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Writing from Hamburg: The Encounter with Foreignness in the Writings of Mary Wollstonecraft and S.T. Coleridge

This paper intends to examine the travel writings of a few late eighteenth-century travellers to northern Europe, with a closer look at those of Mary Wollstonecraft and S.T. Coleridge who journeyed to Germany and Scandinavia at the end of the eighteenth century (1795 and 1798) as the routes to France and Italy were made increasingly perilous. Mary Wollstonecraft's public letters to her lover Imlay recounting her 1795 journey were well known even in her own days; less so, the narrative of Samuel Taylor Coleridge who travelled with William and Dorothy Wordsworth to Germany three years later, in September 1798. One simple reason for that: Coleridge's travel account was not published following his journey as it would be expected from a travel writer. Coleridge recorded his travel experience in a notebook and a very large journal, extracts of which he then used in his letters to Tom Poole and Sara, his wife. His journal, unpublished and currently held in the Berg Collection at the New York Public Library, is composed of a travelogue recounting his sea journey from Yarmouth to Hamburg and ten letters to Tom Poole and Sara Coleridge, written from September 18, 1798 to May 17, 1799. It is an extremely interesting piece of writing, semi-public, semi-private, which was meant to be published as an epistolary travelogue. For some reason though, it was published only ten years later as "Satyrane's Letters" in his short-lived periodical *The Friend* (1809) and then in *Biographia Literaria* (1817) through a careful selection of extracts and a witty obfuscation of authorial identity¹.

As Jeremy Black suggests, the fashionable practice of the Grand Tour suffered a dramatic change in the post-1793 period, after war had been declared by France against Great Britain and Holland. It was not the revolutionary events of 1789 that led 'to the immediate ending of tourism'² in France. What prompted a reconfiguration of travel and discursive practices were the bloodier aftermaths of the revolution, their terrifying representations in British press and literature and the spread of French armies across the

¹ Coleridge makes no mention of why he decided not to publish these letters. He simply states to Josiah Wedgwood: 'Soon after I came into Germany, I made up my mind fully not to publish any thing concerning my *Travels* as people call them / yet I soon perceived that with all possible Economy my expences would be greater than I could justify, unless I did something that would to a moral certainty repay them.—I chose the Life of Lessing for the reasons above assigned, & because it would give me an opportunity of conveying under a better name, [...] opinions, which I deem of the highest importance,' "Letter 283. To Josiah Wedgwood," in Earl Leslie Griggs (ed.), *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol.1, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1966, p. 283. From this quote, we can infer that Coleridge probably didn't think highly of travel writing and that, if at one point he envisaged it, it was only for economic reasons. Nonetheless, since he was also keeping track of his journey in his notebook and in private letters, we may wonder why he kept writing these extremely long and detailed public letters in his journal.

² Jeremy Black, *The British and the Grand Tour*, Taylor and Francis e-library, 2011, p. 65.

continent. 1793 marked the end, or at least the decline, of the Grand Tour in its traditional form:

The year 1792 brought war to the Rhineland and the Austrian Netherlands; and the following spring saw Britain enter the Revolutionary Wars [...]. As French armies spread across Europe new-modelling states, redistributing art treasures and defeating Britain's allies, Europe became an alien entity. [...] the old-fashioned Grand Tour was a victim of this change. Tourism continued, but it followed a different course.³

Writing in an age of geopolitical turbulences and restriction of liberties, Mary Wollstonecraft and Samuel Taylor Coleridge had to contend in their travel writings with these changing perceptions of Europe and continental connections, no longer in line with the Humean approach to Europe, commerce and travels⁴. Furthermore, they used a medium, the letter, which, during the revolutionary decade, carried an increasingly ambivalent political function, as Mary Favret remarks:

On the one hand, the fiction propagated by reformists, such as Fox, Paine and the "Friends of Liberty," depicted the letter as a gesture toward the will of the people, an appeal outside the structures of law and government. [...] the letter became the most accessible, and consequently, the most public means of communication. The fiction generated by conservative forces, however, cast the letter as the tool of conspiracy, the epitome of deceit. [...] Postal surveillance would act as that "third person" monitoring the potentially subversive conversation between two individuals.⁵

Although not politically aligned, Wollstonecraft's and Coleridge's travelogues share interesting aesthetic and stylistic similarities that characterized some *fin de siècle* travel writings before poetry became the privileged medium for the expression of subjectivity and local attachment. The conjunction of philosophical ideas on commerce and sympathy (as expressed by Adam Smith and David Hume) and the literary influence of Sterne⁶ had

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ In his essay XIV "On the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences," David Hume comments on the benefits of commerce and antagonism between European "neighbouring and independent states" for "the rise of politeness and learning." Comparing Europe with Greece, he contends that European states improve their arts, sciences and manners thanks to a system of oppositions and checks that prevents the progress of erroneous theories or uncivilized manners: "What checked the progress of the Cartesian philosophy, to which the French nation showed such a strong propensity towards the end of the century, but the opposition made to it by the other nations [...] The English are become sensible of the scandalous licentiousness of their stage, from the example of the French decency and morals. The French are convinced that their theatre has become somewhat effeminate by too much love and gallantry, and begin to approve of the more masculine taste of some neighbouring nations," David Hume, "Essay XIV," *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects: Essays, Moral, Political and Literary*, vol. 1, Edinburgh, Bell and Bradfute, 1825, p. 114-115. Hume's conception of commerce was not limited to the exchange of goods, it also had humanistic implications, helping develop a deeper understanding and awareness of the other's identity and singularity, which tinged the writings of cosmopolitan travellers. Katrina O'Loughlin for instance has shown "how 'global' the eighteenth-century world" was and how "social prestige" was attached to "travel and foreignness" before the Revolution (*Women, Writing and Travel in the Eighteenth century*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018 p.233).

⁵ Mary Favret, *Romantic Correspondence. Women, Politics & the Fiction of Letters*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 33

⁶ Jean Viviès, "A Sentimental Journey, or Reading Rewarded," *Revue de la Société d'études anglo-américaines des XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles*, 1994, n° 38, p. 247: "Yorick's sentimental progress becomes the metaphor of another way of establishing contact, of setting up dialogue. *A Sentimental Journey* is a triumph

shaped the idea of a benevolent encounter with foreignness in the second half of the eighteenth century, with sentiment, humour, curiosity and wit playing a conspicuous part in the narration. The age of revolutions led to a drastic reappraisal of cosmopolitanism and its influence on travel writings⁷ and thus altered the narrative codes of the travelogue and of sociable encounters as Katherine Turner explains:

[...] a new seriousness becomes virtually *de rigueur* in travel writing after 1789. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, the travel writer is increasingly required to function also as a journalist and political commentator, in order to cater for the intense public thirst for information on the French Revolution. [...] Secondly, individualism and eccentricity become increasingly dubious, rapidly turning into qualities which radical writers would deem frivolous and reactionary writers subversive. The travel writer's nationally representative responsibilities come to the fore, and personal oddities are displaced by the requirements of intellectual and ethical reliability.⁸

Both texts under scrutiny in this article bear witness to the way in which the general mood of antagonism and conspiracy of the post-1793 period intensified the feeling of estrangement from the Continent, widening the imaginative gap between the British observer and the scenes and people encountered. National attachment had indeed become an expected hallmark for travelogues that was usually picked up and commented on by reviewers of travel books⁹.

Juggling with political and personal tensions but also with the changing taste of the public, the singularity of Wollstonecraft's and Coleridge's epistolary travelogues suggests how situating the textual self abroad and narrating the encounter with foreignness had become a literary and political challenge. If Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark* have been amply

of communication (as Gardner Stout has shown) between Yorick and others because he succeeds in communicating his own sensations out of his own sphere, through the operation of sympathy, sentimental commerce, and with the occasional help of look and gesture."

⁷ Charlotte Biggs, an anti-Jacobin woman who travelled to France, voiced these patriotic concerns about cosmopolitan writers too much in love with the world and not enough with their nation, a hardly veiled attack on H.M. Williams. Her text is almost a plea for a new form of travel writing given the political stakes: "A person who is everywhere a stranger, must see things in their best dress [...] a literary traveller never thinks of inconvenience, and still less of being out of humour – curiosity reconciles him to the one, and his fame so smooths all his intercourse [...] universal philanthropists, I have often suspected, are people of very cold hearts, who fancy they love the whole world, because they are incapable of loving any thing in it, and live in a state of 'moral vagabondage' (as it is happily termed by Gregoire), in order to be exempted from the ties of a settled residence. '*Le cosmopolitisme de systeme et de fait n'est qu'un vagabondage physique ou moral: nous devons un amour de preference a la societe politique dont nous sommes membres*'" (p. 530).

⁸ Katherine Turner, *British Travel Writers in Europe: Authorship, Gender, and National Identity*, Routledge Revivals, 2017 [online].

⁹ This is for instance how A. Young's *The Example of France, A Warning to Britain* (1793) was reviewed in *The European magazine, and London review*, vol. 24 (July-December 1793), p. 33: "From these facts learn, oh Englishman, to set the highest value on the privileges thou enjoyest in the possession of the best Constitution in the world, and spurn with patriotic indignation the offers of those who would endeavour, under specious promises of a happier state, to rob thee of the whole, liberty, property, and perhaps life itself!!!" Before condemning radical women in his 1798 poem "The Unsex'd Females," Richard Polwhele had published 'The Influence of Local Attachment with Respect to Home' (London: J. Johnson, 1796), arguing in the preface that "It is natural to prefer our own home to the rest of the world." Polwhele deemed "local attachment" a useful passion for families "in the exercise of the domestic virtues" and by extension, "on a wider scale, to our country, in the exercise of the patriotic" (p. 26).

discussed and analysed for the last thirty years, Coleridge's letters from Germany have received comparatively little attention for the aforementioned reasons. Yet his use of different media—journal, letter and notebook—to recount his northern travels opens a fascinating vista on the underlying tensions informing *fin de siècle* travel writing between literariness and impartiality, cosmopolitan curiosity and national attachment that complexified the aestheticization of the travelling self.

I will first briefly examine the travel writings of some 1770s and 1780s northern explorers to discuss the travel writing standards of the northern tour and the use of the savage/civilized dichotomy creating a polarization of European states; I will then show how Wollstonecraft's narrative of her northern journey was a complex reaction to multiple discourses that emerged in the context of the French Revolution. As a result, her response to northern landscapes and people was an ambivalent one that reshaped the narrative voice of the travelling self. Coleridge's self, as I will show in the last part of this paper, was as much a divided one as Wollstonecraft's when he left Yarmouth for Hamburg in 1798. Similarly, his writing of the Continent would be fraught with tensions and contradictions that would resurface in the narration of his encounter with otherness.

1. Writing northern foreignness in *fin de siècle* journals and travelogues

As Charles Batten notes in his seminal work, eighteenth-century travel writing required the knowledge and use of certain literary conventions to “convey pleasant instructions to an age thirsty for information about foreign countries.”¹⁰ Travel narratives had indeed been shaped by “the most important writers of the day, from Addison & Defoe to Fielding, Smollett, Boswell & Johnson”¹¹. Coleridge was well aware of these eighteenth-century narrative codes but interestingly, when he finally published his travel letters in 1809, he didn't call up Smolletian or Sternian characters to align his narrative with the tradition of literary and sentimental travel; instead, he invoked the fellow clubmen of Mr Spectator, the dreamer Will Honeycombe and the country gentleman Sir Roger de Coverley:

[...] the marked difference of our several Characters (though we were all old acquaintances, and with one exception, all of us fellow Cantabs) suggested to us the idea of a joint Work to be entitled, “Travelling Conversations.” [...] We had agreed to call each other by the names of our Walking-Sticks, each of which happened to be of a different wood. [...] I flatter myself that the Readers of the Friend will consent to travel over the same road with the same fellow Tourists. High indeed will be my gratification, if they should hereafter think of the walk and talk with the FRIEND's Satyrane, Holly, Larch, Hiccory, and Sycamore, with a small portion of the delight with which they have accompanied THE SPECTATOR to his club, and made acquaintance with Will Honeycombe and the inimitable Sir Roger de Coverley.¹²

The tour itself seems to be only a pretext to publish these “travelling conversations” in Addison's fashion of essay-writing, masculine friendship being the guiding principle rather than the places and people encountered during the tour. The expression “travelling

¹⁰ Charles Batten, *Pleasurable Instruction, Form and Convention in Eighteenth-century Travel Literature*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1978, p. 3.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Friend: Series of Essays* [1809], London, Gale and Curtis, 1812, p. 211.

conversations” is indeed an ambiguous one: was he publishing conversations on travels or conversations while travelling?

Coleridge was writing at a time when the popularity of northern travels and narratives was gaining ground. A cultural interest for northern Europe, mostly in relation to the climate and geographical situation, had developed from the 1770s with the travel narratives of Sir Nathaniel Wraxall (*Cursory Remarks made in a Tour through some of the Northern Parts of Europe*, 1775), William Coxe (*Travels into Poland, Russia, Sweden and Denmark*, London, Thomas Cadell, 1784), Andrew Swinton (*Travels Into Norway, Denmark, and Russia*, 1792) and Matthew Consett (*A Tour through Sweden, Swedish-Lapland, Finland and Denmark*, 1789), among others. This is, for instance, how Sir John Carr in *A Northern Summer* (1805) justified a “northern” tour rather than a southern one: “The angry decrees of renovated war had closed the gates of the south; the north alone lay expanded before me.”¹³ Northern countries, lacking the antiquarian potentialities of the South (court culture and curiosities, monuments, paintings, sculptures...), were “less enchanting”¹⁴ and so had to be fashioned on different grounds if their narratives were to sell. The poetry of James McPherson and James Thomson played an important role in this revival of interest for these undisturbed, unknown “primitive” territories of the North and for their inhabitants in their relation to Nature¹⁵ as did the translation work of Thomas Percy, *Northern Antiquities* (1770), providing extracts of the Icelandic mythology. Harnessing this newly-created interest for the ancient North, some travel writers, such as Sir Nathaniel Wraxall, exacerbated the primitiveness of the regions they travelled to when they introduced their narratives: “Such are the kingdoms which I am about to visit, covered during many months with snow, and wrapt in all the horrors of a polar winter: unpolished in their manners, and still retaining the vestiges of Gothic ignorance, they present not many charms to tempt the Traveller.”¹⁶ No civilizing process, some travellers would suggest, tamed the manners of the inhabitants of the North made uncouth by the lack of arts, the climate and long periods of darkness. Yet the bold British tourist, venturing in these “remote and inclement kingdoms,”¹⁷ could be rewarded with a few scattered “seeds of knowledge.” Some narratives were slightly less disparaging or sensationalist. Matthew Consett, for instance, in *A Tour through Sweden, Swedish-Lapland, Finland and Denmark* (1789), adopted a “Grand Tour” style, visiting courts, palaces, castles and churches, pondering over political and social issues. But the further North he travelled, the closer to the state of nature he felt the inhabitants were. While in Lapland he conceded that “It would be a glorious act to undertake to civilize this ferocious people,”¹⁸ although he found that “the inhabitants of their large towns [...] [were] not far behind the rest of the world.”¹⁹ Travel writers would scrutinize manners and national

¹³ Sir John Carr, *A Northern Summer; or Travels round the Baltic through Denmark, Sweden, Russia, Prussia, and part of Germany, in the year 1804*, Philadelphia, Samuel F. Bradford, 1805, p. 4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ James Thomson, “Winter,” in *The Seasons*, Paris, Egron, 1800, p. 203: “They ask no more than simple Nature gives, / They love their mountains and enjoy their storms. / No false desires, no pride-created wants, / Disturb the peaceful current of their time.”

¹⁶ Nathaniel William Wraxall, *A Tour Through Some of the Northern Parts of Europe*, Dublin, C. Jenkin, 1776, p. 3.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4-5.

¹⁸ Matthew Consett, *A Tour Through Sweden, Swedish-Lapland, Finland, and Denmark. In a Series of Letters* [1789], Stockton, Christopher and Jennett, 1815, p. 84-85.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

characteristics, from nobles to peasants, to gauge how far northern inhabitants were from British enlightened manners. M. Consett would admit, from time to time, that “though living [...] at a great distance from polished society,” the inhabitants were “far from being an unpolished society.”²⁰ These narratives did not eschew informative material on demographics, politics and geography but travel writers were well aware of this “growing public thirst for affective and immediate travel narratives”²¹ and thus exploited it by dramatizing landscapes and encounters. Scientific and political observations were thus often sacrificed to emotional and passionate language which required melancholy moonscapes, Gothic sceneries, tales of aristocratic distress, encounters with northern beauties; the *mise en intrigue* creating a greater estrangement between the subject and the foreign objects, a literary device particularly remarkable in Wraxall’s narrative. In Castleholm, Sweden, for instance, he boldly enters a derelict castle, “crawling upon [his] hands and knees”²² and reflecting, “struck with compassion and horror,” on how “a sovereign” could have “been the tenant of such a dungeon, which is too miserable for the worst malefactor.”²³ Wraxall repeatedly uses ‘affective’ descriptions, combining a description of the scenery and his emotional response to it, a rhetorical strategy that could allow him to intensify the sublime nature of the landscape, though threatening at times to erase it as language was powerless to render the intensity of emotions:

In vain would I attempt to raise in your bosom the tumultuous feelings of wonder, rapture, and awful delight, which I have experienced from [the cataract of the river Dahl]: in vain shall I endeavour, by a laboured description of its minutest parts, its size and depth, to give you correspondent and similar emotions. It is one of those objects which to be felt must be seen, and before which language sinks unequal.²⁴

Coleridge’s and Wollstonecraft’s ‘North’ would also be characterized by this curious blend of empirical and emotional realities; yet these writers’ purpose was not to sensationalize foreign places and transform them into commodified locations. Rather the ‘foreignizing’ process which widened the gap between observer and observed translated post-1793 political and inner divisions.

2. Wollstonecraft’s northern travels: shaping the Romantic wandering gaze

In a recent paper²⁵, Christoph Bode wonders how much of “the North” remained in Wollstonecraft’s letters, after having been pressed through such a subjective filter. Contrary to the feminist interpretations of Elisabeth Bohls, Sara Mills or Jane Moore who tend to see in Wollstonecraft’s gaze an aesthetic experience coupled with an ethics of true sympathy for the other, C. Bode argues that Wollstonecraft had been to “her own true

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

²¹ Katherine Turner, *British Travel Writers in Europe 1750-1800*, *op. cit.*

²² Nathaniel William Wraxall, *A Tour Through Some of The Northern Parts of Europe*, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

²⁵ Christoph Bode, “Imaginary Circles Round the Human Mind: Bias and Openness in Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark (1796)*,” in Cian Duffy (ed.), *Romantic Norths, Anglo-Nordic Exchanges, 1770-1842*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, p. 29-52.

North,”²⁶ her perception of civil societies constantly distorted by cultural prejudices, loneliness and misanthropy, her harshest criticism reserved for Hamburg and the “insolent vulgarity”²⁷ of its inhabitants.

Wollstonecraft was well acquainted with the travel narratives of her time as she had reviewed quite a few travels books for the *Analytical Review*. In the introductory lines of her narrative, she admits posing herself as “the little hero of each tale” and yet at the same time, planning “to give a just view of the present state;”²⁸ this contradictory stance, poised between narrative self-consciousness and enlightened empiricism, also characterizing eighteenth-century travelogues. She was quite an unusual traveller though, a woman journeying in these “unpolished” regions of Europe, alone most of the time or accompanied with her babe and her superstitious maid. She had been sent to Tonsberg, Norway, by her American lover, the radical Gilbert Imlay, as his business envoy, to locate the valuable cargo of a ship that had never reached its destination. Her narrative never mentions the purpose of her trip but is tinged with melancholy and grief coming from the knowledge that Imlay’s terms for their relationship were non-negotiable and yet never acceptable for her. She feels at times “as a particle broken off from the grand mass of mankind,” possessed by “melancholy and misanthropy.”²⁹ True it is that her descriptions seem at times to reinforce cultural stereotypes: Swedes are “sluggish” yet “picturesque” in their narrow-mindedness, whereas “the Norwegians are more industrious and more opulent.”³⁰ She admits that her letters are no attempt to “sketch a national character,” simply “a present state of morals and manners [...] to trace the progress of the world’s improvement.”³¹ Her tourist gaze, the gaze of an “enlightened” traveller, reads as a barometer of civilization: people, manners, fashion, hygiene practices, housekeeping, meals, all social aspects are judged according to their degree of enlightened refinement and taste. As Wollstonecraft progresses in her travel and in her narrative, she increasingly believes that the purpose of all European civil societies should lie in the cultivation of the mind and of the spirit of inquiry. Arts and sciences having not yet reached the northern regions, their minds, according to her, have little opportunity for exertion and their domestic and hygiene habits suffer from a lack of scientific knowledge. Wollstonecraft believes that social improvement will affect even the remotest regions she is visiting since man, as he labours to improve his habitat and environment, develops both his industrious skills and mental aptitudes:

It is very fortunate that men are, a long time, but just above the brute creation, or the greater part of the earth would never have been rendered habitable; because it is the patient labour of men, who are only seeking for a subsistence, which produces whatever embellishes existence, affording leisure for the cultivation of the arts and sciences, that lift man so far above his first state. I never, my friend, thought so deeply of the advantages obtained by human industry as since I have been in Norway. The world requires [...] the hand of man to perfect it; and as this task naturally unfolds the faculties he exercises, it is physically

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

²⁷ Mary Wollstonecraft, *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*, Carol H. Poston (ed.), Lincoln & London, University of Nebraska Press, 1976, p. 186.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

impossible that he should have remained in Rousseau's golden age of stupidity.³²

Yet, Wollstonecraft's sympathies are also ambiguously excited by the "artless kindness" of Swedes and Norwegians and she more than once revels in their innocent "overflowing of heart and fellow-feeling."³³ The unresolved position of her narrative, between sentiment and reason, sympathy and impartiality, pleasure and didacticism can be understood as an expression of distrust for aristocratic "artificial manners" or bourgeois "apish good-breeding"³⁴ that makes her marvel at the simplicity of northern manners and the agency of nature in these unpolished regions. And yet, as an eighteenth-century enlightened and politically engaged woman, she cannot consent to Rousseau's antisocial ideas, man's nature being forged as much by nature's powers as by "the varieties,"³⁵ namely the cultural and political institutions and values that turn these impulses of nature into social passions.

Instead of concealing these inner tensions, Wollstonecraft's letters expose and expand them, exploring the way reasoning, imagination and emotions interact in the formation of her perceptions and thoughts: "My thoughts fly from this wilderness to the polished circles of the world, till recollecting its vices and follies, I bury myself in the woods, but find it necessary to emerge again, that I may not lose sight of the wisdom and virtue which exalts my nature."³⁶ As Katherine Turner has convincingly showed, Wollstonecraft's self-dramatization as a homeless woman, abandoned lover and political dissenter creates this feeling of solitude that is aesthetically reconfigured in her poetic wandering gaze:

Here I have frequently strayed [...] and sometimes, reclining on the mossy down, under the shelter of a rock, the prattling of the sea amongst the pebbles has lulled me to sleep [...]. Balmy were the slumbers, and soft the gales, that refreshed me, when I awoke to follow, with an eye vaguely curious, the white sails, as they turned the cliffs, or seemed to take shelter under the pines which covered the little islands that so gracefully rose to render the terrific ocean beautiful. [...] With what ineffable pleasure have I not gazed—and gazed again, losing my breath through my eyes—my very soul diffused itself in the scene—and seeming to become all senses, glided in the scarcely agitated waves, melted in the freshening breeze [...].³⁷

³² *Ibid.*, p. 89. Unlike Coleridge who rejected continental philosophy, Wollstonecraft in her narrative makes no attempt to assess the progress of European states in relation to British standards. Rather in line with Condorcet who published his *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain* the same year as she was travelling, Wollstonecraft believed that the universal values of industry, inquiry and the exertion of the mind and the body would polish and civilize all nations. "[...] nous trouverons, dans l'expérience du passé, dans l'observation des progrès que les sciences, que la civilisation ont faits jusqu'ici, dans l'analyse de la marche de l'esprit humain et du développement de ses facultés, les motifs les plus forts de croire que la nature n'a mis aucun terme à nos espérances," Condorcet, *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain*, Paris, Masson et fils, 1822, p. 265.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 12. She nonetheless concludes letter XIX with a rational note taking the reader back to the tradition of the Grand Tour's educational purpose, thus brushing aside the emotional appeal of sympathy: "[...] when visiting distant climes, a momentary social sympathy should not be allowed to influence the conclusions of the understanding; for hospitality too frequently leads travellers, especially those who travel in search of pleasure, to make a false estimate of the virtues of a nation; which, I am now convinced, bear an exact proportion to their scientific improvements. Adieu," p. 162.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 90

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

In a movement reminiscent of Coleridge's own conversational mind in "Frost at Midnight" or "Fears in Solitude," the travelling authorial self that Wollstonecraft crafts in her narrative hovers constantly between observation and self-interrogation, reflecting on how her mind concatenates a myriad of thoughts and sentiments.³⁸ In that sense, Wollstonecraft's travel-writing style differs significantly from that of 1780s northern explorers who would write to instruct and entertain their audience. Elizabeth Bohls suggests that she "modulates the discourses of sentimental and philosophical travel into the complex mixed mode of Romantic autobiography."³⁹ The pleasure of recollection, as much as loss or nostalgia, permeates her letters, creating this idiosyncratic style which describes not just what she sees or thinks but the workings of a mind and heart pining after a lost sense of plenitude. Yet Wollstonecraft's imaginative powers are not self-centered; her wandering gaze weakens ego boundaries so that her scattered self can experience and sympathize with the world surrounding her. In a personal letter to G. Imlay, she posited imagination as the most genuine social faculty:

The imagination is the true fire, stolen from heaven, to animate this cold creature of clay, producing all those fine sympathies that lead to rapture, rendering men social by expanding their hearts, instead of leaving them leisure to calculate how many comforts society afford.⁴⁰

Similarly, Coleridge's inquiring spirit would adopt this spontaneous and fluid style in his travel notebooks. Interestingly indeed, Coleridge's trip to Germany marks the beginning of his notebook writing practice that he would develop and refine in the Lake district in the early nineteenth century. Yet, unlike Wollstonecraft whose wandering gaze also articulates a feeling of unrootedness, Coleridge constantly refers to home, through either the absence of his loved ones, or his loyalty to his "Mother Isle," or the "superiority" of his nation.

3. "I wrapped myself up in my great Coat": "exceptionalizing" the travelling self

Coleridge's literary engagement with the continent is often referred to in relation to his Göttingen stay and his grappling with German philosophy and literature. Little attention though has been given to his travel narrative from Yarmouth to Hamburg published in *The Friend* (1809) as "Satyrane's Letters" ten years later. As in Wollstonecraft's narrative, Coleridge's modes of perception and representation in his travelogue would be fraught with tensions, expressing the complex realities of his

³⁸ For instance, as she approaches Stromstad, the grass growing "sparingly" recalls "Dr Johnson's hyperbolic assertion 'that the man merited well of his country who made a few blades of grass grow where they never grew before'" and a few lines further, Swift's "Dearly beloved Roger" is invoked. A few pages later, as Mary Wollstonecraft is trying to justify "the extreme affection" of her nature, she summons Sterne's Maria (p. 74).

³⁹ Elizabeth Bohls and Ian Duncan (ed.), *Travel Writing 1700-1830*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 4. Mitzi Myers has a closer look at the way the writer uses language to organize her perception of otherness, a prose that "vividly embodies the subjectivity and search after wholeness of an active mind," thus "piling up clauses and phrases as they occur," Mitzi Myers quoted in Jane Hodson, *Language and Revolution in Burke, Wollstonecraft, Paine, and Godwin*, New York, Routledge, 2016 [online].

⁴⁰ Janet Todd (ed.), *The Collected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2003, p. 264.

continental journey. Germany was indeed no quiet and secured touristic destination. Spies had been posted in Hamburg by the British government and they regularly reported on all types of activities unfolding on the shores of the Elbe: the trade of merchants, the passengers of packet-boats, the letters being delivered to British or foreign residents.⁴¹ The hundreds of secret letters exchanged in the 1790s between Lord Grenville and the civil and governmental spies reveal the extent of the surveillance system in Hamburg and Altona, places swarming with foreigners, emigrants, spies and traitors at the time when Wollstonecraft, Coleridge and the Wordsworth travelled there. Coleridge was probably aware that any letters sent from Hamburg to Britain or from Britain to Hamburg could be opened and read.

No longer a believer in French republican ideals, Coleridge travelled to Hamburg then Göttingen, leaving behind him the unpublished manuscripts of the *Lyrical Ballads* and of a small collection of poems composed of “Fears in Solitude,” “France: an Ode” and “Frost at Midnight.”⁴² To record his experience of northern countries, he had bought, before leaving England, a small notebook and a very large journal in which he would write his epistolary travelogue, that he would send alternately to Tom Poole and his wife Sara. His notebook entries were usually written on the spot in a somewhat telegraphic style and the fragments then expanded in his journal and letters. What is interesting to note is that the complex compositional process of his travel writing went hand in hand with a fictionalizing one. Indeed, additions, obfuscations or modifications from his notebook to his journal, or from his letters to his journal allow us to glimpse at the creative process at work to forge empirical observations into a literary travel narrative. We have thus several textual versions of a same travel moment, recorded differently according to the addressee of his travel writing. As his journal was meant to be published, the description of his departure from Yarmouth teems with patriotic allusions whereas his thoughts in his letter to Sara are for his “dear Babes”:

Departure from Yarmouth described in his journal	Departure from Yarmouth described in his letter to Sara
<p>Chap. I <u>A sea-voyage of eight and forty hours.</u> On Sunday Morning, September the sixteenth, 1798, the Hamburg Pacquet set sail from Yarmouth: and I, for the first time in my life, beheld my native land retiring from me. [...] At</p>	<p>Letter 256. To Mrs S.T. Coleridge Ratzeburg Octbr 3d 1798 Wednesday My dearest love / [...] Sunday Septr 16th – Eleven o'clock – The Packet set sail, & for the first time in my life I beheld my native land retiring from me – my native Land to</p>

⁴¹ The correspondence between Foreign Secretary Lord Grenville and Sir J. Crauford, a British spy posted in Hamburg, highlights this issue: “There is reason to believe that the correspondence between the present Government of France and some of the disaffected subjects in Great Britain and Ireland is principally carried on by way of Hamburg. You will use your utmost exertion to procure the fullest and most accurate intelligence on this subject (as well as the names of the persons engaged in this correspondence as of the nature of it),” “Letter of Lord Grenville to Sir J. Crauford,” 1798, National Archives, Kew, FO158/3 f.12.

⁴² Richard Holmes argues that this short collection can be seen as the poetic translation of his ambiguous position as he was leaving Britain for Germany: “This indicated the narrow path he was attempting to tread between two increasingly polarised factions. [...] It is both political and confessional, a provocative combination of literary styles and subject-matter, which attempts to record the representative experience of a ‘Friend of Liberty’ in those confused and passionate years of the 1790s,” Richard Holmes, *Coleridge. Early Visions, 1772-1804*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1989, p. 201.

<p>the moment of its disappearance – in all the Kirks, Churches, Chapels & Meeting houses, in which the greater number, I hope, of my countrymen were at that moment time assembled, I will dare question whether there was one more ardent prayer offered up to Heaven, than that which I offered then preferred for my Country.⁴³</p>	<p>which I am convinced I shall return with an intenser affection – with a proud Nationality made rational by my own experience of its Superiority. – My dear Babies [...] when the land quite disappeared, they came upon my eye as distinctly as if they had that moment died and were crossing me in their road to Heaven!⁴⁴</p>
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Coleridge was in the crosshairs of anti-Jacobin propaganda and his trip to Göttingen was indeed a welcome escape from the stifling political atmosphere of the 1790s. The “journal” version of his trip can thus be read as an act of self-defence against those accusing him of being, like Rousseau, a “citizen of the world,” abandoning both his country and his family, and as a rhetorical means to show his “proud Nationality made rational by [his] own experience of its Superiority.” Yet, in the age of revolutions, how could a writer be both a *philosophe* and a patriot, a traveller and a loyalist? His epistolary journal was indeed an attempt to resolve these tensions.

A closer look at the manuscript version of his travelogue shows similar narrative techniques as the ones used in Robert Southey’s *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Spain or Portugal* (1797). Southey opens his travelogue with a poem, “Retrospective Musings,” in which he stages himself as a poet and traveller whose thoughts were still with his country as he journeyed to Spain: “I by the cheerful hearth remember Spain, / And tread with Fancy once again the ways / Where, twelve months since, I travelled on, and thought / Of England, and of all my heart held dear.”⁴⁵ In a similar way, Coleridge introduces his northern journey, not in expectation of what he is about to discover, but on a retrospective mode, using a poetic insertion (“Fears in Solitude”) to grieve over what he has not yet left behind, his “Mother Isle” and compatriots:

Chap. I

A sea-voyage of eight and forty hours.

On Sunday Morning, September the sixteenth, 1798, the Hamburg~~h~~ Pacquet set sail from Yarmouth: and I, for the first time in my life, beheld my native land retiring from me. I watched it with somewhat of the same Feelings with which I had often watched the setting Sun from the top of that single Rock, which stands sea-ward at the end of the Valley of Stones near Linton. At the moment of its disappearance – in all the Kirks, Churches, Chapels & Meeting houses, in which the greater number, I hope, of my countrymen were at that ~~moment~~ time assembled, I will dare question whether there was one more ardent prayer offered up to Heaven, than that which I ~~offered~~ [...] then preferred for my Country.

For O! dear Britain! O my Mother Isle!

Thou wert perforce a name most dear & holy

⁴³ The manuscript of the journal is currently kept at the New York Public library in the Berg Collection. I am much indebted to Mary Catherine Kinniburgh for sending me the digital scans of the first pages of this journal. Journal for Sept. 16 & 17, 1798, headed “Chap. I. A sea voyage of eight and forty hours,” Holograph, S.T. Coleridge collection of papers, 1791-1894, Berg collection, New York Public Library.

⁴⁴ “Letter 256. To Mrs S.T. Coleridge,” in Earl Leslie Griggs (ed.), *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol.1, *op. cit.*, p. 420.

⁴⁵ Robert Southey, *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Spain and Portugal*, Bristol, Biggs & Cottle, 1797, p. 158-159.

To me, a Son, a Brother, and a Friend,
A Husband, and a Father, who revere
All bonds of natural Love, and found them all
Within the limits of the rocky Shores.⁴⁶

On board the packet boat, Coleridge also becomes “the little hero of [his] tale,” sympathizing and bantering with the Danish, Swedish, German, French, Prussian, Hanoverian and Jewish passengers while Dorothy Wordsworth and her brother, sea-sick, are confined to their cabin. Coleridge’s blurry social identity becomes the core issue of their conversation:

They Danes had christened me Docteur Theology, and draped as I was all in black with large shoes and black worsted stockings, I might certainly have passed very well for a Methodist missionary. However I disclaimed my Title. What then may you be? A man of Fortune?—No!—A merchant? No! A Merchant’s Traveller? No! A Clerk? No!—Un Philosophe, perhaps? It was ~~of all~~ that time in my life, in which [...] of all possible names and characters I had the greatest Disgust to that of “un Philosophe.” But I was weary of being [...] questioned, and rather than be Nothing, or at best only the Abstract Idea of Man, ~~at best~~, I ~~accepted~~ submitted by a Bow, even to the Aspersion implied in the word “un Philosophe.”

Reluctantly accepting the label “un Philosophe,” Coleridge nonetheless disparages, in this fictionalized conversation, the tribe of “*philosophes*” mentioned elsewhere in his journal: all continental, especially French, philosophers, but also Tom Paine, William Godwin, the members of the “Corresponding Society” among others. Reproduced using the dramatic form, the dialogues between Coleridge and this motley crew quickly veer into a ludicrous staging of corrupted souls and selfish egos: “The Prussian was a travelling merchant [...] full of stories, gesticulations and buffoonery, with the soul as well as the look of a mountebank who while he is making you laugh picks your pocket”; “The Hanoverian [...] a most egregious coxcomb”; “The Swede [...] miserably dependent on the Dane.” Coleridge pieces up his travel narrative with linguistic and grammatical misunderstandings, creating a Babelic confusion that thwarts any possible advent of a cosmopolitan conversational space. The Danish passenger is the one who suffers the most under the pen of Coleridge:

The Dane

O me! If you should dink I is flattering you! No, no, no! I haf ten tousand a year. Yes, ten thousand a year. Yes, ten thousand pound a year! Vell—and Vat is that? A mere trifle! O ‘ouldn’t gif my sincere heart for ten times dhe money.—yes, you’re a Got! I a mere man! But my dear Friend! Dhink of me, as a man! Is—is—I mean to ask you now, my dear Friend—is I not very eloquent? Is I not speak English very fine?

Answer

Most admirably. Believe me, Sir! I have seldom heard even a native talk so fluently.

The Dane (squeezing my hand with great vehemence)

My dear Friend! Vat an affection and fidelity ve haf for each other! But tell me, do tell me. Is I not, now and den, speak some fault? Is I not in some wrong?

Answer

Why, Sir! Perhaps it might be observed by some critics in the English Language, that you

⁴⁶ Journal for Sept. 16 & 17, 1798, Berg collection, New York Public Library.

occasionally use the word 'Is' instead of 'am;' In our best companies we generally say, I am, and not I is or Ise. Excuse me Sir! It is so mere a Trifle!

In this grotesque rewording of a dialogue that potentially took place between the poet and the Danish passenger, Coleridge refutes the Humean argument that “nothing is more favourable to the rise of politeness and learning, than a number of neighbouring and independent states, connected together by commerce and policy.”⁴⁷ The cosmopolitan ideal is constantly thwarted by the narrow-mindedness, indolence and selfish motives of the European merchants. The packet boat becomes a ludicrous restaging of the mercantile system exploiting the colonies' natural resources and subjecting their people to slavery for the benefits of a few wealthy merchants and manufacturers, colluding with a corrupted government. In that sense, Coleridge's anti-cosmopolitan plea is driven rather by anti-capitalist concerns than by nationalistic assumptions. The Danish merchant, treating both Jack, his “Mulatto boy,” and a ruined Swedish nobleman, “utterly dependent” on the Dane, like dogs yet claiming that all people are equal, epitomizes the hypocrisy of the system:

We are all equal, all Gots' Children. I haf ten tousand a year, but I am no more than the meanest man alive. I haf no bride; and yet, my dear Friend! O can say, Do! And it is done. Ha! Ha! Ha! My dear Friend! Now dhere is dhat Gentleman (pointing to “Nobility”) he is a swedish Baron. You shall see. Ho! (calling to the Swede) get me, will you, a bottle of wine from the cabin. Swede. Here, Jack! Go and get your master a bottle of Wine from the Cabin. Dane. No non no! do you go now. You go yourself. You go now! Swede. Pah!

For both Wollstonecraft and Coleridge, the town of Hamburg exemplifies the effects of a corrupted trade system and of the obsession of financial profit on the nature and virtue of man: “[...] the insolent vulgarity which a sudden influx of wealth usually produces in common minds, is here very conspicuous, which contrasts with the distresses of many of the emigrants.”⁴⁸

Once in Hamburg, his troubled relationship with foreignness and travel writing shows in his appropriation of Dorothy's viewpoint. Dorothy also kept a journal⁴⁹ but with no intention of making it public. Almost entirely devoted to the description of Hamburg, it also draws a disparaging view of the town and its inhabitants, in keeping with that of Wollstonecraft.⁵⁰ Both Coleridge and Dorothy adopt a spectatorial stance, hardly mingling with inhabitants but instead scrutinizing, comparing and judging their manners and customs. They both eschew any political consideration, depicting instead street scenes, foreign manners and dresses, shopping problems, costs and food, in such a way

⁴⁷ David Hume, *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects: Essays, Moral, Political and Literary*, Volume 1, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

⁴⁸ Mary Wollstonecraft, *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

⁴⁹ Helen Boden, “Journal of Visit to Hamburg,” *The Continental Journeys 1798-1820. Dorothy Wordsworth*, Bristol, Thoemmes Press, 1995.

⁵⁰ Mary Wollstonecraft, *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*, *op. cit.*, p. 185-186: “Hamburg is an ill, close-built town, swarming with inhabitants; and, from what I could learn, like all the other free towns, governed in a manner which bears hard on the poor, whilst narrowing the minds of the rich, the character of the man is lost in the Hamburger.”

as to preclude any possible feeling of social sympathy such as experienced by Wollstonecraft from time to time: “I am informed that it is the boast and glory of these people to cheat strangers;”⁵¹ “we saw a surly-looking German driving a poor Jew forward with foul language;”⁵² “C[oleridge] had a violent contest with the postilion who insisted upon his paying 20d. a mile for each horse;”⁵³ “Yesterday saw a man of about fifty years of age beating a woman decently dressed and about 37 years of age.”⁵⁴ Dirt, filth, quarrels and noise seem to contaminate all fields of social life in their accounts. For Dorothy, “the first impression that an Englishman receives on entering a Hamburg inn is that of filth and filthy smells;”⁵⁵ the shops are “very dull, and arranged without order or elegance;”⁵⁶ their theatre “a mixture of dull declamation and unmeaning rant.”⁵⁷ German manners are at times redeemed thanks to the neatness of some home interiors or the cleanliness of “the lower orders of women” but overall her literary experience of foreignness is an estranging one. Some extracts from Dorothy’s journal and Coleridge’s letters bear witness to a shared gaze, Coleridge focusing on the same unpleasant aspects: “Awaked by the distressful cries of poultry crowing & clucking in the market place [...] Thursday, 3^oclock. Dined at the Saxe hotel; detestably cheated.–6^oclock. Went to the French comedy–Execrable;”⁵⁸ “We are safe in Hamburg—an ugly City that stinks in every corner, house, & room worse than Cabbin;”⁵⁹ “the filth, the noise and the tallow-faced Roguery of Hamburg”⁶⁰.

Dorothy’s gaze certainly played a crucial role in the narrative composition of the scenes depicted from Hamburg to be found in Coleridge’s notebook. The two following extracts are taken from her *Journal* and from his notebook. In the two accounts, the group of women is organized in exactly the same way, their description sharing textual similarities:

<i>Journal of Dorothy Wordsworth</i>	Notebook of Coleridge
William went to seek lodgings, and the rest of the party guarded the luggage. [...] I was much amused by the various employments and dresses of the people who passed before us. There were Dutch women with immense straw bonnets [...] literally as large as a small-sized umbrella. Hamburger girls with white caps, with broad overhanging borders, crimped and	NB of S.T.C. 336. Saw a boat going down from Hamburg—crammed with all people of all nations with pipes of all shapes, & fancies [...] / – Dutch Women with large umbrella hats shooting out half a yard from their eyes— & with a prodigality of petticoats—the Hamburgers with caps plated on the Top cawl with a sort of silver & a stiff canopy-kind of Veil over their eyes with hanging

⁵¹ Helen Boden (ed.), *The Continental Journals 1798-1820. Dorothy Wordsworth, op. cit.*, p. 27.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Kathleen Coburn (ed.), *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol. 1, London, Routledge & Kegan, 1957, NB 337.

⁵⁹ “Letter 254. To Mrs S.T. Coleridge,” in Earl Leslie Griggs (ed.), *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol.1, *op. cit.*, p. 417.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 420.

stiff [...] Hanoverians with round borders, showing all the face [...] ⁶¹	lace fringe [...] the Hanoverian Women with the forepart of the Head bare [...] ⁶²
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The extract from Dorothy’s journal suggests that Dorothy, Coleridge and Chester watched the scene together, probably commenting upon the eccentricity of women’s outfits and hats. Interestingly, Coleridge makes no mention of the observers in his notebook, he simply jotted down a rapid description of the scene most probably using words and metaphors from their conversation. Yet, when he transcribed his notebook entry in his journal, he erased the presence of Dorothy thus appropriating to himself what was originally the literary product of a shared gaze and conversation:

Wordsworth and the Emigrant went in search of an Hotel. The Emigrant’s Servant, Chester & Miss Wordsworth stayed with the luggage, and I dashed into town to deliver my letter of recommendation [...] I dashed on, and very naturally began to wonder at all things—some for being so like, and some for being so unlike the things in England. Dutch Women with large umbrella hats shooting out half a yard before them, and with a prodigal plumpness of petticoat behind. The Hamburgers with caps plated on the cawl with a sort of silver or gold, or both, & standing round before their eyes, like a canopy veil. The Hanoverian Women with the forepart of the Head bare then a stiff lace standing upright like a Wall, perpendicular on the Cap; and the Cap behind *tailed* with a monstrous quantity of Ribbon which lies or tosses on the Back.⁶³

Although the tone occasionally lightens as he journeys to Ratzburgh and turns his gaze to natural objects, his literary encounters with Hamburgers are very seldom sociable ones and seem, at first sight, to reinforce cultural prejudices and a feeling of national exceptionalism: “But to be an Englishman is in Germany to be an Angel—they almost worship you. I wrote to Mrs Coleridge some ludicrous instances of the Rage for England.”⁶⁴

Coleridge would thus fashion a rather chauvinistic public travelling personae in his journal for complex reasons which have been discussed in this paper. The fierce attacks from *The Anti-Jacobin* certainly motivated the shaping of a rather patriotic travelling self, looking at foreign manners and people with a jingoistic gaze; yet writing in the 1790s from Hamburg or Paris carried very different political significance as compared to before the war. Coleridge shaped and staged a romantic travelling self on board the packet boat that resonated with that of Wollstonecraft:

Wrapping my great coat round me, I lay down on some sails at the bottom of the boat, its motion rocking me to rest, till a discourteous wave interrupted my slumbers, and obliged me to rise and feel a solitariness which was not soothing as that of the past night. Adieu!⁶⁵

⁶¹ Helen Boden (ed.), *The Continental Journals 1798-1820. Dorothy Wordsworth, op. cit.*, p. 27

⁶² Kathleen Coburn (ed.), *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, op. cit.*, NB 336. These examples could be multiplied.

⁶³ Journal for Sept. 16 & 17, 1798, Berg collection, New York Public Library.

⁶⁴ “Letter 258. To Thomas Poole,” in Earl Leslie Griggs (ed.), *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol.1, *op. cit.*, p. 435.

⁶⁵ Wollstonecraft, *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark, op. cit.*, p. 51.

[...] and I wrapped myself up in my great Coat & looked at the Water. A beautiful white cloud of Foam at momently intervals cours'd by the side of the Vessel with a Roar, and little Stars of Flame danced and sparkled and went out in it.⁶⁶

Yet, if Wollstonecraft's sense of distancing was driven by an intense dislike of commerce which had 'contaminated' her lover⁶⁷ and by moments of emotional anguish, her imagination persistently revived social sympathies, thus bringing her back to her fellow citizens and to social issues: "Enough, you will say, of inanimate nature [...] let me hear something of the inhabitants"⁶⁸; "The fire of fancy, which had been kept alive in the country, was almost extinguished by reflections on the ills that harass such a large portion of mankind—I felt like a bird fluttering on the ground unable to mount; yet unwilling to crawl [...] whilst still conscious it had wings."⁶⁹ What distinguishes Wollstonecraft's travel letters from Coleridge's travelogue is the rationale that guides their discursive practices. Wollstonecraft's narrative is motivated by a desire "to trace the progress of the world's improvement" and, as Ingrid Horrocks has shown, her narrative of Sweden, Norway and Denmark gradually becomes "a narrative about, and an argument for, the progress of civilization"⁷⁰; Coleridge's travel writings also constantly hover between introspection and observation but his quest of northern otherness, fraught with political issues and inner divisions, would soon lead him to look at foreign objects rather as a symbolic expression of his own alienated self, as he would later confide to his Malta notebook:

In looking at Objects of Nature while I am thinking, as at yonder moon dim-glimmering thro' the dewy window-pane, I seem rather to be seeking, as it were asking, a symbolical language for something within me that already and forever exists, than observing anything new.⁷¹

⁶⁶ Journal for Sept. 16 & 17, 1798, Berg collection, New York Public Library.

⁶⁷ Although Imlay remained anonymous in Wollstonecraft's public letters, he probably would have felt singled out in her attacks on businessmen: "A man ceases to love humanity, and then individuals, as he advances in the chase after wealth [...] to business, as it is termed, every thing must give way; nay, is sacrificed; and all the endearing charities of citizen, husband, father, brother become empty names," *A Short Residence*, *op. cit.*, p. 190). She was more straightforward in her private letters: "you are embruted by trade and the vulgar enjoyments of life," *The Collected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft*, *op. cit.*, p. 264.

⁶⁸ Mary Wollstonecraft, *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark*, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

⁷⁰ Ingrid Horrocks, *Women Wanderers and the Writing of Mobility*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 152.

⁷¹ NB2, 2546.