

Magdalena OŹARSKA

### **Dorothy Wordsworth as Travel Writer: The 1798 *Hamburgh Journal***

The *Journal of a Visit to Hamburgh and of the Journey from Hamburgh to Goslar* (known under the joint title of *The Hamburgh Journal*) was written in 1798 by Dorothy Wordsworth, sister to Romantic poet William Wordsworth.<sup>1</sup> My interest is in the ways in which the feminine affects the writer's perception of a foreign community and emotional expression of experiences related thereto, contributing to a feminine modification of 18th-century travel writing standards.

Before embarking on a discussion of the text itself, it would seem helpful to offer a concise definition of travel literature. In brief, “*the genre subsumes works of exploration and adventure as well as guides and accounts of sojourns in foreign lands*”,<sup>2</sup> so Dorothy Wordsworth's text clearly falls into the category.<sup>3</sup> In his seminal study, Batten draws attention to several important points concerning eighteenth-century travel narrative conventions. First and foremost, Batten tells us, the neoclassical travel account was expected to be impersonal, and preferably modelled upon Joseph Addison's 1705 *Remarks on Italy*. Addison's text defined the convention for several decades to come, and even domestic tour writers, including Daniel Defoe and his 1724-1726 *Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, imitated his impersonal and factual depictions. The traveller's task was tough as

---

<sup>1</sup> See Dorothy WORDSWORTH, *Journal of Visit to Hamburgh and of Journey from Hamburgh to Goslar*, in: *The Dorothy Wordsworth: Continental Journals*. With a New Introduction by Helen Boden, Bristol 1995, pp. 19-34.

<sup>2</sup> John Anthony CUDDON, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, London 1991, p. 995.

<sup>3</sup> However, according to Elizabeth A. BOHLS – Ian DUNCAN (eds.), *Travel Writing 1700-1830: An Anthology*, Oxford 2005, there are several problems with defining the genre: “*We think of it as having a narrative core, the story of a journey, yet eighteenth-century travel writing often includes as much impersonal description as first-person narration*” (p. xx). Another problem is the writers' including elements of fiction and untruth, which in turn prohibits viewing travel writing as documentary and non-fictional (p. xxi). All these aspects have contributed to frequent inscription of travel narratives as “*overtly autobiographical forms of journals, diaries, or letters*” (p. xxiv). Popular in its day, travel writing was read and appreciated by “*all class of readers*” (p. xxvii) and its influence on literature and general culture is not to be underestimated.

s/he had to prove that s/he had seen the places described but that had to be accomplished in an impersonal manner. Needless to say, discussion of practicalities such as food, lodgings or prices was to be avoided as inelegant. It was in 1779, as George Parks has it, that “*the new mode for including emotional passages in accounts of journeys in Europe was fully accepted*”<sup>4</sup>, and the hitherto binding standards gradually began to abate. It was not until the 19th century that anecdotes enlivening matter-of-fact reports were encouraged or appreciated. In general, having a plot to follow was not laudable, either, as it appeared to detract from the documentary function of the texts at issue. So did a chatty or colloquial narrative tone. In contrast, the use of a humble, unadorned style was taken to be proof of the writer's credibility.<sup>5</sup> Today, this sort of “*formal realism*” (to use a term of Ian Watt's) seems unnecessary. Małgorzata Czermińska, a Polish authority on life writing, discusses travel journals as documentary literature,<sup>6</sup> and distinguishes between two diaristic approaches: the extravert – with its figure of the narrator as witness, at times a reporter; and the introvert, characterised by the external world constituting but a springboard to the narrator's exploration of their inner world.<sup>7</sup>

By the end of the 18th century, when Arthur Young discussed two popular modes of travel writing, namely diaries and letters, he voiced the opinion that journals are the more credible (i.e. more readily verifiable) of the two. He claimed that if a traveller had only very superficial observations, the reader would recognise this,<sup>8</sup> thus stressing the need for truly informative reports of individual travel experience,<sup>9</sup> and especially so in the case of women writers-travellers. Travelling was, as recent researchers invariably point out, a gendered experience. It is of course true that “*the dominant tradition in travel was ... palpably masculine ... and [that] the first explorers often refused to take women on board because they were believed to bring bad luck and to distract the men from their task. Bourgeois culture evolved the home as the temple of femininity*”.<sup>10</sup> While men could flâneur at will, women had to take the precautions of male “protection” if they meant to venture into public space.<sup>11</sup> No wonder, then, that writing women travellers had to

---

<sup>4</sup> George B. PARKS, *The Turn to the Romantic in the Travel Literature of the Eighteenth Century*, in: *Modern Language Quarterly*, Vol. XXV, No. 1, 1964, pp. 22-33, here p. 32.

<sup>5</sup> Charles L. BATTEN Jr., *Pleasurable Instruction: Form and Convention in Eighteenth-Century Travel Literature*, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London 1978, pp. 12-63.

<sup>6</sup> Małgorzata CZERMIŃSKA, *Autobiografia i powieść czyli pisarz i jego postacie* [Autobiography and Novel, or Novelists and Their Characters], Gdańsk 1987, pp. 10-11.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 18.

<sup>8</sup> Ch. L. BATTEN Jr., *Pleasurable Instruction*, pp. 15-33.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 76.

<sup>10</sup> Chris ROJEK – John URRY (eds.), *Touring Cultures: Transformations of Travel and Theory*, London – New York 1997, p. 16.

<sup>11</sup> See *ibidem*, p. 16; James BUZARD, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to 'Culture' 1800-1918*, Oxford 1993, pp. 58, 149; Deborah Epstein NORD, *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation, and the City*, Ithaca – London 1995; Jane MOORE, *Plagiarism with a Difference: Subjectivity in 'Kubla Khan' and 'Letters Written during a Short*

approach their narratives in ways which suited their needs and interests. Advocates of *écriture féminine* would claim that this has to do with the sexual difference which necessarily translates into a separate language and manner of perception of the world. If that view is accepted, John Barrell is right in verbalising the male assumption that women's language was “*relatively concrete and pictogrammatic as compared with that of educated men*”.<sup>12</sup>

Notwithstanding the prevalent eighteenth-century atmosphere surrounding female writing practices, which was hardly conducive to sustained literary effort, with women typically assuming apologetic stances to promote their literary activities,<sup>13</sup> female writers were not immune to the overwhelming tendency of the age towards the production of travel accounts. This travel writing urge was not overtly ridiculed until 1826, when Anna Jameson had her mocking *Diary of an Ennuyée* published, and in the meantime the general view was that “*the Continental tour [was] an affair of 'writing' more than of 'reality'*”.<sup>14</sup> Those “*anti-tourists*” (Buzard's notion) were rebuked for travelling solely for the purpose of producing their memoirs.<sup>15</sup> As for women turning out such accounts, the criticism seems even more justifiable since, if – as Mary Poovey claims – eighteenth-century “*proper ladies*” were supposed to manifest their modesty through keeping quiet in company (cf. Tillie Olsen's notion of unnatural female “*silences*”),<sup>16</sup> they found a respectable way of compensating for that silence – through the use of ink and paper (with no intention of publication, of course, if their respectability be preserved, just what the age termed “*amusement*” for a close-knit group of family friends).<sup>17</sup> It was still way before the very first phase of feminism, which Showalter refers to as “*the feminine*”, dating it to the 1840s: the time when “*women wrote in an effort to equal the intellectual achievements of the male culture*”.<sup>18</sup>

Dorothy Wordsworth's travel writings readily lend themselves to a discussion from a gender-based perspective with a view to demonstrating that they are, first and foremost, women-centred and women-oriented. This example of *écriture fé-*

---

*Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark*', in: *Beyond Romanticisms: New Approaches to Texts and Contexts 1780-1832*, eds. S. Copley and J. Whale, London – New York 1992, p. 146.

This situation was to last well into the 1860s, which is when Thomas Cook and his organised tours company were at pains to provide adequate chaperoning to lady travellers and did so successfully, as can be testified to by several letters of thanks sent by satisfied lady customers. See J. BUZARD, *The Beaten Track*, p. 149.

<sup>12</sup> Qtd. in Jacqueline M. LABBE, *Romantic Visualities: Landscape, Gender and Romanticism*, London 1998, p. 12.

<sup>13</sup> Sandra M. GILBERT – Susan GUBAR, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, New Haven – London 1980, p. 63.

<sup>14</sup> J. BUZARD, *The Beaten Track*, p. 156.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 158.

<sup>16</sup> Tillie OLSEN, *Silences*, New York 1978.

<sup>17</sup> Mary POOVEY, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen*, Chicago – London 1985, p. 41.

<sup>18</sup> Elaine SHOWALTER, *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory*, New York 1985, p. 137.

*minine*<sup>19</sup> is of interest not only for its informative value, but also for the cultural constructs which it communicates. Significantly, this travel journal of Wordsworth's was not written for publication, unlike for instance her later travelogues. The *Hamburgh Journal* is very short, contained within barely fifteen pages.

The *Hamburgh Journal* begins with a matter-of-fact piece of information: "Quitted London, Friday, 14th September 1798".<sup>20</sup> To quote Czermińska again, the autobiographical stance as inscribed in life writing requires the reader to possess at least a minimum of extra-text knowledge of the author's life.<sup>21</sup> By way of explanation, Dorothy Wordsworth's Hamburg trip itself was, in a sense, occasioned by social displacement at home. The Wordsworths' lease of their Alfoxden home was abruptly coming to an end after the landlord had discovered their "generally bohemian existence" and the locals conceived the idea that they were "dangerous radicals".<sup>22</sup> Having found themselves temporarily homeless, they moved in with their fellow poet, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who suffered from poor health and growing opium addiction, so William Wordsworth thought that a trip to Germany together would alleviate the situation. It was Dorothy's first ever trip abroad, and critics tend to accentuate the "xenophobic narrowness" of an inexperienced traveller,<sup>23</sup> harking back to earlier eighteenth-century models. Bohls, in turn, euphemistically draws attention to the fact that Dorothy's reputation as a diarist does not rest mainly on the *Hamburgh Journal*.<sup>24</sup> Yet the text is interesting as a record of a travel experience from a woman already familiar with journalising (she had by then produced her now famous *Alfoxden Journal*).

Unlike texts by her predecessor, Mary Wollstonecraft, Dorothy Wordsworth's travelogue is no rewriting of "her personal story ... into a commentary on modern European society".<sup>25</sup> Displaced from the very start of her German trip, Dorothy and her brother are subject to social exclusion wherever they arrive. It is symptomatic that the diarist omits to hint at their isolation even once over the span of the entire journal, as if in an attempt to pretend that the problem does not bother the carefree travellers. Instead, Wordsworth's plainly extravert narrator sticks to describing the places visited and the people met or observed, women in particular. The majority of the people the Wordsworths meet, significantly, are not members of their own social class or local authorities (unlike Mary Wollstonecraft), but

---

<sup>19</sup> I use this term in a wider context to signify the female difference in general and not simply its biological inscription.

<sup>20</sup> D. WORDSWORTH, *Journal of Visit to Hamburgh*, p. 19.

<sup>21</sup> M. CZERMIŃSKA, *Autobiografia i powieść czyli pisarz i jego postacie*, p. 14.

<sup>22</sup> Michael POLOWETZKY, *Prominent Sisters: Mary Lamb, Dorothy Wordsworth, and Sarah Disraeli*, Westport – Connecticut – London 1996, p. 61.

<sup>23</sup> *The Dorothy Wordsworth: Continental Journals. With a New Introduction by Helen Boden*, Bristol 1995, p. viii.

<sup>24</sup> Elizabeth A. BOHLS, *Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics, 1716-1818*, Cambridge 2004, pp. 170-200.

<sup>25</sup> Mary A. FAVRET, *Romantic Correspondence: Women, Politics & the Fiction of Letters*, Cambridge 2004, p. 118.

lower-class characters, of the same rank as those Dorothy immortalizes in her *Grasmere* and *Alfoxden Journals*: the poor, the labouring and beggars. There are hardly any records of teas, walks with, or meetings with neighbours and acquaintances of the Wordsworths' own status.

Apart from a couple of mentions of an obscure Monsr. De Loutre, a painter the Wordsworths met at a German inn, the only other exception is found in an entry devoted to having dinner with “*Mr Klopstock, the merchant*” and a chance meeting with his brother, Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, the celebrated but aged German poet. Like a chatty housewife next door, Dorothy dwells on the looks of Klopstock's second wife, who comes across as attractive but unfriendly, and the bad teeth of the entire family.<sup>26</sup> She also catalogues the dishes served: “*soup 1st, 2nd, stewed veal without vegetables, 3rd sausages with cabbage, 4th oysters with spinach, 5th fowls with sallad and currant jelly, dessert – grapes, biscuits, pears, plumbs, walnuts; afterwards coffee*”.<sup>27</sup> As for the intellectual feast provided by the company of the famous poet, she barely notes that “*he sustained an animated conversation with William during the whole afternoon*” only to follow with an exclamation of “*Poor old man! I could not look upon him, the benefactor of his country, the father of German poetry, without the most sensible emotion*”,<sup>28</sup> which puts an end to her effusions on the subject. The narrator soon becomes engrossed with one of her notorious complaints, “*a bad headache*”,<sup>29</sup> which some critics have interpreted as a possible circumlocution for menstruation.<sup>30</sup> A very indecorous statement in itself, even if it concerns but ordinary migraine, as any references to bodily complaints were taboo in those days.<sup>31</sup>

As stated above, to avoid the frustrating subjects of social class and sociability in general, Dorothy compensates by detailed presentations of scenes from local life, landscape shots, foreign manners, shopping problems, standards of cleanliness, fashions and eating, in a manner typical of other female travel writers of her age. It is interesting that in this respect, Dorothy goes against a dictum of her famous brother who in his *Guide to the Lakes* dismissed the temptation of “*enter[ing] into every particular ... [as] an endless labour*”<sup>32</sup> which as Labbe remarks, “*would be, in fact, to participate in the feminine world of the detail*”.<sup>33</sup> The “*feminine world of detail*” is a housewife's, and not a leisured lady's, world. The details listed include images of women with special focus on their headgear (which seems to be a fetish with Dorothy Wordsworth in her *Continental Journals* as well): “*There was an old*

---

<sup>26</sup> D. WORDSWORTH, *Journal of Visit to Hamburg*, p. 24.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 25.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 25.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 25.

<sup>30</sup> Alan LIU, *On the Autobiographical Present: Dorothy Wordsworth's Grasmere Journals*, in: *Criticism*, Vol. 26, No. 2, 1984, pp. 115-137, here p. 133.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. M. POOVEY, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer*.

<sup>32</sup> Qtd. in J. M. LABBE, *Romantic Visualities*, p. 40.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 40.

woman, with a blue cap trimmed with broad silver lace, and tied under her chin”; “there were Dutch women with immense straw bonnets, with flat crowns and rims in the shape of oyster shells, without trimming ... . Hamburger girls with white caps ... . Hanoverians with round borders ... . Fruit women with large straw hats in the shape of an inverted bowl... . The ladies without hats, in dresses of all fashions”.<sup>34</sup> All these are catalogued as she kills the time while guarding their luggage and waiting for William who takes an hour to procure lodgings for the travelling party. A walk to their rooms takes the travellers “through narrow dirty, ill-paved stinking streets”, and on entering the inn she finds herself beset by “filth and filthy smells”.<sup>35</sup> On the next day, however, she softens the edge of her previous criticism by saying that “notwithstanding the dirt of their houses, ... the lower orders of women seemed in general much cleaner in their persons than the same rank in England”.<sup>36</sup> In the Klopstock entry, having said that she went to bed with a headache at nine o'clock, in the next sentence, with no logical connection to the previous, she mentions not having seen street rows or drunkards in the course of her fortnight in Hamburg.<sup>37</sup> Yet two days later, on September 28, she contradicts her previous impression with the following account: “Yesterday saw a man of about fifty years of age beating a woman decently dressed and about 37 years of age. He struck her on the breast several times, and beat her also with his stick. The expressions in her face and attitude were half of anger and half of a spirit of resistance. What her offence was we could not learn. It was in the public street”.<sup>38</sup>

Rosemary Sweet tells us that “we should remember also that travellers carried with them a number of preconceptions about what they would see. Altogether, there are not many things which would stand a comparison with Wordsworth's home country. A servant appears to her more familiar than an English servant”.<sup>39</sup> Problems with dishonest shopkeepers occupy a significant portion of her journal entries. We learn about her being cheated when giving the baker two shillings and receiving two rolls of bread instead of four in return, and – when claiming her other two rolls or one shilling back – being treated so rudely<sup>40</sup> that she had no alternative but to quit the shop. She repeatedly complains of high prices offered to travellers, and poor quality of food served at dinners: “bad cucumbers pickled without vinegar”<sup>41</sup> in the German fashion, or “having old bread” and “butter not fresh”.<sup>42</sup> Sev-

---

<sup>34</sup> D. WORDSWORTH, *Journal of Visit to Hamburg*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 21.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 22.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 25.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 27.

<sup>39</sup> Rosemary SWEET, *Cities of the Grand Tour: Changing Perceptions of Italian Cities in the long Eighteenth Century*, 2009. URL: < <http://www.grandtour.amdigital.co.uk/Essays/Content/rosemarysweet.aspx> > [acc. 16. 8. 2009].

<sup>40</sup> Her phrase is “in a savage manner”. See D. WORDSWORTH, *Journal of Visit to Hamburg*, p. 27.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 21.

eral times does the narrator tell her reader about the Germans' pride in cheating the tourists, and their avarice. "*A miserable supper and breakfast 3 marks*"<sup>43</sup> is one of the milder comments on the issue. At another point, she notes, "*I am informed that it is the boast and glory of these people to cheat strangers, that when a feat of this kind is successfully performed the man goes from the shop into his house, and triumphantly relates it to his wife and family*",<sup>44</sup> and the fact that the only "*honest shopkeeper*" she met was "*a Jewess*".<sup>45</sup> Dorothy's housewifely narrator just loves filling her pages with prices of groceries and services: "*chickens 6d. or 7d. apiece, a small carp two marks. ... Beef 4d. or 5d. a pound, mutton 4d. or 5d., veal 8d., Butter 10d., eggs a halfpenny each, a turkey 6 marks, a goose 3 marks, coffee 1/8d. a pound, tea 6/- or 8/-. Sugar, fine, 1/8d, candles 6d., soap 6d*".<sup>46</sup> A porter's services are found to be outrageously expensive, even though William is willing to pay "*more than a London porter would have expected*".<sup>47</sup> On one occasion, Coleridge has "*a violent contest with the postilion who insisted upon his paying 20d. a mile for each horse, instead of a mark the established fare*".<sup>48</sup>

When on a short trip out of town, Dorothy remarks the "*excessive neatness*" of village houses, with "*window curtains as white as snow*" and "*the floors ... perfectly clean*",<sup>49</sup> but upon entering one of those pretty houses to ask for some drinking water, the travellers are politely turned out and told to go on to find some. They take the advice but no water materialises. On a more shocking note, in Altona, the diarist is scandalized with the sight of a female eight-year-old who "*took up her petticoats in full view of the crowd and upon the green where people walk, and sat undisturbed till she had finished her business*",<sup>50</sup> and the bad smells resulting from this popular practice. These are all observations typical not of a Romantic sublime-landscape-hunting traveller, but of a common housewife: even on holiday habitually preoccupied with the prices of groceries and other down-to-earth practicalities. Similarly, the landscape descriptions Dorothy Wordsworth feeds into her diary revolve around the impressions of cleanliness or lack of it, and – at best – ordinary

---

<sup>42</sup> Ibidem, p. 28. Mary Wollstonecraft, in a similar vein, complained about Danes who "*impose on strangers*" their exorbitant prices. See MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT, *A Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark* and WILLIAM GODWIN, *Memoirs of the Author of 'The Rights of Woman'*, ed. Richard Holmes, London 1987, p. 162.

<sup>43</sup> D. WORDSWORTH, *Journal of Visit to Hamburg*, p. 24.

<sup>44</sup> Ibidem, p. 27.

<sup>45</sup> Ibidem, p. 26.

<sup>46</sup> Ibidem, p. 22.

<sup>47</sup> Ibidem, p. 28.

<sup>48</sup> Ibidem, p. 28. Interestingly, Wollstonecraft also made a note on postillions and their prices: "*The expence ... does not amount to more than a shilling the Swedish mile*", a Swedish mile being almost six English miles. See M. WOLLSTONECRAFT, *A Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark*, p. 86.

<sup>49</sup> D. WORDSWORTH, *Journal of Visit to Hamburg*, p. 30.

<sup>50</sup> Ibidem, p. 31.

notion of prettiness. Nothing grand, sublime – or plainly indescribable – happens to arrest the narrator's attention during this trip.<sup>51</sup>

Suffice it to contrast Dorothy Wordsworth's attitude with Mary Wollstonecraft's, succinctly expressed in *Scandinavian Letter Five* (1795): “*Travellers who require that every nation should resemble their native country, had better stay at home. It is, for example, absurd to blame a people for not having that degree of personal cleanliness and elegance of manners which only refinement of taste produces, and will produce everywhere in proportion as society attains a general polish. The most essential service, I presume, that authors could render to society, would be to promote inquiry and discussion, instead of making those dogmatical assertions which only appear calculated to grid the human mind round with imaginary circles, like the paper globe which represents the one he inhabits.*”<sup>52</sup>

One could say, after Susan M. Levin, that “*in her earliest German journal Dorothy Wordsworth appears as a fairly conventional tourist, comparing the shops, houses, and food of foreign cities to those of her own country*”<sup>53</sup> and dismiss “*the domestic concerns that are a distinguishing quality of Dorothy's travel writing*” as merely symptomatic of “*the feminine origins of the work*”.<sup>54</sup> Yet Dorothy as a narrator of a travel journal is not that typical: she fails to mention any sights whatsoever, or make any general observations about the customs of German people, concentrating instead on isolated incidents witnessed, whether in the streets or while dealing with individuals in a variety of matters. Her *Hamburgh Journal* lacks a wider perspective. We learn that they travel, but there seems to be no purpose to that; we learn how much a breakfast costs, but no information follows as to what is done after the meal is finished; as for descriptions, we get occasional statements of general nature, such as “*The country becomes occasionally rather interesting for its strangeness*”,<sup>55</sup> followed by a reference to barren land, woods and few cattle, the description being thus exhausted. Nature abroad does not seem to command much interest or involvement for Dorothy the narrator. Perhaps her expectations were not so much related to the sights to be seen but the natural beauty to be experienced. Hence, when that is found lacking, the whole journal fails in its basic function and has to be filled with petty notes on food prices and hats instead. In a sense, although the narrator comes across as an extravert and reports on what she sees around as the trip progresses, the initial assumption she communicates between the lines is somewhat different: it is to be an inward journey into the past, undisturbed by intense experiences. When they travel by the river Elbe, she almost enjoys “*the gentle breeze an the gentle motion!*”<sup>56</sup>, and when tea is served onboard, by moon-

---

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Margaret HOMANS, *Women Writers and Poetic Identity: Dorothy Wordsworth, Emily Brontë, and Emily Dickinson*, Princeton, New Jersey 1980, p. 40.

<sup>52</sup> M. WOLLSTONECRAFT, *A Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark*, p. 93.

<sup>53</sup> Susan M. LEVIN, *Dorothy Wordsworth and Romanticism*, New Brunswick – London 1987, p. 74.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 80.

<sup>55</sup> D. WORDSWORTH, *Journal of Visit to Hamburgh*, p. 33.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 19.



light, she says, “*I enjoyed solitude and quietness, and many a recollected pleasure*”.<sup>57</sup> Pleasures, then, belong to the past, and the present is not to be searched for intense aesthetic or interpersonal experiences: a mere hint at the diarist's dissatisfaction with her present journey. Instead, it is enough to concentrate on the past in order not to have to face the unpleasant reality. “*The many tongues that gabbled in the cabin*”<sup>58</sup> are sufficient to disturb the self-complacency of the narrator as they seem to remind her of the trip itself which does not promise much pleasure.

With her eye for insignificant detail and colloquial tone, the narrator makes a clear departure from male-instituted travel-writing rules. Yet *The Hamburg Journal* does focus on subjects of interest to women: their status, appearances, households, habits and local fashions. Dorothy Wordsworth the traveller is a spirited and indefatigable observer and recorder of foreign lifestyles and manners, as much as they pertain to females and other underprivileged individuals. In her travel account, mentions of food, drink, general household management, prices of victuals, dealings with servants, accommodation standards, and cleanliness or lack of it, abound. Naturally, references like these can be expected to appeal principally to women readers, and it is unlikely that the author – if she did ever look ahead to publication – was not aware of that. Some critics, however, perceive it as a degradation of Dorothy Wordsworth's artistic powers: “*what she sees in Germany makes her appear provincial and narrow-minded, which of course Dorothy was. In her Grasmere Journal she would write about home as no one she had read had done before, imbuing the domestic with a sense of the sublime, but away from home Dorothy's journals were the work of the middle-class evangelical she had been raised to be*”.<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 19.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 19.

<sup>59</sup> Frances WILSON, *The Ballad of Dorothy Wordsworth*, London 2009, p. 91.