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Experiments in Travel Writing and Romantic Constructions of Place: Ann Radcliffe's 1795 Account of Continental Europe and the English Lake District

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ABSTRACT

In 1794 Ann Radcliffe made a trip to Continental Europe with her husband in order to visit the Swiss Alps and other landscapes which had featured in her popular Gothic novels, but which she had not yet seen in person. However, the couple found themselves turned back at the Swiss border due to a bureaucratic error. This frustration in achieving their main purpose, combined with anxieties relating to the war in Europe, resulted in husband and wife returning to England and setting out on an alternative tour of the English Lake District—a region which had been described as a "miniature" version of the Alps. Radcliffe kept a journal during her travels and published an account of this two-part touring experience the following year. This paper explores the innovative and experimental nature of Radcliffe's travel writing within this text, and considers how the experiences in Continental Europe inform and shape her subsequent reading of the English Lake District. It argues that her Rousseauian vision of an imagined but never experienced Switzerland, comes to be displaced onto the Lake District and that in this, as well as in other respects, Radcliffe offers an innovative and influential textual construction of that landscape.

In May 1794, Ann Radcliffe set off on a tour of the Continent with her husband to visit the sorts of landscapes which had featured in her fiction but which she had not yet seen in person. She was at the height of her fame, having already published three of her most successful novels: *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). The following year she published an account of the tour as *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794, through Holland and the Western Frontier of Germany, with a Return Down the Rhine: To Which Are Added Observations during a Tour to the Lakes of Lancashire, Westmoreland, and Cumberland*. Some sections of Radcliffe's tour have already generated a great deal of critical interest in relation to Romantic constructions of place, but other aspects of this text's contribution to the development of travel writing in the 1790s continue to be

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downplayed.[1] In what follows, I argue that *Journey* is, in many ways, an experimental piece of travel writing, which makes an important contribution to the evolution of ideas about both the Continent and the English Lake District during the period in which both regions were opening up as sites of aesthetic and cultural significance.

Radcliffe and Continental travel writing of the 1790s

Radcliffe and her husband sailed from Harwich to Helvoetsluys, spending some time sight-seeing in Holland before traveling into Germany. Radcliffe's account of this trip would be her first piece of travel writing and in it she shifts between a surprisingly varied range of discourses and approaches, including war reportage, socio-economic and cultural observation, as well as various kinds of landscape description. This range is suggestive of the fact that Radcliffe was testing out approaches to travel writing and exploring ways of conveying the new sights, cultures, and social contexts she was encountering. Moreover, rather than merely being presented with picturesque views or celebrated features of the Grand Tour, we are taken on a much more immersive and experiential textual journey. From the moment she sets foot on Dutch soil, we are invited to share in all that Radcliffe experiences: the sights, smells, costumes, gardens, domestic and official buildings, costs, and modes of travel. Radcliffe clearly recognized that, in taking this approach, she was going against the grain of fashionable travel writing in the period. Having described in detail the narrow streets, smells, and wretched inhabitants of Cologne, Radcliffe pauses to defend her own much more realist approach, noting that "it is not only because they take away something from the dignity of writing, that such observations" are often withheld but also because:

> A man, relating part of the history of his life … does not choose to shew that his course could lie through any scenes deficient of delights; or that, if it did, he was not enough elevated by his friends, importance, fortune, fame, or business, to be incapable of observing them minutely. The curiosities of cabinets and of courts are, therefore, exactly described, and as much of every occurrence as does not shew the relater moving in any of the plainer walks of life. (*Journey* 104)

Radcliffe could be talking about what is sometimes referred to now in social media as "impression management" when she observes that a "writer, issuing into the world, makes up what he mistakes for his best appearance, and is continually telling his happiness, or shewing his good-humour, as people in a promenade always smile, and always look round to observe whether they are seen smiling" (104). In a critique of the limitations of such an approach to travel writing, Radcliffe goes on to argue that:

> the difference between the stock of physical comforts in different countries, the character of conditions, if the phrase may be used, such as it appears in the ordinary circumstances of residence, dress, food, cleanliness, opportunities of relaxation; in short, the information, which all may gain, is sometimes left to be gained by all, not from the book, but from travel. (104)

Radcliffe is not only critiquing the dominant vogue for travel writing here but also suggesting that her own approach, with its emphasis on ordinary lives and details, has the possibility of transmitting to the reader a more dynamic lived experience of the countries described, almost replicating the first-hand experience of travel.

In many respects, Radcliffe's approach to documenting her experience, and especially the section detailing her travels in Germany, prefigures subsequent contemporary accounts by Mary Wollstonecraft and Dorothy Wordsworth, which have themselves been identified as bringing a new approach to travel writing. In the autumn of 1798, some four years after Radcliffe's trip, Dorothy Wordsworth visited Germany with her brother William and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. In identifying influences on Dorothy's unusual style of travel writing in her journal account of the first four weeks of the tour, critics have tended to point to Mary Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark* (1796). Lucy Newlyn, for example, describes *Letters* as a "popular travel book during the 1790s" and suggests that Dorothy's journal is "modelled on the public epistolary style of Wollstonecraft's travel writing" (75). She adds that "Dorothy's style, like Wollstonecraft's alternates between judicious reportage and atmospheric description," noting that Wordsworth "shows an interest in German fashions, the furnishing of rooms, and family habits. Observing details of dress, hygiene and conduct, she sometimes achieves a tone of dispassionate objectivity reminiscent of Wollstonecraft" (75). However, the elements identified in Wordsworth's and Wollstonecraft's work by Newlyn can also be found in Radcliffe's earlier, and also very popular, travel book.

Moreover, at times the imagery used by Radcliffe is echoed not only by Dorothy Wordsworth but also by Coleridge, in ways which make it tempting to suggest that both had read *Journey* before making their own extended visit to Germany—a country which Wollstonecraft in fact only passed through briefly on her return journey. There are many localized examples of such echoes, one of which relates to observations regarding clothes; Radcliffe's description of Dutch costume includes discussion of a type of headgear, sometimes called a "German cap":

> Further on, several women were collected about their baskets of herbs … they had hats of the size of a small chinese umbrella … ; and caps, that exactly fitted the head and concealed the hair, but which were ornamented at the temples by gold filigree clasps, twirling like vine tendrils, over the cheeks of the wearer. (*Journey* 3)

In her 1798 journal Dorothy Wordsworth also describes the headgear worn by the women in detail and, like Radcliffe, uses the umbrella metaphor to convey its size:

> There were Dutch women with immense straw bonnets, with flat crowns and rims in the shape of oyster shells, without trimming, or with only a plain riband round the crown, and literally as large as a small-sized umbrella. Hamburgher girls with white caps, with broad overhanging borders, crimped and stiff, and long lappets of riband. (Knight 23)

Coleridge also picks up on the umbrella metaphor, describing "Dutch women with large umbrella Hats shooting out half a yard before them" and "*tailed* with a monstrous quantity of Ribbon" (Griggs 258). On one level the umbrella comparison is perhaps an obvious one. However, the tone and style of Wordsworth's passage also seems to share similarities with that of Radcliffe. While Coleridge's treatment of the women's apparel is satiric and played for comic effect, Wordsworth echoes Radcliffe in her careful recording of the details of costume, using a range of metaphors and similes to try to convey the visual effect in language. While lines of influence can be notoriously difficult to trace, it seems unlikely that Wordsworth and Coleridge would not have read a recent and extremely popular account of Germany before embarking on their

own extended visit to the country. Even if it is not possible firmly to establish Radcliffe as a direct line of influence on Wordsworth or Wollstonecraft, at the very least, it is worth noting that this section of Radcliffe's tour displays an approach to travel writing which is remarkably similar in some respects to the later work of these other female travelers.

Journeying through a "theatre of war"

One of the key features of Radcliffe's tour, which would be repeated in several subsequent accounts of Germany in the 1790s, is a deeply negative account of the poverty and poor living conditions in many German cities. Though there is clearly some personal disgust in evidence in Radcliffe's account of the "dirty" houses and "wretched" conditions, it is important to recognize that Radcliffe was journeying through what she describes as a "theatre of war" and her reading of Germany is to a large extent shaped by the devastating impact of the allied war against Revolutionary France (*Journey* 92; 186). Much of the material in this first section of the tour in fact constitutes what we might now think of as war correspondence, offering, as it does, accounts of recent conflict gleaned from witnesses as well as first-hand observations from the war zone of the resulting poverty, architectural ruin, and injured soldiers. Crucially, what emerges from this is not an anti-Jacobin tract but rather a nuanced account of the impact of war on the countries involved, as well as a deeply ambivalent stance on the allied campaign against France.

The extended section dealing with the siege of Mainz offers the most detailed example of Radcliffe's war correspondence.[2] From mid-April to late July 1793 the allied forces, made up of a coalition of Austria, Prussia, and other German states, had besieged Mainz and captured it from revolutionary French forces. Arriving in the city one year on, the Radcliffes are taken on a tour of the "melancholy curiosities, left in the city by the siege" (182). These include six churches in ruins, "seven mansions of the nobility" burned, and barely a house escaped without damage (216). Radcliffe goes on to note that between the Castle and the district of Kostheim, "not a tree was to be seen … and the country was so much disfigured, that the proprietors of lands had some difficulty to ascertain their boundaries" (216). The remains of a "magnificent church" are identified as one of the most "lamentable spectacles":

> what was the roof now lies in heaps over the pavement; not a vestige of furniture, or decoration, has escaped the flames … This church and convent were set on fire by a bomb; and of the sick soldiers, who were lodged in the latter, it is feared that but few were removed before the destruction of the building. (182)

Both the architectural damage and repeated references to human suffering, which are direct results of the siege, make for a very ambivalent reading of the actions of the allied forces. Though the siege resulted in the surrender of the French republican army in Mainz, the tone is far from celebratory and in places suggests a condemnation of allied actions:

> The church of Notre Dame was the most conspicuous of many ruined objects. The steeple of this had been one of the grandest ornaments of the city; a shower of bombs set fire to it; and, while it was thus rendered an easy mark for the besiegers, their cannon played upon it and beat a great part of it to the ground. (183)

The emotive language deployed here (including references to a "shower of bombs" and the burning steeple being an "easy mark") is suggestive of an act of wanton destruction. At times this reading becomes more explicit, as in the account of a palace which was burnt "two nights after the French had removed their head quarters and municipality from it" (183).

As well as taking her reader on a tour of the ruins of Mainz, Radcliffe also inserts a 29-page account of the "history of the place from the first invasion of the French to their departure" (187), a narrative which she says has been derived from a German pamphlet as well as information provided by friends who were first-hand witnesses to the events. It is an extensive aside, and the space given over to the plight of Germany emphasizes the importance Radcliffe placed on providing a more detailed understanding of the recent war for her English readers. This impulse was no doubt partly influenced by the presence of Radcliffe's journalist husband, William, who was editor of the *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, a campaigning newspaper that "celebrated the French Revolution, freedom of the press, and Dissenter's rights" (Groom xi). Ingrid Kuczynski suggests that Radcliffe's primary approach to Germany is "almost exclusively visual" and predicated on her interest in reading its scenery "according to the aesthetic ideas of the beautiful and the picturesque" (244), but in fact almost one quarter of the outbound German section of the tour is given over to an account of the recent siege of Mainz and its consequences.

While Radcliffe's journey through a "theatre of war" comes to dominate this section, her main objective is nonetheless to reach the Swiss Alps, and she records her excitement at finally perceiving them at a distance:

> what was our emotion, when, from an eminence, we discovered the pointed summits of what we believed to be the Swiss mountains themselves … This glimpse of a country of all others in Europe the most astonishing and grand, awakened a thousand interesting recollections and delightful expectations. (273)

This was to be Radcliffe's first experience of the sort of landscapes which play such a prominent role in her fiction, and indeed the description here echoes that of the heroine, Adeline, in *The Romance of the Forest,* published four years earlier. When Adeline first catches a glimpse of "the distant alps, whose majestic heads, [seem] to prop the vault of heaven," she finds that her mind is filled with "sublime emotions" (*Romance* 235). It is the thwarting of Radcliffe's desire to achieve the fulfillment of her own imagined tourist experience which brings about a radical shift in perspectives and tone, and which has important implications for the treatment of place in the remainder of the tour.

On reaching the Austrian garrison at the Swiss border, where officials controlled the passage of travelers into Switzerland, the Radcliffes find their journey halted due to an error in the marking of their passports. Radcliffe's hostility toward the Austrian Lieutenant who refuses to listen to their entreaties is palpable: "The malignity, or ignorance of one of these, called the Lieutenant de Place, prevented us from reaching [Switzerland], after a journey of more than six hundred miles; a disappointment which no person could endure without severe regret" (*Journey* 275). This anger soon turns into anxiety as Radcliffe begins to perceive a "malignant obstinacy" in the

Lieutenant's refusal to abandon his earlier suspicions even when evidence is brought forward to support their case. She writes that he left us with:

> notice that we could not quit the town without receiving the Commandant's permission by his means; and it was with some terror, that we perceived ourselves to be so much in his power, in a place where there was a pretext for military authority, and where the least expression of just indignation seemed to provoke a disposition for further injustice. (276–77)

Just as Radcliffe's imagined encounter with the Swiss Alps echoes that of one of her heroines, so the encounter with the Lieutenant comes to be read through these fictional perspectives; as Kuczynski suggests, the experience is depicted as a "climatic confrontation with a malignant Gothic villain" (243). When it is proposed that they could remain in the town to await a further letter from Mainz which would confirm their validity as travelers, Radcliffe turns again to the language usually reserved for the sufferings of her Gothic heroines, observing that "imagination suggested all the possible horrors of oppression during that period" (*Journey* 277). Rather than await such a letter, the Radcliffes decide to turn back, and this becomes a hinge moment in the text. In a key passage, Radcliffe once more affirms what had been her "delightful expectations" of Switzerland, but indicates that henceforth these desires will be projected onto the shores of England, observing that "as the distance from Switzerland increased, the attractions of home gathered strength" (277–78).

The decision to turn back was a fortuitous one since the area was under imminent threat of French invasion and some of the towns through which they passed fell to the French shortly after their return to England. Indeed, on their return journey, they met with frequent evidence of conflict and Radcliffe's relief at the sight of England's shores is tangible in the language she uses at this point: "the lighthouse on the South-Foreland" appears to her "like a dawning star above the margin of the sea" and, by way of contrast, looking back she perceives the French coast "like a dark streak of vapour" (366–67). The release of the tensions both husband and wife must have felt in the last few disturbing weeks is apparent in the pleasure she records at once more being on English soil:

> we landed in England under impressions of delight more varied and strong than can be conceived, without referring to the joy of an escape from districts where there was scarcely an home for the natives, and to the love of our own country, greatly enhanced by all that had been seen of others. (370)

Jeanne Moskal suggests that Radcliffe's *Journey* is "rare, and perhaps unique, among Romantic-period travel books, in juxtaposing foreign with domestic travels" (57). As I will argue, Radcliffe's account of her English travels is in fact fundamentally shaped by her experiences within Continental Europe, in particular her first-hand encounter with the consequences of war, along with her failure to reach Switzerland and all that this country had seemed to represent.

The Lake District as substitute for Switzerland

Having been deeply disappointed in their ambitions to see the Alps, the Radcliffes made alternative plans for a northern English tour. This was a logical decision, since popular

accounts of the English Lake District had presented the region as a more easily accessible alternative to the Alps (West 5), and Radcliffe clearly makes this connection, describing the fells as seen from Lancaster as "a vision of Alps" (*Journey* 389). But, while the analogy between the Lakes and the Alps formulated by Thomas West and others was based primarily on the visual criteria of the picturesque, Radcliffe goes on to develop a more complex reading of the Lakes as a substitute for Switzerland. As Patrick Vincent points out, "analogies between Switzerland and the Lake District" would come to be "rife in the Romantic period" and are developed extensively by Wordsworth, whose own textual comparisons between these two locations helped "transform his visionary republic into a spectacle protected by the National Trust" ("Visionary Republics" 134; 146).[3] Radcliffe's contribution to this process is interesting, both in that her Rousseauian reading of the Lake District pre-dates similar readings to be found in Wordsworth, but also in the extent to which the Lake District effectively replaces or becomes a substitute for Switzerland as a result of her failure to ever visit this desired place. As this section of the tour develops, it seems clear that there is a process of geographical substitution at work, as Radcliffe displaces her unfulfilled desires for Switzerland onto the Lake District. In so doing, she proceeds figuratively to turn her back on the physical spaces of Continental Europe, looking instead to the Lake District to fulfill the visual and ideological expectations she had of Switzerland. It seems likely that Radcliffe's displacement of Swiss ideals onto the Lake District landscapes is more complete partly because of a wish to distance herself from the very immediate and disturbing experiences of war across the Channel but also because, in her case, the object of desire was never actually reached. She therefore has no lived experience of Switzerland on which to base her comparison, and is thus able more readily to displace her expectations onto the English Lake District.

Radcliffe's depiction of the vale of Bampton on the Eastern side of the Lake District is particularly important in this respect, and here she draws extensively on Rousseauian ideals. Radcliffe is, however, reading the region through a doubly fictionalized lens here: via both textual encounters with an idealized Switzerland in Rousseau, and her own imaginative treatment of a life of liberty, rural simplicity, and contentment amidst Alpine landscapes in *The Romance of the Forest*. At Bampton, Radcliffe perceives the inhabitants as living a "civilized, though simple life," closed in as they are by the "towering fells" and experiencing a "healthiness of … climate; and a richness of the vallies" (*Journey* 395–96). The people are described in ways which reflect Rousseau's social ideal, having a "superior simplicity and modesty." She argues that: "Secluded from great towns and from examples of selfish splendour, their minds seem to act freely in the sphere of their own affairs, without interruption from envy or triumph, as to those of others" (397). Within this vale, Radcliffe comes across a parsonage nestled in a scene which speaks of Alpine beauty, from the lofty ridges "covered with forest," to the mountain flocks, and the streams of "chrystal [sic] clearness" (403). In depicting this location and the house itself, Radcliffe draws extensively on imagery and language used to describe the home of Arnaud La Luc, her fictional clergyman from *The Romance of the Forest*, who exemplifies a life modeled on Rousseau's principles. Radcliffe describes La Luc's home as situated "on the borders of a small lake that was almost environed by mountains of stupendous height" (*Romance* 247), and at Bampton she finds a real-life version of this ideal residence:

"Leaving the green margin of the lake, we ascended to the Parsonage, a low, white building on a knoll, sheltered by the mountain and a grove of sycamores, with a small garden in front, falling towards the water" (*Journey* 401).

Similarities between the fictional and real place go beyond the matter of location. There are striking analogies both inside and out, as well as assumptions made about what the residence signifies about the owner. La Luc's chateau, we are told, "was not large, but it was convenient, and was characterized by an air of elegant simplicity and good order. The entrance was a small hall, which opening by a glass door into the garden, afforded a view of the lake, with the magnificent scenery exhibited on its borders" (*Romance* 248). Here the fictional clergyman works and studies, learning about science and philosophy, and trying to live out Rousseau's ideals. The parsonage at Bampton displays many parallels with this residence and comes to represent for Radcliffe the Rousseauian life she had celebrated via this character:

> The interior of the Parsonage was as comfortable as the situation was interesting … with benches to receive a social party … It was delightful to picture such a party, happy in their home, in the sweet affections of kindred and in honest independence, conversing, working and reading …
>
> The seat of a long window, overlooking the lake, offered the delights of other seasons … Here, too, lay a store of books, and … among them was a history of passing events. Alas! to what scenes, to what display of human passions and human suffering did it open! How opposite to the simplicity, the innocence and the peace of these! (*Journey* 402)

The Bampton parson, absent from home at the time of Radcliffe's visit, comes to be constructed almost as a living embodiment of La Luc: the "venerable father of the mansion" is "engaged in his duty at his chapel" at the time of their visit but, they are informed, he would gladly "have rendered any civilities to strangers" (402–03).[4]

The handling of this figure shows that in her construction of the Lakes, Radcliffe takes a significant step in the process of transposing the romanticized image of Switzerland onto a Lake District landscape and its people, a process which would continue via the writings of Wordsworth and would come to have significant cultural ramifications for the region. It is revealing that Radcliffe chooses this moment of transposition of Swiss ideals onto the Lakes to reaffirm the contrast between the model of peace offered in this remote mountainous corner of England and the conflict in Continental Europe. The lines reflecting on this clergyman's home pick up on Radcliffe's earlier observation, made while witnessing the horrific devastation of Mainz, that "An Englishman, walking amidst the ensigns of such artificial and premature desolation, cannot help considering the natural security of his country," to which she adds—somewhat naively—that the horrors of war "cannot enter the cities, or the cottages of an island" (187). This particular cottage is protected not just by the sea but also by the "tremendous ridge of mountains" which surround it. Ironically then, the model of Swiss safety, once displaced onto the Lake District, is doubly assured. Once the Lake District is established as a substitute for the never-experienced visual, ideological, and social experience of Switzerland, it comes to be idealized and presented as functioning as a more positive alternative to anything that war-torn Europe could offer. In this latter part of the tour Radcliffe enacts a full linguistic and imaginative shift, from cosmopolitan European traveler to one who looks for the possibilities of the Europe of

her imagination within England's own shores, and specifically, within the landscape of the English Lakes.

Radcliffe's Gothic imagination and the Lake District

Not only is Radcliffe's handling of the Lake District one of the earliest instances of a Rousseauian reading of this landscape, but within this section of her tour, Radcliffe also begins to draw on other literary influences and experiment with different ways of responding to this region. JoEllen DeLucia refers to *Journey* as "surprisingly 'ungothic'" (137), and while this is certainly true of the Continental section of Radcliffe's tour, within the Lake District section her Gothic imagination is frequently in evidence. As I have argued elsewhere, given her established reputation as the mistress of the genre and the nation's "mighty enchantress" (Scott vii), reading the landscape in Gothic terms gives Radcliffe a privileged imaginary access to a region whose meanings had hitherto been developed by male picturesque writers (Bradshaw 46).

From the outset, Radcliffe draws attention to the Gothic potential of the landscape through which she is traveling, signaling this in the language and imagery of several early passages. The "clouds rolling" along the top of the Lune valley are "like smoke from a cauldron" and here the "venerable Gothic bridge over the Lune" rises "in tall arches" (382; 384). Kendal is the first major town encountered by Radcliffe after Lancaster, and it is presented initially almost as one of her fictional Gothic locations:

> white-smoking in the dark vale … the outlines of its ruinous castle were just visible through the gloom, scattered in masses over the top of a small round hill on the right. At the entrance to the town the river Kent dashed in foam down a weir; beyond it, on a green slope, the gothic tower of the church was half hid by a cluster of dark trees. (386)

A Gothic reading of the landscape recurs on several occasions and Radcliffe frequently calls up the mood and atmosphere of mystery which we find in her fiction through allusions to the world of fantasy and the supernatural: a lake is concealed within a "rocky cauldron" (*Journey* 447); we encounter "wizard" glens (448) and "magical effect[s]" (463); "tremendous crags" resemble "one of those beautifully fantastic scenes, which fable calls up before the wand of the magician" (416). One consequence of this approach is that Radcliffe begins to open up new imaginative ways of perceiving the landscape, which offer a challenge to the more prescriptive demands of the picturesque. Interestingly, she frequently turns to the authority of older literary material in validating her impressions. She describes the approach to Keswick, by this time an important tourist destination, as "the very region, which the wild fancy of a poet, like Shakespeare, would people with witches, and shew them at their incantations, calling spirits from the clouds and spectres from the earth" (440). Radcliffe goes on to suggest that the "wildness, seclusion, and magical beauty of this vale, seem indeed to render it the very abode for Milton's Comus, 'deep skilled in all his mother's witcheries'" (452).

Though Radcliffe is calling on the authority of a male literary tradition here, it is notable that her references often function to identify empowered female figures with the landscape. She depicts Shakespeare's witches as having the power to control and

manipulate natural forces, and the choice of quotation from Milton's *Comus* is also suggestive. Radcliffe turns to this poem repeatedly in her fiction but, as Angela Jones observes, here she selects a line from later in the poem which emphasizes Comus's mother as being the "source of his powers," rather than the introductory line in which the son "usurps the mother" by "excel[ling] her at her mighty art" (510). Radcliffe's selective use of male literary authority therefore has the effect of subtly connecting her own role as "enchantress" with other empowered female literary characters.

While the importing of travel and landscape description into her novels was a key ingredient of the Radcliffean Gothic, we witness here a reversal of the process, with Radcliffe incorporating the language and expectations of Gothic romance into a travel guide. It is a fascinating experiment and one that is suggestive of the close relationship between these eighteenth-century modes of writing as well as Radcliffe's willingness to experiment with existing textual formulae. One consequence of the overlaying of aspects of the Gothic on her travel text is that it predisposes her readers to perceive Radcliffe the traveler as her own autobiographically constructed heroine, who, like her fictional heroines, is emotionally responsive to the landscape through which she journeys. In formulating connections between her Gothic heroines and the female traveler, Radcliffe begins to take Lake District travel writing in new directions, prioritizing both female perspectives and a very intense personal responsiveness to these landscapes. As Robert Miles suggests, Radcliffe's "ability to play upon the feeling mind unlocked more meanings than those fashionably encoded within the sublime and picturesque" (54), and it is to a large extent this capacity to "unlock" new meanings, different to those previously attached to this landscape, which makes Radcliffe's tour so significant in terms of the evolution of travel literature in the period.[5]

Mountain ascents and liminal spaces: Radcliffe's extreme landscape encounters

From the opening pages of *Journey*, there is clear evidence of Radcliffe's willingness to explore different approaches to travel writing and to experiment with new ways of capturing her experiences. Though she does on many occasions continue to draw on phrases and ideas derived from the picturesque tradition, it seems clear that she comes to question the limitations of this discourse when faced with real, lived, and living landscapes. At times this questioning comes through explicitly, such as in the passage describing her approach to Borrowdale, a favored location in earlier guides. Radcliffe turns instinctively to the language of those accounts but, almost immediately, pauses to register the fact that the variety and nuances of real nature cannot be conveyed via the formulaic language of the picturesque:

> It is difficult to spread varied pictures of such scenes before the imagination. A repetition of the same images of rock, wood and water, and the same epithets of grand, vast and sublime, which necessarily occur, must appear tautologous, on paper, though their archetypes in nature, ever varying in outline, or arrangement, exhibit new visions to the eye, and produce new shades of effect on the mind. (419)

Radcliffe feels herself torn by her "wish to repeat the picture" of what she sees in language and "a consciousness of the impossibility of doing so" (419). As Dorothy McMillan

argues, the experience of visiting the actual landscapes which Radcliffe had previously only encountered in art and travel writing, generates an awareness of the limitations of existing discursive modes (57). To some extent, all of her encounters with real places have the potential to trigger this sort of questioning, but it is perhaps not surprising that Radcliffe's travel writing becomes most innovative when faced with particularly unusual kinds of landscape experience, and some of her most experimental passages occur within her two most extreme landscape encounters: her ascent of Skiddaw and the crossing of Lancaster Sands.

The final years of the eighteenth-century saw a rise in the number of Lakeland tourists making a mountain ascent during their visit and accounts of some of these ascents had been published. However, the main travel guides offer little engagement with this experience prior to Radcliffe, whose passage describing the ascent of Skiddaw came to be incorporated into all subsequent editions of West's deeply influential *Guide to the Lakes*, from the sixth edition of 1796 onwards.[6] As Peter Bicknell notes, the "revised *Guide* became a vade-mecum for Lake District visitors" and for "nearly half a century it was carried by almost every visitor to the Lakes" (7; 33). Radcliffe's Skiddaw ascent was thus rapidly absorbed into the canonical travel literature of the period and, as Simon Bainbridge suggests, helped to establish mountain ascents as a key feature of the Lake District tour (200). Skiddaw was for a long time wrongly regarded as England's highest mountain and by the 1790s was firmly fixed in the tourist consciousness, so that Radcliffe's account of an ascent offers a timely intervention in developing attitudes to the region. While later readers came to mock Radcliffe's anxieties in making this ascent, we should remember that undertaking such a journey on horseback while seated side-saddle is a very different experience from climbing Skiddaw on foot. In focusing on Radcliffe's fears, such readers have played down the importance of this passage in terms of bringing about new perspectives on the region.[7] This is in fact a key moment in which Radcliffe challenges the picturesque model since, as Tim Fulford notes, the picturesque approach means that "bodily and temporal experience in the landscape was elided, as was the landscape beyond the frame: its wider geographic, cultural, and historical elements were excluded" (30).

Within the Skiddaw passage, Radcliffe's recording of her own anxieties, and the physical effort experienced by the horses, turns this instead into an embodied experience. The frame of vision is fundamentally dismantled by the radical shifts in viewpoint and sight brought about through the climb. *En route* to the summit, as the horses begin to slow down and pant with the effort of making the ascent, Radcliffe registers the dizzying way in which perspectives and thus meanings shift. Derwentwater "dwindled on the eye to the smallness of a pond" and her vision of the "amphitheatre" of mountains means that fells are no longer seen as individual sublime spectacles or as a framing background for the lake, but as a collective panorama, suggestive of the geological rupture out of which they emerged; this is "a scenery to give ideas of the breaking up of the world" (354). The effort of the climb and the tendency for the turns in the ascent to block out distant views means that Radcliffe also suddenly pans down to the "shades of turf and moss" over which the horses travel. Perspectives are radically destabilized from this height and angle, so that Saddleback, "though really at a considerable distance, had, from the height of the two mountains, such an appearance of nearness, that it almost seemed as if we could

spring to its side" (456). The views from the summit itself are so difficult to deal with using the linguistic tools available to her that she feels able only to "enumerate" rather than to describe (457). The immensity of the scene visible from this 3000-foot-high vantage point immediately challenges any picturesque inclination to contain and focus in on a particular section of the view: "We stood on a pinnacle, commanding the whole dome of the sky. The prospects below, each of which had been before considered separately as a great scene, were now like miniature parts of the immense landscape" (457–58). She proceeds to attempt to find new ways of capturing such a visual experience in language, turning first to cartography and describing the Lakes spreading before her "like a map," before going on to enumerate in precise detail, almost devoid of any superlatives, a detailed and precise account of this living "map" as laid out before her eyes (458).

Radcliffe's description of the view from the top of Skiddaw, and the radically altered perspective on the Lakes which it offers, in some ways foreshadows Wordsworth's subsequent and famous cloud perspective in his *Guide to the Lakes*. Like Radcliffe, Wordsworth attempts to break the limitations of the picture frame and to take in the Lakes as a unity:

> I know not how to give the reader a distinct image of [the main outlines of the country] … than by requesting him to place himself with me, in imagination, upon some given point; let it be the top of either of the mountains, Great Gavel, or Scawfell; or, rather, let us suppose our station to be a cloud hanging midway between those two mountains, at not more than half a mile's distance from the summit of each, and not many yards above their highest elevation. (41–42)

Though Wordsworth's passage has been credited with offering a radically new way of seeing and thinking about the region (Bate 46), Radcliffe's earlier description of the Lakes as viewed from the summit of Skiddaw is an important forerunner, indicating her own willingness to move beyond formulaic and prescribed ideas about the Lakes.

While the Skiddaw passage certainly offers something innovative within Lake District travel writing, perhaps the most radical instance of this occurs at the very end of her book, when Radcliffe journeys through another completely new kind of landscape that seems to resist expression within the standard travel discourses of the period. In her account of their departure from the Lakes via the liminal, dangerous, and shifting Lancaster Sands, there are only residual traces of the formulaic phrasing and proclamations of the picturesque. Instead, the passage offers a nuanced and precise account of the sands crossing, which allows for the personal experience of this living landscape to overcome the fixed expectations set up by the picturesque. Indeed, the limitations of a reading which is dominated by the visual are fundamentally challenged by restrictions on sight as well as by the hybrid nature of a place which is neither fully land nor sea. She enters the "vast and desolate plains before the sea had entirely left them, or the morning mists were sufficiently dissipated to allow a view of distant objects" (496–97).

As Radcliffe begins her journey through this strange terrain, and while waiting for visual markers to emerge, she turns to aural reference points to record her experiences of place:

> The tide was ebbing fast from our wheels, and its low murmur was interrupted, first, only by the shrill small cry of sea-gulls, unseen, whose hovering flight could be traced by the sound, near an island that began to dawn through the mist; and then, by the hoarser croaking of sea-geese, which took a wider range, for their shifting voices were heard from various quarters of the surrounding coast. The body of the sea, on the right, was still involved, and the distant mountains on our left, that crown the bay, were also viewless; but it was sublimely interesting to watch the heavy vapours beginning to move, then rolling in lengthening volumes over the scene, and, as they gradually dissipated, discovering through their veil the various objects they had concealed—fishermen with carts and nets stealing along the margin of the tide, little boats putting off from the shore, and, the view still enlarging as the vapours expanded, the main sea itself softening into the horizon, with here and there a dim sail moving in the hazy distance. (497)

In this experiential piece of travel writing, sight, sound, and movement are all captured. We are presented not with a static artificial landscape, which can be contained and viewed via a frame, but one which simply cannot be fixed. The sands, as well as the traveler's experience of them, are ever-shifting so that the prose itself must respond flexibly, recording the subtle changes moment by moment. The twentieth-century Cumbrian poet and topographical writer, Norman Nicholson, though often quite hostile to the literary representations of the region by outsiders, acknowledges the effectiveness of Radcliffe's description in this passage, suggesting that she manages to capture the uniqueness of her encounter with this strange territory in surprising ways, leaving behind her better known stylistic approaches and turning instead to the "tangible mystery of rock and tide" (83).

Radcliffe's experiments in travel writing here and elsewhere within *Journey* clearly demonstrate an interest in moving beyond existing discursive models in order to find new ways of capturing the unique experiences of the places and landscapes which she encountered on her travels. Her willingness to explore and utilize such a wide range of styles and modes of writing, results in a fascinating and complex text, which needs to be seen as an important stepping-stone in the journey from late-eighteenth-century picturesque travel discourse to a Romantic approach to place-writing. It is perhaps ironic that a writer who had drawn on the dominant modes of landscape writing so extensively in her fiction, should not only come to discover the limitations of those discursive models, but would also play a key role in developing new approaches to travel writing and new ways of thinking about places and their meanings.

Notes

1. As Ingrid Kuczynski notes, no "investigation into the development of the Romantic perception of the Rhine—the *Rheinromantik*—can afford to neglect Radcliffe," who she identifies as one of the first English tourists in the late eighteenth century to identify "the Rhine as a location of picturesque and sublime scenery, thus opening the way for the pervasive romanticising of the area which reached its climax with Byron and Turner" (242).
2. Radcliffe uses the historic English name for the city and refers to Mainz throughout as Mentz.
3. For a more extensive discussion of Wordsworth's displacement of the "Swiss myth" onto the Lake District see Vincent, *Romanticism*.
4. It is notable that "venerable" is Radcliffe's adjective of choice for La Luc, using it on five separate occasions in describing her fictional pastor.

5. For a more extensive discussion of Radcliffe's reading of the Lakes landscape, including her treatment of Gothic ruins and ghostly presences, see Bradshaw 31–46.
6. Prior accounts of a Skiddaw ascent appear in William Hutchinson's *An Excursion to the Lakes* (1774), Adam Walker's *A Tour from London to the Lakes* (1792), and Joseph Budworth's *A Fortnight's Ramble to the Lakes* (1792). The fact that it is Radcliffe's account which comes to be absorbed into the main itinerary guide of the period though, indicates the uniqueness and appeal of her narrative over and above these other earlier descriptions.
7. Hardwicke Rawnsley for example writes: "We may … join the gallant Mrs. Radcliffe, who rode over Skiddaw in 1794, and left behind her such an account of the terrible danger and difficulty of making this, apparently, the first ascent, by womankind, of our tremendous mountain, as would lead one to believe that, at anyrate in her mind, the feat was equal to a climb up Chimborazo, Cotopaxi, Kilimangaro, or the Mountains of the Moon" (160).

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