

# E-rea

Revue électronique d'études sur le monde anglophone

## Présentation

*E-rea*, revue en ligne du Laboratoire d'études et de recherche sur le monde anglophone (LERMA), créée en 2003, publie des articles consacrés aux études anglophones. Chaque numéro comporte un ou plusieurs dossiers thématiques, des articles hors thème, un Grand Entretien, et des recensions d'ouvrages.





**E-rea**

Revue électronique d'études sur le monde anglophone

11.2 | 2014

1. Interactions et transferts / 2. « L'écriture qui voyage »

---

## The Atlantic Ocean and the “Mighty Rivers” of the New World: Natural Phenomena and Human Encounters in Frances Trollope’s *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832)

Manuela D'AMORE

---



**Electronic version**

URL: <http://erea.revues.org/3877>

DOI: 10.4000/erea.3877

ISBN: ISSN 1638-1718

ISSN: 1638-1718

**Publisher**

Laboratoire d'Études et de Recherche sur le Monde Anglophone

Brought to you by Université Blaise Pascal  
Clermont Ferrand



**Electronic reference**

Manuela D'AMORE, « The Atlantic Ocean and the “Mighty Rivers” of the New World: Natural Phenomena and Human Encounters in Frances Trollope’s *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832) », *E-rea* [Online], 11.2 | 2014, Online since 15 July 2014, connection on 13 November 2017. URL : <http://erea.revues.org/3877> ; DOI : 10.4000/erea.3877

---



*E-rea* est mis à disposition selon les termes de la licence Creative Commons Attribution - Pas d'Utilisation Commerciale - Pas de Modification 4.0 International.

**The Atlantic Ocean and the “Mighty Rivers” of the New World:  
Natural Phenomena and Human Encounters in Frances Trollope’s  
*Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832)**

**Manuela D’Amore  
Università degli Studi di Catania  
m.damore@unict.it**

**Résumé :** L’objectif de cette étude est de présenter une lecture de *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832), le premier *best-seller* de Frances Trollope (1780-1863), qui montre les liens importants entre cet œuvre et les « Sea » et « Oceanic Studies ». Le rapport conflictuel avec l’Autre, la représentation de Soi comme un courageuse « lady » anglaise dans le Nouveau Monde des années 1820, les différentes étapes de son voyage et les expériences de la navigation démontreront au lecteur contemporain que, surtout, le voyage maritime et fluvial a influé sur sa perception de la flore, la faune et la société américaines.

**Mots-clés :** Frances Trollope, voyage, Amérique, altérité, voies navigables, navigation

**Abstract:** “At every table d’hôte, on board of every steam-boat, in every stage-coach, and in all societies, the first question was, ‘Have you read Mrs. Trollope?’” (Coke 167-168). A best-seller on the eve of the Victorian era, Frances Trollope’s *Domestic Manners of the Americans* is not just an authentic account of America in the 1820s, but also a courageous book depicting the “Other” from different perspectives. Starting with the latest research in the fields of “Sea” and “Oceanic Studies”, this paper will focus on significant passages from the text, and will show in what terms the author’s travelling modes, and navigation experiences in particular, influenced her perception and writing of the New World.

**Key words:** Frances Trollope, Travel, America, Otherness, Waterways, Navigation

## 1. Travel Literature, Sea/Ocean Fiction, and the “Other”: Why Trollope?

In the last decade, the studies on travel literature as a genre have mainly focused on the writer’s account of the relationships between the familiar and the “Other”<sup>1</sup>. Evidence of the changes in this academic debate can be found in the questions that Casey Blanton has posed in the opening section of *Travel Writing. The Self and the World* (2002): “As [...] books and maps can tell only a part of the truth, by what process, using what models does the traveler presume to describe, to interpret, to represent people and places who are other to him? What encounter is included? What person omitted? What vistas extolled, what rivers left behind?” (Blanton 2)

Needless to say, all possible answers depend on the writer’s personal perceptions and modes of representation of the “Other”. Critics have continued to consider narrative scopes and techniques important, yet the relatively recent emergence of such fields as “Sea and Oceanic Studies”<sup>2</sup> shows that travelling modes and observation angles may make a significant difference in representations. This is especially the case when, for instance, the limited space on a ship entails the “anatomy of society” on the one hand, and the outbreak of the protagonist’s more spiritual conflicts on the other.<sup>3</sup>

More recently still, even closer attention to navigation experiences in travelogues has been paid by the academic community in the field of Transatlantic Studies. For example, Janet Sorensen in *Transatlantic Literary Studies 1660-1830* (Bannet and Manning 124-125) has underlined that both the exchange between diverse geographically-based cultures and the writing of the sea itself should continue to be subject to scholarly investigation. One of the main unsolved issues, in fact, remains “the tension between centrifugal movement across oceans and the formation and maintenance of national identity” (Sorensen 124-125). Thus new trends in travel literature theory, and considers the impact that specific aspects of land and sea voyages can have on the representation of “Self” and of the “Other”.

---

<sup>1</sup> For perspectives on travel writing, particularly on the importance of the relation between the author’s “Self” and the “Other”, see Blanton 1-29; Hulme and Youngs, Chapters 14 and 15; Hooper and Youngs, Chapters 2, 3 and 6; and Pratt, Chapter 10.

<sup>2</sup> For recent publications in this field, see Chappell, Klein, Jolly, Tcherkézoff, and Trevor Tyon; as well as Cohen.

<sup>3</sup> On the link between the ships’ limited spaces, the writer-passenger’s (biased) analysis of the community on board, as well the emergence of his/her spiritual conflicts, see Foulke 1-26.

Published in 1832, at the end of a long stay in the New World, Frances Trollope's *Domestic Manners of the Americans*<sup>4</sup> is far from being a classic piece of literature of the "great lakes", of "the sea", or "of the ocean". The reason why it be considered of interest to scholars of various fields, though, is that it seems to confirm that travelling modes, particularly those related to the navigation episodes, influence the perception and acceptance of the "Other" of a first-person narrator who had always defined herself as a "woman" and a "stranger" (Trollope *D.M.* 314).

### **1.1 *Domestic Manners of the Americans: (The Success of) A Biased Vision of the 'Other'***

Unlike other Victorian women writers –Fanny Kemble, Harriet Martineau, Isabella Bird<sup>5</sup>, to name but a few – Trollope had a definitely clear, practical objective when she left London on November 4<sup>th</sup> 1827: reversing the family fortunes, and possibly escaping her husband's black mood<sup>6</sup>. It was for this reason that she never ("romantically") felt that "to travel is to be nowhere";<sup>7</sup> and that did not see her experience as a spiritual path to self-knowledge<sup>8</sup>. Bassnett (231) and Jenkins (15-29) posit that travel and alterity were essential for the construction of Victorian women travellers' subjectivity, Trollope's first book though testifies to her inflexible "Self" and clearly-defined cultural identity. From this point of view, the latest criticism of her work has shown that her sense of whereness, and deliberate choice to use her aesthetic/moral principles to decipher reality strongly limited her acceptance/appreciation of what was new to her. A "typical Victorian bourgeois traveller", in fact, Trollope wrote a book that, for Cheng, "cannot match the scale of audacity of either Isabella Bird's exploration in Northeast Asia, or Mary Kingsley's adventures in West Africa, nor can [it] match the intellectual profundity of Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* (1835)" (Cheng 127).<sup>9</sup>

A sharply critical account of the American land and civilization in the 1820s, then, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* was purposely designed to be an editorial success, and counterbalance

---

<sup>4</sup> Quotations in this paper will be taken from Fanny Trollope. *Domestic Manners of the Americans (D.M.)*. Ed. Pamela Neville-Sington. London: Penguin, 1997.

<sup>5</sup> For comparisons between Trollope and other pre-Victorian women writers, who could not resist the oblivion of memory, see Parent Frazee 71-108.

<sup>6</sup> Trollope decided to leave for America to reverse her debt-ridden family fortunes. On her husband's decision to lease a farm near Harrow in 1813, and on the collapse of the price of grain in the following years, which made the situation even more serious, see Neville-Sington's *Introduction* to the Penguin edition of *Domestic Manners* viii-xiii. More details are in the fully updated biographies by Ransom and, again, by Neville-Sington.

<sup>7</sup> Here we specifically refer to Clark: "The 'art of travel' is not, straightforwardly, about the inscription of power over otherness, rather it is underscored by an anxious sense that travel is 'to be nowhere'" (32).

<sup>8</sup> On the spiritual-metaphorical significance of travel for Victorian women writers, see Mills, particularly Chapters 1 and 2; and Jenkins 15-29.

<sup>9</sup> On the other analyses of Trollope's passage to the New World, see Cheng, 127.

the failure of the author's business plans in those years. As for its other implications, it certainly served as a prompt response to the pre-imperialistic needs of society: the New World was proposed as a locus of cultural intersection, and through it Britain could even reinforce its traditional, biased notion of the ex-American colonies.<sup>10</sup>

In England Trollope was lionized by society. Before the end of 1832, *Domestic Manners* had run through four editions, and that was obviously perceived as the beginning of a new writing career. For Cheng, the reasons for such a striking success could be found not only in the mixture of different genres in the text – travel and journalistic writing, autobiography, social critique, and immigrant literature – but also in the fact that it was based on authentic observation<sup>11</sup>. Further, the first person narrator's conclusion at the end of volume II, "I do not like them. I do not like their principles, I do not like their manners, I do not like their opinions" (Trollope *D.M.* 314), could also explain why readers appreciated its straightforward style too.

Trollope's overt criticism of the New World and its native population was a symbol of her subjective vision of the "Other". Bassnett's distinction between men's and women's typical paradigms in travel writing<sup>12</sup> may be useful here to demonstrate that she did not concentrate on "facts" as men authors tend to do, but that she was systematically guided by her innermost feelings when she lived a new experience, and wanted to describe it. Of course, direct contact with American nature – its land, its lakes or rivers, and the Atlantic Ocean – was at the root of her personal reactions and narrative choices.

## 2. Text Fragments: Trollope's Voyages in America

A two-volume work, divided into thirty-four chapters<sup>13</sup>, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* "leaves to abler pens the more ambitious task of commenting on the democratic form of the American Government" (Trollope *D.M.* 7). It gives very few dates – readers are only told that Trollope sailed from London on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November 1827, and that she left America in mid-June 1830 – but it "carefully record[s] the observations she had an opportunity of making during a residence of three years and six months in different parts of the United States" (Trollope *D.M.* 7).

---

<sup>10</sup> More information on Trollope's *Domestic Manners* as a tool of pre-imperialistic propaganda in England can be found in Cheng 123-165.

<sup>11</sup> See Cheng 160-165.

<sup>12</sup> On the differences in style and perspectives between men and women travel writers, see Bassnett 225-241.

<sup>13</sup> As for the internal structure of *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, Volume I includes Chapters 1-20; and Volume II Chapters 21-34. In our chosen edition the two sections correspond to pages 9-178, and 181-318, respectively.

*Domestic Manners* is far from being a travel journal, then. Neville-Sington<sup>14</sup> confirms that she had been gathering material since at least June 1828, that on her return to Harrow in August 1831 “she locked herself away to finish writing”, and that it was Captain Basil Hall who finally supervised her work (Neville-Sington xix-xx). An extract from the Table of Contents shows the structure:

CHAPTER I: Entrance of the Mississippi – Balize; CHAPTER II: New Orleans – Society – Creoles and Quadroons – Voyage up the Mississippi; CHAPTER III: Company on board the Steam Boat – Scenery of the Mississippi – Crocodiles – Arrival at Memphis – Nashoba; CHAPTER IV: Departure from Memphis – The Ohio River – Louisville and Cincinnati; CHAPTER V: Cincinnati – Forest Farm – Mr. Bullock; CHAPTER VI: Servants – Society – Evening Parties [...]. (Trollope *D.M.* 3)

Thus in Trollope’s first piece of literature there is room for descriptions of natural phenomena (this was not her primary concern, but she writes about important rivers like the Ohio, the Potomac, and the Hudson; about the Niagara, Potomac, and Trenton Falls, as well as the beautiful sights of the Alleghany mountains);<sup>15</sup> her thoughts on her voyaging experiences and American civilisation are also given precedence. Her writing offers new insights into her condition as a “travelling lady”, and show under what specific circumstances she seemed to be open to the American “Other”.

### 3. Waterways: Open and Claustrophobic Spaces

In *Domestic Manners of the Americans* the natural elements of land and sea are inextricably interwoven with the travelling dimension. Evidence of the narrator’s sense of attraction to – and repulsion against – specific types of waterways, for instance, can be found in the opening scenes. Although readers are not given any details about the London-Nashoba, Transatlantic navigation, they can feel all the strong emotion that the sight of the ocean has caused:

In truth, to those who have pleasure in contemplating the phenomena of nature, a sea voyage may endure many weeks without wearying. Perhaps some may think that the first glance of the ocean and sky shew all they have to offer; nay, even that first glance may suggest more of dreariness than sublimity; but to me, their variety appears endless, and their beauty unfailling. The attempt to describe scenery, even where the objects are prominent and tangible, is very rarely successful; but where the effect is so subtle and so varying, it must be vain. The impression, nevertheless, is perhaps deeper than any other; I think it possible I may forget the sensations with which I watched the long course of the gigantic Mississippi; the Ohio and the Potomac may mingle and be confounded with other streams in my memory, I may even recall with difficulty the blue outline of the Alleghany mountains, but never, while I remember anything, can I forget the first and last hour of light on the Atlantic. (Trollope *D.M.* 11)

---

<sup>14</sup> Detailed information about the writing and publication process of *Domestic Manners* is in the cited *Introduction* to the 1997 edition edited by Neville-Sington.

<sup>15</sup> Trollope’s first priority was to describe the Americans, yet, descriptions of landscapes and natural phenomena can be found in in Chapters IV, X, XVII, XVIII, XXI, XXX, XXXII, and XXXIII.

Defined as “favourable, though somewhat tedious” (Trollope *D.M.* 9), and deprived of “the [emigrant’s] hope” of discovering a less crowded and more promising path” (*The Old World and the New* 141) (this will be pivotal in *The Old World and the New*<sup>16</sup>), the narrator’s “sea voyage” can be defined as a rite of passage nevertheless even though it does not invoke any self-identity transformation.<sup>17</sup> As Steve Clark (1999) argues, any piece of odeporic literature can have such significance, and any “border crossing” experience obliges the traveller to make an even more abstract, symbolic form of “movement”: that of his/her description and interpretation of reality. The epistemological issues that the critic alludes to in the following extract takes us beyond the clear limitations of *Domestic Manners* at this level, and highlights the fact that Trollope was always able to express her own vision of the Atlantic:

I argue that the formal basis of the travel genre is in the structure of rites of passage, originally schematized by Arnold van Gennep. In travel, the territorial passage from one zone to another, the border crossing, represents a critical moment for the identity of the mobile subject. The territorial passage is accompanied by – or even metaphoric of – another movement; the shift from ‘seeing with one’s own’s eyes’ to discerning the meaning of what is seen. The travel text always supplements the insufficient act of ‘witnessing’ with epistemological reflection; a process which exposes fundamental morbidities in the ideologies of ‘movement’ and ‘settlement’ (Clark 31).

Accordingly, Trollope’s transatlantic navigation experience is not represented as the actual beginning of *Domestic Manners*, and is not even described in full. Yet, it retains all its emotional and symbolic significance. Following Clark and recent research in the field of linguistics and hermeneutics<sup>18</sup> allow a better understanding of the implications of her abstract, allusive language. She writes about the “pleasure” of “contemplation”, and about her “deep” “impressions” and “sensations”; a little later in the text, she evokes “the indescribable charm” of the Atlantic too. Such a choice – Schmidt (3) argues – has its roots in the writer’s need not only “to create the same sort of involvement in the [public]”, but also “to create the bond of mutual agreement”.

Apart from the key position of Trollope’s personal perceptions in this section of the text, and her strong determination to influence the reader’s image of the New World, it is the Burkean sense of “dreariness” and “sublimity” that the sight of the “sky” and the “ocean” can cause, that demonstrates that she could only refer to the European cultural standards, and to those of

---

<sup>16</sup> As Pamela Neville Sington suggests in her 1995 monograph on Trollope, it is essential to identify cross-references in her successive literary production. In this case we shall consider Mrs. Trollope, *The Old World and the New* (*O.N.*) London, Colburn Publisher, 1849.

<sup>17</sup> On the social and personal implications of transatlantic voyages, and their significance as rites of passage, see Hardack 49.

<sup>18</sup> A thorough study of the theoretical links between linguisticity and hermeneutics is in Schmidt. As for the aspects that a literary text and a ritual have in common, see Schmidt 3-4.



nineteenth century England in particular. This is still the beginning of the process, but it seems clear that they will never be abandoned.

Finally, her overt attraction to open, “endless” spaces, and to the ocean: at this stage, her positive attitude suggests that her inner “Self” may be open to meet the American “Other”. Unfortunately, the Romantic fascination with the unknown vanishes when faced with reality, and the reader is immediately plunged into the dreadful description of the Mississippi river at the beginning of Chapter I. This is how she describes her first contact with the New World:

The first indication of our approach to land was the appearance of this mighty river pouring forth its muddy mass of waters, and mingling with the deep blue of the Mexican Gulf. The shores of this river are so utterly flat, that no object upon them is perceptible at sea, and we gazed with pleasure on the muddy ocean that met us, for it told us we were arrived, and seven weeks of sailing had wearied us; yet it was not without a feeling of regret that we passed from the bright blue waves, whose varying aspect had so long furnished our chief amusement, into the murky stream which now received us. [...] I never beheld a scene so utterly desolate as this entrance of the Mississippi. Had Dante seen it, he might have drawn images of another Bolgia from its horrors. Only one object rears itself above the eddying waters, this is the mast of a vessel long since wrecked in attempting to cross the bar, and it still stands, a dismal witness of the destruction that has been, and a boding prophet of that which is to come. [...] It is easy to imagine the total want of beauty in such a landscape[. ] [...] We were [...] impatient to touch as well as see the land; but the navigation from Balize to New Orleans is difficult and tedious, and the two days that it occupied appeared longer than any we had passed on board. (Trollope *D.M.* 9-11)

The vivid memory of the Atlantic Ocean, proof of Trollope’s initial, potential openness to future life, sharply contrasts with the description of the Mississippi river as a modern setting for Dante’s *Inferno*. On this occasion, even her language has changed. The “mast of a vessel” emerging from the “eddy waters”, and what she defines as “the fragment[s] of a world in ruins” – “vast quantities of drift wood” and of “floating rubbish” (Trollope *D.M.* 10) – are objective correlatives of the horrors that will come. Her “navigation from Balize to New Orleans” was “difficult and tedious”, and that probably made the “cluster of huts called Balize” “by far the most miserable station [...] [that Trollope] ever saw” (Trollope *D.M.* 9-10).

This first voyage up the Mississippi is symbolic, however, of her future perception of the “Other”, and it reinforces the idea that the narrator’s and the reader’s hermeneutic paths in the New World will always coincide. It is for this reason that the experience on board the *Belvidere*, a “large and handsome boat” (Trollope *D.M.* 18), is pivotal. Trollope’s utter inability to tolerate limited, claustrophobic spaces will reveal her tendency to “corrupt difference into inequality” when confronting American civilisation (Todorov 130). On 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1828, the destination is Memphis.<sup>19</sup> Trollope is very clear:

---

<sup>19</sup> The association of terms like “difference and inequality”, and “equality and identity” in the white men’s approach to the native population in the Americas can be found in Todorov 130.

We found the room destined for the use of the ladies dismal enough, as its only windows were below the stern gallery; but both this and the gentleman's cabin were handsomely fitted up, and the former well carpeted; but oh! that carpet! I will not, I may not describe in condition; indeed it requires the pen of a Swift to do it justice. Let no one who wishes to receive agreeable impressions of American manners, commence their travels in a Mississippi steam boat; for myself, it is with all sincerity I declare, that I would infinitely prefer sharing the apartment of a party of well conditioned pigs to the being confined to its cabin. (Trollope *D.M.* 18)

For Trollope, it will be impossible to have a positive impression of American manners on a Mississippi boat. As Ransom (40-70) confirms, the space on board is limited, thus, perceived as claustrophobic. As for the abundance of concrete nouns, those related to the description of her cabin especially, it conveys all her frustration and sense of repulsion against the other passengers.

This short passage, however, also reveals the writer's determination to make her focus of narration more and more limited: first, she proposes a short but suggestive description of the ocean; then, she concentrates on the Mississippi river with its death symbols; finally, she wants to draw the reader's attention to her experience of navigation on a steam boat. The following passages are even more detailed and straightforward as concerns the contacts with the Americans and their manners:

I hardly know any annoyance so deeply repugnant to English feelings, as the incessant, remorseless spitting of Americans. I feel that I owe my readers an apology for the repeated use of this, and several other odious words; but I cannot avoid them, without suffering the fidelity of description to escape me. It is possible that in this phrase, the "Americans," I may be too general. (Trollope *D.M.* 18)

The fact that Trollope can enjoy "the clear bright beauty of American moonlight long after every passenger but [she] had retired" (Trollope *D.M.* 19) is significant. The reader will have further opportunities of seeing that she was struck by the beauties of Nature, particularly by its open spaces, when she was on her own. At this stage, though, the sense of "repugnance to many of the novelties that [...] surrounded [her]" (Trollope *D.M.* 19) continues to re-emerge when the boat is overcrowded:

[I]t was impossible not to feel repugnance to many of the novelties that now surrounded me. The total want of all the usual courtesies of the table, the voracious rapidity with which the viands were seized and devoured, the strange uncouth phrases and pronunciation; the loathsome spitting, from the contamination of which it was absolutely impossible to protect our dresses; the frightful manner of feeding with their knives, till the whole blade seemed to enter into the mouth; and the still more frightful manner of cleaning the teeth afterwards with a pocket knife, soon forced us to feel that we were not surrounded by the generals, colonels, and majors of the old world; and that the dinner hour was to be any thing rather than an hour enjoyment. (Trollope *D.M.* 20)

The navigation experience entails what Foulke has defined as the "anatomy of society": that is American manners are here being judged according to the standards of "civility" and "politeness" of pre-Victorian England, and Trollope's affirmation of her cultural identity has been made even clearer. A "Lady" and a "stranger", as she was used to describing herself, in fact, she chooses not to

speak overtly about “etiquette” on this occasion<sup>20</sup>, yet she cannot ignore the principle that in the 1830s this was the only “effectual barrier against the innovations of the vulgar”, and that conventions in her country were instrumental in “the construction of the [...] (upper) middle-classes” (Langland 27). Apart from the sociological significance of civil conduct in the Old World, it seems clear that, for her, it would help respect the “delicacy” of American ladies too, and solve the problem of “[t]he separation of the sexes” which is “no where more remarkable on board the steam-boats” (Trollope *D.M.* 138), and it is certainly due to the fact that men “constantly drink spirit”, “chew tobacco and [...] spit incessantly in the presence of women” (Trollope *D.M.* 139).

The following passage is implicitly based on comparisons, and explains why river voyages would be more pleasant in the Old World:

I often used to amuse myself in fancying the different scene which such a vessel would display in Europe. The noble length of the gentlemen’s cabin would be put into requisition for a dance, while that of the ladies, with their delicious balcony, would be employed for refreshments, instead of sitting down in two long silent melancholy rows, to swallow as much coffee and beef-steak as could be achieved in ten minutes. Then song and music would be heard borne along by the midnight breeze; but on the Ohio, when the light failed to shew us bluffs, and the trees, with their images inverted in the stream, we crept into our little cots, listening to the ceaseless churning of the engine, in hope it would prove a lullaby till morning. (Trollope *D.M.* 139-140)

It is apparent here that Trollope was not ready to consider reality from an alternative perspective, that of the “Other”. In her third work, for instance, *The Old World and the New*, Geraldine, one of the main female characters, will posit that “American ladies are very apt to criticise severely the attire of most other countries, particularly of English women” (Trollope *O.N.* 307); in *Domestic Manners*, on the contrary, places and people will continue to be seen through the narrator’s eyes only. The reader will hear her complain about the “unhealthy” shores of the Ohio river (Trollope *D.M.* 31); he or she will understand why “narrow streams” are defined more beautiful and importantly, what observation angle is the preferred one. The pictures of the “pretty brawling” ones near Covington in *The Old World and the New* (Trollope *O.N.* 298) probably have their inter-textual roots in the following passage:

From the time of quitting the Ohio river, though unquestionably, it merits its title of “the beautiful”, especially when compared with the dreary Mississippi, I strongly felt the truth of an observation I remembered to have heard in England, that little rivers were more beautiful than great ones. As features in a landscape, this is assuredly the case. Where the stream is so wide that the objects on the opposite shore are indistinct, all the beauty must be derived from the water itself; whereas, when the stream is narrow, it becomes only a part of the composition. The Monongahela, which is in size between the Wye and the Thames, is infinitely more picturesque than the Ohio. To enjoy the beauty of the vast rivers of this vast country you must be upon water; and then the power of changing the scenery by now approaching one shore, and now the other, is very pleasing; but travelling as we now did, by land, the wild, rocky, narrow, rapid little rivers we encountered, were a thousand times more beautiful. The Potapsco, near which the road runs, as you approach Baltimore, is at many points picturesque. The large blocks of

---

<sup>20</sup> Evidence of Trollope’s criticism about American “etiquette” can be found in Chapters VII, XIII, XIV, and XXVIII.

grey rock, now close upon its edge, and now retiring to give room for a few acres of bright green herbage, give great interest and variety to its course. (Trollope *D.M.* 155)

Pivotal in Cesareo's essay on *Anthropology and Literature* (2002), the nexus between the "travelling eye" and the "travelling gaze" is said to erase objectivity, and to make every piece of odeporic literature a "self-affirming event"<sup>21</sup>. The Lacanian implications of this theoretical principle, those relating to the opposition between the narrator's "description" and "possession" of the "Other", have also recently been analysed by Bill Ashcroft<sup>22</sup>. Writing on her observation perspectives, in fact, she posits that she can remember about what she had heard in England – that "little rivers are more beautiful than great ones", and that "when the stream is narrow, it becomes only a part of the composition" – and she immediately compares the Monongahela to the Wye and the Thames. As for the Potapsco, which is more clearly defined at a topographical level, it is said to be "at many points picturesque" too. Again, her idea about little rivers is not only the product of her personal taste, but also of her inability to leave behind cultural aesthetic models of pre-Victorian England.

Finally, Trollope, as a first-person narrator, establishes a connection between travelling modes and the "Other". She writes that "travelling as [she and her group] were doing, by land, the wild, rocky, narrow, rapid little rivers [they] encountered, were a thousand times more beautiful". Seemingly, when she was far from the claustrophobic spaces on steam boats, and "all trace of a road" was lost (Trollope *D.M.* 27), she could appreciate American Nature, and was more receptive to what was new to her.

#### **4. Land Routes and the Water Element: The Ineffable Beauty of the Niagara Falls**

Our Autumn walks were delightful; the sun ceased to scorch; the want of flowers was no longer peculiar to Ohio; and the trees took a colouring, which in richness, brilliance, and variety, exceeded all description. I think it is the maple, or sugar-tree, that first sprinkles the forest with rich crimson; the beech follows, with all its harmony of golden tints, from pale yellow up to brightest orange. The dogwood gives almost the purple colour of the mulberry; the chestnut softens all its frequent mass of delicate brown, and the sturdy oak carries its deep green into the very lap of winter. These tints are too bright for the landscape painter; the attempt to follow nature in an American autumn scene must be abortive. The colours are in reality extremely brilliant, but the medium through which they are seen increases the effect surprisingly. Of all the points in which America has the advantage of England, the one I felt most sensibly was the clearness and brightness of the atmosphere. By day and by night this exquisite purity of air gives tenfold beauty to every object. (Trollope *D.M.* 81)

During Trollope's more pleasurable and appreciable voyages by land, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* is rich in people and places Apart from the above mentioned passage, which we

---

<sup>21</sup> Further information on this principle is in Cesareo 169.

<sup>22</sup> The difference between the "travelling eye" and the "travelling gaze" to indicate the narrator's possible tendency to appropriate the "Other" is in Ashcroft 229-230.

consider unique for its paratactic simplicity and extraordinary chromatism, it is possible to read about “the dark windings of the pretty Licking” (Trollope, *D.M.* 133) in the State of Kentucky, about the “splendor” of the whole region of the Alleghany mountains (Trollope *D.M.* 147), and about the great falls of the Potomac. For Trollope, the latter especially are “awfully sublime”, and “appal the senses” (Trollope *D.M.* 183). Of course, there are several other perspectives in the book. At the end of her stay, for instance, Trollope complains that in New York “the hackney coaches are “abominably dear, and [that] it is necessary to be on the *qui vive* in making your bargain with the driver” (Trollope *D.M.* 273), but she is still firmly convinced that travelling by land is the best way of appreciating Nature in America. Chapter XXXII is a key chapter from this perspective: she visits Trenton Falls, “only second in fame to Niagara” – needless to say, she is early “a-foot” and “walks through the dark forest” (Trollope *D.M.* 290) – and, finally, she reaches Niagara. Once she gets there, though, she trembles “like a fool”, and cannot even speak:

I can only say that wonder, terror, and delight completely overwhelmed me. I wept with a strange mixture of pleasure and pain, and certainly was, for some time, too violently affected in the *physique* to be capable of much pleasure; but when this emotion of the senses subsided, and I had recovered some degree of composure, my enjoyment was very great indeed. [...] Exactly at the Fall, it is the Fall and nothing else you have to look upon; there are not as at Trenton, mighty rocks and towering forests, there is only the waterfall. [...] The noise is greatly less than I expected; one can hear with perfect distinctness every thing said in in an ordinary tone, when quite close to the cataract. [...] The colour of the water, before this rebound hides it in foam and mist, is of the brightest and most delicate green; the violence of the impulse sends it far over the precipice before it falls, and the effect of the ever varying light through its transparency is, I think, the loveliest thing I ever looked upon. (Trollope *D.M.*, 296)

As Zijlstra’s philosophical approach to “the ineffable” demonstrates, the “aesthetic image” (the one that especially in the Romantic period reconciled opposite terms like “idea and sensoriness”, “time and eternity”, “reality and eternity”) and “defective” language are closely linked.<sup>23</sup> It may be for this reason that Trollope feels strong emotions about such a spectacular view, and that its “violence” leaves her speechless. An almost Romantic description of the beauties of American Nature,<sup>24</sup> that of the Niagara Falls in *Domestic Manners*, will be re-used in Trollope’s future literary production. Inter-textual connections with *The Refugee in America: A Novel*<sup>25</sup> show Emily, one of the main characters, “trembl[ing] and ador[ing]” “before” what she defines as “the altar of the living God!” (Trollope *R.A.* 9). The product of the pleasures of her voyages by land, it testifies

---

<sup>23</sup> On the concept of the ineffable, see Zijlstra, particularly Chapter 1.

<sup>24</sup> On Trollope’s use of a Romantic style in her passage on the Niagara Falls, see Ellis 59-76.

<sup>25</sup> 1832 edition of Trollope’s *A Refugee on America*.

to an even more direct relation between “Self” and the “Other”, and to an even more central role of this natural element.

### **Final Reflections**

Trollope continued to write about America and its civilisation in *The Refugee in America: A Novel* (1832), and in *The New World and the Old* (1849). She experimented with new narrative modes and topics, but always privileged the voyage-by-land dimension (Chapter XX (D.M.) though is an exception from this point of view: she writes that she wanted to “take her passage in the steam-boat” because she “wished to see the celebrated Chesapeak bay”, and argues that during that “beautiful little voyage” it was possible become even more aware “of the gigantic proportion of the country” (Trollope *D.M.* 163)).

This analysis attests to the changes in Trollope’s perception of the New World, and shows that her rare forms of enthusiasm were the product of her experience as a solo traveller, or of the direct, unfiltered contacts she had with Nature. For her, open spaces were definitely better, physical vicinity with American people was unbearable and confronting “Otherness” was painful. Kissel in *Frances Trollope’s Insight into the American Identity in “Domestic Manners of the Americans”* (1994), confirms that she never really accepted the American way of life. She complained that “scholars and men of reading” (Trollope *DM.* 70) were not learned enough, that women were kept in a condition of socio-political inferiority, and that even the religious system in the country was full of “strange anomalies” (Trollope *D.M.* 84). Although she never wanted to comment on “the democratic form of American government” (Trollope *D.M.* 7), she nevertheless sharply criticized it, and was utterly against slavery and assassination.

Trollope’s four-year stay in the New World definitely reinforced her national, class, and gender identity. From this perspective, comparing *Domestic Manners of the Americans* to white travel narratives, particularly to those which “invoke a ceremonial affirmation of status” (Hardack 49), may explain why, when she decided to go back to England in mid June 1830, she was ready both for a new Transatlantic passage, and her future life:

But the time was come to bid adieu! The important business of securing our homeward passage was to be performed. One must know what it is to cross the ocean before the immense importance of all the little details of accommodation can be understood. The anxious first look into the face of the captain, to ascertain if he be gentle or rough; [...] the accurate, but rapid glance of measurement thrown round the little state-rooms; another at the good or bad arrangement of the stair-case. [...] At length, however, this interesting affair was settled, and most happily. (Trollope *D.M.* 313)



## Works Cited

- Abbess Ellis, Linda. *Frances Trollope's America. Four Novels*. New York: Peter Lang, 1993. Print.
- Ashcroft, Bill. "Travel and Power." *Travel Writing, Form, and Empire: The Poetics and Politics of Mobility*. Eds. Julia Kuhen and Paul Smethurst. Abingdon: Routledge, 2008. 229-242. Print.
- Bassnett, Susan. "Travel Writing and Gender." *Travel Writing*. Eds. Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. 225-241. Print.
- Blanton, Casey. *The Self and the World*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2002. Print.
- Cesareo, Mario. "Anthropology and Literature. Of Bedfellows and Illegitimate Offspring." *Between Anthropology and Literature. An Interdisciplinary Discourse*. Ed. Rose De Angelis. London and New York: Routledge, 2002. 158-176. Print.
- Chappell, David. *Double Ghosts: Oceanian Voyagers on Euroamerican Ships*. Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1997. Print.
- Cheng, Chu-Chueh. "Frances Trollope's America and Anna Leonowen's Siam. Questionable Travel and Problematic Writing." *Gender, Genre, & Identity in Women's Travel Writing*. Ed. Kristi Siegel. New York: Peter Lang, 2004. 123-165. Print.
- Clark, Steve H. *Travel Writing and the Empire: Post-Colonial Theory in Transit*. London: Zed Books, 1999. Print.
- Coke, Edward Thomas. *A Subaltern's Furlough: Description of Scenes in Various Parts of the United States... During the Summer and Autumn of 1832*. London, 1833. Print.
- Cohen, Margaret. *The Novel and the Sea*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010. Print.
- De Angelis, Rose, ed. *Between Anthropology and Literature. Interdisciplinary Discourse*. London and New York: Routledge, 2002. Print.
- Foulke, Robert. *The Sea Voyage Narrative*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2002. Print.
- Hooper, Glenn, and Tim Youngs. *Perspectives in Travel Writing*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2004. Print.
- Hardack, Richard. "Water Rites: Navigating Passage and Social Transformation in American Slave and Travel Narratives." *Multiculturalism: Roots and Realities*. Ed. C. James Trotman. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002. 49-76. Print.
- Hulme, Peter, and Tim Youngs, eds. *Travel Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. Print.
- Jenkins, Ruth Y. "The Gaze of the Victorian Woman Traveller: Spectacles and Phenomena." *Gender, Genre, & Identity in Women's Travel Writing*. Ed. Kristi Siegel. New York: Peter Lang, 2004. 15-29. Print.
- Jolly, Margaret, Serge Tcherkézoff, and Darrell Trevor Tryon. *Oceanic Encounters. Exchange, Desire, Violence*. Canberra: ANUE Press, 2009. Print.
- Kissel, Susan S. "Frances Trollope's Insight into the American Identity in *Domestic Manners of the Americans*", *The Midwest Quarterly*, 35. 4 (1994). Print.
- Klein, Bernhard. *Fictions of the Sea. Critical Perspectives on the Ocean in British Literature and Culture*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002. Print.
- Kuhen, Julia, and Paul Smethurst, eds. *Travel Writing, Form and the Empire: The Poetics and Politics of Mobility*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2008. Print.
- Langland, Elizabeth. *Nobody's Angels. Class Women and Domestic Ideology in Victorian Culture*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995. Print.
- Mills, Sara. *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism*. London: Routledge, 1991. Print.
- Neville-Sington, Pamela. "Introduction". *Domestic Manners of the Americans. By Fanny Trollope*. London: Penguin, 1997. vii-xli. Print.
- Neville-Sington, Pamela. *Fanny Trollope. The Life and Adventure of a Clever Woman*. London: Viking, 1997. Print.



Parent Frazee, Monique. *Mrs. Trollope and America*. Caen: Université de Caen, 1969. Print.

Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Abingdon: Routledge, 2007. Print.

Ransom, Teresa. *Fanny Trollope. A Remarkable Life*. New Baskerville: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1995. Print.

Schmidt, Lawrence K., ed. *Language and Linguisticality in Gadamer's Hermeneutics*. Lanham and Oxford: Lexington Books, 2000. Print.

Schmidt, Lawrence K, ed. "Language in a Hermeneutic Ontology". *Language and Linguisticality in Gadamer's Hermeneutics*. Ed. Lawrence K. Schmidt. Lanham and Oxford: Lexington Books, 2000. 1-8. Print.

Siegel, Kristi, ed. *Gender, Genre, & Identity in Women's Travel Writing*. New York: Peter Lang, 2004. Print.

Sorensen, Janet. "Literature of the Ocean." *Transatlantic Studies. Literary Studies, 1660-1830*. Eds. Eve Tavor Bannet and Susan Manning. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. 124-138. Print.

Tavor Bannet, Eve, and Susan Manning, eds. *Transatlantic Literary Studies, 1660- 1830*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print.

Todorov, Tzvetan. *The Conquest of America. The Question of the Other*. Norman (OK): University of Oklahoma Press, 1984. Print.

Trollope Fanny, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*. Ed. Pamela Neville-Sington. London: Penguin, 1997. Print.

Trollope, Mrs. *The Refugee in America: A Novel. In Three Volumes*. London: Whittaker, 1832. Print.

Trollope, Mrs. *The Old World and the New*. London: Colburn Publisher, 1849. Print

Trotman, C. James, ed. *Multiculturalism: Roots and Realities*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002. Print.

Zijlstra, Onno. *Language, Image and Silence: Kirkegaard and Witgenstein on Ethics and Aesthetics*. Bern: Peter Lang, 1998. Print.

### **About the author**

Manuela D'Amore Ph.D. is currently a *ricercatrice* of English literature at the University of Catania (Italy). Her research areas include Gender Studies, Translation Studies, and Odeporic literature; the Late Stuart Era, the Augustan Age, and the Victorian Age. She has translated and edited Eliza Haywood's *Anti-Pamela* (1741), W.M. Rossetti's *The P.R.B. Journal (1848-1853)*, and John Oxenham's *The Cedar Box* (1918). The author of essays on Mary Astell, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Eliza Haywood's *Masquerade Novels*, and D.G. Rossetti's poetic production, she has also worked on 1700 English travellers to America.