

Ingrid Horrocks, *Women Wanderers and the Writing of Mobility, 1784-1814*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2017. 306 pp. \$30.99. ISBN: 978-1-107-18223-3.

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What if wandering does not imply freedom? What if the notion of mobility bespeaks pressure rather than capability? What if the travelers cannot enjoy their journey, tour, residence, and wandering as they are supposed to? These are the doubts that Ingrid Horrocks garners from the texts of the eighteenth-century British women writers. The analogy between freedom and travel has been problematized in Celeste Langan's *Romantic Vagrancy: Wordsworth and the Simulation of Freedom* (1995). Langan questions the abstraction of freedom in liberalism which provides the analogical ground for the poet and the vagrant at the formal level. Following Langan's problematics, Horrocks explores the unfreedom and the coercion suffered by women wanderers that lack the concrete substance for liberty owned solely by their male counterparts. Horrocks excavates from those texts the figure of the "reluctant woman wanderer" which is distinguished from the male, ideal travelers or wanderers who set the tone of the aesthetics of that activity (14). To leave one's home is to encounter the stranger, or in a more theoretical strain, the Other. Horrocks takes up the mission of mobility studies which attempts to turn away from the dominant and hegemonic cultural movements while bringing up the marginal and non-authoritative ones emphasized in *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto* (2010) edited by Stephen Greenblatt. The contact with the strange, the different, the subaltern, or the marginal subjects forces travelers to participate in an affective closeness. For the Romantics, wandering always involves "sympathy" and "vision" (19). A person not only moves but is also moved by others. Yet distance is required for proper sympathy celebrated by the male thinkers. Without a safe separation from the suffering Other, the sympathizers would find themselves caught in harmful psychological agitation.

Readers will unsurprisingly learn that female travelers do not have the privilege to keep that emotional distance when they follow Horrocks's significant contrast between male aesthetics and female experience. The social

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and cultural differences between male and female writers-travelers have been explored by Elizabeth Bohls, to whom Horrocks is much indebted, in *Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics, 1716-1818* (1995). The framework of center/periphery, subject/object, and abstraction/specificity that structures the gendered discourse of aesthetics is fundamental to Horrocks's critique of travel literatures. Male poets, like Alexander Pope, James Thomson, Oliver Goldsmith, and William Cowper, present themselves as a "poet-viewer," who occupies a "stable and centralized position" without which they will get lost in their travels (43). Instead of getting in touch with the strangers and their surroundings, those "traveler-poets" only use their eyes as the empirical means which can rest at a fixed place (52). That center is the anchor keeping the traveler-poet from going astray and serves as a Miltonic "paradise within" where he can always settle safely (67). Nonetheless, certainty and security which characterize how a male poet-wanderer experiences the world cannot be enjoyed by the female wanderers. Charlotte Smith features distinctively "the poet-observer as exiled wanderer," a figure derived from her own experience as a homeless exile, in her poem *The Emigrants* (1793; 69-70). The poet herself has to be exposed to the threat of wandering and suffer the pain with the outsiders. Unlike her male predecessors who can set a distance between them and the strangers, Smith "and the exiles are face to face" (75).

Wandering is not just a geographical movement, but a textual one. Horrocks engages with the idea that Romantic writers share reciprocal enlightenment in their own formation as an author, which is pinpointed by Susan Wolfson in *Romantic Interaction: Social Being and the Turns of Literary Action* (2010). Horrocks translates brilliantly this reciprocity into textual mobility. Reading and writing, when treated as an interactive activity, connect readers and writers from different generations and places. Writers like Charlotte Smith, Ann Radcliffe, and Mary Wollstonecraft like to quote and make allusions. These two textual devices serve different purposes for them and their characters/narrators. On the one hand, Smith quotes lines from male poets to acknowledge the masculine tradition in *The Emigrants*, specifically from *King Lear* to express the absence of "any space of retreat and stability" (78). On the other hand, she demonstrates through quoting her own poems in *Elegiac Sonnets* (1784) "a poetics of alienation from one's own poetic voice" (88) in that a more desperate feeling occurs when she no longer finds accessible "the

former version of oneself" (102). The varied functions of quotations evince Smith's faltering confidence in sympathy in her late poems.

As for Ann Radcliffe, references to others' works have a communal implication. The development of Emily in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) demonstrates how literature provides a sense of community. Inversely, restrictions on movement spoil her literary activity. She cannot read during her imprisonment, and such a failure suggests her "stymied ability to connect to others through literature" (118). Radcliffe perceives the promise of poetry that "expand[s] beyond an individual consciousness in a way that is creative, constructive, and relies on a communitarian concept of selfhood" (123). In contrast to Radcliffe, Wollstonecraft does not entertain in *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796) the former's optimistic view of the companionship of literature. Ideologically, she rejects the privileged male travelers's role "as an elevated, *unmoved*, or *impartial* spectator" and insists on the identity of "a woman, who writes and lives as a moving participant" (142). Textually, she still quotes male poets' works, however inadequate she finds them to express her feelings, in a way that foreshadows an empty space from which she seeks to acquire a potential new voice. Quotations and allusions staged as "the oppressiveness of the conventional" become the wake-up call to her readers to "unmake [their] assumptions about travel, travel narratives, and the more general meanings of mobility" (165). As a revolutionary figure, Wollstonecraft never stays put but keeps moving forward and asks for the impossible.

Aside from quotations and allusions, the syntactic structure in a work is driven home by Horrocks as well. She focuses particularly on Frances Burney in this regard. To counteract the negative receptions of Burney's contemporary commentators, the problem of "unreadability" of *The Wanderer; or, Female Difficulties* (1814) is reframed as textual evidence reflective to the harsh conditions of women wanderers (169-70). Sentences echo the mobility of Juliet, the heroine of the novel. Horrocks discovers that "Burney's most unwieldy sentences recurrently appear at moments when Juliet is forced to move from one situation to another" and at "moments of reluctant acceptance" in which the protagonist suppresses her initial reaction to distasteful things (178). No wonder that Burney's contemporary critics cannot appreciate her narrative style. In discordance with Samuel Johnson's "balance sentences," a specific and unique syntactic rendering is done by her to reflect women's "painful, enforced

relinquishment of thought and agency” (180). The false universality established by men is critiqued in *The Wanderer* as well. “The three tenets of the traveler’s prospect view: disinterested, disembodiment, and distance” are unworkable for Juliet, who tries to elude the chaser in the New Forest (188). Far from being the viewer, Juliet is further objectified under male gazes casted by other men in that same place. Juliet’s experience taken into account, aesthetic appreciation cannot remain neutral but has to be critically examined.

The dichotomy between aesthetics (men) and experience (women) is not always static when they interact with each other, especially through literary reception. Even though the gendered limit or distance is hard to resolve, a new movement is perceivably taking shape. The above-studied women writers who write under the patriarchal tradition struggle to express their specific feelings and find ways to slit through the prison door of paternal language, but their stunted achievement influences significantly their descendants who create works with those precursors’ textual and tonal guide. Horrocks argues that “the reluctant woman wanderer” contributes to the understanding of the “distressed women” in the Romantic tradition (211). William Wordsworth who reads Smith and Burney becomes an example of someone who tries to integrate female voices and women’s narratives into his poems. Wordsworth makes clear that his male Wanderer in *The Excursion* “can afford to suffer” (205). Such a poet-narrator drives readers to question a figure who can feel and record others’ pain while “carry[ing] on with his journey, seemingly unaffected” (208). More gender-conscious than the preceding male writers, the Romantics pinpoint the differences between the male and the female wanderers who enjoy dissimilar social resources and confront with distinct realities. Such explicit positioning of gendered travelers challenges their predecessor’s seemingly universal standard.

The only aspect that Horrocks has not given a satisfactory amount of attention to is the material condition of those writers, narrators, and characters. The author emphasizes from time to time that inequality is the reason for women’s wandering, but poverty and the lack of financial security of those women still deserve more in-depth analyses. Although Horrocks have made such a case particularly well in her interpretations of Wollstonecraft and Burney, readers could have got better chances to look into economic inequality of women at that period if Horrocks had explored the issue more comprehensively with the sharpness she has proven in reading the literary and

the historical materials. This book can be more successful with the reciprocal triad of the emotional, the textual, and the material. Despite such a deficiency, *Women Wanderers and the Writing of Mobility, 1784-1814* should be read by those who wish to understand the difficulties of travel in history experienced by British women and follow the footprints they trudged to leave on the roads of their literary productions.

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