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A British Glance over the American
Landscape: Frances Trollope, Harriet
Martineau, Charles Dickens and their
perspective on the Mississippi River and
the Niagara Falls

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Introduction

This dissertation focuses on travel during the nineteenth century in the United States. Many prominent Victorian writers wrote travel accounts, among these Frances Trollope, Harriet Martineau and Charles Dickens who wrote respectively *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, *Retrospect of Western Travel* and *American Notes for General Circulation*. My focus is on these British authors' points of view when approaching America, on the ways they confronted the "New world" dealing with cultural and personal preconceptions. I have chosen these three authors due to the historical period they share, the first half of the nineteenth century, and their different backgrounds. Frances Trollope was a middle-class English woman who lived with her husband and their children in a huge mansion in the British countryside, Harriet Martineau a sociologist and writer who was very well-known both in England and America for her hugely successful work *Illustrations of Political Economy* while Charles Dickens was at the apex of his popularity when he left for the United States. Dickens was one of the most famous English novelists known for his focus on social issues and social injustices in Victorian England. My choice to include two female writers is due to the change of role that women were experiencing towards the beginning of the nineteenth century in the public sphere.

By assuming that travel writing is a form of narrative, this dissertation argues that each traveller approached America from his/her own point of view and that it affected how they saw this country and how they related their opinions and ideas regarding the New World in their travelogues. I concentrate on point of view in travel and travel writing in the United States of these British authors whose travelogues were all written within the decade 1832-1842. These dates mark respectively the publication of Frances Trollope's *Domestic Manners* and Charles Dickens's *American Notes*. Point of view is the central focus of my argument. More specifically, in the main body of this thesis I explore two major landscape subjects for travel writers in the United States: the Mississippi River and the Niagara Falls. These landscapes are significant in terms of point of view since they seem problematic for the travellers to describe. With this in mind, I argue that several factors have influenced the travellers' perspectives on these two landscapes. Those taken into account in this dissertation are technology, aesthetic theories of beauty in nature and the personal interests of the travellers. Besides, this thesis hinges upon the premise that point of view is both a visual and a

narrative concept. Travellers, in fact, had the possibility to see the landscape directly, this enabled them to see through their visual point of view. Later, they usually turned their impressions into written travel books in order to share their experience. The visual point of view was thus transformed into a narrative point of view. These perspectives may coincide, or be separate by time and space. In fact, travellers could see before writing or writing before seeing. However, all the writers examined visited these landscapes before writing about them and sometimes their visual point of view recorded in letters and diaries did not agree with their narrative point of view in their published travelogues.

Chapter one introduces British travel writing in the nineteenth century. Also presented in this chapter are the primary authors and texts of this dissertation. The chapter can thus be divided into two parts. The first part aims to discuss the function of point of view in the genre of the travelogue as well as the role of the narrator. It then moves to delineate the main characteristics of British travel writing. In the second part, the chapter focuses on the authors taken into consideration in this dissertation, namely Frances Trollope, Harriet Martineau and Charles Dickens. It outlines the reasons which encouraged them to depart from England to the New World, then it sketches a general overview of their travels and it ends by examining specific methodologies employed in order to study and depict America and the Americans in their travelogues.

The second chapter focuses on the Mississippi River and the factors which apparently impacted their points of view. Two factors seem to have played a major role. Firstly, the fact that they observed the river from the steamboat and secondly the European ideas of aesthetic beauty which Edmund Burke had contributed to spread in England. Travel technology and its implications for travellers is therefore one of the main subjects discussed in this chapter. On the one hand, more could be seen and more ground could be covered by using more technological means, on the other hand it caused repercussions on how the land was seen. The development of steam power seem to have affected the perspective and narrative of the travellers. Secondly, the treatise by Edmund Burke *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* is taken into examination in this dissertation in relation to the Mississippi River scenery and the Niagara Falls. Burke's aesthetic ideas on the beautiful are thus, introduced and I examine to which extent these qualities were shared by the travellers as well as to which extent these influenced their appreciation of the Mississippi River scenery. In the light of this, I shall illustrate the sort of landscape which was widespread and appreciated among English travellers. Finally, the chapter examines Martineau's original description of the river and it attempts to explain the reasons which lie at the basis of her

different assessment of the river.

The third chapter continues the study of point of view by bringing into focus the landscape of the Niagara Falls. This part analyses the concept of the sublime and its connections with the Niagara Falls landscape. The attributes which were generally related to sublime sceneries seem to be strongly reflected in the image of Niagara which emerges from the British travelogues. For this reason this chapter aims to examine to which extent the ideas concerning the sublime may have impacted Trollope's, Martineau's and Dickens's points of view on the Falls. However, this concept underwent a very complex evolution throughout the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries in England. For some the sublime was the terrifying vast and powerful, for others it provided sensations of peace and comfort. These various uses originate from the rich and complex development of the term. In the light of this, the chapter attempts to assess the conception of the sublime that the travellers seem to share as well as to study their different responses to the Niagara Falls.

A brief conclusion draws all the results achieved together and attempts to discuss the impact of the various factors on point of view for British travellers and to establish the links between their points of view and the narratives which came from them. I argue that point of view is a complex concept which is usually determined by the interaction of several factors. Those taken into consideration in this thesis are the European aesthetic canons of the beautiful and the sublime, steamboat travel and the travellers' personal interests.

Leaving England

In the nineteenth century British and Americans travelled to each other's country and then published chronicles of their journeys. Hundreds of narratives by British visitors fill the shelves of libraries and bookshops in the form of novels, journals, letters or diaries. Travel writing has flourished through the ages, and early travel accounts by travelers continue to be valued as a significant source of information about cultures and places. Although there is a consistent pattern of travel writing through the centuries, travelogues witnessed their greatest commercial success in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These travellers crossed the Atlantic for several reasons. They went on business, to accompany wealthier travellers to help and to entertain them, some documented their journey in order to write a book in England, some were correspondents and others went there to rest or to visit relatives and friends. For these curious English visitors the journey to the New World may be compared to the Grand Tour of Europe, which was undertaken mainly by middle and upper class young men as an educational rite of passage. This study begins with a theoretical introduction of point of view which is discussed in relation to British travel writing in the nineteenth century. In particular I consider the travelogues of Frances Trollope, Harriet Martineau and Charles Dickens, outlining their motivations for leaving England, the form and content of their travelogues, and providing a general overview of their journeys.

1. 1 Point of view

Issues of point of view are central in this study. Travellers who lived in the United States during the nineteenth century adopted different perspectives when approaching the American continent which affected how their eyes examined and observed the New World. Peter Conrad says that “the reality of America is selective, optional, fantastic: there is an America for each of us”.¹ What he is seemingly suggesting is that there is not a single idea of

¹ Peter Conrad, *Imagining America* (London: Routledge, 1980), 4.

America but many different Americas, one for each of us who wish to visit or read about this vast continent. This process gave birth to a multitude of ideas of America, each reflecting the single point of view of each author, some may bear a likeness, some may contrast, others may share some affinities but they are all centred on the same subject: the America land. Jenna Blum in *The Author at Work* has compared point of view to a camera: “when you are reading a scene in a book and when you are writing a scene, you follow the character almost like a camera on the character's shoulder or in the character's head. You are looking at the character performing a specific set of actions or important actions in vivid detail”.² According to Jenna Blum, readers see characters and situations through the author's eyes. The process is then compared to a camera. The moment when the photographer takes a picture he usually looks into the objective in order to focus the scene, he decides what to include in his frame and what to exclude and eventually he takes the photograph. Likewise, British visitors, when addressing America, embraced a certain perspective which influenced their gaze and their consequent opinions. Perceptions of the United States have evolved and altered throughout time and space and certain factors have played a significant role in influencing the British point of view.

Adopting a point of view in literature is thus one of the first steps for the writer who should be aware of the intricacies and consequences of viewpoint and consider how it will impact the story. Telling a story from a point of view is key to the formation of travel narratives. As Adam Hallet contends in fact “point of view is both visual and a narrative term and therefore can apply to the experience of travelling as well as the creation of narrative”.³ Point of view can both refer to the perspective adopted by these writers when seeing America and the perspective adopted later when reporting their American experience, since, as Angelo Marchese points out, talking is strictly connected to seeing.⁴ Thus, point of view could be regarded as a means of explaining differences of perception while travelling and as a narrative tool to explain its effects on narratives. An author then can apply his point of view to the facts recounted while writing just as the traveller applies his point of view while observing. When Henry James is talking of what advice he could give to the writer who is starting his literary career in *Letter to the Deerfield Summer School* he alludes to this twofold nature of the point of view.

2 Jenna Blum, *The Modern Scholar: The Author at Work, The Art of Writing Fiction* (Recorded Books, 2013), Disk 1, Track 14-15.

3 Adam Hallet, “America Seen: British and American Nineteenth Century Travels in the United States” (PhD thesis, University of Exeter, UK, 2010), 23.

4 Angelo Marchese, *L'Officina del Racconto: Semiotica della Narratività* (Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1983), 92.

Any point of view is interesting that is a direct impression of life. You each have an impression colored by your individual conditions; make that into a picture, a picture framed by your own personal wisdom, your glimpse of the American world. The field is vast for freedom, for study, for observation, for satire, for truth.⁵

“Make that into a picture, a picture framed by your own personal wisdom” says Henry James. With these words he alludes to the work of the writer who needs to see the outer world and reshape his first impressions into a narrative. James is here apparently expressing “the manifesto for all travel writers”⁶ by explaining that point of view is an ordering device both for seeing and writing which emphasises firstly the observer and secondly “the framing of the object”.⁷ Hence, I suggest that travellers order their experiences using narrative, attempting to represent through their personal point of view both the travel and the land through which they travelled.

1.1.1 Travel Books as Narratives

When British travellers came home after experiencing months and years in the United States they were reflecting whether writing a book regarding their American experience. As mentioned in the paragraph above, these visitors studied and observed America with different perspectives, which then affected their travelogues. After deciding to expand their notes into a narrative account, they needed to construct travel as a narrative, thereby to order their journeys and shape them into a story which may be read by thousands of readers. In order to consider point of view as a narrative element to interpret travel writing, travel writing must first be proven to be a narrative. Narratological conceptions of point of view and narrative have been employed in order to explain and explore the role of the author and the narrator in the construction of travel narratives. A German school of narrative theorists investigated on the meaning of the term. Wolf Schmidt, its most famous representative provides the first definition of what is a narrative according to modern narrative theories in his book *Narratology: An introduction*. He explains that “a text [is] qualified as a narrative if it contained specific communicative characteristics. Narration was bound to the presence of a mediating authority, the narrator, and contrasted with the direct presentation of events in the

⁵ Henry James and Leon Edel, *Selected Letters* (USA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 226.

⁶ Hallet, “America Seen,” 24.

⁷ Ibid.

drama”.⁸ The definition provided by Schmid apparently implies the presence of a “mediating authority” combined with “the direct presentation of events.” This contrast may elucidate the presence of a twofold voice inside the narrative, the first, the author who tells the story, the second, the author who experiences events. Moreover, a third function suggested by Schmid is the need to communicate. Both author and narrator are thus apparently impelled by the need to communicate their story to an imaginary reader. Thus, the mediation which Schmid seems to talk of here is probably the narrative point of view while the “direct presentation of events” seems closer to the visual point of view of the author. The second definition examined to investigate whether travel writing is narrative is taken from a structuralist perspective:

The defining characteristic of narration is not a feature of discourse or communication but rather a feature of what is narrated. Texts which we describe as narrative in the structuralist sense of the word contrast with descriptive texts in that they contain a temporal structure and represent changes of state.⁹

This second definition again discloses the presence of an author who crafts the narrative after travelling. This relation is probably conveyed through the “changes of state” in “temporal structure”. The structuralists, by emphasising these “changes of state”, identify the moment of experiencing and the moment of writing which are, as explained in the above quotation, separated by time. Using either of these definitions, travel texts I examine can be regarded as narratives since they share the presence of an author who travels and sees and a narrator who recounts the experience. Thus, the travelogues discussed in these pages are an example of narrative and therefore suitable subjects for the analysis of the visual and narrative point of view.

1.1.2 The Narrator

As discussed above, the travels experienced by these visitors are shaped into a narrative in which a narrating voice relates the events occurred during the journey along with emotions and opinions of the traveller himself. The narrator recounts what is occurring in the experience he is living. This, according to the French theorist Gérard Genette can be better

⁸ Wolf Schmid, *Narratology: An Introduction* (Germany: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 1.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

defined as “diegesis” meaning “the universe in which the story takes place”.¹⁰ In my study I refer to Genette in order to identify the role of the narrator inside the genre of the travelogue whereas I apply the theories of Wayne C. Booth to discuss the relationship between author and narrator. From the point of view of Genette, the narrating voice can be split into two distinct voices depending on whether the narrator is a character inside the story. Thus, he distinguishes between an homodiegetic narrator, who is part of the story and a heterodiegetic narrator who is not a character in the story. In the travelogues that I examine the narrator apparently corresponds to a homodiegetic voice who narrates in the first person the experience he has lived in the States. All these authors are totally part of the journeys they recount in fact they are relating their personal experience in which they are the main protagonist and fill their narratives with personal anecdotes.

As for the relationship between narrator and author I will call direct attention to the notions of implied author and undramatised narrator theorised by Wayne C. Booth in his book *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Booth begins the section devoted to the role of the narrator by stating that:

Perhaps the most overworked distinction is that of 'person'. To say that a story is told in the first or third person, and to group novels into one or the other kind will to specific desired effects.¹¹

As Booth maintains in the above quotation, the narrator does not apparently exist alone but it establishes relations with different elements inside the story and according to the techniques employed it aims to achieve “specific desired effects”. However, the most significant definitions provided by Booth for this study are those of implied author and undramatised narrator. When talking of the implied author Booth explains that he is:

An implicit picture of an author who stands behind the scenes, whether as stage-manager, as puppeteer, or as an indifferent God. [...] The implied author is always distinct from the 'real man', whatever he may take him to be, who creates a superior version of himself as he creates his work. [...] This second self is usually a highly refined and selected version, wiser, more sensitive, more perceptive than any real man could be.¹²

10 Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1988), 17.

11 Wayne Booth, “Distance and Point of View,” in *Essentials of the Theory of Fiction*, ed. Michael J. Hoffman and Patrick D. Murphy (USA: Duke University Press, 2005), 86.

12 Wayne Booth, *The Essential Wayne Booth* (USA: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 8.

The implied author, according to Booth, seems identifiable in a sort of alter ego of the author. He is distinguished from the real author, which is the term that I will use to identify the author who crafted the travelogue itself. He may be described as a wiser version of the author who knows the rules to construct a literary text and how to use narrative devices in order to produce the effects desired. “In so far as a novel does not refer directly to this author, there will be no distinction between him and the undramatised narrator,” Booth maintains.¹³ In the travelogues examined, the narrators do not seem to allude to a wiser alter ego while recounting their experiences. They simply refer to a first person narrator who recounts the events of the journey, thus it could be inferred that in these travelogues “there will be no distinction between him and the undramatised narrator”.¹⁴ When Booth provides the definition for the undramatised narrator he explains that:

Most tales are presented as passing through the consciousness of a teller, whether an 'I' or a 'he'. [...] When there is no such 'I', [...] the inexperienced reader may make the mistake of thinking that the story comes to him unmediated. But even the most naïve reader must recognise that something mediating and transforming has come into a story from the moment that the author explicitly places a narrator into the tale, even if he is given no personal characteristics whatever.¹⁵

As evidence suggests, the undramatised narrator can talk in first or third person and mediate the point of view of the author he is representing. According to the definition provided, the author and narrator's voice coincide, although the former lives outside the story he has crafted, the latter is part of the story who recounts and can even not be described neither morally nor physically. These characteristics seem reflected in the travelogues taken into consideration. Both Dickens, Trollope and Martineau relate their journeys by using the first person, which combines the voice of the author-traveller with the author-narrator. Thus, the narrator's voice tends to coincide with the voice of the author who has experienced the journey itself. Despite this connection between author and narrator, these voices appear temporally and spatially distanced. Wayne Booth talks accurately of the conception of distance in his book by stating that the narrators differ markedly “according to the degree and kind of distance that separates them from the author”.¹⁶ “The distance may be moral. It may be intellectual. It may be physical or temporal: most authors are distant from even the most knowing narrator in that

13 Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (USA: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 151.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid., 152.

16 Ibid., 155.

they presumably know how 'everything turns out in the end'.¹⁷ As he argues, although the narrator and the author's voice may correspond, the travellers Dickens, Trollope and Martineau appeared separated by "physical and temporal" distance from their narrators. The author-travellers, in fact, shaped the journey they had experienced into a travel book narrated by themselves at a different time and space than that of the journey. Frances Trollope, Harriet Martineau and Charles Dickens wrote notebooks, which formed the basis for their later travel books, which could have been revised and shaped according to their tastes and opinions. These writers could use chronological order to portray their journey, select only some events and experiences, suppress other parts, ordering events according to their point of view and insert digressions in order to give particular importance to certain topics. Moreover, according to Booth, authors usually know from the outset how the journey would end, while narrators do not, they are experiencing the journey at the moment of the narration. Considering that the voices of the narrator and the author coincide, I assume that there is not a moral or intellectual distance between them in the genre of the travelogue. Hence, even so minimally, as claimed by Chatman the "act of writing is always distanced from the correspondent's life" and can be revised and altered.¹⁸ In view of this, I suggest that the point of view of the author-traveller determines and affects the point of view of the undramatised narrator who at a different time and space moulds the journey into a travelogue.

Wayne Booth makes a final distinction between "self-conscious narrators", those who are aware of themselves as writers and "narrators or observers who rarely if ever discuss their writing chores or who seem unaware that they are writing, thinking, speaking or 'reflecting' a literary work".¹⁹ In the light of these definitions, it should be maintained that the travellers of this study may all be referred to as self-conscious narrators. As a consequence, they seem all highly aware of their role and of the impact of their travelogues on the American public opinion. Dickens in fact had been commissioned a travelogue and "knew the obligations he had incurred".²⁰ Unlike Dickens, Harriet Martineau and Frances Trollope did not know whether writing a travelogue from the beginning of their experience. They decided only later to convert their notes into travel books for several reasons. They appear aware of their role as writers since they decided spontaneously to write and to spread the knowledge and the opinions acquired along the journey. Frances Trollope, for instance in her conclusion

17 Ibid., 156.

18 Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 171.

19 Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 155.

20 Patrick McCarthy, "Truth in *American Notes*," in *Dickens, Europe and the New Worlds*, ed. Anny Sandrin (Houndmills: MacMillan, 1999), 70.

comments on her role as narrator by stating that she has “made [her] story already too long, and must not linger upon it farther” whereas Martineau discusses her role as a writer in the first pages of *Society in America*:

I was tempted to decline the task of generalising at all from what I saw and heard. In the intervals, however, I felt that this would be wrong. Men will never arrive at a knowledge of each other, if those who have the opportunity of foreign observation refuse to relate what they think they have learned; or even to lay before others the materials from which they themselves hesitate to construct a theory, or draw a large conclusion.²¹

She appears to identify the significance of her position as well as the prominence. As a traveller who had the opportunity to experience the American land she intends to spread her knowledge with the aim of improving the “knowledge of each other”.²² Therefore in the light of the narratological definitions provided by Wayne Booth, the examples studied so far tend to depict the narrators of the travelogues examined as undramatised and self-conscious.

When examining the role of the narrator in travel literature it seems that there is no typical travel account any more than there is a typical novel. In terms of narration, according to Percy Adams, three distinct tendencies could be inferred from the examples of travelogues available from the seventeenth to the twentieth century, although a few writers have studied the history of travel writing and thereby it is difficult to “theorise about”.²³ Firstly he contends that the majority of travel literature has been written in the third person. These travelogues thus appear to resemble to novels as far as the narrator is concerned. Secondly, he maintains that travelogues can be written in first-person by employing the personal pronoun I as memoirs or autobiographies. This narrative point of view apparently allowed the writer to give room to subjectivity and personal confessions. Thirdly, travels could be narrated through letters. This was a widespread technique in novels along the eighteenth century and was primarily established by Richardson's *Clarissa* and *Pamela*. However, when evaluating the role of the narrator and point of view of the travelogues investigated, it should be mentioned that the narrating voice relates the American journeys in first person. In the book *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel*, Adams emphasises the implied consequences of this choice. He maintains that British readers of the eighteenth century thought that

21 Harriet Martineau, *Society in America, Volume I* (New York: Saunders and Otley, 1842), iii.

22 Ibid.

23 Percy G. Adams, *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel* (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 1983), 161.

travelogues should be written in first person as in private journals, letters or in the epistolary novel, which was so popular at that time. In addition, he explains that between the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century subjectivity and landscape description acquired an increasing importance in travel literature. The first-person travel accounts would necessarily affect the content and the form of the travelogue.²⁴ Writing in first person allowed travel literature to give a consistently important role to subjectivity thus bringing the travelogue closer to the genre of autobiography and memoirs. By narrating in first person British visitors tended to open their hearts to emotions and feelings provoked by the contact with the New World, confess their opinions and concentrate on personal experiences. Trollope, Martineau and Dickens tend to stress their use of the first person. In *Domestic Manners* for instance, Trollope recounts several anecdotes happening during the journeys on stagecoach or steamboat, Martineau condemns firmly the “disregard of women”,²⁵ Dickens attacks the condition of prisoners who were spatially and mentally “locked up in their cells”²⁶ and both Dickens and Trollope by using their imagination, attempted to frame an image of America in their minds. Evidence shows that these authors explained their opinions and filled their travelogues with their personal experience and their emotions establishing the importance of subjectivity for the genre of travelogue. This tendency to subjectivity and first person narration in travel writing may be ascribable to the rise of the Romantic movement in England in the second half of the eighteenth century. This cultural and literary current established new trends and a new sensibility which attributed to feelings and imagination a primary role. The presence of the lyric I, the attention to Nature as a living force and the use of imagination may connect Romanticism with the examples of travel books studied. Moreover, these writings were all published in the first half of the nineteenth century which coincides with the development of the Romantic movement in England. As discussed so far, the narrator plays a significant role in understanding the point of view. He is separated from the author-traveller by time and space although their voices coincide. As a consequence, the undramatised narrator can revise and shape his work according to the point of view of the traveller who experienced the journey and decide how to convey his experience. Several narrative techniques may be employed to narrate in travel literature. The authors examined chose to recount their journeys by employing the first person which allowed more subjectivity and the tone of the personal confession, typical of memoirs and autobiographies.

24 Ibid., 162.

25 Martineau, *Society in America, Volume I*, 271.

26 Charles Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation* (Adelaide: The University of Adelaide Library, 1842), 67.

1.2 Travel writers

This thesis intends to examine the point of view of British authors when approaching the American continent. I have decided to focus on England and on the United States for the controversial relationship which has characterised these two countries since the eighteenth century. On the one hand, America was regarded as the land of possibility and opportunity for the inhabitants of the Old World, on the other hand Britain and America's relationship was characterised by conflicts and by a tense political atmosphere. Moreover, the United States represented the former British colony that had decided to separate from the motherland to start the new political experiment of democracy. Thus, several elements constituted this unstable and dangerous relationship. The authors taken into consideration belong to the first half of the nineteenth century and published their travelogues by 1842. They did not exhibit any group identity but shared the same social position, they all came from the literate upper and middle classes, and a common ambition, they all intended to witness and describe America truthfully.²⁷ The first is Frances Trollope who wrote *Domestic Manners of the Americans* in 1832, then Harriet Martineau published three volumes on her American experience titled *Retrospect of Western Travel* in 1838. Finally Charles Dickens published *American Notes for General Circulation* in 1842.

Although British male authors usually dominate the travel writing background of the nineteenth century reflecting the hegemony of male writers and their fame in the literary world this study focuses on two female writers, Frances Trollope and Harriet Martineau, testifying to the change of role which women were experiencing in the nineteenth century. However, the new role of women as well as the emergence of female travel writing will be better discussed in the following section of this thesis.

1.2.1 The Rise of Women Travel Writing

This thesis takes into consideration the travelogues by two women, Frances Trollope and Harriet Martineau, even though men usually covered the role of travellers in the eighteenth century. This is probably due to the new role women were experiencing at the

27 Martin Crawford, "British Travellers and the Anglo-American Relationship in the 1850's," *Journal of American Studies* 12, no.2 (1978): 218, accessed March 5, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27553396>.

beginning of the nineteenth century. Some of them stepped out of their strictly domestic duties and started to participate in public activities which were considered acceptable by the community such as activism, writing and travel. Middle-class women usually lived in the private sphere of society, a world which confined them to the realms of home and family. As Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall contend in their book *Family Fortunes* “a masculine penumbra surrounded that which was defined as public while women increasingly engulfed by the private realm, [were] bounded by physical, social and psychic partitions”.²⁸ According to Davidoff and Hall, women could participate in the family business but could hold no land of their own or maintain the business in case of death of their husband, although they contributed financially to their family's enterprise.²⁹ In view of this, it can be assumed that men were devoted to the public sphere whereas women belonged to the domestic sphere and could not attempt to enter the public realm. Nonetheless, K.D. Reynolds claims that the role of women shifted in the nineteenth century as some stepped out of their domestic roles and began to participate in public activities through activism, travels and writing, which did not apparently endanger their class status or social respectability. He contends that “middle-class women were not debarred from 'public' activity (particularly those activities which stemmed from charity) but engaging in work, however genteel, endangered their social position, and political or campaigning activity threatened their identity as a womanly woman”.³⁰ In order for middle-class women to maintain their identity and status, they needed to be aware of the activities in which they could participate without exposing their social status to danger and being completely excluded from society. For instance, according to Davidoff, women who wanted to participate in political campaigns with the aim of supporting a cause could use their roles as domestic consumers “express[ing] political affiliation by selective trading”.³¹ A significant example of this sort of political activity may be identified during the slave-trade debate in the late eighteenth century. Middle-class women, who were responsible for buying food for their families, refused to purchase the sugar grown in slave plantations. These women paid a higher price for another sort of sugar in order to persuade the Parliament to abolish the slave trade. However, as Davidoff underlines working class women could not afford to buy more expensive sugar whereas aristocratic women did not tend to be in charge of purchasing food for their families. As a consequence, British middle-class women tended to

28 Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (London: Routledge Press, 1987), 319.

29 Ibid., 279.

30 K.D. Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women and Political Society in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 16.

31 Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 448.

be the sole to support this type of political activity by choosing to purchase products which were not produced in the American South. Thus, as the century progressed women gradually found ways to participate in the public sphere which would not endanger their gender identity or class status. For instance, this social authority started to manifest in the field of travels, which had been usually a masculine domain. Several possible reasons may have contributed to the rise of female travels in the first half of the nineteenth century and the consequent explosion of female travel writing in the same period. Firstly, new means of transports promoted easier travels across the Atlantic Ocean (as will be discussed at length in next section), secondly women started to step out their domestic roles and to acquire authority in activities which were socially accepted by men, namely which did not endanger their identity and status as women, thirdly middle-class women possessed the wealth necessary to sustain themselves out of England and finally middle-class women did not work, thus they had free time which allowed them to stay away from England for long periods of time.³² As a consequence, Billie Melman attributes a growing power in the travel sphere by positioning women as pivotal voyagers. In her book *Women's Orients* she claims that the changing role of women created a new type of empowered traveller. By travelling abroad these middle-class women acquired more power and authority within British society.³³ In general, it seems that women saw travel as an emancipatory activity which could have promoted their public roles.

Nonetheless, to a certain extent female travels differed from men's travels. As women, for instance, they had the chance to witness various aspects of societies which men could not access and viceversa. Melman brings the example of the harem, the place destined to the private life of women according to the Islamic religion, which for its nature could be accessed only by women. Then, men and women seemed to focus on different areas of study according to their gender. Harriet Martineau confesses in her travelogue that she has:

Seen much more of domestic life than could possibly have been exhibited to any gentleman travelling through the country. The nursery, the boudoir, the kitchen, are all excellent schools in which to learn the morals and manners of a people: and, as for public and professional affairs, these may always gain full information upon such matters, who really feel an interest in them, be they men or women.³⁴

Harriet Martineau distinguishes between areas of study more suitable to men and areas which

32 Billie Melman, *Women's Orients: English Women and The Middle East 1718-1918: Sexuality, Religion and Work* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 17.

33 Ibid., 36.

34 Martineau, *Society in America, Volume I*, xii.

can be studied only by women. As she evidences, domesticity could be investigated only by women whereas as far as the public sphere is concerned, it seems that both men and women who had an interest in this field could analyse “public and professional affairs”.³⁵ On the contrary, Frances Trollope seems to define which fields she feels competent to judge as a woman and which area may be studied more accurately and with deeper insight by men. She writes:

I am in no way competent to judge of the political institutions of America; and if I should occasionally make observations on their effects, as they meet with my superficial glance, they will be made in the spirit, and with the feeling of a woman, who is apt to tell what her first impressions may be, but unapt to reason back from effects to their causes. Such observations, if they be unworthy of much attention, are also obnoxious to little reproof: but there are points of national peculiarity of which women may judge as ably as men, -- all that constitutes the external of society may be fairly trusted to us.³⁶

Trollope seems to concede that as a woman she is unqualified to analyse political institutions in the abstract. She probably comprehends theory through perceiving its praxis, its structure. Nevertheless, her observation is probably casual and superficial and “made with the feeling of a woman”,³⁷ thus focused on her emotive response. Trollope implies that she cannot think or ponder about politics or economics “as she will feel them”.³⁸ Therefore, she seems willing to avert her gaze from the realm of political and economic issues to focus her speculation on the realm of domestic life and on emotions. Stacy Lee Spencer indicates another difference between men and women travel writing. She maintains that women's eyes wander “from detail to detail and delights in anything unusual or mysterious”.³⁹ As she suggests, women tended to focus on details and particularities of each landscape and situation. They appeared keenly interested in “the incidental occurrences” taking place “on the road”⁴⁰ by analysing every matter in detail. Accordingly, from the feminine perspective, I would assume that the journeying woman rarely had “the end in view”,⁴¹ on the contrary the journey itself seemed her principal subject. In the light of this, it can be observed that the female narrator, usually

35 Ibid.

36 Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (London: Whittaker, Treacher & Co., 1832), 57.

37 Ibid.

38 Stacy Lee Spencer, “Women Writers and the Literary Journey 1832-1844” (PhD thesis, The University of Michigan, USA, 1991), 11.

39 Ibid., 1.

40 Ibid., 3.

41 Ibid.

pauses to make digressions and introspective moments and examine the state of her feelings. Moreover, women according to Lee, “are more interested in themselves, especially as [they] appear in a new scene. How does she look? What do others think of her? Is she changed, or still the same self? She wants nothing more than to 'produce a sensation' to dazzle others and, perhaps more importantly, to dazzle herself”.⁴² As it is possible to evince from this quotation, women tend to concentrate on the sensations and emotions that the outer situation stimulates that on the landscape itself. They appear to focus on their emotional response to the New World and to evaluate to which extent the experience has affected them.

While travel itself was probably regarded as a form of power, writing about their experiences was another way to increase women authority in Britain. Anne Lockwood witnesses that “letters and journals, in the context of travelling, also gave women an authority, based on her positioning as an expert eye-witness to events and practices about which she should presume to enlighten her audience back home”.⁴³ As the quotation suggests, the female ability to write books, letters and journals gave female travellers new status as commentators and critics of cultures and societies of the British Empire. After travelling throughout different countries, they came into contact with several populations, cultures and political, social and economic institutions. For this reason, they tended to adopt the role of experts and attempted to spread the knowledge obtained from their travels. Michelle Tusan notices that “the women's press brought women into the public life”.⁴⁴ This position of prominence in talking of their travels appeared to have brought them out of the shadows of their male family members and allowed them to announce their own political affiliations and opinions regarding political, economic and social issues. Through their travelogues they could engage in discussions about a great deal of topics such as the role of women, the condition of slaves, manners and education and redefine the spheres of action for women.⁴⁵ According to Spencer Lee, in fact, the genre of the travelogue was particularly appealing to women because of the heterogeneous nature of the text itself. “The literary journey, as constructed by these writers, is a highly heterogeneous and complex text, combining numerous thematic concerns and literary conventions. It is at once an autobiography, a social commentary, and a work of imagination”.⁴⁶ Lee, in general, appears to relate the particular attraction that travel writing

42 Ibid., 1.

43 Anne Lockwood, “Voyagers Out of the Harem within: British Women Travel Writers in the Middle East” (PhD thesis, The University of North Carolina, Greensboro, USA, 1997), 4.

44 Michelle Tusan, *Women Making News: Gender and Journalism in Modern Britain* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 26.

45 Melman, *Women's Orients*, 17.

46 Lee Spencer, “Women Writers,” 2.

had for women to its heterogeneous and varied structure and topic. She defines it as “non-structure”, indeed.⁴⁷ She apparently distinguishes few rules for the genre which could “combine introspection with analysis” and being “pleasurable and nominally informative at the same time”.⁴⁸ As her words indicate it seems that the genre of the travelogue had a strong impact on women since it was able to combine the political analysis, which seemed more suitable to men, and the introspection, particularly underlined by Trollope, more suitable to women writers. I therefore assumed that the genre of the travelogue was widespread in the nineteenth century since, for its heterogeneous nature, it appeared to provide men and women with the possibility to express their gender identity without restrictions. This writing activity by giving them a stable salary turned them into economically independent individuals as well as it offered an opportunity for women to establish and consolidate their credibility in the public sphere.

Female travel writers wrote about their experiences within the British Empire as early as 1717. Lady Montagu was among the first women travellers to visit the Middle East. Yet Montagu did not travel because of an impelling desire to visit the countries of the British Empire but because her husband had been appointed British Ambassador in Turkey, thus she had followed the political expedition of her husband.⁴⁹ As the example of Lady Montagu evidences, for much of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, independent women did not travel alone, although they were starting to obtain a role on the public sphere. On the contrary, the majority of women to venture into the Empire countries were probably regarded as “auxiliary travellers”, namely individuals who supported men as wives or siblings.⁵⁰ According to Melman, these individuals did not usually decide to travel but instead they went to sustain the careers of diplomats, soldiers, missionaries and scholars.⁵¹ From 1718 to 1918, nearly sixty-three percent of female travel writers had the opportunity to travel because of their husbands' careers, Melman attests.⁵² On this basis, it may be suggested that, women at the beginning of the nineteenth century were beginning to step out of their domestic roles and to acquire social power through political activism, writing and travel. These activities allowed them to gradually establish their role on the public life. However, these activities had to be socially acceptable. Women needed to keep their female identity and respectability

47 Ibid., 4.

48 Ibid.

49 To read more about the travels and life of Lady Montagu see Jack Malcom, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu: The Turkish Embassy Letters* (London: Virago Press, 1994).

50 Laura J. Labovitz, “For the Benefit of Others: Harriet Martineau: Feminist, Abolitionist and Travel Writer” (MA thesis, University of Nevada, USA, 2011), 12.

51 Melman, *Women's Orients*, 35.

52 Ibid., 34.

undamaged as explained by Billie Melman. As a consequence, women did not travel alone but as supporting figures for their husbands, as in the case of Lady Montagu. As for the women examined in this study, it can be stated that both Frances Trollope and Harriet Martineau escape from the female model I have discussed so far by offering a more independent type of female traveller. Frances Trollope, in fact, left England with her children in order to restore the economic stability of her family but her husband stayed in England. Harriet Martineau, travelled abroad alone as a single woman who aimed to study and have a deep insight into the American institutions. The motivations of these travel writers for leaving England will be largely discussed later in this introduction. Before bringing this introduction to a close I will investigate the reasons for the proliferation of travel literature and I will delineate the characteristics of the nineteenth century background to British travel writing.

1. 3 British Travel Writing: its Development in 19th century England

Since the era of English explorations under the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, America has always aroused great curiosity in the Europeans who travelled to the United States for several reasons. These travels were aided by the strong process of modernisation brought by the Industrial Revolution both in England and in America. During the last decades of the eighteenth century Britain and America underwent enormous changes and turned from mainly farming countries into industrial powers. The growth of population in America, demanded more efficient and faster production in order to serve the needs of the population. This revolution brought new technology, new inventions and new sources of power. At first most of the power used to drive machinery came from water, but the need for more energy led to the development of steam power by James Watt in England in 1775, who patented an engine wasting less fuel. As a result of the introduction of the steam-engine, new factories allowed Britain to manufacture cloth more cheaply than elsewhere and to improve transports. Faster road travel and new boats using steam power were introduced allowing British citizens to travel more quickly and less expensively. Thus, every year growing numbers of visitors arrived on the American shores, a process which formed strong connections between the Old World and the New. Dickens, Trollope and Martineau sailed from England to the New World and in America they experienced these new means, although sometimes the journey was

“somewhat a tedious voyage” as Frances Trollope maintains.⁵³ She “set forward again in one of those grand floating hotels called steamboats” with two hundred cabin passengers on board “they all set down together to a table”.⁵⁴ Thus, she could seemingly experience life on board the ship, which appears an authentic social encounter. On the contrary, Dickens records the “dense conglomeration of passengers and passengers' friends and passengers' luggage, all jumbled together on the deck of a small steamboat”.⁵⁵ He emphasises how crowded these small ships could appear as well as he witnesses his “acquaintance with an American railroad”.⁵⁶ The Industrial Revolution had turned England into a great industrial empire. Britain had become powerful because it had coal, steel and iron for its enormous industry and it could even export these products in large quantities to Europe. With these materials England could produce new heavy industrial goods like iron ships or steam engines or make machinery which produced traditional goods like cotton and wool. This situation led to increase wealth, which was concentrated in the hands of the middle class, which was mainly constituted by industrialists and factory owners. This process of Industrial modernisation allowed the English middle class both to rise their wealth and to possess more leisure time, which was increasingly devoted to travels. According to Adam Hallet, the major phase of British interest in the United states runs from the period following the Anglo-American war of 1812 to the Civil War. Jefferson had purchased Louisiana in 1803 and the already vast American territory further extended stimulating the curiosity of English men and women as well as it multiplied its waterways and railroads allowing easier travels across the country. John Sears in his book *Sacred Places* indicates the requirements for tourism:

A population with money and the leisure to travel, an adequate means of transportation, and conditions of reasonable safety and comfort at the places people go to visit. It also demands a body of images and descriptions of those places – a mythology of unusual things to see – to excite people’s imagination and induce them to travel.⁵⁷

As a consequence, scenic tourism and travels to the north American continent became increasingly popular and in vogue throughout this flourishing era. Moreover, this intensification of travels, which enabled easier and more comfortable movements around the

53 Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, 1.

54 Ibid., 287.

55 Dickens, *American Notes*, 12.

56 Ibid., 78.

57 John Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 3.

globe, seems reflected in the proliferation of travelogues by important literary figures such as Frances and Anthony Trollope, Charles Dickens, Harriet Martineau, Isabella Bird and Frances Kemble.⁵⁸

1.3.1 Why Leaving England?

The new economic resources together with the growth and development of the transport sector had facilitated travels and stays in the United States. However, writers headed to the New World were also ideologically motivated. The American colonies separated from Great Britain in order to establish democracy, a new political form of government based on equality and freedom. According to Christopher Mulvey, the English population looked curiously at the new social order since it tended to perceive England as dominated by restricted ideas of class and morality. America, conversely, tended to simplify class roles and men appeared naturally divided into a richer and a poorer class.⁵⁹ In the nineteenth century the English middle class, due to the Industrial development, grew quickly and included huge differences of wealth, social position and work, such as those working in the commercial orders, those working as lawyers, doctors, soldiers, diplomats and in the navy. Thus, this class combined the very successful and wealthy industrialists, who were the real creators of wealth in England, the small shopkeepers and the office workers living in the suburbs. In *American Notes*, Charles Dickens gives proof of this rigid social structure on which England was founded. When Charles Dickens and his wife Catherine were returning to England in 1842, they met a fellow passenger who was an English sailor coming home on holiday. As soon as he came aboard he stowed his luggage in the forecabin and shared the journey with the crew of the ship. Dickens commented the episode contending that “he'd be damned but for once he'd go aboard as a gentleman”.⁶⁰ As this anecdote evidences, despite experiences of life and work in the United States, the British visitors could not apparently eradicate the English layered social structure which compelled every stratum of society to keep its position. The sailor did not seem to forget his upbringing and even on holiday he refused to live, eat and sleep as a gentleman. Moreover, Mulvey suggests that Victorians promoted a code of values,

58 Hallet, “America Seen,” 14.

59 Christopher Mulvey, *Anglo-American Landscapes: a Study of Nineteenth-Century Anglo-American Travel Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 12.

60 Dickens, *American Notes*, 274.

founded on duty, hard work and charity, which had to be equally applied and equally respected by all strata of society in order to achieve social respectability. Those who did not conform to this rules could not apparently aspire to obtain social acceptance. Thus, one possible reason behind these travels is probably the need to escape from the British society, which was perceived as socially restrictive and morally rigid. Many of the travellers who headed to America may have sought indeed a new world, that is a new social order which escaped these overly restrictive ideas of class and respectability. America was regarded as “the great democratic experiment” based on equality, freedom and opportunity and this largely affected the British point of view when approaching the new continent.⁶¹ It could be suggested that British visitors may have idealised America as the land of opportunities where every social or political problems experienced in England could never be met. R. K. Webb comments that “America was either the land of promise or, more judiciously the test of their ideals”.⁶² With these words Webb probably alludes to the strong ideals and expectations which accompanied the British travellers in their journeys and which affected their point of view when meeting the United States. If their hopes were not satisfied, they may have experienced a strong disappointment. As for the travellers examined in this study, they appeared all influenced by strong idealism and hopes towards America. For instance, Frances Trollope, who moved to the New World with the aim of restoring her financial difficulties, decided to spend a period of time at the utopian community of Nashoba founded by the friend Frances Wright. The community intended primarily to educate and emancipate slaves. During the time spent at Nashoba Frances Trollope exchanged letters with the friend Harriet Garnett and in a letter she confesses her that “a year or two passed at Nashoba would repair our affairs more completely than any other”.⁶³ The evidence suggests that Frances Trollope probably believed that the new life in America could solve her economic problems and have another opportunity to re-establish her economy prosperity. Similar examples could be found for Harriet Martineau and Charles Dickens. The former, in the second volume of *Retrospect of Western Travel* maintained that the country is a “democratic republic, where each man s a man of the government, and means are provided for the expression of every kind of political opinion and desire”⁶⁴ whereas the latter, in a speech in front of some friends before leaving

61 Christine DeVine, *Nineteenth Century British Travellers in the New World* (Farnham, Ashgate, 2013), 18.

62 R. K. Webb, *Harriet Martineau: A Radical Victorian* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1960), 134.

63 Frances Trollope to Harriet Garnett, Cincinnati, December 7, 1828 quoted in Helen Heineman, “Starving in the Land of Plenty’: New Backgrounds to Frances Trollope’s *Domestic Manners of the Americans*,” *American Quarterly* 24, no.5 (1972): 647, accessed February 28, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2711664>.

64 Harriet Martineau, *Retrospect of Western Travel, Volume II* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1838), 79.

contended that he was inspired by “the astonishing change and progress”.⁶⁵ It seems that the authors taken into account in this thesis left England with strong expectations and political ideals of what they could have found in the New World. Dickens and Martineau, in fact, stress, as Frances Trollope, that America is a land of freedom and of economic opportunities, although the focus of Martineau is on political freedom and that of Dickens and Trollope on financial possibilities and progress. Hence, these hopes and search for a “mythological America”⁶⁶ seemed largely motivated by anxieties and problems regarding their own nation, which appeared primarily based on social inequalities and a strict moral code.

1.3.2 Imagined Americas

Strong expectations and idealisation accompanied the English travel experiences, as discussed in the previous section. In general, British visitors were intensely attracted by America considering that they seemed to perceive the United States as based on the liberties and the equality which in Europe were still missing. From the viewpoint of Christopher Mulvey, however, travellers did not only expect to meet a glorious and free country but they tended to imagine America before leaving. As Mulvey maintains, Britons tended to imagine how the American landscape and life in the United States could appear. He explains that the act of imagination is composed by three distinct parts: firstly, the mind imagines, secondly, the traveller sees and thirdly the traveller takes notes of what he has imagined by writing in fact “writing precedes speech”.⁶⁷ Mulvey's theory hinges upon the premise that seeing does not only mean to see through the eyes but in addition, it means to see through the mind. Accordingly, he seems to compare the act of imagination with the act of writing since imagining America is probably regarded as writing about America. As in writing men can use linguistic devices to organise their thoughts, when men imagine their minds write mentally what they have visualised. Thus, through imagination we are apparently given the possibility to “see” in order to “organise the universe into something seeable”.⁶⁸ “We write before we see

65 John C. Hawley, “A far better rest I go to’: Dickens and the Undiscovered Country” in *Dickens, Europe and the New Worlds* ed. by Anny Sandrin (Houndmills: MacMillan, 1999), 182.

66 DeVine, *British Travellers in the New World*, 8.

67 Christopher Mulvey, “Ecriture and Landscape: British Travel Writing on Post-Revolutionary America,” in *Views of American Landscapes*, ed. Mick Gidley and Robert Lawson-Peebles (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 101.

68 *Ibid.*

before we speak” attests Mulvey.⁶⁹ Thus, it may be suggested that before seeing America with their eyes, the British travellers imagined America in their minds and finally they spread their ideas regarding what they had both mentally and physically observed. Dickens called America “the republic of my imagination”⁷⁰ whereas Frances Trollope writes in a letter to Julia Garnett Pertz that “the arrangement was so sudden that at times I still fancy that I dream” and that she “expect[ed] to be very happy and very free from care”⁷¹ by alluding to her quick decision to move to the United States. Martineau had her own idea of what the society of America would look like, a lush wilderness still being explored in its Western parts and a country where men were created equal, as Webb contends.⁷² As these travellers seemingly suggest, it was a widespread tendency to imagine and visualise mentally the New World. However, according to the examples provided, travellers did not possess only one model of America but “many imagined Americas” existed, “one for each of us”.⁷³ Frances Trollope for instance, visualises a world where she may not need protection and where she is happy, the kind of happiness she could not probably live in England due to her economic problems, as I will explain later in this introduction. On the contrary, Martineau's America appeared as a land of natural wilderness which was based on equality. While Trollope seems primarily focused on a private dimension, Martineau, conversely seems to stress her political idea of America. Finally, Dickens seems vague and does not specify what characteristics belong to his personal idea of America. Thus, as the evidence provided may attest, there existed several ideas of Americas. These ideas seemed to project the hopes, expectations and aspirations of these travellers and thus varied individually. Furthermore, the idea that America is imagined before travel is of central importance for the consideration of the point of view. In fact, when Britons headed to the New World with these ideas in mind, they tended to confront them with the real America. When these corresponded they felt probably satisfied, otherwise seriously disillusioned by what they thought of finding there.

Critics seem to have determined two reasons for imagining America before leaving England. Firstly, Adam Hallet contends that America incited Britons to imagine because of the strong enthusiasm felt by British travellers who were very delighted to discover the well-known country of liberty and equality. As suggested in the previous section, British travellers were seemingly attracted by the democratic experiment which encouraged great expectations.

69 Ibid.

70 Jenny Hartley, *The Selected Letters of Charles Dickens* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 97.

71 Frances Trollope to Julia Garnett on board the *Edward*, December 26, 1827 quoted in Heineman, “New Backgrounds,” 649.

72 Webb, *A Radical Victorian*, 134.

73 Hallet, “America Seen,” 6.

On the contrary, England appeared to its citizens founded on social immobility due to rigid class distinctions and on a strict moral code which compelled individuals to respect every single precepts in order to achieve social respectability and thus acceptance. Hence, it may be inferred that British travellers imagined how America appeared, stimulated by their expectations and hopes for a better future in the United States which did not seem possible in England. After all, America had erected itself as “a city upon a hill”,⁷⁴ namely the model of democracy, equality, independence and freedom which every nation should have imitated. John Winthrop, by using this religious metaphor taken from the Bible was probably meaning that America, as “a city upon a hill” was impossible to hide.⁷⁵ Indeed, it should have been an evident examples for all the countries of the world. In the light of this, it seems probable that British travellers kept high hopes, great expectations and used their imagination to visualise mentally how this New World with new institutions could appear and “hoped to copy those they liked in Britain”.⁷⁶ On the other hand, Christine DeVine suggests that this was principally due to Great Britain and America's hostile relationship along the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. Several reasons may have brought the tense atmosphere which characterised the hostile Anglo-American relationship at the beginning of the nineteenth-century. The years between 1776 and 1812 mark respectively the moment of the American Revolution and the consequent independence from England and the year of the Anglo-American war. Firstly, these two countries had experienced the war of 1776, which ended in a disastrous defeat for the British government which lost all its American colonies except Canada. As a consequence, Britain which was a very large colonial Empire tended to regard America as a tiny territory which had been part of a reign which extended from America to Asia and Australia. Thus, it appears that British travellers came from a society which tended to consider itself as an extremely influential and prominent power on the nineteenth century political background and America as a land, which had been subjugated to this boundless Empire for many years. Secondly, the tense relationship between these countries was not aided by the war of 1812, a military conflict fought in the North American colonies. This war, won by the United States, apparently established their naval superiority, as well as it prevented Britain from arresting the American expansion by imposing trade restrictions and by forcing American sailors to serve the British navy. Although these countries reached the peace treaty in 1815, recurrent threats of war dominated the Anglo-

74 John Winthrop, Richard S. Dunn and Laetitia Yeandle, *The Journal of John Winthrop 1630-1649* (USA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 10.

75 To know more see Marcus Greil and Werner Sollors, *A New Literary History of America*, issues 1607, 1630 (Harvard University Press, 2009).

76 Webb, *A Radical Victorian*, 134.

American relationships until 1865.⁷⁷ Apparently, Britons, because of these hostilities and open rivalry, did not read travel books or books which could have informed them about the New World but “manifested [their] ignorance of its ex colony”, as Christopher Mulvey suggests.⁷⁸ As a consequence, travellers tended to imagine what they would find in America since they did not read prior to departing from England. Nevertheless, as Christine DeVine suggests, Americans could be regarded “in many respects as close cousins to the British and therefore not 'other' in the same way as inhabitants of many faraway places, despite the often strained relations between the two countries”.⁷⁹ As she implies, British and American populations may have appeared more like cousins than rivals. A great deal of economic, political and social contacts seem to characterise the Anglo-American relationship which, in DeVine's point of view, may have brought close connections between these populations rather than hostility and rivalry. She underlines that since the Elizabethan era, every century had seen growing numbers of British immigrants landing on the American shores. Thus, a great majority of the American population appeared to be of English descent. Moreover, the common language seemed to help cement “this sense of cousinship”.⁸⁰ These elements may have aided to forge strong connections between Great Britain and America. Consequently, British travellers tended to be curious and interested in questioning and imagining how their fellow countrymen would live in the New World since they felt and perceived “this sense of cousinship” with the American inhabitants.⁸¹ Several motivations seemed to give reasons for the tendency of British travellers to imagine America prior to departing. Firstly, British seemed to look enthusiastically at the new political experiment of democracy which challenged the British social restrictions on which monarchy was based. Secondly, the political tensions which characterised the Anglo-American relationship between the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century probably caused rivalry between these two countries. In the light of these hostilities, British travellers may not have read other travel books to obtain information regarding the New World and thus, they tended to imagine what was expecting them. Third, although the difficult political relationships, it can be suggested that British and Americans shared strong connections. For instance, the American population was largely formed by English citizens and they talked the same language. Therefore, British visitors imagined America to visualise how the lives of people so similar to them could appear. Imagination is of central importance to the discussion of the point of view. As

77 Mulvey, *Anglo-American Landscapes*, 8-9.

78 *Ibid.*, 9.

79 DeVine, *British Travellers in the New World*, 17.

80 *Ibid.*

81 *Ibid.*

previously explained, it affected the perspective which these travellers acquired when examining the American continent as well as their general response to the American land. The following sections of this chapter intend to analyse the motivations for leaving England, the form and the content of the travelogues of Harriet Martineau, Frances Trollope and Charles Dickens. Besides, I have provided a little chart for each author, that I have personally created, displaying their American itineraries.

1.4 Harriet Martineau

Harriet Martineau, a middle-class English woman landed at New York City on Friday, September, 19 1834. When she arrived in the United States she was not, like Frances Trollope, an ordinary emigrant but a successful well-known writer of political economy. America was acquainted with Harriet Martineau before she arrived in the country. She was, in fact, a recognised author and perhaps as William R. Seat specifies “the most influential woman in England”.⁸² In 1834 she had just completed and published her most acclaimed work *Illustrations of Political Economy* after two years of intense writing. Thanks to this book she had probably demonstrated to Americans her “sympathy with the democratic ideal and [her] concern for the welfare of the masses”.⁸³

American theologians knew her as the prophetess of Unitarianism; abolitionists had seen in her 'Demerara' a powerful protest against slavery; statesmen had heard of her influence with the great English leaders; literary men knew her as a poetess, essayist, and writer of fiction; workmen had heard of her as the champion of the common man.⁸⁴

Thus, as William Seat notices every group, every worker and every class of the American society seemed to know Harriet Martineau and her views thanks to the publication of her famous masterpiece *Illustrations of Political Economy* and her previous works. The American population apparently exhibited great enthusiasm and delight at the news that Harriet Martineau was going to land on their country. Several newspapers in fact seem to have heralded her arrival with unanimous enthusiasm. The *New York Advertiser* was probably the

82 William R. Seat, “Harriet Martineau in America” (PhD thesis, Indiana University, USA, 1957), 12.

83 Ibid.

84 Ibid.

first newspaper to announce the event. On Saturday, in the section which reported the names of the arrivals from Europe this brief note appeared: “In ship United States from Liverpool--...Misses H. Martineau, and L. C. Jeffrey, do...”.⁸⁵ After five days, her name appeared in the *Washington National Intelligencer* which reported that “Miss Harriet Martineau, distinguished in the literary world by a number of works of great merit, has arrived in New York, on a visit to this country, in the ship United States”.⁸⁶ As these newspapers evidence, a great deal of publishers seemed to take note of the arrival of every famous foreigner, and Miss Martineau apparently was no exception. The *Evening Post* commented her arrival by stating that:

It is with pleasure we announce the arrival, in the ship United States, from Liverpool, of this distinguished lady.... She visits the United States, we learn, as a friend of civil and religious liberty. It is to be hoped that every facility will be afforded her during her progress through this country, and that she may be able to accumulate facts, which will strengthen her convictions of the value of our social and political prospects.⁸⁷

As all these newspaper announcements may suggest, Harriet Martineau seemed a very acclaimed and praised writer in the United States thanks to the huge success of her literary career and popularity. The American population knew her as a keen observer of political and economic institutions and that she had probably come to assess and observe the American institutions as the *Evening Post* notices. Some of them may have therefore entertained hopes that Miss Martineau “would correct the misconceptions propagated by previous British visitors by writing of her experiences in America”.⁸⁸ Other newspapers tended to note her arrival by adding a few comments about her writings and curious Americans, who knew she was in the country, were waiting the time she would visit their localities. Rumours of her visit had probably passed through in January 1834 in the *Christian Register* that the famous Harriet Martineau was considering a visit to America. The following comment appeared on the *Christian Register* on January 4:

It is said, on good authority, that Miss Martineau purposes to make an early visit to this country. We hope the report may prove true. The numerous admirers of her works among us, would be proud of an opportunity to show their personal respect

85 Ibid., 49.

86 *National Intelligencer* 35 (Washington, September 24, 1834) quoted in Seat, “Martineau in America,” 49.

87 *The Evening Post* (New York, Saturday, September 20, 1834), accessed August 3, 2015, <http://www.newspapers.com/newspage/38191068/>.

88 Seat, “Martineau in America,” 17.

for this distinguished female.⁸⁹

Thus the readers of this Unitarian periodical were probably familiar with the proposed trip. Perhaps the actor Macready, who had a wide acquaintance in America, included the news in a letter to a friend. William R. Seat informs that Miss Martineau consulted Macready while she was planning her tour, and asked him to furnish her with letters of introduction.⁹⁰ Thus, these excerpts from articles of several American newspapers tend to witness the great enthusiasm and interest which characterised the arrival of Harriet Martineau in the United States. It seems clear that she was welcomed as a major celebrity. This information regarding her reception appears to indicate the high esteem in which she was held by the American country. The following sections regarding Harriet Martineau will be focused on examining the motivations which brought her to the United States, the methodology employed to analyse the New World and to trace an outline of her journey in America.

1.4.1 Why Travel to America?

Harriet Martineau spent the years between 1834 and 1836 exploring the Eastern seaboard of the United States. During these two years she lived in the countryside, although she never stayed in one place for a long time. When Martineau sailed to America several motivations seem to have encouraged her voyage. First, she probably needed relaxation and rest after completing the task of writing *Illustrations of Political Economy*. She attests that her “first desire was for rest”.⁹¹ As previously stated, she had been writing for two years and thus she decided to travel and to take a holiday. She had at first thought of visiting Switzerland or Italy. However, the friend Lord Henley apparently altered her plans. She says:

Lord Henley asked whether I did not mean to travel when my Series was done. Upon my replying that I did, he apologised for the liberty he took in asking where I thought of going. I said I had not thought much about it; but that I supposed it would be the usual route, to Switzerland and Italy. 'O! do not go over that beaten track' he exclaimed. 'Why should you, Will you not go to America?' I replied, 'Give me a good reason, and perhaps I will'. His answer was, 'Whatever else may or may not be

⁸⁹ *Christian Register* 13 (Boston, January 4, 1834) quoted in Seat, “Martineau in America,” 46.

⁹⁰ Seat, “Martineau in America,” 49.

⁹¹ Harriet Martineau, *Autobiography* (Canada: Broadview Press, 2006), 330.

true about the Americans, it is certain that they have got at principles of justice and mercy in their treatment of the least happy classes of society which we should do well to understand. Will you not go, and tell us what they are?' This, after some meditation, determined me to cross the Atlantic.⁹²

As her confession evidences, she was probably convinced by her friend to change her route and go to America. Lord Henley was apparently interested in the American social institutions and needed the critical and deep analysis of Harriet Martineau to understand and evaluate America's "principles of justice and mercy".⁹³ Thus, she was probably convinced to gather information on behalf of Lord Henley. Secondly, while she was resting she seemingly proposed to "make a constructive examination of the extent to which democracy in America was succeeding".⁹⁴ She claimed that she "had a strong curiosity to witness the actual working of republican institutions".⁹⁵ Once Martineau reached the shores of America her travels would primarily be aimed at understanding whether the principles of democracy written in the American Constitution and in the Declaration of Independence were reflected in the actual behaviours and institutions of America. Harriet Martineau in *Society in America*, her first work on her American experience, seems to judge society against the principles on which the country claimed to be founded. She therefore took her stand on the American point of view, by "judging American society, in its spirit and methods, by the American tests,— the Declaration of Independence and the constitutions based upon its principles".⁹⁶ *Retrospect of Western Travel*, instead, her second work, resembles to a personal account where she discusses "the aspect of the country, and of its men and manners".⁹⁷ The work, organised into three volumes, is divided in thirty-seven chapters, generally arranged in a chronological manner. However, as Seat explains, the material within the chapters was divided according to topics, that can be grouped into four major areas. The first narrates the voyage and the first weeks in America, the second is about her tour of the South, the third recounts the tour of the West and the last her visit in Massachusetts.⁹⁸ Apart from looking at society from an American point of view, Harriet Martineau seemed interested in studying America in all its different facets and landscapes. In fact, Deborah Logan describes Harriet Martineau as a "social-problem writer eager to address all sides of an argument from a variety of ideological

92 Ibid., 211.

93 Ibid.

94 Seat, "Martineau in America," 14.

95 Deborah Anna Logan, *Writings on Slavery and the American Civil War* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002), 10.

96 Martineau, *Autobiography*, 399.

97 Harriet Martineau, *Retrospect of Western Travel, Volume I* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1838), 4.

98 Seat, "Martineau in America," 284.

perspectives”.⁹⁹ This attitude may be observed when it came to addressing and analysing American society. From her definition, Martineau emerges as a literary writer who wished to analyse and interpret every facet of every social issue from different points of view. In the light of this, it may be suggested that her intention was not only to observe the American institutions while resting but to analyse and interpret with great accuracy and depth the American society. For this reason, she had “willingly acceded to the desire of such of [her] readers as have requested to be presented with [her] *Retrospect of Western Travel*”.¹⁰⁰ In the nineteenth century, America had probably a great deal to offer for a traveller from Britain. Thus, she could observe and interpret several issues such as the democratic form of government, how slavery functioned within the republican society, consider the condition of women and admire the beauties of the American landscape. As Labovitz contends, one of her most popular subjects was the issue of slavery which seemingly became one of her main preoccupations during her two year stay, although she did not travel intending to focus only on this topic. On the contrary, she wished to witness the functioning of the various groups which constituted the American society and their characteristics, as Labovitz adds.¹⁰¹ However, her commitment to social analysis and interpretation may not be regarded as unusual and curious if considering her role as sociologist. One of her most common activity according to Michelle Bencquista was to study a situation and to determine some general principles, activity which dates back to her early childhood years.¹⁰² When she was between two and three years old Harriet Martineau confesses that she was “the absurdest little preacher . . . that ever was. [she] used to nod [her] head emphatically, and say 'Never ky for tyfles: 'Dooty fust, and pleasure afterwards”.¹⁰³ From this confession, it seems possible to describe a tendency to study situations and then determine rules and principles from the earliest days of her life. She further admits that when she was a child she completed a book full of “beloved maxims”.¹⁰⁴ In later life, she confessed that sometimes “her system” could not extensively explain the human behaviour”.¹⁰⁵ As it is possible to see from these few words from her own *Autobiography*, she had a natural inclination towards analysis and drawing general principles from the situations examined. Thus, her commitment to investigate every aspect of the American society while resting may appear a natural behaviour considering her tendency to

99 Logan, *Writings on Slavery*, 83.

100 Martineau, *Retrospect, Volume I*, 4.

101 Labovitz, “For the Benefit of Others,” 72.

102 Michelle Annette Long Benacquista, “Didacticism in Harriet Martineau's Antislavery Narratives” (PhD, The University of Nebraska, USA, 1990), 25.

103 Martineau, *Autobiography*, 41.

104 Ibid.

105 Benacquista, “Didacticism in Harriet Martineau,” 8.

draw general principles from childhood and to her role of sociologist, as she maintains.

The third reason for moving to the United States was to “rough it for a while”.¹⁰⁶ Martineau claimed that after the publication of *Illustrations of Political Economy* her life in London had become crowded with special events, speaking engagements and public dinners. Yet, Martineau never seemed quite content with all the attention she was gaining from the success of her series. She attests in fact:

My next was to break through any selfish "particularity" that might be growing on me with years, and any love of ease and indulgence that might have arisen out of success, flattery, or the devoted kindness of my friends. I believed that it might be good for me to "rough it" for a while, before I grew too old and fixed in my habits for such an experiment.¹⁰⁷

She probably believed that she was becoming too accustomed to a life of luxury in England, due to the publication of her series, which had turned Harriet Martineau into a very successful and popular woman. She apparently decided to leave England before being too old to undertake this sort of voyage or too “fixed in [her] habits”.¹⁰⁸ She says in her *Autobiography* that “to a certain extent [her] travels to America answered [her] purposes of self-discipline in undertaking them. Fearing that [she] was growing too much accustomed to the luxury, and to an exclusive regularity in the modes of living, [she] desired to rough it”.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, she seemed moved by a desire to live different experiences, to observe different populations and institutions and not to become accustomed with a life of luxury. Indeed, she appeared to feel an impelling desire to move and to see. Her voyage to the United States seems motivated by several reasons. Firstly, her need for rest after the publication of her book of social criticism, secondly a friend of hers, Lord Henley had encouraged her voyage. He apparently needed to gather information regarding the American institutions and thus, by knowing Martineau's inclination towards deep analysis and interpretation he probably thought that she was the only writer who could remarkably complete his task. Secondly, she was moved probably by her desire to study America in its different facets and compare their behaviours with the democratic statements contained in the Constitution and in the Declaration of Independence. Finally, she felt that she could have completed the voyage before becoming too old or to accustomed to the life of luxury and ease, which the publication of *Illustration of Political*

106 Martineau, *Autobiography*, 330.

107 Ibid.

108 Ibid.

109 Ibid., 387.

Economy had granted her. The joint combination of these factors persuaded her to move to the United States and to stay there for two years to study the New World.

1.4.2 The Journey: a General Overview



Figure I. Harriet Martineau's Itinerary

A week after she disembarked, she began her journey through America. Her itinerary, as William Seat recounts, “was essentially the same as that followed by Tocqueville and his companions in 1831-1832” Miss Louisa Jeffrey had accompanied her from England and aided her in recording incidents and emotions along the travel.¹¹⁰ William Seat contends that nearly all mid-nineteenth century travellers to the United States followed one of three general routes, although the itinerary could be modified in order to suit the traveller's needs and tastes. He adds that Harriet Martineau decided to undertake the third tour, the longest and the travel which involved a more considerable amount of money, even though it was probably the most

¹¹⁰ Seat, “Martineau in America,” 15.

comprehensive and the most interesting. This tour seems to have enabled her to visit nearly every section of America and probably aided her examination of the country its all its sides and shades. She spent twenty-three months in the United States, almost two years and began her tour on October, 6 after being in America for just over two weeks. She started the journey with her companion with a trip to the State of New York, starting from Albany. A listing of the major cities or sites she visited is here provided in order to delineate an overview of her voyage. After visiting New York she went to Buffalo, the Niagara Falls, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington D.C.. In mid-February, after she had been in Washington for five weeks, she began her Southern tour. She started with Montpelier in Virginia, then Charlottesville, Richmond, Charleston, Columbia, Augusta, Montgomery, Mobile and then she spent ten days in New Orleans. At the beginning of May she started her long journey up the Mississippi and Ohio rivers by steamboat. She travelled up the Cumberland River to Nashville, Tennessee, and after ten days there she moved on to Lexington, in Kentucky. Then she continued her trip up the Ohio River to Cincinnati. Then she visited various resorts in Virginia, New York City again, Boston, the Niagara Falls, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland and Pittsburgh. From there she went to New York where she made preparations for her homeward voyage, which began, August, 1 1836.¹¹¹ The *Washington National Intelligencer* noted her departure by writing that “Miss Martineau, the celebrated British authoress, sailed from New York in the packet-ship Orpheus for Liverpool, on Monday last”.¹¹² Harriet Martineau was sailing home after two years of deep analysis and evaluation of the American country.

1.4.3 Her Deafness: an Obstacle to see America

From the age of twelve Harriet Martineau was living a terrible deafness which developed gradually and became fully apparent when she was fifteen. Martineau's mother referred to her daughter as a “fragile” child and her family tended to blame her for her own misfortune by saying that “none are so deaf, as those that won't hear”.¹¹³ As Martineau explained “I believe my family would have made almost any sacrifice to save me from my

111 Ibid., 50-56.

112 *National Intelligencer* 37 (Washington, August 6, 1836) quoted in Seat, “Martineau in America,” 56.

113 Martineau, *Autobiography*, 83.

misfortune; but not the less did they aggravate it terribly by their way of treating it".¹¹⁴ Apparently, her family treated her as a weak and fragile daughter who was affected by a terrible disability. It seems that she was not regarded as an ordinary child, indeed her family tended to highlight her auditory problem and its terrible consequences. Critics may here maintain that her deafness prevented her from providing an accurate picture of the American society. However, Hill contends that she comprehended that her disability could have affected her understanding and analysis of the American society, thus Martineau attempted to find a solution to her problem.¹¹⁵ Despite her partial deafness, Martineau spent nearly two years travelling in the United States and transformed her disability into an advantage, as she maintained. By employing an ear trumpet and asking to her travelling companion to help her collecting data and to record conversations she could apparently overcome her physical problem. She first addressed her attention towards Louisa Jeffrey, her "research assistant" as Hill defines her.¹¹⁶ Harriet Martineau describes her friend as:

Not only well educated but remarkably clever, and above all, supremely rational, and with a faultless temper. She toiled incessantly, to spare my time, strength and faculties. She managed the business of travel and was for ever on the watch to supply my want of ears and I may add my defects of memory.¹¹⁷

As Martineau explains, this friend seemed to "supply [her] want of ears".¹¹⁸ Louisa Jeffrey, as emerges from Martineau's few words, was a clever woman and especially rational. This characteristic may well fit Martineau's intentions to provide a deep and thoughtful analysis of the American society. She seems further totally committed to help and sustain Martineau for her problems of deafness and memory. Moreover, Martineau seemed aware that her disability prevented her from overhearing casual conversations in public spaces. Thus, Hill informs that she instructed her assistant to listen and record accurately every dialogue heard everywhere.¹¹⁹

In addition, Martineau used an "ear trumpet as hearing aid" with the aim of understanding conversations more accurately with those willing to share confidences with her.¹²⁰ Instead of giving priority to what she saw rather than could have heard she apparently

114 Ibid.

115 Michael R. Hill, "A Methodological Comparison of Harriet Martineau's *Society in America* (1837) and Alexis De Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* (1835-1840)," in *Harriet Martineau: Theoretical and Methodological Approaches*, ed. Michael R. Hill and Susan Hoecker (London: Routledge, 2003), 67.

116 Ibid.

117 Martineau, *Autobiography*, 331.

118 Ibid.

119 Hill, "A Methodological Comparison," 66-68.

120 Ibid., 68.

attempted to go beyond her disability. Martineau argues that she “carr[ied] a trumpet of remarkable fidelity: an instrument moreover, which seems to exert some winning power, by which I gain more in tête-à-têtes than is given to people who hear general conversation”.¹²¹ This instrument seemed to provide a useful help and to aid her in recording data with the scientific precision she needs in order to study society in all its different aspects. Yet Martineau was probably not the only person to recognise the importance of this “hearing aid” but the people she met and conversed with in the United States seemed to acknowledge the importance of this instrument for her. One of these figures was Frances Kemble, the English actress who was living with her American husband Pierce Butler at Butler Place, in Philadelphia. Miss Kemble¹²² had long been one of Miss Martineau's admirers and recorded their meeting in a letter:

Miss Martineau is just now in Philadelphia; I have seen and conversed with her, and I think, were her stay long enough to admit of so agreeable a conclusion, we might become good friends. It is not presumptuous for me to say that, dear H..., because, you know, a very close degree of friendship may exist where there is great disparity of intellect. Her deafness is a serious bar to her enjoyment of society, and some drawback to the pleasure of conversing with her, for, as a man observed to me last night, "One feels so like a fool, saying, 'How do you do?' through a speaking-trumpet in the middle of a drawing-room."¹²³

Frances Kemble seemed to observe that her deafness could have affected her analysis of the American society as well as “her enjoyment”. During her trip Martineau met also Philip Horne, a former mayor of New York, and probably one of the wealthiest and most prominent citizens of the town. Hone records his impressions of Martineau in his famous *Diary*:

The only difficulty in conversing with her arises from her great deafness, which is obviated (at least so far as one speaker at a time is concerned) by the use of a trumpet formed of a tube of gum-elastic, one end of which she places in her right ear while the mouth of the person conversing with her is applied to the other.¹²⁴

Thus, it seems possible to observe that she understood her need of an auxiliary instrument and external aid in order to support her study. She was not the sole to recognise the validity and

121 Martineau, *Society in America, Volume I*, xiii.

122 For more information regarding the relationship between Fanny Kemble and Harriet Martineau see Harriet Martineau, *Autobiography* (Canada: Broadview Press, 2006), 278-279.

123 Catherine Clinton, *Fanny Kemble's Journals* (USA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 80.

124 Allan Nevins, *The Diary of Philip Hone 1828-1851* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1927), 206.

significance of carrying a hearing aid which provided her with the possibility to hear conversations and record data, although with the help of an assistant. Thus, it seems possible to suggest that these measures may have promoted her sociological analysis of the American country and helped her to examine and interpret America in all its different aspects and characteristics.

1.4.4 How to Approach America

When Harriet Martineau arrived in America in 1834 she aimed to examine and evaluate every single aspect of the American society, as discussed in the previous sections. Yet she needed a methodology in order to approach the American society which could have provided her with a comprehensive knowledge of the country in all its social, political and economic aspects. Labovitz argues that first she “made a conscious effort to remain as openly neutral as possible”.¹²⁵ For Martineau, her task in writing about America included recording what she had witnessed with the greatest possible clarity, honesty and impartiality. She claimed in fact that “when [she] was questioned about [her] opinions of American institutions, [she] wanted to learn and not to teach”.¹²⁶ This statement may suggest her desire to observe and examine society as an external interpreter. Apparently, without siding with any group. For her the unbiased traveller must have “an enlightened understanding of American society, and, most important of all, must possess the principles which may serve as a rallying point for his observations, and without which he cannot determine their bearings, or be secure of putting a right interpretation upon them”.¹²⁷ It is probable that she regarded interpretation as important as observation to assess American society. However, she also explains the difficulty at times of presenting an unbiased and objective picture of the Americans since “they are too like brothers and sisters to be subjects for analysis: and I perpetually feel the want of them at hand, to assist me by their controverting or corroborating judgements”.¹²⁸ It seems that she attempted to keep an impartial perspective when observing and evaluating America, although it was at times difficult for the special connection she felt with the American population. After all, English and Americans were sharing the same language and had common origins. When

125 Labovitz, “For the Benefit of Others,” 65.

126 Martineau, *Autobiography*, 336.

127 Webb, *A Radical Victorian*, 162.

128 Harriet Martineau, *Society in America, Volume II* (New York: Saunders and Otley, 1837), 197.

pronouncing her opinions and judgements she was therefore searching proofs on the part of the Americans which could corroborate her opinions. Nevertheless, Benacquista maintains that another occasion in which Martineau lost her neutral position was when she attended a meeting in support of the abolition of slaves. There she was seemingly forced to “express publicly her support for their goals, which destroyed her position as impartial observer”.¹²⁹ For the remaining months of her tour, she kept connections with the abolitionists. Among her closest friends there were in fact William Lloyd Garrison and Maria Weston Chapman, ties that lasted for all her life.¹³⁰ As her travelogues evidences, Martineau had tried to maintain her unbiased perspective while in the South. Nonetheless, she was an abolitionist. Thereby, when she witnessed the atrocities of the slavery for herself she probably revealed her position regarding the issue of slavery, although she had attempted to be as neutral as possible. Martineau had claimed that she would have listened equally to both pro and anti-slavery points of view, although many Southerners had already read her opinion regarding the institution of slavery in *Demerara*. She argues that “[she] really desired to see the working of the slave system, and was glad that [her] having published against the principles divest[ed] [her] altogether of the character of a spy, and gave [her] an unquestioned liberty to publish the results of what[she] might observe”.¹³¹ Slavery, in fact, according to Webb had become a vital principle and preoccupation to Martineau who probably did not wish to conceal her views and attitude towards the institution.

Secondly, she interviewed individuals coming from all social classes, citizens of different ethnic origins, gender and profession to portray the widest spectrum of society. She commented that the traveller “must seek intercourse with all classes of the society he visits, not only the rich and the poor but those who may be classed by profession, pursuit, habits of mind and turn of manners. He must converse with young men and maidens, old men and children, beggars and savans”.¹³² Her inclusive focus seemed to include also those citizens imprisoned, whom she interviewed privately inside their cells. She understood the importance of talking to prisoners personally in order to capture the spirit of the American prison system. During this period she was further visited by the elite of New York, as Seat maintains.¹³³ It included statesmen, religious leaders and publishers who were apparently urging to give them priority on the publication of any book she might write during her stay. In the first few days in America, Harriet Martineau recounts that she met General Mason, Governor Cass and Mr.

129 Benacquista, “Didacticism in Martineau,” 10.

130 Ibid.

131 Martineau, *Retrospect, Volume I*, 230.

132 Harriet Martineau, *How to Observe Morals and Manners* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1838), 188.

133 Seat, “Martineau in America,” 52.

Gallatin. Apparently, they all eagerly sought her company and listened carefully to her opinions. President Jackson entertained her at dinner, James Madison talked with her at his home, Van Buren, Clay, Calhoun, Webster, Marshall, Story and many other leading statesmen were seemingly delighted to exchange some opinions with her. Intellectuals and theologians such as Emerson, Garrison, Channing and Miss Sedgwick welcomed her company. Three days after landing in the United States she wrote the following account which probably witnesses the huge crowd of people who was interested in meeting her and exchange a conversation. Yet it also constitutes an example of the strong acclamation received in America.

How shall I ever tell you what we are doing: At the table of honour appropriated to us I am compelled to take the highest place. Half of our day is taken up with callers. Such trains of them! The late mayor, to bid me welcome, members of Congress, lawyers and candidates for office, interested in poor-laws and -what not,--you must fancy all this. Some of my honours are, having three special orders issued for my things to pass the custom-house untouched; tributes from Bryant and others ingeniously placed under my eyes; a letter from the principal book-sellers of the State, asking leave to negotiate for any work I may think of publishing, and begging me to designate from their book-list what works they shall have the pleasure to present me with. And every copy of my books is snapped up.¹³⁴

It can be suggested that the possibility to have a conversation and discuss of several matters with almost every group constituting the American society, allowed her to approach and study the several facets and institutions which were part of America. Nevertheless, Martineau also built links with slave-holders which were defined as friends.

My feelings were very different from theirs [the American Abolitionists] about the slave-holders in the South; - naturally enough, as these southern slave-holders were nothing else in the eyes of abolitionists, while to me they were, in some cases, personal friends and in more, hospitable entertainers.¹³⁵

She apparently sought to clarify that, even though slave-holders had committed a moral crime “they were not monsters”, as Markovitz argues.¹³⁶ Martineau may have not condoned the

134 Maria Weston Chapman, *Harriet Martineau's Autobiography, Volume III* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 113.

135 Labovitz, “For the Benefit of Others,” 66.

136 *Ibid.*, 65.

institution of slavery, however, her commitment to conduct a comprehensive and neutral analysis, apparently brought her to build links with some slave-holders. This extensive use of personal interactions with America's inhabitants further allowed Martineau to avoid generalisations and abstract ideas in her travelogue. Yet she attempted to provide concrete descriptions and anecdotes of the institutions studied. Through the quotations extracted from her *Autobiography* and her travelogue it has been possible to examine the methodology employed when approaching the new country. Her research was apparently based on her neutral point of view and her contacts and interactions with every social group. This, as it may be suggested, allowed Harriet Martineau to conduct a successful analysis and evaluation of the United States.

1.5 Frances Trollope

Frances Trollope came to the New World in 1827 at the age of 48 relatively unknown as an average emigrant. She travelled through the Atlantic Ocean with three of her children, the two girls Emily and Cecilia, her son Henry, two servants and two family friends, Auguste Hervieu, a French political refugee and gifted artist also teacher of her children and Frances Wright.¹³⁷ She spent almost four years in the United States and her primary destination was the utopian community of Nashoba. She left England in the late autumn of 1827. The vessel carrying the Trollopes' entourage landed in New Orleans on Christmas day. Then she continued the trip by steamboat up the broad Mississippi river. Her *Domestic Manners of the Americans* is a chronologically arranged account of her experiences during her stay of almost four years in the United States. It was published in 1832 when she turned what had at first been intended as a personal diary of her years in America into a travelogue.

1.5.1 Why Travel to America?

Critics have usually identified Frances Trollope's journey to the New World as

¹³⁷ Heineman, "New Backgrounds," 647.

primarily influenced by economic reasons. In this section I will outline the period of her life going from her marriage with Thomas Trollope to the end of her American travel in order to throw light on her reasons to move to the United States. In 1809, Frances Milton married Thomas Anthony Trollope, an English barrister. Since 1817 their economic prosperity had been experiencing financial difficulties and their debts increasing. These faulty economic circumstances had menaced their prosperity but also her husband's ability to maintain a large family. Apparently, the Trollopes were not seriously concerned with their economic situation since they hoped to inherit a small fortune by a wealthy childless uncle. To their dismay, the uncle remarried and fathered a family. Frances Wright, a well-known Scottish writer, a reformer and radical feminist, visited the family in the autumn of 1827 in order to introduce her utopian project and asked for their participation. She had already embarked on a two year tour of the United States although she had been forced to return to England because of a severe fever. Back in England, she hoped to recruit prominent intellectuals for her American utopian experiment, the Nashoba community, in western Tennessee, which aimed at improving the condition of slaves. She had purchased black slaves who worked in the cotton plantation and produced a "surplus of money".¹³⁸ This sum of money would have served a threefold purpose: to reimburse the purchase price of the slaves, to pay the cost of the project itself and finally to pay the cost of the colonisation of the slaves abroad. In the meantime, slaves would be educated. Thanks to her persuasiveness she proved to be successful and gained the Trollopes as recruits. Apparently, her decision to accompany Frances Wright in America was motivated by the growing debts. Fanny understood that, as the stronger member of the family, she had to find a way to restore the Trollope's fortune. In the meantime, her husband retired from his law practice and attempted to become a gentleman farmer. Yet he probably did not succeed in this new profession. As a consequence, she convinced herself that the "Nashoba's project [...] would be a good place for sixteen-year-old Henry to live and work while his mother met the right Cincinnatians and established her bazaar".¹³⁹ In fact, she probably planned to leave the bazaar to her son Henry, "once it was running smoothly", and come back to England.¹⁴⁰ This plan aimed at rescuing her husband from public ruin and "a sense of failure", as Helen Reeder Cross contends.¹⁴¹ When Frances Trollope announced her departure, the surprise was very great among her friends, probably because of the community's unpleasant publicity as well as "the aura of scandal that hung about the name of

138 Ibid., 645.

139 Helen Reeder Cross, "I Hate America," *History Today* 20, no.3 (1970): 166, accessed March 16, 2015.

140 Ibid.

141 Ibid.

Nashoba”.¹⁴² The community was usually described as irreligious in nature and founded on sexual liberty, which probably contravened with England's moral and religious principles. Harriet Garnett, one of Frances' friends, comments on her choice in a letter to Julia Garnett by noting that “the horror that community will excite in every country and most in America. What things will be said and written on such a field for slander and ill-nature”.¹⁴³ In addition, Frances was a cultured and refined English middle class woman whose interest in utopian American projects appeared unusual. According to Helen Heineman, several motivations may explain Frances Trollope's sudden decision. Firstly, she hoped to find a position in the community for her unqualified son Henry, who had left school at the age of sixteen. Secondly, the economic insecurities of the family and thirdly, by participating in Fanny Wright's project she could leave England without revealing the true motivations behind her decision. Finally, it can be suggested that she probably regarded America as a country which granted opportunities equally to all its inhabitants, since it was based on democratic principles. A great deal of British visitors, in fact, tended to attach to the American country, hopes for a better future which did not seem possible in England, as explained in the section “Imagined Americas”. Thus, Frances Trollope explains that “a year or two passed at Nashoba would repair our affairs more completely than any other”¹⁴⁴ since “some pecuniary claims which came upon us quite unexpectedly, made it very necessary that we should leave our pretty place and large establishment for a year or two at least”.¹⁴⁵ America probably appeared to Trollope as “a place where wonderful and new things were being done”.¹⁴⁶ Nonetheless, her idealistic expectations and her attempts to restore the family's fortunes resulted in a failure. She arrived at the mouth of the Mississippi and headed to Nashoba, near Memphis. The colony “was a dismal failure” according to Helen Reeder Cross.¹⁴⁷ The insufficient supplies of food, bad manners and the unhealthy conditions of life compelled her to leave the community. As she explains:

On reaching Nashoba I found it so infinitely more dreadful than I ever imagined possible that I almost immediately decided upon not suffering my children to breathe the pestilential atmosphere more than a day or two— it is impossible to give you an idea of their miserable and melancholy mode of life while I was there [...].

142 Heineman, “New Backgrounds,” 646.

143 Frances Trollope to Julia Garnett, West Cowes, August 6, 1824 quoted in Heineman, “New Backgrounds,” 646.

144 Frances Trollope to Harriet Garnett, December 7, 1828 quoted in Heineman, “New Backgrounds,” 647.

145 Frances Trollope to Julia Garnett, December 26, 1827 quoted in Heineman, “New Backgrounds,” 649.

146 Heineman, “New Backgrounds,” 648.

147 Reeder Cross, “I Hate America,” 167.

The food was scanty and far from wholesome – no milk or butter – bad weather – very little bread – and no meat but pork. - in short I left them in ten days.¹⁴⁸

As a consequence, she left the community since she did not probably regarded Nashoba as the proper place to live safely with her children without the support of her husband. Thus she settled in Cincinnati “the finest situation of the west Alleghenies”, where she came without letters of introduction because of her quick decision.¹⁴⁹ In Cincinnati she attempted to revive her economic conditions both by engaging in artistic projects and by opening the “Cincinnati bazaar” where she intended to sell “luxury items in the best European taste”.¹⁵⁰ Despite her enthusiasm, this project failed because of a series of miscalculations and bad luck. The bazaar was located far from the “fashionable district” of town, she was selling goods which were available in other stores at cheaper prices and the sum of money sent by her husband to purchase goods was confiscated to pay the workers.¹⁵¹ Nonetheless, after her failure she remained in America. Her primary reason to stay was her desire to write a book in hopes of earning money and to avoid an embarrassing situation with friends in England. Therefore, she decided to extend her American experience “until something can be arranged for our future plans”.¹⁵² Moreover, while she was apparently busy to finish the book, her friend Auguste Hervieu was drawing twenty-four lithographs as illustrations for the proposed book. Therefore, it can be maintained that Frances Trollope probably regarded the New World, as a place of opportunities where, she could have restored her financial problems. As evidenced, Frances Trollope's American experience proved unsuccessful from an economic point of view. Both her travel and her book were motivated by her need to improve her economic prosperity. Although her Cincinnati bazaar was unsuccessful, her travelogue “ran through four editions in less than a year, filling the author's family purse with much-needed revenue”.¹⁵³

1.5.2 The Journey: a General Overview

Her travelogue *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, recounts the experience of almost four years in the United States. For the first twenty-five months she lived in a single location,

148 Frances Trollope to Harriet Garnett, Cincinnati, December 7, 1828 quoted in Heineman, “New Backgrounds,” 650.

149 Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, 46.

150 Reeder Cross, “I Hate America,” 166.

151 Heineman, “New Backgrounds,” 654.

152 Frances Trollope to Thomas Anthony Trollope quoted in Heineman, “New Backgrounds,” 655-656.

153 Reeder Cross, “I Hate America,” 164.

Cincinnati, whereas for the rest of the journey she travelled throughout America. This division appears carefully reproduced in the structure of *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, which draws inspiration from the notes taken along her voyage. As a consequence, the first part of the travelogue seems to abound with personal anecdotes extracted from her daily life in Cincinnati, whereas the second part is filled with landscape and urban descriptions. Her observations regarding America and its inhabitants were then transformed into a successful book in England, “during her first months at Stonington”.¹⁵⁴ In the first period at Cincinnati, she worked as housewife, mother and business woman, as Helen Heineman maintains.¹⁵⁵ Mark Twain commented on her journey by saying that “she lived three years in this civilisation of our; in the body of it – not on the surface of it, as was the case with most of the foreign tourists of the day”.¹⁵⁶ She seemed, as his words can attest, fully integrated in the American society and life and lived there as a real American citizen.



Figure II. Frances Trollope's Itinerary.

Her route was a fairly standard tourist route. She entered from the mouth of the Mississippi and from there she went to New Orleans. From here on board the steamship she reached Memphis and then the community of Nashoba where she was intended to settle with her

154 Donald A. Smalley, *Notes to Domestic Manners* (USA: University of Indiana, 1947), 650.

155 Heineman, “New Backgrounds,” 644.

156 Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 392.

family. When the project of Nashoba failed, she moved to Cincinnati, in Ohio. She then focused her tour on the north-eastern part of the United States. From Cincinnati she travelled to Hagerstown, Baltimore, and to Washington; and then east to Philadelphia, Chesapeake, Stonington again, Alexandria, New York, the Niagara Falls, Rochester, Albany and she concluded her journey in New York.

1.5.3 Manners as a Subject for her Travelogue

The title chosen for her American travelogue *Domestic Manners of the Americans* seems to reflect the subject of the narration. By reading the title, the reader may receive the impression that Frances Trollope is turning her gaze on the codes of American etiquette, style, taste and decorum, namely the manners. According to Spencer, the term “domestic”:

implies a commitment to defining and advocating a distinct feminine nature that informs not only the individual woman's roles in society and within the family but also her motivations, her desires, her intellectual capacities, as well as the contours of her body – in short, the entire workings of the feminine subject.¹⁵⁷

Thus, by employing the term “domestic”, it seems that she does not only focus on the manners of the American citizens but she also seems to devote special attention to the feminine sphere. As a consequence, Spencer, suggests that although she does not abandon her interest in feelings or does not regard them as insignificant “to the outward workings of society and the individual subject”, Frances Trollope tends to be “focus[ed] on the physical, the structural and the visible”. She, therefore, appears to be a better observer of the outward form than of inner beings and feelings. For instance, she complained of the arrogant servants, of the rude Americans and their “remorseless spitting”,¹⁵⁸ or the gentleman “always redolent of whiskey and tobacco”,¹⁵⁹ who were “all so repugnant to English feelings”.¹⁶⁰ “The total and universal want of manners, both in males and females, is so remarkable, that I was constantly endeavouring for it” reports regarding the American manners.¹⁶¹ All these manifestations,

157 Spencer, “Women Writers,” 168.

158 Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, 34.

159 Ibid., 94.

160 Ibid., 43.

161 Ibid., 49.

seem to appear as external behaviours which could be examined and studied by an accurate observer. However, Helen Heineman suggests that Frances Trollope did not focus on feelings since “she believed external manners as indicative of inner states”.¹⁶² It seems that the belief in the correspondence between external manners and inner feelings lies at the root of her disregard for inner emotions. She seemingly provides an example of this correlation by retelling an anecdote. When two of her children had been gone longer than expected, she anxiously went to search for them. Stopping to enquire after them at a public house, she was answered by a woman with apparently the best of intentions and good humour, who prepared to join Frances Trollope in the search. She described the woman with these words:

Her look, her voice, her manner, were so exceedingly coarse and vehement, that she almost frightened me; she passed her arm within mine, and to the inexpressible amusement of my young people, she dragged me on, talking and questioning me without ceasing. She lived but a short distance from us, and I am sure intended to be very good neighbour; but her violent intimacy made me dread to pass her door.¹⁶³

Frances Trollope uses this anecdote to depict the woman. Despite her good will and her friendly willingness to help, her open nature and kindness, Trollope seems to notice only her “external roughness”. Her evaluation seems focused on the manners of the woman which apparently correspond to an excessive familiarity from Frances Trollope's point of view. Therefore, her travelogue studies the external manners of the American population which appear absent, in Trollope's opinion. Her focus on the external behaviour may be ascribable to the belief that external manners corresponded to inner states. For this reason she never went beyond the analysis of external manners since according to her, these appeared as essentially connected to the emotions of people.

1.5.4 How to Approach America

When Frances Trollope landed in the United States she approached the American population. During her time there she kept notebooks containing details and information

¹⁶² Helen Heineman, “Frances Trollope in the New World: *Domestic Manners of the Americans*,” *American Quarterly* 21, no.3 (1969): 557, accessed February 28, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2711933>.

¹⁶³ Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, 103.

concerning scenes and conversations. As Heineman attests she tended to record every minute detail of her American life. In fact, she seems to possess “the keen eye of the female” through which she could observe and remember everything, even the secondary aspects and particularities.¹⁶⁴ Trollope seems to be so accurate in her account that Mark Twain compared her to photography, as Heineman attests.¹⁶⁵ It seems that she tended to record everything happened to her but not only general descriptions of events but also all the details which characterised them. Several techniques seemed to be adopted in in order to keep her travelogue as close to reality as possible. Firstly, Heineman explains that she tended to write down events as soon as they occurred in order not to lose details and the memory of them. Trollope, in fact, comments on her documentary accuracy by contending that “whenever [she] gave conversations they were not made à loisir, but were written down immediately after they occurred, with all the verbal fidelity [her] memory permitted”.¹⁶⁶ However, Heineman attests that, although she had developed the habit of writing down conversations immediately, she had an inclination “to recall events and conversations long after they had taken place”.¹⁶⁷ Secondly, she tended to record the accents of the people. In the words of her friend Timothy Flint, she was the “most accomplished mimic”.¹⁶⁸ Trollope was usually interested in capturing the differences between accents in order to provide even more truthfulness to her portrayal of the Americans, she even distinguishes the accents among different social classes. For instance, in the following passage, she delineates the speech of a servant:

Well, I never seed such grumpy folks as you be; there is several young ladies of my acquaintance what goes to live out now and then with the old women about the town, and they and their gurls always lends them what they ask for; I guess you English thinks we should poison your things, just as bad as if we was Negurs.¹⁶⁹

In the passage, Trollope is seemingly reporting the reply of a servant who is complaining because an Englishwoman declined to lend her a dress of hers. The response is apparently full of grammar and pronunciation mistakes that she can reproduce by altering the spelling of the conversation. Thirdly, she tends to reproduce anecdotes and incidents of American life. Cincinnati seems to be her microcosm and its events and happenings are described in detail by

164 Heineman, “Frances Trollope in the New World,” 545.

165 Ibid.

166 Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, 62.

167 Heineman, “Frances Trollope in the New World,” 548.

168 *New York Monthly Magazine* 2 (October 1833), 286-87 quoted in Heineman, “Frances Trollope in the New World,” 647.

169 Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, 58.

her. According to Heineman, Trollope tends to narrate a general story that she renders with great attention to the smallest detail and then she detaches her point of view by making her focus wider. At this point, she usually tends to make some generalisations on the scene described. She, therefore, “wears the cloak of authority”.¹⁷⁰ Trollope has the tendency to start from these ordinary stories of life and from them she usually generalises and provides some universal principle of good behaviour and of bad conduct. In this way, she offers an image of herself as a teacher and preacher who scrupulously can dictate some general rules. As a consequence, it can be maintained that Trollope achieved a truthful and accurate account by employing different techniques: she wrote down episodes immediately in order not to lose memory of it, she recorded accents and differences of language among the different social classes as well as she tended to report ordinary events occurring in her life from which she usually extracted some general principles of good behaviour. On the whole, Trollope does not seem to reproduce incidents because these are entertaining and her audience could enjoy them but because they are “illustrative and representative of essential qualities of American life”.¹⁷¹

1.6 Charles Dickens

Charles Dickens seemed really enthusiastic and excited to depart for the United States. He possessed very high expectations of what he would find there. He had written a letter to the *New York Magazine* editor Lewis Gaylord Clark in order to communicate him that he “[could not] describe to [him] the glow into which [he] [rose], when [he thought] of the wonders that await[ed] [them], and all the interests, [he] was sure, [he] would have in [his] mighty land”.¹⁷² Charles Dickens sailed from Liverpool to the United States on the steamship *Britannia* with his wife Catherine and her maid Anne Brown on January 3, 1842 and arrived in Boston on January 22. Initially, he wanted to settle in Charleston in order to examine the American slave system but because of the heat and the long trip to arrive there he decided to stay in Richmond, in Virginia. When he left England he was at the height of his popularity on both sides of the Atlantic. As a consequence, as soon as he landed on the American shores he was extensively flattered and surrounded by large crowds of citizens who gathered to express their devotion and esteem. He attended public dinners, formal and informal receptions and

170 Heineman, “New Backgrounds,” 550.

171 Heineman, “Frances Trollope in the New World,” 548.

172 Quoted in William Glyde Wilkins, *Charles Dickens in America* (London, Forgotten Books, 2013), 8.

even a ball in New York City. Thus, he was welcomed as a hero, almost like a god. Shortly after his arrival Dickens wrote to the friend Thomas Mitton:

I can give you no conception of my welcome here. There never was a king or emperor upon the earth so cheered and followed by crowds and entertained in public and splendid balls and dinners, and waited on by public bodies and deputations of all kinds. I have had one from the Far West – a journey of two thousand miles! If I go out in a carriage, the crowd surround it and escort me home; if I go to the theatre, the whole house (crowded to the roof) rises as one man, and the timbers ring again. You cannot imagine what it is. I have five great public dinners on hand at this moment, and invitations from every town and village and city in the States.¹⁷³

From the passage, it seems that he had the impression of being observed every moment of his day like a “public exhibit”, although he had come to America as an observer.¹⁷⁴ Apparently, he was exasperated by the Americans who treated him with excessive familiarity and did not respect his private space. In fact, he felt very much oppressed by their behaviour. Dickens describes it in his American travelogue by contending that:

Men and boys who happened to have nothing in particular to do, and were curious in foreigners, came (according to custom) round the carriage in which I sat; let down all the windows; thrust in their heads and shoulders; hooked themselves on conveniently, by their elbows ; and fell to comparing notes on the subject of my personal appearance, with as much indifference as if I were a stuffed figure.¹⁷⁵

As Dickens maintains, he feels that the excessive familiarity with which he was treated in America deprived him of his private life or space. People studied him and compared him to their expectations. This is perhaps one of the reasons for his deep frustration and disappointment at the American population. His initial enthusiasm and excitement, in fact, seemed to have decreased as soon as he experienced the oppressive and suffocating behaviour of the American citizens, as Steven Marcus contends.¹⁷⁶ He understood what it meant to be a celebrity in the New World. Then, he turned his impressions of America into a travel book,

173 Edwin Percy Whipple, *Life, Letters and Speeches of Charles Dickens: with Biographical Sketches of the Principal Illustrators of Dickens's Works, Volume I* (New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1894), 145.

174 Jerome Meekier, “Dickens discovers America, Dickens discovers Dickens: The First Visit Reconsidered,” *The Modern Language Review* 79, no.2 (1984): 266, accessed February 28, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3730011>.

175 Dickens, *American Notes*, 69.

176 Steven Marcus, *Dickens: From Pickwick to Dombey* (New York, Basic Books, 1965), 243.

American Notes for General Circulation, which was published in 1842. Soon after his travelogue Dickens wrote his sixth novel, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, a satirical work regarding his American trip.

1.6.1 Why Travel to America?

When Charles Dickens went to America he was a very popular author both in Europe and in the United States. As Lewis Bogaty points out, Dickens had not gone to America principally to write a book but he rather wished “to see the sights”.¹⁷⁷ Bogaty explains that Dickens remembered how Walter Scott had travelled in old age and that this thought had tortured him. Dickens may have wished to visit America since he was a young man in order to appreciate and enjoy his travel in all its aspects. The book, therefore, seemed the right way for him to finance the trip. According to Bogaty, Dickens had gone to America primarily to visit the country, in fact he wished to see the American landscape. However, according to Bogaty he did not want to be too old to visit the country, he did not want the difficulties of the journey to be more than his enjoyment and pleasure. Therefore, the travelogue seemed to him a good way to support his trip economically. After all, the population which had welcomed him so warmly probably expected him to write a book concerning his experience in America. His popularity, in fact, was large and his American fans who had welcomed and followed him curiously almost everywhere, may have waited with trepidation the publication of a book regarding America. Yet, this publication was, for them, the easiest way to have a clear understanding of Dickens's praise and criticism of America. However, Dickens was aware of the universal expectations and in his travelogue he recorded a conversation he had heard on board the steamer:

“Boz is on board still, my dear”... A long interval having elapsed, during which I imagine him to have been turning restlessly from side to side, and trying to go to sleep; he broke out again, with “I suppose that Boz will be writing a book by-and-by, and putting all our names in it!” at which imaginary consequence of being on board a boat with Boz, he groaned, and became silent.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ Lewis Bogaty, “Dickens's America: A Study of the Backgrounds and of Dickens's Use of America in *American Notes* and *Martin Chuzzlewit*” (PhD thesis, Ohio State University, USA, 1976), 124.

¹⁷⁸ Dickens, *American Notes*, 242.

Dickens seems to know really well the expectations of his supporters. He even overhears two men talking of the book he would have written, where their names might have appeared. Dickens kept a detailed account of his trip since he had been commissioned in advance to write a travelogue on his return to England. A large part of the material for *American Notes* comes from Dickens's letters to his biographer John Forster. Bogaty explains that when it was published it became an immediate success. In the first week after its publication, which had been November 6, 1842 it had sold three thousand copies and by the end of the year the book had already been reprinted four times.¹⁷⁹ Therefore, it seems that thanks to Dickens's popularity the book had experienced an enormous success. The title he had chosen for the book “promised new life for an old subject”.¹⁸⁰ As Bogaty maintains, “the title commented on the American practice of circulating valueless forged notes in payment of debts”.¹⁸¹ In fact, Dickens made a statement on the issue of copyright, which was usually regarded as the main cause of his disillusionment. He was truly upset that his works could be printed and reprinted at will by the American publishers without being able to earn any profits. As a consequence, his ironic title was probably a direct reference to the copyright controversy which was a very debated issue at that time in America. Apparently, Dickens expected that his book would be pirated and circulated freely in America. He, thus, would have not earned money and probably the book would have not received the right appreciation and value. However, Bogaty says that “the promise of the title went unfulfilled”.¹⁸² It seems that the Americans bought the book, although they found it very dull and superficial. Despite its huge success, the book was not apparently appreciated. It was followed by some very harsh and severe reviews by the American press. For instance, the *Quarterly Review* wrote that “it seems to us an entire failure”,¹⁸³ while the *Fraser's* said that there is “nothing – positively – nothing!”.¹⁸⁴ As the magazines' reviews seem to attest, Dickens's travelogue was considered by the Americans as a very negative and dull book. Although it was extensively sold, *American Notes* was not appreciated but harshly criticised by the American population who probably did not agree with Dickens's disappointment and criticism.

179 Bogaty, “Dickens's America,” 123.

180 Ibid.

181 Ibid.

182 Ibid.

183 *Quarterly Review* 71 (1842-43), 505 quoted in Bogaty “Dickens's America,” 124.

184 *Fraser's Magazine* 26 (1842), 618 quoted in Bogaty, “Dickens's America,” 124.

1.6.2 The Journey: a General Overview

From January 22, when he landed in Boston, to April, when he headed West, Dickens spent four months and a half in America, including the month he spent in Canada. Generally speaking, travellers usually followed the same itineraries during these years. Thus, neither his cultural nor his geographical itinerary seemed particularly new, and neither was publishing a book about it probably. Ella Dzelzainis attests that “between 1815 and 1860 some two hundred Britons produced travel accounts of their trips to the States”.¹⁸⁵ It seems that a great deal of British travellers who went to America wrote books once back to England in order to recount their experience. Dickens was, therefore, part of that immense mass of visitors, although his huge popularity may have detached him from all the other travellers.



Figure III. Charles Dickens's Itinerary.

He spent the bulk of his time in New England and New York, but he visited a lot of towns. After landing in Boston he travelled to Philadelphia and to Washington. Then he went to Richmond, he circled south to Fredericksburg and returned to Washington and to Baltimore in order to prepare his sojourn westwards. He also visited Harrisburg and Pittsburgh, Columbus,

¹⁸⁵ Ella Dzelzainis, “The Victorians and America,” in *Charles Dickens in Context*, ed. Sally Ledger and Holly Furneaux (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 211.

Cincinnati, Louisville and Saint Louis. On his return from Saint Louis, he went north to Montreal before going to New York to return home. He visited several different institutions, i.e. schools, hospitals, prisons and businesses. However, as McCarthy underlines, he spent much of his trip travelling from town to town. He travelled through canals, rivers, boats, coaches and trains. In a letter to the painter Daniel Maclise he underlines that he was always en route:

As to Scenery, we really have seen very little as yet. It is the same thing over and over again. The railroads go through the low grounds and swamps, and it is all one eternal forest, with fallen trees mouldering away in stagnant water and decaying vegetable matter – and heaps of timber in every aspect of decay and utter ruin.¹⁸⁶

In the above letter, he seems to give proof that he is always travelling from one place to another. The letter witnesses that he spent a great deal of time on different means of transportation by observing the regular and unchanging landscape. As a consequence, his stays in cities were brief, of one or two days usually, when he and his wife spent meeting crowds of strangers. As McCarthy contends, “so hurried, writing his impressions at every spare moment, he had little opportunity as he went along for developing sympathy or understanding. Nor did he have time to see beyond the surface of things”.¹⁸⁷ Due to the little time he could spend in each city he did not probably have the possibility to portray the lives of the citizens in a truly intimate way. They seem only quickly mentioned in Dickens's account while Martineau and Trollope focused more closely on individual lives. It seems that Dickens and his wife met huge numbers of people every day, who introduced themselves to the popular author and his family. Yet his ordinary meetings did not give him the possibility to know the American citizens intimately but only provided a superficial knowledge of people.

1.6.3 How to Approach America

When Dickens embarked on his journey to America, he seemed to have a primary purpose in mind concerning his book. He aimed to recount a truthful story. His dedication was directed towards “those friends of mine in America who can bear the truth”.¹⁸⁸ He also

186 Walter Dexter, *The Letters of Charles Dickens, Volume I* (Bloomsbury: The Nonesuch Press, 1938), 418.

187 McCarthy, “Truth in *American Notes*,” 69.

188 Dickens, *American Notes*, 3.

contends that he had “nothing to defend”¹⁸⁹ since “the truth is the truth”.¹⁹⁰ Thus, he was seemingly attempting to prove to his readers that the facts recounted were totally dismissing reality and not inflated by him. Apparently, the letters written to his biographer and his notes provided a basis for his authentic account concerning America. He seems to be really interested and worried to write an unbiased and objective account as his words in *American Notes* declare. However, McCarthy underlines that although Dickens was truly committed to write a truthful account “he considered it from a satirist's distance, with wide-eyed amazement, offended dignity and brilliant humour”.¹⁹¹ This point of view seems to have provided him with a right distance from facts enabling him to assess what he saw objectively. Probably, Dickens did not evidence to be too emotionally involved. This perhaps may have affected his judgement. Indeed, by keeping ordinary notes and correspondence with Forster as well as by keeping some distance from events he could provide a truly unbiased account. Sometimes he depicts humorously scenes, as when he describes the cabin on board the ship in the introduction of *American Notes*. He depicts “a beautiful port-hole which could be kept open all day (weather permitting)” or the “large bull's-eye just over the looking-glass which would render shaving a perfectly easy and delightful process (when the ship didn't roll too much)”.¹⁹² By the comic tone of the sentences in brackets, Dickens seems to depict with irony and satire the cabin that he probably did not like. Thus, irony proves an instrument to criticise in an objective way without being too much involved. Diaries, letters and the satirist's mode seem to allow him to give a truthful account. Besides, scholars highlight that Dickens did not know “America independently of all he had heard and read for a decade”.¹⁹³ Indeed, he seems to make direct reference to the work of the previous travellers and to be aware of their reports. This probably led reviewers to accuse him of a “lack of freshness in *American Notes*”, as Bogaty points out.¹⁹⁴ McCarthy, for instance, underlines that his work had been profoundly influenced by the works of Frances Trollope and Harriet Martineau who had travelled before him, in fact, “his modes of getting about were strongly influenced by what others had done before him”.¹⁹⁵ His methodology appears to be grounded on the following principles: firstly, he wrote daily notes of what he did and the people he met, secondly he kept a regular correspondence with his biographer John Forster to whom he narrated his experience and

189 Ibid.

190 Ibid.

191 McCarthy, “Truth in *American Notes*,” 68.

192 Dickens, *American Notes*, 8.

193 Bogaty, “Dickens's America,” 9.

194 Ibid., 2.

195 McCarthy, “Truth in *American Notes*,” 70.

communicated his impressions and opinions by keeping some distance from the events and writing according to the satirist point of view. This apparently allowed him to keep his travelogue unbiased and objective. Fourthly, Dickens seems to have extensively read and studied the work of the writers who went to America before him and to have been influenced by them both in the choice of the itinerary and on the subjects he decided to examine.

The Mississippi River

My study of point of view and the American landscape begins with an analysis of the Mississippi River, the first natural scenery taken into consideration. I explore two major landscape subjects for travel writers in the United States: the Mississippi River and the Niagara Falls, two sites which seem to represent the gigantic and huge dimensions of the American natural scenery par excellence. These two natural sites are significant in terms of point of view both for the travellers and for the writers when revisiting these spaces. Point of view is examined by studying how the British perspective is affected by the encounter with the American landscape and the resulting implications on narrative engendered by these sceneries. The Mississippi River is the main landscape explored in this chapter. Some factors seem to have affected the point of view of Frances Trollope, Harriet Martineau and Charles Dickens when approaching the Mississippi scenery. Firstly, technological improvements of the new means of transportation: through new technologies more space could be seen and travelled in a shorter time and this caused repercussions on how the land was observed. Steamboat travel seems to have mainly affected the perspective and focus of their point of view. It appears that it influenced which aspects it could bring into focus, whether it was mainly the interior of the boat or the landscape outside. Secondly, as soon as these travellers could address their eyes towards the Mississippi scenery, they observed the river and seemingly manifested their impressions provoked by the sight. Ideas regarding what was considered as aesthetically beautiful in the nineteenth century Britain seems to have impacted these travellers' approach to the Mississippi landscape, in particular this thesis will study the theories by Edmund Burke in his work *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. In the light of his aesthetic theory, I will illustrate the sort of landscape which was widespread and appreciated among English traveller writers, artists etc.. I then analyse to which extent Burke's conception of the beautiful has affected Frances Trollope's and Charles Dickens's point of view on the Mississippi scenery. Finally, the chapter examines Martineau's original description of the river and attempts to explain the reasons which lie at the basis of her different assessment of the river. In the following section I briefly consider the unique place the Mississippi River occupies in American and British travel

writing as a vital location in the geography of America.

2.1 The Mississippi River: a General Overview



Figure IV. Map of the Mississippi River.

The Mississippi River is the second longest river of the United States. With its 2300 miles (about 3730 km) it bisects the country into half from North to South by extending from the Lake Itasca, in Minnesota to its outlet in the Gulf of Mexico, in New Orleans. Henry Rowe Schoolcraft laid claim to the discovery of the source of the river in 1832 by stating that “what had been long sought, at last appeared suddenly”.¹ After leaving Lake Itasca, it passes through several of America's largest and most strategic locations, including New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Minneapolis, Memphis and St. Louis. Native Americans were familiar with its course and its resources since they relied on the Mississippi for their survival. Rivers, in fact, constituted a very important resource, as D. J. Timothy recalls.² He contends that hunting, fishing, irrigation and transportation were the river's earliest uses, while nowadays rivers

1 Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, *Narrative of an Expedition through the Upper Mississippi to Itasca Lake* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1834), 54.

2 D.J. Timothy, “River-based Tourism in the United States: Tourism and Recreation on the Colorado and the Mississippi Rivers,” in *River Tourism*, ed. Bruce Prideaux and Malcom Cooper (Wallingford: CAB International, 2009), 2.

apparently represent a fundamental resource for agriculture, energy generation and recreation, particularly as American cities are increasingly growing in width and population. It seems that the native inhabitants gave the name to the river, which was then translated into “The Mississippi” meaning “the Father of Waters” as Alexis de Tocqueville explains in *Democracy in America*.³ Captain Flack, an Englishman who lived with a group of hunters for a year in the Texas range, talks more accurately of the origin of the name. He contends that:

The term “Father of Waters” is, by-the-by, a very free rendering of the Indian name of the great American river. In the language of the Choctaw tribe, MISSAH and SIPPAH, are two words very commonly used; the former meaning “old big”, the latter “strong”. It would be very difficult to find a more appropriate name for the mighty stream which drains a whole continent than the compound of these two adjectives, Missah-sippah, or Old-big-strong.⁴

As Flack seemingly notices the Mississippi River appeared as a strong and powerful stream. These characteristics were first observed by Native Americans who probably thought of a name which could express the true spirit of the Mississippi. Apparently, not only the enormous dimensions of the river struck the eyes of the Americans but also the mighty and forceful stream of water which runs through the riverbed. Thus, the Indian name apparently combines these two fundamental characteristics. In addition, it identifies the Mississippi as the “Father” of all rivers and not as any river in America. Early and later settlers and explorers seem to notice the reason for the name Mississippi. From the Spanish to the British explorers the river tended to strike the travellers for its scale. Lieutenant George Gleig wrote in Letter XVII of *The Campaigns of the British Army at Washington and New Orleans* that the Mississippi “is allowed to be inferior, in point of size and general navigability, to few streams in the world”.⁵ Thus, travellers who encountered the river were apparently struck by the scale of the Mississippi, which could not find a counterpart in Europe. Likewise, Captain Burton, an Englishman who had investigated the life of men living close to the wilderness and the desert, in *The City of the Saints, and Across the Rocky Mountains to California* explains that the Mississippi was not called a river, a drink was any river in Missouri, “the Big Drink was the Mississippi”.⁶ As evidenced by the previous quotations from British explorers, Captain

3 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America, Volume I* (Cambridge: Sever and Francis, 1863), 21.

4 Captain Flack, *A Hunter's Experiences in the Southern States of America* (Bedford: Applewood Books, 2008), 35.

5 George Robert Gleig, *The Campaigns of the British Army at Washington and New Orleans in the years 1814-1815* (London: S. and R. Bentley Dorset Street, 1827), 253.

6 Christopher Mulvey, *Anglo-American Landscapes: a Study of Nineteenth-Century Anglo-American Travel Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 209.

Burton seems to emphasise the grandeur and the colossal strength of the Mississippi which were completely new to the eyes of the Old World. Europeans first met the “Big Drink”⁷ in the sixteenth century when Spanish expeditions to the Gulf Coast seemed to “[report] telling hints of a great river that emptied there” as Thomas Ruys Smith maintains.⁸ Then another expedition led by the Spanish Hernando de Soto in 1541 headed to America in order to seek gold in the New World. Yet the Spanish troops, which were probably in pursuit of riches, discovered an immense river on May, 8 1541 which was called “Rio Grande”⁹. After these first explorations, it took 130 years for an imperial European power to reach the Mississippi again. France, probably stimulated by rumours of a large waterway, a “renowned river”, sent the explorers Jacques Marquette and Louis Joliet who reached the Mississippi from Canada in 1673.¹⁰ Marquette maintains that when they reached the river he experienced “a joy that [he could not] express”.¹¹ Travellers of every variety seem to have examined the river to better comprehend the country through which it flows. Every European visitor apparently acknowledged the immensity of the river and reported the strong emotions felt at the first encounter with the Mississippi. Hence, the Indian name seemed to fit the river better than any European title or etymology and to identify its essential attributes. Thanks to these expeditions and to the travellers' accounts, British popular interest in the enormous river seems to grow incredibly. The river had effectively arisen great curiosity in Britain and the comments of several explorers on its vastness and force may have probably encouraged British visitors to travel on the Mississippi to see directly this famous natural site. Accordingly, the Mississippi River became one of the fundamental stops of the British tour in America and a significant symbol of the United States. Christopher Mulvey, in fact, contends that “coming to the banks of the Mississippi, the Englishman knew that he had reached the real America”.¹² As Mulvey's words witness, the Mississippi had probably become a vivid symbolic representative of America, the nation through which it ran as an “increasingly vital artery”.¹³ Two reasons may explain the strong symbolism which started to be connected to the river. On the one hand, the Mississippi, running through the nation as a vital artery, cut America into two halves, an eastern and a western side. By lying at the heart of the United States, it had usually been regarded as a fundamental source for America's inhabitants'

7 Ibid.

8 Thomas Ruys Smith, “The Mississippi River as Site and Symbol,” in *The Cambridge Companion to American Travel Writing*, ed. Alfred Bendixen and Judith Hamera (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 64.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Mulvey, *Anglo-American Landscapes*, 209.

13 Smith, “The Mississippi River,” 67.

survival and it still constitutes an important resource for the United States. Thus, as aforementioned, the river and the American population appear to have been always strongly connected. Secondly, the river had stimulated great curiosity among the travellers of the world for its dimensions and strength. Visitors who reported their comments and observations on the Mississippi, in Smith's opinion, had probably contributed to arise the British attention and had converted the river into a very popular American tourist attraction.¹⁴ The Mississippi, in fact, did not have a a river of equivalent force and size in Europe. As a consequence, Smith contends that it “became a vital location in the symbolic geography of America”.¹⁵ Thus, very big interest and consideration seems to surround the river which probably became a significant and crucial emblem of America for the nineteenth century British traveller.

However, Smith attests that the development of steamboat travel on the Mississippi may have allowed the river to raise further its popularity and to be regarded as a “vivid symbolic representative of the nation”.¹⁶ He argues that in the antebellum years, thanks to the development of the steam engine, steamboat travel became a commodity in the United States.¹⁷ Steamboats carried people and goods from a place to another although river travel was often slow because the speed of travel depended on the river current and manpower. The introduction of steamboats in the late 1700s and early 1800s revolutionised river travel and trade and seemed to dominate the waterways. As for the United States, Nicholas Roosevelt, a partner in the Mississippi Steamboat Navigation Company with Fulton and Livingston, piloted the boat *New Orleans* downriver for the first time in 1811. According to Smith, this was “a landmark event” for the history of steamboat transportation in America for several reasons.¹⁸ First of all, it opened the river's economic potential since it inaugurated the transportation of passengers on the river. Statistics evidence that from this moment steamboats proliferated and became feasible for almost every citizen. Nearly 200 passengers arrived in New Orleans in 1820, 1000 in 1830, 2000 in 1841 and 3000 in 1847. Exploration probably “gave way to tourism”, as Smith argues and “steamboat travel on the Mississippi [became] a definitive American journey”.¹⁹ Early explorers with their notes, had probably contributed to turn the river from an ordinary American natural site into a very popular tourist attraction. However, the development of steamboat travel, which had revolutionised river trade and passenger transportation may have increased the popularity of the river since

14 Ibid., 62-64.

15 Ibid., 62.

16 Ibid., 67.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

growing numbers of visitors and America's inhabitants started to use steamboats to move across the country. Thus, tourism developed on the Mississippi River and the cabin of a Mississippi steamboat seemed to be the ordinary point of view from which to assess America. As a consequence, Smith claimed that “the Golden Age of steamboating was, therefore, the Golden Age of Mississippi travel writing”.²⁰ Innumerable accounts of the river usually appeared in this period and those of Trollope, Martineau and Dickens are among the most significant. In the light of the reasons discussed so far, the Mississippi seems to eventually grow into a fundamental symbol for America. Three reasons may have contributed to transform the river into a crucial American emblem. Firstly, its geographic location, the river, in fact, lies at the heart of America cutting the country from North to South. Secondly, European visitors did not find in the Old World a similar river for splendour and dimensions. These probably arose their curiosity and the Mississippi popularity in England. Thirdly the development of steamboat travel.²¹ As steamboat became a commodity in America, growing masses of visitors used this new means of transportation to move across the country. Steamboat travel on the Mississippi became a typical American journey and the steamboat cabin the typical point of view from which to observe America and the Mississippi scenery. On the river the British travellers usually took notes of their impressions and emotions that were then usually converted into travelogues. Thus, the beginning of the nineteenth century did not only see the proliferation of steamboats but also the proliferation of the Mississippi travel writing. As this section attempts to display, the Mississippi was probably a very strong symbol connected to America at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Due to its popularity, it seems to have emerged as a fundamental attraction for European travellers who, during their American tour, probably sought to examine and assess the river. The Mississippi, therefore, became an essential stop of the American tour for the European travellers who wished to “understand the essence of America”.²² After having outlined the cultural importance of the Mississippi River for the nineteenth century British travellers, and hinted at the reasons why it became a prominent symbol connected to America and thus an inevitable stop for travellers, I take into consideration two factors, which have probably affected the travellers' point of view when approaching the Mississippi River. In the following section I first examine the characteristics of steamboat travel and then how this new means impacted Trollope's, Martineau's and Dickens's visual and narrative perspective on the river.

20 Ibid.

21 Hallet, “America Seen,” 74.

22 Stephen E. Ambrose and Douglas G. Brinkley, *The Mississippi and the Making of a Nation* (Washington: National Geographic Society, 2002), 204.

2.2 New Modes of Travel: the Journey on board the Steamboat



Figure V. The *Creole Queen* on the Mississippi River.

In the nineteenth century, as the United States became more and more industrialised, new means of transportation helped to connect this growing nation. Movement became an essential part of this American era, first roads and then rivers and canals and then railroads moved travellers and goods across this vast nation. “Everyone seemed en route” emigrating and immigrating, resettling and moving towards different directions, East to West, North to South, from the countryside to town and viceversa.²³ Steamboats were introduced in the late 1700's and early 1800's in America and they soon revolutionised river travel and trade. In 1769, a Scotsman named James Watt invented an engine that was run by steam. Once inventors learned about the steam engine they began to experiment with using it to run boats. The first man to build a steamboat in the United States was John Fitch. With this boat Fitch sailed down the Delaware River. Nonetheless, the first successful steamboat in America was the *Clermont*, which was built by the American inventor Robert Fulton in 1807. With the advent of steam power rivers became even more crucial for transports, and thus were subject of improvement plans, as Banning recounts in his work *Liberty and Order: The First*

²³ Thomas J. Schlereth, *Victorian America Transformation in Everyday Life 1876-1915* (Harper Collins, 1991), 7.

American Party Struggle.²⁴ Banning explains that Albert Gallatin, a Swiss immigrant, Senator and Secretary of the Treasury under Jefferson's presidency proposed to build a network of canals in order to improve the existing system of streams with the aim of connecting the metropolis of the nation. By delivering a *Report on Internal Improvements* in 1808 he suggested to build roads and canals to strengthen the transport links. His suggestions were eventually realised, although these were delayed because of the war of 1812. As for the Mississippi River, Adam Hallet contends that with the advent of the steamboat it became the “major transportation artery” of the United States.²⁵ This is probably due to a twofold reason: its location and its size. First of all, it lied at the heart of the country and due to its dimensions it could probably transport a large number of steamboats. In addition, its privileged position allowed the Mississippi to pass through some of America's major cities such as Saint Louis, New Orleans, Minneapolis and Memphis. Thus, it had access to some of the most important urban centres of America.

As previously explained, travelling on the Mississippi by steamboat became increasingly popular and widespread in America at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Despite its popularity and rapid development it seems possible to assert that it altered travel consistently and therefore how to write about travel in the United States. As Thoreau notices, the traveller from the boat could observe the scenery of the river change slowly from town to town. In his book *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* he maintains that river traveller:

[h]ave the constantly varying panorama of the shore to relieve the monotony of their labor, and it seemed to us that as they thus glided noiselessly from town to town, with all their furniture about them, for their very homestead is a movable, they could comment on the character of the inhabitants with greater advantage and security to themselves than the traveller in a coach, who would be unable to indulge in such broadsides of wit and humor in so small a vessel for fear of the recoil.²⁶

In the passage, Thoreau tends to place the river traveller on the margins of society, thus the point of view seems to be that of a privileged outsider. He suggests that by moving from town to town he is apparently provided with the possibility of commenting on “the character of the

24 Lance Banning, *Liberty and Order: The First American Party Struggle* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2004), 466.

25 Adam Hallet, “America Seen: British and American Nineteenth Century Travels in the United States” (PhD, University of Exeter, UK, 2010), 75.

26 Henry David Thoreau, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (New York: Library of America, 1985), 170.

inhabitants” and observing “the constantly varying panorama”. In addition, Thoreau seems to underline that the traveller on the steamboat owns a privileged position to observe because of the distance which separates him from the coast. This seemingly allows him to keep out of danger “of the recoil” and to comment on situations without any apparent constraint. Hallet contends that, on board the steamboat “the journey is more likely to be the subject when travelling by river as opposed to rail, which revolves around departure and destination”.²⁷ According to Hallet, the passengers who travelled by steamboat could enjoy the scenery which it presented to their eyes since the steamboat was probably not as fast as trains. On the contrary, the railroad travellers, tended to see the landscape at a greater speed than the steamboat travellers who apparently could observe the river at a slower pace. This usually provided them with the opportunity of examining in detail and studying the landscape with greater attention and consideration. Though the speed of steamboats seemed to allow passengers to study the outer landscape with accuracy and attention, Hallet underlines that the river “dictat[ed] the path travelled, the stops to be made and the direction, what is seen but also how the traveller views and writes”.²⁸ Through these words, he is probably discussing the role which the river plays in the journey. He argues that on board the steamboat the traveller cannot decide the sort of landscape he would like to observe. Yet apparently the river chooses the direction and the path, therefore what Trollope, Martineau and Dickens should examine. As a consequence, it seems that the river and the steamboat shared a primary role in affecting the travellers' point of view when observing the landscape of the Mississippi. It can be maintained that, on the one hand the river influenced the sort of landscape these travellers should have examined, on the other hand the steamboat probably played an important part in determining at what pace the landscape was examined. Although the travellers on board the steamboat on the Mississippi River may be close to the nature outside, they appear dictated by what they see. According to Hallet, another factor which may have influenced the traveller's point of view on the river is “the attraction of the society with which he is travelling [...]. [It] can often be more interesting to the traveller than what is outside”.²⁹ Due to the huge popularity of steamboats and its rapid proliferation, great numbers of people started to employ this means to move across the country. Thus, the traveller usually “ha[d] society of his own aboard his vessel”.³⁰ He often shared the journey with individuals of different social classes with whom he shared the cabin and life aboard the ship. Nonetheless, having other individuals

27 Hallet, “America Seen,” 112.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

on board probably affected the traveller's point of view. By sharing this experience as well as by partaking life with other individuals, visitors were provided with the opportunity of experiencing human relationships and exchanging feelings and thoughts. As a consequence, Frances Trollope, Harriet Martineau and Charles Dickens mentioned innumerable moments and recorded conversations with the other passengers of the ship. Dickens, for instance, observes that “everybody wakes at the same time”³¹ and that “at eight o'clock, [they] breakfast in the cabin where [they] have passed the night”.³² He adds that living with more than forty passengers “chairs are all occupied”³³ and that he found “sleepers in every stage, shape, attitude and variety of slumber”.³⁴ Accordingly, Dickens seems to underline that living with other passengers may cause a lack of private space. In fact, he shared every moment of his journey with his travel companions. However, the presence of society may affect the perspective of the travellers when observing the river since human relationships could turn their point of view inward away from the landscape.³⁵ By conversing with the other passengers and by taking part in activities on board the steamboat the travellers may concentrate their attention on the boat itself. Accordingly, they could appear disinterested and disconnected from the river outside. On the whole, the point of view on the Mississippi tended to be influenced by the steamboat, which probably became the usual perspective from which to observe the river. On the one hand, the speed of the ship probably allowed passengers to examine the Mississippi scenery in details and to observe the human settlements which were growing along the coast of the river. On the other hand, the river was responsible for choosing the path, the direction and the itinerary. Moreover, the presence of society on board could further affect the point of view on the river since, by interacting with the other passengers, the travellers often moved their attention from the outer scenery to the interior of the ship. After having briefly outlined the main characteristics of the steamboat and its influence on point of view, I discuss how steamboat travel has affected the point of view of Frances Trollope, Harriet Martineau and Charles Dickens in their travelogues.

31 Charles Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation* (Adelaide: The University of Adelaide Library, 2014), 159.

32 Ibid., 110.

33 Ibid.,

34 Ibid., 159.

35 Hallet, “America Seen,” 112.

2.2.1 The Influence of Steamboat travel on the point of view of Frances Trollope, Charles Dickens and Harriet Martineau on the Mississippi River

Among all the American rivers, the Mississippi, emerged as one of the most prominent waterways in the United States. Increasing numbers of passengers travelled on the river and observed the landscape on the coast. However, their point of view was probably influenced by the steamboat itself which provided them with the perspective from which to examine the river. Steamboat travel impacted Frances Trollope, Harriet Martineau and Charles Dickens's point of view on the Mississippi landscape significantly. Their travelogues give evidence that they all visited the Mississippi River. This natural site was, in fact, a crucial place to visit for European travellers. It seems that observing the river from the perspective of the boat affected their visual point of view to different degrees. For instance, the society on board the steamboat may have influenced their point of view significantly. As for Harriet Martineau, she starts her narration in the second volume of *Retrospect of Western Travel* with the description of the journey along the Mississippi River on board the ship *Henry Clay*. This boat “had the highest reputation of any boat on the river, having made ninety-six trips without accident; a rare feat on this dangerous river”.³⁶ She seemingly introduces her topic with a description of the boat and by emphasising its absolute safety, she discusses the dangers of travelling by steamboat. Steamboats were, in fact, exposed to dangers such as Indian attacks or explosions. However, her attention seems immediately attracted by the crowd of passengers which is gathering aboard. When the passengers of the *Henry Clay* were summoned to supper she describes the group of individuals.:

[I] obtained a view of the company in whose society we were to pass the next ten days. There was a great mixture. There was a physician from New York, with his wife and a friend or two; an ultra-exclusive party. There were Mr. and Mrs. B., also from New York, amiable elderly people, with some innocent peculiarities, and showing themselves not the less mindful of other people from taking care of each other. There was the party that had kept the captain waiting, some of them very agreeable; and the L.'s whom it would have been a privilege to meet anywhere. There were long trains of young men, so many as to extinguish all curiosity as to who they were and where they came from; and a family party belonging to the West, father, mother, grandmother, and six children, who had a singular gift of squalling; and their nurses, slaves. These are all that I distinctly remember among the multitude

36 Harriet Martineau, *Retrospect of Western Travel, Volume II* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1838), 1.

that surrounded the almost interminable table in the cabin.³⁷

As her words suggest, Martineau noticed the varied composition of the crowd on board. She tends to describe every individual accurately by mentioning his profession and origin. Details are apparently provided in order to outline the structure of the society on board. Some of them were scientists, others were “elderly people”, all of different origin.³⁸ Also families and slaves were included in the crowd. As Martineau's description evidences, the composition of the crowd on board the steamboat was usually varied, individuals from different social conditions were all grouped together, women, middle-class men, intellectuals and slaves. Relationships and contacts aboard seemed arranged by meals, as Martineau informs. She asserts that when they “met at breakfast, there was mirth and conversation, and conventional observance”,³⁹ then at seven they “were summoned to supper”,⁴⁰ although she “took no notice of the summons to luncheon at eleven and found that dinner at half past one, came far too soon”.⁴¹ Meals tended to be regarded as fixed appointments which could reunite all the passengers and an occasion to exchange conversations, as Martineau confirms. Moreover, the travellers in the evening “amused themselves in the other cabin dancing or talking”.⁴² Apparently, these contacts strengthened the bonds among passengers, although they lived together only for small periods of time. Though it did not appear to prevent the development of “intimacy [...] out of [these] casual meeting[s]”.⁴³ Thus, as portrayed in *Retrospect of Western Travel*, it seems that many connections grew among the travellers aboard the *Henry Clay* as well as that they shared innumerable experiences together on the ship. On several occasions Martineau records the conversations with her fellow-passengers as when she describes the Kentuckians who sleep on board as “deck-passengers”, the conversation with men regarding burning vessels, exploding boilers and several other gruesome stories.⁴⁴ She tends to portray episodes and anecdotes taking place on the *Henry Clay*. As a consequence, the descriptions of the Mississippi scenery tend to be limited. These recurrent exchanges among the passengers may have disturbed Martineau's analysis of the outer landscape and therefore affected her visual and narrative point of view. Conversations and episodes occurred with her fellow-passengers often seem to direct her gaze inwards, towards the interior of the ship. On the other hand, the

37 Ibid., 3.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid., 4.

40 Ibid., 1.

41 Ibid., 6.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid., 2.

44 Ibid.

presence of huge numbers of visitors aboard tended to impact Martineau's perspective on the landscape because of the chaos and disorder which the crowd brought on board. William Seat claims that "Miss Martineau's Mississippi voyage was characterised by discomfort and crowded conditions".⁴⁵ For instance, an epidemic of cholera was spreading among the passengers of the boat and one of them died of cholera the first night. He was buried ashore in the edge of the forest. One day when "[she] went on deck in the morning, before six, [she] was privately told by a companion that the man who had last forced his way on board had died of cholera in the night, and had been laid under a tree at the wooding-place a few minutes before".⁴⁶ The presence of this serious illness probably worried the passengers of the steamboat, including Harriet Martineau. She argues that after the burial of the man they kept conversing "just as if death had not been among [them]".⁴⁷ It appears that passengers attempted to engage in their ordinary conversations in order to "forget it", although the loss of the man had probably affected them profoundly.⁴⁸ "Even in this case where the departed had been a stranger to us all, and had sunk from amid us in eight hours, I believe that were few or no hearts untouched, either by sorrow for him or fear for themselves. We were none of us as we should have been if this brief connexion with us had never existed".⁴⁹ Despite the little time shared aboard together, the event seems to have moved both men and women and Martineau herself who pauses to reflect on the bonds originated on the *Henry Clay*. On the one hand, it seems that cholera brought passengers to meditate upon the relationships established with the sick man. Despite its brevity, she could feel sorrow for him and for his death. On the other hand, this death may have brought them to further understand the danger of cholera and the fear of being infected. This example seems to evidence that human relationships on board prevented Martineau to keep her attention constantly on the river landscape. Nonetheless, not only had the affection for the sick man apparently affected her perspective on the river, but also the danger of infection had brought chaos and disorder among the passengers, who, alarmed by the illness, seemed to turn their eyes inward. Another example which could further illustrate the chaotic situation lived on board, is when she had her:

first experience of the crying of the little H's. They were indefatigable children; when one became quiet, another began; and, among them, they kept up the squall

45 William R. Seat, "Harriet Martineau in America" (PhD thesis, Indiana University, USA, 1957), 118.

46 Martineau, *Retrospect, Volume II*, 4.

47 *Ibid.*, 6.

48 *Ibid.*

49 *Ibid.*, 5.

nearly the twenty-four hours round. Their mother scolded them; their nurses humoured them; and, between these two methods of management, there was no peace for anybody within hearing.⁵⁰

As evidenced, both the crying of the children and the fear of cholera may have caused agitation and disorder within the steamboat. Apparently, because of this epidemic they became afraid of a possible contamination and death, which the passengers and Martineau attempted to conceal by pretending to conduct their everyday life. Besides, the crying of the baby disturbed her sleep. These events tend to indicate that, although the bonds established on the ship were probably occasions to meet and know new individuals, on the other hand these individuals probably drew away her attention from the Mississippi landscape by keeping her days busy. She appears more concentrated on studying the dynamics taking place among individuals on board the ship than keen on examining the landscape. Generally, Martineau's eyes appeared absorbed by the presence of other passengers. She seems to appreciate the intimacy which had grown with the other travellers and to share innumerable experiences with them. On the other hand, other factors may be taken into consideration when assessing the role of human relationships on point of view. For instance, the presence of many individuals on board may have disturbed Martineau's contemplation of the Mississippi, such as in the case of the epidemic of cholera and the ceaseless crying of children. In the light of this, it could be maintained that society played a big part in shaping Martineau's point of view on the Mississippi landscape. She often turned her gaze inwards towards behaviours, conversations and anecdotes occurred on the *Henry Clay*. Besides this, bonds were described with accuracy and in detail. She made reference to the food, to her fellow passengers, to the Kentuckians on deck, to the dangers of steamboat travel, which were “all remarkable details that comprised any traveller's steamboating experience”, as Smith contends.⁵¹ As a personal account, she tended to record her journey on the river with accurate information regarding her travelling companions and their activities. In this respect, her great interest in studying human relationships may be ascribable to her role of sociologist. In fact, Daniella Boucher states that it is important to underline that Martineau “establish[ed] a scientific method applied to society”.⁵² This is perhaps one reason behind her accurate descriptions of the people on

50 Ibid., 4.

51 Thomas Smith, “The River Now Began to Bear upon our Imaginations: Margaret Hall, Frances Trollope, Harriet Martineau, and the Problem of the Antebellum Mississippi,” *Revue Française d'études Américaines* 98, no. 4 (2003) accessed March 4, 2015, <http://www.cairn.info/revue-francaise-d-etudes-americaines-2003-4-page-20.htm>.

52 Daniella Boucher, “Small Victories, Lasting Change: Harriet Martineau, Slavery, and Women's Rights,” *Journal of Sociology and Self-Knowledge* 4, no.3 (2006): 323, accessed January 20, 2014,

board. Boucher comments in fact that “with the right methods, it is easier to see patterns and make sense of complicated social ideas”.⁵³ Thus, it appears that Martineau founded her sociological methodology on a scientific analysis which aimed to provide detailed information in order to comprehend social patterns more easily. Martineau is in fact considered by scholars as the first female sociologist. It seems that she wants her work to be useful and to provide a positive contribution to society. However, as Patricia Madoo Lengermann and Jill Niebrugge point out, Martineau needed sympathy to achieve her purpose: “the quality of mind most essential in the observer, for Martineau, then, is not distance but sympathy – a skill which distinguishes the student of society from the student of geology or general statistics”.⁵⁴ According to Lengermann and Niebrugge, as a student of society she does not need distance to provide a useful analysis of society but sympathy. This is perhaps the task she undertakes on board the steamboat. Instead of establishing few contacts with the other passengers as Trollope and Dickens, Martineau establishes with them relationships of friendship and mutual interest, as I have demonstrated. In order to know society, she decides to establish a contact with people. Only when affinity, respect, contact and intimacy have been established, can society be studied and examined. Her perspective on board the steamboat seems therefore strongly affected by her “sociologist's eye”. Thus, looking at the landscape on board a steamboat seems to influence substantially her portrayal of the Mississippi. Despite the discomforts which may have drawn Martineau's attention away from the landscape of the river, she probably attempted to ignore them and concentrate primarily on the human relationships rather than on the landscape passing before her eyes.

As for Frances Trollope and Charles Dickens, they sailed on the Mississippi River and, like Harriet Martineau, they examined the natural scenery from the perspective of the steamboat, although their points of view on landscape appeared differently affected by steamboat travel. Frances Trollope begins her portrayal of the ship by asserting that, despite the “large and handsome boat”,⁵⁵ she found “the room destined for the use of the ladies dismal enough, as its only windows were below the stern-gallery”.⁵⁶ Generally, her assessment of the ship appears negative. She describes the filth of life aboard the river steamer in vivid details. Only Swift, she says, could adequately describe the carpets on a steamboat, so besmattered

<http://scholarworks.umb.edu/humanarchitecture/vol4/iss3/29>.

53 Ibid.

54 P. M. Lengermann and Jill Niebrugge, “The Meaning of 'things': Theory and Method in Harriet Martineau's *How to Observe Morals and Manners* and Emile Durkheim's *The Rules of Sociological Method*,” in *Harriet Martineau: Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives*, ed. Michael R. Hill and Susan Hoecker-Drysdale (New York: Routledge, 2003), 85.

55 Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (London: Whittaker, Treacher & Co., 1832), 34.

56 Ibid.

with spittle and tobacco. However, she does not only convey an unpleasant impression of the boat which would have carried her and the other passengers along the Mississippi River, but she also provides a negative assessment of the Americans on board. After a few lines of introduction, Trollope concludes “let no one who wishes to receive agreeable impressions of American manners, commence their travels in a Mississippi steamboat; 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”.⁵⁷ As her words seemingly maintain, the experience on the steamboat becomes an occasion to assess the entire American population, although later she partially retracts her judgement by arguing that she “must now, and always, be understood to speak only of that portion of them which [she] has seen”.⁵⁸ As the focus of her travelogue relies on manners, her harsh criticism seems to rely on the American manners. Through her words, she apparently compares Americans to pigs, thus animals which are generally regarded as dirty and uncivilised. Manuela d'Amore argues that her sense of repugnance seems to re-emerge when the boat is overcrowded.⁵⁹ Trollope, in fact, maintains that:

It was impossible not to feel repugnance to many of the novelties that surround 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 anything than an hour of enjoyment.⁶⁰

Apparently, the quotation evidences her disappointment at the bad manners of the Americans by comparing them to “generals, colonels and majors of the Old World”. Americans are, therefore, judged according to the standards of civility and politeness of nineteenth century England and Trollope probably took this moment as an opportunity to state her cultural identity. As Teresa Ransom confirms, the abundance of concrete nouns, related to the

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid., 35.

59 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*,” *E-rea revue* 11, no.2 (2014): 5, accessed March 5, 2014, <https://erea.revues.org/3877>.

60 Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, 21.

description of her cabin and of the passengers, seemingly conveyed her frustration and repulsion against the other passengers.⁶¹ Likewise, Dickens tended to harshly criticise his fellow-passengers. In his opinion, the crowd gathered aboard the ship by observing strict rules of conduct, like attending meals at fixed times or engaging in the same activities every day, gave proof of its monotonous and homogeneous style of life. He claims:

We fed at the same times, on the same kind of viands, in the same dull manner, and with the same observances. The company appeared to be oppressed by the same tremendous concealments, and had as little capacity of enjoyment or light-heartedness. I never in my life did see such listless, heavy dullness as brooded over these meals: the very recollection of it weights me down, and makes me, for the moment, wretched. Reading and writing on my knee, in our little cabin, I really dreaded the coming of the hour that summoned us to table; and was glad to escape from it again, as if it had been a penance or a punishment. [...] But sitting down with so many fellow-animals to ward off thirst and hunger as a business; [...] goes so against the grain with me, that I seriously believe the recollection of these funeral feasts will be a waking nightmare to me all my life. [...] There was a magnetism of dullness in them which would have beaten down the most facetious companion that the earth ever knew.⁶²

As the quotation suggests, Dickens seems irritated by the tedious rhythm of life on the steamboat. Life appears boring and pointless. It seems as an endless repetition. In addition, individuals, are again compared to animals, thus people without any sign of civilisation or culture, characteristics which usually mark the human race. A series of interminable adjectives gathers in order to describe the crowd of “deadly, leaden people; such systematic plodding, weary, insupportable heaviness; such a mass of animated indigestion in respect of all that was genial, jovial, frank, social, or hearty”.⁶³ These characteristics, which he seemingly attributes to the Americans, depict them as a mass of dull, deadly and flat individuals. It is therefore possible to attest that, in the opinion of Frances Trollope and Charles Dickens, the first impressions on board the steamboat on the Mississippi River seem to provide the reader with a negative and disapproving portrayal of the American population. In the light of this, it seems possible to maintain that both Frances Trollope and Charles Dickens did not seem interested in bonding with their travelling companions, who were seemingly regarded as rude and boring individuals. Frances Trollope and Charles Dickens could, therefore, direct their gaze outward

61 Teresa Ransom, *Fanny Trollope: A Remarkable Life* (New Baskerville: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1995), 40.

62 Dickens, *American Notes*, 209.

63 *Ibid.*, 209.

and turn their point of view on the Mississippi landscape. Trollope, for instance, seems to prefer “well conditioned pigs” to the company of Americans.⁶⁴ Likewise Charles Dickens, despite some recorded conversations with individuals on board, did not seem to feel close to any travelling companion. Unlike Harriet Martineau, who had noticed how much her heart had been touched by a stranger “who had sunk from amid [them] in eight hours”,⁶⁵ Trollope and Dickens seem to highlight primarily the passengers' “remorseless spitting”⁶⁶ and their extreme dullness and monotony. Apart from some reported conversations, for instance he recounts an exchange of views with “one Pitchlynn, a chief of the Choctaw tribe of Indians” with whom he had “the pleasure of a long conversation”, he does not apparently witness any meaningful bond established along the journey.⁶⁷ Thus, neither Dickens nor Trollope seem to have kept any significant contact with the other passengers. On the contrary, they tended to assess Americans negatively and by hinging upon their observations, they tended to draw some universal resolutions on America's citizens. Their visual perspective, therefore, appears affected to a lower degree by the contact with the steamboat society and they appeared to give primary attention to the river landscape. In addition, Ransom suggests that, the inability of Frances Trollope to keep prolonged contacts with the Americans, may be probably due to the economic disappointment experienced at Cincinnati. As a consequence, she tended to prefer open spaces where she could observe the Mississippi scenery, which provided her with release from “the claustrophobic interior world of the steamboat cabin” and the contact with the Americans.⁶⁸ According to Ransom, it seems that her economic backlash in Cincinnati may have thrown a negative light on her whole American experience. Apparently, this economic failure did not allow her to feel understood by the Americans, who had probably broken her dreams of restoring her family fortunes. Consequently, she does not seem to bear close relationships and contacts with the Americans on board. On this basis, it is possible to state that, because of her frustration towards the Americans, she tended not to spend a great deal of time by establishing connections or conversations with the passengers. Yet she focused primarily her visual point of view on the Mississippi scenery outside by providing long descriptions of the river. Unlike Martineau, who tended to establish intimate bonds with the other travellers, Frances Trollope and Charles Dickens tended to limit contacts. Trollope had, in fact, claimed their absolute lack of manners whereas Dickens, had talked of them as a mass of monotonous and conformed citizens. Descriptions of the Mississippi scenery abound in

64 Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, 34.

65 Martineau, *Retrospect, Volume II*, 6.

66 Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, 18.

67 Dickens, *American Notes*, 202.

68 Smith, “The River Now Began,” 16.

their travelogues. While Martineau, perhaps for her role of sociologist, spent most of her chapter on the Mississippi by relating conversations and events and studying human behaviours, Dickens and Trollope seemingly concentrated their attention on the landscape outside the ship. On this basis, when questioning to which extent the steamboat impacted these travellers' points of view on the Mississippi, it could be maintained that the steamboat experience had a stronger impact on Martineau's point of view. On the contrary, both Dickens and Trollope were apparently more committed to observe and examine the landscape of the river. This section has attempted to meditate upon the role played by steamboat travel in the Mississippi journey. Next part will be concerned with assessing Edmund Burke's aesthetic ideas in order to evaluate the two factors which probably affected most the travellers' point of view with respect to the Mississippi River landscape. It, thus, will introduce the aesthetic ideas of Edmund Burke, who theorised on the characters of the beautiful with the aim of discussing whether these British aesthetic ideas affected Trollope, Martineau and Dickens's perspective and appreciation of the river.

2.3 Edmund Burke and the Beautiful

In the previous section I have examined to which extent observing the Mississippi from the point of view of the steamboat may have influenced their perspective on the river. However, it may not be regarded as the only factor which affected the British point of view. Yet British aesthetic ideas of the beautiful seemingly provided them the point of view to analyse the landscape, despite these standards of taste could profoundly affect their appreciation of the river. In the following section I will briefly outline the theories of the beautiful which Edmund Burke illustrated in his aesthetic treatise *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* and I will then assess to which extent it impacted on Trollope's, Martineau's and Dickens's points of view. The treatise by Burke was published in 1757, about a century before the departure of these travellers and his ideas “enjoyed an influence that was disproportionate to either the quality or originality of its ideas”, as MacLaren maintains.⁶⁹ He defines beauty “that quality, or those qualities in bodies, by which they cause love, or some passion similar to it. [He] confine[s] this definition to the

69 I. S. MacLaren, “The Influence of Eighteenth Century British Landscape Aesthetics on Narrative and Pictorial Responses to the British North American North and West 1769-1872” (PhD thesis, The University of Western Ontario, USA, 1983), 29.

merely sensible qualities of things, for the sake of preserving the utmost simplicity in a subject”.⁷⁰ As his words seem to suggest, the beautiful appears associated with the external qualities of bodies, thus discernible by every traveller. He appears, in fact, to rest his analysis on the “sensible qualities” . These are regarded by Mark Johnston as “perceptible [properties], that physical objects (or events) perceptually appear to have. Thus smells, tastes, colours and shapes are sensible qualities”.⁷¹ Accordingly, it seems that Burke regards the beautiful as a set of attributes that any individual may be able to observe since they appear as distinctly perceptible and observable traits. He further underlines that by observing the beautiful, it usually stimulates an emotion of love in the reader. However, love, by which he “mean[s] that satisfaction which arises to the mind upon contemplating anything beautiful, of whatsoever nature it may be”,⁷² is separated from desire or lust “which is an energy of the mind, that hurries us on to the possession of certain objects, that do not affect us as they are beautiful, but by means altogether different”.⁷³ Apparently, he differentiates between love, which is the feeling that arises in front of a beautiful object and desire, which seems to be connected to a mere ambition to possess objects. Burke then proceeds to enumerate the sensible qualities which may stimulate love in the reader, for this reason “we ought, therefore, to consider attentively in what manner those sensible qualities are disposed, in such things as by experience we find beautiful”.⁷⁴ Firstly, Burke points out that “the most obvious point that presents itself to us in examining any object is its extent or quantity”.⁷⁵ Thus, he starts his list by considering the issue of size. By basing upon the premise that “the objects of love are spoken of under diminutive epithets” he seemingly concludes that “attending to their quantity, beautiful objects are comparatively small”.⁷⁶ Even in the English language, he explains “the diminishing *ling*” is usually added to the names of persons and things loved.⁷⁷ As a consequence, he associates beautiful objects with smallness since beauty needs to incite love. Secondly, he considers the issue of smoothness. According to Burke, it is so essential to beauty that he does “not recollect anything beautiful that is not smooth”.⁷⁸ The reason for considering smooth objects as beautiful is provided by attesting that “bodies which are rough

70 Edmund Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (Adelaide: The University of Adelaide Library, 1756), 7.

71 Mark Johnston, “Objective Mind and the Objectivity of our Minds,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 75, no.2 (2007): 233-268, accessed April 12, 2015, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1933-1592.2007.00075.x/abstract>.

72 Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry*, 80.

73 Ibid., 48.

74 Ibid., 101.

75 Ibid., 65.

76 Ibid.,102.

77 Ibid.

78 Ibid., 103.

and angular, rouse and vellicate the organs of feeling” may cause “a sense of pain, which consists in the violent tension or contraction of the muscular fibres”.⁷⁹ On the contrary he argues that, “smooth bodies relax” the eyes.⁸⁰ Thus, he seems to prefer small and smooth objects because of their ability to induce a sense of relaxation and quietness in the viewer. Thirdly, beautiful objects “vary their direction every moment, and they change under the eye by a deviation continually carrying on”.⁸¹ In his opinion, a gradual variation in the external aspect seems fundamental to regard an object as beautiful. Although he seems to appreciate variation, he does not usually support figures which “vary in a sudden and broken manner”,⁸² in fact he does not “find any natural object which is angular, and at the same time beautiful”.⁸³ Though he inserts variation among the fundamental characteristics to achieve beauty, he apparently does not regard sudden variation as beautiful. It needs to be slow and gradual in order to encourage the sentiment of love. According to Burke, the figure which best exhibits gradual variation is the bird.

The head increasing insensibly to the middle, from whence it lessens gradually until it mixes with the neck; the neck loses itself in a larger swell, which continues to the middle of the body, when the whole decreases again to the tail; the tail takes a new direction, but soon it varies its new course, it blends again with the other parts, and the line is perpetually changing, above, below, upon every side.⁸⁴

Apparently, this constitutes, for Burke, an example of the beautiful in nature. The lines of the body of a bird which gradually change in direction relax his eyes because not only does “the idea of variation” need to be regarded accurately, but also “the manner of the variation” is important to represent a beautiful figure. Fourthly, he states that “an appearance of delicacy and even of fragility” is almost essential to beauty.⁸⁵ On the contrary, oaks, ashes or the elms are “awful and majestic” since “they inspire a sort of reverence”. Yet “the delicate myrtle”, the orange, the almond, the jasmine and the vine are “vegetable beauties”.⁸⁶ Eventually, “the colours of beautiful bodies must not be dusky or muddy, but clean and fair”, “they must not be of the strongest kind”. Indeed, “those which seem most appropriate to beauty, are the milder of every sort” like “light greens; soft blues; weak whites; pink reds; and violets”.

79 Ibid., 134.

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid., 103.

82 Ibid., 104.

83 Ibid.

84 Ibid.

85 Ibid., 104.

86 Ibid., 105.

Furthermore, another essential quality attributed to colours is variation. “In a fine complexion there is not only some variety in the coloring”, besides “they are mixed in such a manner, and with such gradations, that it is impossible to fix the bounds”.⁸⁷ Burke closes his list, by last mentioning colours. These, as smallness, smoothness and delicacy, aim at conferring to the beautiful object an air of balance and quietness. He seemingly escapes majestic and imposing figures with strong colours. Apparently, variation should be pursued in matching colours since objects which present only one shade are regarded as not agreeable. On the whole, Burke concludes by remarking that the qualities studied so far are “the properties on which beauty depends; properties that operate by nature, and are less liable to be altered by caprice, or confused by a diversity of tastes”.⁸⁸

These qualities which are connected to the beautiful were often associated with certain sorts of landscape. According to MacLaren “for the eighteenth-century Englishman, the habit of regarding the Mediterranean world as the seat of natural beauty was commonplace”.⁸⁹ He explains that prior to the eighteenth century in Europe, the arts usually celebrated the beauty of Mediterranean women, landscapes and historical sites. These places were, therefore, converted into common beautiful landscapes according to the British thinking. Eden, the Elysian Fields, Atlantis, Delphi and Venice were probably among the symbols of beauty, which had been captured in painting “at least since the late fifteenth century” from Leonardo Da Vinci onwards.⁹⁰ Thus, the beautiful qualities outlined by Burke seemed to be inextricably related to artistic representations of the Mediterranean geography. As a consequence, Mac Laren explains that Englishmen travelled to Italy in order to discover beauty, although they were familiar to these landscapes because they had been long represented by Dutch painters. However, he argues that “Englishmen could only with difficulty employ the term beautiful to name the landscapes of their own country” since the idea of the beautiful did not seem dissociable from Mediterranean and classical tastes.⁹¹ The English landscape was usually related to ideas of Picturesque Beauty. Since such qualities seldom occurred in English nature, the beautiful probably occurred less in English discussions of landscape. This idea of beauty, which had been inherited from the Classical literature and the Italian Renaissance, “meant that the beautiful natural scene was the perfect scene”.⁹² As MacLaren maintains, it seems that the qualities of the beautiful postulated by Burke found in the Mediterranean landscapes its

87 Ibid., 106.

88 Ibid.

89 MacLaren, “Eighteenth Century British Landscape Aesthetics,” 17.

90 Ibid.

91 Ibid., 18.

92 Ibid., 19.

perfect representation which could enhance relaxation and stimulate love. After having indicated the principal points of Burke's thought, I will attempt to discuss whether his aesthetic ideas may have had an impact on Frances Trollope's, Harriet Martineau's and Charles Dickens's point of view on the Mississippi River.

2.3.1 The Mississippi landscape of Frances Trollope and Charles Dickens



Figure V. The Mississippi River.

The Mississippi River was the major transportation artery of the United States from the early nineteenth century. Frances Trollope, Charles Dickens and Harriet Martineau who travelled on the river by steamboat observed the Mississippi scenery and wrote their observations regarding the river. This section aims to examine these travellers' response to the Mississippi scenery and to establish to which extent the ideas of the beautiful postulated by Burke affected their point of view and their appreciation of the river. Thanks to its popularity, Burke's theories were enjoying a very huge expansion in England. Thus, it is possible to assume that those aesthetic ideas tended to affect the canon of beauty of the landscape in nineteenth-century England. I will now proceed to analyse how these travellers regarded and described the Mississippi landscape in order to assess whether Burke's ideas had affected their

point of view both visually and narratively.

Frances Trollope entered the United States at the mouth of the Mississippi, from New Orleans and wound her way up to Cincinnati. The first aspect she apparently noticed was the “mighty river” where “trees of enormous length” were lying on “the long course of the gigantic Mississippi”.⁹³ As these words can attest, she was probably overwhelmed by its size, as Hallet contends.⁹⁴ Gigantic and mighty are the adjectives attributed to the river which was apparently filled with enormous logs. Thus, the Mississippi seems immense both in dimensions and in strength, it is in fact regarded as “mighty”, and each of its components tend to be of the same dimension and power. Dickens, too, appears to be haunted by the Mississippi “the Great Father of Rivers”.⁹⁵ The name itself, he uses to refer to the river, seems here connected to its size. “An enormous ditch, sometimes two or three metres wide, running liquid mud, six miles an hour; its strong and frothy current choked and obstructed everywhere by huge logs and whole forest trees”, these are the words which Dickens uses to represent the Mississippi.⁹⁶ He tends to employ adjectives which aim at describing its vastness. Enormous, strong, huge and whole apparently intend to portray the size and the majestic strength of it. Even the human settlements growing on the banks of the river should not be called as “village” for Dickens, but “city” would be more appropriate.⁹⁷ Mulvey, in fact, pointed out that, for its gigantic dimensions, “it had to be seen in time as well as in space”. Thus, the traveller may have to travel to it and along it due to the extent of the land covered. “The Mississippi did more than dominate the landscape. It was horizon and foreground in one; it went beyond the limits of vision; it stretched unchanging beyond the limits of imagination”, argues Mulvey.⁹⁸ As he explains, the river probably appeared to the British eyes with its enormous dimensions that could not be contained in one single view, but travellers needed time to go through its entire space. Moreover, its long course seems to stretch until the line of the horizon, as it probably occupied all the land these visitors could see with their eyes. It was, in fact, “beyond the limits of vision”, as Mulvey suggests.⁹⁹ It appears that travellers found it impossible to classify the river “within the existing aesthetic criteria that they brought to bear on the landscape” as Smith claims. They cannot even identify the Mississippi as sublime, despite its dimension and strength. Neither in Dickens's travelogue not in Trollope's

93 Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, 27.

94 Hallet, “America Seen,” 76.

95 Dickens, *American Notes*, 209.

96 Ibid.

97 Ibid., 195.

98 Mulvey, *Anglo-American Landscapes*, 216.

99 Ibid.

Domestic Manners the adjective sublime is mentioned by the travellers and connected to the river's landscape. The Mississippi, for the immensity and the gigantic dimensions, probably had no counterpart in the Old World and it seemingly stroke Frances Trollope and Charles Dickens who did not find anything similar to compare in Europe and no aesthetic concept to relate to it. Another striking feature of the river is probably the absence of the mild colours Burke associates with the beautiful. In their place, Dickens finds “no moving lights and shadows” but only a “changeless glare of the hot, unwinking sky” and a “dismal swamp”.¹⁰⁰ These characteristics may suggest dark colours and dark shades. The swamp is usually associated with dark greens and browns and the absence of lights and shadows seem to confer to colours an atmosphere of gloom. This is seemingly confirmed by the sky which does not exhibit any sort of light, it is in fact “unwinking”. Likewise, Frances Trollope describes the Mississippi as “this mighty river pouring forth its muddy mass of waters and mingling with the deep blue of the Mexican Gulf [...] the murky stream which now received us”.¹⁰¹ As it seems possible to read from the quotation, the colours connected to the river are again the dark shades mentioned by Dickens. The river appears muddy, which is usually associated with brown colours as well as the stream is defined as “murky” thus dark and hard to see through. “Large flights of pelicans were seen standing upon the long masses of mud which rose above the surface of the waters”, Trollope remarks again.¹⁰² Adam Hallet argues that the presence of big quantities of mud in the landscape may contribute to convey the impression that the Mississippi is “the point from which the refuse of America, its sewage, pours forth into the pure blue of the ocean”.¹⁰³ In fact, the repetition of the term “mud” and “muddy” may communicate this idea, the “muddy masses of water”, “the muddy ocean”, the “long masses of mud” and the “mud banks” occur five times in only two pages. Besides, the dark colours suggested by both descriptions and the absence of light seem to evidence this impression as well as to separate the Mississippi scenery from the mild colours which Burke relates to beauty. Besides being enormous and dark in colours, the Mississippi seems to present no variation. The banks of the river appear “low and flat”¹⁰⁴ and this “continues unvaried for many miles above New Orleans”, Dickens maintains.¹⁰⁵ Hallet argues that “the lack of culture and civilisation which greet the traveller on the river exemplify the homogeneity and size of

100 Dickens, *American Notes*, 209.

101 Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, 25.

102 Ibid.

103 Hallet, “America Seen,” 75.

104 Dickens, *American Notes*, 209.

105 Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, 37.

the landscape".¹⁰⁶ On the Mississippi there are apparently no signs of civilisation. Yet everything seems monotonous and unchanging to the eyes of Dickens. Nothing seems able to elicit the curiosity of these travellers. According to Frances Trollope "no objects more interesting than mud banks, monstrous bulrushes, and now and then a huge crocodile luxuriating in the slime" seem to constitute the landscape.¹⁰⁷ Trollope had probably never seen crocodiles before, thus the view of alligators may have stimulated some reactions in her. Nonetheless, Hallet claims that her indifference might be ascribable to the monotony which she relates to the entire landscape which is described as monotonous as a result. This homogeneity and flatness probably affected Trollope's senses to such an extent that "nothing on the river [could] excite or elicit a reaction".¹⁰⁸ Her senses appear to numb to outside stirrings and she, therefore, looked unmoved by the presence of crocodiles. On the other hand, Hallet argues that "this is another sign of the extradiegetic narrator overwriting the intradiegetic observations of the traveller".¹⁰⁹ As the quotation suggests, it seems that surely the first crocodile on the Mississippi elicited Trollope's attention and curiosity, more than mud banks and bulrushes. However, by assuming that her travelogue was written at a different space and time than that of the journey, we can maintain that for the extradiegetic narrator, crocodiles did not probably constitute a novelty. Yet he had already had experience of them and felt excitement at the view. As a consequence, her narrative point of view does not seem as much affected by the presence of alligators as her visual point of view. Hallet explains that the monotonous scenery appears to strike Dickens as well. Dickens narrates that "for miles and miles, and miles, these solitudes are unbroken by any sign of human life or trace of human footstep".¹¹⁰ As Trollope, he notices and sees the desolation and the absence of any sign of culture and civilisation. Then he "[came] upon an open space where the tall trees [were] burning".¹¹¹ Thus, lack of culture and human beings apparently mark monotonous landscapes. The scenery appears so desolate in his mind that, according to Stephen Fender, he invents "a fantasy culture to fill that wilderness".¹¹² This is apparently expressed by anthropomorphising the landscape: the trees become "grizzly skeletons" which "seem to try to grasp the boat".¹¹³ Some of them are "bathing their green hands in the river" and others have

106 Hallet, "America Seen," 77.

107 Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, 26.

108 Hallet, "America Seen," 77.

109 Ibid.

110 Dickens, *American Notes*, 195.

111 Ibid., 197.

112 Stephen Fender, "American Landscape and the Figure of Anticipation: Paradox and Recourse," *Sea Changes: British Emigration and American Literature*, ed. Mick Gidley and Lawson-Peebles (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 52.

113 Dickens, *American Notes*, 196.

“bleached arms” which “start out from the middle of the current”.¹¹⁴ It seems that when Dickens does not find life in what he is describing, he invents it. This may be regarded as an effect of the monotony he associates with the Mississippi scenery. As for delicacy and smoothness, it appears that both lacked from the portrayals of the river provided by Trollope and Dickens. The former, depicts “long masses of mud which rose above the surface of the waters”¹¹⁵ which seemingly prevented the travellers from seeing “any indication of the land”,¹¹⁶ the latter alludes to “huge logs and whole forest trees”¹¹⁷ which obstructed everywhere the passage of the river. The Mississippi appears covered either with mud or with logs which blocked the passage of steamboats and endangered the journey of these travellers. Instead of being smooth, the surface tends to be “rugged” and “broken”, thus “contrary to that idea”.¹¹⁸ In addition, in a letter to John Forster, Dickens even describes the Mississippi as “the beastliest river in the world”.¹¹⁹ The adjective “beastliest” is apparently far from conveying the delicacy and fragility which Burke predicated. On the contrary it tends to provide a sense of “robustness and strength” which for Burke were “very prejudicial to beauty”.¹²⁰ As discussed so far, it seems possible to maintain that the landscape portrayed by Trollope and Dickens probably lacked all the characteristics, which according to Burke, could be connected to beauty. Instead of being depicted as small, the river appeared as big as to cover the entire view by covering both the horizon and the foreground, its colours, muddy and dark, contrast with the mild shades associated to beautiful sceneries, the gradual variation of the landscape seems to be replaced by a monotonous environment which shows no signs of colonisation or change, eventually the perfect smoothness appears interrupted by masses of mud and logs which obstructed the river. By assuming that Burke identified the traits of the beautiful, the Mississippi scenery might not appear beautiful to the eyes of Trollope and Dickens. On the contrary, Adam Hallet contends that it allowed them to regard the river landscape as “a reversal of the proper order of things”.¹²¹ Frances Trollope argues that the scenery “looks like the fragment of a world in ruins”.¹²² American nature, in Trollope's point of view, seems “against Nature”.¹²³ Instead of developing and expanding, it appears to destroy its components and to reduce itself to mere fragments, which seem to suggest that, as nature is collapsing, it

114 Ibid.

115 Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, 25.

116 Ibid.

117 Dickens, *American Notes*, 209.

118 Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry*, 103.

119 John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens* (Boston: James R. Osgood & Company, 1875), 519.

120 Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry*, 104.

121 Hallet, “America Seen,” 76.

122 Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, 26.

123 Hallet, “America Seen,” 76.

can no longer be viewed totally but only through parts. Thus, from a narrative point of view she has the tendency to render her visual impressions of the Mississippi River through the use of visual fragments. “The mast of a vessel long wrecked in attempting to cross the bar” is still standing there as “a dismal witness of the destruction that has been”,¹²⁴ the vessel accompanies the image of the woodcutters she meets on the banks of the river. “The squalid look of the miserable wives and children of these men was dreadful” she asserts, and on the whole she “could say that [she] had never witnessed human nature reduced so low”.¹²⁵ Apparently all these fragments provided the sense of desolation and destruction which characterised the Mississippi landscape, in Trollope's opinion. Eventually, it is described in terms of Dante's *Divine Comedy* as hell on earth, “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”, she asserts.¹²⁶ Therefore, the visual impressions that the Mississippi originated were apparently expressed from a narrative point of view through these fragments which convey infernal images of “a world turned upside down” and thus, turned the landscape of the river into a nightmare.¹²⁷ Dickens, too, seems to be haunted by the Mississippi. The river is firstly regarded as a “waking nightmare”,¹²⁸ then as “the hateful Mississippi”,¹²⁹ although he provides a more accurate description only when approaching the junction of the Ohio and Mississippi:

Huge logs and whole forest trees: now twining themselves together in great rafts [...], now rolling past like monstrous bodies, their tangled roots showing like matted hair; now glancing singly by like giant leeches; and now writhing round and round in the vortex of some small whirlpool, like wounded snakes. The banks low, the trees dwarfish, the marshes swarming with frogs, the wretched cabins few and far apart, their inmates hollow-checked and pale, the weather very hot, mosquitoes penetrating into every crack and crevice of the boat, mud and slime on everything.¹³⁰

Rodney Edgecombe claims that the scenery seems to regress to an earlier and less developed mode, “to a point in creation where life has still to be differentiated from chaos”.¹³¹ The above

124 Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, 25.

125 Ibid., 38.

126 Ibid., 25.

127 Fender, “American Landscape,” 238.

128 Dickens, *American Notes*, 208.

129 Ibid., 209.

130 Ibid., 210.

131 Rodney Stenning Edgecombe, “Topographic Disaffection in Dickens's *American Notes* and *Martin Chuzzlewit*,” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 93, no.1 (1994): 40, accessed March 5, 2015,

passage apparently extends and intensifies the earlier accounts of the river. Here, individuals seem impotent, they are portrayed as pale under a very hot weather which may have caused some faints. Moreover, by turning the logs into leeches and snakes, thus anthropomorphising them, and underling the presence of frogs and mosquitoes, Dickens tends to hint again at the idea of “primordial reversion”.¹³² Individuals look weak and powerless whereas the river with its animals appear mighty and invincible. Thus, for both Trollope and Dickens the journey on the river appears as a journey back through time, the river in fact “rolled along as wearily and slowly as the time itself”.¹³³ As Trollope represented narratively her visual point of view by conveying the image of a world in ruins which was collapsing and breaking into pieces, Charles Dickens seems to convey a similar image of destruction by hinging upon the idea of a chaotic world which destroys the land and “take[s] it into itself”.¹³⁴ As a consequence, it seems that they could not see the Mississippi outside their European viewpoint. Yet the landscapes which did not meet the aesthetic criteria of the Burkean beautiful, tended to be regarded as a “reversal of the proper order of things”.¹³⁵ It appears that this factor affected the travelling point of view which had a strong impact on the narrative point of view, as the images employed to represent the Mississippi seemed inevitably affected by what they observed. This is apparently visible when Trollope and Dickens discuss the Ohio River. The Ohio, like the Mississippi, initially seems to figure as “a decreator”,¹³⁶ it has in fact “washed away its banks and stately trees have fallen down into the stream. Some have been there so long, that they are mere dry, grizzly skeletons. [...] And some were drowned so long ago, that their bleached arms start out from the middle of the current, and seem to try to grasp the boat, and drag it under water”.¹³⁷ Images of destruction abound in the previous quotation, for instance the trees are like dead skeletons, some of them fell into the stream of the river and other attempted to sink the boat. Trollope too, discusses the Ohio River in terms of destruction and desolation. “Yet these fair shores are still unhealthy. More than once we landed, and conversed with the families of the woodcutters, and scarcely was there one in which we did not hear of some member who had 'lately died of the fever’”.¹³⁸ Though its inhabitants “are infinitely better than those on the Mississippi”, they “still look like a race that are selling their lives for gold”.¹³⁹

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/>.

132 Ibid., 42.

133 Dickens, *American Notes*, 209.

134 Edgecombe, “Topographic Disaffection,” 43.

135 Hallet, “America Seen,” 76.

136 Edgecombe, “Topographic Disaffection,” 43.

137 Dickens, *American Notes*, 196.

138 Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, 47.

139 Ibid.

The inhabitants look like impoverished unhealthy people living on unhealthy shores. The plague seems to have infected the coasts of the Mississippi and brought a great deal of people to die. According to these previous descriptions, the Ohio shares some characteristics with the Mississippi and figures as a site of “primordial reversion”.¹⁴⁰ On the other hand, the Ohio seems to have inspired a positive response on the part of these travellers. In a letter to his friend Forster, Dickens writes: “while I have been writing this account, we have shot out of that hideous river [Mississippi], thank be to God; never to see it again, I hope, but in a nightmare. We are now on the smooth Ohio, and the change is like the transition from pain to perfect ease”.¹⁴¹ In the above quotation, Dickens regards the Ohio as a “smooth” river, apparently one of the characteristics which conferred beauty to objects according to Burke. Besides, this tends to produce a sensation of “perfect ease” and comfort. Here, it seems that Dickens is alluding to the state of relaxation and calmness which smooth sceneries provide. “The application of smooth bodies relaxes” is attested by Burke in the fourth chapter of his treaty.¹⁴² Likewise, Frances Trollope refers to the river by stating that the Ohio “is bright and clear; its banks continually varied as it flows through what is called a rolling country”.¹⁴³ The variation seems beautiful to her, although the signs of civilisation are still missing. “Were there occasionally a ruined abbey, or feudal castle, to mix the romance of real life or nature, the Ohio would be perfect” she asserts.¹⁴⁴ Perhaps from Trollope's point of view the Mississippi cannot be regarded as totally beautiful without displaying signs of culture and life, although it seems to approach the idea of beauty. The bright and clear banks appear different from the muddy and dark banks of the Mississippi as well as a smaller dimension seems to contribute to express Trollope's appreciation of the river.

From the time 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.¹⁴⁵

As quoted above, Frances Trollope tends to regard the Ohio as a beautiful natural scenery by virtue of its dimensions. On the contrary the Mississippi seems to lack all the attributes of

140 Edgecombe, “Topographic Disaffection,” 41.

141 Foster, *The Life of Dickens*, 520.

142 Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry*, 134.

143 Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, 36.

144 *Ibid.*, 47.

145 *Ibid.*, 166.

beauty. The main reason behind the appreciation of some of its attributes like smoothness, variation and bright colours may be related to the conception of beautiful postulated by Burke. As for these characteristics, both Trollope and Dickens were probably pleased with these traits in the Ohio, according to the impressions recorded inside their travelogues. Trollope seems to enjoy the landscape with her travelling companions to such an extent that they:

ceased to grumble at [their] dinners and suppers; nay, [they] almost learned to rival [their] neighbours at table in their voracious rapidity of swallowing, so eager were [they] to place [themselves] again on the guard, lest [they] might lose sight of the beauty that was passing away from [them].¹⁴⁶

Though they seem to take pleasure in the Ohio landscape more than the Mississippi, the first traits noticed by Trollope and Dickens seem to remind them the river of the Mississippi scenery. Hallet maintains that initially the Ohio inspires terror because “the narrator-author has rewritten the Ohio River, seeing it from his retrospective point of view through the experience of the Mississippi River”.¹⁴⁷ The fallen trees, apparently provide a sense of destruction and desolation, these with “bleached arms [...] try to drag [the boat] under water”.¹⁴⁸ Both Dickens and Trollope may have seen the Ohio through the nightmare landscape of the Mississippi since the destruction which usually characterised the Mississippi, appears here transferred to its tributary. As Hallet suggests, a double point of view might have been employed when Frances Trollope and Charles Dickens saw the Ohio for the first time by extending the visual point of view with which they were examining the Mississippi to the whole Ohio landscape. It seems that they kept using the same lens to observe two distinct sceneries. Thus, Hallet concludes that they may be regarded as “both guilty of seeing their subsequent rivers and travels through the nightmarish lens of the Mississippi”, which had no romance nor life and was not probably pleasing from Trollope and Dickens's point of view.¹⁴⁹ It is probable that Trollope, as well as Dickens were not able to consider the Mississippi landscape from an alternative perspective: the British aesthetic ideas regarding the beautiful constituted the lens through which they observed the landscape. These theories' approach seems to have impacted the point of view of these travellers, who researched the qualities of the beautiful in the Mississippi scenery. Besides, these aesthetic ideas affected their narrative point of view by determining the images and linguistic devices, which Frances Trollope and

146 Ibid., 47.

147 Hallet, “America Seen,” 78.

148 Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, 47.

149 Hallet, “America Seen,” 78.

Charles Dickens employed to convey their impressions of the Great Father of Rivers. Before bringing this chapter to a close, next section will be concerned with evaluating Harriet Martineau's response to the Mississippi landscape and its relationship with Burke's aesthetic thought.

2.3.2 Harriet Martineau: the Mississippi Landscape and the Sociological Interpretation

The previous section has attempted to discuss the point of view adopted by Frances Trollope and Charles Dickens when confronting with the Mississippi scenery. By hinging upon the premise that the theories of Edmund Burke regarding the beautiful were widespread in England at the beginning of the nineteenth century, I attempted to research whether Trollope's and Dickens's response to the river may be indebted to Burke's theories. In the light of this, I could state that the qualities of the beautiful postulated by Burke were missing in the Mississippi river landscape, as demonstrated in their travelogues, as a consequence, they portrayed the scenery as a world “turned upside-down”.¹⁵⁰ They did not seem to be able to observe the Mississippi outside their European viewpoint which impacted their visual and narrative response to the landscape. However, Harriet Martineau's reaction to the Mississippi, as reported in *Retrospect of Western Travel*, differed from Trollope and Dickens's response. On the one hand, she found the river as “mighty” and a symbol of “grandeur”.¹⁵¹ Mulvey maintains that “the landscape of the Mississippi found no counterpart at all in the European experience and the European traveller could not prepare himself for the impression that it was to make on him”.¹⁵² As his words suggest, European travellers were probably struck by the dimensions of the river. Trollope and Dickens were similarly impressed by the size and apparently no European visitor in America could abstain from observing its might and dimension. Harriet Martineau tended to write as little as possible regarding the river size, despite the fact that it was a significant part of her trip. Christopher Mulvey explains that “the English traveller sought some term to apply to the unexpected landscape before him and his own unanticipated response to it”.¹⁵³ It thus appears that the Mississippi with its size rendered

150 Ibid., 76.

151 Martineau, *Retrospect, Volume II*, 9.

152 Mulvey, “Ecriture and Landscape,” 215.

153 Ibid., 216.

Martineau lost for words, unable or unwilling to write about it. Though she did not apparently spend a great deal of words to describe the river, she noticed its grandeur which apparently stretched until its banks. When the steamboat stopped at the wooding-place she “had [her] first walk in the untrodden forest. The height of the trees seemed incredible as [they] stood at their foot and looked up. It made [them] feel suddenly dwarfed”.¹⁵⁴ The big dimensions which characterise the whole environment of the Mississippi tended to dominate the landscape. Despite its size, Martineau does not appear frightened by the river. Yet she looked curious to discover where this mighty and immense river could lead her. “The vastness of the river now began to bear upon our imaginations” she attests, as if the Mississippi for its immensity could be totally investigated only through her imagination. However, she witnesses “a great horror of going too far and was not sorry to find it impossible”.¹⁵⁵ The boat, in fact, could have left “two or three passengers behind without finding it out, and no fate could be conceived more desolate”.¹⁵⁶ It seems therefore that although the vastness appeared to excite her curiosity, it could as well swallow the visitors, who would have few possibilities to be rescued in that sort of wilderness. Apparently, vastness had a twofold meaning for her: it was regarded as a cause of dread and interest, which stimulated her imagination. Nonetheless, she found the river not simply mighty “for she was even able to discern its beauty”, as Smith argues.¹⁵⁷ Martineau contends that “so little testimony has been borne to its beauty”,¹⁵⁸ though much has been said regarding its size. She usually “stepped out of [her] window, with [her] book, work or writing; and sitting under the shade of a counterpane, and in full view of the river and western shore, spent in quiet some of the pleasantest mornings [she had] ever known”.¹⁵⁹ By contemplating the landscape from the steamboat it seems that the Mississippi scenery provided Harriet with relaxation and calmness. Apparently, those sensations which, according to Burke may bring to discover real beauty. She was “in perpetual amazement”¹⁶⁰ in front of the scenery. As a consequence, Harriet Martineau often pauses to remark the beauty of the landscape. “No place can be more beautifully situated; on a bend of the Mississippi” she attests when talking of Natchez while Adams Fort, “afforded the most beautiful view [they] had yet seen on the river”.¹⁶¹ Both the river and the towns growing on its banks appear beautiful according to Martineau. She usually sat in the steamboat and eagerly watched the scenery stretching along

154 Martineau, *Retrospect, Volume II*, 11.

155 Ibid.

156 Ibid.

157 Smith, “The River Now Began,” 16.

158 Martineau, *Retrospect, Volume II*, 9.

159 Ibid., 7.

160 Ibid., 9.

161 Ibid., 13.

its banks. This seemingly provided her with quietness and pleasure from the claustrophobic and crowded spaces inside the boat. What Trollope and Dickens had regarded as an underworld she could observe as a beautiful landscape. Though Burke had predicated the smallness of beautiful objects and she seemingly recognised the vastness and majesty of the Mississippi, she could refer to this scenery as beautiful. Besides, the other qualities which combined together could encourage love and thus identify a beautiful landscape, do not seem here reflected in the description of the river she provides. For instance, in terms of smoothness, she realised that the presence of logs in the river may jeopardise her journey. “In the afternoon we ran over a log; the vessel trembled to her centre; the ladies raised their heads from their work; the gentlemen looked overboard” she maintains.¹⁶² As her words may evidence, logs which fell from the banks into the river may represent a danger for the steamboats travelling on the river and did not apparently convey a smooth appearance to the river itself. As for colours, they seem absent from Martineau's Mississippi. Apart from some scattered references to green meadows and “green boughs”¹⁶³ or the green woods as well as the “white houses”, no mild colours seem to appear on the scene.¹⁶⁴ Yet the mud and blackness which Trollope and Dickens had noted are apparently still included in the landscape. However, Smith contends that in the case of Martineau “the traditionally lamented muddiness of the Mississippi [was] transformed into proof of its creative essence”.¹⁶⁵ In Smith's opinion, the mud which Trollope and Dickens lamented and regarded as a symbol of destruction, as a world which was collapsing and destroying itself, was indeed interpreted as the source of America's creative power. In *Society in America* Martineau narrates of “a sort of scum on the waters which betokened the birth-place of new land”.¹⁶⁶ She apparently traced the passage of water, mud and seeds which were left as deposits and formed the basis for “ever-increasing islands”.¹⁶⁷ This is perhaps what she defines as “world-making”.¹⁶⁸ Her approach to the Mississippi landscape seems radically different from those of Frances Trollope and Charles Dickens. In *Retrospect of Western Travel* Martineau maintains that “it was like being set back to the days of creation”.¹⁶⁹ The mud was, therefore, probably regarded as a substance which could guarantee constant regeneration of the land and contribute to originate new lands, it was not perceived as a sign of destruction and annihilation. This creative process may also have

162 Ibid., 13.

163 Ibid., 24.

164 Ibid., 13.

165 Smith, “The River Now Began,” 14.

166 Harriet Martineau, *Society in America, Volume I* (New York: Saunders and Otley, 1842), 157.

167 Smith, “The River Now Began,” 14.

168 Martineau, *Society in America, Volume I*, 156.

169 Martineau, *Retrospect, Volume II*, 23.

been extended to the human progress perceived on the Mississippi banks where she examined every stage of societal advancement “from the clearing in the woods, where the settler [...] creates his own food, warmth and winter light, [to] primitive life”¹⁷⁰ and “ever progressing human settlements,” as Smith claims.¹⁷¹ As a consequence, it seems probable that for Martineau the Mississippi emerged as an emblem of transformation and growth. Though the scenes that the Mississippi offered were sometimes frightful and other times more pleasant and even beautiful in Martineau's opinion, she attests that “to the eye of one who loves to watch the process of world-making, it is full of delight”.¹⁷² According to Martineau, the scenery will always appear beautiful to the eyes of the traveller who eagerly aims to watch and examine the surrounding landscape. Martineau states that the traveller may feel a profound delight in contemplating the landscape, although it may not include the qualities which, in the English nineteenth century thought, were usually connected to the beautiful. She argues that the primary purpose of the observer is to love watching the landscape. The traveller does not probably have to be affected by any external factor. On the contrary, he should watch the environment only with the aim of observing. This will probably ensure that the visitor feels delight and regards the landscape as beautiful, regardless of any aesthetic canon. This is seemingly what she experiences in front of the Mississippi landscape, though the time she spent observing the scenery was probably inferior to the time Frances Trollope and Charles Dickens spent to examine the river. Despite her attention seemed primarily caught by the steamboat society, she felt that the time spent to observe the river was primarily devoted to watch “the process of world-making” without any purpose in mind than that of enjoying the view.¹⁷³ As a consequence, I suggest that Martineau does not intend to classify the Mississippi scenery under a specific aesthetic canon. Her description, in fact, lacks all the qualities of the beautiful, although she does not appear concerned about their absence. It is, instead, the simple observation of the landscapes which can give her joy and pleasure. This, in fact, lays the foundations of her sociological method, “the strongest legacy” she left to sociology, according to Boucher.¹⁷⁴ Martineau is in fact regarded by scholars as a “valid social scientist” who founded her analysis on “exact dates, full descriptions and how she obtained her information”.¹⁷⁵ In this way, she established a scientific method based on observation to

170 Martineau, *Society in America, Volume I*, 159.

171 Smith, “The River Now Began,” 14.

172 Martineau, *Society in America, Volume I*, 158.

173 Ibid.

174 Daniella Boucher, “Small Victories, Lasting Change: Harriet Martineau, Slavery, and Women's Rights,”

Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge 4, no.3 (2006), 323, accessed January 25, 2015, <http://scholarworks.umb.edu/humanarchitecture/vol4/iss3/29>.

175 Ibid.

study society. It seems that Martineau's approach was so rooted that she also applied it to the examination of the landscape. As a matter of fact, she does not notice the lack of the beautiful “she is not saying that we must believe her based on her extensive experience. She is instead noting the information and letting us determine if her method is sound”.¹⁷⁶ Her point of view, therefore, appears neutral and unbiased and it leaves the reader to formulate his own thought on the Mississippi. In this, Martineau “was truly a sociologist”.¹⁷⁷ On Martineau's thought Christopher Mulvey suggests that:

Experience of [this landscape] could be very much affected by the traveller's willingness to remain inactive while the panorama unfolded before him. For Harriet Martineau it was 'holiday travelling to have such a succession of pictures as I saw made to pass noiselessly before one's eyes' and she rose at dawn every day of her journey east from Cincinnati. [...] But Charles Dickens was driven almost frantic. [...] Restless, nervous, obsessively hard working, Dickens was exasperated by the enforced idleness of steamboat travel.¹⁷⁸

In the light of this, it seems possible to acknowledge that Dickens's nervous temperament as well as his commitment to write a travelogue on his American experience may have obstructed his examination. His busy schedule must have affected his point of view on the river and prevented a free observation. Likewise, Frances Trollope had left America with the aim of restoring the financial family fortune and from the moment when she landed on the American shore she had attempted various activities to raise some money. Although she apparently failed, as discussed in the first chapter. Accordingly, it seems that her economic problems probably worried her and prevented a thoughtless examination of the river, free from any constraint or influence. Unlike Dickens and Trollope, Martineau, intended to relax from a period of intense work after having published *Illustrations of Political Economy*. Her wish to rest and relax may have encouraged her to examine the Mississippi landscape without thoughts of an impending economic breakdown or the responsibility of writing a travelogue. This could have further stimulated her “delight” in front of the Mississippi landscape, though she seems to spend little time to observe the river. As Mulvey suggests, her willingness to sit and watch may have affected her point of view on the river which lacked the qualities associated with the beautiful. In part Martineau's point of view seems overwhelmed by the

176 Ibid.

177 Ibid.

178 Mulvey, *Anglo-American Landscapes*, 225.

size of the river, in part it seems free from Burke's aesthetic influence. Harriet Martineau appears, therefore, to greet positively the river's landscape. Though she apparently acknowledged that it lacked the qualities which were usually related to the beautiful, she suggests that "to the eye of one who loves to watch the process of world-making, it is full of delight".¹⁷⁹ As a social scientist, Martineau seems here to have applied her sociological approach to the study of the landscape. Instead of reading the Mississippi scenery according to specific aesthetic canons she seems to consider observation as an essential tool to read every aspect of human life from social behaviour to human environment. This provides a delight which is not filtered through the aesthetic canons of the beautiful and the sublime but it is obtained by enjoying the landscape through a fresh and unmediated look.

¹⁷⁹ Martineau, *Society in America, Volume I*, 158.

The Falls of Niagara

The study of point of view and the American landscape continues with an examination of the Falls of Niagara. The previous chapter has discussed and evaluated the factors which most affected Trollope's, Martineau's and Dickens's points of view on the Mississippi River. After having analysed the Mississippi scenery this third chapter intends to bring into focus the landscape of the Niagara Falls. As in the previous chapter, this dissertation will take into consideration the treatise by Edmund Burke *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, probably the most influential work concerning the aesthetics of the sublime in England. While still known today for its significance, Burke's *Enquiry* was but one in a long procession of works written in eighteenth-century Britain “on the nature of aesthetic experience and knowledge” as Erik Altenbernd maintains.¹ Upon publication, however, it seems that Burke's treatise distinguished itself by making an immediate impact “on the terms and direction of aesthetic discourse in Britain and abroad”.² After having examined to which degree the concept of the beautiful affected the British travellers' point of view in relation to the Mississippi landscape, this part will analyse the concept of the sublime. The attributes, which were generally related to sublime sceneries, seem to be strongly connected with the image of Niagara that emerges from the British travelogues taken into consideration. For this reason, this chapter aims to examine to which extent the ideas concerning the sublime may have impacted Trollope's, Martineau's and Dickens's point of view on the Falls. The chapter will first outline the enormous significance of the Falls for the nineteenth century British traveller. Several factors apparently contributed to increase its popularity and appreciation and to turn Niagara Falls into one of the first examples of a “must-see” in America.³ Then I shall illustrate the evolution of the concept of the sublime from Edmund Burke to Wordsworth. By analysing the attributes which Romantic writers related to the sublime, I shall summarise its main principles and then discuss its huge popularity at the beginning of the nineteenth century. This will enable me to assess to which

1 Erik Altenbernd, “Body and Soul: Landscape Aesthetics, the Market Revolution, and the Nineteenth-Century American Wilderness” (Thesis, California State University, USA, 2006), 32.

2 Ibid.

3 Adam Neil Hallet, “America Seen: British and American Nineteenth Century Travels in the United States” (PhD thesis, University of Exeter, UK, 2010), 167.

extent Burkean sublime may have affected the travellers' point of view and consequently their different responses to the Niagara Falls. In the following section I briefly discuss the significance of the Falls for British travellers and the reasons which brought them to visit the Falls and turned them into "the most important natural draw for travellers from across the Atlantic, as well as those closer to home".⁴

3.1 Niagara Falls: a General Overview



Figure VII. "A View of the American, Bridal Veil and Horseshoe Falls".

The Falls of Niagara River is the collective name which is usually assigned to three waterfalls located at the boundary between the United States of America and Canada, specifically between the province of Ontario and the State of New York. According to McKinsey, the three waterfalls, the Horseshoe Fall, the American Fall and the Bridal Veil Fall form the highest flow rate of any waterfall in the world with a vertical drop of more than fifty metres and constitute the most powerful waterfall in North America.

⁴ Hallet, "America Seen," 166.

As McKinsey maintains “Niagara Falls was known but virtually unexplored”.⁵ Due to its position, in fact, the Falls were initially only accessible to Indians and apparently they were not seen by white men until late in the seventeenth century, as she adds. The first known written record of Niagara dates back to 1604 when the French explorer Champlain mentioned the Falls in his *Voyages*, although he had never seen them. When he explored Lake Ontario he commented that “there is a fall about a league wide, where a very large mass of water falls into said lake”.⁶ This seems to be the first reference to the waterfalls. As McKinsey reports, Champlain had been informed of its existence by his Indian guides in 1603 but he had never seen them since he probably “did not deign it worthy of a detour”.⁷ However, the first European explorer to see the Falls was the French Louis Hannepin who took part in La Salle expedition in 1678-79 and described them in his *Description of Louisiana*. Apparently, he was the first reporter to see the Falls and due to the book’s wide dissemination both in France and in translation, all Europe probably soon discovered the natural wonder of the Niagara Falls.

However, Adam Hallet contends that only between the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century Niagara Falls became “the first tourist trap of the United States”.⁸ It seems that the Falls of Niagara, as the Mississippi River, became what is nowadays called a “must-see” of the United States and it was, therefore, included in the American Tour.⁹ This seems evidenced by the accounts of the British travellers I take into consideration here. All their travelogues apparently contain extracts regarding their trips to the Falls. In addition, both Martineau and Dickens visited the Falls twice. This natural scenery was probably one of the fundamental stops for travellers from all over the world, who would not come back home without viewing the spectacle posed by the Falls of Niagara. Frances Trollope’s words testify how significant these Falls were for travellers from abroad and to which extent she desired to visit them. In *Domestic Manners* she starts her account of the Falls by stating that “any day would have seemed bright that brought me to the object which, for years, I had languished to look upon”.¹⁰ Trollope writes with excitement at the prospect of viewing “one of the wonders of the world”.¹¹ She strongly desired to see the Falls, which appeared as a fundamental stop of her tour. Her words evidence that she had wished to see them for years. This seems to attest

5 Elizabeth McKinsey, *Niagara Falls: Icon of the American Sublime* (USA: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 7.

6 John Howard Hinton, *The History and Topography of the United States of North America, Volume II* (Boston: Samuel Walker, reprinted 1834), 7.

7 Hallet, “America Seen,” 166.

8 *Ibid.*, 167.

9 *Ibid.*

10 Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (London: Whittaker, Treacher, & Co., 1832), 302.

11 *Ibid.*, 285.

the great popularity of Niagara among British travellers who felt it as a necessary part of their journeys. Likewise, when approaching the Falls Charles Dickens claims that he was “too near the Great Falls to wait patiently there”¹² and Harriet Martineau similarly maintains that “there is nothing like patient waiting in a place like this”.¹³ Their words seem to witness the strong excitement and extreme desire to see the Falls of Niagara. These travellers could not apparently hold their enthusiasm and trepidation to the idea of seeing the Falls. Thus, they seemingly lost their patience, as their words witness. Therefore, the Falls of Niagara were surrounded by great curiosity and interest at the beginning of the nineteenth century. However, some factors may have played a fundamental role in transforming this natural site into a very popular attraction. Hallet claims that “the nineteenth century was the dawn of tourism in the modern sense”.¹⁴ Some visitors probably went to the United States to visit the Falls every year. However, it seems that at the beginning of the nineteenth century a new sort of tourism was born at the Falls of Niagara, “tourism in the modern sense”.¹⁵ Scholars and researchers usually attribute this massive change to different reasons. Firstly, the Erie Canal was completed in 1825 which proved to be “an abrupt turning point for Niagara”.¹⁶ The Canal ran from Albany, on the Hudson River to Buffalo, at Lake Erie in order to create a navigable route from New York City, on the Atlantic Ocean, to the Great Lakes. When the Erie Canal was built the Falls could no longer be kept as a “sacred, separate landscape” but they “opened to trade, industry and tourism on a large scale”.¹⁷ Apparently, Niagara Falls had been kept as a private place, a space separated from the chaotic industrial American metropolis nonetheless, after the completion of the Erie Canal it opened to huge masses of travellers. Thanks to the canal, travellers could reach Niagara more easily with shorter journeys and this probably brought to a large increase of tourism. McKinsey records that “as early as 1827 an estimated 15.000 people assembled” at the Falls and by the late 1840 “the Falls hosted more than 40.000 visitors annually”.¹⁸ Thus, it seems that the opening of the Erie Canal revolutionised the scenery of Niagara Falls and transformed it “from a national icon, remote and imagistic [...], into a fashionable resort”.¹⁹ As McKinsey contends, it seems that before the opening of the Canal these Falls were regarded as a very intimate site barely accessible to travellers. As a

12 Charles Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation* (Adelaide: The University of Adelaide Library, 2014), 242.

13 Harriet Martineau, *Retrospect of Western Travel, Volume I* (New York: Saunders and Otley, 1838), 107.

14 Hallet, “America Seen,” 166.

15 Ibid.

16 McKinsey, *Niagara Falls*, 127.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

consequence, the Falls were often imagined by those who wished to visit them, who apparently attempted to delineate in their mind an image of the Falls. Martineau herself maintains that she “expected to be disappointed in the first sight of the falls”.²⁰ Her words perhaps evidence that before coming to America she had formed in her mind a picture of this natural site which may not correspond to the real image of Falls. Its remote and not easily accessible location may have contributed to construct Niagara as a distant and forgotten place which could only be imagined and not actually visited. However, with the advent of the Erie Canal it seems that not only could more tourists probably access the place, but also that “all the tourist accommodations and allurements” appeared. “Hotels, guides hawking carriages [...], souvenir stands, museums, specially erected vantage points, admission fees and crowds” populated the place.²¹ Thus, after the Canal was built all tourist facilities rapidly proliferated at the Falls. Apparently, the opening of the Erie Canal brought several transformations in the Niagara landscape. On the one hand, it opened to huge groups of visitors, on the other hand, after the influx of tourists began, some tourist facilities, such as restaurants, hotels and shops, started to be seen at the Falls. On the whole, the amelioration of transport links seems to have played a crucial role in raising the popularity and tourism of Niagara Falls. Secondly, McKinsey claims that the British middle-classes increased and became “more affluent”.²² It appears that the former middle class grew in wealth and dimension. This growth probably enabled larger numbers of British citizens to cross the Atlantic Ocean to view the Falls. Donna Loftus claims that “the Victorian middle-class is largely associated with the growth of cities and the expansion of the economy”.²³ Thus, it seems that the growth of industries allowed the growth of wealth of the “middling sort”.²⁴ Moreover, she adds that “shopkeepers and merchants undertook to transport [...] and the increased scale of industry and overseas trade, together with the expansion of empire fuelled the proliferation of commerce and finance”.²⁵ As a consequence, the British middle-class seems to have encountered a very huge expansion in number and in wealth at the beginning of the nineteenth century due to the growth of the British economy. This may be ascribable to the development of transports, trade and to the new industrial means of production, which seem to have changed the British economy significantly. New financial means probably allowed British citizens to travel more

20 Martineau, *Retrospect, Volume I*, 104.

21 McKinsey, *Niagara Falls*, 127.

22 Ibid.

23 Donna Loftus, “The Rise of the Victorian Middle-Class”, BBC History, accessed May 5, 2015, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/middle_classes_01.shtml

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid

often and easily reach Niagara. Moreover, Hallet underlines that with the amelioration of transports and the increase of wealth of the middle-classes not only did more and more travellers have the opportunity of viewing the Falls but they could also spread and divulge their opinions and emotions concerning the Falls. Some may have talked of the Falls only in their oral conversations, others may have decided to write their impressions in travel books or diaries and to publish them. Although these travellers employed different means to convey their opinions, they all similarly attempted to communicate their ideas and to promote knowledge of the Falls. Thus, travel books seem to have “played their part in raising the profile and popularity of Niagara Falls”, as Hallet maintains.²⁶ As a matter of fact, when travellers confessed their emotions and attempted a description of the Falls they were seemingly spreading information and raising the popularity of the Falls in Europe. Patrick McGreevy has calculated that three quarters of known nineteenth century travel books regarding the United States describe Niagara. Therefore, it could be maintained that a great deal of writings probably mentioned the Falls and contributed to its general reputation. As a consequence, by examining and discussing this natural scenery Niagara apparently became very widely known in Europe. John Sears in his *Sacred Places* seems to outline the basic features of this new modern sort of tourism. He explains that modern travel demands:

a population with money and the leisure to travel, an adequate means of transportation, and conditions of reasonable safety and comfort at the places people go to visit. It also demands a body of images and descriptions of those places – a mythology of unusual things to see – to excite people's imagination and induce them to travel.²⁷

In his study Sears seems to point at the main requirements for American pleasure travel at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Transportation improvements seemed to him necessary to move European populations across the Atlantic. As seen in the previous chapter, at the beginning of the nineteenth century some changes in the transportation field seemed to have revolutionised travel in the United States, namely steam power was applied to boats. As a result, boats could sail much faster. Later, the railway system probably brought a further improvement to the field of transports. Moreover, thanks to the completion of the Erie Canal visitors could reach the Falls more easily and take shorter journeys. In addition, the growth of a prosperous urban population which had both leisure time and wealth available appeared as

²⁶ Hallet, “America Seen,” 166.

²⁷ John Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 3.

the basic prerequisite “to the creation of an American Grand Tour” which included Niagara, as McGreevy maintains.²⁸ The growth of tourism, brought also to the proliferation of hotels, museums, restaurants around this natural site. McKinsey, in fact, records that these facilities rapidly spread around the Falls with the arrival of huge masses of travellers. Furthermore, Sears argues that modern tourism needs “a body of images and descriptions [...] to excite people's imaginations and to induce them to travel”.²⁹ Apparently, widespread travel books which portrayed Niagara intended to excite the imagination of the readers and to raise their curiosity as well as to witness the author's personal experience with the Falls.³⁰ Thus, the descriptions of Niagara may have given Europeans “a glimpse of the grandeur and magnificence” of this natural scenery and incited them to travel to America, like the Mississippi River, the Falls of Niagara could not probably find a counterpart in Europe for strength and splendour.³¹ Mulvey explains that it was not a landscape which “could be easily anticipated in Europe”, yet “there were few ways of preparing emotion and language in advance”.³² As a consequence, both travel books and oral conversations mentioning Niagara Falls must have contributed considerably to raise British curiosity towards America and therefore to raise British journeys to Niagara. It is important to notice, says McGreevy, that “its appeal was truly international”, thousands of European citizens in fact “made the same pilgrimage to Niagara” during the same time of the year. On the whole, several factors may have contributed to different degrees in order to transform the Falls of Niagara into a very popular American attraction. The development of new means of transportation and the construction of the Erie Canal, a wealthy middle-class which had money and time available to travel and the proliferation of travelogues which talked of Niagara probably constituted, in Sears's opinion, the three essential principles lying at the basis of modern tourism at the Falls at the beginning of the nineteenth century. These issues seem to equally contribute to transform Niagara into an American icon, into “America's foremost symbol of nature”, and into a place which, thanks to modern facilities, could be finally visited and not only confined to the European imagination alone.³³ The following section aims to outline the development of the concept of sublime by starting to examine the sublime as theorised by Edmund Burke. It

28 Patrick McGreevy, *Imagining Niagara: the Meaning and Making of Niagara Falls* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), 6.

29 Sears, *Sacred Places*, 3.

30 McGreevy, *Imagining Niagara*, 7.

31 Ibid.

32 Christopher Mulvey, “Ecriture and Landscape: British writing on post-revolutionary America,” in *Views of American Landscapes*, ed. Mick Gidley and Robert Lawson-Peebles (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 106.

33 William Irwin, *The New Niagara: Tourism, Technology, and the Landscape of Niagara Falls 1776-1917* (USA: Pennsylvania University Press, 1996), 71.

then moves to sketch its evolution in the Romantic period in England.

3.2 The Concept of the British Sublime and its Evolution

Nowadays, the term “sublime” is usually employed to attribute some vaguely superlative qualities to objects or events. However, in the course of the history of ideas, the term sublime has undergone a very complex and rich development. It generally covered a wide set of meanings depending on the historical moment and on the author. More specifically, Luke White contends that in the realms of art, philosophy and literature it used to refer to “the awe-inspiring, the grandiose or the great” in nature.³⁴ According to Emily Brady it seems that the taste for the sublime developed in the eighteenth century “through visits to the mountain landscapes of Britain, Europe and North America”³⁵ as part of the Grand Tour which young upper-class young men undertook in order to move symbolically from youth to adulthood. Accordingly, the concept of the sublime revolves around the relationship between human beings and the “grand or terrifying aspects of nature”.³⁶ However, it probably experienced its biggest expansion and development between the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century when Romanticism started to flourish in England, and it became “one of the central concepts around which discourses on art and aesthetic experience were articulated”.³⁷ According to White, this word turned into a key term between the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century.³⁸ During this period, the adjective “sublime” usually indicated a new taste for the “aesthetic appreciation of nature” and art that was developing at the time.³⁹ Through the notion of the sublime the English Romantics could interpret the landscape and provide their emotions with a definition. As Altenbernd maintains, it was a new “reconceptualization of nature”, not only a new method by which Europeans constructed the landscape.⁴⁰ Generally speaking, this term was employed in order to formulate appreciation towards old ruins, the Alps, mountains, storms, deserts and oceans. It generally

34 Luke White, “Sublime Resources: A brief History of the notion of the Sublime,” accessed August 4, 2015, http://www.lukewhite.me.uk/sub_history.htm.

35 Emily Brady, *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy: Aesthetics, Ethics and Nature* (USA: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 100.

36 Philip Shaw, “Landscape and the Sublime,” The British Library, accessed August 10, 2015, <http://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/landscape-and-the-sublime>.

37 White, “Sublime Resources”.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 Altenbernd, “Body and Soul,” 48.

expresses a taste for “the rugged rather than the harmonious and smooth, the forceful rather than the restrained or measured, the wild rather than the orderly or symmetrical, the primitive rather than the sophisticated”.⁴¹ It constituted a revolution in taste on art and culture of Neoclassicism, which was based on very contrasting principles. By drawing inspiration from Classical - Roman and Greek ideals, Neoclassicism embodied some attitudes towards art and life including “ideals of order, logic, restraint, accuracy, correctness [and] decorum”.⁴² On the contrary, Romantic aesthetic was based on different ideas. The sublime alluded to disorder, greatness, strength, savageness and wilderness. Neoclassicism, conversely, was based on limits and order. Thus, the appearance of a sublime taste for art and nature, probably provided people with the opportunity of sensing and giving voice to new sentiments and emotions which were regarded as a break from the past. During the Romantic era, the concept of sublime spread all over Europe, and had a significant impact on British Romanticism. According to Samuel Holt Monk, the concept became very significant in England for its relationship with nature. As Monk explains, English interest in sublimity was probably principally due to the fact that “English poets had always been closer to nature than had the French poets”.⁴³ For Monk, the close proximity of nature to British life and habits had probably predisposed English poets and artists to respond to the term favourably. In Monk's view, the closeness to nature which British poets and artists had traditionally exhibited, may have strengthened their relationship with the natural environment, which probably awoke “a sympathetic response among the dwellers in England's green and pleasant land” to the concept of sublimity.⁴⁴ British Romanticism seems therefore to mark a significant period for the sublime.

According to Luke White, several philosophers and poets like Burke, Wordsworth, Kant or Nietzsche attempted to theorise the concept and to formulate its main attributes in a few rules. For this reason, in the realms of philosophy, art history and literary studies the sublime has acquired a range of specific meanings. Each of them attempted to provide his own interpretation of sublimity and to identify some examples of sublime landscapes. In fact, when the term “sublime” appeared in books, essays and treatises the reader could understand and visualise mentally a picture of a sublime landscape. However, these various uses of the term stem from the complicated and rich history of its development. The sublime has,

41 White, “Sublime Resources”.

42 “Neoclassicism: an Introduction,” Victorian Web, accessed May 5, 2015, <http://www.victorianweb.org/previctorian/nc/ncintro.html>.

43 Samuel Holt Monk, *The Sublime: a Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960), 205.

44 *Ibid.*, 206.

therefore, experienced an evolution along the Romantic period in England. The first study was attributed to Longinus. *On the Sublime* was written probably in the third century A.D. and was then translated by the French critic Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux into French in 1674. Due to his influential position and fame in the world of letters, the notion of the sublime spread widely in the context of art. However, of the many works produced along the eighteenth century concerning the aesthetics of sublime, Edmund Burke's treatise *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* probably brought the concept to prominence in England in 1757. The treatise was very influential in England when it was published and according to McKinsey it was generally regarded as the first that "most firmly located the source of such feelings in natural objects".⁴⁵ It also marked the transition from the neoclassical to the romantic aesthetics according to Altenbernd.⁴⁶ The treatise had a widespread and profound influence throughout the century and made a significant contribution to the field of aesthetics. In his work Burke, who locates the source of the sublime in the natural environment, considers terror as the primary emotion which the sublime elicits. Burke describes the experience of the sublime as follows:

The passion caused by the great and sublime in nature, when those causes operate most powerfully, is astonishment: and astonishment is that state of the soul in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other. [...] Hence arises the power of the sublime, that, far from being produced by them, it anticipates our reasonings, and hurries us on by an irresistible force. [...] Terror is in all cases whatsoever, either more openly or latently, the ruling principle of the sublime. Several languages bear a strong testimony to the affinity of these ideas. They frequently use the same word to signify indifferently the modes of astonishment or admiration and those of terror.⁴⁷

The above passage seems to indicate that the primary emotion the observer feels in front a sublime landscape is terror. Although Burke could not reduce his notion of the sublime "to any fixed principles", he thought that it was important to outline some of its attributes in order to avoid confusion between the sublime and the beautiful.⁴⁸ As the above passage seems to evidence, the observer appears petrified in front of a sublime scenery and this strong emphasis

45 McKinsey, *Niagara Falls*, 32.

46 Altenbernd, "Body and Soul," 34.

47 Edmund Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (Adelaide: The University of Adelaide Library, 1756), 53.

48 Ibid., 80.

on terror seems to prevent any rational activity during the sublime experience. The viewer cannot concentrate on any other aspect of the landscape and his/her eye cannot look away, in fact, “it cannot entertain any other”. All the movements of the observer are seemingly blocked by the view and it seems impossible to think, act or move. Yet his only attention seems to be focused on the landscape which appears very alluring, although the scenery terrifies him. Thus, in Burke's opinion the sublime landscape seems to exercise a twofold effect on the viewer. It excites an “idea of terror”⁴⁹ which prevents him from moving or speaking, and yet this strong terror exerts a strong attraction to the landscape on the part of the viewer, who probably feels excitement and confusion when “the great power of the sublime” arises.⁵⁰ This philosophy is founded on the emotions of the mind, and inquires into the relations between human beings and external nature. In addition, by linking terror to physical pain, Burke defines the sublime as “whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible or is conversant about terrible objects or operates in a manner analogous to terror”.⁵¹ For Burke, it seems that what causes pain or harm may scare men since “pain is always inflicted by a power in some way superior because we never submit to pain willingly”.⁵² Hence, objects, people or landscapes that can inflict pain physically are usually regarded by Burke as more powerful and thus, can stimulate sensations of terror. However, by founding the emotional response to sublime on terror, Burke detached men from nature. Instead of hinging upon contact and harmony, with the emphasis placed on pain and terror he seems to distance men from the natural environment, which can procure awe and harm them.

To illustrate his argument, Burke then lists a specific set of qualities of natural objects which are responsible for stimulating terror, thus codifying sublimity. The first characteristic which sublime landscapes need is obscurity. With the term obscurity Burke means uncertainty about an object's boundaries, otherwise “when we know the full extent of any danger, when we accustom our eyes to it, a great deal of the apprehension vanishes”.⁵³ His decision to include obscurity may be ascribable to the idea that “a judicious obscurity in some things contributes to the effect” of the sublime. It seems that dark sceneries which prevent the observer from viewing clearly and distinctly may contribute to provide terror and thus sublimity to the landscape. “In nature, [in fact] dark, confused, uncertain images have a greater power on the fancy to form the grander passions, than those have which are more clear

49_Ibid., 52.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid., 36.

52 Ibid., 59.

53 Ibid., 53.

and determinate”, Burke maintains.⁵⁴ Apparently, he grounds his concept on a psychological reasoning of the human brain. He suggests that by knowing exactly every detail of the scenery, the mind, cannot feel fear or terror but only a sense of security and protection. On the contrary, when the mind does not see or know it probably experiences a lack of certainty. This may cause terror to arise. In addition, obscurity may also excite the imagination to visualise what lies behind the shadows. Secondly, he associates the idea of power to the sublime. Power is not only connected to the sublime because of pain, as aforementioned, but also in relation to sceneries which inspire sensations of might and grandeur. “Whilst we contemplate so vast an object, under the arm, as it were, of almighty power, and invested upon every side with omnipresence, we shrink into the minuteness of our own nature, and are, in a manner, annihilated before him”, Burke argues.⁵⁵ The passage asserts that in front of the grandiose and mighty men usually feel as extremely tiny beings who can exercise no power or authority. This perhaps can stimulate terror since “the notion of some great power must be always precedent to our dread of it”.⁵⁶ Besides, power can also disclose the presence of God, according to Burke. In fact, the passage seems to allude to an almighty God who crafted the world by virtue of His power. Therefore, The observer can feel God's immense and boundless authority in front of sublime sceneries. By feeling the presence of God with His tremendous power, men may thus perceive how insignificantly little and impotent men are compared to His authority and influence. It is “on this principle that true religion has, and must have, so large a mixture of salutary fear”, Burke explains.⁵⁷ These words, do not allude to any destructive emotion of fear but possibly hints at a common feeling of subjection which is usually felt in front of the powerful. Burke argues that religion should be founded on a similar state of subordination and awe towards the Deity. The Bible, in fact, reads “Tremble, thou earth! At the presence of the Lord”, as Burke reports.⁵⁸ He seems to provide the issue of power with a twofold meaning. Power refers both to a vision of grandeur and strength which can elicit terror in the viewer who feels weak and impotent, and to the presence of a God-creator who may scare the observer. Despite His might, the perception of a powerful God does not affect the observer negatively, it can also lead to “rejoice”, although it probably leads to “rejoice with trembling”.⁵⁹ Burke concludes his section on power by contending that “no conviction of the justice with which it is exercised, nor the mercy with which it is tempered,

54 Ibid., 57.

55 Ibid., 63.

56 Ibid., 64.

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid., 63.

can wholly remove the terror that naturally arises from a force which nothing can withstand”.⁶⁰ Burke, thus, seems to deal with the emotions of the mind and on their emotions in order to excite terror which can lead to experience sublimity. Thirdly, Burke mentions privation. He believes that “all general privations are great, because they are all terrible; vacuity, darkness, solitude and silence”.⁶¹ These examples of privations may elicit the imagination to go beyond the rational boundaries and to visualize what can lie beyond the known. As in the case of obscurity, he seems to play on the indefinite and imprecise which may encourage human imagination to picture what cannot be distinctly seen. Another quality which can stimulate terror and thus sublimity is vastness. “Greatness of dimension is a powerful cause of the sublime” and he considers extension in “length, height, or depth”.⁶² Among vast sceneries he explains that “the perpendicular has more force in forming the sublime”.⁶³ As in the case of power, great dimensions can, cause terror. Greatness, in fact, may procure a sensation of power and strength in the landscape and of the viewer’s weakness. Likewise, infinity, succession and uniformity seem to convey an idea similar to that of obscurity. After a long and endless succession the eye seems unable to perceive the bounds. As for the imagination, it can “meet no check which may hinder its extending [...] at pleasure”.⁶⁴ Succession and uniformity are instead regarded as a sort of “artificial infinite”.⁶⁵ By the term “succession” he means that “the parts may be continued so long and in such a direction [...] to impress the imagination with an idea of their progress beyond their actual limits”.⁶⁶ For Burke's the figures should not contain alterations or terminations in order to provide an idea of infinity. Greek temples seem to be the perfect example to illustrate the idea, the regularity of their columns and their disposition “give this figure full force”.⁶⁷ Difficulty is another trait of the sublime, when a work seems “to have required immense force and labour to effect it, the idea is grand”.⁶⁸ Likewise, magnificence is another source of the sublime. Burke describes it as “a great profusion of things, which are splendid or valuable in themselves”.⁶⁹ This idea can be connected to the sublime since it may excite a sensation of grandeur and splendour. Apparently, disorder increases the sublime since it encourages the use of imagination to picture in the mind what may lie beyond the greatness seen. This gives “a

60 Ibid.

61 Ibid., 65.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid., 66.

65 Ibid., 67.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid., 69.

68 Ibid., 70.

69 Ibid.

sort of infinity”.⁷⁰ Finally, he concludes his list dealing with sounds and lights. As for light, Burke insists that the effect of a dazzling sun could obliterate the differences between colours and blur their shades. On this basis, the sun seems to operate like darkness in annihilating the details. Moreover, he maintains that, generally, dark and gloomy colours are sublime. Finally, he mentions sounds. Loud and sudden sounds, even when repetitive seem to provide an idea of infinity and greatness. With the inclusion of sounds, he seems to imply that sublime cannot only be elicited by the eye, but also the ear can play a part in inspiring sublimity. Burke argues that “excessive loudness alone is sufficient to overpower the soul, to suspend its action, and to fill it with horror”.⁷¹ Among sounds, he also includes the cries of wild beasts who “are equally capable of causing a great and awful sensation”.⁷² All these qualities are seemingly able to inspire the powerful emotion of the sublime. The concept which Burke had theorised primarily plays on the psychology of the viewer. These traits, in fact, seem to impact the mind which should perceive ideas of infinity, boundless space, obscurity and greatness, both in its dimensions and in grandeur. In addition, these traits seem to stimulate imagination, as the individual needs to mentally visualise what lies beyond the perceived, heard and known. When the viewer can finally detect all these qualities in a scenery, Burke explains, he needs to detach himself to feel delight and thus perceive sublimity. “When danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible; but at certain distances, and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are delightful, as we everyday experience”.⁷³ Without detachment there can be no sublimity but only pain, as stated in the passage above. Sublimity resides in fact, according to Burke, only in our mind. Accordingly, it may be maintained that for Burke sublimity is a psychological process founded on the separation between self and nature.

However, thanks to the enormous popularity that Burke's theories experienced and their fast circulation these attributes probably became “the conventional characteristics of sublimity”, as Altenbernd maintains.⁷⁴ It appears that the qualities which artists and writers generally associated with sublime sceneries were kept substantially unaltered throughout the century, although the concept of the sublime evolved and changed by taking different shades of meaning. Loud sounds, animal noises, suddenness, obscurity, darkness, magnitude and infinity were regarded as the defining elements of the sublime and were recurring even in later formulations of the sublime. About half a century later, William Wordsworth for instance,

70 Ibid., 71.

71 Ibid., 75.

72 Ibid., 76.

73 Ibid., 37.

74 Altenbernd, “Body and Soul,” 34.

seems to record the same qualities of the sublime as those postulated by Burke in the following passage:

How divine, the liberty, for frail, for mortal, man
To roam at large among unpeopled glens
And mountainous retirements, regions consecrate
To oldest time! [...] and while the mists
Flying, and rainy vapours, call out shapes
And phantoms from the crags and solid earth
As fast as a musician scatters sounds
Out of an instrument; [...]
And starting from the hollows of the earth
More multitudinous every moment, rend
Their way before them — what a joy to roam
An equal among mightiest energies;
And haply sometimes with articulate voice,
Amid the deafening tumult, scarcely heard
By him that utters it, exclaim aloud,
“Rage on, ye elements! let moon and stars
Their aspects lend, and mingle in their turn
With this commotion (ruinous though it be)
From day to night, from night to day, prolonged!”⁷⁵

The excerpt comes from the section “The Solitary” of the poem *The Excursion*. In the passage a lonely man recalls the joys of wandering alone among the loud noises of the mountain cataracts. A great deal of traits which Burke associates with the sublime are present in the extract. The line: “The mists/flying and rainy vapours” communicates an idea of obscurity. Mist and vapours, in fact, may conceal the scenery by encouraging the use of imagination. “The deafening tumult” and the exclamation “aloud” seem to exemplify loudness while the “mightiest energies” which “more multitudinous every moment [...] roam” may procure both a sensation of power and magnificence. Moreover, by mentioning “day to night, from night to day” the final line conveys a contrast of colours between lightness and obscurity. therefore, The natural scenery, appears to exhibit the characteristics which were conventionally associated with the sublime.

However, despite the presence of these traits, at the beginning of the nineteenth

⁷⁵ William Wordsworth, *The Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth together with a Description of the Country of the Lakes in the North of England* (Pittsburgh: John Kay, Jun. & Brother, 1837), 427.

century, Wordsworth emerges, as the representative of a different mode of feeling which does not apparently see the sublime in nature as terrifying or frightening but he seems to conceive a comforting and protective image of nature. The conception of sublimity in Wordsworth probably changes because “his attention to nature is different in style”, as Brady points out.⁷⁶ According to Brady “Wordsworth's aesthetics of nature can be described as participatory and situated, inspired by immediate atmosphere rather than distance”.⁷⁷ In other words, Wordsworth alludes to a nature which can cause an intimate connection with the self. Instead of feeling distance and separation or terror, the subject appears to experience a strong connection with the natural environment which can be established also “via the senses, imagination and the emotion”.⁷⁸ In the passage quoted above, for instance, the Solitary seems to immerse himself in nature. Through his exclamation full of passion and emotion he seems to seek his place in the environment and to feel involved in the natural scene. He wants “to mingle with this commotion”, he then wanders alone among “unpeopled glens”, and attempts to state that the stars and the moon need to lend their aspects as in a sort of communion with men. The actions depicted apparently convey an idea of participation and communion. Moreover, the senses and emotions may support his proximity with nature. He sees directly through his eyes and hears his voice screaming aloud in the valley. The self is thus “part of an interconnected whole”, as McKinsey suggests.⁷⁹ Apparently, the observer enters the scene as an active participant who directly experiences the sublime. Nature, therefore, does not threaten the poet as in Burke's example, but appears to provide comfort and protection to the self. Rather than placing man and nature in opposition, Wordsworth probably considers them as complementary elements belonging to the same world. Chris Drummond suggests that “Wordsworth looks at the world and sees not an alien force against which he must struggle, but rather a comforting entity of which he is a part”.⁸⁰ Likewise, George Gordon Byron, placed emphasis on the communion with nature. “I live not in myself, but I become portion of that around me” he recites in *Child's Harold Pilgrimage*. “Class'd among creatures, when the soul can flee, and with the sky, the peak, the heaving plain of ocean, or the stars, mingle, and not in vain”, he maintains.⁸¹ When he writes of his wish to “mingle” his soul with the mountains, the ocean and the stars or when he states his affinity to the human race, he seems

76 Brady, *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy*, 102.

77 Ibid.

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid., 105.

80 Chris Drummond, “Nature in Shelley and Wordsworth,” Victorian Web, accessed May 5, 2015, <http://www.victorianweb.org/previctorian/ww/nature3.html>.

81 George Byron, *Child's Harold Pilgrimage* (Brussels: Du Jardin-Sailly Brothers, 1829), 108.

to echo Wordsworth's thought concerning the relationship between men and nature and to evoke ideas of participation and communion.

This section has attempted to outline the development of the concept of sublime. By starting with Edmund Burke, it has sketched the features which became conventionally associated with sublimity. His notion based on terror and physical pain, however, laid the foundations for the separation between nature and the self. Instead of enjoying the environment, the observer appears petrified and incapable of every rational action or movement. Burke's treatise, which was published at the beginning of the eighteenth century became quite famous in England and seemed to have a widespread and profound influence throughout the century. However, the conception of the sublime evolved through the years. Despite its traits did not vary, the relationship between self and nature changed significantly by providing new interpretations to the concept. Wordsworth was regarded as the representative of a new mode of feeling sublimity. Through his senses, emotions and imagination the poet could connect with nature and establish an intimate relationship with it. The Romantic sublime, by drawing a deep connection between self and nature, may provide an occasion for "grasping the self as connected to something beyond itself".⁸²

3.2.1 Frances Trollope: the terrifying nature of the Falls

Frances Trollope left New York City for Niagara Falls on May, 30 1831. She completed the first part of her journey by stagecoach and then she travelled on the Erie Canal. She claims that "for years" she had wanted to see the Falls, thus she "languished to look upon".⁸³ Trollope appears excited to see Niagara "all [she] had wished for, hoped for, dreamed of".⁸⁴ She seems enthusiastic at the idea of meeting the natural scenery which a lot of people had probably promoted with excitement. It must have been a natural spectacle never seen before, "one of the wonders of the world".⁸⁵ As soon as she encounters the Falls she "start[s] to tremble like a fool" and her girls "clung to [her], trembling too".⁸⁶ The first reaction she seemingly exhibits is that of physical emotion and trepidation. She can't probably move, but only tremble. In front of the Falls she "say[s] that wonder, terror and delight" overwhelmed

82 Brady, *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy*, 107.

83 Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, 297.

84 Ibid.

85 Ibid., 291.

86 Ibid., 302.

her. As her words seem to suggest a combination of emotions confuses her, both wonder with delight and terror are experienced. In fact, she “wept with a strange mixture of pleasure and of pain”.⁸⁷ Not only had she felt the strength of the Falls but also this greater might seems to exert an influence over her who is admiring the scenery. As Burke had maintained, pain is usually inflicted by a force superior which, by establishing its power, can harm. This process seems to be reflected in Trollope's reaction in front of the Falls. The Falls of Niagara, whose power exceeds Trollope's strength, can thus exert their influence over her. She wept and later she confessed that the view had “violently affected [her] in the physique to be capable of much pleasure”.⁸⁸ The Falls of Niagara are apparently depicted as a mighty natural scenery which may even harm the observer. Trollope appears physically struck and hurt by the Falls which impose all their power and authority on the viewer.



Figure VIII. Niagara Falls, New York.

In Trollope's description the elements of terror and pain are essential to establish her relationship with nature as in Burke's treatise. Trollope appears detached from the sight although she confesses to feel delight and pleasure in front of the scene. Through her visual point of view she seems to look at the Falls as a landscape which can hurt her both physically and emotionally. In fact, Nature, does not appear comforting to her eyes. On the contrary, it may appear as a violent and mighty force which could dominate over human beings. As a

⁸⁷ Ibid.,

⁸⁸ Ibid., 303

consequence, a connection between men and nature seems prevented. "Pain is always inflected by a power in some way superior" Burke states and in Trollope's description this mighty force seems to refer directly to the Falls.⁸⁹ Nonetheless, apart from terror and pain, she acknowledges that "enjoyment was very great indeed" after recovering "some degree of composure".⁹⁰ After experiencing terror and physical pain, the senses and emotions are apparently established and balanced as well as the rational activities possible again. Thanks to the newly gained composure and rationality she can possibly look at the Falls through different eyes and appreciate the scenery which no longer affected her. "Pleasure and pain" recites Burke, these words may be regarded as a direct reference to Trollope's encounter with Niagara. After experiencing them she can thus feel the scenery as delightful. However, it seems that she always alludes to a trembling pleasure, a sort of enjoyment which cannot be experienced totally but it is always blended with fear and awe. Throughout the chapter, Trollope often recalls the extreme enjoyment the view had procured her, but this joy cannot apparently be totally experienced. For instance, she observes that "the passage across the Niagara, directly in face of the Falls is one of the most delightful little voyages imaginable".⁹¹ However, a few lines before she had witnessed that "the shadowy mist" concealed "the horrors".⁹² Again, a few lines later she "shudder[s]"⁹³ and confesses the physical pain inflicted by the ceaseless observation of the Falls but then she can describe it as a "stupendous cataract".⁹⁴ Trollope spent days of both "excitement and fatigue" at the Falls of Niagara. These words seem to exemplify excellently the sort of sublime perspective through which she could observe the Falls.

Why is it so exquisitely a pleasure to stand for hours drenched in spray, stunned by the ceaseless roar, trembling from the concussion that shakes the very rock you cling to, and breathing painfully in the moist atmosphere that seems to have less of air than water in it? Yet pleasure it is, and I almost think the greatest I ever enjoyed.⁹⁵

The passage above seems to summarise Trollope's experience. A mixture of terror and pain combined with a very great joy. It does not seem possible to see the sight as totally delightful since the spectacle looks often painful to her eyes. Besides, according to Adam Hallett Niagara

89 Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry*, 59.

90 Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, 303.

91 *Ibid.*, 305.

92 *Ibid.*, 304.

93 *Ibid.*, 305.

94 *Ibid.*, 304.

95 *Ibid.*, 308.

Falls “only becomes beautiful in retrospect”.⁹⁶ As Hallet suggests, it seems that only after the narrator-character has recovered composure and has established its feelings that it can truly appreciate Niagara. This perhaps represents the distance existing between visual and narrative points of view sometimes. It seems that only after having investigated her mind and established some distance she can truly appreciate what she views, as Burke underlined by talking of distance. At first it is the awful which strikes her, not the beauty of the scene. However, this sensation of terror might have been mitigated by the fact that Trollope wrote her travelogue only when at home in England. In this way, Trollope may have recollected her impressions concerning the Falls and reconsidered them. With the passing of time, the strong emotions of terror and fear that she had felt in front of the spectacle of the Falls may have lost their initial strength and intensity. As a consequence, the scenery appeared beautiful and pleasurable only in retrospect. The narrative point of view, therefore, seems here to overwrite the visual point of view which considered the Falls as terrifying and frightening.

The portrayal of the Falls which Frances Trollope provides in her travelogue indicates that terror and pain are the two elements on which her vision is founded, and that these profoundly affected her relationship with nature. However, the description seems also to include some more attributes which for Burke were essential to excite terror and thus evoke the sublime. For instance, the scenery appears distinctly obscure. The “foam and mist”⁹⁷ rising from the Falls seem to hide the landscape which displays its “very obscurity”.⁹⁸ The sight has “a shadowy mystery hang[ing] about it which neither the eye nor even the imagination can penetrate”.⁹⁹ The Falls of Niagara appear as a mystery to the observer who may attempt to understand it rationally. Neither through the eye nor through the imagination man can possibly disclose its mystery, Trollope explains. Any attempt to comprehend the Falls or its creation seem precluded to the viewer. Thus, obscurity seems to acquire a twofold meaning for Trollope. It alludes both to its dark atmosphere and to the impossibility to comprehend the landscape. However, the dim atmosphere appears contrasted by the lightness which discloses the Falls when the sun rises. “Every moment, as the light increased, cloud after cloud rolled off, till the vast wonder was again before me”, Trollope maintains.¹⁰⁰ Burke had asserted that sublimity could be found in contrasts between lightness and darkness, and Trollope introduced a similar view. “To make an object very striking, we should make it as different as possible from the objects with which we have been immediately conversant; when therefore

96 Hallet, “America Seen,” 169.

97 Ibid., 303.

98 Ibid., 305.

99 Ibid., 303.

100 Ibid., 305.

you enter a building, you cannot pass into a greater light than you had in the open air”, Burke contends.¹⁰¹ The description of the Falls provided by Trollope offered a similar sight. Therefore, The contrasts between lightness and darkness, contribute to depict the scenery as sublime. However, contrasts not only are present in colours but also in the shape of the landscape. The scene starts up above the falls where it is full of rocks and forests and then it descends towards the flat shores and the impression conveyed is that of a “river [which] had been broken up by some volcanic force”.¹⁰² The image she evokes above is that of an extremely savage strength. This perhaps may allude to its power. On several occasions, the river is depicted as “mighty”, as a “violent transition”,¹⁰³ or a “violent impulse”.¹⁰⁴ She even narrates an episode concerning some boats which had been tragically destroyed by the power of the Falls so that “a reward of ten dollars was offered for the largest fragment of wood that should be found from either wreck”.¹⁰⁵ The idea of violent and irresistible force seems to be highlighted by Trollope, as a fundamental attribute of the sublime scene that she is staring at. Then, in terms of vastness, the landscape seems to impress for its immensity. The “massive volume”¹⁰⁶ and the “vast wonder”¹⁰⁷ probably exemplify the stupor she felt in front of the immense natural landscape. It was even “beyond its vastness”.¹⁰⁸ A spectacle which could not apparently be contained in her view but exceeded the capacity of her eyes. This perhaps provides a sense of infinity and boundless land. In fact, as Sears suggests, Niagara “had absolutely no counterpart in the Old World”, no Falls could possibly match Niagara in Europe.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, she seems to observe the landscape as a proof of God's act of creation and of its power. “God said, Let there be a cataract, and it was so”, she states.¹¹⁰ The act of creation seems here ideally exemplified by her words. While the Mississippi had been associated to destruction and annihilation, the Niagara Falls apparently recalled the moment of the divine creation of the world and elicited a sense of regeneration which did not seem possible at the Mississippi. As a consequence, Niagara turned into a “high altar”, a name which can convey religious connotations.¹¹¹ In her own words, she does not define herself as a tourist but a worshipper on her “pilgrimage to reach the shrine”.¹¹² As religious pilgrimages

101 Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry*, 73.

102 Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, 305.

103 Ibid., 306.

104 Ibid., 303.

105 Ibid., 304.

106 Ibid., 304.

107 Ibid., 299.

108 Ibid., 414.

109 Sears, *Sacred Places*, 12.

110 Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, 306.

111 Ibid., 301.

112 Ibid.

prove usually very demanding for travellers “the trip [to Niagara] was indeed a hard one at the beginning of the century”, McKinsey explains.¹¹³ The difficulties experienced during pilgrimages usually serve the worshipper as a “reward” for finally reaching the Deity. Likewise, Trollope seems to prove that she has earned the sublime scenery, there is in fact this “strong sense that one must earn the experience of sublimity by hard labour”, McKinsey reports.¹¹⁴ Trollope seems to complete her arduous journey to the site of her pilgrimage which “nature [has] placed at such distance from her worshippers on purpose to try the strength of their devotion”.¹¹⁵ By worshippers Trollope probably means all those European visitors who can appreciate the scenery through the sublime point of view. On the whole, this sense of difficulty probably aims to enhance the value of the Falls, although, thanks to new technologies it was easier for travellers to make the pilgrimage. As a consequence, she acknowledges the “sublimity” of the scene.¹¹⁶ The attributes listed and commented above seem to connect the spectacle of the Falls admired by Trollope to the concept of the sublime which Burke theorised. All the elements that are above mentioned may reflect Burke's ideas and thoughts concerning sublimity. However, in British Romanticism elements like power, vastness, contrasts of colours, dark atmosphere and the presence of God apparently became conventionally related to sublime sceneries, as aforementioned. They appear, therefore, in diverse portrayals of the Falls throughout the century and were probably interpreted as literary conventions. Nonetheless, the most striking aspect which may lead to associate Trollope's sublime point of view to Burke's conception lies in the pair of terror and pleasure. The former is conceived as the primary strength which establishes the relationship between the self and nature in sublime environments, and the latter as a sort of enjoyment which can be experienced when looking at the sublime, although it is always interspersed with awe. The sensations which Trollope affirms to perceive in front of the Falls seem to link her directly to Burke's conception of terror. The same degree of astonishment is suggested when he argues that “astonishment is the effect of the sublime in its highest degree”¹¹⁷ and that “terror is the ruling principle of the sublime”.¹¹⁸ This strong sensation of fear seems directly reflected in the description of Niagara by Trollope. Her strong sense of religious reverence and submission, joined with her awe and physical pain may attest that the relationship established with the natural scenery is not of comfort or protection. Trollope seems to detach from the landscape

113 McKinsey, *Niagara Falls*, 44.

114 Ibid.

115 Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, 301.

116 Ibid., 304.

117 Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry*, 52.

118 Ibid., 53.

and to emotionally connect only in part with it. Accordingly, I suggest that Frances Trollope seems to look at the Falls of Niagara through the visual point of view of the Burkean sublime.

Some explanations may be advanced in order to understand her point of view. Frances Trollope was a middle-class English woman who had married Thomas Trollope, an English barrister. They lived in London but then they “had moved to the fashionable house Julians” on 400 acres.¹¹⁹ There, Frances Trollope usually entertained her guests with parties, amateur theatricals and meetings, as Heineman recalls. Despite their financial troubles, they did not seem seriously concerned and “had lived above their means” for a very long time.¹²⁰ Besides her long journey to the United States she did not seem to have made any significant travel in her life before and she was probably accustomed to habits, customs, and the landscape of her privileged English life. When she came to America, the clash seemed quite strong for her. She appears to reject abruptly the reality she sees in America. Firstly, after arriving at Nashoba she decides to leave the community after a short period of time because of the hygienic conditions, the food and the educational methods. She states:

On reaching Nashoba I found it so infinitely more dreadful than I ever imagined possible that I almost immediately decided upon not suffering my children to breathe the pestilential atmosphere more than a day or two – it is impossible to give an idea of their miserable and melancholy mode of life while I was there. [...] The food was scanty and far from wholesome – no milk or butter – bad water – very little bread – and no meat but pork – in short I left them in ten days.¹²¹

Her reaction to the community seems quite severe. Probably life in the community constituted a very different background to the fashionable and comfortable life she was leading in England. Lack of proper food and health care seem to be the reasons which forced her to leave the community. Even the contact with the city of Cincinnati seemed to have caused a harsh reaction in her. Apparently, her dislike was due to a revulsion against the unattractive places of the town. As a consequence, she states: “it seems hardly fair to quarrel with a place because its staple commodity is not pretty, but I am sure I should have liked Cincinnati much better if the people had not dealt so very largely in hogs”.¹²² Both Nashoba and Cincinnati

119 Helen Heineman, “‘Starving in the Land of Plenty’: New Backgrounds to Frances Trollope’s *Domestic Manners of the Americans*,” *American Quarterly*, 24, no.5 (1972): 644, accessed February 28, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2711664>.

120 Ibid.

121 Frances Trollope to Harriet Garnett, Cincinnati, December 7, 1828 quoted in Heineman, “New Backgrounds,” 650.

122 Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, 63.

appear to elicit strong reactions on her part. Rage, disappointment, disgust, disdain may be classed among the emotions that she felt there. It seems that as both Nashoba and Cincinnati were regarded as different and uncomfortable places compared to her life in England, she reacted with harshness, strong criticism and disappointment. Likewise, the Falls of Niagara were seen as a natural phenomenon which could find no counterpart in Europe. A completely new natural wonder to which no individual could prepare either emotionally or visually. As a consequence, she reacted to the view with strong sentiments of terror. What may be regarded as new or far from her comfortable and fashionable life, apparently disturbed and unsettled her by originating a harsh response. Besides the enjoyment she could feel at the Falls, she often mentions the terror and physical pain that the view procured her. I suggest that the severe responses which Cincinnati and Nashoba elicited, seemed reflected in her response to the Falls of Niagara. For this reason, she may have interpreted the sublime in Burkean terms. The Falls of Niagara seem to elicit a strong emotion of terror and physical pain because they represented a new landscape for her, a place which she had never experienced before and from an aesthetic point of view it was very distant from the British landscape. Hence, initially the Falls of Niagara incited fear and awe and could be appreciated only retrospectively. However, it seems that she could visually see the landscape as sublime, but words could not convey her true emotions on paper. Although she can see the landscape of the Falls and interpret it visually as sublime, she affirms that “any attempt to describe the sensations produced must lead direct to nonsense”.¹²³ Therefore, she cannot describe the Falls properly. For this reason, there may be a separation between her visual and narrative point of view since she cannot apparently transfer to the reader what she sees directly. On several occasions she says that it is not to her “to attempt a description of Niagara; [she] feel[s] she has no powers for it” and “how utterly futile must every attempt be to describe the spot”.¹²⁴ Despite the evidence, she seems to do her best to assure that she has no words for the Falls. Burke's point of view on the sublime may in fact be addressed to the European natural landscape. Accordingly, it could not be adapted adequately to other sorts of landscapes. On the one hand, Trollope's portrayal of the Falls seems to be shaped by the Burkean sublime. In fact, it includes the characteristics that Burke had connected to sublime sceneries. On the other hand, she proves unable to communicate her ideas and emotions properly, it was in fact almost useless to attempt to describe the Falls when language failed. The mission seems too great for Trollope, who is apparently unable to find suitable words, therefore she turned to “unsuitable

123 Ibid., 303.

124 Ibid.

ones” in order to provide some traits of the Falls.¹²⁵

When Frances Trollope arrives at the Falls of Niagara after a long journey by stagecoach and then steamboat on the Erie Canal she was very astonished to find herself in front of a natural environment that she had presumably desired to see from a very long time. Her first reaction to the landscape was of terror and physical pain. On several occasions in fact she narrates that the Falls had struck her violently. These emotional reactions probably affected the relationship she established with nature. As a consequence, nature does not appear as a comforting or protective entity to her eyes but as violent and powerful. Therefore, Trollope seems to agree with Burke's conception of the sublime, which was founded on terror. To conclude the section, I have suggested that her proximity to Burke's thought may be due to her cultural and social background. As a middle-class British woman accustomed to live in ease and comforts, she usually reacted violently when confronted to landscapes and realities far from her fashionable and comfortable life in England. As a consequence, she felt terror and pain in front of the Falls, a new and unimaginable scenery for a European middle-class woman. Nonetheless, her British sublime point of view seems inadequate to describe the Falls and she declares her impossibility to utter any sentence which could depict them properly. Accordingly, her visual point of view appears detached from her narrative point of view.

3.2.2 Charles Dickens, Harriet Martineau: the Falls, the Self and Society

Charles Dickens visited the Falls twice in 1842 and 1868 while Harriet Martineau went there in 1834 and in 1836. Like Frances Trollope they both appeared very enthusiastic to meet the Falls for the first time. Harriet Martineau, for instance, “made a law, with the hearty agreement of the rest of the party, that no one should ask an opinion of the spectacle for twenty-four hours”.¹²⁶ She probably feared to be disappointed in front of a natural spectacle that she had apparently wished to see for a very long time. Dickens, instead, was “too near the Falls to wait patiently anywhere else” thus he “set off by the train, the same morning at nine o'clock, to Niagara”.¹²⁷ Dickens, while approaching the Falls, was “constantly straining [his] eyes in the direction where [he] knew the Falls must be”.¹²⁸ They seem to produce a sensation

125 Christopher Mulvey, *Anglo-American Landscapes: a Study of Nineteenth-Century Anglo-American Travel Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 192.

126 Martineau, *Retrospect, Volume I*, 104.

127 Dickens, *American Notes*, 242.

128 Ibid.

of impatience. He cannot wait to arrive at the Falls knowing that he was very close to them, thus he seeks it impatiently. Dickens seems to attempt to write within the conventions of the sublime, being overwhelmed by the first sight of the Falls:

I could see an immense torrent of water tearing headlong down from some great height, but had no idea of shape, or situation or anything but vague immensity. [...] I was in a manner stunned, and unable to comprehend the vastness of the scene. It was not until I came on Table Rock, and looked – Great Heaven, on what a fall of bright-green water! - that it came upon me in its full majesty.¹²⁹

The author seems to struggle to complete his sentence, as he was overwhelmed by his senses. The exclamation probably alludes to his stupor and amazement at the first sight of the Falls. Apparently, both Dickens and Martineau “[saw] something of the Romantic sublime”¹³⁰ in the Falls, as a result, they attempted to describe it within its conventions. The dim atmosphere of the scene seems to be the first detail that Dickens highlights in the scenery, “a damp mist falling; and the trees in that northern region quite bare and wintry”, he states.¹³¹ The environment conveys also a “gloomy” sensation when the observer looks at the Falls which “roll down the rock like white smoke”.¹³² The darkness, therefore, is not apparently conveyed only by the general scenery in the background but by the Falls themselves which, by descending are compared to “white smoke”.¹³³ Likewise, Harriet Martineau interprets the movement of the Falls, “like smoke from a cannon or from a replenished fire”,¹³⁴ although the light or the wind sometimes contribute to “clear the spray for an instant”.¹³⁵ The view seems therefore to be hidden behind a dim atmosphere which is both conveyed by obscurity and by the spray of the waterfall. Besides, Martineau can see the Falls while the day is darkening, when “the sun disappeared before [they] reached the ferry-house, and the panorama from the river was seen in the magnitude and majesty of twilight”.¹³⁶ The Falls of Niagara seem to strike them also for their huge dimension. No visitor can apparently have an idea of the “degree of grandeur”¹³⁷ of the Falls, explains Martineau. Dickens alludes to the “vague immensity of the Falls”.¹³⁸ The use of the adjective “vague” seemingly conveys an image of

129 Ibid., 244.

130 Hallet, “America Seen,” 178.

131 Dickens, *American Notes*, 242.

132 Ibid., 245.

133 Ibid.

134 Martineau, *Retrospect, Volume I*, 105.

135 Ibid., 107.

136 Ibid., 120.

137 Ibid., 106.

138 Dickens, *American Notes*, 243.

boundless immensity, and probably stimulates the imagination to visualise what lies beyond the natural boundaries. This perhaps conveys an idea of infinity. “The mighty rush of water” is then reported by Dickens when approaching the Falls.¹³⁹ The loud noise they produce may be due to the enormous strength and power of the water while falling. Martineau described loudness by comparing the Falls to a “hurricane” when both “wind and waters reverberated from the cavern”.¹⁴⁰ She employs the visual image of the hurricane to convey an auditory sensation. It seems that the image of the hurricane, however, can convey numerous feelings, i.e. the idea of power and strength of the water, the loudness of its crushing on the river, and its movement from top to bottom. perhaps These are all ideas that a hurricane can convey by alluding to the waterfalls. Martineau sometimes is unaware of the power of the Falls, it seems as if she could not totally comprehend its extent, “I had never before been fully aware of its power over the senses”, Martineau affirms.¹⁴¹ Dickens, conversely, transforms the idea of power into a visual and auditory image when he “felt the ground tremble underneath [his] feet”.¹⁴² Apparently, the Falls are as strong as to cause the ground to tremble. The sensations conveyed are both auditory, visual and tactile. Therefore, The reader, can feel the earth trembling under his feet and the loud noise that it produces as well as the unimaginable might of the Falls which can cause the movement. Besides, Martineau underlines the contrasts of colours which conventionally evoke a sublime image. The cloudy morning slowly “clear[s], and at [that] moment the sun lighted up the Horseshoe Fall”.¹⁴³ Generally, a great deal of colourful “apparitions [...] went and came, blushed and faded”, she asserts.¹⁴⁴ These contrasts of lightness, darkness and different colours seem to give the scene dynamism and movement. On the contrary, like Trollope, Dickens appeared to link Niagara to a God creator. At Niagara Dickens was probably experiencing a religious moment as he “was raised upward”, Mulvey comments.¹⁴⁵ Dickens explains that he felt “near to [his] creator” as it was a “heavenly promise”.¹⁴⁶ In a letter to John Forster he communicates that “it would be hard for men to stand nearer to God than he does there. From its unfathomable grave arises that tremendous ghost of spray and mist which is never laid, and has been haunting this place with the same solemnity – perhaps from the creation of the world”.¹⁴⁷ By asserting that the scenery appeared

139 Ibid.

140 Martineau, *Retrospect, Volume I*, 113.

141 Ibid., 117.

142 Dickens, *American Notes*, 243.

143 Martineau, *Retrospect, Volume I*, 106.

144 Ibid., 107.

145 Christopher Mulvey, *Anglo-American Landscapes*, 194.

146 Dickens, *American Notes*, 244.

147 Mulvey, *Anglo-American Landscapes*, 193.

to him as the day of the creation he felt, therefore, nearer to his God. Dickens, who seems to be overcome by the natural spectacle, regards the scene as the creation of the world. Like Frances Trollope, he compares the scene to the genesis in the Bible. Besides, the juxtaposition of superlatives to describe the Falls apparently conveys an idea of religious power. Only God's might could have created the natural spectacle of the Falls of Niagara, as a result visitors could feel his presence. Harriet Martineau and Charles Dickens therefore, provided some attributes of the Falls. These qualities and feelings seemed to correspond closely with those that nineteenth century travellers generally associated to Niagara. Their portrayals seem to include the elements which Burke connected to sublime landscapes. In fact, many of these qualities can be found in their descriptions such as loudness, power, contrasts, magnificence, grandeur and immensity. Nearly, all the Burkean qualities are embodied in the Niagara Falls: it is an immense and powerful waterfall, majestic, whose outlines were obscured by mist, in a seemingly infinite succession of waters which created an intermittent roar, surrounded by the wilderness. Moreover, although its colours are not dark and gloomy, the contrasts of light and darkness and the play of colours with light on the water seem dazzling. Hence, it seems possible to maintain that both Dickens and Martineau wrote of the Niagara Falls from a sublime perspective because their descriptions included all the elements which Burke had associated to sublimity and which had then become sublime conventions in British Romanticism. Nonetheless, unlike Trollope, they do not seem to associate sensations of terror and pain to these sublime qualities in the landscape. Both Dickens and Martineau do not feel fear in front of the Falls. They felt only uneasiness due to their immensity and grandeur, in fact it was a landscape to which no observer could prepare, as Mulvey had clarified. No signs of terror are recorded among their impressions, nor do Trollope's reactions of pleasure and awe seem to be reflected in Dickens's and Martineau's descriptions. They seem to underline only the pleasure and enjoyment that the landscape conveys. For Dickens it is an "enchanted ground"¹⁴⁸ which leaves him "stunned, and unable to comprehend the vastness of the scene".¹⁴⁹ Likewise, Martineau emphasises the beauty of the Falls. She feels an intense enjoyment "from the moment that [she] perceived that [they] were actually behind the cataract, and not in a mere cloud of spray" and the scene looked magnificent to her eyes.¹⁵⁰ Besides, Martineau commented on the absolute safety of the landscape that could neither harm nor scare her. She maintains that:

148 Ibid.

149 Ibid.

150 Martineau, *Retrospect, Volume I*, 113.

[their path] was sometimes a wet ledge of rock just broad enough to allow one person at a time to creep along; in other places [they] walked over heaps of fragments both slippery and unstable. If all had been dry and quiet, [she] might have thought this path above the boiling basin dangerous, and have trembled to pass it; but amid the hubbub of gusts and floods it appeared so firm a footing that [she] had no fear of slipping into the caldron.¹⁵¹

The passage above evidences that the landscape did not convey awe and that it also communicated sensations of safety and protection to her. Despite the slippery and unstable surface she had no fear to fall as the ground appeared as firm and stable, never dangerous. Without terror it seems that they could establish a closer relationship with nature. Trollope, for instance, sharing Burke's vision of the sublime, was apparently detached from the natural environment because it excited emotions of terror. Dickens and Martineau, conversely, did not feel frightened by nature and could establish a more intimate connection with it. Charles Dickens, for instance, mentions the peaceful sensation and tranquillity that it procures. He retreats to abstract concepts like "Peace. Peace of Mind, Tranquillity, calm recollections of the Dead, great thoughts of Eternal Rest and Happiness" and then he clarifies "nothing of gloom or terror".¹⁵² It seems that Niagara for him was like a comforting and protective entity. Unlike Trollope, he seems to clarify that neither fear nor awe can this natural spectacle elicit. Nature appears sublime, thanks to the characteristics listed above, and simultaneously warming and maternal. The darker and terrible side which is essential to Burke's sublime is apparently missing from the image of Niagara which Dickens introduces. As a consequence, the aspects of nature which Dickens presented through the Falls of Niagara conveys a totally different idea of sublimity. It rests on its protectiveness and comfort rather than on the terror that its immensity conveyed. Dickens is able to think, reflect, ponder and recollect his thoughts in front of the Falls, which seemingly communicate to him sentiments of relaxation and peacefulness. He can, thus, link his mind to abstract concepts such as life, death, peace and happiness. As Dickens witnesses "the strife and trouble of daily life receded from [his] view, and lessened in the distance, during the ten memorable days".¹⁵³ It seems that all the struggles and difficulties of daily life disappeared when he was in contact with the Falls of Niagara by providing him with the possibility to reflect on significant issues. Although nature established its power and may have astonished him for its immensity, vastness and its enormous power it does not appear frightening to Dickens but its enormous size seems to function as a protective

151 Ibid.

152 Dickens, *American Notes*, 244.

153 Ibid.

entity for men. Besides, as “an image of Beauty” Niagara predominates in his account of the Falls. The landscape seems to provide him with peace and comfort, “to have Niagara before me, lighted by the sun and by the moon, red in the day's decline, and grey as evening slowly fell upon it; to look upon it every day, and wake up in the night and hear its ceaseless voice: this was enough”.¹⁵⁴ This sight seems enough to deliver his mind from daily preoccupations, and the ceaseless staring at the Falls appears to give him relief. As a consequence, it seems that the conception of the sublime which Wordsworth and Byron developed in the nineteenth century was shared by Dickens to a certain extent. Their vision of a caring nature which bonds strongly with men seems present in Dickens's description. A feeling of unity links men with nature, as they were a unique entity. Thus, beauty and comfort take precedence over its terrifying aspects. According to Robert Patten, in fact, Dickens's “biding concern in not the secrets of Nature, but the ways the mind takes, interprets, and learns from the external world”.¹⁵⁵ Men, in Dickens's interpretation of Niagara, can apparently learn from nature since it allows them to rest. This perhaps delivers their mind and provide them with the occasion to reflect and think of significant and abstract issues. Men can improve themselves in contact with nature and elevate their minds, as he is probably implying in *American Notes*. Raymond Williams, argued that “the physical world is never in Dickens unconnected with men”.¹⁵⁶ Therefore, The Niagara Falls, are apparently deeply connected to men, it is nature that provides them with the comfort and protection necessary to detach their minds from the external world. Through nature men can probably improve and are led to a physical as well as a mental regeneration.

Nonetheless, some reasons may explain and interpret his relationship with nature. Dickens travelled to America in 1842. By this time, the Romantic conception of sublime had evolved radically from Burke's theories, which experienced a decrease of influence by mid-century with the advent of new influential ideas concerning the sublime. Dickens, wrote *American Notes* twenty years later than Trollope's *Domestic Manners*, when a new vision of the sublime emerged. As seen in the previous section, the major representative of this new mode of feeling with nature was Wordsworth, and Dickens's vision of nature closely resembled his concept of sublime. Furthermore, according to Elizabeth McKinsey towards the mid of the nineteenth century “as people began to conquer the Falls – bridging it, harnessing

154 Ibid., 245.

155 Robert L. Patten, “A Surprising Transformation': Dickens and the Hearth,” in *Nature and the Victorian Imagination*, ed. U.C. Knoepfelmacher and G.B. Tennyson (London: University of California Press, 1977), 156.

156 Raymond Williams, *The Country and The City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 161.

its water power, defying it with towers and stunts – its actual terror receded inevitably”.¹⁵⁷ This is perhaps a reason behind the lack of terror in Dickens's description of the Falls. When he visits and describes the Falls of Niagara, a great deal of visitors have already attempted the deed. A lot of descriptions have already appeared and portrayed the frightening power of the Falls. These had acknowledged the dark and terrible aspect of the Falls which may have become a “literary convention”.¹⁵⁸ Conventions, in fact, “discipline the writer to remain within some bounds of commonly shared experience and meaning, insuring that the intended message is communicable”.¹⁵⁹ Through the use of conventions writers could make definite descriptions of the Falls, which became increasingly common. In this way, readers could interpret the environment quite conventionally through the use of recurrent formulas. Landscape, in fact, seems to be framed within a set of fixed attributes. These various features of the cataract had been reported and measured a great deal of times and all appeared repeatedly in the nineteenth-century literature, as McKinsey argues.¹⁶⁰ It seems, therefore, that towards the mid of the nineteenth century it became conventional to portray the Falls as frightening, although their terror had probably lost power. The Falls, had in fact been domesticated, in McKinsey's opinion. A great deal of travellers by narrating of its power as well as all the technological improvements like the Erie Canal, which made travel to the Falls easier, had apparently reduced its terror and “provide[d] more orderly control”.¹⁶¹ Charles Dickens's portrayal of Niagara combined the attributes which were traditionally linked to the sublime, although it lacked the terror on which Burke's conception of sublime was founded. According to Burke, men felt terror in front of the immense spectacles of nature like the Alps, storms, deserts and stormy oceans. The Niagara Falls may be included among these sceneries for their terrifying vast dimensions. Wordsworth promoted a more intimate and comfortable image of nature, which seemed to emerge from Dickens's description of the Falls. On the other hand, the absence of the dark and terrible aspects of nature may be explained by alluding to the domestication of the Falls. According to McKinsey in fact a great deal of descriptions concerning Niagara Falls written throughout the nineteenth century and the technological improvements had probably contributed to control the landscape of Niagara. As a consequence, it probably did not truly excite terror but towards the mid of the century, terror probably became a literary convention to refer to the sublime.

Likewise, Harriet Martineau presented an image of Niagara which was conventionally

157 McKinsey, *Niagara Falls*, 166.

158 Ibid., 53.

159 Ibid.

160 Ibid., 44.

161 Ibid., 53.

linked to the sublime, as explained previously in this section. However, as in Dickens's description, the element of terror seems to lack from her portrayal of the waterfall. "The beauty was far more impressive to [her] than the grandeur", she attests.¹⁶² The landscape for her was "pleasant" and "magnificent"¹⁶³ as well as it procured "excitement".¹⁶⁴ Apart from narrating episodes of danger related to the Falls, it appears that there were no signs of terror in her description. On the contrary, despite the dangers that the landscape posed to visitors, she attests that she "had no fear of slipping into the caldron".¹⁶⁵ Martineau acknowledges the dangers of Niagara Falls. For instance, she mentions a bird swallowed by the Falls: she "saw it driving and fluttering about a minute or two in the spray, when it flew directly into the sheet, and was swallowed up".¹⁶⁶ The waterfall, thus, represented a threat for human beings and for animals. Wind was so strong that her "hat blew off" although the guide "put his upon [his] head, and that was carried away in like manner".¹⁶⁷ Then, when some rocks prevented her passage she managed to go beyond the rocks and cross the tract. She states: "I made the guide press himself back against the rock, and crossed between him and the caldron, and easily gained my object".¹⁶⁸ Despite the presence of the rock, she seems to overcome the obstacle without difficulties. The dangerous Falls seem to obstruct the passage of men and make their visit troublesome. However, Martineau appears to defeat these problems without much effort. The dangers do not seem to threaten her since she never alludes to the emotions of fear or terror, even in case of difficulty. On the contrary, she easily solves all the problems and overcomes any obstacle that the landscape may pose. By examining her travelogue, therefore, it can be observed that while Burke promoted a double reaction to the sublime landscape based on both pleasure and terror, she founded her response to the Niagara Falls on the sole pleasure and the beauty of the landscape while terror was apparently absent. Therefore, her point of view seems to be like Dickens's closer to the idea of sublime promoted by Wordsworth. In fact, as in Dickens's travelogue, Nature appeared more comforting and protective towards men than in the Burkean conception of the sublime. Nonetheless, it seems that in order to achieve a full appreciation of the landscape Martineau needs to interpret it under a sociological perspective. Apparently, she cannot examine the scenery without relating it to human activity, politics or social issues but for Martineau the life of society seems

162 Martineau, *Retrospect, Volume I*, 106.

163 *Ibid.*, 110.

164 *Ibid.*, 107.

165 *Ibid.*, 113.

166 *Ibid.*, 116.

167 *Ibid.*, 115.

168 *Ibid.*

impossible to detach from the landscape. It thus appears to become a symbol of the life of society itself. For instance, one morning she found an old man admiring the Falls:

[he] was an American. Being on a journey, he had walked from Queenstown to see the falls. He quietly observed that he was ashamed to think there had been wars near such a place, and that he hoped the English and Americans were grown wiser now, and would not think of fighting any more. This came in echo of [her] thought. [She] had been secretly wishing that all the enemies in the world could be brought together on [that] rock; they could not but love as brethren. ¹⁶⁹

As Martineau explains, she meets an old American on the site of the Falls. Their encounter seems to turn into a general reflection on the solidarity between men. The place inspires the hope that divisions between human beings may be overcome and force men to remember that the wars fought on that site would never happen again. This site seems to mitigate violence among people and nations and therefore it promotes a protective image of nature. Men and nature are regarded as a unique whole. Through nature men can understand their past errors, whereas nature bears remembrance of the past and inspires a more hopeful future. She then moves to discuss the origins of the place. She was seemingly “meditating, as [they] were, that [they] were sitting on the spot where the falls were pouring down their flood ages before Babylon was founded or the Greek Mythology had arisen out of the elements of universal conviction, it was not surprising that [they] had no thoughts to spare for the weather”.¹⁷⁰ The place seems to bear the traces of the ancient civilizations which once inhabited the world. The thought that the most important civilizations were born after the Falls brought her to meditate. It seems that history and the memory of ancient societies are means for Martineau to know the place and become aware of it. The knowledge of wars as well as of past civilizations is apparently needed in order to comprehend and totally enjoy the landscape. Thus, her role of the sociologist probably emerges even when observing and analysing the environment of the Niagara Falls. It seems that she cannot truly separate the landscape from the human activity, but that they complement each other. Apparently, she cannot focus her interest on the aesthetic aspects of the scenery, but her primary concern seems to be always about social behaviours and human activities. While approaching the Falls she stops at Queenstown, there she recalls the deeds of a man named Sir Isaac Brock who “fell at the battle of Queenstown, in October, 1812, near the basement of [that] monument. It [was] 145 feet high, and, being built on a

169 Ibid., 108.

170 Ibid., 111.

pretty steep hill, command[ed] a fine view”.¹⁷¹ The place seems to be better understood and gain in beauty through the knowledge of its history. Accordingly, it can be maintained that her analysis does not rest only on aesthetic grounds but it further examines the memory of places. She then compares the spray from the Falls to “smoke from a cannon or from a replenished fire”.¹⁷² Again, “every successive pulse of the cataract was like a cannon shot a few yards off, so that there was no standing it long”.¹⁷³ Significantly, the water of the Falls seems to acquire an historical meaning. It is connected to the smoke of cannons during the war and to the awareness that wars were probably fought at the site of Niagara. She terminates her chapter with another image which combines landscape and memory. After “dawdling” about the Falls, Martineau and her friends return to the hotel but:

Bad new awaited [them] at home; news of Mr. Van Buren's casting vote in favour of the third reading of the Gag Bill, and of a fresh breaking out of the dreadful Creek war in Georgia; but now that that atrocious bill has long been thrown out, and the Creek war ended [...] this day of delicious dawdling stands out bright enough to be worthy of the scene and of out human life.¹⁷⁴

She closes her chapter on the Niagara Falls with this political and historical reflection. By knowing that the Gag Bill has been repealed and that the Creek War has ended, Martineau can finally see Niagara as “worthy”. She seems to imply that a better understanding of the landscape may be acquired by “actively opposing these political developments”.¹⁷⁵ Apparently, she cannot look at the landscape with a simple aesthetic interest in sublimity, but landscape seems inextricably connected to human history and social memory. Therefore, she looks at landscape mainly with an interest in social behaviour. As the examples provided may evidence, landscape is often connected to the memory of political events or past civilizations. Hence, I suggest that, in aesthetic terms, the scene presents a combination of elements which were conventionally linked to sublime sceneries and the relationship between human beings and nature may bring to affirm that her visual point of view was closer to a Wordsworthian conception of the sublime. However, I argue that, an aesthetic analysis was not her primary interest. It was instead “for reform, and not for the natural beauty that first awakened her to

171 Ibid., 110.

172 Ibid., 106.

173 Ibid., 119.

174 Ibid., 120.

175 Stacy Lee Spencer, “Women Writers and the Literary Journey, 1832-1844” (PhD thesis, University of Michigan, USA, 1991), 139.

intense feelings”.¹⁷⁶ She emerges as a sociologist in the examination of the landscape of the Falls of Niagara. If initially her point of view was struck by the immensity and sublime appearance of the Falls retrospectively from her narrative point of view she probably could not totally enjoy the natural spectacle without reading the landscape from a sociological perspective. It seems that two different points of view can be detected in her description of the Falls. A first visual point of view which enabled her to see the Falls directly and a second point of view, to which I refer as narrative point of view, which enabled her to write about the Falls. These two perspectives may coincide, or be separated by time and space. Besides, they are not in chronological order but writers could write before seeing or seeing before writing. As for Martineau, it is probable that she saw the Falls for the first time before writing her impressions and her description of them. In the first Volume of *Retrospect of Western Travel*, in fact, she contends that she “expected to be disappointed in the first sight of the falls, and did not relish the idea of being questioned on the first day as to [her] 'impressions’”.¹⁷⁷ Besides, a lot of time seems to have passed between the moment she saw the Falls, in “October 1834”¹⁷⁸ and “June 1836”¹⁷⁹ and the moment she wrote and published her travelogue, in 1838. This temporal and spatial separation may have brought her to re-elaborate her first impressions of the Niagara Falls. Thus, at first sight she probably noticed the awe-inspiring vastness and immensity of them. These emotions may have been mitigated by her second visit, when she knew in advance what to expect from the scenery. Then, one year later Martineau transformed her visual perspective of the Falls into a written description to be inserted in her travelogue. William Seat, in fact, explains that while she was writing *Retrospect of Western Travel* she kept a diary to record her daily progress, “on August 31, 1837 she finished the first volume”.¹⁸⁰ Thus, about one year elapsed before she wrote her travel book. With the passing of time, the emotions of terror and fear may have lost its original power. This allowed her narrative point of view to focus solely on some sociological considerations on the landscape, given that society was her primary interest. Finally, Martineau attests her reluctance to describe the scenery. As Frances Trollope before her, they all seemed to experience a problem of language at Niagara. Dickens, conversely, does not apparently maintain that he cannot write and describe the scene properly, but he affirms that he “could see an immense torrent of water tearing headlong down from some great height, but had no idea of shape, or situation, or anything but vague immensity [...] [he] was in a manner

176 Ibid.

177 Martineau, *Retrospect, Volume, I*, 104.

178 Ibid.

179 Ibid.

180 William R. Seat “Harriet Martineau in America” (PhD thesis, Indiana University, USA, 1957), 283.

stunned, and unable to comprehend the vastness of the scene”.¹⁸¹ He seems overwhelmed by the power and the immensity of the Falls, and this perhaps prevents him from describing the Falls. On the contrary, Martineau maintained that “it was not [her] intention to describe what [she] saw at Niagara so much as to relate what [she] did. To offer an idea of Niagara by writing of hues and dimensions [was] much like representing the kingdom of Heaven by images of jasper and topazes”.¹⁸² While Dickens and Trollope seem to state their impossibility to describe the landscape, Martineau does not rely on a general inability to write, but she apparently states explicitly that it is not her intention. Thus, this decision rests on her choice. As Adam Hallet argues, authors at Niagara “lack[ed] of a new vocabulary for the landscape of the New World”.¹⁸³ It has been often mentioned that the natural scenery of the Falls did not probably have a counterpart in Europe, as a consequence, no sceneries could prepare them to meet this natural site both visually and linguistically. It can be suggested therefore, that both Dickens and Trollope regarded the landscape of the Falls through a European point of view of the sublime which could not be apparently adapted to the new landscape. They were “rather trying to impose point of view upon it”.¹⁸⁴ By applying European aesthetic conventions to the American natural landscape, they probably could not provide a portrayal of the Falls which expressed properly the emotions they felt in front of the sight. European sublime sceneries, in fact, appeared very distant from American sublime landscapes. Martineau, on the contrary, seems to assert convincingly that her choice does not depend on her impossibility, but on a personal decision. Her primary intention is not to describe the landscape aesthetically, but only to provide a portrayal of the Falls which included its social and historical memory. Frances Trollope focuses on “the physical, the structural, and the visible” in her *Domestic Manners*, in fact, as the title suggests, her interest is in *Domestic Manners*.¹⁸⁵ It does not mean that she saw feelings as unimportant to society but she was probably “a better observer of form than of feeling” as Spencer contends.¹⁸⁶ Thus, she seems strongly attracted to aesthetic beauty in people and landscapes. For Martineau, on the contrary, a psychological and sociological analysis seemed more appealing, more than an aesthetic examination. Her interest in man as a social being brought her to avoid purely aesthetic observations and to look at the landscape of Niagara through her available means. As a consequence, she focuses primarily on the social memory that the spectacle evoked.

181 Dickens, *American Notes*, 243.

182 Martineau, *Retrospect, Volume I*, 104.

183 Hallet, “America Seen,” 179.

184 *Ibid.*, 175.

185 Spencer, “Women Writers,” 171.

186 *Ibid.*

While Dickens's and Martineau's responses offered an initial description of the Falls which included all the elements that Burke had connected to sublime landscapes, they both lacked the element of terror in the relationship between men and nature. On the other hand, Harriet Martineau introduced a similar image of the Falls devoid of any terror or fear on the part of the viewer, even dangers were apparently controlled and easily overcome by men. However, it seems that she could achieve a total appreciation of the landscape only by studying the human behaviours connected to it. Accordingly, the scenery of Niagara starts to evoke the memory of past wars, past colonisations and to recall current political events. Only through the study of society she seems to deem the landscape worthy of observation. I suggest therefore that Dickens's point of view was strongly affected by the time he visited the Falls as well as by his need to investigate to which extent men could learn from nature. Martineau, on the contrary, seems to emerge through her role of sociologist. Landscape, therefore, appears as a means to study society and investigate social behaviours in order to bring a different and new perspective on the Niagara Falls.

Conclusion

My dissertation has focused on travel writing during the nineteenth century by examining issues of point of view in the travelogues of Frances Trollope, Harriet Martineau and Charles Dickens. These travellers went to the United States from the beginning to the mid of the nineteenth century. They went with different motivations and approached America with different points of view which affected the ways they saw this country and how they related their opinions and ideas concerning the New World in their travel books. Therefore, I have suggested that there is not a single idea of America but many different Americas, one for each visitor. This thesis, has hinged upon the premise that point of view is both a visual and a narrative concept. More specifically, I have argued that their points of view has been influenced by different factors such as the different modes of travel, European aesthetic ideas of nature, and their personal interests and identity. The interaction among these factors seems to have determined their points of view. This conclusion aims to summarise the main points I have examined concerning their impacts on point of view for British travellers and to establish the links between their points of view and their narratives. The landscapes taken into consideration are those of the Mississippi River and of the Niagara Falls, which are regarded as the two most representative landscapes of America. The first aspect examined is European aesthetic ideas of nature and of beauty in nature. British travellers generally tended to apply European aesthetic canons in order to interpret and comprehend the new environment. As Christopher Mulvey points out, the Falls of Niagara “could not easily be anticipated in Europe; there were few ways of preparing emotion and language in advance and travellers felt their deficiencies strongly”.¹ Although Mulvey alludes to the Falls, this sentence can be easily related to the Mississippi scenery as well. These landscapes, in fact, probably impressed the British travellers for their dimensions and strength since there were no counterparts in Europe to match their characteristics. As a consequence, it seems that they employed European aesthetic ideas in order to comprehend these unknown and unimaginable landscapes. In part they attempted to see America through a European point of view, albeit these points of view were largely European and could not always be adapted to the American scene, but they attempted to impose point of view upon it. For instance, as far as the Mississippi River is

¹ Christopher Mulvey, “Ecriture and Landscape: British writing on post-revolutionary America,” in *Views of American Landscapes*, ed. Mick Gidley and Robert Lawson-Peebles (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 106.

concerned, I suggest that both Frances Trollope and Charles Dickens looked at the river through the point of view of Burkean beautiful. Edmund Burke provided a list of the qualities connected to beautiful landscapes, which were really widespread in England. His ideas may have affected their perspective on the Mississippi River. However, their point of view failed to comprehend the Mississippi landscape since their descriptions seemingly lacked all the qualities attached to the beautiful. Although Trollope and Dickens researched the qualities of the Beautiful in the Mississippi scenery, they defined it as “a world in ruins”,² a “waking nightmare”,³ as well as a chaotic nature which recalls a sort of “primordial reversion”.⁴ Instead of expanding and developing nature here seems to collapse. They cannot probably see this natural setting as beautiful but only as a world “turned upside down”.⁵ Therefore, the category of the beautiful fails to apply to the landscape and the Mississippi River seems to be left without the right aesthetic code of interpretation, it is neither beautiful nor sublime. Of the three, Martineau is the only who can look at the scenery and state that “it offered the most beautiful view”.⁶ What Trollope and Dickens had regarded as an underworld she could observe as a beautiful landscape, though it lacked the attributes which, according to Burke, were connected to beauty. No smoothness, no bright colours but muddy and gloomy shades and gigantic dimensions are probably the most prominent characteristics that she notices in the landscape. Besides, for Martineau, the Mississippi was regarded as an emblem of transformation and growth, “it was like being set back to the days of creation”⁷ she maintained by alluding to the mud and seeds left by the water as deposits to create “ever-increasing islands”.⁸ Thus, she could perceive it as pleasing and take delight in the view. In the light of this, I suggest that Harriet Martineau was not probably interested in joining any specific aesthetic canon, her description of the Mississippi does not aim to conform to any particular set of aesthetic qualities. Indeed, her primary interest seems to be society. Thus, aesthetic reasons intermingle with personal interests and with a question of identity to determine her point of view. Her principal interests were human behaviours and social

2 Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (London: Whittaker, Treacher, & Co., 1832), 6.

3 Charles Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation* (Adelaide: The University of Adelaide Library, 2014), 208.

4 Rodney Stenning Edgecombe, “Topographic Disaffection in Dickens' *American Notes* and *Martin Chuzzlewit*,” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 93, no.1 (1994): 41, accessed March 5, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27710940>.

5 Thomas Ruys Smith, “The River now Began to bear upon our Imaginations: Margaret Hall, Frances Trollope, Harriet Martineau, and the Problem of the Antebellum Mississippi,” *Révue Française d'études Américaines* 94, (2003/4): 10, accessed March 4, 2015, <http://www.cairn.info/revue-francaise-d-etudes-americaines-2003-4-page-20.htm>.

6 Harriet Martineau, *Retrospect of Western Travel, Volume II* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1838), 10.

7 *Ibid.*, 23.

8 Smith, “The River now Began to bear upon our Imaginations,” 14.

activities. Her sociological method was founded on scientific observation and analysis of society. On the Mississippi River, in fact, she did not spend much effort or time to study the Mississippi banks but her attention was mostly attracted by the crowd of people gathered on the boat. Martineau did not provide judgements but she limited herself to observe and examine the society on board and its behaviours almost scientifically. The landscape, therefore, seems to be an instrument for her examination of society. Likewise, when in front of the Falls of Niagara she needs to interpret them under a sociological perspective in order to achieve full appreciation of the landscape. Although she noticed and reported the sublime characteristics of the scenery and demonstrated to be hugely impressed by its size and strength, Martineau could not apparently examine the scenery without relating it to human activities and social issues. Society is, therefore, impossible to detach from the landscape. Indeed it represents the life of society itself since it bears the traces of the ancient civilisations which once inhabited the world. Thus, she could not look at the landscape with a merely aesthetic interest in its sublime aspect but it seems inextricably connected to human history and social memory. At the end of her account she informs the reader that “it is not [her] intention to describe what [she] saw at Niagara”.⁹ It was not probably her purpose and interest to provide an aesthetic description of the Falls, indeed it was her choice to avoid it and concentrate on a sociological analysis. Therefore, the aesthetic interpretation combines with her sociologist's eye in order to determine her point of view on the Falls.

Another factor which played a significant role in determining their point of view was the steamboat, the means through which they observed the Mississippi River. A study of point of view on the river could not be accomplished without considering the means of transportation from which they could observe the Mississippi. Nineteenth century technological advancements such as steam power revolutionised river travel and trade. The mechanisation of travel led to shorter and faster journeys and the possibility for travellers to have a more limited experience of the landscape. As the cabins of the boats became more comfortable, nature outside may have become less interesting. Travellers could amuse themselves with books, chatting or observing the other passengers. Thus, steamboat travel usually separated passengers from the outside landscape. Unlike Harriet Martineau, Frances Trollope and Charles Dickens did not seem to experience this sort of detachment. While on the steamboat, Dickens directed his observation to examine the differences among the social classes present on the boat. In fact, he was well-known for his role as social commentator who

⁹ Harriet Martineau, *Retrospect of Western Travel, Volume I* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1838), 104.

“criticise[d] economic, social, and moral abuses in the Victorian era”.¹⁰ Thanks to his deep social commitment and his awareness of social injustices he tended to study the differences existing among the social classes on board. As a result, he noticed a terribly boring and flat monotony and uniformity. He seemed to be irritated by the tedious endlessly repeated rhythm of life on the steamboat and he depicted the Americans as a mass of dull, deadly and flat individuals. Likewise, Frances Trollope assessed the Americans on board the steamboat negatively. As the focus of her travelogue relied on external manners, namely the *Domestic Manners*, she harshly criticised the Americans by comparing them to pigs, animals usually regarded as dirty and uncivilised. On this basis, I suggest that both Trollope and Dickens did not seem interested in bonding with their travelling companions who were regarded as rude and boring individuals. They did not only tend to criticise but they expressed harsh judgements against the Americans. Accordingly, they directed their gaze outward and turned their point of view on the Mississippi River. As for Martineau, steamboat travel affected her point of view on the river significantly. Due to the presence of people on board and her interest in social relationships and social behaviours she mainly concentrated her gaze inwards. Steamboat travel and her identity seem to have played a significant part in determining her point of view on the Mississippi River. It is, therefore, possible to maintain that steamboat travel affected their point of view to different extents. On the one hand, Martineau effectively experienced a separation from the landscape thanks to the steamboat and her interest in society and social behaviours. On the other hand, Trollope and Dickens did not seem to experience this sort of detachment. This is perhaps due to their severe assessment of the Americans on board. Trollope instead of finding refined and civilised citizens regarded them as rude pigs while Dickens could not encounter a well organised society but only a uniform and monotonous group. As a consequence, they directed their point of view towards the landscape outside the ship. Thus, it seems that their points of view on the Mississippi River were determined by the constant interaction between their personal interests, British aesthetic canons of Beauty and the fact that they observed the river from a steamboat.

I then examined Niagara Falls as a case of study of a sublime environment. Niagara was at scale unprecedented for European visitors. The concept of sublime had become widespread and known in England with the treatise by Edmund Burke *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* which brought it into prominence in the eighteenth century but then the sublime underwent a very complex and rich

10 Andrzej Diniejko, “Charles Dickens as Social Commentator and Critic,” Victorian Web, accessed May 5, 2015, <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/diniejko.html>.

development. A great deal of writers in fact attempted to theorise it and to formulate its main attributes by conferring to the sublime different shades of meaning. As a matter of fact, when the travellers approached the Falls they embraced different sublime perspectives. For instance, Frances Trollope, seems to agree with the Burkean sublime which was founded on terror and pain. Her proximity to Burke's theory may be due to her social background. As a middle-class English woman she was accustomed to live a privileged and comfortable life in a very huge mansion in the British countryside with her husband and their children. Evidence seems to manifest that she tended to react violently when confronted to new realities and environments, as in the examples of Nashoba and Cincinnati. It seems probable, therefore, that the landscape of the Falls could excite terror in her. As for Dickens and Martineau, they did not seemingly conceive nature as frightening according to their sublime point of view. Nature was, indeed, comforting and protective, though it presented the characteristics of the sublime. As a consequence, their point of view seems to approach Wordsworth's conception of sublime. Moreover, towards the mid of the nineteenth century, a great deal of travellers had visited Niagara and written about its scenery as well as technological improvements and tourism facilities had probably domesticated the scenery. This may suggest that men towards the mid of the century had learned how to control the wild landscape of the Falls. As a consequence, it did not excite terror or frighten them any longer. Dickens in nature could relax, reflect and recollect his thoughts by gaining a sentiment of peacefulness. It seems that all the struggles of daily life disappeared when in contact with the Falls of Niagara by providing him with the possibility to reflect on significant issues. It appears, therefore, that an image of beauty and peace predominates in his account. However, the absence of the dark and terrible aspects of nature in Dickens may be due to a twofold reason. Firstly, when Dickens visited America in 1842 Burke's theories may have experienced a decrease of popularity and influence. Besides, Dickens' research in the 1840's seems concerned with investigating the relationship between men and nature. More specifically, whether men could learn from nature, a topic he had profoundly developed in his Christmas Books. Harriet Martineau introduced a similar image of the Falls devoid of any terror or fear, even dangers were apparently controlled and easily overcome by men. However, the fact that she read the landscape as sublime or which perspective of the sublime she adopted seems to be trifling. Indeed, it should be noted that she needed to study the social relationships, behaviours and history connected to it in order to appreciate the landscape. She devoted in fact a great deal of attention to portray her own emotions and to realise her social analysis. Accordingly, the scenery at Niagara starts to evoke memory of past wars, past colonisations and to recall current political events. Only through

the study of society she seems to deem the landscape worthy of observation. While the Mississippi River could not be classified as aesthetically beautiful, the travellers could look at the Niagara Falls as sublime. In the Falls' landscape, in fact, all the sublime attributes were reflected, although the European sublime could represent only in part the landscape of the Falls. Apart from Martineau who attested that it was not her purpose to describe the Falls, Frances Trollope and Charles Dickens apparently came with a European point of view and attempted to adapt the landscape to it. When presented with the features of the Falls, their viewpoint failed and it left them overwhelmed and in silence. As soon as the travellers approached the sublime landscape of Niagara, personal interests and questions of identity seem to have played once again a fundamental part. Besides, these factors had a different impact on Trollope, Martineau and Dickens. Sometimes these encouraged the travellers to connect with the landscape, for instance, when Trollope, by assessing the Americans negatively, turned her gaze outside the steamboat, other times these encouraged the travellers to separate from the natural environment, Martineau's constant attention and need to examine society and its behaviours, for instance, may be considered as an example of detachment from the landscape. Generally speaking, this thesis has noted that point of view is a complex concept which is usually determined by the interaction among several factors, those taken into consideration here are the European aesthetic canons of the beautiful and the sublime, steamboat travel, and the travellers' personal interests as well as their identity. In fact, they were not only travellers but fathers, mothers, social critics, sociologists and commentators. These identities influenced significantly their point of view. When approaching the American landscape they tended to look at America through a European viewpoint. It may be due to their need to feel more comfortable and protected in front of an environment which, for strength and dimensions was very dissimilar to the European scenery. Besides, they may have felt powerless, puzzled and unable to comprehend it. As a consequence, they attempted to know the Mississippi and the Niagara Falls through concepts and ideas that they had imported from the Old World. This perhaps could make them feel at ease even in the immense and majestic American land.

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