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Madam Knight on the Road. A Journal from Colonial America

Abstract

The Journal of Madam Knight was written in 1704 by Sarah Kemble Knight. The paper presents the historical background, i.e. the legal and social situation of women in colonial North America and an early history of Boston. The Journal itself is analyzed with a special attention paid to Madam Knight's attitude to otherness revealed in her writing, and the harsh conditions a female traveler was exposed to. Lacanian notions of the Real and das Ding are employed as tools for the analysis of specific fragments of The Journal, in which she describes her fear of the wilderness. Finally, the lack of expected change in the traveler at the end of her journey is commented on.

Keywords

Journal, Colonial North America, Female writer, Lacan

The pages which survived to be published after Sarah Kemble Knight's death can be quickly read, their number is not impressive. However, we can learn from a direct source what it meant to travel at the beginning of the 18th century in colonial North America. Moreover, this is an account of a journey written by a woman, which makes it especially interesting if we consider the historical and cultural background—it was still the Puritan worldview that prevailed in New England. As it can be read in the introduction to the journal, “The writer was a lady of good family in respectable social and church standing, who was much too busy with the affairs of daily life to concern herself unduly with matters of state or religion” (Winship 1920, iii).

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Women in Colonial America—New England

Sarah Kemble Knight wrote her *Journal* at the beginning of the 18th century. Nevertheless, it would be appropriate to begin from the 17th century, when she was born and raised. We can start by quoting Laurel Thatcher Ulrich: “Some of the disabilities of colonial women can be attributed to sexism, others to sex. The colonial world, like our own, struggled to reconcile the ways in which women and men are different with the ways in which they are the same. Yet one thing which surely separated the premodern past from the nineteenth century was a tolerance for contradiction. Female life was defined in a series of discrete duties rather than by a self-consistent and all-embracing ‘sphere.’ For this reason, unitary definitions of status are especially misleading in any description of the lives of colonial women” (1991, 27).

Historians who analyze the 17th-century documents can observe that most white women’s roles in society were prominently those of wife and mother, and “a woman’s physical domain generally encompassed the house and garden” (Smith 2008, 2). Since we are considering the Puritan period, it is important to remember specific characteristics expected from women, namely “being pious, modest, and helpful” (Smith 2008, 2). From a legal point of view, the situation of women in the colonies was the same as in England, “Under English law, a married woman was a *feme covert*, and her money and property belonged to her husband. In this patriarchal society, wives’ identities were ‘covered’ by their husbands” (Smith 2008, 7). This coverage can be explained in the following way: “Under coverture, married women or *femes covert* had no separate legal identity” (Smith 2008, 27).

To understand some of the comments Madam Knight made in her *Journal*, we can recall that there were quite strict laws about what people could or could not wear in Massachusetts. “A law passed in 1651 mandated that only the wealthy could wear such items as expensive lace, gold or silver buttons, silk hoods, and high leather boots” (Smith 2008, 73). The different dress codes existed for gender and class, and “People expected to look at someone and instantly establish whether the person was a man or a woman, a master or a servant” (Smith 2008, 75).

The duties undertaken by Madam Knight at the beginning of the 18th century would be understood earlier as well since women were even expected to leave the realm of the domestic and help their husbands. As we can read in *Women’s Roles in Seventeenth-Century America*, “Wives routinely acted in their husbands’ places when their husbands were away. [...] In most in-

stances when a wife acted on her husband's behalf, it went unnoticed because it was so commonplace" (Smith 2008, 76). However, the rules which defined what it meant to be a good wife were still evident: it was expected from women to look after home and family first of all (Smith 2008).

Sarah Kemble Knight was able to read and write, but learning those skills was not an obvious requirement for women in the 17th century: "Although the Massachusetts law required that children be taught to read, it did not mention writing until the subsequent version passed in 1703" (Smith 2008, 151). Moreover, only boys were usually taught to write since it was considered "a job-related skill" (Smith 2008, 151). However, "Wealthier women, of course, were more likely both to own more books and to be better educated. Women from wealthy families received writing instruction from private writing masters [...]" (Smith 2008, 151).

When the lives of white women in the 18th century are studied, they are relatively similar to those in the previous century: "Eighteenth-century Anglo-Americans expected wives to obey and submit to their husbands" (Smith 2011, 1). From a legal point of view, their situation did not change. In the 18th century, it appears that women could earn money, and it was their additional occupation to all the domestic labor. In the second half of this century, women were shopkeepers, managed the property, and worked as "brewmasters, bakers, soap makers, saddlers, and milliners, among other occupations" (Smith 2011, 60). Sarah Kemble Knight could be included in this group of women who were able to provide some financial support for their households themselves.

Another element that can be taken into consideration with a view to the specificity of the *Journal* is travel. A historian writes that "many well-to-do women found limits on how, where, and when they traveled" (Smith 2011, 86). It should also be remembered that "Elite women rarely traveled alone. For a woman of any class to travel without male protection or the clear indication that she was the wife or daughter of a gentleman connoted that she was not respectable or, worse, that she was sexually available" (Smith 2011, 86). As long as their accommodation was concerned, women who belonged to the upper-class would stay in homes of people representing their social level "rather than risk encountering objectionable strangers in an inn or tavern" (Smith 2011, 86).

When we speak about women in colonial America, the traditional gender roles were brought to New England by the colonists themselves, and since the Puritans organized their social structure according to the patriarchal rules, women were required to be submissive to men in all worldly matters.

Boston of Madam Knight's Times

To introduce the town from which the journey began, the town which shaped the character of Madam Knight, we can use a quote: "In 1630, the year that Boston was founded, Governor Winthrop and the other leaders of the Massachusetts Bay Company's fleet of migrants looked for a likely place to settle among the islands and peninsulas in Massachusetts Bay" (Peterson 2019, 27). In 1632, the General Court recognized the town as the most convenient place to organize public meetings for colonists, and that was how Boston became the capital of the colony (Peterson 2019). Private donations enabled the building of a townhouse, and in consequence, the sessions organized by the General Court could be held there. Boston became a city-state, which meant that "Boston was merely one town among many in Massachusetts, a part of the whole, and yet it represented the whole as well" (Peterson 2019, 30).

Peterson observes that just after a dozen years, "Boston began to acquire its defining characteristics when the chaos of the first decade of puritan migration to the New World gave way to new patterns of settlement, trade, power, and authority" (2019, 30). Moreover, by the middle of the 1640s, the town became "the center of Atlantic Puritanism, a distinctive trading node and rising commercial power within the developing Atlantic economy, and the metropolis of the sprawling, quasi-independent composite state (Parliament, in a fit of absentmindedness, called it a "kingdom") of New England" (Peterson 2019, 31).

Boston developed into a relatively diverse place, and at Boston's South End, wealthier merchants had impressive homes on large plots of land, while the streets of the North End were described as packed. Moreover, "Boston Common [...] became a popular place for an evening promenade" ("John Winthrop's 17th century Boston"). The town became the place that could be called a paradise for shoppers with its astounding number of 500 shops, where imported goods could be bought. Later, another element distinguished Boston from other colonial cities since "The presence of printing presses and bookstores made it a very intellectual city" ("John Winthrop's 17th century Boston").

The following quote may well characterize the place where Madam Knight lived and which she used as a yardstick wherever she went "One contemporary observer noted that 'a Gentleman from London would almost think of himself at home at Boston when he observes the Numbers of people, their Houses, their Furniture, their Tables, their Dress and Conversation,

which perhaps is as splendid and showy as that of the most considerable Tradesmen in London.' 'The buildings in Boston are in general good,' said a visiting clergyman in 1759. 'The streets are open and spacious, and well-paved; the whole has much the air of some of our best country towns in England'" ("John Winthrop's 17th century Boston").

Sarah Kemble Knight

There is a certain amount of biographical information offered to the readers of *The Journal* about its author. According to the Introductory Note in the version published in 1920, "Sarah Kemble Knight was thirty-eight years old when she made the fearsome journey along the route now followed by the 'Shore Line' trains" (Winship 1920, iv). If a modern reader sees the word "fearsome" before even reading her account of the journey, some expectations occur, and some curiosity is induced. We might start asking why she decided to undertake such a task and what made her travel independently. While reading about her life, it could be observed that it was not much different from the lives of many women in New England. Her father was a shopkeeper, and when they moved to Boston, she married "the American agent for London" (Winship 1920, iv). Therefore she belonged to the middle class. Her husband's occupation involved traveling abroad, and consequently, she was left alone in Boston, which in her case did not mean just staying at home and waiting. It can be assumed that she obtained some education beyond the one typical for women of that period since she could teach children from the neighborhood to write, wrote letters for others, copied court records, or even drafted legal documents (Winship 1920). Thus, she was skilled enough in writing to leave an account of her journey for future generations.

She lived in the center of the residential part of Boston, and the house must have been big enough to run a shop there and to offer residence to "a relative by marriage" and "two or three others who it is fair to conjure were paying guests" (Winship 1920, v). One of the household members became the reason for her journey since Madam Knight, in the absence of her husband, undertook a task that would be fulfilled by the man of the house in other circumstances. The young widow, whose late husband (Caleb Trowbridge of New Haven) was Madam Knight's cousin, needed assistance in the settlement of the estate. Consequently, "Madam Knight started for New Haven [...] and when Caleb's father [...] decided to keep her waiting until he had been to New York, she likewise decided to go there with him" (Winship 1920, vi).

During her journey, she wrote about her observations and everyday events. It is impossible to decide whether she thought about publishing her diary, but it would be more probable to assume that she prepared her story for those back in Boston to entertain her relatives or guests with witty observations from the places outside Boston. This need for the stories, or even desire, can be recognized in her journal; therefore, it would be no surprise if she wished to amaze her acquaintances back home.

The *Journal* was published in 1825, so more than a hundred years after her journey, and it was given to Theodore Dwight by “the relative who administered the estate of the diarist’s daughter” (Winship 1920, vii). In the introduction to this first edition, Dwight commented that “Over that tract of the country where she traveled about a fortnight, on horseback, under the direction of a hired guide, with frequent risks of life and limb, and sometimes without food or shelter for many miles, we proceed at our ease, without exposure and almost without fatigue, in a day and a half, through a well peopled land, supplied with good stagecoaches and public house, or the still greater luxuries of the elegant steamboat which daily traverse our water” (1920, xiv). There are now more than twenty daily flights from Boston to New York, and it takes approximately one and a half hours to reach the destination.

The Journal

Mary McAleer Balkun calls *The Journal* “a travel narrative, one in which a privileged narrator moves through a landscape perceived as ‘foreign’ [...]” (1998, 9) in which we can read about “alien ‘others’ with whom” the narrator “comes in contact” (1998, 9). *The Journal* begins with information for the reader about the exact time it all began, so we know it was Monday, October 2, 1704, and Madam Knight even mentions the time: “about three o’clock in the afternoon” (1920, 1). Such details make the reader consider *The Journal* from its first page as a real account of what happened, and they would expect such information in a realistic story told from a first-hand experience. She would not be able to find the route. That is why she needed to be assisted by men who knew the way. Anywhere outside Boston was a “foreign” land for her, and she would not be able to manage to reach her destination without someone who had traveled there before. We should not consider it a weakness since, acknowledging the specificity of the area she had to cross, she would need a guide.

Let us imagine now this lady on horseback riding into the dark and listening to the stories told by her guide. We can learn from her journal that the ability to tell stories was highly appreciated by her or even desired. Scott

Michaelson emphasized the role the stories played in her journal, namely: "The stories that Knight is told on her journey, and that she admires [...] serve her by situating her in terms of class" (1994, 39). He also added that "Knight's stories always come at the expense of someone [...]" and they "are better described as 'abuses'" (Michaelson 1994, 41). This description is how he differentiated between traditional Puritan writing, which offered lessons to be used, the texts that "were structured according to their 'uses'" and *The Journal* (Michaelson 1994, 41).

The reality turned into a tale seemed to be of great importance for her. However, describing her reactions in *The Journal*, Knight did not try to pretend that this journey was an easy experience for her since she shared with the reader her fears: "When we had Ridd about an how'r, wee come into a thick swamp, wch. By Reason of a great fogg, very much startled mee, it being now very Dark" (Knight 1920, 4-5). To see a woman at night on the road must have been quite unusual, as we can guess from the reaction of her hostess at the place they were to stay for the night: "Law for me—what in the world brings You here at this time a night?—I never see a woman on the Rode so Dreadfull late, in all the days of my versall life. Who are you? Where are You going?" (Knight 1920, 6). Furthermore, she kept on asking questions, which was quite rude from the point of view of Madam Knight; she would instead expect to be welcome and asked to sit down after the journey. As one of the researchers suggested, Madam Knight might have been taken for a prostitute (Stern 1997). It must have been a total novelty to see a female representative of the middle class traveling independently. It could even be observed that traveling could be a form of breaking specific rules. Nevertheless, it would be an exaggeration to call Madam Knight a rebel, but she might have been viewed as an eccentric then. However, it was already mentioned that we should instead treat her journey as taking on a male role (doing this on behalf of her husband) rather than acting like a rebellious female of colonial America.

This account is how Mary McAleer Balkun clarifies her role, and she based her explanation on the argumentation of Laurel Thatcher Ulrich and his book *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women of Northern New England*. She uses the term "deputy-husband" to describe the position a wife takes when necessary. Balkun informs us that "This is an expression that Laurel Thatcher Ulrich takes from the writing of a seventeenth-century Englishman who explained that 'a woman, in her husband's absence, is wife and deputy-husband, which makes her double the files of her diligence. At his return, he finds all things so well he wonders to see himself at home

when he was abroad” (1998, 14). A further comment on her behavior could also be borrowed from Ulrich’s book: “A *deputy husband* shouldered male duties. These might be of the most menial sort—for a weaver’s wife, winding quills for the loom; for a farmer’s wife, planting corn—but they could also expand to include some responsibility for the external affairs of the family. A deputy was not just a helper but at least potentially a surrogate” (1991, 27-28).

On this first night, we can follow the author of the journal as she is climbing to “the bedsted” and to “y^e wretched bed that lay on it; on w^{ch} having Stretch [her] tired Limbs, and lay’d [her] head on a Sad-colour’d pillow, [she] began to think on the transactions of y^e past day” (Knight 1920, 7). Such a description let us imagine the place—its lack of comfort or even clean bed-clothes, but we can appreciate the choice of Madam Knight’s words.

She continued to travel with the Post, and her first comment we get is on the food she was served. This time, the reader can realize that undertaking such a journey was a real challenge for someone used to a different type of life in Boston. Using her imagination to render best the specificity of the food she was served, she offered a pretty vivid description to readers. Even when reading it after all those centuries, we cannot help smirking: “y^e woman bro’t in a Twisted thing like a cable, but something whiter; and laying it on the bord, tugg’d for life to bring it into a capacity to spread; w^{ch} having wth great pains accomplished, she serv’d in a dish of Pork and Cabage, I suppose the remains of Dinner. The suase was of a deep Purple, w^{ch} I tho’t was boil’d in her dye Kettle [...] I, being hungry, gott a little down; but my stomach was soon cloy’d” (Knight 1920, 8-9).

Julia Stern comments on the same fragment from *The Journal* as follows “This repulsive meal functions as a microcosm for Knight’s vertiginous vision of the unfamiliar classificatory structures organizing social life outside of Boston” (1997, 7). Further descriptions of meals she was offered at various places also bare this specific mark of an abject. Julia Kristeva, introducing the concept of an abject, that is, something that is neither a subject nor an object, suggested that when we are overwhelmed by disgust, this mixture of affects and thoughts does not have a specific object. The repulsive, the abject, is not just *un ob-jet* in front of a subject to which we give a name or imagine it. Kristeva claimed that being disgusted with food was probably the most basic and primordial form of repulsion (2007). For Madam Knight, it seems a compulsory behavior to write detailed descriptions of anything considered disgusting to her (Stern 1997).

Another difficult moment for her was to replace the horse for a canoe, which “was ver small and shallow, so that when we were in she seem’d redy to take water, which greatly terrified mee” (Knight 1920, 9). The way she writes about this event changed something relatively trivial into an unusual experience when she reached for metaphors from the Bible (Lott’s wife). Water does not seem to be her element since the mention of the river which needed to be crossed made her worry for her safety: “no thoughts but those of the dang’ros River could entertain my Imagination, and they were as formidable as varios, still Tormenting me with blackest Ideas of my Approaching fate—Sometimes seeing my self drowning” (Knight 1920, 11).

Her imagination is quite vivid since when it got dark and only moonlight helped them see things, she wrote that “Imperfect Reflections” of the starry sky “rendered every Object formidable. Each lifeless Trunk, with its shatter’d Limbs, appear’d an Armed Enymie; and every little stump like a Ravenous devourer. Nor could I so much as discern my Guide, when at any distance, which added to the terror” (Knight 1920, 11). When she speaks about a formidable object, we could direct our attention to the notions of the Real and *das Ding*, which Jacques Lacan employed.

The Real is a concept that appeared in Jacques Lacan’s theory in 1953, simultaneously with the concepts of the symbolic and imaginary. It would not be easy to give a concise definition of the Real because, like other concepts introduced, changed, and abandoned by Jacques Lacan, it is not unequivocal. Nor is it a concept that all those interested in Lacan’s theory interpret in the same way. Here, it will be helpful to identify the Real with the trauma and the cause of fear or anxiety. Such a choice would correspond to the specific reaction of Madam Knight to the objects she could barely see in the dark.

Considering the limitations imposed by the framework of this paper, let us try to introduce the concept or category of the Real, and the easiest way to do this is to refer to a dictionary, namely the *International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*. However, even this short definition reveals the complexity of the notion itself and the changes the concept underwent over the years. Martine Lerude writes that Lacan introduced the concept/category of the Real in the lecture “Le symbolique, l’imaginaire et le réel” (1953) and linked it with the Imaginary and the Symbolic. Lacan wrote in *Écrits* (1966) that what does not come out in the symbolic order appears in the real one. Whereas in a 1978 seminar, *The Four Basic Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, the Real is explained by Lacan using the concepts of compulsion and repetition. The failure of symbolization immortalizes repetition caused by real traumas. There is a new

way of defining the Real by Lacan; namely, the Real becomes what always returns to the same place. Lacan conceptualized the traumatic experience as the Real, which cannot be symbolized (Lerude 2005). “The terror” experienced by Madame Knight reveals her fear for the unknown, for reality which seems entirely alien for the Bostonian who is not accustomed to the wilderness, which appears incomprehensible for her, therefore traumatizing.

It would be interesting to observe how this Lacanian concept is further interpreted. In the text “The Lacanian Real: Television,” Žižek writes that usually, the Lacanian “Real” is presented as a hard core that resists symbolization and dialectization, sticking to its place and always returning to that place. However, this is just one side of the Real that dominates the 1950s texts. The Real is a brutal pre-symbolic reality that always returns to its place. Then we can talk about the Symbolic order that gives structure to our perception of reality, and finally, the Imaginary order, which includes illusory beings that are not characterized by a real existence but are only a structural effect (Žižek 2008). This early understanding of the Real presented by Lacan in the 1950s seems to correspond with the specific response to the wild and alien reality evidenced in the above-cited fragment from *The Journal*.

However, we should be aware that selecting just one interpretation of the Real to refer to the experiences of Madam Knight is a self-imposed limitation. In the preface to *For They Know Not What They Do*, Žižek proposes that there are three different Reals. So there is “real Real,” that is, the terrifying Thing, the original object; “symbolic Real” being the signifier reduced to a meaningless pattern; “imaginative Real” or unfathomable “something” due to which the sublime can be perceived in an ordinary object (Žižek 2002). Referring to the first understanding of the Real, Duane Rousselle, in the dictionary explanation of the terms used by Slavoj Žižek, reminds us that *das Ding* goes beyond what is the signified element, so it must have its place in the Real, and its most elementary feature is to withdraw from symbolization (Rousselle 2014).

Sarah Kemble Knight saw “an Armed Enymi” in a tree trunk or “a Ravenous devourer” in a stump, thus perceiving seemingly harmless objects as a threat. Objects viewed in this way correspond to the notion of *das Ding*, therefore becoming the embodiments of the alien and terrifying entities. Jacques Lacan rediscovered the concept of *das Ding*, which Sigmund Freud used in *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (*Entwurf einer Psychologie*). Freud calls the perception part that cannot be assimilated “the thing” (*das Ding*). The Thing, or *das Ding*, is something that cannot be named and cannot be

confronted with because we are devoid of any associations that would make it possible to understand. *Das Ding* remains outside the subject, or instead belongs to the external, to the alien and frightening. Freud argues that the “I” encounters both the known and the foreign when forming judgment (Freud 1895).

The Thing emerging from the realm of Real (something that cannot be expressed verbally) imagined by Madame Knight was quite primordial since we can read that “Now Returned my distressed apprehensions of the place where I was: the dolesome woods, my Company next to none, Going I knew not whither, and encompassed wth Terrifying darkness” (1920, 13). *Das Ding* represents the frightening environment she encountered on her way, and as a town dweller she could not reach for any associations which would facilitate understanding of her surroundings. Lacan directs his readers to the Freudian text to find out that “the whole progress of the subject is then oriented around the *Ding* as *Fremde*, strange and even hostile on occasion, or in any case the first outside” (2008, 62). *Das Ding* is also for Lacan the Other. He claims that “in reality *das Ding* has to be posited as exterior, as the prehistoric Other that it is impossible to forget—the Other whose primacy of position Freud affirms in the form of something *entfremdet*, something strange to me, although it is at the heart of me, something that on the level of the unconscious only a representation can represent” (Lacan 2008, 87-88). Madam Knight would be exposed to many things that were strange and foreign to her during the journey, as evidenced in her *Journal*.

Soon, the reader is offered another detailed description of her route to the place where she would spend the night, and this time it seems that the place satisfied her requirements. Alas, she would soon find something to complain about since the voices she could hear from another room were too disturbing for her. She could not fall asleep, so the discussion on the origin of the name Narragast is reported in her journal. After a long ride, the place she stayed to find some rest gave her another opportunity to indulge in complaining. It is worth noting how she uses the name of the host (“mr. Devils”) to ridicule the whole situation: “However, like the rest of Deluded souls that post to y^e Infernal den, Wee made all possible speed to this Devil’s habitation” (Knight 1920, 20). Here her need for being told a good story, which was a prominent object of her desire, is revealed: “We desired entertainm’t, but could hardly get a word out of ‘um” (Knight 1920, 21). As Scott Michaelson also observed, she uses the word ‘entertainment’ “to describe conversation—interesting and amusing tales, good stories [...] she uses her sense of good conversation or entertainment in order to distinguish herself from others, in a way increasingly prevalent in the eighteenth-century colonies” (1994, 37).

Every place she visits is offered a detailed characteristic as if she considered her *Journal* to be a guidebook for other travelers (“I thought it proper to warn poor Travailers to endeavor to Avoid falling into circumstances like ours” (Knight 1920, 21)). Dissatisfaction appears to be the primary emotion experienced when she comments on her accommodation; thus, it is easy to conclude that the places were not designed for female middle-class travelers. She seems to be an exception among the usual guests. Her continuous complaining might be annoying for contemporary readers since it could be concluded that she judged reality only based on her quite limited experience. Anything that was not in agreement with her expectations was pitiful.

Moreover, her attitude to otherness, or the other, which emerges from the pages of her journal, can also be unacceptable nowadays (at least for the author of this paper). Indeed, we need to consider the historical moment; however, her attitude was not ubiquitous. In *The Journal*, we can refer to the comments referring to “Indians” and enslaved Black people. The most striking gesture would be depriving them of humanity, and when dehumanized, they could be treated as a lesser category of beings: “I had scarce done thinking when an Indian-like Animal come to the door” (Knight 1920, 25). Another comment with vocabulary indicating her attitude to otherness is evidenced by the following quote: “into the dish goes the black hoof as freely as the white hand” (Knight 1920, 38). This account is the manner she comments on farmers being “too Indulgent [...] to their slaves: suffering too great familiarity from them, permitting y^m to sit at Table and eat with them” (Knight 1920, 38). The limbs of an enslaved person cannot be named in the same manner as the ones of a white farmer—an enslaved person is another animal on the farm, according to the lexicon of Madam Knight. As was observed by Julia Stern, “The trope of animality becomes most overt when Knight details the race relations at work in Connecticut. Though she has not observed these dealings at first hand, Knight nevertheless views such exchanges as perversely indulgent” (1997, 8). This researcher offers even a harsher comment on Madam Knight’s behavior when writing: “An early-American white supremacist, Knight consistently portrays African Americans and Native Americans as dehumanized. She objects to the Connecticut practice of submitting disputes between masters and slaves to legal arbitration. Rational beings should have no business with animals except under conditions of domination” (Stern 1997, 8).

New Haven, where she finally arrives, seems like another country for her (“Inform’d myself of the manners and customs of the place” (Knight 1920, 33)), and if we looked at the map of North America today, it is just 248 km

away from Boston. Knowing no other places, she compares everything to Boston as if her hometown should be considered the only yardstick to be used: "They are Govern'd by the same Laws as wee in Boston, (or little differ-ing,) thr'out this whole Colony of Connecticut, [...] and many of them good, Sociable people, and I hope Religious too: but a little too much Independent in their principlalls" (Knight 1920, 33-34). She pays great attention to the specificity of merchandise and describes the procedure in detail. She comments on the clothes women wear and the "Chief Red Letter day," an election day.

She continued her journey to New York, and she probably would not be herself if she could not find something to criticize, and this time it was the food they were offered before they could take a ferry. However, Fairfield had for her "good entertainment, and Lodg'd," but the readers are not offered any details why she was finally satisfied. We may assume a good story was told since she was hungry for words, as could be observed earlier.

If anyone reached this moment in her journal, they would no longer be surprised that we are offered information about numerous flaws she was able to find at her further accommodation on the next page. It could be even a bit tedious now, and it would be even possible to "hear" her carping continually. Her high expectations also prove that she did not realize or try to imagine what such a journey would involve. Finally, in New York, she "received great Civilities" from a merchant she was recommended to, and we might be a bit astounded by her comment that, although the merchant and his wife were deaf, she enjoyed the conversation. They were "very agreeable in their Conversation, Diverting me with pleasant stories of their knowledge in Britain from whence they both come" (Knight 1920, 49). It might be assumed that the conversation was not about exchanging ideas but rather meant being entertained by listening to accounts of events foreign to her.

New York turned out to be a place she found agreeable since she "made a great many acquaintances amongst the good women of the town, who courteously invited [her] to their houses and generously entertained [her]" (Knight 1920, 52). Moreover, Madam Knight takes on a role of a tourist guide when describing the architecture of the town, again comparing it to the one you can find in her hometown ("The Buildings Brick Generaly, very stately and high, though not altogether like ours in Boston" (1920, 52)). The readers are offered a detailed description of the interiors; therefore, they would be able to compare them with those in Boston houses. She uses the phrases "as ours have" or "like ours," and it seems that this is the only way she can comment on something new she sees. She needs to compare it to something

familiar to her. Since New York is more diverse than Boston when it comes to its inhabitants, she has an opportunity to comment on the English and the Dutch—their dress, habits, and diversions.

Going back from New York to New Haven in winter was a challenge, and she again experienced some hardship, “being overtaken by a great storm of wind and snow” (Knight 1920, 57). Moreover, they were forced to find somewhere to spend the night, which was somewhat problematic (and, of course, the accommodation was quite inconvenient). New Rochell, where she managed to get the next day, was described by her as “a very pretty place,” which appears to be a pleasant change in the style of her commentary. But still, she soon had to stay at the place where she “could get nothing there but poor entertainment, and the Impertinant Bable of one of the worst of men, among many others of which our Host made one” (Knight 1920, 61-62). Nevertheless, her need to explore would be revealed again in Fairfield, which she treated as a foreign land and “employed in enquiring concerning the Town and manners of the people, &c” (Knight 1920, 63).

However, it could be noticed that wherever she goes, she employs binary oppositions to comment on reality. Michaelson even claims that is it how she “constructs a sense of self” with the use of “the familiar oppositions city/country, educated/ignorant, and well-to-do/poor [...], and she links all these to her favorite oppositional structure—the one she prefers using for positioning herself above others—that of conversant/silent” (1994, 38). Michaelson reaches for Bourdieu’s *Symbolic Power* to reflect on such behavior as “a primitive attempt to dominate others through ‘symbolic power’—to legitimate economic or political inequalities by trying to define the so-called ‘truth’ of the social world” (1994, 38). To the above-listed oppositions one more could be added; namely, human/animal. This “symbolic power” of dividing people into the realms of animality and humanity was already observed in her entries in *The Journal*.

She stayed in New Haven longer than she probably wished since she had to wait for all legal procedures concerning the distribution of the estate to be completed. Her journey back to Boston was not smooth as she again faced some dangers (“my horse dropt down under me as Dead” (Knight 1920, 70)), but she got safe home on March 3. Her return was appreciated in a manner enjoyable for her since she could write about her “Kind relations and friends flocking in to welcome [her] and hear the story of [her] transactions and travails” (Knight 1920, 72) and stories would be the greatest asset for her.

No New Self

Our contemporary expectations that traveling should induce some changes in the traveler and result in an emergence of a new self do not seem to be adequate when discussing the case of Madam Knight. If we reach for travel narratives written more recently, reading about a physical and psychological journey through a wilderness (literal and metaphorical) to a renewed sense of self is considered conventional. Let us mention Cheryl Strayed's *Wild. From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail* (2012) is a clear example of such a narrative. To comment on this transition, Jono Lineen, in "Travel writing: Always has always will be," reaches for the notion of liminality, which is introduced by Arnold van Gennep and further developed by Victor Turner. This concept is employed to refer to the changes a traveler may undergo in the same manner as the person who undergoes the ritual "passes through a realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state [...]" (Turner 1979, 235). According to Turner, "Liminality may be partly described as a stage of reflection" (240), and as such, the idea seems to be applicable for describing the state of a person who left their domestic sphere to experience otherness.

When we read about Madam Knight's observations in *The Journal*, it is hard to find any evidence that she would accept otherness or be ready to alter (her)self. She appears to be a woman shaped so rigidly by her circumstances (her class, economical position, to name just two) that adopting a new stance after encountering other attitudes (for example, those toward enslaved people) might be beyond her capabilities. As it is observed by Susan Clair Imbarrato "Throughout her account, Knight makes clear her genteel status and high standards, as she describes her accommodations and encounters" (2006, 66). The person whose hometown and the rules according to which Bostonians functioned were best would not look for improvement elsewhere. What is more, Julia A. Stern draws our attention to one particular moment when Madam Knight described her sickness: "That a woman obsessed with her refinement should feel vindicated in the very throes of bodily disorder is itself a fascinating commentary on the way in which Knight contemplates differences of class. Vomit becomes a righteous conduit through which the elite woman traveler may register her disgust over distasteful service by an inferior" (1997, 9-10). If we keep in mind that *The Journal* was written after she came back home, this clinging to her status and the feeling of superiority may be striking for a modern reader. Imbarrato observes that "As both director and narrator of her travel account, Knight attempted to control and reinforce class structures" (2006, 97).

Balkun comments that "Knight's stance throughout her journey is necessarily that of an outsider or stranger" (1998, 12). It might be suggested that this "necessity" was self-imposed since there appears to be no intention on her part to try to understand or accept otherness. She can only reject it as if she rejected the possibility of bringing a new self from her journey. In this case, "travel confirms Knight's previously revealed identity as a superior type of American self in its New England incarnation, and second, through travel, she realizes her potential and emerges as a fitting model for that self" (Balkun 1998, 20). There seems to be no room here for becoming a different self.

When introducing *The Journal* in the collection of female travel writing, Sargent Bush, Jr. argued that "Arduous travel had long had a figural significance in the minds of New Englanders. For many years, even before John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* made the idea popular, Puritans had used the metaphor of travel as a way of picturing their spiritual journey from corruption to salvation. Many in New England in the first decade of the eighteenth century continued this literary, spiritual tradition" (1990, 71). It would be difficult to apply the everyday use of journey as a metaphor for a spiritual change and an individual life as a journey to either salvation or damnation employed by Puritan writers to analyze her *Journal*. It might be assumed that even if she had been affected by Puritanism as an inhabitant of Boston, the time when the journey took place was characterized by growing secularization.

Travel narratives were relatively common in Madame Knight's time; however, a female perspective of such an experience offered to a more extensive public was less available. Even her journal was published more than a hundred years later, and it is not the only example of a text which depicts life in early North America written by a female (*A True History of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (1682); *Some Account of the Fore Part of the Life of Elizabeth Ashbridge* (1774); *The Travel Diary of Elizabeth House Trist: Philadelphia to Natchez, 1783-84* (1990) can be mentioned here).

We can just read the words she left for us, and there is no evidence in the text itself, no passages which would inform the reader about a change in her attitude, a new way of addressing some issues after coming back home. Therefore, there are only suppositions or expectations at our disposal, which would not be enough to support an argument for the emergence of a new self at the end of Madam Knight's journey. Nevertheless, if one tried to argue that the gender of the writer is the reason for the absence of the change mentioned above in the traveler, it would be a cumbersome process. It could be suggested that the social standing and aspirations inhibited such an alteration rather than the fact that it was a woman who authored *The Journal*.

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