

## The Rialto Bridge and the Charles Bridge in 19th-Century women's travelogues

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### Abstract

Perhaps the most famous bridge-inspired 19th-century literary text is William Wordsworth's 1803 sonnet "Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802", written about a month after his sister Dorothy produced her Westminster Bridge *Grasmere Journal* entry. The two pieces are not unusual: at the turn of the 19th century, travellers seldom failed to take note of the bridges they did or did not cross. Dorothy Wordsworth's *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland* (1803), like Hester Lynch Piozzi's *Observations and Reflections Made in the Course of a Journey through France, Italy and Germany* (1789) or Ann Radcliffe's *Journey Made in the Summer of 1794* (1795) before, feature regular references to bridge crossing, with little beyond mere mentions of bridges and their more or less precise locations.

One of the first English women's travelogues to use bridge images, particularly those of the Rialto in Venice and the Charles in Prague, as springboards to more profound reflection is Mary Shelley's *Rambles in Germany and Italy, in 1840, 1842, and 1843* (1844). To give a broader scope to my examination of women's travel writing for bridge imagery and its uses, I will not limit it to a discussion of English authors only: my selected texts will also include 19th-century Polish women's travel writings, such as Maria Wirtemberska's 1816 travelogue, titled *Certain Events, Thoughts and Feelings Experienced Abroad* [*Niektóre zdarzenia, myśli i uczucia doznane za granicą*], not published until 1978, or Łucja Rautenstrauchowa's 1847 *In and Beyond the Alps* [*W Alpach i za Alpami*], which also feature the Rialto and Charles bridges.