

A Thesis Presented to
The Faculty of Alfred University

Publishing Practicum
A Woman's Place in the World:
An Anthology of Victorian Travel Narratives

by

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When I decided to do another publishing project for my senior thesis, I knew that I wanted to republish authors whose voices were excluded from the white male literary canon of the nineteenth century. This line of thought led me to the genre of women's travel narratives from Victorian England, and from there I narrowed my focus further to include women who traveled to non-English-speaking countries outside of Europe. I wanted to make the genre of early women's travel writing more easily accessible while also calling attention to the ways in which marginalized groups interacted. No easily-accessible, thorough anthologies of Victorian women's travel narratives existed before this project. Even before terms like "feminism" or "intersectionality" existed as we know them today, their roots are visible in narratives like the ones I included in my anthology.

The process of creating this volume included several steps: finding and selecting out-of-copyright texts, researching each author and writing biographies, researching historical context to write a general introduction and create a timeline, collating each text to check for grammatical, optical character recognition (OCR), or formatting issues, placing the texts into InDesign to format them, and designing the book's cover. While I worked on my own project this semester, I also acted as Whitlock Publishing's Associate Editor under Dr. Grove, helping students in the Publishing Practicum class with their work. The added workload of this role challenged my time-management skills but had the benefit of making sure I was up to par with my InDesign skills and editing abilities.

All of the texts I chose for this anthology were available as public domain materials through Project Gutenberg or available as facsimiles on Google Books, which meant that I did not have to fully re-type any of them; rather, they just required a thorough reading to ensure that they were free of errors or formatting issues that would be exacerbated once imported into

InDesign. I downloaded all of them as Microsoft Word documents to do basic editing work before switching to InDesign.

Only two of the texts, *A White Woman in Central Africa* by Helen Caddick and *Eastern Life, Present and Past* by Harriet Martineau, required full collating. Both available only as facsimiles, I could download them as plain text to Word, which stripped them of all paragraph breaks but included all running headers, page numbers, and extraneous marks on the page in the text body. To return them to their original formatting, I used a split screen to read the plain text version and the facsimile version side-by-side so I could re-insert paragraph breaks where they belonged, remove running headers and page numbers embedded in the text, and check for any OCR mistakes. During this process, I discovered that *Eastern Life* in its entirety would comprise around six hundred pages, so I decided to include only Part I in my anthology to keep the page count under the 1,200-page maximum. In total, these two texts required about five hundred pages' worth of collating.

In addition to creating a general introduction and timeline to preface the anthology, I also researched the authors to write the biographies that precede each text. This step felt necessary because, although the authors share the common factors of writing as women from Victorian England, their class, experience with formal education, political views, and reasons for travel varied so greatly that a general introduction could not do justice to each of their unique life stories.

After proofreading all six texts, I imported them into InDesign one at a time to finish formatting them. The file as a whole was so large that any function influencing the entire document would crash InDesign for several minutes before implementing the change, so I worked with each file separately in the early stages of editing to standardize font and font size,

line spacing, title page formats, paragraph indentations, and new chapter headings. During this stage, I also did the first round of adjusting tracking (space between each letter) and horizontal letter scale to remove all widows and orphans (single lines at the top or bottom of a page, and single words on a new line at the bottom of a paragraph) to make the text look clean and unfragmented. Two of the works, *A White Woman in Central Africa* by Helen Caddick and *Across Patagonia* by Lady Florence Dixie, included photos and illustrations respectively, so I scanned and included those images together with their original descriptions in this volume.

Creating this anthology called upon the interdisciplinary nature of the English major, wherein we learn not only about literature and writing but, as Dr. Mayberry puts it, how to think. Looking at these authors through the lens of Victorian worldviews encourages conversation about the ways in which writers interact with the societal perspectives of their time and with each other.

The idea that men, not women, should be the people exploring the world was frequently enforced by fiction as well as nonfiction writers. As a genre, travel fiction has also been historically male-dominated, reinforcing the idea of separately gendered spheres even in literature. We remember *The Odyssey*, Huckleberry Finn's adventures down the Mississippi, and *Around the World in Eighty Days*, all supporting the male worldview that the outside world belongs to them in its entirety; a woman's destiny is to tend to her household and wait for her husband's return. Her place in the world is a limited one, confined on all fronts by history, literature, and societal pressure.

The ideal Victorian woman was passive, silent, and domestic. We see this with the Victorian era marking the height of the corset's popularity in women's fashion, the perfect garment for restricting women's activity and lung capacity. Poems like Tennyson's 1832 "The

Lady of Shalott” and the 1852 Millais painting of Ophelia drowning romanticize the figure of the female body, whose beauty is enhanced by her reduction to an object—the Lady of Shalott is allowed to exist peacefully as long as she goes about domestic tasks in her castle, but she is punished when she tries to leave that sphere.

The authors anthologized in this volume exist in stark opposition to the literary, artistic, and fashion conventions of their time. They overcame their lack of access to the same education their male peers enjoyed and escaped the domestic sphere to encounter and interact with different parts of the world. Each preceded by an author biography, these six works were all written by British women in the late nineteenth century. Each author travels to non-English speaking countries outside of Europe, many of which were colonized by England and under some degree of European political control. The interaction of these women travelers, an oppressed group in Western society, with other oppressed groups of people, provides the basis for a relationship made complicated through having in common a lower social standing than white men, while maintaining the barrier formed by British exceptionalism and white supremacy. Viewing history through the lens of a marginalized writer allows the reader to recognize common threads of privilege, oppression, and gendered perspectives.

The Western world tends to glorify these authors as heroines. In celebrating their courage and ability to break gender norms, history often ignores their complicity in dehumanizing other cultures and people of color. They were early champions of white feminism, excluding voices from women of color from their narratives or filtering them to further a political stance. Some of them recognized the damage colonization had on the cultures they visited, but even in praising the native people’s art, societal structure, or way of life, they could not avoid revealing their casual racism and faith in British exceptionalism.

Some of these authors were more progressive than others, but they share the common denominator of being impossible to classify under one description. Harriet Martineau, who lost her hearing at an early age, wrote for disabled peoples' healthcare and rights, helped to preserve ancient Egyptian culture, and was an abolitionist—but she also argued for treating Egyptian people like children and described the governor of Thebes as “apish.” Mary Kingsley, who pioneered the practice of anthropological fieldwork, lived with cannibalistic tribes of people and defended some of their ways of life, also used the n-word in her work and claimed that “I did not do anything without the assistance of the superior sex.” Helen Caddick wrote frankly about the damage British colonization did to African people and their environment, but lacked the resources and drive to make change.

These authors' destinations, non-English-speaking countries outside of Europe, were considered dangerous because of their “otherness.” Some of these women traveled purely for the sake of seeing new places, some for mission trips, and some for anthropological or sociological work, but they share the culpability of upholding and, in some cases, even strengthening the dichotomy between white Europeans and everyone else. Most of the authors anthologized here sought only to observe and report, not to elicit change or impose their beliefs on others, but even so their lenses of experience are colored by racism.

Although the term did not exist until more recently, the idea of the white feminist savior is rooted in narratives like some of the ones anthologized here wherein Western women, taught to pity women of other cultures and lifestyles, feel compelled to “save” them without any conversation with or input from the people they impose their help on. These authors report on countries saturated with European colonialists and missionaries, commenting on the “civilizing” process that seemed, even to them, to be doing more harm than good. In her narrative *A White*

Woman in Central Africa, Helen Caddick writes, “We English are an odd mixture, we send out large sums for missions, and then permit and encourage such a show in London as ‘Savage Africa,’ which must thoroughly demoralise the natives, and undo years of patient work.”

This almost-playful dismissal of English cruelty and dehumanization masquerading under the guise of religion as “an odd mixture” points to a larger and ongoing issue in Western societies—in recognizing marginalized people’s struggles while simultaneously viewing them as subhuman, Caddick’s concern for their welfare never develops beyond vague written apprehension. Caddick’s passive reaction is likely suppressed, at least in part, because of her political powerlessness at home as a woman. She had the freedom to travel alone across the world, but upon returning to the bounds of English society, she would have been confined to a comparatively domestic sphere.

The work these women did—building hospitals, preserving Egyptian culture, providing literary representation of strong women traveling, identifying new plants and animals—was inarguably important work, but the circumstances that made their work necessary was nearly always directly linked to European imperialism. The fish Mary Kingsley “discovered” were very likely already well-known to Africans who had fished the rivers for generations. The cultural preservation these authors worked towards was only necessary because European colonization destroyed ancient cultures. Missionary work tried to overwrite centuries-old tradition with Bible verses, rampant tourism defaced monuments and broke down rich history into fun facts on a white family’s vacation itinerary, and historically-rich villages were razed to make way for European-style buildings.

During the mid-1800s, ethnology and anthropology began to compete with each other for academic dominance between young and old members of the European Ethnological Society.

Ethnology, rooted in the belief that different races of people were biologically unequal in development and mental faculties, began to give way to the anthropological perspective of studying humankind's behaviors as a whole rather than pitting its different cultures against each other. Fieldwork in either of these areas of study was uncommon during the nineteenth century, making Mary Kingsley a pioneer of anthropological fieldwork despite her misguided views exaggerating the racial and sexual differences between people. She argued for immersing oneself in other cultures in order to best understand them, eschewing the traditional route of watching from afar. She writes, "...unless you have lived among the natives you can never get to know them. At first you see nothing but a confused stupidity and crime; but when you get to see—well! ...you see things worth seeing."

The context of the American Civil War also provided insight into the intensifying debate between whether humanity as a whole was worth looking at, or whether racial differences merited an entire area of study. In her text, Kingsley uses the n-word twice, which warrants examination because the word had largely fallen out of use among her contemporaries and might have been surprising to her readers. In combining progressive attitudes and multidisciplinary interests with outdated, degrading tenets in certain matters, these works encourage examination of how seemingly conflicting viewpoints align.

These women travelers and writers chipped away at stereotypes by not only traversing lands previously considered inaccessible to them, but documenting them in their own voices. Readers must acknowledge both the progress they made for women's rights and the ways in which they reinforced white supremacy, the effects of which remain relevant today in discussions of intersectionality in feminism. Today, the Oxford English Dictionary defines intersectionality as "The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and

gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage; a theoretical approach based on such a premise.” In traveling as part of a marginalized group and interacting with other marginalized groups, these authors’ connections are inextricably wound together in common struggles that they face with varying degrees of privilege.

"The irredeemable ugliness of the Tibetans produced a deeper impression daily. It is grotesque, and is heightened, not modified, by their costume and ornament."

Isabella Bird
Among the Tibetans

"What was the attraction in going to an outlandish place so many miles away? The answer to the question was contained in its own words. Precisely because it was an outlandish place and so far away, I chose it. Palled for the moment with civilisation and its surroundings, I wanted to escape somewhere, where I might be as far removed from them as possible."

Lady Florence Dixie
Across Patagonia

"The moonlit plain lay, with the river in its midst, within the girdle of mountains. Here was enthroned the human intellect when humanity was elsewhere scarcely emerging from chaos. And how was it now? That morning, I had seen the Governor of Thebes, crouching on his haunches on the filthy shore among the dung heaps, feeding himself with his fingers, among a circle of apish creatures like himself."

Harriet Martineau
Eastern Life, Present and Past

"In Africa we always appear to consider the country ours and the natives the intruders."

Helen Caddick
A White Woman in Central Africa

A WOMAN'S PLACE IN THE WORLD

AN ANTHOLOGY
OF VICTORIAN TRAVEL NARRATIVES

The six authors anthologized in this volume explore the world with different intentions, expectations, and political views. These women travelers and writers chipped away at stereotypes by not only traversing lands previously considered inaccessible to them, but documenting their journeys in their own voices. Readers must acknowledge both the progress they made for women's rights and the ways in which they reinforced white supremacy, the effects of which remain relevant today in discussions of intersectionality in feminism. In traveling as part of a marginalized group and interacting with other marginalized groups, their connections are inextricably wound together in common struggles that they face with varying degrees of privilege.

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A WOMAN'S PLACE
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AN ANTHOLOGY
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EDITED BY HALEY RUFFNER

"All the earth is seamed with roads, and all the sea is furrowed with the tracks of ships, and over all the roads and all the waters a continuous stream of people passes up and down—travelling, as they say, for their pleasure. What is it, I wonder, that they go out for to see?"

Gertrude Bell
Safar Nameh, Persian Pictures

"In many parts of Africa the native fauna are fast disappearing, owing to the 'sporting' proclivities of the white man. The tendency is to pass laws for their protection, when there is no longer any to protect."

Helen Caddick
A White Woman in Central Africa

"I think it is necessary to remember here, as in all strange positions of the mind, that we ought to understand before we despise, and that, usually, the more we understand the less we despise."

Harriet Martineau
Eastern Life, Present and Past

"Speaking at large, the introduction of European culture—governmental, religious, or mercantile—has a destructive action on all the lower races; many of them the governmental and religious sections have stamped right out; but trade has never stamped a race out when dissociated from the other two, and it certainly has had no bad effect in tropical Africa."

Mary Kingsley
Travels in West Africa

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INTRODUCTION

WHEN WE THINK OF FAMOUS TRAVELERS in history, we think of Christopher Columbus, Marco Polo, and Lewis and Clark. We think of young white men setting out from their countries' shores to discover the world, oceans, and continents open and waiting for them. We think of men lured by the promise of discovering their fortunes and winning fame in far-away lands as they impose their cultures onto places with already-rich histories. Maps were drawn in the footprints of male adventurers whose voices would dominate the literary canon at the expense of the countries they visited.

As a genre, travel fiction has also been historically male-dominated, reinforcing the idea of separate gendered spheres even in literature. We remember *The Odyssey*, Huckleberry Finn's adventures down the Mississippi, and *Around the World in Eighty Days*, all supporting the male worldview that the outside world belonged to them in its entirety; a woman's destiny was to tend to her household and wait for her husband's return. Her place in the world was a limited one, confined on all fronts by history, literature, and societal pressure.

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