

PEAK PERFORMANCES:
CULTURAL AND AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE VICTORIAN
FEMALE MOUNTAINEER

by

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ABSTRACT

In this study, I conduct a cultural analysis of a range of neglected English-language books, articles, lectures, drawings, paintings and photographs produced by three generations of nineteenth-century women mountaineers who climbed and published visual and verbal accounts of their mountain adventures within the context of Victorian Anglo-imperialism (1850-1914). The women whose works I analyse include British travellers: Mrs. Henry Warwick Cole, Mrs. Henry Freshfield, Elizabeth Tuckett, Frederica Plunket, and Elizabeth Le Blond; and American women Annie Peck and Fanny Bullock Workman.

In an effort to help counter the reductive tendencies of existing sourcebooks about women travellers and mountaineers, I have attempted to situate these texts and images produced by women mountaineers within the literary, geographical, and historical-cultural moments of their production and circulation. In so doing, I have also sought: 1) to gain insight into some of the material, ideological, and discursive factors which may have impeded or facilitated Victorian women's ability to participate freely and equally in the male-dominated cultures of travel and mountaineering, and which also may have affected the ways in which they represented their public identities and their travels; 2) to explore how, in their books, articles, lantern slide lectures and publicity photos, individual female climbers exploited, negotiated around, or subverted these constraints in their attempts to publicly perform facets of their identities and their relationships to Victorian ideologies of gender, race, class, and sexuality.

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"The 'Alpine Path' has been climbed, after many years of toil and endeavour.
It was not an easy ascent, but even in the struggle at its hardest there was a delight and a zest
known only to those who aspire to the heights."

—L.M. Montgomery, *"The Alpine Path."*

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Prelude:

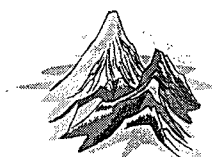
Setting the Stage



Figure 1. Photograph of the interior of Mrs. Le Blond's tent turned dressing room during her travels in Norway. The dress hanging from the top middle of the tent seems included to suggest that Le Blond is out exploring in trousers rather than her skirts—today, she is playing the “breeches” part. However, the elaborate toilette, right, reassures readers that she has not left all the trappings and behaviours of polite society and respectable bourgeois femininity behind. Her pillow is also too interestingly symbolic to miss mentioning—just as the rich British lady Le Blond rested her head every night on the Union Jack, so too did all British women travellers's sense of power, freedom, and privilege (both on the trail and off) often rest upon the imperial and national authority bestowed on them by the British Empire to rule foreign people and places. Reproduced from Elizabeth Le Blond's *Mountaineering in the Land of the Midnight Sun*. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1908.

In this study, I conduct a cultural analysis of a range of neglected English-language books, articles, lectures, drawings, paintings and photographs produced by three generations of nineteenth-century women mountaineers who climbed and published visual and verbal accounts of their mountain adventures within the context of Victorian Anglo-imperialism (1850-1914). The women whose works I principally analyse include British travellers Mrs. Henry Warwick Cole, Mrs. Henry Freshfield, Elizabeth Tuckett, Frederica Plunket, and Elizabeth Le Blond; and American women Annie Peck and Mrs. Fanny Bullock Workman.

In an effort to help counter the reductive tendencies of existing sourcebooks about women travellers and mountaineers, I have attempted to situate these texts and images produced by women mountaineers within the literary, geographical, and historical-cultural moments of their production and circulation. In so doing, I have also sought: 1) to gain insight into some of the material, ideological, and discursive factors which may have impeded or facilitated Victorian women's ability to participate freely and equally in the male-dominated cultures of travel and mountaineering, and which also may have affected the ways in which they represented their public identities and their travels; 2) to explore how, in their books, articles, lantern slide lectures and publicity photos, individual female climbers exploited, negotiated around, or subverted these constraints in their attempts to publicly perform facets of their identities and their relationships to Victorian ideologies of gender, race, class, and sexuality.



Surveying the Critical Terrain

Over the past three decades, numerous survey-style coffee-table books about Victorian women travellers, adventurers, and mountaineers have been published—two examples being Mary Russell's *The Blessings of a Good Thick Skirt* (1986) and Jane Robinson's *Wayward Women* (1990). While notable for their efforts to “recuperate” in some small measure the lives and, to a lesser extent, the writings of women who had been completely erased from patriarchal canons and histories, several feminist and post-colonial theorists, such as Nupur Chaudhuri, Margaret Strobel, and Simon Gikandi have revealed these texts to be problematic, particularly due to their tendency to celebrate virtually *all* Victorian women travellers as feminist heroines. A recent example of this ‘celebratory’ tendency appears in the Foreword to Rebecca Brown's book *Women on High* (2003), which was written by a present-day female mountaineer named Arlene Blum.¹ Blum writes:

In Victorian times, when mountains were considered mysterious, fearful places and women frail creatures in need of protection, a band of courageous female pioneers took to the heights, breaking the rigid rules of Victorian society and achieving remarkable physical feats and unprecedented personal fulfillment. . . . [W]hat were the motivations of these women swaddled in long skirts and bound in corsets? What was it that caused them to defy convention? . . . In so doing, they expanded their horizons and enriched their lives, while broadening the possibilities for women everywhere. They are role models for any of us who want to live lives of challenge and adventure. (ix-xi)

The problem with such “celebrations,” Chaudhuri and Strobel argue, is that they tend to

overlook the historical, personal, and material differences between women travellers, and that they simplify or essentialise the specific historical-cultural, geographical, and discursive details of the women's writings and their lives.² In so doing, they also run the risk of committing what Gayatri Spivak has called "the old imperialist lie" of downplaying, ignoring, or completely denying both the active and passive roles which white, middle-class Western women actually played in the dissemination and perpetuation of racist, imperialist, and even misogynistic or anti-feminist beliefs and practices. Such appears to be the case of Blum, for example, who seems unaware of the ways in which, directly or indirectly, Victorian women travellers and mountaineers participated in an activity which did not "broaden the possibilities for women everywhere": imperialism.

Survey-style retrospectives of Victorian women's travel are also problematic in that they tend to operate based on what in his *History of Sexuality* (1978) Michel Foucault has called the "repressive hypothesis"—that is, they subtly erect a historical-cultural division which turns a blind eye to any parallels between the past and the present, and which represents the "Victorians" (particularly Victorian women) as repressive, repressed and less advanced "Others" against and through whom contemporary women are able to assert their identities as more advanced, more sophisticated, and more liberated. This process of Othering is particularly problematic to those of us (the editors of the recent book *Victorian Afterlife* (2000) John Kucich and Dianne Sadoff, and myself included) who resist the suggestion that we, in twenty-first century North America, are post-Victorian or even post-Feminist. As I will argue in the last section of this study, what goes around does indeed come around again—or perhaps it never left in the first place; we in contemporary North America are publicly and privately grappling with

some of the very same problems of gender, race, class, and sexuality as those supposedly stuffy and stodgy old Victorians.

The findings of scholars such as Sara Mills, Shirley Foster, Susan Morgan, and Alison Blunt have been crucial in that they have moved contemporary considerations of Isabella Bird, Mary Kingsley, and other Victorian “globetrotteresses” as unequivocally exceptional, eccentric, and (often incorrectly) proto-feminist, by conducting detailed and critically rigorous readings of their writings. Sara Mills, for example, often makes convincing use of Foucauldian discourse theory in her book *Discourses of Difference* (1991) in order to demonstrate how the writings of several Victorian women travellers contributed to—and were, to a large extent, shaped by—concurrent discourses of gender and colonialism.

This project is deeply indebted to (as it is deeply influenced by) the works of all of the critics mentioned above; however, I am particularly grateful to Mills, who has set the precedent for thinking and writing about the previously ignored and under-explored field of Victorian women's travel writing.

In *Discourses of Difference* (1991), Mills stated that her central objective was to explore how Victorian discourses of femininity and colonialism “determined the style and content of women’s travel writing” (14). At least part of Mills's objective seems equally applicable to the subgenre of travel writing I scrutinise (women’s mountaineering texts); in **Act I**, for example, like Mills, I argue that the Victorian cults of ideal bourgeois and imperial femininity seem to have placed a great deal of pressure on various generations of Victorian women mountaineers to appear and act in very codified ways, both on and off the trail; these ideals also seem to have affected these women’s discursive representations of themselves and the places and peoples

they encountered.

Despite common interests and similar findings, however, there are two crucial points at which my work's objectives may be seen as departing from those of Mills': first, although Mills acknowledges that power is a complex nexus, throughout *Discourses* she seems to present the power of ideologies and discourses as primarily repressive and as operating mostly from the outside. This is reflected in her suggestion that "what we should be concentrating on is not the proliferation of discourse, but the constraints on the writing process" (69). By contrast, I am as equally concerned with exploring the productive as well as repressive effects of ideologies and discourses, and the ways in which Victorian women were agents, subjects, and producers of ideologies and discourses, as I am with the ways in which they were "subjected" to them. As Anne McClintock has put it, "white women were not the hapless onlookers of empire but were ambiguously complicit both as colonizers and colonized, privileged and restricted, acted upon and acting" (*Imperial Leather* 6). I have therefore aimed wherever possible to illuminate the active and conscious roles which women often played in the production, perpetuation, and/or subversion of both potentially liberating and constraining ideologies and practices.³

The second way in which my work may be seen as departing from Mills is that, while Mills seems to have placed the greatest focus on the impacts of gender and colonialism on Victorian women travellers and their writing, I have tried to heed the advice of more recent scholars, such as Alison Blunt and Anne McClintock, who have argued that a focus specifically on gender or on colonialism still oversimplifies the complex interactions and conflicts occurring between and within categories of gender, race, class, and sexuality in the nineteenth century.⁴ Blunt argues that one must "consider subject positionality in terms of constructions of race and

class as well as gender [and I will add sexuality] revealing their complexities over space and time” (*Travel*, 2). Similarly, McClintock argues that “race, gender, and class are not distinct realms of experience, existing in splendid isolation from each other; nor can they simply be yoked together retrospectively like armatures of lego. Rather, they come into existence in and through relation to each other—if in contradictory and conflictual ways” (*Imperial Leather* 5).

Building and expanding on these suggestions, my work considers how Victorian ideologies of gender interacted, intersected, and conflicted with other factors such as age/generations, geography, sexuality, marital status, and political as well as religious affiliations, to both constrain and liberate Victorian woman mountain-climbers physically and discursively.

Although I focus specifically on the visual and verbal works of a particular group of women, united not only by their gender but by comparable modes, goals, or geographical *topi* of travel, I aim in this study to illuminate rather than erase or elide differences between individual women travellers and mountaineers. It is for this reason that I have avoided attempting to speak about “a distinctly (or an essentially) feminine” voice.⁵ On the contrary, my work seeks to resist claims made by contemporary scholars that women’s travel writing was somehow essentially different from or less repressive than men’s writing of the same period.

Two particularly problematic claims which my study seeks to overturn are Dea Birketts’s claim that “the contrived tradition of exploration, expressed in such ceremonies as flag planting and the naming of geographical features, was also seldom exercised by women travellers” (129) and Lila Harper’s argument that “women’s travel writing is not as concerned with describing sweeping viewpoints as men” (216).⁶ By bringing to the fore evidence of

women's often active and aggressive participation in Victorian mountaineering culture, I hope to make it clear that such generalisations are in need of refinement and revision.



As a cultural analysis, my study seeks to interrogate and deconstruct methodologies which privilege the written over the visual, the “literary” over the ephemeral, or “High Culture” over so-called “low” popular culture, and which remove cultural artefacts from the historical-cultural contexts in which they were produced, circulated, and consumed. My study therefore embraces many of the aims of the Cultural Studies field, particularly its “interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and sometimes counter-disciplinary” methodologies, its commitment to “the study of an entire range of a society’s arts, beliefs, institutions and communicative practices” and its belief that “all forms of cultural productions need to be studied in relation to other cultural practices and to social and historic structures” (During 4).

As I hope the titles of the various sections of the study suggest, two main tropes underlie its structure and style: mountain travel and theatricality. My reason for using mountaineering terms is perhaps a bit more obvious; I have chosen to divide the study into Acts in order to emphasise the fact that I regard documents produced by Victorian women mountaineers not merely as travel accounts of encounters with foreign landscapes and peoples, but as crucial sites wherein these women carried out their own “autobiographical alpine acts.”

I also constantly invoke terms and theories derived from travel, performance and

performativity in this study because they are, to my mind, compatible with and reflective of:

1) the theatrical and “spectacular” spirit of Victorian society, of nineteenth-century travel, of mountaineering (as well as travellers and mountaineers), and, by extension, of the material under analysis.

2) my larger desire to resist the reductive and “mortifying” tendencies of early sourcebooks on women travellers (as discussed earlier in this introduction).

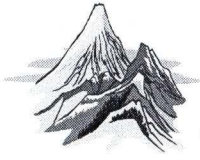
3) my understanding of processes of identity and gender as fluid, iterative, and therefore potentially mutable, rather than fixed, “essential,” and determined; after the manner of Judith Butler, I view “gender . . . as an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*” (*Gender Trouble* 140).

According to Joseph Litvak in his book *Caught in the Act: Theatricality in the Nineteenth-Century English Novel* (1992), “the trope of ‘theatricality’ [also] enables us both to unpack subjectivity as performance and denaturalize—to read as a scene—the whole encompassing space in which that subjectivity gets constituted: the intricate web of ‘romantic’ bonds and family ties. . . . In other words, if the self is treated here as not just a text but as a contingent cluster of theatrical roles, then it becomes possible to make a spectacle of the imperious domestic, sexual, and aesthetic ideologies for which, and in which it is bound” (xii).

The idea of making a scene also has subversive potential in that it offers a means of countering what Litvak calls the “patriarchal preference for linearity” by asking us to bear in mind more fluid and less linear ways of thinking about history, identity, and society. This fluidity may then allow us to more accurately glean at least some sense of the incessant and simultaneous interplay between subject and object and between representation and self-

presentation which is at work in every individual's performance of selfhood.

As part of my effort to emphasise the performative nature of Victorian mountaineering women's travels and visual as well as verbal self-presentations, I have chosen to refer to the women using the names they used in public representations of themselves, and I have left off referring to them by their first names if they themselves have never given them (as is the case with Mrs. Cole and Mrs. Freshfield). In the case of Miss Tuckett, Mrs. Cole, Mrs. Freshfield I have tried to be careful to preserve their marital titles to remind the reader that marital status seems to have played a crucial role in their public performances of identity as genteel "ladies." In the case of Elizabeth Le Blond, I have chosen to refer to her primarily as Le Blond because, to do otherwise might be too confusing given that she was married several times and published under each of her other names, and because she seems to have been known primarily by this married name. Now and again, I have added the "Mrs." to Le Blond to reflect my sense of this figure as playing several roles, some more "masculine" and some more decidedly ladylike; I have done a similar thing with my references to Frederica Plunket (a.k.a Miss Plunket and Plunket) and Mrs. Fanny Bullock Workman (a.k.a Workman, Mrs. Bullock Workman, Mrs. Workman). In my references to Annie Peck, I have deliberately left her marital title out, so that she is either "Peck," "Annie Peck," or "Annie Smith Peck" because this is how she publicly named and presented herself and because the prefix "Miss" was often used in a condescending manner by critics and reviewers.



Tackling the Approach: Trail Guide and Itinerary



Figure 2: “The Plain of Six Glaciers, below the Victoria Glacier, 1903.” Photographed by Beatrice Longstaff Lance. Reproduced from Edward Cavell and John Whyte’s *Rocky Mountain Madness: A Bittersweet Romance*. Banff, AB: Altitude, 1982.

Outside of the **Prelude** and the **Postlude**, this study is made up of two distinct but closely interrelated sections; the first, **Act I**, serves as a kind of historical-cultural backdrop within and against which the women discussed in **Act II** may be said to have negotiated and performed their public and published identities.

In the first part of **Act I**, I will draw upon a number of visual and verbal sources in order to provide a more nuanced and detailed study—not only of women and travel in the nineteenth

century, but of women and Victorian mountaineering—which takes into account both the repressive and productive aspects of classed, gendered, raced, and sexual ideologies structuring both Victorian middle-class women's mountaineering adventures and their publications. Thus, I explore not only the material, ideological, and discursive odds stacked against women who wished to negotiate a space for themselves in patriarchal Victorian British public life and alpine culture, but some of the social and ideological events or transformations which may be said to have facilitated or accommodated women's travel and mountain activities in the nineteenth century.

Act II is devoted to an exploration of various Victorian women's participation in their own strategic self-fashioning. Here I conduct a more detailed examination of how some of the prevailing restrictions and accommodations delineated in **Act I** were invoked, expanded, or exploited by individual Victorian women mountaineers in their own public and published performances of self-hood. Central to this section will be the subject of “wardrobe” and the crucial role which clothing seems to have played in each female mountaineer’s process of “self-fashioning.”

In the **Postlude**, I present a brief summary of the work conducted here, as well as offer some questions and ideas which scholars may find fruitful for future projects. In the **Afterword**, I then offer some points of connection and comparison between the mountaineering and mainstream cultures of Victorian Britain and those of twenty-first century North America through a comparative look at an item of women’s climbing clothing appearing in the 2001 issue of Mountain Equipment Co-op Clothing company’s catalogue with one displayed by the Ladies’ Alpine Club in 1911.



As is perhaps always the case with any engaging subject, I have reluctantly but deliberately left several things out. First, I have limited my focus primarily to British and North American women climbers of the nineteenth century, in part because I am specifically interested in the interrelationship between mountaineering and what one might call more distinctly “Anglo” ideologies of imperialism, gender, sexuality, and class. In using the term “Anglo” I recognize that I am drawing together what Benedict Anderson would call a number of distinct “imagined communities.” However, in my mind at least, there are enough ideological similarities between the ways in which British, Canadian, Australian and American climbers theorised and practised mountaineering to warrant this kind of grouping. One example of this ideological closeness may be found in the ways in which both British and American climbers viewed the relationship between mountaineering and imperialism. Although it is certainly the case that nations such as Germany and France were prominent imperial powers during the latter decades of the nineteenth century, I agree with Reuben Ellis that the British and American climbers seem to have been the ones most aggressively conquering peaks abroad and most explicitly linking the alpine act of ascent with Anglo-imperialist annexation.

I have also limited my study to English-speaking women climbers who published accounts of their mountain experiences in part because I am more interested in exploring Victorian women mountaineers as authors, artists, and photographers than I am in offering a comprehensive social history of women’s mountaineering here. Thus, a number of extremely

accomplished and fascinating women who have left little to no visual or textual records of their climbs (such as Lucy Walker, Margaret Anne [Mrs. E. P.] Jackson, Lily Bristow, Mary [Petherick] Mummery; Katy Richardson, Emmeline Lloyd-Lewis, and Isabella Straton) are only mentioned briefly (if at all).

As I initially prepared this dissertation, I had intended to figure Canadian women such as Elizabeth Parker and Mary Schäffer-Warren more prominently. However, the fact that both women openly declared themselves non-mountaineers warranted my decision to demote them to “extras” rather than major characters in the study.⁷

Finally, I had also planned to give greater prominence to fictional representations of women mountain-climbers appearing in books, short stories, and plays of the period. But as I collected my primary resources, I came to realize that my initial scope for the study was perhaps too broad to ensure the integrity of my work’s focus. On the positive side, I hope the fact that I have had to be so ruthless in my decisions regarding what to include and what to exclude demonstrates that there is a wealth of material left to be explored by other scholars and historians—including, I trust, me in the future.

ACT I:

Men, Women and Mountains: The Historical-Cultural *Mise-en-Scène* of Victorian Mountaineering



Figure 3. Australian climber Freda Du Faur flanked by guides Alex and Peter Graham. Reproduced from Bea Dawson's *Lady Travellers: the Tourists of Early New Zealand*. Albany, Auckland: Penguin Books, 2001. 168. I include this image because it visualises the hierarchical relationship structuring Victorian mountaineering culture. However, the placement, posing, and clothing displayed by Du Faur in this clearly posed photo may also be seen as an illustration of Freda Du Faur's own chosen public persona—the demurely feminine “lady” climber.

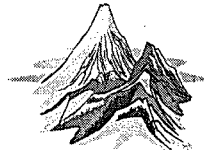
In August of 1898, an article entitled “Should Women Climb Snow Mountains?” appeared in *Women at Home* magazine. As the title indicates, the article was an opinion piece devoted to the subject of women’s mountaineering. Two authors—one male and one female—were recruited to provide their perspectives; the more conservative “cons” side was taken up by Mr. Claude Benson, a climber who later authored a mountaineering handbook, *British Mountaineering* (1914), while the more audacious cause of the “pros” was taken up by Miss E. P. Hughes of Cambridge.

I will more closely analyze both authors’ arguments for and against women’s mountaineering later in the study. For now, however, I want merely to draw the reader’s attention to the date and the title of the piece; I mention the date to point out that this article appeared at a time when several generations of Victorian women had already made successful ascents of various mountains across Europe.

The title is worth noting because its interrogative construction indicates that, far from being a foregone conclusion, the idea of women climbing mountains was still, by the end of the nineteenth century, a subject of anxious inquiry, an unresolved question or problem to be publicly pondered, discussed, and debated.

As I will demonstrate in the sections entitled **Women Travel: Accommodations and Restrictions**, “Should Women Climb Snow Mountains?” offers a good deal of crucial insight into some of the most often publicly evoked reasons for which (and most successful ways in which) women’s mountaineering was both encouraged and discouraged. Just *why* women’s mountaineering was such a locus of contestation during the Victorian period more immediately merits further investigation.

In their anthology, *Manful Assertions*, Michael Roper and John Tosh remind us that “masculinity (like femininity) is a relational construct, incomprehensible apart from the totality of gender relations” (2). In other words, Roper and Tosh argue that, in order to acquire a more detailed view of a particular set of Victorian gender ideologies, such as, for example, ideal femininity, one must also attempt to understand how both femininity and masculinity were constructed and perceived at this time. Thus, as part of an effort to more fully understand how women mountaineers and women’s mountaineering were regarded in the nineteenth century, I will first attempt to explore just how men’s mountaineering and mountaineering men were represented during this period.



“We shall be told that ‘mountaineering’ is a manly exercise.
It is so, inasmuch as it is unwomanly.”

—Charles Dickens (“Foreign Climbs.” *All the Year Round* 19 August 1865. 85)

It will perhaps be unsurprising to discover that a crucial part of the reason why women’s mountaineering and, by extension, mountaineering women were the focus of so much social debate in the Victorian period is due to the fact that, from its inception, mountaineering was constructed as a masculine and masculinist endeavour.

Of Mountains and Men: A Brief History

Jane Nardin argues that, “for many centuries men shunned mountains [as the] haunts of gods and demons” and ventured “into the mountains only when the exigencies of war or commerce required them to do so” (442). According to Nardin, “until the eighteenth century, the Alps were not different from other mountains in these respects. Many travelers found the spiritual dangers of the Alps even more fearsome than the physical dangers, for the peaks were widely believed to be infested with devils, monsters, and dragons of every description” (442). Thus, writes Ronald Clark in *The Victorian Mountaineers*, “before mountaineering could reach full stature, the mountains themselves had to be given a new place in the Universe. . . . [T]here had first to be a spiritual preparation, the making of an apologia which would enable men to regard mountains neither as areas of danger [nor] terror” (29).

According to mountaineering historians, such as Marjorie Hope Nicholson, two seemingly disparate groups played key roles in helping to alter these previous conceptions of mountains as “wars, wens and blisters on the otherwise fair face of nature” (Nicholson 2): Enlightenment scientists and eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century aesthetic theorists and practitioners.

Building on the ideas of eighteenth-century philosopher Edmund Burke’s notions of the sublime and the picturesque, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s writings on mountains and noble savagery, the Romantics altered lingering social perceptions of mountains as unattractive and frightening by representing the Alpine landscape as a site through which to undertake imaginative, quasi-religious quests for solitude, aesthetic inspiration and spiritual communion with the Divine.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, scientists Horace de Saussure and J. D. Forbes also helped initiate a positive valuation of mountains by demonstrating their empirical importance in their published accounts of travels which they had taken to remote alpine regions to conduct research on glaciers and mountains.

Throughout the nineteenth century, a large number of mountain travellers and climbers continued to be drawn to the mountains by aesthetic, spiritual, and Romantic impulses. However, mountaineering, as it was theorised and practised by Britain's first mountaineering institution, the Alpine Club of London (c. 1857), was more often presented as an activity very different from the Romantic Shelleyan wanderings of yore, its practitioners very different from the Byronic hero (**Figures 4, 5**).

Perhaps as part of an effort to mark themselves out as followers of a new cult of muscular bourgeois manhood, the early founders of the Alpine Club attempted to make it explicitly clear—both in the objectives and the rules of the club, and in the subtitle and introduction of the first edition of the Alpine Club's publication the *Alpine Journal*—that the impetus behind mountain-climbing in the Victorian period was not simply to worship what Shelley might call the “wonder and [the] beauty and [the] terror!” of the mountains from afar and from the lower slopes.⁸ Rather, after the manner of scientific men such as de Saussure and Forbes, and several generations of English explorers and adventure-seekers, the Alpine Club encouraged men to actively explore and aggressively climb to conquer the world's “virgin peaks,” for the purpose of “mountain exploration and scientific observation” (**Appendix IV**).

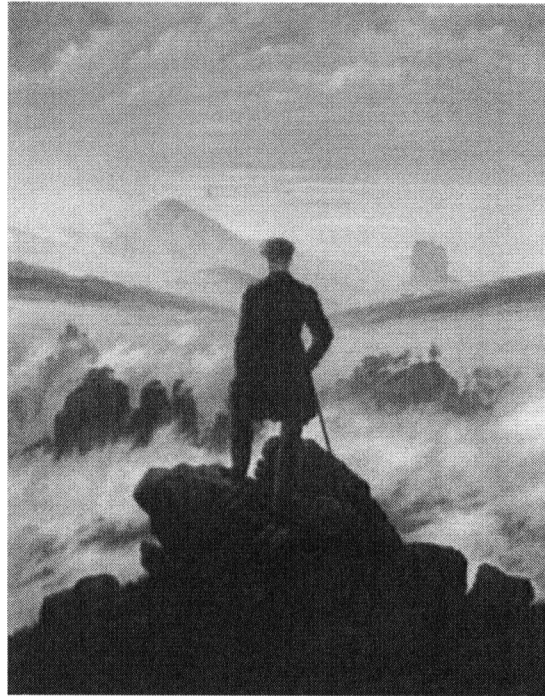


Figure 4. The Sensitive and Stylish Byronic Romantic Wanderer as presented in Caspar Friedrich's "Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog" (1818).



Figure 5. Two Rugged, Slightly More Aggressively Posed and Armed yet Still Gentle-Manly Victorian Mountaineers (Unknown and J. J. Bennen, c1850). Reproduced from Alpine Club Library's Virtual Photo Album, <http://www.alpine-club.org.uk/photolibrary/album.html>

By yoking mountaineering to two concurrent and complexly interrelated intellectual and social realms which, according to Victorian ideals of gender, were generally said to be the domains of men—"exploration" and "science"—the Alpine Club imbued mountaineering and mountaineers with social and national symbolic significance, while asserting the masculine and masculinist nature of the activity and its participants.

When a man climbed a mountain, the Alpine Club argued, he was doing more than participating in an increasingly popular pastime—he was participating in an activity which would allow him to contribute (both directly and indirectly) to the enlargement of British empirical knowledge. As John Ball stated in the introduction of the Alpine Club's first publication, *Peaks, Passes and Glaciers*, the Club viewed itself as "an association [which] might indirectly advance the general progress of knowledge by directing the attention of men not professedly followers of science, to particular points in which their assistance may contribute to valuable results" (qtd in "Formation of the Alpine Club" 85). In other words, the Alpine Club hoped that, while climbing mountains in Europe and abroad, its male members would envision themselves helping England to obtain and then to maintain prominence as a physically, intellectually, and scientifically powerful nation comprised of manly men.

Not all Victorians were convinced that mountaineering was such a socially relevant, scientifically lucrative, or "manly" endeavour. Charles Dickens and John Ruskin are two notable examples of individuals who were unconvinced that mountain-climbing had any larger social function or that mountaineers had any other motivations for ascending Alpine peaks than pure self-aggrandisement.

In 1864 John Ruskin condemned mountaineering for what he saw as mountaineers'

almost blasphemous lack of reverence for the majesty and holiness of the very mountains which had been worshipped a generation earlier by the nation's Romantic poets: "You have despised nature," Ruskin told a Manchester audience:

That is to say, all the deep and sacred sensations of natural scenery. The French revolutionists have made stables of the cathedrals of France; you have made racecourses of the cathedrals of the earth. . . . The Alps themselves, which your own poets used to love so reverently, you look upon as soaped poles in a bear-garden, which you set yourselves to climb, and slide down again, with 'shrieks of delight.' When you are past shrieking, . . . you fill the quietude of their valleys with gunpowder blasts, and rush home, red with cutaneous eruption of conceit, and voluble with convulsive hiccough of self-satisfaction. ("Of King's Treasuries" 33-35)⁹

Similarly, in two articles published in *All the Year Round* (1865), Charles Dickens called those "ambitious adventurer[s] coming from afar, with money and curious appliances, for the sake of scaling, with no practical object or end except the gratification of his personal vanity, peaks and pinnacles never scaled before" reckless "would-be acrobats" and "gamblers" epitomising "foolhardihood" ("Foreign Climbs" 135). Dickens asked his readers: "What is the motive of foolhardiness [i.e., mountaineering]? We have said before, and again say, that the only one discoverable is BRAG ("Foreign Climbs" 136). He therefore concluded that "the society for the scaling of such heights as the Schreckhorn, the Eiger, and the Matterhorn contributed about as much to the advancement of science as would a club of young gentlemen who should undertake to bestride all the weathercocks of all the cathedral spires of the United Kingdom" ("Foreign Climbs" 136).

Perhaps surprisingly, even some members of the Alpine Club of London, such as Leslie Stephen, were in agreement with Dickens's assertions that mountain-climbing was nothing more than purely a sport; in a chapter of his 1871 book *Playground of Europe* entitled "Regrets of a Mountaineer," for example, Stephen wrote:

I admit that mountaineering, in my sense of the word is a sport. It is a sport which, like fishing or shooting, brings one into contact with the sublimest aspects of nature; and, without setting their enjoyment before one as an ultimate end or aim, helps one indirectly absorb and be penetrated by their influence. Still it is strictly a sport—as strictly as cricket, or rowing, or knurr and spell—and I have no wish to place it on a different footing. The game is won when a mountain-top is reached in spite of difficulties; it is lost when one is forced to retreat . . . (*Playground* 307).

During a lecture before the Alpine Club in which he offered a parodic account of his ascent of the Rothorn in 1864, Stephen took his sporting opinions even further by openly mocking several of his distinctly more scientifically minded fellow clubsmen who insisted upon conducting "experiments" while on the trail: "And what philosophical observations did you make? will be the enquiry of those fanatics who, by a reasoning process to me utterly inscrutable, have somehow irrevocably associated alpine travelling with science. To them I answer, that the temperature was approximately (I had no thermometer) 212° (Fahrenheit) below freezing point. As for ozone, if any existed in the atmosphere, it was a greater fool than I take it for" (*Playground* 108-9). Though Stephen's verbal jabs at alpine scientists were aimed at another scientist-mountaineer, F. F. Tuckett, eminent alpinist-scientist John Tyndall apparently

was so angered over these remarks that he resigned from the Alpine Club, despite being next in line for President (Dangar and Blakeney).

Aside from a common desire to mock mountaineers' tendencies to take themselves and the scientific potential of mountaineering a bit too seriously, Stephen was quite unlike Dickens and Ruskin, in that he still believed that the benefits of mountaineering in the lives of England's men outweighed its costs; particularly during the 1860s, as the Alpine Club was attempting to establish itself as one of London's learned societies and striving to enlarge its numbers by encouraging various accomplished climbers, explorers, and men of science to join its ranks, Stephen, like many other advocates of both the "scientific" and "athletic" views of mountaineering, wrote articles to the popular press espousing the myriad personal as well as social benefits of the activity.¹⁰

Social historians such as Peter Hansen have argued that the popularity of mountaineering among nineteenth-century English middle-class men was not only due to Victorian entrepreneur Albert Smith's wildly popular diorama lantern slide show, "Mont Blanc," which ran at the Egyptian Theatre in Picadilly during the 1850s (**APPENDIX III**), but because of the number of extremely attractive, noble and "manly" attributes which early proponents of the sport convincingly argued that mountaineering was said to cultivate in its practitioners.

In the opinion of the anonymous author of the article "Mountaineering-The Alpine Club," appearing in the October 1859 issue of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, mountaineering had the ability to change "the idle or working man of the over-civilised world" into a virile and healthy specimen of physical, moral, and spiritual health (457). Similarly, in 1863, T. S. Kennedy wrote that he believed that "mountain excursions produce not only a highly

beneficial effect on the physical character . . . but that they produce an equally beneficial effect on the mental character, that they excite a thoughtful foresight, that they improve self-reliance in the moment of danger . . .!” It was for these reasons that he felt “justified in claiming for alpine climbing first rank amongst athletic sports as a nourisher of all those varied elements that go to form all that is commendable in the Anglo-Saxon character” (1). In *Mountaineering in 1861*, John Tyndall added his belief that climbing allowed him to “feel in all my fibres the blessedness of perfect manhood, causing mind, and soul, and body, to work together with a harmony and strength unqualified by infirmity or ennui” (70).

According to many sources, mountaineering was “healthy,” not only due to the manly physical exertion or “work” which it required (work which was said to ward off the kind of effeminacy and spiritual, moral, and physical degeneration which an excessively indolent yet bureaucratised existence in a highly industrialised world was said to cause), but due to the sublime and pristine geographical locations in which climbing was often carried out. Although, as the nineteenth century wore on, places like Chamonix in the Swiss Alps were becoming increasingly infected by what in *Sesame and Lilies* Ruskin called the “white leprosy” of tourism, as new chalets, rail-lines, and hotels cropped up in order to pander to the growing influx of predominately British tourists, mountain regions continued to be viewed by the Victorians as Nature’s sanitariums. Being located on what Rudyard Kipling deemed “the edge of cultivation,” mountains seemed relatively untouched by the soot and grime with which many felt England’s urban and rural areas had been tainted by industrialisation.¹¹ Tyndall confirmed this therapeutic view of mountains in his declaration that “there is assuredly morality in the oxygen of the mountains” (*Mountaineering in 1861*, 70).

In essence, throughout the nineteenth century, mountaineering became glorified as the ideal new means through which the upper- and middle- class English man could experience what Anne McClintock calls “anachronistic spatiality” and what Homi Bhabha has called “belatedness”: in journeying to and through alpine environments, one was able to temporarily escape modern life and experience a kind of movement backward temporally as one ascended geographically—back to a simpler, purer, though clearly pre-industrial time and place, away “from the reek of cities and the dull air of plains, to regions of freshness and vitality, where the air itself seems to produce a kind of innocent intoxication” (“Mountaineering—The Alpine Club” 457).¹²

At the same time as they felt themselves to be leaving the chaos of modern life and the strictures of respectable society behind, however, mountaineers were said to be cultivating skills which would assist them in becoming or remaining successful in the urban wilds of the business districts of Britain. Anthony Trollope argued that mountaineering “makes our men active, courageous, ready in resource, prone to friendship, keen after gratifications which are in themselves noble and good” (Hansen *British* 320). Similarly, J. D. Forbes wrote in the 1857 *Quarterly Review* that mountaineering’s “manly regimen” trained a young man to be “self-reliant, enduring, and full of resource, presence of mind” in all aspects of his life (287-8). It is perhaps for these reasons that, Peter Hansen and Jonathan Simon note, the Alpine Club was so successful at attracting middle-class “social climbers”—men eager to get a leg up in Victorian England’s financial and social worlds. Indeed, Simon argues that, for many Victorian men, “mountaineering was more than a metaphor; rather it was a kind of parallel world to their professional and social lives. This was particularly true of the professionals, lawyers, doctors,

clergy, and academics that disproportionately made up the membership of the Alpine club. . . . Victorian mountaineering provided a crucial counter practice in which young professionals could engage in a highly stylized and yet undeniable form of competitive risk taking without significant loss to their increasingly important role in governing Victorian society” (np).¹³

The View from the Top: Mountaineering and the Imperial Scramble for Supremacy

Perhaps the greatest selling points of mountaineering to middle-class men in Victorian Britain (particularly from the 1870s onwards) were the claims that it allowed its practitioners and, by extension the readers of mountaineering texts, viewers of mountain panoramas and dioramas, and audiences of mountaineering lantern slide lectures which often resulted from such excursions, to gain a sense of national and imperial security and superiority at a time when British subjects and, in particular, Britain’s *male* subjects, were feeling especially anxious and doubtful about themselves and about the future power and supremacy of their nation and empire; Elaine Freedgood argues that mountaineering came to play a crucial role in allaying such fears, for, “[i]n constructing the Alps as a perilous place worth risking, Forbes, Ruskin, and Smith contributed to the construction of England as safe. England’s homely and hilly landscape provided a comforting contrast to the wildness and extremity of the Alps, and the Alps became a useful geographical other against which some mid-century Britons could attempt to forge, actually or vicariously, a rugged and durable identity for themselves . . . their nation, and their empire” (104).



Figure 6. The View from the Top: Male climbers demonstrating the Panoptical Stance. Reproduced from the Alpine Club of London Library's Virtual photo album at <http://www.alpine-club.org.uk/photolibrary/album.html>

Like Freedgood, Peter Hansen argues that it is far from coincidental that it was particularly towards the latter decades of the nineteenth century (1860s-1890s), as Britain's imperial presence and power on the international stage were rumoured (and feared) to be uncertain and unstable, that mountaineering gained such prominence and popularity, and that British mountaineers began shifting their interest away from conquering the Alps of Europe to the mountains of nations in which Britain had colonial, economic, or military involvements and interests, such as India and Africa.

In his book *The Oberland and its Glaciers* (1866), H. B. George (editor of the *Alpine*

Journal from 1863 to 1867) exemplifies the tendencies of many British mountaineers to represent mountaineering as an activity both mirroring and extending Britain's larger designs and desires for colonial expansion and world domination. To George, the impulse to climb was the impulse to conquer: "The climbing spirit, like the love of all kindred pursuits, is essentially a form of that restless energy, that love of action . . . of exploring the earth and subduing it, which has made England the great colonizer of the world, and has led individual Englishmen to penetrate the wildest recesses of every continent" (iv).¹⁴ In many ways, George's quotation is a textual version of the anxious yet adamant symbolic message which Victorian climbers attempted to send through the highly compensatory gesture of planting the national or imperial flag at the top of a "bagged" virgin peak: racially, nationally, imperially, Britain was (and would continue to be) on top of the world (**figure 7**).



Figure 7. Britannia Rules the Mountains Too! In the image above, noted British Columbia, Canada climber Phyl Munday (far right) Munday is depicted with several other fellow members of her Scout Troop bagging and flagging their first peak: Vancouver's Grouse Mountain. Reproduced from Kathryn Bridge's *Phyllis Munday: Mountaineer*. Montréal: XYZ Publishing, 2002. 10.

Both literally and symbolically, then, mountaineering afforded men what Mary Louise Pratt has called the “monarch-of-all-I-survey” privilege and what Anne McClintock has called the “panoptical stance” *par excellence*—a stance which economically, politically, and culturally the British Empire also sought through its subjugation of foreign lands and peoples. James Ryan has argued that the interrelatedness of mountaineering and imperialism in the Victorian period is most evident in the fact that nineteenth century British mountaineers constructed the mountains, their climbing, and themselves using visual and verbal terms borrowed from scientific tomes and fictional as well as “non-fictional” colonial, imperial, and exploration texts—texts which were used to justify and naturalise British economic, cultural, social, and racial superiority and control in nations such as India and in regions such as the North and South Poles.



Figure 8. After the manner of many Victorian anthropologist-photographers and artists (see figure 62 and Elizabeth Edwards’ book *Anthropology and Photography*), three Swiss guides are posed by an anonymous photographer, seemingly so as to display front and side views of their physiognomies. Reproduced from D. F. O Dangar and T. S. Blakeney’s “The Rise of Modern Mountaineering and the Formation of the Alpine Club, 1864-65.” *Alpine Journal* 62 (Nov. 1957): 14-38.

One particularly popular discourse used by British mountaineers was the photograph. Almost as soon as it was invented, the new medium of photography was recruited by the Victorian climbers to aid them in their desires not only to study, explore, and conquer various unexplored mountain-ranges, but also to “capture” various foreign peoples. Figure 8 demonstrates how many climber-photographers used the technology of the camera to turn their foreign guides and porters into ethnographic specimens.

In addition to describing climbing as a form of hunting, as a kind of military campaign, or as akin to Polar expeditions, many Victorian mountaineers also connected climbing to imperialism by presenting mountain-climbing as yet another of the British “White Man’s Burdens”; in many texts produced by British climbers, those “Other” countries bestowed with mountains are represented as incapable and unfit to appreciate and use them.

Demonstrating that nineteenth-century women were by no means universally against imperialism or racial oppression (a subject which I will return to in my analysis of texts by several Victorian women mountaineers in **Act II**), female traveller Mary Kingsley openly conveyed the general perception of many British subjects (both male and female) about foreign places and peoples. Like many British travellers and mountaineers, Kingsley envisioned the difference between the more and less civilised races using a geographical metaphor wherein the race considered to be superior in nature and civilisation was envisioned as standing on the pinnacle of a mountain: “I do not believe that the white race will ever drag the black up their own particular summit in the mountain range of civilisation,” she wrote after herself ascending Africa’s Mount Cameroon, “. . . alas! for the energetic reformer—the African is not keen on mountaineering in the civilisation range. He prefers remaining down below and being

comfortable. He is not conceited about this; he admires the higher culture very much, and the people who inconvenience themselves by going in for it—but do it himself? No. And if he is dragged up into the higher regions of a self-abnegatory religion, six times in ten he falls back damaged, a morally maimed man, into his old swampy country fashion valley” (*Travels* 680).

François Thioly, a Swiss climber, spoke with disgust of the generally condescending attitude of English climbers towards him and his fellow countrymen, and of a common belief among British mountaineers that it was the Englishman’s divinely ordained right to climb another nation’s mountains: “M. Tyndall, a British tourist well-known for his work in the Alps and his daring expeditions, looked at my feet (I was wearing white fleece gaiters) as a member of the Jockey-Club might examine the legs of a race-horse. As I wasn’t wearing woollens and skins similar to his, I was to him only a perfumed tourist, a veritable intruder daring to climb the highest Alps which had been erected, by the hands of the Creator, for the English alone” (qtd in Hansen, *British* 280). Here, Thioly presents a first-hand response to a process of “Othering” common in so many nineteenth-century imperial texts, particularly mountaineering narratives—a process in which individuals perceived as outside the normative imaginative community of white, male, middle-class, British/Englishness are figured as raced, classed, gendered, sexed objects of derision.

Echoing both Thioly’s views about British climbers and British climbers’ associations between hunting and climbing, Edward Whymper recorded in his famous account of the 1865 Matterhorn disaster *Scrambles* a distinct awareness that his guide “Carrell clearly considered the mountain a kind of preserve and regarded our late attempt as an act of poaching. . . . A soldier who fought in the War of Independence against Austria. . . . He wanted the Matterhorn to be

climbed by Italians for Italians” (81). Whympers reminds us that, whether a tool of pro- or anti-imperialism, climbing has never been a straightforwardly innocent “act of ascent” devoid of imperial or national signification.

Between Men: Victorian Mountaineers and their Guides



Figure 9. The Hierarchical Climber-Guide Relationship Visually Asserted Through Strategic Posing. Here, the King of the Hill to whom the guides are deferring as loyal subjects is really a Prince—“Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught, at the Grands Mulets, in 1864, at the age of 14” according to Ronald Clark (*Victorian Mountaineers*). Reproduced from Ronald Clark’s *The Victorian Mountaineers*. London: Batsford, 1953. 11.

Due to their socio-economic indebtedness to their English employers, guides were particularly prone to the kind of treatment experienced and expressed by Thioly. In the early days of climbing in the Alps, some Englishmen attempted to downplay the role played by their Swiss guides (some going so far as to blame them for any mishaps or failures such as the Whympers disaster—see **Appendix II**) and, in so doing, to assert their personal, socio-economic as well as national and “racial” superiority. The tradition within English alpine culture that the

mountaineer was always to be given privilege of being the first to summit the mountain, even if he had been roped in the middle of the guide line for the bulk of the trip, reflects and extends this general tendency of devaluation. Visual representations of climbers and guides (most often studio photographs) provide further evidence of the ways in which details were often manipulated in order to produce, while purporting merely to reflect, the superior manliness of the English climber and the subordinate position of the loyal but decidedly lower foreign guide (figure 9).

That is not to say that all English climbers despised or mistreated their guides. Many mountaineers, like Leslie Stephen, openly admitted their dependency on the superior knowledge, strength, and experience of the men under his employ. Stephen wrote that "I utterly repudiated the doctrine that Alpine travellers are or ought to be the heroes of Alpine adventures. The true way at least to describe all my Alpine ascents is that Michel or Anderegg or Lauener succeeded in performing a feat requiring strength, courage, the difficulty of which was much increased by the difficulty of taking with him his knapsack and his employer" (*Playground* [1871] 76). Stephen spoke with particular fondness of Swiss guide Ulrich Lauener, calling him in the *Playground of Europe* "the most picturesque of guides. Tall, spare, blue-eyed, long-limbed and square shouldered, with a jovial laugh and a not ungraceful swagger, he is the very model of a true mountaineer" (116). Stephen's praise leads one to suspect that the ideal model of the British mountaineer had actually been that of the stocky Swiss peasant. In a letter home to his wife Lucy, Alfred Wills' gleeful report that a season of climbing had rendered him indistinct from a Swiss guide seems to confirm this suggestion: "You must be prepared for a change, when you see me . . . a stout faced burly, rough looking peasant, with hands and face of

a deep copper colour and with long hair and dilapidated garments—such is your husband become” (qtd in Hansen, *British* 275)

Peter Hansen notes that, generally, Swiss guides were better regarded and more fairly treated than non-European guides and porters. According to Hansen, “the encounters which British climbers had with the ‘other’ in mountains outside the Alps engendered closer identification with the Swiss guides and asserted Britain’s European identity” (“Vertical Boundaries” 52). In his 1888 book, *Pioneers of the Alps*, a heavily illustrated celebration of Swiss guides, C. D. Cunningham expressed a similar sense of a quasi-evolutionary hierarchy emerging in the minds of many mountaineers. According to Cunningham,

it would be a long time before British climbers felt as much affection for the ‘dark-skinned Boteas’ of the Caucasus, as they did for the sturdy Oberlander who greets us with Grus uch on the familiar mountain paths of Meiringen; The sunburnt faces of a group of Swiss guides as represented in the first attempts of an amateur photographer, have much more of what is *gemuthlich* about them than the long-robed men of Gebi in the ‘Frosty Caucasus.’ As time passes on, as rum, missionaries, and British vice-consuls gradually prepare these now somewhat uncivilised districts for the climbing Britisher, we may perhaps hear of some Wili Ali who is regarded as a sort of Melchior by the explorers of these parts. (qtd in Hansen, “Vertical Boundaries” 52)¹⁵

As we will see in later chapters, many English climbers (including most of the women under analysis) adhered to this race, nation, and class-based hierarchy which placed the English middle-class traveller on top and the non-Western European “native” porter on the bottom. As a

result, many tended to believe strongly that, while not English, Swiss guides were far superior in ability, experience, and character and thus far more ideal employees than any other local guides or porters. It is for this reason, that, even when climbing in non-Western European ranges, most British and North American climbers opted to import their favourite Swiss Alpine guides—whether their guides had ever set foot in that country before or not.¹⁶



Figure 10. “British Mountaineers in the 1860s.” Reproduced from Ronald Clark’s *The Victorian Mountaineers*. London: Batsford, 1953. frontispiece. This photo, created in a studio but made to appear as if it was taken “on the trail,” demonstrates the role which some Victorian climbers and many alpine tourists (male and female) envisioned the Swiss guide playing—gentlemanly servant. In this way, Victorian mountaineers and travellers imported (rather than left behind) the hierarchical social order which structured their lives, their society, and their domestic spaces in the nineteenth century.

So widespread was the association of Swiss men with experience, ability, and trustworthiness that, in Canada, the Canadian Pacific Railway Company went so far as to import

Swiss guides to attract world-class British and European climbers. These guides were well-treated, in so far as the CPR gave them paid employment and had a mock Swiss village named Edelweiss built for them outside Golden, B. C. However, in return for such amenities, the guides had to submit to being the CPR's show-ponies. John Marsh reports that "The first guides to be brought out by the CPR to serve at the mountain hotels, were Edouard Feuz, Jr. and Christian Häsler, who came to Glacier in 1899. The Company capitalized on their character, reputation, and visual appeal to the hilt. It had them parading in traditional costume in Trafalgar Square in England, visiting renowned mountaineers to solicit business, posing for photographs, and promenading up and down the railway platform at Glacier when the trains came in" (427).

While crucial actors in the CPR's efforts to advertise the Canadian Rockies as a "hundred Switzerlands in one," Marsh points out that the guides "... got little credit [for the fact that] ... they accomplished more first ascents than their clients" and also that "[w]elcomed by climbers in difficulty on the slopes, they were sometimes treated badly or ignored when nearer civilization" (427).



Figure 11. Swiss Guides Christian Häsler and Eduard Feuz, Jr., who were imported by the CPR, are captured in this photo by the Vauxs at “Glacier House, Aug. 16, 1899.” Reproduced from Edward Cavell’s *Legacy in Ice: the Vaux Family and the Canadian Alps*. Banff, AB: Altitude, 1983. 33.



Several nineteenth-century artifacts offer the suggestion that mountaineering not only provided Victorian men with a means through which to (at least psychologically) conquer a number of imperial, racial, and national fears, but it also helped them allay several sexual and gender-based anxieties which had been made more prescient by the increasing mobility of women and a series of military defeats abroad.¹⁷

A quotation appearing in the September 15, 1866 edition of the *Athenaeum* argued that alpine excursions not only provided young men with a new means of purifying and strengthening their bodies, minds, and souls, but quite paradoxically, it offered them a means through which to physically or conceptually exercise and exorcise sexual energy and prowess:

“For school boys and young collegians who are restless and uncontrollable, there is no better discipline than the well-planned ascent of a lofty mountain. Twelve hours on ice and snow, with axe and alpenstock in continual play, will tame the wildest madcap of Oxford or Cambridge. The treadmill of rough or widely crevassed glacier will make the fastest man deliberate and manageable. In this way the wildest oats of England may be harmlessly sown in the wildest Alpine ice-fields” (328). In addition to explicitly linking mountaineering to sexual activity, this quotation exemplifies the contradiction inherent in dominant heteronormative constructions of Victorian bourgeois masculinity: unlike the Victorian Cult of True Womanhood which demanded that a woman completely repress her sexual appetites (constructed as unnatural and counterproductive to her “ordained” roles as loyal wife and mother), the Victorian Cult of Manliness both demanded the repression of sexual desire through a rigorous program of ascetic self-denial and left room for the indulgence (and thus expulsion) of “natural” but unrefined sexual appetites through “acceptable” though less than “respectable” means outside the confines of the marital union, such as the use of prostitutes and mistresses.



Figure 12. Nineteenth-century postcard, once part of a Series entitled "Fantasy of Jungfrau." Private Collection of Carole Harmon.

The nineteenth-century postcard depicted above (**figure 12**) renders more vivid the relationship being subtly posited, not only in the *Athenaeum* quotation, but in mountaineering texts by even the most scientific or gentlemanly of Victorian alpine men such as Edward Whymper: the relationship between mountaineering, gender, and sexual conquest.¹⁸

On the surface, the meaning of the postcard (perhaps produced for purchase by alpine travellers seeking to commemorate and remember their own touristic or sexual alpine exploits) seems relatively clear—if slightly disturbing: playing on the name of the mountain, the Jungfrau is depicted by the droll artist as quite literally a young woman.¹⁹

Far from being an accurate representation of any material reality, the image is, as the title suggests, "a fantasy."²⁰ In the tradition of both scientific and imperial exploration narratives (which mountaineering texts may be said to have both been *influenced by* and later *influencing*), the conquest of a potentially dangerous, difficult, or unknown landscape is

symbolically enacted as a heterosexual fantasy—a fantasy in which the male explorer/traveller successfully unveils, penetrates, and forces into submission an enticing but treacherous landscape schematised as Woman.²¹

Despite the remarkable difference in size between the Amazonian Mountain-Maid and the flea-like mountaineers rappelling down her body, the Jungfrau's half-exposed body and her prostrate position suggests that Nature is losing in this Manichean struggle against Man (or, in this case, men). The men appear to be seeking to tear off the veil of mystery enshrouding her secrets, and preparing to conquer her scopically, physically, and sexually.²² The smiles on both the moon's and the Jungfrau's faces belie the potential violence of the act, and suggest that she is perhaps an eager and willing receiver of these incursions.

When regarded within the larger social-historical context of the image's production and circulation, "Fantasy of Jungfrau" may be seen as revealing a number of Victorian social fears.

Perhaps one of the most prominent sources of social anxiety, particularly among more conservative Victorian men who had embraced as natural and fixed older mid-Victorian ideas and ideals of womanhood as primarily passive and domestic, was the fact that an ever-increasing number of women were being found (out of necessity and, increasingly, out of desire) to enter into competition with men in the public world of work. According to Bram Dijkstra and Elaine Showalter, many channeled their fears of symbolic emasculation and "castration" into the creation and circulation of an alluring yet cruel figure of womanhood, the *Femme Fatale* (**figure 13**).



Figure 13. Playing on masculine fears of topsy-turvydom brought about by increased female emancipation, Charles Dana Gibson depicts several alluring yet coldly sadistic Gibson Girls attempting to dissect a flea-sized male suitor in his ironically titled illustration, “The Weaker Sex” (1903).

One may view images such as the “Fantasy of Jungfrau” as presenting a set of patriarchal fears and anxieties similar to those enacted in contemporary images produced by artists such as Charles Dana Gibson. However, unlike Gibson’s image, in which the woman remains an attractive but malicious figure, the men the helpless victims of her sadism, the antlike climbers in “Fantasy of Jungfrau,” seemingly against all odds, appear to have avoided being subsumed by the virginal yet treacherous Jungfrau’s snowy peaks and icy crevasses, and are in the final stages of conquering and subduing the wayward woman and, by extension, their (and the implied male viewer’s) fears of symbolic castration or emasculation. In this way, “Fantasy of Jungfrau” also demonstrates one of the central reasons for the popularity of mountaineering among middle-class Victorian men: unable to regain a superior foothold over increasingly discontented wives, daughters, and mothers, mountaineering offered bourgeois men a physical and symbolic means through which to express their fears and to attempt to maintain some modicum of their previous

power and privilege. Through the alpine act of conquering, flagging, and mapping a “virgin” mountain, the Victorian man psychically recuperated his former socio-sexual position “on top.”²³

The adamant manner in which mountaineering was touted as a “manly” and “masculine” or “virile” active sport enacted on a passive female geography may also evince an anxious desire on the part of a number of Alpine men to assure members of respectable Victorian society that the close relations and interchanges between mountaineers and their fellow brothers (as well as their handsome, tanned Swiss guides) on the trail, in remote huts and bivouacs, and in the all-male clubrooms were homosocial but not homosexual. Quotations by mountaineers Edward Whymper and Graham Irving resonate with enough of a homoerotic undertone to suggest otherwise; of the social climate of the Club-House at Zermatt Edward Whymper wrote: “there is a frankness of manner about these strangely-apparelled and queer-faced men which does not remind one of drawing-room or city-life; and it is good to see—in this club-room of Zermatt—those cold bodies, our too-frigid countrymen, melt together when they are brought into contact . . .” (*Scrambles* 110). Similarly, in a lecture about Alpinism reproduced in the *Alpine Journal* of 1909, R. L. G. Irving represented the relationship between men and mountains as a quasi-sexual encounter “between men”: “There is an overwhelming sense of personality about a peak when we feel its broad snowy chest almost touching our own, when his great rocky shoulders rub against ours and our hands clutch at his hard, rough skin to get a hold” (380).

The Jungfrau image not only renders more visible the misogynistic and homophobic fears of many Victorian men; in many ways, it reflects (even as it extends) the general position of Victorian alpine institutions on the subject of women. As we saw in the Jungfrau image, and as we will see in the ensuing sections, women were perceived by many mountain-climbers as more

fitted for the role of the passive desirable object than that of the active, desiring, climbing subject.

Certainly, not all mountaineering men adhered to this perception. Some male Alpine Club members such as Douglas Freshfield and T.G. Bonney outwardly scorned the sexist rules of the Club. Bonney, for example, called the law which “prevents us from numbering among our members” mountaineers such as Elizabeth Le Blond, “stern” and “Salic”; others, such as George Adam Smith, found the athletic female mountaineer depicted on the cover of the Sept. 18 1886 edition of the *Illustrated London News* (figure 17) to be a much more attractive and much healthier image of womanhood than the pallid and child-like Angel of old that he clipped and framed the picture to remind him of the kind of woman he wanted to “be the mistress of my heart and home” (*Alpine Journal* 87 [1982]: 148).²⁴

Unfortunately, men who were accepting of women’s mountaineering were apparently in the minority. For, throughout the nineteenth century, the administrators of Victorian alpine culture’s institution concurred with the opinion of other fraternal scientific bodies, such as the Royal Geographical Society, that “women can’t and shan’t be geographic.”²⁵ Thus, despite the Alpine Club’s awareness that “[o]f course, [women]’d like the honour of belonging to our institution . . . no doubt” (*Daily Mirror* 1907), until the 1970s, the Alpine Club remained firm in their decision to exclude women from participation in their club and to severely limit women’s contributions to their journal. During the nineteenth century, the only female to be awarded status as an Honorary Female member of the Alpine Club was W. A. B. Coolidge’s dog “Tschingel” (figs. 14, 15, 16).



Figure 14



Figure 15.

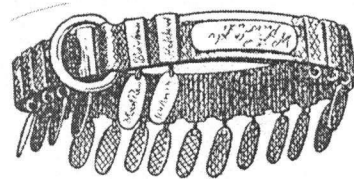


Figure 16.

Figures 14, 15, 16. Tschingel the infamous climbing dog, accompanied her owners Meta Breevort (female figure centre of Figure 14) and W. A. B. Coolidge (male figure on right in Figure 14) on numerous ascents. Figure 16 depicts the special collar that was made for the dog and upon which engraved tags describing the details of each ascent added each time she reached a new summit. Although clearly a female dog, it may be of interest to note that co-owner Breevort insisted on referring to the dog as "he," even after "he" had a litter of puppies. All images reproduced from Ronald Clark's *An Eccentric in the Alps: The Story of Rev. W. A. B. Coolidge*. London: Museum, 1959. titlepage.



In the previous sections, I revealed the prevalent ways in which mountaineering appears to have been constructed, particularly by the Alpine Club of London: as a quasi-sexual, empirical and imperial, and, thus, according to prevailing gender norms of the day, as an essentially masculine and masculinist endeavour.

In the ensuing pages, I will both elaborate upon and problematise such constructions through a detailed analysis of several visual and verbal documents taking as their subject a range of questions and debates which, arguably, are best understood as a subsection of the “Woman Question” debates raging in Britain in the nineteenth century: the “Question” or “Questions of Women’s Mountaineering.” These texts and my analysis of them will, I hope, illustrate that: 1) the efforts of the Alpine Club to restrict, prohibit, and prevent women’s participation in and contribution to alpine culture, literature, and knowledge were not as successful as its members may have hoped (or we may have believed) them to be; 2) that, although, officially, the club was successful at keeping women from becoming members until the 1970s, unofficially, women’s participation in alpinism was not only accommodated but actively encouraged in a number of contexts and forms—often by male members of the same club that was struggling to keep mountaineering a male preserve.

That is not to say, however, that any Englishwoman who wished to break what Elizabeth Le Blond called “the shackles of convention,” to climb and then to publish accounts of her feats could do so with any level of ease. As this next section will illustrate, gaining acceptance as a

female mountaineer (whether amateur or professional) was no “easy day for a [Victorian] lady.”

Women and Mountaineering: Travel Restrictions



Figure 17. “A Lady Mountaineer, Mountaineering in the Tyrol: Turning a Corner.” Engraved drawing by R. Caton Woodville. Reproduced from the cover of the *Illustrated London News* on September 18, 1886. 1. This Delicate yet Aggressive Ice-Axe Wielding Lady Mountaineer is trying desperately to manoeuvre along a narrow precipice. One wonders if the rather cross expression on her face is in fact the result of deep concentration or of her annoyance at having to be restrictively roped between the two Swiss guides (notably smaller than her) who may or may not be “helping” matters.

“Come down, O maid, from yonder mountain height:
 What pleasure lives in height (the shepherd sang)
 In height and cold, the splendour of the hills?
 But cease to move so near the Heavens . . .
 And come, for Love is of the valley, come,
 And find him; by the happy threshold, he”

- Alfred Lord Tennyson, *The Princess*, 1847

In an article entitled “Tennyson and the Mountain-Maid” appearing in the *Alpine Club Journal* of 1959, David Allan Robertson, Jr. convincingly argues that the stanza above, excerpted from Book VII of Tennyson’s 1847 poem *The Princess*, appears to have been an imaginary male speaker’s plea to a personified version of the Jungfrau mountain not to appear so aloof and uninviting.

However, these lines also quite nicely articulate the private thoughts of various Victorian men and women when confronted both with the knowledge that a number of women were attempting alpine climbs after the manner of male Alpine clubsmen and that increasing numbers of non-climbing women were beginning to express their discontent and their desires to aspire higher than the social roles prescribed to them: women’s natural and ordained place, the speaker suggests, is not among the lofty peaks of the Alps or, symbolically, the masculine public fields of competition and accomplishment, but with the female figures appearing in Edward Whymper’s famous “Club-Room at Zermatt” illustration, in the “valley,” and in the background, near the domestic hearth, home, or hotel (**figure 18**).

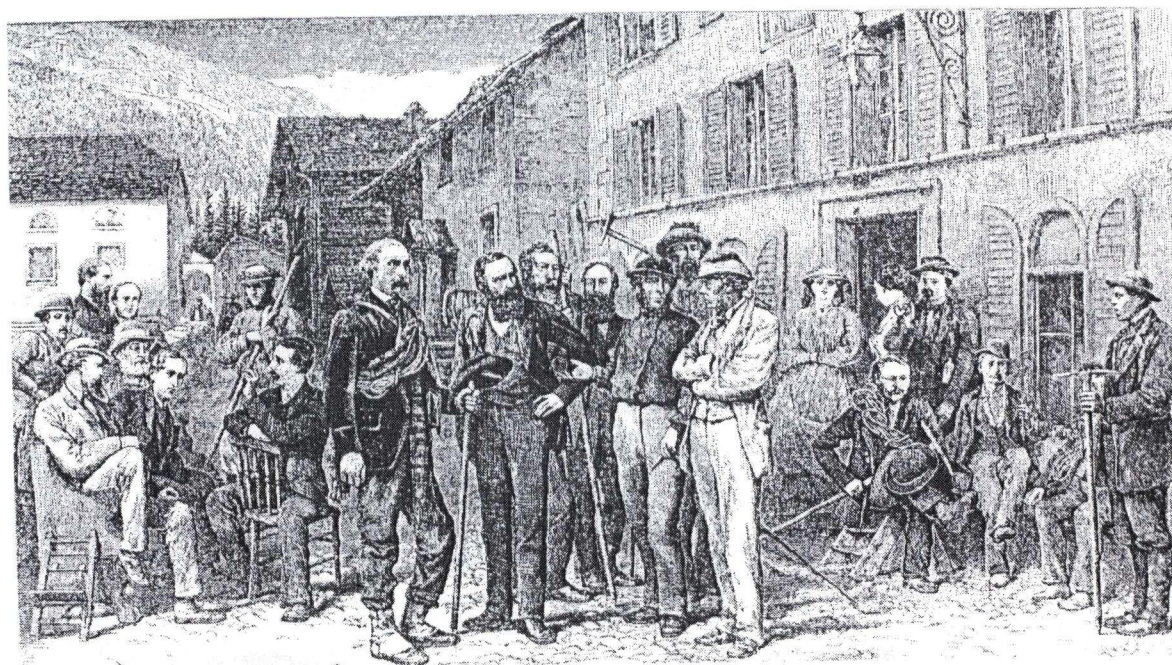


Figure 18. Edward Whymper's famous engraved image of "The Club-Room of Zermatt, in 1864." Reproduced from the 5th edition of Whymper's book *Scrambles Amongst the Alps*. London: John Murray, 1900. 249. This image interestingly exploits posing and figure placement to literally and symbolically place the male English climbers in the centre of things. Although present in the image, notable mountaineer Lucy Walker is relegated to the right side of the image, significantly near (and almost in) the domestic space of the Clubroom, next to the female housekeeper and the lower-class Swiss guides. The names and identities of both women are notably absent from the caption which accompanied the image when it appeared in Whymper's 5th edition of *Scrambles*. Visually speaking, the Swiss guides are relegated to a subordinate position even lower than the women. At right, several guides are depicted seated, while Ulrich Lauener (second row centre), the tall and fierce climber whom Stephen admired so much, is barely visible over the head of the English climber in front of him.

The admonishment offered in Tennyson's poem closely mirrors the comment which accomplished mountain-climber Elizabeth Le Blond's great-aunt was said to have uttered to Le Blond's mother, upon hearing that her great-niece had been mountaineering in the Alps: "Stop her climbing mountains for she is scandalising London and looks like a red Indian" (*Day In, Day Out* 90). According to Le Blond, the indignant elder was alluding to the effects of sun exposure on her great-niece's face (in *Day in Day Out*, Le Blond wrote that "I was usually copper-

coloured when I returned to England after a series of ascents" [90]). However, Lady Bentinck's comment brings to the fore some of the ways in which members of Victorian "respectable" society (represented and reinforced in this scene by Le Blond's great aunt) patrolled and upheld the borders of propriety and class so as to prevent their erosion by wayward young girls seeking to overstep their bounds. Having failed to behave or look in a manner defined by polite society as "lady-like," Le Blond has not only brought a quasi-sexual aura of scandal and shame to her family and her class, but she appears to have put herself at risk of becoming another—and in the Victorian world order, an *inferior*—race.²⁶

Both within and outside the Alpine Club, women's mountaineering was discouraged in ways and on grounds very similar to those presented by Le Blond's grandmother. On August 19, 1893 a ditty entitled "The Walking Englishwoman on the Alps" appeared in *Punch*, accompanied by a pen and ink drawing of an alpenstock-wielding Lady Alpinist (**figure 19**). After the manner of the speaker in Tennyson's poem, the female mountaineer is berated for having transformed herself from a moral domestic "Angel" or "goddess" into an unattractive, unnatural, and even "alarming" species of femininity, "the female mountaineer":

"The Walking Englishwoman on the Alps"

You who look, at home, so charming—
 Angel, goddess, nothing less—
 Do you know you're quite alarming
 In that dress?
 Such a garb should be forbidden
 Where's the grace an artist loves?
 Think of dainty fingers hidden
 In those gloves!
 Thick! And yet you often tear them
 With that axe
 Worst of All, unblackened, unshiny

Greet them with derisive hoots
 Clumsy, huge! For feet so tiny!
 Oh, those boots!

This poem is of interest for several reasons. On the one hand, it presents one of the most common arguments used to berate women's climbing—that mountaineering and indeed any activity involving physical exertion outdoors enacted upon delicate “respectable” women a degenerative process which rendered them (perhaps permanently) physically coarse, ugly, and mannish. At the same time, it demonstrates a crucial paradox at the heart of dominant Victorian conceptions of gender: femininity in the Victorian view was both considered essential, innate, and immutable, and constantly in the process of “making” or at peril of being “unmade.”²⁷ In this instance, by failing to stay “at home” and by refusing to don the impractical but delicate clothing most commonly associated with respectable genteel (read passive, corsetted) femininity, the Englishwoman in the Alps seems to have masculinised or “unsexed” herself.

As the poem indicates, appearance and, in particular, women's clothes were the source and site of much anxiety during the nineteenth century, especially within Victorian mountaineering culture. Even as dress reformers were gaining some ground in their battle for changes to the impractical, excessive, and even potentially dangerous sartorial styles and practices of the middle class woman, particularly the practice of tight-corsetting, many men (such as, we may infer, the author of the *Punch* poem) and women held tenaciously to older or more conservative models of feminine beauty. These older models envisioned the ideal upper-class lady as pale, elaborately dressed and coiffed, heavily corsetted and crinolined, and, from the 1870s onwards, bustled so as to appear at once extremely tiny and extremely grand, but in all

respects, restricted and restrained (**figures 20 and 21**).

Many individuals who were against women's participation in mountaineering used clothing as a means of putting the Victorian female mountaineer literally as well as figuratively into a tight bind. Victorian women were sent two conflicting messages in many articles debating the subject of mountaineering women; in many cases, as in the *Punch* poem, unfeminine clothing and, by extension, activities which necessitated a woman's adoption of less fancy and feminine dress, were presented as rendering a woman unattractive and even "alarming"; and, as Mrs. Le Blond's grandmother argued, it placed a "lady" at risk of being (mis)read as a woman of questionable morality, respectability, and even of a questionable gender, class, or race.

On the other hand, many observers berated female tourists who had endangered themselves and other members of their party by attempting to climb in respectable but also distinctly impractical garb. As an advocate of women's mountaineering, Swiss Alpine Club member Julian Grande pointed out in a 1911 article for the London *Daily Mail* that "women naturally are somewhat at a disadvantage when climbing, especially as regards their dress. A more troublesome or unsuitable garment than a skirt is impossible to imagine for mountaineering" (9). "The difficulty with a skirt," Grande argued, was "that when one gets up in higher regions the wind literally catches it and turns it into a balloon, very often blinds its wearer, impedes the progress of the climber and becomes most dangerous" (9).



Figure 19. The Practical but “Alarming” Englishwoman on the Alps who was the subject of Punch’s satirical poem, “The Walking Englishwoman on the Alps.” Reproduced from *Punch* (August 1- 1893) .



Figure 20.



Figure 21.

Figures 20 and 21. Two More Elaborate but Stereotypically more Feminine Ladies from the 1862 (left) and 1877 (right). Images reproduced from Alison Gernsheim’s *Victorian and Edwardian Fashion: A Photographic Survey*. NY: Dover Publications Inc., 1981.

Thus, it seems that Victorian lady climbers had but two choices—both of which seemed designed to discourage women's participation in mountaineering and their success at it: 1) they could risk social stigmatisation and climb in more masculine but more practical and less restrictive garb inspired by (or borrowed from) their brothers, sons, or husbands; or 2) they could wear more typically feminine but heavy, constrictive clothing which would ensure their categorisation as a "lady." However, both the clothing and the label "lady" which sartorial conformity would bring also prevented women from going (or from being allowed by overprotective men to go) as high, as fast, or as far as the men. In extreme situations, a "lady" might be prevented from climbing altogether by male mountaineers due to the potential for mishap which having an inappropriately clad delicate creature in the caravan increased. Indeed, in an article in *Women at Home* for 1898 Miss E. P. Hughes argued that garments such as the crinoline or bustle, the corset, or the longer skirt were so dangerous and cumbersome that "no good guide will now take a lady up a difficult mountain unless she is dressed properly in light woollen garments—knickerbockers and [if desired] short skirt, no stays, and the usual paraphernalia of glasses, warm gloves, veil, gaiters, etc" (933).

While social rules were constantly being made and transgressions threatened with swift punishment, consensus on a finite set of hard and fast sartorial rules was never reached. In Victorian mountaineering culture, as in Victorian society at large, women's climbing clothing continued to be a subject of animated debate throughout the nineteenth century. As I will reveal in later sections, even women climbers and advocates of women's participation in mountaineering differed widely in their opinion of the clothing question. Although many members of polite society sought to achieve a homogeneity of behavior through the erection of

elaborate etiquette rules and the threat of social punishment, each individual woman climber exercised some degree of power in choosing to respond to the sartorial dictates of the day—many doing so in very interesting and innovative if somewhat surprising ways. For, not all women who sought to climb mountains sought to completely buck social convention. Moreover, not all women wished to follow the dictates of “respectable” or even fashionable society.



Arguments of Nature

In so many areas of Victorian life, arguments about women’s superior moral but inferior physical fibre were frequently used to legitimate the restriction or prevention of women’s involvement in public and physical activities; mountaineering was no exception. Even as health reformers were gaining ground for the idea that exercise could have restorative rather than degenerative effects on the Victorian lady’s constitution, and even as they were beginning to find that many “innate” female inferiorities were the result of poor education, restrictive clothing, and a lack of nutrition and exercise rather than nature, the claim that vigorous exercise such as mountain-climbing could destroy a woman’s health and impede her reproductive capabilities for life continued to be evoked as a legitimate reason for curbing or preventing women’s full participation in Victorian alpine culture. In a chapter of his 1914 handbook on mountaineering devoted to “Mountaineering for Women,” for example, male climber Claude Benson warned male and female readers of the possible repercussions of a woman overexerting herself physically: “I use the term ‘weaker sex’ advisedly, because women are not so strong as we are,

and they must *remember* it. Overfatigue has not infrequently permanently impaired the health of a strong man, and women are more susceptible to a similar distressing experience. Their organism is more delicate and complicated” (186-87). In an ensuing footnote, Benson continued: “Since writing this, it has been remarked to me ‘A woman who has once overwalked herself seems doomed to be more or less of an invalid for life,’ and ‘Doctors, in this age of feminine athletics, are constantly having girls on their hands who have overdone it, and will never be quite the same again’” (186).



Women Mountaineers and the Victorian Publishing Process

On the trail, women climbers’ behaviors and appearances were policed by male and female fellow travellers. Off the trail, their visual and verbal publications of themselves and their travels were surveyed and sometimes altered by male editors and publishers.

A number of publishers such as Longman eagerly produced writings by women mountaineers and helped support lecture tours (often motivated in part by a desire to capitalise on the sensationalism which surrounded women who were perceived as doing slightly audacious and only marginally lady-like things).²⁸ However, until well into the twentieth century, Victorian women’s serious contribution to mountaineering culture in the form of published texts was officially discouraged by the Alpine Club. This discouragement was enacted both through

the Alpine Club's refusal to publish all but two articles by women in the main body of the *Alpine Journal* (until at least 1900), and through their consistently disparaging treatment of women mountaineers' writings in *Alpine Journal* book reviews—particularly those writings which seemed to veer from the path of respectable femininity.²⁹

An *Alpine Journal* review of Amelia Edwards's book *Untrodden Peaks and Unfrequented Valleys* (1873) may provide some insight into the ways in which many male book reviewers used their discursive power in order to assist the Alpine Club in making it extremely difficult for women to present themselves as accomplished climbers and serious authors.³⁰

The Alpine Club reviewer of *Untrodden Peaks and Unfrequented Valleys* opened his article by chastising writers like Miss Edwards for helping to "destroy the silence and simplicity they pretend to love by directing a whole tide of tourists into the quiet waters they have chanced to drop into." To further stress his disapproval of Edwards' book and his anti-touristic leanings, he grumbled that "'Après moi le déluge' would have been, perhaps the most appropriate motto for the handsome and lavishly illustrated volume now before us" (317).³¹

The reviewer then turned his attention towards discrediting Edwards's claims, in the title of the book, that she was now presenting to readers a novel yet accurate account of an equally novel set of travels through various "untrod peaks and unfrequented valleys": "... Miss Edwards has little to tell which will be new to those who already possess or have read with care Messrs. Gilbert and Churchill's 'Dolomites'," the reviewer argued, before launching into a lengthy process of correcting a series of "mistakes or omissions in detail into which the author has fallen." He then focused his energy towards openly refuting her opinions of local accommodations and her perceptions of the difficulty of several alpine routes:

The pass (Oberbacher Joch), from the upper valley of Auronzo to the Sexten Thal, is not 'dangerous' in any way. The general experience of the inn at Agordo is, we believe, the reverse of Miss Edwards's,—probably the cook was out of for the day at the moment of her visit. Mr. Tuckett has strolled up alone the Cima di Fradusta spoken of in the preface as unascended and of the greatest difficulty. Of the length and difficulty of the frequented mule-path from Agordo to Primiero Miss Edwards has, we think, given a very exaggerated account. (318-19)

After calling her outline sketch "representing the peaks of Primiero" particularly "reeling," "disorderly" and "an insult to the weird grandeur of that noble group," the reviewer closed with a mixed compliment regarding his prediction for the book's success: "... the volume as a whole thoroughly deserves the popularity its publishers' *liberality* will doubtless secure for it" (319, emphasis my own).

If one considers the clothing Edwards wore (ladylike costume), her preferred mode of travel (often by mule), and the relatively small number of actual ascents she attempted during her travels, one might perhaps agree with (and even find warranted) the reviewer's insistent categorisation of Edwards and her writing as touristic and novice. However, when one is reminded of several facts—about Edwards and about the Dolomites—the reviewer's words may seem less like a brutal but honest appraisal of an inferior book by a relatively unaccomplished lady tourist and more like an anxious and defensive masculinist attack against a perceived female threat.

Had one only the A.C. review to go by, one would perhaps have no idea that, though her climbing record was less extensive and impressive than that of women such as Elizabeth Le Blond, Edwards did, on this trip, conquer a first ascent of a mountain, the Sasso Bianco. One would perhaps also fail to find that, contrary to what the reviewer said, Miss Edwards actually *did* have much to tell which was new; historical record shows that in fact the first part of Edwards' title was quite accurate—at this particular historical moment, the Dolomite range was still a relatively unexplored region, having no real roads, and containing peaks that had not yet been bagged by the British Alpine Club members (Unsworth).

Bearing these facts in mind, it may not be an implausible contention to make that the reviewer was so thoroughly critical and dismissive of Edwards and so insistent about questioning her abilities to present accurate visual and verbal records because he (like many male members of the Victorian mountaineering, explorational, scientific, and educational communities) wanted to prevent a woman's travels and writings from beating out men's climbs and accounts of still relatively unexplored regions. The reviewer's reference to the superiority of a somewhat outdated book written by male climbers Gilbert and Churchill seems to affirm this contention.

Whether these verbal slights were strategic or "honest," the reviewer's refusal to accept any of Edwards's work as factually sound and credible implicates him in a larger project being undertaken by several Victorian institutions to re-produce a definition of females as helpless, bumbling, rambling tourists and males as serious, accomplished and productive explorers, discoverers, and socio-scientific authorities. As we shall see in later sections, this equation was used to exclude several extremely accomplished women from being viewed by various male-dominated communities as talented climbers and producers of 'serious' knowledge. However, as

we will also see, many of the women were more than helpless victims of such categorisations. On the contrary, like Edwards (who had herself asserted in her narrative that she was merely a “rambling” lady tourist almost as often as she rebelled against such labels) a large number of Victorian women travellers and climbers themselves often exploited the female-tourist equation in attempting to mask their subversive intentions with a façade of submissive, non-threatening “touristic” femininity. As a result, women such as Edwards often played a part in perpetuating the devaluation of women’s abilities to climb and write with any level of seriousness or authority.

If, after publication, book reviewers held a great deal of power over how a lady traveller’s book would be perceived and categorized by the general public, prior to the publication process, editors and publishers also played a key part in helping female alpinist-authors determine the style, content, and structure of their manuscripts. In her book, *Mountaineering in the Land of the Midnight Sun* (1908), for example, Le Blond tells readers how the publisher had talked her out of presenting her work in a more daring form. Sensing that “[n]owadays readers of books of travel expect an ever-increasing number of illustrations,” Le Blond had envisioned publishing a book comprised only of a series of her photographs arranged “in a series, resembling a cinematograph.” In her vision, the images would have been the only things “occupying the whole of the space between the covers of [the] book.” However, Le Blond reports that “my publisher . . . assures me that were I thus to present the following pages to a discriminating public, I should be a trifle ahead of my century, and it is on his suggestion that I dilute the

perhaps too numerous illustrations with a certain amount of penmanship” (13).

In her 1928 autobiography *Day In, Day Out*, Le Blond also points out that the title of her first book had not been chosen by her: “The detailed accounts of my climbs followed in a stream of volumes. The first was certainly the crudest publication of a travel nature ever offered to a kindly public and noticed by indulgent reviewers. . . . Its only other good point was its title, and that was not mine. It was called ‘The High Alps in Winter, or Mountaineering in Search of Health’” (91). While one remains uncertain as to the reason for the editor’s choice of this title, one may infer that it was chosen to suggest both a more subversive and more conservative persona—in order to appeal to the broadest of audiences. Both serious mountaineers and non-climbers with an appetite for novelty and sensation for example might have been drawn in by the contrast between the first part of the title (“The High Alps in Winter”) and the author’s name and gender, and therefore might have proceeded to buy this book about fellow climber (and, even more shocking, a female climber!) undertaking high peaks in an extremely dangerous season—winter. The interests of less adventurous armchair travellers or invalids might have been piqued by the suggestion that mountaineering allowed one to attain health. This latter group might have purchased the book with the hopes that Le Blond’s appendices on alpine convalescence might lead them to a potential elixir for their maladies.

I include these details about publication to remind my reader of the complexities not only of publication, but of representation and identity formation—clearly, women’s travels, social and discursive personae, and their visual and verbal creations were more than simply public manifestations of private desires, ambitions, or intentions. Rather, all were the product of an elaborate set of internal and external cultural and individual discursive negotiations.



If the previous analysis offers a very general sense of some of the ways in which Victorian women were discouraged from following in the more daring footsteps of their vertically inclined husbands, brothers, and sons, the next section may offer us insight into some of the less openly acknowledged but perhaps more accurate reasons why Victorian male mountaineers wished to keep the Alpine Club and, by extension, mountaineering culture, an all-male preserve.

I have already noted a tendency within male scientific, imperial, and artistic representations of landscapes to figure Nature as a woman, particularly within Victorian alpine culture. However, as James Buzard has noted, Englishwomen were also closely, if complexly, constructed as synonymous with Culture, with leisure, with civilization, and with packaged tourism. Thus, another reason why men argued for women's exclusion was that, to many men, women represented (indeed embodied) all that they wanted to escape from by heading for the hills. As Buzard puts it in *The Beaten Track*, after the technological expansion and economic democratisation of intercontinental train and steamship travel had opened up the formerly elitist and masculinist tradition of the Grand Tour to a greater number of people, Victorian women and, in particular, bourgeois female tourists became the "Others" against which and through which those seeking to establish identities as "authentic travellers" defined and asserted their identities:

Women could not, it was thought, respectably travel 'post' (the method allowing for greatest speed and spontaneity); there could be no indulging that *nostalgie de la boue*

with which male travellers had often greeted ‘sordid’ Continental rooms and meals.

Because of her dependence on male care and British amenities, because of her always requiring to travel slowly and in company—men took it for granted—the woman abroad was a natural ‘tourist’ to the men who observed her: she was another avatar of that plural person destroying real travel—much as she was, along with other troublesome sorts, a natural member of ‘the crowd.’ (151)

A 1901 Louis Vuitton ad (**figure 22**) represents the stereotypical construction of the “lady traveller-as-tourist.”



Figure 22. The Stylish but Impractical Lady Tourist as Presented by Louis Vuitton 1901 in the *Orient-Pacific Line Guide*. London: Sampson, Low, Marston, 1901. iv. Reproduced from Barbara Hodgson’s *No Place for a Lady: Tales of Adventurous Women Travellers*. Vancouver/Toronto: Greystone Books, 2002. 12.

Eminently an elaborate creature, the female of the species both literally and figuratively brought with her all the trappings and baggage of civilised life—baggage which, noted Harold Spender, often slowed, complicated, and rendered more dangerous the travels of both the lady and her companions: “the present danger which always exists [is] that a woman should become rather a drag on a [climbing] party, diminishing the pace, and monopolising the attention of the men at moments when each member of the party ought to count for one” (930).

To mountaineering men like Leslie Stephen, the rugged mountain landscape was so attractive because it was supposed to be in all regards an “uncorseted” landscape—a wild place to which men could flee in order to escape (at least temporarily) from the pressures, restrictions, and responsibilities which domestic and society life as “lady’s men” demanded of them. On the trail and in the context of the Alpine society, the Alpine Club man could swear, tell off-colour jokes, drink and smoke to his heart’s content, wear dirty clothes and avoid soap as long as he liked. In the company of the “ladies,” however, he was obliged to behave in a restrained, polite, and respectable manner.

In *The Playground of Europe* (1871), Leslie Stephen acknowledged the fact that the jokes, stories, and behaviour of Alpine men in remote alpine huts and in the Alpine Club-Rooms of Zermatt and London were far from always “gentlemanly”; in the ensuing passage, Stephen humorously describes how, much after the manner many Alpinists who had begrudgingly had to moderate their dress, their demeanour, and their manners after a climbing season away from polite society, Stephen had to clean up his manuscripts (written initially for the amusement of fellow Alpine Club men) for presentation to the public:

One does not make a bad book good by giving notice of its faults, nor can one hope to

soften the inexorable ferocity of critics. And yet I am possessed with a nervous feeling, like that of a gentleman entering an evening party with a consciousness that his neckcloth is badly tied, and endeavouring by an utterly futile contortion to put it right at the last moment. With my eyes open to the weakness of my conduct, I do what I have often condemned in others, and make a statement which I might more wisely leave to my enemies. The case, then, is this. I have endeavoured to remove from these papers one glaring fault. Most of them were originally written for a small and very friendly audience; and whilst the pen was in my hand, I had a vision before my eyes of a few companions sitting at the door of some Swiss inn, smoking the pipe of peace after a hard day's walk, and talking what everybody talks, from archbishops to navvies; that is to say, which is ordinarily called 'shop.' I was simply prolonging pleasant chats about guides and snow-slopes and arêtes, and ropes and crevasses, which had a strange interest at the time, and were delightful even in the recollection. As some often-cited painter used to work at his picture in a court dress by way of maintaining a dignified frame of mind, I could hardly scribble my undignified narratives in anything but a rusty old shooting-coat, perfumed with tobacco, and still marked by the rope that had often been fastened round it. It was perhaps excusable that there should intrude into my pages a certain quantity of slang, and a large allowance of exceedingly bad jokes. On presenting myself to a larger public, I have endeavoured to perform the painful operation of self-mutilation. The slang, I would fain hope, has been ruthlessly excised; but the pain of dismissing a poor old joke, at which its author has smiled with parental affection, and which his friends have

condescended to accept as more or less facetious, inflicts so cruel a pang, that I fear some intolerable specimens may remain. (ix)

The idea of “escape” from domesticity was so crucial to Victorian men’s mountaineering for two main reasons; first, because the democratisation of travel had opened the door of opportunity for unprecedented numbers of women and families to participate in leisure travel and “grand tourism” alongside the men, thereby making it increasingly difficult if not impossible for the Victorian middle-class man to get away; and, secondly, because social pressures in the form of marriage and familial responsibility meant that the alpine man’s days of solitary bachelorhood and of conquering the High Alps were numbered. As Helena Mitchie argues in her article, evidence of this social pressure on the Victorian man to “reorient” himself to a new, more domestic identity after marriage is evident in the writings of Leslie Stephen.



Figure 23. Unlike many other more masculinist climbers, Alfred Wills always envisioned mountain-climbing as a family affair. This image depicts a family reunion held at the Wills’ Swiss chalet, dubbed the Eagle’s Nest sometime in the 1880s or 1890s. To many Alpine Clubsmen, this photo would have represented the very sorts of crowds they headed to the hills to avoid. Reproduced from Ronald Clark’s *The Victorian Mountaineers*. London: Batsford, 1953. 34.

According to Mitchie, the “regrets” referred to by Stephen in the title of his article “Regrets of a Mountaineer” related to the fact that, after his marriage to Minny Thackeray, the once avid mountaineer was expected to come down from yonder mountain heights and be with his love in the valley. Mitchie cites the following passage from Stephen’s piece as evidence of his sense of “regret”: “I was married on June 19 [1867], and to avoid all folly of breakfasts, &c., we got it done at 8 A.M., and started by the Folkestone and Boulogne train for Paris. . . . We went to Switzerland and visited my dear old mountains, and to you—being out of the possibility of peaching—I may whisper that I felt certain pangs at staying at the bottom, instead of bounding from peak to peak across the fathomless abysses of the glacier” (qtd in Mitchie 242).

If Victorian female *tourists* were a source of frustration and focus of criticism for Victorian male travellers because they reminded them of the strictures and structures they wished to escape in travelling away from England to the “edge of cultivation,” why were female mountaineers—women who, like Victorian male travellers and mountaineers, wished to deviate from and climb higher than the beaten track—also seen as a source of male anxiety and criticism?

Women’s sports historian Jennifer Hargreaves has offered one reason why Victorian men responded negatively towards female athletes such as mountaineers: because “women’s participation in the traditionally all-male competitive sports was symbolic of her competition with men” in other spheres of life (50). A famous quotation uttered by Leslie Stephen seems to illustrate Hargreaves’s theory; in Stephen’s words: “Since the first summer I spent in the Alps, more than one excellent mountain of my acquaintance has passed through successive stages

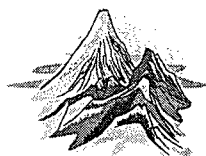
denoted by the terms ‘inaccessible,’ ‘the most difficult point in the Alps,’ ‘a good hard climb, but nothing out of the way,’ ‘a perfectly straightforward bit of work;’ and finally, ‘an easy day for a lady’” (304).³² The implied logic appears to have been that, if a woman could do a climb, then it was no climb worthy of a virile man. A peak conquered by a woman was instantly demoted. It must have been easier than it looked.

Stephen’s comment therefore leads one to conclude that mountaineering for the “fairer sex” was discouraged not only because it was said to have a detrimental effect on a woman’s complexion, constitution, appearance, or reputation (nor because there was “no room”³³ in the Alpine Club for them), but because women’s presence diminished the accomplishments and reputations of mountaineering men, and therefore, undermined constructions of mountaineering as a manly and anti-touristic sport.

Extending Stephen’s anxieties about women turning a difficult and therefore manly ascent into an “easy day for a lady,” a writer for *The Athenaeum* chimed in that female climbers made Victorian Englishmen look weak by comparison: “these Alpine females do not belong to the ‘weaker sex’; they are stronger than many men, —at least, literary men” (57 [March 3, 1871]: 680). In this context, it is perhaps also plausible to argue that the masculinist climbers often discouraged women’s climbing because female mountaineers reminded them too much of other anxious problems—problems which, as I mentioned earlier, mountaineering was touted as helping Victorian men to escape or conquer; namely, the decline of patriarchy and thus the waning of men’s socio-economic and sexual dominance.

While the Mountaineering Woman, the Social Climbing Woman, and the New Woman may have differed in objectives (the Climbing Woman seeking to physically aspire to the heights,

the Social Climber seeking to better her socio-economic position, and the New Woman striving for a combination of physical, social, and political ascendancy), the *Athenaeum* quotation leads one to conclude that the mountaineering woman was seen as permutation of these other feminine types because she too sought to turn the patriarchal and hierarchical Victorian social order topsy-turvy, and more specifically, because she too ostensibly seemed to usurp the traditionally male socio-sexual position “on top.”³⁴ Thus, I argue, the reason why Victorian mountaineering women seem to have remained many Victorian men’s—and, in particular, mountaineering men’s—“Other” in the nineteenth century is because, like (and perhaps even more so than) the social climber and the New Woman, female mountain-climbers reminded men of their waning ability to remain, literally and figuratively speaking, “Kings of the Hill.” Whether in Alpine society or at home back in England, it seemed, women were always coming out on the top of the heap.³⁵ As we will see particularly in the case of Annie Peck and Fanny Bullock Workman, female climbers were not only aware of such associations but actively exploited them in their construction of public identities as women and as mountaineers.



Women’s Travel Accommodations:

Despite the general trend towards the disparagement and discouragement of women’s “movements”—a trend which, among certain individuals continued even until the end of the nineteenth century, particularly as suffragism was gaining in power and profile and the numbers of athletic and adventure-seeking women seemed to have increased significantly—women’s

participation in Victorian alpine culture was often legitimated, if only in a relatively small number of contexts and for a finite number of reasons.

Alpine Travel for Pleasure and Leisure

While many solitary male travellers and mountaineers in particular detested the family tour and women on it, by the 1860s such groups were becoming increasingly expected (if not accepted) sights in Europe, particularly in the Alps near the glaciers (**figure 24**)—thanks to the efforts of Victorian entrepreneurs Albert Smith and Thomas Cook.³⁶



Figure 24. English Tourists “doing” the Glaciers of Switzerland in the “late 1870s.” Reproduced from Ronald Clark’s *The Victorian Mountaineers*. London: Batsford, 1953. 117.

Although Albert Smith has been credited for his role in popularising mountaineering

among the middle classes, no one has drawn attention to the crucial role which he and his show played in exposing Victorian women to male alpine culture and enabling them an opportunity to “virtually” participate in mountaineering. While he tended to cast his Mont Blanc show in accordance with contemporary patriarchal social scripts which envisioned men as active doers and women as passive onlookers and objects, **figures 25, 26, and 27** attest to the fact that Albert Smith did offer those Victorian women who could afford to attend his show an experience which they might never have otherwise been able—or indeed allowed—to access: a vicarious ascent of the highest mountain in the Swiss Alps, Mont Blanc. It is for this reason that no study of women’s mountaineering is complete without some mention of him. (For a more detailed discussion of Albert Smith’s Mont Blanc Show consult **Appendix III**).

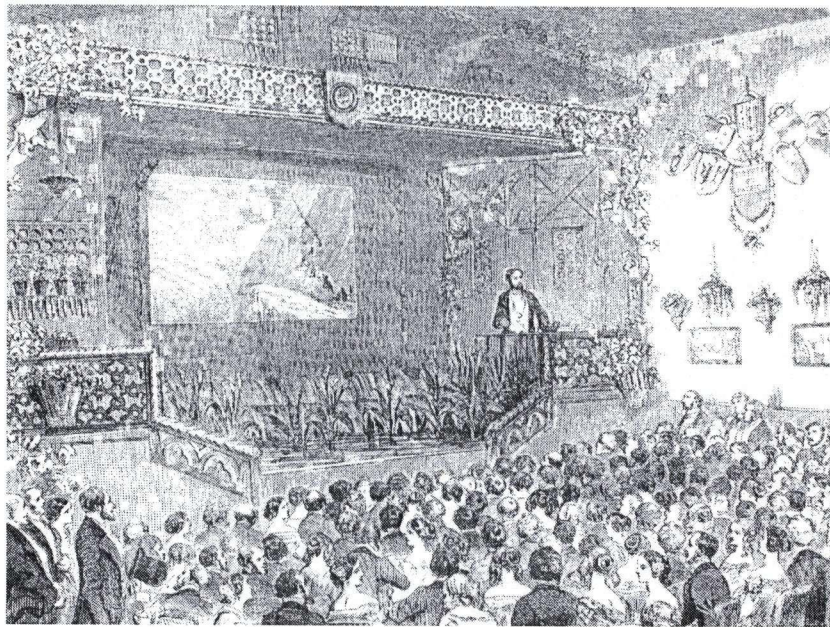


Figure 25. Interior view of the Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly Circus, London, during a performance of Albert Smith’s “Ascent of Mont Blanc” Show. Reproduced from the *Illustrated London News* 25 December 1852. 565.

According to Charles Dickens, “by his own ability and good humour [Smith] thaw[ed] Mont Blanc’s] eternal ice and snow, so that the most timid ladies [could vicariously] ascend it twice a day . . . without the smallest danger of fatigue” (qtd in Fitzsimons 135). Similarly, in what seems to have been a press release for the Mont Blanc show, Smith’s publicity manager argued that

[Smith’s] unquestioned ability as a lecturer, his rapid but distinct utterance, his genuine humour, his keen sense of the ridiculous as exhibited in that fish out of water—John Bull abroad— and his well-selected and well-painted scenery, conspired with his careful attention to the comfort of his audience, to enable him to achieve an unprecedented success, so that every man or woman, boy or girl, who has visited the metropolis during the past six years, has been able to ‘do’ the ascent of Mont Blanc by deputy, and to realise it to him (or her) self pretty nearly as if he (or she, as the case may be) had climbed upon the snowy side of that king of European mountains, had crossed his awful ravines, had heard the thunder of his avalanches, and sat upon the summit to enjoy the view of his rosy peaks of his brother mountains at dawn of day, and to drink a glass of champagne, then and there, to the health of Her Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria. (Qtd in Hansen, “Albert Smith” 305-6)

Because it helped contribute to the popularity of the Alps as a British travel destination (a popularity which in turn sped up the development of the Alps by and for British tourists), and because it facilitated what I have called the “domestication” of all things Swiss and Alpine by the British, Smith’s Mont Blanc show may therefore be said to have done for and to Switzerland what Queen Victoria’s Highland Journals did for and to Scotland.³⁷ **Figures 26 and 27** illustrate

one such form which this “domestication” took: female fashion. **Figure 26** is an image of an item Smith gave ladies who attended his Mont Blanc show: a program for the show in the form of a fan. Part feminine prop, part scientific artefact (the underside had a map of Smith’s travels on it), the Mont Blanc fan symbolizes both Smith’s role in domesticating and commodifying the Alps and his encouragement of women’s participation in various social, economic and (to a lesser extent) physical acts of conquest. **Figure 27** depicts two ladies against a rather wild seaside scene that the more observant viewer quickly realizes is actually a studio photographer’s painted backdrop. The figure on the left is wearing a Tyrolean hat (that is, a hat fashioned after the sort worn by peasants and tourists in the Tyrol mountains). I include this image because it suggests the influence of mountaineering culture in general and Mont-Blanc-o-mania in particular on mainstream Victorian life and fashion. Indeed, this image seems to confirm and extend Lynne Withey’s contention in *Grand Tours and Cook’s Tours* that even non-climbing Victorian men and women got caught up in the Alpinism craze. According to Withey, “Mountaineering became fashionable throughout Switzerland, even among those who had no intention of climbing ‘anything higher than a diligence,’ to quote Charles Dudley Warner. Mountain-climbing gear was especially popular among British tourists, he claimed, who were easily spotted with their veils and green glasses, alpenstocks and spiked shoes, even though not one in a hundred got close enough to the ice and snowfields to make good use of their outfits” (214). Apparently, British tourists brought their newly acquired tastes home with them; just as Victorian women integrated respectable ladies’ dress into their climbing clothes, **figure 27** reminds us that respectable Victorian ladies sometimes integrated alpine clothing into their urban and rural wardrobes.

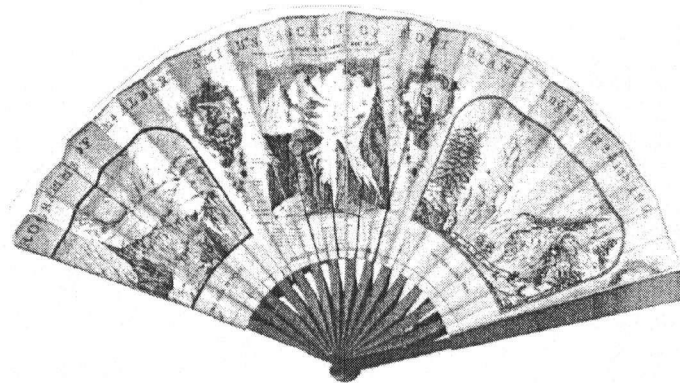


Figure 26. Programme of Mr. Albert Smith's ascent of Mont Blanc, August 12th & 13th, 1851. According to experts at Bernard Shapero Rare Books, London, UK, "[t]his charming fan was occasionally issued to ladies by Smith as a programme to accompany the lecture, the attractive views include a glacier scene and a plan of Smith's route up Mont Blanc." Image and textual description reproduced from Bernard Shapero Rare Books' *Books on Mountaineering, with a Collection of mainly Alpine Panoramas*. London: De Montfort P, nd. 50.



Figure 27. Two unidentified ladies pose against a painted seaside background. Photographer, date unknown. (possibly 1880s). Reproduced from Alison Gernsheim's *Victorian and Edwardian Fashion: A Photographic Survey*. NY: Dover Publications Inc., 1981.

According to Piers Brendan, Thomas Cook played perhaps the most crucial role of all Victorian entrepreneurs in rendering tourism an acceptable activity for even the most feminine of Victorian ladies. Cook was strategic in his representations of his tours; he courted audacious women seeking to escape the doldrums of domestic life by presenting his packaged tours as exciting adventures off the beaten track. In *The Excursionist* magazine, for example, he dubbed his female clients “heroines who required no protection, beyond what the arrangements and companionships of the tour afforded.” In the 1900s on the cover of its published monthly magazine, *The Traveller’s Gazette*, Cook again took to playing up and playing out these female fantasies (and male fears) of escape from male protection and supervision by depicting a handsomely dressed Kodak-toting “heroine” cutting an audacious path across the Globe (**figure 28**).



Figure 28. A Lady Globetrotter on the cover of Cook’s Traveller’s Gazette (c. 1900s) leaves a male companion in the dust as she cuts an independent path across the Globe. Reproduced from Edmund Swinglehurst’s *Cook’s Tours: The Story of Popular Travel*. Poole and Dorset: Blandford, 1982. 124.

The male lagging behind and carrying the lady's coat on the *Traveller's Gazette* cover reminds one that the notion of "escape" being sold to Victorian women was in many respects a myth. Indeed, the *Gazette* image usefully displays the role which Cook envisioned himself and his paternalistic company playing in the Victorian woman's travel experience. Piers Brendan notes in his history of the Cook empire that Thomas Cook was careful to assure the more respectable would-be clients that he was there to act as a "travelling chaperone" or Alpine guide (figure 29) who would ensure that his female clients didn't stray too far from the path of respectability. It was perhaps due to his ability to present his packaged tours as audacious yet acceptable travel that, notes Brendan, "more ladies than gentlemen went on Cook's tours" (52).



Figure 29. Cover of *Cook's Guide to Cook's Tours in France, Switzerland, and Italy* (1860s?) depicts Thomas Cook as an Alpine Guide dressed in Swiss garb. Reproduced from Edmund Swinglehurst's *Cook's Tours: The Story of Popular Travel*. Poole and Dorset: Blandford, 1982. 124.

Thomas Cook's Swiss tours took Smith's virtual show one step further by helping female travellers with vertical inclinations to realize their dreams of enjoying the view from the top by

actually bringing them to (and up) the Alps. In 1863, for example, a young woman named Jemima Morrell took the opportunity afforded by a Cook's circular ticket to conduct a whirlwind tour of Switzerland (**figure 30**).

Together with her brother and five of their friends, a mix of men and women who dubbed themselves the "Junior Alpine Club," Morrell and her crew "crossed the Tête Noire Pass between Chamonix and Martigny, went up the Rhone Valley as far as Sion, visited the spa at Leuk, rode mules over the Gemmi Pass to Kandersteg, steamed across Lake Thun and Lake Brienz, toured Interlaken, visited the waterfalls at Lauterbrunnen and Giessbach, and climbed Mount Rigi" (Withey 151).

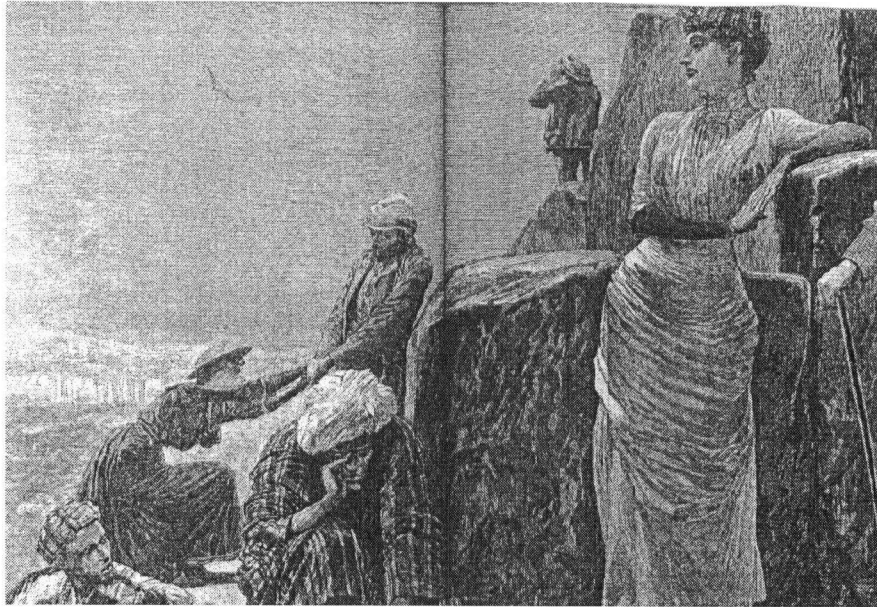


Figure 30. Jemima Morrell (possibly in centre) and the Junior Alpine Club on Cook's first Swiss tour, 1863. Reproduced from Piers Brendan's *Thomas Cook: 150 Years of Popular Tourism*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1991. Figure 10.

Although the Alpine Club undoubtedly would have berated Miss Morrell and her cohorts for their attempts to emulate their prestigious institution and would have dismissed their excursion as

mere “tourism” or “larking,” under the auspices of tourism, Miss Jemima and her female companions were able to gain alpine experience that, ostensibly, could help them prepare for higher calibre alpine ascents.

In later years, Cook led lady tourists and aspiring female climbers up the sides of Mont Cencis, Mount Vesuvius, and even the peaks of the great Egyptian pyramids (**figure 31**).



Figures 31. “Tourists Ascending the Great Pyramid.” R. Caton Woodville, *Illustrated London News*, 7 May 1887: 530-31. Over Hill, Over Dale, Over Ancient Pyramids?! The Lady travellers depicted in this engraving appear to share Mary Kingsley’s views about verticality and racial superiority cited on page 40. At left, a pith helmeted male attempts to pull a young white ‘mem’ up to his ‘level,’ while at right an imperious and restrained Englishwoman enjoys the panoptical stance afforded by a view from the top—a view which appears to have been won less by her own efforts and more by those of the exhausted natives crouching at her feet.

While women seeking to travel in mountain regions or in countries scarcely explored or “domesticated” by tourism found it extremely difficult to legitimate their travels, by the end of the 1860s, largely due to the efforts of Smith and Cook, the Alps were seen as quite an

acceptable and popular place for young ladies to visit (though climbing them was a whole other issue). During the nineteenth century, the Alps also became the romantic backdrop for many Victorian relationships. A great number of love affairs and marriage matches, some among English tourists, and some between English and Swiss locals, were often kindled during Swiss tours.³⁸ Sir Edward Davidson parodied this fact in a letter to a male friend, writing that two women he met in the Alps confirmed his suspicions that women who travelled to the Alps did so not to conquer the mountains, but in order to participate in that other challenging sport of conquest, “husbandeering” (Clark).³⁹

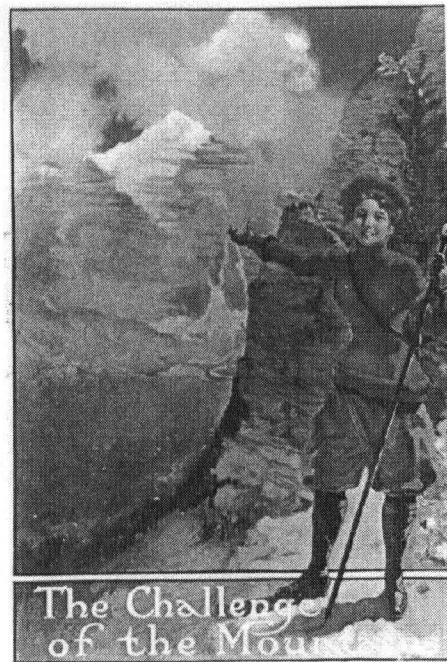


Figure 32. “The Challenge of the Mountains.” Image reproduced from a postcard made by Altitude publishing of a turn of the century Canadian Pacific Railway advertisement, featuring Alpine Annie. Original is held in the Glenbow Museum and Archives, Calgary, AB (2595). Both fashionable and functional, Alpine Annie seems to have been a more attractive construction of the Female Mountaineer. In contrast to the Englishwoman in the *Punch* poem, Alpine Annie’s beauty and attractiveness are enhanced both by her voluminous knickers and by a fitted red sweater that provocatively hugs her feminine curves (though it looks suspiciously like it has a built-in corset in it).

While Sir Edward accused mountaineering women of being husbandoes, evidence suggests that a select number of men found female climbers attractive objects of conquest. Accomplished mountaineer and Alpine Club member F. F. Tuckett seems to have been one such man; in a letter to a friend he wrote “I think we might have a branch of the club to comprise able bodied females, but it would be rather dangerous, as what mountaineer could resist a girl who had ‘done’ the Strahleck, Geant, or Weiss Thor.” Similarly, a prominently placed image of an attractive Gibson-Girlesque female climber (called Alpine Annie) in the centre of a 1909 travel advertisement commissioned by the Canadian Pacific Railway, offered the suggestion that in addition to the relatively pristine and untouched peaks of the Canadian Alps (the Rockies), the Canadian climbing woman was another attractive “Challenge” that an adventurous male traveller might try to conquer whilst on holidays (**figure 32**).

Switzerland was not only a great place to meet one’s lovematch. As both Peter Hansen and Helena Mitchie have pointed out, before Niagara Falls, Switzerland was regarded as the ideal honeymoon destination in the nineteenth century. Notes Hansen, “Many English couples spent their honeymoon in the Alps, the appeal of which—like honeymoons to Niagara Falls—appears to have been the association between wild nature and unbridled passion. Thundering avalanches and gushing cascades symbolized emotion that was channeled but not fully under control, the proximity of which gave added zest to the honeymoon” (*British* 294).

While Victorian men on vacation may have felt themselves at ease and less pressured to uphold the dictates of proper behavior required of an individual back in Victorian English high society, evidence suggests that, while on a honeymoon, the majority of Alpine men upheld the “divided spheres” notion of gender and of climbing—even during their wedding tours. By far

the most common trend amongst male mountaineers seems to have been to leave their wives at the hotel while they went in pursuit of more arduous climbs. A notable exception was Alfred Wills, who took his wife Lucy on an overnight glacier bivouac as part of their Swiss honeymoon.⁴⁰

At the same time, however, many brides openly confessed that they preferred staying back at the hotel. Leslie Stephen's wife Minny was one such woman who found the mountainous landscape such a daunting and uninviting contrast to the security and comfort of the alpine hotel that she could scarcely look out the window at the mountains, let alone attempt to see them from the mountaineer's perspective. In a letter to a friend she wrote: "I am trying not to look out of the window, for if I do I shall see the Matterhorn with the moon shining on it and you can't think how horrid it looks, like a great hooky sort of gleaming ghost. I always think it will come and poke its great hook nose into the window" (qtd. in Mitchie 243). As Minny's comments indicate, not only many men but many women recapitulated the common masculinist dichotomy which was coming to be established, both in Victorian alpine culture and in Victorian society at large: that "ladies" were domesticated leisure tourists, while men were the rugged, undomestic, "real" travellers.

Mrs. Lucy Wills and Mary Mummery, wife of famous mountaineer A. F. Mummery and close friend of accomplished female climber Lily Bristow, reacted much less favourably to the hierarchical and exclusionary tendencies of Victorian mountaineering culture, both at home in London and in Switzerland. Unlike Minny Stephen, Lucy wrote that "I had no idea I should enjoy Switzerland so much. I am almost as well now about the glaciers as Alfred is and that is

saying a good deal. I have managed the walking too, better than I expected" (Hansen, *British* 295).

In a chapter included in her husband, climber Alfred Mummery's book, *My Climbs in the Alps and Caucasus* (1897), Mary Mummery wrote a more scathing attack not only of Alpine masculinism but Alpine masculinity:

The slopes of the Breithorn and the snows of the Weiss Thor are usually supposed to mark the limit of ascents suitable to the weaker sex—indeed, strong prejudices are apt to be aroused the moment a woman attempts any more formidable sort of mountaineering. It appears to me, however, that her powers are, in actual fact, better suited to the really difficult climbs than to the monotonous snow grinds usually considered more fitting. . .

.The masculine mind, however, is with rare exceptions, imbued with the idea that a woman is not a fit comrade for steep ice or precipitous rock, and in consequence, holds it as an article of faith that her climbing should be done by Mark Twain's method, and that she should be satisfied with watching through a telescope some weedy and invertebrate masher being hauled up a steep peak by a couple of burly guides, or by listening to this same masher when, on his return, he lisps out with a sickening drawl the many perils he has encountered. (qtd in Mazel 60-61)



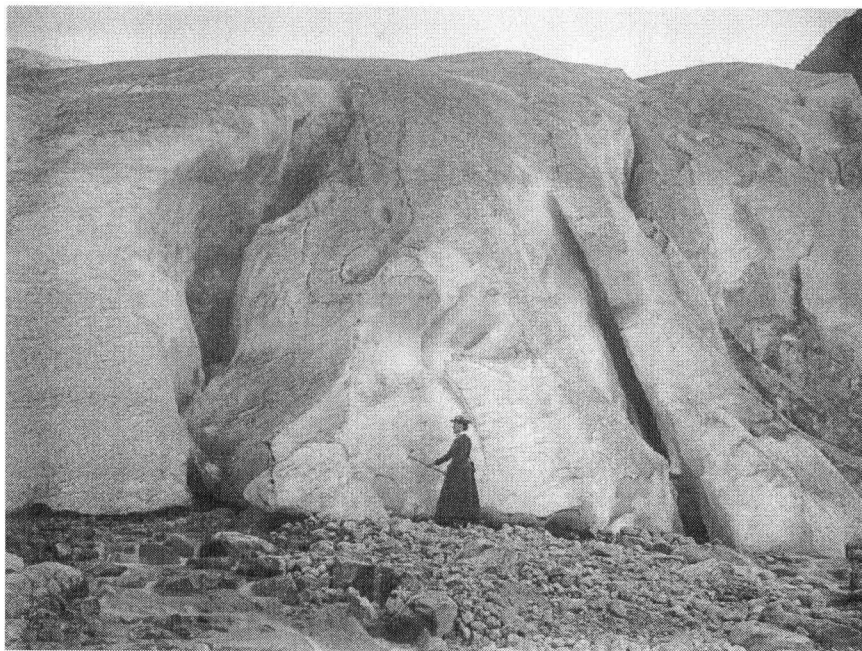


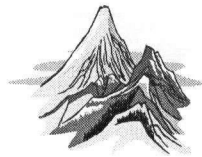
Figure 33. Mary Vaux as a Glaciological instrument in the Vauxs' study of the "Ice forefoot of Illecillewaet Glacier, August 17, 1899." Reproduced from Edward Cavell's *Legacy in Ice: the Vaux Family and the Canadian Alps*. Banff, AB: Altitude, 1983. 24.

While, as Mary Mummery pointed out, many Alpine Club members were loath to acknowledge women's equivalent potentials and capabilities for accomplishing notable ascents or for contributing new and crucial data to scientific knowledge, some men seemed to have embraced Victorian constructions of women as handmaidens and helpmeets and allowed them to accompany them on scientific data-gathering expeditions.⁴¹ George Vaux, Sr., for example, brought his daughter Mary on several occasions to aid in his glaciological research in the Canadian Alps. During their travels, Mary was able to become the first female to conquer Mt. Stephen in the Canadian Rockies. However, as **figure 33** illustrates, in her younger days at least, more often than not Miss Vaux was asked to "come down from yonder mountain height" and allow herself to be turned into a kind of calibrational tool by her father in his measurements of

the glaciers.



Figure 34. Mary planting the American flag atop Mt. Stephen. 1899. Whyte Museum



“Mountaineering in Search of Health”

Just as many men praised mountain air for its ability to invigorate and to purify the aristocratic dandy and the debilitated working class man into a robust and virile kind of new man (the Alpine Man), a number of individuals—both men and women, some climbers, some not—promoted alpine travel and mountaineering for women on the grounds that both mountain air and outdoor exercise could serve as the ideal cures for a number of “feminine” diseases which were said to be compromising the health of Britannia’s wives, daughters, and mothers, upon whose

well-being the future of the nation and empire rested.

In the 1898 article “Should Women Climb Snow Mountains?,” Miss E. P. Hughes argued that mountaineering was an ideal activity for women in large part because it was “health-giving”: in her view, it was important for both men and women to “get right away from man” and “rest [their] jaded bod[ies] and mind[s] . . . for even a short time, in the midst of the grand simplicity of form and colour and the restful loneliness of snow and ice” (932). Miss Hughes also argued that mountaineering enabled women to “develop certain excellent qualities [such as] pluck, endurance, and a firm belief in the necessity of careful preparation, and of a wise plan for the successful carrying out of any difficult feat,” which in Hughes’ view, were desirable and crucial for the well-being of both men and women of the British Empire (932).

Similarly, in an 1885 short article published in the *Illustrated London News*, an anonymous advocate of women’s mountaineering refuted his/her contemporaries who held the belief that women were not only physically unsuited for the sport and incapable of rivalling or equalling men, but that the qualities which mountaineering cultivated within men were seen as undesirable in women. The author opened the article by praising the image of an audacious ice-axe wielding female mountaineer appearing on that week’s cover of the *Illustrated London News* (**figure 17**): “Ladies of the Alpine Club—if the club has yet admitted female members—will perhaps take a lesson from this brave countrywoman of ours, who is shown ‘turning a corner’ on the insecure snow-path round a jutting tower of rock, slightly assisted by the guides with their rope, but apparently relying more on her own alpenstock, thrust into the bank of hard snow at her right hand” (2).

The writer then continued by arguing that women not only had the potential to learn the

skills necessary to excel at the sport, but that they also possessed certain qualities which would in some ways make them more suited for climbing than men:

If a woman has nerve and self-possession, in which qualities, partly moral and partly physical, not a few women are equal to men, she can learn to perform feats of this kind, with her light, firm tread and good balance of the whole body, as deftly as the more robust sex. . . . Girls have been known, in a lofty London house, to step outside from one upper window-sill to another, where boys would scarcely have ventured, and to think nothing of such danger. This faculty, moreover, of enduring the unusual position of very great altitude without disturbance of the brain and nerves, is not always found in men of undoubted courage, who would calmly face the enemy's fire on the field of battle. . . . Women, as a general rule, are not cowards at all, unless they have been made so by a bad education and indolent habits of life. (2)

In a similar vein, Julian Grande (Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, member of Swiss Alpine Club, and husband of accomplished New Zealand climber Constance Barnicoat) argued in an article for the *Daily Mail* (announcing an exhibition of women's climbing gear mounted by the Alpine Club in 1911) that "mountaineering develops in a woman, as well as a man, self-reliance, courage, patience, endurance, and fortitude, and helps her to overcome many impediments which obstruct her path in everyday life" (9). Grande added his belief that, far from being unattractive amazons, invertes, or viragos, mountaineering ladies were a superior kind of woman: "I have never known a lady climber to be either mean, gossipy, or hysterical," he assured readers. "Lady climbers invariably make good wives, good mothers, and excellent

chums" (9).

Canadian climber Mary Crawford and American mountaineer Annie Peck concurred with Hughes and Grande. In an article for *Outing* entitled "Practical Mountain-Climbing" (1900), Peck wrote that "there is no surer or more healthful remedy for obesity than mountain-climbing, and it is the testimony of many that no physician's prescription will so surely restore the health and buoyancy of youth, the sensation of being ten or twenty years younger, as a summer spent in climbing high mountains" (697). Likewise, in an article appearing in the *Canadian Alpine Journal* in 1909, Crawford wrote that

There is no recreation which, in all its aspects of surrounding and exercise, will bring about a quicker rejuvenation of worn out nerves, tired brains and flabby muscles than mountaineering. It is for women one of the new things under the sun and every fresh mountain is a delight. Ennui has no place in the vocabulary of one who climbs, the words which rout it are enthusiasm and exhilaration. Diseases of the imagination cannot be discovered anywhere on a mountain side, where Nature asserts herself so grandly to the consciousness and with such insistence that the 'ego' with its troubles sinks out of sight. . . . [A woman who climbs] is going to know herself as never before—physically, mentally, emotionally. And so she starts out, gains confidence with every step, find the dangers she has imagined far greater than those she encounters and arrives at last upon the summit to gaze out upon a new world. Surely not the same old earth she has seen all her life? Yes—but looked at from on top—a point of view which now makes upon her mind its indelible impression. This woman returns to her round of daily duties in the workaday world—but she has only to close

her eyes for a second and she is transported to her mountain top. Brain fag? Nervous exhaustion? Asthenic muscles? They have lost their dread meaning. . . .When the mountaineer's friends one and all greet her with the exclamation 'How well you are looking, I never saw you look better in your life!' she knows that she is the happy possessor of the beauty of health gained from her sojourn among the heights. (88)

As these passages demonstrate, many advocates of mountaineering were skilled rhetoricians, and the arguments they presented were often not only compelling but convincing and factually as well as logically "sound." However, in England at least, even into the twentieth century, the majority of even the most forward thinking men and women continued to be divided as to whether vigorous exercise such as mountaineering actually improved or destroyed a woman's health.⁴² The general consensus, even amongst late Victorian mountaineers open to women's climbing, seems to have been that women who attempted to exert themselves as hard as men did or to travel as far, as high, and as fast as them ran the risk of destroying rather than refining their health. Harold Spender recapitulated this pseudo-medical opinion in "Should Women Climb Snow Mountains?" (1898), writing that "the average woman is . . . far less equipped for the work than the average man. She is apt to find out too late that the qualities of ardent enthusiasm and high spirits which are easily cultivated in high mountain regions, are not the only essentials for high climbing" (931).

Similarly, in an *Alpine Journal* review of female mountaineer Frederica Plunket's book *Here and There Among the Alps*, the reviewer scolded Plunket for encouraging women to do anything more than extremely moderate climbs: "The objections (to women's climbing) usually

heard range themselves chiefly under two heads, the sentimental and the practical. The former may be briefly dismissed. . . . The objections which may be urged on the score of possible injury to health have a far greater weight. The caution said originally to have been offered by a Scotch doctor to an old lady who declined to drink anything stronger than toast and water, 'Ma'am, that is a thing only to be taken in small quantities, and then under medical advice,' might profitably be repeated to some inconsiderate advocates of ladies' mountaineering" (273).

ACT II

Making Snow Angels: Sartorial and Autobiographical Constructions of the Victorian Lady Mountaineer

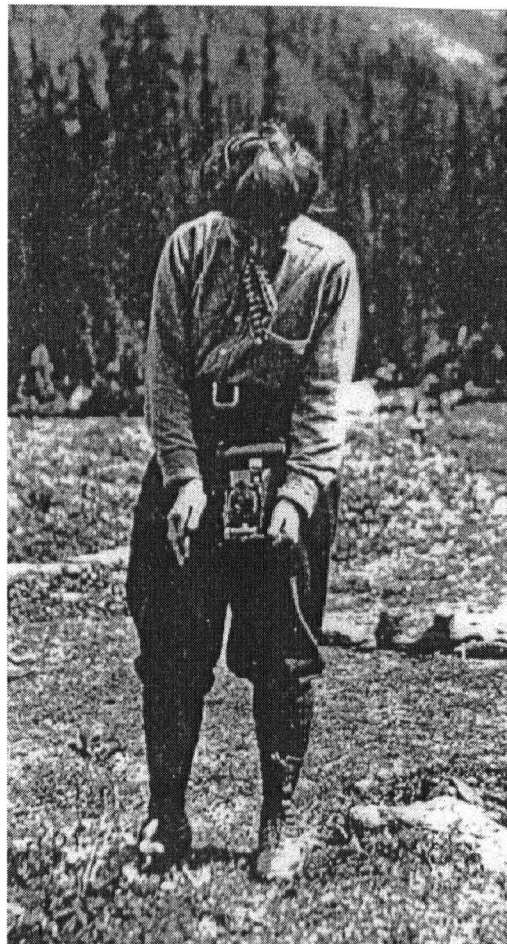


Figure 35. "A Fair Kodakerist," Miss Job, Alpine Club of Canada Annual Camp, Lake O'Hara, 1909; Photo by F. W. Freeborn. Reproduced from Edward Cavell and John Whyte's *Rocky Mountain Madness: A Bittersweet Romance*. Banff, AB: Altitude, 1982. 5.

Reduced to silent and static ghosts frozen and fixed in aging photographs, Victorian women mountaineers appear to many contemporary viewers as exotic but remote objects, similar in their contrived and unnatural poses, and their stoic expressions.



Figure 36. Studio Portrait of eminent female climber Mrs. E. P. Jackson with Husband, c. 1870s. Reproduced from David Mazel's *Mountaineering Women: Stories by Early Climbers*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M UP, 1994. 70.

To a twenty-first century viewer, images such as **figure 36** above may seem to capture some of the oppressive workings of Victorian patriarchal society: once an active and audacious lady mountaineer, the woman in the photograph seems to have been forced by the male photographer to “suffer and be still” as a silent feminine object in the quasi-domestic carpeted studio.

Certainly, in images such as **figure 3** and **36**, posing is used to visually assert a socio-sexual hierarchy: by posing the woman as seated, (and, in the case of Mrs. E. P. Jackson in

figure 36, with her head cocked demurely and slightly sideways) while having the men stand or sit up so as to appear more physically daunting, the photograph gives the impression that, in stature and in status, the women in the images (as in society) were dependent upon and inferior to the male guides and guardians towering over them. However, while both many Victorian and contemporary viewers would have taken such images to be mere documentations reflecting the “natural” and immutable relationships and identities of the individuals depicted, late twentieth-century theorists such as Judith Butler would view these photographs as clear demonstrations of the way in which relationships and identities are re-produced as fixed and as essential.

Similarly, the work of more recent visual theorists and feminist scholars such as Judith Butler, Teresa De Lauretis, and Marianne Doane would ask us to question the traditional assumption that, within patriarchal societies, the scopic and, by extension, the social order is completely successful at producing an uneven hierarchy of male/active/agent/viewer and female/passive/object/viewed, in which women have usually been relegated to the status of victims.⁴³

Images such as **figure 35** also offer the suggestion that, while Victorian women were disempowered by sexist traditions and practices, such as their inability to vote until the twentieth century, many were able to actively participate in their own self promotion and self production, both in the studio tableau and in Victorian society at large.

At the very least, the sometimes subtle differences of wardrobes and stances presented in these images indicate that not all Victorian women experienced or responded to the controlling photographic—and by extension patriarchal—gaze in the same way. The camera in the hand of the lady in **figure 35** and the defiance with which the women in **figures 3** and **36** return the gaze

of the camera and the photographer remind one that each woman not only appears to have played at least some part in fashioning her own public self but that she often played a role as an active agent of representation, fixing, freezing, and objectifying others as well.

While we are able to mark out certain differences between the appearance/clothing and poses of each female climber and, through this, to glean a small sense of each woman's own agency within the context of the photographic session, the images themselves do not afford us the ability to gain an understanding of the agendas or subjectivities of the women depicted. It is only by contextualising such images within the textual, socio-historical, and (auto)biographical contexts of their construction and publication that one may gain a more elaborated sense of the women, their differences, their similarities, and their own active participation in both their own self-representations and in representations of other peoples and places.

Previously, I provided a brief survey of the social, historical, and ideological background within which or against which Victorian women mountaineers lived, climbed, and published; bearing these details in mind, I will now turn to a detailed comparative analysis of various visual and verbal texts by Victorian women mountaineers who not only climbed but who published accounts of their ascents.

In this next section I will explore the different ways in which various individual Victorian women negotiated within or around the discursive, ideological, and material constraints and accommodations delineated in Act I, and to offer insight into how and why the representations of various women are, at moments, similar to and, at others, so markedly different from each other.



If there is one factor uniting this otherwise diverse group of women, it is that all Victorian women mountaineers undoubtedly experienced at some time or another a good deal of ideological pressure to assimilate their behaviour and appearances to more conservative or “respectable” standards and ideals of upper-class womanhood, particularly given that all the women under discussion here sought to participate in two worlds which, during the reign of Victoria, continued to be defined as predominantly masculine and masculinist public domains: the world of mountaineering and the worlds of publishing and self-promotion.⁴⁴ As Marni Stanley has argued in her own studies of Victorian women’s travel writing, like the woman in **figure 17**, Victorian women travellers and travel-writers found themselves (and placed themselves) in the precarious position of having to walk the discursive ice bridge “between propriety and adventure; between modesty and fame; between what one should do and what one does do; between being a woman and being a traveller [or in this case a mountaineer]” (13); Perhaps even more so than their male counterparts, women were made “to travel [and indeed to write] under watchful eyes, often as concerned with how they will be seen as with what they are able to see” (Mills, *Discourses of Difference*)

The pressures faced by various generations of Western middle-class women living and climbing in, and publishing about, various geographical locations in the nineteenth century, then, appear to have been similar: appear, behave, and write “like a lady.” However, both the amount of pressure placed upon each woman, and the manner in which each woman could and did

respond to such pressures differed. Such differences, I argue, often depended upon a number of factors, such as: class; geography and itinerary; age and generation; affiliations; and agenda.

Class/Finances:

Victorian women of different classes faced different financial and ideological pressures. These pressures not only had an impact upon the type, size, length, location, and budget of their excursions, but they also affected the ways in which various Victorian women fashioned and performed their public identities, and the ways in which their climbs—and accounts of their climbs—were publicly received.

Mountaineering and Women of Higher Social Elevations:

For Elizabeth Le Blond, the daughter of an affluent family with aristocratic lineage, climbing and publishing were activities that could be undertaken for the “thrill of it.” Unlike Annie Peck, a university Classics professor who had left her job as a teacher in order to pursue a full-time career as a lecturer on the subject of alpinism, Le Blond had time and money not only to travel to the Alps in both summer and winter, but to live there year-round. As a result, she was able to pursue ascents whenever she liked. Le Blond also had ample financial resources in order to outfit herself and her team of guides, and to hire maids and servants to accompany her on many of her ascents. According to Peck, at the end of her Preface to *Search*, such things were luxuries that she, a woman of sparse means, had been denied: “Surely I hope to climb, for pleasure merely, smaller mountains such as the Alps and Canadian Rockies; while, if funds were

provided, I would gladly make further exploration among the many untrodden peaks of the Andes, the Himalayas, or elsewhere, with full equipment and competent assistants, prepared to make more accurate scientific observations than were possible on my last expedition. But never, no, never, shall I again set out so meagrely financed and equipped as to be compelled to serve as porter, cook, photographer, scientific man, and general boss, all at the same time!" (xii)

Despite a larger store of financial resources, however, Le Blond argued that, on the trail, upper class ladies may have had more difficulty adapting to the challenges which life away from civilization presented than their lower-class sisters; in her autobiography *Day In and Day Out* (1928), for example, Le Blond admitted that, until she began mountain-climbing "never . . . had I put on my own boots, and I was none too sure on which foot should go which boot" (90). In the first few years of her climbing career she was therefore adamant that she always bring a lady's maid with her to aid her in such affairs. According to Le Blond, it was only after "one of the species had incessant hysteria whenever I returned late from an expedition, and another had eloped with a courier" that she finally "gained [her] independence of all assistance of the sort that [maids] did or, more often, did not render" (*Day In* 90). However, as she noted in her book *High Life and Towers of Silence* (1886), more often than not, she ended up forcing her guide to fulfill the function of the lady's maid: "[w]hen I travel with [my guide] Cupelin, I invariably leave all the responsibility of packing and seeing that nothing is left behind to him, and he takes upon himself so completely the united duties of courier, ladies' maid, guide, cook, and many other vocations, that he looks after all articles likely to go astray, as if that was the sole business of his life" (176).

Off the trail, women like Mrs. Elizabeth Le Blond may have agonised less over how to fashion their public personae since they did not need to rely as heavily on the financial gain which the popularity of their books and lectures might afford as working women without financial backing like Peck did. On the other hand, however, as Le Blond noted herself, “respectable” genteel ladies were generally more in the public eye than other classes of women. As a result, their actions and behaviour may have actually been more heavily policed (both on the trail and off) by those seeking to patrol and uphold the borders of polite society than middle-class women’s were. As Le Blond’s great-aunt warned her, a life of misery was ahead for a “lady” who lost her reputation and who, by affiliation, tarnished her family’s standing within polite society.⁴⁵ From their social debuts or “coming out” parties in public until their marriages, single aristocratic ladies were particularly prone to greater scrutiny and protection by their families, and more elaborate and codified sets of restrictions were placed upon their behaviour—ostensibly to ward off fortune hunters, the possibility of extramarital affairs, or illegitimate children.

Working Girls: Scrambling to Reach the Top

If Annie Peck’s experiences are any indication, lower or middle-class working women often faced immense difficulty when it came to planning and paying for an expedition, whether carried out for leisure or serious scientific work. Throughout *A Search for the Apex of America* (1911), Peck makes mention of the problems which she faced gaining and maintaining financial backing from individuals and companies, particularly when her first attempts to ascend Mt. Huascarán had failed:

After this [latest] failure [to ascend Huascarán], my hope of inducing anyone to take further interest in the matter had dwindled almost to the vanishing point. What then was my gratification, on calling the afternoon of my arrival at the office of the Magazine to be greeted, after a cordial handshake, with, 'Well, are you going again?' Hope promptly reviving, I cheerfully responded, 'I should like to, but there isn't a bit of use without Swiss guides.' 'What will they cost?' 'I think it can be done for \$3,000.' A further interview and the strongest possible presentation of the case failed, however, to convince the powers that ruled that that sum in advance would be a judicious outlay. (101)

Ultimately, Peck was refused the full sum she sought. However, she graciously accepted the "portion" which "was promised" in exchange for writing articles for the magazine about her exploits. Peck's next move was "a visit to Washington, with a call on President Roosevelt" where she "gained his favourable interest, as I felt sure I would; since he was an honorary member of our Alpine Club, and by temperament would be appreciative of a real athletic and sporting event" (306-7).

Clearly, as Peck's account demonstrates, women who did not have their resources provided by their families or their spouses not only faced difficulty gaining institutional backing and financial support, but found themselves having to more seriously consider how to represent themselves and their climbs to audiences off the trail so as to gain financial backing and the requisite social approval of their patrons. Thus, both on and off the trail, these women were often more at the whim of their literal or figurative "employers" and backers, as well as their

audiences, than independently wealthy women such as Le Blond or Peck's rival Mrs. Fanny Bullock Workman.⁴⁶

On the positive side, however, many working women were not only more mentally and physically equipped to deal with life on the trail—having long since become accustomed to dressing themselves, cooking their own meals and budgeting for a household—but they might have been more willing and able to deal with bending or breaking social codes and the adversity which resulted, especially since women like Peck, a university educated woman working as a professor, did so on a daily basis.



Age and Generation:

The factors of generation and age are also worth considering when analysing women's travel and mountaineering texts. As will become evident in my analysis, women travelling and climbing during the 1850s seem to have been confronted with a different (if not a smaller) number of models of ideal femininity after which to fashion themselves. By contrast, towards the latter decades of the nineteenth century, the suffrage, dress, health, and education reform movements, the rise of imperialism, and the increasing numbers of women travelling and working in the public sphere, all contributed to a proliferation of new, more mobile (though not always acceptable) models of femininity after which a late Victorian girl or woman could, ostensibly, fashion herself.

Earlier Victorian women also seem to have had genteel expectations of feminine propriety imposed upon them at an earlier age than late Victorian women. According to Sally Mitchell, late Victorian and Edwardian girls were able to justify prolonging what Grace Seton Thompson once referred to as their “pinafore days” of tomboyish behaviour well into late adolescence, due to the emergence of the *fin-de-siècle* cult of the “New Girl.”

It is also important to point out that women coming later in the century had a larger number of athletic and audacious female role models to emulate and thus perhaps had an easier go of things than their foremothers had; in *Conquest of Mount Cook* (1915) Du Faur acknowledged that women like her had paved the way for the next generation of climbers:

Fortunately in this world, the wonder of one day is taken as a matter of course the next; so now, five years after my first fight for individual freedom, the girl climber at the Hermitage need expect nothing worse than raised eyebrows when she starts out unchaperoned and clad in climbing costume. It is some consolation to have achieved as much as this, and to have blazed one more little path through ignorance and convention, and added one tiny spark to the ever-growing beacon lighted by the women of this generation to help their fellow-travellers climb out of the dark woods and valleys of conventional tradition and gain the fresh, invigorating air and wider view-point of the mountain-tops. (37)

Evidence that earlier women mountaineers’ travels and writings influenced later ones appears in the accounts of Mrs. Freshfield and Mrs. Le Blond.⁴⁷ Also, according to Milbrey Polk and Mary Tiegreen in *Women of Discovery*, Annie Peck was made to play a crucial role in a rather

interesting advertising campaign put on by the Singer Sewing Company. Polk and Tiegreen suggest that *carte-de-visite* postcards of Peck and her South American climbs (**figure 37**) were included with every new sewing machine, for the purpose of inspiring middle-class girls to “pattern” themselves after the adventurous female mountaineer.

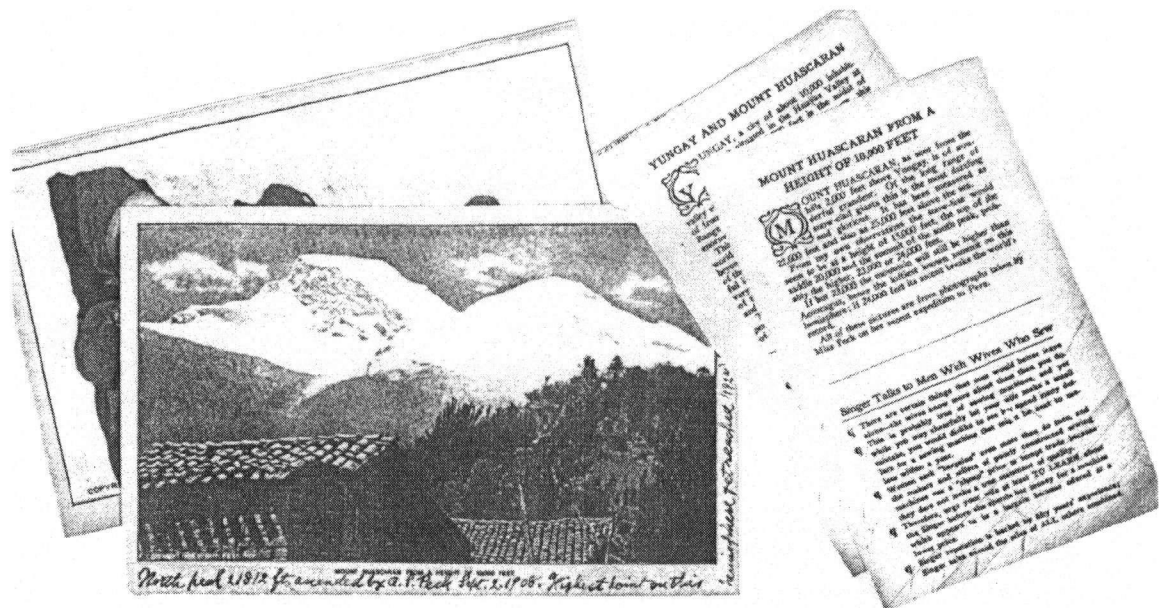


Figure 37. At left are two of several *carte-de-visite* style cards depicting scenes from Peck’s ascent of Huascaran. At right are images depicting the information printed on the underside of the cards. One wonders if Singer used Peck’s account of having had to make unmentionables by hand and without a pattern as part of their campaign to encourage women of the necessity of a sewing machine. Reproduced from Milbrey Polk and Mary Tiegreen’s *Women of Discovery: A Celebration of Intrepid Women who Explored the World*. London, Scriptum Editions, 2001.

Fictional and non-fictional representations of female climbers appearing in newspaper articles and in girl’s magazines such as *The Girl’s Own Paper* also undoubtedly had a significant influence on young ladies of the latter decades of the nineteenth century. Surely, more than a few girls found themselves daydreaming of being Elizabeth Le Blond or Fanny Bullock Workman, whom Edward Whymper described in an 1885 article for the *Girl’s Own* as “performing feats which have both astonished the natives, and caused a feeling of wonder,

sometimes not unmixed with apprehension, in the minds of those who were brought up in the more sober and cautious school of the last generation” (164). Like heroine Gwendolen Harleth of George Eliot’s novel *Daniel Deronda* (1874-6) many a girl must at least have privately felt they too needed to be taken to the Alps or they too would threaten to break their arm out of boredom;⁴⁸ and countless young women must certainly have been entranced by the audacious young mountaineering heroine of A. E. W. Mason’s novel *Running Water* (1907) (**figure 38**).



Figure 38. “She is the daughter of a friend of mine” drawn by H. S. Potter. Reproduced from A. E. W. Mason’s *Running Water*. 1906. NY: The Century Co., 1907. 204. In this illustration, Sylvia Thesiger, the heroine of A. E. W. Mason’s novel *Running Water*, is depicted as a kind of Snow Angel. Like the male characters in the book, the men at Sylvia’s feet in the image are gazing up at her partially with a desire to revere her as an exotic and erotic kind of New Woman and partially with a longing to emulate the speaker in Tennyson’s *Princess*, and beg this real-life mountain-maid to come down from yonder heights, to quit her wild wandering ways and find love in the valley.

Based on the evidence I have uncovered, it is perhaps fair to say that later Victorian women had, relatively speaking, a wider range of movements than their foremothers, thanks in large part to the “pioneering” efforts of the latter group. However, as Sally Mitchell and others have revealed through their own research, even into the twentieth century, it was still expected that girls would eventually become wives and mothers, and that any activity (particularly any public activity) they took up they did in service of their future roles as wives and mothers of men, of the nation, and of the empire. If any activity presented the possibility of conflicting with their connubial and maternal functions, they would generally be forced to give it up.

In order to circumvent these social expectations and to continue to participate in their favourite activities without being seen as having shirked their womanly duties or as having stepped outside the bounds of feminine propriety, many rhetorically adept women (both early and late Victorian) attempted to “domesticate” mountaineering; that is, many represented mountaineering as an activity which was actually compatible with femininity, arguing that it allowed a woman to cultivate and exercise skills which would be crucial to them in their later roles as wives and mothers. Mrs. Malcolm Ross’s 1901 article in the *Wide World* entitled “Housekeeping on a Glacier” stands out as a notable example of this discursive approach.⁴⁹

As the title of her article suggests, Mrs. Malcolm Ross saw (and wished to forge) an affiliation between mountaineering and domestic management. According to Mrs. Ross, mountaineering had actually prepared her for her new life as the wife of eminent New Zealand Judge Malcolm Ross: “Before I was the proprietor of a mansion of my own,” she tells readers, “I started housekeeping on a glacier, for our honeymoon trip was spent in the Alps, and was my

first experience of ice in bulk” (604). Mrs. Ross goes on to give an account of how the ardors of camp life prepared her to become an industrious and economical housewife:

On [one] occasion we ran short of bread. Among our stores was self-raising flour, and I in a rash moment volunteered to make some scones. I mixed them in a billy, and set the dough in a frying pan over the huge log fire. . . . By the way, baking scones over an open wood fire for five hungry men is a very hot and arduous occupation. A cake tin and two plates—one with a hole in the bottom—were all our apparatus. As fast as the scones were cooked, they were eaten, and though I only mixed, superintended, and ordered about the amateur stokers, my complexion never recovered from that fiery ordeal. (608)

Despite several mishaps, including attacks by blowflies and kia parrots, mislabelled cans which led to their having to eat stewed kidneys every day, and a shortage of water which meant “heating [a] tin [of asparagus] in the same water . . . afterwards used to make the tea!” (608), Mrs. Malcolm Ross showed herself to be like the ideal lady in Ruskin’s famous speech “Of Queen’s Gardens,” who could make a clean and comfortable little home wherever she went, even on rocks under the stars.⁵⁰

Through her article, Mrs. Ross contributed to the construction and acceptance of a new female “type,” (what I would call a Snow Angel or the Angel in the Hut)—a figure who facilitated women’s movements in so far as she demonstrated the possible compatibility of travel, mountaineering, and respectable femininity, but one who also restricted women in that she encouraged a “divided spheres” approach to camping and climbing which mirrored the uneven social order at home many travellers longed to escape.

Marital Status:

Female mountaineers were particularly prone to scrutiny, not only when they were travelling to remote regions with often very primitive accommodations, but when they were doing so without appropriate chaperonage; for, unless they were climbing with male relatives or husbands, or even with female companions, they would be forced into extremely close proximity with often foreign, often lower class male guides and porters. In a 1932 retrospective on the history of women and mountaineering, Elizabeth Le Blond argued that “the chief reason why women so seldom climbed fifty years ago was that unless they had the companionship of a father, brother, [husband], or sister, it was looked at as most shocking for a ‘female’ to sleep at a hut or a bivouac” (“Then and Now,” 5-6). **Figure 39** represents the kind of behaviour which many Victorians hoped that rules of chaperonage would prevent: improper (romantic or sexual) co-mingling between lower-class foreign men and upper-class Englishwomen.



Figure 39. Image title and artist unknown. Reproduced from Raymond Fitzsimons's *The Baron of Piccadilly: The Travels and Entertainments of Albert Smith, 1816-1860*. London: Geoffrey Bles, 1967. np. Male guides drag a group of predominately female tourists up a snowy Swiss mountain trail. Note the rather provocative position in which the lady tourist at centre finds herself (straddling a male guide, practically burying his head beneath her avalanche of petticoats!!).

Freda Du Faur's account of her difficulties experienced when attempting to climb "*sans epoux*" in New Zealand seems to confirm Le Blond's suggestion that chaperonage was the primary obstacle impeding women's participation in mountaineering. Du Faur wrote that

I was the first unmarried woman who had wanted to climb in New Zealand, and in consequence I received all the hard knocks . . . I found myself up against all the cherished conventions of the middle-aged. In vain I argued and pointed out that I had come to the mountains to climb, not to sit on the veranda and admire the view. If I were to limit my climbs to occasions on which I could induce another woman or man to accompany me, I might as well take the next boat home. At the moment there was no one in the hotel who could or would climb Mount Sealy; there was not the ghost of a climber on the premises, only women who found a two-mile walk quite sufficient for their powers. This they could not deny, but they assured me in all seriousness that if I went out alone with a guide I would lose my reputation. . . . (*Conquest* 36)

Given the "shock value" attached to unchaperoned women, it is perhaps no surprise that female mountaineers often confessed to feeling that life on the trail might be easier for married women than single ones—if only because their married sisters had ready-made chaperones at hand. Having neither a husband nor an army of servants to coordinate back home, Annie Peck wondered whether "perhaps some of her more experienced married sisters" who were used to running a household and bossing men about "would have done better" at handling the male porters (*Search* 51). Even Du Faur confessed that "[F]or about ten minutes I almost succeeded in wishing that I possessed that useful appendage to a woman climber, a husband" (*Conquest* 36).

However, Du Faur quickly rescinded this wish, concluding “sadly that he would probably consider climbing unfeminine and so my last state might be worse than my first” (36).

In the end, despite the risk of social stigmatisation, both Peck and Du Faur admitted to having occasionally flouted the chaperonage rules, not only by climbing alone with male porters or guides, but by going so far as to sleep with them in the same tent. Peck for example recounts having shared a tent with her native porters during a rather scandalous bivouac in *Search*.⁵¹ Similarly, in *Conquest of Mount Cook* Du Faur confessed that on Mount Cook she had invited her male guides Alex and Peter Graham to share her tent: “The evening turned exceedingly cold, and I decided that having already walked over most of the conventions since I began mountaineering, one more would matter nothing; so I suggested to the guides that they abandon their tent and save me from shivering in icy aloofness till morning.” One can only imagine how mortified many more conservative readers would have been at such confessions—though it is possible that both women’s claims that they had broken convention for strictly practical reasons (i.e., to avoid freezing to death) served to buffer the audacity of their behaviour.⁵²

Arguably, married women were afforded a wider range of mobility and freedom than their unmatched “Odd” sisters, in part due to the fact that they had fulfilled at least one of society’s expectations: to become a wife. Moreover, as Jan Schroeder has noted, married women were empowered by the fact that could hide behind their married name or their husband’s name and reputation; even if he was not along on the journey, a woman could more easily pass as a “Mem Sahib” whose purpose for travelling or climbing abroad could be legitimated as being carried out for the purpose of supporting and extending her husband’s work.⁵³ In the case of Fanny Bullock Workman, any slight against her honour and any interrogations of her

respectability were firmly dealt with by her husband Henry who, according to the author of her obituary “wielded a pretty blade, never so keen or so or so quick as in her support” (Farrar 182).

Female climber Isabella Straton (later Madame Charlet-Straton) solved the chaperonage problem when she married her Swiss guide, Jean Charlet (**figure 40**). Lucy Walker admitted that she loved her guide Melchior Anderegg but he was already married. Henriette D’Angeville preferred to be known as “La Fiancée du Mont Blanc.”



Figure 40. Studio portrait (c. 1860s), showing Miss Isabella Straton and her then-guide but future husband Jean Charlet (couple at left). The female figure at right is Emmeline Lloyd-Lewis. Reproduced from Ronald Clark’s *The Victorian Mountaineers*. London: B. T. Batsford, 1953. 169.

Unlike their married “sisters,” unprotected single women had to grapple with the spectre of the social stereotypes of the “Odd Woman” and her more mobile but equally unattractive

sister, the “Spinster Abroad”—a figure which Royal Geographical Society President George Curzon publicly declared to be “one of the horrors of the nineteenth century” (*The Times*, 31 May 1893).⁵⁴

However detrimental to one’s social reputation, being what Mary Kingsley described as “the serpent of the season” had some benefits financially: according to Blunt, Foster, Mills and others, solitary or “unprotected” lady travellers were often more likely to reach celebrity status, due in large part to the aura of exceptionality afforded to solitary female “adventuresses” throughout the nineteenth century—at least in the eyes of the sensation-seeking general public.⁵⁵



Geography and Itinerary:

Both the restrictions placed upon and the accommodations afforded to Victorian women depended in part upon the national and geographical places from which they originated and, more so, the places from which and to which they travelled.

As noted earlier, by the 1860s the Swiss Alps were well on the way to becoming highly domesticated by tourism. As a result, for much of the nineteenth century places like Switzerland were seen as somewhat acceptable travel destination for ladies; and, therefore, the idea of a lady climbing in the Swiss Alps may have lost some of its sensationalism and novelty by around the 1870s. By contrast, areas like the Caucasus, the Himalayas, the Andes, and the mountains of Africa continued to be shrouded with a veil of mystery and danger until the late nineteenth century because less accessible to and less explored and conquered by roving Western eyes.

Indeed, notes Caroline Brettell, “. . . voyaging within Europe, that is, within the boundaries of what was still considered the ‘civilized world’ in the nineteenth century, was qualitatively different and therefore differently motivated from voyaging abroad to other continents. Africa, Asia, Australia, and at least some parts of the Americas were still ‘uncivilized’ . . . The journey to Italy, on the other hand, was a well-trod path for those taking their ‘Grand Tour,’ and written accounts of these voyages were numerous” (160). Shrewd businesswomen, both Annie Peck and Fanny Bullock Workman undoubtedly knew that the areas in which they were climbing (South America in the case of Peck; the Himalayas in the case of Bullock Workman) would lend to them and their narratives a sense of the audacious, of the dramatic, and of the exotic. Thus it is perhaps safe to argue that they chose their travels and their texts’ titles with the partial aim of emphasizing their audacity and their ambitiousness.⁵⁶

A female mountaineer/travel writer who had gone farther afield than most of her male contemporaries might have had the opportunity to gain popularity with the general public. On the downside, however, she might have more difficulty gaining popularity and acceptance within the fold of the male scientific institutions, such as the Royal Geographical Society or the Alpine Club, due to the fact that her feats would likely be perceived as equalling or rivalling those of the male members—many of whom were attempting to establish themselves as exceptionally masculine and accomplished explorers. The icy reception which Mrs. Workman often received from the male mountaineering and geographical communities exemplifies this fact; according to David Mazel, although Fanny Bullock Workman and her husband were invited to lecture before the Royal Geographical Society and the Alpine Club, “Workman spoke openly about the unfriendly reception she occasionally received in Britain; following her death in 1925, her

obituary in the *Alpine Journal* would only admit, with revealing understatement that Workman 'felt that she suffered from 'sex antagonism,' and it is possible that some unconscious feeling, let us say of the novelty of women's intrusion into the domain of exploration so long reserved to man, may in some quarters have existed. . . . in time there tended to arise, in certain high and serene circles an atmosphere, shall we say, of aloofness?'" (Farrar 10).

Not only the geographical location of a climb, but the particular mountain ascended, and the chosen route and manner of ascent and descent affected the perceptions, receptions, and textual self-constructions of Victorian women mountaineers. Praise and acceptance by both the general public and the masculinist alpine community not only often depended on whether a female climber attempted a traverse, a first ascent, a first ascent by a woman, an old ascent by a new route, or in a new way, such as in winter; and, finally, whether it was a rigorous climb conducted all on foot or an ascent rendered less arduous through the extensive use of horses or mules.

By the 1860s, certain mountains such as Mount Cencis, Mount Vesuvius, and Mont Blanc had become extremely popular with tourists. As a result, any woman climbing such often trodden peaks might not have had to exert as much rhetorical effort in order to be seen merely as an ordinary, unexceptional and, thus, non-threatening lady tourist—that is, of course, unless her aim was to mark herself out as eccentric or exceptional, in which case a less popular or unconquered peak might be a better object of conquest. By contrast, a woman climbing a mountain not yet conquered might not only have the opportunity to bag a coveted first ascent or a first woman's

ascent, but she could exploit the air of sensationalism which encircled male and female explorers, travelers, and mountaineers who veered off the beaten track of civilization.

Like the woman who climbed an unconquered peak, women whose routes and manner of ascents were seen to put them in competition with men or which defied conventionality (such as “guideless” or “manless” ascents), often faced greater animosity from both the male mountaineering institution and from members of polite society than less ambitious “lady” climbers or tourists who took the well-trodden paths with guides and porters.

A notable example of this fact is the case of Anna and Ellen Pigeon. In an 1872 letter, the Pigeons recounted the response which their successful traverse of the Sesia Joch from Zermatt to Alagna received among Alpine men; according to Ellen Pigeon, several Alpine Club members socially “punished” her and her sister by refusing to even look at or talk to them: “In days gone by,” wrote Ellen in 1892, “many A.C. members would not speak to us . . .” (Brown 38).⁵⁷ The Alpine Club was responding both to the fact that the Pigeon sisters had bagged a new traverse, and that they had travelled with no other chaperones than their male guides.

In a 1999 article for the *Alpine Journal*, Riccardo Cerri tells us that the sisters were also required to “rely on the detailed knowledge of places and mountaineering experience of distinguished theologian Giuseppe Farinetti, who had accompanied Giovanni Gnifetti to the top of Signalkuppe on 9 August 1842 [and who] after the death of the Alagna parish priest in 1867 . . . had become in fact the ‘old sage’ of mountaineering on the Italian side of Monte Rosa” after “[m]any of the Alpine Club’s more authoritative members [such as A. W. Moore] remained sceptical about the traverse and carried on asserting that the women and their guide had in fact crossed nothing but the Lysjoch” (163-167). Pigeon wrote to Farinetti begging him to confirm

their claim since she knew that “we could not expect those who maintain the contrary to be convinced on our testimony only” (167). Farinetti obliged with a detailed series of facts which “entirely proved that on the 12th of August 1869 [the Pigeon Sisters] really made the passage of the Sesia-Joch from Riffel to Alagna, through the fearful precipices of the Parrot Spitze, however incredible it would seem, because it has been accomplished by two young ladies accompanied by a single guide and a porter” (166). Cerri writes that “[o]nly after the Pigeon sisters provided the Club with Farinetti’s reply was the issue happily resolved, and in May 1872 in the Journal appeared ‘The passage of the Sesia Joch from Zermatt to Alagna by English ladies.’ The article was an exhaustive summary of the whole controversy, also containing the translation of most of the detailed account written by Farinetti himself” (168).



Nationality/Nationalism:

In some instances, the nationality of a Victorian female climber relative to the country in which she climbed, and the political nature of her nation’s relationship to the British Empire or England is worth remarking; for, such facts may have had some impact on how nineteenth-century women climbers clothed and represented themselves, as well as on how various national audiences perceived those climbers and their ascents, and received their visual and verbal representations of both.

With the exception of Annie Peck and Fanny Bullock Workman, most of the women under scrutiny here were born, raised, or lived within the British Empire (i.e.: England, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Ireland in the case of Elizabeth Le Blond); as such, most of them may have been influenced by many of the same English or British ideals and ideas of femininity, race, nation and empire. Similarly, as Gerson, Kröller and others have argued, in travelling abroad to these fellow 'British' colonies (whether to climb or to lecture), they may have experienced similar social expectations of behaviour. However, one must be careful not to over-generalise.

As Gillian Whitlock has pointed out in *The Intimate Empire* (2000), adherents to more traditional Victorian English ideologies found on visits to even some of the more civilised outposts of Empire that British beliefs and customs had been transformed or altered during "shipment" from urban to rural and from Mother to "daughter" country. In particular, many seem to have noticed the emergence of more rugged, less decorative—or what many more conservative Britons reviled as "lax"—ideals of feminine appearance and behaviour in countries settled by British *émigrés*. It is perhaps for this reason that places like Canada, Australia, and, most particularly, America were rumoured by British Victorians to have "faster" and less genteel women.⁵⁸

In an anonymous entry into the visitor's logbook at Glacier House in the Canadian Rockies (dated July 17, 1908), a male Australian tourist described his perception of Canadian women in a manner which seems to confirm the opinion that their notions of appropriate behaviour for women were more akin to those of the conservative English, while the Canadians' ideals of respectable and acceptable femininity more closely resembled those of the "wild"

Americans; the Australian traveller instructed fellow foreign tourists to “bring your cameras! The girls here ride astride” (np).⁵⁹

Rudyard Kipling registered a response similar to that of the Australian tourist upon catching sight of two noted late nineteenth-century American explorers of the Canadian Rockies, Mary Schäffer-Warren and Mollie Adams, during his visit to Canada in 1907:

As we drove along the narrow hill-road a piebald pack-pony with a china-blue eye came round a bend, followed by two women, black-haired, bare-headed, wearing beadwork squaw-jackets, and riding straddle. A string of pack-ponies trotted through the pines behind them. ‘Indians on the move?’ said I. ‘How characteristic!’ As the women jolted by, one of them very slightly turned her eyes, and they were, past any doubt, the comprehending equal eyes of the civilised white woman which moved in that berry-brown face. . . .The same evening, at an hotel of all the luxuries, a slight woman in a very pretty evening frock was turning over photographs, and the eyes beneath the strictly arranged hair were the eyes of the woman in the beadwork jacket who had quirted the piebald pack-pony past our buggy. Praised be Allah for the diversity of His creatures! (qtd in Smith 62-63).⁶⁰

In order to understand the sense of shock or titillation registered by these foreign male visitors to Canada (particularly Western Canada), one must remember that the Alpine Club of Canada was not only much more open to and accepting of women’s participation in mountain-climbing than their British “father,” the Alpine Club of London, but it was much more active in attempting to gain all Canadians’ support of women’s adoption of “rational” dress on the trail. Arguably, since many former genteel



Figure 41. Mary Schäffer-Warren astride her favourite horse, Nibs. Reproduced from Janice Sanford Beck's *No Ordinary Woman: the Story of Mary Schäffer-Warren*. Calgary, AB: Rocky Mountain Books, 2001. 126.



Figure 42. Several Alpine Club of Canada women relax on mountain, B.C. Glenbow Archives PD-327-101

British emigrés to Canada had long since realized the need to adapt their clothing and their lifestyles for frontier life, dress reform would not have been a difficult cause to agitate in certain parts of Canada.

Unlike the Alpine Club of London, the A.C.C. welcomed female members from their beginnings. According to Pearl Ann Reichweinn, “of the 250 memberships [to the A.C.C.] registered for 1907, one-third belonged to women; by 1917, women held half the A.C.C. memberships. The annual A.C.C. publication, the *Canadian Alpine Journal* (CAJ) recommended mountaineering as an excellent recreation for women, reflecting the more vigorous roles adopted at the turn of the century by middle-class Canadian women” (“Guardians” 7). Reichweinn also points out that A.C.C. co-founder, Elizabeth Parker “set a policy of liberating dress for women alpinists” as soon as the club began; the policy stated that “what applies to one sex applies to the other in all matters of clothing for actual climbing” (“Guardians” 7).⁶¹

Many Americans also seem to have been more “forward” in their thoughts about women’s participation in mountaineering than the British; the Appalachia Club for example accepted women members from its inception in 1876, while the American Alpine Club was co-founded by Annie Peck in 1902. Some American women were also extremely audacious in their views of women’s climbing clothing. One wonders what more conservative travellers would have thought if they had encountered a woman on the trail, clad in the outfit suggested by American lady climber Mrs. W. G. Nowells. Mrs. Nowells had written an article entitled “A Mountain Suit for Women” for *Appalachia* in 1876 arguing not only that “too much cannot be said in favor of the emancipation waist” but that the ideal mountain suit might be an altered woman’s flannel bathing costume.

The appeal of countries outside of Western Europe perhaps therefore not only related to the fact that Anglo-travellers might find some territory or some peaks not yet trodden by the feet of male and female tourists, but that they might be encouraged by locals to “relax,” cast off, and even to escape (if only temporarily) some of the more restrictive customs and standards which they, as “respectable” ladies, would have been required to observe “at home” or in more “cultivated” regions—such as wearing skirts and crinolines or riding sidesaddle.⁶²

Isabella Bird was one such woman who cast off some of the more restrictive elements of her wardrobe over the course of her travels through various countries outside Britain. In her travels through the Rocky Mountains, for example, Bird donned turkish trousers (a.k.a bloomers) (figure 43).⁶³



Figure 43. Isabella Bird’s infamous visual representation of her Hawaiian Riding dress which she included in later editions of her book *A Lady’s Life in the Rocky Mountains* (London: John Murray, 1879) in order to assure readers that the outfit she worn on her Rocky Mountain travels had not been as scandalous and unladylike as reviewers of her book had suggested. Reproduced from Marni Stanley’s “Skirting the Issues: Addressing and Dressing in Victorian Women’s Travel Narratives.” *Victorian Review* 23.2 (Winter 1997): 167.

Conversely, a nineteenth-century traveller (whether an American coming to a supposedly more conservative country or a stereotypically conservative Briton travelling to a place with sets of standards of female behaviour and deportment deemed less rigorous and thus less moral) might, in certain locales, become even more conservative or meticulous about her habits of dress and deportment. Indeed, while etiquette travel manuals had long since begun advocating that women adopt specialised clothing appropriate to the increasingly diverse number of public contexts and activities in which they found themselves participating, late Victorian explorer Mary Kingsley was one such woman who refused to deviate from the most rigorous and ascetic habits of urban Victorian deportment and dress, even while travelling through the sultry climes of the West African jungle. Kingsley told her female audiences that they “have no right to go about Africa in things you would be ashamed to be seen in at home” (168). In her narrative *Travels in West Africa*, Kingsley prided herself on remaining a “most lady-like old person” throughout her travels: “I hasten to assure you I never even wear a masculine collar and tie, and as for encasing the more earthward extremities of my anatomy in—you know what I mean—well, I would rather perish on a public scaffold” (502). According to Kingsley, far from endangering a woman’s life, feminine garments could actually preserve it; falling into a spiked pit intended to trap wildlife caused her to “realise the blessings of a good thick skirt. Had I paid heed to the advice of many people in England, who ought to have known better and did not do it themselves, and adopted masculine garments, I should have been spiked to the bone and done for” (270). **Figure 44** may give the reader some sense of Kingsley’s travelling wardrobe.



Figure 44. Mary Kingsley in 1897. Reproduced from Alison Blunt's *Travel, Gender, and Imperialism: Mary Kingsley and West Africa*. NY and London: The Guildford Press, 1994. 119.

According to Sara Mills and Shirley Foster in their anthology *Victorian Women's Travel Writing*, the British middle-class woman's appearance and dress were especially crucial in the colonial context, not only because it sent fellow colonists a message both about the individual female wearer's morality and respectability, but because it was a crucial means through which the Victorian woman abroad symbolically asserted her national, racial, and sexual difference from, and superiority over, intriguing but inferior local populations: "Western women travelling in other countries were very aware of the way that they were often taken to be representative of Britain, especially within the colonial context" (8). Constance Larymore recapitulated this idea when she wrote that a colonial woman's appearance at table in a "tumble down tea dress" was a sure sign of her moral "deterioration" (qtd in McEwan).

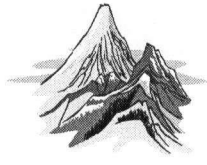


Figure 45. Elizabeth Parker (front row, left of centre) and the founding members of the A. C. C., including Arthur Wheeler, (front row, centre). Although self-professedly no “climber,” Parker chose a climbing rope as an accessory for this photo. Parker’s daughter Jean (second row, centre) by contrast was an accomplished climber and was a member of the Ladies’ Alpine Club of London. Reproduced from Cyndi Smith’s *Off the Beaten Track: Women Adventurers and Mountaineers in Western Canada*. Canmore, AB: Coyote Books, 1989. 42.

Although many Victorian women regarded countries such as Canada as part of the Britannic “imagined community,” and some consciously viewed their travels and ascents as being carried out in support or in the name of British imperialism, not all women living under British rule in the nineteenth century considered themselves British, nor were they all pro-imperialists. Both at home and abroad, many nationalistic individuals and groups sought actively to mark themselves as citizens of a country that may have borne similarities to Britain but was

not British. One interesting example from the mountaineering world is co-founder of Canada's Alpine club (A.C.C.), Elizabeth Parker (**figure 45**).

While many British mountaineers viewed their sport as an activity which mirrored and helped to extend the British Empire's larger projects of imperial and colonial expansion, Parker offered the claim that mountaineering could perhaps serve as a nationalistic act which would help Canada prevent the touristic and physical conquest of its peaks (enacted by the women in **figures 7 and 34**)—a conquest which people like Parker took to be symbolic of British and American desires for economic, social, and cultural domination over their nation.

Fellow Canadian mountaineer A. O. Wheeler himself had written that "Canadians are admitted the world over as typical of strong energetic and intelligent manhood. As mountaineers they are, except in training, no whit inferior to representatives of any other race. Canada for Canadians is our motto. Why not then a Canadian Mountain Club for Canada?" (qtd in Huel 28). However, after becoming discouraged about the seeming lack of interest in mountaineering on the part of his fellow countrymen (and women), Wheeler began campaigning for the formation of a Canadian branch of the more established American Alpine Club.

By contrast, Elizabeth Parker remained adamant that only a strictly Canadian mountaineering club could help forward Canada's attainment and preservation of a national identity distinct from either the British Empire or its southern neighbour, America. In a review of Wheeler's book *The Selkirk Range* (1905) for the *Manitoba Free Press*, Parker replied to Wheeler proposal's that the "initial object is to become allied to an already formed and active Alpine Club, that has won its spurs; but that, when strong enough, with some record behind us, there is no reason why we should not stand on our merits" (qtd in Huel 32), with the fiery retort

that “we owe it to our own young nationhood, in simple self-respect, to begin an organized system of mountaineering on an independent basis. Surely between Halifax and Victoria, there can be found at least a dozen persons who are made of the stuff, and care enough about our mountain heritage to redeem Canadian apathy and indifference [towards the fact that the best peaks in the Canadian Alps are being bagged by foreigners, particularly Americans]. It is simply amazing that for so long we have cared so little” (qtd in Reichweinn 6). Eventually, Wheeler concurred with Parker and, together, the two orchestrated the birth of a distinctly Canadian Alpine Club—a club which still continues to thrive today.

Off the trail, the nationality of the writer and that of her intended audience also often may have had an impact on the female mountaineer’s performance of self-hood (ie: whether visual, textual, and/or lecture based) and her audience’s perception and reception of that performance. For example, British audiences were in some instances more and in others less receptive to audacious non-British female travellers who came to their country as part of their lecture circuit. George Curzon of the Royal Geographical Society, for example, felt that fast American women travellers were to blame for the audaciousness of British women and therefore declared that “the genus of professional female globetrotters with which America has lately familiarized us is one of the horrors of the latter end of the nineteenth century” (*The Times* 31 May 1893).⁶⁴ Curzon’s comments lead one to suspect that, depending on the particular audience, American women may have played up (or more often played down) stereotypes about the character of their nation’s women. In the case of Fanny Workman, one is left unsure whether her Americanness might not have played a part in the icy reception which she records having received during her lecture series in England.

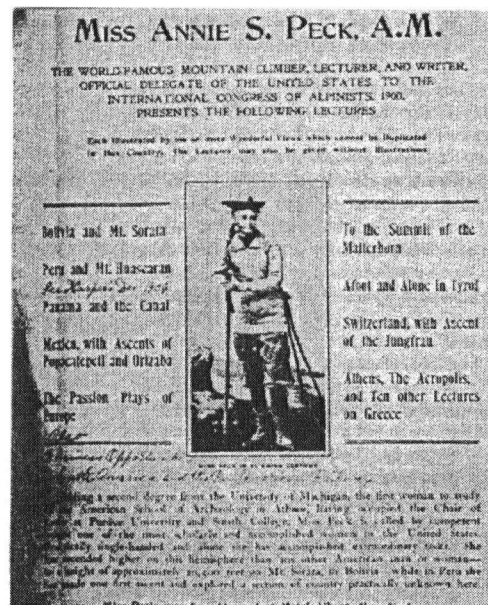


Figure 46. Poster advertising Annie Peck’s lantern-slide illustrated lectures. Reproduced from Elizabeth Fagg Olds’s *Women of the Four Winds*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985.

Certainly, such receptions must have made her think carefully about her wardrobe choice on tour to ensure she was not mistaken for a wild American woman. By contrast, one imagines Annie Peck playing up such notions by appearing before her English lantern lecture audiences (as she so often did in her publicity images, such as **figure 46**) in order to help drum up much needed revenues from the sales of her books, articles, and lectures.

But, presumably, most Victorian lady climbers followed the example of Mené Muriel Dowie, who, according to Dorothy Middleton, mildly shocked audience-members at her lantern lecture about her travels in the Carpathian Mountains by wearing a respectably subdued brown dress. Audiences were shocked perhaps because this image was a far cry from the trouser-wearing, pistol-backing barefooted “girl” which Dowie had described having been on the trail.

Affiliations

The religious and political views of groups, families, and individuals also affected their perceptions of gender roles and their constructions of ideal femininity; these perceptions and constructions in turn affected various Victorian women's performances of selfhood (again, both on and off the trail) and the particular ways in which these performances were publicly and privately received.

Cyndi Smith argues that the Vaux family's Quaker beliefs both contributed to their encouragement of Mary's interest and participation in their mountaineering and mountain research; for, according to Smith, Quakers held rather progressive beliefs about female education and "women's rights" (26).

Newspaper clippings and reviews held in the Whyte Museum, Banff, Alberta give evidence to suggest that Vaux's lantern-slide lectures presented before audiences in Philadelphia were particularly well-received; whether this positive reception was due to a large number of fellow Quakers in the audience is unclear. However, such receptions provide an interesting example of how, on occasion, a woman's religious beliefs actually facilitated her ability to construct a serious identity as an alpine "authority."

More often than not, religious discourses were evoked as part of a female mountaineer's attempt to present herself more as a Romantic "lady tourist" than as an aggressive conquering mountain-adventurer. In Mrs. Cole and Mrs. Freshfield's books, for example, the language of divine sublimity is evoked continuously—perhaps in order to assure readers that they were more like Ruskinian mountain worshippers than would-be Alpinists, in that they preferred to revere the peaks from afar and generally from below. Alpine tourist and author of religious tracts Frances

Ridley Havergal makes the connection between mountains and Christian piety in her book *Swiss Letters and Alpine Poems*. (Ed. J. Miriam Crane. London: Nisbet, 1881).

Perhaps more than any other affiliations, a female mountaineer's views on imperialism and the burgeoning feminist movements significantly affected the ways in which she presented herself visually and textually and, more particularly, how she represented foreign peaks and peoples. Specifically how these affiliations affected various women's "peak performances" will be explored in later sections on the individual women.

Agendas:

Like their male counterparts, female mountaineers were motivated to climb mountains for a myriad number of reasons, including spiritual and aesthetic inspiration; exercise; the sense of challenge and danger; escape from the strictures and structures of polite society and civilised life; to make distinctly imperialistic, nationalistic, or feminist statements; in order to explore previously unexplored regions and bag unconquered peaks; to contribute to social, historical, or scientific knowledge about various mountains and mountain flora, fauna, and peoples.

Women's motivations for publishing about mountaineering were similarly diverse and included the desire: to be socially acceptable or popular; to gain financial success, which often could only be achieved through being popular or sensational with the general public; to buck convention; to construct an identity as an eccentric and/or to elicit sensation which, as mentioned earlier, would sometimes also help a woman achieve other objectives, such as financial success;

to make a serious contribution to scientific, artistic, and/or imperial knowledge; to establish a reputation as a serious and accomplished mountaineer first and as a woman second; to promote mountaineering as a respectable rather than useless or dangerous activity; or to promote women's participation in mountaineering.

However, given the social stigmatisation which faced women who were seen as doing “unlady-like” things for “unlady-like” reasons, many Victorian women's outwardly professed intentions or motivations behind their climbs or their writings undoubtedly often failed to match their privately held objectives or their behaviour outside of the public eye. Following the assumptions of Joan Rivière's often evoked “Feminine Masquerade” hypothesis, which argues that women under patriarchy tend to find themselves masking or downplaying their true intentions and abilities by feigning humility and incompetence in order to avoid being seen as a threat to male authority, it is perhaps fair to argue that the female mountaineers under discussion who climbed and published accounts of their climbs in the form of books, articles, and public lectures publicly professed certain reasons for climbing and for seeking publication which were often very different from the ones they privately felt—particularly if they had goals which were more ambitious than ladylike.⁶⁵

Yet, whether they chose to mask or to flaunt (or even to admit to) those private motivations, the aims or agendas of the female mountaineers undoubtedly influenced and, in many cases, helped to determine the particular styles of Victorian womanhood which a female mountaineer-author rejected and which she adopted in attempting to fashion her own public persona.

If Victorian women who sought to participate in the masculine sphere of mountaineering were berated for behaving in unlady-like ways or for having unsexed themselves, those mountaineers who went on to publish or lecture about their mountain adventures had to be particularly self-conscious and acutely cognizant of the public image which they conveyed. More specifically, Victorian female mountaineer-authors had to be prepared to choose which of their personal objectives they sought most to achieve and which ones they were willing to compromise on in order to gain favour with particular groups or individuals. For example, a woman mountaineer might set herself to climb mountains and to publish accounts of her alpine experiences with the hope of gaining not only notoriety with the general public but serious acceptance by institutions such as the Alpine Club. However, that same woman might desire to do so without being deemed an unfeminine “virago” or a “Feminist.” Thus, in order to achieve her agendas without losing the title “lady,” the female mountaineer might have had to ensure that she represented herself and the activities in which she participated as supporting rather than as threatening gendered bourgeois codes of respectability and, most crucially, their relationships with men.

A crucial part of a woman’s play with appearances was clothing.

“The Skirt is a Mere Polite Apology”: Fashioning the Victorian Female Climber

“Let the skirts be as short as possible—to clear the ankles. Nothing else is permissible for mountain work, where one must face bogs, deep heather, thorny gorse, and must not stumble into the hem of one’s garments on the face of a rocky precipice. I must, however, draw the line at the modern feminine costume for mountaineering and deer-stalking, where the skirt is a mere polite

apology—an inch or two below the knee, and the result hardly consistent with a high ideal of womanhood” —Lillias Campbell Davidson, *Hints to Lady Travellers at Home and Abroad* (1889) (152).

“The [climbing skirt is] a badge of respectability”

—Elizabeth Le Blond, “Then and Now.” *Ladies’ Alpine Yearbook*, 1932.

“. . . [A]s to outfit, candor bids one to say that no woman looks her best in the shortest of skirts . . .” —W. G. Fitzgerald. “Women in the High Alps.” *Harper’s Bazaar* 42.6 (June 1908): 546

As clothing historians such as Valerie Steele have argued, more than any other discourses, clothing and appearance were perhaps the most crucial elements of all female mountaineers’ performance of identity on and off trail because they played a central role in how a woman was socially and sexually perceived and received in the Victorian period. As one Victorian fashion critic put it, “Dress is the second self, a dumb self, yet a most eloquent expositor of the person. . . . Dress bears the same relation to the body as speech does to the brain; and therefore dress may be called the speech of the body” (qtd in Steele 132). It is perhaps for this reason that so many female mountaineers were so anxious about how they appeared, particularly in view of the chalet, and that the topic of clothing is the most prominent one in virtually all discussions of women’s mountaineering in the nineteenth century.

As I noted earlier, Victorian female mountaineers were put in a difficult position where clothing was concerned. On the one hand, masculinists were quick to remind ladies that the repercussions which a woman faced for failing to dress, act, and look like a “lady” (whether at home or abroad) were great—those who refused to conform to bourgeois ideals and ideas of respectability and femininity were said to put themselves at risk of being branded a prostitute, a wild or fast woman, or a “shrieking sister,” but also were at risk of rendering themselves

unhealthy, unnatural, and unfeminine. Yet, even as they ridiculed women such as “The Englishwoman on the Alps” for not conforming to sartorial (and by extension social) codes of proper femininity, male travellers berated decorative ladies who attempted ascents in restrictive though feminine clothing, and with excessive amounts of luggage, for inconveniencing and endangering male members of the climbing party.⁶⁶

While the Dress Reform Movement (originating in America) was able to bring to the fore evidence which could support women’s decisions to adopt less conventional but arguably more functional and “healthy” forms of dress, in Britain at least, there were distinct limits as to just how far a woman still wishing to be considered a “respectable” lady would deviate sartorially until well into the twentieth century.⁶⁷



Figure 47. *Punch* cartoon from the 1850s which appears to have been simultaneously poking fun at two relatively new fashion innovations—the lady’s walking skirt and draw-string crinolines—and the hypocrisy of older generations who criticised the young for their ‘fastness’ even as they themselves transgressed borders of propriety. While the skirt facilitated women’s movements, as the cartoon indicates, some found the view afforded by the shortened hemline of a woman’s petticoats and ankles rather scandalous. Image reproduced from Phyllis Cunnington and Alan Mansfield’s *English Costume for Sport and Outdoor Recreation from the 16th to 19th Centuries*. London: Black, 1969.

Although many rational dress advocates had been arguing since at least the 1850s that turkish trousers (Bloomers) or knickerbockers were the only practical types of clothing suitable for improved health and mobility, the dichotomous view of women as decorative/attractive objects and men as functional/intellectual subjects, and the cognitive links between clothing, morality/sexuality, and gender remained too deeply entrenched in Britain to allow for functionality to win out over form—at least where women's appearances or apparel were concerned.

If, as Davidson's quotation indicates, a skirt which cleared the ankles was audacious enough for even those most in support of women's physical activities to protest, exposed bifurcated garments would have seemed positively obscene to more conservative Victorian men and women (**figure 47**). For much of the nineteenth century, a similar antipathy towards women going without corsets was expressed. Women who circulated in public *sans corsette* ran the risk of being deemed morally lax or sexually negligent. Constance Larymore, in the early 1900s expressed a similar sentiment in her advice to colonial wives: "Always wear a corset, even for a *tête-à-tête* home dinner on the warmest evenings; there is something about their absence almost as demoralizing as hair in curling pints" (qtd in Middleton 8).

As Elizabeth Wilson has pointed out, in large part due to the American Feminist and dress reformer Amelia Bloomer, and French radical George Sand, wearers of bifurcated garments, particularly trousers, ran the risk of being labelled as feminists (as well as sexual "inverts" or hermaphrodites), whether they supported women's suffrage or not. Thus, as in the case of female bicyclists, social pressures forced Victorian female mountaineers—particularly those seeking to safely and successfully carry out ascents higher than those outlined in tourist

guidebooks, but not wishing to risk being labelled “unlady-like”—to be extremely innovative where their clothing and appearances were concerned.

In her 1859 book *A Lady's Tour Round Monte Rosa*, Mrs. Henry Warwick Cole demonstrated her clear awareness of the art of public presentation and deception. Under the auspices of “practicality,” Mrs. Cole went to great lengths in her narrative to give detailed advice to potential alpine travellers and climbers on how to achieve an appropriately lady-like look without endangering everyone around them, and without too much risk to their reputations:

A lady's dress is inconvenient for mountain-travelling, even under the most careful management. And therefore every device which may render it less so should be adopted. . . . Of course every lady engaged on an Alpine journey will wear a broad-brimmed hat, which will relieve her from the incumbrance of a parasol. She should also have a dress of some light woollen material, such as carmelite or alpaca, which, in case of bad weather, does not look utterly forlorn when it has once been wetted and dried. Small rings should be sewn inside the seam of the dress, and a cord passed through them, the ends of which should be knotted together in such a way that the whole dress may be drawn up at a moment's notice to the requisite height. If the dress is too long, it catches the stones, especially when coming down hill, and sends them rolling on those below. I have heard more than one gentleman complain of painful blows suffered from such accidents. A riding-skirt, without a body, which can be slipped on and off in a moment, is also invaluable: it should be made of light waterproof cloth, only just long enough to cover the feet when riding. (6-7)⁶⁸

Whether Mrs. Cole adhered to these elaborate instructions is unknown—as with many female travellers, we have only her descriptions of herself to go by. Although she was much troubled by difficulties acquiring a sidesaddle and claims to have refused to ride during parts of her traverse of Monte Rosa without one, Mrs. Cole sidestepped the kind of controversy which plagued fellow travellers such as Isabella Bird by leaving out any visual rendering of herself.⁶⁹ Mrs. Cole's clothing may have looked something like that of the women appearing in **figure 48**.



Figure 48. Portrait depicting a mixed climbing party which included famous mountaineer Lucy Walker (back row, centre). This image usefully illustrates the more decorative and ladylike clothing and accessories favoured by some female alpinists. Reproduced from Farrar, J. P. "In Memoriam: Mrs. Fanny Bullock Workman." *Alpine Journal* (1925): 180-82.

Mrs. Elizabeth Le Blond, an accomplished climber and founder of the Ladies' Alpine Club in 1907, went so far as to wear knickerbockers underneath her skirts. Like Mrs. Cole and indeed many other Victorian female mountaineers, Le Blond found the skirt to be a crucial, if still often cumbersome, prop in their public performance of selfhood, and used it as a sartorial

trompe de l'oeil (or as Mrs. Lillias Davidson deemed it, “a mere apology”) with which to cover their less than lady-like parts and intentions.

Unlike Lucy Walker (**figure 48**), the eminent female climber who adamantly insisted upon climbing in a white print dress and crinoline her entire climbing career (including on her first woman’s ascent of the Matterhorn), Mrs. Le Blond was known to slip off her skirt once outside of the view of the chalet, for in Le Blond’s view, the skirt was “a badge of respectability.”⁷⁰ In *Harper’s Bazaar*, 1908, W. G. Fitzgerald recounted a particularly stressful mishap which had apparently occurred to Le Blond when, just before she had returned to civilization after a day’s climb, she sent her guide back to retrieve her skirt which had been “rolled up, and put under a heavy stone [which was] marked with a small cairn”:

After a more secure place had been reached, Imboden was sent back for Mrs. Le Blond’s skirt—a relic treasured far above its paltry intrinsic worth, for it had many thrilling associations. He climbed cautiously down, but suddenly heard a rumbling roar. Like a flash he squeezed himself in under an overhanging crag, and as he did so a monstrous mass of stones and snow poured down the mountain right over his hiding place. When the avalanche had passed he ventured forth, but a little lower a fresh fall began, and lasted many minutes. Just as the old peasant reached the spot where the skirt lay beneath its heap of stones a stupendous crash checked him. Looking behind, he saw the smoke of a mighty ice avalanche coming in a vast wave over the cliffs above. He darted for shelter, and from beneath a great rock he saw the millions of tons of ice boulders and rock masses, with trees and moraine debris, sweep majestically past. Now for the comedy. As every Alpinist knows, there goes before the avalanche a wind almost as destructive as the

avalanche itself. And before ever the advance guard of the mass had touched the little mound where Mrs. Le Blond's skirt was concealed, the whole heap rose from the ground and was whirled far out of the path of the avalanche and along in fragments by the violence of the advance-guard gusts. For many minutes grave old Imboden saw his mistress's skirt whirling into the heavens, like the mantle of Elijah as the Prophet disappeared in the splendor of the clouds! (549)

According to Rebecca Brown, "clad in her knickers, [Le Blond] snuck back to the village, then concealed herself behind a tree while her guide went to her hotel to fetch another skirt—he returned with an evening gown instead" (50).

It was perhaps due to this clothing crisis that, in later years, Le Blond advised other female climbers to follow a more lady-like sartorial path than the one she had adhered to; in the entry on women's mountaineering for C. T. Dent's edited book *Mountaineering* (1892), she and Katy Richardson suggested to readers not to remove their skirts outside of town but, rather, to draw them up and down as the occasion suited, *à la* Mrs. Cole:

When climbing, the skirt must, whatever its length, be looped up. Therefore it is easy to have a skirt which, in the valleys or towns, which does not look conspicuous. . . . [A climber should have] an extra belt of strong ribbon . . . which is then pinned to [the skirt] in fish-wife style. The length is then arranged according to the requirements of the occasion. One safety pin attaching the two sides and another fastening the back, the hem being pinned on to the outer belt, do the work. . . . (Qtd in Brown 51)

Although she had been quoted as responding to an old lady's "imploing me with tears in her eyes not to 'spoil my life for so small a thing as climbing a mountain'!" with the retort that "if my reputation were so fragile a thing that it would not bear such a test, then I would be very well rid of a useless article" (Conquest, 36), ample evidence exists to suggest that, on the contrary, Freda Du Faur was quite careful of how she appeared, both before the respectable men and ladies circulating around the Hermitage on Mount Cook or on the upper slopes of the New Zealand Alps, and before the camera when being represented on her climbs. Thus, even though she happily confessed to having "already walked over most of the conventions since I began mountaineering," and although she continued to do so by doing things such as inviting her male climbing guides to share accommodations with her (to conserve body heat), or by shocking the women at the Hermitage by admitting "that it was a pity that mountaineering had such a devastating influence on the complexion, but pointed out that it was only a temporary evil and as nothing to the joys I had acquired at the same time" (Conquest, 35), Du Faur always tried to maintained an extremely lady-like appearance both off the trail and on. As **figure 49** exemplifies, in public/published representations of herself *en route* to the peak of a mountain, she never seems to have worn knickers without a skirt over them.

Off the trail, Du Faur was similarly obsessive about her appearance, particularly before admiring tourists at the Hermitage; according to Du Faur, it was only when she "strolled out to dinner in my prettiest frock" that she felt "so supported [as to be] able to face the hotel full of strangers and the toasts and congratulations that were the order of the evening" after bagging the first ascent of NZ's Mount Cook (Conquest 110).



Figure 49. Image of the Australian-born conqueror of New Zealand's Mount Cook, Freda Du Faur, clad in her preferred version of climbing garb—a feminine collared blouse, knee-length skirt over knickers and puttees. Du Faur's ladylike chignon hairdo and accessories such as the brooch and belt add to the over all 'femininity' of the look. Reproduced from Bea Dawson's *Lady Travellers: the Tourists of Early New Zealand*. Albany, Auckland: Penguin Books, 2001. 168.

On the one hand, Du Faur's religious insistence upon feminine garb related to her desires to alter stereotypical perceptions of athletic women and of mountaineering as sport unsuited for "ladies"; as she wrote in *Conquest*: "Being perfectly well aware that the average person's idea of a woman capable of real mountaineering or any sport demanding physical fitness and good staying power, is a masculine-looking female with short hair, a loud voice and large feet, it always gives me particular pleasure to upset this preconceived picture. In the year of grace 1910 a love of fresh air and exercise is not a purely masculine prerogative . . . and should be quite easily associated with a love of beauty and personal daintiness . . ." (109-10).

However, just as the hypermasculinisation of mountaineering during the nineteenth century was in many respects related to a desire on the part of various Victorian men (whether heterosexual or not) to anxiously and adamantly assert their virile manliness and avoid the appellation “effeminate” (a term with both gendered and sexual connotations), in this instance, Freda Du Faur’s anxious assertions of her respectability and her femininity through appearance and dress may have been related to anxieties not only of gender but of sexuality. For, as biographers have revealed, Du Faur was engaged in a long-term relationship with Miss Muriel Cadogan, “one of two ‘Lady Experts’ employed at the Dupain Institute of Physical Education in Sydney” (Dawson 186). Given the stigmatisation surrounding “deviancy” of various forms from the heteronormative imperative (particularly during Du Faur’s lifetime), and given the fact that sexologists such as Richard von Krafft-Ebbing argued that “[u]ranism may nearly always be suspected in females wearing their hair short, or who dress in the fashion of men, or pursue the sports and pastimes of their male acquaintances,” it is perhaps unsurprising that Du Faur would have been so anxious about appearing like a respectable (read heterosexual) lady and not a short haired feminist, hermaphrodite, or “invert.”

Socially speaking, women who chose to wear a skirt on the trail—whether of the fuller or more “abbreviated” forms—may have had a greater range of manoeuvrability on the trail and off, in so far as they at least visibly conformed to standard expectations of female appearance and thus may have been less often the subject of social scrutiny than their trouser-clad sisters. However, sartorially speaking, ladies in skirts often found themselves in positions which required the highest levels of dexterity to ensure they kept up their ladylike appearances.

In order to avoid any possible mishaps on the descent, female climbers were often advised (and advised each other) to turn their sartorial liability into an asset by using their skirt as a kind of sled upon which to glissade down the slope; noted Walter Barrow in his article for *Wide World Magazine* c. 1907, “to glissade standing . . . requires some practice; and with ladies, or when the snow is soft, a sitting glissade (technically known as “boiler-ending”) is much in vogue.”

In New Zealand, Freda Du Faur reported that “for glissading, women’s skirts were drawn back through the legs and tucked firmly in front with a safety pin” (qtd in Dawson 179). While many women found this an innovative idea, one more proper climber apparently found the results horrific, for, “[i]n the forward movement her skirt was pushed up to show more leg than she approved of, and in her efforts to remedy matters her heels caught in the snow and she wheeled round hard with her legs now pointing skywards. . . . She was furious and asked that we stop at once as it was quite disgusting” (qtd in Dawson 179).

American climber Meta Breevort soon discovered that her “dress plan [draw string crinoline] had failed,” for, “descending snow slopes the snow enters between the rings and stuffs up the hem and makes me heavy and wet.” As a result, she soon started “bast[ing] up both the dress and skirt” (qtd in Clark, *An Eccentric* 39). Peter Hansen reports that she also “removed her crinoline hoops after she left a village and reinserted them when the day was finished” (*British* 319).

Despite the stigmatisation attached to bifurcated garments, some women defied social convention to climb in divided skirts, knickerbockers, bloomers, or, in rare cases, trousers. Most of the women who donned bifurcated bottoms followed the example of Le Blond, **figure 64** and

Freda Du Faur, **figure 49**, and covered them with skirts of various lengths—at least until out of view of the hut. However, a select number of women insisted that “masculine” garb was the only clothing suitable for mountain-climbing.

Like Mrs. Cole, Annie Peck (**figure 72**) and Constance Barnicoat (**figure 50**) legitimated transgressions of sartorial propriety on the grounds of health, safety, and practicality. In the aptly titled article “Practical Mountain Climbing,” Peck wrote that

Women . . . will declare that a skirt is no hindrance to their locomotion. This is obviously absurd, and though a few ladies have climbed mountains like the Matterhorn in extremely scant and abbreviated skirts, I dare assert that suitably made knickerbockers (not so scant as men’s and yet not too full) are not only more comfortable but more becoming, whether to stout or slender figures. A scant skirt barely reaching the knee and showing the knickerbockers below, such as some ladies have worn, is as ungraceful a costume as could be devised; and for a woman in difficult mountaineering to waste her strength and endanger her life with a skirt is foolish in the extreme. . . . It may not be necessary to add that no one should climb mountains or even hills in corsets. One must have the full use of the lungs, and the loosest corset is some impediment to the breathing. As ordinarily worn they are impossible. Moreover, they greatly increase the heat, impede circulation, and promote rush of blood to the head. (698-99)

Similarly, in an article for *Wide World Magazine*, Constance Barnicoat argued that

Skirts, even the shortest, are almost impracticable in [mountaineering]. . . I promptly sent for proper boy’s boots, the heaviest procurable, with very thick soles which I had well

nailed, and generally rigged myself out as much like a boy as possible with a white wool 'sweater,' knickers, and puttees to my knees. Except in some such dress the guide flatly refused the risk of taking ladies; and he was perfectly justified. . . . Whatever arguments may be urged against a boy's dress for a woman anywhere within range of civilisation, those arguments do not hold good in wilds such as we went through. . . . A real boy's dress is, in my view, far preferable in every way to a compromise such as a so-called 'reformed' costume. . . . (566)



Figure 50. Constance Barnicoat in "boy's costume." Note that such an appellation carried with it an association of smallness of stature and childlike dependency—the implication seems to have been not only that women were too small to fit into men's clothes (manufacturers had not yet begun producing 'rational' climbing dress for women), but also that more adventurous girls could please (rather than threaten) their outdoorsy husbands by being the sons they never had. See Rena Phillips' "A Woman on the Trail" (*Outing Magazine* XLIV [April-Sept. 1904]: 585-89) for a similar suggestion that if women were to "wear the pants" literally or figuratively, they should be boys' pants. Image reproduced from Bea Dawson's *Lady Travellers: the Tourists of Early New Zealand*. *Lady Travellers: The Tourists of Early New Zealand*. Albany, Auckland: Penguin Books, 2001.

As Bea Dawson has argued, “Constance’s suitability as a feminist role model is in some question as she saw herself as an individual apart [from the feminist movement]” (213). Thus, Barnicoat’s choice of clothing was likely motivated by practicality. By contrast, however, Annie Peck’s active participation in the late Victorian suffrage movement leads one to suspect that she donned knickers not merely for health or safety reasons, but because she wished to capitalise upon the powerful feminist associations which had tended to be attached to bifurcated garments since the Bloomer movement in the 1850s.

In *A Search for the Apex of America* Peck wrote that “. . . being always from earliest years a firm believer in the equality of the sexes, I felt that any great achievement in any line of endeavour would be of advantage to my sex” (xi). Thus, it is perhaps fair to argue that like, early nineteenth-century American Bloomer girl Julia Archibald Holmes, who ascended Pike’s Peak in 1858 in support of the feminist cause, Peck used knickers and bloomers as crucial props in her attempts to perform her allegiance to the causes of dress reform and female emancipation of every kind, and in her desire to politicise her ascents into feminist statements of women’s equality.⁷¹

Saving Face, Masking the Truth: The Female Mountaineer’s Toilette

“Climbing is very bad for the complexion. I would not dare . . . to describe what I have seen in the way of damaged complexions on mountain sides.”—Harold Spender in “Should Women Climb Snow Mountains?” *Women at Home* (Aug. 1898): 931.

“A sun-mask is absolutely necessary for any lady who would be afraid of exchanging her complexion for a truly Alpine one—brown, strong, and healthy.”—Julian Grande, “Woman Out of Doors.” *Daily Mail*, 6 May 1910.

“In high climbing, a veil is not despised even by some members of the sterner sex.” Annie Peck, “Practical Mountain Climbing.” *Outing* 38 (September, 1901): 695-700.

While Freda Du Faur accepted sunburned and peeling skin as an expected part of mountaineering, and, particularly towards the end of the nineteenth century, some Victorian men and women (like Julian Grande in the *Daily Mail*, quoted above) began to regard “berry brown” skin as a sign of a woman’s health, many Victorian ladies were too afraid to both figuratively and literally lose face. Thus, along with kid gloves, hats, and veils, complexion masks became necessities in the toilettes of many female alpine travellers and climbers (figure 51).



**Madame A. T. ROWLEY'S
TOILET MASK**
(OR FACE GLOVES)

Is a natural beautifier for bleaching and preserving the skin and removing complexional imperfections. It is soft and flexible in form, and can be WORN without discomfort or inconvenience.

It is recommended by eminent physicians and scientists as a substitute for injurious cosmetics.

COMPLEXION BLEMISHES may be hidden imperfectly by cosmetics and powders, but can only be removed permanently by the Toilet Mask. By its use every kind of spots, impurities, roughness, etc., vanish from the skin, leaving it soft, clear, brilliant, and beautiful. It is harmless, costs little, and saves pounds uselessly expended for cosmetics, powders, lotions, etc. It prevents and removes wrinkles, and is both a complexion preserver and a beautifier.

Illustrated Treatise, with full particulars, post free, 3 stamps.

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THE TOILET MASK CO. 139, OXFORD STREET,
LONDON, W.**

TO BE WORN THREE TIMES IN THE WEEK.

Figure 51. An undated advertisement for a complexion mask known as the “face glove” renders more explicit Riviere’s suggestion in “Womanliness as Masquerade” that femininity is a play of masks. Many masks had cosmetics permanently imprinted upon them—though Annie Peck’s was moustachioed. Some were made of linen or flannel. Image source unknown.

In her sketchbook of a series of travels in Tyrol and Switzerland with several other ladies and Alpine Club men, Elizabeth Tuckett recounted that the ladies who donned complexion masks were met with astonished gazes of local women, and had trouble seeing, hearing, and breathing.

Yet Tuckett and her female companions found their complexion masks to be very crucial, in that they allowed them freedom from parasols.

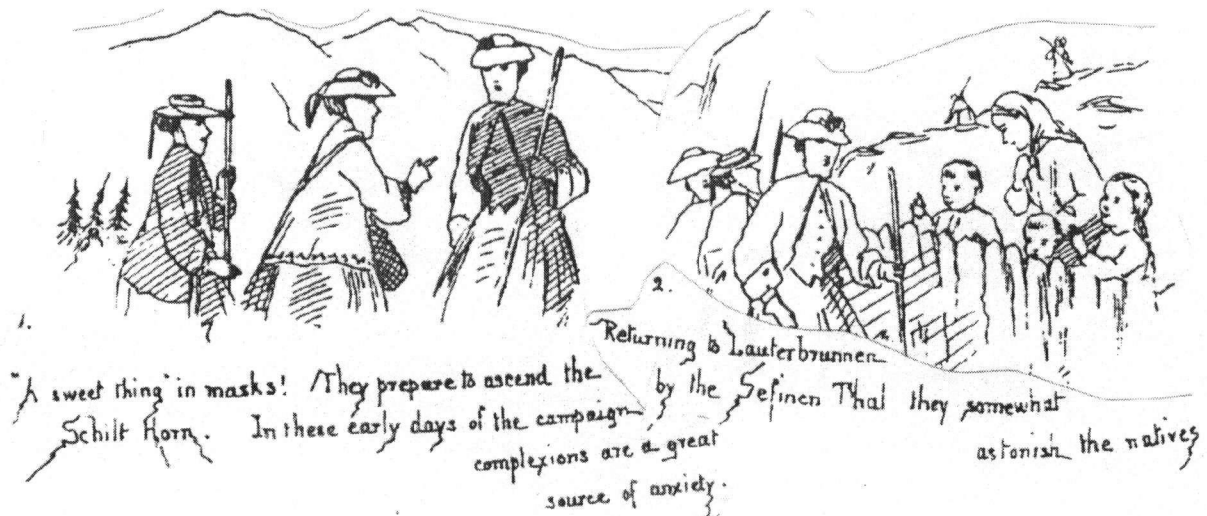


Figure 52. Miss Tuckett and fellow female companions captured *en masques*. As Tuckett's caption puts it, to Victorian women climbers "complexions [were] a great source of anxiety" but the masks which protected them "somewhat astonish[ed] the natives." Reproduced from Elizabeth Tuckett's *How I Spent the Summer*. 1866.

Male climbers such as Harold Spender declared these masks to be "distractingly ugly."

However, many female climbers insisted upon them because they preserved what was in the Victorian period that mark of gender, race, and class *par excellence*: white skin. Indeed, as Dea Birkettnotes in *Spinsters Abroad*, to Victorian women travellers "[t]he sun itself was an enemy to be combatted and avoided at all costs; preservation of a white skin carried not only racial implications but for white women, the notion of purity and fragility."

On a more practical level, complexion masks protected women from experiencing the excruciating pain suffered by Elizabeth Le Blond during her approach to the *Col du Tour*: "I have many times had my face badly burnt on ice and snow," Le Blond wrote in *High Life and Towers of Silence*, "but never have I experienced such agony as resulted from my walk to the Col

du Tour. My friend suffered quite as severely as I did, and for four days neither of us could leave the house. The stiffening of the skin made opening one's mouth to eat—a matter in which all one's ingenuity was required, and the pain from the blisters with which my face was entirely covered, prevented me from lying down even for a moment during the second night. A sorry spectacle we presented when at last we could leave the hotel . . ." (96). Le Blond must have later wisened up; in **figure 53** below she is seen wearing a makeshift mask.



Figure 53. Looking somewhat like the Invisible Man, Elizabeth Le Blond is captured by an unknown photographer wearing a makeshift complexion mask fashioned from cloth. Reproduced from Maria Aitken's *A Girdle Round the Earth*. London: Constable, 1987. 17.

In her *Hints to Lady Travellers* (1889) Lillias Campbell Davidson wrote of a recipe which she argued would treat exposed skin that masks and veils had failed to prevent from burning: "One is so exposed to the wind and sun on mountain-tops that the effect on a delicate skin is often such as to burn and tan the face to a painful degree. A simple and homely remedy, which may be obtained in the most out-of-the-world localities, is sour milk applied thickly at night, and

washed off with plenty of soap in the morning. Cucumber-juice and glycerine is another excellent specific; and sulpholine lotion is a good addition to one's toilet necessities among the mountains" (156). Undoubtedly, Davidson's concoction would have been warmly received by female climber Lily Bristow, had she had the recipe at hand after a climb during which "the old fool of a rope [went] and knock[ed] my very superior hat and my goggles down a quite impossible slope" thereby causing her to "completely ruin my cherished complexion!" ("An Easy Day for a Lady" 374). Up until that fateful moment, Bristow had "preserved my skin hitherto with the utmost skill, but of course having no hat has brought my forehead up into the regulation blisters, and even the rest of my face smiles with difficulty" ("An Easy Day for a Lady" 374).

Peak Performances: Victorian Female Mountaineers and their Autobiographical Alpine Acts

Victorian women mountaineers' sartorial styles and practices on the trail nicely illustrate the larger rhetorical strategies which many women alpine authors often employed in their published/public self-presentations. In the following sections, I will use the images of the three sartorial styles most commonly adopted by Victorian female mountaineers (depicted below) in order to discuss three types of women's mountaineering narratives which seem to have emerged during the nineteenth century: the more feminine (l), the hybrid (c), and the rational approach (r).



I: Playing the Lady's Part



Figure 54. Studio portrait of two unknown lady alpinists and their male companions. This photo gives quite a nice illustration of ladylike climbing garb (of the kind Mrs. Cole and Mrs. Freshfield might have worn). A close observer will note that the otherwise demure looking lady at right is exposing her glacier-nail hobbled boot. Reproduced from Phyllis Cunnington and Alan Mansfield. *English Costume for Sport and Outdoor Recreation from the 16th to 19th Centuries*. London: Black, 1969.

Of all the female alpine writers I consider, Mrs. Cole in her book *A Lady's Tour Round Monte Rosa* (1859), Mrs. Henry Freshfield (A Lady) in *Light Leaves Gathered* (1861) and *Summer Rambles. . .* (1862), and Miss Elizabeth Tuckett in her published sketchbooks *How We Spent the Summer* (1866) and *Zigzagging* (1871), seem to have been most consciously and most adeptly playing the "lady's" parts.

In these texts, book titles, book covers, frontispiece images, and *noms de plumes* appear to have been used by the authors to serve as the literary equivalents of the drawstring crinoline, the climbing or riding skirt, or the ornate and suitably feminine but clearly artificial complexion mask (figures 51-52). In each instance, the book (and by extension the authoress) is presented to the reader in a diminutive, attractive, but non-threatening feminine form.

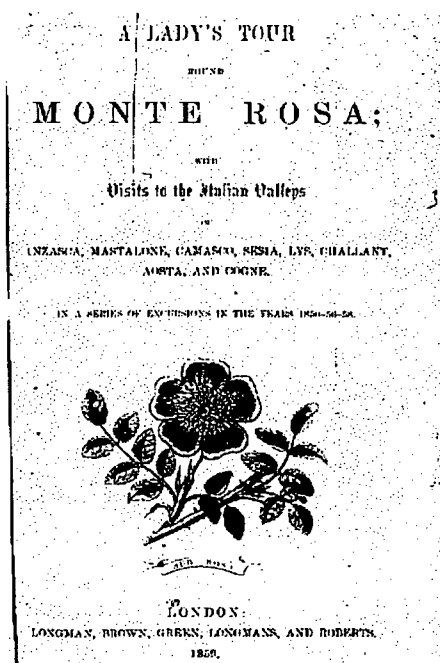


Figure 55. Title page of Mrs. Henry Warwick Cole's *A Lady's Tour Round Monte Rosa*. London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1859. Both the title and the ladylike botanical image add to the feminine quality of the book.

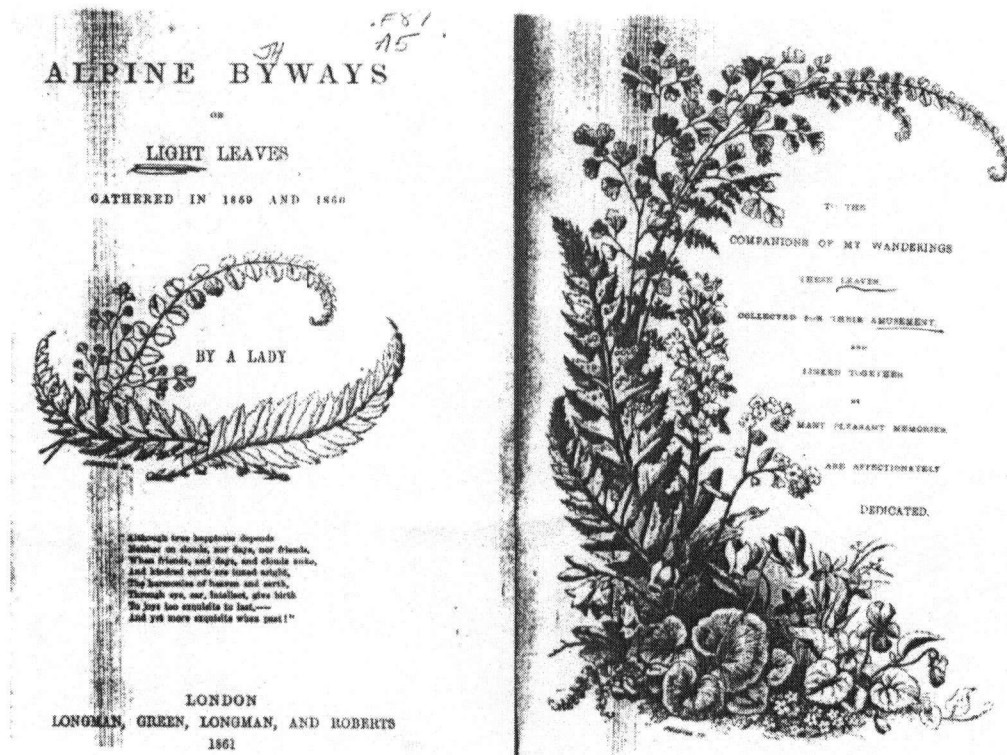


Figure 56. Left, title page, and right, dedication page from A Lady's [Mrs. Henry Freshfield's] *Alpine Byways*. London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1861. Going even further than Mrs. Cole, Mrs. Freshfield's book relies not only on delicate botanical prints to assure readers of both the author's and the text's "genteel" femininity, but includes a delicately worded title; a snippet of poetry; a sentimental dedication emphasizing "amusement," "pleasantries," and "affection"; and the demure *nom-de-plume*, "A Lady."

Although distinctly decorative, light, and feminine, both in terms of their presentation, style, and content, Miss Elizabeth Tuckett's books are examples of an unconventional sort of travel narrative. Rather than being written texts peppered with illustrations, Tuckett's books are published versions of a series of captioned sketches which she drew while following the zigzagging steps of her brother F. F. Tuckett (a prominent Alpine Club man) across the Tyrol and the Dolomites in the 1860s and 70s. Most interesting is the fact that Miss Tuckett has constructed her books and her mountain travels as dramatic plays, with each character being portrayed on the opening frontispieces (entitled *Dramatis Personae*) as playing a role in these larger Alpine dramas (figure 57).

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

"but we set forth to climb"; xxxxxxxxxxxx.

The Princess.

E: an A.C. (*scientific*)

U: his Sister. (*graphic*)

Mrs C: the Chaperone. (*domestic*)

U: a Ward. (*vocalistic*)

W: the life of the party. (*phonetic*)

WF: a host in himself. (*socratic*)

ENB: an M.C. (*photographic*)

EB: his Wife. (*artistic*)

C: her Sister. (*peripatetic*)

HEB: going up for honours. (*enthusiastic*)



Dedicated by special request to themselves!

Figure 57. Frontispiece from Elizabeth Tuckett's popular published sketchbook *How We Spent the Summer: Or a Voyage in Zigzag, in Switzerland and Tyrol, with Some Members of the Alpine Club*. London: Longman's, Greenman's, Green & Co., 1866.



Figures 58, 59, 60, 61. These sketches, taken from pp. 12 and 37 of Tuckett's *How We Spent the Summer: Or a Voyage in Zigzag, in Switzerland and Tyrol, with Some Members of the Alpine Club*, London: Longman's, Greenman's, Green & Co., 1866, depict the ladies of the party bidding the men adieu (figure 58), sketching (figure 61), letter writing for "16 hours a day" (figure 60), and spending "idle hours" at lake side with male chaperones (figure 61). By contrast the men are off to "attack a new Peak" and to find a "premier pas" up a neighbouring peak (figure 59).

As she made explicitly clear on the frontispieces of both her books, Miss Tuckett cast her travel performance plays (and concomitantly her life and her travels) in adherence to the social

scripts being written, rehearsed, and reenacted by the masculinist Alpine Club and Victorian patriarchal culture at large; at the beginning of her first book, for example, the female characters are introduced as: “L [Tuckett’s sister] (graphic); ‘Mrs. C’: the chaperone (domestic); V: a Ward (vocalistic); EB: his Wife (artistic); C: her sister (peripatetic).” By contrast the male characters are described as “F: an A.C. (scientific); W: the life of the party (phonetic); W. F.: a host in himself (Socratic); E. N. B: an MC (photographic); H. E. B.: going up for honours (enthusiastic)”. This “divided spheres” approach to mountaineering is recapitulated throughout the sketchbook as, again and again, the ladies are relegated to the lower lakes, chalets, and towns of the valleys to botanise, sketch, and socialise, while the younger men go off to conquer the higher neighbouring peaks (**figures 58-61**).⁷²

Tuckett’s choice of labelling the sketchbooks “performances,” together with the playful and dramatic “tone” conveyed by her images and their captions, suggest a pre-Judith Butler self-consciousness about the iterative rather than essential nature of gender that may ask us to question the earnestness of “Miss” Tuckett’s light, innocent, and ladylike ways. One of the central claims of this particular study is to acknowledge Victorian women’s active participation in their own self-images. Thus, I contend that, both within the text (as traveller) and without (as authoress), Miss Tuckett reveals herself to be a highly dexterous character actress who is quite adept and convincing in the role of the bumbling “fair tourist.”

There are only a very small number of occasions when Miss Tuckett’s carefully crafted mask of demure femininity slips and a less than ladylike side is revealed; **Figure 62** for example presents a local Alpine woman posed in a way also favoured by (stereotypically) male

ethnographic and medico-scientific artists and photographers of the day (see Elizabeth Edwards' *Anthropology and Photography*).



Figure 62. "Sketches on the steamboat, Unterwalden Fashions." Pen and ink sketch by Elizabeth Tuckett. Reproduced from *How I Spent the Summer; Or a Voyage in Zigzag, in Switzerland and Tyrol, with Some Members of the Alpine Club*. London: Longman's, Greenman's, Green & Co., 1866. 14.

However, Miss Tuckett gives such sketches captions which assure her readers/viewers that her interest in the women are appropriately feminine in nature: she is interested in their hairstyles and clothing.⁷³ With the captions, these quasi-scientific sketches are transformed into fashion plates and Tuckett therefore safely stays in her chosen character: the demure sketching, rambling lady tourist.



While Miss Tuckett seems to have preferred to maintain a lady-like demeanour at all costs, Mrs. Freshfield and Mrs. Henry Warwick Cole were not above drawing their physical and

rhetorical crinolines up to less than lady-like length now and again—perhaps to add a moderately sensational air to themselves and to their narratives. Like the female mountaineer slyly but demurely exposing her glacier-nailed boots from beneath her voluminous skirts in **figure 58**, at several points in their narratives, the ladies Mrs. Freshfield and Mrs. Cole both give the reader a hint (and a glimpse) that possibly there is something more beneath their lady-like appearances, and that they perhaps had more ambitious reasons for climbing and for publishing accounts of their climbs than mere “rambling” or “touring.”

In the introductions to both *A Lady's Tour* and *Alpine Byways*, for example, Mrs. Cole and Mrs. Freshfield both openly state that their intentions in publishing records of their own travels are to demonstrate, to female and male readers, that many mountain excursions (albeit of a more moderate kind than those pursued by men) might be as easily and safely accomplished—and as fully enjoyed—by women as by men. Mrs. Cole writes that “having successfully accomplished and thoroughly enjoyed the tour of Monte Rosa, I desire to give, in the following pages, the benefits of my experience to others, in hopes of inducing them, and especially members of my own sex, to follow my example, and visit the valleys which surround this magnificent mountain, some of which have been hitherto but little frequented” (1). Similarly, Mrs. Freshfield writes that, in publishing “selections from [her] note-book” she hopes to encourage “wives and sisters [to] seek participation in the pleasures which they hear so vividly described” by the mountaineering men in their lives, and to show them “the most healthful influence on the mind” and “relaxation and amusement” which “acquaintance with the By-ways and higher passes of the Alps” have the possibility of providing to both women and men of “almost every variety of mental and bodily capacity” (2).

In addition to making it clear that, contrary to many travel guides, which deemed most trails too difficult for the fairer sex, “ladies may now enjoy the wildest scenes of mountain grandeur and comparative ease,” Mrs. Freshfield reveals that she also “venture[s] to contribute a few leaves to the already abundant growth of Alpine literature” (4). However, she is careful to add that it is “not without much hesitation” that she attempts to do so.

Now and again, Mrs. Cole and Mrs. Freshfield also make it clear that they relished those moments when they did things which might be seen as audacious for ladies; Mrs. Cole wants her readers to know that, on at least on occasion, she “. . .saucily declined the proffered help” of her guides, acknowledging that

. . . had I accepted it, I should not have been able to say that I had ascended without assistance. This I was anxious to do, for Murray, speaking of the Aeggisch-horn says, ‘This is a new expedition, just beginning to be known, and is a fatiguing day for ladies; few would attempt to climb the horn, and indeed the view is not so greatly superior to that from the lower ridge as to make it essential to incur the additional fatigue.’ In this opinion I do not at all concur; for I not only climbed up, but also came down again, without any other aid than that of my trusty Alpen-stock and the occasional assistance afforded by my taking hold of the rocks on the side of the path. (68)

Similarly, Mrs. Freshfield makes sure to point out that “The ascent [of the Titlis] is apparently rather an unusual one for ladies, and even while thus providing the necessary aid for our enterprise, I suspect that the good folks at Engstlen were somewhat incredulous as to its accomplishment” (24). According to her, the folks at the “Angel” Inn near Engelberg were equally incredulous when, having gone ahead of the men, she and her female companion arrived

there unaccompanied: "The appearance of such 'unprotected females' evidently created some surprise when we entered the hotel, and said we had come from the Titlis [But] [w]hen our dilemma was understood, the 'Angel' and its inmates received us most hospitably, and the good people busied themselves most kindly in providing us with slippers and dry garments" (33).

In addition to enjoying the experience of what Chloe Chard has called "transmuting from spectator into spectacles" ("Transmuting"), Mrs. Cole and Mrs. Freshfield both also seem quick to make note of instances when their abilities or knowledge surpass those of their male companions or other male authorities.

Mrs. Freshfield seems particularly keen to correct guide book authors, such as John Murray: "It is time that 'Murray' should qualify his assertion, that the Gries 'is not a pass for ladies.' Acting on such authority, many may be deterred from a journey presenting no real difficulties, and offering great attractions; leading, as it does, at once, from the wild grandeur of snow and glacier, to the magnificent falls of the Tosa, and the Italian loveliness of the Val Formazza" (40). A few pages later, after recounting several rather unfortunate mishaps of her husband which had left him winded and with a sore knee, Mrs. Freshfield brags about having had better stamina for walking than both her husband and her male guides: "Below the falls, the path became rough, generally paved with uneven blocks of stone, which evidently fatigued the men who accompanied us. We had hints that Formazza would be the best resting-place, but as this would have entirely upset our plans for the next day, we affected not to understand what was said" (43).

While such moments of sauciness might indicate that these women may have had some rather ambitious agendas which their performances of femininity sometimes failed to hide from

view, there is little textual or historical evidence to suggest that the desires on the parts of Miss Tuckett, Mrs. Freshfield, and Mrs. Cole to appear more as lady-like “alpine tourists” than serious mountaineers was purely performance. Certainly, unlike some of their more docile and domestic female contemporaries, these ladies took advantage of the new travel opportunities being afforded to the middle-classes by the expansion of the railways through Switzerland in order to accompany their husbands, brothers, and male friends to the Continent. However, all three women seem to have been generally rather accepting of (or at least resigned to playing) the secondary or “supporting” parts most commonly allotted to “ladies,” both while climbing and in Victorian society at “home”: namely, those of the tourist and the handmaiden.

Mrs. Cole and Mrs. Freshfield show their adherence to Victorian constructions of femininity as dependent, delicate, and touristic in a number of ways. Most obviously, without any suggestion that they were being pressured by their companions to alter their behaviour, both women seem to have actively and consciously taken it upon themselves to ensure that they upheld as many standards and conventions of feminine behaviour and deportment—normally reserved for “home” or polite society—on the trail.

For example, Mrs. Cole and Mrs. Freshfield attempted to preserve and police propriety by insisting upon a lady’s sidesaddle even in the most remote of alpine regions where an English lady tourist would still have been an extremely rare sight. Riding astride in remote regions would arguably have been the most practical and convenient, and in some alpine villages might have gone unjudged. However, while both women had neglected to bring sidesaddles of their own along for the journey, both remained recalcitrant on this subject; so adamant was Mrs. Freshfield that, at one point, she and her female companion, C— went so far as to use make-shift side-

saddles (comprised of a wooden frame with a duvet thrown over it) when no lady's saddles were to be found at any hostel in the area.

Like Miss Tuckett, Mrs. Freshfield attempted to uphold the dictates of polite society by being extremely conscientious about her appearance and the state of her clothing. In *Alpine Byways*, Mrs. Freshfield reveals that she was so concerned with appearing respectable that, after being thrown from her horse *en route* to the Valley of Sixt, she rushed back to the chalet—not to receive medical attention or to rest but to sew her dress, which had been torn by the horse: “There could be no doubt of the necessity of my return to Sixt, if only to see what repair was possible to my torn garments. . . . It was a relief to find the repairs of my dress less formidable than appearances led me to expect: a strong gingham skirt having given way only in the seams. Great progress was made in two hours towards its restoration to a wearable condition” (106). A few pages later Mrs. Freshfield is careful to contrast her hyperconsciousness of her lady-like appearance with the apparent laxity of the local alpine peasants: “Judging from a group of peasants whom we saw at work in a field by the road side, we were led to suppose that the softer sex here borrow the husband's garments, as most suitable to such occupation!” Mrs. Freshfield notes with disdain; “in one case petticoats were certainly discarded as quite superfluous” (116). Clearly, Mrs. Freshfield argues, *her* own rules of toilette were never allowed to become that lax and unladylike—even in remote regions of the Alps.

In another telling passage from the same book, Mrs. Freshfield asserts her female moral authority by recounting how she attempted to ensure that the rules of *politesse* had not been broken by her less vigilant male travelling companions. After having been forced by a sudden rainstorm to sojourn in a peasant's barn, Mrs. Freshfield recounts that she “was anxious to know

how payment could be made to the peasants whose hay had been so unceremoniously appropriated, a matter about which the men's consciences did not seem troubled. My remonstrances were answered by an assurance that a trifle would be left in the bowl, but I had little faith in the intention being fulfilled" (22).

As much as she enjoys pointing out the errors and inadequacies of many male alpine authorities, however, Mrs. Freshfield shows a good deal of deference to the superior abilities of the men, most often by acknowledging that some of the more difficult routes were best left to be conquered by the male members of the party. On more than one occasion, Mrs. Freshfield and her companion rode in the *calèche* or on horses to their next destination or stayed at their place of accommodation, while Mrs. Freshfield's son D[ouglas], her guide Couttet, and on occasion, her husband H[enry] tackled more arduous trails.

Mrs. Cole also often readily defers to male opinion that certain routes will be too fatiguing for ladies. In Chapter One for example, Mrs. Cole advises that "only gentlemen can be recommended to return by the Moro, which is, on the Italian side, so steep and fatiguing, that it would be a most arduous undertaking for a lady" (13). Similarly, in Chapter VI, she writes that "by reason of the excessive steepness of the Italian side, it would be an almost impracticable undertaking for any lady to cross the Moro from Macugnaga to Saas, and I would strongly recommend no one to attempt it who is not an unusually experienced and vigorous pedestrian. . . . It is not, in fine weather, very difficult to cross from the Swiss side, as we did; but if the route were reversed, the fatigue would be excessive, and no lady should attempt it unless she is prepared to travel in a *chaise-à-porteur*" (110).

After the manner of stereotypical lady tourists, Mrs. Cole and Mrs. Freshfield also have no qualms about voicing their discontent with the dirt, discomforts, and difficulties of their less “civilized” foreign accommodations in their narratives. Mrs. Cole for example describes her bedroom “in the little wooden inn belonging to the village doctor, Herr Lauber, which was then the only house for the reception of travellers in Zermatt” as “tolerably comfortable” but rather substandard due to the fact that “unfortunately the floors looked as if they had never been washed since the house was built” (30). The “*salle-à-manger*” she describes as being “poorly furnished with rough deal tables and benches” (30).

In *Alpine Byways*, Mrs. Freshfield recounts a memorable stay in an inn which not only had a floor that “was apparently unacquainted with soap” but whose rooms were filled with “a most unpleasant and peculiar odour”; according to Mrs. Freshfield, “[t]he explanation was that, the adjoining ‘apartment’ was occupied by one of the [Swiss] king’s ‘Chasseurs Royales,’ with his family. A wolf had been killed the previous day in the royal preserves, and the man had just been employed in skinning the animal in the passage, producing a wolfy scent, certainly not agreeable as an accompaniment” (142).

By sticking to the lower routes and riding much of the way on horseback, by complaining about the primitive inns, and by insisting on luxuries such as side-saddles, Mrs. Cole and Mrs. Freshfield both seemed to confirm the belief of many Victorians that, in the words of Mrs. Freshfield, “the higher regions of the Swiss Alps” were primarily “the playground” . . . where the energy, enterprise, and endurance of her grown-up *sons* [could] find ample scope for exercise” (*Alpine Byways* 1).

The desires on the parts of Mrs. Freshfield and Mrs. Cole to appear lady-like off the trail as well as on is apparent not only in the contents of their narratives but in their chosen styles of writing. For example, although, like Tuckett, Cole and Freshfield sometimes openly confess to having derived pleasure from being objectified (by fellow travellers and even by the local peasants) off the trail as authors, both seem generally to have tried to play the part of the demure ladies who find self-advertisement vulgar, and who therefore seek to direct their audiences' literal and figurative eyes away from themselves and towards the "view."

While both women demonstrated a familiarity with serious as well as popular contemporary writings (including the more "serious" and scientific works of geologists and glaciologists), Mrs. Cole and Mrs. Freshfield's chosen modes of description of these Alpine landscapes seem to have fit more into Victorian definitions of the lady-like and the touristic than of the rational, male, and scientific. Admittedly, both women do make reference to participating in amateur botany and geological and zoological specimen-collecting in their narratives (Cole admiring butterflies, Freshfield picking flowers and crystals now and then). However, as they make clear in both their visual and verbal descriptions of various alpine regions, their responses to mountains (and their reasons for travelling to and through them) are inspired less by those of the serious alpine scientist or adventurer, and more by Romantic artists and poets, and contemporary travel guidebooks.

In both Mrs. Cole and Mrs. Freshfield's books, the influence of Romanticism (a movement popular with Victorian middle-class tourists abroad according to James Buzard and very often associated with the feminine in the nineteenth century according to Sara Mills) is most

readily apparent in the fact that virtually everything and everyone in their views are judged according to the aesthetic categories of the “picturesque” or “sublime.”



Figure 63. “Cima di Jazi from Maçunaga.” Illustration from Mrs. Henry [Jane; or A Lady] Freshfield’s book *Alpine Byways, or, Light Leaves Gathered in 1859 and 1860*. London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1861. 212. Engraving based on a drawing by Freshfield’s female travelling companion who is given the name C— in the text.

On pages 38-39 of *Alpine Byways* for example, with the aid of lines taken from Longfellow’s poem “Sunrise on the Hills,” Mrs. Freshfield presents a word-picture of what she called the “sublime” “View from the Titlis,” that seems to have been produced by following the “script” of alpine landscape description set by male aesthetic theorists such as Edmund Burke and Byron: “There was sufficient brouillard to obscure the distant horizon, but the panorama was magnificent; carrying the eye over ranges of mountains and grand glaciers, where ‘Frost reigns

everlasting—and ice and snow/ Thaw not.’ The point on which we stood was dry and free from snow, which enabled us to sit down and enjoy our luncheon while we watched the clouds, which now began to gather together below, blotting out the valley of Engelberg. It was a scene of wild and striking grandeur” (29). **Figure 63** exemplifies Freshfield and her female companion’s picturesque visions of Switzerland. In this image of the “Cima di Jazi from Maçunaga,” in the tradition of sublime paintings of the 18th century, the alpine mountain view is depicted “from below,” rather than “from the top.” Like the group of rustic buildings depicted in the forefront and at the base of the mountain—seemingly the only traces of civilization in this rugged Alpine landscape—the viewer is dwarfed by the grand alpine peaks and thereby made to vicariously experience the sense of sublime terror and grandeur first felt by the image’s creator.

Similarly, in a passage appearing in the first chapter of *A Lady’s Tour* (entitled “Ruskin’s Bird’s Eye View”) Mrs. Cole’s attempts to relay the details of her journey through the words of (the, at this time, anti-mountaineering) Ruskin:

There is no monotony in the tour round Monte Rosa, no mere repetition of the same scenes, but the whole abounds with endless variety; and in order to properly describe it, one ought to be endowed with the marvellous powers which are displayed by Mr. Ruskin in treating of natural scenery. In one of his works he has portrayed, with the utmost felicity, the striking difference which exists between the vegetation of Northern and Southern climes; and though his ‘bird’s eye view’ takes in a wider extent of country than the district of Monte Rosa, it will be found to bring vividly to the reader’s mind a better idea than I can attempt to give of the diversity of character and clime which prevails

there. He says—‘I have never yet seen any description pictorial enough . . . [etc etc].

(18)⁷⁴

Elsewhere in their books, Mrs. Cole and Mrs. Freshfield also exploit an association being forged in Victorian women’s magazines between femininity and commodity culture by using their published texts to advertise products such as “Murray’s indispensable ‘Handbook’,” Lund’s glacier nails, and, in the ensuing passage from Mrs. Cole’s text, a lady’s portable sidesaddle: “One of the most recent travellers in the Italian valleys is the Rev. S. W. King, who was accompanied by his wife. Mrs. King took with her one of *Whippy’s portable sidesaddles*, which folded into a compact waterproof case, and could be adapted with equal facility to horse, mule, or donkey. This was of the greatest use, and inspired the proudest feeling of independence” (9).⁷⁵

As both their travel itineraries and narratives indicate (see **Appendix I**) neither Mrs. Cole, Mrs. Freshfield, nor Miss Tuckett were as audacious or accomplished as either some of their predecessors or contemporaries. Yet, even though neither of them appear to have been as intent on infiltrating the male dominated sphere of the Alpine Club as they seem to have been on supporting the success of the more adventurous male members of their expeditions, one must not overlook that fact that these women were still “climbers,” though perhaps of a less physically audacious sort. While these women may not have attempted to compete with men on the slopes by making arduous first ascents, first ascents by women, or guideless climbs, Mrs. Cole and Mrs. Freshfield did, in publishing their writings about their rambles, seek to compete with men in the largely masculine world of publishing; and, in so doing, they sought to gain some of the social and financial rewards which both male and female travel writers were afforded in Victorian society.

Using their femininity as a useful rhetorical as well as physical garb, Mrs. Cole and Mrs. Freshfield were not only able to gain for themselves relatively more mobility than some of their more confined middle-class sisters, but they played a significant role in encouraging other women to either follow in their footsteps to become what Elizabeth Helsinger has called "Angels out of the House," or to travel even farther and higher than they did. Thus, even as they reinscribed and reinforced social stereotypes of women travellers and mountaineers as weak, delicate, aesthetic minded, and unambitious tourists, these women helped to alter social perceptions of slightly more active or mobile women as unattractive and unlady-like.

II: A “Sort of Middle Position”



Figure 64. Mrs. Elizabeth Le Blond photographed by her guide Josef Imboden wearing “hybrid” climbing clothes next to a stone cairn atop a Norwegian peak, 1899. Reproduced from Rebecca Brown’s *Women on High: Pioneers of Mountaineering*. Boston: Appalachian Mountain Club Books, 2002. 78.

Just as not all women were content with the limited range of motion which lady-like costume afforded, not all mountaineering women were satisfied with taking up the more socially accepted but physically and intellectually limited roles of the amateur handmaiden or the glacier-larking tourist, which Mrs. Cole, Mrs. Freshfield, and Miss Tuckett were prone to play. That is not to say, however, that all women who sought to become serious and accomplished climbers (or writers, scientists, artists) sought to completely loosen themselves from what Mrs. Elizabeth Le Blond once termed the “shackles of conventionality.” As I have noted in the case of Freda Du Faur, for example, even many of the more accomplished and physically more daring women still took care to camouflage their more subversive claims and designs with public assurances of respectable femininity.

Mrs. Le Blond’s mountaineering clothing provides a useful corollary for the rhetorical strategies employed by many slightly more audacious but reputation-minded Victorian mountaineering women. Mrs. Le Blond, you will recall, slipped in and out of her climbing skirt depending on her climbing route and her social audience; if she wanted to achieve some serious climbing, out of the view of the hut, the cumbersome skirt was doffed and, to the relief of her safety-minded guides, a more “rational” approach was taken. However, in view of polite society, she was always careful to don the skirt and strike a feminine pose. Rhetorically, Mrs. Le Blond seems to have been fashioning a similar kind of hybrid appearance in her books.

**‘Working Against [and with] the Grain’:
Elizabeth Le Blond negotiates the Shackles of Victorian Conventionality**

“I owe a supreme debt of gratitude to the mountains for knocking from me the shackles of conventionality”—Elizabeth Le Blond, *Day In, Day Out*, 1928.

“In writing, as in mountaineering, we have often to work much against the grain.”
—Elizabeth Le Blond, *Mountaineering in the Land of the Midnight Sun*, 1908.

In her later years, Elizabeth Le Blond expressed opinions (reproduced above) which some contemporary critics have taken as evidence of possibly feminist leanings, and which many of her contemporary readers might have dubbed audacious, or, at the very least, unbefitting a genteel “lady.” However, the images of Mrs. Le Blond which emerge from these utterances contrasts sharply with the much less ostentatious way in which she presented herself in her books, *The High Alps in Winter; or Mountaineering in Search of Health* (1883), and *High Life and Towers of Silence* (1886).



Figure 65. Elizabeth Burnaby (later Le Blond) c. 1880s. Photographer unknown. Reproduced from her book *The High Alps in Winter; or Mountaineering in Search of Health*. London: Sampson Low, 1883. Frontispiece.

Like many of her alpine foremothers and contemporaries, Mrs. Le Blond (then Mrs. Fred Burnaby) went to great lengths to appear lady-like and unthreatening in her début publication, *The*

High Alps (1883). Evidence of this fact is made immediately available in the frontispiece of the book, which is a fancy dress studio photograph of young Elizabeth carefully groomed, tightly laced, bedecked with a jaunty hat, lace collar, fashionable buttons and necklace. A sprig of flowers at her waist completes the lady-like picture (**figure 65**).

Verbally, the demure and feminine frontispiece image is reiterated by Le Blond several times throughout her narrative. At the beginning of *The High Alps*, for example, Elizabeth assures the reader that her entrance into the sport of mountaineering happened by accident, and, to some extent, against her will, and that she continued to participate in climbing primarily in search of health:

In the summer of 1881 I came to Chamonix for the first time. I arrived there in bad health. As for mountaineering, I knew nothing of it, and cared less. However, after a fortnight spent in the fresh mountain air, I was, one day, induced by some friends to accompany them to Pierrepontue. . . . On the 10th of June, 1882, I was once more installed in my old quarters at the Hotel d'Angleterre. Not with any intention of mountaineering, however. But before long the desire to 'go up something' grew too strong to be resisted. (v)

In her account of her ascent of the Aiguille du Midi, Mrs. Le Blond describes her method of summiting not only as amateurish, but as accidental as her entrance into the sport had been: "A considerable amount of tugging from above was necessary, and Cupelin, from his lofty perch, looked like a fisherman landing an unwieldly salmon, and in a few minutes we all stood on the top" (52).

In her second book, *High Life and Towers of Silence* (1886), a picture of her guide replaces her own. Once again, the frontispiece seems to have been chosen to reflect as well as perpetuate the verbal picture given within the body of the text: throughout her book, in dramatic contrast to many other mountaineers' narratives, the strengths and accomplishments of Mrs. Le Blond's guides are given precedence over her own, and they are emphatically commended for their crucial role in the success of the excursions. As she writes in the dedication of the book "to [Edouard Cupelin's] pluck and knowledge of his work I owe whatever success I achieved in the excursions which we made together" (A2).

Even in later years, after she had stopped climbing altogether, Mrs. Le Blond tended to modestly down-play her earlier accomplishments. In her 1928 autobiography *Day In, Day Out*, she wrote that "I climbed like a child, ardently, engrossingly, thinking not at all of on-lookers, and indeed unaware that such even existed, and when one day I came across an allusion to myself in a paper as 'an Alpinist of world-renowned fame' I wondered what idiot could have written it" (92).

Le Blond took a similarly self-deprecating approach to her writing. In *High Life*, she not only describes her narrative as a book filled with "prosing and twaddling," but apologises to her readers for the fact that (as she points out both in the introduction and conclusion) her book has neither serious merit (as it does not appear to "fill[] a gap of any sort,") and that, aside from one "record of climbing likely to interest you, if you search for novelty," it takes readers "over familiar ground, and amongst familiar faces" and 'over *les grandes voies où l'humanité a passé*' (v). After thanking her readers, particularly "*Messieurs les intrepides!*" for "honour[ing] me by glancing at this volume" and for having "received with such undeserved kindness my first work,"

she concludes with “a few [more] words of apology for venturing to present this book to the public” (195).

While many people found the role of the feminine, larking, bumbling, and childlike amateur lady alpine tourist which Le Blond was so fond of playing charming and convincing, the male reviewers of her books did not always seem to. In an Alpine Club review of her book *High Life and Towers of Silence*, for example, the reviewer attacked the book for its numerous errors, described her accounts of Alpine peoples as “not so very rare and uncommon as [she] seems to think,” noted how one of her photos “is amusingly like [but inferior to]” a photo by male alpine photographer “Mr. Donkins” and then argued that, ultimately, while the book was a “pleasantly-written volume which will agreeably while away an hour or two on a winter’s afternoon . . . [it] is not likely to rank among the Alpine classics” (188).

Le Blond’s insistence upon her bumbling inferiority undoubtedly made it all too easy for reviewers to undermine her accomplishments (many of which were truly remarkable and original—see Le Blond’s biography in **Appendix I**) and to paternalistically discount her as nothing more than a mere lady dabbler. However, the reason for such unfavourable reviews, I will suggest, had less to do with Le Blond’s actual or professed abilities to write or to climb, and more to do with the Alpine Club’s abilities to see that Le Blond’s feminine persona, like her climbing skirt, was a mere false front, which she had used in order to cover her more audacious “masculine” intentions and actions—intentions and actions which promised to undermine the accomplishments and erode the elitist masculinism of the reputation of the Alpine Club as a male preserve. While perhaps a bit overzealous in their attempts to undermine the reputations of women like Le Blond, the Alpine Club reviewers were not far off the mark in terms of perceiving

Le Blond as a threat. For, as Le Blond herself admitted on occasion (and indeed as she demonstrated in both word and deed), she not only had masculine garb on underneath her demure outer covering, but “masculine” intentions, abilities, and accomplishments.⁷⁶

Normally quite meticulous about appearing like a non-threatening lady (particularly in visual renderings of herself on the trail as well as off—see **figs. 66-71**) at several moments in her texts, as on the trail, Le Blond leaves off her feminine garb and she appears before the audience with her more serious and rational intentions exposed. In such moments she reveals that her aims are to shake from herself what she later dubbed “the shackles of conventionality,” to establish herself as a serious mountaineer rather than a mere tourist, and, after the manner of male entrepreneurs Albert Smith and Edward Whymper, to popularise mountaineering, particularly amongst women.⁷⁷ One such moment occurs in her book *The High Alps*:

I was undecided what excursion to begin with. For some months my wish had been to cross what was, perhaps, the one remaining untrodden Col in the chain of Mont Blanc. It was true that it led from nothing—nowhere, but it was so strikingly and aggressively a Col, that some one was sure to cross it some day. Therefore, if I made the first passage I should perform three praiseworthy actions. First, I should deprive “somebody else” of it; secondly, I should unite the glaciers of Lechaud and Geant by a passage involving a detour of about five hours from the ordinary route; and thirdly, the Aiguille du Tacul would be ascended by quite a new way (21).

Similarly, in a chapter provocatively subtitled “*ce n’est que le premier pas qui coute*,” Le Blond not only is careful to reiterate that “all the subsequent ascents which I shall describe in these pages, were made for the first time in winter, unless the contrary is stated” (41), but she becomes

“honest enough to admit” both that she has gained the greatest enjoyment from the most arduous of climbs which made her question “whether the thing was practicable or not,” and that she has found it “pleasant . . . to do something which no one else has done” (42).⁷⁸

In *High Life and Towers of Silence* (1886), Mrs. Le Blond makes another of her intentions clear: she wishes to encourage non-climbing readers to follow her example and partake of the “challenge of the mountains”: “Should mountaineering [particularly] in winter become popular, as it deserves, numerous inconveniences which I encountered will be avoided. Chalets and mountain inns will be inhabited, roads kept in good order, and diligences will ply between headquarters and the larger towns; guides, too, will be more accustomed to travel in those regions in winter, and to give information regarding the ascents at that season. I will only add, ‘try mountaineering in winter and you will not be disappointed’” (ix).

As such passages indicate, both in climbing and in writing her books, Le Blond not only had two personae (one masculine, one feminine) but three particular audiences in mind as she sought to achieve several somewhat ambitious personal agendas: one, the rational, serious, and accomplished audience of (stereotypically) male mountaineers; another an amateur, touristic, and predominantly female and genteel audience; and a third audience made up of a newly emergent group of women mountaineers—a group Le Blond later played a crucial part in pioneering and expanding as co-founder of the Ladies’ Alpine Club (1907).

In seeking to appear as an intelligent and figure worthy of authority and respect (at least on the subject of mountain-climbing) who was both a mountaineer and a lady, and in attempting to open up male mountaineering culture to an acceptance of female participation while avoiding



Figure 66. Engraving of Elizabeth Burnaby (Le Blond) and guides taking a break for lunch. Reproduced from *The High Alps in Winter; or Mountaineering in Search of Health*. London: Sampson Low, 1883.



Figure 67 and 68. At left, Le Blond and her guide Joseph Imboden posed in a rather matrimonial way. Le Blond clothes in this image are feminine, though her tie and cravat are reminiscent of the 'rational' dress popular among more forward thinking females of the late nineteenth century. Reproduced from Ronald Clark's *The Victorian Mountaineers*. London: Batsford, 1953. At right, clad in quite a long skirt, hair nicely coiffed, Elizabeth Le Blond is led across a Swiss glacier. Reproduced from Maria Aitkin's *A Girdle Round the Earth*. London: Constable, 1987. 16.

complete beratement by male contemporaries, Elizabeth Le Blond had an extremely challenging performance ahead of her. Professionally, if she wished to be taken seriously by the Victorian alpine institution and not be classified merely as a lady, as a tourist, or as a lady-tourist, she needed to demonstrate her competence, and the originality as well as difficulty of her climbs. If she wished to gain a bit of popularity and financial success with the general reading public, setting herself up as an audacious female adventurer could prove lucrative. However, in the eyes of polite society, her family, and masculinist members of Alpine Club, social reputation would be lost if she looked or acted in ways that would have been deemed too “unfeminine,” or if she did things which would be seen as infringing on the masculine domain.

Possibly in order to show deference to the Victorian male alpine elite, Le Blond devoted several written articles (“Perils of the High Peaks.” *Cosmopolitan* 37 [July, 1904]: 245-52) and at least two published books (*True Tales of Mountain Adventure* [1902] and *Adventures on the Roof of the World* [1904]) towards praising male Alpine Clubsmen’s achievements. Similarly, at several moments in her narrative accounts of her own climbs, she attempts to create an alliance with Alpine Club readers—both in terms of ability and experience as a mountaineer, and in terms of breeding and class—by pointing out the difficulty and novelty of her climbs without sensationalizing or overexaggerating her experiences, and by berating tourists and mocking porters right along with the most elitist of male Alpine Club men. In *The High Alps in Winter*, for example, Le Blond attempts to align herself more with the more accomplished and serious male mountaineers by overtly contrasting her appearance, her climbing team, and her objectives with those of several impractical lady tourists they encounter:

As we were starting, another caravan filed out of town. They were bent, it appeared, on a very different errand to ours. Their object being to breakfast in the pine woods a few miles farther up the valley. Several ladies in gorgeous apparel were of the party, and a porter marched in front, with an enormous hamper of provisions balanced on the top of his knapsack, and a heavy basket in each hand. He gazed enviously at my followers, bound for the cool and snowy upper regions; and they chaffed him on his pleasant occupation. Our way led up through dark woods and past beds of wild strawberries. (3)

In her second book, *High Life and Towers of Silence*, Le Blond again reveals her desire to mark herself out as a serious mountaineer through her insistent and strategic attempts to distinguish herself from the packaged tourists seen milling around the chalets:

We also meet the party of English or Americans, who are 'personally conducted' by an agent of Messrs. Cook or Gaze. This flock is renowned for its absolute helplessness. None of the troop speak a word of any language but their own, so they are continually worrying their unhappy conductor to translate various notices of no possible interest to them, and he is driven nearly wild by their perpetual requests for small change and their complaints as to their accommodation. 'Mr. Smith,' says a damsel from across 'The Herring-pond,' 'will you lend me twenty-five centimes? I've forgotten my purse.' Mr. Smith is just in the act of arranging for the thirty-three mules, which he has chartered for the day, and settling the knotty point as to the just amount to be distributed in tips to the various mule drivers. He hands her the twenty-five centimes, and takes out with a groan, for about the fiftieth time that day, his bulky note-book. Hardly has he finished entering her debt into it than an elderly spinster of forbidding aspect marches up to him. His heart

sinks, for he sees trouble ahead. 'Mr. Smith,' she begins, 'I must beg of you not to have me placed at dinner this evening next to Miss. A., and I wish to inform you that I will never go on excursions in the same carriage with that young person. If I were you, Mr. Smith, I should consider it my duty to remonstrate with her on her flippant behaviour yesterday morning. . . . I could fill pages with such conversations, heard day after day in front of the Montanvert and the Angleterre, at Chamonix, but I fear to become as tedious to my readers as the majority of the personally conducted ones rapidly become to their leader. (32-34)

Later in *High Life*, in another attempt to assert her authority and competence as a mountaineer, Le Blond condescendingly compares the porter to a "child": "A little further on the ground became steeper, and, looking back, the porter could be seen, laboriously following us in an attitude much affected by infants of tender years" (63).

Cutting and elitist remarks about tourists and porters aside, Le Blond did make several attempts to pander to non-climbing tourists and female amateurs; at the beginning of *High Alps in Winter*, for example, she presents herself as both comrade and experienced yet kindly and approachable guide to armchair climbers: "For those who, though not themselves mountaineers, yet take an interest in the pursuit, and care to read these pages," Le Blond is thoughtful enough to add ". . . explanations of mountaineering terms used in this book" (ix). Later in the book, Le Blond also offered recommendations of ascents for less accomplished climbers: "I can thoroughly recommend the ascent of the Grandes Jorasses to all mountaineers of tolerable ability. The rocks are charming, solid, and giving good foothold and handhold" (14). At the end of *The*

High Alps in Winter, Le Blond goes a step further and includes a big appendix of detailed information compiled specifically for non-climbers perhaps wishing to follow in her footsteps and go to the Alps in search of health.

Ultimately, judging both from the immense popularity which her books were said to have with the Victorian general public (Bates), and her relative lack of popularity with and official acceptance by the Alpine Club (at least the reviewers of her books), it appears that Mrs. Le Blond's hybrid performances of femininity had only limited success.⁷⁹ Unfortunately, several members of the patriarchal institution of the Alpine Club placed Le Blond (and many women like her) in a double-bind that virtually ensured she could not achieve all she was trying to accomplish with her climbing and her writing: namely, a reputation as a serious and experienced climber and a popular alpine authority. When she attempted to play the "lady's role" or to align herself with "tourist" class readers (perhaps in an effort to gain financial favour with them and to construct herself as an Alpine authority before this amateur, non-climbing audience), she not only risked alienating herself from members of the official male alpine institutions—many of whom did not take too kindly either to individuals seeking to demystify and democratise mountaineering or to women seeking to infringe on their male prerogatives—but she potentially undermined her reputation with them as a serious climber.⁸⁰ Conversely, when she attempted to align herself with mountaineers, by insulting or mocking tourists or travellers of other classes she encountered on her trips, she potentially undermined her popularity and threatened her goal of popularizing mountaineering with the masses. In so doing, Le Blond thereby may have helped to reinscribe the wall of exclusionism and elitism that, paradoxically, kept many accomplished women climbers like her from being embraced into the fold of the male-run Alpine Club. And,

of course, once again, she opened herself up to attack by masculinists for attempting to compete with the men, and for trying to establish herself as both a serious and popular but quasi-masculine authority.



Figures 69, 70. In both the studio photograph at left and the painted portrait (by artist Mary Macleod) at right, Mrs. Le Blond's wealth and aristocratic background are foregrounded through her clearly expensive expensive accoutrements, such as her ermine hat and collar at left, and the conspicuously displayed tiara, rings, watch, necklace, and fur stole at right. Figure 70 is reproduced from Bill Birketts and Bill Peascod's *Women Climbing: 200 Years of Achievement*. London: A & C Black, 1989). Figure 71 appeared as the frontispiece of Le Blond's autobiography *Day In, Day Out*. London: John Lane, 1928.

In later years, perhaps fuelled by frustration that she and several other women like her continued to be refused full membership into the Alpine Club, and that they and their climbs continued to be denied the level of official as well as unofficial praise which they deserved, Le

Blond went on to become head of a new organization strictly for women, the Ladies' Alpine Club (1907); the L.A.C sought to recruit its female members from a wider range of national and socio-economic backgrounds than the Alpine Club of London, but the Alpine Club nevertheless took to patronisingly calling their "daughter" club (**APPENDIX V**). Though visual renderings of Le Blond in her later years (**figs. 69, 70**) suggest that she continued to prefer playing the role of the audacious but clearly elegant and patrician lady, the Ladies' Alpine Club members saw through the act and gave her full credit for her accomplishments, not merely as a woman but as a mountaineer.

Although she was denied official membership in the Alpine Club, it must be said that, in her day, some male Alpine Club members openly praised Le Blond's accomplishments. For example Ronald Clark writes that eminent Alpine Clubsman T. G. Bonney "praised Le Blond in his presidential address as one whom our stern Salic law prevents us from numbering among our members" (195). Similarly, in her 1928 autobiography Le Blond recalled being "electrified" that, although the *Alpine Journal* reviewer of her first book *Mountaineering in Search of Health* had found a seemingly infinite number of faults, he had written that the "unparalleled series of ascents executed by a lady" that she had described in her text "will form one of the most brilliant chapters in the history of winter mountaineering." And, Edward Whymper (in 1885) wrote an article praising Le Blond—though he discouraged young women from attempting to do what such an exceptional woman had done. **Figure 71** is a reproduction of the image of Le Blond which accompanied Whymper's article. Unlike many visual and verbal representations of female climbers of the day, Le Blond is presented not as a mannish virago but as a genteel lady still in possession of her delicate femininity. Apparently, climbing had not, as her great aunt had feared,

turned her into a ‘red Indian’—though in this image she arguably looks less like an English mountain-climber and more like a young picturesque Swiss peasant.

However, despite such praise—which was rarely unmixed with some form of criticism or limitation—throughout the nineteenth century, and even into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Le Blond’s memory and reputation have continued to be undermined (when they have not been ignored altogether) by scholars and historians. Many histories of mountaineering either leave Le Blond out or they categorise her as an exceptional *female* mountaineer, even though her climbing record (particularly her number of winter climbs and first ascents) exceeded that of many male climbers of her day.



Figure 71. Engraved image of Mrs. Elizabeth Le Blond. Reproduced from Edward Whymper’s “Two Lady Alpine Climbers. Mrs. Burnaby–Miss Walker.” *Girl’s Own Paper* (Dec. 15, 1885): 164-167. The image is possibly an engraver’s re-interpretation of the frontispiece image of Le Blond appearing in her *The High Alps in Winter; or Mountaineering in Search of Health*. 1883. (see Figure 65 of this thesis).

Despite the fact that Elizabeth Le Blond was arguably one of the most prolific and popular authors of mountaineering tales in the nineteenth century (producing between 1883 and

1928 over nine books, numerous articles, and thousands of photographs—many of which became illustrations for a male climber's book, as well as for her own books and lantern slide lectures), many twentieth-century critics have been dismissive of her published works. In 2000, for example, echoing the Victorian Alpine Club reviewer's declaration that Le Blond's "work is not likely to rank among the Alpine classics," Robert Bates wrote that "all [of Le Blond's books] were popular in her day, but from a literary standpoint none is now worth notice" (158).

I argue that the continued devaluation of Le Blond's climbing career has been in some part the ironic and unpredicted result of her own self-construction as a "lady alpinist" and her frustrating tendency to feign humility and amateurishness (both of which did little to contradict previous underestimations of her truly remarkable climbing record). However, I suspect that the suppression of Le Blond's writings from mountaineering anthologies (even from otherwise thorough books such as David Mazel's *Mountaineering Women: Stories by Early Climbers* which was written in 1994) are in some part due to the rather matter-of-fact manner in which Le Blond chose to style her prose. My own sense of Le Blond is not that she was a bad writer—although she herself would later admit in *Day In Day Out* that her first book had been extremely rough around the edges—but that she was a climber who did not always wish to over-sensationalise or 'fictionalize' her accounts for the purpose of marketability. In one respect, then, Bates was correct. . . . Le Blond's books are not particularly ripe for "literary" analysis. However, I disagree that this merits Le Blond's exclusion from "mention." Rather, I argue that Le Blond's writings requires careful contextualisation in the historical-cultural moment of their production and consumption, and their author's possible intentions in order to be better understood and appreciated.

As I suggest in the previous section, one of Le Blond's desires seems to have been to render mountaineering a more popular and accessible activity. However, I concur with the belief expressed by the reviewer of her book *My Home in the Alps*, that she did not want to do so recklessly;⁸¹ the *Alpine Journal* praised Le Blond for wanting to correct false constructions of mountaineering which either played up or played down the dangers and difficulties of the activity in the mind of the would-be climber: "[I]n justice to Mrs. [Le Blond], we must say that she does her best to educate those whom the climber of the old school must admit to be his masters—those whose competition regulates prices, whose convenience fixes 'the season,' whose demand creates the supply [—the tourists]" (127). Considering this intention to "educate" rather than to entertain it is perhaps less surprising why some critics past and present have failed to see the *literary* merits of the books.

Le Blond's desire to construct a public identity as a serious mountain authority (which I discuss at greater length on pp. 176-86) also undoubtedly helped dictate her choice of the rather unornate style and rather anecdotal material of the books. As Elaine Freedgood has adroitly pointed out in a brief discussion of the writings of female climbers Amelia Edwards and Frederica Plunket in *Victorian Writing about Risk*, female mountaineers might have chosen a more sensational or fictional approach which played up the dangers of climbing, but to do so would only further undermine believability and legitimacy as truly admirable climbers and reliable writers in the eyes of the masculinist mountaineering community, for, "[u]nlike the male mountaineers who were freer to recount their pain in great detail—because of the extra credential of manliness mountaineering conferred upon them—Edwards [and other female climbers] had to prove that a woman possessed the necessary emotional and physical stamina to undertake

mountaineering. . . . [To do otherwise] might give evidence of [their] possible unfitness for high places" (117).

Freedgood's suggestion that female climbers such as Edwards consciously chose such narrative styles in part out of some "authorial anxiety . . . about [their] self-presentation as level-headed mountaineer[s]" (117) accords with my sense of Le Blond. Rather than seeing her writing as no longer worth mention now, I see Elizabeth Le Blond's books as the product of a writer who was almost as skillful in her attempts to negotiate around and within the constraints of gender and of genre as she was in her ability to dodge crevasses and avoid avalanches in the snowy winter Alps.



Finding "A Sort of Middle Position": Miss Frederica Plunket's Feminine Masquerade

While Frederica Plunket's relatively short climbing record might place her in closer association with early female mountaineers like Mrs. Cole or Mrs. Freshfield than with Le Blond, Plunket shared with the latter several similarities; like Le Blond in her later years, Frederica and her sister climbed with no male relatives or companions other than their guides and porters. Like Le Blond, Plunket not only desired to chisel away at the exclusivity of the Alpine Club by popularising and demystifying the sport, but she wished to alter perceptions that, in all respects, women and mountaineering were antithetical; and, like Le Blond, Plunket seems to have desired to participate in the masculinist worlds of mountaineering and publishing without completely

subverting bourgeois codes of propriety and femininity, and without being deemed entirely deviant or scandalous.

After the manner of Mrs. Le Blond, Mrs. Freshfield, and Mrs. Cole, Miss Frederica Plunket opens her book by describing herself as being motivated by a slightly subversive intention: “[I am] actuated, not so much by the motive to describe my own especial excursions, as by the wish to persuade other ladies to depart more than is their usual habit from the ordinary routine of a Swiss summer tour; to urge them no longer to pause on the threshold of the Alpine world, but to pass its snow-marked boundaries, and to see and admire for themselves those wonders of nature which many of them are content to gaze on from a distance, thus losing half their beauty” (“Preface,” np).

A few lines later, Plunket launches into a critique of Alpine Club men’s “sensational and highly exciting” mountaineering accounts for their tendencies to “check the energies and chill the aspirations of moderate walkers” and to make readers and, in particular, female readers “feel that to attempt such performances would be absolute madness, risking other lives as well as their own, and they lay aside the fascinating volume with a sigh, and regretfully confess that the high Alps are beyond their powers, and that they must content themselves with small expeditions, and mule paths at moderate elevations” (2). Later in the narrative, Plunket not only critiques male mountaineers for their tendencies to exaggerate danger in order to exclude women like her, but she expresses her exasperation over the fact that virtually all men they encountered upon their journeys underestimated women’s abilities. Clearly, Plunket argues, on the subjects of mountaineering and women, “[men] are in some respects mistaken” (2).

As the previous passages demonstrate, Plunket desired to undermine the authority and restrictiveness of the Alpine Club and to democratise mountaineering. However, Plunket's book is filled with moments which lead one to suspect that, unlike women such as Annie Peck, Plunket was too concerned with losing her reputation as a "lady" to travel and to write with her less than ladylike side always exposed. Like several other more demure female alpinists, Frederica Plunket attempted to downplay the more subversive qualities of her writing and her behaviour by playing up the respectability and, more importantly, the femininity of both.

In the very same preface in which she had only lines earlier launched her attack at the Alpine Club, for example, Plunket attempts to demonstrate her feminine side by presenting herself as a benevolent mother figure, and by positioning her readers as children for whose well-being and happiness she wishes to appear to be concerned. Like an ideal mother, friend, or wife, Plunket argues that her pleasure is derived vicariously—that, in selflessly putting the pleasure of those around her before her own, she, like the ideal domestic Angel, derives her greatest sense of fulfillment: "Should any of the readers of this book be induced by its perusal to extend their mountain walks, and thereby to increase the measure of their own enjoyment, the writer will have attained her object, and will feel pleasure in the thought that she has contributed, be it ever so slightly, towards their happiness" ("Preface," np). In such constructions, after the manner of Mrs. Malcolm Ross in "Housekeeping on a Glacier," both the acts of mountaineering and authorship are made to seem compatible to, rather than at odds with, respectable bourgeois notions of femininity: in participating in alpine excursions and in writing about these outings, Plunket shows herself to be extending rather than subverting her innately selfless and maternal feminine charms in order to teach, to guide, and above all, to please.

In a rhetorical act which may be best described as “stooping to conquer,” Plunket also plays up her femininity while playing down her abilities by showing herself to be in agreement with masculinist Alpine Clubsmen regarding the inferior capabilities of female climbers. Moments after having attacked Alpine Club members for their tendencies to overexaggerate climbing dangers, Plunket concedes that “it is quite true that the giants of the Alpine world are for the most part unattainable by [women], and that with some bright, but rare exceptions, ladies have been unable to overcome the difficulties of their ascent”; a few pages later Plunket feigns humility and subordination through her apologetic declaration that

. . . to the deeds of the adventurous few [my sister and I] have no hopes of attaining; their feats as much surpass ours, as did those of Hercules, the doings of the ordinary mortals of his day, and we should as now think of attempting to scale the Matterhorn as we should have thought then of trying to strangle the lion of Nemea. Those stupendous peaks that they have reached are to us forbidden ground; we may look up to them admiringly, longingly perhaps, but on their dizzy heights our feet can never stand; they are, like so many places in the world, the reward and the privilege of those who excel, and mediocrity cannot obtain them. (13)

Unable (or perhaps unwilling) to push for a complete subversion of Victorian social conventions and practices which placed women in inferior and less mobile roles (both on the trail and off), Plunket turns from assuring the audience of her submissiveness to asking whether the powers that be might not afford women desiring to travel off the beaten path of tourism “a sort of middle position” on the borderland “between the forbidden ground of danger and the beaten paths of safety,” between the “active and energetic portion [of alpine travellers], who like to soar

above the common herd, [and] look down sometimes from the eminences to which they attain with supreme contempt on their neighbours below” and the tourists who “taking the world easy in a chaise a porteur, or on the back of a mule, smile in superior way at the folly of the climbers, and talking about what they have little experience of, say that nothing is gained by all the trouble taken and the risks incurred” (3). Plunket argues that “. . . because the foremost ranks are unattainable, it is no reason that one should not try for the second, and we, or any other ladies who choose to make the effort, may leave the great mass of idlers in the hollow behind us, and rising above the hot mule paths, may take to the snow and ice, and with the fresh glacier wind blowing cool on our faces, we may mount with alacrity as high as our limited powers will permit us” (13).

Towards the end of her narrative, Plunket recapitulates this sense of herself as both climber and tourist in her comparison of life on the trail, “roughing” it in Swiss hotels and inns, with cultivated life in British Society. Plunket opens her comparison by making it clear that she truly enjoys the “unfettered life” of the mountaineer: “the sudden return from the perfect freedom of the mountain regions to the artificial world in which we live produces at first a slight shock, and the wild portion of nature asserts itself for an instant through all the conventionalities which custom and education have woven into the tissue of our daily lives. Certainly, as we drove that evening through the paved and lighted streets of Botzen, it was a comfort to me to think that in a few days we should again be back among the mountains, and, sitting on some mossy stone, might watch the last faint rose of the after-glow fade from their snow-clad heights” (98). However, for the remainder of the chapter, Plunket is careful to assure her reader that

though it is very well to have fine feelings about the sunset, as we linger watching it from the mountain side, it must be allowed, on the other hand, that civilisation with all its trammels, has its advantages too, and at the end of a long journey a comfortable, well-appointed hotel possesses charms in the eyes of the wearied traveller. What sight, for instance, when one is very hungry, can be much more pleasant than a white, glossy tablecloth on which glass, silver, and china are symmetrically laid, while an attentive waiter approaches, tray in hand, bearing the substantials of the feast. Where is the enthusiastic lover of the Alps who would just at that moment exchange the field of damask for the field of snow, the glasses for seracs, the plates for slabs of rock, and the waiter with his burden for a guide with an ice-axe? (98-99)

By positioning herself and other female would-be mountaineers as desiring only to be considered slightly more than tourists (though their actual climbs suggest otherwise), but always less than serious and accomplished male mountaineers, Plunket seems to have hoped to reassure masculinists that, for the most part, she wished to keep the patriarchal gender economy structuring Victorian society and Victorian mountaineering culture intact, and that, rather than calling for a complete subversion of social conventions, she was merely seeking a slight relaxation of restrictions upon women's movements.

Like many middle-class female travellers, Plunket not only deflects attention away from her and her sister's clear and deliberate transgressions of many Victorian social codes of propriety and femininity by anxiously emphasizing her femininity, but by asserting her national and racial superiority over fellow foreign tourists, guides, and locals.⁸² In addition to berating local peasants for their seemingly inexplicable ignorance about their own local mountains,

throughout *Here and There*, Plunket sets herself up as a kind of social investigator and moral police woman surveying the beds and dining rooms of every hotel and inn in which they stayed. More often than not, the hosts of foreign accommodations receive failing grades for their inability to maintain a level of cleanliness and hospitality that meets the strict standards of the civilised travelling Englishwoman. In these contexts, Plunket's meek and apologetic lady tourist persona is traded for the more assertive, condescending, authoritative role of what Deirdre Davis has called the imperious Daughter of Albion abroad who envisions herself as a kind of ambassador burdened with the task of making little Englands wherever she goes.

At the end of the book, following a chapter entitled "Hints to Lady Pedestrians," Plunket also adopts the "panoptical stance" of the rational, quasi-scientific observer under whose gaze every foreign thing, place, and person is an object to be studied, classified, and (symbolically if not physically) "captured." Like a diligent ethnologist, Plunket devotes an entire section to a comparative examination of the national and racial characteristics of "the various races who inhabit [those countries in which the great Alpine chain lies,] and who, separated from each other often by mere imaginary boundaries, yet differ so much in their persons, their customs, their manners, and their characters" (189). Plunket bases her findings on her experiences with various national/racial "specimens," the appearances of each nation's women, and the state of various regions' mountain inns at which she has stayed.

According to Plunket, her experiences have led her to conclude that some Alpine groups are distinctly more attractive, more civilized, and more praise-worthy than others; in her (Victorian bourgeois) view, for example, "[t]he peasants of the Swiss valleys" are admirable due to their British-like characteristics of being "sturdy, independent, truthful . . . and very

industrious” though they are often plagued by an inherent tendency to be “mercenary” (190); similarly, the “peasants of the Italian valleys” are at once to be praised for their “lively, intelligent . . . good-humoured . . . and very friendly” manners, but to be kept at an arm’s length by the English traveler for their tendencies to be “idle” and “untruthful.” National and racial shortcomings aside, Plunket finds the Savoyards “to be inferior to both [the Swiss and Italian] nations [as] [t]hey are not so polite as the former, nor so industrious and energetic as the latter” (192). When compared against other European peoples, the Swiss come out on top; however, whether Swiss, Italian, or Savoyard, all foreigners are found to be decidedly unequal to Plunket’s British bourgeois female standards of loyalty, honesty, attractiveness, industriousness, and cleanliness.⁸³

After an initial perusal of an 1875 review of Plunket’s book by the Alpine Club, one initially gains the sense that Plunket was a more deft and successful social and rhetorical performer than Le Blond, in so far as her work seems to have elicited male respect without male anxiety. In the *Alpine Journal* review of her book, for example, the reviewer not only praises Plunket’s style of description for its “sober precision” and for her ability to “treat Alpine dangers in their true light, as real things enough, but, like those of a crowded crossing, for the most part easily avoidable by ordinary prudence and foresight” but goes so far as to say that “if Miss Plunket will allow us to say so, [this book is] one of the most satisfactory proofs we have yet seen of the ‘Higher Education of Women.’ If Cambridge is succeeding in its task as well as the Alpine Club, the other sex will in the next generation have put themselves in a position to demand the suffrage or any higher privilege they may wish for—possibly even admission amongst our noble selves” (272).

As the review progresses, however, it becomes clear that, like Le Blond's books, Plunket's text has caused some unease within the Alpine Club. Clearly having seen through Plunket's feminine performance and accurately discerned what he calls the "real purport of [Plunket's] book [namely] to serve as an argument in favour of ladies' mountaineering" and thus to "*vulgariser les sommets*," the reviewer's praise quickly turns to condescension. For the remainder of the piece, after the manner of reviewers of both Le Blond's and Edwards' books, the critic sets about to undermine Plunket's authority and accomplishment by paternalistically discounting and correcting advice or information that is presented by Plunket; by referring to her book as a "pleasant little volume" rather than a serious or impressive study; and, towards the end of the review, by using Plunket's own self-construction as a lady tourist against her in order to undermine the reliability of her descriptions of the Dolomite mountains: "[Miss Plunket's] opinion on dolomite mountains is fairly enough given for what it is worth, that is, as the result of what can be seen out of the window of a railway carriage" (274). Like Le Blond, then, it appears that Plunket was unable to disguise her ambition enough to avoid criticism by male critics and, thus, unable to avoid falling into the *crevasse* of obscurity which subversive women's texts have often been thrown by patriarchal canon-makers.

III: The Rational Approach



Figure 72. The often reprinted studio portrait of Annie Peck in her “rational” climbing clothes. Reproduced from Milbrey Polk and Mary Tiegreen’s *Women of Discovery: A Celebration of Intrepid Women who Explored the World*. London, Scriptum Editions, 2001.

A third group of women took advantage of the opportunities which the public acts of ascent and publication afforded them, not only in order to promote themselves and their accomplishments, but to forward the political causes to which they were adherents. In an interesting inversion of the “Fantasy of Jungfrau” postcard (**figure**), two particularly audacious American women, Annie Smith Peck and Fanny Bullock Workman, played up and perpetuated masculine anxieties about “women on top” by self-consciously politicising mountaineering into an overtly feminist endeavour.



Figure 73. Mrs. Fanny Bullock Workman holds up a newspaper with the clearly visible feminist headline “Votes for Women” on it near the Siachan Glacier. Reproduced from Workman’s *Two Summers in the Ice-Wilds of the Eastern Karakoram*. 1917.

Annie Peck declared her feminist intentions in the introduction to her book: “To all who had faith in my ability to win ultimate success or who have rejoiced in my triumph, I would

express the hope that they may be encouraged on future occasions to aid women everywhere in obtaining equal opportunity with men; justice and not favour.” Similarly, in *Two Summers in the Ice Wilds of the Eastern Karakoram* (1917), Fanny Bullock Workman included a photograph of herself waving a newspaper with the headline “Votes for Women” near Karakorum (**figure 73**) and wrote that “it is to be hoped that light may fall upon the souls of men that they may realise the great injustice practised upon the weaker sex” (qtd in Aitken). Likewise, in a note at the end of *Two Summers*, Mrs. Workman declared that

The object of placing my full name in connection with the expedition on the map, is not because I wish in any way to thrust myself forward, but solely that in the accomplishments of women, now and the future, it should be known to them and stated in print that a woman was the initiator and special leader of this expedition. When, later, woman occupies her acknowledged position as an individual worker in all fields, as well as those of exploration, no such emphasis of her work will be needed; but that day has not fully arrived, and at present it behooves women, for the benefit of their sex, to put what they do, at least, on record. (284)

By the titles, the sheer sizes, and the contents of their narratives (i.e., “documentary” photographs, maps, measurements), by the discursive personae they chose, and even the destinations to which they travelled, Annie S. Peck and Fanny Bullock Workman appeared intent upon sending both the general public and the Alpine Club community a similar message: these women not only wished to be considered accomplished mountaineers first and women or “ladies”

second, but, on and off the trail, they hoped to be ascribed the same level of authority and regarded with the same level of respect and seriousness as any man.

Given that both women were adamant promoters of themselves, their abilities, and their political causes, it is unsurprising that historians and critics have characterised both Annie Peck and Fanny Bullock Workman as aggressive and uncompromising figures who would hardly have thought of demurely downplaying their accomplishments or of playing the role of the helpless “lady.” However, both Workman’s and Peck’s writings and visual and verbal self-presentations bear evidence which suggests that both not only faced many of the same pressures and struggles faced by earlier female mountaineers (i.e., the pressure to appear feminine, the struggle to negotiate between propriety and notoriety, between establishing themselves as serious climbers and authors and asserting their respectability), but that, in some instances, both women responded to these pressures in ways similar to those of even the most stereotypically feminine climbers.

Although an extremely competitive, driven, and outspoken individual who sought to compete with men both on the trail and off, Fanny Bullock Workman was neither sartorially nor rhetorically immune to the social pressures facing other women like her to conform, in appearance and action, to respectable upper-class definitions of “ladyship.” Whether on the trail or off, Workman did not completely subvert convention—at least where clothing and deportment were concerned.

Fanny Bullock Workman not only climbed with a skirt over her trousers on even her most daring and difficult of climbs in the Himalayas (**figure 73**), but she often included carefully

posed images of herself in feminine fancy dress alongside her otherwise serious, straightforward, scientifically detailed mountaineering accounts (**figure 74**).



Figure 74. Mrs. Fanny Bullock Workman depicted in a studio photograph taken “off the trail.” According to Victorian conventions of portrait photography, the fan in Mrs. Workman’s hand and the ornate desk and chair would have signified femininity, while the book and papers would have symbolized education. In this way, the image usefully captures the two worlds within which women explorers such as Workman had to negotiate. Reproduced from the Workmans’ *The Ice-Bound Heights of the Mustagh: An Account of Two Seasons of Pioneer Exploration and High Climbing in the Balistan Himalaya*. London: Constable, 1908; NY: Scribner, 1908. leaf btwn pp. 190-191. The same image was reproduced on the first page of Mrs. Workman’s article “Recent First Ascents in the Himalaya.” *The Independent* 68 (June 2 1910): 1202-1210.

In *Ice-Bound Heights of the Mustagh* (1908), for example, the placement of her image (**figure 74**) seems haphazard and gratuitous but is, in my view, deliberate; mingled in with seemingly objective, and scientific documentary shots of the mountains and peoples encountered, and of Fanny and her husband conquering various peaks, the studio image of Fanny (followed on the next page by a companion image of her husband William) seems included to act, like her climbing skirt, as “a mere apology”—a somewhat compensatory attempt on Fanny’s part to assure readers that, despite her stereotypically masculine ambitions, she is very much a woman (and a lady).

Interestingly, Fanny's rival for the women's altitude record, Annie Peck, occasionally employed a similar rhetorical strategy. Although she never climbed in a skirt and more often than not included images of herself in trousers (such as **figure 72**), Peck, like Workman and like Elizabeth Le Blond in her first publication, included a fancy dress image of herself on the frontispiece (**figure 76**) garbed in practical yet appropriately feminine evening dress; later in the text, she also included an image of herself on the deck of the ship (on the way to her climbs) (**figs. 75**).



Figure 75. Photograph of Annie Peck and fellow male companions aboard the ship which is taking them from New York towards Panama. Although her pose is confident, conveying an air of resolution, and in many respects mirroring the pose struck in her famous climber image reproduced in figure 72 (arm resting on her alpenstock, eyes looking back at the camera), Peck's dress is respectably conservative and feminine. Original caption is "Setting Out from New York: Miss Peck, Scientist, two Swiss Guides." Reproduced from Annie Peck's *A Search for the Apex of America*. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1911. 8.

Upon first inspection, Annie Peck's studio portrait (**76**) seems conventional and straightforward; based on the way she is dressed and on the size of the small delicate slipper in

her hand, Peck appears to be in all respects a respectable lady (with impressively small feet for such remarkable mountaineering feats). One might even go so far as to suggest that the image of an elaborately dressed Peck holding the small shoe resembles the fairy book character Cinderella, captured just before trying on the glass slipper which will reveal her true aristocratic identity and seal her alliance with Prince Charming.



Figure 76. Fancy dress photo of Peck, apparently taken the same evening that she addressed a lecture to—and received her silver shoe and medal from—the Lima Geographical Society. Reproduced from the frontispiece of Annie Smith Peck's *A Search for the Apex of America: High Mountain Climbing in Peru and Bolivia*. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1911.

However, Peck's bemused facial expression and pose in the image provide a striking contrast to both the demure and lady-like clothing and photographic props and the potential

Cinderella intertext; rather, the contrast between these elements and Peck's expression leaves the viewer with the impression that Peck is begrudgingly and almost impatiently playing a role and holding a pose with which she is uncomfortable and discontented.⁸⁴ Like Cinderella's less diminutive and therefore less stereotypically feminine sisters, Peck cannot (and in this instance desires not) to fit into the shoe and, by extension, the role of the delicate feminine princess which Peck and other women were encouraged by patriarchal social scripts to play.

The viewer's reading of the image is later complicated even further by Peck's own revelation of the meaning of the slipper in the image. At the very end of the narrative, Peck reveals that the shoe had been "a pleasing souvenir of [her] occasion [of being the first woman to address in their own language The Lima Geographical Society] [regarding her conquest of Huascarán]." Apparently the slipper had once been "a handsome solid silver stirrup in the form of a slipper, a relic of colonial days, when it was doubtless used by some maid or matron of high degree in her horseback rides about the city or in journeying over mountain or plain." In its new manifestation it became a souvenir commemorating Peck's less than lady-like conquest of South America, and symbolically foreshadowing her nation's future economic exploitation of its resources: "This slipper of silver. . . made from native metals of this richly mineralised and otherwise resourceful country [is] preserved as [one of] my most precious treasures," she wrote (370).

Unlike Mrs. Cole or Mrs. Freshfield who used their married names as their *noms de plumes* in order to shelter themselves somewhat from claims of unrespectability, both Annie and Fanny's names always appeared on all their pieces of writing as "Annie S[mith]. Peck" and

“Fanny Bullock Workman,” often followed by the long list of titles and institutional affiliations which they had achieved—recognition by the Alpine Club of London being notably absent. That is not to say however that either Fanny Bullock Workman or Annie Peck were above using their marital status (married in the case of Workman; single in the case of Peck) in a strategic manner.

Although, as both Dorothy Middleton and David Mazel have noted, Fanny is said to have been the mastermind and head organizer of the couple’s excursions, and although she was often very adamant about ensuring that such facts were made known to the general public, Fanny was nevertheless also often careful to present her climbs and her written accounts of them as a collaborative effort—not between climbers, guides, and porters, but between the female climber and her husband. On the frontispiece of several of her published books, for example, Fanny’s husband William Hunter Workman is given credit (though often secondary credit in that his name usually appeared second). Even Fanny’s double-barrelled name (Bullock Workman) reveals this attempt to negotiate between her individual identity and a relational one.

Fanny delivered several lectures alone, was the sole author of many articles about the travels and ascents conducted by herself and her husband, and may have been the author of most of their books. However throughout a number of these books, the rhetorical approach taken is again one of collaboration; in *Ice-Bound Heights of the Mustagh* the authorial “I”s are replaced by “we’s” and third person references to both Mr. and Mrs. Workman. Stephanie Tingley notes that in their first book, *In the Ice World of Himalaya* (1900) “. . . they divide a chapter devoted to exploring the effects of altitude on climbers between them” while *Two Summers in the Ice-wilds of Eastern Karakoram* is composed of some sections written by Fanny, others by William.

Peck by contrast often played up the fact of her being unmarried and played down the collaborative nature of climbing, perhaps in order to help sustain the aura of sensationalism and exceptionality which being a solitary female traveller could bring. **Figures 72 and 79**, depicting a solo Peck *as if* in the process of conquest, exemplify Peck's often textually expressed view (especially after Rudolf Taugwalder stole her first steps on Mt. Huascarán and after a series of desertions on the part of many of her male companions, porters, and guides): that mountaineering was sometimes best practised as a solitary art.

Although self-described rivals for the world's altitude record, Peck and Workman shared similar aims: such as the desire to carry out serious and accomplished first ascents in areas hitherto relatively unexplored and unconquered either by Western men or women; to conduct scientific experiments and observations and contribute this knowledge to the British and American imperial and national archives; to politicise mountaineering into a feminist affair; and to impress and gain the respect of both serious and general audiences. Discursively, Peck and Bullock set about to achieve these agendas in often comparable ways.

While many female mountaineers used mainly their gender, class, and nationality in order to gain physical and social mobility, Peck and Workman attempted to construct and maintain their authority (both on the trail and off) less often by professing their feminine inferiority or feigning humility and harmlessness, but by donning the sartorial and rhetorical garbs of the male imperial adventurer.

Both on the trail and in her written accounts, Annie Peck seemed to enjoy fancying herself in the role of the stereotypical male explorers who climbed (aggressively and

competitively) for the power, pleasure, and challenge. Peck not only went so far as to borrow Antarctic explorer Robert Peary's snow suit and don a complexion mask adorned with a man's moustachio, but was known to borrow the modes of behaviour and description typical of male adventurers such as Peary in her representations of her climbs.

Although an extremely vocal feminist who felt that "any great achievement in any line of endeavour" which she accomplished would be "of great advantage to my sex," Peck still often followed the masculinist tendency to gender and sexualise uncultivated landscapes as fecund and female; in the opening of her book, for example, Peck declared that her climbs had been motivated by a desire to "do a little genuine exploring" and to "conquer a virgin summit."

Yet, as much as she sought to emulate the feats of male explorers and mountaineers such as Peary and Sir Martin Conway, Peck also made it clear that she did not mean merely to follow in these men's distinguished footsteps; on the contrary, as she boldly notes in her introduction to *Search*, her aim was, if possible, to both literally and figuratively clamber to the top of the world, to "attain some height where no *man* had previously stood . . ." (x-xi).

Peck's desire to directly compete with fellow male climbers, explorers, and scientists even as she emulated them is rendered even more clear in her textual treatment of several men in her book. As Reuben Ellis has noted in *Vertical Margins*, "the figure of the reluctant male guide is almost conventional in Peck, and the theme of male faintheartedness permeates *Search* from first page to last" (109). This theme is particularly apparent in the following angry phrase which Peck recalls having uttered after Professor X (Dr. Tight, a biologist and president of the University of New Mexico) had decided to cancel his plans to accompany her mid-way through

the first expedition, and after a number of other male guides and porters had followed suit: “Oh how I longed for a man with the pluck and determination to stand by me to the finish!” (152).

According to Reuben Ellis, Peck attempted to present herself in the role of the rational, practical (read stereotypically masculine) mountaineer by casting her male companions in feminine or effeminate terms. Playing up and playing out the gendered and sexual anxieties depicted in late-Victorian anti-feminist cartoons such as **figure 77**, Peck attempts to appear braver, stronger, and more capable (in a word, more manly) by presenting the men as “tak[ing] on behavioral and personality characteristics stereotypically associated with women” (Ellis 111). As Ellis points out, Peck’s men “. . . nag and whimper. They profess helplessness to get their way. Their ‘continual chatter’ (166) forces Peck to travel out of earshot and, compared to Peck’s own quickly efficient preparations, they practise what she calls ‘an elaborate toilet’ (303)” (111).



Figure 77. The image above, appearing in the June 11, 1896 issue of *Punch*, illustrates some of the anxieties of emasculation which many males feared females “on top” would bring about and which Peck may have been playing up in her own narratives. At left, a man in feminine dress turns from his domestic duties of mending and tending to the children to be tutored by his learned infant daughter, while two elder females dressed in boy’s breeches rough-house on the furniture. “In the New Age,” the artist seems to suggest, men will be forced to play the woman’s parts, while the women will attend to the ‘manly’ business outside the home. The implication is that men will become, like the stereotypical woman, ignorant and dependent. At

the same time, however, a warning seems to be issued from men to men that women's liberation will lead to men and children being abandoned and domestic chaos ensuing.

Such declarations undoubtedly indicate Peck's frustration with her inability to get stable support, both in the form of money and morale. However, as Ellis rightly points out, these statements also reveal Peck's struggle to overcome stereotypical notions of feminine inferiority (both within herself and from the outside, enforced by male companions)—notions which Peck must overcome not only in order to construct textual and social authority as a serious, accomplished (read masculine) mountaineer but, rather paradoxically, in order to turn her mountaineering adventures into an overtly feminist endeavour.⁸⁵

By showing herself (a woman) to be more adept at playing the breeches parts than her male counterparts, Peck simultaneously did a number of things. Most obviously, she delivered a decisive critique of dominant constructions of male machismo. More significantly, however, Peck inverted the usual mountaineering dichotomies of male-active, female-passive. This move was interesting. On the one hand, it enabled Peck to mount her feminist statement of emancipation—it allowed her to show the world that, contrary to popular beliefs, she and other women like herself were capable of being as brave, reliable, and competent as men (in this case more so). On the other hand, it rather paradoxically enabled Peck to usurp the very same “masculine” role of the powerful adventurer that she was critiquing. Thus, while she may have seen herself as a fighter for gender-based equality, in a way, Peck revisited on her would-be male oppressors the same forms of patriarchal disparagement that she and other female climbers had faced in trying to come up in the world. By belittling her male companions, Peck may therefore also have been doing exactly what masculinist men feared strong independent New Women would do as they struggled for emancipation: rather than promoting equality, Peck was

attempting to emasculate them in order to render them impotent and “muscle” them out of their privileged positions on top.

After the manner of many male mountaineers who emphasised their feats while suppressing the contributions of their guides, Peck attempted to construct social and textual authority on and off the trail not only by criticizing the men and showing herself to be superior to them in ability and accomplishment, but by attempting to assert her mastery over her foreign porters and guides. I say “attempt” because, as Peck noted again and again in her narrative, while she was the socio-economic “employer,” in the climbing situation, gender seemed to trump class, nation, and race; during the first expedition, the “indians” remained obstinate and deferred only to orders given by white or South American men. According to Peck, “the indians supposed [the Professor, who abandoned the expedition early on] to be the leader of the expedition and believed that he had already abandoned it; that I could do nothing anyway. So they slipped away homeward leaving us alone. . . . Never before had I felt so helpless. Heart-sick I said nothing. . . . To manage three men seemed beyond my power” (51). Evidently, whether American or South American, no “man” would allow himself to be hen-“Pecked”; even with the mustachioed mask on, there was no mistaking that Peck was a woman and, on the trail, a female held no power.

Despite her attempts to portray the men as the weak ones, Peck was so impotent in the face of entrenched gender ideologies which placed men as the leaders of expeditions that, to her absolute horror, she was unable to stop Swiss guide Rudolf Taugwalder from stealing the first steps on the virgin peak of Huascarán—a ceremonial gesture which, as an American climber following British mountaineering traditions, and as the financial backer of the operation, Peck had assumed was to be her right when the time came. Of the event, Peck wrote:

Rudolf now appeared and informed me that he had been on to the summit, instead of remaining to assist with the hypsometer. I was enraged. I had told them, long before, that, as it was my expedition, I should like, as is customary, to be the first one to place my foot at the top, even though I reached it through their instrumentality. It would not lessen their honour and I was paying the bills. . . . I had not dreamed of such an act. The disappointment may have been trivial. Of course it made no real difference to the honour to which I was entitled, but of a certain personal satisfaction, long looked forward to, I had been robbed. (344)



Figure 78. Peck “AS ON summit” of Huascarán. Reproduced from Annie Peck’s *A Search for the Apex of America: High Mountain Climbing in Peru and Bolivia*. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1911. In this image, one gets a clearer view of Peck’s masculine garb, complete with mustachioed complexion mask.

Peck's attempts to present the men as lacking in manliness and pluck may have therefore been related to this employer and employee struggle. **Figure 78** demonstrates how Peck attempted to use another stereotypically rational, masculine discourse—photography—in order to conceptually reclaim the first steps on the virgin summit which her defiant male Swiss guide had “stolen” from her.

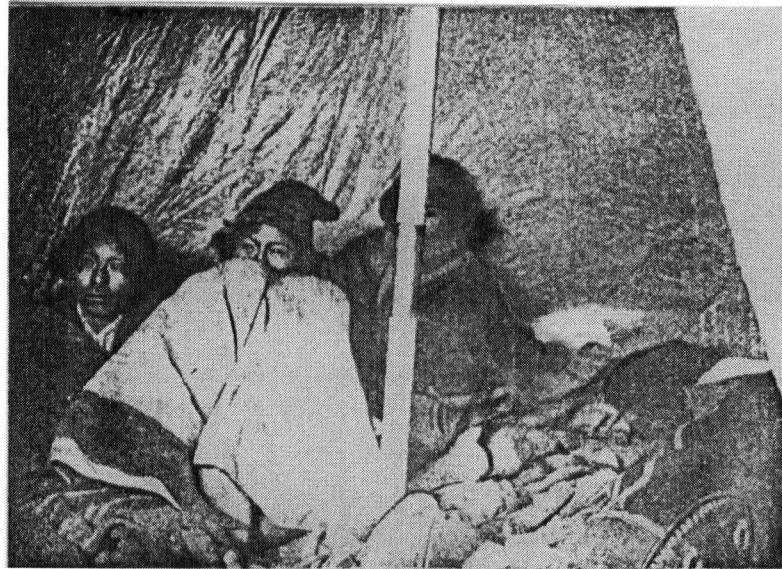


Figure 79. “Flash light of Indians in tent.” Reproduced from Peck’s *A Search for the Apex of America*. NY: Dodd, Mead, 1911. Although she refers to them as upper-case “I” “Indians” in the caption (as opposed to her usual tendency to call them “indians”), Peck’s accompanying description of the way in which the image was taken underscores the latent imperial violence and racial inequity underlying the photographic practises employed not only by Peck, but also by many other Western photographers; as Peck herself notes in her narrative, this image was literally “taken” of the guides against their will (see note)

Disappointed in her efforts to control the wayward “indians” under her employ on the trail, **figure 79-81** suggest that Peck perhaps also often turned to the “documentary” medium of photography as a means through which to (at least symbolically) “fix” and dominate them.

Many of Peck’s visual representations may be called (and indeed in her day would have been seen as) ethnographic; images such as **figure 80** and **81**, for example, particularly seem to reflect Peck’s knowledge and employment of conventional methods of posing used by Western ethnographers of the day to record the racial characteristics, traditions, and living conditions of

foreign peoples (see also Elizabeth Edwards' *Anthropology and Photography*). **Figure 79** seems less posed and seems almost to capture the movements of the people depicted—in this way the image may perhaps be seen as less violently objectificatory. However, to my mind at least, traces of ethnography persist in most of Peck's images of South American peoples, due to the historical-cultural contexts in which they were first taken and later circulated.



Figure 80. “Hornillos, Oven.” Reproduced in Peck's *A Search for the Apex of America*. NY: Dodd, Mead, 1911. In this image, several local natives are posed in front of a large oven.

One must not forget that these are the result of a white middle-class northern American traveller/observer's attempts to photographically “capture” images of various classes, ages, and genders of South American people (often against their will),⁸⁶ which she later displayed before white middle-class lecture audiences in America—audiences who, at this particular time, were flocking to menageries, museums, and World Fairs to sate their simultaneous interest in and racist revulsion towards such peoples.

The fact that Peck often captions the images with titles such as “the [lowercase] indian guides” rather than the natives’ actual names perhaps further signifies a desire on the white traveller’s part to erect and uphold a distance between herself and the “Others.”⁸⁷

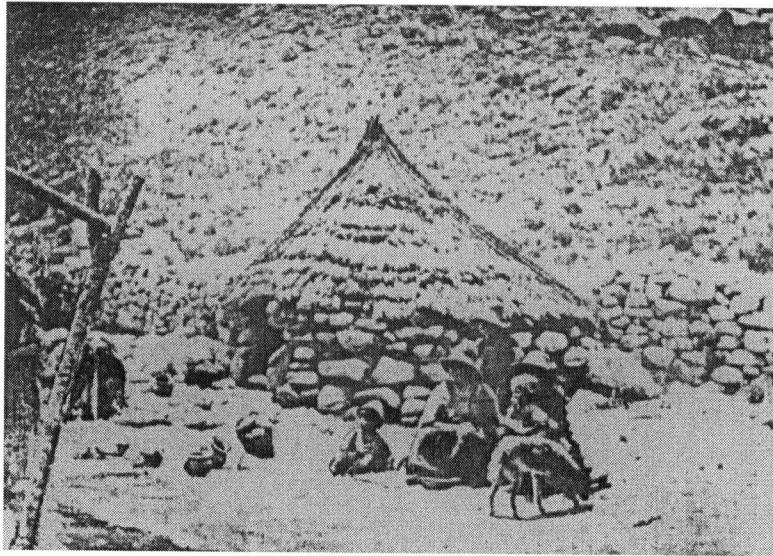


Figure 81. “House of Indians.” Reproduced from Peck’s *Search*. NY: Dodd, Mead, 1911. 190.

Like many of her visual images, many of Peck’s verbal descriptions of South America are inflected with stereotypes and racial “othering.” Throughout *Search*, Peck talks of the disease, squalor, poverty, and drunkenness of many natives she encounters.⁸⁸ For example, Peck mentions the fact that many “indians” were “generally dirty looking . . . [from] sleep[ing] on the floor and wear[ing] the same garments day and night for an indefinite period” and imagined that “[a] bath is an unknown luxury which they would doubtless regard rather as a punishment” (36).

However, Peck’s published work is too rife with contradictions and complexities to argue that, like the stereo-typical Western coloniser, she merely condescendingly essentialised South American places and peoples. In several places, Peck’s narrative also gives evidence to suggest more than a detached scientific and derogatory imperial response to all that she observed on her travels.⁸⁹ In **Chapter VII**, for example, Peck challenges contemporary

assumptions about foreign races as being innately 'savage' and inferior due to d-evolution—assumptions which elsewhere in the narrative she sometimes perpetuates—by offering a socio-cultural root to such stereotypical profiles: “It is hardly to be wondered at that the Aymara indians are a rather surly looking lot, since they have been robbed of their lands and their more sympathetic rulers, and made subject to an alien race by whom in earlier days they were ill-treated and oppressed far more than now” (62).

A few chapters later Peck breaks her mask of scientific rationality in order to make it clear that she is aware of (and clearly incensed by) the detrimental impacts of foreign invasion and influence on South American peoples: “Professor Solon I. Bailey, after much wandering among the ruins of ancient towns near Chosica, estimated that once there was a population of 6,000 in a district containing barely 500. So unjust and improvident were the methods of the early Spaniards, who, in their madness for gold, ill-treated the natives and ignored the importance of agriculture, that for many years the development of Peru has halted, among other causes from this diminution of population” (102).

Such passages suggest that Peck was more than simply a superficial tourist or an invasive “explorer.” On the contrary, Peck appears to have structured parts of both her travels and her travel narratives around a desire to open her mind (and the minds of her audiences) towards gaining a more nuanced and less stereotypical understanding of South American peoples. While Peck was like fellow female Alpine travellers Mrs. Freshfield or Frederica Plunket in that she sometimes complained about the wretched conditions of foreign inns, she was different in that she more often expressed enthusiastic curiosity about than revulsion towards the local customs, industry, and politics of the people populating the countries through which she travelled—a curiosity which she attempted to feed by touring neighboring ruins,

mines, and remote villages, and by sampling first-hand foreign festivals and cuisines. The following passage, which recounts an evening which occurred during a sojourn in Bolivia, demonstrates Peck's receptivity to (rather than fear of) the "foreign" and the unknown: "A half hour before the dinner which was served at the hour of seven, M. Courty came to me with the inquiry if I would like a cockle. Having no idea what a cockle might be, but desiring to become acquainted with all Bolivian customs and dishes, I replied 'Yes.' A tray was soon brought, with small tumblers containing a dark liquid which proved to be a mild and harmless cocktail, my first experience of the beverage, though of course the name was familiar; I had not expected to hear it in that remote region" (73).

Like many travellers, Peck found herself comparing foreign people and customs with those of her own country. Predictably, in such comparisons, the foreign culture often fell short of the traveler's own culture. However, unlike many of her contemporaries who used their travel and travelogues in order to reassure themselves of their racial, social, and national superiority, Peck refused to suppress those moments when she finds the people, the customs, and even the geographies of various South American countries to be as equally civilised, cultivated, and attractive as those of America; in the Chapter entitled "Life in La Paz in 1903," for example, Peck is quick to point out that, contrary to stereotypical American beliefs, "the sections of [this] country . . . are ordinarily safer than the United States, which has a larger percentage of murders than any other civilised country upon the globe" (63).

Peck also finds it interesting that "there is no such prejudice against [the "indians"] as with us against negroes, though doubtless some of the old Spanish families pride themselves on their pure Castilian blood. A Minister of one of the Departments of Government, I was told,

was a full blooded indian” (63). Similarly, after a visit to the ruins of Tiahuarnaco, Peck reminds readers that such a site was “regarded by many as the most ancient, and as indicating the highest degree of civilisation, of any existing in the Western hemisphere” (73).

Finally, Peck closes Chapter X with an account of a visit to a Peruvian school for girls—an account which seems, on the one hand, designed to highlight the relative belatedness of Americans on the subject of women’s education (particularly women’s education in the sciences and geography) and, on the other, to provide a commentary on the deterioration of Victorian codes of politeness and decorum in America’s younger generations: “There were two rooms, one for the A. B. C.’s, the other for older girls. I heard a class in botany and one in geography in excellent recitations. The map of Europe was evidently well understood by these girls ten or twelve years old. The pupils rose to greet me when I entered as also when I left, and the teacher was a model of courtesy. I was much interested in a little school-book I saw which gave instruction in ethics, in duties of various kinds, and many practical hints in regard to conduct. A similar one, it seemed to me, might be introduced to advantage in our own schools” (114).

In addition to allowing Peck to mount a critique of various facets of her own country’s beliefs and social practices, such representations of South American local peoples and customs as educated (or educatable), as civilised, and, thus, as unbarbaric, may perhaps best be understood as part of an effort on Peck’s part to meet several agendas and objectives which she hoped to achieve by travelling to and writing about South America: namely, a self-professed desire to “aid in a small degree the cause of Peace by increasing our knowledge of countries with which we have too little acquaintance, a bond of sympathy and union taking place of crass conceit and narrow prejudice” between the US and South America (xi).

On the one hand, Peck's humanitarian profession that she wished to create a "bond of sympathy and union" and stop "crass conceit and narrow prejudice" would seem to set her apart from other more aggressively imperialistic contemporaries and thus render her worthy of the title "exceptional" that some many feminist historians have given her. However, one must not overlook several recurrent statements made in *Search* that, to my mind at least, call into question the suggestion that Peck's professed desire to induce an "awakening interest in our sister Republics beyond the Equator" was as innocently altruistic as it may have seemed.

In fact, ample evidence exists to suggest that both Peck's travels and her visual and textual representations of her travels had been formed around another agenda that can perhaps be best described as economically (rather than racially) imperialistic in nature; the most obvious evidence is the fact that, in her own words, Peck desired to draw "attention to the magnificent scenery of the Andes and to other matters observed in my travels" in order to help promote "commerce, travel, and trade between [America and South America], and the construction of the Pan-American Railway" (xi). This agenda of economic imperialism is made clear in passages such as the following:

While every portion of the globe is undoubtedly worthy of investigation and is certain at some time to be explored, the inhabited regions of the earth, especially those of our own hemisphere, which, for their magnificent scenery invite travel, and for their mineral and agricultural riches invite commerce, should at once become better known to us.

Mountain climbing for itself alone, to many, nay, to nearly all of our people, might not seem worth while; worse, it might appear folly; but as a means of drawing attention to a section of country that should be world famed for the splendour of its great mountains,

no less for the mineral riches along their slopes, it seemed that my efforts might appeal in a practical way to practical men. (217)

Peck concludes that “were I a young man with \$1000 to start, I can conceive of no more favourable place to go and make my fortune than Chimbote or somewhere up this wonderful valley.”

When regarded in the context of these more overtly imperialistic statements Peck’s anti-essentialising representations of South American places and peoples assume new significance. Rather than simply demonstrating Peck’s superior level of sensitivity towards and education about various cultures outside her own, such descriptions are seen as playing a crucial role in extending America’s expansionist desires to eventually assimilate South America into its “imagined community” economically, culturally, and politically, and turn it into the “Playground” of the US. As she herself notes in the book, by presenting South America and South Americans as attractive, friendly, yet poor, Peck hoped to render them worthy of and receptive to American cultural and economic involvement and investment, and thus to present the South as an ideal site of development that did not seem to carry with it the kinds of difficulties experienced by Westerners colonizing ‘savage’ Africa.⁹⁰



Most often clad in her prized topie hat, skirt, and puttees, Fanny Bullock Workman (although an American) epitomised (and seemed deliberately to emulate) the figure of the British Memsahib, who was both “mem” (woman) and “sahib” (boss). Like Peck, Workman

often constructed authority both on and off the trail by asserting her raced, classed superiority over guides, porters, and local peoples and peaks—a fact which some contemporary feminist scholars have undoubtedly found difficult to reconcile with her feminist declaration that she “hoped that light may fall upon the souls of men that they may realise the great injustice practised upon the weaker sex” (qtd in Aitken).⁹¹

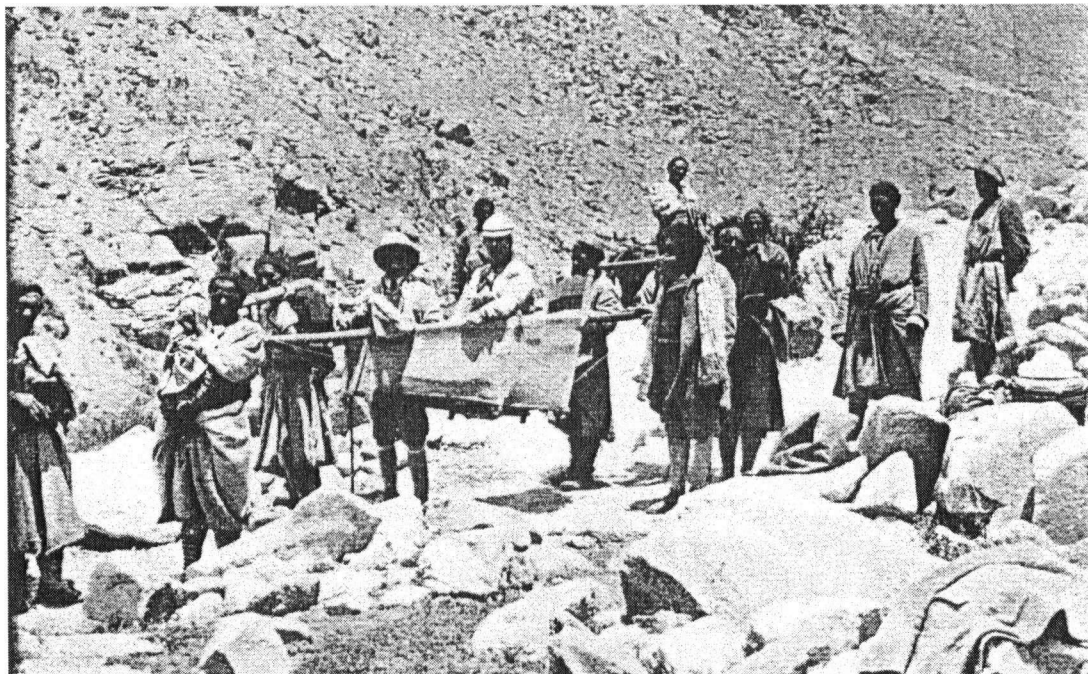


Figure 82. “Mrs. Bullock Workman in Dandi Indus Valley.” After turning her ankle on some loose rock, Mrs. Bullock Workman was carried through the Himalayas in a Dandi by her so called “lazy” coolies. In this image, Mrs. Workman appears more like Nina Mazuchelli, the mid-Victorian traveller who was carried in like fashion through India, than an intrepid and independent mountaineer. Image reproduced from the Workmans’ *Ice-Bound Heights of the Mustagh*. 7.

The sensitivity and genuine curiosity often expressed by Peck in her book is notably absent from Workman’s narratives. Unlike Peck, Workman seemed unwilling to consider any similarities to or points of comparison between herself as an upper-class white American and the lower-class native “Others” working for them—**figs. 82 and 83** reasserts on a visual level the fact that, as the following quotation taken from *Ice-Bound Heights of the Mustagh* (1908) illustrates, the

Workmans felt themselves to be (and wanted to be considered as) a class and a race apart from and above their coolie workers:

Certain philanthropically disposed persons, having little or no knowledge of coolies under the conditions here considered, talk of the efficacy of kind treatment—which means coddling and making companions of them—in inducing them to remain faithful to their agreements. . . . But our experience leads us to agree with those who, having had much to do with coolies under varying conditions, regard this idea as mere sentimental nonsense. . . . [T]he coolie understands only the application of superior force as an incentive to fulfil his obligations. Gratitude he does not know. Kindness he does not appreciate nor reciprocate, and ordinary motives of personal advantage, as understood by Europeans, do not always appeal to him. He is an Asiatic, uswayed by those principles which regulate the conduct of conscientious Europeans. (407-08)



Figure 83. The self-professed “leaders of the expedition,” Fanny Bullock Workman and her husband pose as determined experienced climbers. This image is one of a huge number of photographs printed in the Workmans’ books which play up the success and experience of the white climbers and play down the role played by the coolies and guides whose labour ensured their success. Reproduced from *Ice-Bound Heights of the Mustagh*. London: Constable, 1908. 393.

Described as analogous in appearance and behaviour to children or monkeys, insects, and “lemmings,” the Workmans’ “Asiatic” coolies are continually demoted to a devolved, degenerate, and subhuman status; this status is made even lower by the fact that many animals the Workmans encounter on their travels are described as possessing more human-like qualities than the coolies. For example, Sherrill Grace (in conversation) has pointed out that, in *Peaks and Glaciers of Nun Kun* (1909), the only times the Workmans seem to turn their attention away from the scientific analyses of altitude, glaciers, and topography and break their shared narrative mask of cold, “objective” detachment from the people and scenes they describe is when they are recounting the adventures of a scrappy white rooster that had originally been acquired for food. Grace suggests that the rooster becomes a kind of mascot for the couple whose scrappiness and “pluck” they perhaps saw as mirroring their own “strengths in adversity” and contrasting sharply with the cowardice of their sly and unreliable coolies. Considering its smaller size and its colour, Mrs. Workman in particular may have seen herself as the little bird “that could.” Whatever its deeper symbolism (if such exists), it is clear that, in Bullock Workman’s mind, contemporary ideals and ideas of gender seem to have been open to a greater amount of debate and contestation than were those ideologies which placed white British and American men and women on the pinnacles of national and racial superiority.

While Peck’s approach to racial, cultural, and employer-employee relations may in no way be said to be setting an ideal precedent of equality and safety, Peck does seem to have been more open to admitting the errors of her ways, where her treatment of her native workers was concerned, than Mrs. Bullock Workman and her husband. Once Peck figured out part of the reason why her men were turning back at the snow line, (spiritual beliefs, improper equipment and clothing, bare feet, no protection against snowblindness), she made sure to scrape together

funds to ensure that a cross would be brought and mounted to ward off “evil spirits” and helped equip the climbers with “special equipment” such as “two good flannel shirts and two pairs of shoes, . . . with stockings and one or two other articles including mittens” Upon realizing that “[u]ndergarments to go with the woollen shirts were, however, lacking,” Peck also “purchase[d] at Cajabamba some bright pink cotton-flannel, from which I proceeded to cut, as well as an inexperienced patternless woman might, and hastily sew some unmentionables for the benefit of the two porters.”

By contrast, Workman made little to no such provisions for her army of “coolies”—many of whom undoubtedly abandoned the expedition because their clothing and footwear provided no real protection against the extreme weather of the upper Himalayas. In fact, Workman and her husband often openly expressed their resentment over the supposedly excessive amounts of food and pay they were forced to give to the dozens of “greedy” natives under their employ.

What is unique about Bullock Workman’s rhetorical strategy is that she not only attempted to assert her authority and agency through a suppression of the native “Others” working under her employ but that she also sought to do so by “one upping” her female competition for the women’s altitude record: Annie Smith Peck. Casting aside any talk of female solidarity expressed in feminist declarations, Workman made it clear in several of her books and articles that she and not Peck was Queen of the Hills; the wealthy woman made sure to confirm this declaration by hiring a group of men to triangulate Huascarán and prove Peck’s altitude measurements to be overexaggerated. It is no coincidence that Mrs. Workman paid a crew of *male* scientists to triangulate Peck’s peak rather than attempting to do so herself. Workman obviously wanted to ensure that no one could attack her data on the same grounds

that she herself was attacking Peck's (i.e., that the data had been gathered by an amateur woman and therefore prone to imprecision).

Workman and her husband also went to great lengths to discount Annie Peck in a series of letters appearing in *Scientific American*. As these letters make clear, like Peck, Mrs. Bullock Workman also wanted to construct herself as a rational, objective, and scientific figure of authority. At the same time, however, Workman was emotionally invested enough in her struggle to reign as "women's altitude record holder" that she was willing to employ the very arguments and discourses masculinists later used in order to undermine the seriousness of her work, in her own attempt to discredit Peck's claims to either the women's or the men's altitude records.

Just as many male Alpine Club reviewers of women mountaineers' books and lectures attempted to berate women's work on the grounds that the books contained too many factual mistakes, Mrs. Workman set about in her letter to *Scientific American* to present both Peck and Peck's measurements as faulty, lacking in objectivity, rationality, and therefore as being scientifically unsound—in other words, clearly the work of a bumbling lady tourist and not a rational, manly scientist:

Knowing from her own statement that Miss Peck made no instrumental observations above 19, 600 feet on Huascarán, and believing, furthermore, Aconcagua to be the highest mountain of the Andes, I decided to test the truth of these assertions by sending expert European engineers to make a detailed, up-to-date triangulation of the two summits of Mount Huascarán. The only previous known measurement of this mountain was made many years ago, which is said to have given a height of 22,180 feet for the south or higher summit. Prof. Schrader, who a few years ago made the most authentic

measurement yet made of Aconcagua, and M. Henri Vallot, both well-known French scientists and heads of the *Société Générale D'Études et de Travaux Topographiques* of Paris, and gave the matter their close personal attention. (143)

After presenting the results of the triangulation (which revealed that “Miss Peck’s highest ascent to date therefore stands, north peak Huascarán 21,812 feet instead of 24,000” and thus she had “not the ‘honor of breaking the world’s record,’ either for men or women” which Mrs. Workman held after climbing to “22,568 and 23,300 feet” in the Himalayas), Mrs. Workman strategically aligned herself with the male explorer who had so haunted Peck’s thoughts as she had attempted and failed to conquer Huascarán again and again (Sir Martin Conway) by smugly declaring that: “Mount Aconcagua, nearly 22,900 feet, still remains, as I predicted and as Sir Martin Conway and other Andean explorers have always maintained, the highest peak of South America” (143). As if to add insult to injury, Mrs. Workman closed with a cutting reminder to Peck that Workman’s own record not only debarred Peck from “that honor” of a woman’s first ascent, but that “a number of men have made ascents exceeding [Peck’s] highest” (143).

Peck’s response to Workman’s first letter appeared in the *Scientific American* days later, on Feb. 26th, 1910. In her retort, Peck admitted that, although she had hoped to “contribute . . . to the world’s scientific knowledge” (*Search*, xi) she had made no precise measurements during her climbs—her reason being that “on account of the high wind I had been unable to take hypsometric observations on the summit.” However, she argued for the scientific nature of her findings on account of the fact that she had “brought back absolute proof [of the ascent of Mount Huascarán, north peak, September 1908] in the shape of photographs.”⁹²

Peck then subtly mocked Mrs. Workman for the fact that she took estimates to be facts, and that she had gone to such great trouble as to spend excessive amounts of time and money on proving these estimations false. "Naturally, I did not expect the scientific world or anyone else to regard my estimate as an exact measurement," she told readers. "If anyone did so, I cannot be responsible. It was, of course, quite within the province of anyone to take so great an interest in the matter as to spend some thousands of dollars in sending engineers to Peru to make a triangulation of the mountain, and to publish this as the absolute height of Huascarán" (183).

Peck exerted the most rhetorical energy reminding readers that even the most empirical of scientists could make errors in altitude, due to the fact that the already imprecise and imperfect tools and procedures used by mountaineers to calculate altitude became even less reliable when used in ranges with peaks reaching altitudes much higher than those of the Alps. To help support her argument, Peck cited two "disinterested" male alpine authorities, "Mr. A. L. Mumm (of the English Alpine Club)" and "Dr. Norman J. Collie (also of the English Alpine Club)" whose own investigations into the problems of altitude measurement accorded with her own.

In a manner similar to Mrs. Workman, Peck closed her letter by calling into question her female rival's reliability: "In this connection it may not be wholly out of place to say that while Mrs. Fanny Bullock Workman has, according to the newspapers, frequently announced her readiness to furnish evidence of the altitudes claimed by herself, when I wrote to her stating that I should be glad to see the figures of her observations, an interest shared by some other Alpinists, she informed me that they had not been published in any of her writings, nor did she offer to give them to me personally" (183).⁹³

Peck's veiled suggestion that Mrs. Workman had perhaps falsified her contrary evidence produced the interesting effect of drawing Fanny's husband into the *melée*. This final letter is worth mention, not only because it demonstrates the significant advantage which married women sometimes had over unmarried ones (in that the married woman had a husband who could rally behind her in support of her rather ambitious cause), but also because it illuminates the ways in which the credibility and competence of women like Peck (and, ironically, in other contexts, like Mrs. Workman) were subtly yet forcefully eroded by male-dominated scientific communities.

Like his wife, Dr. Workman's plan of rhetorical attack was to focus on demonstrating "Miss" Peck's inferior abilities as a climber and as an objective rational scientist. Most often, he did so by returning insistently to the fact that Peck's findings were, as she had herself admitted, mere suppositions and "not based on any measurement data as to the height of that mountain." Workman reminded his audience over and over that "suppositions have no place in this field. Observed facts are what count."

In a direct attempt to prevent Peck both from being considered an esteemed or credible member of the male-dominated scientific community in which the majority of *Scientific American's* readers were involved, and from being a serious rival for his as well as his wife's altitude records, Workman also paternalistically suggested that Peck was a wily female who had tried to "pull a fast one" on the distinguished rational scientific community; "her plan is ingenious but not creditable to her knowledge of the principles of altitude-measurement," he told SA. Luckily, Dr. Workman seemed to be suggesting, he and his wife were cognizant enough to realize the shoddiness of Peck's analytical methodologies to catch her in the act of deliberately trying to deceive the public by trying to pass "assertions" as truths.

The Peck and Workman debate did not seem to have direly affected the reception of Peck's book *Search*—even with the more scientific reviewers—nor does it appear to have altered her reputation as a sensation with the general public. However, Peck's relationship with the American Alpine Club (which rather ironically she had helped to form), and her reputation within it as a serious and accomplished mountaineer were hampered—not specifically due to the Workmans' interrogation of Peck's scientific methodology, but due to a mishap which had occurred during Peck's otherwise successful ascent of Huascarán. As Peck had recounted in *Search*, Swiss guide Rudolf Taugwalder had lost his gloves while helping Peck with her own gear. The result of this loss was that Rudolf got severe frostbite and had to have his left hand amputated. Several fingers on his right hand and several of his toes were also lost. While many masculinists would have already been seizing upon this incident as proof of women's inferior climbing abilities, Peck made matters worse by responding to the incident in a manner which many felt was cold, unsympathetic and irresponsible. Undoubtedly still smarting from the blow which Rudolf's "theft" of her first steps on the peak of Huascarán had dealt her, Peck, according to Reuben Ellis, had blamed Taugwalder for the mishap. The A.A.C. clearly sided with Taugwalder and mounted a fund raising campaign to support him. Despite these events, Annie Peck, arguably more than any other female climber, continues to be embraced by feminist historians and by the general public who read about her as the very "symbol of personal and female accomplishment that she had longed to be" (Ellis 134).

Perhaps due to her more overtly racist and imperialistic stance (together with the daunting size of her books or her rather detached and impersonal narrative voice), Mrs. Workman's life and writings have not been seized upon in the same way Peck's have been—though many surveys of women travellers include her. In her own day, Workman's narratives

and lectures had been more widely received—not only within American and English scientific communities, but with the general public at home and abroad. Workman's success at gaining entrance into the male world of science and exploration is evident in the fact that, according to Workman's obituary in the *Alpine Journal* for 1925, despite a rather chilly reception in England, she had been invited to speak to the Royal Geographical Society in 1905. This invitation was certainly no mean feat since only one woman before her, Isabella Bird, had been given such an honour. However, Workman was still given short shrift, in that only her husband, Dr. Workman, was eventually made a Fellow of the RGS. As if in an attempt to atone for the restrictive rules of the patriarchal institution, the President of the RGS said, after her lecture: "I believe I am right in saying that the feats accomplished by Mrs. Workman are more remarkable in the way of mountaineering than those which have been accomplished ever before by any of her sex. Whether I ought to make that limitation or not I am rather doubtful, but, at all events, with that limitation it will not be denied" (qtd in Farrar 181). Workman did however later conduct a solo lecture tour of Europe, during which she gave "thirty seven lectures in thirty days" (Middleton 82). According to Dorothy Middleton, it was because of her own tour that Mrs. Workman was unable to sit in on her husband's own lecture before the RGS—a lecture which Middleton also suggests his wife may have written anyway (82).

What is, of course, notable in the representations of Annie Peck and Fanny Bullock Workman in many recent surveys of Victorian women travellers and mountaineers is that both women's complex but often active participation in cultural, economic, and political imperialism have tended to remain under erasure, while their feminist stances have often been pushed to the foreground. It is through Peck and Workman that both women's mountaineering and

mountaineering women often continue to be linked with (and read as symbolic of) the feminist struggle.

Postlude:

Looking Back and Looking Ahead

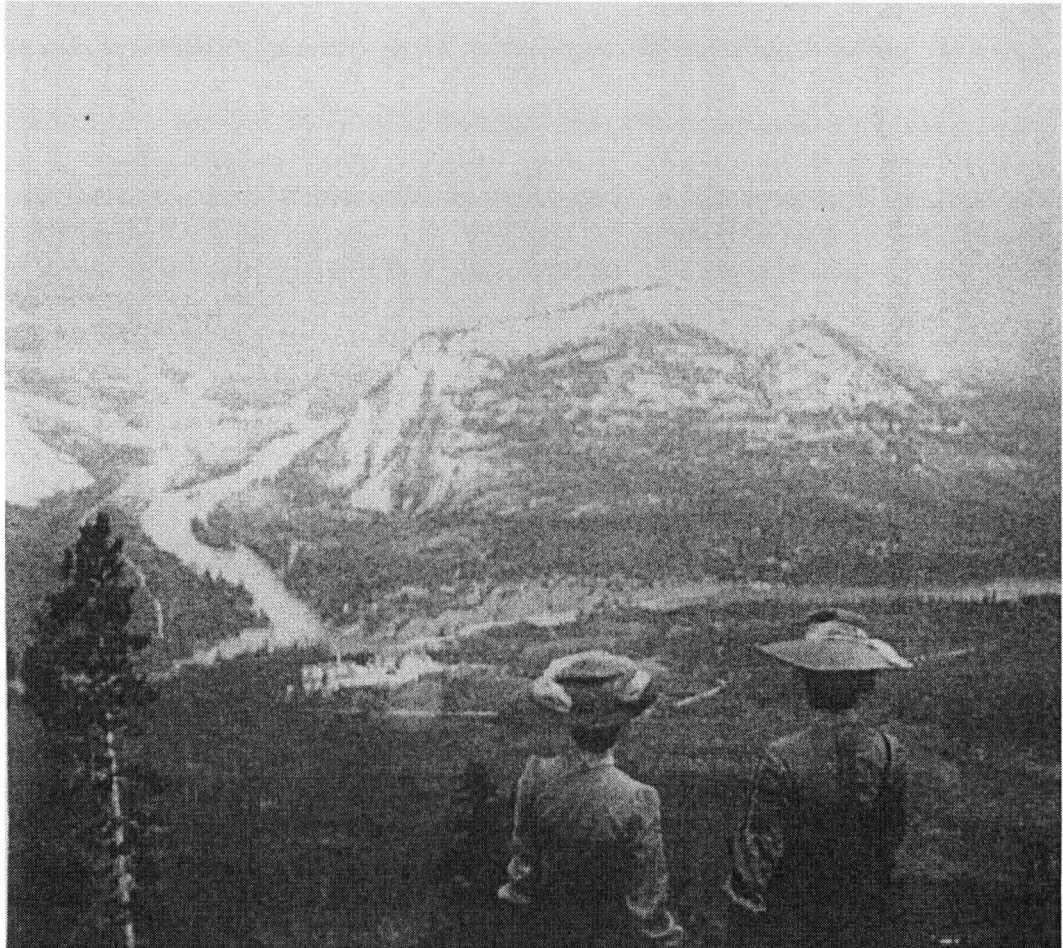


Figure 84. Two Lady Climbers Enjoy the View from the Top. Photograph by Beatrice Longstaff Lance. Whyte Museum of the Rockies Archive. V653 NA30-45.

If one were able to look beneath the surface of this study, one would find it comprised of a seemingly infinite number of paths of inquiry—some of these so called ‘paths’ I attempted to forge myself; others had been beaten by others and so made my intellectual travel easier. Still others required completion or needed to be abandoned altogether and left for others to tackle.

While they may have seemed to diverge at certain points, all these paths may be linked back to one of two larger general starting points from which this study originated and around which my work has been structured: 1) the topic of mountaineering women as discursive objects; and 2) Victorian women mountaineers as climbing, writing subjects.

In the earlier part of the thesis I attempted to speak to the first topic through an exploration of how and why mountaineering women were discouraged from occupying the active subject positions of “climber” and “writer.” What my research revealed was that, central to this process of discouragement and exclusion was a set of cartoons, poems, articles, and book reviews taking as their subject women’s mountaineering. These visual and verbal representations attempted to essentialise women’s place in both Victorian society at large and in nineteenth-century mountaineering culture as domestic, rather than athletic, by turning would-be female climbers and their writings into objects of ridicule and derision. However, as I also discovered, derision and disgust were not the only responses registered by Victorian men and women to the Victorian lady mountaineer.

Image such as **figure 32** (of Alpine Annie) remind one that women mountaineers appear to have served as objects of erotic attraction and desire—though less often as they were perceived as unnatural or unattractive harbingers of the demise of male hegemony in the nineteenth century. Some Victorian women emulated the “Englishwoman on the Alps” despite the paternal warnings of *Punch* cartoonists not to follow in her audacious footsteps; moreover,

some otherwise conservative men found her to be an enticing and exceptionally attractive specimen of 'New' womanhood.

Such a broad range of responses to the figure of the Lady Mountaineer indicate that representations—and the restrictive discursive power which many may such representations have been designed to transmit—'backfired' or were made to work against themselves by some of the men and women who consumed them.

Act II perhaps helped to illustrate more specifically how various individual women evoked, responded to, exploited, and rejected some of the more prevalent stereotypical views of women and mountaineering circulating during their lifetimes. This section also was designed to illuminate the active role which Victorian women mountaineers actually played in the worlds of mountaineering and publishing.

By placing the lives and writings of Mrs. Henry Warwick Cole, Mrs. Freshfield, Elizabeth Tuckett, Elizabeth Le Blond, Frederica Plunket, Annie Peck, and Fanny Bullock Workman in juxtaposition as well as in opposition to each other, I also hope to have contributed to the movement within contemporary scholarship which seeks to discourage simply celebrating all women travellers and mountaineers as feminist heroines, and instead seeks to acknowledge women's individual differences, as well as the often varied and complex contribution made by Victorian females to imperialism, science, feminism, nationalism, and of course, mountaineering.

Future scholars may also perhaps find useful my categorisation of the women into three groups (the feminine, the 'hybrid,' and the rational) based on analogies which I saw between the clothing and rhetorical garbs chosen by different Victorian women alpinist-writers. These categories are of course not perfect—all the women's writings are in some respect 'hybrid' texts

in that all contain a mixture of masculine and feminine discourses. However, when looked at comparatively, it becomes clear that those mixtures contain different amounts of similar elements; the works of women like Peck and Workman for example contained a relatively larger amount of 'masculine' elements than those of Mrs. Cole or Freshfield. Whether individual personality, chronology, or nationality played a part in the fact that the late-nineteenth century American climber Annie Peck was the one who most openly played the 'breeches' part—both in her climbs and her visual and verbal representations of those travels—is difficult to discern with any level of certainty, but the influence of such factors is interesting, and to my mind, important to consider nonetheless.



Although much has been attempted, much work remains to be done on the subjects of women, travel, and mountaineering in the nineteenth century. One particularly large chasm lies in the area of women and sexuality in relation to travel and climbing. While scholars such as Ronald Hyam and Robert Aldrich have acknowledged homosexual relationships among men in the culture of colonialism and travel, most theorists and historians have assumed a heteronormative bias in their consideration of women's travel and women travellers—this despite the fact that, as I point out on page 132, women like Freda Du Faur were not heterosexual.

A number of complex 'issues' regarding sexuality and women's travel arose after I discovered this fact about Du Faur—many of which I felt to be extremely important and to my knowledge which have not yet been tackled by scholars, but which, aside from brief mention on

page 132, I felt to be beyond the scope of this particular study. By reproducing some of my own musings here, scholars may perhaps be inclined to take them up at a future date.

My research has revealed to me that more work needs to be done on the subjects of landscape and sexuality. Mountainous areas are particularly perplexing and complex geographies, comprised as they are both of lofty phallic peaks and 'female' crevasses and valleys, named as they often are after great men. Yet, most writings speak of landscape using the male conquerer-female conquered paradigm. Elaine Freedgood has attempted to consider male responses to both the hetero- and homo-erotics of Alpine peaks, and female climber Amelia Edwards' response to the phallic menacing aspect of jagged Dolomite rock in *Victorian Writing About Risk*; however, I was unable to uncover any scholarly work which considers a lesbian erotics of landscape. I therefore ask (and encourage others to consider) the following questions:

- Does sexuality and sexual orientation play a role in the way in which an individual responds to a place, a landscape, its peoples? If so, what impact might they have?
- How might such an impact affect our reading or understanding of the writings of homosexual women travellers, like Freda Du Faur?
- Is it possible to map out a queer theory of geography?

Rather than probing the lives of all female climbers or travellers for hints that they may have been homosexual, I suggest that a study of Victorian women travellers' responses to female peoples and feminine or feminized landscapes which addresses rather than represses female-female homo-eroticism may help to transform the heterosexist leanings of the field.

For my own part, I am planning a project on Freda Du Faur which attempts to more thoroughly consider how gender and sexuality interacted and conflicted in the context of a Victorian woman's public performance of selfhood, and which explores the role (if any) which Du Faur's sexual orientation may have had not only on Du Faur's approach to landscape and mountaineering, but also on the responses which the Victorian public may have had to Du Faur's climbs and books as a result of her sexual orientation. I am still researching whether Du Faur's sexual orientation was even known publicly during her climbing career—what is known (because Du Faur declared it publicly) is that Du Faur not only named a mountain after her female lover in the Southern Alps of New Zealand (Mt. Cadogan), but she dedicated her book to her as well.

If other keen scholars don't "cut me off at the pass," I may also produce a paper or article on nineteenth-century fictional works which figure female mountaineers or females mountaineering in them. For now, however, to quote Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh*, I "have reached the top of this steep question and may rest, I think."

Afterword:

Making Connections with Those ‘Other’ Victorians



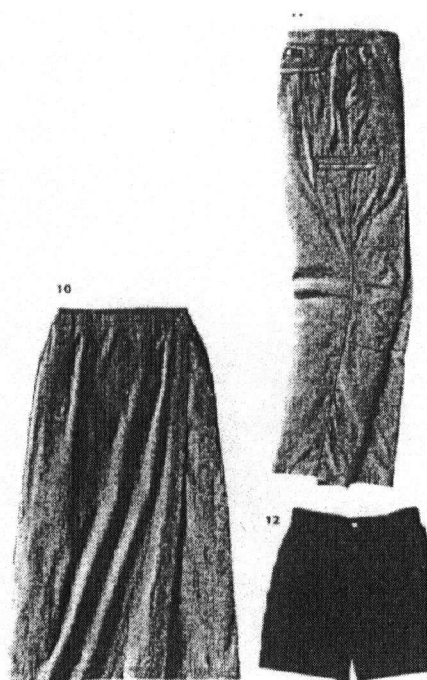
Figure 85. A 2001 advertisement for British Airways depicting a contemporary female passenger fashioned as an adventurous Victorian Lady traveller. Like many coffee-table books about women travellers and climbers, the ad not only seems to nostalgically idealise the Victorian white female traveller as a heroine, but it, very problematically, seems also to be encouraging women of today to emulate and/or surpass them. The copy of the ad also echoes Thomas Cook ads of the early 1900s which promise female travellers both luxury and comfort and audacious adventures off the beaten tourist track.

By way of a conclusion, I wish to bring to the attention of the reader something which manifested itself during the production of this study: an advertisement for clothing and travel appearing in the 2001 catalogue for Mountain Equipment Coop targeted primarily at contemporary middle-class women. I bring this document to the fore as a reminder that, far from being somewhat obscure old and out-moded texts with very little import in the present day, the visual and verbal documents that I scrutinised in this study present a number of ideas, concerns, and processes of negotiation which, quite interestingly, continue to emerge even in our own supposed age of Post-feminism and Post-Victorianism.

Last year, a friend of mine showed me an ad for a piece of outdoor clothing which had appeared in Mountain Equipment Clothing company's 2001 summer catalogue. The garment was a "trekking" skirt made of "Cordura nylon with a moisture control system"—a material which, the M.E.C. product blurb assured its clients, made it equally useful as a skirt and, when opened up, "an instant ground sheet!" To me, what was so striking about this catalogue item was not only the skirt's versatility but its remarkable similarity to a climbing skirt which, quite interestingly, had made its first appearance almost 100 years earlier at a Mountaineering Equipment Exhibition put on by the Ladies' Alpine Club in London, 1911. Like the M.E.C. skirt, the Ladies' skirt exhibited was said by the *Daily Mail* to be "a convertible garment"—though this particular skirt had the option of being "worn either as a cape or a short skirt" (Grande, np).



Figure 86. Illustration of what was, in its day, an extremely innovative piece of women's climbing clothing: a "convertible garment which can be worn either as a cape or a short skirt." Reproduced from Julian Grande's "Woman Out of Doors: Lady Alpinists from a Man's Point of View." *DailyMail* 6 May 1910. np.



10. MEC Trekking Skirt Trek in remote places without offending local sensibilities in this amazingly comfortable, practical garment. Cut long for full coverage and allow for custom trimming and hemming. Full wrap style with two waist buttons, an adjustable fit. Open up the full skirt for an instant groundsheet! A small zip pocket inside the waistband secures valuables. Rugged 4.4oz. Cordura® nylon w/ Moisture Control System. * Made in Canada, fabric from USA.
 Colors: Light Olive (shown), Pebble, or Pewter.
 Sizes XS-XL.
 4014-514 266g (M) \$44.00

Figure 87. At left, the M. E. C.'s "Trekking Skirt," which seems to be a modern-day resurrection of the Victorian "convertible" cape/skirt. Reproduced from the Mountaineering Equipment Co-op Company's 2001 Summer Catalogue.

Despite their remarkably similar forms and functions, (**figures 86, 87**) the M.E.C. garment seems to have been produced for a slightly different purpose than the L.A.C. one—a purpose which, I argue, serves to illuminate some distinct parallels between the sensibilities of those “Other” Victorians and ourselves in the supposed Age of Post-feminist, Post-colonial Enlightenment.

In a language remarkably similar to that used by Victorian dress reformers and advocates of “practical mountaineering” like Elizabeth Le Blond and Annie Peck, the skirt (described as an “amazingly comfortable, practical garment”) was reportedly designed to allow its wearer to “[t]rek in remote places without offending local sensibilities.” Here the skirt is represented as providing a function akin to the one Le Blond had ascribed to the mountaineering skirt 100 years previously: it could serve as a “badge of respectability.” However, while Le Blond recommended the skirt as a crucial means through which the female traveller could assure fellow Western travellers of her feminine respectability in view of the chalet (in the words of an anonymous *Daily Graphic* review of the exhibition, the skirt allowed its female wearer to “be garbed according to the demands of convention when returning to civilization” [Hansen, *British*, 318]), in this instance, the skirt is being promoted as a garment which will ensure that the female traveller protects the sensibilities of various foreign locales she encounters on her adventurous “treks” off the beaten path.

In suggesting that Western women ought to wear a garment which shields “local sensibilities,” the M.E.C. ad at once serves to invert and to recapitulate the logic underpinning several prevalent Victorian ideologies of gender and race; according to Le Blond and the *Daily Graphic*, for example, it was one’s fellow British and Western European middle-class tourists whose delicate and somewhat prudish sensibilities needed to be shielded from the revelation of

a female traveller's bifurcated nether regions. Although women travellers reported having caused a bit of a stir amongst locals, it was often because they had not seen a Western female traveller in skirts. More often than not, as Mrs. Freshfield noted in her own travelogue, it was thought that foreign women (particularly foreign working women) were more "lax" and practical about their clothing than the Western traveller. At the same time, a common assumption was that local natives were more sexually licentious. It was for this reason that, as I mentioned elsewhere in the thesis, more often than not, Victorian women often insisted on feminine garb in even the most exotic or remote places. In remote regions such as Africa, the skirt and the corset became crucial signifiers (and moral shields) in order to assure a woman traveller's fellow countrywomen and men that she had not been influenced by her potentially immoral surroundings, that she was still an appropriately constrained and restrained lady in possession of her superior English upper-class morality.

In the M.E.C. ad, the Western wearers of the trekking skirt are constructed as the more liberated and empowered—it is the "backwards," unenlightened, and child-like "natives" whose innocence of feminine bifurcation (and, one infers, whose ignorance of female sexuality and Western feminist sexual liberation) needs to be preserved and protected by the more conservative and, in Western culture, traditionally feminine garment. The one similarity between the two ads is that, whether repressed or liberated, it is the middle-class Western woman traveller abroad who continues to be given the responsibility of policing the propriety of the "natives" and of serving as a model of demure and respectable femininity, both on the trail and off.

The other garments displayed upon the same page as the M.E.C. skirt attest to the fact that the Victorian rational dress reforms have gained enough of a strong hold in twenty-first century North American culture that women can now "wear the pants" without fear of social

stigmatisation. However, as Priscilla Choi has pointed out in her own work on femininity and athleticism, the equation of female attractiveness with certain clothes and appearances (i.e., long hair, makeup, jewellery, and dresses) is so deeply entrenched in Western culture that women who participate in physically demanding or traditionally “male” sports must still find ways to assert their femininity through clothing in order to avoid being labelled masculine, androgynous, or unrespectable.

The fact that feminine or hybrid garments such as the sensible “trekking” skirt are still being made and quite actively being advertised and advocated reminds the contemporary reader that killing the mythic Victorian Angel ideal is still more easily said than done. At the same time, recent ads such as the British Airways advertisement (**figure 85**) remind one that ending the continued nostalgic and aesthetic idealisation of the problematic figure of the Victorian female “adventurer” will be an even more difficult but no less crucial task.

Endnotes

¹ Blum lists her accomplishments in *Women on High*: “[I]n 1970 I organized the first all-woman ascent of Denali (20, 300’) in Alaska; in 1976 I attempted an ascent of Mount Everest, in 1978 led the first American ascent of Annapurna I (26,320’) with a women’s team, and in 1980 led an international women’s team in making the first ascent of Bhregupanth (22,300’) in the Indian Himalaya” (x).

² Note also the following passage from Simon Gikandi’s book *Maps of Englishness*: “Reading the feminine in the culture of colonialism, then, is a project driven by a paradox. We want to read woman as the absolute other in the colonial relation so that we can unpack the universalism of the imperial narrative and its masculine ideologies, but the result (positing white women as figures of colonial alterity, for example) can be achieved only through the repression of their cultural agency and the important role they play in the institutionalization of the dominant discourse of empire and the authority of colonial culture. In addition, when we try to discuss women as constitutive elements of the high imperial norm, we encounter a set of ideological and interpretive problems that are the effect of both the inscription of female subjectivities in the culture of colonialism and our own reading preferences.” Thus, Gikandi suggests “Reading woman in the culture of colonialism demands . . . that we renounce the binary opposition—between self and other—promoted by the dominant (masculinist) narrative and see imperial femininity as an invitation to us to read colonialism’s culture in its contradictions and complicities, as a chiasmus in which the polarities that define domination and subordination shift with localities, genders, cultures, and even periods” (123-24).

³ Although Foucault does not seem to consciously take into account gender in his studies, many of his thoughts regarding power and agency have informed my own discussions of Victorian Western middle-class women. In my view, the ideological effects of power (noted by Foucault in books such as *Discipline and Punish*) seem often to have been similar on the female individual to those on the male. While denied political agency and socio-economical autonomy, Victorian women, like Victorian men, were subjects, if only in the sense that they too were subjected to regimes of power, self-regulation, or “subjectification”; thus we might alter Foucault’s writing to state that “he [or she] who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he [or she] makes them play spontaneously upon him [or her] self; he [or she] inscribes in him [or her]self the power relation in which he [or she] simultaneously plays both roles; he [or she] becomes the principle of his [or her] own subjection” (202-203).

⁴ Although in her introduction to *An Anthology of Women Travel Writings* (2002) (co-produced with Shirley Foster), Mills acknowledges that race, class, gender, and sexuality all played significant and complex roles as well (1).

⁵ My work takes up Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose’s suggestion in *Writing Women and Space* that “the central task for many feminists today is to articulate the extraordinarily complex and simultaneous interaction of gender, class, race, and sexuality (to name just four of the most

frequently mentioned axes of identity, oppression, and resistance) that creates difference between women; the politics of difference with which many feminists are now concerned is not only the politics of difference between two genders, but also the politics of diversity among women" (6).

⁶ Here Harper is repeating Mary Louise Pratt's contention in *Imperial Eyes* that "women tended not to view the world from promontories."

⁷ Parker once wrote that she was one of the "unknown company which scales the rocks and cuts the ice-stairway in imagination only" (qtd in Williams 71). Similarly, during a trip across the Sunwapta and Wilcox passes, Schäffer discovered that she was no mountaineer, being "scared stiff at rocks and precipices" (qtd in Williams 60).

⁸ For more on this new cult of manhood, based on the concept of *mens sana in corpore sano* and muscular Christianity, see Bruce Haley; Donald Hall; James Eli Adams.

⁹ Ruskin later vitiated his earlier attacks against mountaineers, acknowledging in the preface to his second edition of *Sesame and Lilies* (1865) that "experience of distant peril" and "habits of quick and calm action" were "requisite in the formation of manly character." According to David Robertson, "three years later, [Ruskin] accepted the Reverend St. John Tyrwhytt's invitation to the December dinner of the Alpine Club. Leslie Stephen remembered the occasion: 'He declined to speak and at first looked at us, I think, as rather questionable characters, but rapidly thawed, and became not only courteous, but cordially appreciative of our motives. I think he called us 'fine young men.' For his "Author[ship] of the Fourth Volume of *Modern Painters*" Ruskin was given an honorary membership to the Alpine Club in 1868 and remained a member until the 1880s.

¹⁰ In order to sample some more of Stephen's writings on mountaineering, see: *The Playground of Europe* (1871) and *Men, Books, and Mountains* (1956).

¹¹ See Kipling's poem "The Explorer," 1898.

¹² According to McClintock, anachronistic space is a trope in which "imperial progress across the space of empire is figured as a journey backward in time to an anachronistic moment of prehistory. By extension, the return journey to [England] is seen as rehearsing the evolutionary logic of historical progress and upward to the apogee of the Enlightenment in the European metropolis." In other words, "[g]eographical difference across space is figured as a historical difference across time" (40).

¹³ Mountaineers were not the only ones noting the connections between climbing and the business world. According to David Macfarlane, the father of self-help, Samuel Smiles, reportedly used mountaineering as a central trope: "Casting around for a metaphor with which to hammer home his idea[s], Smiles settled tellingly on mountain-climbing. 'Wherever there is difficulty, the individual man must come out for better for worse. . . . Encounter with it will train

his strength, and discipline his skill; heartening him for future effort. . . The road to success may be steep to climb, and it puts to proof the energies of him who would reach the summit" (87).

¹⁴Mountaineers not only presented themselves as explorers akin to Livingstone and Mungo Park, their alpine pursuits as similar to military campaigns or hunting safaris, but many *were* geographers, explorers, soldiers. Conversely, as Lila Harper has noted many explorers and imperialists capped their expeditions with ascents of local mountains (though they were not necessarily mountaineers).

¹⁵As Reuben Ellis has convincingly demonstrated in his book *Vertical Margins* (2001), American climbers exhibited a similar tendency to connect mountaineering with imperial conquest. This is perhaps no surprise since both the British Alpine Club and Britain in general served as models of inspiration and emulation for most English-speaking nations in the Western world at this time. However, because American foreign policy often mirrored that of Britain and American climbers shared the many of the same empirical goals and imperial dreams of travelling off the beaten path, of exploring unmapped terrain, and of being the first to conquer the world's remaining virgin peaks, America and Americans often came to be perceived as less allies and more as competitors in the Great Games of alpine and colonial conquest.

¹⁶Annie Peck brought Gabriel and Rudolf Taugwalder of Zermatt with her during at least one round of climbing in South America; Elizabeth Le Blond brought Josef Imboden and his son Roman with her on her climbing tour of Norway (during this tour, tragically, Roman fell to his death); the Workmans brought Swiss guides on more than one Himalayan expedition.

¹⁷In "Albert Smith, the Alpine Club, and the Invention of Mountaineering in Mid-Victorian Britain" (*Journal of British Studies* 34 [July 1995]: 300-324), Peter Hansen writes that "a series of military crises from the mid-1850s to mid-1860s undermined the complacent confidence in British manliness and power. The incompetent if heroic performance of the British military in the Crimean War, the massacres of the Indian Mutiny, the Second Opium War with China, the threat of invasion from France which led to the foundation of the Volunteer Corps in 1859-1860, the conflicts with the Maori in New Zealand, the agitation over the American Civil War, and the controversy over Governor Eyre in Jamaica in the mid-1860s—each provoked anxiety and debate about the decline of British power" (314).

¹⁸Edward Whymper's description of the Matterhorn as a woman in *Scrambles* (1871) reflects the actions in the postcard: "Our mountain, like a beautiful coquette, sometimes unveiled herself for a moment and looked charming above, although very mysterious below. It was not until eventide she allowed us to approach her: then as darkness came on, the curtains were withdrawn, the light drapery was lifted and we stole up on tiptoe through the grand portal framed by Mont Suc" (99-100).

Anne McClintock notes a similarly gendered and sexualized approach to mountains in H. Ryder Haggard's book *King Solomon's Mines* (see *Imperial Leather*, 1-5).

¹⁹The "Fantasy of Jungfrau" postcard is part of a long tradition of figuring the Jungfrau, not only as a virginal woman, but as a potentially treacherous *Femme Fatale*:

See, for example, William Wordsworth's Ecclesiastical sonnets, 1821-22, Part II,

'The Jung-Frau and the Fall of the Rhine Near Schaffhausen'

The Virgin Mountain, wearing like a Queen

A brilliant crown of everlasting snow,

Sheds ruin from her sides; and men below

Wonder that aught of aspect so serene

Can link with desolation."

More generally, Robert Macfarlane has also pointed out that in the seventeenth century "with their labial ridges and vaginal valleys" mountains were referred to as " 'Nature's *pudenda*' " (15). Undoubtedly, the artist and the viewers of this image would have had these associations in mind.

²⁰ Just as Swiss mountains were being personified as enticing women, Swiss women were often presented as being embodiments of the Swiss landscape; examples of this fact may be found in the description of Marguerite Obenreizer, a Swiss born woman being wooed by Englishman George Vendale in Wilkie Collins and Charles Dickens's story "No Thoroughfare" (1867): "The young lady wore an unusual quantity of fair bright hair, very prettily braided about a rather rounder white forehead than the average English type. . . . A remarkable indication of freedom and grace of limb, in her quiet attitude, and a wonderful purity and freshness of color in her dimpled face and bright gray eyes, seemed fraught with mountain air. Switzerland too, though the general fashion of her dress was English, peeped out of the fanciful bodice she wore, and lurked in the curious clocked red stocking, and in its little silver buckled shoe."

²¹ Anne McClintock also calls this "an erotics of enravishment" on page 22 of *Imperial Leather*. See *Imperial Leather*'s opening chapter "The Lay of the Land" as well as Annette Kolodny's book of the same title (after which McClintock's chapter was named) for a more detailed analysis of this "land-as-woman symbolization" and its role in what Kolodny calls the "psycho-sexual dramas of men."

²² An interesting though morbid counter-image to the undressed Jung Frau emerges in the details of the aftermath of the first ascent of the Matterhorn. While the men conquering the Jungfrau tore from the Mountain Woman her gauzy clothes, the failed conquerors of the Matterhorn were treated in a similar manner by the merciless Mountain; according to Robert Macfarlane, "when a rescue team reached the glacier, they found a trio of naked and mutilated corpses. The men's clothes had been ripped from them during the fall. . . . Of Douglas, the lord, nothing was to be found except a boot, a belt, a pair of gloves and a coat sleeve" (95).

²³ I am grateful to Brenda Leifso, whose research into the Victorian periodical press uncovered a fictional mountaineering story, "Two Glacier Accidents," in which Victorian masculine fears of castration and annihilation are left unresolved after the male protagonist failed to conquer the mountain-as-femme-fatale. Leifso argues that " 'Two Glacier Accidents' was ignored by contemporary readers because it ultimately emasculates, or feminizes, the protagonist. . . . In

refusing the reader a traditionally manly herioc climax, the story reverses the image of the muscular bourgeois and, in doing so, disrupts the continuity of masculine dominance.”

²⁴ Eventually, Smith got his wish when he married Lilian Adam Smith, a lady tourist and budding *alpiniste* whom he had met while visiting the Alps. According to the *Alpine Journal* (87 [1982]: 142-158), their wedding took Switzerland, and also perhaps Albert Smith’s Mont Blanc Sideshow, as an inspiration: the bridal party carried edelweiss and were given alpenstock shaped pins.

²⁵ The quoted lines are excerpted from the parodic poem which appeared in *Punch*: “A lady an explorer? A traveller in skirts? The notion’s just a trifle too seraphic. Let them stay home and mind the babies, or hem our ragged shirts; But they must, can’t and shan’t be geographic!” (qtd in Blunt, *Travel* 160).

²⁶ The response of Le Blond’s grandmother may in some ways be seen as confirming Davidoff’s suggestion in *The Best Circles* that “in nineteenth century English upper- and middle-class women were used to maintain the fabric of Society, as semi-official leaders but also as arbiters of social acceptance or rejection” (16). Davidoff also points out that “gentility was most nearly equated with the idea of respectability, and for women, respectability was nominally equated with sexual respectability . . . [which] could only be maintained by being identified with a home, a family status” (80).

²⁷ My use of the term “unmade” here is deliberate, as I wish to evoke Mary Poovey’s book *Uneven Developments*, in which she argues that “the middle-class ideology we most often associate with the Victorian period was both contested and always under construction; because it was always in the making, it was always open to revision, dispute, and the emergence of oppositional formulations. The system of ideas and institutions I examine here, in other words, was uneven, and it developed unevenly” (3).

²⁸ The fact that William Longman was a member of the Alpine Club of London is perhaps worth considering when thinking about how and why women were both included in and excluded from Victorian alpine culture.

²⁹ One was published by Meta Breevort using the male pseudonym of her nephew W. A. B. Coolidge; the other was a tale by Mrs E. P. Jackson entitled ““A Winter Quartette” (*Alpine Journal* 14 [February 1889]: 200-10). Just why or how Mrs. Jackson was able to become an exception to the masculinist rules and get her story published remains the subject of conjecture. Just how many other women may have followed Breevort’s lead and gained publication through the use of a male *nom-de-plume* is also uncertain.

³⁰ I reached these conclusions after pouring over the book reviews of women mountaineers’ texts and climbs which appeared in the *Alpine Journal* from the 1850s until 1910. Rather than reproduce all reviews in my files, I have chosen the Edwards review because it seems to demonstrate several recurrent strategies employed by *Alpine Journal* male reviewers in their treatments of the works of Elizabeth Le Blond and others—when they included them at all.

These strategies include comparing the female's climbs, writings, and photographs to men's and finding the former to be an inferior imitation of a superior male original; and questioning the accuracy and thus the authority presented in the female climber's writings—particularly when claims of novelty or serious accomplishment are made.

³¹Variations of these comments appear in the *Alpine Journal's* reviews of Elizabeth Le Blond's books; for example, like Edwards's reviewer, the critic of Le Blond's *My Home in the Alps* (1892) blames her for helping to bring the hoards. Also like Edwards' critic, the reviewer of Le Blond's *High Life and Tower of Silence* (1886) questions the novelty and thus the truly original contribution of Le Blond to the archive of reliable mountaineering knowledge, writing that "some of [Le Blond's descriptions of Alpine people and places] are not so very rare and uncommon as Mrs. Main seems to think." The reviewer also calls one of Le Blond's photos "amusingly like Mr. Donkin's well-known photograph" (187-188).

³² Albert Mummery reportedly also uttered this phrase—though apparently with a more ironic tone—in reference to Lily Bristow, a talented female climber whom he took on several ascents.

³³According to Peter Hansen, "in one article about the ladies' club, a clever *Daily Mirror* reporter asked the Secretary of the Alpine Club why women were not permitted to join. The Alpine Club official lamely claimed that they had no room" (*British Mountaineering* 314).

³⁴For a prototypical example of the female social climber, see Becky Sharpe in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*. Note also Gwendolyn Harleth in George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* who seeks to rise above both the conventions and restrictions of class and gender not only through social climbing but, interestingly, through mountain-climbing. Similarly, in George Gissing's *The Odd Woman* (1893), the New Woman is conflated with the female mountaineer in the figure of Rhoda Nunn who, towards the end of the novel, we find outwalking her male companion, Everard Barfoot: "Everard and his companion began their climb through the pretty straggling village of Boot. . . . Scawfell they could not hope to ascend; with the walk that lay before them it was enough to make a way over one of his huge shoulders. 'If your strength fails,' said Everard merrily, when for an hour they had been plodding through grey solitudes, 'there is no human help. I should have to choose between carrying you back to Boot or on to Wastdale.' 'My strength is not likely to fail sooner than yours,' was the laughing reply" (258).

³⁵ Here I am building on Patricia Marks's contention in *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers* that many Victorians feared female emancipation and the figures which represented that emancipation (namely the bicycle-riding New Woman) because it was felt that the strength of women led to "the inevitable submission" and "feminization" of men (174-176).

³⁶ And, yet, there is ample evidence to suggest that women had been travelling to the Alps to visit the glaciers even earlier. Macfarlane quotes an English journalist who wrote in 1801 that "A sentiment of curiosity, exceedingly natural, induces travellers from all parts of the world, and to examine the surrounding glaciers. These places have recently acquired a new degree of interest—the geologue, the mineralogist, and mere amateur repair thither with avidity; and even women are amply indemnified for the fatigue of the journey by the pleasure arising from the view of objects entirely new to them" (35). Marie De Paradis made her first ascent of Mont

Blanc in 1808. According to Jane Nardin, Mary Shelley was also an early female Alpine tourist. And David Macfarlane reports that in an 1836 guidebook to the Alps, Mariana Starke encouraged women to “stare as much over the precipices” so that they may “become capable of beholding height with sang-froid” (*Mountains* 85).

³⁷ Annie McClintock usefully defines domesticity in *Imperial Leather*: “Domesticity denotes both a [gendered] space (a geographic and architectural alignment) and a social relation to power. . . . Etymologically, the verb to domesticate is akin to dominate, which derives from dominus, lord of the domum, the home. Until 1964, however, the verb to domesticate also carried as one of its meanings the action ‘to civilize’ (34-35). I use the term deliberately, with the colonial and gendered associations of the term in mind, to describe the way in which Alpine places, peoples, and customs came to be commodified by the Victorians into fetish objects to be possessed and used, often by Britannia’s women and children. See **figures 26 and 27** for examples of the “domesticated” Alps.

³⁸ A number of eminent Victorian mountaineers and alpine travellers confessed to having had “romantic” relationships/love affairs with or unrequited obsessions for Swiss women (think for example of Matthew Arnold’s Marguerite). Similarly, Swiss women figure in several Victorian novels as attractive yet exotic heroines (see for example Wilkie Collins and Dickens’ “No Thoroughfare,” in which an Englishman George Vendale falls in love with a Swiss woman named Marguerite).

³⁹ According to Ronald Clark, “Sir Edward Davidson, the great climber of the Silver Age, meeting Lord Fisher at the Riffelalp about the turn of the century, noted that two young women there were ‘husbandeering,’ not mountaineering. ‘I suppose the places are so deadly dull that the young men fall an easy prey,’ Fisher replied” (190).

⁴⁰ A more detailed account of the bivouac appears in Wills’ own writing and is reiterated in Cicely Williams’s *Women on the Rope*. According to Peter Hansen and Helena Mitchie, however, most of the rest of the Wills’ honeymoon involved Lucy being left behind to paddle on the glaciers while her husband climbed peaks such as the Wetterhorn. In later years, Lucy was left home with their daughter Edith, while Alfred went to Switzerland. During this separation, Lucy did get to ramble in the Lake District. However, she found that the grandeur of Switzerland had “spoil[ed her] for this miniature” (see Mitchie, as well as Hansen’s *British Mountaineering*, 296).

⁴¹ Examples of this Victorian construction of femininity may be found in the writings of Ruskin (“Of Queen’s Garden” from *Sesame and Lilies*) and in Lady Elizabeth Eastlake’s “Lady Travellers.” *Quarterly Review* 76 (June 1845): 98-136.

⁴² British men and women seem to have been less receptive to such ideas than their American, Swiss, or Canadian counterparts. The relative conservatism of the British alpine community is reflected in the different Alpine Clubs’ views towards rules regarding women’s membership in the clubs, the acceptance of articles written by women in their journals, and the officially expressed stance of their club’s members on women’s clothing.

⁴³Laura Mulvey is known for having first articulated this gendered economy of vision.

⁴⁴I base this assertion on Martha Vicinus' own argument in *A Widening Sphere* that "[n]ineteenth-century women were not always the passive, submissive creatures of popular idealizations, but neither were they ever completely free from this stereotype. Its most pervasive and effective form of control was through the social and individual demand for respectability. While we can now judge Victorian women to have been more varied, active and complex than previously considered, we must not create a new stereotype that ignores the limits within which Victorians lived and changed. Rather, we should recognize the struggle to achieve independence—economic and personal—within the framework of traditional social values as being the hallmark of the times. Those of us brought up in the shadow of this tradition can perhaps well appreciate its strength in molding women, generation after generation" (xix).

⁴⁵Here I am referring to the same statement mentioned earlier which Le Blond's grand aunt was said to have uttered. Recalled Elizabeth: "I had to struggle hard for my freedom. My mother faced the music on my behalf when my grand aunt, Lady Bentinck, sent out a frantic S.O.S. 'Stop her climbing mountains. She is scandalizing all London and looks like a Red Indian' (*Day In, Day Out* 90).

⁴⁶Although Le Blond noted in her book *Mountaineering in the Land of the Midnight Sun* (1908) that her publishers had pressured her to write about certain things and in certain ways—she wanted her book to be all photographs, but altered her plans to ensure publication.

⁴⁷W.A.B. Coolidge was also recorded as saying that "My Aunt (Miss [Meta] Brevoort) would certainly never have started if Miss Walker had not set the example" (qtd in Lucy Walker obit in *AJ*, 1917-18). Similarly, Mrs. Le Blond expressed open admiration for Katy Richardson, Lucy Walker, among others in her articles for the *L.A.J.* and in her book *Day In, Day Out* (1928). Mountaineers did not only inspire other mountaineers. Mary Kingsley wrote in her own book *Travels in West Africa* that she adored mountaineering accounts and may even have been spurred by such accounts to climb Mt. Cameroon while in West Africa.

⁴⁸At the beginning of *Daniel Deronda*, Gwendolen Harleth says to her aunt, Madame von Langen, ". . . I am bored to death. If I am to leave off play I must break my arm or my collar-bone. I must make something happen; unless you will go into Switzerland and take me up the Matterhorn." Echoing the fears of some solitary minded men that female climbers were actually "husbandeers" (see **note 38**), Madame von Langen replies that a more suitable object of conquest for a young lady such as Gwendolen might be a man: "Perhaps this Mr. Deronda's acquaintance will do instead of the Matterhorn" (9)

⁴⁹ See also Lady Eastlake's review of several early Victorian women's travel texts, "Lady Travellers" *Quarterly Review* 76 (June 1845): 98-136 for an earlier example of women writers' discursive attempt to "domesticate" travel so as to render it a suitable activity for ladies.

⁵⁰ See **notes 41 and 49**.

⁵¹Oddly enough, Peck seems to have found it more necessary to anxiously assert the appropriateness of having hugged and danced with one of her native “indians” after her successful ascent than of sleeping in the same tent with them.

⁵²Lily Bristow in a letter to her family recounted one such experience: “Imagine six people in a tent [6ft x 4ft] which had been tight for three! Sleeping-bags, tent and everything were of course sopping wet, but it was bliss and comfort after our experiences outside” (“An Easy Day for a Lady” *Alpine Journal* 53 [1941-42]: 370).

⁵³See Jan Schroeder’s “Strangers in Every Port: Stereotypes of Victorian Women Travellers.” *Victorian Review* 24.2 (Winter 1998) for more on this.

⁵⁴In a letter entitled “Ladies and the Royal Geographical Society” appearing in *The Times* (31 May 1893): 11, George Curzon wrote that [the RGS members] contest in toto the general capability of women to contribute to scientific geographical knowledge. Their sex and training render them equally unfitted for exploration; and the genus of professional female globetrotters with which America has lately familiarized us is one of the horrors of the latter end of the nineteenth century.”

⁵⁵According to Cheryl McEwan and Alison Blunt, Mary Kingsley was one such sensational female icon. McEwan reports that “Following her return from Africa in 1895 and the publication of *Travels in West Africa*, Kingsley became a celebrity in Britain” (89).

⁵⁶Note how, in the titles of Workman and Peck’s works, the location of travel is emphasised while any reference to the women as “ladies” is erased. Terms like “Apex” and “Pioneering Ascents” emphasise the seriousness and ambitiousness of their activities.

⁵⁷The Pigeon Sisters recorded their exploits in a small book which was later published for private circulation by Griffith Farran, Okeden, and Welsh (1885). Due to its extreme scarcity, I have not seen this book, though I am told that it is little more than a “meticulous” if rather “cold” list of their ascents by altitude. But for more on the Pigeon sisters vs. the Alpine Club, Cerri’s article is worth consulting (*Alpine Journal* 104 [1999]: 163-169).

⁵⁸Upon arriving in New Zealand for her first season of climbing, Australian born mountaineer Freda Du Faur was disappointed to discover that rumours about the “laxity” of social mores in New Zealand and Australia was more myth than reality:

⁵⁹Having read the Australian’s response, a presumably Canadian girl perpetuated the stereotype by retorting “Ladies bring your riding skirts, the men here are bashful.”

⁶⁰Once again, Kipling’s comment makes evident the “racialization” of transgressions of class, gender. Like Elizabeth Le Blond, Mary Schäffer seems to have transformed herself into a “red Indian” by travelling off the beaten path of respectability.

⁶¹It is interesting to guess at the nationality of the females who had so shocked the Australian visitor—were they Canadian or American women? Were they perhaps actually fellow

Australians who, feeling liberated by the experience of travel to the rugged Rockies, decided to “go native” and adopt some Canadian climbing clothes?

⁶²A) By “cultivated” I mean places comprised of larger numbers of fellow British tourists or genteel European travellers.

B) Shelagh Squires notes that “Tourism is an activity in which innovative or unconventional behaviours are more acceptable than they would be at home. In terms of women travellers, in the Rockies, tourism was thus perhaps one of the few spheres wherein otherwise ‘unacceptable’ behaviour could be explored; and under the auspices of spectacle or eccentricity, tacitly accepted” (6-7).

⁶³The people who encountered Bird on the trail seem to have been less shocked than the *Times* reviewer of Bird’s book, who noted with disdain that Bird had “donned the masculine habiliments for her greater convenience.” According to Mills and Foster, Bird angrily and anxiously responded to this slight against her femininity by “writ[ing] to her publisher, Murray, that her dress was that Hawaiian riding costume always worn by ladies” and by “insist[ing] that later editions of her work contain an explanatory note to this effect, plus a sketch which would confirm the femininity of her garb” (9). Indeed, the note to the Second Edition read: “For the benefit of other lady travellers, I wish to explain that my ‘Hawaiian Riding Dress’ is the ‘American Lady’s Mountain Dress,’ a half-fitting jacket, a skirt reaching to the ankles, and full Turkish trousers gathered into frills which fall over the boots,—a thoroughly serviceable and feminine costume for mountaineering and other rough travelling in any part of the world. I add this explanation to the prefatory note, together with a rough sketch of the costume, in consequence of an erroneous statement in the *Times* of November 22d.”

⁶⁴ According to Eva-Marie Kroller, “Canadian [and British] women travellers were warned against [the] pernicious influence” of the “Emancipated American Female” whose “rejection of her traditional role duplicated her nation’s rebellion against the mother country” (74-75).

⁶⁵ Cheryl McEwan writes that “the distinction between public and private writings is an important one in terms of women’s writing, particularly their travel writing”; more specifically, she argues that “the textual constraints that controlled published narratives were not present in private correspondence” and therefore the fact “that textual constraints controlled published narratives becomes clear when one compares the opinions expressed in print to those explained in private correspondence” (81). If my work seems more tentative at this point, it is because I could not locate any private correspondences or journals of the women under discussion and so cannot speak with any certainty about the specifics of their private intentions. However, the differences in tone, style, and content between documents produced by one woman alone suggests a process of negotiation between public expectation and private intentions or desires.

⁶⁶ According to Cicely Williams, one particular famous event in the history of women’s mountaineering which demonstrated the potentially dangerous nature of conventional women’s clothing on climbs was an 1867 attempt on the Matterhorn: “In 1867, while the battle over the cause of the [Matterhorn] tragedy was still raging, a group of Italians crept quietly out of the

village of Breuil en route for the Italian ridge of the Matterhorn. They were J. J. And J. P. Maquinez, Victor Maquinez, Caesar Carrel and J. M. Carrel. . . .For some reason J. M. Carrel took with him his daughter Félicité: possibly, in spite of opprobrium with which people still regarded the Matterhorn, she hoped to be the first woman to climb it. She very nearly succeeded. The party was only three hundred feet below the summit when a tremendous gale roared up. It blew Félicité's skirt over her head; unfortunately she was wearing a crinoline which made matters worse. Her father and his friends had the greatest difficulty in disentangling her; the wind continued unabated and the situation became so dangerous on account of Félicité's skirt that they had to abandon the climb. To make up for the disappointment they christened the spot they had reached on the Italian ridge *Col Félicité* and so it remains to this day" (41).

⁶⁷Valerie Steele notes that "Women of the aristocracy and the haute bourgeoisie . . .dressed not to attract rich patrons, but rather for an active social life. Their role—at soirees, balls, receptions, the races, the theatre, etc.—was to look beautiful and elegant. As social leaders, they were in a position to set the rules of appropriate dress, as long as they did not drastically break from previous standards. . . . Women of the upper-middle and middle classes led a more restricted social life, centering around their children, visits to friends, shopping, and so on. Although they, too, were supposed to look beautiful and well dressed, the situations themselves implicitly limited the degree of erotic display that would have been acceptable. Middle-class women were also not in as strong a position to risk public criticism by appearing too avant-garde" (76).

⁶⁸Lieutenant-Colonel H. Westmorland (circa 1873) wrote: "The amusing part of the 'advanced' costumes of my aunts was that they wore buttons round the waist and button holes round the bottom hem, so that should the figure of a strange man appear in the distance, the buttons could be undone and the skirt let fall to a discreet length" (qtd in Cunnington 322).

⁶⁹ Interestingly, Le Blond appears to have been similarly careful to ensure she never appeared in any published visual representations of herself dressed simply in knickers.

⁷⁰One wonders whether it is in large part due to Miss Walker's insistence upon wearing the white dress (which she was careful to have fixed up after each climb) or her refusal to publicly promote or publish upon the subject of her notable ascents that Punch was more laudatory of her than of the "Englishwoman in the Alps"; *Punch* Vol. 61, August 26, 1871: a poem entitled "A Climbing Girl" appeared to mark the occasion of the first woman's ascent of the Matterhorn:

"A lady has clomb to the Matterhorn's summit

Which almost like a monument points to the sky;

Steep not very much less than the string of a plummet

Suspended, which nothing can scale but a fly.

This lady has likewise ascended the Weisshorn,

And, what's a great deal more, descended it too,
 Feet foremost; which, seeing it might be named the Icehorn,
 So slippery 'tis, no small thing is to do.
 No glacier can baffle, no precipice balk her,
 No peak rise above her, however sublime.
 Give three times three cheers for intrepid Miss Walker.
 I say, my boys, doesn't she know how to climb!"(86).

⁷¹Note that Rebecca Brown calls it the "European solution"—which suggests that non-European climbers may have been generally more receptive to wearing and advocating rational dress.

In *Search* Peck was more overtly feminist than her article for *Outing* "Practical Mountain Climbing" (1900), in which she argued that women could also follow the more moderate sartorial example of Elizabeth Le Blond who wore a skirt over her trousers. However, in *Search*, Peck also admitted to donning a skirt in view of the hut during her climbs in the Presidential Range and wore a divided ulster coat in order to cover the fact that she rode astride during her trip to Huascarán.

⁷² While botanizing and sketching were generally considered more feminine than aggressive climbing or exploring, Sara Mills has argued that such activities were on the one hand ladylike and on the other hand imperialistic, because "at the same that its production displays to the reader a safe, feminine persona for the narrator, it also produces a vision of the colonized country as a storehouse of random flora and fauna waiting for the civilizing order of the narrator with her Western science" (41).

⁷³ Although it may be argued that, even without the captions, Tuckett's interest in Swiss women would have been seen as acceptable subject matter for a "lady tourist" to write about. As Mills argues (see **note 76** above), ethnography and genteel femininity were often compatible.

⁷⁴ According to Sara Mills "nineteenth-century women travellers, particularly those who went to Italy and wrote about it in terms of aesthetic familiarisation, were thus almost inevitably replicating a male model of itinerary and discourse." However, "[w]hile the source of the knowledge is male . . . the application of artistic criteria has a particularly feminine resonance." Mills and Foster also argue that "[d]escriptions of the sublime were overdetermined for Western women; at one and the same time the sublime combined high status aesthetic discourse (often a kind of Romantic poetic language) together with "feminine" emotional response" (91-92). "This aestheticising discourse often marked out a particular class position for women, indicating their education and the leisure necessary for acquiring this knowledge of the vocabulary of the aesthetic; it also signified that they were tourists rather than missionaries or explorers, since this particular stance in relation to the landscape signalled to the reader that their concerns were with

exploring their own psyches and perceptions rather than presenting information about the indigenous peoples or their country" (93).

⁷⁵ Mrs. Freshfield openly promoted several mountaineering and travel books such as Murray's, as well as "Arnica," an ointment which she "strongly recommend[ed] to all mountain travellers, liable to the casualties of sprains and bruises, never to be without a small bottle of this most useful companion" (62).

⁷⁶ Though in *Mountaineering in the Land of the Midnight Sun* (1908), she stated plainly that she was no feminist.

⁷⁷ Note that Le Blond recalls being influenced by the stories of Whymper as a child—her mother had read them to her. References to Whymper's books appear regularly in her texts, indicating if not a conscious emulation then at least a sincere appreciation for the style and content of Whymper's books.

⁷⁸ Le Blond did indeed go on to do many things which no one else (male or female) had done, including: making the first ascent of the Bieshorn; several first alpine ascents in winter; several first ascents in Norway (see *Mountaineering in the Land of the Midnight Sun*); even a few guideless climbs (Diavolezza, Col du Tour). Le Blond also went over the Matterhorn from Visp to Breuil, and back to Zermatt by the St. Theodule without sleeping out, bagged the third ascent of the Highest point of the Dent du Geant, and ascended the Wiesshorn with only a guide and a porter of whom she knew very little (see Le Blond's biography in **Appendix I**).

⁷⁹ Robert Bates, Cicely Williams and others refer to her popularity.

⁸⁰ See note for a sample of Alpine Journal reviewers' attempts to undermine her authority due to her tendency to pander to non-climbing readers.

⁸¹ As I mention elsewhere, given her wealth, Le Blond did not need to worry as much about using whatever means necessary to drum up business for her books or lectures—there was not the same sense of urgency as there was for Peck, who relied on the profits of her books.

⁸² These transgressions included breaking the codes of chaperonage by travelling without any male relatives, and considering ascents without guides or assistants

⁸³ For more on northern European (read British and French) representations of European peasants, Caroline Brettell's essay "Nineteenth Century Travelers' Accounts of the Mediterranean Peasant" (*Ethnohistory* 33.2 (1998): 159-173) is worth consulting. Notes Brettell: "The rural 'folk' of Europe were a constant preoccupation of historians, politicians, artists, and writers throughout the nineteenth century. For some . . . they were simply *savages*, little more than animals, 'men' without culture and certainly without civilization. For others . . . the country folk of Europe were not dirty and ignorant brutes, but the embodiment of Rousseau's noble savage, honest and industrious people who represented all that was good and should therefore be preserved in a constantly changing social environment" (159). Plunket's

views appear to have accorded both with the negative and with the more positive stereotypes of the day.

⁸⁴ Had it been a wearable artefact, the delicate shoe would not have fit for, at the end of her book, Peck revealed that, quite ironically, she had “by a curious coincidence . . . been obliged to deliver my address wearing one Japanese slipper, from having in my room the evening before stepped upon a sharp nail which had penetrated an artery of my foot” (370).

⁸⁵ By feminist I mean a similar thing to Reuben Ellis—that Peck sought to bring “her critique of conventional female roles into the mountains”

⁸⁶ As Peck herself admits on pg. 141 of *Search* that the image reproduced in **figure 79** was taken against the will of her native guides: “Some of the indians already having retired, I take a flash-light picture of them in their tent.” Similarly, on pg. 81, Peck recounts that “at the last house in the suburbs we pause for a glass of pisco. . . . I took a photograph of the woman, though she turned away her face as if adverse to the operation, as many of the natives are” (81).

⁸⁷ Though Peck’s reasons for erecting this photographic division may have not only been racially motivated but as I have mentioned earlier also related to a) a white woman traveller’s need to publicly assure viewers/readers that all proprieties were properly observed between herself and the men (though she admitted to sharing a tent with them in the narrative) and b) a disgruntled female climber’s desire to recuperate some of the glory that was stolen from her by her rebellious male companions (who stole her first steps) by showing herself going it alone.

⁸⁸ Had Peck received backing from Soapine soap company, as she had originally hoped, such descriptions would have seemed even more imperialistic—Peck would have become the white woman as/with Soapine spreading her gospel of cleanliness across South America, softsoaping the natives and their nations as she went. See McClintock’s *Imperial Leather* for more on “Soft-soaping the Empire.”

⁸⁹ I tend to agree with Alison Blunt, who argues that these complexities and contradictions (a “common theme” in women’s travel writings of this time) are caused by (and the result of) “the author’s multiple persona,” and her struggle to textually and socially work within, around, and outside the constraints of Victorian gender ideology and authorship in order to construct authority (“Reading Mary Kingsley” 52-53). Whatever the cause, Peck’s work shares with Mary Kingsley’s evidence of her being “both accomplice in, and critic of, the business of imperialism” (Blunt, “Reading,” 52-53).

⁹⁰ In her foreward, Peck also acknowledged that she was attempting to “extending our acquaintance with sections and peoples for commercial reasons most desirable to cultivate” (xii).

⁹¹ In *The New Woman*, Sally Ledger argues that it was actually more common than not that Victorian feminists adhered to imperialist ideologies; according to Ledger, “Victorian culture was underpinned by a strong sense of national and racial superiority, which was in turn based on

Britain's imperial status. Middle-class Victorian feminists generally shared these assumptions, often identifying their cause with the British imperial mission. Feminists were able to exploit ideological assumptions about women's superior moral strength to enable themselves to take up imperial service in the name of Victorian womanhood. . . . [Thus,] a good deal of feminist argument, in common with imperial discourse, was preoccupied with race preservation, racial purity and racial motherhood" (64).

⁹² Here I have deliberately transcribed the Workmans' spelling of "Huascarán" (without the accent) to highlight the difference in cultural awareness and sensitivity between them and Peck. Unlike the Workmans, Peck was not only meticulous about getting spelling right but, as she noted at the end of *Search*, she delivered an entire speech before the Peruvian Geographical society in Spanish—apparently Peck's delivery of the speech was marred by only one or two errors of pronunciation.

⁹³ Ironically, Dorothy Middleton and others have noted that twentieth-century surveyors have now found that, despite their claims of absolute objectivity and authority, many of the Workmans' measurements and maps were incorrect and poorly done.

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Appendix I: Dramatis Personae

Mrs. Henry Warwick Cole (????-????)

Little is known about Mrs. Henry Warwick Cole, aside from the fact that she was married to Henry Warwick Cole who, according to David Mazel “was something of a legal expert, the author of a book on the legal issues confronting English citizens living in France” (27) and that she is often referred to as the author of “the first [mountaineering book] in English by a woman alpinist” (Mazel 27).

List of Travels/Ascents

Three extended trips through the Alps between 1850 and 1858, during which time she completely circled 15, 203 foot Monte Rosa.

Works by Mrs. Henry Warwick Cole

A Lady's Tour Round Monte Rosa; with Visits to the Italian Valleys . . . in the Years 1850-56-58. London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1859.

Works Containing Information about Mrs. Henry Warwick Cole

Brown, Rebecca. *Women on High: Pioneers of Mountaineering.* Boston, Mass.: Appalachian Mountain Club Books, 2002.

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Freshfield, Mrs. Henry (Jane Quintin)

(? – 1901).

Mrs. Freshfield is best known in mountaineering circles for being the wife of Henry Freshfield (an early Alpine Club member) and the mother of Douglas Freshfield. Douglas (later known as D. W.) not only became President of the Alpine Club of London and the Royal Geographical Society but, according to Jane Robinson, he “went on to become one of history’s great mountaineers.” Mrs. Freshfield, her husband, son, and a female companion C— spent many summers exploring the lesser trodden routes of the Alps.

List of Ascents

1859— Schilthorn

Crossed Joch Pass then ascended the Titlis (10,627 feet)

Works by Mrs. Henry Freshfield [a.k.a A Lady; Jane].

Alpine Byways, or, Light Leaves Gathered in 1859 and 1860. London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1861.

A Summer Tour in the Grisons and the Italian Valleys of the Bernina. London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1862.

Works Containing Information about Mrs. Henry Freshfield

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**Le Blond, Elizabeth (nee Hawkins-Whitshead) Burnaby Main
(1861-1934)**

Elizabeth Hawkins-Whitshead was born and raised in Ireland, the only daughter of a wealthy family; due to her family's aristocratic lineage, Elizabeth debuted in English high society at age seventeen and became part of the "Prince of Wales" set. According to one biographer it was "[d]uring her first season in London, at the age of seventeen [that] she met and married the gallant Captain Fred Burnaby . . . the soldier, correspondent, and traveller—twenty years her senior—whose books *Ride to Khiva* (1876) and *On Horseback through Asia Minor* (1876) had made him a hero of the Empire" (20). In 1879, the couple had a son, Arthur St. Vincent.

In 1881, Elizabeth visited Chamonix (without Fred and baby Arthur) for the first time. Although she had reportedly been sent there in the early stages of consumption, by the end of that season, she had accomplished a double ascent of Mont Blanc. Elizabeth's climbing career had begun.

After Burnaby's death in the Egyptian battle of Abu Khea (1885), Elizabeth later married D. F. Main, an English doctor, and set up residence in St. Moritz, Switzerland. During her years in Switzerland, Mrs. Main accomplished many things: in addition to several daring winter ascents, she became the first woman to pass the Men's Skating Test. Outside of climbing, her other Alpine pursuits included tobogganing, Alpine bicycling, and "[s]he also delighted in the thoroughly modern and competitive sport of driving motor cars up mountains" (Russell).

Main passed away in 1892. Elizabeth remarried a third time—this time to Aubrey Le Blond, a porcelain expert. Le Blond accompanied his wife on several trips to Norway where

Elizabeth eventually made over twenty first ascents—ascents which undoubtedly contributed to Mrs. Le Blond being named the first President of the newly formed Ladies Alpine Club of London in 1907.

In addition to travelling through Russia, China, and Korea with Aubrey in 1912, Mrs. Le Blond became a nurse and worked in Dieppe during World War I. During this time she presented several lantern slide lectures of her ascents to the British troops. After the War, Le Blond continued her involvement with the Ladies Alpine Club executive but stopped climbing. Her autobiography *Day In, Day Out* was published by John Lane in 1928.

Selected List of Ascents:

1882

Double ascent of Mont Blanc (1st by Aiguilles de Belvedere, 2nd by Aiguilles Grise)
Grand Mulet
Grandes Jourasses (winter)

1882-83 Winter

Montreux
Col des Grandes Montets
Aiguille du Midi
Col de Chardonnet
Col d'Argentiere
Grand St. Bernard
Col St. Theodule
Monte Rosa

1883:

Breithorn (*first ascent*)
Matterhorn Traverse (1883)
Weisshorn, Bieshorn, Balfrinhorn
Bishorn (1884—*first ascent*)—13, 625 feet
Diavolezza Pass

Riffelhorn (*first descent from route from the glacier*)
 Rothhorn
 UnterGabelhorn from Trifthal

Winter Traverse of Piz Palu (1900), accompanied by Lady Evelyn McDonnell, without any men (ie: guides, or porters).

Climbs in Arctic Norway (as listed by Le Blond in her book *Mountaineering in the Land of the Midnight Sun* [1908]).

Goevertind (*first recorded ascent*)
 Kjostind (*second ascent, first from the Lyngen side*)
 Isskartind (*second ascent, new route*)
 Sofietind (*first ascent*)
 Sultind (*first ascent*)
 Skraektind (*first ascent*)
 Stortind (*second ascent*)
 Firedaletind (*first ascent*)
 Kjoempes Tand (*first ascent*)
 Taffeltind (*first ascent*)
 Elizabethtind* (*first ascent*)
 Klyverrokke (*first ascent*)
 Gyldenrokke (*first ascent*)
 Faestning (*first ascent*)
 Kristianstind (*first ascent*)
 Holmebugttind (*first ascent*)
 Durmaalstind (*second ascent, Mr. Hastings and his porter having reached the summit by a different route half an hour previously*)
 Jaggisjokka (*first recorded ascent*)
 Eastern Laxelvtind (*first ascent*)
 Sphinx (*first ascent*)
 Andersdalskar (*first crossing*)
 Hundbjergtind (*first ascent*)
 Tomastind (*first ascent*)
 Imbodontind (*first ascent*)
 Balkisvarre (*first ascent*)
 Balkisvarrenebbe (*first ascent*)

Works by Mrs. Elizabeth Le Blond (aka Burnaby Main) by date

The High Alps in Winter; or Mountaineering in Search of Health. London: Sampson Low, 1883.

High Life and Towers of Silence. London: Sampson Low, 1886.

My Home in the Alps. London: Sampson Low, 1892.

Hints on Snow Photography. London: Sampson Low, 1894.

"Mountaineering from a Woman's Point of View." In *The Sports of the World*. F. G. Aflalo, ed. Two Volumes. 1902-03.

True Tales of Mountain Adventure for Non-climbers Young and Old. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1902.

Adventures on the Roof of the World. London: Fisher Unwin, 1904; NY: Dutton, 1904.

"Perils of the High Peaks." *Cosmopolitan* 37 (July, 1904): 245-52.

The Story of an Alpine Winter. London: Bell, 1907.

Mountaineering in the Land of the Midnight Sun. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1908.

"The Ladies' Alpine Club. A Brief Summary." *Ladies' Alpine Journal* (1925): 5-9.

Day In, Day Out. London: John Lane, 1928.

"Then and Now." *Ladies' Alpine Journal Yearbook* (1932): 5-6.

Works Containing Information about Mrs. Elizabeth Le Blond

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Brown, Rebecca. *Women on High: Pioneers of Mountaineering.* Boston, Mass.: Appalachian Mountain Club Books, 2002.

Clark, Ronald. *The Victorian Mountaineers.* London: Batsford, 1953.

"Elizabeth Le Blond." *Alpine Journal* 1934.

Engel, Claire Eliane. *They Came to the Hills.* London: Allen & Unwin, 1952.

Le Blond, Elizabeth. *Day In, Day Out.* London: John Lane, 1928.

"Le Blond, Mrs. Aubrey (Elizabeth, formerly Mrs. MAIN and Mrs. BURNABY)." In Marion Tinling's *Women Into the Unknown: a Sourcebook on Women Explorers and*

Travelers. NY: Greenwood P, 1989. 20-21.

Whymper, Edward. "Two Lady Alpine Climbers. Mrs. Burnaby-Miss Walker." *Girl's Own Paper* (Dec. 15, 1885): 164-167.

Williams, Cicely. *Women on the Rope: The Feminine Share of Mountain Adventure*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973.

Peck, Annie Smith.
1850-1935

Annie Smith Peck was born in Providence, Rhode Island in 1850. Her father George Peck, Sr. was a lawyer while her mother was, according to Reuben Ellis, a woman who "traced her roots all the way back to Roger Williams." Peck's parents were quite conservative (part of what Ellis calls "an 'old' and traditional New England Baptist family") so that, according to Shasta Raiman, "when she wanted to enter the University of Michigan to study for her B. A., they opposed her plans vehemently [and] [h]er father even suggested that if she went against his wishes, he would cut her off with the proverbial penny." After Peck reminded him that her three brothers had been given full support to attend Brown University, George Sr. begrudgingly gave his approval and Annie entered the newly created women's program at Ann Arbor. She graduated with a B. A. in Classics in 1878 and went on to teach in Cincinnati and Montclair, N. J. She went back to Rhode Island in 1880 to earn her M. A. in less than a year and then became a Latin professor at Purdue University (Indiana).

In 1884, Peck quit teaching and departed for Europe, with vague plans to study music and languages abroad. It was during these travels that she saw the Matterhorn for the first time and became enamoured with the idea of mountain-climbing. Due to lack of money or time, she was unable to climb in the Alps at that point but vowed to return.

Instead, with the financial backing of her brother George, Peck first entered a year of study in the School of Classical Archaeology in Athens. She was, apparently, the first female to enter the school. In 1886, she returned to the U.S., and became a Latin professor at Smith College in Northampton, Mass. In 1887, having been refused the title of Chairman of the department, she quit the academic life and decided to pursue a career as a travelling lecturer. At first lecturing

on topics related to her specializations, Peck soon realized a need to broaden her repertoire.

Mountaineering soon came to be the subject that would dominate her thoughts, plans, and life.

Due to her remarkable climbing feats (listed below), Peck went on to become Founder member of the American Alpine Club and Official Delegate of the United States to the International Congress of Alpinists in 1900. She also became a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society in 1917. After her ascent of the north peak of Huascaran, the Lima Geographical Society apparently renamed it "Cumbre Ana Peck in her honor" (Ellis 98).

Selected List of Ascents:

1888

Mount Shasta (Northern California): 14,162 ft.
Mt. Cristallo (Dolomites, Italy): 10,500 ft

1895

Matterhorn: 14,703 ft
Mt. Popocatepetl (Mexico): 17,883 ft

1897

Mt. Orizaba (Mexico): 18,660 ft.

1908

Huascarán, north peak, Peru (first ascent): 21,800 ft.

1911

Nevado Coropuna, Peru (first ascent): 21,079 ft.

1932

Mount Madison, New Hampshire: 5,367 ft.

Works by Annie Smith Peck (by date):

"Practical Mountain Climbing." *Outing* 38 (April-Sept. 1901): 695-700.

"A Woman in the Andes: My Attempt to Ascend Mount Huascarán." *Harper's Monthly Magazine* 114 (Dec. 1906): 3-14.

The South American Tour. New York: Doran, 1913.

Industrial and Commercial South America. 1922.

Flying Over South America: Twenty Thousand Miles By Air. Boston and NY: Houghton Mifflin, 1932.

Works Containing Information about Annie Smith Peck

Aitkin, Maria. *A Girdle Round the Earth*. London: Constable, 1987.

Brown, Rebecca. *Women on High: Pioneers of Mountaineering*. Boston, Mass.: Appalachian Mountain Club Books, 2002.

Ellis, Reuben. *Vertical Margins: Mountaineering and the Landscapes of NeoImperialism*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 2001.

Mazel, David. *Mountaineering Women: Stories by Early Climbers*. College Station, TX: Texas A & M University P, 1994.

Rahman, Shaista. "Annie Smith Peck" (1998), from the Web site www.anniepeck.com.

Plunket, The Honourable Frederica (Louisa Edith)
 (?-1886).

Little is known of Frederica (Louise Edith) Plunket, though the title Honourable which appears before her name on the cover page of her book indicates aristocratic lineage. Plunket travelled with her sister, climbing the slopes of the Upper Engadine and the Austrian Alps in 1874.

List of Ascents

Not available

Works by Frederica Plunket

Here and There Among the Alps. London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1875.

Works Containing Information about Frederica Plunket

"Plunket, the Honorable Frederica." In Jane Robinson's *Wayward Women: a Guide to Women Travellers*. NY: Oxford UP, 1990.

Williams, Cicely. *Women on the Rope: The Feminine Share of Mountain Adventure*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973.

Tuckett, Elizabeth (????-????)

Although an immensely talented artist in her own right, Elizabeth Tuckett is most often mentioned in the mountaineering world due to the fact that she was the sister of Francis Fox Tuckett, an eminent and accomplished Alpine Clubsman.

Unlike her brother, Miss Tuckett does not appear to have bagged any notable first ascents and is thus perhaps best described as an alpine traveller rather than a high altitude climber. But Elizabeth's sketchbooks of her summer travels with her brother and friends were immensely popular with the general public, and several advertisements and glowing reviews for them appeared at the front of various editions of the *Alpine Journal*.

According to Peter Hansen, Tuckett was also the author of several children's books—some of which apparently used mountaineering to help teach children about responsibility and moral behaviour.

List of Ascents:

Not available

Works by Elizabeth Tuckett (by date)

How We Spent the Summer: Or a Voyage in Zigzag, in Switzerland and Tyrol, with Some Members of the Alpine Club. London: Longman's, Greenman's, Green & Co., 1866.

Our Children's Story by One of their Gossips. London: Longmans, 1870.

Zigzagging amongst Dolomites. London: Longman's, Green, Reader & Dyer, 1871.

The Children's Journey and Other Stories. London: Strahan & Co., 1872.

Works Containing Information about Elizabeth Tuckett

Hansen, Peter. *British Mountaineering, 1850-1914*. Dissertation. Harvard University, 1991. 9211688.

Tuckett, Francis F. *A Pioneer in the High Alps: the Alpine Diaries and Letters of F. F. Tuckett, 1856-1874*. London: Arnold, 1920

Williams, Cicely. *Women on the Rope: The Feminine Share of Mountain Adventure*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973.

Workman, Fanny Bullock
1859-1925

Fanny Bullock was born in Worcester, Massachusetts. She was the daughter of Alexander Hamilton Bullock, who was elected governor of Massachusetts in 1866, and Eliza Hazard Bullock, the daughter of a wealthy manufacturer and merchant from Connecticut. Fanny's wealth afforded her access to an exclusive education—in addition to having tutors, she attended “finishing” schools in NY, Paris, and Dresden. After returning from school abroad, she entered American high society and, in 1881, she married a prominent physician, William Hunter Workman (also of Worcester). The couple eventually had one daughter, Rachel. According to Maria Tinling, “Little is known about Rachel, who must have spent all her early years in boarding schools, for the Workmans began to travel two years after her birth.”

In 1889, Dr. Workman retired from the medical profession, reportedly due to ill health, and the family moved to Europe where Tinling reports “they did not live a sedentary life, for they climbed in the Alps, went on walking tours, and bicycled about several European countries.” Their European travels by bicycle between 1895 and 1897 became the subject of their first books, *Algerian Memories* (1895) and *Sketches Awheel in Iberia* (1897); a few years later, the couple took their bikes to India—travels which inspired *Through Town and Jungle: Fourteen Thousand Miles A-wheel among the Temples and People of the Indian Plain* (1904).

During their first Indian tour, the Workmans had done a bit of exploring in Balistan. However, a flood swept the Kashmir valley and destroyed many of their photos and negatives. As a result, the couple ended up backtracking in an attempt to re-capture some of the scenes that had been lost in the flood photos.

It was during their travels in India that both Dr. and Mrs. Workman became committed to mountain climbing and exploration. In 1898, 1899, 1902, 1903, 1906, 1908, 1911, and 1912 they mounted expeditions into the Himalayas, mapping, photographing, climbing, and naming (as well as renaming) areas as they went. The Workmans reportedly named one Himalayan mountain after their daughter Rachel and another mountain in Balistan was christened Mount Bullock Workman after Fanny.

In 1899, Fanny Bullock Workman set the first altitude record for women after climbing 21, 000 ft on Mt. Koser Gunge, but her highest climb was Pinnacle Peak (approx. 22, 815 ft). In 1905, Fanny Bullock Workman became the second woman to address the Royal Geographical Society of London, while her husband was accepted as a RGS fellow. Sometime during this period, Mrs. Workman set off on a whirlwind lecturing tour of Europe.

During World War I, Fanny and her husband retired to the south of France, where they lived until Fanny's death in 1925. According to Tinley Mrs. Workman "left an estate of nearly \$500,000 and made bequests to four women's colleges—Radcliffe, Wellesley, Smith, and Bryn Mawr. Bryn Mawr established a Fanny Bullock Workman Traveling Fellowship." Dr. Workman died in 1937; the couple's ashes are buried in Worcester and atop their remains sits a monument inscribed with the words "Pioneer Himalaya Explorers."

Selected List of Ascents

(for more complete list, consult Workman's own articles listed below)

1899

Mt. Bullock Workman: 19, 450 ft.

Mt. Koser Gunge: 21, 000 ft

1902

Alchon Col, Balistan: 17,000 ft.
Mt. Lungma, Balistan: 22, 500 ft.

1906

Pinnacle Peak, Nun Kun Range of India: 22, 800 ft. (*set women's world altitude record*)

1909?

Hispar-Biafo Watershed Peak: 21, 350 ft.

1912

Siachen Glacier: 21,000 ft.

Works by Fanny Bullock Workman (by date)

(With William Hunter Workman) *Algerian Memories: A Bicycle Tour over the Atlas to the Sahara*. London: Unwin, 1895.

(With William Hunter Workman) *Sketches Awheel in Modern Iberia*. NY and London: Putnam, 1897. Also published as *Sketches Awheel in Fin de Siècle Iberia*. London: Unwin, 1897.

(With William Hunter Workman). *In the Ice World of Himalaya: Among the Peaks and Passes of Ladakh, Nubra, Suru, and Balistan*. London: Unwin, 1900

"Among the Great Himalayan Glaciers." *National Geographic* 13 (Nov. 1902): 405-6.

"First Ascents of the Hoh Lumba and Sosbon Glaciers in the Northwest Himalayas." *Independent* 55 (Dec. 31, 1903): 3108-12.

(With William Hunter Workman) *Through Town and Jungle: Fourteen Thousand Miles A-wheel among the Temples and Peoples of the Indian Plain*. London: Unwin, 1904.

(With William Hunter Workman) *Ice-Bound Heights of the Mustagh: An Account of Two Seasons of Pioneer Exploration and High Climbing in the Balistan Himalaya*. London: Constable, 1908.

Peaks and Glaciers of Nun Kun: A Record of Pioneer Exploration and Mountaineering in the Punjab Himalaya. London: Constable, 1909.

"Miss Peck and Mrs. Workman." *Scientific American* 102 (Feb. 12, and Apr. 16, 1910): 143, 319.

"Recent First Ascents in the Himalaya." *Independent* 68 (June 2, 1910): 1202-10.

(With William Hunter Workman) *The Call of the Snowy Hispar: A Narrative of Exploration and Mountaineering on the Northern Frontier of India*. London: Constable, 1910; NY: Scribner, 1911.

"Conquering the Great Rose." *Harper's* 129 (June 1914): 44-45.

"Exploring the Rose." *Independent* 85 (Jan. 10, 1916): 54-56.

"Four Miles High." *Independent* 86 (June 5, 1916): 377-78.

Two Summers in the Ice-Wilds of Eastern Karakoram: The Exploration of Nineteen Hundred Square Miles of Mountains and Glaciers. London: Unwin, 1917.

Works Containing Information about Mrs. Fanny Bullock Workman

Aitkin, Maria. *A Girdle Round the Earth*. London: Constable, 1987.

"A Record Climb in the Himalayas: Mrs. Bullock Workman, Cyclist and Mountaineer." *The Young Woman* 9 (1900-1901).

Brown, Rebecca. *Women on High: Pioneers of Mountaineering*. Boston, Mass.: Appalachian Mountain Club Books, 2002.

Mazel, David. *Mountaineering Women: Stories by Early Climbers*. College Station, TX: Texas A & M University P, 1994.

Middleton, Dorothy. *Victorian Lady Travellers*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965.

Miller, Lurie. *On Top of the World: Five Women Explorers in Tibet*. London: Paddington, 1976. 101-29.

Tarbell, Arthur. "Fanny Bullock Workman, Explorer and Alpinist." *New England Magazine* 33 (Dec. 1905): 487-90.

Tinling, Marion, ed. *Women into the Unknown: A Sourcebook on Women Explorers and Travellers*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood P, 1982.

Wayward Women: a Guide to Women Travellers. NY: Oxford UP, 1990.

Whympers, Edward. "Two Lady Alpine Climbers. Mrs. Burnaby-Miss Walker." *Girl's Own Paper* (Dec. 15, 1885): 164-167.

Appendix II: Edward Whymper and the Matterhorn Disaster of 1865

Edward Whymper (1840-1911), was an English illustrator who got bitten by the mountaineering “bug” when he was sent to Switzerland by William Longman to make sketches of mountain scenery.



Portrait of Edward Whymper as a Young Man

Whymper is perhaps most famous for two things: 1) his successful first ascent of the Matterhorn (after six unsuccessful attempts). 2) the spectacularly disastrous events which took place on the descent. This ascent was so significant because, to many mountaineers, it symbolized the end of the “Golden Age of Mountaineering,” as the Matterhorn had been the last unconquered peak in the Alps; the descent became so ‘famous’ because three prominent Englishmen— Douglas Hadow (a senior civil servant), Rev. Charles Hudson (an Oxbridge-

educated clergyman) and Francis Douglas (the aristocratic)—died during it, and because Whymper, one of the only three surviving members of the original climbing party of seven, later wrote a book *Scrambles amongst the Alps* (1871, 6th ed. 1936), and presented hundreds of public lectures on the subject.

I wish to include a passage from *Scrambles*, in which Whymper himself recounts the events of the fateful day in 1865—a day that led Queen Victoria herself to ponder outlawing mountaineering as a sport for men, nevermind for women (Clark):

“We started from Zermatt on the 13th of July, at half past five, on a brilliant and perfectly cloudless morning. We were eight in number—Croz (guide), old Peter Taugwalder (guide) and his two sons; Lord F. Douglas, Mr. Hadow, Rev. Mr. Hudson, and I. To insure steady motion, one tourist and one native walked together. The youngest Taugwalder fell to my share. The wine-bags also fell to my lot to carry, and throughout the day, after each drink, I replenished them secretly with water, so that at the next halt they were found fuller than before! This was considered a good omen, and little short of miraculous.

On the first day we did not intend to ascend to any great height, and we mounted, accordingly, very leisurely. Before twelve o'clock we had found a good position for the tent, at a height of eleven thousand feet. We passed the remaining hours of daylight—some basking in the sunshine, some sketching, some collecting; Hudson made tea, I coffee, and at length we retired, each one to his blanket bag.

We assembled together before dawn on the 14th and started directly it was light enough to move. One of the young Taugwalders returned to Zermatt. In a few minutes we turned the rib which had intercepted the view of the eastern face from our tent platform. The whole of this great slope was now revealed, rising for three thousand feet like a huge natural staircase. Some parts were more, and others were less easy, but we were not once brought to a halt by any serious impediment, for when an obstruction was met in front it could always be turned to the right or to the left. For the greater part of the way there was no occasion, indeed, for the rope, and sometimes Hudson led, sometimes myself. At six-twenty we had attained a height of twelve thousand eight hundred feet, and halted for half an hour; we then continued the ascent without a break until nine-fifty-five, when we stopped for fifty minutes, at a height of fourteen thousand feet.

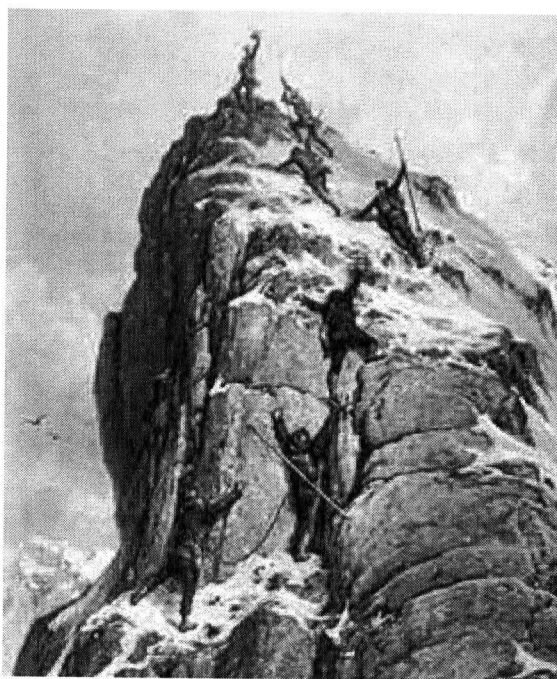
We had now arrived at the foot of that part which, seen from the Riffelberg, seems perpendicular or overhanging. We could no longer continue on the eastern side. For a little distance we ascended by snow upon the *arête*--that is, the ridge--then turned over to the right, or northern side. The work became difficult, and required caution. In some places there was little to hold; the general slope of the mountain was *less* than forty degrees, and snow had accumulated in, and had filled up, the interstices of the rock-face, leaving only occasional

fragments projecting here and there. These were at times covered with a thin film of ice. It was a place which any fair mountaineer might pass in safety. We bore away nearly horizontally for about four hundred feet, then ascended directly toward the summit for about sixty feet, then doubled back to the ridge which descends toward Zermatt. A long stride round a rather awkward corner brought us to snow once more. That last doubt vanished! The Matterhorn was ours! Nothing but two hundred feet of easy snow remained to be surmounted.

The higher we rose, the more intense became the excitement. The slope eased off, at length we could be detached, and Croz and I, dashed away, ran a neck-and-neck race, which ended in a dead heat. At 1:40 P.M., the world was at our feet, and the Matterhorn was conquered!

The others arrived. Croz now took the tent-pole, and planted it in the highest snow. "Yes," we said, "there is the flag-staff, but where is the flag?" "Here it is," he answered, pulling off his blouse and fixing it to the stick. It made a poor flag, and there was no wind to float it out, yet it was seen all around. They saw it at Zermatt--at the Riffel--in the Val Tournanche... .

We remained on the summit for one hour—One crowded hour of glorious life.



**Ascent of the Matterhorn, 14 July 1865 (Arrival at the Summit), 1869
by Paul Gustave Louis Christophe Doré, (1832 – 1883)**

It passed away too quickly, and we began to prepare for the descent. Hudson and I consulted as to the best and safest arrangement of the party. We agreed that it was best for Croz to go first, and Hadow second; Hudson, who was almost equal to a guide in sureness of foot, wished to be third; Lord Douglas was placed next, and old Peter, the strongest of the remainder, after him. I suggested to Hudson that we should attach a rope to the rocks on our arrival at the difficult bit, and hold it as we descended, as an additional protection. He approved the idea, but it was not

definitely decided that it should be done. The party was being arranged in the above order while I was sketching the summit, and they had finished, and were waiting for me to be tied in line, when some one remembered that our names had not been left in a bottle. They requested me to write them down, and moved off while it was being done.

A few minutes afterward I tied myself to young Peter, ran down after the others, and caught them just as they were commencing the descent of the difficult part. Great care was being taken. Only one man was moving at a time; when he was firmly planted the next advanced, and so on. They had not, however, attached the additional rope to rocks, and nothing was said about it. The suggestion was not made for my own sake, and I am not sure that it ever occurred to me again. For some little distance we two followed the others, detached from them, and should have continued so had not Lord Douglas asked me, about 3 P.M., to tie on to old Peter, as he feared, he said, that Taugwalder would not be able to hold his ground if a slip occurred.

A few minutes later, a sharp-eyed lad ran into the Monte Rosa Hotel, at Zermatt, saying that he had seen an avalanche fall from the summit of the Matterhorn onto the Matterhorn glacier. The boy was reprovved for telling idle stories; he was right, nevertheless, and this was what he saw.

Michel Croz had laid aside his ax, and in order to give Mr. Hadow greater security, was absolutely taking hold of his legs, and putting his feet, one by one, into their proper positions. As far as I know, no one was actually descending. I cannot speak with certainty, because the two leading men were partially hidden from my sight by an intervening mass of rock, but it is my belief, from the movements of their shoulders, that Croz, having done as I said, was in the act of turning round to go down a step or two himself; at this moment Mr. Hadow slipped, fell against him, and knocked him over. I heard one startled exclamation from Croz, then saw him and Mr. Hadow flying downward; in another moment Hudson was dragged from his steps, and Lord Douglas immediately after him. All this was the work of a moment. Immediately we heard Croz's exclamation, old Peter and I planted ourselves as firmly as the rocks would permit; the rope was taut between us, and the jerk came on us both as on one man. We held; but the rope broke midway between Taugwalder and Lord Francis Douglas. For a few seconds we saw our unfortunate companions sliding downward on their backs, and spreading out their hands, endeavoring to save themselves. They passed from our sight uninjured, disappeared one by one, and fell from the precipice to precipice onto the Matterhorn glacier below, a distance of nearly four thousand feet in height. From the moment the rope broke it was impossible to help them. So perished our comrades!

For more than two hours afterward I thought almost every moment that the next would be my last; for the Taugwalders, utterly unnerved, were not only incapable of giving assistance, but were in such a state that a slip might have been expected from them at any moment. After a time we were able to do that which should have been done at first, and fixed rope to firm rocks, in addition to being tied together. These ropes were cut from time to time, and were left behind. Even with their assurance the men were afraid to proceed, and several times old Peter turned, with ashy face and faltering limbs, and said, with terrible emphasis, "*I cannot!*"

About 6 P.M., we arrived at the snow upon the ridge descending toward Zermatt, and all peril was over. We frequently looked, but in vain, for traces of our unfortunate companions; we bent over the ridge and cried to them, but no sound returned. Convinced at last that they were

neither within sight nor hearing, we ceased from our useless efforts; and, too cast down for speech, silently gathered up our things, and the little effects of those who were lost, and then completed the descent.”

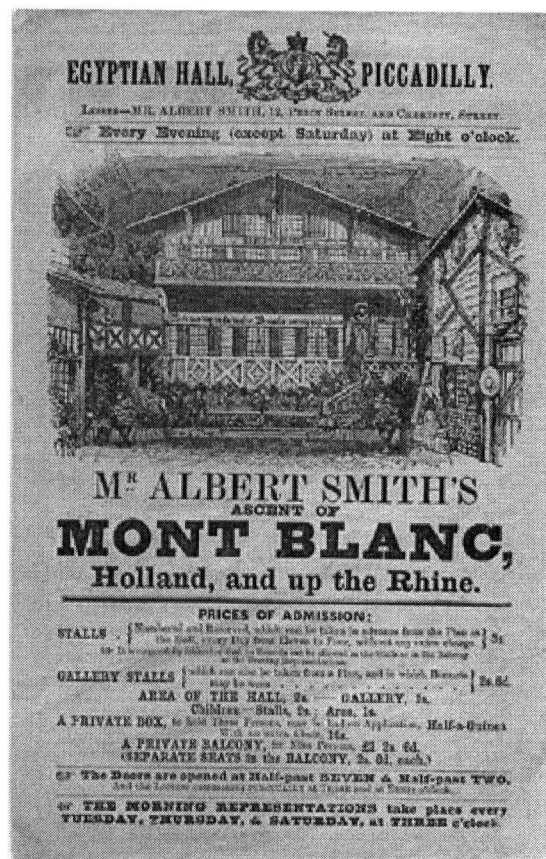
According to Mark Twain,

Zermatt gossip darkly hints that the elder Taugwalder cut the rope, when the accident occurred, in order to preserve himself from being dragged into the abyss; but Mr. Whymper says that the ends of the rope showed no evidence of cutting, but only of breaking. He adds that if Taugwalder had had the disposition to cut the rope, he would not have had time to do it, the accident was so sudden and unexpected. Lord Douglas' body has never been found. It probably lodged upon some inaccessible shelf in the face of the mighty precipice. Lord Douglas was a youth of nineteen. The three other victims fell nearly four thousand feet, and their bodies lay together upon the glacier when found by Mr. Whymper and the other searchers the next morning. Their graves are beside the little church in Zermatt. (432)

Appendix III:

Albert Smith and the Mont Blanc Sideshow

Although he wore many hats during his lifetime (journalist, contributor to Punch, and other periodicals, author of burlesques, dramas, travelogues), Albert Smith came to be best known for the successful and long-running lantern-slide lecture show and diorama of his own ascent of Mont Blanc (1851). The show was put on at the Egyptian Theatre in Piccadilly, London from 15 March 1852 to 6 July 1858.



The image above (as well as **figure 25**) may help one to visualise just what the Mont Blanc show was all about. But very generally speaking, Raymund Fitzsimons describes the show as “travelogues, illustrated by dioramic views and laced with comic songs and sketches. This

compound of amusement and instruction was irresistible to his middle-class audiences, who laughed the more freely for knowing they were being educated at the same time" (13).

As Richard Altick tells it, the *mise-en-scène* was apparently quite impressive: The room had been converted into a little plot of old Switzerland, *bien meublé*. Most prominent was a full-scale representation of the exterior of a chalet, in the center of which was a curtained window through which a cheery light shone; during the scenes the portion representing the wall was raised out of sight. The front of the hall, according to a contemporary description, 'was occupied by a large pool of water, surrounded by granite rocks and Alpine plants, and well stocked with some live fish; and from this spring clumps of bulrushes and Arum lillies, which throw water and gas from their petals. Chamois skins, Indian corn, alpenstocks, vintage baskets, knapsacks, and other appropriate matters are grouped about the balconies, and vines and creepers slung about the rafters and beams.' The room was further decorated with the banners of the various cantons, and 'some remarkably elegant lamp-shades of hanging leaves and flowers break the light very agreeably.' Mottoes [were also] dispersed on the scenery and about the room, quoting the sayings carved on real chalets. (475)

According to Fitzsimons, Smith's show became the "talk of the town." It "ran for two thousand performances and earned him thirty thousand pounds" (13). During this time, it spawned music and dance crazes (Fitzsimons reports that "London danced to 'the Mont Blanc Quadrille' and the 'Chamonix Polka', with Beverley's views and a portrait of Smith on the music covers . . . [while] Jullien conducted 'Les Echos de Mont Blanc Polka' at his promenade concerts at Covent Garden" [126]), it influenced female fashion, and it also inspired several

children's games and toys, including 'Mr. Albert Smith's Ascent of Mont Blanc in Miniature, a set of seventeen stereoscopic views, and the 'Game of the Ascent of Mont Blanc' (see below).

In addition to the show itself, what kept the crowds coming was perhaps the fact that Smith gave away free items, including ladies' fans (**fig. 26**) which doubled as a program for the show; apparently, "Everyone who visited the Egyptian Hall during Christmas week was given a copy of Mont Blanc Twelfth Night characters, a sheet of twenty-four colour illustrations of characters from the show, which folded into an envelope decorated with a picture of the proscenium" and, on the five-hundredth performance "a bouquet was presented to each lady in the audience and a portrait of Smith to each gentlemen" (Fitzsimons 131-139);

What kept them coming back was perhaps the fact that Smith changed the program slightly each year. On the opening night of the third season, for example, Smith let loose "four chamois and ten St. Bernard dogs, two of which Smith later gave to the Prince Consort and a third to his friend Dickens." Another St. Bernard was led down the aisle by a Chamonix female peasant in 'native' dress, who allowed the women and children in the first row to pet the dog and take a chocolate from the barrel around its neck.

Smith's account of his ascent was only slightly more flamboyant and dramatic than his actual climb had been. Fitzsimons states that "at 7.30 on the morning of August 12 Albert Smith and his three companions set out to climb Mont Blanc. They formed the largest climbing party ever to leave Chamonix. Sixteen guides led the way, followed by eighteen porters carrying:

60 bottles of vin ordinaire

6 bottles of Bordeaux

10 bottles of St. George

15 bottles of St. Jean

3 bottles of Cognac

1 bottle of syrup of raspberries

6 bottles of lemonade

2 bottles of champagne

20 loaves

10 small cheeses

6 packets of chocolate

6 packets of sugar

4 packets of prunes

4 packets of raisins

2 packets of salt

4 wax candles

6 loaves

4 legs of mutton

4 shoulders of mutton

6 pieces of veal

1 piece of beef

11 large fowls

35 small fowls. (114)

Upon their return, Fitzsimons reports that:

Many people had come out from Chamonix to meet them, and it was proposed that they should make a triumphal entry into the village. First came the guides carrying their ice axes; next came Smith and his companions riding on mules; then came the families and friends of the guides, followed by a concourse of people from the village. Small boys walked alongside the guides carrying alpenstocks and knapsacks, and hoping that they appeared to be a part of the expedition. So Albert Smith went gaily through the fields that border the Arve, in the bright afternoon sunlight, accepting bouquets of flowers from admiring girls, and meeting fresh visitors from Chamonix all the way. The cannon, which had been firing ever since they left Le P lerins, sounded a regular salute as the procession entered Chamonix. The streets were crowded with cheering people. Bands of music played. Ladies waved their handkerchiefs from the windows of the hotel. Fireworks and cannons were all going off at once. The procession reached the courtyard of the Hotel de Londres, where Edouard Tairraz presided over a table laden with bottles of champagne and decorated with flowers and candles, and here they drank, and were stared at, and had their hands shaken by everybody. (121-122)

Peter Hansen has argued that Smith was almost single-handedly responsible for inventing and popularising the sport of mountaineering in Victorian England. Certainly, the influence and impact which Smith had on both the official male mountaineering institution (the Alpine Club of London) which emerged in the wake of the Mont Blanc show and on mainstream popular middle-class culture were remarkable. Smith's show spawned books, songs, dances, games, and women's fashion. More significantly, it both created and sated a growing appetite for travel and mountaineering accounts and encouraged a wide number of people to travel to Switzerland and "do" Mont Blanc.

However, in the eyes of many Victorian men and women seeking to distinguish themselves as serious mountaineers and to preserve the Alps from the swarming masses of “cockneys” seeking to clambour atop Mont Blanc, Smith was perhaps not always viewed as a straightforwardly positive influence on the form which the new sport of mountaineering took in the Victorian period as he has been presented to be.

The following is a quotation taken from a letter written by Williams Mathew, Jr. (co-founder and early member of the Alpine Club of London) in response to the suggestion of a fellow clubsman that Albert Smith be accepted as an A. C. man. I include this excerpt because, to my mind at least, it reveals that, although the men who eventually formed England’s mountaineering institutions in the nineteenth century had perhaps been inspired by Smith and his show to take up climbing in the first place, in many respects, mountaineering activities in the years after Smith’s ascent and his show were often seen less as an emulation of and more as a reaction against Smith’s particularly grandiose “approach” to mountains and mountaineering: ““I cannot say that I see the introduction of Albert Smith’s name with feelings of great satisfaction.”

John Ruskin, who had been in Chamonix around the time of Smith’s ascent apparently wrote the following in his diary: “All true lovers of natural beauty hold it in reverence so deep that they would as soon think of climbing the pillars of the choir of Beauvais for a gymnastic exercise, as of making a playground of Alpine snow.” In a letter to his father he wrote “There has been a Cockney ascent of Mont Blanc which I believe you are soon to hear in London” (see Clark). His famous “soaped poles in a bear garden” speech may have been inspired by Smith.

The most prominent roles which Smith and his show appear to have played in the history of modern mountaineering were these:

- 1) they introduced alpinism to a wider audience than would ever have been exposed to it (i.e., women)—it is arguably Smith's efforts to democratise mountaineering which made him rather unpopular with more conservative or elitist climbers whose motivations for climbing primarily stemmed from what one contributor to the *Alpine Journal* in 1878 described as the longing for "the exchange of crowds for solitude . . . [and the desire for the] sudden and complete breaking away from all the comforts as well as the cares of civilisation" (ie: women and tourists);
- 2) they presented mountains and mountaineering as possible sites of enjoyment and leisure as well as challenge and serious scientific study;
- 3) they furthered the commodification, commercialisation, and "domestication" of the Swiss Alps by and for the British.

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Appendix IV

The Alpine Club of London: A Brief History

In his article "Sport, Hegemony, and the Middle Class," David Robbins writes that "For the period 1850-1914 . . . the history of British mountaineering is primarily the history of the Alpine Club and secondarily that of . . . other 'senior' clubs";

Institutionalization [of mountaineering as a 'distinctive form of activity'] followed with the establishment of the Alpine Club in London in 1857 and the publication in 1858 of *Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers*, a collection of accounts of the British and their guides in the 1850s. Two further volumes were published in 1862, followed from 1863 onwards by the regular publication of the *Alpine Journal*. This precedent was widely emulated in other European countries in the following decade. Subsequent developments in Britain include the founding, and around the turn of the century, of several other clubs, each devoted to the pursuit of mountaineering in the various mountain areas of Britain; clubs which were the forerunners of hundreds more (584).

Below are quotations which summarize the objectives of the Alpine Club and proposed aims of the Alpine Journal, as described by the first A. C. President, John Ball, and the first Editor of the Journal. Note how both the address and the objective use the term "all" repeatedly—as if to suggest an inclusive and democratic organization:

Objectives of the Club: The Alpine Club invites the membership of all who have explored high mountainous ranges. It facilitates association among those who, in their admiration of natural grandeur, possess similarity of taste, and will enable its members to make arrangements for meeting at some suitable locality whence they may in

common undertake any of the more difficult excursions. It will also give to all an opportunity of interchanging information, of recording the results of novel expeditions, and of consulting the maps and books to be placed in the rooms which it is expected the Club will eventually possess. The members will occasionally dine together at their own expense, but the funds of the Club will be made available when on suitable occasions the Club is favoured by the presence of geographical explorers, or by that of other guests of celebrity. ("Rise of Modern Mountaineering" 28-30).

Introductory address March 1863, reprinted as Introduction to the first edition of the *Alpine Journal*:

The amount of geographical and other information acquired during each summer by members of the Alpine Club, is felt to be worth making known more generally than by means of the papers read at their monthly meetings. It has, therefore been resolved to establish a Journal, which shall not only give an account of their actual proceedings, but also contain other matter relating to mountain explorations, and thereby to extend to all members of the Alpine Club, and to the public in general, advantages which have hitherto been enjoyed only by those able to attend regularly the meetings of the Club. It is intended to report all new and interesting mountain expeditions, whether in the Alps or elsewhere; to publish all such new items of scientific and geographical knowledge as can be procured from the various available sources; to give some account of all new books treating of Alpine matter, and, generally, to record all facts and incidents which it may be useful to the mountaineer to know (1-2).

As I noted above, the aims of the Club and its Journal seemed quite inclusive; however, a closer look at a series of correspondences exchanged between the founding members of the A. C. and the subsequent (and less publicly announced) rules and membership policies of the Club which resulted reveal some of the club members' more elitist sides.

In their first circular concerning the Alpine Club, founding members William Mathews and E. S. Kennedy apparently "invit[ed] those interested in mountaineering to meet in London, and it was, presumably, in the light of the responses [they] obtained that the dinner at The Leasowes, Birmingham, was held on November 6 [1857], when plans were advanced a further stage" ("Rise of Modern Mountaineering"). One of the central subjects of discussion were the proposed rules of the club and the question of members. The first draft of the rules was as follows:

- I. The Club shall be called the Alpine Club.
- II. The management of the Club shall be vested in the President, in the two Vice-Presidents, in the Honourary Secretary, who shall also undertake the monetary affairs of the Club, and in the Acting Committee of Five members
- III. All the Officers of the Club and the Committee shall be elected annually by ballot.
- IV. The name of every candidate for membership shall be submitted to all existing members of the Club ten days or more before the day of balloting. Every candidate shall be proposed, seconded, and balloted for, and one black ball in five shall exclude
- V. A candidate who has been blackballed shall not be again proposed within eighteen months.
- VI. Each member shall on entrance pay the sum of One Guinea, and One Guinea subscription. The subscription to be due January 1 in each year.
- VII. A candidate shall not be eligible unless he shall have ascended to the top of a mountain 13,000 feet in height

VIII. The Officers of the Club, together with the Committee, shall have the power of electing suitable persons as honorary and corresponding members.

IX. The Club shall dine together in February and in May, and the dinner shall be paid for by those who have not four days previously signified to the Honorary Secretary their intention of being absent. Every member, upon giving due notice, shall be at liberty to introduce at his own expense one friend to the dinners of the Club.

Over the next year, the rules were debated and revised based on the suggestions of early or proposed members. One rule that was the subject of great debate was VII. Albert Smith wondered “[D]on’t it strike you that 13,000 feet is a little too high for a limit? It suggests rather a love of lofty scrambling than of mountain wonders.” While William Mathews, Jr. that “I cannot say that I see the introduction of Albert Smith’s name with feelings of great satisfaction and I doubt the expediency of rule VII,” he seems to have concurred with Smith on the question of the height requirement, writing that “It is no doubt an excellent thing that a man should have ascended a mountain 13,000 feet high but will it not needlessly restrict our members? There are many men who have not made any ascents, but who intend to do so, and would join for the sake of getting information. ‘The rule too will shut out all Norwegians.’”

In a statement that reflects the conflicting desires of various early members to both expand Club membership while maintaining some kind of barriers to inclusion, F. Vaughan Hawkins, wrote that he “shall have much pleasure in becoming a member of the ‘Alpine Club.’ One or two remarks suggest themselves on the proposed rules, particularly the 13,000 ft. qualification, which I rather doubt the efficiency of, though I quite agree in the object. But surely all the world will qualify by going up the Cima di Jazzi wh., as we know, is perfectly practicable for ladies in an easy morning, and in the meanwhile, the Geant or Col d’Erin or an unsuccessful attempt on a new mountain wd. not qualify at all.”

By 1858, when a third circular was sent round to members, Rule VII had been deleted, and Rule IV “added a preliminary scrutiny by the Committee of a candidate’s qualifications, whether literary or in the form of mountain expeditions. ‘One black in ten’ was to exclude” (“Rise of Mountaineering”). No mention is made of the seemingly unofficial policy: that the Alpine Club of London remained until the 1970s “no place for a lady.”

The cost of membership together with the Club’s policies of screening and blackballing members undoubtedly were behind the fact that, notes Robbins,

of more than 800 members, two-thirds were drawn from the professions of law, teaching, civil and public service, the church, medicine and the arts. . . . By contrast the landed upper class could be said to be under-represented in relation to their social prestige and political importance. Less than 12 percent of the club’s early membership falls under the generously broad category of ‘Landowners, rentiers and those of no profession’ [Blakeney, 1951]. . . . If the club was not dominated by the landed gentry, neither was it obviously representative of the emergent industrial bourgeoisie.

Although 22 percent of its early members are classified as having occupations in ‘trade and commerce’ [Blakeney, 1951], a number of these would be London-based and engaged in banking and commercial services linked to the City of London. It is also clear that most early mountaineers were public school and Oxbridge educated [Mumm, 1921: 3] and that the club progressively acquired a distinctly anti-bourgeois ethos, to the point that it could be rumoured that it was his occupation as a manufacturer that had disqualified the leading mountaineer of the 1880s [A. F. Mummery] from membership.

The clear basis of recruitment to the Alpine Club thus appears clear: the bulk of the

membership was drawn from various fractions of the professional middle class, old and new, mixed with a smaller number of individuals from the landed, financial and industrial sections of the bourgeoisie and from the middle classes employed in industry and finance. The general pattern of recruitment appears to remain fairly stable over the 1863-1914 period with only a gradual increase in members recruited from 'trade and commerce'. Among professionals the sport seems to have had a particular attraction for academics, teachers and 'intellectuals' of all sorts. (585)

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Appendix V

The Ladies' Alpine Club: A Brief History 1907-1975

The Ladies' Alpine Club was formed in 1907 as a subgroup of the London's Lyceum Club by a cluster of women who shared an interest in mountaineering but had been excluded from membership in the prestigious and all-male Alpine Club of London. In 1909-10, the ladies split from the Lyceum Club to become their own independent institution.

Although Hansen notes that Adeline Edwards "took credit for first thinking of the idea for a Ladies' Alpine Club seven years earlier," Mrs. Elizabeth Le Blond seems to have played a central part in turning the idea into a reality. Le Blond became the Club's first President; after two terms of Presidency, Lucy Walker became President. Miss Walker was succeeded by Miss Maud T. Meyer ("a brilliant mathematician from Girton").

Unlike the Alpine Club of London, which prided itself on being the father of many satellite clubs that cropped up in countries such as Switzerland and Germany in the wake of the A.C.'s formation in 1857, the L.A.C was, from its inception, slightly more cosmopolitan in its outlook. The international perspective of the club was reflected in the fact that Vice Presidents from various nations were chosen to serve as Delegates of their clubs, and that the first Honorary President was Queen Margherita of Italy. However, Edwards's vision of the Club, expressed during a speech during an L.A.C. dinner (December 16, 1907), demonstrates that some L.A.C. members may have envisioned the club in a different light. The following excerpt from Edwards speech offers the suggestion that, unlike Le Blond, members such as Edwards viewed the L.A.C. as a vehicle for English nationalism: "Let us see to it that [the L.A.C.]

becomes also the Club par excellence,” Edwards said, “membership of which is a cachet of honour in whatever country of the globe we elect to climb bearing in mind always that whatever we Englishwomen choose to do, that we can do, and will do, second to none” (314). Edwards’ focus on the might of the “English” suggests that on the questions of nation and race, some of the L.A.C. members may have been more akin to some of the more elitist and parochial A. C. men than their fellow clubswomen.

Generally speaking, however, the L. A. C. not only welcomed members of all nations but of various ages—as Le Blond noted in her history of the Club, the L. A. C. prided itself on “[trying] in every way to adapt itself to the spirit of the times and to its growing membership of young climbers.” But like the A. C., the L. A. C.’s membership fee and the cost of mounting climbing expeditions would have kept the Club a predominantly middle- to upper-class club.

Members attended lectures, borrowed books from the library, and participated in teas, dinners and at-homes at their Clubroom, which, two years after the club’s organization was housed in the Hotel Great Central, London. To enhance their sense of inclusion, members were also able to purchase a badge, described as being “in the form of a silver brooch with a monogram in the centre and a dark green enamel border” for 4s 6d.”

During World War I, as the Alps were closed and various nations turned their focus towards the war effort, the LAC cancelled their December dinners and reduced their activities to sporadic informal meetings. According to Le Blond, however, “the L. A. C. was not, as a body, idle in war-time. The Club-room was used as a depot for boots, socks, and other comforts, sorely needed at first by the French and Italian Alpine troops, and more than 4,000 articles were sent out to our allies” (“Ladies” 7).

In 1919, the Club was forced to hold its first reception and supper after the war at the Forum Club—due to the fact that, in 1916, Le Blond writes, “the Government requisitioned the Hotel Great Central, and with it the Club-room” (“Ladies” 7). By 1925, the L. A. C. had laid claim to having “recognized standing as the chief Ladies’ Climbing Club in the world” (“Ladies” 5).

L.A.C and the A.C.

According to Le Blond, the Alpine Club of London was often quite supportive of its “daughter.” When, in the early years, the women were trying to establish a library, for example, Le Blond reports that “Gifts of [books,] photographs and paintings were also received not only from members of the L. A. C., but also from members of the friendly body of climbers housed in Savile Row, who have from the first shown a strong and helpful interest in the L. A. C.” (“Ladies” 6). A skeptic might argue that the A. C. had been so “strong” and “helpful” because a club for women offered the promise of keeping females from trying to infiltrate into the manly club. Protesting females could no longer claim that they wished to join the Alpine Club because there was no other opportunity for them to meet with people with common Alpine interests. Instead, they could now be directed towards the separate, slightly subordinate, but for ladies quite “appropriate,” club and the separate spheres ideology could be safely upheld. In 1970, the Alpine Club finally opened its doors to women.

The 1910 L.A.C. Exhibition

From May 2 to 7, 1910, the Ladies’ Alpine Club mounted a Mountaineering Equipment Exhibition at the Great Central Hotel, the headquarters for the club. An advertisement for the exhibition appearing in the *Alpine Journal* of 1910 reports that “although primarily intended to illustrate articles for the use of ladies, a fair number of novelties of interest to the sterner sex

were to be seen" (246). Among the novelties of interest to 'the sterner sex' were "specimens of the well-known Mummery and Whymper Alpine tents" and "a large variety of genuine peasant-made homespun, suitable for the roughest of hard wear." According to the *Alpine Journal* reviewer of the exhibition, "many of these are of the closest texture and of great strength, and were considered the beau ideal for men's mountaineering clothing" (247).

Among the "novelties" for women displayed were: "a specially designed light travelling trunk with a metal frame covered with Willesden canvas, capable of withstanding much rough wear"; "specimens of clothing, gloves and mittens of special design; "a wine and sandwich case of the usual hunting pattern"; "a string rucksack"; and "a neat little leather case holding a No. 3 Brownie camera, a Conway's guide, a Siegfried map, and a small metal sandwich case."

Burberry was there displaying "specimens of their Gabardine wind and weather proof garments"—garments which, then as now, "are too well known to need comment" (247), while "Messrs. Jaeger's exhibit comprised a serviceable double-breasted sweater with high neck, sleeved waistcoats, moccasins, and a throat and chest protector." Other merchants presented boots; ice axes; glacier nails for boots; cameras; face cream and "tabloids"; "a lantern which folds up flat" (*Daily Mail* 6 May 1910. 7); "a silk sleeping tent weighing only 1 1/2 lb. [that could be] stowed in a pocket . . . [A] cooking utensil which forms kettle, saucepan, or frying pan as required. . . . [T]eas . . . in tablet form and jams and soups in tiny tins" (*Daily Mail* 3 May 1910. 7); a hut pillow, and "snow spectacles of a special shade of orange tint" (247). All in all, the event appears to have been a mini-Great Exhibition for mountaineers.

The highlight of the show was Messrs. Thomas & Son's (6 Brook Street) lady's climbing outfit. According to the AC review, the "climbing costume of Scotch tweed . . . attracted considerable attention." Apparently it included a "Norfolk coat [which had] a pleat in

the back to allow freedom to the arms, two pleats in front, two pockets outside, and one inside breast-pocket. It is lined with silk, and has elastic wind cuffs." The nether parts of the outfit were comprised of "knickerbocker breeches" which "lace[d] at the knee, with an additional thickness of cloth under the laces to protect the knee" and a convertible skirt (which I analyzed on pp. 240-44 and which is depicted in **figure 86**). "A soft leather bonnet made of gazelle skin, with the hair outside, appeared to be a most useful and comfortable head covering for climbing in a wind" (246).

The Ladies' Alpine Journal

From 1913 to 1925, the L.A.C. produced a series of Yearbooks which were too small and brief to be considered journals in the conventional sense. LAC Index editor Johanna Mertz writes that in 1925 "it was decided to produce an enlarged Annual report [as the LAC called their year-book] and to include articles and photographs" (3). The journal continued until 1970 when the L.A.C.'s merger with the Alpine Club of London opened the door for women's equal participation in both the male club and its journal.

Works Containing Information about the Ladies' Alpine Club

The Ladies' Alpine Club Index 1907-1975.

Le Blond, Elizabeth. *Day In, Day Out*. London: John Lane, 1928.

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