The Right Sort of Woman

The Right Sort of Woman: Victorian Travel Writers and the Fitness of an Empire

By

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

"Most people journeyed by book."
—Robert Colls, Identity of England[1]

The nineteenth-century English home was mythologized in fiction, poetry, theatre, song, sermons and advertisements. The home, imagined as warm, clean and virtuous, symbolized a place of respite from the frenetic pace of industrialization. It was commonly thought such a domestic haven would allow a man to revive himself after dealing with the stress of the public capitalist system.[2] Victorian women were responsible for maintaining the happy hearth. Women were "told to remember the needs of 'world-weary men' and to pray, think, strive to make a home something like a bright, serene, restful, joyful nook of heaven in an unheavenly world."[3] John Ruskin and Coventry Patmore were just two of many writers who glorified the patriarchal system and the submissive, always supportive, ideal of Victorian womanhood— the angel in the house.

The long term ramifications of such a patriarchal ideal were crippling. Middle- class women were treated as little more than overgrown children who needed constant care and guidance. Women had little authority over their own bodies. They were taught to avoid overexerting themselves, to live sedate and restful lives. Too much exertion or stress, it was thought, would cause women to damage their reproductive systems. In order to avoid harming their reproductive organs, women could not participate in exercise or sports. To protect the future of England, women needed to live quietly so that they could bear and tend to the offspring of the nation. Women were not allowed to exert their bodies in strenuous exercise because it was commonly believed that physical exertion would cause "pelvic disturbances," or worse, create manly women. Among the list of

[1] Robert Colls, *Identity of England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 266.
[2] Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), 345.
[3] Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), 345.

concerns was that women's hormones and reproductive capabilities would be disrupted because of athletics.[4]

During the mid-to-late nineteenth century leisure recreation and sports began to occupy public debate. Radical critics of the angel in the house Victorian ideal of womanhood, such as John Stuart Mill and Harriet Martineau, argued for individuality, freedom, and education coupled with the right to exercise the female mind and body.

While middle-class English boys received training in academics and sports, many girls received a home education which consisted of reading, etiquette, sewing, and dance. Private girls' schools emphasized "husband-catching skills: coiffure, fashion, singing, and piano-playing for decorous courtship recitals in parental parlors." [5] All women, female domestics as well as middle-class wives and children, were taught to be fearful, respectful, humble, and gentle.[6]

Until 1847 higher education for women was limited. Then Queen's College for Women opened in 1847, followed by Bedford College in 1849, and Royal Holloway College in 1886.[7] St. Thomas's Hospital in London did not open its school for female nurses until 1860.[8] Cambridge University did not allow women to sit for examinations until 1872. Women were not awarded Cambridge degrees until 1947. Women could not earn any degree from the University of London until 1878.[9]

Without access to equal education, most girls transitioned from their parents' control to domestic service and then on to marriage. Victorian women's lives centered on the work of the home; the husband's comfort was their primary responsibility. The public arena was meant only for men.

This is not to say that middle-class Victorian women were not permitted leisure; leisure was looked upon as a desirable marker of social status.[10] Successful middle-class men gained social respectability if they earned

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[4] Kathleen E. McCrone, "Play Up! Play Up! And Play the Game! Sport at the Late Victorian Girls' Public School," *The Journal of British Studies* vol. 23.2 (Spring 1984): 114.

[5] Gary Cross, *A Social History of Leisure Since 1600* (State College, PA: Venture Publishing, Inc., 1990), 108.

[6] Leonore Davidoff, *Worlds Between: Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 27.

[7] Suzanne Fagence Cooper, *The Victorian Woman* (London: V & A Publications, 2001), 81.

[8] Suzanne Fagence Cooper, 83.

[9] Sally Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England*, second edition (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 2009), x.

[10] Gary Cross, 103.

enough money to allow their wives to remain safely tucked in the domestic sphere with nothing whatsoever to do. Then, it was the reliance on domestic servants which enabled the middle-class wife to refocus her energies to respectable pursuits outside of the home, to church and charitable organizations.[11] While servants tended to domestic tasks, middle-class wives became the focal point for developing the growing interest in philanthropy as well as a new form of domestic leisure built around togetherness and gentility rather than the traditional and often rough community pleasures of peasant society.[12] Wholesome leisure activities, usually performed in public parks, organized by dutiful wives, provided "moral training and sustenance for the young and men."[13] The moral training for boys acquired through leisure activities consisted of developing competitiveness, assertiveness, and courage. Only men and boys could participate in recreational leisure sports while women and girls were expected to watch and politely applaud.

What did Victorian women do for themselves in their leisure time? Victorian women read. *The Cornhill Magazine* and *Belgravia* were just two of the many popular magazines that sought to educate women beyond the concerns of the home. When William Makepeace Thackeray became editor of *The Cornhill Magazine* he hoped to create a magazine that would make women "better middle-class citizens."[14] Thackeray worked to provide articles on literature, science, history, and law in conjunction with lighter reading.[15] Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Belgravia* magazine encouraged women to perform activities, such as reading, apart from the family. *Belgravia* wanted women to "think independently and to enjoy themselves while reading."[16] Middle-class women also devoured books about travel and adventure. There was also a large output of texts which emphasized ways to improve female health through moderate exercise.[17] These texts challenged the traditional images of the frail Victorian woman and articulated new categories of femininity. One result of the reading trends was that the Victorian women's movement came to the foreground through the popular press in the arguments surrounding women's health

[11] Gary Cross, 104.
[12] Gary Cross, 63.
[13] Gary Cross, 103.
[14] Jennifer Phegley, *Educating the Proper Woman Reader: Victorian Family Literary Magazines and the Cultural Health of the Nation* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2004), 71.
[15] Jennifer Phegley, 76.
[16] Jennifer Phegley, 134.
[17] Kathleen E. McCrone, 109.

and the right to exercise. In addition to suffrage, dress reform and education reform, women's right to participate in leisure sports was also an issue linked to the women's movement, although there was no organized campaign for women's sports as there was for suffrage, education and dress reform.[18]

Sports rose to the forefront in the general discussion on women's health largely as a reaction against the growing cult of invalidism. Large numbers of Victorian women suffered from anemia and tiredness.[19] Rather than examine the effects of women's fashion (corsets) or poor diets, male physicians interpreted such symptoms as biological weakness. Women were told to avoid physical exertion by resting as often as possible. Physicians prescribed opiates, bromides, or advised being bled, or having teeth pulled to remedy the myriad of women's health problems.[20] Bessie Rayner Parkes lamented that "people endeavoured to check the physical power of their daughters as much as that of their minds."[21] In defiance of the burgeoning cult of invalidism, in 1850, Harriet Martineau advocated sports for women as a cure. Although walking was always recommended as an appropriate athletic activity for women and wealthy women rode horses— with a chaperone—Martineau's message was revolutionary. In 1850 middle-class women had few options for physical exercise because sports were seen as masculine and thus inappropriate for women. In direct opposition to Martineau's call for agency over one's own body, sporting magazines and *Punch* ridiculed athletic women. They caricatured athletic women as freaks, Amazons, and lesbians. Nevertheless, encouraged by Harriet Martineau and J.S. Mill, pockets of Victorian women began to question the life of invalidism as an effective remedy for their ailments.

Suffragists and liberal philosophers were not alone in their criticisms of the cult of invalidism. British women travel writers also challenged the notion of the proper sphere for women and the social taboos regarding choices of female leisure activity. Women travelers, when abroad, often participated in physical activities women were not allowed to participate in while in England. Rather than sedately play cards, lounge in bed, or sew by the fireside, British women travelers preferred to ride horses, climb

[18] Kathleen E. McCrone, 108.
[19] Sally Mitchell, 197.
[20] For a detailed discussion of the medical treatments given to Victorian women see Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *For Her Own Good: Two Centuries of The Experts' Advice to Women*, second edition (New York: Anchor Books, 2005).
[21] Sally Mitchell, *The New Girl: Girl's Culture in England, 1880-1915* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 106.

mountains, hunt and canoe wild waters—all activities respectable Victorian women were not expected nor allowed to do. Venturesome women travel writers demonstrated women could develop physical strength and gain control over their own lives.[22] Although sports and travel were thought of as masculine activities, nineteenth-century women travel writers refused to have their minds and bodies checked. Bold women travel writers, who advocated for demanding exercise for women, were usually linked to the feminist movement in the public consciousness because their experiences challenged existing social arrangements.

By 1840 moneyed women had the socioeconomic clout to ignore some social taboos. Fashionable English women were hawking and fox hunting, with the assistance of safety gear and always with appropriate clothing.[23] Harriet Martineau, in 1850, recommended physically demanding activities such as swimming and rowing for all women. By the 1860s, upper class and upper-middle class women could participate in croquet, archery, yachting, fox-hunting, and side-saddle riding. Golf and tennis opened to women in the 1880s. By the fin de siècle women were playing lacrosse, field hockey, fencing, cricket and gymnastics.[24] These athletics were appropriate, or safe, for women only because they were strictly "constrained by costume and custom."[25] Organized leisure activities allowed both sexes the opportunity to play and watch together. Women were expected to "play like gentlemen and behave like ladies."[26]

Yet sportswomen were still the exception rather than the norm.[27] Ladies who shot drew great amounts of vocal criticism. Critics viewed women's interest in leisure sport as superficial at best. Even Queen Victoria, in a letter from 1882 to her daughter, Princess Victoria, expressed her distrust of athletic women; the Queen believed "it was acceptable for a woman to be a spectator, but only fast women shot."[28] As late as 1917 Lord Warwick remarked, "I have met ladies who shoot and I have come to the conclusion, being no longer young and a staunch Conservative, that I would prefer them not to."[29] Magazine cartoons depicted women as

[22] Kathleen E. McCrone, 108.
[23] Mike Huggins, *The Victorians and Sport* (London: Hambledon & London, 2004), 80.
[24] Sally Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England*, second edition (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 2009), 226.
[25] Mike Huggins, 80.
[26] Mike Huggins, 80.
[27] Kathleen E. McCrone, 109.
[28] Maria Aitken, *Women Adventurers: Travelers, Explorers, and Seekers* (New York: Dorset Press, 1987), 85.
[29] Maria Aitken, 85.

"dizzy creatures with little interest in sport."[30] Some thought women played sports only to flirt; the physiological need (not to mention mental need) for demanding exercise was thought unnecessary for ladies. As late as 1887 in America, author Charlotte Perkins Gilman was advised to live a "domestic life" as treatment for her melancholia.[31] Mental and physical exertion was strictly forbidden because of her condition. Since then medical science has discovered that physical exertion caused by regular exercise actually elevates mood; exercise and sports might have been a practical remedy for Gilman, among others. Contrary to many physicians' warnings and public scorn, some nineteenth-century women realized the importance of physical and mental stimulation. They challenged advice given by doctors, husbands, and even their own mothers.

This book explores the lives of five women travel writers who dared transgress the boundaries of Victorian respectability in leisure and answered the call initiated by J.S. Mill and Harriet Martineau. Mary Kingsley, Isabella Bird Bishop, Lady Florence Douglas Dixie, Isabel Savory, and Elizabeth Le Blond were fortunate their social status and relative unattachment to familial obligations allowed them the freedom to travel. While they traveled, these five women thrived on the outdoor life and sports. All five writers were widely read and enjoyed by their contemporaries. Although Savory, Bird, Kingsley, and Le Blond were not active champions of the feminist movement, adventurous women travel writers fueled the fin de siècle's New Woman's movement because their readers interpreted their achievements as adventurers and sportswomen "as proof of female equality."[32] Brave women travelers were participating in imperial activities that were once only the realm of men. The New Woman no longer contented herself with the home and hearth; The New Woman sought adventure which the travel writing of the past decades had inspired.

Analyzing women's travel writing proposes significant challenges because women travelers, although far from Britain, were never completely free from British moral codes and British commercial interests. While away from home, women writers participated in cultural exchanges that often led them to reevaluate their definitions of womanhood and freedom. Women travel writers participated in debates other than the

[30] Mike Huggins, 81.
[31] Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "Why I Wrote *The Yellow Wallpaper*?" in *Women Who Did: Stories by Men and Women, 1890-1914*, ed. Angelique Richardson (London: Penguin Books, 2002), 398-9.
[32] Catherine Barnes Stevenson, *Victorian Women Travel Writers in Africa*, Twayne's English Authors Series, ed. Herbert Sussman (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), 3.

'Woman Question.' Because of the competing and sometimes overlapping social expectations these women had, their texts are unstable, contradictory, transgressive. In *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism*, Sara Mills reads women travel writers as part of a larger enterprise rather than as examples of exclusive, exceptional women who escaped the structures of patriarchy.[33] Mills points out that many critics,

> in an attempt to construct a history of women travellers which depicts women in a positive way (i.e., one which portrays them as strong individuals whilst still retaining femininity), are very selective with the accounts they give of women travellers, for example, they leave out accounts in the original texts of cruelty or deceitfulness. Stress is laid on feminine qualities, such as the care that was felt for the 'natives.'[34]

Instead, and I agree with Mills, women travel writers negotiated tensions brought about by competing power structures. Women's travel writings were not *de facto* autobiographies nor were the texts glorious advertisements for the New Woman. At times in the travel texts, the writer supports traditional Victorian mores and at other times, the travel writer is renegotiating competing positions. This oftentimes leaves the travel reader perplexed as to the writer's actual position. This is the beautiful complexity of the travel narrative. Travel writing can be daring, self-reflective, and spiritual in nature. Travel writing, like the nature of travel itself, negotiates the gray areas between power and desire, between us and them.[35] Travel writing speaks to the politics and prejudices of the day.

Women travel writers faced many of the same social constraints their peers faced in Britain. For example, women were "not supposed to know or write about sex."[36] And, as Mills states, "Within this stereotype, women are supposed to travel in order to paint butterflies and flowers"—certainly not scale mountains, navigate rivers and record data on foreign geographies.[37] Victorian women travel writers rejected their submissive position as 'good wives' at home, and many had no particular "affinity

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[33] Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1991), 29-34.
[34] Sara Mills, 34.
[35] Steve Clark, ed., *Travel Writing and Empire: Postcolonial Theory in Transit* (London: Zed Books, 1999), 2-3.
[36] Sara Mills, 81.
[37] Sara Mills, 81.

with domesticity."[38] The Woman question then becomes centered on women's place(s) within the empire.

Women travel writers operate not only within the power structures of gender but within the power structures of empire, class, and race. To understand a woman, or a man, for that matter, we should take into consideration the myriad roles human beings occupy over their lifetimes. A woman of the lower classes would have had immensely different experiences than a woman of the upper classes; economics and race participate in the construction of identity as significantly as gender. In hopes of capturing a more complete understanding of women's travel writing, particular attention should be paid to the diverse roles and power structures women navigated. With the exception of Bird and Kingsley, scant scholarly attention has been paid to the other travel writers in this book. In many respects, this book is a maiden voyage, charting the lives, personalities, and prejudices of singular British women. It is my hope the biographies of the travel writers, combined with overviews of their writings, and brief discussions of the politics of the period(s), will inspire scholar-teachers to include these travel writers in their classroom lectures and research, thereby opening, and no doubt deepening, theoretical analysis of each of the travel texts. This book makes no attempt to be the final word on women's travel writing or theory, rather I hope this book serves as a starting point, a diving board into the deep and wide pool of women's writing on sports and the empire.

Female athleticism and power structures are investigated in the following five travel narratives: Isabella Bird Bishop's *The Hawaiian Archipelago: Six Months among the Palm Groves, Coral Reefs, and Volcanoes of the Sandwich Islands* (1875), Lady Florence Douglas Dixie's *Across Patagonia* (1881), Mary Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa* (1897), Isabel Savory's *A Sportswoman in India: Personal Adventures and Experiences of Travel in Known and Unknown India* (1900), and Elizabeth Le Blond's *Mountaineering in the Land of the Midnight Sun* (1908). These texts were selected for their representations of exploration, empire, and their portrayals of athletic women who were quite opinionated about their position as British women. Each writer navigates the tensions between gender, sport and empire in distinct yet unstable ways. By choosing these particular texts— one text from each of the last decades of the Victorian era and one with a foot in the Edwardian era— we can reflect upon the social anxieties surrounding women's roles in order to better explore the relationship between women's athletics, women's rights, and social change. I placed the texts in chronological order to better examine the

[38] Maria Aitken, 9.

evolution of travel writing as a genre and to better examine the status of the British Empire. Because travel writing struggles with so much more than gender issues, I also explore a germinal question posed by Mary Louise Pratt in *Imperial Eyes*: "How has travel writing produced the rest of the world for European readership?"[39]

Chapters 2 through 6 investigate what sport and travel suggest about nineteenth-century British society. Chapter 2 analyzes how Isabella Bird Bishop's travel narrative addresses social and political issues surrounding the native Hawaiians as the United States and England competed for Hawaiian goods and territory. Isabella Bird praises the newly Christianized Hawaiian lifestyle. She also charts the islands' resources and expounds on Hawaii's value as a colony. She is particularly captivated by the freedom enjoyed by native Hawaiian women. While in Hawaii, Bird escapes from strict British customs—namely she rides on her horse like a man. Bird's travel narrative negotiates not only theories of womanhood but theories of empire as well. The female body and the equine body become the contested zones between 'civilized' and 'savage'— the British Empire and 'the other.'

Chapter 3 examines Lady Florence Douglas Dixie's *Across Patagonia*. In this survivalist travel narrative, Dixie describes her journey across South America with her brother and her husband. As she crosses the South American frontier on horseback, Dixie ponders the slavery of women and the dangers faced by women. The adventurers encounter prairie fires, food shortages and thrilling hunts. When Dixie participates in the hunts, she questions English sporting tradition and her role as a woman. Her time spent in the open South American air does not masculinize her; rather it provides a lesson in self-reliance and empathy which transcends gender boundaries. Her womanhood, she believes, is strengthened because she has learned to provide for herself and survive in dangerous circumstances.

Many critics have focused on Mary Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa*. Chapter 4 synthesizes the work done by scholars such as Alison Blunt, Catherine Barnes Stevenson, Katherine Frank, and Sara Mills, all of whom have explored Kingsley's position as a solitary woman explorer. Chapter 4 adds to the debate by deconstructing Kingsley's rhetoric in regards to her position as an active, sporting imperial subject. Kingsley's physical exertion might remind readers of classic male adventurers, yet her negotiation of Africa reflects her deep and contradictory relationship with imperial Britain.

Chapter 5 investigates Isabel Savory's *A Sportswoman in India: Personal Adventures and Experiences of Travel in Known and Unknown*

[39] Steve Clark, ed., 8.

India. Savory travels by boat, train, elephant and horse in order to experience the greatest jewel in the British crown. She claims she travels to expand her mind. To broaden her personal education, she catalogues India's riches, explores the causes of poverty and ponders international relations. Her opinions are diverse and fluctuating; she criticizes British colonial policy regarding Kashmir just as she denigrates Indian social customs. As a British woman in India, Savory seems torn between defending her mother country while criticizing native policy. She finds herself trapped between the roles of patriot and preservationist. Nevertheless, her narrative is a moving account of perseverance. Savory describes the joys as well as the challenges faced by sportsmen. Her narrative is rich with thrilling descriptions of avalanches and big game hunts. She faces many dangerous circumstances thought of as unsuitable for ladies.

Chapter 6 focuses on Elizabeth Le Blond's adventures in *Mountaineering in the Land of the Midnight Sun* (1908). At a time when few women attempted mountain climbing, Le Blond is one the sport's most distinguished climbers. And, in the aftermath of the notorious Matterhorn tragedy— which claimed the life of Florence Douglas Dixie's brother— Le Blond remains one of the sport's most outspoken advocates. Le Blond worked publicly to increase the safety of the sport. She describes the skill and determination needed for this very dangerous sport. In her travel narrative she provides advice to fellow climbers and armchair travelers; Le Blond also remarks on gender and imperialism. She describes Norwegian women's characteristics; Norwegian women, she finds, have admirable, independent qualities— qualities that build a strong, modern nation.

Examining these travel narratives strengthens our understandings of women's positions in the British Empire. All five women challenged themselves physically in order to participate in the chronicling of the British Empire. British women travel writers renegotiated social expectations for women and revisioned their place within the vast empire. The final chapter of this study traces the impact women adventurers had on the nineteenth century and beyond. Because of the positive accounts of female athleticism, female health and sports became prominent topics in society. Because of such women writers, by the early twentieth century, women had increased access to athletics. Girls' schools taught physical education.[40] Popular magazines, such as *The Girl's Own Paper*, even

[40] Kathryn Gleadle, *British Women in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 183.

featured athletic activities for young women.[41] Medical doctors realized that "exercise improved women's health and childbearing capacity" yet this realization still competed with anxiety over the loss of feminine charms due to a perceived roughness caused by exercise and sport.[42] By the early twentieth century, women seized opportunities to participate in athletics thereby resituating themselves in the debate over equal rights. British women's travel writing functioned as "a medium for the construction of a self-confident female subjectivity."[43] Sports and travel inspired women to escape the tradition-bound domestic sphere in order to actively participate in the Empire, in life. This was the era of the New Woman.

[41] Sally Mitchell, *The New Girl: Girl's Culture in England, 1880-1915* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 105.
[42] Sally Mitchell, 106.
[43] Indira Ghose, *Women Travellers in Colonial India: The Power of the Female Gaze* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 32.

CHAPTER TWO

ISABELLA BIRD BISHOP AND HER ADVENTURES IN HAWAII

Isabella Bird (15 October 1831- 7 October 1904) was a frail, sickly child. Her physical activity was limited because of spinal complaints; she found it difficult to ride or walk long distances.[1] Her parents did, however, encourage her to spend time outdoors.[2] At eighteen, Bird underwent surgery to remove a tumor at the base of her spine.[3] When she was twenty, her doctor prescribed travel to improve her health; she journeyed to America. But, the following year, her health continued to suffer.

In her thirties she had chronic backaches and moved in with her sister, as an invalid.[4] Although she and her sister, Henrietta, lived in a "dignified square" in Edinburgh and had "circle of high-minded, intelligent friends," Bird's health was never hardy.[5] Bird remarks, in her personal letters, that she experienced "neuralgia, pain in my bones, pricking like pins and needles in my limbs, excruciating nervousness, exhaustion, inflamed eyes, sore throat, swelling of the glands behind each ear, stupidity."[6] Traditional Victorian medicine did little to alleviate her suffering. She took three bromides per day and continued to feel "shaking all over." She experienced undefined terror of which she decided, "I am such a miserable being."[7] In addition to bromide, she also took laudanum and chlorodyne. She had a series of operations, one of which removed her teeth. Her back pains

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[1] Pat Barr, *A Curious Life for A Lady: The Story of Isabella Bird* (London: Macmillan, John Murray, 1970), 28.

[2] Anna M. Stoddart, *The Life of Isabella Bird (Mrs. Bishop) hon. Member of the Oriental Society of Pekin* (London: John Murray, 1908; Research Publications, Inc.: History of Women (1977): fiche reel 769, no. 6164), 9.

[3] Evelyn Bach, "A Traveller in Skirts: Quest and Conquest in the Travel Narratives of Isabella Bird," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 22.3/4 (1995): 588.

[4] Evelyn Bach, 588.

[5] Pat Barr, 19.

[6] Pat Barr, 20.

[7] Pat Barr, 20.

improved occasionally, yet she continued to suffer from other ailments. She was bled by leeches and by incisions.[8] She wrote in a letter to her sister: "My back is better but my head remains so bad and I always feel so tired that I never wish to speak…I wish I cared for people and did not feel used up by them, for people one can always have. I like toil with occasional spurts of recreation. This is such an aimless life."[9] She goes as far as to tell Henrietta that, if her health improved, she would prefer a servant's life rather than her aimless life as a gentlewoman. She decides, "Manual labour, a rough life and freedom from conventionalities added to novelty would be a good thing."[10]

Aches and pains of the body, in the nineteenth century, were seen as forms of depression. For male sufferers, doctors often recommended robust and invigorating exercise such as horseback riding and gymnastics. For men, fresh air, water, and hardy food constituted remedies for chronic complaints.[11] In fact, a nineteenth-century handbook for physicians, *Tanner's Index of Diseases*, "urged against the use of purgatives, sedatives, and narcotics," for men. *Tanner's* instead recommended "strengthers" such as "strychnine, or nux vomica; phosphate of zinc and bark; bromide of potassium; and cod liver oil."[12]

Bird found that when she traveled her health improved. In 1872, Bird, at age forty-two, sailed for the Sandwich Islands. There she indulged in fresh air and strenuous physical activity. She relished the physical activity Bird proved fresh air and exercise benefited Victorian women as it did Victorian men.

Kay Chubbuck, in her introduction to *Letters to Henrietta*, suggests that Bird may not have traveled for her health alone, but also to find a husband. Chubbuck wonders if Bird's health suffered because of her spinsterhood and "its attendant feelings of being unused and unwanted."[13] After all, Bird's destinations had a "staggering superfluity of men," a caveat that was advertised in many British publications.[14] In *Victorian Lady Travellers*, Dorothy Middleton points out that Bird turned down a marriage offer to Rocky Mountain man Jim Nugent because of his use of

[8] Isabella Bird, *Letters to Henrietta*, edited by Kay Chubbuck (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2003), 5.
[9] Isabella Bird, 20.
[10] Isabella Bird, 21.
[11] Bruce Haley, *The Healthy Body and Victorian Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), 17.
[12] Bruce Haley, 28.
[13] Isabella Bird, 16.
[14] Isabella Bird, 16.

whiskey.[15] Bird's account of her initial physical attraction to Jim Nugent is powerful; the short passage passes as a piece of Victorian erotica. In *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains*, Bird comments on his handsome nose, his mouth, and the way his clothes "hung together, and on him."[16] For Bird, Jim Nugent epitomizes a type of rugged, desperado masculinity—masculinity no doubt made more intriguing because of its stark contrast to the men she encountered in her own traditional, church-going middle-class life. Although physically attracted to Jim Nugent, Bird was not desperate for a husband. She realized that no good could come from a formal relationship with him because of his whiskey drinking. Although Bird did not find a suitable husband on any of her journeys, she did find restored health because she felt useful. Part of a respectable middle-class family—relatives of William Wilberforce—Bird's mother and father believed devoutly in service to God and the community.[17]

Isabella Bird Bishop's 1875 travel memoir *The Hawaiian Archipelago. Six months Among the Palm Groves, Coral Reefs, and Volcanoes of the Sandwich Islands* records the political situation the Sandwich Islands faced in the mid-nineteenth century. Although Bird did not align herself with feminist organizations, her travel text resonated with late nineteenth-century women's rights activists.[18] Her travel narrative encouraged British bourgeois women to carve out "new social spaces" for themselves.[19]

Bird's critique of Hawaii begins when she confronts questions surrounding the mental and physical state of the native Hawaiians. They are not, she claims, savages nor are they cannibals— although after the 1779 massacre of Captain James Cook and five of his sailors in Hawaii many Britons perceived Hawaiians as savages. Hawaiians were not identical to Fijians, and perhaps most importantly, she finds the native Hawaiians did not worship idols and they did not run naked through the jungle. The Hawaiians, she reports, are "on the whole a quiet, courteous,

[15] Dorothy Middleton, *Victorian Lady Travellers* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), 35.
[16] Isabella Bird, *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains*, edited by Ernest S. Bernard (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 96.
[17] Dorothy Middleton, 20.
[18] Karen M. Morin, "Narrating Imperial Adventure: Isabella Bird's Travels in the Nineteenth-Century American West," *Western Places, American Myths: How We Think About the West*, edited by Gary J. Hausladen (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2003), 217.
[19] Karen M. Morin, 218.

orderly, harmless, Christian community."[20] Early in her travel narrative, Bird describes the civilized order of the Hawaiian kingdom. She writes:

> The Hawaiians show a great aptitude for political organization, and the islands have a thoroughly civilized polity. They constitute a limited monarchy, and have a constitutional and hereditary king, a parliament with an upper and lower house, a cabinet, a standing army, a police force, a Supreme Court of Judicature, a most efficient postal system, a Governor and Sheriff on each of the larger islands, court officials, and civil list, taxes, a national debt, and most of the other amenities and appliances of civilization.[21]

Bird credits Christian missionaries with bringing the Bible, education and efficient political systems to Hawaiians. She acknowledges missionaries taught Hawaiians how to read English. Later, Hawaiians began to challenge ancient, oppressive feudal customs. Bird lays this foundation as if to prove to her readers that Hawaiians are civilized. Bird's fondness for Hawaiian culture is markedly different than many male travelers' attitudes toward the Pacific Islanders. Bird does not view Hawaiian people as sites for conquest; rather she hopes their natural, joyful lifestyle might influence Victorian culture. She infers that the English might learn how to live joyful, healthy lives because of information she provides in her travel book.

The Sandwich Islands and Britain

Christian missionaries settled in Hawaii approximately fifty years before Bird's visit. In Ephraim Eveleth's *History of the Sandwich Islands with an Account of the American Mission Established there in 1820*, Eveleth describes the situation of native islanders during the missionaries' early contact. Eveleth states, "From the death of Captain Cook, until the introduction of Christianity, in the year 1820, there was going on in the islands a regular deterioration in character, and an aggravation in vice and misery."[22] Divine intervention, in the form of Christian missionaries, was

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[20] Isabella Bird Bishop, *The Hawaiian Archipelago. Six Months Among the Palm Groves, Coral Reefs, and Volcanoes of the Sandwich Islands* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1894), 3.

[21] Isabella Bird Bishop, 3.

[22] Ephraim Eveleth, *History of the Sandwich Islands: With an Account of the American Mission Established There in 1820 & With a Supplement, Embracing the History of the Wonderful Displays of God's Power in These Islands* (Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1831), 78.

in Eveleth's opinion the only way to end the misery of the islanders and advance civilization. To employ a post-colonial phrase, the missionaries were the first to take up *the white man's burden* and attempt to bring the Hawaiians into the fold of Western civilization.

The missionaries' early documents reveal how they perceived the islanders during the early contact. One missionary, Mr. Stewart, records in his journal: "A first sight of these wretched creatures [sic] was almost overwhelming. Their naked figures and wild expression of countenance, their black hair streaming in the wind as they hurried the canoe over the water, with all the eager action and muscular power of savages."[23] During the first encounter, Hawaiians were perceived as savages. Nevertheless, the savages the missionaries first encounter seem capable of civilizing because of their curiosity regarding Western culture and their apparent adaptability. Stewart notes: "It is proper, however, to add, that the natives are rapidly adopting the English or American fashion of dress, and procure foreign cloth and garments as fast as they have the means of purchasing them."[24] Mark Twain's *Roughing It* (1872) also records the early missionaries' frustration with Hawaiian clothing, or lack thereof. Twain writes:

> When the missionaries first took up their residence in Honolulu, the native women would pay their families frequent friendly visits, day by day, not even clothed with a blush. It was found a hard matter to convince them that this was rather indelicate. Finally the missionaries provided them with long, loose calico robes, and that ended the difficulty—for the women would troop through the town, stark naked, with their robes folded under their arms, march to the missionary houses and then proceed to dress![25]

The missionaries were relieved to see Hawaiians experimenting with Western fashion but were no doubt concerned about their lightheartedness in such matters. By the time Mark Twain traveled to Hawaii in 1866, Hawaiians had adopted a code of dress that covered female genitalia. Hawaiian women wore bright colored robes which covered their arms and draped to their feet.[26] Although missionaries worked diligently to cover Hawaiian women, Twain reports Hawaiian women wore "seldom a

[23] Ephraim Eveleth, 18.
[24] Ephraim Eveleth, 22.
[25] Mark Twain, *Roughing It*, ed. Harriet Elinor Smith, Edgar Marquess Branch, Lin Salamo and Robert Pack Browning (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 460-61.
[26] Mark Twain, *Mark Twain's Letters from Hawaii*, ed. A. Grove Day (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1975), 27.

chemise or any other undergarment."[27] Hawaiians adopted some of the missionaries' fashion, but certainly not all. Hawaiians, to some extent, resolved to remain Hawaiian.

Missionaries saw sin and vice in Hawaiian food, entertainment, and sexuality. Much to the missionaries' dismay, not only did native Hawaiians eat fruits fresh from trees, sugar cane, wild hogs and dogs, chiefs lived in shocking decadence compared to poorer subjects on the islands.[28] The chiefs, not unlike European monarchs, enjoyed class privilege; Eveleth writes, "the chiefs may truly be said to live at their ease, enjoying a profusion of the produce of the land and sea, and having no other care but 'to eat, and to drink, and to be merry.'"[29] Missionaries also battled the practice of polygamy. Missionaries preached that polygamy "is an evil of which we can have no just conception. It is the bane of human society. It destroys at once the sacredness of the relation between husband and wife."[30] Nevertheless, missionaries believed Hawaiians evolved from savage to civilized relatively quickly. For example, Eveleth states, "These people are acquiring the habits of civilized life, just in proportion as they enjoy the instructions and example of the missionaries."[31] Christian religion, bolstered by moral examples set by missionaries, provided instruction and guidance that was thought lacking in the Hawaiians. Because of their Christian guidance, missionaries believed they saw the "awakening intellect of a nation."[32]

The Earl of Pembroke and Dr. George Kingsley (Mary Kingsley's father), in 1872, reported Christian missionaries in the Pacific believed they had "utterly stamped out all these pleasant paganism," including singing, dancing, and smoking. But Pembroke and Kingsley report that this is not the case. They concluded missionaries have only successfully introduced pigs to the islands and stamped out cannibalism.[33] They do note the London Society is a liberal mission society that "seems to care more for 'results' than for doctrines, and sends out its emissaries with a free permission to teach almost any form of Christianity best suited to

[27] Mark Twain, 27.
[28] Ephraim Eveleth, 32.
[29] Ephraim Eveleth, 35.
[30] Ephraim Eveleth, 68.
[31] Ephraim Eveleth, 50.
[32] Ephraim Eveleth, 187.
[33] George Robert Charles Herbert (Earl of Pembroke) and Dr. George Henry Kingsley, *South Sea Bubbles* (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1872), 160-162.

themselves or their natives."[34] Kingsley and Pembroke see the Pacific islanders as living double lives, "a church and a natural one,—and naturally the missionary reports the church one."[35]

The path toward the "awakening intellect of a nation" was not accomplished without resistance. Mark Twain reports, in 1866, that the King of Hawaii said: "The foreigners like their religion—let them enjoy it, and freely. But the religion of my fathers is good enough for me."[36] Twain admired the prideful resistance he observed in Hawaiians. In his *Notebook* he wrote: "More missionaries and more row about saving these 60,000 people than would take to convert hell itself."[37] Hawaiians welcomed foreign people to their islands but fought to retain their own customs. The Hawaiian goal was to retain sovereignty while increasing their national profit.

Christian mission work however is implicitly connected to empire building. Even Eveleth admits,

> How gratifying is it, then, to find, that these privileges and encouragements of civilized life, are actually beginning to dwell upon the once benighted shores of Hawaii and her neighbouring isles! We cannot predict that they will ever become like the British isles; but when we reflect, that righteousness is at the foundation of national, as it is of individual prosperity; and behold it taking deep root there; when we call to mind the natural advantages of these islands, connected with their great facilities for commercial intercourse with all nations, we are constrained to believe, that they are destined to hold an important rank in the civilized world.[38]

For the missionaries it was their moral, Christian duty to ready the savage islands for the American and British empires.

The competing missions of both the United States and England created diplomatic tensions in the Pacific. By the middle of the nineteenth-century, Hawaii found itself in a precarious position caught between England, France and the United States. Hawaii was eagerly courted because of the

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[34] George Robert Charles Herbert (Earl of Pembroke) and Dr. George Henry Kingsley, 291.
[35] George Robert Charles Herbert (Earl of Pembroke) and Dr. George Henry Kingsley, 297.
[36] Mark Twain, 169.
[37] Mark Twain, *Mark Twain's Letters from Hawaii*, ed. A. Grove Day (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1975), viii. Despite his sympathetic views on Hawaiian customs, Twain did support a Christianized, democratic Hawaii rather than pagan feudalism.
[38] Ephraim Eveleth, 187.

high levels of Western civilization found in the islands—work performed by the early missionaries. In 1861, Sophia Cracroft, a famous Artic explorer and forty-five year old spinster, wrote in a journal letter to her family in England, "Among the indigenous races below the equator, in any event, none had reached the civilized refinement of the better class of Hawaiians, many of who were 'highly educated and accomplished men.'"[39] For Cracroft, the "accomplishments" of the Hawaiians had in large part to do with King Alexander Liholiho because he "regularly" received "the *Times*, the *Illustrated News*, the *Quarterly*, the *Edinburgh Review*, *Blackwood's Magazine*, the *Westminster Review*, and *Punch*."[40] The Hawaiian king, at least for Sophia Cracroft, seemed a perfect "English gentleman."[41] In Cracroft's opinion such a display of British literary sophistication did not impede the missionaries' imperial agenda. In fact, such displays of anglophilism may have heightened the American advancement because the United States did not want to lose Hawaii to England. The United States aggressively negotiated with Hawaii. There were however opponents who did not support the United States' negotiations with Hawaii. As Cracroft claims:

> Of all people, the Americans must be the very worst for entering among and civilizing a savage people, since they at once fall foul of the fundamental institution of such a people-viz., that of the chiefs. The American theory being that all men are equal-niggers excepted!- and the Presbyterians being especially wedded to this principle, the Missionaries have ever held it as a rule to weaken the power of the chiefs-in fact, to destroy the Aristocracy of the Land. [42]

Greed, racism, prejudice surrounded Hawaii in the debate on expansion in the Pacific.

Steamships, early in the nineteenth century, crossed the Pacific carrying goods and people from the United States, Australia, New Zealand, China and Japan. Trade in sandalwood and fur brought many foreign steamships into Hawaii.[43] It was not uncommon for American

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[39] Alfons L. Korn, *The Victorian Visitors: An Account of the Hawaiian Kingdom, 1861-1866, Including the Journal Letters of Sophia Cracroft, Extracts from the Journals of Lady Franklin, and Diaries and Letters of Queen Emma of Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1958), 15.
[40] Alfons L. Korn, 16.
[41] Alfons L. Korn, 17.
[42] Alfons L. Korn, 73.
[43] Ralph S. Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom: Volume II 1854-1874, Twenty Critical Years* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1966), 15.

missionaries to arrive in Hawaii via whaling ships.[44] By 20 July 1855, a treaty between the United States and Hawaii was agreed upon. This treaty, which was in effect for seven years, declared those Hawaiian products—such as livestock, coffee, unrefined sugar, molasses, and arrowroot—would be admitted duty free into the United States. In turn, Hawaii would receive American timber, wheat, coal and flour duty free.[45] Between 1854 and 1874 domestic exports increased from less than $275,000 to more than $1,500,000.[46] Hawaii's molasses export in 1865 reached almost half a million gallons.[47] In 1866, Hawaii yielded twenty-seven million pounds of sugar.[48] Because of its wealth of domestic products Hawaii was well positioned to barter with Western imperial powers.

Hawaiian officials resisted annexation and complete colonization. By the time Isabella Bird arrived in Hawaii, King Kamehameha IV had reorganized the Hawaiian educational system. This was accomplished by an act of legislature in the spring of 1855 and thus removed the American missionary influence on Hawaiian schools.[49] And before that, in 1849, the Hawaiian government decided to remain independent from England and America and thus remain neutral. Hawaii hoped to develop policies that "were not anti-American or pro-British, but only pro-Hawaiian."[50] Bird's travel text, although it situates Hawaii in the imperial game, focuses on women's freedom. This text, which describes her experiences in the islands during 1872, is an adventurous display of a woman's power more so than it is an evangelical or economic treatise. Similar to Hawaii's goal in the age of Empire, Bird remains "pro-Hawaiian."

The Women of England and Their Social Duties

Bird's travel narrative is a challenge to conservative Victorian ideologies. She states she has never seen "people live such easy, pleasant lives" as native Hawaiians.[51] More importantly, Bird rejects the popular Victorian ideal of the angel in the house "whose only thought was for her

[44] Ralph S. Kuykendall, 16.
[45] Ralph S. Kuykendall, 41.
[46] Ralph S. Kuykendall, 163.
[47] Mark Twain, 259.
[48] Mark Twain, 258.
[49] Ralph S. Kuykendall, 106.
[50] Ralph S. Kuykendall, 199.
[51] Isabella Bird Bishop, *The Hawaiian Archipelago. Six Months Among the Palm Groves, Coral Reefs, and Volcanoes of the Sandwich Islands*, 64.

family and who was free from the taint of sexual awareness."[52] Not only does Bird challenge conventional English patriarchy in her text, she also offers alternative domestic possibilities. Bird confronts popular nineteenth-century conservative social beliefs proliferated by women, such as Mrs. Sarah Stickney Ellis (1812-1872). Ellis, a missionary's wife, wrote wildly popular books on women and social duties. One of her books, *The Women of England, Their Social Duties, and Domestic Habits*, was in its fifteenth edition by 1839.

Ellis advocates for social and domestic usefulness for women. The greatest problems with nineteenth-century English women, for Ellis, are inactivity, frivolity, affectation, and ignorance. For example, Ellis claims:

> …the greater portion of the young ladies (for they are no longer *women*) of the present day, are distinguished by a morbid listlessness of mind and body, except when under the influence of stimulus, a constant pining for excitement, and an eagerness to escape from everything like practical and individual duty.[53]

Bird is just the type of British lady Ellis targets. Although Bird dutifully tended to her ailing parents before her travels, for the most part, Bird escaped traditional domestic drudgery. Ellis finds such quests for excitement almost sinful, but it is precisely such excitement, such playful adventure which improves Bird's health. If it were not for adventure, travel and sports, Bird would have continued to lead a life of invalidism. By venturing outside the realm of traditional roles for women that Ellis supports, Bird improves not only her health but also her quality of life.

Ellis believes nineteenth-century women needed no time for adventure and sports because they had "deep responsibilities" and "urgent claims" since "a nation's moral wealth is in your keeping."[54] Ellis and Bird share some common ideologies. Ellis, as did Bird, strongly believed "women should not be ignorant or helpless."[55] Both women believed their sex should be capable of handling any duty. Where their philosophies diverge is on the issue of a woman's place. For Ellis, a morally upright woman

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[52] Suzanne Fagence Cooper, *The Victorian Woman* (London: V & A Publications, 2001), 10.

[53] Mrs. Sarah Stickney Ellis, *The Women of England, Their Social Duties, and Domestic Habits*, 15th ed. (London: Fisher, Son, and Company, 1839; Research Publications, Inc.: History of Women (1975): fiche reel 163, no. 1046), 12. Sarah Stickney Ellis was the second wife of William Ellis. Rev. Ellis, a missionary, worked in Hawaii with his first wife Mary from 1823-1824.

[54] Mrs. Sarah Stickney Ellis, 13.

[55] Mrs. Sarah Stickney Ellis, 298.