

**THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY**

**Touring Strange Lands:  
Women Travel Writers in Western Canada,  
1876 to 1914  
by**

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## **ABSTRACT:**

**Between 1870 and 1914 an unprecedented number of middle-class English-speaking women travel writers journeyed to Western Canada and published accounts of their trips. Their depictions of the West's peoples and environment were influenced by a variety of factors, including the conventions of travel writing, and their staunch mission of promoting Anglo-Saxon cultural superiority and political dominance. Although women travel writers in other 'foreign' settings have been presented as defying conventions of acceptable behaviour for women, these writers only rarely presented themselves in this light. Scholars, to date, have not analysed in detail women's travel writing in the Western Canadian setting. Examination of women's travel writing about the West, however, reveals insight into women's participation in the Anglo-Saxon and imperial process of creating knowledge about the colonised.**

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## **DEDICATION**

**It is to my parents Birte and Bent Jakobsen that I dedicate this work. Without their unrelenting support and encouragement throughout countless international and national migrations this thesis could not have been written. Thank you mor and far for always encouraging me to pursue the academic interests closest to my heart.**

**Pernille Jakobsen, December 1996**

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Introduction:  
A 'Novel' Phenomenon?

Between 1870 and 1914 an unprecedented number of English-speaking women travelled to Western Canada and published accounts of their trips. Before this time travel accounts about the Canadian West were authored mainly by male fur traders, adventurers, missionaries, and travellers whose publications composed a sizeable corpus by the 1870s. Travel writing about the Canadian West by women authors, however, was a comparatively novel phenomenon. Several factors combined to make the West an appealing destination for women travel writers as well as other visitors in this time period. Rupert's Land was transferred to the Dominion government in 1870, which signalled the end of the fur trade era in the Canadian West, and opened the West for increased settlement and agriculture. In 1874, British law and order, through the introduction of the North West Mounted Police (N. W. M. P.), was established in the West. One of the most significant changes for women travellers was the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway (C. P. R.) in 1885 which greatly facilitated transcontinental travel, and made it easier for women to journey across Canada independently. Increased public interest in Western Canada was also the result of international developments, such as the rise of tourism which coincided with the height of British imperialism to encourage unprecedented interest on behalf of many middle-class English people in those countries which had political, economic, and social ties to Great Britain.<sup>1</sup> Until the beginning of World War I, which effectively terminated non-essential

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<sup>1</sup>In the late Victorian and early Edwardian eras the term 'middle-class' referred to a broad group of people, exhibiting different degrees of wealth, including mainly the business and professional classes as well as some 'white collar' workers. The middle class expanded during the 19th century mainly as a result of mid-nineteenth century

travel until the 1920s, and by which time the age of 'New Imperialism' had effectively expired, many women travel writers were attracted to Western Canada.<sup>2</sup> British women travel writers were often drawn to Western Canada to explore opportunities for Anglo-Saxon, and especially British women, emigrants in the West, to visit friends and family already settled in the area, and to enjoy Western Canada's natural and 'primitive' surroundings.<sup>3</sup> These women travel writers brought many social and literary conventions of writing about 'foreign' people and places with them which influenced how they perceived and wrote about Western Canada. Overall, their writings reflected the women travel writers' sense of their own cultural superiority and political dominance, which is demonstrated by their responses to Western Canada's natural environment, peoples, and 'liberating' atmosphere.

The appearance of English-speaking women travel writers of English, Scottish, Canadian, and American ancestry, of mostly middle and upper-class backgrounds, in Western Canada during the latter half of the nineteenth century, was at least in part a reflection of imperialistic fervour which created widespread interest in travel to Britain's

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industrialization and had money to spend on superfluous activities such as holidays. See Patricia Jasen, Wild Things: Nature, Culture, and Tourism in Ontario, 1790 - 1914 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 20.

<sup>2</sup>Patrick Brantlinger, Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830 - 1914 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 19.

<sup>3</sup>Although present day studies often use the term 'Anglo-Celtic' as opposed to 'Anglo-Saxon,' the latter term was used by women travel writers in their literature, and emphasizes the Victorian belief that social and political 'superiority' was largely based on racial background. As Peter Gay argues in The Cultivation of Hatred: The Bourgeoisie Experience Victoria to Freud, Vol. III (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1993) during the latter half of the nineteenth century Anglo-Saxons considered themselves superior to 'lower' races, including the Celts, and "... all agreed on one essential: individuals with common ancestors carry in their blood inherent and indelible characteristics and capacities that link them to other individuals sprung from the same family tree." 76.

colonial possessions.<sup>4</sup> Scholars disagree about precisely when imperial enthusiasm was sparked in the late nineteenth century, but refer to this era as the 'Second British Empire' or the age of 'New Imperialism' interchangeably. Carl Berger, author of *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism 1867 - 1914*, describes imperialism in Canada at this time as an ideology exhibited in a variety of social structures, functions, and expressions, and not only in political and economic dynamics.<sup>5</sup> By the time that Queen Victoria took her throne in 1837 numerous women travel writers had been exploring and writing about continental Europe for over three hundred years.<sup>6</sup> By the mid-nineteenth century European destinations had become relatively familiar topics of female exploration and literature, and some women travel writers desired to journey to 'new' places, such as Persia, India, China, and Africa.

The British public was greatly interested in those British colonies, including Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, which offered opportunities for the settlement of large numbers of Anglo-Saxons. Many British colonies had room to spare for Anglo-Saxon men as well as 'redundant' middle-class Englishwomen, and the women's travel writing under examination in this study offers one example of broad and widespread interest in Britain's colonies. Many Canadian and British expansionists and imperialists

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<sup>4</sup>While all of the women examined in this study were English-speaking, not all were from the British Isles. For the sake of clarity, the term 'British' is used throughout this thesis in reference to all of the women under consideration in this study.

<sup>5</sup>Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism 1867 - 1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), esp. chapter 7.

<sup>6</sup>Scholars disagree about when women's travel actually began because they include different types of excursions under the heading of 'travel writing.' Some writers do not clearly distinguish between women travellers and women travel writers, and therefore sometimes include women on 4th century religious pilgrimages in their studies. See: Mary Russell, *The Blessings of a Good Thick Skirt: Women Travellers and their World* (London: Collins, 1986), 23. Catherine Barnes Stevenson, author of *Victorian Women Travel Writers in Africa* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982) cites Margery Kempe, who visited Jerusalem and Rome in the early 15th century as the first woman travel writer, 1.

thought Western Canada had enormous social and economic potential as one of the last 'empty' and 'uncivilised' colonies. Women were imbued with stereotypes concerning the 'civilising mission of woman,' which implied that women had superior moral attributes over men, and that women were innately well-suited to domestic and maternal chores,<sup>7</sup> which suggested that they could help to mould the moral and social development of Western Canada.<sup>8</sup> Determining how Anglo-Saxon women would fare in Canada's Western settlement belt, therefore, became a widespread concern expressed in a variety of literature.

Encouraging British middle-class women to come to Canada was also seen as an answer to Great Britain's demographic imbalance. In Great Britain women greatly outnumbered men, which created a 'surplus' of unmarried women. By 1861 there was an 'excess' population of more than 800,000 women in Britain.<sup>9</sup> Unmarried women of the middle-classes were in an especial dilemma as they had not been prepared, unlike their working-class counterparts, to join the paid labour force. This meant that many of these 'excess' women faced a lifetime of poverty. This imbalance between the sexes was caused by many factors and continued to grow throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Part of the problem was that fewer male children reached the age of maturity, and that many men were killed in wars. The most important reason for this gender imbalance, however, was that British men migrated to overseas British colonies in record numbers during the latter half of the nineteenth century. This meant that by 1911 British women outnumbered British men by over 1.3 million in the British Isles.<sup>10</sup> While these

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<sup>7</sup>Joan M. Jensen and Darlis A. Miller, "The Gentle Tamers Revisited: New Approaches to the History of Women in the American West," Pacific Historical Review, 49 (May 1980), 179.

<sup>8</sup>R. G. Moyles and Doug Owram, Imperial Dreams and Colonial Realities: British Views of Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 192.

<sup>9</sup>Susan Jackel ed., A Flannel Shirt and Liberty: British Emigrant Gentlewomen in the Canadian West (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1982), xv.

<sup>10</sup>A. James Hammerton, Emigrant Gentlewomen: Genteel Poverty and Female

census numbers do indicate that women outnumbered men in English society, it is difficult to prove that middle-class women made up the bulk of the 'excess.' Some women lied about their ages on census reports for pragmatic or vanity purposes. Members of the middle-class also tended to postpone marriage until at least their mid-twenties. The numbers do suggest, however, that more middle-class men emigrated than their female counterparts.<sup>11</sup> Some women travel writers, therefore, came to Western Canada specifically to investigate marriage and employment opportunities for middle-class 'spinster' British women. It seems that many of them hoped that their travel writings would encourage impoverished British middle-class 'spinster' women to try their fortunes in the Canadian West, although it is impossible to deduce how influential their writings were in effecting emigration.

By the late nineteenth century improvements in transatlantic and transcontinental travel made the Canadian West more accessible for women travel writers.<sup>12</sup> Safe and efficient Atlantic steamships greatly alleviated the risks associated with extended sea voyages in earlier periods, and this encouraged larger numbers of tourists, not just women, to travel abroad. Comfortable continental railroads were also popular among women travel writers, and many of those who visited Western Canada discussed the C. P. R. in their travel texts. In conjunction with this, after the mid-nineteenth century greater numbers of people, benefiting from the increased expendable wealth of the middle classes, could afford to travel.<sup>13</sup> It also became more socially acceptable, although not entirely unproblematic,

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Emigration 1830 - 1914 (London: Croom Helm, 1979), 28.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 31.

<sup>12</sup>Shirley Foster, Across New Worlds: Nineteenth-Century Women Travellers and their Writings (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), 75.

<sup>13</sup>Jasen, 20.

for women to travel alone after this time - especially to 'safe' and 'law-abiding' colonies like Canada, which had already been 'explored' by British men.

More women's travel writing also appeared at this time because some of the conventions of travel writing changed between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. According to some scholars, eighteenth, and early nineteenth, century British and Canadian readers of travel literature in English expected to be entertained with impersonal 'instructional' information concerning the customs and manners of foreign peoples and places.<sup>14</sup> Male explorer and adventure writing fit into this 'instructional' model, as their voyages were usually undertaken with specific destinations in mind, and their literature was filled with information concerning geographical details and specific 'facts.'<sup>15</sup> In this way, male travel writing was thought to describe the 'what and where' of adventure experiences.<sup>16</sup>

By the nineteenth century, however, readers of travel writing, especially in Great Britain, were interested in the personal details of the relationship between the travel writer and his or her experience of a foreign environment.<sup>17</sup> More attention was now focused on the 'how and why' of travel.<sup>18</sup> British readers expected to learn more about the author's autobiographical details and 'impressions' of foreign lands and peoples, which popularised the introspective and detailed qualities of a great deal of women's travel writing.<sup>19</sup> The reader was entitled to both "... an exterior voyage, to descriptions of scenery and so forth, ...

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<sup>14</sup>Stevenson, 6.

<sup>15</sup>Jane Robinson, Wayward Women: A Guide to Women Travellers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), x.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Stevenson, 6.

<sup>18</sup>Robinson, x.

<sup>19</sup>Stevenson, 9.



[and] to an interior voyage which takes place side by side with that outer one," and women's travel writing was perceived as especially meeting these requirements.<sup>20</sup>

Travel writing reached a larger audience during the Victorian era, as it was the great age of periodical literature.<sup>21</sup> Numerous magazines and journals circulated in Canada and Britain which provided a forum for women's travel accounts.<sup>22</sup> For a number of reasons, therefore, by the late Victorian era, women's travel writing had a wide audience and was especially popular among a middle-class British readership who enjoyed travelling vicariously and learning about Britain's colonies.

As a genre, travel writing is notoriously difficult to define. There is considerable disagreement among scholars about the types of literature which should constitute travel writing. Generally travel writing is placed somewhere between fiction, in that devices of narration and story telling are usually present in the text, and autobiography, in that travel writing is generally "I" narrated and purports to be truthful.<sup>23</sup> Increasingly, scholars are recognising that travel writing should not be approached merely as 'factual' records of events as it also invariably included many imaginative details, and was often created to meet the expectations of audience.

For the purposes of this study it seems reasonable to adopt four main distinctions between the many types of travel literature discussed by scholars. They are: 'exploration' narratives, 'emigrant' handbooks, 'guide' books, and 'temporary resident' books. Implicit in these categories is the idea that travel writers approached their journeys with different

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<sup>20</sup>Norman Douglas Experiments (New York: Robert McBride and Co., 1925), 8 - 9, quoted in Stevenson, 7.

<sup>21</sup>Maria Frawley, A Wider Range: Travel Writing by Women in Victorian England (London: Associated Press, 1994), 28.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup>Joanne Shattock, "Travel Writing Victorian and Modern: A Review of Recent Research," in Philip Dodd ed. The Art of Travel: Essays on Travel Writing (Great Britain: Frank Cass and Company, Ltd., 1982), 151.

motives in mind, and formulated their experiences according to their primary objectives for undertaking their voyages. 'Exploration' narratives imply challenging journeys for the purpose of seeking out territories and sights never before discovered by Europeans or non-Aboriginal peoples. This category is usually applied exclusively to 17th and 18th century male expeditions and 19th century Canadian explorations, but may also be applied to journeys undertaken by women in which the woman was 'the first' to arrive at an unusual destination, or a considerable dose of 'masculine' adventure, in other words the possibility of physical danger, influenced the travel itinerary. 'Emigrant' handbooks were typically sponsored by a patron and were used to encourage especially Anglo-Saxons to settle in Canada's Northwest. 'Guide' books were written with the express purpose of providing detailed information about a particular region of the Northwest; and finally, 'temporary resident' books were written by those who stayed in Canada for a number of months, and believed that they could offer a first-hand narrative of what conditions in Canada were 'really like.' Some scholars would exclude all categories but the very first from an examination of travel literature, by arguing that the other categories do not describe travel in its purest sense.<sup>24</sup>

Categorisations of this type have also been used by some scholars to exclude women's literature from examinations of travel writing. It seems more logical to suggest, therefore, that women and men may have experienced travel in different ways which influenced how they constructed their travel texts. Undoubtedly, men and women often included similar types of information in their travel books, and women's travel literature

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<sup>24</sup>Paul Fussell, Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between the Wars (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), "A travel book, at its purest, is addressed to those who do not plan to follow the traveller at all, but who require the exotic or comic anomalies, wonders, and scandals of the literary form romance which their own place or time cannot entirely supply." 203.

demonstrates that they participated in creating all four of the previously outlined types of travel literature. These categories, however, should be taken as fluid guidelines rather than rigid definitions as themes in women's travel writing transcend these boundaries. Travel books of all four 'categories' outlined above will be sampled in this study, to reveal the great diversity of women's travel writing about Western Canada.

Few scholars have systematically considered women travel writers in a Western Canadian setting. Some of the approaches used in studies of men's travel writing in Western Canada reveal important themes and methods of analysis which might also be applied to studies of women's travel writing. Scholars who are interested in Western Canadian travel writing, although they do not always identify it as travel literature, and include other forms of fictional and non-fictional literature in their studies, tend to stress the literature of male fur traders, adventurers, and travellers. I. S. MacLaren's work is one example of this approach as he has written many articles concerned with male explorers.<sup>25</sup> MacLaren is especially interested in the 18th and 19th centuries and how male explorers, such as the members of the John Franklin, Henry Youle Hind, and John Palliser expeditions reacted to the landscapes they encountered in Canada's far West and Arctic zones. According to MacLaren, these early male travel writers were influenced by contemporary landscape aesthetics concerning 'nature,' which were based on Romantic ideas of the sublime and the picturesque.<sup>26</sup> MacLaren argues that British male explorers and travellers

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<sup>25</sup>See for example: I. S. MacLaren, "The Aesthetic Mapping of Nature in the Second Franklin Expedition," Journal of Canadian Studies, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Spring 1985), 39 - 57.; "Exploration /Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Author," International Journal of Canadian Studies, 5 (Spring 1992), 39 - 68.; "I came to rite thare portraits': Paul Kane's Journal of his Western Travels, 1846 - 1848," The American Art Journal, XXI, No. 2 (1989), 6 - 88; "Aesthetic Mappings of the West by the Palliser and Hind Survey Expeditions, 1857 - 1859," Studies in Canadian Literature, Vol. 10, Nos. 1 - 2 (1985), 24 - 52.

<sup>26</sup>The 'Romantic movement' inspired a 'sentimental approach to nature based on

preferred the geographical expanses that most closely resembled British artistic landscape representations. Male explorers, therefore, favoured the rolling topography of the parklands with its trees and shrubs, over the barren prairie grasslands, because the former reminded them of southern England, and was therefore aesthetically and psychologically pleasing.<sup>27</sup>

MacLaren also discusses the purported 'truth value' of travel literature in addition to conventions of landscape appreciation and representation in his work. MacLaren argues that travel texts are not unqualified representations of 'truth,' as they are often composed with an audience in mind and usually 'evolve' between initial journal entries and final publication. MacLaren maintains that most of the changes introduced to the travel writer's original notes were made to convey a stronger sense of what the traveller/adventurer was seeing and experiencing to a distant audience. Other changes were made to ensure that the traveller/adventurer did not offend prevailing social conventions. To avoid antagonising sensitive audiences and to maintain the author's personal credibility, 'crude' journal entries were often 'elevated' by editors to reflect a gentlemanly 'tone' of writing.<sup>28</sup> This is especially well demonstrated by the diaries of artist Paul Kane, the first non-trader traveller in the West, which were published in *Wanderings of an Artist* (1859) and were dramatically altered to elevate his simple grammatical style into a gentlemanly text.<sup>29</sup>

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human emotion rather than reason. Viewing 'sights' as 'sublime' was to see them as awe-inspiring and somewhat frightening. The 'picturesque' referred to a sight which was not beautiful and lacked the imposing qualities of the sublime. The Romantic movement is generally cited as beginning in Europe in either 1789 or 1798 and extending into the 19th century. M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* 5th edition. (Fort Worth: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1988), 165 - 166.

<sup>27</sup>MacLaren, "The Aesthetic Mapping of Nature in the Second Franklin Expedition," 43.

<sup>28</sup>MacLaren, "Exploration/Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Author," 45.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 59.

Contemporary ideas, especially concerning imperialism and Anglo-Saxon racial superiority, revealed themselves in travel writing, especially in descriptions of landscapes and native peoples. British, and Canadian, writers imbued with the conquering and civilising forces associated with Anglo-Saxon blood in the late nineteenth century did not desire to be, or perceive themselves as, equals to social 'inferiors,' including native peoples and a variety of non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants.<sup>30</sup> Indians, therefore were usually referred to as 'savages' or 'noble savages' in keeping with this convention. 'Nature' representations were also governed by social and literary conventions. In travel writing the forest often represented the 'wild' and was thus also ripe for Anglo-Saxon conquest.

Travel writers themselves were conscious of social and literary conventions and often altered their own travel texts to meet public expectations of their work. Richard Davis, for example, illustrates how John Franklin's texts were transformed by Franklin to better suit the expectations of his audience.<sup>31</sup> By comparing Franklin's written narratives of his 1819-22 and 1825 - 27 journeys to Rupert's Land, Davis demonstrates that Franklin's account of the second journey was considerably revised in order to introduce some of the elements of danger and survival which had characterised his earlier voyage. Franklin's disastrous first journey narrative was filled with stories of cannibalism and boot-eating, readily gobbled-up by an interested audience. Franklin's well-orchestrated second journey, in contrast, lacked these elements of danger and survival, and to boost his book sales and maintain the interest of his audience, Franklin deliberately 'constructed' elements of his narrative to ensure his continued appeal. Audience, therefore, was a crucial shaping element in exploration narratives and Davis states that there can be "...no 'pure' account of

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<sup>30</sup>Brantlinger, 21.

<sup>31</sup>Richard Davis, "History or His/Story? The Explorer Cum Author," Studies in Canadian Literature, Vol. 16, No. 2 (1991/92), 93 - 111.

exploration, no unfettered expression of the discoverer's responses, but only a series of poses in which the author permits himself to be viewed by his audience."<sup>32</sup>

In "Canadian Exploration as Literature," T. D. MacLulich investigates only 'exploration' narratives and argues that they do not necessarily reveal 'what actually happened,' but were formulated as 'quests,' 'ordeals,' or 'odysseys' depending on the author's success in achieving his primary objective for undertaking the voyage.<sup>33</sup> If the adventurer succeeded in achieving his goal he described it as a 'quest,' highlighting all of the dangers and hardships he had to overcome to attain his goal.<sup>34</sup> If he failed to achieve this primary goal, he described it as an ordeal and emphasised his survival techniques. The 'odyssey' approach made the achievement of a specific goal only of secondary importance to undertaking the journey itself. The 'odyssey' approach, therefore, allowed the author's personal interests to shine through and encouraged vivid descriptions of people and places.<sup>35</sup> Because of this emphasis, the 'odyssey' approach is often used to describe women's travel literature.<sup>36</sup> MacLulich, like MacLaren and Davis, recognises that travel literature cannot be approached as straightforward representations of 'lived experience.' Instead, these scholars acknowledge that a number of social factors, as well as literary conventions, affected how male travel writing was produced, and suggests that women's travel writing should be questioned in similar ways.

In *Images of the West*, R. Douglas Francis provides excerpts from mostly male-authored travel texts, as well as art and other types of literature, and demonstrates that political, economic, and social perceptions of the West affected a transformation in popular

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>33</sup>T. D. MacLulich, "Canadian Exploration as Literature," *Canadian Literature* No. 81, (Summer 1979), 74.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 75.

<sup>36</sup>Stevenson, 8.

images of Canada's West between the 17th and 20th centuries. Francis focuses on a succession of popular images of the West, beginning with the West as 'barren wasteland' between 1650 and 1850, followed by 'Edenic' visions of the West between 1845 and 1885, and a period of 'utopian' images which he argues existed side by side with 'realistic' images of the West between 1880 and 1920. Francis demonstrates that these images had very little to do with any one particular 'reality' of the West. Instead, images of the West were conditioned by popular expectations of the area and diverse perspectives concerning the nature of the West often existed at the same time. According to Francis these images served to reinforce contemporary understandings of the West's social, economic, and political possibilities. Early male fur traders, for example, characterised the Canadian West as a desolate and barren landscape unsuitable for European habitation and agriculture until 1850, because they depended upon the vision of the West as 'wasteland' to maintain their employment.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, to attract settlers to the West after 1880 a 'positive' image of the West was needed, and thus a transformation in images occurred between 1850 and 1880. One key factor involved in changing literary representations of the West was the new nationalist and imperialist attitude prevalent after the 1850s. Both Canadian nationalists and British imperialists were interested in promoting settlement in the West after this time. Canadian nationalists, many of whom had British roots and shared British imperial sentiments, focused on the agricultural and manufacturing potential of the West, which could bring wealth to Eastern Canada. Imperialists, of both the Canadian and British sort, saw Western Canada as the final and crucial link in the British empire.<sup>38</sup> To realise the agricultural and settlement possibilities of the West, new images of its climatic and landscape characteristics were needed. This need influenced the famous Palliser and Hind

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<sup>37</sup>R. Douglas Francis, Images of the West: Responses to the Canadian Prairies (Saskatchewan: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1989), 5.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 74.

excursions which were launched by the British and Canadian governments to re-evaluate the settlement and agricultural possibilities of the West in the late 1850s and to determine its 'true' character once and for all.

The 'genuine' nature of the West, however, proved enigmatic. Francis, like MacLaren, acknowledges that negative images of the West's landscape and climate were so pervasive that they persisted well into the 19th and 20th centuries, and even swayed the 'scientific' Hind and Palliser reports.<sup>39</sup> MacLaren argues that Palliser loathed the Western interior, with the exception of the 'fertile belt',<sup>40</sup> and argued that the Great American desert extended into the prairie region, which we, ironically, recognise as the breadbasket of Canada today.<sup>41</sup> Francis, furthermore, argues that the culmination of these expeditions and imperialist sentiments gradually resulted in changing images of the West, until the West was represented as an agricultural paradise in some mid to late 19th century literature. This positive image, however, coincided with a more 'realistic' image of the West, which was in part a legacy of the West as 'wasteland' image, and created tensions in some literary representations of the West. These duelling images are pervasive in women's travel writing and create an interesting dichotomy, as negative images often appear alongside more positive depictions.

In Imperial Dreams and Colonial Realities, R. G. Moyles and Doug Owram define nine common British images of Canada prevalent in a variety of fictional and non-fictional literature between 1880 and 1914, including examples of travel literature. The Canadian

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<sup>39</sup>MacLaren, "Aesthetic Mappings of the west by the Palliser and Hind Survey Expeditions, 1857 - 1859," 24.

<sup>40</sup>The area referred to as the 'fertile belt' was first defined by Henry Youle Hind in 1857-1858. 'Fertile belt' refers to the area from the "... Lake of the Woods to the Rocky Mountains, passing through the Red and Saskatchewan River countries, and extending into the foothills at the 49th parallel." Francis, Images, 6.

<sup>41</sup>MacLaren, "Aesthetic Mappings of the West by the Palliser and Hind Survey Expeditions, 1857 - 1859," 36.



West occupied a special place in a great deal of the literature of this time, which emphasises the compelling position of the West in both the Canadian and British consciousness. Moyles and Owsram clearly indicate that a wide gap existed between literary images and lived realities of the West in much of this literature, especially in the literature concerned with encouraging Western Canadian settlement. Like Francis, they include a variety of literature in their study, and often discuss male and female writing under the same thematic headings. Overwhelmingly, however, they give the impression that women travel writers wrote only about restricted topics including domestic issues, 'class' status of women, immigrants, and Indians. While it is true that women travel writers did discuss all of these important issues in their books, they also wrote about participating in traditionally 'male' exploits, such as camping and hunting activities, which Moyles and Owsram do not specifically acknowledge.

Susan Jackel's *A Flannel Shirt and Liberty*, a compendium of writings by a select group of middle-class British gentlewomen interested in emigration, is one of few studies to consider late 19th century women's travel writing about the Canadian West.<sup>42</sup> Jackel does not analyse these books as travel writing; rather, her approach is chronological, and she includes excerpts from women's books concerned with middle-class British female emigration between 1880 and 1914. Jackel introduces many relatively unknown British women writers to the history of settlement in the West, and she demonstrates convincingly that the encouragement of middle-class British female emigration by women writers was not perceived by these women writers as a straightforward solution to the problem of middle-class British female 'redundancy.' Middle-class British women accustomed to having servants often lacked the practical skills such as cooking, cleaning, and basic

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<sup>42</sup>Emma Jane Curtin's "Daughters of Empire: British Gentlewomen in Alberta, 1880 - 1914," MA thesis. University of Calgary, 1990, examines the life experiences of some British emigrant gentlewomen in Western Canada.

gardening which were essential for survival in the harsh climate of the Canadian Northwest. It was not perceived to be 'ladylike' for women with 'genteel' roots to labour at working-class female jobs in domestic service or industry.<sup>43</sup> Ironically, working-class women had the skills which the West required, but middle and upper-class British female travel writers often discouraged working-class women from coming to the West. Middle-class women travel writers, as well as other 'reformers' of the day, believed that better reared and educated middle and upper-class Anglo-Saxon women would raise the 'moral' and 'social' tone of Western society. Emigration schemes encouraging middle-class British women to come to Western Canada, therefore, were not uncomplicated solutions to the unbalanced gender 'supply and demand' situation in Great Britain. Jackel effectively reveals that middle-class British women responded intelligently to the difficulties and opportunities implicit in encouraging women's emigration to Western Canada. Unfortunately, however, Jackel's approach also tends to encourage a reading of these women's travel writings as straight-forward representations of reality, and lacks analysis of social and literary conventions which scholars of male exploration writing are so careful to elucidate.

Although she does not focus exclusively on women travel writers, Patricia Jasen, author of *Wild Things: Nature, Culture, and Tourism in Ontario, 1790 - 1914*, draws upon a variety of travel literature in her examination of Ontario tourism. Jasen is careful to point out that the entire travel experience was based more upon "...subjective experience than

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<sup>43</sup>The concept of 'gentility' was an important goal for the vast British middle class, largely in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. 'Gentility' implied education and wealth, complete with servants and elaborate social rituals. Genteel women were to maintain an air of household 'respectability,' to mark their family's social status. See Deborah Gorham, *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal* (London: Croom Helm, 1982), 7 - 10.

objective reality."<sup>44</sup> According to Jasen, travel writing was influenced by popular expectations regarding the 'sights,' such as Niagara Falls and the Saguenay, that travellers could expect to see during their journeys. Jasen argues that the whole tourist experience was a Romantic one, and that travel to far-away places enabled the tourist to use his or her feelings and emotions to experience the land.<sup>45</sup> The tourism industry as a whole was built upon arousing and selling images of landscape to the consumer.<sup>46</sup> These powerful images and widespread familiarity of popular sights created tremendous expectations. It is not surprising, therefore, that some travel writers were disenchanted with their first 'sight' of a much-praised tourist destination. Although outside of Jasen's specific geographic area, this sense of disillusionment also applies to women travel writers' first perceptions of the Canadian West. Women travel writers were often disappointed with their first sight of the West, especially the prairies.

Unlike MacLaren, and Francis, who assert that Romanticism failed to be influential after the 1880s, Jasen argues that certain conventions of the Romantic tradition, especially conventions of the picturesque, continued to influence tourism well into the twentieth century. Jasen also quashes the artificial distinction made between 'tourists' and 'travellers' present in many studies concerned with travel writing. Implicit in this distinction is the idea that a true 'traveller' is an 'adventurer,' or 'explorer,' who can journey alone into the depths of the unknown, and endure countless physical hardships. A 'tourist,' by contrast, is a rather uncourageous individual who packs along too many frills and only patronises 'popular' vacation destinations.<sup>47</sup> Jasen's approach is to consider the terms 'tourist' and

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<sup>44</sup>Jasen, 6.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 7.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 13.

<sup>47</sup>Paul Fussell, as quoted in Jasen, 5.

'traveller' as synonymous, because to travel was to be "... in a state of mind in which imagination plays a key role," whether one was described as a tourist or a traveller.<sup>48</sup>

A growing body of literature concerned specifically with women's travel writing has emerged on the international scene largely since the 1960s. A large proportion of this literature is not scholarly in intent, and authors concerned with women's travel writing have tended to 'celebrate' a handful of Anglo-Saxon Victorian women travel writers who wrote about 'exotic' locales such as India, Asia, Africa, and continental Europe. In their focus on women travel writers who toured these 'exotic' locales, writers have demonstrated that women travel writers could be as 'adventurous' as men, and that women were not nearly as limited in their physical and geographical mobility as is commonly implied by Victorian separate spheres ideology.<sup>49</sup> The problem with this approach is that it has tended to over-emphasise and exaggerate the theme of women as adventurers, and has also obscured many lesser known women from studies of travel writing. Dorothy Middleton, for example, author of *Victorian Lady Travellers*, portrays women travellers as 'intrepid,' implying that they were unusually adventurous, heroic, and extraordinary.<sup>50</sup> According to Middleton, women travel writers desired travel as a way of realising their cravings for greater independence and opportunity away from the bonds of the feminine 'sphere.' Similarly, in her introduction to *Spinsters Abroad*, Dea Birkett emphasises that Victorian women were 'exceptional' in their willingness to leave the domestic sphere to travel. Birkett argues that the 'spinster' women with whom she is concerned were running away from the legacy of

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<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>49</sup>'Separate spheres' ideology implied that: "The public sphere was the male's exclusive domain, whereas the private sphere was seen as presided over by females for the express purpose of providing a place of renewal for men, after their rigorous activities in the harsh, competitive public sphere." Gorham, 4.

<sup>50</sup>Dorothy Middleton, *Victorian Lady Travellers* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), 7.

unhappy childhoods in which woman's domestic and maternal role was seen as mentally and physically debilitating.<sup>51</sup> Birkett characterises women travel writers as 'odd' and 'eccentric' which is a theme perpetuated by many other authors of women travel writers. Mary Russell even maintains that women travel writers are "... society's square pegs: the guardians of our right to deviate."<sup>52</sup> One obvious problem with this 'celebratory' approach is that it results in making these Anglo-Saxon middle, and to some extent upper, class women travel writers appear as exceptional and rare, and sometimes extremely odd, individuals. This characterisation encourages only a superficial understanding of women's travel writing and tends to ridicule their achievements.

Instead of taking a 'celebratory' approach, some scholars are interested in demonstrating that women's travel writing constitutes a separate genre from men's travel writing. This is usually accomplished by emphasising that women travel writers focused on the 'domestic' features of the travel experience, such as indigenous methods of food preparation and local standards of hygiene and dress,<sup>53</sup> and by arguing that women travel writers were more sympathetic than men to indigenous peoples.<sup>54</sup> Sara Mills, author of *Discourses of Difference*, discourages a 'celebratory' approach towards women's travel writing. Mills argues that the non-scholarly, celebratory studies discussed above encourage a straight-forward reading of women's travel texts as unbiased representations of reality.<sup>55</sup> These studies tend to lack analysis of social and literary factors which, as has been alluded to in the discussion of male exploration literature, necessarily influenced how travel writing

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<sup>51</sup>Dea Birkett, *Spinsters Abroad: Victorian Lady Explorers* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 18.

<sup>52</sup>Russell, 21.

<sup>53</sup>Foster, 24.

<sup>54</sup>Margaret Strobel, *European Women and the Second British Empire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 36.

<sup>55</sup>Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference: an Analysis of Women's travel Writing and Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1991), 35.

was created. Of particular concern in Mills' study is the role of women in 'colonial discourse'.<sup>56</sup> Mills argues that women have either been ignored in scholarly works concerned with colonial matters, or have appeared in limited roles, such as 'memsahibs' needing protection from predatory indigenous men, or as 'sexually-available' indigenous women. The role of Anglo-Saxon women in mitigating 'colonial' language and conventions, however, has not been a significant issue of scholarly concern.<sup>57</sup> Mills maintains that Anglo-Saxon women did participate in colonial discourse, and despite limitations imposed by the discourses of colonialism and the discourses of femininity, concerning what they as women could and could not write, they still managed to participate in creating and maintaining colonial knowledge and behaviours. On the one hand, women used colonial language to emphasise their status as "... the inferior sex within the superior race," especially in their relations with indigenous peoples over whom white women had authority.<sup>58</sup> On the other hand, women were to present themselves as demure and 'ladylike,' or risk exposing themselves to charges of exaggeration and sexual impropriety in their writing. Mills argues that in order to avoid these charges women travel writers had to adopt a passive voice and write about appropriately feminine subjects, such as relationships and domestic concerns. Thus, there is a tension in women's travel writing between the 'male' colonial voice and the feminine strategies of representation women employed to

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<sup>56</sup>The term 'colonial discourse' is used by Mills to refer to the many different social and literary conventions which Anglo-Saxon men used in reference to colonial landscapes and peoples. Usually Edward Said, author of *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), is credited with providing the argument that Anglo-Saxon literary depictions of the 'other' encountered in a 'colonial' setting tells more about the author than the subject being described. Said used the term 'discourse' to refer to all texts, literary or non-literary, written about the Orient.

<sup>57</sup>see also Jane Haggis, "Gendering Colonialism or Colonising Gender?: Recent Women's Studies Approaches to White Women and the History of British Colonialism," *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 13, Nos. 1/2 (1990), 105 - 115.

<sup>58</sup>Strobel, xi.

maintain their propriety. This tension is evident in women's travel writing about Western Canada, and is well-illustrated by examining some of the conventions women travel writers used to represent Western landscapes, peoples, and their strategies of self-expression, which are the main themes under analysis in this study.

Although Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* falls outside the geographic and temporal limits defined by this study, her ideas concerning European 'construction' of the 'other' are extremely useful.<sup>59</sup> Pratt describes many of the different kinds of social and literary conventions used to legitimise Anglo-Saxon intervention in the South American continent. One example Pratt uses is to demonstrate that Europeans, in the first half of the nineteenth century, constructed South America as a 'backward' and 'neglected' place to legitimise capitalistic intervention and exploitation.<sup>60</sup> Europeans criticised the perceived refusal of the indigenous people to participate in European capitalist schemes such as extensive mining and agricultural operations, and also constructed the indigenous as 'lazy,' 'filthy,' or otherwise debauched to authorise their intervention in South American society.<sup>61</sup> From the women's travel writings sampled in this study it appears that this same Anglo-Saxon intervention was applied to Western Canada's indigenous peoples, and ethnic minorities, who were often also characterised as 'backward' and neglected. Of particular concern in Pratt's study is her discussion of conventions of 'seeing' indigenous peoples and landscapes. 'Seeing' or looking upon the 'other,' whether a person or landscape scene, objectified the subject of the gaze. Descriptions of 'sights,' therefore, should not be considered neutral comments, but rather as

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<sup>59</sup>The term 'other' is used throughout this thesis to refer to people who did not share the women travel writers' ethnic, social, and/or class background.

<sup>60</sup>Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 152.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, 151 - 152.

reflections of the seer's social and literary background. By adopting the 'monarch-of-all-I-survey' approach, in particular, which entailed seeking a literal or metaphorical high ground so that a bird's eye view of everything 'below' could be attained, women travel writers could dominate and create landscape or human 'sights' in accordance with their social ideologies.<sup>62</sup>

In "Conventions of Representation: Where Discourse and Ideology Meet," Pratt argues that strategies of representation in literature cross 'fiction' and 'non-fiction' boundaries, and are rooted in contemporary social ideologies.<sup>63</sup> This means that social and cultural ideologies cannot be separated from literary representations. Scholars, to date, have not yet examined how these social and literary conventions revealed themselves in women's travel writing about the Canadian West. Surely, however, complex forces were at work and are reflected in women travel writers descriptions of 'appropriate' behaviour, impressions of Western Canada's natural environment, and perceptions of immigrants and Indians. By studying women's travel writing about the Canadian West it is possible to offer a second, gendered, understanding of perceptions of the West and how ideas concerning English-speaking cultural superiority conditioned these images. By discussing women's travel writing about Western Canada it is possible to offer insights into how Anglo-Saxon women created knowledge about the 'colonised' within the British imperial agenda. This requires analysis of the social and literary conventions women travel writers employed.

Many women travel writers wrote about their experiences in the Canadian West, but only a select group of English-speaking women travel writers is included in this study. All of the women selected in this study met certain criteria. These women travel writers' texts

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 201 - 202.

<sup>63</sup>Mary Louise Pratt, "Conventions of Representation: Where Discourse and Ideology Meet," in Georgetown University Round Table on Language and Linguistics, ed. Heidi Byrnes, (Washington, D. C.: Georgetown University Press, 1982), 139 - 155.



were chosen because they seemed broadly representative of 'typical' travel experiences between the late 1870s and World War I. Travel between the mid nineteenth century and World War I was largely a middle-class phenomenon, so it is fitting that most of these ladies came from middle-class backgrounds. The women selected also offered detailed impressions of at least one aspect, either 'peoples,' 'nature,' or 'behaviour,' of the three Western provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, or Manitoba. Although the three aforementioned prairie provinces provide the focus of this study, select examples from women's travel writings about the Rocky Mountains and the natural areas of British Columbia and the Arctic are included to demonstrate the power and influence of prevailing conceptions of representing behaviour, nature, or peoples.

Only published travel texts are considered, which may be seen as a shortcoming as significant revisions commonly occurred between original journal citations and the final published version. Often, however, women's travel writing has only survived in its published form, which renders a comparison between initial and published travel experiences impossible. By considering only published versions, it is also possible to demonstrate the many similarities inherent in women's travel writing which may reveal further insight into how social and literary conventions influenced the creation of women's travel literature.

Biographical information concerning the lives of these women is often scarce. When it has been possible to locate information about these women's lives it will be offered in the text. The travel writings of fourteen English-speaking women are included in this study. Seven of these women, including Georgina Binnie-Clark (1871 - 1947), Marion Dudley Cran (b. 1879- 1942), Mary Georgina Hall (n. d.), Catherine Laura Johnstone (1838-1923), Elizabeth Keith Morris (n. d.), Duchess Susan St. Maur (\* - 1939), and Ella Sykes (187\* - 1939) were of English origin. Jessie Saxby (1842 - 1940), Elizabeth B.

Mitchell (1880 - 1980), and Lady Ishbel Aberdeen (1857 - 1939) were Scottish. The Canadians include: Agnes Deans Cameron (1863 - 1912), Mary Agnes Fitzgibbon (1851 - 1915), and Ellen E. Spragge (1854 - 1932). One American, Mary Schaffer (1861 - 1939), rounds out the list.

Many of these women travel writers were well-educated individuals, often trained at home by governesses or at public schools. Some had strong literary backgrounds in fields such as journalism, history or literature before voyaging to Canada. The earliest travel account under consideration here is provided by Mary Agnes Fitzgibbon, who toured Manitoba for two and one half years in the late 1870s. Fitzgibbon was born in Belleville, Ontario, June 18, 1851 into a well-to-do family. During her lifetime Fitzgibbon was an active promoter of the Female Immigrants' Receiving Home in Toronto, established in 1905. In 1894, Fitzgibbon founded the Women's Canadian Historical Society, and many of her books were concerned with historical subjects; for example, *A Veteran of 1812*, *Hero of Beaver Dam*, and *Historic Days*.<sup>64</sup> Fitzgibbon was also connected to the well-known literary Strickland family through her mother's side of the family, and co-authored two books with Catherine Parr Traill. In 1880 Fitzgibbon published her first book, *A Trip to Manitoba, or Roughing it on the Line*, which described her extended visit to Manitoba.<sup>65</sup> Fitzgibbon recounted her trip from a diary she kept while in Manitoba. About half-way through her trip, fire raged through the wooden house she was staying in and Fitzgibbon wrote: "[a]ll my books, pictures, jewellery, and those odds and ends which, though of little money value, had grown priceless to me from association, were destroyed, and my desk also, containing my notes of dates and places, so that these pages I have had to trust entirely

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<sup>64</sup>Henry James Morgan ed., Canadian Men and Women of the Time: a Hand-book of Canadian Biography of Living Characters, 2nd ed. (Toronto: William Briggs, 1912), 400.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

to memory."<sup>66</sup> Overall, Fitzgibbon's work describes her visit to Manitoba in great detail, and she offered many amusing anecdotes about her experiences on the trail and in the 'wilds,' and is thus both a 'temporary resident' book and a 'guide book.'

The second woman travel writer included in this study is Mary Georgina Hall. Hall journeyed to Manitoba after docking in New York and travelling by train up through the United States. Hall reached Winnipeg May 18, 1882. Very little is known about her, and there is even some ambivalence about her marital status, although she published *A Lady's Life on a Farm in Manitoba* under the name Mrs. Cecil Hall in London in 1884.<sup>67</sup> The book, based on a series of letters supposedly sent to her family in London, tells of her experiences 'keeping house' on her brother's farm, whom she refers to only as 'A-,' and of her travels through parts of Western Canada and the United States. In addition, Hall provided details for intending emigrants throughout her book, and in this sense it may be considered an 'emigrant' guide. Susan Jackel suggests that Hall was of genteel background because of the title and text of her book. Jackel also argues that the level of prose suggests that Hall had more than a minimal education.<sup>68</sup>

Catherine Laura Johnstone is another enigmatic woman travel writer. She appears to have been very concerned with educational matters in Canada's Northwest, as her book is filled with comments regarding a variety of religious schools and institutions. Her book *Winter and Summer Excursions in Canada*, published in London in 1894, is dedicated to Sir James Johnstone, "... whose zeal in promoting education and peaceful prosperity in remote districts of her majesty's eastern empire must lead him to take an interest in the

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<sup>66</sup>Mary Fitzgibbon, *A Trip to Manitoba: or, Roughing it on the line* (Toronto: Rose-Belford Publishing Company, 1888, 159.

<sup>67</sup>Jackel in *A Flannel Shirt and Liberty* suggests that Hall was unmarried, 4.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

settlers and natives of the furthest quarters of her majesty's western dominion."<sup>69</sup>

Throughout her 'emigrant' guide/ 'temporary resident' book, Johnstone was concerned with providing 'correct' information regarding Western Canada's climate extremes, and warned that Canada was filled with many dishonest individuals who were ready and willing to con new settlers out of their money. Johnstone was also the author of another Canadian story, *The Young Emigrants: a Story for Boys*, published in London in 1898.

The social and financial prestige of her father, the Honourable John Hillyard Cameron, "... a distinguished statesman and member of the Ontario bar," and her mother, Ellen, the daughter of General Mallett, secured Ellen Elizabeth Cameron Spragge's status firmly in the professional classes.<sup>70</sup> While it is not clear whether or not Spragge was enjoined by the government to describe her journey by train across Canada, the fact that Spragge was one of the passengers on the first through train on June 28, 1886, and published "[t]he substance of this volume ... in a series of articles in the *Toronto Week* during the progress of the journey it narrates," suggests that Spragge may have been commissioned.<sup>71</sup> In 1886 Spragge published *From Ontario to the Pacific*, which was based on the previously published articles. Spragge's trip lasted four months in total, part of which was spent with her husband camping in British Columbia. Spragge's book fits closest to the 'guide book' format in that she provided many details for future C. P. R. passengers. In *Canadian Men and Women of the Time*, Spragge is listed as a noted

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<sup>69</sup>C. L. Johnstone, *Winter and Summer Excursions in Canada* (London: Digby, 1894), preface.

<sup>70</sup>Morgan ed, *Canadian Men and Women of the Time: A Handbook of Canadian Biography*, 1st. ed. (Toronto: William Briggs, 1898), 1051.

<sup>71</sup>Ellen Elizabeth Cameron Spragge, *From Ontario to the Pacific* (Toronto: C. Blackett Robinson, 1887), preface.

contributor to various Canadian magazines and newspapers, as well as an artist who drew water colour sketches of the Rocky Mountains and surrounding areas.<sup>72</sup>

Jessie Saxby was born into a middle class family in the Shetland Islands in 1842. Although she had no formal education, Saxby established a strong literary career. She became a professional writer after the premature death of her husband in 1873. Saxby travelled from Glasgow, Scotland, on May 26th, 1888, to Quebec and then from Montreal to Victoria on the C. P. R. She was interested in both science and literature, and turned these interests into a career with which to support her five sons. Saxby published mostly articles, poetry and boys' books. In 1890 Saxby published *West-Nor'-West*, which recounted her 1888 visit to Canada. This visit was primarily motivated by Saxby's interest in promoting Scottish emigration to Canada, about which she had previously written numerous articles for journals such as the *Scotsman*, *Chambers Journal*, *Boy's Own Paper*, and the *Scottish Parish Magazine*.<sup>73</sup> Saxby had "...two sons settled in the North West Territories, and regard[ed] the Dominion as the nation of the future,"<sup>74</sup> which is powerfully reflected in her 'emigrant' guide.

Lady Ishbel Aberdeen was born Ishbel Maria Marjoribanks in an extremely wealthy upper-class family in London in 1857. Aberdeen first published her 'emigrant' guide, *Through Canada with a Kodak* in Edinburgh in 1893. Excerpts from this book appeared in Aberdeen's Estate magazine, *Onward and Upward*, before its initial publication. This travel book recorded her two trips to Canada. Her first trip was in 1890, followed by an excursion to British Columbia in 1891. Aberdeen was an ardent supporter of emigration for working-class women and founded the Aberdeen Ladies Union which co-ordinated the

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<sup>72</sup>Morgan ed., 2nd ed., 1051.

<sup>73</sup>Morgan, ed., 1st ed., 910.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid.

many branches of female welfare work going on in the city of Aberdeen.<sup>75</sup> Aberdeen also resided in Canada for five years, between 1893 and 1898 while her husband presided as governor-general, and while in Canada she founded the National Council of Women. She also wrote *Our Lady of the Sunshine*, which was published in 1909. In 1931 Lady Aberdeen was conferred the honour of the Grand Cross of the British Empire which entitled her to be known thereafter as the 'Grand Dame of the Empire.'<sup>76</sup> Lady Aberdeen also served as president of the International Council of Women, created in 1888 to promote the social, economic and political welfare of women, between 1893 and 1936.<sup>77</sup>

Very little is known about Susan St. Maur, who was accompanied by her husband Algernon on an excursion through Canada in the late 1880s. She was born Susan Margaret Mackinnon, the younger daughter of Charles Mackinnon in the British Isles.<sup>78</sup> On September 5, 1877, she married Sir Algernon St. Maur, 15th duke of Somerset. The two travelled across Canada in luxury on the C. P. R., and hunted and fished their way through British Columbia and Manitoba for six months. Susan St. Maur provided details for hunters, emigrants, and adventurers in *Impressions of a Tenderfoot: During a Journey in Search of Sport in the Far West* which was published in London in 1890.

Mary Schaffer was born Mary Townsend Sharples to a wealthy 'more English than the English' Quaker family in West Chester, Pennsylvania, in 1861. She was a very well-educated child and received training in mathematics, Latin, and other subjects. In 1889 while vacationing with her family at Glacier House, Banff, she met Dr. Charles Schaffer

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<sup>75</sup>See Marjorie Harper's introduction in Lady Ishbel Aberdeen, Through Canada with a Kodak (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).

<sup>76</sup>Doris French, Ishbel and the Empire: A Biography of Lady Aberdeen (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1988), 305.

<sup>77</sup>Harper, xviii.

<sup>78</sup>Dod's Peerage, Baronetage, Knightage, etc. of Great Britain and Ireland for 1919 Seventy-ninth year. (London: Dod's Peerage Ltd., 1919), 783.

whom she married the following year. Dr. Schaffer was intrigued by the flora and fauna of the Rocky Mountains, and Mary accompanied him on several short-term excursions to collect specimens for his botanical classification scheme. Dr. Schaffer passed away from chronic heart disease in 1903. Mary, however, could not abandon her love for the Rockies which had been intensified by her excursions with her husband for over one decade. Schaffer decided to continue her husband's classification scheme and excursions into the Rockies, and accompanied by Mary 'Mollie' Adams, and Mary Vaux, respectively, Schaffer set out on two explorations into the Banff area which are recounted in her 'exploration' book *Old Indian Trails*. It appears that Schaffer relied upon her diary, and those of her travelling companions 'M' in reconstructing these journeys.<sup>79</sup>

Agnes Deans Cameron was the youngest child of six children and was born in Victoria in 1863. Her parents had emigrated from Scotland to California, and then moved to Victoria in 1860 attracted by the British Columbia gold rush. Cameron was educated in Victoria public schools and became a teacher. In 1890 she became the first woman high school teacher in Victoria and in 1894, the first woman principal in British Columbia.<sup>80</sup> Throughout her lifetime, Cameron was a vocal equal-rights advocate who spoke out for equal-pay for equal-work legislation for female teachers and principals, and was a vocal proponent for European immigration to the prairies.<sup>81</sup> Cameron's controversial opinions resulted in the cancellation of her teaching license in 1906.<sup>82</sup> After this time she turned to journalism, and wrote many articles concerning Canada's 'wheat belt.' In 1908 at the age of

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<sup>79</sup>Cyndi Smith, Off the Beaten Track: Women adventurers and mountaineers in western Canada (Jasper: Coyote Books, 1989), 50 - 68.

<sup>80</sup>Roberta J. Pazdro, "Agnes Deans Cameron: Against the Current," in In Her Own Right: Selected Essays on Women's History in B. C. ed. Barbara Latham and Cathy Kess (Victoria: Camosun College, 1980), 103.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 101.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., 115.

44 Cameron, accompanied by her niece Jessie Cameron Brown, began a six-month excursion to Canada's Arctic regions. Clearly, she intended to publish her experiences from the outset of her journey, because she packed along her typewriter. Thus, Cameron's *The New North* published in 1910 is both an 'exploration' book as well as a detailed 'guide book.'

Ella Constance Sykes was a member of the upper-class and was born in London. Sykes' exact birth-date is not known, but she was probably born between 1870 and 1875.<sup>83</sup> When she came to Western Canada in 1911, Sykes came as a self-supporting member of the Colonial Intelligence League. Her mission was to act as an undercover investigative reporter in order to explore conditions for middle-class 'home helps' in Canada's Northwest. Sykes spent a total of six months in Western Canada and worked for five different employers. In 1912 Sykes published the 'emigrant guide' account of her trip in *A Home-Help in Canada*. Sykes had previous travel experience as she had accompanied her brother Sir Percy Sykes on his travels through Persia in 1894, and had published *Persia and Its People* and *Through Persia on a Side-Saddle*.<sup>84</sup> In 1915 she renewed her travels to the East, and served as Secretary of the Royal Asiatic Society between 1920 and 1926.

Georgina Binnie-Clark, born in 1871, was educated by governesses in her middle-class home in Dorset, England. Binnie-Clark began publishing short stories and articles in English magazines around the turn of the century, and by 1905, when she visited the Canadian prairies, she considered herself a professional writer. Binnie-Clark published *A Summer on the Canadian Prairies* in 1910, which was in many ways an 'emigrant' guide intended for middle-class women like herself. In 1914 she published *Wheat and Woman*, which told of her experience of wheat farming in Saskatchewan between the harvests of

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<sup>83</sup>Jackel, *A Flannel Shirt and Liberty*, 187.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.



1905 and 1908.<sup>85</sup> *Wheat and Woman* provided many useful details for English women who might have wished to farm in Canada and reflected Binnie-Clark's personal difficulties in securing hired labour for her farm while also managing the day to day 'womanly' household activities. *Wheat and Woman* is Binnie-Clark's most noted work, but it does not provide the travel details present in *A Summer on the Canadian Prairie*, and is therefore not considered in detail in this thesis. Binnie-Clark is the only woman travel writer under investigation in this study who described characters in great detail. Throughout this book, Binnie-Clark 'created' characters by giving them suitable fictional names and describing their habits and philosophies in detail. This book is often considered under the topic 'British emigrant gentlewomen' because Binnie-Clark was especially interested in the opportunities which might be found for single middle-class women like herself in Western Canadian prairie homesteading.

Marion Cran was born Marion Dudley in 1875 in South Africa to an Anglican minister and his wife. Shortly after, the family returned to England. Cran trained as a nurse, but made her name in radio broadcasting and journalism. In the first decade of the twentieth century, Cran was commissioned by the Canadian government to write an 'emigration' guide to encourage middle-class British women to come settle in Canada's West. This work was published twice, the first edition in 1909, with a Canadian reprint in 1910, and the second edition in 1911. It was titled *A Woman in Canada*. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s Cran continued to publish and wrote a book almost every year. Cran also wrote at least two plays in 1907 including *The Shell of A Man*, and the *Life of Herbert Beerbohm Tree*. In *A Woman in Canada* Cran was interested in investigating working conditions for middle-class, as opposed to working-class, British women in Canada's

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<sup>85</sup>see Susan Jackel's introduction in 1979 reprint of Georgina Binnie-Clark *Wheat and Woman* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979).

Northwest. Cran believed that only middle-class women had the moral and educational capacities to 'correctly' mould the rising generation of Western Canadian youth. She concluded her positive book by stressing that many opportunities were available in the West, and stated that if she had to support herself financially she too would have emigrated to Canada.<sup>86</sup>

Elizabeth Keith Morris, author of *An Englishwoman in the Canadian West*, published in London in 1913, is perhaps the most elusive of the women travel writers sampled in this study. Assuming that some of the details she provided in her book were in fact autobiographical, it can be conjectured that Morris visited the West shortly before publication, as she referred to the presence of electric lights, telephones, and vacuum cleaners in some town homes. Morris travelled with a companion, most likely female, and hinted that Morris was returning home to be married. She accomplished this by presenting a photograph of a young man and stating that: "[c]ircumstances in which Cupid has largely figured, have recalled us to our native land."<sup>87</sup> Overall, Morris' book described many of the most common stereotypes circulating about Western Canada in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and is most strongly an 'emigrant/guide' book.

The best educated of the women travel writers included in this study was Elizabeth B. Mitchell. She was born on July 21, 1880 in Edinburgh. Her father was an advocate in Sterling, which placed the family in the professional classes. Mitchell was one of few women to achieve first-class honours at Oxford before the first World War. During her time at Oxford, she completed the classical Mods and Greats course of study, which had

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<sup>86</sup>Who Was Who in Literature 1906 - 1934, Vol. 1 A-K. Michigan. Gale Research Company, 263; and Jackel ed. A Flannel Shirt and Liberty. 124.

<sup>87</sup>Elizabeth Keith Morris, *An Englishwoman in the Canadian West* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, 1913), 189.

the reputation of being the most difficult course of study offered at Oxford.<sup>88</sup> Mitchell was interested in a variety of social reform efforts during her lifetime, especially the Garden Cities movement which was concerned with curtailing some of the abuses, such as overcrowding and wastefulness, brought about by industrialisation.<sup>89</sup> She arrived in Canada in May 1913. Mitchell stayed four months in the city she would only describe as M – (revealed to be North Battleford by historian Susan Jackel), and then on a prairie farm from September to December of 1913. Mitchell published *In Western Canada Before the War: Impressions of Early twentieth Century Prairie Communities*, in 1915. Mitchell's study is very difficult to classify, as she intended it to be a 'study,' by attempting to correct 'faulty' impressions of Western Canada described in other travel literature. In some ways this book fits into the 'emigrant guide' category because Mitchell provided powerful images of the West's overall positive characteristics.

This thesis will draw upon samples of women's travel literature to illustrate how social and literary conventions including Anglo-Saxon ideas concerning racial, cultural, and political superiority influenced the creation of their travel texts. The emphasis throughout is on delineating and interpreting some of the social and literary conventions women travel writers relied upon to construct their views. Because women's travel writings are virtually absent from studies concerned with Canadian travel writing secondary literature concerned with the experiences of male travel writers in Canada as well as studies concerned with women's travel writing on the international scene have been used to provide background information. This is not to suggest, however, that the intent of this thesis is to compare male and female travel writing as this topic requires detailed analysis beyond the scope of this study.

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<sup>88</sup>see Susan Jackel introduction of Elizabeth B. Mitchell, *In Western Canada Before the War* (Saskatchewan: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1981), x.

<sup>89</sup>*Ibid.*, xi.

Chapter one will discuss 'conventional' behaviour, and demonstrates that maintaining 'authority' as travel writers was not an uncomplicated process for women. Women travel writers, rather, had to mitigate social conventions carefully to be able to participate in 'unconventional' activities like hunting and camping. Examples of some women's outspoken opinions are also provided, to suggest that women did not always behave in conventional ways, and that the perceived social, economic, and political imbalance between Canada and the 'mother empire' somewhat encouraged women travel writers to express 'liberal' ideas. Chapter two will discuss women travel writers' representations of nature, to illustrate that their 'construction' of Western landscapes was not a neutral process. Women travel writers were influenced by previous literary depictions of the West as well as their personal motives for venturing West in their characterisations of its environment. Chapter three investigates women travel writers' portrayals of native peoples and non-English speaking immigrants, to illustrate the weight and influence of the various 'distancing' strategies women travel writers used to maintain 'appropriate' social distance between themselves and the objects of their 'gaze'.<sup>90</sup> Women travel writers did not, and could not, objectively report on the 'sights' they saw, and therefore their writing should not be approached as uncomplicated representations of reality. Throughout their depictions of Western Canada women travel writers were careful to assert their own cultural superiority based on contemporary ideas concerning the supremacy of the Anglo-Saxon race and imperial ideas.

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<sup>90</sup>John Urry, The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies (London: Sage Publication, 1990), argues that how we gaze at the things we encounter is conditioned by our social background and the historical period in which we live.

## Chapter One:

### 'Appropriate' Behaviour for Ladies?': Mitigating Social Conventions

My friend, the little explorer, ... lives among the Rocky Mountains and the Indians for months at a time, far, far, in the wilderness. You would not expect it would you? She does not look like it, does she? She ought to look some other way, should she not?<sup>1</sup>

Middle-class British expectations of women's 'conventional' behaviour were to some extent challenged by women travelling in Western Canada between 1870 and 1914. This is not to say, however, that women travel writers abandoned all of their cultural inhibitions in Western Canada. Social, cultural, and literary conventions continued to exert influence over how women behaved and how they formulated their travel texts. Most of the time, women travel writers were careful to uphold social conventions of 'proper' middle-class womanly behaviour and expression in their travel texts, to avoid compromising their reputations, upon which their authority as women writers largely depended. Women travel writers, therefore, included many 'conventional' subjects including domestic matters and serene descriptions of scenery such as flowers, lakes, and woods in their literature. Another aspect of maintaining their propriety as middle-class women required women travel writers to maintain an appropriate social distance from people considered by them to be culturally, and sometimes morally, inferior. Yet, there are passages in some of these women travel writers' texts which seem highly unconventional, especially the discussions which indicate that women, at times, participated in unconventional, if not culturally 'inappropriate,' activities like hunting, camping, 'feminist' discussion, and other socially

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<sup>1</sup>Mary Schaffer, Old Indian Trails: Incidents of Camp and Trail Life, Covering Two Years' Exploration through the Rocky Mountains of Canada (Toronto: William Briggs, 1911), 15.

problematic pastimes for 'ladies' in this era. The relationship between these concordant and discordant female behaviours, however, is not easily resolved. It seems, therefore, that an examination of women travel writers' more 'unusual' activities and commentaries will help scholars to better understand the complexities inherent in women's travel writing and how women consciously mediated social and literary conventions in their travel texts.

Arriving at an understanding of 'appropriate' womanly behaviour during the period under investigation involves recognising that numerous social, economic, and political transitions occurred between the mid-nineteenth century and the Great War. Social conventions are difficult to define precisely, but at this time period ladies were expected to be "... gentle, meek, patient, self-denying, tactful, devoted, tender, sympathetic, and enduring."<sup>2</sup> Curiously, the late nineteenth century was also an age concerned with questions of woman's liberation, including women's involvement in suffragist activities, and the search for alternatives for the rising numbers of single women who suffered from a dearth of viable employment opportunities.<sup>3</sup> A kind of juxtaposition therefore existed between the types of behaviours and activities believed to be 'appropriate' for women and some of the actual activities and means of expression that women engaged in.

Small inroads towards women's greater emancipation were made during this time period, usually attributed to the growth of the forces of industrialisation and urbanisation, and demonstrated by the growth of a variety of women's organisations such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union.<sup>4</sup> While these developments slowly encouraged the growth of

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<sup>2</sup>Wendy Mitchinson, The Nature of Their Bodies: Women and Their Doctors in Victorian Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 16.

<sup>3</sup>Martha Vicinus ed, A Widening Sphere: Changing Roles of Victorian Women, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), xii.

<sup>4</sup>Alison Prentice et al. Canadian Women: A History Second edition (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1996), 192 - 194.

women's organizations and spawned greater public awareness of 'feminist' issues,<sup>5</sup> they also encouraged serious social backlash.

The 'spheres' ideology, which proclaimed that woman's place was in the home and her proper duty was to maintain the moral temper and social status of her family, was expounded loudly after the late 1850s, and was in many ways a reaction against women's new-found freedoms.<sup>6</sup> The spheres ideology also implied that 'respectability,' tenuously defined as "... a certain level of outward and inward gentility," replete with Christian morality and behaviour, underlay how women might behave within both the public and private spheres.<sup>7</sup> At the end of the nineteenth century the ideal 'respectable' occupation of middle-class women was marriage and the maintenance of home and family. Unmarried middle-class women could accept only limited means of employment, such as teaching or 'white-collar' clerical jobs to maintain their 'respectability.'

Undeniably, changes did occur during the 19th century, which has urged Deborah Gorham, among others, to sharply differentiate between the life experiences of women born in the early, mid, and late Victorian eras.<sup>8</sup> The birth-dates of the women travel writers investigated in this study range between the 1830s and the 1880s, which may partially account for the more radical views held by some of the women born in the 1880s, the age

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<sup>5</sup>During the late nineteenth century two forms of 'feminsm' circulated. One was 'equal rights' feminism which stressed that women were entitled to the same rights as men, including the vote. The second type of feminism was 'maternal' feminism which was based on woman's role as guardian of the home and argued that they could not properly care for their families unless conditions in society as a whole were improved. Many women defied such categorisation and often drew upon both types of feminism. See, for example, Alison Prentice et al. Canadian Women: A History (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988); Linda Kealey A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada (Toronto: Canadian Women's Educational Press, 1979)

<sup>6</sup>Prentice et al., 143.

<sup>7</sup>Vicinus, xvi.

<sup>8</sup>Gorham argues that women's life experiences differed markedly depending on whether they were born in the early, mid, or late Victorian period.

of the 'New Woman.' Changes in women's attitude and behaviour came about gradually during this period. One of the most visible 'emancipations' were those in clothing, as women's dress became less restrictive with the introduction of 'shirt waists' and 'bloomers.'

To some extent, travel abroad, and the publication of written material were in themselves relatively new-found opportunities for women. The women travel writers investigated in this study differed markedly in their adherence to 'conventional' standards for their behaviour while abroad, and demonstrate the profound complications inherent in social expectations of women's appropriate behaviour. These women travel writers, however, were often careful to present themselves as behaving within the limits of conventional womanhood, which has led some scholars to argue that different standards of writing applied to women and men in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>9</sup>

Many scholars suggest that how women expressed themselves was gender-specific in many ways. According to some scholars, women were supposed to write about their 'feelings,' romance and sentiments, and home and family life.<sup>10</sup> Men, in contrast, wrote about 'facts and figures,' and were often relied upon by women travel writers to provide authoritative details.<sup>11</sup> Women travel writers could adopt a 'male' voice, "... and the very act of writing 'factual' material symbolised entry into male discourse," with its emphasis on facts and figures and concrete knowledge, but this was deemed a bold and impudent act.<sup>12</sup> Women travel writers therefore tended to either follow social prescriptions for their appropriate behaviour, or subtly skirted these writing constrictions.

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<sup>9</sup>As alluded to in the introductory chapter Foster, Stevenson, and Mills, Discourses of Difference discuss women's travel writing as a distinct genre from men's travel literature.

<sup>10</sup>Foster, 18.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 18 and 19.



Jessie Saxby and Elizabeth Keith Morris provide good examples of what they, and undoubtedly many of their peers considered women's 'appropriate' behaviour to entail. In 1888, Jessie Saxby, for instance, vocally indicated her 'conventional' position. Saxby clearly disapproved of women travelling alone, and stated openly that: "[t]he self-asserting female who travels alone is too apt to be guided by visionary ideas as to what the rules of the road *should* be. She is addicted to vehement declaration of her opinions."<sup>13</sup> Instead of recommending that women travel alone and be self-assertive, Saxby advised that "[i]f you are passive and inane, you are looked after as if you were a parcel of goods..."<sup>14</sup> In 1912, referring to suffragist activity in Western Canada, Elizabeth Keith Morris stated: "[s]uffragettes, with their unwomanly attacks upon men, have not yet reached that Far West," and was elated that Canadian women had, quite sensibly in her view, settled down to the business of making homes and families.<sup>15</sup>

Other women travel writers were far less outspoken about the maintenance of women's passive social role, but still recognised the social necessity of maintaining 'proper' behaviour. One of these important conventions, present in many of the women's travel writings under scrutiny, was to refer to an outside authority, usually male, to relate specific 'facts' or important historical stories about the West which would appear 'unseemly' if related by a woman. Ellen Spragge, author of *From Ontario to the Pacific by the C. P. R.* published in 1887, used this device throughout her book to provide factual information. For example, in discussing Portage la Prairie, Spragge wrote "[a]ccording to Mr. Sanford Fleming, 'this town is situated on the northern bank of the Assiniboine River...'"<sup>16</sup> In establishing her current geographical position, Spragge wrote: "'[w]e are,' says Mr. Fleming,

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<sup>13</sup>Jessie Saxby, *West-Nor'-West* (London: James Nisbett and Company, 1891), 147.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup>Morris, 74.

<sup>16</sup>Spragge, 28.

'five hundred and fifty-four miles from Winnipeg, north of the Cypress Hills.'"<sup>17</sup> Mary Agnes Fitzgibbon, who wrote in 1880, also occasionally relied upon an outside male authority to relate facts or tell important stories. In describing a portage she wrote: "[t]he portaging, or carrying powers of the Indians, says Major Butler, is remarkable; one man often carrying two hundred-weight for several miles."<sup>18</sup>

Another related convention used by women travel writers to maintain 'appropriate' behaviour, was to excuse the quality, and sometimes even the act of publication itself, of their travel books. Susan St. Maur, for example, stated in her preface to *Impressions of a Tenderfoot*, published in 1890, that: "I have chosen the title 'Impressions of a Tenderfoot' in order that those who read may not expect great things, a 'Tenderfoot' meaning in the 'Far-West,' a person new to the country, or, must it be confessed, a 'Greenhorn.' Thus regarded, I trust that the contents of this volume may meet with a generous and lenient handling."<sup>19</sup> Mary Georgina Hall, author of *A Lady's Life on a Farm in Manitoba*, prefaced her 1884 book by stating: "[t]hese letters were never intended for publication, and were only the details written to our family of an every-day life, and now put in the same shape and composition; not as a literary work, but in the hopes that the various experiences we underwent may be useful to future colonists."<sup>20</sup>

By adopting these conventions women travel writers could present their material, and opinions, without challenging social and literary norms for 'appropriate' behaviour. There are other passages in women's travel writing, however, which suggest that women travel writers did not always adhere to these standards of 'conventional' behaviour,

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<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>18</sup>Fitzgibbon, 120.

<sup>19</sup>Susan St. Maur, *Impressions of a Tenderfoot: During a Journey in Search of Sport in the Far West* (London: John Murray, 1890), viii.

<sup>20</sup>Mary Hall, *A Lady's Life on a Farm in Manitoba* (London: W. H. Allen and co., 1884), preface.

especially in the West. This is well demonstrated by the travel writing of Marion Cran and Agnes Deans Cameron.

It does seem clear that in some ways Western Canada often inspired women travel writers to express contentious opinions, and perhaps also to challenge social norms. For example, writing in 1908 Marion Cran, in *A Woman in Canada*, related this incident which took place while she was in the company of Mrs. Bennett in Regina, Saskatchewan:

Mrs. Bennett of Regina, with the beautiful eyes and motherly way, ... succeeded so nicely in looking unconcerned when I smoked a cigarette one day after a particularly hard wrestle with pen and ink. I shall always remember that courteous calm, it utterly deceived me, and I smoked in comfort. Months afterwards in a London theatre I met Mr. Hook of the Regina 'daily,'... and he told me I had considerably damaged an otherwise fair reputation by smoking. Which was very sad and horrible for me, but very nice for the gossips. I always believe gossip-mongers keep a warm place in their hearts for people who shock them."<sup>21</sup>

At first glance, this passage seems a little jarring. Certainly, Marion Cran was an outspoken writer who did not refrain from openly voicing her opinions when she desired to do so, but she was also an educated and cultivated 'proper' middle class woman. It is difficult to decide what to make of her act of smoking in public, before it seems that it was deemed socially acceptable for women to do so, at least in Canada, and then deliberately choosing to include this experience, laced with sarcasm, in her travel book. One explanation put forward by some scholars of women's travel writing is that travelling abroad, especially to the American continent, enabled women to defy conventional behaviour and emboldened them to act in ways they normally would not. Maria Frawley,

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<sup>21</sup>Marion Cran, *A Woman in Canada* (Toronto: The Musson Book Company Ltd., 1910), 238 - 239.

author of *A Wider Range*, states that women travel writers perceived 'America' (used in her book to refer to both the United States and Canada) as a land of re-birth, with 'rejuvenating' powers, which could free people from some social restraints and which demanded a greater display of personal autonomy from women as well as from men.<sup>22</sup>

Another reason might be that by the early nineteenth century new standards of behaviour for women were starting to develop and were aided by the rise of individualism.<sup>23</sup> Cran was on a government sponsored mission to discuss *her* personal experiences and opinions of Western Canada. This gave a certain authority to her writing and point of view, as she had a virtual guarantee of publication, and may have encouraged her to speak freely. In any event, it appears that Cran's inclusion of this event serves a dual purpose. First of all, this excerpt presents her as a woman willing to speak her mind, and possibly she included this passage to demonstrate that she really was not leaving anything out of her experience in Western Canada. Secondly, it illustrates that 'conventions' of women travel writers' behaviour in the Western environment could include activities and manners of expression which were surprisingly more 'emancipated' than we, as modern readers of late nineteenth and early twentieth century literature, have been conditioned to expect by a great deal of historical writing which stresses that the private sphere was repressive and stagnating for Victorian and Edwardian women.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Frawley, 161 - 162.

<sup>23</sup>Phillippe Aries and George Duby eds. A History of Private Life: From the Fires of Revolution to the Great War IV. Translator: Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990), 670.

"individualism' comprises a general movement in the early years of the twentieth century in which the growth of cities and increased mobility of people spawned greater anonymity and autonomy, and diminished the bonds of everyday life. This led to people demanding increased freedoms, including holidays, and heightened overall awareness of class distinctions.

<sup>24</sup>Jeanne Kay, "Landscapes of Women and Men: Rethinking the Regional Historical geography of the United States and Canada," Journal of Historical Geography.

Yet, this 'emancipation' applied only to limited topics and situations. This is well illustrated by Marion Cran's very brief commentary on female suffrage. Cran adopts a rather ambiguous voice when she is questioned about her suffrage and political involvement by a fellow, male, passenger on the C. P. R.. The gentleman assumed that Cran was politically involved because he had read about Cran's speech to the presswomen of Winnipeg on the issue of suffrage in a local newspaper. Cran, however, hastened to explain that she was completely ignorant of politics (which is not likely considering her educational background and interest in current affairs), and Cran, furthermore, told the gentleman that, in fact, she had only spoken about suffrage in the first place because of her deep concern for the poor working conditions for women in England.<sup>25</sup> It appears, therefore, that Cran was more comfortable questioning certain social conventions, like the cigarette instance - perhaps especially because she was in the presence of a woman when she 'offended' custom, whereas challenging 'male' political conventions was outside of her authority, at least in a travel text.

There are many other examples of women travel writers manipulating social conventions and expectations in their travel literature. Some of this literature suggests that women travel writers consciously used their travel writing to put forward new 'feminist' ideas and standards of behaviour. It is important not to over-emphasise this idea, however, as few of these women described themselves as unqualified 'feminists.' Georgina Binnie-Clark was interested in opportunities for middle-class British women in the Canadian West. The lack of homesteading opportunities for single middle-class British women in the

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Vol. 17, No. 4 (1991), makes the point that although the sexual spheres ideology has often been portrayed as repressive and stagnating for Victorian women, the sexual spheres ideology is not supported by a great deal of the literature pertaining to the West and that movement between the 'commercial' and 'domestic' spheres was, in actuality, very fluid, for both women and men, 444

<sup>25</sup>Cran, 213 - 214.

Canadian West, as well as the poor reputation of English 'remittance' farmers among Canadians disturbed Binnie-Clark, and she wrote many articles about this issue during her lifetime.<sup>26</sup> Binnie-Clark noted that conditions for British women farmers in Canada were more difficult than for farmers' wives, and she also observed that middle-class women could have few pretensions to their middle and upper-class backgrounds while performing the duties of domestic servants.<sup>27</sup> Men, however, did not lose their class status in the West, no matter how hard they had to work or how impoverished they appeared.

Binnie-Clark, as well as other women travel writers, recognised that 'British' gender and class structures were different in Canada. Women travel writers described Canada, and especially the newly-emerging West, as marked by social and economic fluidity. Some women travel writers, including Marion Cran and Binnie-Clark, argued that opportunities for the English working-classes were provided in Western Canada by this social and economic fluidity. At the same time, however, the absence of ingrained formal social structures disturbed some women travel writers who were accustomed to being treated with 'due' deference.

Ella Sykes, who disguised her true identity as an upper-class British woman to work as a 'home help' in Western Canada, offered many comments regarding class issues in the West. During one of her five home-help assignments Sykes had to wait upon male farm labourers, and it disturbed Sykes that these men, of a much lower social position than herself:

... never thought of lending a hand as I passed the jug, cut the bread, changed their plates, placed the dish of bacon on the table, and handed them the tea poured out by my employer, eating my own meal in the process of waiting. I

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<sup>26</sup>Jackel ed., *A Flannel Shirt and Liberty*, 151.

<sup>27</sup>Binnie-Clark, *Wheat and Woman*, 215.

confess that it went somewhat against the grain to wait on them in this manner...<sup>28</sup>

According to Sykes class distinctions were evident in Canada, but were not openly acknowledged. "It struck me again and again that the difference between England and Canada in this respect was that England acknowledged these distinctions, and Canada pretended to ignore them."<sup>29</sup> Related to the idea that an absence of class distinctions marked the Dominion was the associated belief that Canada suffered from a dearth of culture. Canadians, at least according to Jessie Saxby and Ella Sykes, were so focused upon acquiring wealth, that they had allowed cultural matters to slide. Sykes' 'acquaintance' "... considered that Canada was greatly in need of culture as the main, if not the sole subject of conversation was the 'almighty dollar,' and he thought that an influx of educated British women with high ideals would do much to raise many a standard."<sup>30</sup>

Usually, 'feminist' ideas concerning issues of female suffrage and the desire for women's greater equality with men appear only as brief commentaries in women's travel literature, rather than as central themes in the body of the texts. Ideally, feminist issues are linked to a 'greater cause,' such as Cran's 'maternal' concern for poor working-class British women, or attempts by other women to 'reform' or educate minority groups or Indians. Agnes Deans Cameron, author of *The New North* published in 1910, had a very clever way of commenting upon 'gender' issues. Instead of referring to members of her own society or ethnic group to voice her opinions, she referred to the daily habits and gender relations of native peoples. For instance, Cameron concluded that "[s]ad is the lot of the Indian women of the North. Fated always to play a secondary part in the family drama, it is hard to see

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<sup>28</sup>Ella Sykes, *A Home-Help in Canada* (London: Smith, Elder, and Company, 1912), 44.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 144.

what of pleasure life holds for her."<sup>31</sup> In another passage Cameron referred to animal life, in this instance 'phalarope' birds, to discuss feminist ideas:

Father Phalarope builds the house, the one hen-pecked husband of all feathered families who does... Mamma, meanwhile, ... struts long-leggedly with other female phalaropes, and together they discuss the upward struggles toward freedom of their unfeathered prototypes.<sup>32</sup>

Cameron was a very outspoken individual who fought for a variety of female-reform issues during her lifetime. She also, however, accepted conventional methods of representing the 'other.' By unconsciously accepting her social and racial status as an Anglo-Saxon woman, which in the early twentieth century implied that she was biologically and culturally superior to 'lesser' races such as native peoples, she could make 'aside' comments which reflected upon her own Anglo-Saxon society without offending prevailing social conventions of womanly expression.

Cameron's book also introduces the theme of 'adventure,' which is present in many women's travel texts. Cameron's journey was very 'unconventional' in terms of the scope of her journey. Throughout her trip to Canada's far north she chose to subsist on an indigenous diet, at one point consisting of reindeer parasites and piping hot seal blood. She also had to endure very rough habitations, which were not in keeping with 'conventional' accommodations for middle-class women travel writers. Many other women travel writers, however, also experienced camping and hunting activities.<sup>33</sup> Patricia Jasen, author of *Wild*

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<sup>31</sup> Agnes Deans Cameron, The New North: Being Some Account of a Woman's Journey through Canada to the Arctic (New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1910), 308.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 271.



*Things*, argues that during the latter half of the 19th century a number of changes in tourism habits and philosophies occurred to increase interest in Western Canada. Seaside resorts, especially in Eastern Canada and Europe, were well-established entities by this time, and offered their services to wealthy middle and upper class guests. The late 19th century, however, also saw an increase in the popularity of 'raw, untouched' nature, as people believed that experiencing nature fully would enable them to better understand themselves.<sup>34</sup> A movement towards nature and away from resorts was therefore underway by the time period under discussion here. Many areas of Western Canada were still in their 'natural' state and one way to experience this nature was to participate in a camping expedition. Again, ambiguities of convention arise. The prospect of camping in the wilderness was not an activity that many non-native women traditionally participated in. 'Roughing it' remained less acceptable for women than for men, until at least the 1920s, although the majority of Western homestead women had to camp out, participate in clearing the land, build barns, and other such 'masculine' behaviours.<sup>35</sup> Some women travel writers' literature, however, suggests that several women strongly desired to enter this 'male' territory, and indicates that between 1870 and 1914, life in the wilds could function to relax social conventions requiring demure standards of dress and behaviour for women.

Contemporary literature on travel writing focuses heavily on the 'exploration' activities of male surveyors, hunters, and expeditionists between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>36</sup> Greater numbers of men than women had traversed the 'wilderness' on fur trading and hunting forays, but as the nineteenth century progressed, and journeys into the 'wilds' were undertaken for the sake of hunting and enjoying nature rather than

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<sup>34</sup>Jasen, chapter 4.

<sup>35</sup>Jensen and Miller, 181.

<sup>36</sup>See for example, Germaine Warkentin ed. Canadian Exploration Literature: An Anthology (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1993.)

accumulating furs and meats for profit, many more non-native women joined men in wilderness excursions. Implicit in the desire to enter the wilds was the recognition that Western society needed to embrace its 'primitive' roots to avoid the "... danger of becoming a nation of cities, an urban race unfitted to wrestle with the wild."<sup>37</sup> With the growth of cities and nervous ailments such as 'neurasthenia,' the curative and restorative benefits of a holiday in the wilds grew to include women.<sup>38</sup> This recognition, however, was not unproblematic as it required women to either openly defy conventions of appropriate behaviour which, largely, did not advocate women's participation in 'rough' exploits, or required women to find subtle and create ways of mitigating social conventions, so that they too could participate in camping and hunting trips.

One very important literary and social convention of the Victorian age which often limited and influenced women travel writers' accounts of their involvement with the 'wilds' was the conception of wilderness as 'female.' Early male explorers and adventurers had been the first to write about the Canadian wilderness, and often referred to it as 'mother earth' and 'bride' whose primary function was to nurture man.<sup>39</sup> This language continued into the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and is represented in male travel literature which conceptualised nature, especially wilderness areas, as female. Implicit in this language, therefore, was the idea that the 'wilds' existed largely for the sake of men, whose duty was to tame nature. This convention has led some scholars to suggest that women had to either adopt male language to refer to the 'wilds' or develop their own more suitable language for discussing nature. Some women travel writers chose to adopt this

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<sup>37</sup>Cran, 13.

<sup>38</sup>Jasen, 114.

<sup>39</sup>Carolyn Merchant, The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980), 8 - 9.

male convention of the 'female' wilderness in their own writings. Elizabeth Morris, for example, stated that:

The bush, with its mysterious attraction, its speaking silence, and its wild, uncivilised freedom, was a closed book to us. We longed to penetrate its secrets, and to share, if only in a small degree, something of its delights, which the men who had wandered far into the wilds expatiated upon at such length.<sup>40</sup>

At least some women, therefore, acknowledged that in terms of both social and literary conventions the wilderness was male territory. Participating in journeys into the 'wilds,' therefore, could be a strangely androgenous experience for some women travel writers, which partially explains why some adopted this 'male' literary convention for describing the wilds. Standards concerning 'true womanhood' also affected how women travel writers portrayed themselves in their writing. Genteel ladies were still regarded as more 'frail' and 'sensitive' than men, a lingering legacy of eighteenth century scientific studies which:

... suggested that women's nerves or 'fibers' - along with those of male artists and intellectuals - were more delicate than ordinary men's, legitimating women's claim to the refined sensibility or taste that was increasingly prized (but also making them supposedly more prone to nervous disorders).<sup>41</sup>

By the late nineteenth century, greater numbers of women travel writers participated in camping activities, but remnants of this eighteenth century philosophy lingered on. One

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<sup>40</sup>Morris, 47.

<sup>41</sup>Elizabeth A. Bohls, Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics, 1716 - 1818 (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 100.

popular way of experiencing camping activities, therefore, was for women travel writers to engage the services of a guide or two, inevitably male. The use of male guides by females travelling unescorted, of course, also raised questions concerning 'appropriate' womanly behaviour.

Most of the women who engaged in camping expeditions in Canada's West, most notably Mary Schaffer, Ellen Elizabeth Cameron Spragge, Mary Hall, Susan St. Maur, and Elizabeth Keith Morris, were accompanied by men, including husbands, brothers, and guides during their expeditions. Agnes Deans Cameron, during her expedition to and from Canada's arctic regions, also made use of male guides, but relied primarily on her niece, Jessie Cameron Brown, to act as travelling companion. Despite the perception that women played a very limited role in camping activities, promoted by present-day literatures which are silent about women's activities in traditionally 'male' exploits in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women did camp, and delighted in the opportunities the wilds afforded for relaxing social norms.

Women's enjoyment of the camping experience and its related activities depended in part on their personal attitudes about maintaining social proprieties. It seems that the further women travel writers removed themselves from 'civilisation' the more they were able to enjoy camping out. This is demonstrated by Mary Hall's experience. Hall went on a camping expedition in 1882, and unlike many of her contemporaries she did not relish the opportunity. Her trip lasted eight days, took her from Winnipeg to Fort Ellice, and she employed both carriage and horse as well as train for transportation. Hall was accompanied by a female companion, in addition to her brother A- and a farm hand. Hall wrote, concerning herself and her female companion, that: "I don't know that we either of us look forward to the expedition very much, as we fear we shall have to rough it too

greatly; but, on the other hand, it seems a pity not to see something more of the country."<sup>42</sup> Hall, however, did go on her trip and wrote 200 miles west of Winnipeg that she "... [was] pleased to find that all the North-west is not like the country around Winnipeg, so awfully flat and without a tree; on the contrary we have been through rolling prairie, almost hilly and very well-wooded in places."<sup>43</sup>

Camping allowed women travel writers to come into closer contact with nature than they did during everyday life, and many of them enjoyed experiencing natural scenery at close hand. Hall, however, did not venture far enough away from 'civilisation' to be able to enjoy nature at close range, or more importantly for this chapter, to be able to forego social expectations concerning her dress and behaviour. Hall endured camping chiefly when hotel rooms were not available, or were considered unsuitable by her. At one Inn, although the hostess was scrupulously clean, Hall did not want to "... share the only bedroom with her, her husband and two other men, one ill with inflammation of the lungs..."<sup>44</sup> Camping on the open prairie, therefore, was undertaken only as a last resort for Hall. Hall described her tent as an 'A' tent which had room for two people to sleep side by side and was, after all, fairly comfortable after some straw had been put under her buffalo robe and a pillow was fashioned out of clothes. Hall coveted the freedom of her male companions as the following morning, "... the men had bathed in the river, which we very much envied ..." <sup>45</sup> Hall could endure living on bread and marmalade for three consecutive days; the challenge she found almost unbearable was the difficulty of maintaining 'lady-like' standards of cleanliness and dress while on her expedition. On one of the last nights of her trip, Hall was told that the livery man would not be able to deliver their hand-bags containing combs

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<sup>42</sup>Hall, *A Lady's Life on a Farm in Manitoba*, 97.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, 108.

and garments to the hotel she was staying at. Her reaction to this was utter despair, she wrote that: "[w]e were nearly sprinkling ashes on our heads and rending our garments when the fact was broken to us..."<sup>46</sup> Hall concluded her trip by stating: "I don't know that we have had any very amusing adventure; but the whole expedition has been an adventure, and therefore, as it proved the business of the day, it was taken seriously."<sup>47</sup>

Unlike Hall, who did not quite manage to escape from 'civilisation,' those women travel writers who 'camped out' further away from 'civilisation' discovered that different conventions of dress and behaviour for women prevailed in the wilds. Mary Schaffer, in *Old Indian Trails*, relished the physical comfort associated with less-restricted clothing, "... the joys of moccasins after ordinary shoes..., [and] that there [was] a place where hat-pins [were] not the mode..."<sup>48</sup> Women travellers could mitigate conventional standards of dress in the 'wilds,' and were often inventive and resourceful, as in the case of Susan St. Maur, author of *Impressions of a Tenderfoot*. St. Maur explained "I was glad that my tweed petticoat reached only to my knees, and with long boots, a flannel shirt, and Norfolk jacket, I could jump from rock to rock in a way that surprised even myself."<sup>49</sup> St. Maur added that "[i]t is very difficult to keep one's clothes tidy in camp, as perpetually the fire 'wants fixing up,' ... or perhaps one sees the frying-pan sliding quietly into the fire; then, clean or dirty, one must go to the rescue."<sup>50</sup> St. Maur advised "I found the best way to avoid having to wash my hands perpetually was to wear a long pair of dogskin gloves, and to keep them on most of the day."<sup>51</sup> In spite of difficulties in staying properly attired, some women travel

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 120.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 121.

<sup>48</sup>Schaffer, 15.

<sup>49</sup>St. Maur, 94.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 96.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

writers appreciated the freedom of dress which could be allowed them in the woods and which was not possible in conventional society.<sup>52</sup>

Many women travel writers engaged in camping and its related activities during their visits to Western Canada, which reinforces the idea that camping was not an unusual activity for women travel writers. A good example is Ellen Elizabeth Spragge, one of the passengers on the first through train on June 28, 1886. Spragge was accompanied by her husband on a month long camping excursion through the Kootenays, British Columbia, region. Spragge's camping trip was a good deal more complicated than Hall's, as Spragge had to engage trains, steamers, horses, and small boats during her expedition. Spragge left Donald, B. C., on Saturday August 28th to board the steamer *Duchess* on the Columbia River. The steamer trip lasted a total of three days, after which the Spragges were met by an Indian boy who they had engaged to guide them, and two saddle horses. Spragge had never camped before, and credited her husband with the success of the trip, as she "... found that a tent, comfortably arranged by [her] husband's skilful hands, was an abode not at all to be despised in favourable weather."<sup>53</sup> Spragge described the cold nights, wind and rain showers she experienced during her trip. Spragge wrote that during one storm: "[v]isions of falling trees and branches mingled in my dreams with the flapping of canvas and the rattle of thousands of pine needles upon the tent. I sighed for the stability of a house, and vowed vows never to camp again."<sup>54</sup> Throughout her descriptions of her camping experience she was careful to make social distinctions between herself and her husband and their Indian guides. Indian guides usually completed the 'menial' tasks, such as cooking and packing up,

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<sup>52</sup>Shelagh J. Squire, "In the Steps of 'Genteel Ladies': Women Tourists in the Canadian Rockies, 1885 - 1939," *The Canadian Geographer*, 39, No. 1 (1995), 8 - describes clothing as a form of social control.

<sup>53</sup>Spragge, 109.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, 116.

associated with life in the 'wilds.' Overall, Spragge greatly enjoyed her trip, and provided glowing descriptions of the wonderful natural scenery she saw while far away from urban centres. Spragge's camping expedition lasted until the end of September and took her through to the Upper Kooteney Valley before returning to Donald, British Columbia, on Sunday September 26, 1886.

Almost twenty years after Spragge's excursion into the wilds of British Columbia, Mary Schaffer started out on a four month camping expedition into the mountains surrounding the Banff area. Schaffer openly acknowledged that social conventions had restrained her from engaging in an expedition of this great length in earlier years. She related that she and her friend, Mary 'Molly' Adams, had sat in the hotel parlour and listened to the tales told by male excursionists just returned from the mountains, and wrote: "[i]n meek despair we bound our heads to the inevitable, to the cutting knowledge of the endurance of man and the years slipped by."<sup>55</sup> Schaffer, however, realised shortly after the turn of the century that she need not forego a journey into the mountains because of her gender. She realised that "... [w]e can starve as well as they; the muskeg will be no softer for us than for them; the ground will be no harder to sleep upon; ... nor the bath colder if we fall in,' - so-we planned a trip."<sup>56</sup>

Schaffer, named "Yahe-Weha" meaning 'mountain woman' by the Stoney Indians, is the best known of the women travel writers who camped out.<sup>57</sup> Schaffer described two of her expeditions into the Rocky Mountains in her book, *Old Indian Trails*. Her expedition of the summer of 1907 was to officially begin on June 20th at Lagan, although it was somewhat delayed, and she was accompanied by Mary 'Molly' Adams and two male guides,

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<sup>55</sup>Schaffer, 4.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 176.



one of whom was Billy 'Chief' Warren.<sup>58</sup> The aim of the 1907 expedition was to find the sources of the Saskatchewan and Athabasca rivers. According to Schaffer, this goal was provided more for the sake of giving friends and family a 'destination' or purpose, as her true motive was to "... delve into the heart of an untouched land, to tread where no human foot had trod before, ... and to learn daily those secrets which dear Mother Nature is so willing to tell those who seek."<sup>59</sup> Schaffer recognised that a mountain journey was not a typical pursuit for a wealthy well-born woman traveller like herself, and acknowledged her readiness to depart, rather tongue-in-cheek "... now with all the necessary things gathered together, with trunks packed not with frills and furbelows, but with blankets, and 'glucose,' air-beds, and evaporated milk."<sup>60</sup>

Schaffer's 1908 expedition also started at Lagan and began on June 8th, despite a heavy downpour. Schaffer had a strong interest in the Canadian Rockies and clearly adored life in the outdoors, despite her initial fears of the wilderness, bears, and horses.<sup>61</sup> Schaffer was first introduced to mountain excursions by her first husband Dr. Charles Schaffer, whom Schaffer accompanied on a decade long mission to collect specimens for a classification he was developing. Schaffer continued to return to the Rocky Mountains even after Dr. Schaffer's death. She recorded that her primary motivation for continuing her journeys was a desire to complete the botany classification her late husband had initiated.<sup>62</sup> Schaffer found a sense of spiritual peace in nature which could not be attained in conventional society. Schaffer commented throughout the book about oncoming western

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<sup>58</sup>E. J. Hart ed., A Hunter of Peace: Mary T. S. Schaffer's Old Indian Trails of the Canadian Rockies (Canada: The Whyte Foundation, 1980), 12.

<sup>59</sup>Schaffer, 13.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 17.

<sup>61</sup>Hart ed., A Hunter of Peace, 7.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 6. Another reason may have been that she sought solace for her husband's death in the wilds of the mountains. Hart ed. A Hunter of Peace.

civilisation, which she saw as a scourge upon both the wilderness and the natural nomadic lifestyle represented by the Indians. Schaffer wrote "[a]s we crossed the Athabasca, we realised that next time we came that way our horses would not have to swim for it, all would be made easy with trains and bridges; that the hideous march of progress, so awful to those who love the real wilderness, was sweeping rapidly over the land."<sup>63</sup>

Camping also enabled women travel writers to experience real and imagined dangers which were not possible in conventional society. Schaffer related the very real physical danger associated with crossing a raging river on horseback. She was not enamoured with the prospect of exposing herself to danger, but rather advised her readers "... that caution and judgement mean safety."<sup>64</sup> St. Maur relished life in the wilds, despite the hardships involved in a canoeing and camping trip. She also emphasised that danger was a part of her voyage. "The risks of a trip on a river full of rapids are considerable. One mistake in a bad place with pole or paddle either upsets or smashes the canoe, and then the chances are against a safe landing."<sup>65</sup>

In 1909, when she set out for her excursion to Canada's Arctic, Agnes Deans Cameron did not even momentarily entertain the possibility that her gender could prevent her from taking a journey which she had planned for two years. Cameron sought adventure through Western Canada all the way up to the North, relishing a more complete experience of Western Canada than the East-West route offered by the CPR. Cameron journeyed from Chicago up through Winnipeg to the Mackenzie Delta. Camping in August by the Peace River was an exhilarating experience for Cameron. "These delicious nights in

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<sup>63</sup>Schaffer, 359.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 40.

<sup>65</sup>St. Maur, 94.

the tent are memories that will remain through all the years to come. It is cool and silent and productive of thought."<sup>66</sup>

Even the usually conventional Elizabeth Keith Morris participated in a camping adventure during her visit in Canada's Northwest. Morris' experience aptly indicates that by 1912 camping had become a common activity undertaken by a variety of tourists, including women. Morris camped with her brother, and stated at the beginning of her 'camping' chapter that "[m]y sex precluded any great distances into uncivilised places, but sixty miles to the north-west of us lay the beautiful Wabamum Lake, which was considered an ideal camping spot for those who wished to remain on the fringe of civilisation."<sup>67</sup>

Camping also enabled women to engage in some activities which were normally regarded as being outside of the 'feminine' range. Hunting, or sport, is one very good example of this. Few studies investigate the role of women in hunting expeditions, with the notable exception of Maria Aitken, *A Girdle Around the Earth*, who examines women's involvement in hunting in Africa and India in her book. Sport was seen as the privilege of the British male elite, an important part of a young man's education to prepare himself for war.<sup>68</sup> Until at least the 1920s, sport was not perceived as being a lady-like activity, and Queen Victoria herself contended that "... only fast women shoot."<sup>69</sup> Women travellers, however, did engage in hunting. Social conventions, furthermore, demanded that hunting be governed by a strict code of conduct, to ensure that it was an activity associated more with elitist interests in natural studies, including botany and geology, and was as far removed from any connotations of 'butchery' as possible. Sport in this sense was associated with the values of British civilisation and was engaged in for the sake of getting exercise

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<sup>66</sup>Cameron, 333.

<sup>67</sup>Morris, 43.

<sup>68</sup>Moyles and Owsam, 62.

<sup>69</sup>Maria Aitken, *A Girdle Round the Earth* (London: Constable, 1987), 85 and 86.

and fresh air. This was seen as being in stark contrast to the 'primitive' and distasteful slaughter the Indians engaged in to procure their daily fare.<sup>70</sup>

Susan St. Maur experienced hunting and camping in British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. To her this expedition was paradise, despite sleeping on hard ground and enduring rain-soaked tents and bedding. While on vacation St. Maur indulged in fishing. As she and her husband Algernon were paddling down the Cowichan river in Indian guided canoes, St. Maur recounted: "... part of the time I fished with a spoon on a trout rod and landed a 4 lb. trout after excellent play, which amusement the Indians failed to appreciate, their only idea being to kill."<sup>71</sup> In November, St. Maur continued her tour into Manitoba where the main object was to hunt moose. Although St. Maur did not participate in her husband's moose hunting campaigns, it is evident that she was aware of the correct conventions and methods for successfully hunting moose, as well as many other forms of game, and she provided pages of details discussing the most effective ways of hunting large game. This 'masculine' advice however was tempered by St. Maur's doses of feminine behaviour. St. Maur was careful to demonstrate in her book that while her husband was off shooting at moose, she maintained the domestic order in their tent. She was far from passive, however; while he was away she engaged in some small animal hunting, mainly rabbits, and was proud to include 'rabbit broth' on their daily menu upon her husband's return.<sup>72</sup>

The women's travel literature suggests that there was absolutely nothing unusual about women shooting quarry. Marion Cran was proud of her ability to blow away gophers on the trail. While travelling over the prairie to visit an Englishwoman, Cran described her exploits in the following manner: "... the journey is considerably gilded by the loan of a .22

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<sup>70</sup>Moyles and Owrap, 63.

<sup>71</sup>St. Maur, 90.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 250.

Winchester and the presence of a driver who connives at gopher-shooting. We dawdle along and shoot from the rig whenever the boy turns with a 'say there's a dandy shot,' and I see a pretty squirrely person sitting by his hole..."<sup>73</sup> Likewise, camping just outside of Vermillion, a member of Agnes Deans Cameron's entourage spotted fresh moose tracks. The next day, as the party floated down the river in scows, a lone moose was spotted on the shore cropping willows. Cameron described the scene:

It had been generously agreed that if opportunity offered us a moose the shot was to be mine, so in excited whispers the news is telegraphed to our end of the scow and my rifle is handed up... I fire, and the shot just grazes his spine. Will he take to a gully? No, he plunges into the river instead and we follow him up in the little tug. One more shot is effective and I have killed my premier moose.<sup>74</sup>

Like St. Maur, hunting was primarily a sporting event for Cameron. Discussions of 'hunting' in women's travel literature suggest social conventions regarding expectations of 'appropriate' behaviour for women were lessened by the wilderness environment. As well, it is possible that women travel writers included discussions of hunting in their books to develop the theme of the West as 'bountiful,' which was important for encouraging others to come visit or emigrate to the Canadian West.

Social expectations concerning women travel writers' 'appropriate' behaviour were sometimes challenged by women travel writers in Western Canada. This process, however, was far from straight-forward, as women travel writers carefully negotiated literary and social conventions in their travel texts. To some extent, it appears that Western Canada had a 'liberating' atmosphere which encouraged at least some women travel writers to

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<sup>73</sup>Cran, 116 - 117.

<sup>74</sup>Cameron, 346 - 348.

participate in activities they would normally forego. One aspect of this 'liberation' may have depended on the women travel writers' elevated social position in Western Canada. As Anglo-Saxon women writers, certain social and literary conventions functioned to provide them with a culture-based authority. Maintaining 'propriety,' nonetheless, remained a concern for women travel writers as they were very careful about what they, as women, said and did while travelling in Western Canada.

## Chapter Two:

### 'Cultivating Nature:' Women Travel Writers Create Western Canada

From the first moment I found the prairie entirely attractive - its stillness, its serenity, together with its strong and eager pulse of life... It could raise one's mood to the power of wings and the seventh heaven, and hurl one down to those tiresome regions where one has to move with fixed determination, a tight gripped lip, and step by step - but it never bored.<sup>1</sup>

Women travel writers' literary representations of Western Canada were much more than straightforward descriptions of the natural environment, including climate and landscapes. Their responses to the many natural aspects of Canada's West reflected social expectations of the West's future, and pre-existing literary conventions for describing nature. Often, women travel writers provided both negative and positive representations of the West's natural environment in their travel books. Positive depictions of the West, which appeared in a variety of government sponsored immigration literature and travel writing towards the end of the nineteenth century promoted Western land as bountiful and the climate as 'invigorating.' Women travel writers were often drawn to the West by literary portrayals of its 'garden-like' propensities and often colluded in the formation of these powerful positive images regardless of their personal inclinations for visiting Western Canada. Some women travel writers sought to redress what they considered falsely exaggerated depictions of the West, and offered less positive, more 'realistic' presentations of the West's climatic, economic, and social vagaries. Overwhelmingly, however, women travel writers participated in the imperial process of representing Western nature as positive

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<sup>1</sup>Georgina Binnie-Clark, A Summer on the Canadian Prairie (London: Edward Arnold, 1910), 135.

and inextricably linked to 'popular' conceptions of the West as the land of hope and promise for the Anglo-Saxon race.

As alluded to in the introductory chapter, women travel writers had various motives for journeying to Western Canada which to some extent influenced the overarching tone of their travel texts. The year and season of women travel writers' arrival and how 'close' they actually came to nature while in the West was also influential in conditioning their responses towards it. Summer, as opposed to winter, trips elucidated vastly different comments. Scientific and technological developments also influenced women travel writers' responses to Western nature, as late Victorians believed in the ability of modern man to transform 'raw' nature into a more viable economic resource. At the same time, however, late Victorians also longed to escape from the ills of modern civilisation. Thus they viewed the natural environment as simultaneously a "... 'garden,' the symbol of the agricultural West and transformed nature, and the 'wilderness,' the symbol of the wild West and unspoiled nature."<sup>2</sup>

Descriptions of the West as 'garden' and 'wilderness' coincide in women's travel writing, as do positive and negative emotional responses to the natural environment. Several major conventions of 'seeing' nature dominate much of the women's travel literature. Many of these conventions focused on perceptions of the West's 'life-giving' propensities. Women travel writers often conceptualized Western Canada's natural environment in terms of its future possibilities, and therefore alluded to its 'emptiness' and want of 'civilisation.' Alternatively, they focused on the West's 'realisation' of its potential, and thus discussed billowing wheatfields and other signs of cultivation.

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<sup>2</sup>R. Douglas Francis, "The Wilderness and the Garden: Conflicting Non-Native Images of Nature in Nineteenth-Century Prairie Canada," University of Calgary. Unpublished paper, given at the Canadian Historical Association Annual Meeting, Brock University, June, 1996, 13.



How British women travel writers wrote about the Canadian West was also influenced by preconceived literary and social ideas about the natural terrain they would encounter. An abundance of literature concerned with the Canadian West was in existence by the late nineteenth century. As Georgina Binnie-Clark was told in 1905 the "...book-market is fed up with Canada."<sup>3</sup> A variety of explorers, scientists, and artists had been touring and recording Western Canada in literature, charts and art since at least the 1650s. These early English texts characterised Western Canada as a cold, desolate, and barren place ill-suited for settlement.<sup>4</sup> These early male explorers concentrated on the West in terms of its fur-making potential, and were not really convinced that an area devoid of trees could be suited for agriculture.<sup>5</sup> Gradually, by the 1870s, as the economic and imperial advantages of expanding Western Canada were expressed by Canadian nationalists and British imperialists the image of the West as cold and barren changed to a more positive fertile conceptualisation.

Women travel writers were also influenced by other women's travel texts in formulating their representations of Western Canada. Mary Hall wrote that she was greatly impressed by Miss Bird's (most likely *An Englishwoman in America*, published in 1856) description of the Rocky Mountains.<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth Mitchell made reference to Sykes' *A Home Help in Canada* while discussing opportunities for British women in Canada's West.<sup>7</sup> Some of the women travel writers investigated here actually came across each other during their travels in Western Canada. Marion Cran, for example, met Mary Schaffer at a lodge

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 7.

<sup>4</sup>See Francis, *Images of the West*, and Doug Owram *Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856 - 1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980).

<sup>5</sup>Owram, 14.

<sup>6</sup>Hall, *A Lady's Life*, 137.

<sup>7</sup>Elizabeth B. Mitchell, *In Western Canada Before the War: A Study of Communities*, (London: John Murray, 1915), 59

under Mt. Stephen in the Canadian Rockies. Cran had heard about Schaffer's excursions into the Rocky Mountains and was very excited about meeting her, and Schaffer's companion Miss Adams, in person. Cran included several pages in her book discussing Schaffer's exploration of the Banff area as well as many photographs taken by Schaffer.<sup>8</sup>

Literary renditions of the West as 'fertile,' which appeared in a variety of government sponsored literature and was used to encourage Anglo-Saxon, and especially British, immigration to Western Canada were also tremendously influential in conditioning women travel writers' responses.<sup>9</sup> In these representations the prairies rippled with ripe golden wheat, flowers abounded, and the climate offered to invigorate and improve the health of a feeble urban population. These images were deliberately encouraged by government officials and businessmen on both sides of the Atlantic who recognised that the Canadian West offered financial, political, and social opportunities. The development of agriculture and manufacturing industries in the West could greatly improve Eastern Canada's wealth and help to ensure the success of the British Empire by populating the interior's vast open spaces. Settlers were needed to fill the land and till the soil, for the benefit of Eastern Canada, Britain, and God. Settlers, of the 'right sort,' preferably Anglo-Saxon and British, were needed to come out to the West to ensure the formation of a strong, stable, and moral community.<sup>10</sup> The Dominion government and C. P. R. officials, therefore, commissioned a series of immigration pamphlets which emphasised the 'garden-like' climate and habitat of the Northwest. Millions of dollars were spent on producing documents which emphasised the positive aspects of the West, especially in terms of its 'fertile' and 'bracing' character.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Cran, 182 - 188.

<sup>9</sup>Francis, *Images of the West*, 109.

<sup>10</sup>Owram, 125.

<sup>11</sup>Francis, *Images of the West*, 110.

These positive characterisations helped to create the image of the West as 'garden.' This image, however, was also inspired by the powerful and long-lasting European Romantic movement.<sup>12</sup> The Romantic movement was instrumental in forming the basis of late Victorian and early Edwardian literary images of nature, especially through the aesthetic categories of the 'picturesque' and 'sublime' which implied that a social and cultural distance existed between the 'viewer' and the 'viewed'. 'Sublime' landscape was usually associated with water, crags, and rocks, and inspired a feeling of awe or terror in the beholder.<sup>13</sup> The most familiar 'sublime' landscape in America was Niagara Falls, especially before the mid nineteenth century, but after these years, the Rocky Mountains were sometimes depicted in terms of their 'sublimity'.<sup>14</sup> The picturesque tradition taught that nature at its best served to imitate art, especially of the British variety.<sup>15</sup> Many descriptions of flowers, woods, prairies, and native and immigrant people, were deemed 'picturesque.' Scholars disagree about when the Romantic tradition ended. Largely, it is conceded that the sublime tradition mainly vanished by the closing decade of the nineteenth century. The picturesque tradition, however, continued to influence how women travel writers, as well as other tourists, responded to the Canadian West.

The Romantic movement spurred an unprecedented interest in the 'wilds' of the New World. In part, this interest stemmed from the associated idea that God revealed himself through nature.<sup>16</sup> To embrace God, therefore, was to espouse nature and fully

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<sup>12</sup> The Romantic movement is generally cited as beginning in Europe in either 1789 or 1798 and extending into the nineteenth century. M. H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms, 165 - 166.

<sup>13</sup> Jasen, 8.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., chapter two. See also Karen Dubinsky. "'The Pleasure is Exquisite but Violent': The Imaginary Geography of Niagara Falls in the Nineteenth Century," Journal of Canadian Studies, Vol. 29, No. 2. (Summer 1994), 64 - 88.

<sup>15</sup> Jasen, 9.

<sup>16</sup> Francis, Images of the West, 38.

required that humans revert to their 'natural' condition which entailed accepting the innocent unworldly 'primitive' within themselves. To experience nature completely, human reason had to take second place to the expression of human emotion, sentiment and imagination. By the nineteenth century, 'civilisation' was increasingly seen as a corrupting influence and man, and woman, had to abandon society, at least temporarily, to regain their innocence.<sup>17</sup> This created the 'Edenic myth,' which suggested that God's 'garden' still existed in unspoiled regions of the world. 'Eden' in this context, however, was not a fixed geographical entity, but appeared in various regions of the West, perhaps especially in British Columbia as 19th century men, and women, sought to regain their 'primitive' selves.<sup>18</sup> The role of emotion and imagination in experiencing the West, therefore, was given remarkable credence, and many women travel writers were clearly influenced by the Romantic movement in their expressions of landscape aesthetics.

The notion of 'landscape aesthetics' coupled with the romantically-inspired interest in nature implied that there were both correct and incorrect ways of 'seeing nature,' and this created tremendous expectations of 'sights.' It is not surprising, therefore, that some women travel writers were disappointed by their first experience of Western Canadian landscape, especially the prairies. From a diary excerpt included in her travel book, Lady Aberdeen wrote: "... I am not going to rave about the scenery of Manitoba; for to a mountain bred visitor these everlasting prairies, with their serpentine black trails winding through them, appear, on first acquaintance at any rate, inexpressibly dreary."<sup>19</sup>

Mary Fitzgibbon, who wrote in the 1870s, had a similar experience, as she had been well-prepared to expect a paradise in the West by reading a variety of government

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 39.

<sup>18</sup>Moyles and Owsram, 71.

<sup>19</sup>Ishbel Aberdeen, *Through Canada with a Kodak* (Edinburgh: W. H. White and Co., 1893), 107 - 108.

pamphlets and travel literature.<sup>20</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that she was a little disappointed upon her first sight of the prairie, and prepared her readers for the initial shock of encountering it. "We were on the prairie- the great rolling prairie, at last; and I was disappointed - nothing but grass and sky, desolate and lonely. These, however, were my first impressions. How fond I grew of the prairie I know now that I am away from it; perhaps for ever."<sup>21</sup> Although both of these women admitted to being disappointed with their first sight of the prairie, they both suggested, Aberdeen implicitly, and Fitzgibbon explicitly, that their views concerning the bleakness of the prairies could, and did, change over time. It appears that they did not want to discourage Anglo-Saxon emigration to the area, or hamper the overall positive image of the West; instead they were acknowledging that they had been influenced by the 'positive' images of the West circulating in the art and literature of their era to expect a very different prairie environment from the one they encountered. It is also possible that they were influenced by the growing trend to provide a balanced picture of Western landscape, by including some negative images in their books, in contrast to the glowing 'positive' renditions put forth in an assortment of other literatures.<sup>22</sup>

Positive renditions of the West were extremely potent, especially when 'mythological' and Romantic language was applied to them. This language seems especially powerful in the years before the turn of the century, although it endured in some women's travel writing until World War One. One example of this mythical incarnation of the land, which demonstrates the image-shaping power of this kind of language was provided by Ellen Spragge from her vantage above the Kootenay plains in 1886:

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<sup>20</sup>Francis, "The Ideal and the Real," 257 and 258.

<sup>21</sup>Fitzgibbon, 41.

<sup>22</sup>Francis, *Images*, 156.

This flaxen land owed its indescribable straw colour to the magic power of the sun god, who had dried and bleached the herbage all over this immense extent of country, giving the landscape, with its dark evergreens and azure sky, an individuality of expression not often met with in the book of nature.<sup>23</sup>

While this description unquestionably reflected some 'truths' about the physical appearance of the Kootenay Plains, Spragge's reference to the 'power of the sun god' in creating this landscape seems to indicate that she was 'mythologising' her description. This kind of mythical representation of landscape transcended Western geographical boundaries, in that it was used to describe prairies, the interior of British Columbia and sometimes even the Arctic and Rocky Mountain areas. One popular way of representing prairie landscape to emphasise its mythical and mysterious qualities was by describing prairie storms and mirages. On the prairie, fires and storms were some of the most fascinating sights for Mary Georgina Hall. "The fires look like one long streak of quivering flame, the forked tips of which flash and quiver in the horizon, magnified by refraction, and on a dark night are lovely."<sup>24</sup> Hall also admired the clarity of the air to which she attributed a 'mirage' effect: "[t]he mirage is also very curious; the air is so clear that one often sees reflected, some way above the horizon, objects like the river, trees, and even the town of Winnipeg, which we could not otherwise see."<sup>25</sup> Mary Agnes Fitzgibbon also embraced nature on the prairies, as she related in 1878:

Nowhere is evening more beautiful than in Manitoba ... The sun was setting low down in the heavens as in a sea of gold, one long flame-coloured line alone marking the horizon. In the south-west rose cloud upon cloud of crimson and gold,

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<sup>23</sup>Spragge, 119.

<sup>24</sup>Hall, *A Lady's Life*, 49 - 50.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 51.

crossed by rapid flashes of pale yellow and white lightning, which momentarily obliterate their rich colours. To the south was a great bank of black thunder-cloud crested with crimson, reft to its deepest darkness by successive flashes of forked lightning. Immediately overhead a narrow curtain of leaden clouds was driven hither and thither by uncertain winds; while below, the prairie and all its varied life lay bathed in the warmth and light of the departing sun...<sup>26</sup>

In the above passage, Fitzgibbon created western nature as 'art.' Considering Fitzgibbon's positive rendition, along with the many other positive 'nature' descriptions provided by women travel writers, it is not surprising that negative images had less impact. Positive renditions of the West's natural character also derived their strength, in part, from a literary tradition which had for hundreds of years associated the 'west' with ancient culture and imperial conquest. This ancient importance of the 'west' was hinted at by Johnstone who compared the Qu'Appelle region to ancient Egypt,<sup>27</sup> and Mary Fitzgibbon who compared Pointe du Chene's mud to the fertile soils of the Nile.<sup>28</sup> One of the most concise descriptions of the great importance of Canada's West, and its link to an ancient or mythological past, was provided by Agnes Deans Cameron in 1909 when the West was beginning to realise its settlement and agricultural potential:

There has always been a West. For the Greeks there was Sicily; Carthage was the western output of Tyre; and young Roman patricians conquered Gaul and speculated in real estate on the sites of London and Liverpool. But the West that we are entering upon is the last west, the last unoccupied frontier under a white man's sky.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Fitzgibbon, 59 - 60.

<sup>27</sup>Johnstone, 17.

<sup>28</sup>Fitzgibbon, 101.

<sup>29</sup>Cameron, 3.

In addition to the power of mythological language, these images also derived strength from a European tradition of seeing Western Canadian nature as 'empty' of 'civilisation' and therefore ripe for Anglo-Saxon conquest. Native peoples were often considered as part of 'scenery' themselves, which will be discussed in the following chapter, and therefore posed no difficulties for Anglo-Saxon claims to the land. In 1887, Jessie Saxby, for example, wrote that:

[t]he country which is traversed by the C. P. R. is exquisitely beautiful; but, as a whole, it impressed me profoundly by its want of human life. It looked like a land which had dared man to break its solitudes . . . If the 'great lone land' is to be changed into the fruitful Paradise God meant it to be, it must be peopled by great numbers working together.<sup>30</sup>

In 1905 Georgina Binnie-Clark added: "[t]he scenery of the Canadian prairie has always a charm of its own, but on either side of the Qu'Appelle valley the approach is very lovely."<sup>31</sup> Binnie-Clark admired the scenery of that area, however, because it was so very well suited for human settlement. She wrote: "... the bluffs have all the effect of neat plantations, unshadowed by the process of the planter. On either side of the trail attractive sites seemed to invite spacious country-houses..."<sup>32</sup>

Presenting the land as 'empty' was especially pertinent as many British imperialists believed that settling the West was a duty of God-fearing Anglo-Saxons. As Jessie Saxby argued:

[w]hen Britain fully comprehends her mission on earth she will undertake this noble business of emigration in a very different spirit from heretofore, and the world as well as

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<sup>30</sup>Saxby, 18.

<sup>31</sup>Binnie-Clark, *A Summer on the Canadian Prairie*, 131.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.



Britain herself will go forward on broader lines, and on the more enduring basis of religious duty.<sup>33</sup>

To Saxby, the prairies were 'greater Scotland,' and 'garden,' and she urged Britons to send out "...well-assorted specimens' from our home nursery-garden, and [that] our transplanting of those goodly young shoots should be more systematic, more discerning, and more wholesale than it is at present."<sup>34</sup> Saxby, in common with most of the women travel writers examined in this study, discussed the potential of Western Canada for immigrants in her travel book. In common with the government literature of the late nineteenth century, positive depictions of the Western environment were often linked to encouraging British emigrants to come out West.

One very powerful theme in Elizabeth Mitchell's *In Western Canada Before the War*, published in 1915, was that of correcting 'faulty' impressions of Western Canada. Mitchell's purpose was to evaluate Western Canada in terms of its underlying social and economic structures to provide a more balanced picture than she believed was presented in many British texts, travel and otherwise. Mitchell believed that "[s]een from this side of the ocean, Canada appears as so essentially a land of back-woods and prairie that when English people go to Canada or meet Canadians they are puzzled and find their ideas in great need of adjustment."<sup>35</sup> Mitchell, in common with many other women travellers, found the prairies rough, but hospitable, and the people hard-working, weather-roughened and successful.

Catherine Laura Johnstone also desired to present an 'accurate' assessment of Western Canada's natural environment. Johnstone began her book by stating that the

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<sup>33</sup>Saxby, 32 and 33.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 32.

<sup>35</sup>Mitchell, 99.

pamphlets put out by the C. P. R. and related emigration agents "... record only the successes of the British settlers in Canada," and encouraged people without the necessary skills to come to the West.<sup>36</sup> To demonstrate the accuracy of her personal observations, Johnstone wrote that:

[t]hese experiences are not only those of summer tourists, but of a visitor and participator in the work of an establishment of the prairie during the dreary winter months, when even the sparrows had fled to warmer regions, and the wolf and snowbird seemed to be the only wild creatures left.<sup>37</sup>

Johnstone's recognition of the misleading influence of summertime visits was an extremely important observation. Few women travel writers, however, acknowledged the impact of summertime visits on the construction of positive natural images in their travel texts. One exception to this trend was Susan St. Maur, who suggested that a very different idea of the prairie was gained by visiting it in November. St. Maur related: "[t]he prairie in June and the prairie in November are woefully unlike. In June all was green and bright; the glorious summer, with all its hope and joy, had plenty in store for our pleasure. Now it looked bare, and gloomy, and hopeless."<sup>38</sup>

The connection between positive nature representations and emigration seems especially pertinent when women were the target of emigration campaigns. Women travel writers recognised that British women had a special role to play within the British Empire, and could influence the attitudes of tourists and prospective immigrants towards Western Canada with the representations of landscape and climate they provided in their travel texts. As British women they had a patriotic duty to present the West as the land of

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<sup>36</sup>Johnstone, Winter and Summer Excursions in Canada, xiii.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., xiv - xv.

<sup>38</sup>St. Maur, 238.

promise to ensure the success of the British Empire and race. Thus, some women's travel writing alluded to the idea that the West was paradise for all, but especially for English-speaking women who could 'rule' the new domain. As Mitchell acknowledged "[t]he burden of Empire-making most truly rests on the prairie woman, and she is often worn and old before her time; she has little ease - but she has great honour, she is really a queen ruling in her domain."<sup>39</sup> Or, in Elizabeth Keith Morris' words "[t]he mothers of Canada are our true empire-builders, their children the corner-stone of a structure which defies all stormy political onslaughts."<sup>40</sup>

Women travel writers were influenced by the trend to promote the West in positive terms largely initiated by Clifford Sifton in the 1890s.<sup>41</sup> To encourage settlers to come to Canada Sifton forbade the publication of the West's actual temperatures, as well as references to snow and cold, in literature destined for the overseas market.<sup>42</sup> This campaign failed to dispel entirely knowledge of the cold Canadian winter in Europe, so Sifton and his compatriots emphasised the health-giving properties of clean 'brisk' air in stark contrast to the humid and almost 'malarial' atmosphere present to the south of the border.<sup>43</sup> Some of Sifton's literature may have influenced women travel writers' perceptions of Western Canada, and some women travel writers, of course, participated in the process of emphasising the positive characteristics of the West.

Marion Cran, for one, was "... prepared to write Canada down a tropical country."<sup>44</sup> Cran, therefore, described a drive through the prairies in the following terms: "[o]ff we go

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<sup>39</sup>Mitchell, 46.

<sup>40</sup>Morris, 26.

<sup>41</sup>Francis, *Images*, 109.

<sup>42</sup>Ronald Rees, *New and Naked Land: Making the Prairies Home* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1988), 14 and 15.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid, 17.

<sup>44</sup>Cran, 122.

under the wide blue skies through miles of wheat, miles of scrub and bush, miles of virgin prairie damascened with purple daisies and golden-rod..."<sup>45</sup> This language emphasised the fertility and abundance of the West, in keeping with the literary tradition of presenting the West as a promised land.<sup>46</sup> Later in her book Cran added:

I am unable to show to English minds the wide Western horizon, the height and blueness of the skies, the stinging caress of the wind, sweet with scent of the upland hay and the wild charm of the prairie when it breaks, ... into rolling dunes of grass and scrub... - I had thought Manitoba beautiful, now I am fain to forget her in Saskatchewan.<sup>47</sup>

Even Elizabeth Mitchell, who desired to describe Western landscape 'accurately' indulged in some Romantic landscape depiction: "... we ... pushed eastwards along the great main road, gloriously invaded by the many-coloured prairie wild-rose, and bordered with splendid swathes of Michelmas daily. Patches of wheat and the all-embracing sunshine made a golden background."<sup>48</sup>

Saxby, likewise, had many Romantic visions of the future of Western Canada which demonstrate the strength, endurance, and popularity of positive landscape renditions. As Saxby travelled through the 'woods' on C. P. R., for example, she described it as a 'sublime' area because of its lack of settlement and Anglo-Saxons. Saxby then described a Romantic vision of the future of the same area when Anglo-Saxon settlers, of the British and northern European variety, had 'tamed' the land and made it beautiful. On the C.P.R. 20 miles from Regina she wrote: "[t]he whole valley seems to be a succession of gardens, planted and

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 99.

<sup>46</sup>Francis, *Images*, 109.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 128.

<sup>48</sup>Mitchell, 16.

tended by nature, and blooming as Eden, inviting mankind to come and people its lovely solitudes, and reap from them the harvests of health and plenty which so surely follows on 'going forth' in 'certain hope.'<sup>49</sup>

In many similar passages, again especially before the turn of the century, the West was seen primarily in terms of its future potential rather than its contemporary 'reality.' In this way, women's travel literature tells us more about British cultural ideologies and literary conventions than about any 'truth' concerning Western nature. This is further reinforced by the idea that women, like their 17th and 18th century male explorer counterparts, were most comfortable within a 'familiar' environment. Saxby, for instance, related best to nature which reminded her of the British Isles. She contrasted the 'sublime' aspect of mountain outlines and the 'savage' features of swamp-scarred land with:

... uplands as green, tender, and smiling as the dimpled lawns of England. Then before you have done your feasting your eyes upon that delicate verdure and restful beauty, the scene changes, and the cars are oscillating along crags which overhang lakes that remind one of Scottish lochs and northern seas.<sup>50</sup>

A related convention for 'familiarising' Western Canadian nature was to compare it to another popular tourist destination, made known by the proliferation of travel writing in this era. Ella Sykes, who had spent time with her brother in Persia before coming to Western Canada in 1911, stated that the Prairies "... reminded [her] of the Persian Desert in its infinity, its distant horizon, and its air of mystery..."<sup>51</sup> Sykes' main point, however, was to point out the essential difference between the two:

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<sup>49</sup>Saxby, 31.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 18.

<sup>51</sup>Sykes, 81.

The desert, with its wastes of rolling sand, might well stand for the symbol of death, while the boundless prairie, with a soil only waiting for the plough in order that it may supply food for millions, is an emblem of life. The keen tonic air that blows across the desert and the prairie, filling those who breathe it with the *joie de vivre*, and making them almost insensible to fatigue, is practically the same, and converts the Oriental traveller and the Canadian into optimists of the first water.<sup>52</sup>

The prairies to Sykes, and many other women travel writers, were a metaphor for life and prosperity. Unlike the barren desert, the prairies offered opportunities for growth and affluence, which is also indicated by women travel writers' descriptions of prairie flowers. For example, rolling across the prairie on the C. P. R. Ellen Spragge described the prairie as "... a region of vivid blues and greens, where the land and sky met upon the horizon, and the eye was almost wearied by the glare of colours all about us."<sup>53</sup> To Spragge, the prairie was also a source of endless flowers, and she stated: "[w]ild flowers covered the prairie in all directions, handsome red lilies, enormous cone flowers, wild sunflowers, dwarf wild roses growing on bushes hardly a foot high, a tall plant with a deep pink blossom unfamiliar to me, and scores of others I did not recognise."<sup>54</sup> Many of the women travel writers recognised the profusion of flowers on the prairies, and these representations served to emphasise the image of the fertility of the West. Some scholars argue that wild flowers represented an 'interior landscape' for women travel writers in that women carried with them certain conventional standards of beauty in flora and fauna as

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Spragge, 28.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 30.

well as general concepts of 'home,' in which beautiful things, such as flowers, played an important part, and could be used to familiarise an alien environment.<sup>55</sup>

Romantic and sentimental language was also used by women travel writers to promote the image of the West as an agrarian paradise, in which it was possible to live off of the fruits of the earth and attain anything and everything that could be desired.<sup>56</sup> Elizabeth Keith Morris, who travelled to the Canadian West around 1912, succinctly described these sentiments: "[t]he prairie filled us with wonder, it looked so vast and unending, and we heard with amazement of the wealth which lies hidden in its soil for those who will plant the seed."<sup>57</sup> Fitzgibbon added: "[t]he prairie soil is so rich that it yields a hundred-fold, and the absence of the great preliminary labour of 'clearing' which the early settlers in Ontario had to contend with, renders it a most advantageous country for emigrants."<sup>58</sup>

Another part of the exuberant vision of the West were the purported healing powers of its healthy climate. The landscape of the West was open, uncluttered and airy. Spragge spoke of "... feeling quite invigorated by the strong, fresh prairie wind."<sup>59</sup> Morris stated "... in the sunny Province of Alberta illness is not too prevalent, and fancy ailments are impossible, owing to the busy, useful lives which are led."<sup>60</sup> C. L. Johnstone added, in spite of a cold winter during which her towels froze tight to her bedroom chair: "... a sojourn in the north-west is very beneficial in some cases of consumption and delicate lungs."<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Julie Roy Jeffrey, "There is Some Splendid Scenery: Women's Responses to the Great Plains Landscape," *Great Plains Quarterly*, Vol 8, (Spring 1988), 73.

<sup>56</sup>See Francis, *Images of the West*, esp. Chapter 4.

<sup>57</sup>Morris, 16.

<sup>58</sup>Fitzgibbon, 67.

<sup>59</sup>Spragge, 24.

<sup>60</sup>Morris, 34.

<sup>61</sup>Johnstone, 41.

These perceptions of the West's fertile and health-giving character were related to women travel writers' conceptions of nature and climate. The image, of course, was much stronger than the reality, as the climate or landscape of the West had not changed since 18th century explorers characterised it as a barren and cold wasteland. It seems surprising, therefore, that literary representations of the West as 'garden' were filled with such conviction, and that many of the images of the prairie 'landscapes' presented by women travel writers leave a lasting and forceful impression of the 'fertile' characteristics of this region. Seasonal variations in temperature and topography accounted for some of the differences in women travel writers perceptions of the prairies, as the Northwest experienced dramatic fluctuations in yearly temperatures. Annual temperature variations remained roughly consistent, but the conditions under which extremes in hot and cold were experienced changed dramatically in the 38 year period under consideration.

Long before Elizabeth Keith Morris enjoyed the luxury of telephones and electric lights during her visits to select prairie homes, some women travel writers, such as Mary Georgina Hall, experienced the prairie from isolated farm shacks during the summer months. Hall arrived in Winnipeg in 1882, and experienced first-hand the trials and tribulations which faced a relatively new and under-populated settlement. Immediately upon arrival Hall expressed her sense of the solitude and openness of the prairie. "O, the prairie! I cannot describe to you our first impression. Its vastness, dreariness, and loneliness is appalling."<sup>62</sup> The miles of rough, uncultivated prairie combined with sparse, and often poor, habitation contributed to make the prairies disagreeable to Hall. In this view, also discussed by Mary Fitzgibbon, the prairies were a cold, lonely, and unfriendly place where people sometimes failed to find their way, only to end as frozen corpses or impoverished former gentlefolk crippled by overwork. Overall, Hall enjoyed her exposure

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<sup>62</sup>Hall, *A Lady's Life on a Farm in Manitoba*, 24.



to the Canadian prairies, but her enjoyment was based on the knowledge that she would shortly return to England. Already, by May 25th, just one week after her arrival, Hall had concluded that she "... would not live in such a place for worlds..."<sup>63</sup> Wintertime was especially feared by Hall, as the "... loneliness and dreariness of the prairie with two or three feet of snow would be appalling."<sup>64</sup>

In this negative view of the prairies, it was possible for people to lose their way in many different ways. People could get lost in blinding, freezing prairie snow storms, only to be discovered dead. As well, the lack of trees or other definable barriers on the prairies served to make the landscape, "... perceptually and spiritually disorienting..."<sup>65</sup> In other words, the prairie landscape in this context was unlike any scenery women travel writers had been accustomed to at home, and could be both physically and psychologically distressing. The less familiar the landscape, the more difficult it became for women travel writers to personalise, and accept it. Fitzgibbon discussed this prairie disillusionment in the context of a man seeking directions to the local prairie cemetery: "[a] man who asked his way there was directed to go straight across the prairie to the east, until he came to where grass and sky meet. Forgetting that as he advanced the horizon receded, he thanked his informant and went on his fruitless search..."<sup>66</sup>

Even the positive Ellen Spragge was affected by this other, negative, perception of prairie landscape. As she gazed out through the windows of the C. P. R., Spragge commented:

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 37.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 78.

<sup>65</sup>MacLaren, "Aesthetic Mappings of the West by the Palliser and Hind Survey Expeditions," 47.

<sup>66</sup>Fitzgibbon, 63.

[t]he sky, without a cloud, forms a blue vault above us, nothing around is visible but the prairie on all sides, gently swelling and undulating, with the railway forming a defined diameter across the circle. The landscape is unvaried; a solitude in which the only sign of life is the motion of the train.<sup>67</sup>

While this prairie landscape was seen as calm, serene, and beautiful, it could also inspire a kind of fear in some women travel writers. As Spragge wrote:

[s]till no Rocky Mountains rose slowly into view to break the line of the rolling plain, and a horrid fear seized me that, owing to the prairie wind which had delayed the train an hour or more, night would close around me before I could see the first mountains my eyes had ever rested upon.<sup>68</sup>

Often this 'terror' was linked to the tremendous expectations of mountain scenery built up by familiarity with the Rockies depicted in a variety of literature. Women travel writers had developed huge expectations of the Rockies' unrivalled majesty and were afraid that their emotional responses to their first sight of the mountains would fall short of social expectations. This literary familiarity with the Rockies, it seems, discouraged some women travel writers from providing any detailed descriptions of the mountain landscape. Instead, they were more likely to include photographs in their travel books, which Mary Schaffer believed spoke for themselves, or to credit the depictions provided by earlier, usually male, mountain explorers. Marion Cran took this latter approach and wrote of her anticipation of the Rockies thus:

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<sup>67</sup>Spragge, 38.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid. 41.

[t]ravellers tell of it, how it towers to heaven and leans to hell,  
 how it is riven of valleys and gives back sound with a terrible  
 voice, how it is ranged by the bear and shadowed by the lone  
 eagle. Men with pens dipped in fire have told of the Rockies,  
 I will be betrayed into no competition with them.<sup>69</sup>

Ellen Spragge did not acknowledge feeling limited or constrained by a specifically male tradition of writing about the Rockies. Spragge believed that "[w]ords seem too feeble to express or describe the grandeur and solemnity of such scenery; one could only gaze in awe and admiration, and realise how small and feeble a thing man is beside the works of God."<sup>70</sup>

The Rocky Mountains had a pre-eminent place in women travel writers' depictions of Western nature. Spragge described forested, mountainous scenery in terms of the sublime. The sublime offered the possibility of embracing deeper, darker, and more dangerous emotions through its depictions of wild, unfettered landscape. Spragge wrote that:

We were passing through a wild region of tall and slender spruces and pines, in a narrow rocky defile: some were mere bare, naked poles, others scantily clothed at their tops with ragged foliage, which lower down changed into a dark, heavy black fungus, indicative of premature decay, giving these youthful trees a melancholy, depressing air, as if they were wearing their own mourning. There was something to me irresistibly suggestive of crape (mourning attire) about these sombre trappings of Nature's vegetation.<sup>71</sup>

Spragge's characterisation of this scene as one of mourning indicates the power of nature to elicit strong emotional responses. On a less forbidding note, the rawness of the Rocky

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<sup>69</sup>Cran, 180.

<sup>70</sup>Spragge, 62.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid. 60.

Mountains also offered time for contemplation and reflection, in keeping with contemporary ideas concerning the power of nature to return an individual to his or her 'natural' state.

Other women travel writers, like Susan St. Maur, were more impressed by the Rockies' picturesque qualities. St. Maur wrote: "... in the distance the snowy mountains; these great snow peaks change their aspect with every gleam of sunlight, with every shower, with every breath of wind, and in their ever-changing beauty continually suggested fresh thoughts from the book of Nature."<sup>72</sup>

In some ways this romantic and sentimental language was also used by Agnes Deans Cameron to describe Canada's Arctic regions. The far north represented an oasis of natural wonder for Cameron. While she sailed in a small craft, Cameron saw the Mackenzie Ramparts for the first time, and like Marion Cran, she felt she lacked the words to do the scenery justice:

As we [passed] in silence we can but look and feel. One day a Canadian artist will travel north and paint the Ramparts, some poet, gifted with the inevitable word, here write the Canadian epic. Awed and uplifted, our wish is to be alone; the vision that is ours for one hour of this Arctic night repays the whole summer's travel.<sup>73</sup>

Cameron's use of romantic and spiritual language did not preclude her desire to see the land settled and populated. Nature, in its 'untouched' state, in spite of the irony of its being traversed by the C. P. R., the very harbinger of 'civilisation,' was still conceived of in very spiritual terms during this era. This has led R. Douglas Francis to suggest that late Victorian views of nature "... reflected the divided, almost schizophrenic, Victorian mind

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<sup>72</sup>St. Maur, 49.

<sup>73</sup>Cameron, 206.

that both longed to return to a simpler, pre-industrial agricultural society, and desired to use the wonders of technology and the power of nature to create a perfect society in the future."<sup>74</sup>

Women travel writers certainly reflected this 'schizophrenic' view of Western Canada in their travel texts. Their descriptions of the Western environment often linked positive, fertile landscape representations with successful British settlement of the land, while they simultaneously admired and sought out the natural and 'untouched' areas of the West. Their representations of the Western environment demonstrate the force of contemporary social and literary conventions in shaping their depictions. Certainly, women travel writers had a broad repository of Western images to draw upon by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They were influenced by remnants of negative images of the West characterised by literature up to about 1850, as well as by the 'new' literary trend to portray a more 'realistic' picture of the West by the late nineteenth century. The overwhelming urge to render the West in favourable terms, which is the concern in most of the women's travel literature, however, is attributed to the power of fertile landscape representations in art and literature of the West after 1870. In these landscape representations the prairies rippled with golden wheat, and offered promise for the future, as the last frontier and key to Canada's success as a nation, and maybe even as successor to Britain as world imperial leader.

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<sup>74</sup>Francis, "The Wilderness and the Garden," 27.

### Chapter Three:

#### Others: Views of Indians and Immigrants

It is part of the creed of every Englishman to dislike or at best to tolerate foreigners.<sup>1</sup>

Women travel writers' descriptions of Indians, mixed-bloods, and non-English immigrants reflected prevailing social and literary conventions of characterising the 'other.'<sup>2</sup> 'Nativist' sentiments largely distinguished the attitude of the British majority towards the 'foreign' minority in Western Canada between the late 1870s and 1914. Nativism included ethnic prejudice, religious antipathy, and racist sentiments, and involved "... opposition to an internal minority on the grounds that it posed a threat to Canadian national life."<sup>3</sup> Native peoples were also treated as inferiors by Anglo-Saxons, and were discriminated against on racist, economic, social, and political levels.<sup>4</sup> Late Victorian and early Edwardians believed that they were superior to non-Anglo-Saxons and offered many comments concerning the alleged 'inferiority' of 'less-civilised' peoples. By depicting Indians, mixed-bloods, and immigrants as 'picturesque,' 'primitive,' or generally less

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<sup>1</sup>Binnie-Clark, *A Summer on the Canadian Prairie*, 124.

<sup>2</sup>The term 'other' is used by scholars to imply a distance - social, racial, economic or otherwise between the agent of the dominant culture, in this case middle-class women travel writers, and the people they describe. The term 'Indian' is used here as an Anglo-Saxon conception since native peoples "... neither called themselves by a single term nor understood themselves as a collectivity." Robert F. Berkhofer Jr. *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), 3. The term 'mixed-blood' refers to both Metis, French and native, and British and native peoples and is used in preference by social historians of the 1980s over the pejorative term 'half-breed' often used in women's travel writing. See Prentice et al, 22.

<sup>3</sup>Howard Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice: A History of Nativism in Alberta* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1982), 7.

<sup>4</sup>"... the nativist focus precludes discussion of the attitudes of the Anglo-Celtic dominant group toward native peoples since the latter obviously could not be considered 'foreign.'" 11 and 12.

'advanced' than themselves, women travel writers created a cultural and literary distance between themselves and the 'objects' of their gaze. Anglo-Saxon imperialist ideas concerning 'civilisation' and 'racial hierarchy' also encouraged women travel writers to distance themselves from 'others,' which is demonstrated by the conventions they used for representing Indians, mixed-bloods, and immigrants in their travel literature. Indians were usually presented as dying remnants of a passing race which must make way for the advance of Western civilisation. Mixed-bloods were often seen as occupying a more tenuous social position as their 'white' blood somehow enabled them to become 'civilised' while simultaneously possessing the more 'basic' instincts of their Indian parents.<sup>5</sup> Immigrants were often portrayed in terms of their alleged assimilatory capacities, and those immigrants who were perceived as closer to the British in terms of dress, manner, and appearance were clearly preferred by women travel writers. As there are significant differences between representations of immigrants and Indians, the latter category including mixed-bloods, in women's travel literature, the first half of this chapter will investigate British women travel writers' representations of Indians, and to a lesser extent mixed-bloods. The second half will focus on women's caricatures of an assortment of non-English immigrants.

Some scholars suggest that women often took a more sympathetic stance towards the 'colonised' than their male counterparts in the colonial environment. According to this argument, women travel writers were more sympathetic toward the 'other' because they were themselves 'colonised' under patriarchy.<sup>6</sup> Their inferior position encouraged women to identify with the 'other,' and sometimes even to criticise their culture's interference in the

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<sup>5</sup>Johnstone, 73.

<sup>6</sup>Billie Melman, Women's Orient: English Women and the Middle East, 1718 - 1918 (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1992), 4 - 6.

lives of certain indigenous peoples.<sup>7</sup> The subjugated social position of women, however, did not exclude women travel writers from expressing British imperial sentiments, or participating in creating knowledge about the colonies. Imperialism, replete with Darwinistic ideas concerning the evolution of mankind and the idea that 'civilised' societies should, rightfully, usurp 'savage' cultures, made it socially acceptable for women travel writers to comment upon or 'correct' the less-evolved 'other'.<sup>8</sup> Travel to distant lands, or immersion among 'primitive' people, therefore, enabled and legitimated women travel writers to comment about, and interfere in, the lives of indigenous, culturally-different, peoples. Often, women are overlooked in discussions of 'colonial discourse,' but scholars are gradually beginning to acknowledge that Victorian women did participate in creating knowledge about Britain's colonies, and were influenced by some of the strategies implied by 'colonial discourse'.<sup>9</sup> The women's travel writing under study here, with few exceptions, suggests that women travel writers were often unsympathetic toward 'others.' This unsympathetic attitude is reflected by women travel writers' comments regarding class issues in Canada and their use of a variety of conventions to consciously create a social and literary distance between themselves and the objects of their gaze.<sup>10</sup>

Women travel writers became increasingly able to establish a physical distance between themselves and Indians in the Canadian West after 1870. Aside from being commissioned for the occasional hunting or camping foray, Indians were no longer necessary as guides to the same extent that they had been during the fur trade era. After

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<sup>7</sup>Stevenson, 11.

<sup>8</sup>See Strobel, for example.

<sup>9</sup>See for example, Janaki Nair, "Uncovering the Zenana: Visions of Indian Womanhood in Englishwomen's Writings, 1813 - 1940," *Journal of Women's History*, Vol. 2., No. 1., (Spring 1990), and Mills, *Discourses of Difference*.

<sup>10</sup>For a 'sympathetic' stance see Isobel Grundy, "The Barbarous Character We Give Them: White Women Travellers Report on Other Races," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, Vol. 22. ed. Patricia B. Craddock and Carla H. Hay, (1992), 77.



1870, the government desired to place natives on reserves so that land could be made available and perceived as 'safe' for the settlement of Anglo-Saxons. A series of treaties, which eventually had the effect of confining Indians to reserves, therefore, was negotiated between 1871 and 1877.<sup>11</sup> Anglo-Saxon settlement remained slow until well after 1880; indeed the largest influx of immigration did not occur until the first decade of the twentieth century, but the intrusion of large numbers of non-natives into the West after the completion of the C. P. R. succeeded in placing Indians at the margins of white society. Indians at the time of women travel writers' excursions through Western Canada became popular 'sights' viewed primarily through the windows of C. P. R. passenger cars. In the words of Susan St. Maur, "[w]e had glimpses of Indians fishing for salmon from time to time; sitting in their dug-out canoes, they looked very picturesque."<sup>12</sup> In many ways, therefore, it was no longer necessary, or desirable, for Anglo-Saxons to maintain direct contact with native peoples, and Indians were increasingly seen as 'sights' belonging to the past, rather than viable individuals in the new Western society.

The Indian's marginalisation was part of a broader literary and social phenomenon. Whereas before 1880 Indians had been the focus of many male-written travel narratives, which emphasised natives as "... wild, dignified, and adept,"<sup>13</sup> after that time Indians were often not seen in literature at all, or were characterised largely as remnants of a passing race.<sup>14</sup> According to Mary Lu MacDonald, author of "Red and White Men; Black, White

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<sup>11</sup>Sarah Carter, "Categories and Terrains of Exclusion: Constructing the 'Indian Woman' in the Early Settlement Era in Western Canada," *Great Plains Quarterly*, 13 (Summer 1993), p. 148.

<sup>12</sup>St. Maur, 72.

<sup>13</sup>Moyles and Owsram, 180.

<sup>14</sup>see, for example: Mary Lu MacDonald, "Red and White Men; Black, White and Grey Hats: Literary Attitudes to the Interaction between European and Native Canadians in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century", *Canadian Literature*, (Spring/ Summer 1990), No. 124, 92; Moyles and Owsram.

and Grey Hats," this change was preceded by a rapid series of modifications in literary depictions of Indians in the first five decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>15</sup> In the context of literature mostly concerned with Ontario, MacDonald argues that in the first decades of the nineteenth century, Indians were more likely to appear as central characters in literature, because they were more directly involved with white society. MacDonald also identifies an 'American' and an 'English' strain of writing about Indians. Although Indians often had both 'good' and 'bad' characteristics in both types of literature, American literature tended to emphasise Indians' negative attributes. Indians' 'good' traits included their simplicity, harmony with nature, nobility, and acceptance of Anglo-Saxon cultural conquest. 'Bad' traits included their 'savage' impulses, violence, and rejection of Christianity.<sup>16</sup> As the nineteenth century progressed, and Indians became relegated to the fringes of white society, they appeared less frequently as central characters in books. As well, the 'American' influence of stressing that Indians were warlike, savage, and hostile, became more prevalent in Canadian literature, although MacDonald argues that Canadian authors never portrayed Indians as 'savage' to the same extent as some American authors.<sup>17</sup>

Strange, and wild, stories concerning natives, however, had obviously reached a large audience and were well ingrained in the Anglo-Saxon conscience by the late nineteenth century. Writing in 1894 C. L. Johnstone related:

Strange stories are told by the older generation of emigrants of what the north-west was like when they first came out; and happy are those who then took up land at Winnipeg. In some places the Indians were still formidable, and the country had

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<sup>15</sup>MacDonald, 104.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 93.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 104.

also long been made a refuge for white and negro outlaws and adventurers.<sup>18</sup>

According to contemporary studies which demonstrate that the Canadian West was not a particularly 'wild and woolly' place at all, Johnstone's description seems exaggerated, if not untrue. It serves, however, to indicate the strong influence of the 'American' tradition of writing about the 'frontier' and how pervasive faulty images and stereotypes concerning native peoples have been, and continue to be, in a variety of Canadian literature.

Conflicting and stereotypical portrayals of Indians' 'noble savage' or 'savage' character also fit into the larger discussion concerning the relationship between literary conventions, including the Romantic tradition, and social ideologies, particularly Anglo-Saxon race ideas, British imperialism, and women's travel writing. The 'noble savage' was thought to epitomise the natural qualities of innocence and lack of worldly sophistication so greatly cherished by the Romantics. The image of the 'savage,' on the other hand, was necessary to legitimate Anglo-Saxon take-over of native land and interference in Indian culture. Late Victorian and early Edwardian literature upheld two mutually unattainable goals. It often advocated the advance of the European at the expense of the indigene, while it simultaneously promoted the return to a simpler and more natural way of living represented by the 'noble savage'.<sup>19</sup> Women's travel texts, as well as other forms of literature, do not clearly delineate precisely *when* this simpler and more natural Indian society existed; instead undetermined references to the past were used to indicate the presence of a 'primitive' state which must give way before 'civilisation.'

Indians, it seems, had run out of time. In women's travel writing, as well as in many other forms of fiction and non-fiction, Indians were referred to as belonging to a rapidly

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<sup>18</sup>Johnstone, 95.

<sup>19</sup>Jasen, 111.

diminishing past, which could not survive in a new industrial or agricultural world. In 1907 Mary Schaffer, for example, commented, regarding an old Indian camping ground, "[t]here stood the tepee-poles as the actors had used them last, - five lodges. But the grass waved there untrod, moss covered the long-deserted fire-places, and probably many of those who had last played their part there had gone to the Great Theatre of all."<sup>20</sup> Notable aside from Schaffer's depiction of Indians as belonging to an unfettered past was her use of Romantic language, a trait shared by many women travel writers when describing Indians in terms of a figurative or literal 'past.'

The idea that Indians were dying off is an extremely important theme in late nineteenth and early twentieth century literature. Certainly, Indian tribes were decimated by war, famine, and disease.<sup>21</sup> The emphasis on this theme in literature, according to Daniel Francis, indicated that the Indian's imminent mortality made him interesting to the reader, and also made it important to record the Indian while he still existed.<sup>22</sup> Women travel writers often shared in the expectation that Indians would shortly be extinct. According to Lady Aberdeen, and others, it was more merciful for "... these poor folk that their race is yearly diminishing and that by-and-bye all traces of their existence will have vanished," as she believed that Indians were unsuited to the lifestyle of white civilisation.<sup>23</sup>

Another important social change which took hold after the mid-nineteenth century which had special repercussions for the presentation of Indians in literature, was the increased popularity and influence of scientific ideas, and especially social Darwinism.

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<sup>20</sup>Schaffer, 139.

<sup>21</sup>Terry Goldie, *Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand Literatures* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 3.

<sup>22</sup>Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992), 53.

<sup>23</sup>Aberdeen, 202 and 203.

Implicit in social Darwinism was the idea that human races could be hierarchically ranked in terms of their 'progress.' 'Primitive' societies, including most indigenous peoples, were seen as lacking the intellectual and emotional capacities for adapting to a new social environment. Natural selection had not equipped natives with the ability to adapt and hence white people were justified in treating natives in a racist manner.<sup>24</sup>

Often, Indian myths and legends were used in women's travel writing, sometimes incorrectly, to emphasise Indians' lower scale in the Darwinistic conception of social evolution. For example, Agnes Fitzgibbon reported:

[s]trange as it seems very few Indians can swim, probably from their fear that they shall drown while learning. They believe that, if drowned, their spirits wander for ever in a vain search for the happy hunting-grounds, and no Indian will marry the daughter of one who has met his death in that way, lest the curse should descend to him.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to comments regarding Indian myths and legends, the literature is also replete with vocabulary which describes Indians as 'slovenly,' 'lazy,' 'dirty,' and 'backward,' to indicate their 'uncivilised' state in an era dominated by British ideas about 'civilisation.'

In creating literary depictions of Indians, therefore, Anglo-Saxon women travel writers were influenced by many social conventions and a colonial discourse which coloured their renditions. Thus, Indians were described in terms of their 'odd' or unusual dress and behaviour. Mary Hall, for example, 'created' Indians in the following language:

[t]heir style of dress is grotesque, to say the least of it; one man passed us in a tall beaver hat, swallow-tail coat,

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<sup>24</sup>Bruce G. Trigger, Natives and Newcomers: Canada's Heroic Age Reconsidered (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985), 16.

<sup>25</sup>Fitzgibbon, 132.

variegated-coloured trousers, moccasins, and a scarlet blanket hanging from his shoulder. The long hair, which both men and women wear, looks as if a comb never had passed near it, and gives them a very dirty appearance.<sup>26</sup>

Hall also wrote that the "... Indian is naturally idle- to eat, smoke, and sleep is the sole end of his life; though he will travel immense distances to fish or hunt, which is the only occupation of the men, the women doing all the rest, their condition being but little better than beasts of burden."<sup>27</sup>

Indian women were also described as 'degraded.' Women travel writers did not express sympathy for members of their own gender. As Anglo-Saxon women they felt they had a civic and moral duty to present themselves as 'superior.' One belief in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was that a culture's level of sophistication, or evolution, could be gauged by measuring the treatment of their women, taking Anglo-Saxon patriarchal society as the norm.<sup>28</sup> Agnes Fitzgibbon thus described 'squaws' on a muddy Winnipeg street in the following manner: "[y]oung squaws with shaggy, flowing hair, short, coloured merino skirts, and shawls over their heads, sit on the side-walks, chattering in their guttural tongue, and laughing over some joke."<sup>29</sup> Fitzgibbon is careful to maintain the prevailing opinion of Indians as a 'primitive' and unsophisticated race and she accomplished this not only by emphasising the 'dirt and grime' of the Indians, but also by implying that they were 'lazy' and 'coarse,' degraded by a newly 'civilised' world. Part of this 'degradation' included the perception that Indian women, unlike 'civilised' British women, were ill-treated and over-worked by Indian men. This attitude was also declared

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<sup>26</sup>Hall, *A Lady's Life*, 104.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Grundy, 73.

<sup>29</sup>Fitzbiggon, 54.

by Susan St. Maur, who expressed her dismay that Indian "...squaws do all the hard work, but perhaps will have an easier time as the men get more civilised."<sup>30</sup>

These descriptions of Indians as 'uncivilised,' reflected in their treatment of Indian women according to women travel writers, were used, in part, to justify the marginalisation of Indians by English culture. Some British women travel writers took this argument a little further and stressed that Indians in the Canadian West benefited from the presence and benevolence of Anglo-Saxon interference. Catherine Laura Johnstone, for example, argued that Indians suffered from famine and war before British law and order was introduced in the West. Johnstone commented on the 'progress' the Indian made after contact with English culture. Johnstone wrote that before this time the Indian:

... sometimes wandered hundreds of miles in one year in search of subsistence. Now he can obtain a sale for his wares, wages for his labour, medicine in sickness, and ... he is gradually imbued with faith in a Heavenly Protector... it really appears as if the European settlers had been sent to the north-west for his preservation.<sup>31</sup>

Johnstone's statement implied not only the superiority of 'civilisation' over 'savagery,' but also that Christian Anglo-Saxons had a moral and ethical duty to spread the Christian word and care for the unenlightened 'heathen.' This is one dominant theme in women's travel literature, and functioned to legitimise Anglo-Saxon interference in Indian culture. According to Elizabeth Keith Morris it was the duty of white women to civilise (reform) non-white peoples, as well as those perceived as occupying a lower rung on the evolutionary ladder, such as non-Anglo-Saxon or non-middle-class immigrants. Although women travel writers largely agreed that Anglo-Saxons were responsible for caring for

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<sup>30</sup>St. Maur, 42.

<sup>31</sup>Johnstone, 18.

Indians, they did not concede Indians a place within white society. Instead, most women travel writers believed that Indians should be segregated from Anglo-Saxon society, as they did not belong in the 'new' world. For example, with regard to a 'squaw' Morris encountered during her travels, she remarked that:

[t]he big cities and towns, with their up-to-date civilisation, know her not as a citizen; but at times she is still to be seen with her dirty blanket and moccasins, coarse black hair, high cheekbones, and a clay pipe in her mouth, taking her place humbly at the back of her lord and master.<sup>32</sup>

Clearly, in this view Indians belonged in the realm of 'nature,' replete with its 'uncivilised' aspects. Indians, to Schaffer, belonged on the plains and in the 'woods,' where their dress and manners were not out of keeping with their environment. According to Schaffer: "[t]he true home of the Indian is certainly the tepee; when he takes to a house, he is sure to construct a dismal failure, from our point of view."<sup>33</sup> Ellen Elizabeth Cameron Spragge agreed that there "... is an unnatural element about semi-civilised Indians which has to be actually felt to be appreciated. The Redskin loses his picturesqueness when he is placed within four walls..."<sup>34</sup> Mary Agnes Fitzgibbon also associated Indians with nature. "An Indian never beats his horse, nor drags at the reins in the cruel way so common among more 'civilised' riders, but sits on his horse as though it were part of himself."<sup>35</sup> Implicit in Fitzgibbon's statement is the idea that Indians were closer to nature, and, therefore, to animals, than their white counterparts, and thus had better 'natural' instincts regarding the treatment of animals. The 'woods' were also often associated with the real or mythological

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<sup>32</sup>Morris, 57.

<sup>33</sup>Schaffer, 97.

<sup>34</sup>Spragge, 132.

<sup>35</sup>Fitzgibbon, 55.



presence of Indians in women's travel writing: "[d]usky savages in waving plumes and flowing robes, mammoth beasts, dryads, demons, seem there. You would fain not look, not imagine, when all this is repeated so often that it becomes vivid and real; but in spite of yourself 'the woods' hold you in thrall."<sup>36</sup>

The close association of Indians with nature, however, did not mean that Indians were capable of perceiving natural 'beauty.' Conventions regarding aesthetic taste were culture-bound and women travel writers believed that it was only possible to perceive natural beauty through an educated and cultured glance. Schaffer, for example, wrote that she "... often [wondered] when passing an Indian camp-ground, be it ancient or modern, if ever for an instant the natural beauty of a location consciously appeals to them. I have seen not one but many of their camps and seldom or never have they failed to be artistic in their setting..."<sup>37</sup> Although this passage could be interpreted to mean that Indians were so accustomed and well-suited to nature at its most beautiful that they, therefore, could not recognise 'beauty,' it appears more likely that Schaffer was implying that Indians were 'primitives' who had no understanding of contemporary landscape aesthetics. Susan St. Maur also revealed her surprise at the aesthetic sensibilities of natives. St. Maur was astounded that "[o]ne of the best districts for collecting wild flowers is at the foot of the Crowfoot valley; this place (and also Morley) are Indian reservations, and it is remarkable that in choosing them the Indians have selected the most fertile and prettiest valley."<sup>38</sup> Schaffer and St. Maur recognised that an unbridgeable gap existed between themselves and Indians and seemed to imply that the Indians' lower ranking on the evolutionary scale impeded their ability to consciously appreciate 'civilised' aesthetic standards of natural beauty.

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<sup>36</sup>Saxby, 24.

<sup>37</sup>Schaffer, 174.

<sup>38</sup>St. Maur, 44.

Implicit in much of the women's travel discussed in this study is the idea that Indians could be 'improved' by Anglo-Saxon teachings and interracial blending. Catherine Laura Johnstone believed that: "[i]t stands to reason that when he [the Indian] has been taught a civilised pursuit, his innate wandering instincts lead him to stray off to seek employment among more civilised men."<sup>39</sup> An ambiguous alternative to the Indian-as-dying-race theme was also proposed by Johnstone. Johnstone believed that "... the uncivilised Indian has been driven towards the Rockies and other corners of the Dominion, where he must conform to civilisation or become extinct."<sup>40</sup> Johnstone, however, recognised that the mixed-blood population was gaining, and not losing ground, and stated that:

[t]o condemn half-breeds in the sweeping manner in which they are often condemned by people who have never been among them, is to disparage the antecedents of 3,000,000 of the 4,800,000 who now inhabit Canada. These 3,000,000 are increasing at a much faster rate than those of pure English descent, whose numbers are only kept up by immigration.<sup>41</sup>

Contrary to others who claimed that Indians were becoming extinct, Johnstone recognised that a merging of Anglo-Saxons and Indians was occurring. Still, Johnstone maintained the Darwinian belief that primitive societies must 'give way' to more advanced groups. This is supported by Johnstone's belief that Indians amalgamated quite successfully with white people, as "... all trace of him, except perhaps the black eyes, is often lost in the second generation."<sup>42</sup> Indeed, education of Indians, and perhaps especially

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<sup>39</sup>Johnstone, 70.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 97.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 98 and 99.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 98.

mixed-bloods, was seen as integral to maintaining and strengthening the British ethos of the West. As Jessie Saxby added:

[w]e commit an awful sin in giving to an inferior race the strong physique, independent instincts, keen sense of justice, aggressive faculty, and energetic purpose of our blood, and withhold from it the intellectual training and moral restraints of our spiritual being which make the natural man something more than a brute.<sup>43</sup>

Women travel writers were often more hopeful about the future of mixed-bloods than full-blooded Indians in Anglo-Saxon society. Johnstone's proposition that 'white' characteristics usually conquered over 'Indian' traits is one very good explanation for this 'kinder' attitude. Fitzgibbon elaborated upon this idea by describing well-educated 'half-breeds' in Winnipeg society. Fitzgibbon said: "[t]heir education, carefully begun by parents, is often completed in Scotland, and they are well-read, intelligent people, as proud of their Indian as of their European descent. Many of them are handsome and distinguished." <sup>44</sup> Fitzgibbon then described the meeting between one of these well-educated and cultivated half-breed young ladies and a young Englishman:

... fresh from the old country, and full of its prejudices... [she] was entertained by him with reflections on race, and condolences at having to associate with half-castes. At last he inquired how long she had been in the country? Making him a stately curtsy, she answered 'All my life! I am one of these despised half-breeds,' and instantly left him.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Saxby, 90.

<sup>44</sup>Fitzgibbon, 70.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 71.

It appears, therefore, that mixed-bloods could play a positive role in Anglo-Saxon society if they effectively abandoned their Indian social background and adopted the 'civilised' practises of Anglo-Saxon culture.

Aside from limited encounters with mixed-bloods acculturated to non-native society, women travel writers did not usually come in close contact with either Indians or mixed-bloods. Usually, women travel writers saw Indians from train windows, and occasionally undertook excursions to nearby Indian reserves to see how the Indians were 'improving' from their contact with Anglo-Saxon religious leaders and reserve agents. St. Maur believed that "[t]he system of reservations is just and right. They provide a settled home to those Indians who would otherwise be without land of their own..."<sup>46</sup> Aside from Cameron's unusual expedition to the Far North which included extended visits with a number of Eskimo and Indian families, Mary Schaffer was the only woman travel writer under investigation here who came into close contact with natives outside of a reserve setting. Schaffer referred to the Indians she encountered during her expeditions by name, and recognised their tribal affiliations. Schaffer visited some Stoneys in camp, the wives of Abraham and Sampson Beaver's families, during her summertime excursion in 1907.

In 1908 Schaffer met Mrs. Swift (either a mixed-blood or Indian woman, the literature does not specify) who lived with her husband and four children by the Athabaskan gorge. Schaffer related that it was pleasant talking to Mrs. Swift, "... though her English was limited,"<sup>47</sup> and exclaimed "oh, we women are all alike,"<sup>48</sup> when Mrs. Swift showed Schaffer all of her wedding finery and fancy work. Despite this close contact with native peoples, however, Schaffer still upheld certain social and literary conventions for 'constructing' Indians. To Schaffer, Indian 'squaws' were simultaneously 'dirty' and

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<sup>46</sup>St. Maur, 195.

<sup>47</sup>Schaffer, 323.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 325.

'friendly,' and were still 'objects' suited to be represented by her, rather than just people.

Consider the following excerpt:

When I hear those 'who know,' speak of the sullen, stupid Indian, I wish they could have been on hand the afternoon the white squaws visited the red ones with their cameras. There were no men to disturb the peace, the women quickly caught our ideas, entered the spirit of the game, and with musical laughter and little giggles, allowed themselves to be hauled about and pushed and posed in a fashion to turn an artist green with envy.<sup>49</sup>

At the same time that she attempted to correct faulty social images of the Indian, Schaffer, in fact, corroborated them in the process. Schaffer had fun with the Indian 'squaws,' who allowed her to 'haul and push and pose' them, but her goal was to film them, as representatives of the 'other' culture, not to accept them as her social equals.

Although most women travel writers referred to Indians as composing a largely indistinguishable group, some women travel writers easily distinguished between Indian tribes, and in this context may be considered as being somewhat sensitive to Indian culture. Catherine Laura Johnstone, for example, noted that "[t]he Crees in the reserves in Assiniboia are a plainer race than their half-brothers about Prince Albert and Battleford, who have all adopted French names."<sup>50</sup> Other women travel writers also recognised that Indian tribes differed. St. Maur wrote:

[t]he Prairie Indians in the North-West Territory do not take to industrial pursuits like those in British Columbia, and for this reason, that while the former have Government grants and rations, the latter have none, therefore, they like farming,

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 176 and 178.

<sup>50</sup>Johnstone, 102.

fishing, lumbering, and such work, while the Prairie Indians, having no incentive to work, hunt, and this is their sole occupation.<sup>51</sup>

Lady Aberdeen argued that Plains Indians were much more adept at hunting than their British Columbian coastal counterparts, who relied primarily on trapping to snare their game. In addition, Lady Aberdeen offered a considerable volume of material on the British Columbian coastal tribes. Aberdeen attempted to rectify contemporary social perceptions of Indians' totem poles as 'idols' and discussed the function of totems in Indian society. Aberdeen's Anglo-Saxon perceptions, however, dominated her perceptions. She described 'matriarchy,' which existed among some northern coastal tribes, as "... a system which has often been found to exist among primitive races,..." in stark contrast to the more advanced system of patriarchy practised by more 'civilised' tribes as well as Europeans.<sup>52</sup>

It was in their relations with Indian children and 'squaws' that women travel writers most clearly demonstrated their Anglo-Saxon cultural biases. Consider, for example, the following excerpt from Susan St. Maur's *Impressions of a Tenderfoot*:

One Indian papoose was looking longingly at an orange which a small white child was eating. I had just time, as the train moved off, to obtain 3 from the dining car and give them to the child; and the squaws bobbed their heads in acknowledgement, and giggled with pleasure as the papoose toddled towards them with the oranges in her small arms. Trifling incidents like this bring one into touch with the people, and gratify oneself as well.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>St. Maur, 195.

<sup>52</sup>Aberdeen, 228.

<sup>53</sup>St. Maur, 32.

This incident represented more than an instance of kindness as this description established a cultural and literary distance between the woman traveller and the 'object' of her gaze.<sup>54</sup> On one level, it was instructional, in that St. Maur was attempting to teach her readers how to approach Indians. On another level, however, this statement implies a much more profound ideology designed to reflect the white woman's superior level of civilisation.<sup>55</sup> St. Maur was suggesting that Indian children 'naturally' identified with white children's wants and desires. Their 'squaw' mothers, however, were not capable of providing them with 'civilised' artifacts because they were as helpless as children themselves. Indian mothers in this context were rendered partially helpless because of their marginalisation to the fringes of white civilisation and dependence on government support, but also helpless in the sense that they lacked the 'sensibility' and 'refinement' of white women. The role of the white woman in this context was therefore to rescue and instruct the rising generation.

Many passages concerned with the 'proper' instruction of Indians, especially youth, are present in women's travel writing. Ellen Elizabeth Spragge was greatly impressed by two adolescent Indian boys, whom she believed had benefited greatly from European intervention. Spragge wrote that Indians, like "... young plants may be trained, while the old ones can only be pruned."<sup>56</sup> Likewise, Jessie Saxby included a chapter for children titled 'Winnogene' in *West-Nor'-West*. Saxby's main character was a little white girl named Winnogene, "... 'a bright ray of light,' - that is the literal meaning of the Indian word; and the girl who is so named is a ray of the brightest sunshine in a lonely prairie home."<sup>57</sup> Winnogene, however, disliked being called by a 'Nichie's' name, as she already at a young

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<sup>54</sup>Foster, 102.

<sup>55</sup>Nair, 14.

<sup>56</sup>Spragge, 135.

<sup>57</sup>Saxby, 49.

age associated Indians with murderous and primitive characteristics. Winnogene saw Indians as 'savage' and 'un-Christian' because her parents were among the first settlers in 'red-man's' land. According to the story, some of these first settlers had mistreated the Indians, and therefore, "[a]t that time the whole country round there was in an unsettled state. Indians and half-breeds were roaming the land athirst for revenge on the conquering race, eager for plunder, ignorant, debased, all the worst passions of their savage nature roused by injustice and harsh treatment."<sup>58</sup> Saxby explained that Winnogene's mother suffered multiple miscarriages from being repeatedly frightened by Indians, or sounds associated with Indians. Winnogene's mother even mistook the sound of wolves howling outside her door one night for "... Indians come to murder them."<sup>59</sup> Finally, however, one small child, Winnogene, survived. According to Saxby, Winnogene's destiny, in common with all of the other children born in the area, would be "... to teach the poor conquered 'Nichies' a more Christ-like creed than that which was practised by their conquerors."<sup>60</sup>

Some women travel writers included passages which suggest that they were aware that the British had played a role in the Indian's debasement. Susan St. Maur, for instance, was upset that white men plundered the above-ground burial platforms of Indians to steal the deceased's tobacco. St. Maur "... was sorry to hear that to get possession of this tobacco, the body is often pulled down by rough whites; and one can understand the distress this causes the Indians, whose dead are as sacred to them as ours are to us."<sup>61</sup> Leading Indians to vice, however, was not difficult as all people contained the 'primitive' within and were in constant danger of returning to a 'savage' state. Only by upholding the conventions of 'civilisation' was it possible to avoid this downfall. Lady Aberdeen

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 50.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>St. Maur, 42.



acknowledged this sentiment and stated that "... contact with the whites has demoralised the Indians... [and has] intensified the vices of the [Indians]." <sup>62</sup> Thus, Lady Aberdeen recognised that although her culture had been influential in debasing the Indian, the Indian already possessed the characteristics which would result in his downfall.

Women travel writers also offered comments about immigrants in their travel texts. Marion Cran wanted to rectify the perception that Canada was a country populated only by British and French people. She stated that: "Canada welcomes to her shores every man of every race who will work her soil and obey her laws; she draws her people from every nation, and the English settler has not proved himself the best man." <sup>63</sup> Cran clearly admired the industry and adaptability of settlers like the Italians and 'Galicians'. <sup>64</sup> Cran's admiration of immigrants, in common with many other women travel writers, was not unqualified. Immigrants were usually not treated with the same extent of ethnocentric bias as Indians, but women travel writers' descriptions of immigrants still strongly reinforce the idea that women travel writers perceived immigrants primarily in culturally pre-determined ways. Clearly, they preferred those who adopted British 'manners and customs.' Aside from the English 'remittance man' figure who was an embarrassment to their culture, British women tended to see themselves and their cultural values as 'above' all other nationalities. Agnes Fitzgibbon, for example, described Mennonites and Icelanders in the following way:

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<sup>62</sup>Aberdeen, 241.

<sup>63</sup>Cran, 14.

<sup>64</sup>Ukrainians were often referred to as 'Galicians' at this time because a large proportion of them originally arrived from Galicia, an Austria-Hungarian province. By the early twentieth century the term 'Galician' had acquired negative connotations and was sometimes used to slight Ukrainians. Howard Palmer, "Strangers and Stereotypes: The Rise of Nativism 1880 - 1914," in R. Douglas Francis ed. The Prairie West: Historical Readings (Alberta: University of Alberta Press, 1985), 314.

The Mennonites and Icelanders interested me very much. The former, who are all thrifty and energetic, make excellent settlers. They have a large settlement some twenty miles south-east of Winnipeg. The dress of the women is quaint, yet neat. They wear short, full skirts, just showing their small feet; jackets, and becoming white caps, from under which their round black eyes, small straight features, and intelligent expression, greet one pleasantly. The men are taller, with a quiet, unconscious air of superiority which is refreshing. The dress of the Icelfander is somewhat similar, but they are more lethargic-looking. They have bright 'milk and roses' complexions, great opaque blue eyes, and a heavy gait which gives them an appearance of stupidity, which is not a true index of their character..."<sup>65</sup>

Immigrants, like Indians, were 'others' to be described and categorised. The immigrants described by Fitzgibbon in the above passage lose their individuality and identity in this collective, dehumanising description. They are created by Fitzgibbon according to conventions of the picturesque as 'sights,' to be objectified and evaluated. This was accomplished by identifying certain features and trademarks of immigrants, which may or may not be shared by all of them, and allowing these features to represent the group in its entirety. Immigrant settlers were also characterised in terms of their perceived ranking on the Darwinistic social scale, as well as their perceived ability to succeed in agriculture. Marion Cran, for example, contended that: "[t]he Galicians are a handsome race of a much lower type than the Scotch ... The Jews are only found in cities, they are commercial parasites and no good on the land."<sup>66</sup>

Likewise, Georgina Binnie-Clark came to a conclusive understanding of Hungarian settlers based on her meeting with one family. "Both men and women are almost ant-like in their instinct of industry, but especially the women. I have heard that they can be unjust;

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<sup>65</sup>Fitzgibbon, 57 and 58.

<sup>66</sup>Cran, 220.

I know that they can be generous."<sup>67</sup> Binnie-Clark, however, seemed to have good intentions regarding her Hungarian neighbours. Binnie-Clark wrote: "[n]either of us ever arrived within miles of the other's language, but we were always good friends. Her eyes were bright with intelligence and goodwill; and I have been told that we British are always intelligible on the subject of our requirements."<sup>68</sup> Binnie-Clark, nonetheless, credits her own culture for imbuing her, and other British people, with the qualities which make her 'interpretable' to everyone else. Like Indians, immigrants play a passive role in their relations with members of the dominant Anglo-Saxon group.

Many women travel writers included comments about 'Galician' settlers to emphasise the perception of Canada as a land of hope for the poor and downtrodden. Even the worst conditions under British standards were better than the lifestyle the Galicians were accustomed to. In stark contrast to the experience of a disgruntled German who decided to leave Western Canada after his crop failed, Elizabeth Keith Morris stated:

[a] Galician who [had been] digging trenches, for which he received eight shillings a day had another view of the country when asked if he would go back to the Fatherland, he replied with an emphatic shake of the head, and the following rather unusual statement: - 'No, I stay here. In my country, I dog, here, I man.'<sup>69</sup>

By having the 'Galician' 'speak' in dialect and shake his head, Morris simultaneously constructed and emphasised an implied social distance between herself and the 'object' of her literary representation. Many women travel writers used devices such as dialect and

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<sup>67</sup>Binnie-Clark, *A Summer on the Canadian Prairie*, 124.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>69</sup>Morris, 29.

exclamation points to suggest detachment from a situation and to emphasise their purportedly elevated 'class' status.<sup>70</sup>

Women travel writers were often especially interested in immigrant children. Like Indian children, immigrant children could be 'moulded' into 'proper' citizens. Elizabeth Morris wrote: "[i]n a country where mixed races abound it is essential to have teachers who will instil the old British ideals and principals in the minds of the children and teach them loyalty to the mother country and the old flag."<sup>71</sup> Morris commended the department of Education for keeping a special officer "... moving around among the Galicians, who constitute the biggest proportion of foreigners in the province."<sup>72</sup> Morris credited the Galician children for being:

... remarkably bright. They pick up the English language very quickly from their English-speaking teachers, and prove very apt pupils indeed. It is through education the rising generation of Galicians and other foreigners will become good Canadian citizens, and their attitude towards education is very gratifying.<sup>73</sup>

Agnes Deans Cameron added:

On the benches of one school-room in Edmonton I found children who have been born in Canada, the United States, England, Scotland, Russia, New Zealand, Poland, Switzerland, Australia, and Austro-Hungary. They were all singing 'The Maple Leaf Forever.' It is the lessons these

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<sup>70</sup>Eva-Marie Kroller, "First Impressions: Rhetorical Strategies by Victorian Women," *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature*, Vol. 21, No. 4, (Oct. 1990), 92.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*

children are to learn in the little red school-house which will determine the future of western Canada.<sup>74</sup>

Besides children and 'Galicians,' the group of immigrants which most commonly appears in women's travel writing is the Chinese. Catherine Laura Johnstone stated that: "[t]here are many reasons given for the law which prevents [the Chinese] from settling in the north-west of Canada: one, that they would mix with the Indians and soon fill up the country with an inferior race, probably hostile to European settlers or their descendants."<sup>75</sup> Susan St. Maur described another reason why the Chinese were discouraged from settling the Northwest. 'Chinamen,' according to St. Maur:

... [consist] principally on rice and a little dried fish, quite content so long as they are making enough money with which to return to their own country. They are excellent labourers, very industrious and, as a rule, honest, working for lower wages than white men. This is one of the many reasons why there is such a strong feeling against them.<sup>76</sup>

Jessie Saxby added "[a]lthough we have long since learned to doubt the existence of the 'noble savage' of American romance, it is satisfactory to feel assured that the American Indians amalgamate much more readily with European races than do the nigger and the 'heathen Chinees.'"<sup>77</sup> The most serious charge against the Chinese, at least according to Saxby, was that "... the government allows the Chinese to adopt their own habits and customs ... and they are allowed to carry on all their vile practices, morally and physically, and sanitary, which they have been accustomed to do in their own country."<sup>78</sup> Efforts to

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<sup>74</sup>Cameron, 391.

<sup>75</sup>Johnstone, 5.

<sup>76</sup>St. Maur, 71 - 72.

<sup>77</sup>Saxby, 94.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 95.

thwart the budding British ethos of the Canadian West were clearly not appreciated by women travel writers.

Lady Aberdeen provided insights into how the Chinese may commonly have been treated by their class-conscious masters. In her descriptions of her Chinese cook, Aberdeen always placed his name within quotation marks to suggest that he and his name were very unusual, if not downright odd. She characterised "Foo," as a "... very touchy gentleman, and if you offend his majesty you will find that he will demand his pay and walk off the next hour."<sup>79</sup> Aberdeen was particularly upset at "Foo" on one occasion in which he acted outside his 'rank' as servant. Aberdeen told the story in the following manner:

A large covey of prairie chickens flew past the house. Lord A. ran to get his gun; but, meanwhile, friend 'Foo' had seen the birds, and, being fond of sport, borrowed my brother's gun and ammunition out of his room, without saying 'by your leave,' and sped away so as to be first on the scene of action. On being called back, and a humble suggestion made that he should wait a minute and go with Lord A., instead of in front of him, he waxed fierce with wrath.<sup>80</sup>

"Foo," apparently, had endured enough social discrimination. Aberdeen suggested that antagonism between the British and the Chinese were mutual, and that really no one was to blame for this state of affairs. On a tour of the docked 'Empress of India' at Vancouver harbour, on which Aberdeen saw Chinese "freight," she wrote:

[i]t creates a curious sensation to be brought face to face with this strange people between whom and ourselves there seems to be a gulf fixed - the two races having so little in common,

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<sup>79</sup>Aberdeen, 175.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

... They despise us, and look on us as heathens, ... And we, or at least many of us, no less unjustly despise them...<sup>81</sup>

Thus, Aberdeen excused herself from participating in the creation of the Chinese as culturally inferior 'others.'

Those 'foreign' settlers who shared an Anglo-Saxon racial background with the British experienced the least amount of social and economic antipathy, and were therefore also the immigrants least commented upon in women's travel texts. Jessie Saxby, for example, clearly stated her immigrant preferences: "[t]he Norse settler in Canada will have many of his hereditary tastes gratified, for the Dominion holds amid the hollows of her magnificent mountains, and upon the bosom of her vast prairies, inland seas as grand and wild as those which girdle the shores of Scandinavia."<sup>82</sup> Northern Europeans were not believed to pose a threat to budding Canadian nationalist sentiments built upon British sentiments as they assimilated quickly and tended to disperse themselves thinly rather than congregating in groups.

From the maternalistic stance of Susan St. Maur, who invariably referred to her Indian tour guides as "her" Indians and included telling descriptions of the natives she encountered along her way, to the more 'sympathetic' stance of Catherine Laura Johnstone, who commiserated with the plight of the marginalised Indian, women travel writers revealed their social and cultural biases in their interactions with the 'other.' It is difficult to maintain the argument that women travel writers presented the 'other' in a sympathetic light. It seems instead that women travel writers' were agents for Anglo-Saxon cultural superiority, and to some extent British imperialism, and this encouraged them to represent Indians, mixed-bloods, and immigrants as less 'civilised' than themselves. Women travel

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 200.

<sup>82</sup>Saxby, 154.

writers were clearly influenced by contemporary social and literary conventions for characterising the 'colonised,' and employed these strategies to perpetuate a social and literary distance between themselves and the 'objects' of their gaze. Jessie Saxby's words seem a fitting conclusion:

It has always seemed to me a sad, inexplicable thing that aboriginal races should die out before the conquering Briton. Why cannot we absorb the black, red, and yellow men by a gradual and kindly process, instead of stamping them out of their own lands with the iron heel of a master?<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 93.



### Conclusion:

#### Beautiful Dreams of 'Savage' Lands?

But I am on British soil again, and my Canadian experience seems now like a beautiful dream.<sup>1</sup>

Between the late 1870s and the First World War Western Canada was visited by a number of English speaking middle-class women travel writers who published accounts of their trips. It is clear from their writing that these women were influenced by a variety of social and literary conventions in their renditions of the West's 'liberating' atmosphere, natural environment, and peoples. Implicit in most of their writing was the idea that Western Canada was a less-civilised place which could benefit from the 'civilising' influences of Anglo-Saxon and, preferably, British women. The height of British imperial fervour coincided with these women's visits to Western Canada and undoubtedly motivated women travel writers to travel to and describe Western Canada in their literature. These women travel writers were also influenced by Anglo-Saxon and other 'race' ideas which advocated the cultural and political superiority of white English-speaking peoples over the 'other,' which is well represented throughout their writing.

It was an essential part of the mission of women travel writers to offer a distinctly 'feminine' representation of Western Canada, although women travel writers approached this agenda in unique ways. Ella Sykes, for example, expended her own time and money to investigate conditions in Western Canada for middle-class women and came to the conclusion that Canada was not an ideal place for educated and cultured British gentlewomen. Marion Cran was also interested in investigating opportunities for women in Canada, and was bolstered by British and Canadian authorities in achieving this objective.

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<sup>1</sup>Jessie Saxby, 154.

The West encouraged some women travel writers, like Georgina Binnie-Clark, to express 'feminist' opinions and attitudes. 'Feminist' ideas in these women's travel writings, however, were usually tempered by social and literary conventions which required women to write and behave in socially prescribed ways. Women travel writers often relied upon an outside, usually male, authority to establish 'facts' concerning Western Canada, and sometimes excused themselves for publishing their work.

Women travel writers also recognised that some behaviours were distinctly 'unfeminine,' and sometimes subtly excused themselves for participating in 'unconventional' activities. Mary Schaffer and Agnes Deans Cameron, for instance, acknowledged that extended trips into 'uncivilised' regions, the Rocky Mountains in Schaffer's experience, and the Arctic for Cameron, were not typical pursuits for women of their class or era. Cameron in some ways disguised the inappropriateness of her journey by offering her experiences as an educational 'study' of peoples and places in the North. Schaffer maintained her femininity throughout her travel book by asserting her reliance upon the knowledge and physical strength of her male guides during some strenuous outdoor pursuits.

These women travel writers implicitly and explicitly acknowledged that a fine social, and literary, line could differentiate between 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' female behaviours, which could potentially affect the women travel writers ability to publish their material or maintain their reputations as 'reputable' women. Disobeying or flouting social rules for appropriate feminine behaviour could result in unpleasant consequences. Susan St. Maur pinpointed this concern in her description of a fellow female passenger encountered on the C. P. R.:

A very strong-minded American lady was in the train from the Glacier House with us, travelling in the interests of some Boston newspaper. Her appearance would have warranted her being able to travel round the

world alone. She had on a short serge dress, her hair was cropped, and at the back of her head she wore a grey wideawake, while her sole ornament was a small liquor bottle suspended by a silver chain. She kept her note-book and pencil in hand the whole time.<sup>2</sup>

St. Maur, as well as the other women travel writers surveyed in this study, recognised that they needed to maintain certain standards of behaviour, demeanour, and expression to maintain their authority as women writers. Many of the women travel writers, such as Jessie Saxby, Ishbel Aberdeen, and Ellen Spragge, also believed that a woman's perspective would help to foster a positive image of Canada, and suggested that opportunities for women existed on a number of levels. Some women travel writers exaggerated the theme of opportunities for women in Western Canada, and some recent scholars uncritically accept these writings as actual depictions of lived experience rather than carefully constructed literary representations. Certainly, some women travel writers, well illustrated by Elizabeth Keith Morris, portrayed the West as 'Utopia' and described the West's environment in glowing romantic terms. Catherine Laura Johnstone, on the other hand, stressed that the Western environment was not always the bountiful summerland portrayed in a great variety of literature.

Other questions concerning the impact of gender upon the travel writers' experiences and writing remain more difficult to assess. The emphasis throughout this thesis has not been to compare men's and women's travel writing as this would require in-depth analysis, but instead to suggest that these categories cannot be considered in isolation from one another.<sup>3</sup> The absence of any quantity of secondary literature regarding the

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<sup>2</sup>St. Maur, 158 - 159.

<sup>3</sup>Sara Mills, "Knowledge, Gender, and Empire," in Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose eds., Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies (New York: The Guilford Press, 1994), 36.

experiences of women travel writers in Western Canada has necessitated an application of some of the approaches used by scholars interested in travel writing on the international scene, as well as literature pertaining to the experiences of male travel writers in Western Canada. Many themes in women's travel writing were shared by men. Women, like men, were most comfortable within a 'familiar' environment, which is demonstrated by their preference for landscapes and cultural practices which reminded them of home. Both men and women travel writers presented the West in overwhelmingly positive terms in the latter half of the nineteenth century, although the negative view of the reality of Western life was gaining increasing currency.

It is also important to stress that individual women travel writers held different opinions and expressed themselves in different ways, which suggests that gender was not always *the* determining factor in conditioning their responses and attitudes. At the same time, the literature does imply that women travel writers had to negotiate conventions of behaviour and expression which did not necessarily apply to men. While women may not always have treated the 'other' in a sympathetic way, it does seem clear that women and men's experiences of travel were different because of the social roles they were expected to play, and not because they had fundamentally different desires or values.<sup>4</sup> Instead, "... nineteenth-century middle-class men and women were both infatuated with the romance of travel, and ... many of them dreamed of 'savage lands' where they could escape the constraints of civilisation as defined and enforced by their own social class."<sup>5</sup>

In some ways, the West provided new-found freedoms for the women travel writers considered in this study, which was demonstrated by both their activities and means of expression. In the West, women travel writers could participate in hunting and camping

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<sup>4</sup>Jasen, 24.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 25.

activities, sometimes out of a desire to experience the 'primitive' elements of life, and sometimes out of a lack of other options, in the case of Mary Hall. Throughout most of their caricatures of Western landscapes and peoples, whether they used Romantic language, like Mary Fitzgibbon, to convey a sense of the mystery and beauty of the prairie, or took a more pragmatic approach, as in the case of Elizabeth Mitchell who endeavoured to provide a factual study of the West, these middle-class Anglo-Saxon women were keenly aware of their importance to the British imperial agenda and recognised that their authority as writers, in large part, rested upon this cultural and racial status. The ways in which women travel writers went about creating the Western environment in their travel books was neither neutral nor uncomplicated, and women travel writers most clearly reflected a sense of their own cultural values and expectations in their depictions of Western landscape rather than any particular, concrete 'reality' of Western Canada.

The depictions of natives and non-English speaking 'foreigners' in Western Canada provided in women's travel books also demonstrate that women travel writers' notions of their own assumed cultural superiority influenced their reception of 'others.' 'Others,' including natives, mixed-bloods, and non-English immigrants, were often presented in an unsympathetic light by women travel writers journeying through Western Canada, in spite of claims made by some scholars on the international scene who suggest "... that women, colonised themselves by gender, might recognise and oppose colonisation based on race," and thus adopt a more sympathetic towards 'others' than their male counterparts.<sup>6</sup> In their depictions of Western Canada, it is too simplistic to say either that women travel writers reflected only a pre-determined cultural outlook, or to say that women's travel writings are straightforward representations of reality.

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<sup>6</sup>Susan L. Blake, "A Woman's Trek: What Difference Does Gender Make," Women's Studies International Forum, Vol. 13, No. 4. (1990), 347.

By analysing these texts as women's travel writing, rather than as 'factual' records of the lived experiences of British emigrant gentlewomen, which has been the approach to date, it is possible to re-position women within the broader context of British imperial history.<sup>7</sup> Women travel writers were active participants in the British imperial process of creating knowledge about the world, and could use their travel texts to expound upon the social and literary ideologies which influenced their lives. Unquestionably, we learn more about the women travel writers' cultural baggage and outlook than any concrete reality of life in Western Canada. Certainly, truth and fiction are inextricably linked in their literary renditions of Western Canada and reveal the strength of prevailing social and literary ideas and conventions in women's travel writing.

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<sup>7</sup>For the 'traditional' approach see Susan Jackel's A Flannel Shirt and Liberty, and Emma Curtin's Daughters of Empire.

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