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**SEEING THROUGH WESTERN EYES:  
A STUDY OF THREE WOMEN'S HOLY LAND TRAVEL NARRATIVES**

**BY**

**KERRY LOUANE FAST**

**A Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of**

**MASTER OF ARTS**

**Department of Religion  
University of Manitoba  
Winnipeg, Manitoba**

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**Seeing Through Western Eyes: A Study of Three Women's Holy Land Travel  
Narratives**

**BY**

**Kerry Louane Fast**

**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University**

**of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree**

**of**

**MASTER OF ARTS**

**KERRY LOUANE FAST©1999**

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## ABSTRACT

Much attention has been given to women's travel writings of the nineteenth century, however little has been given to travel narratives of the Middle East and their unique religious dimensions. Much scholarship of women travel narratives assumes that women, as the Other in their own societies, expressed an affinity with the colonized Other. Such assumptions, however, ignore the collusion of women in their countries' colonial endeavors. I examine how three European women used the people of the Middle East to construct their selfs in response to the constraints of religion and gender in their societies.

Harriet Martineau (*Eastern Life: Present and Past*, 1846) was a Unitarian, but embraced atheism. In the Middle East she encountered a form of Christianity that challenged her views about Jesus and religion. She also encountered women in harems who challenged her understanding of what a true woman was. In response, she sharply condemned both.

Ida Pfeiffer (*Reise einer Wienerin in das Heilige Land*, 1842) found travel to be liberating. She also discovered that this resulted in a conflicting relationship to her home. Her experiences in the Middle East caused her to critique her own society, yet her pilgrim activities in Jerusalem, in which she was unable to appreciate the forms of worship she encountered, reminded her how strongly her ties to home, particularly religious ties, actually were.

Amy Fullerton (*A Lady's Ride Through Palestine and Syria*, 1871) viewed the Middle

East through Evangelical eyes. She focused on its biblical associations and the Protestant missionary work being carried out by single women. Through this focus she demonstrated that she was strongly committed to Evangelical ideas of biblical truth and ideals of women.

All three of these women used the Middle East and its people in their narratives to respond to the dynamics in their own societies.



## **Preface**

In 1992 and again in 1996 I had the good fortune of visiting the Middle East as an employee of an international development agency working in the Middle East. It was as a result of these visits, and my ongoing employment in the agency's Middle East sector that this thesis was born. Back then I had no notion of travel narratives and nineteenth century women, not even much of a notion of a thesis. However, the realization was growing that perceptions of the Middle East in the West can be based on almost anything—media portrayal, religious beliefs, political leanings—but rarely on what people of the Middle East have to say about themselves and their lands. Perceptions are created, but they have the potential of greatly influencing both the perceiver and the one being perceived. To unravel perceptions, to find out how they are created and what their effect is, has been the broad motivation in writing this thesis.

An undertaking such as a thesis cannot be accomplished by one person alone. I am indebted to many for their assistance and support. The staff of Document Delivery at the Elizabeth Dafoe Library have searched the furthest corners of North America's libraries for me, and their friendly and helpful assistance over the past year has been greatly appreciated.

My committee members, Dr. Dawne McCance, Dr. Kate Blackstone and Dr.

Louise Renée have been supportive and their feedback has been helpful. I would also like to thank Dr. Jane Kalbfleisch of Women's Studies for her constructive advice.

My advisor, Dr. Egil Grislis has repeatedly expressed interest in my subject and has given suggestions and advice throughout my work which have been both insightful and constructive. However more importantly, his continued attention to my work has indicated his confidence in my ability to write this thesis. For this I am deeply grateful.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their patience and their ongoing interest. In particular, my sister Rosabel Fast has listened to me, offered advice and continually displayed an avid interest in my thesis. Her support seems to have been never ending.

**Here was *our* Jerusalem.**

**-Mary Berenson, *A Modern Pilgrimage* (1933)**

**They go home about as wise as they came out.**

**-Isabel Burton, *The Inner Life of Syria* (1875)**

## Introduction

In 1867 the young American, Kate Kraft set out for the Middle East in the company of her sister and brother-in-law. In Nazareth, at the Fountain of the Virgin she observed the women of the town drawing their day's supply of water. Like many travellers to the Middle East, she saw Mary, the mother of Jesus in these "[y]oung damsels clad in loose white trousers and flowing blue robes." <sup>1</sup> Her brother-in-law pointed out that what she was seeing were not modern Madonnas, but dirty, poor girls, with too many children, enslaved to their polygamous husbands. "You have been looking through the wrong end of my lorgnette," <sup>2</sup> he mockingly told her. Less romantic his view certainly was, but not more accurate, for both saw what they expected to see. For Kate, the modern Nazareth was synonymous with the biblical one, and so she saw only biblical characters. Her brother-in-law was dependent entirely on incorrect stereotypes. He assumed that Nazarenes were all Muslims, and that all Muslim men were polygamous, when in fact Nazareth was largely a Christian town and polygamy was rare among Muslims, one factor being that few men could afford more than one wife. Neither Kate Kraft nor her brother-

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<sup>1</sup> Kate Kraft, *The Nilometer and the Sacred Soil: A Diary of a Tour Through Egypt, Palestine, and Syria* (New York: Carleton, Publisher, 1869), 274.

<sup>2</sup> Kraft, 275.

in-law had more than glanced at these women, yet both presented their descriptions of Nazarene women with the assurance that they had correctly apprehended these women.

This thesis examines how three women, all from Western Europe, viewed people of other races and cultures. It is about seeing, not what was there, but what they wanted to see, what they needed to see, what they were able to see. It is about looking *through* a lorgnette, whether the right or the wrong end, always through it, always establishing that one is looking and another is being looked at. The one never yields the lorgnette into the hands of the other, for then she does not know what is being seen. More importantly, then she does not know how she is being seen. In this, the thesis is also about realizing that a travel narrative concerns the interface between a traveller and the lands she visits and not so much those lands themselves.

Harriet Martineau (1802-1876), Ida Pfeiffer (1797-1858) and Amy Fullerton (dates unknown) travelled to the Middle East in 1846, 1842, and 1871 respectively. Each wrote an account of her travels, and these narratives are the subject of this thesis. (Harriet Martineau's *Eastern Life: Present and Past*; Ida Pfeiffer's *Reise einer Wienerin in das Heilige Land*; Amy Fullerton's *A Lady's Ride Through Palestine and Syria*.) Harriet Martineau and Amy Fullerton were British; Ida Pfeiffer was Austrian. They visited many of the same locations, often heard guides provide the same information, but the three women did not see the same Middle East. The geography remains constant throughout the three travel narratives, yet the meaning of that geography is unrecognizable from narrative to narrative. In their creation of meaning, these three women were most

powerfully shaped by the dynamics of their own worlds. I explore these dynamics and how they influenced the creation of meaning out of the Middle East.

In my exploration of the three women and their perception of the Middle East, I focus on religion and gender as the two influences that tie these three travel narratives together. Gender, in most recent scholarship, is increasingly being studied in conjunction with class and race and not usually with religion. It is not my intention to ignore class and race or other facets of the lives of these women in my focus on religion, but when reading travel narratives of the Middle East, it is evident that the religiosity of that land is so thoroughly imbedded in the Western mind of the nineteenth century that few travellers failed to comment about its biblical association. The fact that their destination was the Middle East, with its undeniable religious associations, affected the travel narratives of these women to a great extent. They used their travel narratives as a means to address religious themes, inspired by their understanding of the Holy Land. In this respect travel narratives about the Middle East differ from travel narratives about other parts of the world, and so religion remains a vital aspect in their travel narratives and is a central focus in this study.

In conjunction with the dynamics in the lives of these women that influenced their narratives, I explore how geography, and particularly, the people who inhabited that geography were portrayed and interpreted in these travel narratives. Ruth Frankenberg in her study of racism, *The Social Construction of Whiteness* states that

[c]entral to colonial discourses is the notion of the colonized subject as irreducibly Other from the standpoint of a white "self." . . . [O]ne effect of colonial discourse is the production of an unmarked, apparently autonomous white/Western self, in contrast with the marked, Other racial and cultural categories with which the racially and culturally dominant category is coconstructed.<sup>3</sup>

Harriet Martineau, Ida Pfeiffer and Amy Fullerton used the people of the Middle East as a contrast against which their own identities as Western religious women could be established or enhanced. People of the Middle East were considered culturally, racially and religiously inferior by these women, and this hierarchy of value was used by these women to construct themselves.

Such creation of self holds within it an implicit sense of dominance. It assumes that the Middle East exists for the benefit of the traveller, and that the traveller best understands the Middle East and can give meaning to it. In a masterful understatement, Edward Said expresses how such dominance both obliterates the people of the Middle East, and therefore can present itself as innocent. Here I paraphrase Said's statement: these women sense no irony in the fact that their tours and their visions will reveal nothing to them about modern Orientals and *their* destinies. What matters about the Orient is what it lets happen to these women, what it allows their spirits to do, what it

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<sup>3</sup> Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 16-17.

permits them to reveal about themselves, their ideas, their expectations.<sup>4</sup> This thesis is about three women and the dynamics and forces that gave shape to their construction of the Other in the creation of themselves as they wrote about the Middle East.

In order to situate my comments more concretely, I will further examine: 1) The context of the Middle East and travel in the Middle East in the nineteenth century; 2) The Middle East as a religious destination; 3) some questions of methodology and the study of women's travel literature.

### Context:

The nineteenth century brought great changes to the relationship between Europe and the Middle East. The "rediscovery of the Holy Land"<sup>5</sup> was marked by Napoleon's presence in Egypt in the late eighteenth century, and his defeat at Acre by British and Turkish troops. This marked a turning point in Europe's involvement in the Middle East. Previously Egypt, ruled by Muhammad Ali, and the Levant, comprised of Ottoman provinces, had been largely overlooked by Europe, but with the coming of the nineteenth century a steady increase in European presence began. In the early years of the century,

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<sup>4</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1979), 172-173. The actual quote reads "Chateaubriand senses no irony in the fact that his tour and his vision will reveal nothing to him about the modern Oriental and *his* [emphasis original] destiny. What matters about the Orient is what it lets happen to Chateaubriand, what it allows his spirit to do, what it permits him to reveal about himself, his ideas, his expectations."

<sup>5</sup> This phrase was coined by Yehoshua Ben-Arieh as the title of his book Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, *The Rediscovery of the Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century* (Jerusalem and Detroit: The Magnes Press and the Hebrew University, 1979).



every major Western government sought to establish consuls in cities in the Middle East, but were only permitted to do so in coastal centres such as Beirut and Acre. <sup>7</sup> In 1838 Britain was granted permission to establish a consulate in Jerusalem, and within twenty years all major Western governments followed suit, <sup>8</sup> giving European governments access to the interior of the Levant. As the century progressed, these consuls became increasingly powerful as the Ottoman Empire weakened. All this affected travel in the Middle East greatly.

While Palestine was officially a province of the Ottoman Empire in the early nineteenth century and fought over by Egypt and the Ottoman Empire, (with European influence) the Levant was, apart from major centres, *de facto* controlled by various groups of Bedouins, who could demand any price they desired in exchange for protection in their territory. Apart from the more frequently travelled spots such as Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Nazareth, protected by the European consuls, travelling was hazardous for Europeans on account of this. Protection had to be bought from the sheik who controlled the area which the traveller hoped to visit. These conditions discouraged travellers, but as the consuls assumed more power, travel in the region became more accessible to Europeans. Not only did scientific and exploratory expeditions increase, travellers arrived in ever greater numbers, ensured of protection by their consuls. By mid-century travel in the Levant had changed significantly. Throughout the century, Egypt, firmly under the

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<sup>7</sup> Britain, France, Russia, Germany, Austria, the United States.

<sup>8</sup> Ben-Arieh, 111-112.

control of Muhammad Ali and his son, remained stable and accessible, as far as travellers were concerned.

Not only was the Middle East becoming more accessible to European travellers, the nature of travel was also undergoing change.<sup>9</sup> By the 1850's railroad had made travel across Europe much simpler and quicker, replacing the slower steamship, and therefore, also made the Middle East more accessible to Europeans. Visitors began arriving in greater numbers and by 1869 travel to the Middle East took a new turn with the advent of Thomas Cook's tours, designed to make travel to the Middle East accessible for working class people.<sup>10</sup> Travel was becoming more convenient and also becoming affordable for a greater number of people. The powerful presence of European consuls throughout the Middle East had lessened the threat of Bedouins considerably, and few places were restricted for travellers. By this time too the hated quarantine houses were a thing of the past, and travellers could move much more easily from country to country. Dragomen, muleteers, cooks, guides, horses, armed escorts (as needed)—all could be hired at such major staging centres as Beirut, Jerusalem and Cairo. Dragomen had become accustomed to the ways of Europeans, and the wrinkles of the business had been smoothed out! Frances Power Cobbe travelling in 1863 was dismayed to discover that

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<sup>9</sup> See John Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion: Victorians and Edwardians in the South* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 18-38 for a description of the changing travel scene in Europe and the Middle East.

<sup>10</sup> See Edmund Swinglehurst, *The Romantic Journey: The Story of Thomas Cook and Victorian Travel* (London: Pica Editions, 1974).

her dragoman served dinner on willow-ware plates, obviously acquired from Europe.<sup>11</sup> Tourism was a firmly established trade in the Middle East.

Harriet Martineau, Ida Pfeiffer and Amy Fullerton travelled through the Middle East in such a changing climate. Harriet Martineau and Ida Pfeiffer frequently travelled with heavily armed escorts, were forced to spend time in quarantine houses and could report sights to their readers that were still novel. Amy Fullerton, in comparison, could travel alone safely relying on an extensive network of Europeans for hospitality, not only in major centres, but throughout the Middle East. She was travelling a well-worn path through the Middle East, finding little original to report.

#### Religiously Motivated Travel to the Holy Land:<sup>12</sup>

The religious dimension of travel to the Middle East cannot be ignored, for the Middle East is most often, among Western travellers of the nineteenth century, identified as the *Holy Land*. This is a designation from which religious meaning cannot be divorced. Not only is there a religious component to the travel narratives, frequently the primary significance for Christian travellers is that it is the *Holy Land*. In addition, because the Middle East has primarily been seen as the Holy Land by Christians—a land made sacred by its biblical connection, rather than as a political or even cultural

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<sup>11</sup> Frances Power Cobbe. *The Cities of the Past* (London: Trübner & Co., 1864), 4.

<sup>12</sup> I am using this designation as it is understood by Christians, not Jews or Muslims, i.e. in addition to its biblical connection, it is made sacred by the life and death of Jesus.

area—they have assumed a certain claim to it. As a result, travel narratives of the Middle East often fundamentally deal with religious themes.

Robert L. Wilken, in writing of the development of the idea of the Holy Land, suggests that "[l]and, like many things human beings hold dear, is not a simple gift of nature; it is made, invented by those who live in and on it,"<sup>13</sup> and by those who visit it, I would add. The Holy Land is essentially a Christian construction and Christians have possessed it without apology. While different generations of Christians have defined the Holy Land in different ways, there has remained a continuous tradition of ownership. Christians have constructed the Holy Land for their use and benefit.<sup>14</sup> The Holy Land is given shape to suit their religious piety.

Glenn Bowman discusses the construction of the Holy Land in the modern Middle East. He examines three groups of Christian pilgrims (Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Christian Zionists) who all came to Jerusalem with different religious expectations and who fulfilled those expectations in vastly different ways in their particular construction of the Holy Land. He concludes that the

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<sup>13</sup> Robert L. Wilken, *The Land Called Holy: Palestine in Christian History and Thought* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), xiv.

<sup>14</sup> Robert L. Wilken discussed the construction of the Holy Land of the first seven centuries of Christianity. Gershon Greenberg, *The Holy Land in American Religious Thought, 1620-1948: The Symbiosis of American Religious Approaches to Scripture's Sacred Territory* (Lanham, New York and London: University Press of America, 1994) discusses, for example, such constructions by various religious groups within the United States.

Jerusalem experienced by each group rises less from the walls and streets of the literal city than from images of the holy city and its environs imbibed in distant places while the pilgrims-to-be listened to stories and songs, engaged in religious ceremonies, observed sacred and secular art works, and read pilgrims' tales and travellers' narratives. The holy city is, in other words, a place where pilgrims who have inherited or developed certain images of a "Jerusalem" during enculturation elsewhere can embody those images and engage them as aspects of the material world.<sup>15</sup>

This is precisely what is taking place in the three travel narratives that I examine. Each woman describes the Holy Land in quite different ways—Harriet Martineau sees the Holy Land as the birthplace of religion; Ida Pfeiffer experiences it as a traditional pilgrimage site; Amy Fullerton as a timeless biblical landscape—strongly shaped by their beliefs established at home. These women's Holy Lands are bound together by a shared belief in the centrality of the life of Jesus in making the land holy, but they differ in how they interpret it and make it meaningful for themselves and their readers.

By constructing the Middle East as the Holy Land whose import lies in the distant past linked to the immediate world of the traveller, travellers are able to bypass entire peoples and their histories. Mary Pratt in her article "Scratches on the Face of the Country" describes Alexander von Humboldt who in his trek through South America was

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<sup>15</sup> Glenn Bowman, "Christian Ideology and the Image of a Holy Land: The Place of Jerusalem Pilgrimage in the Various Christianities," in *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage*, ed. John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 99.

more interested in the archeological ruins he found, the "traces" of South Americans, than he was in the people of South America, many of whom he was closely associated with as a part of his entourage. By noticing only the "traces" of South Americans, he was able to reduce "current American societies to vestiges of a glorious past."<sup>16</sup> This freed him from the implications his expedition had on the lives of South Americans (he was sent to South America to investigate that possibilities of mining), because all that mattered to him was South America's history. The travels of the three women I study may seem more innocent than Humboldt's, but it should not be forgotten that through their focus on the "traces" of the people of the Middle East (its biblical associations), these women contributed to images of the Middle East that justified European presence and encouraged the extensive influx of Europeans into the Middle East that changed dramatically the course of events in the Middle East. The construction and experience of the Middle East as the Holy Land provided license to travellers to overlook the fact that the Middle East had a history and a people who had not remained unaffected as the Christian world was constructing the Holy Land. These women did see the Middle East as more than merely the Holy Land (they did, after all, move about in the nineteenth century) but the religious dimension of the Middle East remains central to their experiences.

#### Methodology and the Study of Women's Travel Literature:

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<sup>16</sup> Mary Pratt, "Scratches on the Face of the Country; or What Mr. Barrow Saw in the Land of the Bushmen," in *"Race," Writing, and Difference*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), 149.

Paul Fussell has suggested that travel is about freedom; a travel narrative is "an implicit celebration of freedom."<sup>17</sup> There is a great deal of truth in that statement, for travel provides the opportunity to leave behind the restrictions of one's life, and experience something entirely new in a new context. But the experience of travel is more nuanced than that. Unrestrained freedom is not evident in most travel narratives and yet this idea is at the heart of much scholarship of women's travel literature.

In 1965 Dorothy Middleton wrote *Victorian Lady Travellers*, opening the field of the study of travel writings by women, which has burgeoned ever since. She based her analysis of women's travel literature on much the same premise as Fussell used to define travel, though giving it shape within a specifically female experience.

Travel was an individual gesture of the house-bound, man-dominated Victorian woman. Trained from birth to an almost impossible ideal of womanly submission and self-discipline, of obligation to class and devotion to religion, she had need of an emotional as well as an intellectual outlet. This she found, often late in life, in travel, and though her dignity never wavered, and she seems to have imposed her severe moral standards on the very rough company in which she often found herself, she was able to enjoy a freedom of action unthinkable at home.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Paul Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between the Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 203.

<sup>18</sup> Dorothy Middleton, *Victorian Lady Travellers* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), 4.

Such an analysis of a woman's experience in the nineteenth century has dominated much of the study of women's travel.<sup>19</sup> Indications that nineteenth century women found travel tremendously liberating are not difficult to find in their travel narratives. Isabel Bird could ride through the Colorado Rockies with Rocky-Mountain Jim, a sort of sophisticated desperado who was far removed from her Edinburgh home. Mary Kingsley could lead an expedition from Zambia to Sierra Leone. In fact, the emancipatory aspect of women's travel was well recognized even in the nineteenth century. By the end of the century, Lillias Davidson in her *Hints to Lady Travellers*, a handbook that gave advice to women so that they could travel without offending anyone's sensibilities, could express that view that freedom was the right of any woman who wished to travel.

Woman may abuse the privileges too long withheld from them, in the first bewilderment of feeling a new power in their hands. But none, perhaps, is less open to abuse, and surely none is more excellent in itself and its results, than the power which has become the right of every woman who has the means to achieve it—of becoming in her own unescorted and independent person, a lady traveller.<sup>20</sup>

Even though the liberatory effects of travel are well established, the restrictions of home cannot be as neatly contrasted with the freedom of travel as Middleton does. Travel also includes obligations, as the writing of a travel narrative evinces; a traveller's

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<sup>19</sup> So for example Dea Birkett, *Spinsters Abroad: Victorian Lady Explorers* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1989) discusses women who were bound to their homes and families, and were only freed to travel, once their duties as daughters were over.

<sup>20</sup> Lillias Campbell Davidson, *Hints to Lady Travellers At Home and Abroad* (London: Iliffe & Son, 1889), 255.



experience must be of wider import than merely what it has meant for her. Travel can also be an experience of fear and alienation. In other words, the traveller's relationship to home is more complex than a simple restrictive/freeing dichotomy; "home" accompanies the traveller. As the three travel narratives demonstrate, the woman's relationship to "home" is what provides meaning to the experience of travel.

Seeing women's travel as only liberatory also remains unsatisfactory in that it ignores entirely the woman's interface with the countries in which she travels. In such a single-dimensional understanding of travel, the woman's relationship with her own society (i.e. her release from it) dictates how her travel narrative will be read and the impact her travel has on the places she visits will be merely marginal. So for example Jane Robinson can unabashedly describe Ida Pfeiffer as "spinning twice round the world"<sup>21</sup> and her journey to the Middle East as one great adventure: "Nine months later she was back [home]. She had been swindled by sea captains, cheated by camel-drivers and exhausted by guides and companions—and could not have enjoyed herself more."<sup>22</sup> Admittedly not a sophisticated analysis of Ida Pfeiffer's travel, it does however highlight the difficulties that arise when women are described only as adventureresses escaping their confining societies, as Robinson characterizes Ida Pfeiffer. What Robinson overlooks without apology is that Ida Pfeiffer used the power that came along with her being European to domineer the ship's captain, and that she threatened the camel-driver

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<sup>21</sup> Jane Robinson, *Wayward Women: A Guide to Women Travellers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 2.

<sup>22</sup> Robinson, *Wayward*, 26.

with a whip because he was from Egypt's lower class. When focusing only on the liberatory nature of travel (which is an undeniable aspect of Ida Pfeiffer's travel), the darker side of travel can easily be overlooked.

Edward Said, in his book *Orientalism* discusses the interface between the West and the East in ways that illumine the reading of writings by people travelling to the Middle East. Two aspects of what he calls orientalism are particularly relevant to this discussion, the first being that the West assumes that the East exists for its benefit, and the second that the West understands the Middle East better than even people of the Middle East and can therefore give meaning to it. Said uses the case of Lord Balfour in the British parliament, explaining England's role in Egypt. Balfour can confidently state that the Egyptians are "a subject race, dominated by a race [the British] that knows them and what is good for them better than they could possibly know themselves. Their great moments were in the past; they are useful in the modern world only because the powerful and up-to-date empires have effectively brought them out of the wretchedness of their decline and turned them into rehabilitated residents of productive colonies." <sup>22</sup> Said's second point is that the East exists for the West. Egypt is there to be a colony to England and England will make out of it, the best colony possible.

The three travel narratives that I examine share this same sense of orientalism. Naturally, the women were not directly involved in the political realm, but they too assume that the Middle East is there to be used by them, and that the West is the agent

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<sup>22</sup> Said, 35.

that can bring positive change to the Middle East.

Said does not, however, make a distinction of gender. In fact, he writes almost exclusively about men. Yet in reading travel narratives written by women, there is a distinction that can be made. As has already been noted, women most often write from a position of some ambiguity in their own societies, for women travelling often experienced the disapproval of their societies for challenging expectations about women.

An emphasis in the study of women's travel writing has been to read it as having distinct characteristics from men's travel writing. Rarely stated explicitly, but certainly implied in the conclusions reached by scholars who hold such an assumption, is that women's writing is morally superior to men's. Catherine Stevenson is one such scholar. In *Victorian Women Travel Writers in Africa* she claims that

[m]en . . . write formal, distilled autobiographies in which the primary concern is an objective evaluation of the significance of the whole life (or journey). Women, in contrast, produce more private, fragmented, episodic autobiographies (often in the form of a diary or series of letters) which impose no overarching design on their lives or travel. Women tend to record, to surrender to experience; men to judge, to schematize experience.

She further claims that "[w]omen often cast their narratives as a series of letters home to a predominantly female audience interested in both the minutiae of everyday domestic life and the writer's psychological reactions to a new environment." <sup>24</sup> Implied

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<sup>24</sup> Catherine Barnes Stevenson, *Victorian Women Travel Writers in Africa* (Boston: (continued...))

in this categorization of women's writing, is that women are given to writing about personal and relational aspects of their travel as opposed to the distant and analytical style of men. To move from such an assumption about women's writing to the conclusion that they responded with empathy when they encountered colonial subjects being exploited, is almost natural. This allows some feminists to resolve the dilemma of the darker side of women's writing. Said's notion of orientalism can be labeled as patriarchal. So Stevenson characterizes British women who travelled to Africa as women who accepted "the notion of British superiority and sanction[ed] the presence of Britain in Africa." Nevertheless they

frequently voice[d] strong criticism of their country's treatment of specific situations or particular African tribes. Often, women travellers display a special sympathy for and understanding of peoples whose skin color distinguishes them, as women often find themselves distinguished, as the "other," the alien. Even in situations where Africans are the enemy, women travellers . . . seem reluctant to condemn or to cast racial slurs upon these adversaries.<sup>25</sup>

bell hooks [sic] outlines clearly what the implications are of an assumption such as Stevenson's that a universal female experience exists which overcomes cultural prejudices. While writing about racism, her comments are equally applicable to feminist scholarship on colonialism.

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(...continued)  
Twayne Publishers, 1982), 9-10.

<sup>25</sup> Stevenson, 11.

Contemporary feminist thinkers . . . suggest that differentiation of status between females and males globally is an indication that patriarchal domination of the planet is the root of the problem. . . . Ideologically, thinking in this direction enables Western women, especially privileged white women, to suggest that racism and class exploitation are merely the offspring of the parent system: patriarchy. Within [the] feminist movement in the West, this had led to the assumption that resisting patriarchal domination is a more legitimate feminist action than resisting racism and other forms of domination.<sup>26</sup>

Such assumptions too easily free women of their participation in "other forms of domination," in this case colonialism, and therefore, increasingly scholars of female travel literature have been unwilling to accept such a hierarchy of women's and men's writing. Not only is the corpus of travel literature rife with exceptions among both men and women, scholars have increasingly noticed that women who experience being the other in their own societies, rather than identifying with other marginalized people as Stevenson suggests, distance themselves from those marginalized in order to establish their "rightful" and "needed" place in their own societies. Antoinette Burton provides an example of this from the British feminist movement of the nineteenth century. Its commitment to empire gave shape to the movement and she concludes that

[d]espite . . . their genuine concern for the condition of Indian women . . . many middle-class British feminists viewed the women of the East not as equals but as

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<sup>26</sup> bell hooks, *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (Boston: South End Press, 1989), 19.

unfortunates in need of saving by their British feminist "sisters." By imagining the women of India as helpless colonial subjects, British feminists constructed "the Indian woman" as a foil against which to gauge their own progress.<sup>27</sup>

Reinforcing colonial relationships in which white women were superior to Indian women was essential to the maintenance of the British feminist movement, for it provided a way in which their own emancipation could be measured. If the Indian woman was subjugated, then the British woman must, by contrast, be liberated.

Yet there is more than merely acknowledging that Western women constructed themselves by using colonized people. These women were also responding to constructions of gender and constructions of the colonized. So for instance, Alison Blunt describes Mary Kingsley who travelled to Africa, as being unable to empathize with African women, because to "empathize with African women constructed as both racially and sexually inferior by imperial and patriarchal discourses would have undermined her own ability to share in imperial power and authority and thus her ability to travel and to legitimize her travels."<sup>28</sup>

In a similar way, Harriet Martineau, Ida Pfeiffer and Amy Fullerton were responding to patriarchal and colonial constructions both of gender and of the colonized.

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<sup>27</sup> Antoinette M. Burton, "The White Woman's Burden: British Feminists and 'the Indian Woman,' 1865-1915" in *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance*, ed. Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), 137.

<sup>28</sup> Alison Blunt, *Travel, Gender, and Imperialism: Mary Kingsley and West Africa* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1994), 106.

Often they appropriated these constructions for themselves, as Mary Kingsley did, for it was to their advantage to do so. Yet while they display characteristics described by Said, and participated in that sense, in the colonial endeavor, they were nevertheless attempting to establish a place for themselves in their societies that were dominated by patriarchal constructions of women that marginalized them.

Here I return to my earlier comments about the construction of the Other for the sake of the Self. In the travel narratives of Harriet Martineau, Ida Pfeiffer and Amy Fullerton, the self is created as it is contrasted to the people of the Middle East. As Harriet Martineau, Ida Pfeiffer and Amy Fullerton travelled through the Middle East and described their experiences, they were doing so as women who were intrinsically a part of their own cultures, establishing a place for themselves as women who were responding to culturally defined constructions of women and of religion, in a world in which their cultures were the colonizers and the cultures of the Middle East the colonized. They saw what they were able to see and what they needed to see, in order to find for themselves a place from which to speak.

I do not approach these travel narratives in a uniform manner. I wish to show the diversity of ways in which nineteenth century travellers to the Middle East apprehended the Middle East. This is not so much to say that these women are representative, as it is to say that it is not possible to describe *the female traveller to the Middle East*. The dynamics present in the lives of these women resulted in three very different travel

narratives.

In Chapters I and II I examine two parallel experiences that Harriet Martineau describes in *Eastern Life*: her visit to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and her visit to harems in Cairo and Damascus. In both instances her carefully controlled "objective" narrative is broken into as she responds with disgust and abhorrence to Eastern Christianity in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and to the ways of women in the harems. These two instances confront Harriet Martineau's ideas of what true religion is and what a true woman is. In Chapter II I also examine how, for a brief moment the lorgnette is snatched from the hands of Harriet Martineau, and her gaze is turned back on her. Chapters III and IV are about Ida Pfeiffer who found travel to be the liberating experience that it often is described as being. But she also found, that this produced a complicated, even schizophrenic relationship to her home. The Middle East became the means whereby Ida Pfeiffer could critique her own society and her experience in it as an upper class-turned-lower class woman, but it also made evident that her bond to her own society, particularly in its religious dimensions was extremely strong. In Chapters V and VI I discuss Amy Fullerton's pervasive religious interpretation of the Middle East. She focused on two aspects of the Middle East: its biblical associations, and the Protestant mission work being carried out. She found in the Middle East the necessary evidence to demonstrate that she was a woman who was strongly committed to Evangelical ideals of biblical truth, and equally strongly to Evangelical ideals of women.

And finally a word about the process of writing this thesis. If I examine the



writings of three nineteenth century women who travelled to the Middle East, and from their travel narratives extract clues as to the dynamics that were working in their lives, in other words, if their travel narratives say more about them than they do about the Middle East in the nineteenth century, then I must acknowledge that this thesis says as much about its author, as it says about nineteenth century women.

## **Chapter I**

### **From Unitarian to Atheist: The Challenge of Eastern Christianity**

On a lurid November evening in 1846, Harriet Martineau first caught sight of the African coast from the deck of the ship carrying her and her three companions to Alexandria where their eight month long journey through Egypt and the Levant began. In their journey they travelled up the Nile as far as the first Cataract, basking in the sun and examining the countless temples, tombs and statues of ancient Egypt. In a caravan of camels they travelled across the Sinai, suffering unbearable discomfort <sup>1</sup> and the doings of a treacherous guide and finally travelled through Palestine and Syria on horseback, stopping at every sacred biblical site. However, on that November evening on the eve of her trek, Harriet Martineau was struck, as she never again would be, by the "first phantom appearance" of Africa "amidst the chill and gathering dusk of evening, and with a vast expanse of sea heaving red between" herself and the coast. <sup>2</sup>

If her anticipated travel seemed to her an elusive phantom from the deck of the ship, solid land under her feet quickly changed that. *Eastern Life: Present and Past*, the travel narrative based on this journey is not about what eluded her, but about what she

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<sup>1</sup> At times Harriet Martineau walked the entire day as this was preferable to riding a camel.

<sup>2</sup> Harriet Martineau, *Eastern Life: Present and Past* (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1848), 17.

could firmly and concretely lay out before her readers. Riding through the desert from Petra to Hebron, she was inspired with the central theme of her book. "There can be but one perfect one" she states, and she is confident that she had found it.<sup>3</sup> Arrogance aside, such is the confidence that is evident in *Eastern Life* as Harriet Martineau describes not only her experiences as a traveller, but also elaborates and develops her "perfect" theme. The Middle East, as the birth place of religion, was also the scene of its steady development from polytheism to monotheism to the pure moral teachings of Jesus. From the ancient Egyptians whom she encountered in the Nile Valley, to Moses and the Hebrews whose wanderings she shared in the Sinai, to Jesus who grew up among the flowers and hills of Nazareth, religion had steadily progressed. The itinerary of her travels provided a convenient structure to the book; she began her journey in the land of the ancient Egyptians, where monotheism was first introduced, then travelled to the Sinai where Moses perfected and entrenched monotheism, next to Palestine where Jesus established a moral law, and finally to Syria, which she associated with Islam, which again emphasized monotheism.<sup>4</sup>

*Eastern Life* is, however, more than just a treatise on the religions of the Middle East. In addition, it is possible to read it as one woman's apologia of her personal theological and philosophical development from devout Christianity to atheism. Musing

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<sup>3</sup> Harriet Martineau, *Harriet Martineau's Autobiography*, 3rd edition, 2 vols. (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1877), II:279.

<sup>4</sup> This is, of course, a somewhat unnatural progression, as Islam cannot be easily associated with Syria, and not also with Palestine and Egypt.

on *Eastern Life* in her *Autobiography* approximately ten years after she travelled to the Middle East, Harriet Martineau melded both the progression of world religions as she observed them, and her own development.

The result of the whole [of my journey], when reconsidered in the quiet of my study, was that I obtained clearness as to the historical nature and moral value of all theology whatever. . . . It was evident to me, in a way which it could never have been if I had not wandered amidst the old monuments and scenes of the various faiths, that a passage through these latter faiths is as natural to man, and was as necessary in those former periods of human progress, as fetishism is to the infant nations and individuals.<sup>5</sup>

This movement through faiths for humankind was described by Harriet Martineau as a movement from the concept of a "pantheon of Gods", "then a trinity,—and then a single deity." At this point in her description, she moved beyond religions in the Middle East to her own religious development. The "conceptions of deity . . . become abstract and indefinite, till the indistinguishable line is reached which is supposed, and not seen to separate, the highest order of Christian philosopher from the philosophical atheist."<sup>6</sup> Her account of her journey through the Middle East left off with Christianity and Islam, but here in her *Autobiography* she connected her own migration through faith to complete

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<sup>5</sup> Martineau, *Autobiography*, II:279-280.

<sup>6</sup> Martineau, *Autobiography*, II:280.

the religious progression, for she was that philosophical atheist. *Eastern Life* established the grounding for her progression to atheism.

Harriet Martineau's theory of the progression of religion, and her own involved position in this progression is central in understanding how she viewed and described the people of the Middle East. Her personal migration out of faith resulted in her own passionate response to the people of the Middle East, particularly Eastern Christians, for in their expression of faith, they challenged her theory of religion at its core, and thereby called into question her own choices. The phantom she so resolutely submerged in *Eastern Life* haunted her when her view of Jesus was brought face to face with Christians who expressed their piety based on an all together different interpretation of Jesus.

Harriet Martineau was a prolific writer and she published her first article in 1821 in the Unitarian *Monthly Repository*. From there she went on to write a history of England, several travel narratives and a novel. She translated Comte's *Positive Philosophy* into English and in addition wrote numerous essays and articles on a wide range of topics such as the rights of the working class and women, the abolition of American slavery and even mesmerism.<sup>7</sup> She was a leading figure in Victorian society. As her biographer Vera Wheatley describes her, in her own time she was sometimes eulogized, more often satirized, but "she was, . . . so often, *there* [emphasis original]."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Harriet Martineau published more than one hundred books, numerous articles and wrote more than 1600 newspaper editorials. See Gayle Graham Yates, ed., *Harriet Martineau On Women* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1985), 3.

<sup>8</sup> Vera Wheatley, *The Life and Work of Harriet Martineau* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1957), 11.

Harriet Martineau was born in 1802 to Unitarian parents and her theological beliefs were given shape within the Unitarian tradition. Religion was always an important aspect of her self-identity. At the age of two or three she recalled being "intensely religious" and though the "religion was of a bad sort" she doubted whether she "could have got through without it,"<sup>9</sup> due to her unhappy childhood. A pivotal moment in her religious development took place at the age of eleven when she began to be aware of inconsistencies in Christian theology that would eventually result in her abandonment of Christianity. "[H]ow," she wondered, "if God foreknew everything, we could be blamed or rewarded for our conduct, which was thus absolutely settled for us beforehand."<sup>10</sup> She later saw this incident as a "foreshadow of [her] release"<sup>11</sup> from a Unitarianism that she came to see as utterly inconsistent. Unitarianism, she claimed, chose to retrain those parts of orthodox Christianity that suited it, and dispense with those that did not. So, for example, most Unitarians accepted heaven, but rejected hell. They "appropriate[d] all the Christian promises, without troubling themselves with the clearly-specified condition,—of faith in Christ as Redeemer."<sup>12</sup> This inconsistency, as she called it,<sup>13</sup> resulted in her eventual recognition of "the monstrous superstition in its

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<sup>9</sup> Martineau, *Autobiography*, I:12.

<sup>10</sup> Martineau, *Autobiography*, I:44.

<sup>11</sup> Martineau, *Autobiography*, I:43.

<sup>12</sup> Martineau, *Autobiography*, I:39-40.

<sup>13</sup> R. K. Webb provides a more sympathetic view of the Unitarian church. What  
(continued...)

[Unitarianism] true character" and she found herself "with the last link of [her] chain snapped,—a free rover on the broad, bright breezy common of the universe."<sup>14</sup>

Finding herself severed from Unitarianism was the outcome of many years of religious development. In 1831, more than ten years prior to her journey to the Middle East, she won first prize for three articles she submitted to the Central Unitarian Association, one each on Unitarianism for Muslims, Jews and Catholics. Even while she was actively participating in Unitarians events such as this contest, she states in her *Autobiography* that at this time she had "already ceased to be an Unitarian in the technical sense. . . . [T]he time was approaching when, if I called myself so at all, it was only in the free-thinking sense."<sup>15</sup> She then emphatically asserted that "[my] severance from their faith [Unitarianism] was complete and necessarily final when I wrote 'Eastern Life.'"<sup>16</sup> Her travel to the Middle East, and the clarity it provided for her played a very important role in her development toward atheism. As her biographer Valerie Pichanick says about

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Harriet Martineau came to consider as the inconsistencies of Unitarianism was its attempt to embrace science (such as the newly developing biblical criticism and Darwinism) and not abandon religion. See R. K. Webb, "The Faith of Nineteenth Century Unitarians," in *Victorian Faith in Crisis: Essays on Continuity and Change in Nineteenth-Century Religious Belief*, eds. Richard J. Helmstadter and Bernard Lightman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 126-149.

<sup>14</sup> Martineau, *Autobiography*, I:116.

<sup>15</sup> Martineau, *Autobiography*, I:158.

<sup>16</sup> Martineau, *Autobiography*, I:159.

her Middle East journey, in travelling to the East Harriet Martineau "crossed the threshold of unbelief."<sup>17</sup>

Her journey to the Middle East was a pivotal point in her movement from faith to atheism, and not without consequences. Yet *Eastern Life* does not give expression to the anxiety this movement caused her. While she claimed never to have doubted the rightness of her development, her ideas resulted in alienation from her family (particularly painful was her separation from her brother James who had always been very close to her) and many friends. She also knew that *Eastern Life* as a public statement of her development, would be controversial to the reading public. In 1847 while writing *Eastern Life*, she corresponded with H. G. Atkinson, a close friend who shared her views, expressing this alienation.

I am pretty confident that I am right in seeing the progression of ideas through thousands of years. . . . But I do not know of any one who has regarded the matter thus: and it is an awful thing to stand alone in. . . . But I do feel sadly lonely, for this reason,—that I could not, if I tried, communicate to any one the *feeling* that I have that the theological belief of almost every body in the civilised world is baseless. The very statement between you and me looks startling in its presumption. And if I could, I dare not, *till I have more assurance than I have*

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<sup>17</sup> Valerie Kossew Pichanick, *Harriet Martineau: The Woman and Her Work, 1802-76* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1980), 175.



*now that my faith is enough for my own self-government and support [emphasis mine].*<sup>18</sup>

While her public display remained confident, she did not have such confidence personally. Her fears of being a solitary voice were confirmed. Several magazines were unflatteringly critical in their reviews of *Eastern Life*.<sup>19</sup> The publisher who had initially agreed to publish *Eastern Life* returned it on the basis that it was "a work of infidel tendency, having the obvious aim of deprecating the authority and invalidating the veracity of the Bible."<sup>20</sup> Particularly offensive were her description of Christianity as part of a progression, rather than as the only valid religion, her explicit statements challenging Jesus' divinity, and her repeated claims that the Bible was an historical book only.

*Eastern Life* is a confident and authoritative expression of Harriet Martineau's opinions. Yet there are fissures in *Eastern Life* through which her anxiety is evident most notably that extent to which Harriet Martineau made efforts to establish her authority. *Eastern Life* makes clear that the truth of the development of religion can only be fully understood from the perspective of having travelled in the Middle East, which she had done, but her readers obviously had not. Nevertheless, *Eastern Life* is thoroughly erudite. In addition to such classical authors as Herodotus, Harriet Martineau makes extensive use of the twelfth century Arabian physician Abdallatif who travelled to Egypt.

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<sup>18</sup> From a November 7, 1847 letter to H.G. Atkinson, in Martineau, *Autobiography*, II:283.

<sup>19</sup> Pichanick, 181-182 lists *Fraser's Magazine* and *British Quarterly Review*.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Wheatley, 264.

Contemporary travellers such as Sir G. Wilkinson, John Buckhardt, Edward Robinson, and Edward Lane are all a part of her catalogue of research.<sup>21</sup> Yet in the end she used her experience of having travelled—of having *been there*—to establish her authority. No amount of research (which she had done extensively) could equal the knowledge gained from having been in the Middle East.

Books of Biblical scholarship,—those which are of free and enlightened and earnest minds,—are a great blessing at home;—the greatest, except the Book itself: and, moreover, they are an indispensable preparative for the benefits of travel: but, as instructors, how low they sink while one is contemplating an Egyptian tomb, or looking abroad from the heights of Horeb! The monumental volumes of Egypt teach in a day what can never be learned in libraries at home: and in the Desert, "Truth springs out of the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven" which overhangs Sinai.<sup>22</sup>

On Mt. Sinai she had "little thought ever to have seen so much of Moses"<sup>23</sup> as she did that day, by being where he had been, and seeing what he had seen. In fact, she could understand Moses with more clarity than if she had been "a cotemporary [sic] disciple of Moses," she claimed. At the Sea of Galilee, Jesus' words were completely

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<sup>21</sup> In total she lists eight classical sources. See Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 89-90. These travellers' works are: Wilkinson's *Modern Egypt and Thebes*; Buckhardt's *Journey Through Arabia Petraea*; Edward Robinson's *Biblical Researches*; Lane's *Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*.

<sup>22</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 389.

<sup>23</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 319.

comprehensible to her because she was where Jesus had been. "When one stands where I stood this day, above the lake, and among the wild flowers . . . one feels a more intense relief,—a more cheerful and animated love for those effectual discourses [Gospels], *than can ever be felt at home* [emphasis mine]." <sup>24</sup> By overwhelming book learning with actual experience, Harriet Martineau drew attention to her unique ability to interpret ancient religions. But the singularity of her authority rested on the itinerary she followed. The words of Jesus were comprehensible to her in a way they could be to few people, because she had first visited Egypt and Sinai. "To my apprehension, on the spot, and with the records of his life in my hand, and the recollections of Egypt and of Sinai fresh in my mind, nothing could be simpler than his recorded words," <sup>25</sup> she said about her experience in Galilee. By stressing the itinerary itself as an important learning device, she established her authority. Progressive knowledge was built on progressive experience. Not only has she experienced Moses and Jesus first hand, she has also experienced the *progression of religion*. This could not be surpassed in terms of gaining understanding. "[T]hese lights accumulated as we went; and we found what it was to carry our Egyptian

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<sup>24</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 471.

<sup>25</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 471. So Maria Frawley, *A Wider Range: Travel Writing by Women in Victorian England* (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1994), 142 suggests that Harriet Martineau claimed that "her experience was identical to native experience" and that the "scenery necessarily evokes in her the same ideas and emotions it once evoked in the ancient Egyptians."

associations into the Desert; and thence, enriched again by the fruits of the Wandering, into Palestine."<sup>26</sup>

Going directly from England to Palestine did not allow for experiencing the progression of religion. The traveller would not understand Jesus in the same way if the ancient Egyptians and Moses were not taken into account. In this she made her most pointed attack on her would-be accusers, anticipating the controversy her ideas of Jesus and biblical inspiration would generate.

If I could convey any idea of the advantage . . . of studying, first Egypt, and the Sinai peninsula, instead of going straight from the theological atmosphere of home into the sacred places of Palestine, I cannot but think that much irreverent dogmatism, and much idolatrous superstition would be recognized for what they are.<sup>27</sup>

By "irreverent dogmatism" she meant belief in the inspiration of the Bible, and by "idolatrous superstition" she was referring to the belief of the divinity of Jesus.

Harriet Martineau's attempt to establish authority in her book gives evidence of the anxiety she felt about the reception of her views. She knew she was espousing an unpopular interpretation of Christianity, even an interpretation that would threaten many of her readers. By emphasizing that her journey gave her a unique advantage in

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<sup>26</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 389.

<sup>27</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 388.

understanding religion, she could claim to be privy to a body of knowledge her readers were not, and in that way undermine their criticism of her ideas.

Harriet Martineau's perfect idea as to the contents of *Eastern Life* consisted of a "genealogy . . . of the old faiths,—the Egyptian, the Hebrew, the Christian and the Mohammedan"<sup>28</sup> as she told her travelling companion in the Negev. She traced this genealogy through *Eastern Life* using several key themes or ideas that she saw developing in these religions. Harriet Martineau was concerned with the *ideas* of religion. Ideas were the essence of religion, and forms, rituals and liturgies detracted from those ideas. A recurring pattern in religion, as she saw it, was that followers of great leaders corrupted and polluted the teachings of their leaders by introducing form into their religions.

In addition to monotheism, and its inverse, idolatry, Harriet Martineau was taken up with the idea of moral government, a religion that functioned because people loved, respected and tolerated each other, rather than obeyed rules and laws and submitted to a hierarchy of God and government. The Egyptian priesthood, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad were the bearers of truth, though their followers rarely, if ever, understood and lived up to their ideals.

Travelling up the Nile, Harriet Martineau explored the religion of ancient Egypt. As she examined every minute detail of the temples and tombs she visited, she acquired great respect for the ideas that lay at the heart of this religion. Amidst all the grotesque

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<sup>28</sup> Martineau, *Autobiography*, II:279.

aspects of ancient Egyptian religion (such as polytheism and mummifying cats) the beginnings of pure religion were sprouting. These became the seeds of the great monotheistic tradition. Moses, according to Harriet Martineau, took the best out of Egypt, i.e. monotheism (Moses had studied at the feet of ancient Egyptian priests according to Harriet Martineau), and established it. Monotheism, according to Harriet Martineau, had not been a trifling aspect of ancient Egyptian religion—it was “the leading point of belief of the Egyptians, from the earliest times known to us; the belief that there was One Supreme,—or, as they said,—one only God.”<sup>29</sup> Given the obvious polytheistic nature of ancient Egyptian religion (as she herself saw in the temples), Harriet Martineau was obligated to explain how such a religion could be the seed of such a rigorously monotheistic religion as Judaism. The truth lay in the leadership, not in the common practice of that religion. The priests were, without fail, monotheistic. They believed in one supreme being and in a moral government. However, they were equally aware that such concepts would be incomprehensible to the Egyptians of their day, and so they accommodated their religious teaching. “They [priests] held among themselves the doctrines of the unity of God, and of a divine moral government, and lowered their doctrine to meet the comprehension of the people, by deifying the attributes of God, and making local rulers of them.”<sup>30</sup> However, the Egyptian priesthood came to consider this knowledge as the exclusive right of their priesthood—an initiation secret. Moses, in

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<sup>29</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 118.

<sup>30</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 171.

contrast, saw that Egyptian religion was flawed because it had denigrated into unbridled idolatry. He knew that he had to remove the Hebrews from this context if he was to establish monotheism. But more significantly for Harriet Martineau's scheme, Moses

perceive[d] a mighty truth, which appears to have been known to no man before him;—a truth so holy and so vast that even yet mankind seem scarcely able to fully apprehend it;—the truth that all Ideas are the common heritage of all men, and that none are too precious to be communicated to every human mind.<sup>31</sup>

In this regard far superior to his Egyptian tutors, Moses was able to insist on monotheism, "to bring his brethren face to face with Jehovah as people and king,"<sup>32</sup> a belief from which the Egyptian priesthood had shielded Egyptians. But what Moses failed to accomplish was the establishment of a moral government. Just as the ancient Egyptians had had to compromise, so Moses had to institute a religion that was bound by rituals, ceremonies and rules rather than one based on the greatest moral good of humankind because the Hebrews were not prepared for a moral law.

Jesus was left to accomplish the ideals that Moses had had to surrender. He continued the tradition of monotheism,<sup>33</sup> and through his astoundingly simple message, opened up the possibility of moral good prevailing in human interaction. He was able to

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<sup>31</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 288.

<sup>32</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 289.

<sup>33</sup> As a Unitarian, Harriet Martineau did not consider Jesus divine and attributes the Christian doctrine of the trinity to the heresy of Gnosticism.

extract everything good from the religions that had preceded him and let fall away everything that was harmful.

Here [teaching in the temple] it was that he found, brought in by the four winds, and intermingling like the fumes of the incense and the smoke of the sacrifice, all that the minds of distant nations had to offer before the sanctuary of the true God; the wisdom of the Egyptians, the science of the Assyrians, the philosophy of the Greeks, and the now strict monotheism of the Hebrews. Here it was that he, by his god-like nature, gathered into himself and assimilated all that was true, deep, noble, and endearing in this world-wide range of thought, and gave it forth again, in such a music of Glad Tidings, ringing clear under that temple roof, as that every heart felt,—"never man spake like this man!"<sup>34</sup>

Here Harriet Martineau deviates somewhat from her genealogy. Now Jesus is no longer only the culmination of ancient Egyptian religion's development into Judaism, he has drawn the best from the entire Western tradition in order to make his teachings sublime. Jesus was a teacher who replaced all the ritual and ceremony that had existed in religion up to that point with true moral good, with the greatest *ideas* possible: monotheism and moral government.

Without a doubt Christianity (as expressed by Jesus) was the culmination of Harriet Martineau's progression of religion.

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<sup>34</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 403.



[H]erein lies the inestimable superiority of Christianity;—of the Christianity of Jesus himself. The whole purpose and scope of his teaching were to imbue men with the spirit of faith and morals; to detach them from forms and perceptive guidance, and introduce them to the prerogative of their own reason, conscience, faith and affections. . . . Christianity, therefore, gives the light, instead of offering a hand to guide men through the dark<sup>35</sup>

as other religions do. Naturally, Harriet Martineau describes Jesus as the greatest moral teacher, without reference to his divinity, because her religious belief was formulated in a Unitarian context. However, it also became crucial that his teachings, his *ideas*, were the purest, loftiest of all, because the genealogy of theology could be extended to "Christian philosopher" and then to "philosophical atheist" only from his teachings, not from his divinity and certainly not from the rituals and liturgies developed in Christianity. Thereby her own position of philosophical atheism could be fully justified. Jesus, as she understood him, was the crux of her argument.

But what of Islam? Chronologically and geographically (at least in her scheme), Muhammad should have superseded Jesus, but he did not. Islam, in her opinion, was only an "offset" and a "deviation" of Christianity.<sup>36</sup> Islam remained a religion based on law, on precepts, and did not speak to the moral good of humanity and was, therefore limited

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<sup>35</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 498-490.

<sup>36</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 487-488.

in it effect. Its primary significance was that it provided a monotheistic correction to Christianity's aberration of Trinitarianism.

Harriet Martineau would have preferred to situate her philosophy of the development of religion firmly in the ancient past, except as it pertained to her atheism. However, she was brought face to face with modern manifestations of those ancient religions, and she could not ignore them. Because her interpretation of Jesus was at the crux of her argument, she was particularly aware of modern Christians as she observed them in Palestine. Harriet Martineau portrayed herself as extremely tolerant of people who differed from her. Her opinion of Eastern Christianity should be understood in contrast to this overt attempt to present herself as tolerant beyond most travellers, for she was anything but tolerant in her judgment of Eastern Christians.

Her tolerance is a theme that runs through other of her writings, and is present not only in *Eastern Life*. It is characteristic of Harriet Martineau to give people the benefit of the doubt, to try to understand the motivation behind an action, no matter how offensive it was to her. In 1834 she travelled to the United States with what she considered an objective mind: "I went with a mind, I believe, as nearly as possible unprejudiced about America. . . . As to knowledge of them [Americans], my mind was nearly a blank: as to opinion of their state, I did not carry the germ of one." <sup>37</sup> This is evident in her strong opposition to slavery yet her attempt to understand southern slave owners.

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<sup>37</sup> Harriet Martineau, *Society in America*, 3 vols. (London: Saunders and Otley, 1837), I:x.

As she was writing *Society in America* she was also writing *How To Observe Morals and Manners* in which she outlined, theoretically, how a traveller should observe another culture. After outlining all the various parts of a society that a visitor should use to glean knowledge from, she concluded that the "result of the whole of what he [the traveller] hears will probably be to the traveler of the same kind with that which the journey of life yields to the wisest of its pilgrims. As he proceeds, he will learn to condemn less, and to admire, not less, but differently."<sup>38</sup>

Her tolerance was not merely theory; she did try to keep her prejudices from causing her to pass judgment, and most often she succeeded. This is how she characterizes herself in *Eastern Life*. "If I had been on the banks of some South African river, seeing a poor naked savage at his fetish worship, I must have tried to learn what idea, however low, was at the bottom of this observance."<sup>39</sup> In *Eastern Life*, she made a conscious effort to demonstrate tolerance where tolerance was not necessarily expected. This is evident in her attitude to their Egyptian boat crew on the Nile.

We do not agree with travelers who declare it necessary to treat these people with coldness and severity,—to repel and beat them. We treated them as

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<sup>38</sup> Harriet Martineau, *How To Observe Morals and Manners* (London: Charles Knight & Co., 1838), 228.

<sup>39</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 215.

children; and this answered perfectly well. . . . I do not remember that any one of them was ever punished on our account: certainly never by our desire.<sup>40</sup>

While her attitude was certainly paternalistic, she did want to communicate that her group treated Egyptians in an "enlightened" fashion, as other travellers did not. While watching returning Meccan pilgrims parade through Cairo, she was spit at by an Egyptian. However, she excused this on the basis that she was part of a "very conspicuous group" of Europeans and she "really did not wonder at it; and could not resent it, putting [herself] in the place, for the moment, of a devout Mohammedan."<sup>41</sup> At Hebron, at the tomb of the Patriarchs, which was controlled by Muslims who allowed no Christian or Jew into the mosque over the tombs, she experienced momentary frustration towards this illiberal attitude, and found herself favoring Christianity over Islam, but immediately corrected herself. "I was presently ashamed of the absurd and illiberal emotions; and, as I looked upon the minaret, felt that the Mohammedans had as much right to build over scared places as the Empress Helena."<sup>42</sup> In comparison to most other travellers, this reaction to being excluded from the Hebron mosque was startlingly tolerant. Many wished for a renewed crusade to liberate Palestine from Muslim control when they were denied access to the tombs.

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<sup>40</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 40-41.

<sup>41</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 254.

<sup>42</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 380. Helena, the mother of Constantine, was responsible for building churches over the tomb of Jesus, his birth place and the spot of the annunciation in Nazareth.

Any notion of tolerance and understanding evaporated entirely in her encounter with Eastern Christianity. She was simply unable to take her own advice. She was venomous in her judgment of all aspects of Eastern Christianity that she observed and even of religious expression that she did not observe, but only heard about. Just as Jesus had incorporated all the best of traditions prior to him, so the Eastern Church had incorporated the worst of these same traditions.

Here we have, in these Christian churches, the wrathful "jealous God" of the old Hebrews, together with the propitiating Osiris, the malignant Typho . . . and the incarnations of the Egyptians . . . all mingled together and profanely named after him who came to teach, not "cunningly devised fables," but that men should love their Father in Heaven with all their hearts and minds, and their neighbor as themselves.<sup>43</sup>

Eastern Christianity was the complete antithesis of Jesus as Harriet Martineau envisioned him.

She reserved her harshest judgment for the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Jerusalem was a "heathen metropolis"<sup>44</sup> and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was an "idolatrous temple"<sup>45</sup> within it, which she compared unfavorably to Jezebel's shrines of Astarte.

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<sup>43</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 412-413.

<sup>44</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 432.

<sup>45</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 431.

She resorted to sarcasm to portray her disgust and very deliberately made a mockery of the religious experience of Eastern Christians in the Church. "To think of Christ and Christianity in the midst of such a church is like having a reverie of sunrise from a mountain-top when one is looking at a puppet-show." <sup>46</sup> She was given a guided tour of the Church, and shown all the various sacred sites from the "pretended sepulchre" of Jesus to the "sockets of the three crosses" and beside these, the "fissure cased with marble" in which Adam's head was found. However, when her group was shown the exact place where the soldier who struck Jesus on the cross came to repent, their entire group broke into laughter, and in a condescending fashion she stated, "the device was so exquisitely innocent!" <sup>47</sup> In a similar fashion she condescendingly described the Greek Orthodox Patriarch, one of the most significant Christian dignitary in the Levant, as a man "in a state of high delight, which he expressed with a *very innocent glee* [emphasis mine], at the reception he had met with in his recent progress round his diocese." <sup>48</sup>

During Holy Week in Jerusalem, when her companions attended a foot washing service in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, she preferred to gaze out over the Mount of Olives from her room, rather than "witness mummeries done in the name of Christianity,

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<sup>46</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 430.

<sup>47</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 430-431.

<sup>48</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 499.

compared with which the lowest Fetishism on the banks of an African river would have been inoffensive."<sup>49</sup>

She was determined to see everything that was shown to her no matter how it repulsed her, "except the mummeries of Easter Week in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. From that exhibition I did shrink."<sup>50</sup> She was referring specifically to the ceremony of the Greek fire<sup>51</sup> which attracted Protestant visitors regularly and equally regularly repelled them. No Protestant visitor attempted to understand this ceremony, but few were so hostile towards it.<sup>52</sup> Harriet Martineau did not witness this ceremony, but even so she did not reserve judgment. Hearing about it confirmed everything she felt about Eastern Christianity. Again, her language is unusually strong.

According to the account the gentlemen brought home, the crowd was very dense. . . . The poor creatures were perfectly frantic, not only shouting and gesticulating, but leaping on one another's shoulders. One of my friends, who

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<sup>49</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 411.

<sup>50</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 385.

<sup>51</sup> A ceremony taking place on Saturday of Holy Week in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, in which fire, believed to be sent directly from heaven was removed from a chamber in the Church and passed to pilgrims waiting in the Church.

<sup>52</sup> Ruth Hummel and Thomas Hummel, *Patterns of the Sacred: English Protestant and Russian Orthodox Pilgrims of the Nineteenth Century* (London: Scorpion Cavendish, 1995), 21 cite one Rev. W. K. Tweedie who travelled to the Holy Land in 1873 describing the Church of the Holy Sepulchre as the seat of Satan.

never uses strong language, told me "it was like a holiday in *hell*" [emphasis mine]. Such is Christianity at Jerusalem!<sup>53</sup>

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre and Eastern Christianity were belittled by Harriet Martineau—puppetry, amusing entertainment, a childish patriarch, even hellish in nature—and she was unable to appreciate what she observed. Here there was no attempt to understand what motivated Christians in their devotion. The only way Harriet Martineau could view such a display of religious piety was to "put aside entirely the Christianity with which one is familiar."<sup>54</sup> In her description of Eastern Christianity she insisted that there was no relation between her view of Christianity and Jesus, and what she observed in Jerusalem. She dared not allow any legitimacy to a religion that was based on a much different view of Jesus, than her ideas were.

This very negative assessment of Eastern Christianity is in sharp contrast to her description of Islam as she observed it in her travels. Ironically, Islam as she observed it, most closely matched her ideal of Christianity and it provided a contrast to Eastern Christians. Her portrayal of Islam served as a corrective to the corruption of Christianity in Palestine. Islam presented a religion that was ritual-free and entirely monotheistic, neither of which Eastern Christianity was in the opinion of Harriet Martineau. When comparing mosques with the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Damascus she equated the simplicity of the mosque with true Christianity, and the ornateness of the church with

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<sup>53</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 411.

<sup>54</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 430.



idolatry. "How much more Christian do the mosques look in their simplicity, than these idolatrous Greek churches with their profane mythological pictures, and their multitudinous rites and observations!"<sup>55</sup> She praised a mosque she visited in Cairo because there the "houseless poor" found a "refuge." In contrast to the "heathen" Church of the Holy Sepulchre in which she had to put aside her own faith, this mosque was "sacred to all who have hearts, whether they be heathens, Mohammedans or Christians" because of the "solace and peace which are to be found there."<sup>56</sup> In fact, this mosque surpassed the best of churches in which Christians claimed that the church was no respecter of persons. "We are accustomed to say that there is no respect of persons, and that all men are equal, within the walls of our churches: but I never felt this so strongly in any Christian place of worship as in this Mohammedan one, with its air of freedom, peace, and welcome to all the faithful."<sup>57</sup> And even though Islam would not last because of its inherent flaw, it had, on every count, a better grasp of the true nature of religion than Eastern Christianity.

He [a Muslim] may well think it a great advancement upon the worship of the Greek church for men to worship One God; a God really and truly One, without subterfuge, or those metaphysical multiplications which he knows to have constituted the idolatry of the East. He may well think it a great advantage upon

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<sup>55</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 499.

<sup>56</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 246.

<sup>57</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 246-247.

the worship of the Greek church to have no priesthood intruding between man<sup>58</sup> and his Maker. . . . With all this strength on the side of Mohammedanism, in contrast with the abased condition of Christianity in the East, it can be no wonder that the more modern faith prevails immeasurably in proportion to the more ancient and vilely-corrupted belief.<sup>59</sup>

Indeed, "we have only to rejoice that a religion so good, in comparison with the rest,<sup>60</sup> as that of Mohammed, prevails over the others to the extent that it does." <sup>61</sup>

Her revulsion at the piety of Eastern Christianity was a deeply personal experience and caused her great distress. While she did not appreciate "idolatry" anywhere (she had at an earlier time visited Rome and been distressed there too) she was not prepared for her reaction in Palestine. "I could have had no idea how much more painful the spectacle is in Palestine,"<sup>62</sup> she stated, the primary reason being that it conflicted with her idea of Jesus. The simplicity of Jesus' teaching had been made "most striking on the spot where he lived and taught" and "the pure monotheism of his own ideas are evident as the daylight" to those who had been in Sinai. <sup>63</sup> Harriet Martineau's literal progression

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<sup>58</sup> The text here reads "God" which must certainly be an error.

<sup>59</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 497-498.

<sup>60</sup> Here she is referring to Eastern Christians, Druze, Jews and the ancient religion of Baalbek.

<sup>61</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 488.

<sup>62</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 412.

<sup>63</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 412.

through religion had made Eastern Christianity's "corruption" of the simple teaching of Jesus unbearable. The great weight she placed on Jesus in terms of her own justification of atheism had a direct bearing on how unrelenting she was on Eastern Christianity. Most Protestant travellers were troubled by the layers of traditions surrounding Jesus' life in Palestine, and preferred those places away from cities and churches that were free of any outward sign of tradition, such as countryside. The Sea of Galilee, the hills of Nazareth and the fields of Bethlehem were scenes of spiritual significance. Protestants simply did not know what to make of the church tradition that had developed around the Christian holy sites. They wanted to get away from it; they were negative towards it, but few were as scathing in their criticism as Harriet Martineau. Few had need to be so critical. Few had invested so much as Harriet Martineau invested in her particular understanding of Jesus and Christianity. Few had sacrificed family and friends, even public reputation in their interpretation of Jesus. If, for her, true Christianity lay in the simple teachings of Jesus and any development beyond that had adulterated Christianity, it was not surprising that she found Eastern Christianity utterly revolting. It challenged everything she has claimed about religion, and furthermore, it challenged her own personal path through religion, for Eastern Christianity, with its rich sensory expression was everything her simple moralistic teacher from the Sea of Galilee was not. As she observed Eastern Christianity she saw no interest in "ideas", but only forms, rituals, and liturgy. If Eastern Christianity's expression of piety was legitimate, her genealogy from Jesus to atheism would have no basis, and thus her own migration would be baseless. The stakes were too

high for Harriet Martineau to grant any legitimacy to such an extremely different view of Jesus.

Harriet Martineau's view and description of the people she met in the Middle East were largely determined by her religious ideas and her own commitment to them. Muslims were highly regarded, because they embodied aspects of true religion that Eastern Christianity had, according to Harriet Martineau, abandoned. Eastern Christians received her condemnation in a way that no other group did, because they challenged what she perceived to be true religion. Her condemnation of Eastern Christianity was particularly harsh, because in its expression of religious piety, it challenged the central tenant of her theory, that Jesus, as the truest and purest embodiment of religious ideals, was a simple teacher of moral goodness from which could develop an atheistic philosophy that valued goodness above all else. As someone who was on the threshold of embracing such atheism, in the face of great personal loss and public criticism, the simplicity and ritual-free worship of Muslims seemed infinitely more in the spirit of Jesus, as she had created him, than Eastern Christianity, with its patriarchs, icons, gild and passion-filled ceremonies.

## Chapter II

### Calling Colonialism Into Question: Exchanging Glances in the Harem

For many women travelling to the Middle East in the nineteenth century a visit to a harem was part of the established tourist itinerary. Europeans had long been drawn to that which alluded them, and when, in the nineteenth century women began travelling to the Middle East in greater numbers, they sought out the opportunity to see first hand what had only been accessible to them through secondhand male accounts. In 1763, with the posthumous publication of the *Letters* of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, England was provided with its first eyewitness account of a harem by a Western traveller.<sup>1</sup> The nineteenth century produced many such accounts by women travellers, and these accounts remained immensely popular among the reading public.<sup>2</sup> Mary Eliza Rogers, who published her account of Middle Eastern life in 1862, was aware of this demand when she assured her readers that she "gleaned many facts concerning them [Levantine women],

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<sup>1</sup> In 1717 Lady Mary Wortley Montagu accompanied her husband to Istanbul where he was ambassador for the British government. See Robinson, *Wayward*, 32-34 for a brief biography of Lady Montagu.

<sup>2</sup> Such as Emmeline Lott, *The English Governess in Egypt, Harem Life in Egypt and Constantinople* (London: R. Bentley, 1866); Mary Eliza Rogers, *Domestic Life in Palestine* (London: Kegan Paul, 1989). First published as Mary Eliza Rogers, *Domestic Life in Palestine* (London: Bell & Daldy, 1862); Isabel Burton, *Inner Life of Syria, Palestine, and the Holy Land: From My Journal*, 2 vols. (London: Henry S. King & Co., 1875); Sophia Lane Poole, *The Englishwoman in Egypt: Letters From Cairo* (London: Chas. Knight, 1844).

which have never hitherto been published,"<sup>3</sup> including accounts of several harems she visits. Isabel Burton wrote that "every one of my friends has begged of me to describe the inner life of the harim,"<sup>4</sup> and while she provided an extensive description of a harem, she was unwilling to describe those aspects that her readers were most eager to read. Her book was to be such that it "may appear on every table *sans peur et sans reproche*."<sup>5</sup> She was well aware that part of the attraction of harem accounts grew out of the voyeuristic nature of viewing what was forbidden. She, however, wanted to provide a sanitized version of harem life. Billie Melman, writing of nineteenth century harem accounts, has shown that most Western women "understate[d], or prefer[ed] to ignore, altogether, the obvious political and sexual aspects of seclusion and polygamy."<sup>6</sup> They preferred instead, to describe women in the harem as "tending to children, to patching, embroidering and sewing;"<sup>7</sup> in short, they described the harem as a European "middle class abode."<sup>8</sup> Harriet Martineau, unlike many of her co-travellers, such as Mary Eliza Rogers and Isabel Burton, ignored those domestic aspects of harem life, and chose instead to use her

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<sup>3</sup> Rogers, vii.

<sup>4</sup> Burton, *Inner Life*, I:3.

<sup>5</sup> Burton, *Inner Life*, I:4.

<sup>6</sup> Billie Melman, *Women's Orients: English Women and the Middle East, 1718-1918: Sexuality, Religion and Work* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 162.

<sup>7</sup> Melman, 161.

<sup>8</sup> Melman, 162.

account as a polemic against the "two hellish practices [of] slavery and polygamy." <sup>9</sup> Her account is unparalleled in its condemnation and has been described as "the most scathing attack, by a Victorian, on Middle East polygamy and segregation." <sup>10</sup> It stands out in her travel narrative, along with her attack on Eastern Christianity.

Twentieth century feminists have scrutinized harem literature for what it can reveal about an alternate female perspective, in contradistinction to the tradition of travel accounts by men who were voyeuristically describing what they desired to see, but could not. Western women, in contrast, could visit harems, and therefore, have been seen as writing with a different focus. Scholars such as Melman work with the assumption that a universal female perspective exists that binds women together even across cultures and that can be contrasted to the male perspective. In the context of harem literature, Western women, according to Melman, rose above cultural differences to challenge the voyeuristic male description of Eastern women that existed in travel literature up to this point. Victorian women "normalised and humanised" the harem by de-eroticizing it and participating in the "ordinary activities of Muslim women and in rituals observed in harems."<sup>11</sup> Melman is assuming that for these Victorian women, their identity as women proved to be more important to them than their identity as Western women. This is

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<sup>9</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 265.

<sup>10</sup> Melman, 137.

<sup>11</sup> Melman, 62.

problematic, for it overlooks how women's identity as women was tied into their cultural identity and could not be separated from it.

Mervat Hatem in her article "Through Each Other's Eyes" is less willing to acknowledge such "cross-cultural women's solidarity,"<sup>12</sup> for she realizes how intrinsically women are a part of their own cultures. However, she too yearns for the existence of such a universal feminine solidarity. Examining both harem literature by Western women and writings by Middle Eastern women about Western women living in Egypt, she concludes that they viewed each other as "alien" in order to maintain their precarious positions in their own societies. Western women viewed Egyptian women as oppressed and restricted in their movements in order to downplay their own subordination as women; Eastern women viewed European women living in Egypt as a threat to the nationalistic, anti-colonial effort they were a part of. Thus both Egyptian and European women were "not able to relate to each other's experiences, learn from them and . . . integrate them into an understanding of the dilemmas that were also their own."<sup>13</sup> Their differences proved to be "an obstacle to the thorough critique of the . . . patriarchal rules" that bound them both.<sup>14</sup> Hatem moves the discussion further along by drawing attention to the wide gulf between Eastern and Western women, acknowledging that differences between women

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<sup>12</sup> Indira Ghose, *Women Travellers in Colonial India: The Power of the Female Gaze*, (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1998), 56.

<sup>13</sup> Mervat Hatem, "Through Each Other's Eyes: Egyptian, Levantine-Egyptian, and European Women's Images of Themselves and of Each Other (1862-1920)," *Women's Studies International Forum* 12 (1989): 183.

<sup>14</sup> Hatem, 198.



were often great, but her desire remains for women to be able to "relate to each other's experiences,"<sup>15</sup> rather than view each other as "alien."

Feminist critics more attuned to the pervasive presence of colonialism and race relations in nineteenth century travel literature take exception to the possibility of a universal unifying female experience, pointing out that such "sisterhood" makes it impossible to name the oppression that Western women themselves were involved in as they participated in the colonial enterprise. As Inderpal Grewal points out, "[f]or many Euro-American feminist critics the need to see Western feminism as anti-imperialist in the face of much evidence to the contrary comes out of the . . . desire to see feminism as wholly oppositional and existing outside particular ideological formations."<sup>16</sup>

For Grewal, Western women writing about the harem were writing first and foremost as supporters of the colonial enterprise. "For most of them, empire was a matter of pride as well as policy that did not need contestation."<sup>17</sup> Rather than drawing on the similarities Western women discovered in the harem as Melman does, she focuses on the contrasts. Western women needed to see themselves as liberated and in turn, drew

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<sup>15</sup> Hatem, 183.

<sup>16</sup> Inderpal Grewal, *Home and Harem: Nation, Gender, Empire, and the Cultures of Travel* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 12. Such a desire must have motivated Deborah A. Logan, "Harem Life, West and East," *Women's Studies* 26 (1997): 449 to make the astounding and dismaying claim that "Englishwomen traveling in pre-Civil War America and in Eastern countries participated in the period's human rights debates from a position of cultural subordination that *white women of all classes shared with people of color* [emphasis mine]."

<sup>17</sup> Grewal, 66.

attention to the un-liberated position of harem women. The establishment of this contrast had a distinctly colonial focus:

[a]s a part of the "civilized" culture, which perceived itself as superior in being against despotism and promulgating representational government, Englishwomen were seen as free and therefore different from Asian women. The contrast between the English female traveler and "Eastern" inhabitant of the harem emphasized the mobile-immobile, free-unfree opposition that was part of the structure of colonial relations.<sup>18</sup>

Englishwomen had a vested interest in describing themselves as liberated and harem women as subjugated in order to emphasize the superiority of the West in which women were liberated, over the East in which women were oppressed, thus contributing to colonialism. For Grewal, female travel narratives of the nineteenth century must be read first and foremost as colonial texts.

Such critics of women's colonial writings provide a necessary correction to those feminists who search for universal female experiences and thereby disregard women's participation in oppressive systems. However, both groups of feminist scholars see the harem women only in so far as they are of interest to the European women who describe them. The focus remains on the European woman and what can be known about her, even in her attempts to know another. Indira Ghose attempts to provide an alternative reading of harem literature by drawing attention to the world of the Eastern woman, most

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<sup>18</sup> Grewal, 66.

of which remains hidden in Western harem literature. She suggests that "more things are going on in the zenana [Indian harem] than are dreamt of in the travellers' tales. The traveller's transcendent gaze fails to penetrate the darkest recesses of the other's mind—the other eludes the epistemic grasp of the traveller." <sup>19</sup> For Ghose, harem literature opens up the possibility that harem women were more than merely the "colonized". They were a part of a world that the Western woman was unable to penetrate, had she wanted to. To see harem women as such is to remove the last word from the colonizer. The Western woman's description of harem women is then no more than a fleeting moment in the lives of the harem women. This is not to minimize the effects of colonialism on the lives of women in the Middle East, nor their awareness of its presence, but to acknowledge that the sphere of their lives extended beyond their lives as the colonized.

To read Harriet Martineau's *Eastern Life* as an opening to another world in which she is nothing more than an insignificant guest is not to ignore her collusion with the colonial enterprise; Grewal could well have been describing Harriet Martineau. Rather, it is to acknowledge that Harriet Martineau unhesitatingly saw herself as racially and culturally superior to people in the Middle East, but that that cannot be the final word. In this light, I would like to examine her description of the harems she visits in order to uncover those moments in her account when her world intersected with the world of the harem. Harriet Martineau in her scathing polemic against the harem makes the reader

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<sup>19</sup> Ghose, 68.

aware that there is another perspective, another way of being, that she encountered. This other perspective, this other world, has a way of being noticed in Harriet Martineau's account, even though her colonizing mark is evident on every page of her description. In this I would like to add to Ghose's reading of harem literature, by suggesting that it may be possible to do more than merely point out that Western women failed to understand harem women. The intensity of and excesses in Harriet Martineau's description of harem women demonstrate that that other world was all too close for her; she did not fail to recognize the potential of having her gaze directed back at her and this threatened her.

This can never be anything but an incomplete project, as the harem women's lives are accessible to us only obliquely *through* Harriet Martineau's description.<sup>20</sup> In fact, it would be naïve to assume that anything but a hint of the world of the harem is accessible to us through *Eastern Life*. Harriet Martineau remains the dominant figure throughout her account, controlling what gets said, and how it gets said. In spite of this however, the women of the harem, through their interaction with Harriet Martineau, call into question the legitimacy of her appraisal and resulting condemnation of their lives.

As already stated, Harriet Martineau's description of harem life is scathing. She begins her account with the full confidence that she has done everything in her power to understand the harem, but nothing can redeem it.

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<sup>20</sup> I am indebted to Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1992), 22 for this image on how to read a text.

I declare that if we are to look for a hell upon earth, it is where polygamy exists: and that as polygamy runs riot in Egypt, Egypt is the lowest depth of this hell. I always before believed that every arrangement and prevalent practice had some one fair side,—some one redeeming quality: and diligently did I look for this fair side in regard to polygamy: *but there is none* [emphasis mine].<sup>21</sup>

Lucie Duff Gordon, a contemporary of Harriet Martineau, who was given a copy of *Eastern Life* to read during her residence in Luxor found Harriet Martineau's "attack upon hareems outrageous; she implies that they are brothels." <sup>22</sup> Indeed, Harriet Martineau did more than imply; she stated explicitly that women in brothels and harems were engaged in the same activity, shared the same morals, and behaved in a similar fashion. She was certain that jealousy and rivalry ran rampant among the women in both brothels and harems, and that this resulted in the sure death of any child born. As in a brothel "when the rare event of the birth of a child happens, a passionate joy extends over the wretched household" as for a brief moment rivalries are set aside and lavish attention is given to the child, so women of the harem "through a wonderful conquest of personal jealousy" grieve when a child dies regardless of whose it is. But "lose it they must; for the child always dies," she asserted. Either it was killed through suffocating kindness or

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<sup>21</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 260.

<sup>22</sup> Lady Duff Gordon, *Letters From Egypt (1862-1869)* Centenary Ed. (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1869), 121. Her assessment, overall of Harriet Martineau, is not complementary: "I have been reading Miss Martineau's book; the descriptions are excellent, but she evidently knew and cared nothing about the people."

murdered by jealousy: "the strangling the innocent in its sleep,—or the letting it slip from the window into the river below,—or the mixing poison with its food."<sup>23</sup>

Harriet Martineau was further appalled by what she concluded to be excess eating on the one hand,<sup>24</sup> and intellectual derivation on the other. The women "suffer cruelly from indigestion,—gorging themselves with sweet things, smoking intemperately, and passing through life with more than half the brain almost unawakened, and with scarcely any exercise of the limbs."<sup>25</sup> The women are "dull, soulless, brutish or peevish."<sup>26</sup> With sanguinity she stated that "[t]here is nothing about which the inmates of harems seem so utterly stupid as about women having anything to do."<sup>27</sup>

She also focused on the presence of slavery in the harem. Polygamy, in Harriet Martineau's opinion, went hand in hand with slavery, and nothing she had seen up to this

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<sup>23</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 261-262.

<sup>24</sup> See Helena Michie, *The Flesh Made Word: Female Figures and Women's Bodies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 12-17 for a discussion on the connection between food and sexuality in Victorian England. Particularly relevant is her conclusion that "[d]elicate appetites are linked . . . [to] virginity." Michie, 16. The converse is that gorging is linked with oversexed or inappropriately sexed women. This would connect with Harriet Martineau's description of the harem as a brothel and also with her assumption that the harem women were engaged in lesbianism.

<sup>25</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 269. It is ironical that in an appendix to Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 522 in which Harriet Martineau provides information to future travellers to the Middle East, she defends her own habit of smoking which she acquired in the Middle East, by claiming that smoking is "usually found eminently good for health," differentiating between Middle Eastern methods of smoking and British methods.

<sup>26</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 263.

<sup>27</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 269.

point (i.e. slavery in the United States) was as evil as slavery in the harem. So unbearable were the "dull and gross face of the handmaid" and the "abject, or worn, or insolent look"<sup>28</sup> of the eunuch, that she wished that the Nile would rise to flood the whole of Egypt.

There was nothing in this life of prostitution, murder, gluttony, mindlessness and slavery that Harriet Martineau found redeemable, even though she diligently looked. Her condemnation of the harem was absolute. "I feel that a visit to the worst room in the Rookery in St. Giles' would have affected me less painfully," she writes. "There are there at least the elements of a rational life, however perverted; while here humanity is *wholly and hopelessly* [emphasis mine] baulked."<sup>29</sup>

Harriet Martineau's condemnation of the harem was swift and complete, even though her exposure to it was minimal. After spending a mere two hours in an Egyptian harem *without the aid of an interpreter*, she was fully confident that she "apprehend[ed] the thoughts and feelings of the persons concerned in it."<sup>30</sup> Without engaging in any meaningful conversation, she claimed to understand her hostesses and was able to pass sweeping judgments on their lives. She very quickly came to a conclusion about harem

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<sup>28</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 265.

<sup>29</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 264.

<sup>30</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 260.

life, for a second visit to a Damascene harem, during which an interpreter was present, only confirmed the conclusions she reached after her Cairene visit.<sup>31</sup>

Such was Harriet Martineau's assessment of harem life. In order to understand the extent to which Harriet Martineau's very critical assessment of harem life was unique among Western accounts, at least in degree, it is beneficial to place it alongside other accounts that were being widely read. As already mentioned, Lucie Duff Gordon was appalled by Harriet Martineau's description. Isabel Burton described harem life with great delight, albeit patronizing delight, but Mary Eliza Rogers provides the most insightful contrast. Her account of a day spent in a harem is the antithesis of Harriet Martineau's in every respect. Jealousy and rivalry were absent, children were a normal part of harem life, and attention was not drawn to slavery, but rather to the communal and egalitarian nature of the women's lives. The evening was spent smoking narghiles and the tube of a pipe was passed from woman to woman, regardless of status. Helweh, the "favored" wife, passed it to another of her husband's wives, "inclin[ing] her head gracefully"<sup>32</sup> and then the tube was passed around to the slave women. Likewise, slaves, wives and children all participated in the evening's entertainment of dancing and singing.

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<sup>31</sup> This is reminiscent of Leila Ahmed's characterization of modern Americans' opinion that Islam categorically oppresses women in Leila Ahmed, "Western Ethnocentrism and Perceptions of the Harem," *Feminist Studies*, 8 (1982): 521-522: it is "not only that Americans by and large know nothing at all about the Islamic world . . . it is rather, that Americans 'know', and know without even having to think about it, that the Islamic peoples . . . are backward, uncivilized peoples totally incapable of rational conduct. . . . Just as Americans 'know' that Arabs are backward, they know also with flawless certainty that Muslim women are terribly oppressed and degraded."

<sup>32</sup> Rogers, 223-224.



Mary Eliza Rogers' harem, in contrast to Harriet Martineau's description was one in which domestic harmony and affection governed the women's lives.

Harriet Martineau was a woman who took seriously her responsibility in the public world. As a woman who was transgressing the Victorian ideal of women through her very public life, she sought to portray herself as a woman whose efforts were directed to help others. Like a mother, Harriet Martineau needed someone dependent on herself, whom she could influence positively. She acknowledged this much in her *Autobiography*. In her domestic affairs, she found this among "poor improvable neighbours" and "young servants" who, she said, "I might train and attach to myself."<sup>33</sup>

"No woman more brave, or wise, or untiring in the public service has lived this century" stated the *National Reformer* following her death. "Her glory was that she not only sympathised with progress, she took trouble to advance it, she worked for it by the labour of her genius."<sup>34</sup> While these words are eulogistic in nature, they do point to the nature of Harriet Martineau's life. She worked tirelessly to improve the lot of people's lives and never shrunk from carrying out her duty, even at personal risk.<sup>35</sup> This was not

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<sup>33</sup> This was taken from a discussion in Sidonie Smith, *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), 147-148 in which Smith is quoting from Harriet Martineau's *Autobiography*.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Pichanick, 240.

<sup>35</sup> In Harriet Martineau, *Retrospect of Western Travel*, 2 vols. (London: Saunders and Otley, 1838), II:164, she describes her attendance at a Boston abolitionist meeting  
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just the assessment of others. Harriet Martineau saw herself in a similar fashion. "Authorship has never been with me a matter of choice," she wrote in her *Autobiography*. "Things were pressing to be said; and there was more or less evidence that I was the person to say them. In such a case, it was always impossible to decline the duty for such reasons as that I should like more leisure, or more amusements, or more sleep, or more of any thing whatever."<sup>36</sup> The causes Harriet Martineau sacrificed herself to were many, but in all of them she could be assured that people needed her, that they depended on her to champion their cause. She saw herself, in Sidonie Smith's words, as an "altruistic martyr,"<sup>37</sup> who had "brought everything under her control."<sup>38</sup>

Likewise the Middle East was submitted to her pen. The Middle East was for Harriet Martineau controllable for the most part, for in her mind it consisted of ancient temples, desert mountains and biblical landscapes. They were what she made of them. She could shape them to support her philosophy of the progression of religions through history. However, the women of the harem were not this manipulatable. They would not submit to her control. While she described harem women like the many others who "needed" her and whose plight she could improve, they did not view her as their paladin.

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in which she was well aware that the possibility of a mob attack on the meeting was high. Nevertheless, she publicly identified herself by giving a short speech, and then received insults, enough to make her feel "that the whole nation had risen against" her.

<sup>36</sup> Martineau, *Autobiography*, I:188.

<sup>37</sup> Smith, 141.

<sup>38</sup> Smith, 148.

By their refusal to see her as their savior, they challenged the way that she had found a place for herself in her society as a woman. They challenged the way she wished to be seen. She could inform her readers that these women were "the most injured human beings" she had even seen, but she could not entirely remove from her description their actual behavior nor the women's pity for her.

Everywhere they pitied us European women heartily, that we had to go about traveling, and appearing in the streets without being properly taken care of,—that is, watched. They think us strangely neglected in being left so free, and boast of their spy system and imprisonment as tokens of the value in which they are held.<sup>39</sup>

The very things she was convinced enslaved the women were the things they valued, and in turn, what she valued was considered by the women to belittle her. While she describes the harem women as imprisoned in their own system, through her judgment comes an implicit judgment of her by the harem women.

For such a difference she knew of no recourse. Her usual response in such a situation was to assume the role of dutiful advocate. In the harem that role was not understood nor accepted. In frustration she laid the blame entirely on the harem women, and thereby absolved herself for abandoning her usual role.

If there was the slightest chance of doing any good, I would speak out at all hazards;—I would meet all the danger, and endure all the disgust. But there

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<sup>39</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 263.

is no reaching the minds of any who live under the accursed system. . . . [T]here is nothing to appeal to in the minds of those who, knowing the facts of the institution, can endure it.<sup>40</sup>

Harriet Martineau reacted in as extreme a manner as she did because in the harem she could not bring her influence to bear. Harriet Martineau's feeling of helplessness, a feeling she was unaccustomed to, drove her to condemn so thoroughly the women of the harem. The woman who could sway government policy, who was listened to when she spoke, was confounded by the harem, which did not easily allow itself to be shaped into her mold. The harem threatened to undermine Harriet Martineau's position of control. By laying the responsibility on the shoulders of the harem women for their own "plight", Harriet Martineau reestablished her control of the situation.

In order to justify her condemnation of the harem, and ultimately justify her Self, she sought to establish a breadth of difference between herself and the harem women and the people in the Middle East generally. This distinction was integrally bound up with Harriet Martineau's sense of colonial superiority over the people of the Middle East. It was also bound up in her sense of what she was as a woman. Like the feminists described by Antoinette Burton, Harriet Martineau's distinction from the people of the Middle East, and particularly the women in the harem, assured her that she embodied true womanhood.

In the harem, clothing became a major focus of the interaction between Harriet Martineau and the women of the harem. Harriet Martineau hoped to demonstrate her

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<sup>40</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 260.

superiority through clothing, and it was also through clothing that the harem women undermined the legitimacy of Harriet Martineau's attitude towards them. Clothing is also used elsewhere in *Eastern Life* to emphasize the difference between Harriet Martineau and the people of the Middle East. She emphasized her racial and cultural superiority by the clothes she wore.

Victorian women travellers frequently made mention of their clothing and most, like Harriet Martineau unquestioningly maintained conventional clothing. According to Birgitta Maria Ingemanson, Victorian women insisted on maintaining "a correctly feminine appearance"<sup>41</sup> while travelling in order to ensure respectability while engaging in activity, i.e. travel, that "challenged accepted norms and invited retribution."<sup>42</sup> In other words, by appearing entirely respectable on the exterior, women could experience the freedom from the constraints of their society that travel made possible. "[F]amiliar clothing along with well-known domestic props provided . . . a façade of propriety behind which the women were free to pursue the ulterior purpose of their travels: active participation in life."<sup>43</sup> Ingemanson concludes that women "dressed in formal attire not

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<sup>41</sup> Birgitta Maria Ingemanson, "Under Cover: The Paradox of Victorian Women's Travel Costume" in *Women and the Journey: The Female Travel Experience*, ed. Bonnie Frederick and Susan H. McLeod (Pullman WA: Washington State University Press, 1993), 7.

<sup>42</sup> Ingemanson, 7.

<sup>43</sup> Ingemanson, 5-6.

to be conspicuous but, paradoxically, to appear normal and proper.”<sup>44</sup> Ingemanson, however, reads women's travel narratives as if the women's only concern was their reputation in their own societies. When read as texts that were written within a colonial setting, this fetish with clothing takes on another meaning. Harriet Martineau, through her dress, had every intention of appearing conspicuous. She was obtrusive in the Middle East, and she intended to remain that way. As a conspicuous European woman she received much (unwanted) attention during her travels. However, she thoroughly rejected the option of dressing in Eastern style to diminish this conspicuousness. No Western woman should adopt Eastern clothing, she wrote:

[s]he can never, in a mere passage through an Eastern country, make herself look like an Eastern woman; and an unsupported assumption of any native custom will obtain for her no respect, but only make her appear *ashamed of her own origin and ways*. *It is better to appear as she is, at any cost* [emphasis mine], than to attempt any degree of imposture.<sup>45</sup>

Dress, for Harriet Martineau, became a way for her to distinguish herself from the people she encountered in her travels. Harriet Martineau dressed differently, and she described this difference diligently, not to assure her readers that she remained a respectable lady throughout her travels, but to emphasize that she remained unmistakably

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<sup>44</sup> Ingemanson, 19. So also Ghose, 133.

<sup>45</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 43. A similar point concerning British travellers and their clothing is made by Grewal, 94. "Clothing that was uncompromisingly English was one way to prevent any ambiguity regarding the reasons for travel, for them travel could not be interpreted as alienation from or rejection of England."

British in the eyes of the people of the Middle East. This is confirmed in a series of short episodes in which Harriet Martineau describes Egyptian crews' responses to Europeans ironing their clothing on board the boats. "The dragoman of another party, being sounded about ironing his employer's white trousers, positively declined the attempt; saying that he had once tried, and at the first touch had burnt off the right leg." Another Egyptian crew decided that ironing was the Europeans' way of killing lice. Her own crew also never comprehended what she was doing.<sup>46</sup> Clothing is here used to demonstrate that people of the Middle East cannot understand the West, and in her description of such a misunderstanding, the people of the Middle East are made to look foolish, thereby establishing the superiority of Europeans. Again clothing is used to emphasize the distinction between herself and the people of the Middle East.

Unwittingly, Ingemanson provides an apt metaphor for Harriet Martineau's intention. "[W]e may find the costume . . . of Victorian women travelers cumbersome and inappropriate. But, precisely in the context of vigorous travel, these attributes had a deeper, eminently pragmatic function: as a *barrier behind which the women were safe* [emphasis mine]."<sup>47</sup> Ingemanson is referring to the physical protection clothing can offer,<sup>48</sup> but for Harriet Martineau clothing also provided an ideological barrier that served

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<sup>46</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 72.

<sup>47</sup> Ingemanson, 12.

<sup>48</sup> So, for example Mary Russell, *The Blessings of a Good Thick Skirt: Women Travellers and Their World* (London: Collins, 1988). The title of this book is taken from a quotation from Mary Kingsley, a traveller to Africa, who fell into a thorn bush, but  
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to keep her removed from the people of the Middle East. She erected a barrier against the erosion of the difference between herself and the people of the Middle East by wearing clothes (properly ironed) that would never be mistaken for anything but European.

Elsewhere in the Middle East, the attention Harriet Martineau received due to her conspicuousness was an irritant, one she stoically endured, for this unwanted attention was evidence that she was perceived as different, and through this difference she could maintain her colonial distinction. This was her intention in the harem as well and this was how she wanted her readers to understand her interaction with the harem women. Summarizing her visit, she describes herself as the one being examined, enduring it with stoic patience. "To sit hour after hour on the deewán, without any exchange of ideas, having our clothes examined . . . and being gazed at by a half-circle of girls in brocade and shawls . . . is as wearisome an experience as one meets with in foreign lands."<sup>49</sup> However, when she actually described what she did in those hours, they were filled with lively interaction between herself and the women.

In the harem attention was not an irritant, it was sought after. The women of the harem expected to have their clothes examined just as they examined hers. They invited attention; they wanted to be scrutinized, touched and exclaimed upon. This is evident even through her patronizing opinion. "They were so free in their questions about us, and so evidently pleased when we used a similar impertinence about them, that we took the

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remained unscathed due to her skirt.

<sup>49</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 263.



opportunity of learning a good deal of their way of life." <sup>50</sup> When Harriet Martineau and her travelling companion were too hesitant for the likes of the harem women in their admiration, they are prodded to be more demonstrative. "Mrs. Y. and I were consulting about noticing the bride's dress, when we found we had put [it] off too long: we were asked how we liked her dress, and encouraged to handle the silk." <sup>51</sup> Upon the encouragement of the women, Harriet Martineau went on to "examine the bundles of false hair some of them wore; the pearl bracelets on their tattooed arms, and their jeweled and inlaid pattens." <sup>52</sup> These were not the things Harriet Martineau would have preferred to examine. She noticed the ceiling, the carpets, the mirrors, the furniture, the jeweled coffee cups, the location of the people in the harem, their facial expressions. Now she was encouraged to touch the women, their hair, their arms, and even their feet. Her preference to observe from a distance was not honoured.

In the harem a completely new set of rules applied, one that Harriet Martineau could not challenge. Clothing was not a barrier, it was an equalizer. In the Damascene harem, her travelling companion's veil and bonnet were removed by the women of the harem, and "she was instructed that the street was the place for her to wear her veil down, and that *they [harem women] expected to see her face* [emphasis mine]" <sup>53</sup> in the harem.

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<sup>50</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 269.

<sup>51</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 269.

<sup>52</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 269.

<sup>53</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 268.

Western dress codes that conflicted with Eastern ones had to give way. Clothing that hid the face of one from another would not be tolerated by the women in the harem. The symbol of the veil is here unexpectedly inverted. It was not the Middle Eastern woman who was veiled, but the Western one; it was women who have stereotypically been portrayed as veiled, who insisted that the veil be removed. If elsewhere the unwanted attention she received reassured Harriet Martineau that her racial hierarchy remained intact, in the harem this assurance withered, for she was forced to focus all her attention on people she considered as her inferiors and in turn allow them to direct their attention to her.<sup>54</sup>

She could not prevent the harem women from examining her, but she could, through her description of their curiosity, describe the women disparagingly, like children who found Western ways entertaining. Mrs. Y's bonnet "went round, and was tried on many heads—one merry girl wearing it long enough to surprise many new comers with the joke. . . . But the greatest amusement was my [ear] trumpet." It got passed around several times as the women spoke into each other's ears with it. "Could one have

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<sup>54</sup> See Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem*, trans. Myrna Godzich and Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 14. Alloula draws a similar comparison in his study of postcards of Algerian women taken by French photographers, though in the postcards he examines, the women are veiled. "These veiled women are not only an embarrassing enigma to the photographer but an outright attack on him. It must be believed that the feminine gaze that filters through the veil is a gaze of a particular kind; concentrated by the tiny orifice for the eye, this womanly gaze is a little like the eye of a camera, like the photographic lens that takes aim at everything. . . . Thrust in the presence of a veiled woman, the photographer feels photographed; having himself become an object to be seen, he loses initiative: *he is dispossessed of his own gaze* [emphasis original]."

conceived it!"<sup>55</sup> she exclaimed in condescension. The distinction that she wanted clothing to provide between herself and the harem women is here maintained as an adult-child hierarchy. Harriet Martineau refused to acknowledge that the harem women were a curiosity to her, for that would be acknowledging an experience of equality. She described them from the colonial position of being able to assist them, yet the women of the harem acted with confidence that they were a curiosity to her. She described them as living in a kind of hell where ignorance, slavery and childishness prevailed. They were the most "studiously depressed and corrupted" women she had ever seen,<sup>56</sup> pathetic creatures beyond her assistance. However, by the women's insistence that she examine every detail of their clothing, and allow them to do the same to her, by the women's obvious enjoyment in her presence and their expectation that she enjoy theirs, it is evident that they did not conceive of themselves as victims of oppressive institutions as she made every effort to describe them. The cultural superiority she assumed in this assessment was undermined by the reciprocal nature of the harem women's interaction. Her clothing did not act as a barrier; it did not erect a hierarchy. Instead, her clothing drew the harem women to her.

Through their interaction with Harriet Martineau, these women conveyed a sense of egalitarian difference. The roles that existed in the colonial world—the colonizer and the colonized; the one bestowing civilization and the grateful recipient—did not exist in

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<sup>55</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 268.

<sup>56</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 270.

the harem. In the harem Harriet Martineau was *nothing more* than a foreign woman, and the women knew they were foreign to her. The women of the harem were as attuned to the differences between themselves and Harriet Martineau as she was, but her conception of that difference was given no weight. Their conception of that difference is evident as they control the interaction. Harriet Martineau strove to give expression to her conception through the forcefulness of her polemic against the harem. Relationships fashioned by a colonial hierarchy could not exist in the harem, so she had to make them exist in her description of it.

Paradoxically, through Harriet Martineau's polemic which sought to diminish the harem women into victims of "hellish" institutions, came a glimmer of another world. Harriet Martineau's account opened the door a crack to the world of the harem. The harem women did not see themselves as victims; they did not know themselves as the colonized, as the racial and cultural inferiors of Harriet Martineau. Like her, the harem women acknowledged the wide gulf between them, but unlike Harriet Martineau, they did not use it to establish a hierarchy of worth. Rather, the distinction that existed was sought out and enjoyed. But Harriet Martineau could not acknowledge the legitimacy of this world, for it called into question the legitimacy of her own. It was perhaps a young Damascene woman, who with the familiarity of an equal, drove Harriet Martineau to close completely the door on the harem. "In one house that we visited" Harriet Martineau wrote,

the eldest daughter . . . sat down beside me, and laughed with the delight of having visitors. She examined my clothes, stroking me and nodding; but fixed at last upon my gloves. After trying long and in vain to put them upon her enormous hands, she took my hands, to stroke them and laugh at the nails. She wanted me to admire hers, which were all dyed black.<sup>57</sup>

Harriet Martineau however, could not admire the Damascene woman's hands. She noticed a Western glove that did not fit an Eastern hand, and the hands that held hers were not only black from henna, but seemed bruised and injured as if "they had all been pinched in the door."<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 493.

<sup>58</sup> Martineau, *Eastern Life*, 493.

### **Chapter III To Go to Jerusalem?**

On Ida Pfeiffer's return journey from the Middle East to her home in Vienna, the steamer she was travelling on made a brief stopover at Syracuse. The captain allowed only four hours absence from the ship, but Ida Pfeiffer eagerly joined a small group of men who wished to see "all the lions of this once rich and famous town." <sup>1</sup> However, the men were waylaid in their attempt to find some lunch; she could not be bothered with this, so she hired her own guide and spent the few precious hours she had seeing the Roman ruins: the theatre, the amphitheatre, a prison known as the "Ear of Dionysius", several grottos, and finally the promenade along the sea. Unfortunately time did not permit her to visit the catacombs. The men whom she had accompanied had spent most of their time in their pursuit of lunch; she was the only passenger on board the ship who had seen anything of Syracuse. "Though I got nothing to eat to-day but a piece of bread and a few figs, which I despatched [sic] on the road," she concludes of her experience, "I saw some sights which I would not have missed for the most sumptuous entertainment."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ida Pfeiffer, *A Visit to the Holy Land, Egypt, and Italy*, trans. H. W. Dulcken (London: Ingram Cooke & Co., 1852), 273.

<sup>2</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 273.

Syracuse was by no means the most outstanding place Ida Pfeiffer visited during her visit to the Middle East, nor was foregoing one meal the greatest privation she endured for the sake of seeing new sights, but the most enduring aspect of Ida Pfeiffer's many travel narratives becomes evident in her description of Syracuse. She always attempted to reach beyond what was possible; she was always in search of new sights and experiences. This was the woman, who in her childhood climbed a mountain only to have her eyes "fill with tears" when she saw other mountains "towering" before her which she was unable to climb.<sup>3</sup> As an adult she fulfilled her childhood desire, travelling around the world, visiting the Middle East, attempting to reach the Amazon from South America's western coast, travelling up the Pearl River in China. Each successive journey undertaken by Ida Pfeiffer—and she made five—inspired another, taking her to another part of the world she had not yet seen. A driving passion inspired her travel that she could not resist. "As an artist is compelled to paint a picture, and a poet to express his ideas, so I am compelled to see the world," she wrote.<sup>4</sup>

In contrast to her experience in Syracuse which indicated her ever widening *Reiselust*, her stopover in Rome on her way home from the Middle East evinces a woman

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<sup>3</sup> Ida Pfeiffer, *Visit to Iceland and the Scandinavian North*, trans. H. W. Dulcken (London: Ingram & Co., 1853), ix.

<sup>4</sup> Ida Pfeiffer, *Eine Frauenfahrt um die Welt* (Wien, 1850), 3 quoted in Patricia Howe, "'Das Beste sind Reisebeschreibungen.' Reisende Frauen um die Mitte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts und ihre Texte," in *Reisen im Diskurs: Modelle der literarischen Fremderfahrung von den Pilgerberichten bis zur Postmoderne*, ed. Anne Fuchs and Theo Harden (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1995), 306. (Translation my own.)

who had reached her destination and accomplished what she set out to do. In Rome she was granted an audience with the Pope solely due to her having made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Her description of this event is surprisingly prosaic, given the intensity of her religious experience in Jerusalem. "He asked me some questions, gave me his blessing, and permitted me at parting to kiss the embroidered slipper."<sup>5</sup> This matter of fact description clearly marked a completion for her. Her pilgrimage had been blessed by the Pope himself; she could return home, a blessed woman.

Ida Pfeiffer's life of travel began with a journey to the Middle East. *Reise einer Wienerin in das Heilige Land* is the description of that journey. It is unique among her travel narratives for it entails not only an account of a journey to distant places, but also an account of a woman on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. None of her other journeys were so overtly religiously motivated, nor had as their destination such thoroughly sacred geography. Only in *Reise Einer Wienerin* do both "Syracuse" and "Rome" exist side by side, do both the traveller and the pilgrim find a voice.

Ida Pfeiffer was born in 1797 as Ida Reyer, the daughter of a wealthy Viennese merchant.<sup>6</sup> Her father assumed complete control of her education and upbringing. She spent the first eight years of her life alongside her five brothers, in every way treated as

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<sup>5</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 313.

<sup>6</sup> All biographical information about Ida Pfeiffer is taken from Ida Pfeiffer, *The Last Travels of Ida Pfeiffer: Inclusive of a Visit to Madagascar with an Autobiographical Memoir of the Author*, trans. H. W. Dulcken (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1861) which includes biographical information about Ida Pfeiffer thought to have been written by her son, though large sections of her biography are direct quotations from her own writing.



they were. She dressed as they did and fully joined in their activities. When her father died, her mother began her re-education as a girl. The young girl fiercely resisted this, but was eventually reconciled to her sex by her tutor: "I owe to him the insight I received in three or four years into the duties of my sex; and he it was who changed me from a wild hoyendish creature into a modest girl."<sup>7</sup> Tutor and student also fell in love, but her mother would not allow them to marry due to the tutor's inferior social status. Devastated by this, Ida Pfeiffer vowed never to marry. Her mother eventually persuaded her otherwise, but Ida Pfeiffer remained adamant that she would never marry for love, and stipulated that her husband must be no younger than fifty. She then married Dr. Pfeiffer, a well-known lawyer from Lemberg. Ida Pfeiffer was forced to take full responsibility for the support of their two sons when her husband's reputation was ruined, and subsequently his career, through his exposure of embezzlement among high ranking government officials. Ida Pfeiffer eventually returned to Vienna to live and raise her two sons, leaving her husband behind in Lemberg. Her life following her husband's ruin was never one of ease. She "performed household drudgery . . . bore cold and hunger . . . worked secretly for money, and gave lessons in drawing and music."<sup>8</sup> Even so, there were many days when she could provide only bread for her sons. Ida Pfeiffer felt this fall from her social status deeply, and her pride prevented her from asking her family for

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<sup>7</sup> Pfeiffer, *Last Travels*, xiv.

<sup>8</sup> Pfeiffer, *Last Travels*, xxi.

assistance. Her poverty was alleviated only upon the death of her mother, which left her with a modest income.

Ida Pfeiffer acquired her desire to travel when she was a young child: "[w]hen I met a travelling-carriage, I would stop involuntarily, and gaze after it until it had disappeared; I used even to envy the postilion, for I thought he also must have accomplished the whole long journey." As an older child, she enjoyed nothing more than the "perusal of voyages and travels . . . and envied the more every navigator and naturalist."<sup>9</sup> While she made shorter journeys with her parents, and later with her husband, it was not until she had raised her two sons and seen them well established in their lives, that she could seriously consider fulfilling her dreams.

Ida Pfeiffer's journey to the Middle East, her first extended travel, was undertaken at the age of forty five. On the 22nd of March, 1842 she boarded a steamship at Vienna, destined for Constantinople. Her family and friends were not eager for her to travel, and to ease this concern, she let them believe that Constantinople was her destination. In her mind, however, she knew she would make every effort to travel to the Middle East, though uncertain if she would succeed. At Constantinople she began inquiring about the possibility of travelling to Beirut. She was firmly discouraged to do so, both by the Austrian consul and by travellers who had recently returned from Beirut, on account of the dangerous conditions of travelling through Bedouin-controlled territory, especially as an unaccompanied woman. However, she persisted in her inquiries until she found a

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<sup>9</sup> Pfeiffer, *Iceland*, viii.

returned traveller who reported that it was safe. These conflicting reports convinced her that the only way to find out the actuality of the situation was to experience it herself, and so she set out on the voyage to Beirut alone. In the Levant she and her party (she was joined by several British and Austrian men in Jerusalem) travelled to Jerusalem, the Dead Sea, Damascus, Baalbek and finally returned to Beirut. From Beirut she travelled, once again alone, to Egypt, returning to Vienna via Italy. She arrived back in Vienna on the 6th of December, having been gone for more than eight months. In her travels, Ida Pfeiffer had few comforts, she travelled long days on horseback, frequently slept under the stars, endured immense heat and often had only one meagre meal a day.

Rather than satisfying her *Reiselust*, her journey to the Middle East awakened within her an insatiable desire to travel. Three years after returning from the Middle East, she set out for Iceland and Scandinavia (1845). This was followed in 1846 with a journey around the world in which she visited South America, various Pacific islands, China, India, Persia, returning home via the Caucasus and Constantinople. After her return home, she thought she would "settle down in repose,"<sup>10</sup> but in 1851 she began her second world trip, this time receiving sponsorship from the Austrian government. This voyage took her to South Africa, Indonesia, California, Peru, the eastern United States, and Canada. In 1857 she made her final trip, to Africa. However, this journey was cut short due to an illness which she contracted in Madagascar. She returned to Vienna, foregoing her intended journey to Australia, and died on October 28, 1858.

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<sup>10</sup> Pfeiffer, *Last Travels*, xxix.

In her own day Ida Pfeiffer was a famous woman. Every trip she made was followed by a published book of travel. Her travel writings went through numerous editions and were all translated into English and some into French. She was made an honorary member of the Geographical Society of Berlin and also received the gold medal for arts and sciences from the Prussian king. In her travelling she accomplished what few men did, let alone women. However she began such a life of adventure with a journey to Jerusalem, to the greatest Christian shrine, a journey which even the Pope could sanction.

*Reise einer Wienerin* is a travel narrative in which two facets of journeying are held in tension: *pilgrimage* which took her to the heart of her religious world, Jerusalem; and *travel*, which took her from home into the unknown. Pilgrims knew what they would find in Jerusalem because they knew what they were looking for. As a pilgrim Ida Pfeiffer's expectations of what she would find and experience there were firmly established before she ever reached the Middle East. She was going to Jerusalem to retrace the steps of Jesus, to participate in his life and death *in situ*. Ida Pfeiffer experienced this desire to identify with the life of Jesus in a deeper, more profound way in a prescribed manner, following the footsteps of countless European Christians who for centuries had visited the same sacred locations as she did. There would be no surprises. Pilgrimage is about journeying to a destination approved of and known. Such a predictable journey was reassuring, both for herself and her readers.

Travel is about journeying into the unknown, about seeing sights the traveller does not know exist, about experiencing another world. As a traveller, her destination was much less defined, and how her experiences would affect her, much less certain. The only surety she had was a steamer ticket from Vienna to Constantinople. She did not know her itinerary, the length of her journey, nor whether she would return home alive. She certainly did not know at this point that it would alter the direction of her life fundamentally. Her travel was not reassuring for herself or her society, for as she became more comfortable with her distance from home, she also became increasingly dissatisfied with her own society. Her travels in the Middle East became an opportunity for her to critique her own society.

As a female pilgrim-cum-traveller, Ida Pfeiffer experienced the anxiety brought on by travel in a heightened fashion. Not only did she find another world apart from Vienna and Europe that caused her to question the assumptions and practices of her home, by travelling she also stepped outside the boundaries of prescribed female behavior to find that new world. She did not, as her biographer points out, ride her "Pegasus in the approved style of the traveled ladies of the period."<sup>11</sup> In this context, pilgrimage, as a journey that endorsed her society's religious beliefs and values, and did not threaten its prescribed role for women, lessened the threat of a woman abandoning her home.

As this tension between travel and pilgrimage is articulated, Ida Pfeiffer's equally tension-filled stance vis-à-vis the Other in her travels becomes visible. Ida Pfeiffer the

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<sup>11</sup> Pfeiffer, *Last Travels*, xxv.

pilgrim and Ida Pfeiffer the traveller—to maintain a somewhat artificial distinction—did not find themselves directing their gaze at the Other from the same position. As a traveller who found herself increasingly dissatisfied with her own society; her experiences in the Middle East became the stick against which she measured her world. However, as a pilgrim experiencing affinity with the religious values of her own society, she experienced the Middle East as thoroughly Other, for she did not understand the religious values of Middle Eastern Christianity which she encountered in Jerusalem. In this chapter I will focus on these two facets of journeying, and how they reveal the tension Ida Pfeiffer experienced as a traveller-pilgrim-woman. In the following chapter I will examine in more detail how her encounters with the people of the Middle East reflect the tension she experiences.

Of course, such a categorization of travel and of Ida Pfeiffer in into travel/traveller and pilgrimage/pilgrim is somewhat artificial. *Reise einer Wienerin* does not create such a distinction. Rather such a distinction serves the purpose of making explicit the tension that exists in *Reise einer Wienerin*. It draws to opposite poles, articulating themes that exist side by side in tension throughout Ida Pfeiffer's travel narrative.

Erik Cohen notes that traditional societies conceived of the world as consisting of a sacred Centre and a "surrounding, dangerous but alluring chaos."<sup>12</sup> Within such a world view, there were two types of journeying, "pilgrimage, a movement toward the

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<sup>12</sup> Erik Cohen, "Pilgrimage and Tourism: Convergence and Divergence," in *Sacred Journeys: the Anthropology of Pilgrimage*, ed. Alan Morinis (Westport, CT and London: Greenwood Press, 1991), 50.

Center, and travel, a movement in the opposite direction, toward the Other, located beyond the boundaries of the cosmos." <sup>13</sup> Pilgrimage, while it often involved risk on the part of the pilgrim, was essentially endorsed by the pilgrim's society for it was a journey to the spot where the divine and the profane meet, the centre of a religious world. In this way it maintained and reaffirmed the values of the society. The Centre was upheld as centre. Nineteenth century Viennese society did not, of course, ascribe to such a sacred world view, but pilgrimage to Jerusalem in a predominantly Roman Catholic country remained a form of journey that did not pose a threat to that society. As Mary Campbell suggests, Christian pilgrimage to Jerusalem was "a repetition, a reenactment" of biblical events, particularly the life of Jesus. These events and locations are "fixed and known" in the Holy Land and therefore pose no threat. <sup>14</sup> Victor and Edith Turner suggest that Christian pilgrims go to Palestine

to make their understanding of Christianity . . . more vivid by immersing themselves in its geographical setting; by restoring their faith's orrectic pole, so to speak, in allowing the landscape in which the founder lived to reanimate his messages. . . . More than this, they have sought to imitate Christ by retracing the steps of his life recorded in the Gospels—most potently, by following his last

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<sup>13</sup> Cohen, 50.

<sup>14</sup> Mary Campbell, *The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing, 400-1600* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), 116.

sorrowful journey to Calvary and experiencing in imagination his Resurrection.<sup>15</sup>

Because the Holy Land is familiar to Christians as the locus of Jesus' life and death, known through the biblical account and through the accounts of previous pilgrims, the "kind of spiritual change a pilgrimage may enforce is in no way subversive and is understood in advance."<sup>16</sup> In other words, pilgrims and their societies know before the pilgrims set out what awaits them in Palestine, both in terms of what sites they will visit, and how those sites will affect the religious life of the pilgrim. The Turners sum it up well when they write of pilgrimages: "[t]he point of it all is to get out, go forth, to a far holy place approved by all."<sup>17</sup>

The traveller as opposed to the pilgrim, according to Cohen, has rejected the Centre and is in search of "a new alternative Center in the recesses of the Other."<sup>18</sup> The world from which the traveller comes is no longer satisfying for the traveller, and therefore the traveller's attempt to find an alternative Centre "represents a threat to the accepted Center and, thereby, to the established social order."<sup>19</sup> Campbell likewise

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<sup>15</sup> Victor Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 163.

<sup>16</sup> Campbell, 116.

<sup>17</sup> Turner and Turner, 7.

<sup>18</sup> Cohen, 51.

<sup>19</sup> Cohen, 51.



describes travel as based on an "experience of difference,"<sup>20</sup> unlike the known and familiar of pilgrimage. Travel is a search for that which cannot be found at home. It is journeying to a place that cannot be defined in advance.

Ida Pfeiffer's journey to the Middle East moved her in these two conflicting directions. On the one hand she was moving *toward* Jerusalem, where her faith, which she assumed was shared by many of her readers in nineteenth century Austrian society, would be reaffirmed and rejuvenated, posing no threat to her own society. On the other she was moving *away from* home, and while this movement from home created anxiety for her, she was quickly developing into an impassioned life-long traveller, who would never again be satisfied with her home. As a pilgrim, Ida Pfeiffer's journey was marked with certainty, and her society understood her motivation; as a traveller she was journeying into the unknown, a space her world could not control nor define.

The dis-ease she experienced as a woman challenging societal expectations by travelling lingered with her much longer than the anxiety of leaving home. She was well aware of her society's disapproval and could not easily come to terms with the stigma attached to her travel. Maria Frawley points out that "Victorian women who traveled abroad were expected to discover that there was no place like home."<sup>21</sup> When these women discovered that home held less for them than the wide world, they sought for ways to justify this aberration from expectation. Finding themselves in such a tension,

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<sup>20</sup> Campbell, 116.

<sup>21</sup> Frawley, 27.

many nineteenth century women were driven to ensure their reputations and justify their leaving home.

Ida Pfeiffer, in casting her journey to the Middle East as a pilgrimage to the Holy Land served to make her venture into the unknown less threatening to her society, for a pilgrimage was one of the few forms of travel considered acceptable for women.<sup>22</sup> If pilgrimage reaffirms the values of society, and is, as Campbell suggests, about the *known*, there is little wonder that it was considered a less threatening form of journeying for women in the nineteenth century. They would return more firmly rooted in their society's religious faith. For a woman venturing out into the unknown and thereby threatening her society's assumptions of what acceptable behavior of women was, a journey that contributed to her religious devotion ameliorated such suspicions. And it is also evidence of Ida Pfeiffer's conflicting response to her society's patriarchal restrictions on women travelling. Pilgrimages undertaken by woman have a long tradition in the history of Europe and Ida Pfeiffer could claim that tradition,<sup>23</sup> and thereby she accepted her

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<sup>22</sup> Howe, 303 lists pilgrimage as legitimate travel for women, along with such journeys as a search for a cure, honeymoon, and the travel of a bride to her new home.

<sup>23</sup> Mary Campbell uses the 4th century nun Egeria as the beginning point of the development of European travel literature. See Campbell, 15-33. In addition to Egeria, other early female pilgrims were Paula and her daughter Eustochium, and Melania, all described by Jerome (c.347-c.420). Gabriele Habinger in Ida Pfeiffer. *Reise in das Heilige Land: Konstantinopel, Palästina, Ägypten im Jahre 1842*, ed. Gabriele Habinger (Vienna: Promedia, 1995), 6 suggests that Ida Pfeiffer could expect a certain amount of understanding from her contemporaries because she was writing within a tradition of female religiously motivated travel.

society's expectations of her as a woman, while at the same time challenging them by travelling.

Ida Pfeiffer was well aware that pilgrimage was a more acceptable form of journeying for women than travelling into the wide world, and she took advantage of this dimension of pilgrimage to allay her society's censure. "The first journey, for a woman ALONE, was certainly rather a bold proceeding," she envisions her readers thinking in *Travel To Iceland*, her second travel narrative. "Yet in that instance she might still have been excused. Religious motives may perhaps have actuated her."<sup>24</sup> In Ida Pfeiffer's assessment of her readers, pilgrimage was considered an acceptable form of travel for a woman. Having reminded her readers of this, and therefore attempted to silence their judgment of her, she moved to legitimize her second journey by placing it also, within the parameters of religiously motivated travel, albeit not explicitly pilgrimage. What was effective the first time, should certainly work again, she hoped. Ida Pfeiffer's pilgrimage had been very much a journey toward the centre of her religious world, one her readers would understand. She had not expected to experience something new; she made a pilgrimage to have her faith confirmed and renewed. She acquired a more vivid sense of a faith she already possessed. These are the facets of her journey to the Middle East that she depended on to legitimize it. Her stated motivation for travelling to Iceland likewise confirmed and renewed religious values and experiences that her society would have little trouble understanding and appreciating.

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<sup>24</sup> Pfeiffer, *Iceland*, viii.

I chose Iceland for my destination, because I hoped there to find Nature in a garb such as she wears nowhere else. I feel so completely happy, so brought into communion with my Maker, when I contemplate sublime natural phenomena, that in my eyes no degree of toil or difficulty is too great a price at which to purchase such perfect enjoyment. And should death overtake me sooner or later during my wanderings, I shall . . . be deeply grateful to the Almighty for the hours of holy beauty in which I have lived and gazed upon His wonders.<sup>25</sup>

Her visit to Iceland, like her pilgrimage to Jerusalem, was a reaffirmation of religious values.

Such an overt use of pilgrimage to counter the displeasure displayed by her society was not merely a guise Ida Pfeiffer used to lend legitimacy to the real motivation for her travel—her escape from the societal restrictions placed on women—as Patricia Howe suggests.<sup>26</sup> Ida Pfeiffer's pilgrimage was in every respect authentic, but her sometimes conscious and other times unconscious use of her pilgrimage lent credibility to her travel and helped justify her decision to travel.

Ida Pfeiffer began her journey to the Middle East filled with anxiety at leaving home. It was months before she was freed entirely from the pain of that separation and became a confident traveller. On the second day of her journey, having travelled only as

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<sup>25</sup> Pfeiffer, *Iceland*, ix-x.

<sup>26</sup> Howe, 303.

far as Budapest, she was overcome with a "violent headache, accompanied by nausea and fever" which she attributed to the "painful excitement of parting" with her friends.<sup>27</sup> Several times throughout her journey the realization of her distance from home overwhelmed her. As a pilgrim, setting foot in Asia at Constantinople was to be one step nearer to Jerusalem, but as a traveller, it meant an ever greater distance from home. "It was with a peculiar feeling of emotion," she wrote, "that for the first time in my life I set foot on a new quarter of the globe. Now, and not till now, I seemed separated by an immeasurable distance from my home."<sup>28</sup> On board the steamboat leaving Constantinople for Beirut, she was again overwhelmed by the foreignness of her surroundings. "Once more I was alone among a crowd of people, with nothing to depend on but my trust in Providence. . . . All was strange. The people, the climate, country, language, the manner and customs—all strange."<sup>29</sup>

Such anxiety may be attributed to the initial experience of leaving home, but even in the Lebanon, having already travelled for more than three months, she experienced close ties to her home. Riding through mountains, her party came to the loveliest valley she has ever seen, with a "beautiful village, with a church smiling in the midst." Without warning, church bells rang out clearly. These were the first she had heard throughout the

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<sup>27</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 20.

<sup>28</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 48.

<sup>29</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 76.

Middle East, and a feeling of "delicious emotion" filled her.<sup>30</sup> They immediately reminded her of home.

Here, so far from my native country, they appeared like links in the mysterious chain which binds the Christians of all countries in one unity. I felt, as it were, nearer to my hearth and to my dear ones, who were, perhaps, at the same moment listening to similar sounds, and thinking of the distant wanderer.<sup>31</sup>

The familiarity of church bells reminded her of her link to her home, but that link was being challenged through her experience of travel. She had found a new life that would motivate her to a life of travel, and never allow her to settle down. Ida Pfeiffer came to the point where she no longer shared the interests of her fellow Viennese. In the following chapter I will elaborate on Ida Pfeiffer's dissatisfaction with her home and her resulting critique in some detail, but here one example of her dissatisfaction will be provided.

One of the central areas of critique was the class conscious nature of Austrian society. Given that Ida Pfeiffer had lost her own social status through her husband's ruin and felt this loss very keenly, it is not surprising that class became a major focus of her critique of her society. Upon seeing the Nile Delta, she was "carried away by the beauty and grandeur of nature" and spent some time despairing over the lack of interest in travel

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<sup>30</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 197. The ringing of church bells was prohibited by the Ottomans, but in the mountains of Lebanon, an area controlled by Maronites, this prohibition was ineffectual.

<sup>31</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 198.

among those at home, particularly the upper class. Their life of leisure could not be compared to what she had gained through her travel.

[W]hen I thus saw myself placed in the midst of new and interesting scenes, it would appear to me incredible how people can exist, possessing in abundance the gifts of riches, health, and leisure time, and yet without a taste for travelling. The petty comforts of life and enjoyments of luxury are indeed worth more in the eyes of some than the opportunity of contemplating the exalted beauties of nature or the monuments of history. . . . What indeed, are the entertainments of a large town [at home] compared to the Delta of the Nile? . . . The pure and perfect enjoyment afforded by the contemplation of the beauty of nature is not for a moment to be found in the ball-room or the theatre; and all the ease and luxury in the world should not buy from me my recollections of this journey.<sup>32</sup>

Implicit in this judgment is a distancing from her society. Her newly discovered life was, in her view, superior to that which she had left behind and she now saw herself as superior to her fellow Europeans as well. Ida Pfeiffer had developed from a timid traveller who suffered illness upon leaving home, into a woman who came to prefer the new and varied experiences of travel. Yet even as her delight at hearing church bells demonstrates, she simultaneously experienced a link to her home and could not separate herself entirely.

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<sup>32</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 228-229

As Ida Pfeiffer developed from a brave, but inexperienced traveller, to a self-confident, professional traveller in her later years who was not only aware of her fame, but was proud of it,<sup>33</sup> she evinced much more confidence about her travels in the face of her would-be critics. In *Reise einer Wienerin* even while she offers a critique of her own society, she is still hesitant, and validates her travel all the more. Ida Pfeiffer was well aware that the judgment she must defend herself against was a judgment of travelling as a woman.

My friends and relations attempted in vain to turn me from my purpose by painting, in the most glorious colours, all the dangers and difficulties which await the traveller in those regions. "Men," they said, "were obliged gravely to consider if they had physical strength to endure the fatigues of such a journey, and strength of mind bravely to face the dangers of the plague, the climate, the attacks of beasts, bad diet, &c. And to think of a woman's venturing alone, without protection of any kind, into the wide world, across sea and mountain and plain,—it was quite preposterous." This was the opinion of my friends.<sup>34</sup>

While she clearly did not share the opinion of her friends, nonetheless she could not ignore the implicit rebuke that underlay their concern. Even well beyond her journey to the Middle East, her travels left her with a strong sense that she was stepping outside the boundaries of prescribed behavior for women. Repeatedly she felt driven to defend

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<sup>33</sup> This is a paraphrase of Howe, 302.

<sup>34</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 17-18.



her travel as a woman. In the introduction to *Visit to Iceland* she begs her readers not to judge her "too harshly" for travelling.<sup>35</sup> She explains in detail how she had wanted to travel since her childhood and reassured her readers that she had looked after all her domestic arrangements and ensured that her sons were firmly established in their lives before she even considered leaving home. Not entirely comfortable with such a self-revelatory introduction, she deprecatingly justified it as necessary, necessary because travel by a woman challenged societal expectations: "it is only because this love of travelling does not, according to established notions, seem proper for one of my sex, that I have allowed my feelings to speak in my defence."<sup>36</sup> In the introduction to her third travel narrative, *A Lady's Voyage Around the World*, she has become sufficiently confident about her fame as a traveller to shape this same justification of travel in the form of a challenge to her readers, but justify it she still must. To those who would judge travel to be inappropriate for women, and accuse her of travelling only to draw attention to herself, she suggests that they travel. Such detractors would realize soon enough that an irresistible impulse motivates travel that cannot be ignored.<sup>37</sup> While she continued to experience anxiety about travelling for years to come, Ida Pfeiffer began in *Reise einer Wienerin*, to respond to her society's judgment by challenging its views of appropriate

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<sup>35</sup> Pfeiffer, *Iceland*, x.

<sup>36</sup> Pfeiffer, *Iceland*, x.

<sup>37</sup> Ida Pfeiffer, *Eine Frauenfahrt um die Welt*. (Wien: Gerold, 1850), preface, quoted in Helga Schutte Watt, "Ida Pfeiffer: A Nineteenth-Century Woman Travel Writer," *German Quarterly* 64 (1991): 343.

behavior of women. Not only did she demonstrate that these fears were unfounded, but that the fears were based on an incorrect assumption about what a woman was. The underlying fear in such warning from her society, never articulated, but certainly present, was that of sexual harassment, even assault from foreign men.<sup>38</sup> She must respond to her society's concerns for her, but she must also establish that she never compromised her respectability as a woman.

To some extent she accommodated herself to the fears of her society and was careful to demonstrate that she did not abandon behavior they considered suitable for a woman. On board the steamship headed for Constantinople, she immediately became the object of curious travellers, "[t]he captain having mentioned that a woman was on board who intended travelling to Constantinople." But, she is quick to add, a fellow traveller "offered his services" and "he afterwards frequently took me under his protection."<sup>39</sup> This was a thin guise however, as Ida Pfeiffer was more comfortable looking after herself. She was an independent woman—she made her own travel arrangements, found accommodations, hired her own camel train, frequently travelled alone—and she wished to be respected as an independent woman. She responded to her critics by challenging their notion of what constituted safety for a woman. Her safety lay in her being a woman, not in protection from men, she claimed. In Beirut she was advised to travel in male

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<sup>38</sup> Frankenberg, 81 discusses a parallel construction in American society where Black men, like foreign men are constructed as "the African American male sexual aggressor." White men and White women respectively, are constructed as, the "savior" and "victim." See Frankenberg, 78-85 for a fuller discussion.

<sup>39</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 19.

disguise to ensure her safety, but she insisted on retaining unmistakably female clothing. Her sex was not a liability, but an asset, she claimed. Travelling as a woman did not, as she had been warned, endanger her. Rather, everywhere she was "treated with respect, and kindness and consideration were frequently shown" her *because* she was a woman.<sup>40</sup> The fear of those who would not have a woman travel was therefore not justified, since being a woman protected her throughout her travels. Harriet Martineau used clothing to establish her European distinction from the people of the Middle East. Ida Pfeiffer used her clothing to establish a distinction from men of her own society who challenged her ability to travel, and who assumed that males offered protection, and women invited danger. Ida Pfeiffer was unwilling to accept these assumed roles.

In a disturbing incident, Ida Pfeiffer again demonstrated that the Middle East was a safe place for solitary women; in this instance because of her assumed inherent superiority over Egyptian men of lower class. Upon her departure from Cairo, the man she had hired to facilitate her arrangements attempted to cheat her, but this did not surprise her. "[A]ll fellahs are accustomed to cheat strangers *in every possible way* [emphasis mine], but particularly with coins," she stated. His attempt however angered her, and in response she brandished her whip "at him in a very threatening manner" although she was the only woman present among "a number of his class." Her critics' unspoken fear of being overpowered by men is here hinted at, but she does not accommodate it. She insisted that she had nothing to fear as a woman. Nothing but

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<sup>40</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 76.

confidence marks her portrayal of this incident. "[T]he best method of dealing with these people" is with a "display of firm will" she tells her readers.<sup>41</sup> Ida Pfeiffer did not once flinch from wielding her full authority in this account. Being a woman in this situation was the decisive factor. "I am sure," she tells her readers, "that in my case they were the more intimidated as they had never expected to find so much determination in a woman."<sup>42</sup> Any threat the fellahs might impose is undermined. They could not stand up to a (European) woman. There is never any question, in Ida Pfeiffer's description, but that they will submit to her authority. Ida Pfeiffer chose to portray herself as a woman who had nothing to fear from foreign men. If she did not receive respect, she could nevertheless demand it as a woman. There was no situation that could endanger her. "My journey was a very long one through very dangerous regions; on some occasions I travelled alone with only one Arab servant, and yet nothing serious ever happened to me."<sup>43</sup> If her readers were concerned that she would be harmed or compelled to act inappropriately, she reassured them that this was never the case. In all her travels through the Middle East, she never needed to compromise her "respectability". Even as she remained sensitive to the criticism of her society, she was unwilling to remain within their constraints, and so had to demonstrate that another set of rules existed for women while travelling.

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<sup>41</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 259.

<sup>42</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 259.

<sup>43</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 193-194.

By challenging her society's view of women's safety, Ida Pfeiffer had to maintain a precarious balance. Her mode of being a woman traveller differed significantly from what was expected for a woman. She would not accept the protection of men or of a male disguise. Her travel had validated for her an alternative way of being a woman, i.e. she had travelled in perfect safety in spite of her society's fears, but her confidence in her safety masked the continual dis-ease she experienced regarding how she was perceived as a travelling woman.

*Reise Einer Wienerin* is replete with her attempts to portray the Middle East as a place that did not compromise her safety or integrity, but this did not resolve the tension for Ida Pfeiffer. As Ida Pfeiffer travelled away from home, she experienced a complexifying array of pressures that are evident in her travel narrative. Even as she found leaving home difficult, she became aware of the limits of her own society particularly in the areas of class and gender. She also found herself experiencing the tension of being unable to resist travel, yet being censured by her society for travelling as a woman. Pilgrimage to Jerusalem, an integral part of her journey, pilgrimage to the accepted centre of her religious world, became a means whereby these complex pressures could be alleviated somewhat. Pilgrimage could reassure both herself and her society that she had not abandoned her home and its values altogether, that the tie between herself and her old world still existed.

The focus of her pilgrimage from the beginning was Jerusalem, and her comments throughout *Reise einer Wienerin* focus on the centrality of the life and death of Jesus as

the *raison d'être* of her pilgrimage; she knew from the outset what she was looking for. While still far off in Constantinople where she had felt the distance from home keenly, she was deeply moved as she stepped from European soil to Asian soil. It has been her "long and warmly-cherished wish to tread this most wonderful of the four quarters of the earth," and with God's help she was confident that she would be able to fulfill her dream.<sup>44</sup> Asia, in her mind, had been made sacred through its association with Jesus, for the "true light of the world shone forth" to save humanity in that portion of the world.<sup>45</sup>

Nearing Jerusalem, her first glimpse of the Levantine shore again stirred her heart. Sailing close along the shore, she was able to see various locations with biblical connections, but more than mere biblical association, she focused on the proximity to places where Jesus had been. "With a beating heart I gazed unceasingly toward St. Jean d'Acre, which I at length saw rising from the waves, with Mount Carmel in the background. Here, then, was the holy ground on which the Redeemer walked for us fallen creatures!"<sup>46</sup> She bypassed the obvious connections to crusaders and Elijah that these sites evoked for so many nineteenth century travellers, and focused instead on their association with Jesus. She insisted on disembarking at this spot, against the wishes of the captain who claimed it would be too dangerous due to snakes and marauding Bedouins. An "entirely singular, hitherto unknown feeling awoke" in her as she took her

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<sup>44</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 48.

<sup>45</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 49.

<sup>46</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 95.

first steps in the land where Jesus had walked, precipitated by the realization that she could well be "stepping in the same spot, the same house, that was visited once by Jesus."<sup>47</sup> From the far edge of the continent, Ida Pfeiffer has very nearly reached the Centre.

Her approach to Jerusalem itself elicited an even more indescribable emotion. The most "glorious day" of her life began as she saw Jerusalem in the early morning light for the first time. Oblivious to her surroundings, her "emotion was deep and powerful" and she was lost in "thankfulness and "praise."<sup>48</sup> The first thing she did after disposing of her personal belongings in her room, was to hurry to the Church of St. Francis attached to the pilgrim hostel, to "lighten the weight of . . . [her] heart by fervent prayer."<sup>49</sup> On her first visit to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, in the tiny chapel built over the Sepulchre of Jesus, the spot that had been the "object of all . . . [her] lifelong wishes," she fell on her knees with emotions too "holy and manifold" to be expressed in words.<sup>50</sup> As soon as she had sufficiently recovered from the fatigues of her journey, she undertook her long anticipated night vigil in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. This was undoubtedly the pinnacle of her pilgrimage. She joined the procession, wax taper in hand, as it moved

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<sup>47</sup> Ida Pfeiffer, *Reise einer Wienerin in das Heilige Land* (Wien: Verlag Jakob Dirnböck, 1844; reprint, Stuttgart: Steingrüben Verlag, 1969), 110. Hereafter referred to as Pfeiffer, *Reise*. (Translation my own.)

<sup>48</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 109.

<sup>49</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 109.

<sup>50</sup> Pfeiffer, *Reise*, 131. (Translation my own.)

from spot to spot associated with the passion of Jesus. But the most blissful hours of her life occurred when she could revisit all the sacred sites and succumb to her meditations in the "solemn stillness" of the empty Church.<sup>51</sup> The pilgrim was entirely satisfied. Whoever "has lived to enjoy such hours, has lived long enough!"<sup>52</sup> she exclaimed. In contrast to Ida Pfeiffer the traveller who could never again settle down, Ida Pfeiffer the pilgrim could wish for nothing more. She had no qualms about leaving Jerusalem because she would carry with her forever the richness of that experience. Any hardships she had endured were well worth it.

A calm and peaceful feeling of happiness filled my breast; and ever shall I be thankful to the Almighty that He has vouchsafed me to behold these realms. Is this happiness dearly purchased by the dangers, fatigues, and privations attendant upon it? Surely not. And what, indeed, are all the ills that chequer our existence here below to the woes endured by the blessed Founder of our religion! The remembrance of these holy places, and of Him who lived and suffered here, shall surely strengthen and console me wherever I may be and whatever I may be called upon to endure.<sup>53</sup>

Ida Pfeiffer has found in Jerusalem what so many other pilgrims had found there, a mystical connection with the suffering Jesus, that confirmed and strengthened her faith,

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<sup>51</sup> Pfeiffer, *Reise*, 131.

<sup>52</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 116.

<sup>53</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 144-145.



that satisfied her life-long yearnings. She could return home, having accomplished what she set out to do, and having received strength that she was confident would never leave her.

In a subtle, yet consistent manner *Reise einer Wienerin* evinces that such an intense religious experience would be understood by her readers. She does not distinguish herself from them, as she had done at the Nile Delta, but rather draws them into her experience. She describes her pilgrimage experience in such a way as to encompass the faith of her readers; she assumed that they would identify with her experience. Jesus walked on this earth for "us fallen creatures,"<sup>54</sup> she tells her readers as she first walked where Jesus walked. The "woes endured by the blessed Founder of our religion" became the basis of a comparison to her own ills and those of her readers, when she reflected on the meaning of her experience in Jerusalem.<sup>55</sup> Ida Pfeiffer could voice such affinity with her own society because she was confident that what she had experienced would not be foreign to her readers. Ida Pfeiffer's pilgrimage was a journey that confirmed her faith in a way that would be understood and appreciated by many in her society. Such a journey lent legitimacy to her travel that otherwise distanced and even made her critical of her own society.

Travel opened up for her a whole new world that gave her a new perspective on her own world, but in the course of this discovery, she became acutely aware of how her

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<sup>54</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 95.

<sup>55</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 144.

newfound freedom threatened her society's norms of acceptable female behavior. Her pilgrimage as a journey that reaffirmed her faith, a faith not unlike many of her readers, helped her establish affinity with her society, and thereby lessened the threat her travel posed. It countered the tension that she was experiencing by travelling as a woman alone through a foreign world.

This tension is equally present in Ida Pfeiffer's portrayal of the people she encountered in the Middle East, the focus of the following chapter. As she navigated her way through her conflicting responses to her own world—both as a world that she distanced herself from, and yet sought affinity with—her encounters with the people of the Middle East give further evidence of a woman who hesitatingly found in travel the resources needed to express her dissatisfaction with the world she had left behind.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Pilgrim or Traveller: A Question of Identity**

Ida Pfeiffer's travels in the Middle East provided her with assurance that she had the resources necessary for travelling. Not only was she assured that she had the physical stamina to endure long exhausting days of travel and extreme heat, or that she had the fortitude to find her way in foreign places where she could not understand the language nor be understood, but also, that she could leave her familiar world and embark into the unknown. Travel had a profound effect on Ida Pfeiffer and it furnished her with an alternative perspective on her own society. What she encountered in the Middle East resulted in dissatisfaction with that which was so familiar to her. In *Reise einer Wienerin in das Heilige Land* Ida Pfeiffer used the Middle East to demonstrate this dissatisfaction with her own society; the unknown was used to provide a critique of the familiar. Travel is after all, a search for "an alternative Center in the recesses of the Other."<sup>1</sup>

Even as *Reise einer Wienerin* became a way for Ida Pfeiffer to offer a critique of her own world, she was not willing to abandon that world entirely. She was not yet a famous and seasoned world traveller, backed by royal patronage, confident that she would be able to make her own way as a traveller. She saw her journey to the Middle East as a testing ground. Her safe return to Vienna from the Middle East persuaded her that she

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<sup>1</sup> Cohen, 51.

had not been "tempting Providence" by travelling.<sup>2</sup> However, it was more than Providence she had to concern herself with. She had pushed well past the boundaries of her society's tolerance of what a woman should do. This too had left her hesitant, and as such, she found that her pilgrimage to Jerusalem lent a measure of legitimacy to her travel. If, as I suggest in the previous chapter, pilgrimage is a journey that brings pilgrims to the centre of their world and upholds the religious values of their society, then predictably, Ida Pfeiffer while engaged in pilgrim activity, would find herself most strongly drawn to an experience and expression of religious piety that identified her strongly as European. This being the case, there is little wonder that when she engaged in pilgrimage activity in and around Jerusalem, she was acutely aware of herself as a European, and that she emphasized her distinction from Middle Easterners. At these moments she established herself, without compromise as a European. In this way her pilgrimage emphasized the extent to which she was aligning herself with the values of her own society.

This tension between travel and pilgrimage explains the inconsistencies, or rather, the complexities of Ida Pfeiffer's interaction with the people she encounters throughout the Middle East. It also explains how she could distance herself from her world, and yet cling to it, how she could draw attention to the superior behavior of Middle Easterners and then harshly criticize it.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Pfeiffer, *Iceland*, ix.

<sup>3</sup> Joan Burbick, "Under the Sign of Gender: Margaret Fuller's *Summer on the*  
(continued...)

As discussed in the previous chapter, her safety as a woman in a foreign world became a focus of the critique of her world. She was aware that her society's dis-ease of her travelling was motivated by the assumption that the Middle East was a dangerous place for women. She made it quite clear to her readers that such an assumption was incorrect. Not only were women safe, they were *safer* than they would be in Europe, particularly when encountering Middle Eastern men.

Outside a mosque in Constantinople, Ida Pfeiffer was shown consideration as a foreign woman, in a way she had never expected. With the appearance of the Ottoman sultan and his retinue she was allowed to move to the front of the crowd in order to be able to see him. This greatly impressed her. Such politeness was a trait "which many a Frank<sup>4</sup> would do well to imitate." But she commended more than the politeness. Turkish men were favorably compared to European men. "In a Turk . . . this politeness is doubly praiseworthy, from the fact that he looks upon my poor sex with great disrespect; indeed, according to his creed, we have not even a soul."<sup>5</sup> While she was depending on an

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(...continued)

*Lakes*," in *Women and the Journey: The Female Travel Experience*, ed. Bonnie Frederick and Susan H. McLeod (Pullman WA: Washington State University Press, 1993), 67-83 deals with this same complexity in American women's frontier writing, though she does not bring in the religious aspect.

<sup>4</sup> "Frank" was a common designation for northern Europeans in the nineteenth century. So for instance, Karl Baedeker, ed., *Palestine and Syria: Handbook for Travellers* (Leipsic: Karl Baedeker, Publisher, 1898), lxxvii defines Franks as Europeans and distinguishes them from Levantines, who are Mediterranean Europeans such as Italians and Greeks.

<sup>5</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 43.

incorrect understanding of Islam, nonetheless her point is clear. European men should treat a woman with respect because they valued women, but they were outdone by foreigners who had no such respect for women.

But her description of a crowd in Egypt provides the most pointed attack on those who claim that women were not safe in the Middle East.

[P]eople always behaved most decorously. They certainly shouted, and pushed, and elbowed each other like an European mob; but no drunken men were to be seen, and it was very seldom that a serious quarrel occurred. The commonest man, too, would never think of offering an insult to one of the opposite sex. I should feel no compunction in sending a young girl to this festival, though I should never think of letting her go to the fair held at Vienna on St. Bridget's day.<sup>6</sup>

Having experienced both the Cairene fête celebrating Muhammad's birthday and St. Bridget's Day, Ida Pfeiffer made the distinction between Europe and the Middle East complete. The Middle East was a safer place for women than Europe was. Her critics' accusations were undermined by her experience.

Not only did Ida Pfeiffer address women's safety, she also focused on class. She was very conscious of her social position in her own society. She was fiercely proud that she had single-handedly supported her family, yet acutely aware that her society's preoccupation with social status had had a profound effect on her life, both in being prevented from marrying the man she loved and in living a life of poverty brought on by

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<sup>6</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 248.

her husband's ruined reputation. Having lived a life greatly affected by her changing social status, Ida Pfeiffer was keenly observant of instances when she was discriminated against. Throughout her travels she depended on services provided by Austrian consuls located at all the major centres in the Middle East. They assisted travelling Austrians with advice and recommendations on accommodation, guides and other matters of import to travellers. Several of these consuls received Ida Pfeiffer's harsh criticism for discriminating against her due to her class. They did not provide her with the assistance she felt she was entitled to. In Beirut she could not convince the consul to give her any attention whatsoever when she needed accommodations. "As I happened to be neither rich nor high-born, the Consul would not receive me at all the first time I called on him."<sup>7</sup> With persistence she eventually was granted an audience, but no assistance was forthcoming. She had encountered similar treatment in Constantinople, where even letters of introduction were to no avail. She again sarcastically attributed this to the consul's class consciousness: "not being fortunate enough to travel in great pomp or with a great name, my countrymen [the consul and his attendants] did not consider it worth while to trouble themselves about me."<sup>8</sup>

In contrast to this consul, Ida Pfeiffer describes her Turkish landlady who was the antithesis of the class-conscious consul. She was lauded for providing everything Ida

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<sup>7</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 174.

<sup>8</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 41.

Pfeiffer could desire including "constant readiness to oblige" <sup>9</sup> when it came to hospitality and assistance. Here in Constantinople her European world failed her, whereas the Middle East satisfied her. The hospitality of the landlady became an opportunity for Ida Pfeiffer to point out the failings of her own society and indicate that the new world she had encountered surpassed her old one.

I am ashamed, for their [the consul and his attendants] sakes, to be obliged to make this confession; but as I have resolved to narrate circumstantially not only all I saw, but all that happened to me on this journey, I must note down this circumstance with the rest. I felt the more deeply the kindness of these strangers [the landlady and her family], who, without recommendation or the tie of country, took so hearty an interest in the well-being of a lonely woman.<sup>10</sup>

Her host had responded to her need, not her status, she pointed out. The consuls had been unwilling to do that; they had, in fact, ignored her need.

Positive encounters with people in the Middle East heightened the contrast between her own world and her experience in the Middle East. The hospitality she experienced in the Middle East impressed her. Having so firmly denounced the consuls' treatment of her, her description of a day spent in the company of the consul of Joppa (a Syrian man appointed by both France and Austria) and his family is significant. Her reception from this consul was of a decidedly different nature than the Austrian consuls'.

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<sup>9</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 41.

<sup>10</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 41.



Through the course of the day the consul showed her the town, and in the evening she shared a meal with his family and was then provided with accommodation in his house.

Nothing was able to dampen her obvious enjoyment of this evening of "real Oriental entertainment."<sup>11</sup> She disliked every course offered her during the meal—the pilaf was too spicy which "rendered it unpalatable"; the cucumbers lacked oil and vinegar so she had to force them down; the rice milk was too strongly flavored with attar of roses, the smell of which nauseated her; the final course consisted of stale cheese and burnt hazelnuts—but rather than complain, she attributed her dislike of the meal to her being "still too much of the European."<sup>12</sup> Being a European impeded her ability to enjoy all aspects of Eastern life, she acknowledged.

Her inability to communicate meaningfully also did little to dampen her enjoyment. She says of her evening: "[m]uch was spoken, and little understood,"<sup>13</sup> but that "was not of much consequence" for "[t]he same thing is said often to be the case in learned societies."<sup>14</sup> The implication is clear: in "learned societies" there was *only* meaningless conversation, while in this Syrian setting, the quality of the evening made up for any lack of conversation. Here again the description of a very positive encounter with Middle Easterners reminded her readers that the new world of the Middle East was

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<sup>11</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 100.

<sup>12</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 101.

<sup>13</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 101.

<sup>14</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 101.

superior to the life of the upper classes in Austria, and that being European was not always advantageous.

Ida Pfeiffer's encounters with consuls was one way in which she pointed out the contrast between class conscious Austrian society and a hospitable and gracious Middle East as she experienced it. Yet she was not oblivious to the presence of class structures within the Middle East. At times, however, she diminished the effect of those structures in order to draw attention to the egalitarian, i.e. class-less nature of Middle Eastern society. In a garden outside a Constantinopolitan mosque, she observed several hundred women relaxing and enjoying themselves. The ultimate class distinction, that of slave and free, which Ida Pfeiffer could not deny was present in the Middle East, was difficult to detect among these women as she described them. She noted that they were smoking and drinking coffee with "extreme enjoyment;" friends were sharing the same pipe; women were sitting under the cypresses "talking and joking cheerfully". This whole scene was pervaded with a sense of egalitarianism. The slaves were treated "very kindly" and "the black servants sat among their mistresses, and munched away bravely."<sup>15</sup> There was no distinction in dress, all wore brilliantly coloured clothing. Ida Pfeiffer points out that she could distinguish between slave and mistress only by the skin colour, the slaves being darker, and that otherwise their appearance and their interaction gave no hint of a social hierarchy. Particularly in the context of her description of this garden, she notes that "the lot of the slave in the house of a Musselman is not nearly so hard" as assumed

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<sup>15</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 42.

in Europe.<sup>16</sup> In her observation of women in the Middle East, she noted that they were content and happy. She was not about to sanction the institution of the harem, nor even slavery, but she certainly minimized the effects of slavery in her description. In this garden, the distinctions of class, so prevalent in her own society, were nearly absent from her description.

Ida Pfeiffer, in her travels throughout the world, frequently took note of the difficult lives of people living in poverty. In *Reise einer Wienerin* the fellahs of Egypt receive such attention. She saw the oppression and human suffering that were the result of Muhammad Ali's policies in Egypt,<sup>17</sup> and to these she took exception, implicating Europe's governments which supported him. The fellahs were "obliged to bend their necks beneath a yoke of iron slavery,"<sup>18</sup> but more deplorable for Ida Pfeiffer was the condition of an insane asylum she visited in Cairo. She was horrified by the animal-like treatment of and the subsequent animal-like behavior of the people there. She was convinced that no cure could be found given such circumstances, and furthermore, that such treatment only brought on insanity. "And yet" she exclaims in disbelief, "the Europeans can praise Mohamet Ali! Ye wretched madmen, ye poor fellahs, are ye too

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<sup>16</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 42.

<sup>17</sup> See Naomi Shepherd, *The Zealous Intruders: The Western Rediscovery of Palestine* (London: Collins, 1987), 73-74 for a brief description of Muhammad Ali's policies of agricultural and fiscal reform that are judged to be oppressive, particularly to the fellahs of Egypt.

<sup>18</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 223.

ready to join in this praise?"<sup>19</sup> The force of this rhetorical question is to point an accusing finger at European governments. From the perspective of these governments, it may seem appropriate to support a despot, but seen from the perspective of the fellahs and the "madmen" she has observed firsthand, Europe becomes involved in the cruelty perpetuated by Muhammad Ali on the lower classes of his society. Her travels provided her with another dimension of the reality of Europe's support of the Egyptian ruler, and she found it alarming.

But Ida Pfeiffer's sympathetic response to the suffering of lower classes in the Middle East cannot be understood in isolation from her actual interaction with people of this class. From a point of observation she may sympathize with this suffering, but as she interacted with them more directly, her own appropriation of classist and racist attitudes becomes evident. She unhesitatingly considered herself superior to the lower classes of Middle Easterners. As a European woman she tolerated no inconvenience or disobedience from those of the lower classes of the Middle East. They were there to serve her and facilitate her needs. Porters vying to attract her business as she arrived at Beirut were best taken care of with a threatening stick. Likewise, children in Bethlehem who surrounded her horse with offers of help (which she took to be begging) were best dispensed either with a "multiplicity of coins or with a riding whip."<sup>20</sup> She did not inform her readers which option she chose, but she did express relief that her horse was

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<sup>19</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 235.

<sup>20</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 125.

accustomed to such activity and remained calm throughout the flurry. Her horse received more consideration than did the children who surrounded her. They were merely an inconvenience needing to be dealt with. As she threatened the man she hired in Egypt with a whip when he cheated her, so she threatened to destroy his livelihood when he and the camel driver refused to stop for a rest on their return ride from Suez to Cairo. They cited the danger of the road; she was convinced they only wished to hurry home. She never hesitated to use her power over this man, which she possessed as a European.

I told him I had hired both camels and men, and had therefore a right to be mistress; if he did not choose to obey me, he might go his way with the camel-driver, and I would join the first caravan I met, and bring him to justice, let it cost me what it would. . . . On our arrival at Cairo the camel-driver had not even the heart to make the customary demand for backsheesh, and my servant begged pardon for his conduct, and hoped that I would not mention the differences we had had to the consul.<sup>21</sup>

Both Ida Pfeiffer and this Egyptian man knew that she could jeopardize his livelihood by reporting this incident to the consul. While she points out to her readers that she has power over this man because she is a woman, in fact, her being European provided her with power.

Ironically, her treatment of lower class Middle Easterners proved her to be as class conscious as the consuls she so roundly denounced. Her critique of oppression in the

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<sup>21</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 258.

Middle East went no further than a cutting remark about Europe's involvement in such oppression. Her concern for Egyptian fellahs was little more than a veneer covering her more deep seated attitudes towards them. She was not drawing attention to oppression in general, rather the way in which Europe was supporting an oppressive system in the Middle East.

If she idealized the women in the Constantinopolitan garden, at other times she was more critical of upper class life in the Middle East. Particularly, she contrasted it to the difficult life of lower class European women. The difficult life of lower class European women is a theme running throughout her books, and may well have stemmed from her own experience of poverty. The lives of women throughout the world were frequently compared favorably to the lives of these European women. Visiting India during her first world voyage, she comments that "the lot of the poorer classes of women in India and the East is not so hard as is commonly supposed" for men do all physical work. She then draws attention to the condition of the lives of European women. "I wish from my heart that the poor women in our countries were only half as well treated as in many which are considered in a very rude state."<sup>22</sup> In her second world journey, she took issue with those who compared the lives of the women of Borneo negatively to European women, suggesting that women of Borneo had difficult lives in comparison. She was quick to point out just how difficult the lives of lower class European women were. Some spent their entire day taking care of children and livestock, cooking, and then assisting

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<sup>22</sup> Ida Pfeiffer, *A Lady's Voyage Round the World* (London: Century, nd), 150.

their husbands in the fields; others spent the entire day bent over a wash tub and hauling water up four or five stories; others worked in factories with poor light never seeing the sun.<sup>23</sup> For Ida Pfeiffer, this concern was not merely a general concern for women, but a deeply personal one. "Heaven only knows what I suffered during eighteen years of my married life . . . from poverty and want" she wrote in her memoirs. "I performed household drudgery, and bore cold and hunger. . . . [I]n spite of all my exertions, there were days when I could hardly put any thing but dry bread before my poor children for their dinner."<sup>24</sup>

In *Reise einer Wienerin* her commentary on the lives of lower class European women took a somewhat different angle. In her description of a day spent with an innkeeper's wife, a woman not of the lower classes, she draws attention to this woman's life of leisure. This woman did "nothing but play with the children or gossip with the neighbors" all day.<sup>25</sup> Her husband saw to the running of the inn in every aspect, and even provided the meal for his wife. This woman, along with her children could afford to spend the hottest part of the season in the mountains of Lebanon. "What a difference between an Oriental and a European woman" was Ida Pfeiffer's response to that day,<sup>26</sup> and the European woman Ida Pfeiffer had in mind was certainly not an upper class woman.

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<sup>23</sup> Ida Pfeiffer, *Meine zweite Weltreise*, 4 vols. (Wien: Gerold, 1956), II:75, quoted in Watt, 346.

<sup>24</sup> Pfeiffer, *Last Travels*, xxi-xxii.

<sup>25</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 92.

<sup>26</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 93.

This woman's life of leisure was in marked contrast to Ida Pfeiffer's own life and the lives of other lower class European women.

*Reise einer Wienerin* is the travel narrative of a woman who has experienced another world that surpassed her own in many ways. She received unexpected consideration and respect from Middle Eastern men; she observed women, who through their very different lives nearly obliterated class consciousness; she was graciously hosted by the Joppa consul and her Turkish landlady. Even in those instances where she noted negative aspects of Middle Eastern life, she used it to critique her own world. As she turned her gaze onto various aspects of Middle Eastern life, including its classist structures, she used what she observed to highlight those aspects of her own society that affected her most deeply, specifically her life as a lower class woman, and the suspicion she met with as a travelling woman. Her new perspective left her feeling discontentment with and even judgmental of her own world. Ida Pfeiffer experienced a distancing from her own society which resulted in frequent comparisons between her experiences in the Middle East and comparable situations in Europe.

If her travels resulted in Ida Pfeiffer reassessing the values of her own society, her pilgrimage to Jerusalem reminded her how deeply rooted she still was in her society. Her pilgrimage was an experience many Austrians would have found meaningful as she found it. It did not create the suspicion that her travel did. As a pilgrim Ida Pfeiffer was uncompromisingly European and her laudatory opinion of so much of the Middle East is noticeably absent during her pilgrimage activities.



Much scholarship of pilgrimage has been dependent on Victor and Edith Turner's seminal study of pilgrimage, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*. They describe pilgrimage as a phenomenon that always moves the pilgrim toward "communitas" defined as a

relational quality of full unmediated communication, even communion, between definite and determined identities, which arises spontaneously in all kinds of groups, situations, and circumstances. It . . . combines the qualities of lowliness, sacredness, homogeneity and comradeship. . . . Communitas strains toward universalism and openness, it is a spring of pure possibility.<sup>27</sup>

Pilgrimage has an inherent unifying quality about it according to Turner and Turner, as the individual experiences of pilgrims combine to create a larger than life experience for the pilgrim group. John Eade and Michael Sallnow, even while they critique the Turner model, summarize well the implication of communitas for pilgrimage according to this model. Pilgrimage becomes

a state of unmediated and egalitarian association between individuals who are temporarily freed of the hierarchical secular roles and statuses which they bear in everyday life. . . . Pilgrimage . . . to the degree that it strips actors of their social personae and restores their essential individuality, is the ritual context *par excellence* [emphasis original] in which a world religion strives to realize its

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<sup>27</sup> Turner and Turner, 250-251.

defining transcultural universalism; for to reach the individual is to reach the universal.<sup>28</sup>

The Turner model of pilgrimage assumes, not only that pilgrimages involve large groups of people, but that a common geographical goal also ensures a common emotional and spiritual goal, i.e. pilgrims from around the world will approach the pilgrimage site all expecting to encounter the Divine in the same fashion, and that through this they will experience a measure of unity with their fellow pilgrims that obliterates the barriers of status, individuality and differences in culture, at least to a degree, among the pilgrims.<sup>29</sup>

To use such a model of pilgrimage for Ida Pfeiffer's experience would be to force it into a paradigm for which it is ill-suited; much of Ida Pfeiffer's description of her experience would have to be outrightly overlooked. She had no desire to interact with people of different classes or different ethnic groups, as a pilgrim. Her disdain for the expression of Christianity as she saw it in Jerusalem bears this out. Furthermore, her most intense experience took place when she was alone. She was a solitary pilgrim and she preferred it that way. Pilgrimage for her, was not an equalizing experience, but very much an experience that differentiated her from those around her and established her as European. Ida Pfeiffer's pilgrimage portrays a woman who did not identify with her

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<sup>28</sup> John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow, *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 4.

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With such a model, it is not surprising that Malcolm X's hadj serves as the quintessential pilgrimage in this model for Victor Turner. See Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1974), 168-169.

fellow pilgrims and worshipers, the Christians of the Middle East. *Communitas* was not created during Ida Pfeiffer's pilgrimage in Jerusalem, rather differences were made more apparent.

Scholars of pilgrimage have seen that the Turner model of pilgrimage overlooks the very significant differences that exist amongst pilgrims. Eade and Sallnow suggest that pilgrimage, rather than a unifying and universal experience, will be experienced in any number of ways, given that a variety of groups and people constitute a pilgrimage. In this way a pilgrimage is a

*realm of competing discourses* [emphasis original]. . . . It is these varied discourses with their multiple meanings and understandings, brought to the shrine by different categories of pilgrims, by residents and by religious specialists, that are constitutive of the cult itself. Equally, a cult might be constituted by mutual *misunderstandings*, as each group attempts to interpret the actions and motives of others in terms of its own specific discourse.<sup>30</sup>

If we are to understand Ida Pfeiffer's pilgrimage adequately, it will have to be seen as an expression of her particular construction of what Jerusalem was, and what the appropriate religious experience would be in her opinion. Furthermore, her particular construction of Jerusalem conflicted with other Christians', who were also present in Jerusalem. To see Ida Pfeiffer's pilgrimage as one discourse among many, rather than as a part of a universal Christian experience as Turner and Turner must, is to allow the

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<sup>30</sup> Eade and Sallnow, 5.

individuality of Ida Pfeiffer's experience to be recognized. It also provides an explanation for why Ida Pfeiffer had so little appreciation for the religious devotion she saw around her, for it was based on a different premise of what appropriate Christian worship should be in Jerusalem.

Ida Pfeiffer's expectations of her pilgrimage were certainly established by the outset of her journey, long before she reached Jerusalem. From childhood on she had yearned to undertake this pilgrimage. Her view of what a true pilgrimage experience should be clashed with the experience of her fellow worshipers and the Christian tradition that was a part of religious life in Jerusalem. She made use of the structures of Christianity present in Jerusalem, i.e. she claimed the sacred topography as her own, yet the particular expression of religious devotion she encountered there interfered with her own devotion, and was the antithesis of what her sense of appropriate worship was.

Ida Pfeiffer's *Pilgerziel* was undoubtedly the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and her long anticipated night vigil there. While she participated in the procession and received mass in the Chapel of the Sepulchre, activities she found extremely meaningful, she was greatly relieved when everyone quitted the Church and she was left alone to meditate. These were the most blissful moments of her life, she wrote. Interrupting this bliss were the several midnight masses that were conducted by various Christian groups resident in the Church. She had long anticipated this midnight mass, but was disappointed by it. She found it noisy and intrusive and rather than enhance her pilgrimage as she had expected it would, it made her own worship difficult. Unlike her

praise of Middle Eastern crowds, here the difference between herself and the "din" around her was meant to belittle the religious piety of Jerusalemites and in contrast, establish her own piety as superior.

The Greeks and Armenians beat and hammer upon pendent plates . . . the Roman Catholics play on the organ, and sing and pray aloud; while the priests of other religions [sic] likewise sing and shout. A great and inharmonious din is thus caused. The constant noise and multifarious ceremonies are calculated rather to disconcert than to inspire the stranger. I much preferred the peace and repose that reigned around, after the service had concluded, to all the pomp and circumstance attending it.<sup>31</sup>

Christians worshiping in the Middle East conflicted with Ida Pfeiffer's idea of what worship should be in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. She evaluated it only on the basis of how it enhanced or distracted from her own. She could not see as valid any piety that differed from hers.

As another integral part of her pilgrimage, Ida Pfeiffer went daily to the Church of St. Francis to pray.<sup>32</sup> In the Church of the Holy Sepulchre she found the Christian worship disruptive. In the Church of St. Francis, she had only disdain for the worship she observed, in spite of it being a Roman Catholic church.

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<sup>31</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 116.

<sup>32</sup> Ida Pfeiffer engaged in similar activity during her stopover in Rome during her return journey, going daily to St. Peter's Cathedral to pray.

The amount of devotion manifested by these people is very small. . . . They conversed together a good deal, and prayed very little. . . . The good people here must fancy they are doing a meritorious work by passing two or three hours in the church; no one seems to care *how* [emphasis original] this time is spent, or they would assuredly have been taught better.<sup>33</sup>

Ida Pfeiffer had little tolerance for anything that differed from her own religious values. She condemned worship she did not understand, thus distinguishing herself from Middle Eastern Christians. But she also would not tolerate any behavior that lessened that distinction. The worshipers at the Church of St. Francis threatened to do just that. The sense of decorum in the Church of St. Francis differed from hers, and therefore she condemned it as impious. She wished to pray in solitude and without disruption. Her fellow worshipers had other ideas of what appropriate worship was. As a foreign woman wearing European clothing, she drew attention to herself. People openly discussed her and even touched her. All this frustrated her and she found it "quite impossible to give [her] . . . mind to seriousness and devotion."<sup>34</sup> Like Harriet Martineau in her visit to the harems, Ida Pfeiffer preferred to observe from a distance; she described the women in the church as wearing "boots of yellow morocco", gowns of "white linen" and "a large shawl of the same material."<sup>35</sup> However, her fellow worshipers had no such notion of observing

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<sup>33</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 110.

<sup>34</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 110.

<sup>35</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 110.

from a distance and therefore maintaining a distinction. Much like the harem women described by Harriet Martineau, they wanted to experience the Other as tactile. She describes her fellow worshipers with obvious exasperation: "[they] pushed purposely against me, and put out their hands to grasp my bonnet, &c." <sup>36</sup> Elsewhere in her journey a similar kind of touching was patiently tolerated by Ida Pfeiffer. During a visit to a harem in the vicinity of Mount Carmel, the harem women had also touched her, but without annoying her greatly: "[f]irst they took my straw hat and put it upon their heads; then they felt the stuff of my traveller robe . . . and every lady came up and felt my hair."<sup>37</sup> Here in the Church of St. Francis, such touching was not tolerated. Here, where she wanted to maintain the difference between herself and her fellow worshipers, tactile encounters blurred those distinctions too much, for "touching cannot happen without a touching back, and thus there can be no clear opposition between subject and object, because the two positions constantly turn into each other. . . . [I]nasmuch as the things touched also touch each other, the borders are not firm."<sup>38</sup>

Dress became another way in which Ida Pfeiffer attempted to establish a distinction between herself and her fellow worshipers. Her clothing was of course what drew the attention to her in the first instance. In order to minimize the disruption she caused, the priest asked her to "make an alteration" on her dress, or at least remove her

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<sup>36</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 110.

<sup>37</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 165.

<sup>38</sup> Iris Marion Young, *Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays in Feminist Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 193-194.

straw hat and veil herself. Obviously her unveiled face was considered inappropriate in a church. Her response was immediate and unyielding. She would remove her hat, but she refused to veil herself.<sup>39</sup> Her anger was integrally linked to her being European; she informed the priest that "this was the first time such a thing had been required of a Frankish woman"<sup>40</sup> and she would not accommodate such a request. Her sense of what was appropriate clashed with the Christianity of the Church of St. Francis. The suggestion that she should accommodate herself to the custom of Middle Eastern Christians, that she remove some of the distinctiveness about herself as a European, was outrightly rejected. When Ida Pfeiffer refused to travel in male disguise her clothing marked her off as a woman, but here, like Harriet Martineau, clothing became a way to distance herself from Middle Easterners; it marked her off as European. Ida Pfeiffer was determined to remain a "Frankish woman" by refusing to cloth herself in a Middle Eastern fashion. She could remove what was offensive—the hat—but she would not don what she thought would remove the distinction—a veil—between herself and her fellow worshipers.

To say that Ida Pfeiffer assumed that the holy spots in Jerusalem were there primarily for her religious needs is perhaps extreme, but her strong reaction to Middle Eastern worship both in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and in the Church of St. Francis, her forceful attempt to maintain the distinction between herself and her fellow

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<sup>39</sup> According to her own description of the women's clothing in this church, this was only a partial veiling.

<sup>40</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 128.



worshippers, and her intransigence about altering her worship, evince how deeply attached she was to her particular understanding of the meaning of Jerusalem. That she would, at this point in her narrative, choose to describe so forcefully her distinction from Middle Easterners, suggests that she wished her readers to identify her as uncompromisingly European at this point. This is clearly evident from her inability, and lack of desire, to adjust and accommodate herself to the Christian traditions of Jerusalem. How her presence affected the worship of others was not of concern to her. She assumed the right to worship as she wanted to worship, and when this was disrupted in both the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and at Church of St. Francis, she expressed her intense dislike for that which caused the disruption.

As a form of journeying that reaffirmed the centre of her world, pilgrimage became a way of differentiating herself from her fellow worshippers in Jerusalem who did not share that centre. It established her as a European over and against Middle Eastern Christians. As an experience that differentiated her from her fellow Christians, it was a form of journeying that had the potential of legitimizing Ida Pfeiffer's more extensive travel through the Middle East, particularly as she was experiencing, and giving voice to an increasing distance from her own society. The ambivalent relationship of Ida Pfeiffer to her own world is reflected in *Reise einer Wienerin*: as a traveller, Ida Pfeiffer distanced herself from her world by criticizing it; as a pilgrim she drew herself to it by establishing herself as uncompromisingly European. The hesitant traveller who became ill upon leaving her familiar world still needed the reassurance provided by her

pilgrimage as she embarked on a life of travel. It reassured not only herself, but she hoped it would also still the criticisms directed at her for travelling into a world her society could neither define nor control.

There is a measure of self-absorption in Ida Pfeiffer's use of the Middle East, as she gives voice to her own ambivalence. The Middle East and its people were given value in so far as she was able to appropriate them to her own experience. She both idealized them and condemned them as she needed to for her own purposes. A group of women, travelling to Mecca, on their own pilgrimage no less, were, for a brief moment, given voice by Ida Pfeiffer in expressing an alternative way of relating. Travelling together on a boat from Atfé to Cairo, these women made every effort to assist Ida Pfeiffer. They procured food for her at each stop; they insisted that she cook her food first on their fire; they yielded their seats on the deck whenever she needed one. She accepted all of this with gratitude, and again commented that Europeans could learn from these women in their treatment of others: "[t]hey all behaved in such a courteous and obliging way, that these uncultivated people might have put to shame many a civilised European."<sup>41</sup> On this basis the women in the cabin next to her were truly good in her estimation—as the Joppa consul, the Turkish landlady and the Middle Eastern crowds had been good—for they surpassed Europeans in their treatment of her. In spite of all kind attention to her needs, she found it difficult to accommodate their request that one of them be allowed to share her quarters in order to ease their overcrowded space. Reluctantly

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<sup>41</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 226.

she allowed them to carry out their ablutions and prayers in her cabin, only because she spent most of her time on deck anyway.

These woman, however, wanted more than to assist her and in return make use of her cabin. These women also wanted to know her name. She gave it to them, and they gave her theirs. Six days later she was riding across the desert towards Suez in a camel caravan, when a voice cried very distinctly, "Ida! Ida!" To her great surprise, these same women riding at the head of the caravan recognized her and expressed their great delight at seeing her again. She was amazed that they had remembered her name, because she had long forgotten theirs. They had remembered her, not only as a European, but as a woman named "Ida". She designated them only as "some Arab women who had made the voyage" with her.<sup>42</sup>

For a brief moment, and it is no more than that, *Reise einer Wienerin* allows for the possibility that there was another way for Europeans and Middle Easterners to interact. Unlike Harriet Martineau, who refused to admit that the harem women she encountered could be anything but victims of a horrific system of slavery, Ida Pfeiffer could acknowledge, if only fleetingly, that these women proffered a different way of relating.

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<sup>42</sup> Pfeiffer, *Holy Land*, 255.

**Chapter V**  
**Truth Beyond Doubt: The Middle East as Illustrating the Bible**

*"Monday, 6th.* I awoke when scarce a streak of dawn yet showed, and thought of the day which had thus greeted the Israelites with its morning light so near this very spot." Thus begins Amy Fullerton's reflections on her first morning in the Middle East. Awakening in the modern town of Suez where the newly opened Canal opened into the Red Sea, Amy Fullerton's mind was drawn back thousands of years to the biblical story of Moses and the fleeing Hebrew slaves. She was not in the modern Middle East, but in a land of the distant past. The route of the fleeing slaves, the battle fields where Joshua conquered the promised land, the stream where David collected stones for his sling, the Nazareth hills among which Jesus was raised, this was the world that she entered when she disembarked the ship that had brought her from Italy. Turning from her own waking moments, she continues by drawing her readers into the experience of the Hebrew slaves. Her readers cannot escape from the implications of her experience. "May we all be kept from the Pharaohs of wickedness which pursue us in this world, and may we ever hold to the cloud and pillar of fire of His presence, who is ever near to shield and protect His redeemed ones!"<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Amy Fullerton Fullerton, *A Lady's Ride Through Palestine and Syria; With Notices of Egypt and the Canal of Suez* (London: S. W. Partridge & Co., 1872), 19.

The Middle East was for Amy Fullerton, a "mythscape—a repository of Christian sacrality"<sup>2</sup> where the biblical world, her world and the world of her readers were all collapsed into one. Amy Fullerton had come to the Middle East to have the Bible and her faith in it confirmed and enriched.

Amy Fullerton left Italy on February 24, 1871, and returned to Florence on July 1, having spent four months in the Middle East. How much time she spent in Italy, either prior to her departure or after her return, she does not record, for that is not of importance for the purpose of this book. *A Lady's Ride* is not about her journey *per se*, it is about the Holy Land. It is not about leaving England and home for a foreign world, it is not about gaining a new perspective. It is about reassuring herself and her readers that their religious beliefs were valid and right, not unlike Ida Pfeiffer's religious experience. Glenn Bowman points out that "pilgrimage narratives . . . serve to render the strangeness of the East familiar to a people who know it solely through the symbols and parables of scriptural religion."<sup>3</sup> For Amy Fullerton, the Middle East never moved beyond what was familiar, beyond the "symbols and parables" of her nineteenth century Anglican Evangelicalism. Hers is a book that describes a woman whose received frame of reference had created a world out of the Middle East long before she ever left England.

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<sup>2</sup> Glenn Bowman, "Pilgrim Narratives of Jerusalem and the Holy Land: A Study in Ideological Distortion," in *Sacred Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage*, ed. Alan Morinis (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1991), 153.

<sup>3</sup> Bowman, "Pilgrim Narratives," 155.

*A Lady's Ride* is directed towards maintaining and strengthening this world. "Pilgrimage is after all a form of copying."<sup>4</sup>

Amy Fullerton was not a renowned world traveller. If it were not for her book, she would have disappeared into obscurity. Nor is this surprising, for *A Lady's Ride* is not of outstanding quality. Her experience is not singular, it is generic, like countless other nineteenth century travellers to the Middle East. Amy Fullerton stands less as an individual and more as a representative of a large segment of nineteenth century travellers to the Middle East.

In particular, three emphases found in *A Lady's Ride* can be found throughout the corpus of travel literature of the Middle East written in the latter half of the nineteenth century (and even in the beginning of the twentieth). Amy Fullerton shared with many of her contemporary travellers a desire to experience the Bible as alive, as flesh and blood being acted out in front of her eyes. The Middle East provided this opportunity. Integrally connected to this desire was Amy Fullerton's continual attempt to demonstrate the veracity of the Bible. The nineteenth century saw the "truth" of the Bible threatened and many travellers to the Middle East used their "findings" to bolster the faltering credibility of the Bible. Finally, Amy Fullerton desired that her readers participate in, and learn from her travels. *A Lady's Ride* is not merely a description of one woman's travels in the Middle East, it is aimed to fortify and enrich the faith of its readers, as much as it

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<sup>4</sup> Said, 177.

did its author's. In none of this was Amy Fullerton unique, but very much a product of her times.

Amy Fullerton's focus had profound implications for how she viewed the people of the Middle East. The primary way in which Amy Fullerton accomplished her aims was to people her biblical landscape with biblical characters, and for this she used nineteenth century flesh and blood Palestinians, Egyptians, and Syrians. People with lives that extended far beyond their brief encounter with a visiting British woman were reduced by her to being defined by that brief moment of encounter, and furthermore, that encounter was defined by a religious experience entirely removed from their world. They became little more than biblical figures in a sacred geography that served to strengthen Amy Fullerton's faith and the faith of her readers in its various facets. They played an integral role in the faith of Christians far removed from their lives, but apart from this, their lives were meaningless to Amy Fullerton. Amy Fullerton and the thousands of other visitors to the Middle East of whom she is representative, extracted from the Middle East that which they needed in order to enhance their own belief. Such de-humanizing rendered the people of the Middle East mute, for they were forever bound to play only one role—a biblical one—on the pages of Amy Fullerton's narrative, regardless of the nature of their lives.

Amy Fullerton's vision of the Middle East is deceptively benign as a solitary narrative. As pilgrim account piles up on pilgrim account, in which the Middle East and its people are appropriated for the sole benefit of the pilgrim, the destructiveness of such

appropriation is dulled and even obliterated from the minds of those reading the accounts, for who ever stops to think that the Middle East is not first and foremost the Holy Land, there to be experienced by the sincere pilgrim?

To view the Middle East primarily as the place of biblical events is, of course, not peculiar to Amy Fullerton and the nineteenth century. As long as Christians have made pilgrimages to the Holy Land, their primary guidebook has been the Bible.<sup>5</sup> Amy Fullerton, however, was obsessed with the parallels between what she saw in the Middle East and the biblical account as she knew it in a particularly nineteenth century fashion. Philip Schaff, a Union Theological Seminary professor expressed well a widely experienced response to the Middle East when he described what his journey to the Middle East in 1876 had meant for him.

My faith in the Bible has not been shaken, but confirmed. Many facts and scenes, which seem to float ghost-like in the clouds to a distant reader, assume flesh and blood in the land of their birth. There is a marvelous correspondence

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<sup>5</sup> For example, the two earliest pilgrim narratives of Christians visiting the Holy Land are dominated by visits to biblical sites. The pilgrimage account of the unnamed Bordeaux Pilgrim (333 C.E.) consists of an itinerary of places visited, most of which were biblical sites. Likewise Egeria's account (c. 394 C.E.) is dominated by her visits to every biblical location known to the Church. For both however, the landscape was devoid of people. See Aubrey Stewart, trans., "Itinerary from Bordeaux to Jerusalem," *Library of the Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society*, Vol. I. 1887, reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1971 and John Wilkinson, trans. *Egeria's Travels in the Holy Land*, Rev. Ed. (Jerusalem: Ariel Publishing House, Warminster, England: Ares and Phillips, 1981).



between the Land and the Book. *The Bible is the best handbook for the Holy land, and the Holy Land is the best commentary on the Bible* [emphasis mine].<sup>6</sup>

Here is a complete absorption of the Middle East into the framework of the Bible. In a reciprocal fashion, the Middle East and the Bible interpret each other, and leave no room for any alternative meaning. Like Amy Fullerton, Schaff collapsed his world, the Middle East and the biblical world into one. With the Bible in hand, a traveller could understand the Middle East in its entirety. Nothing else of importance existed in the Middle East for the serious Christian.

In order for Amy Fullerton to create her mythscape, she had to establish the all inclusive nature of the biblical world, i.e. every possible place she visited was linked with its biblical past. Passing the road to Shiloh on her way from Jerusalem to Damascus, she noted that there was nothing to see there, not even ruins or scenery, yet "its site must be ever most interesting to the Christian . . . [for] this spot once contained the Tabernacle of the Lord."<sup>7</sup> That is not all. Not bothering to stop at Shiloh, she nonetheless used this opportunity to describe every biblical event that was connected to Shiloh whether that was the dedication of Samuel, the capture of the ark, or the prophetic condemnations of Amos and Hosea. Riding through the desert area between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea she was reminded of David and the many times he "crossed and re-crossed these

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<sup>6</sup> Philip Schaff, *Through Bible Lands: Notes of Travel in Egypt, the Desert, and Palestine* (New York: American Tract Society, 1878), 383-384.

<sup>7</sup> Fullerton, 241.

mountains to avoid the persecution of Saul"<sup>8</sup> and then of "the forty days of Satanic persecution endured by our Lord" in this desert.<sup>9</sup> Resting underneath the Oak of Mamre near Hebron reminded her not only of Abraham, but of "the spies sent by Joshua" who found here "the splendid grapes of Eschol" and then of David's conquest of the Jebusites.<sup>10</sup> This litany continues wherever she travelled. No stone was left unturned in her search for biblical landscapes.

What is noticeably absent from *A Lady's Ride* is the nineteenth century Middle East. It was present in the sense that Amy Fullerton rode through the crowded streets of Cairo on a donkey, took a boat from Port Said to Joppa and stayed in a pilgrim hostel in Jerusalem, but she submitted her experience in the Middle East to such a penetrating interpretation given shape by biblical history, that her readers were left, not with a strong sense of what the Middle East was like, but with a strong sense of how much the biblical world of the past was still very accessible to them even though they were living in a world far removed from it.<sup>11</sup> This was, of course, the intent. Topography was biblical, not nineteenth century; the Middle East was shaped by biblical events, not by nineteenth

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<sup>8</sup> Fullerton, 135.

<sup>9</sup> Fullerton, 136.

<sup>10</sup> Fullerton, 206.

<sup>11</sup> There is one major exception in *A Lady's Ride*. Amy Fullerton is equally concerned with the Protestant mission work in the Middle East. This is the focus of the following chapter.

century realities. It was as if the thousands of years that separated the nineteenth century from the biblical world did not exist.

This was a common way of "reading" the Middle East among nineteenth century travellers. Thousands travelled to the Holy Land and returned home having seen biblical scenes enacted before them as they gazed upon the landscape. Isabel Burton saw Boaz' field where Ruth gleaned barley when she travelled to Bethlehem.<sup>12</sup> Kate Kraft saw "the fair maidens of Shiloh" dancing with cymbals and reeds celebrating the grape harvest, being raped by the Benjaminite men when she and her party rode through the arid valley of Ain-el-Haramyeh.<sup>13</sup> Caroline Hazard pictured Jesus feeding five thousand people when she saw "the round flat loaves of bread, baked on both sides" in the market of Acre.<sup>14</sup> Like Amy Fullerton, none of these women were actually looking at people when they saw the biblical scene, but the association of the location was enough for them to visualize the biblical characters needed to complete the biblical story. Every location that could be was linked to biblical events. The list became endless.

To locate, in imagination, biblical characters upon a biblical landscape may seem innocuous, but Amy Fullerton relentlessly appropriated people throughout her travels in the Middle East in this same manner, in order for them to animate her carefully created biblical landscape. Returning to Cairo from a visit to the Wells of Moses, she made

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<sup>12</sup> Burton, *Inner Life*, II:178.

<sup>13</sup> Kraft, 253.

<sup>14</sup> Caroline Hazard, *A Brief Pilgrimage in the Holy Land* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1909), 13.

several such connections for her readers.

Our return was only marked by our meeting a group of Bedouins, in which was a blind man, who, staff in hand, pursued his way seemingly fearless of obstacle. So might the blind beggar have appeared who sought aid from the Lord. . . . We saw at a distance strings of dromedaries bringing brushwood to sell, and then to return with a little provision of corn to their village. Thus were Joseph's brethren obliged to seek food in their days of famine.<sup>15</sup>

From her hotel in Cairo she saw several Egyptians launching a boat which required it be moved from the shore into the Nile. This reminded her of the Hebrew slaves. "As when Israel was afflicted in Egypt, it appears they still use a union of human strength to accomplish various works, all applying it at the same moment."<sup>16</sup> Surprisingly, when seeing a Muslim pray, her biblical eye saw the apostle Peter.

[A] Musselman coming out on one of the distant house-tops, reverently spread his carpet and prostrated himself for prayer, in an attitude of the most lowly obeisance, and remained for some minutes in earnest devotion. . . . Peter was so praying when the vision of the sheet full of unclean things was let down before him.<sup>17</sup>

Not only observations made from a distance such as street scenes, but much more

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<sup>15</sup> Fullerton, 26.

<sup>16</sup> Fullerton, 20.

<sup>17</sup> Fullerton, 224.

intimate and extended interactions with people in the Middle East were shaped by Amy Fullerton to conform to the biblical world she had created, confirming how thoroughly she was entrenched in her view of the Middle East. On a day trip from Bethlehem, she and her party were invited into the tent of a Bedouin sheik because two of his sons had been students of the German missionary present in the group. Here they "received the kindest welcome" and were served coffee, cakes and bread. This was an opportunity few travellers had, but it too was endowed with meaning largely to the extent to which she was able to make this sheik conform to the biblical Abraham. "The scene seemed like a realisation of the life of the patriarchs. Reference was always made to the Sheik . . . for every movement in the household economy, and a word from him seemed sufficient to ensure obedience."<sup>18</sup> If her mind's eye was able to see the plain upon which Abraham pitched his tent, then it became simple enough to see Abraham in the Bedouin sheik on that plain. A blind man, a caravan, Egyptian sailors, a devout Muslim are all likewise appropriated for her biblical landscape. The blind man became a recipient of Jesus' healing powers, the sailors became Hebrew slaves, a Muslim became a first century apostle. It little mattered what the actual event was or who the people were, what mattered was that Abraham, Peter, Hebrew slaves, etc. could still be encountered and therefore, understood. Not only did Amy Fullerton "know" the biblical world and how people lived, she "knew" equally well that life had not changed since that time for people in the Middle East. Regardless of what the lives of people entailed, what mattered to

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<sup>18</sup> Fullerton, 135.

Amy Fullerton was that, for one moment, she apprehended them as biblical figures. Implicit in her use of Middle Easterners for her purpose, is that *her* gaze was able to capture the true import of the lives of these people.<sup>19</sup>

Discovering such "flesh and blood" embodiment of biblical events consumed many nineteenth century visitors to the Middle East, including Amy Fullerton. Such a "fetish with Scriptures"<sup>20</sup> was fed by Amy Fullerton's desire to make her experience meaningful for her readers. Naturally, her readers could not see what she saw but as she described the Middle East as the biblical world, the Bible could be endowed with greater meaning for her readers as it had been for her. Amy Fullerton conveyed a very strong sense that her experience was not merely her own. She dedicated her book to her nieces and nephews and hoped "its contents may lead them to realise as deep an interest in the subject of which it treats, as it has been my happiness to experience in the suggestions

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<sup>19</sup> Of course Amy Fullerton was not the only traveller who continuously saw biblical events and people before her eyes. Elizabeth Butler, *Letters From the Holy Land* (London: Adam and Clark Black, 1912), 34 upon visiting Bethlehem, commented, "How many figures of Our Lady we saw about the field and lanes with babes in their arms!" Kraft, 274 likewise alluded to Mary when she saw the women of Nazareth drawing water. Such "biblicizing" was not without its critics, even in the nineteenth century, the most notorious of course being Mark Twain who travelled to the Middle East in 1867. He saw through such a view of the Middle East, but attacked, through his satire and wit, only the romanticizing of the Middle East. He was not concerned with the effect such romanticizing may have upon the description of people in the Middle East. So, for example, he claimed that "Oriental scenes look best in steel engravings. I cannot be imposed upon anymore by that picture of the Queen of Sheba visiting Solomon. I shall say to myself, 'You look fine, madam, but your feet are not clean, and you smell like a camel.'" See Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad or the New Pilgrims Progress* (New York: Signet Classic, 1966), 393. Originally published as Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad or the New Pilgrims Progress*, (Hartford: American Publishing Co, 1869).

<sup>20</sup> Pemble, 56.

and reflections it has throughout offered to myself." <sup>21</sup> Not only her family, but all her readers were drawn into her experience as she repeatedly pointed out the implications of what she was witnessing to her readers.

Ian Bradley characterizes Evangelicals of the nineteenth century as being intensely concerned with propagating "'serious' behavior among the people of England." <sup>22</sup> Great effort went into spreading their beliefs and values throughout British society, and "[i]f they could not convert the entire population of England to vital Christianity, the Evangelicals hoped at least to make sure that all should act as though they had been."<sup>23</sup> This emphasis manifested itself in travel accounts to the Middle East as well. David Klatzker has demonstrated that generally, for "genteel" Protestant travellers (whom he defines as bourgeois Evangelical) "Holy Land travel writing was viewed as a teaching tool—if it did not provide a forum for serious theology, it at least helped to provide religious knowledge and spiritual uplift." He has examined only American accounts, but his conclusion is equally valid for British Evangelicals such as Amy Fullerton. <sup>24</sup> Amy Fullerton, like other Evangelicals who were concerned for the well-being of their own society, wanted her book to influence her readers towards such serious living. There is

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<sup>21</sup> Fullerton, np.

<sup>22</sup> Ian Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness: The Evangelical Impact on the Victorians* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1976), 147.

<sup>23</sup> Bradley, 145.

<sup>24</sup> David Klatzker, "American Christian Travelers to the Holy Land, 1821-1939," Ph.D. diss. (Temple University, 1987), 278.

a pervasive sense of didacticism throughout her narrative. There are lessons to be learned in the Middle East, and she is making these moral truths available to her readers. She is offering to them the benefits *and* obligations of her experience through her narrative.<sup>25</sup>

Writing of fourth century pilgrims, Robert L. Wilken states, "[f]or the pilgrim the holy places were not simply historical sites that invoked a memory of the past. Seeing was more than seeing, it was a metaphor for participation."<sup>26</sup> For Amy Fullerton as for fourth century pilgrims, participation in the biblical events was an integral part of her experience. Not only did she awake where Israel first awoke, she wept over Jerusalem, she agonized over her sin in the Garden of Gethsemane, she sat under the Oak of Mamre as did Abraham. But her participation was always framed in a didactic way for her readers, for she wanted to extend that participation to include her readers.

An excursion to the vicinity of Philip's well where the apostle was said to have baptized the Ethiopian, became an opportunity to instruct her readers on the importance of conversion, and the faithfulness of God. "Here the eunuch sought and found the Word of Life, and became a baptised Christian. Thus the earnest seeker ever finds a ready

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<sup>25</sup> Children's books were another avenue through which Evangelicals propagated their beliefs and values. Trips to the Middle East also became the subject of children's book, which contained strong didactic elements. See Mary Hazelton Blanchard Wade, *Twin Travelers in the Holy Land* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co, 1919) and L. A. Green, *A Girl's Journey Through Europe, Egypt and the Holy Land* (Nashville: House of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, 1889).

<sup>26</sup> Wilken, 116.



answer."<sup>27</sup>

At the Jordan River the experience of the people of Israel was used by Amy Fullerton to provide moral instruction to her readers, again with a strong emphasis on conversion. "It would appear as if to it [the plain through which the Jordan flows] was accorded an ever fresh spring of life, nurtured by these holy waters, to remind the pilgrim that the life can only be sustained in the soul by the waters of that rock which followed a wearied band in its wanderings through the desert."<sup>28</sup>

Amy Fullerton's most meaningful spiritual experience occurred in the Garden of Gethsemane while she was meditating on the suffering of Jesus.<sup>29</sup> Her account of this hour was not only a reflection of her own participation in this suffering, but throughout, her readers are closely drawn into the experience.

Many were the reminiscences which arose in connection with the scene before me. . . . It was a solemn moment for reflection on sin, on the great and dominant power over the human heart of that great enemy of mankind—Satan—existing now in so many fearful forms. . . . Oh, what refuge is there not in prayer, and who, with such convictions here raised, could pass on without it,—prayer that we may be kept from the evil to come,—prayer that our hearts may be opened more and more to the blessed truths left us in the teachings

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<sup>27</sup> Fullerton, 228.

<sup>28</sup> Fullerton, 187.

<sup>29</sup> She entirely ignores the Church of the Holy Sepulchre as a site of Jesus' passion; she does not even describe a visit to the Church.

of our Divine Master, who, having loved us, will love us to the end.<sup>30</sup>

Biblical locations did not merely contribute to making the Bible come alive, they brought with them moral responsibility. Through Amy Fullerton's self-appointed intermediary role, the powerful effects of biblical locations were to be felt even among her far off readers.

Her appropriation of the Middle East for her didactic purposes was extended also to the people she encountered in the Middle East. As they served to make the Bible come alive, so they could be used to provide moral instruction for her readers. Like a flesh and blood sermon, landscape and the people in it were used to instruct her readers.<sup>31</sup>

Amy Fullerton was invited to participate in a Jewish Passover meal at the home of the chief rabbi of Jerusalem. Ironically she points out that the invitation had been issued hesitatingly because her hosts naturally dreaded "the curiosity of travellers in general,"<sup>32</sup> these being, in the main, Christians. She however, without apology, submitted that evening's experience to a thoroughly Christian interpretation, resulting in unyielding judgment of Jews. Her opinion of this Jewish family and the Jews throughout Palestine, was nothing unique. Like many Evangelicals, she shared the view that the Jews had brought upon themselves a curse by rejecting Jesus, but that, in fulfillment of biblical prophecy, Jews of the Diaspora would return to Palestine, and be converted to

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<sup>30</sup> Fullerton, 117-118.

<sup>31</sup> Caroline Hazard's travel narrative is cast in the form of twelve sermons she preached at Wellesley College of which she was president.

<sup>32</sup> Fullerton, 126.

Christianity, this as a precursor to the return of Jesus. This belief was widespread among Evangelicals, and its roots ran deep in Evangelical thought.<sup>33</sup> It pervaded Amy Fullerton's characterization of the Jews she encountered, including the Rabbi and his family. From the Jewish family she received hospitality. In return she passed harsh judgment, relying on widely held ideas among Evangelicals that Jews had deliberately rejected Jesus, and turned even that into a lesson for her readers.

What a lesson for us who would wish for greater evidence by sight! [W]ho amongst the nations of the earth [meaning the Jews] have proved themselves more willful and stiff-necked—to the last moment of their appointed career, denying even the evidence of their senses in the miracles of our Lord? Who would not tremble at the natural hardness and wickedness of the human heart which is thus exhibited!<sup>34</sup>

The warning is unambiguous. Her readers should be careful not to reject Jesus as the Jews had. The Jewish family became an object lesson for her readers.

Other people and events witnessed by Amy Fullerton were more deliberately shaped to conform to the biblical account, contributing to her intent to make the Bible come alive, but also providing further material for moralizing. In Lebanon she visited the home of a bride, together with the missionary in that area. Few visitors to the Holy Land

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<sup>33</sup> See Mayir Vereté, "The Restoration of the Jews in English Protestant Thought 1790-1840," in *Middle Eastern Studies*, 8 (1972): 3-50. This was the impetus behind much of the mission work in the Middle East. See next chapter.

<sup>34</sup> Fullerton, 126.

were able to interact with local people in such a way, and Amy Fullerton was able to describe the bride, the surroundings, the food eaten, the conversation, and the bridegroom in great detail, but it was overtly cast in biblical language. "It was almost with a feeling of awe that we saw, advancing through the uncertain light, a procession of twelve or fourteen figures draped in white, and each carrying in her hand (extended before her) a lighted lamp. They came up the steps at our feet, and passed into the house." <sup>35</sup> As she continued her description of what is clearly the parable of the ten virgins, Amy Fullerton deliberately shaped her narrative to conform to the biblical text. These women accompanied the bride to the home of the bridegroom and when they reached it, they called "'Behold, the bridegroom cometh!' and with this signal . . . he appears. . . . All who are of the marriage party enter and 'the *door is shut* [emphasis original].'" <sup>36</sup> This scene was very deliberately shaped by the use of actual biblical text to conform to the biblical parable. And then, having reduced this wedding to a parable, she drew the natural parabolic conclusion. "May we never be found knocking for admittance at this solemn moment, but with lamps trimmed with 'the Oil of the Spirit,' be called upon to enter 'into the joy of our Lord.'" <sup>37</sup>

As Amy Fullerton wanted the Bible to come alive for her readers and through that, inspire them to "godly living", so she wanted her experience in the Middle East to assist

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<sup>35</sup> Fullerton, 316.

<sup>36</sup> Fullerton, 316.

<sup>37</sup> Fullerton, 316.

in establishing the Bible's veracity. Her obsession with finding biblical parallels was directed into a tenacious attempt to authenticate the Bible. Palestine was ransacked "for 'evidence' of the accuracy of the Bible"<sup>38</sup> in the nineteenth century, brought on by a widespread concern for the credibility of the Bible. Naomi Shepherd describes the two developments of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that brought on this concern. Geology, on the one hand, had established that the earth was millions of years old thus seriously challenging the then held view of creation based on the literal interpretation of the biblical accounts. On the other hand, the study of the Bible in its "historical and cultural context" which "pointed out inconsistencies and chronological impossibilities . . . made it difficult to read the text with faith in its literal truth."<sup>39</sup> Many Christians, and in particular Evangelicals found these developments alarming. In an attempt to combat them, Evangelicals turned to Palestine for the needed proof that the Bible, as it stood, was entirely reliable. If they could show that biblical places actually existed, that the teachings of Jesus were drawn from real life in the Middle East and that biblical customs were still practiced as described in the Bible, Evangelicals were confident that the authority of the Bible would be assured.

Several events of the nineteenth century confirm the widespread importance of such authentication for Evangelicals. In 1838 a Union Theological Seminary professor Edward Robinson travelled to the Middle East, crisscrossing the land in an attempt to

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<sup>38</sup> Shepherd, 18.

<sup>39</sup> Shepherd, 77. I am relying on Shepherd, 73-106 for the above discussion on the authentication of the Bible.

uncover the location of biblical sites. He sorted through Christian tradition, local accounts and archeology in order to establish which locations were authentically biblical. The resulting book, *Biblical Researches in Palestine* <sup>40</sup> became the "cornerstone of 19th century Palestine exploration" <sup>41</sup> and was used by countless travellers to acquaint themselves with Palestine. <sup>42</sup> Its influence was widespread and his opinion was highly respected. His book also confirmed for many Christians, the historicity of the Bible.

In 1865 the Palestine Exploration Fund was founded in England with the intent to uncover biblical locations through archeology. <sup>43</sup> "To recover the real past and the real people of the Book was the task the P[alestine] E[xploration] F[und] set itself."<sup>44</sup> Expectations for what the Palestine Exploration Fund would uncover were high. Visiting the archeological excavations became a necessary stop on a visitor's tour of Jerusalem. Amy Fullerton was very impressed with the work that had been done on the temple mount

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<sup>40</sup> Edward Robinson, *Biblical Researches in Palestine and the Adjacent Regions: A Journal of Travels in the Years 1838 & 1852*, 3 vols. (London: John Murray, 1856). Initially his book was published after his first visit to the Middle East in 1838. A subsequent volume was added following his visit in 1852.

<sup>41</sup> Ben-Arieh, 88.

<sup>42</sup> In 1898, sixty years after Robinson first travelled to the Middle East, Baedeker is still recommending it as a source for the geography of Palestine and Syria. Baedeker, cxvi.

<sup>43</sup> See A. L. Tibawi, *British Interests in Palestine 1800-1901: A Study of Religious and Educational Enterprise* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 183-185 for a discussion on the origins and purpose of the Palestine Exploration Fund.

<sup>44</sup> Barbara W. Tuchman, *Bible and Sword: England and Palestine From the Bronze Age to Balfour* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1956), 245.

to uncover the stones in the walls of the temple built by King Herod, some of which "still bear the mark of having been bevelled." <sup>45</sup> Kate Kraft, upon visiting the excavations in Jerusalem expressed what many people felt. She hoped that these excavations would "satisfy the skeptical and confirm the believer."<sup>46</sup>

Whether it was archeology, geography, or biblical customs enacted before their eyes, travellers to the Middle East looked everywhere for confirmation of their understanding of the truth of the Bible, which not only assured them that the Bible was reliable, but also confirmed their faith. Pemble describes the Protestant Victorian traveller as striving to "unravel [the Bible] in a spirit of stern evangelical literalism. . . . His supreme object in coming to the Holy Land was to see through the accumulated layers of legend, tradition, and romance that obscured the Scriptures, and confirm their credibility by relating them to real places and real people." <sup>47</sup>

Amy Fullerton was thoroughly a part of this endeavor. For Amy Fullerton this became the purpose *par excellence* of a journey to the Middle East. The value of her journey was wrapped up in how thoroughly the Bible could be authenticated. Upon leaving Palestine, Amy Fullerton devoted some time to reflecting on the significance of her experience. She concluded that

[i]t has been well said, by a writer of considerable talent, "That there is a magic

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<sup>45</sup> Fullerton, 154.

<sup>46</sup> Kraft, 223.

<sup>47</sup> Pemble, 58.

power in the living reality of the land of Palestine which neither poet's pen nor painter's pencil can ever appropriate." It is indeed true, that when the eye wanders over the plane and mountain, or the foot touches the Holy ground, the superiority of the real over the ideal is at once felt.<sup>48</sup>

For Amy Fullerton the "real" were those places and those words that could be fully verified and she was confident that many such sites existed, which she listed for the benefit of her readers. Whether or not a site was the actual biblical site was of paramount importance. The traveller who came to the Middle East for any other purpose had "missed the true object of his journey to Palestine."<sup>49</sup> Many travellers in the Middle East, even those who shared Amy Fullerton's passion to find biblical truth, were fascinated by Eastern culture and the pages of their narratives are filled with descriptions of these things and people. Not so Amy Fullerton. A person made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in order to experience the truth of the Bible, whether that was in seeing it enacted before their eyes or having its truth verified in other ways.

She was confident that the oasis known as the Wells of Moses was indeed the "first resting-place of the Israelites."<sup>50</sup> The field of Judas' death was "verified by the discovery of skulls of races foreign to the land."<sup>51</sup> A white iris she was given was "by

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<sup>48</sup> Fullerton, 231.

<sup>49</sup> Fullerton, 231.

<sup>50</sup> Fullerton, 25.

<sup>51</sup> Fullerton, 13.



many thought to be the 'lily of the fields.'" <sup>52</sup> The Garden of Gethsemane pleased her because she was told that it was quite possible that the olive trees were there when Jesus was there. And even if that were not the case, "their hoary age harmonizes well with that period. They are also in a locality to which there is no opposing fact, but much confirmatory evidence."<sup>53</sup>

If biblical sites could be verified, and thus contribute to the nineteenth century confidence in the Bible, so could biblical words be verified. Amy Fullerton was further assured that the Bible was true when she was able to make similar connections between customs of the Middle East and biblical practices. "Another very affecting realization of Bible language" she wrote,

is seen in the custom of the bakers and many well-to-do persons, who having live coals left after the baking or cooking in their houses is over, are prepared to give these remains to the poorer class, who come through the streets with an iron tray and a cushion on their heads, and receive the gift of these still living embers. Thus *in truth* [emphasis mine] is carried out "heaping coals of fire."<sup>54</sup>

The Psalmist's words "A lantern unto my feet and a light unto my paths" were verified when she heard that "a lantern must be borne before the passenger" <sup>55</sup> in order to

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<sup>52</sup> Fullerton, 16.

<sup>53</sup> Fullerton, 118.

<sup>54</sup> Fullerton, 222. Romans 12:20.

<sup>55</sup> Fullerton, 221. Psalm 119:105.

protect oneself against possible attack. She included a sketch of "the thistle of Palestine" in her book to confirm Isaiah's words that "There shall come up briers and thorns."<sup>56</sup>

Other nineteenth century travellers were just as taken up with such paralleling between the Bible and the Middle East. For Ellen Miller the Song of Solomon was confirmed when she heard the popping of guns at night in the vineyards meant to keep foxes away.<sup>57</sup> For Margaret Thomas the prophetic text was verified when she saw men crushing pottery near Jerusalem.<sup>58</sup> The Reverend Beverly Carradine was fervently reminded of Jesus' instructions to his disciples "Go ye into the city and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water" when he encountered a man with a pitcher in the streets of Jerusalem.<sup>59</sup> In fact, several chapters in Reverend Carradine's book were devoted to uncovering such parallels. His book became a systematic attempt to find as many parallels as possible, regardless of the relevancy, or even the absurdity of such parallels. Others even constructed such parallels. Yeshayahu Nir describes Alexander Keith, a Scottish clergyman who published a book entitled *Evidence of the Truth of the Christian Religion* in 1847, who included in his book a photograph of the "desolation of

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<sup>56</sup> Fullerton, 234. Isaiah 5:6.

<sup>57</sup> Ellen Miller, *Alone Through Syria*, (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1891), 144. She is referring to Song of Solomon 2:15: "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines."

<sup>58</sup> Margaret Thomas, *Two Years in Palestine & Syria* (London: John C. Nimmo, 1900), 146. "Even so will I shiver this people and this city, as one shivers a potter's vessel that cannot be made whole again." Jeremiah 19:11.

<sup>59</sup> Beverly Carradine, *A Journey to Palestine* (Toronto: A Sims, 1892), 428. He is referring to Mark 14:13.

Jerusalem" confirming the prophet's words that "Zion shall be plowed as a field."<sup>60</sup> The picture, however, was carefully constructed; a field bordering the wall of Jerusalem was used, but only a fraction of the wall was included in the picture. The entire city, which was of course not in ruins, was kept beyond the frame of the picture.<sup>61</sup>

Not only was the Middle East one great source for illustrations which verified the Bible, biblical prophecy was being fulfilled right in front of her eyes, asserted Amy Fullerton. Her visit to the two Muslim mosques on the Temple Mount verified the words of Ezekiel "which point to the twenty-five unbelieving men who, with their backs to the Holy of holies, will worship with their face to the east; and this *is literally fulfilled* [emphasis mine] in the position of these two mosques and their worshippers."<sup>62</sup>

Jews praying for the restoration of Israel at the Western Wall were seen as living proof of prophecy concerning the restoration of Israel. European travellers would go every Friday to observe the prayers of the Jews. This experience deeply moved Amy Fullerton, as it did many travellers. "Here it is alone that the Jew is permitted to approach the beloved Temple of his fathers. Women, hiding their faces more closely than ever in their veils, may be heard, in low wailing tones, lamenting their misery: and the whole

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<sup>60</sup> Jeremiah 26:18.

<sup>61</sup> Yeshayahu Nir, "Cultural Predispositions in Early Photography: The Case of the Holy Land," in *Jerusalem in the Minds of the Western World, 1800-1948*, ed. Yehoshua Ben-Arieh and Moshe Davis (Westport CT: Praeger, 1997), 198-199.

<sup>62</sup> Fullerton, 148.

scene verifies the word of the Psalmist," she concluded.<sup>63</sup> The Jews in Palestine were a constant reminder to Amy Fullerton of the prophecy concerning the loss of their land and their eventual repossession of it. She issued a strong warning against those travellers who viewed the "scene [at the Western Wall] only as one of a series of spectacles, and [were] too often forgetful that so '*it is written*'[emphasis original]!"<sup>64</sup>

By collapsing history to make the biblical past and the present one, Amy Fullerton allowed the people of the Middle East to be visible only on her terms. They became only biblical figures, and could be freely used as needed to provide moral instruction and admonition to her readers. As landscape and people were used to remind her readers of their moral obligations as Christians so they were used to reassure her readers that the Bible was reliable.

Mary Campbell, in writing of the fourth century nun Egeria, describes her as creating through her narrative, "a chart not of the geography of the Holy Land, but of a particular . . . experience of it."<sup>65</sup> Glenn Bowman spells out the implications of such a creation of the Holy Land. He describes how medieval pilgrimage accounts can be read "not to discover the literal lineaments of that land [i.e. Palestine] but to uncover the

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<sup>63</sup> Fullerton, 115. She is referring to Psalm 79:1, 4-5 which she quoted: "O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps. We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. How long, Lord? wilt thou be angry for ever? shall thy jealousy burn like fire?"

<sup>64</sup> Fullerton, 116.

<sup>65</sup> Campbell, 27.

concerns, both cultural and personal, of those who wrote them and those for whom they wrote them."<sup>66</sup> *A Lady's Ride* provides a glimpse of the concerns of many nineteenth century visitors to the Middle East but it tells us very little of the nineteenth century Middle East.

Amy Fullerton's construction of the Middle East as the Holy Land that served primarily to enhance *her* religious belief, and to strengthen *her* faith, along with that of her readers was to appropriate and use as she willed the lives of other people. She denied that their reality had meaning beyond what it meant for her. The people she encountered were drawn into her account as needed, in order for Amy Fullerton to accomplish her purpose. In effect, Amy Fullerton rendered silent, or de-humanized the people of the Middle East through her relentless aim to see the Bible become a living picture book before her eyes. The people she used were nothing more than illustrations in her book that could be read by her readers to help them make the Bible "come alive", as it had for her. They were illustrations that could be used to goad her readers on to higher moral and spiritual living. They were illustrations that confirmed the truth of the Bible, as she understood that truth. The people of the Middle East were destined to remain forever speechless biblical characters in a picture book of words, being examined thousands of miles away, by people who have never seen them, and in all likelihood, never would. Amy Fullerton, along with many Western Christians, possessed a land and its people, by

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<sup>66</sup> Bowman, "Pilgrim Narratives," 154.

creating a "Holy Land" based entirely on concerns of nineteenth century Western Christians.

**Chapter VI**  
**Teacher, Missionary, Exemplar: The Ideal Woman in the Middle East**

In a hotel room in Cairo, Amy Fullerton encountered an Indian staff person who was puzzled by her lack of male accompaniment. He suggested all the options he was aware of: was her husband arriving later? Was she a widow? Then she must be a nun. None of the above, Amy Fullerton asserted, though "it required some explanation to make him comprehend the astounding fact of a *single* [emphasis original] woman." She then continues by describing his extensive effort to detail how all women in India were married. Her response: "[I]n England we do as we please; we need not [marry] if we do not wish it."<sup>1</sup> This exchange says more about Amy Fullerton's sense of self than it does about marriage practices in either England or in India. Her visit to the Middle East compelled her to establish herself vis-à-vis married women and vis-à-vis foreign women as this exchange indicates. It established for Amy Fullerton that British women were not at all constrained by societal restrictions on, or expectations of them. Women could do as they pleased when it came to marriage. Secondly, British women were entirely different from Indian women (and given the context, I would suggest she felt the same way about Middle Eastern women). British women were free; Indian women had no choice but to marry.

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<sup>1</sup> Fullerton, 21.

As her exchange with the Indian staff person indicates, Amy Fullerton constructed herself as British and as a single woman living without societal constraints in terms of marriage. However, she was not as confident about her identity as she would have the Indian staff person believe. In the context of her own Evangelical world, in which marriage was strongly encouraged for women, she sought to create for herself a place from which to speak, a place of authority, by emphasizing that single women as she observed them in the Middle East, were the embodiment of the ideal woman. Amy Fullerton aligned herself with single female missionaries in the Middle East by taking an avid interest in, and supporting their work. In *A Lady's Ride* Amy Fullerton draws attention to the Protestant mission work in the Middle East. Not only does she draw attention to it, she rigorously emphasizes its presence and what she perceives to be its effectiveness, by visiting numerous missionaries and describing the work they are involved in.<sup>2</sup> Noticeably present amongst this array of missionaries are the single female missionaries and their work. Miss Whately, Miss Arnott, Miss Baldwin, Miss Rose, Miss Hicks, Miss James. . . . These were the women with whom Amy Fullerton obviously aligned herself and wished to draw attention to.<sup>3</sup> These women are portrayed as ideal women, who through their sacrificial mission service were educating, civilizing and converting the women of the Middle East. Equally conspicuous in *A Lady's Ride* are the

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<sup>2</sup> This involves more than forty missionaries and projects.

<sup>3</sup> There are some exceptions to her focus on single female missionaries. In addition to the work of single female missionaries, Amy Fullerton also highlights the efforts of a Syrian convert who began his own training school for clergy and the work of the American missionaries, Mr. and Mrs. Eddy in Lebanon.



women and girls who are the focus of this female missionary work. In order to draw attention to the service of the single missionaries, Amy Fullerton must describe these women as needing, wanting and benefitting from the work of the missionaries. In this way they were instrumental in creating the image of the ideal single missionary in the Middle East, an ideal Amy Fullerton can align herself with.

Amy Fullerton portrays female missionaries as carrying out work similar to that of married Evangelical women in England who, with their "special aptitude for faith"<sup>4</sup> were expected to create a domestic environment, i.e. the home, in which their moral superiority would influence their families and through their families reform and convert the nation. Amy Fullerton demonstrates that female missionaries in the Middle East similarly were using their moral power to civilize and Christianize the Middle East. In this way, not only England, but England's empire would be converted and reformed.

As only a traveller, she could not claim the role of missionary as such, but she could involve herself entirely in their work, speaking on behalf of them and garnering support for their work through her narrative. By doing this, she could demonstrate that she too, as a single woman, without husband and children, had a vital and valuable place in the wider endeavor of the Evangelical missionary cause. In *A Lady's Ride* Amy Fullerton seeks to create a place for herself, not by challenging her society's notions of the ideal woman, but by endorsing those ideals and adapting them to the context of single female missionaries in the Middle East and the women they work with.

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<sup>4</sup> Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 115.

Victorian ideology of women proclaimed that women's primary locus of influence was to be the home. As Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall have shown, the home was variously seen as the place to "regenerate society", the place of "social progress" or the place where "social virtue" <sup>5</sup> was promoted. The influence of women from, and through the home made all this possible, for "[w]hile the Victorian sexual ideology cast woman as the weaker sex, it endowed her at the same time with unquestionable moral superiority, rooted in the ostensibly feminine virtues of nurturing, child-care, and purity."<sup>6</sup>

Evangelicals brought a particularly religious dimension to this sphere of a woman's influence. Vitally concerned with the reform and conversion of British society, Evangelicals "entrusted" women with the responsibility of creating and maintaining a home from which could emanate the moral force to reform and save society. <sup>7</sup> What throughout Victorian society was considered the moral superiority of women was expanded in the Evangelical context into a "special aptitude for faith" <sup>8</sup> possessed by women. According to Evangelicals "the only way to save the nation was to reform from the bottom up and a truly religious home provided the only sure foundation." <sup>9</sup> The home was, according to Elisabeth Jay, "in miniature the battlefield on which the Evangelical

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<sup>5</sup> Davidoff and Hall, 188.

<sup>6</sup> Burton, "White Woman's Burden," 138.

<sup>7</sup> See Bradley, 179-193 for a description of the Evangelical home.

<sup>8</sup> Davidoff and Hall, 115.

<sup>9</sup> Davidoff and Hall, 171.

cause must be won or lost."<sup>10</sup> A woman's role as wife and mother was to create and maintain such a home. Single women could fulfill the same role as "honorary wife" for their brothers and fathers, but their options were limited, given such rigid expectations of and narrowly defined attributes acceptable in women.

Most single women did not so much challenge the role of women as enter occupations that utilized the same feminine qualities that married women were expected to have in the home. They turned increasingly to teaching and philanthropy and by the middle of the century "philanthropy had become the quintessential sphere of the single woman."<sup>11</sup> Mission work likewise was appealing to women as an area where they could exercise the feminine ideal. The same feminine virtues that were idealized in women as wives and mothers could be utilized in service to the "less fortunate". However, in this shift from the home to a more public sphere, women became obligated to justify their changing roles.

Antoinette Burton describes how the British feminist movement adapted the ideology of women's moral superiority for their own purposes, moving the sphere of influence from the private world of the home to the public sphere of influence.

Rather than overturning the Victorian feminine ideal, early feminist theorists used it to justify female involvement in the public sphere by claiming that the exercise of woman's moral attributes was crucial to social improvement.

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<sup>10</sup> Elisabeth Jay, *The Religion of the Heart: Anglican Evangelicalism and the Nineteenth-Century Novel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 136.

<sup>11</sup> Davidoff and Hall, 59.

. . . Victorian feminists exploited assumptions about women's superior moral strength, thereby empowering themselves and other women to take up social service in the name of Victorian womanhood.<sup>12</sup>

A parallel adaptation was taking place in the Evangelical world that motivated women to be missionaries. They took their moral and religious superiority beyond the shores of England into the colonial world, there to carry out the work of converting and reforming, not England, but England's empire.

Even though single women justified their involvement in missionary work by so thoroughly maintaining Evangelical ideals of women, the established mission movement could not easily acknowledge the legitimacy of single female missionaries. Single women were not welcomed as missionaries by mission societies until the end of the nineteenth century, and therefore had to procure other means of support. Of the two prominent British mission societies present in the Middle East, the Church Missionary Society only officially began to employ (single) women in 1887.<sup>13</sup> The London Jews Society, the other major British mission society in the Middle East, never officially employed women. Both societies, however, maintained vital informal relationships with

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<sup>12</sup> Burton, "White Woman's Burden," 138.

<sup>13</sup> Married women were more easily accommodated as their presence was seen to ensure that male missionaries would not establish liaisons with foreign women. Married women could also continue in their roles as wife and mother. Even so married women were not on their payroll. See T. Thomas, "Foreign Missions and Missionaries in Victorian Britain" in *Religion in Victorian Britain*, ed. John Wolffe (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997), 102-111 for a description of the beginnings of these societies.

female missionaries. While women were seen as essential in their efforts to convert Middle Eastern women, the societies could not bring themselves to endorse fully the presence of single women in their organizations. The discomfort remained. The Middle East, however, was filled with single female missionaries who were simultaneously endeavouring to embody the ideal woman through their work, while by their presence in the Middle East, challenging it.

In order to get around the hesitancy of the mission societies, these women bypassed the official structures in the missionary movement, creating their own structures of support. Female missionary societies such as the Society for Promoting Female Education in the East, which was entirely supported and administered by women in England were created.<sup>14</sup> Other missionaries were supported through independent means. This continuing tension between female missionaries and mission societies reveals that single women continued to challenge Evangelical expectations of women, even if they were engaged in work that strengthened the core of Evangelicalism.

The ideology that saw women in the home as the moral force behind societal change also promoted the idea that it would be through the women of a foreign culture that that society would be transformed into a civilized Christian society. A woman,

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<sup>14</sup> See Melman, 175-179 for a description of the relationship between the mission societies and the female missionaries in the Middle East. Margaret Strobel, *European Women and the Second British Empire* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 53-54 and Kumari Jayawardena, *The White Woman's Other Burden: Western Women and South Asia During British Rule* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 26-27 describe similar conflicts women had with mission societies in India.

identified simply as A.U. travelling to India (between 1868 and 1885) concluded that "there is little hope for Christianity in India . . . till the women can be reached, and if only the wives and mothers could be won, the greatest obstacles to progress and the religion [i.e. Hinduism] would at once be swept away."<sup>15</sup> Such an attitude precipitated an emphasis on working with women, for if they could be converted they could become the moral force in their own homes, behind societal reform and conversion, as British Evangelical women were expected to be.

In addition to the ideology that women were the moral force behind society, in nineteenth century England the status of women was often promulgated as the measure whereby a society's level of civilization could be determined, the status of English women being the measure.

The condition of women is one of the most remarkable circumstances in the manners of nations. Among rude people, the women are generally degraded; among civilized people they are exalted. . . . As society refines upon its enjoyments, and advances into that state of civilization . . . in which the qualities of mind are ranked above the qualities of the body, the condition of the weaker

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<sup>15</sup> A. U. *Overland, Inland and Upland: A Lady's Notes of Personal Observation and Adventure*, micrographic editions (Calcutta: Stamp Digest, 1984), 142 quoted in Janaki Nair, "Uncovering the Zenana: Visions of Indian Womanhood in Englishwomen's Writings, 1813-1940," in *Journal of Women's History* 2 (1990), 15.

sex is gradually improved, till they associate on equal terms with the men, and occupy the place of voluntary and useful coadjutors,<sup>16</sup>

proclaimed James Mills in his 1818 *History of British India*. It did not need to be stated that women were considered equal to men in civilized England, and degraded in colonized societies. Britain's imperial presence was justified on the basis that it brought civilization to the colonial world, which was, after all, known as "the white man's burden". As Inderpal Grewal suggests, speaking of the veil and the harem, "[t]o remove these was to civilize the colonies."<sup>17</sup> In other words, bringing civilization to the colonial world was integrally connected to changing the lives of colonized women.

Intertwined in the imperial idea that England was coterminous with civilization, was the idea that civilization was coterminous with Christianity. To convert was to civilize and to civilize was to convert. It is then of little wonder that Christianity was credited with raising the status of women. As Davidoff and Hall suggest, "[i]t was widely believed that Christian society had played a vital part in raising the status of women and that Protestantism, in particular, manifested a high level of civilization in terms of its attitudes about them."<sup>18</sup>

Women by and large adopted this premise in their mission work, and directed their efforts to this end. If civilization could be measured by the status of women, and

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<sup>16</sup> James Mills, *History of British India*, (1818, 5th ed. 1958; rpt. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1968), II:309-310 quoted in Strobel, 49.

<sup>17</sup> Grewal, 50.

<sup>18</sup> Davidoff and Hall, 115.

Christianity/Protestantism was the vital force responsible for raising the status of women, then efforts focused on reforming and improving the status of women would naturally receive attention from missionaries, for that would bring Middle Eastern women closer to Christianity. Female missionaries shared the imperial ideals of the superiority of Britain and shouldered their share of "responsibility" in seeing Britain's civilization spread throughout the world, albeit in a manner that was considered appropriate for women. As Strobel demonstrates, "[w]omen [missionaries] actively engaged in the cultural aspects of imperialism through their gender roles as caretakers and 'civilizers.'"<sup>19</sup> As women, they had unique access to women in the Middle East and could bring their civilizing presence to bear on Middle Eastern women.

These two aspects of Victorian gender ideology are central in understanding Amy Fullerton's sense of self. Female missionaries were ideal women according to her because of their sacrificial service of caring for and educating Middle Eastern women, and because they were contributing significantly to the goal of raising the status of Middle Eastern women, thereby making it much easier to convert them. Through their care for

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<sup>19</sup> Strobel, 51. Leslie Flemming demonstrates that American female missionaries, while not supporting British imperial efforts, shared much the same attitude toward India. Americans were motivated by their own sense of chosenness as Americans, and this became the basis of their efforts to bring civilization to India. Like British missionaries, they "came to India committed to effecting substantial change in the social norms affecting Indian women. That commitment was often couched in a rhetoric that stressed women's low status in Indian society and urged conversion to Christianity as a means of raising women's status." Flemming, "A New Humanity: American Missionaries' Ideals for Women in North India, 1870-1930," in *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance*, ed. Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), 194.



and nurture of girls and young women, they displayed qualities worthy of the best of women. This is whom Amy Fullerton identifies with, throughout *A Lady's Ride*. It is as their voice that she finds a place for herself. A single woman without an approved role in her Evangelical world, can in the Middle East, find that role. Of the three women studied, Amy Fullerton most thoroughly embraced her society's patriarchal constructions of women and colonial constructions of Middle Eastern people. By challenging them, she would have had to give up this place established for herself as a single woman. Seeing the women of the Middle East as anything but needing civilization and Christianity would have forfeited her place. In such a conflicting situation, Amy Fullerton chose to accept patriarchal expectations of herself.

"The great task of the Christian Church" wrote the historian Julius Richter in 1910, "is the spiritual reconquest of these lost provinces of the Church, until at last the cradle-lands of Christianity be again under the shadow of the Cross."<sup>20</sup> Forty years earlier, Amy Fullerton was pouring extensive effort into that same goal. As the Middle East was being Christianized through the work of Protestant missionaries, she was confident that the "land where once shone in its fulness the grace and mercy of our God and Lord" would be restored to its former glory.<sup>21</sup> She was doing her part by visiting and

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<sup>20</sup> Julius Richter, *A History of Protestant Missions in the Near East* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1910), 73.

<sup>21</sup> Fullerton, 99. The presence of Eastern Christians did not contribute to making the Middle East Christian, in the opinions of most Protestant missionaries. Efforts to convert were directed as much at Christians as they were at Muslims and Jews. At best, the Eastern churches were considered to be in need of considerable reform.

encountering missionaries, but more importantly, by soliciting support for mission work through *A Lady's Ride*. Her efforts as a visitor who observed the mission work, were directed toward importuning her readers to support mission work in the Middle East. She concludes her narrative by reminding her readers that it is their "duty and privilege," and should be their "constant effort, to strengthen the hands of the devoted workers" in the Middle East.<sup>22</sup> Through her description of the recipients of mission work, and of the female missionaries in particular, she provides justification for that plea. The work of these outstanding women was truly worth supporting.

When Amy Fullerton travelled through the Middle East, one of her primary objectives was to gain a clearer understanding of Protestant mission work being done in the Middle East. She visited numerous missionaries and their projects, and everywhere she went she was hosted by these missionaries, often travelling with them. In addition to observing children at school and young women in vocational classes, she was invited to a Jewish Passover meal, attended benevolent society meetings, and was hosted on several occasions by local converts who had themselves become missionaries. Amy Fullerton saw a different "Middle East" than many travellers who were dependent on a dragoman or on guide books, but nonetheless she apprehended the Middle East through a very specific lens. She saw people who needed what the missionaries offered: civilization, Christianity and education.

British mission efforts in the Middle East grew out of a long tradition that

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<sup>22</sup> Fullerton, 347.

concerned itself with the conversion of the Jews. In 1809 the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews was founded in Britain.<sup>23</sup> At the heart of its motivation was the belief that the Bible could be understood literally, and that thus prophecies would be fulfilled literally, particularly prophecies believed to be centred around the return of Jesus. Prior to the return of Jesus, Jews would be converted to Christianity and return to Palestine. The Mission sent its first missionary to Palestine in 1822 and its work was still in progress when Amy Fullerton visited the Middle East. However, by the time Amy Fullerton visited the Middle East in 1871, British efforts had expanded to include work with Eastern Christians and Muslims, through the Church Missionary Society affiliated with the Church of England. Schools, hospitals and benevolent societies had been established in Egypt, Palestine and Syria, with the work directed at Jews centred in Jerusalem. Just as Britain had established mission work in the Middle East, Americans and Prussians had begun similar work,<sup>24</sup> although their focus included Eastern Christians from the onset. In addition to the official work of Western mission societies, women were operating schools, orphanages and hospitals throughout the Middle East, independently of these societies. So for example, in Cairo Amy

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<sup>23</sup> For a more detailed description of the beginning of the Society's work in Palestine, see Sarah Kochav, "Beginning at Jerusalem': The Mission to the Jews and English Evangelical Eschatology," in *Jerusalem in the Minds of the Western World 1800-1948*, ed. Yehoshua Ben-Arieh and Moshe Davis (Westport CT: Praeger, 1997), 91-107.

<sup>24</sup> See A. L. Tibawi, *American Interests in Syria 1800-1901* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966) for the history of American mission work in the Levant, and Frank Foerster, "German Missions in the Holy Land" in *Jerusalem in the Minds of the Western World 1800-1948*, ed. Yehoshua Ben-Arieh and Moshe Davis (Westport CT: Praeger, 1997), 183-194.

Fullerton visited the network of schools founded, funded and administered by Mary Louisa Whately.

Underlying Amy Fullerton's description of the mission work directed at women in the Middle East is the Evangelical ideology of women having moral and religious superiority. The education of women and girls endowed them with civilized habits and provided them with domestic skills needed to create homes from which could radiate moral and spiritual reform, she believed. In this task, single female missionaries were exemplary. By emphasizing the recipients of mission work, Amy Fullerton could draw attention to the missionaries who were, through their sacrificial life, contributing to the Christianizing of the Middle East and the spreading of civilization. She could emphasize an embodiment of the ideal Victorian woman, an embodiment by women who like herself, had had to create an alternative model of being this ideal woman, in the face of continuing suspicion from their peers (fellow missionaries) and from their superiors (mission societies that maintained an affiliation with them but were unwilling to endorse their work fully). By identifying with, and supporting them, she used them to establish her authority. She could claim authority in her narrative because she was advancing the work that these ideal women were doing.

As stated earlier, teaching and philanthropy were common ways in which single women could bring their moral superiority to bear. "Teaching was seen as an extension of childrearing which was being given special emphasis within serious Christianity"<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Davidoff and Hall, 293.

according to Davidoff and Hall. Amy Fullerton describes the missionaries that she visited as such ideal teachers. The children in their schools were eager to learn and frequently favorably compared to British children. The children are "bright and healthy,"<sup>26</sup> and "happy and cheerful."<sup>27</sup> In Jaffa Amy Fullerton visited the school of Miss Arnott. Here the children "looked happy and contented . . . [and] their demeanour was more quiet than is often the case in schools at home. . . . Standing motionless, their eyes only betrayed the vivacity of their silent observation."<sup>28</sup> As ideal woman missionaries these women are described as models of sacrificial dedication. Miss Rose in Nazareth, "devoted to her work," received the commendation that "[f]ew, perhaps, are better fitted" for missionary work than she is.<sup>29</sup> Miss Whately in Cairo was "far removed from the common pursuits of women"<sup>30</sup> as she taught and administered a network of schools. While these teachers were able to produce model students, more importantly, the girls were being molded into civilized, Christian women. Miss Arnott's female students were "taught to work and knit socks" and it was, for Amy Fullerton, "gratifying to see this little crowd cleanly in dress and *civilised in manner* [emphasis mine]."<sup>31</sup> Miss Whately should hold everyone's

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<sup>26</sup> Fullerton, 276

<sup>27</sup> Fullerton, 306

<sup>28</sup> Fullerton, 95-96

<sup>29</sup> Fullerton, 264.

<sup>30</sup> Fullerton, 73.

<sup>31</sup> Fullerton, 96.

respect, Amy Fullerton informs her readers, for she was training children to fulfill established gender roles. "Any one remaining here for a while must feel an intense interest in the success of our admirable countrywoman, Miss W.," Amy Fullerton comments. "What may it not effect . . . giving the founding of a good education in reading, writing, and accounts [to the boys]; and to the girls orderly, cleanly habits, and a knowledge of the value of their souls, which up to this time they were not permitted to suppose they possessed?"<sup>32</sup> In Amy Fullerton's description of Miss Whately's teaching, the children are being civilized and Christianized simultaneously. Boys are taught skills that will prepare them for a public life, and girls are taught personal skills, but more importantly, the task of raising the status of these girls has begun. The superiority of Christianity will soon be felt, as Amy Fullerton's veiled reference to Islam suggests: Islam degrades women, according to Amy Fullerton, and Christianity corrects that, allowing women to realize their full worth. After a visit to Miss Baldwin's school in Jaffa, Amy Fullerton sums up her feelings about female missionaries. "What praise do not such devoted women deserve, for the energy and self-denial they exert! Far away from their own circle of relationship, their sole wish is to raise to better things a population immersed in ignorance."<sup>33</sup> Sacrifice and commitment to improving the lives of Middle Easterners were what marked these women off from other women, in Amy Fullerton's estimation.

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<sup>32</sup> Fullerton, 69-70.

<sup>33</sup> Fullerton, 99.

In contrast to the ideal women Amy Fullerton supported and identified with, is her description of several women with whom she travelled to the Dead Sea. They had come to the Middle East to be missionaries. They were hopelessly incompetent, according to Amy Fullerton, and would never make missionaries. One of the women held "peculiar views", another one was concerned only with impressing her companions with "her rank in life", and all received Amy Fullerton's derision for not being able to ride properly. These were women who were not fit to be missionaries according to Amy Fullerton, for they were "devoid of any kind of useful experience."<sup>34</sup> Such women detracted from the missionary work, and only proved to be bothersome. Her denouncement of these women is unusually sharp and indicates how passionately she felt about the role of single female missionaries. Incompetence and lack of commitment, which she saw in her travelling companions, were not to spoil the flawless reputation of the female missionaries that Amy Fullerton was creating through her description of their work.

Central to Amy Fullerton's support of single female missionaries is her portrayal of the women and girls they worked with. Her observation of the lives of Middle Eastern women is very narrowly focused. She is convinced that (Western) education of women is the best means to civilize and Christianize the Middle East, and therefore she is able to see women only as needing (and wanting) education. Throughout *A Lady's Ride* Amy Fullerton demonstrates that the mission work is *necessary* because of the state of the women; that mission work is *effective*, i.e. that women's lives are changing; and that the

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<sup>34</sup> Fullerton, 173.

people of the Middle East *recognize for themselves* that mission work is improving their lives.

Antoinette Burton points out that British "[f]eminism and female reform ideology virtually dictated the existence of dependent clients on whom to confer aid, comfort, and (hopefully) the status of having been saved."<sup>35</sup> More than just British feminists felt it necessary to create "dependent clients". Amy Fullerton, by describing the lives of Middle Eastern women as tedious and purposeless, created immediate justification for the missionary work, and an immediate opportunity to describe the value of female missionaries. Education that stimulated the mind and taught women useful domestic skills was the obvious solution to minds and lives that were being wasted by inactivity, which, as Amy Fullerton described them, is what the lives of Middle Eastern women consisted of.

Shortly after arriving in the Middle East, she visited the grounds of a Cairene harem. Here she noted in particular the opulent gardens that were being maintained. The life of leisure that this harem made possible results only in her pity for the women in it. "But, alas! What a life of enervation does not this produce!"<sup>36</sup> This was her conclusion before she ever entered the harem, for she never met any of the women in the harem.

But meeting women did nothing to change her opinion. Throughout her travels she evaluated women through the same grid. Near the end of her journey, she visited the

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<sup>35</sup> Burton, "White Woman's Burden," 139. Klatzker, 279 sees a similar trend among American Evangelical travellers to the Middle East.

<sup>36</sup> Fullerton, 52.



home of a Lebanese governor. Here she was graciously hosted by his wife and her friends. Received with "great animation and kindness", carpets were spread for her, she was offered "a delicate green salad" and then finally a pipe, which her hostess "laughingly" offered her, "well assured it would be declined."<sup>37</sup> Now sitting on a river bank in the company of a group of hospitable and contented women, her response was as it had consistently been throughout her travels. In her sweeping evaluation of their lives, she ignored the hospitality given her, she ignored the obvious enjoyment that the women received from each other's company and saw only degraded minds. "The totally unemployed life of the eastern women is surprising, and it must have taken ages to reduce human nature to such a state of mental inactivity."<sup>38</sup>

This judgment is not limited to the upper classes of women in the Middle East. In Jerusalem she visited the Jewish Girls' Institute in which women were taught handwork by missionaries, the sale of which provided income for their families. Amy Fullerton was very impressed with this project, for it provided gainful activity for "many a poor listless creature, whose greatest misery perhaps is the total want of occupation." Without this diversion, these women's lives would be nothing more than "one long state of inanition"<sup>39</sup> for they had nothing to do except prepare meagre meals for their husbands, she states. That upper class women have time for leisure is tenable. That women whose poverty

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<sup>37</sup> Fullerton, 325.

<sup>38</sup> Fullerton, 325.

<sup>39</sup> Fullerton, 226.

drives them to depend on the sale of their handwork to support their families, do nothing all day, is not a fair assessment. However by describing their "listlessness" and "empty lives," immediate support for the missionary teaching them was created; who else but the missionary would be able to change the lives of these women?

When compared to Harriet Martineau's invective of harem women, Amy Fullerton's description of the women she encounters seems benign. While she shared many underlying prejudices and opinions about Middle Eastern women with Harriet Martineau and many other nineteenth century women—they were ignorant, listless, bored, over-indulged and oppressed—her judgment was much less harsh. She could not judge the women she observed to be hopelessly entrapped in their "lives of oppression" as Harriet Martineau did, for in order for missionaries to be successful, women must be educable and receptive to the efforts of the missionaries. Not only did she want to describe missionary work as needed, it must also be effective, so she described women as having potential and opportunity to change.

Education of women, she is confident, will radically change the nature of Middle Eastern society. In Egypt, after visiting a girl's school, she comments: "[i]n another generation this [parental opposition] will become less, no doubt; but one can hardly picture its [education] success to any extent, without its causing a great revolution in the position and feeling of the women."<sup>40</sup> As the Jewish women, and now these Egyptian girls demonstrated for Amy Fullerton, education, often with a strong domestic component

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<sup>40</sup> Fullerton, 57.

to it, was replacing the tedium of women's lives with purpose and utilitarian activities.

After studying the involvement of American female missionaries in north India, Leslie Flemming concludes that

[m]ost [missionaries] wanted to create "useful" women. By "useful" they typically meant having an enhanced domestic role similar to that ideally prescribed for middle-class American women, i.e., one that combined at least minimal literacy with the ability to cook, keep a clean house, sew, teach one's children, and above all, find satisfaction in the role of village pastor's wife.<sup>41</sup>

The schools Amy Fullerton visited were not striving to train pastors' wives as such, but she does describe them as training girls for a domestic life not unlike middle-class British women. She is greatly impressed by the work being done by Miss Hicks in Lebanon, who has created, not only an environment that is reminiscent of Britain, but is molding the girls into civilized young women who will become good wives. Amy Fullerton found "[e]very part of the house . . . in the most perfect order" with a "lady-like sitting room" and a garden filled with "geraniums and other flowers." In the school, the girls were taught domestic skills such as cooking and laundry. One student, whose father was particularly "anxious [that] she should receive all the advantages of a liberal education" was even taught piano.<sup>42</sup> These girls were being taught skills that would enable them to manage a household well, a household that was not so different from a

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<sup>41</sup> Flemming, 201.

<sup>42</sup> Fullerton, 304.

British middle class one. Not only were they being taught domestic skills which provided purpose in their lives, their education was also preparing them to create a domestic environment in which their husbands would be positively affected. Having been taught how to manage a household, their education would also contribute to domestic harmony, for their accomplishments, as educated women, would provide "agreeable entertainment for the many indolent hours of their husbands."<sup>43</sup> Fifty years earlier Harriet Martineau had advocated strongly for education of girls in England. Her concluding argument for this was that an educated wife would in every way create a better home. "Let her be taught that she is to be a rational companion to those of the other sex among whom her lot in life is cast, that her proper sphere is *home* [emphasis original]—that there she is to provide, not only for bodily comfort of the man, but that she is to enter also into community of mind with him."<sup>44</sup> An unlikely bedfellow for Amy Fullerton, Harriet Martineau advanced an argument for female education that was not unlike that used by Amy Fullerton to support missionary work in the Middle East. Through her description of model students throughout the Middle East, Amy Fullerton enhanced her description of female missionaries, who through their teaching of girls, were truly using their own moral superiority to influence the next generation of women in the Middle East.

Amy Fullerton demonstrated that this influence had already begun to take effect. In Beirut Amy Fullerton visited a "most energetic and devoted" converted Syrian woman

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<sup>43</sup> Fullerton, 305.

<sup>44</sup> From the October, 1822 issue of *Monthly Repository* in Yates, 93.

who ran a school in which the work of the children was so exemplary that it "even exceeds the specimens in [British] . . . schools."<sup>45</sup> At a school run by the Society for Promoting Female Education which trained female teachers, she evaluated the school as being "constantly successful in supplying native teachers—wondrous new life of activity and self-support in the future for Eastern women, hitherto regarded as one remove from the brute creation."<sup>46</sup> Middle Eastern women, through the tireless work of female missionaries, were experiencing their true worth as women. As Muslims they were little more than animals; as Christians they were fulfilled women, serving their own people, and perpetrating the values they themselves had been taught.

The entire effort to educate Middle Eastern women was being done for the good of the people in the Middle East, Amy Fullerton asserts, which they were coming to realize themselves. "It is gratifying to see how anxious the natives all are to show their sense of the value of the friendship and good offices of Europeans, and we may hope a still stronger tie will be felt by the advance in civilisation and the education of their women."<sup>47</sup> By describing such openness to missionary work, Amy Fullerton made the missionary effort of single women both valid and necessary. However, Middle Eastern women themselves were realizing how beneficial Western education was for them.

The women in the East are generally of a subdued and patient

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<sup>45</sup> Fullerton, 343.

<sup>46</sup> Fullerton, 302.

<sup>47</sup> Fullerton, 324.

temperament, and most of them have great aptness for learning, and apply themselves to it with readiness and zest. Probably the better position it enables them to take has already had its effect, and hitherto no opposition has been encountered from the men, which may be looked upon as an unexpected feature in this progress.<sup>48</sup>

As Amy Fullerton visited school after school filled with girls and women, she describes for her readers, students who have come from a life of tedium and mental inactivity but who were receiving, at the hands of dedicated female missionaries, a whole new purpose to their lives. They were eagerly lapping up what was taught them. Not only were they noticing the benefits of such education, their husbands and fathers were also coming to see the importance of this education. With such a change underway, Amy Fullerton could, with full confidence, inform her readers that their support of this mission work was fully warranted and absolutely necessary. She could also, without hesitation align herself with this worthy group of women, whom she credited with this change. Through her description of their work, she became the voice of these women in the Middle East.

In her conversation with the Indian staff person, Amy Fullerton established that British women were unconstrained by societal expectations, and that there existed a hierarchy with Western women superior to colonized women. As Amy Fullerton describes her journey through the Middle East in *A Lady's Ride*, she attempts to

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<sup>48</sup> Fullerton, 306.

demonstrate that the constraints experienced by single women do not exist. Through their mission work, they lead exemplary lives, and are involved in a vital role that only they can fill. These are the women who should be seen as models for her own society. By aligning herself with them, and avidly supporting their work, Amy Fullerton can vicariously claim her place among them. But in order to ensure that these missionaries remain ideal women, Amy Fullerton must rigorously maintain the hierarchy between Western women and Middle Eastern women. A civilizer can only bring civilization to the uncivilized, a Christian can only convert a non-Christian, and an educator can only teach the uneducated.

## **Conclusion**

It has been my intent to examine the three travel narratives of Harriet Martineau, Ida Pfeiffer and Amy Fullerton from several perspectives, focusing on religion and gender. At the heart of this thesis is the destination. I have, it is necessary to point out, multiple destinations in mind, destinations that were created as these women, coming from various environments, moved around in the geographic Middle East and surrounded themselves with the history, the religions, the customs and the people of that geography. Geographically, they travelled to the same place, but they diverged in their understanding of that landscape; each had her own Jerusalem shaped most strongly by her particular religious milieu. This was a landscape shaped most strongly by its Christian associations, yet none of them gave shape to the Holy Land in the same way. However, not only must their religious world be taken into account. Equally fundamental has been their travelling as women. I have not assumed that there is an inherent difference in women's and men's writings. I have, instead, sought to examine how ideologies of gender shaped these women's identities and how this affected their construction of the Middle East.

For while each woman created her own Middle East, and thus the multiple destinations, none of them could have done that without the "real" Middle East, however elusive its definition might be. Were it not for this elusive Middle East, it would be of little consequence that each woman saw what she wanted to see and what she was able



to see. It would be of little consequence that each woman purported to be describing the Middle East as it truly was, were it not for that other Middle East. These women's creations assume a hierarchy of value—European over Middle Eastern—of cultures, of religions, of histories, and therefore also of people. One woman assumes a voice to speak, and as she speaks, the people of the Middle East and their cultures, religions and histories are present only insofar as she speaks them into being. The value of the Middle East in the travel narratives of these women lies in its being malleable in the hands of these women.

Harriet Martineau's experience in the Middle East was given shape by her formation in Unitarianism and her gradual development toward atheism. The Jesus that Harriet Martineau so passionately portrayed, a great moral teacher who led an exemplary life, was not foreign to Unitarianism, and therefore her intensive criticism of a Christianity where that aspect of Jesus' life was not visibly obvious, is not surprising. However, it was not just that Eastern Christians placed a divine Jesus at the core of their religious piety. Her extreme dislike of Eastern Christianity emerged out of her own development away from faith. Eastern Christians expressed their piety in an intensely sensory fashion, thus challenging Harriet Martineau's notion that *ideas* were at the heart of religion. She was well aware that *Eastern Life* would be met with sharp criticism from both her family and friends, and from the reading public, because of her radical opinions about religion. She could not afford to have the basis of her ideas undermined to any extent, and therefore Eastern Christianity could not be legitimate in any way.

Harriet Martineau submitted the Middle East to a very structured and controlled interpretation. This was not unlike her own life in which she maintained control by establishing herself as a woman who was needed by others, whether that was her household servants or those in society for whom she advocated, such as slaves and working class women. Having others dependent on her ensured that she would remain in control, but also that her role as a woman could be justified. In the face of such justification, Harriet Martineau's description of her harem visits is noteworthy, for in her frustration of not being able to assist these women, i.e. they did not engage her as one who was their superior as she saw herself, she could only harshly denounce their lives.

Harriet Martineau's response to Eastern Christianity and harem women are parallel experiences. Both challenged her carefully constructed view of herself, for in both instances the Middle East slipped out from underneath her otherwise firm grasp. The phantom appearance that she saw aboard the ship as she was approaching Egypt was that elusive Middle East that would not submit itself entirely to Harriet Martineau's pen.

Ida Pfeiffer as a very devout Roman Catholic is the one true pilgrim in the classic definition of a pilgrim, i.e. her goal was the central Christian shrine in Jerusalem, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and as a devotee at that shrine her greatest moments of bliss were achieved. She did not need to bypass the Christian tradition to find meaning in the Holy Land; she embraced that tradition, at least in so far as the tradition had established and maintained sacred sites. She was not so willing to embrace the worship

that had developed as a part of that tradition, for it sharply conflicted with her own ideas of what true devotion should be at Jerusalem's shrines.

Ida Pfeiffer's description of the Middle East was dependent not only on her religious experience in Jerusalem as a pilgrim, but also on the dynamics she experienced as a woman travelling throughout the world. As she travelled to the Middle East, she sensed very strongly her society's disapproval for transgressing the boundaries of acceptable behavior in women. She had reason to be apprehensive about how she would be perceived, for her travels in the Middle East caused her to turn a critical eye toward her own society, particularly as it related to her experience as a lower class woman in a class conscious society and as a woman travelling. Not only did she turn a critical eye toward her society, frequently she used her positive experience in the Middle East to lend weight to her critique.

Ida Pfeiffer's travel narrative is ambivalent about her relationship to her home. As a pilgrim she found little among her fellow worshipers which she could appreciate. This difference was used by Ida Pfeiffer to establish how firmly she was, and intended to be, European. However, in much of the remainder of her travels, she found the Middle East appealing. People were hospitable, looked after her needs, and generally respected her. She did not go so far as to identify with the Middle East, but she did use her experience to critique her own society and thereby distance herself from it. In this context her pilgrimage as a journey acceptable for women, was an embrace of her own European

identity. It served to reassure not only herself, but also her society, that she had not abandoned home entirely, nor discarded her society's expectations of women altogether.

Amy Fullerton's Middle East was thoroughly given shape by her strong commitment to Evangelical notions of the Holy Land. She was, in this sense, representative of many nineteenth century travellers to the Middle East, much more so than either Harriet Martineau and Ida Pfeiffer. The Middle East was a "godsend" for Amy Fullerton and nineteenth century Evangelicals, for it was replete with illustrations of biblical life and characters that could be used to maintain the veracity of the Bible at a time when it was increasingly coming under attack. Seeing the Middle East as illustrative of biblical texts also enhanced the appeal of the Bible, making the culturally obscure biblical account become immediately understandable. All of this had the effect of obliterating the modern Middle East for Amy Fullerton. Harriet Martineau depeopled the Holy Land in her interpretation of history and therefore had to deal with the modern Middle East as it conflicted with her interpretation. Amy Fullerton incorporated the people of the modern Middle East right into her Holy Land, along with the landscape, and therefore rendered the modern Middle East irrelevant in her understanding of the Holy Land.

In a similar fashion the women and girls who were participants of Protestant mission efforts in the Middle East were also illustrations, illustrations used by Amy Fullerton in her creation of the single female missionary as the ideal woman. They were

illustrations of how necessary and how effective mission work being carried out by these missionaries was.

By producing a Middle East shaped by Evangelicalism, Amy Fullerton created for herself a place of authority from which she could speak. Like so many others, she had seen the Bible "come alive" before her eyes and was, therefore, able to pass on her experience to her readers for their benefit as well. Furthermore, as a single woman in a milieu that valued married women as ideal, she could place herself among the group of ideal women in the Middle East, i.e. the single female missionaries. While not a missionary herself, she saw herself as a vital part of their work, soliciting support and speaking on their behalf. But in order to accomplish this, she had to maintain colonial constructions of Middle Eastern women and Evangelical patriarchal constructions of what the ideal woman was. Western women brought civilization and Christianity, whereas Middle Eastern women were caught in a world from which they could be saved only by the assistance of western missionaries.

Placing these three travel narratives side by side has the effect of drawing attention to the different destinations of each woman, i.e. each woman's creation of a Middle East given shape by her own experience. Out of this, the question also becomes apparent, what of the "real" Middle East, for as Edward Said states, "it would be wrong to conclude that the Orient was *essentially* [emphasis original] an idea, or a creation with no corresponding reality."<sup>1</sup> I have resisted reading travel narratives as if some "do it better

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<sup>1</sup> Said, 5.

than others," as if some approximate the "real" Middle East with greater truth, or with less of a sense of cultural superiority. Most obviously I have not maintained that women's writing is morally superior to men's in that it identifies with the colonized, or calls into question colonial dominance while men's writing perpetuates and undergirds colonialism. But I have also resisted doing it amongst the three women I examined, even while it is possible to place a judgement of value on them. Amy Fullerton travelling amicably to Baalbek in the company of a Syrian woman is in marked contrast to Ida Pfeiffer banishing a whip over the heads of children. Harriet Martineau's recognition that Islam and Judaism have valid roles in the history of religions is preferable to Amy Fullerton's assumption that all—Muslim, Jew, Christian—need to be converted to her form of Christianity. Ida Pfeiffer's mode of travelling which drove her to eat with Middle Easterners, sleep in their homes and deal directly with them, enabled her to interact more closely with people of the Middle East than did Harriet Martineau's self-contained package of companions, tents, dragoman and British food. However, I have resisted evaluating these three women against each other to any great extent, for I have not wanted to lose sight that there is a point of reference beyond them, no matter how focused I have been on their narratives. This point of reference is the "corresponding reality" that Said speaks about, the Middle East they make use of to create their travel narratives, the "cultures and nations whose location is in the East, and . . . [whose] lives, histories, and customs have a . . . reality

obviously greater than anything that could be said of them in the West." <sup>2</sup> I have wanted to, however incompletely, keep pointing out that it is present in the travel narratives.

In this regard I am at an advantage, for I can view these narratives from a distance, at least a distance of time. With such a distance comes a different perspective. Most notably is the presence of post-colonial writing which has made it impossible to read these colonial texts—as these travel narratives certainly are—as only the accounts of three women travelling. In other words, however insignificant these narratives are within the corpus of colonial writing, they are still a part of it and contributed to the support of colonialism, if even in a minor way. <sup>3</sup> So I have attempted to retain a focus on how each woman's writing makes use of the Middle East, and to point out that while they do it in different ways, they all do it.

In *The Empire Writes Back*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin conclude that "post-colonial culture is inevitably a hybridized phenomenon involving a dialectical relationship between the 'grafted' European cultural systems and an indigenous ontology."<sup>4</sup> In other words, in a post-colonial world it is impossible to bypass the

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<sup>2</sup> Said, 5.

<sup>3</sup> And perhaps not so minor. Harriet Martineau wrote two books directly about England's colonial policy: *British Rule in India* (1857) and *Towards the Future Government of India* (1858) .

<sup>4</sup> Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 195.

ongoing effects of colonialism; the pre-colonial world cannot be brought back. Ashcroft, et. al. continue:

Hence it has been the project of post-colonial writing to interrogate European discourse and discursive strategies from its position within and between two worlds; to investigate the means by which Europe imposed and maintained its codes in its colonial domination of so much of the rest of the world. Thus the rereading and the rewriting of the European historical and fictional record is a vital and inescapable task at the heart of the post-colonial enterprise.<sup>5</sup>

Ashcroft et. al. are referring specifically to authors from colonized parts of the world who are writing from a world that has been irreversibly affected by colonialism. However, the post-colonial enterprise that Ashcroft, et. al. describe remains: to read colonial texts in such a fashion is to expose their participation in the domination of one culture over another, even while acknowledging that such a domination in women's writing arises out of their own conflicting responses to patriarchal and colonial constructions of themselves as women, and of the people of the Middle East.

I now lay down my own lorgnette, having examined three travel narratives from amongst a myriad written by women in the nineteenth century. These are three very distinct travel narratives, each with its own destination; each having used one Middle East to create another; each having been a conduit through which selective images, ideas and values were allowed to flow. If I have achieved anything through the writing of this

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<sup>5</sup>Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 196.



thesis, I hope it is to have demonstrated that a land and its people should never be, indeed, can never be reduced to any one person's creation of that place, and that the horizons of that land will always recede from the grasp of even its most imaginative creators.

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