



Fall 2016

In Search of Health, Freedom & Identity: An Analysis of Isabella Bird's and Margaret Fountaine's Renovation of Self through Travel & Travel Writing

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Abstract

“An Analysis of Isabella Bird’s and Margaret Fountaine’s Renovation of Self through Travel & Travel Writing” tracks three interdependent facets of identity that become apparent in the travel literature of Victorian ladies Isabella Lucy Bird and Margaret Fountaine. These facets are:

- the socialized self (the identity developed as a result of the society in which one grows up)
- the renovated self (the identity developed through interacting with and adapting to other cultures)
- and the edited self (the identity one creates when she writes about her experiences—for my thesis specifically, the identity the author creates to reconcile her socialized and renovated selves)

Bird’s and Fountaine’s identities developed very similarly, but modern scholars discuss these women in drastically different terms. I argue that they are remembered incongruously due to how their edited selves have been crafted.

Keywords

Travel, travel writing, identity, lepidopterist, Victorian

Disciplines

English Language and Literature | Literature in English, British Isles | Women's Studies

Comments

Written as an Honors Thesis in English.

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In Search of Health, Freedom & Identity:

An Analysis of Isabella Bird's and Margaret Fountaine's
Renovation of Self through Travel & Travel Writing

By Mikki Stacey

“Peregrination charms the senses with such unspeakable and sweet variety that some consider [her] unhappy who has never traveled.”

—Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621)

Transition and transformation characterize the Victorian era. Among the most dramatic transformations were advancements in transportation that led to more intercultural engagement. Traveling within and beyond Europe, British men set their sights on empire and economic growth. Also as a result of travel, however, British women experienced a more personal paradigm shift regarding their function in British society and the larger world. Isabella Lucy Bird and Margaret Fountaine were two such women. They came into adulthood fully engrossed in the very Christian, conservative, and provincial culture of their communities, having minimal interaction with other perspectives until they were well into adulthood. Approaching middle age, however, they took horses, trains, and steamships away from what was frustratingly familiar to them. Isabella Lucy Bird's destinations included: the United States and American territories, Australia, Hawaii, Japan, China, India, and the Middle East. Margaret Fountaine also had an impressive itinerary, covering: Ireland, Italy, Austria, Germany, Hungary, Greece, Syria, Palestine, Africa, Costa Rica, Jamaica, India, Nepal, Tibet, California, the Philippines, Brazil, and more. As independent women, Bird and Fountaine experienced changes in scenery and culture available in places like the American West, the Middle East, and the Far East. Through these travels, they evolved beyond the British model of femininity. These once docile ladies became respected travelers, writers, and scholars: Isabella Bird a respected lay anthropologist and Margaret Fountaine a noteworthy lepidopterist.

People generally write for the sake of a sense of posterity. At least initially, however, Bird and Fountaine regularly documented their travels for personal reasons. Isabella Bird sent her sister, Henrietta Bird, highly detailed letters, and Fountaine kept intensely personal journals. Letters contain and convey select moments to a specific, usually intimate audience. Diaries help preserve memories for the individual. These private writings, not initially intended for

publication, have become Bird's and Fontaine's legacies. Though both women published in their lifetimes and became respected by their scholarly communities, their posthumous fame heavily relies on these personal travel narratives. Bird and Fontaine realized, as their travels began to shift from recreational to career-oriented excursions, that their private writings would become public record. Inevitably, they adapted the content of their letters and journals to reflect the public images they wished to project. Thus, Bird's letters focus less on the health she set out to find and more on the landscapes she crosses and the people she meets, and Fontaine's diaries, though they remain personal and concerned with her feelings, become increasingly concerned with the butterflies she collects and studies.

The evolutions in their writing from private to public reflect their altered sense of self. The socialized self, renovated self, and edited self are interdependent and ever-changing identities, and what can be known of each is based on its relationship to the others. Over time, both ladies gradually slough off much of their socialized selves, the identity each developed as a result of the British society in which she grew up. During this process, a new sense of self emerges: a renovated self, the identity each came into during the process of her travels. When Bird and Fontaine began to write about their travels, they needed to account for these two facets of identity. As they balanced these versions of self, they created written personas, their edited selves. Their images were edited twice: first more or less unconsciously as they decided what information would most interest their private audiences and second more deliberately as they or an editor decided how the masses should perceive them.

The existence of these three selves calls into question the notion of the genuine self. It is impossible to know the interiorities of Margaret Fontaine and Isabella Bird definitively or to discern what percentage of their writing is true to fact and what percentage has been altered.

Still, we can learn much about both the authors and the culture of Great Britain from the way these identities interact. As Bird and Fountaine became more conscious of a public readership, they needed to reconcile the culture to which they were writing—i.e., the culture from which they came—to the cultures in which they were immersed while they were writing. Even though both women struggled against British culture in their youths and experienced further difficulties whenever they returned home during their travels, the socialized self never disappears from their writings. Both Bird and Fountaine allude to the faith they were taught to have, and they carefully consider what family and friends might think of their experiences. Through these conscious reminders of their socialized selves, they subconsciously demonstrate their expansions into their renovated selves. The contrast between their socialized and renovated selves is drastic, since both women flourish in the traditionally masculine cultures forbidden to them at home. Because they certainly did not conform to the traditional ideal of womanhood, their edited selves had to be structured so that their public images remained palatable to the expectations of a Victorian readership.

Despite the fact that Fountaine and Bird traveled at slightly different times and to different locations, their identities developed in very similar ways. Both are products of nineteenth-century British society, and both sought out and thrived in male-dominated cultures that would have been deemed less civilized by their Victorian peers. As they realized the freedom that came with traveling independently, they deviated from the expectations of their domestic culture. Unlike most British women, who were considered accomplished if they could dance, sing, and sew, these notable travel writers became pertinent to their scholarly fields and earned their places in Victorian intellectual circles.

Their evolutions diverge at the edited self, the identity with which we, as readers, engage most directly. They differ significantly at both tiers of this identity, private and public editing. Private editing is a largely subconscious process that is impacted by the form in which the author expresses herself. Bird first drafted her journeys in the form of the epistle. Though her letters are a form of private writing, she wrote to an audience outside herself. At its smallest and most intimate, that audience consisted of her sister. Each day or series of days would be revised to contain the information most apt to interest Henrietta and framed in a way that Henrietta would find acceptable. Fountaine, alternatively, detailed her travels in a journal. She was her own audience. Her main concern would have been narrowing her day down to the instances she wanted to remember and on which she wanted to reflect, leaving out portions she wanted to forget or altering them to make herself feel better.

The phase of public editing poses further complications. For the most part, Bird controlled her legacy. She edited her private letters into their published form. She chose which of her experiences she did and did not want to be public knowledge. With the gift of hindsight, she added footnotes and context to her epistles. Alternatively, though Fountaine eventually knew her journals would become public documents and revised them annually, her legacy is largely dependent upon a male editor who reduced her twelve volumes to two collections years after her death. The editor of Fountaine's abridged experiences tends to focus on her personal eccentricities rather than her work as a lepidopterist. The differences between Bird and Fountaine's editing processes impact how we read their travel narratives and interpret the authors as both characters and real people.

Isabella Lucy Bird and Margaret Fountaine felt the impetus to move; they were conscious of the restraints England placed upon them well before they discovered freedom abroad. Boldly

going beyond “civilization,” they came into themselves and developed their renovated identities. Their socialized selves, however, went everywhere with them, which perhaps explains why they wrote—to justify their unconventional happiness and success. As Bird and Fountaine documented their self-imposed exiles from Great Britain in their respective formats, the epistle and the diary, they had to balance these two components of their identities in the form of the edited self. Because it is impossible to extrapolate a genuine self, the edited self becomes the most critical facet of identity as it serves as an immortal self. We continue to remember and discuss these women because of their travel writings, but we remember and discuss them very differently even though they had similar experiences. Readers treat Bird and Fountaine incongruously as a result of choices—both within and beyond the authors’ control—regarding their edited selves.

Bird and Fountaine were far from the only British abroad. Tourism flourished in the nineteenth century. Though young upper-class British men had long traveled about Europe on “The Grand Tour,” rapid industrialization made it easier for the masses to go abroad. The rail system that began to sprawl through Great Britain during the 1840s expanded through Europe and eventually beyond as a result of “British finance and British engineering and manufacturing skills” (Atterbury and Cooper 32). Steamships or “floating hotels” developed contemporaneously with the train (Atterbury and Cooper 34). These innovations in transportation made travel accessible to the masses, not just wealthy men. In fact, “as many as 100,000 people a year were availing themselves of the service [of steamers] by 1840” (Buzard 47). Due to this increase in travel, popular cultural sites became inundated with tourists. In 1848, *Blackwood’s Magazine*

published an article that claims, “The merits of the railroad and the steamboat have been prodigiously vaunted, and we have no desire to depreciate the advantage of either. . . But they have afflicted our generation with one desperate evil; they have covered Europe with tourists” (qtd. in Buzard 48). Indeed, hordes of middle-class men and women flocked to experience their version of “The Grand Tour.”

Though tourism in general caused issues in and beyond Europe, the author of the *Blackwood's* article does not actually take issue with tourism so much as female tourists. Women were at last seeing more of the world, receiving an experiential education previously reserved for young, wealthy men. Although they were struggling against their expected gender roles at home as “virgin princess, defenceless mother, plaything and companion” (Atterbury and Cooper 48), the cultural norm was still to travel under the protection of a father, brother, or husband.¹ With the supervision of a male relation, Victorian women tended to follow the general path of “The Grand Tour,” which included the major cities and landmarks of France, Switzerland, Italy, Austria, Germany, and the Netherlands. After a period of a few years, they would return home to Great Britain and resume a traditional lifestyle. A true woman was meant to embody “Every tender thought, every lofty emotion, every generous sentiment that men may be in danger of forgetting in the clash and tumult of the world. . . and thence go forth to purify and sustain and resist the lowering tendencies of active life” (Morgan 40). The household, still a woman’s domain, was meant to be a man’s haven from the stressful world of politics. While women might understand subjects like politics insofar as it enabled them to be sympathetic to their husbands’ concerns, they were meant to remain “above partisan strife” (Morgan 41). Though the role of women was changing in Victorian England, cultural norms continued to limit the sex.

¹ Accomplished male traveler and travel writer Anthony Trollope satirizes this quintessentially Victorian expectation in his short story, “An Unprotected Female at the Pyramids” (1859).

While married women were expected to be household fixtures who depended on their husbands, single and independent women were largely unaccounted for in Victorian norms and were, thus, generally stigmatized. Women could and did travel alone for various reasons (health, missionary work, etc.). Often, women who traveled as individuals, particularly those who traveled further than Europe, never married. Many remained single, not because they were undesirable, but because they preferred the autonomy their single-status conferred upon them to the limitations of matrimony. Mary Kingsley, Marianne North, and Amelia Edwards are three such notable women. Though Margaret Fountaine and Isabella Lucy Bird did have romantic relationships with men, they too would have been classed as spinsters as neither had any serious suitors until she was middle-aged. All these ladies went to different cities and nations and had vastly different experiences, but each found a freedom abroad that she would not have had at home. Marriage would likely have meant settling in Great Britain and relinquishing the liberty they had discovered. Many Victorian women had a distaste for the limitations Great Britain inflicted upon them, and those who traveled independently found their escape from the confinement.

Women sought to document their freedom and, due to the patriarchal structure of the era, had to finesse their way into the world of publishing. Prior to the Victorian period, the genre of travel writing was dominated by men for the simple reason that women lacked the means to go abroad. As Susan Bassnett explains in her essay, "Travel writing and gender," men

moved more freely in the public sphere. The great European sagas of knightly questing (such as *The Norse Sagas* and *The Arthurian Cycle*) or seafaring exploration (such as *The Odyssey* and *The Lusiads*) are also male narratives with women the objects of desire or destination points . . . the idea of man as heroic

risk-taking traveller underpinned not only the great travel narratives of the next centuries, but . . . the twentieth century also. (225)

Indeed, the hyper-romanticized notion of a foreign land as an exotic woman to be explored and conquered colored the Victorian travel experience because it contributed to the idea of traveling as a distinctly masculine activity. Male travel writers of this time tended to write for a male audience, describing their conquests in unfamiliar countries in terms of penetrating virgin territories.

Women increasingly infiltrated the genre of travel literature in the nineteenth century, and they did so by doing exactly what was acceptable for ladies to do. It was commonplace for a woman to either write letters home or keep a journal during her journeys. Via these forms of expression, women unthreateningly entered the genre of travel writing through a side door. Both letters and journals are generally forums for conveying emotion; it made sense for women to write in these formats because, according to a cultural paradigm, they are inherently emotional creatures. Thus, regardless of whether or not they actually wrote letters, women began to write travel works in an epistolary format to make their narratives more palatable to the masculine publishing industry.

Female travel writers knew their public audiences nearly as intimately as they knew their private audiences; public expectations had been deeply engrained into their socialized selves. Though gender roles were in flux, a distinct separation still existed between the masculine sphere and the feminine sphere. Cynthia Huff explains this dichotomy in her essay, “Textual Boundaries: Space in Nineteenth-Century Women’s Manuscript Diaries”:

The ideology and the social spatial ordering of nineteenth-century Britain reinforced gender differences. Women symbolized the ideal of femininity by

residing as the angel in the house and only ventured outside it to perform familial duties of production and reproduction; men determined the place of the empire and conquered the worlds of commerce, industry, and politics only to return home for moral sustenance from the presiding angel. Article after article, literary text after literary text, reiterated the separate sphere concept as the ideal spatial path to womanhood. (124)

By remaining in the household, women learned to be passive and dependent. This romantic image of the soft and demure woman would have been reinforced in their reading. Indeed, when picking up a Victorian narrative with a female protagonist, the reader would have had subconscious expectations as to the story it contained. Often, the contents include a young woman—close to the ideal of femininity though maybe not the standard of beauty—in some type of unhappy situation. Though she exercises sufficient autonomy to extricate herself from her initial position, the happy conclusion comes about due to a man, probably a lover, or else she withers and dies.² Nineteenth-century readers would have internalized this plot-structure. Such popular culture is, of course, an integral part to the establishment of the socialized self.

The most significant factor in Bird and Fountaine's socialization was their religion, however. Christianity was the dominant faith in Victorian England. More than 4,500 churches were built or rebuilt between the 1830s and 1870s, and these churches sent missionaries

² Some obvious examples of this phenomenon include Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, in which Miss Eyre falls in love with the first man she sees as an adult; Anne Brontë's *Agnes Grey*, which is not meant to be just another governess novel even though the protagonist does indeed become a governess; and Alfred Lord Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott," who falls victim to a terrible curse by not obeying the rules set out for her.

throughout the British Empire (Atterbury and Cooper 54). The fervor with which Victorians practiced Christianity meant Christian values pervaded most aspects of British culture: education, philanthropy, industry, and so on.

Bird and Fountaine particularly felt the influence of Christianity. Isabella Lucy Bird was born on 15 October 1831 to Edward Bird and Dora Lawson. Bird's father was an Anglican preacher; her mother taught Sunday school. So intense was Edward Bird's faith that he had to be removed from several of the churches at which he once preached because his followers found him too strict. In fact, the parishioners at his Birmingham church stoned him from his post for his excessively ascetic lifestyle.³ Isabella also had the influence and competition of her younger sister, Henrietta, who was so pious that their neighbors referred to her as "The Blessed One" (Chubbuck 8). Like her sister, Isabella was quite charitable. She performed philanthropy such as aiding crofters in their emigration to Canada and founding a training center for medical missionaries.

The Birds' education, however, was more than simply religious. The sisters were homeschooled together and had lessons from both parents. Their literary education, of course, consisted of the Bible and Milton, but Isabella also knew the works of Anthony Trollope and Charles Dickens well. Thus, along with the expectations of what it meant to be a Christian woman, Isabella internalized some more adventurous tales. The sisters received a more expansive education than most girls. They learned Latin and Greek, natural history, mathematics, and chemistry. Isabella "had a passion for microscopes" (Chubbuck 4), showing her penchant for science early in life. Her talent for writing also presented itself at a young age. She published her

³ Many parishioners did not appreciate Edward Bird's insistence upon total rest on the Sabbath.

first article at seventeen years old, and in her twenties, Bird was frequently published in religious journals such as *Good Words* and *The Sunday Magazine*.

Margaret Elizabeth Fountaine also grew up in a very Christian household. On 16 May 1862, she became Reverend John Fountaine and Mary Isabella Lee's second child and first daughter. For the first fifteen years of her life, she lived in her father's rectory in South Acre, Norfolk, where Reverend Fountaine had shepherded his flock since 1846. Despite Reverend Fountaine's profession, Margaret's biographer, Natascha Scott-Stokes, focuses on Mary Isabella Lee as the enforcer of Christian morals in the children's lives as she was also raised in the church. With her seven brothers and sisters, Margaret was educated in the schoolroom at South Acre rectory on the days her mother and Fräulein Hellmuth, the German governess, could rally everyone inside. Margaret was particularly hard to coax into the classroom, preferring to ride her horse away from Fräulein. The Fountaine children's lessons consisted of French, German English composition, literature, painting, and music. Though she did not care much for the languages, Margaret excelled at and enjoyed the arts.⁴ She particularly loved getting to sketch outside. The Fountaine children liked growing up in the country and being able to spend their time out of doors, where they were free of their parents' and governess' rules.

Upon Reverend John Fountaine's death in December 1877, Margaret, her mother, her siblings, and their several household employees moved twenty miles east to Eaton Grange in the city of Norwich. Only months later, Margaret's older brother, John, also died. This transition, from two parents to one, from one home to another, from two brothers to one, was a significant

⁴ It is possible Margaret Fountaine got her eye for detail from her father's side, "For the Fountaines are one of the greatest art collectors and connoisseurs of England . . . Margaret would have been able to see original works by many European Masters . . . including Brueghel, Jacob van Ruisdael and Jan van Huysum" (Scott-Stokes 24–25).

shift in her life; the year of their relocation is the year she started keeping diaries.⁵ Margaret was eager but skeptical about what the move would mean to her. She, Constance, and Geraldine wrote a poem together that served as the frontispiece for Margaret's first diary:

Those dreams, of the far distant future,
 Whose mysteries, are yet unsealed,
 Oh! Could I but pierce through its shadows
 And gaze on its untrodden fields.
 What scenes of vexation and sorrow!
 What moments of heart-rending anguish
 Would instantly burst to my sight. (qtd. in Scott-Stokes 26)⁶

The first two lines of this epigraph reflect her hope and excitement through “dreams” and “mysteries.” In the third line, she quickly reins herself in, reminding herself she cannot see or count on what has not yet happened. Her hopes are then replaced by apprehensions of “vexation and sorrow!” that become immediately visible to her imagination, negating the idea of the “untrodden field.” Margaret certainly felt the loss of her father and brother through the many changes their deaths brought to her life. One such change was sole supervision of her mother, who was quite hard on the passionate child.

Both Bird and Fontaine resisted the norms that were inculcated into them since birth. Bird's method of rebellion, however, was more passive than Fontaine's. Being a good, Christian woman, Bird could not simply travel for pleasure. She needed a more serious purpose,

⁵ The significance of this date is emphasized years later, when Fontaine requests her journals not be unsealed until 100 years after the date she began keeping them.

⁶ Scott-Stokes had access to Fontaine's original journals while she was writing *Wild & Fearless: The Life of Margaret Fontaine*. Thus, she includes excerpts that are not documented in W.F. Cater's condensed versions of Fontaine's writing: *Love Among the Butterflies* and *Butterflies and Late Loves*.

and her body gave her one. Bird was frail from childhood. Her symptoms included carbuncles on her spine, lesions, fevers, headaches, rashes, nausea, rheumatism, muscle spasms, hair loss, and general physical pain.⁷ Victorian medicine could not make sense of her amalgamation of symptoms. Some of Bird's complaints were likely engendered by her efforts to cure them. Along with several operations necessary to remove tumors, doctors also performed regular bloodlettings by both incisions and leeches. Her medication included laudanum, potassium bromide, and chlorodyne—some of which she took with alcohol in the hopes of soothing her nerves. Chlorodyne, a combination of opium and cannabis, has side effects like nausea, loss of appetite, and constipation, which would account for some of her symptoms. In addition, potassium bromide, though safe in small portions, can be dangerous in the quantities Bird consumed, leading to episodes of “psychological derangement” (Chubbuck 6). As she was taking it three times per day, she noted that it made her “more nervous than I have ever been and I cannot remember anything or read a book. These last few days I have felt shaking all over and oppressed with undefined terror” (qtd. in Chubbuck 6). Bird probably had carbunculosis, a condition that entails “A staphylococcus skin infection that results in large, infectious knobs on the back and spine . . . accompanied by fever, fatigue, inflammation and malaise” (Chubbuck 6). Today, doctors would cure it by surgically draining its characteristic boils. Unsure what else to try, however, her doctor prescribed a sea voyage—a prescription that turned into something of a love affair Bird spent the rest of her life chasing.

Margaret Fontaine was also apt to pursue what she loved. But whereas Bird was more or less cured by her newfound love of the sea, Fontaine's passions were thought to be unhealthy. In the journals that pre-date Fontaine's travels, she wrote only once a year on “her day,” April

⁷ Bird had her first tumor surgically removed from her spine at age eighteen (Chubbuck 4).

15.⁸ Each of these early entries focuses on her love interest of the year. At seventeen, she had lost some of the initial skepticism about Norwich that her poem expresses and wrote in April 1879, “The very streets of Norwich have become sacred to me . . . I have learnt a new feeling, a new love so great that it cannot confine itself to one object . . . I love the long straight road because it is there that we generally see *him* . . . Oh, we never knew at South Acre what real happiness was” (*Love* 22).⁹ Her affections, however, proved quite transient. On 15 April 1881, she writes of Woodrow, a man she loved fervently though she had never spoken to him, but when he moved to Australia, she remained “perfectly happy” (*Love* 24). Nearly every early entry contains sentiments for a different man, and the emotion is equally high and giddy in each.

Her passions could not be kept in the confines of her diary. Her affections were so evident that in April 1883 her doctor said that both she and her sister, Evelyn, “had got a monomania and that was the love of men!” (*Love* 27). She accepted and worried about his diagnosis, “for very often when I find myself in the presence of a man, even one whom I am really perfectly indifferent to, I feel my monomania raging and burning in my brain, I am bound with a spell which I cannot resist before the object in whose company I am” (qtd. in Scott-Stokes 32).¹⁰ In essence, she was a hormonal teenager. She seems to have felt, however, the apparent impropriety of her feelings as she continues, “Sometimes I feel afraid when I think how desperately, how awfully wicked I am, while at others my heart is so hard, that I do not even deplore my sins.” She could not hate her sins, perceiving them as expressions of love, but they

⁸ This date was not her birthday but rather “a day the other members of the family were expected to indulge their fortunate sister in minor ways; there does not seem to have been any present-giving. It was important enough for Margaret to decide to keep a record of it” (Cater 17–18).

⁹ Entries from 15 April 1878 to 15 April 1913 can be found in W.F. Cater’s first condensation of Fountaine’s work, *Love Among the Butterflies: The diaries of a wayward, determined and passionate Victorian Lady*.

¹⁰ In some cases, her mania literally burned. She seared one of her interest’s initials into her palm using iodine (Scott-Stokes 31).

certainly frustrated her: “It ought now to be my greatest wish, that before this time comes round again, I shall have grown in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, but alas! There is one other wish in my heart which I fear is far greater. Oh! How I long that it may please God to grant me *that* wish!” (qtd. in Scott-Stokes 32). She desired to practice the temperance her mother wanted her to have, the temperance that would have made her less of a target for gossip in her Christian community. Regardless of her knowledge of Jesus, however, Fontaine would never give up “*that* wish.”

Eventually, problematically, and perhaps fortunately, twenty-one-year-old Margaret Fontaine’s affections settled on Septimus Hewson, a chorister in the Norwich Cathedral Choir whose voice was the “very breath and soul of music” (qtd. in Scott-Stokes 33). Daily, she walked the forty-five minutes to the cathedral under the pretext of sketching its interiors. This crush took a greater toll on Margaret than the others. By this time, she had learned that her infatuations were a point of conflict at home, often leading to periods of silence between her and her mother. She thus kept her affections a secret and “felt it was all sin, from beginning to end – the long practiced schemes of deceit to hide from Mother my real motive for going there, as well as the continual gratification of that unholy love, carried on within the house of God” (qtd. in Scott-Stokes 35). Her guilt plagued her for six years; her tumultuous emotional state is evidenced in her entries. They greatly increase in length over this interval, spanning hundreds of pages and suddenly taking hours to read.¹¹ Her feelings for Hewson led her astray from the practices of a good Victorian girl. Neither Fontaine nor Bird was particularly great at adhering to Victorian social practices in general. They refused to be conventional angels of the house.

¹¹ Fontaine included a time after each entry. These times have proven to be how long it takes to read that section of the journal (Cater 19).

These women did, however, become impressive testaments to female capability, but it would be misleading to say that they resisted the typical Victorian woman's life through their strengths of spirit. Neither could withstand the expectations of her culture. Though Bird's health problems were partially due to incorrect treatment, Bird was a "neurasthenic," meaning that her physical ailments were also partially manifestations of psychological distress (Chubbuck 6). She so hated sitting about all day sewing that she was crippled by it and thus physically forced to participate in the convention of the dependent woman. Though her body was fit, Fountaine experienced bouts of depression as a result of her unreciprocated loves. She was particularly wounded by her fondness for Septimus Hewson. She had no choice but to suffer; conventions forbade her from speaking to a man to whom she had never been introduced. Her melancholia was evident though not understood. Her family forced her to take trips to the coast of Norfolk and Winchester, which did her no good. Both ladies needed to get away from the rules (and rule) of British civilization for the sake of their health.

Simple travel, however, was not enough to alter these women. Bird, for instance, traveled to America in her twenties, but she did not return to England with any great paradigm shift. Her book about the experience, *The Englishwoman in America*, was originally published in 1856, when she was twenty-five. She goes to the States "with that amount of prejudice which seems the birthright of every English person" (*Englishwoman* 46). Though some of these prejudices "melted away" upon interacting with Americans, "It must never be forgotten that the noble, the learned, and the wealthy have shrunk from the United States; her broad lands have been peopled to a great extent by those whose stalwart arms have been their only possession" (*Englishwoman* 46). Despite her bias, the rules of propriety were largely the same between the mother country and her former colony. Bird was essentially as limited in America as she was at home.

Regardless of literal distance, the cultural spaces of England and America were constructed with the overarching Western mindset.

Bird returned to America two years later and then did not leave home again until after her parents' deaths. Her father died of influenza in 1858, six weeks after her return from this trip. Dora Bird died six years after her husband, in 1866. The Bird sisters then lived together in Edinburgh for two years, remaining devoted to the Christian lifestyle their parents had engrained in them and practicing philanthropy. This interval of their lives led to the publication of Isabella Bird's *Notes on Old Edinburgh* in 1869. Bird, however, continued to be plagued by her illness, and she eventually moved in with her friend, Emily Clayton, who helped nurse her. As Bird's health dwindled, in the autumn of 1871, she again had an excuse to go abroad.

Like Bird, Margaret Fountaine was relatively unaltered by her first solitary experience abroad, which took place in Ireland. On 25 September 1886 while she was in the south of England, she sent a letter to her beloved Septimus Hewson, professing her attraction to him and asking he forgive her forwardness. His response, which remains stored between pages of Fountaine's journal, came twenty days later. In his letter, Hewson is both polite and less-than-passionate: "there is no forgiveness required, as I am pleased to hear of Winchester and its cathedral I remain, Yours very truly, Septimus Hewson" (*Love* 33). She, however, treasured his words. So, when he was "sent away, on account of being such a dreadfully unsteady man" (*Love* 37), she was more heart broken than she had ever been. Not long after Hewson returned to his native Limerick, however, Fountaine's Uncle Edward died and left his property to his nieces, leaving each £30,000; Margaret Fountaine became an independent woman with the means to travel to the love she thought she would never see again.

Fontaine's trip to Ireland, however, was no more transformative than Bird's trip to the American East. Fontaine traveled, found Hewson, told him she was financially independent, and they shared a more or less romantic week in the spring of 1890. When she returned home, Fontaine believed she was finally engaged to the man for whom she had spent years pining. Still unhappy with her daughter's romantic endeavors, Mary Isabella Lee forced her to inquire of Hewson, "how much money you have got" (*Love* 47), fearing he was only courting her for her money. Sir John Lawes, family friend and executor of her uncle's will, responded to her 23 August 1890 letter, "I am only sorry that it is by your late uncle's money that you have been able to carry out what I cannot but call a most unfortunate arrangement" (*Love* 47). Hewson was not changed by her trip either. His last letter to Fontaine was dated 19 August 1890. After two months without hearing from him, she reached out to his Aunt, who reported, "I can gather that he has no idea he ever entered into any engagement. . . I think the very best thing you can do is to banish all thoughts of him from your mind" (*Love* 48). She was classically heartbroken and convinced the eyes of the community were on her and judging her for her mistake. She remained the emotional teenager. To find real change and growth, she needed to go further than the British Isles.

As Isabella Bird and Margaret Fontaine continued to seek the freedom of health and love abroad, they necessarily interacted with societies that differed radically from their home culture. By reacting and adapting to a change, not merely in setting, but also in the rules of propriety, these women had to set aside their socialized personalities—their versions of self that accorded with Victorian norms and mores—to some extent. Cynthia Huff explains the traveler's

necessary development of the renovated self—a self that has adapted to life within a foreign culture—in terms of space: “space is more than just a dichotomy between inner and outer. Rather, space is socially and culturally constructed and reflects our ideas about how we interact within a culture and how that culture influences us” (123). They had to construct identities that allowed them to behave in such a way that fit the spaces in which they toured. Embodying those identities permanently changed them. When Bird and Fountaine were no longer expected to be delicate ladies but rather were expected to fend for themselves, they developed extreme autonomy and became the proverbial intrepid lady travelers.

Isabella Lucy Bird did not begin to discover this renovated self until she was nearly forty. In 1871, she experienced an increase in her depression and developed a number of carbuncles on her back. Henrietta prompted her to take a sea voyage because travel previously ameliorated her symptoms. Thus, approaching middle age, Bird again took advantage of the steam ship and boarded the *St. David*, destination New York. Though none of Isabella’s letters to Henrietta from this journey survive, a letter to her friend, Ella Blackie, with whom she corresponded throughout this tour, remains.¹² Her writing suggests that she recovered during her six months on board the vessel, but it also indicates her ongoing struggle with the civilized world. Bird writes, “At last comes a visible response to your two delightful letters, one of which welcomed me at great wicked whirling overwhelming N.Y. the other at this staid quiet puritan town” (*Letters* 31).¹³

¹² This letter, dated 24 March 1872, is the only evidence we have of Bird’s 1871–1872 tour. We know she wrote to Henrietta, however, as she refers to those epistles in this letter.

¹³ *Letters to Henrietta* is a collection of Bird’s unpublished letters compiled by Kay Chubbuck. These epistles will be referred to in this section on the renovated self because they are as unaltered from their original state as possible, thus limiting the influence of a third-party editor on our perceptions of Bird. Chubbuck has added “a paragraph format . . . and for purposes of space certain sections have been omitted or summarised. . . omissions are marked by ellipses in square brackets. . . . Otherwise, these letters are as Isabella wrote them” (25). These transcripts

Regarding the city, her language is generally negative. New York was too much for her country taste. Neither does Bird show any particular fondness for the harbor town she visited in Maine. Her language is less strong regarding “Island Harbour” probably because the town would have had fewer rules of propriety than New York, but she remained frustrated because it too subscribed to the Western standard of “staid . . . puritan” social practices.¹⁴

Part of the apparent negativity in the language Bird uses to describe New York and Maine stems from its extreme contrast to the reverent tone she takes up when she describes being on the open water. Bird most loved visiting the ocean:

It must have been equally hard to believe that after encountering the fury of an Atlantic storm for 7 days in coming home I should brave the risk again. But at last I am in love, and desperately in love, and the old sea god has so stolen my heart and penetrated my soul that I seriously fear that hereafter though I must be elsewhere in body I must be with him in spirit. I am not joking. (*Letters 31*)

The sea is lawless and wild; it does not expect Bird to be helpless.¹⁵ This shift in expectation catalyzes Bird’s initial formation of her renovated self; being on board ship was “like living in a new world so free, so fresh, so vital, so careless, so unfettered, so full of interest that one grudges being asleep” (*Letters 31–32*). The freedom of the salt water revitalized her, and for that feeling, she loved it. Like a love-struck schoolgirl, she experienced a “perfect infatuation” (*Letters 31*). Thus, she found herself, like the sea, being frequently in “tempestuous spirits and . . . always in

are also theoretically without much if any deliberate editing on Bird’s part either. Bird’s published works will be discussed in the section on the edited self.

¹⁴ The letter is marked “Island Harbour Maine U.S.” but it is unclear if this was the former name of what is now Harbor Island or if it was one of Maine’s many other coastal towns.

¹⁵ After spending months on the water, she is utterly taken with the fact that there are “no demands of any kind, no vain attempts to overtake all one knows one should do. Above all, no nervousness, and no conventionalities” (*Letters 32*).

excellent spirits” (*Letters* 32). She was changed by leading the life of “a viking wild” (*Letters* 32), and she could feel the difference in herself. This unladylike experience “has taught me some useful lessons. I think I am entirely unrecognisable, at least I hardly recognise my own identity” (*Letters* 32). She struggled to identify with the personality English society had carefully groomed her to have. Her new self seemed so outlandish to her that she did not want her friend, Blackie, to repeat this new development: “I never could have believed I was the kind of woman who would influence men. But manners and speech have undergone a gradual but entire transformation, refined tastes are being developed, and I know that I have the good will of all the ships company, and the warmest and most respectful regard of 2 or 3” (*Letters* 32). Not an invalid, not delicate, not passive, or dependent, Bird realizes, in the Atlantic, that she has power.

This autonomous renovated self becomes more evident the more she writes of home. While she is certainly never rid of her socialized identity, she seems to be consciously trying to keep Great Britain in a positive light, writing, “it is now difficult for me to imagine any pleasure in any other life,” then, nearly as an afterthought, “except at home” (*Letters* 32). She traveled, theoretically, to regain health and return home to perform the duties of a Christian woman, but being in foreign air became necessary to maintaining her good health. She felt, however, that she only had “strength enough for my sea life, for its grand excitements, and blissful quiet” (*Letters* 32). She refers to typically comforting ideas like “a week of warm rooms and seeing friends” in ironically hopeless terms, correctly worrying that “the usual demands of land life would destroy me again” (*Letters* 32). To leave her love—the “sea god”—is to relapse. She is sure to stipulate, however, that Blackie should “Believe always in a love [for her friendship] which even Neptune has not stolen away” (*Letters* 32). Although she continued to feel a fondness for those who helped mold her socialized self, that identity would not return unaltered.

Though it took the excitement of a tumultuous ocean to trigger Bird's dissociation from her home culture, Margaret Fontaine eagerly began to shed her association with her socialized self even within Europe. Unlike Bird, Margaret Fontaine took only a year before she left England again. At the age of 29, Fontaine found herself in Switzerland during their annual carnival with her sister, Florence, and this experience changed her life. After a night in Berne, the sisters departed for Geneva, where they spent the remainder of August and September. Here, Fontaine began to develop a recognizable version of her renovated self through her discovery of a purer love: butterflies. Though she was still in Europe and under the generally Western paradigm, she felt freer: "having left the English climate far behind, the evening was of unclouded loveliness and as I looked down upon the sunlit valleys with ranges of mountains beyond, a great and wonderful delight came over me. I had lived all these years and never known till now how beautiful was this earth" (*Love* 52). The beauty of the Swiss Alps proves significant to Fontaine's new sense of self. The landscape connects her with her future as a lepidopterist. She writes, "I would often spend my afternoons at St Jean and go out with an English girl after butterflies, a pursuit of which once started soon became all-absorbing" (*Love* 53). Indeed, butterflies became, not only Margaret's life, but also her excuse to travel. Lepidoptera gave Margaret the escape she needed from the life of a proper Victorian housewife or spinster.¹⁶

The seed of Fontaine's renovated self is rooted in her socialized identity. Having grown up in the country, Margaret developed a beloved hobby of catching butterflies. She also often visited the botanical gardens and Mr. Henry John Elwes' butterfly collection. Mr. Elwes was a

¹⁶ Scott-Stokes indicates Fontaine's resistance to these conventional roles: "She understood that women could lose themselves in their role as wives and mothers, failing to achieve what their own potential might offer. 'All women can marry, and live only in the love of their husbands,' [Fontaine] wrote. 'Might I not weary of that phase of existence so common to all. And gaze with restless yearning eyes upon the dim visions of that strange dream: life I have now more than made up my mind, that it will be my lot to lead'" (38).

family friend of the Fountaines and the owner of England's largest collection of Lepidoptera (Waring 54). In Geneva, she thinks fondly back to this childhood:

I filled my pocket box with butterflies, some I had only seen in pictures as a child and yet recognized the moment I caught sight of them on the wing. I little thought years ago, when I used to look with covetous eyes at the plates representing the Scarce Swallowtail or the Camberwell Beauty that I should see both these in a valley in Switzerland and know the delight of securing specimens. I was a born naturalist, though all these years for want of anything to excite it, it had lain dormant within me. (*Love* 53)

Fontaine's language of realization and awakening reflects the same enthusiasm and zeal Isabella Bird felt traveling across the ocean. Fontaine had long desired to "be free to choose [her] own path in life," and her financial security and newfound joy allowed her to embrace "[her] ruling passion [which] is the love of independence" (*Love* 27). Fontaine thus found herself finally able to "[knock] about the world and [get] used to the ways and customs of men" (*Love* 39). Her renovated identity develops a character more "proper" Victorian ladies might term "masculine."

Fontaine did, indeed, observe the ways and customs of men quite closely as she began to participate in those ways. Butterfly collecting was in fashion among the British when Fontaine rediscovered it for herself, but "The scene was dominated by men" (Waring 54). Those men, however, offered her respect. Like Bird, she thrived when she was not expected to be dainty or quiet. When she returned to society with all its socialized expectations, Miss Fontaine struggled more than before because she had learned what it felt like to have real autonomy. Coming home after her months in Switzerland, she wonders, "Why, when life can be made so

joyous and happy, do the English seem to convert it into a thing so dull and depressing?” (qtd. in Scott-Stokes 65–66). She “merely exist[ed]” (qtd. in Scott-Stokes 66) while she was in England. Having discovered independence, Fontaine could not easily relinquish its freedom and felt the necessity of leaving home more than ever.

Several months after her return to England, Fontaine departed for Italy, where all she had learned of herself in Switzerland was reaffirmed. She writes of a Florentine churchyard:

Plenty of butterflies here; I caught a splendid specimen of male Brimstone, thinking that though it was common enough in England I should always love to think that it was caught in Italy. It gave me a pang of remorse to take this beautiful creature away from her flowers and her sunshine, which I too knew so well how to enjoy; the death of the butterfly is the one drawback to an entymological career. (*Love* 57)

Though Fontaine probably wrote this passage as an observation on the day she encountered this familiar and beautiful insect, this narrative parallels her expansion into her renovated self. She was a thing of England; she just happened to be in Italy, much like the Brimstone. She took particular joy in capturing this butterfly because she found it far from her home. To bring the Brimstone home with her, however, she had to kill him. The death of the butterfly may depict Fontaine’s dwindling recognition of her socialized identity and her growing connection to the renovated self she discovered abroad. Like the butterfly, she “too knew so well how to enjoy” the gardens of Italy and beyond, but also like the butterfly, her freedom was cripplingly limited by the prospect of “dull and depressing” England.

The crippling force of Western norms that repelled Fontaine also led Bird to travel again, and much more extensively this time. Though Bird began to realize her renovated identity

at sea, she did not feel that same tear from her socialized culture until January 1873, when she went beyond the British Empire. Rediscovering some of the vigor she had on her return from her sea voyage a year earlier, Bird went through a more drastic shift in character as a result of this journey. Though this tour began in Australia and continued in New Zealand, those countries did little for Bird's health. Leaving New Zealand for San Francisco, California on New Year's 1873, she boarded a run-down steamship called the *Nevada*. Chubbuck describes this ship as "barely seaworthy: condemned by a governor surveyor, she was in 'dilapidated condition', and nearly capsized after hitting a typhoon" (56). In other words, the conditions of the ship hardly seem hospitable to anyone, let alone an English lady, let alone an invalid. Bird, however, had a sailor's spirit and was again revitalized by her days on the water. Onboard, she befriended several American women. She developed a particular attachment to Mrs. Dexter, however, as she helped the woman care for her son, who had ruptured a blood vessel in his lungs during their journey and was spitting blood. He was in dire need of a doctor. His mother begged the captain to stop at the nearest island so she could find him one. That island was Oahu. Bird (ever the Christian philanthropist) disembarked with them at Honolulu, deferring her planned trip to California, to continue helping the little family. Bird stayed in this city for about a month. Many of Bird's Honolulu letters have been published, but she spent six months in the Sandwich Islands. Her unpublished epistles from this time, particularly those from Hilo (on the big island), are revealing of Bird's motivations for travel.

Bird's epistles reveal the excitement of her experiences in Hawaii. A letter from Hilo (19 Feb. 1873) begins by encouraging Henrietta to show the epistle to everyone, promising, "it will be like a book" (*Letters* 56). The "book" to which she alludes is the story of a sickly woman going on traditionally masculine adventures in an unfamiliar territory; it seems fictional. Bird

describes Hilo as “an enchanting place” (*Letters* 57). She finds this sense of magic in the town due to its dissimilarities to England:

It is the most kindly sociable friendly little place you can imagine. There is no morning visiting. If people want anything they come in at any hour, but after supper 6 o'clock people take their lanterns and drop in to each others houses or verandahs and have talking and music. As there are no servants there are no doorbells and no one raps but people come in at the verandah windows and if you are in our drawingroom you are supposed to be ready to receive them. (*Letters* 57)

The formality of the practice of distributing visiting cards, having a specific day and time each week to receive guests, and dressing a specific way for these encounters made British socialization more cold and obligatory than neighborly and fun. Bird subconsciously disassociates herself from the cultural norm she would have known well and claims the Hawaiian culture, asserting, “I now know all its ways” (*Letters* 57). Obviously, Bird did not become a Hawaiian after spending only months there, but in identifying with the island, she inevitably shed some of her British-ness.

As she distanced herself from her learned ideals of the feminine, Bird became healthier—in fact, it is hard to keep in mind that sickness is one of her distinguishing characteristics. Bird could be described as “vital” based on her travel writing. She goes on long journeys by herself, riding astride her horse, wearing her “Hawaiian riding dress.”¹⁷ She reflects on how her English

¹⁷ Bird describes her costume in a footnote in the second edition of *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains*, her first published book of travel literature: “For the benefit of other lady travelers, I wish to explain that my ‘Hawaiian riding dress’ is the ‘American Lady’s Mountain Dress,’ a half-fitting jacket, a skirt reaching to the ankles, and full Turkish trousers gathered into frills falling over the boots,—a thoroughly serviceable and feminine costume for mountaineering and other rough traveling, as in the Alps or any other part of the world” (10). It is worth noting that, though her garb is practical and she characterizes it as “feminine” she is embarrassed to be

peers would perceive her new lifestyle. She comments on 22 February 1873, “I like the independent ways of going off on my 2 hour journey alone crossing in my scow swimming and fording my rivers and getting in wet up to my waist! How frightful we should think it at home if we heard of anyone ‘having had’ to swim a river” (*Letters* 57–58). As Bird developed into her renovated self, she was able to live experientially instead of seated on a couch while working on her sewing.

Bird seems to fluctuate between identifying with her socialized self and performing it as, immediately following this profession of happiness, Bird writes an anecdote that places her back in the role of the Victorian, Christian woman: care giver. She cooks a big meal of “a most delicious curry, a rolled pudding, a huge beef steak turnips breadfruit baked” for ten people and aids the Severance family with its sick child (*Letters* 58). Though she denied the role of motherhood, Bird made sure to show that she could be the quintessential maternal nurturer. She then vacillates again to a more traditionally masculine manner, discussing intelligently the realm of politics. She goes into America’s negative response to Hawaii’s election of a king and the intention of annexation. She also shows an emotional resilience that is atypical of the female stereotype. She mentions offhand a potentially emotional report, but Bird relays only the facts: “news came that on the way to Hilo a man on horseback carrying a child had fallen over the track. . . the man and horse were killed. . . . It was not one of the worst places . . . 2 of these *palis* as they [cliffs] are called the track is so narrow that one of your feet hangs over a precipice 500 feet deep” (*Letters* 61). The lack of displayed concern, regardless of whether or not it is deliberate, calls attention to Bird’s bravery. She travels the same track as this man, but unlike

wearing it when she runs into Westerners. She writes, “When I saw these strangers and their well veiled stare I remembered that I was in a Bloomer Suit astride a horse and that probably they had never seen such a thing! I wished I was anywhere else” (22 Feb. 1873).

him, she “liked [her] ride” (*Letters* 61), which she is sure to state immediately after her report of his death. Her renovated self is characterized by a resilience that is uncharacteristic of the socialized version of Bird.

As her health increased and her confidence grew, Bird’s motivations for travel altered. No longer was she traveling for health. Rather Bird began to travel because it interested her. Her ability to engage with foreign cultures and understand their societal structures takes her writing into the realm of ethnography.¹⁸ Bird’s socialized self is loath to admit this shift because, as Lila Harper explains, “Realistically, for women traveling alone, travel has always been and still is difficult, and to present oneself as essentially being alone invites questions about the traveler’s morals” (17).¹⁹ Eventually, however, she could not deny her purpose. She outlived her sister but continued to travel, write, and be generally healthy. As a result of her journeys and her publications “the eminent British geographers of her day considered her one of themselves. In 1892, she became the first woman ever elected a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society” (Boorstin xvi).²⁰ By shifting the intent of her writing, Bird needed to create a public persona—her edited self.

¹⁸ It is important to note that the Victorian view of science was not as rigid as today’s definition of the subject. Harper explains, “[nineteenth-century science] included elements of both hobby and mental discipline; it was a way of observing the world. Initially, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century science presented itself not as an area of study so much as a method which related observation to the forming of hypotheses, a method which could be applied to human activities as well as to the natural world” (14–15).

¹⁹ Chubbuck seconds this sentiment: “For such a religious woman, traveling for pleasure was absurd” (4). All this said, Bird preferred to travel alone; when Henrietta asked to join her, she refused the companionship.

²⁰ To be a woman inducted into the Royal Geographical Society during the nineteenth century is obviously an impressive feat. The circumstances very much characterize Bird as an intelligent and capable figure as it was not an honor she went looking for and she functioned as an exception to the male members’ deeply ingrained perception of women: “[Bird] was the one woman traveler whose geographical credentials were well secured and not questioned by Victorian readers. Even Lord Curzon, a vocal opponent of women’s membership in scientific

Fontaine's interests also won her the attentions of England's scholarly community and eventually necessitated the genesis of an edited self. After two years of collecting in Italy, Fontaine returned home and visited her friend Mr. Elwes.²¹ His extensive collection of Lepidoptera put hers into perspective. Though she was much newer to the profession than he, the comparison brought out her competitive side:

I was happy till I and Rachel were asked to spend three days at Colesborne, to see Mr Elwes' butterflies, a thing I had much desire to do. . . . Mr Elwes' wonderful collection making one thoroughly unsettled and discontented, I was dissatisfied with my own collection in a way that was almost childish. 'Now you see the possibilities of a collection,' Mr Elwes had said one day in the museum, to which I had replied, that on the contrary I only saw the *impossibilities* of a collection!" (qtd. in Waring 55)

The idea of the impossible, however, was always a challenge to Fontaine. Motivated by this winter return home, Fontaine set out to collect in Sicily in 1896.²² Her first action upon reaching the island was to find Signor Enrico Ragusa, a well-regarded Sicilian entomologist and, conveniently, the proprietor of the Grand Hotel des Palmes. He gave her "most valuable [information], for *M. Pherusa*, the butterfly I most wished to find, was, I knew, like all butterflies of that genus, most local in its habits; it was therefore a grand point for me to hear the precise

societies, could not fault Bird Bishop's abilities. Unable to ignore his fellow traveler when making his argument against women's memberships in the increasingly government-involved geographic societies, Curzon emphasized instead the rarity of women such as Bird Bishop" (Harper 133).

²¹ Henry John Elwes was, by this point, a respected scientific traveller and natural history collector; "at various times he had served as vice-president of the Royal Horticultural Society, president of a series of smaller natural philosophical societies and, from 1897, a Fellow of the Royal Society" (Waring 55).

²² Fontaine writes of her time at home with her mother, "No more bagatelle in the smoking-room, no more fun. So Florence and I cracked a bottle of champagne together over the fire in her room, and we sat up for the last time" (*Love* 81).

locality for it, at the foot of Monte Cuccio” (*Love* 81). Fontaine quickly developed specific goals; she knew what species she was looking for and how to find them.

Even this early trip was notable. *The Entomologist* published an article on Fontaine’s collecting a year after her Sicily expedition. The piece covered what she learned of the butterflies’ habitats and their variations. Later issues of the magazines continued to discuss this initial article. This same year, the British Museum accepted a number of Fontaine’s specimens into its collection. Her success was rapid. President Edward Poulton eventually invited Fontaine to join the Linnean Society in 1912—an honor that only became available to women at the start of the 1900s. Fontaine’s admittance into the society was well earned.

The collection she donated to the Norwich Castle Museum consists of an impressive 22,000 butterflies. Most of these specimens are in particularly good condition because Fontaine acquired them through a breeding process she had honed throughout her career. In addition to her journals and these preserved insects, Fontaine’s career also generated several sketchbooks (presently located in the Entomology Library of the Natural History Museum) that contain her illustrations of the caterpillars and butterflies she bred. Researchers still utilize these resources as “She travelled all over the tropics, collecting in many difficult places, and the data that accompany her specimens are providing information about the fauna of areas that have changed or are under threat” (“Fontaine-Neimy”). According to the website devoted to Fontaine’s collection at the Norfolk Museum, “Within the last year the collection has been searched by workers from the Smithsonian Institute and the Natural History Museum, for data from Amazonia and Madagascar respectively” (“Fontaine-Neimy”). Fontaine’s account of how she attained this level of scholarship is an incredibly compelling story that has largely been poorly told.

Despite the success Fontaine achieved within her lifetime, she is generally under-discussed in today's academic community. When she is discussed, literary scholars remember her for her flirtations, and other scholarly groups regard her "purely as an avid collector rather than as an entomologist" (Waring 53). On the other hand, Bird, whose writings are not as scientific as Fontaine's in some regards, is remembered much more seriously. Though these women underwent similar character developments, modern society regards them quite differently due to the contrasting editing processes of their writings.

Bird and Fontaine wrote first to communicate memories to an intimate audience and second for the sake of public knowledge. By writing about their travels on a nearly day-to-day basis in letter and journal form, they were, more or less, writing autobiography or memoir. The events documented had ostensibly happened in the fashion and order in which they are presented to the reader. Even as these authors first recreated their experiences for personal purposes, however, they inevitably altered them. In the words of William C. Spengemann, author of *The Forms of Autobiography: Episodes in the History of a Literary Genre*, "self revelation becomes self creation" (qtd. in Kagle and Gramegna 38). Bird and Fontaine had to pick and choose what to share, maybe embellishing certain events for the benefit of readers, their egos, or their images. While they manipulated their lives, they consequently revised themselves, creating their edited-selves.

The edited-self is a facet of identity with two-tiers that are defined by audience: private versus public. The first drafts of Bird's and Fontaine's travel narratives were written for private audiences. Isabella Lucy Bird initially wrote to a predominately one-person audience, her sister

Henrietta, and Margaret Fountaine kept journals for herself. The revision involved in this intimate form of communication likely does not really feel like editing. Pulitzer Prize winning memoirist Annie Dillard warns against writing as preservation of memory, however, as it is a “certain way to lose them. You can’t put together a memoir without cannibalizing your own life for parts. The work battens on your memories. And it replaces them” (qtd. in Bloom 28). In other words, by documenting an event or a feeling, the writer gives memory a concrete form that cannot be changed, and “After you’ve written, you can no longer remember anything but the writing” (Dillard, qtd. in Bloom 28). Thus, even in these genuine and personal first drafts, they craft characters of themselves.

Isabella Bird’s initial documentation of her travels was less private than Margaret Fountaine’s; Bird had a reader to impress. “The Blessed One,” Henrietta, would have been a more critical reader than the general populous. Although Bird discovers that “Travellers are privileged to do the most improper things with perfect propriety” (qtd. in Harper 158), she had the challenge of getting that propriety across to a sister who had the same strict, religious upbringing and who more conventionally adhered to that upbringing.²³ Closer to her than anyone, Henrietta would have been aware of her sister’s strengths and weaknesses. Though a trusted recipient of Bird’s extensive epistles, she was also the most qualified English woman to judge them. Modern readers might interpret Henrietta as a representative of Bird’s socialized self as, had Bird stayed in Great Britain, they would have led similar lives. Through the editing

²³ Though she also remained a spinster, Henrietta Bird adopted a child, Mary, the year before her sister traveled to the Pacific. She also wrote, but only poetry in praise of God. Chubbuck describes her as “the idealised Victorian ‘angel of the hearth’ . . . devotedly good and pure, a woman without desires, who lived entirely for other people” (8). To memorialize her sister’s philanthropy, Isabella erected a clock in the middle of Tobermory, Mull in honor of Henrietta.

process, Bird presents her renovated self as a character whom her sister would laud rather than condemn.²⁴

Bird's perhaps subconscious editing choices manifest in a few forms. Most obviously, she had to make choices about which events she did and did not want to report to her sister, whom she referred to as "My Darling" and "My Ownest." For instance, we will probably never know if Bird had any romantic relations while she traveled. None are directly mentioned, but she may not have been comfortable sharing such content with her sister. Anything overtly scandalous would have been consciously omitted. Generally, however, Bird would have innocently selected which excursions to detail and which tangential figures to introduce based on her knowledge of Henrietta. Another form of first-phase editing has been discussed in the section on the renovated self—directly referencing Victorian socialized ideals and their presence in her liberated lifestyle (i.e. positioning herself as nurturer etc.). Some of Bird's self-confident tone may also have been formed in revision. By downplaying her fears and the dangers she faced, Bird not only comes across as a more capable adventurer, but she also would have decreased Henrietta's need to worry about her.

At first, Fountaine had no such audience to take into account, making her writing a bit more blunt (and giving future editors more material to make her look frivolous as she had no

²⁴ Bird seems to succeed at this adaptation. In a letter Henrietta writes to their friend, Mrs. Blackie, she says, "Isa . . . is evidently better, for she views everything cheerfully . . . She has continued to enjoy herself wonderfully and has ascended (on horseback) all 3 great volcanic mountains of Hawaii. The last 3 letters have not contained a single word which has left other than a pleasant impression" (*Letters* 140). Indeed, Bird might have oversold her travels to her sister as, again, Henrietta proposed to join her in Hawaii. Though Bird evaded her sister's request, Henrietta recognized the merit in Isabella's writing and encouraged her to continue editing so she could publish about her travels.

reason to omit such content herself).²⁵ She would, however, have had a similar subconscious editing process. Like Bird, Fontaine had to choose which events were interesting enough to write down. When she was writing for personal reasons, Fontaine documented scenes that seemed significant to her as a person. When she was writing for scholarly reasons, she documented what information would further her studies of Lepidoptera. The diary format was well suited to her lifestyle. Suzanne Bunkers and Cynthia Huff suggest that the journal format is particularly fitting for women in general because “women’s narratives follow different structures than men’s” (9). They cite Carolyn Heilbrun, an author and professor of English, explaining, “‘When the hope for closure is abandoned, when there is an end to fantasy, adventure for women will begin.’ Because the diary form avoids closure in the traditional sense, writing and critiquing diaries may enable women to envision their narratives and their lives differently” (9). This idea of a lack of closure seems well suited to Fontaine’s writing; diaries are considered emotionally centered documents for a reason. She started keeping them during a phase of major transition in her life. It is quite likely that they helped her justify her inability to assimilate to the expectations of Victorian England. Although Fontaine relied on her journals to grapple with her feelings, she did not need them to resolve any inner turmoil. Driven by her desire for freedom, she definitely found her adventures in the open world.

The adventures she pursued, however, often shift the focus of her journals away from herself. She no longer wrote entirely for the sake of her emotions. Large spaces go to keeping

²⁵ Fontaine does not shy away from discussing her indiscretions. Harriett Blodgett writes, “Fontaine, however, willingly confronts herself and any readers someday, even if she is still Victorian enough in rearing to be prudish about full disclosures” (157). Fontaine does, however, disclose a fair bit, including the sexual tension between her and her dragomon, Kahlil Neimy: “He carried me in his arms across the room, and laid me on my bed, and when he lay over me the weight of his body was sweet to me now because I loved him. We went very near the brink” (*Love* 139).

meticulous records of the varieties of caterpillars and butterflies she encountered and the conditions under which she found them. In the case of the Lepidoptera she bred, she documented their lifecycles and noted what factors she discerned were significant. Her personal narrative is also part lab journal.

Fontaine also had an annual time to revise. She first drafted on whatever paper was on hand. Every year, around the date of “her day,” she transcribed these loose entries into the journals she eventually donated to the Norfolk Museum. This method of writing on physical pieces and then compiling epitomizes Bunkers’ and Huff’s notion of the diary as fragmented by nature (3). Each moment Fontaine describes has a separate origin; amassing those moments into a cohesive entity came later. Fontaine almost certainly altered her writing (and therefore memory) during this unification process. In fact, hindsight apparently factors into multiple entries in W.F. Cater’s published version of Fontaine’s diaries.

At several points, Fontaine seems to include symbolism, which would be unlikely of a day-by-day diary—when she describes her engagement ring for instance. Kahlil Neimy, who had served as Fontaine’s dragomon on several of her expeditions, fell in love with her whilst in Damascus, and he proposed to her in 1901²⁶ as they traveled “beneath the shadows of those great rocks near Baalbek” (*Love* 128). Their interaction shows a massive shift from Fontaine’s socialized self. She did not initially pursue the romance. In fact, his love was “not a pleasing thought, so I speedily dismissed it” (122). When he became too overt for dismissal, “I thought then that never had I come into contact with quite such a weak, contemptible character before” (*Love* 123). Unlike the men she once chased, Neimy had to work for her affections—showing Fontaine’s character growth. Though he eventually did endear himself to her, she still could not

²⁶ She had just turned 39. He was 24.

leave her work out of her description of the engagement: “we held each others’ hands and swore to be true. And all the time the big, brown butterflies flitted unmolested to and fro among the hot rocks” (*Love* 128). Neimy became a key player in Fountaine’s career. They remained together until his death.

They were, however, an unconventional match, and Fountaine homed in on that characteristic of their relationship. Months after their engagement, Neimy bought her a ring at a bazaar in Jerusalem: “It contained two stones, set in a double circlet of gold, one stone being deep blue and the other white and sparkling like a diamond – I used to say the white stone was me, and the blue himself. I gave him a ring with one rather pale, red stone set in gold, but we both agreed it would be safer not to wear them for the present” (*Love* 139–140). Though all engagement rings are symbolic, Fountaine seems to foreshadow future turmoil by directly stating the specific symbolism she attached to the bands and then noting their decision not to wear them.

The ring alludes to romantic strife before any problems actually arise. By herself in Greece, she had the ring appraised. Cater reports that the jeweler told her the gold was real, but the stones, the symbols of these individuals as a couple, were “only first rate imitations” (*Love* 140). Fountaine writes on this new knowledge, “so we were both false, Khalil and I, but excellent imitations that no-one will ever know!” (*Love* 140–141). She experienced shortly thereafter the very expected hurdle of trying to get her friends and family to acknowledge her engagement to a foreigner of a lower class, but the fake stones seem to hint at a bigger problem of which Fountaine could not have yet been aware—that she was the other woman. She discovers this unhappy truth weeks after returning home to England upon the receipt of a letter that reads:

Damascus the 17 December 1901. Lady – Lately Mre. Kalil Neimy went with two persons to Jerusalem and he is nearly about thirty five days absent of Damascus, and as his wiffe is very anxious to him and she came many times asking me about him therefore I am coming by theses linies asking if you had received some letter of Mre. Neimy and you know where he is till I tell his wife and his father and mother. (*Love* 142)²⁷

Fontaine's corresponding diary entry is very mature. Fontaine expresses concern for his wife and family, saying, "I alone seemed to have escaped unhurt" (*Love* 142). This reaction is more calm than one might expect. Fontaine likely revised her feelings in hindsight and displaced some of her emotion into earlier suggestions of the betrayal. She had no need, however, to edit out the affair altogether because she was not revising for an external audience.

Editing for the public is the key difference in the written lives of Margaret Fontaine and Isabella Bird. Fontaine exercised virtually no control over her posthumous image. The most significant say she had in the public editing process was her will and a note, which dictated when the public would have access to her diaries and prefaced their early content. She seems to have kept symbolism in mind when she chose to bequeath her Lepidoptera collection and recollections to the Norfolk Museum upon her death in 1940. The twelve volumes reached the museum in a padlocked black japanned box about two feet long, by one foot wide, and one foot tall. Her will said this box was not to be opened until 15 April 1978, 100 years after she began keeping her diaries.

²⁷ The spelling and grammar from the original document is maintained.

As a result of this choice, Fontaine had no say as to how her diaries would be presented to the public at large. W.F. Cater, thus, got to piece together the version of Margaret Fontaine that the masses remember in the form of *Love Among the Butterflies* and *Butterflies and Late Loves*, two books condensing Fontaine's prolific writing. These edited texts include many details about Fontaine's romantic endeavors. Cater perhaps had human interest in mind when he chose entries with this focus on relationships. His abridged versions of her journals are enjoyable to read, in part, because they feel like gossip. Like most people, Fontaine had romantic and sexual feelings. It is important to show this facet of her personhood in order to represent her as a complete human. Problems arise, however, when she is reduced to this singular facet of her character. The entries contained in W.F. Cater's *Love Among the Butterflies* and *Butterflies and Late Loves* are the only collections of Fontaine's personal work that are available to the public at large, and as their titles suggest, they heavily focus on the collector's love life.

These collections call attention to an issue at the second tier of the edited self: revising for a public audience. Both Isabella Bird and Margaret Fontaine realized that their personal writings would become public record. They censored their writings and altered their characters accordingly. As Lynn Bloom explains in "I Write for Myself and Strangers': Private Diaries as Public Documents": "In public private diaries, the author creates and presents a central character, herself, as seen through a central consciousness, also herself. When the writer is skilled, both are sophisticated, artistic constructs with a persona analogous to that of the heroine of a drama, who speaks in a distinctive voice" (Bloom 31). Bird approached this process of creating her public persona much more consciously and cautiously than Fontaine. She carefully crafted her image as a Christian woman of science whereas Fontaine was less concerned as she did not present her contemporaries with her journals.

This deviation in their editing processes points to another split in this facet of identity—first- versus third-party editing. Though editions of Isabella Bird’s travel literature have been produced since her death, for the most part, Bird was her own editor. Despite her insistence in a letter addressed to friend John Murray that she was “printing my letters literally without alterations” in reference to *The Hawaiian Archipelago* (1875), the first book she published in her career as a traveler (qtd. in Chubbuck 12), she did make changes. Upon each return home from her travels, her habit was to “excise a mass of personal detail, while adding in its place intellectual gravitas” (Chubbuck 12). Chubbuck, whose purpose in publishing *Letters to Henrietta* is to show the discrepancies between Bird’s books and Bird’s letters, writes that “There is nothing in Isabella’s ‘on the spot’ observations like the ‘scholarly enthusiasm’ she attributes to them, nor are there many passages that would be ‘most interesting to scientific people’” (13).²⁸ No, Bird desired to be perceived as a natural academic.²⁹ She would black out sections of the original epistles and totally eradicate others as she organized her correspondences prior to death to craft a more spotless image of herself. Seven editions of her second book, *A Lady’s Life in the Rocky Mountains*, were published within her lifetime, and she contributed to the editing processes of at least the first three, adding footnotes and commentary with hindsight in mind. Bird even went so far as to choose her first biographer, Anna Stoddart, whom Bird gave “explicit instructions about what to write” in order to guard her reputation (Chubbuck 2).

²⁸ Chubbuck includes quotations from Isabella Bird’s 1874 letter to John Murray III.

²⁹ Some scholars suggest that Henrietta was the more academic Bird sister. Chubbuck proposes that Henrietta suggested the scholarly additions to her older sister’s work. She cites an unpublished 1889 letter from Isabella Bird “‘One thing out of many which made my letters to her what they were was the singular amount of her accumulated knowledge of countries, of their geography, products, government, ethnology, religions and botany . . . She could supply so much to fill me in or correct the outlines. She *informed*’” (13).

Though she took extra steps to come across as a proper Christian woman and a serious intellect, Isabella Bird thought about men as Fountaine had. Scholars often speculate that, while in Colorado, Bird had a romance with “Mountain Jim,” a “notorious ‘ruffian’” whom she always refers to as Mr. Nugent (*A Lady’s Life* 78). When she first sees him, she immediately wonders at how his old hunting suit “hung together, and on him. The scarf round his waist must have had something to do with it” (78–79). Once she gets past his precarious dress, she is intent upon his face, finding it “remarkable. He is a man about forty-five, and must have been strikingly handsome.” She details each feature: “He has large grey-blue eyes, deeply set, with well-marked eyebrows, a handsome aquiline nose, and a very handsome mouth. . . . One eye was entirely gone, and the loss made one side of his face repulsive, while the other might have been modeled in marble” (79). Perhaps she is simply being a good narrator, but she clearly felt a connection to him as when he spoke to her in his “cultured tone of voice” she began to “[forget] both his reputation and appearance, for his manner was that of a chivalrous gentleman, his accent refined, and his language easy and elegant” (79).³⁰ At the very least, he became her good friend during her time in the mountains, helping her on particularly tough journeys.

Also like Fountaine, however, Bird worried about class, and the men of the Rockies were socially beneath her. She believed herself to be, after all, “a ‘de Byrd’, a member of ‘that very old Warwickshire family . . . connected with several families of that English nobility’” (Chubbuck 17). Men of various classes seem to have been fond of her. Even after the age of forty, she received at least three proposals of marriage. Dr. John Bishop felt he had a special

³⁰ Though Bird likely believed Mr. Nugent’s reputation was well-founded, Chubbuck reports: “Unfortunately, most of the stories Isabella tells about Jim in *A Lady’s Life in the Rocky Mountains* are false, but she appears to have believed them. . . . George Kingsley . . . quipped that Jim was called ‘the Mountainous One’ because of ‘the extraordinary altitude of his lies’” (18).

place in Bird's heart, saying, "I have only one rival in Isabella's heart and that is the High Table Lands of Central Asia" (qtd. in Chubbuck 16), and in 1881, they were indeed married.³¹

Even in matrimony, however, Bird maintained her autonomous identity. Though women are often discussed in terms of their husbands, Dr. Bishop is, even now, sometimes referred to as "Mr. Bird" (Chubbuck 16). Isabella Bird is almost always referred to as "Bird" or "Bird-Bishop"; she maintained an identity distinct from her husband.³² During their five-year marriage, Bird did no significant traveling. In March 1886, Bishop died of pernicious anaemia, giving Bird the freedom to travel and write again. It is worth noting, however, that Bird thought of Mr. Nugent upon her husband's death. She averred that she had seen the ghost of Mountain Jim, who had been murdered in a land dispute, at the moment of his death. She never mentioned this event, however, until after Mr. Bird's death, which followed Jim's by twelve years. There is something romantic about her story, in which Jim tells her "I have come as I promised" (qtd. in Chubbuck 20). Bird excised such stereotypically feminine feelings from her travel literature though; we do not know what he promised. In her writing, Bird seems highly intelligent, moral, fearless, and independent because that is how she chose to be perceived.

Those adjectives could also be applied to Margaret Fountaine, but they rarely are because her reputation was placed in the hands of editors who lived well after her. When Fountaine made the decision that her thoughts and memories would someday be public, she likely edited her

³¹ Dr. Bishop tended to Henrietta the year before while she was suffering from typhoid. Isabella was still in mourning clothes on their wedding day. Henrietta seemed to have been fond of him, and in a letter to Ella Blackie, Isabella suggests the wedding was her little sister's dying wish: "Both sisters knew John Bishop was in love with Isabella; it was only 'the affection and companionship of my sister that made me reluctantly decide against marrying. It is all changed now'" (Chubbuck 15).

³² A letter to Ella Blackie confirms that this separation between man and wife was desirable as Bird writes to her on the eve of the wedding, "I assume that my social position by birth and my literary position are too firmly established to be shaken by this match" (qtd. in Chubbuck 18). This sentiment corroborates the idea that Bird married Bishop at Henrietta's request.

experience with constructing a persona in mind. She again would have altered her experiences during her annual transcribing of her entries into her official journals. She did not, however, undergo a publishing process as Bird did. Along with her journals and will, her donation to the Norfolk Museum included a page that apologizes for her teenaged entries. This note is, perhaps, the most significant way in which Fountaine tried to revise herself. She mediates the expectations of her no longer Victorian audience:

Before presenting this – the story of my life – to those, whoever they may be . . . I feel it incumbent upon me to offer some sort of apology for much that is recorded therein, especially during the first few years, when (as I was barely 16 at the time it was begun) I naturally passed through a rather profitless and foolish period of life such as was, and no doubt is still, prevalent amongst very young girls . . . a hundred years ago, when education of women was so shamelessly neglected, leaving the uninitiated female to commence life with all the yearnings of nature quite unexplained to her, and the follies and foibles of youth only too ready to enter the hitherto unoccupied, and possibly imaginative brain. (qtd. in Scott-Stokes 14)

Clearly, she had hopes of atoning for the frivolity for which she is now remembered. She was aware of the misguided affections she followed as a youth. She ends with a quotation: “Some writer has said (I think it is Bulwer Lytton) that ‘a woman’s whole life is a history of the affections – the heart is her world!’” (qtd. in Scott-Stokes 14). This passage seems particularly true of Fountaine but perhaps not in the way its speaker intended. Rather, the world became her heart. She passionately loved the foreign countries she explored, and she took every opportunity to pursue her desire for travel.

W.F. Cater generally presents her desires as frivolous, sexually driven. Fountaine's biographer, Natascha Scott-Stokes, comments on Cater's selection: "when an edited version of her diaries was published in the 1980s, it was her passionate love life that caught the imagination. She was presented as an eccentric Victorian with an indiscriminate passion for men. Yet there is so much more to Margaret Fountaine than her queue of would-be lovers" (14–15). Obviously, he selected the letters included in *Love Among the Butterflies* and *Butterflies and Late Loves* deliberately. Love is the theme. He could have presented that theme in a few different ways—by focusing on the transition from youthful ideals of romantic love to the love of butterflies or from Victorian limitations on love to the recognition of the love of freedom. Instead, however, he keeps the focus on romantic love through both texts. Although Fountaine wrote about a span of experiences, both personal and professional, she did not choose which experiences would be presented to the general public. Cater provides a very limited perspective of Fountaine's character. Keeping human interest in mind, Cater compiled a selection of letters he thought would be most marketable as a book.

Cater also influences Fountaine's current image in his presentation and analysis of the limited text he represents. For instance, he begins *Butterflies and Late Loves* with a chapter titled "New Readers Start Here," an introduction, written in his voice, meant to summarize the first half of her life, which serves as the first impression many readers have of Fountaine. The first sentence of this book, however, is not about Fountaine, butterflies, travel, or the time period. Rather, Cater begins his telling of this impressive woman's story with Septimus Hewson. Her editor does not introduce her until the end of the next sentence: "[Hewson] was a feckless, dishonest drunkard, and he broke Margaret Fountaine's heart" (*Butterflies* 9). To his credit, Cater does not try to portray Hewson as a good guy. He does, however, discredit Fountaine first by not

introducing her, the protagonist, until after an unfortunate childhood love, second by making her the object of the sentence, and third by making the very first description of her as broken-hearted—lovesick and sad instead of intelligent and capable. Cater acknowledges that Fountaine led an exceptional life, but again, he undermines her autonomy by giving Hewson the credit for her adventures, saying:

There is no doubt, either, that in breaking her heart he helped break the chains of Victorian convention and so enabled her to live the life she loved – a long and, in part at least, a happy life. Without Septimus she might have declined into good works, genteel sketching and bridge parties, and the window she opens for us on most of the earth’s surface and on a vanished world would have remained shut.

(Butterflies 9)

The first time Fountaine is the subject of a sentence, Cater puts her in a stereotypically feminine context. The whole opening paragraph of this book essentially thanks a sot for allowing Fountaine to break Victorian conventions. Cater suggests that, were it not for Hewson, Fountaine would have led an ordinary existence hardly worth reading about.

Cater goes on to characterize Hewson further and buries several of Fountaine’s impressive experiences—“she was to vanquish Turkish bandits, Austrian Customs officers, hostile tribesmen and drunken Colonials” (*Butterflies 9*)—in the middle of a paragraph. Despite her adventures, he writes, “Reading the diaries of her earlier years one is desperately sorry for Miss Fontaine,” and he has a point; she certainly had a complicated childhood.³³ Unfortunately he very inaccurately assumes readers should be “almost equally sorry for Septimus” (*Butterflies 9*). When Cater leaves off Hewson, he still does not put Fountaine’s experience in her control.

³³ Yes, Cater really does spell her name incorrectly.

Instead, he turns to another man in her life: “If we owe a great deal to Septimus for setting Margaret to travel the world, we owe no less to Uncle Edward Fountaine, of whose life we know little but whose death brought Margaret an income enough to make her independent” (*Butterflies* 9–10). Only after portraying her as a woman who got lucky for the men in her life does Cater make Fountaine the subject of a sentence and give fact-based background information on the years before she began keeping diaries. As his books are the only mass-distributed selections from her journals, the finite image of her he presents is problematic, leaving her modern audience with a misleading impression. Despite Cater’s portrayal of her as lovesick, flirtatious, or coquettish, Fountaine’s writing makes clear where her desires had truly lain. She felt “Freedom is the crowning joy of life. Thank God there are few on earth I really care for; I would there were none. I want to see all I can of this beautiful world before I have to leave it . . . It is the affections that hold us back from great enterprises . . . that tie us down to one spot on earth” (*Love* 119). Her professed hope was to avoid the love with which Cater makes her seem obsessed.

Isabella Bird and Margaret Fountaine had a genuine love of autonomy that enabled them to put themselves first—before conventions or men. They still kept English expectations in mind, however, at all phases of writing. They contextualized their experiences in the terms of their home culture, speculating what friends and family might think of their travels. Bird paid more attention to what the English would think of her though—probably due to several factors. First, even in her personal writing, she had an external audience to consider. Second, her travel writing became public within her lifetime; thus, her public image affected her more directly. Third, Bird had her very religious sister to help her edit. She knew her edited self would become her immortal image—would dictate how I, 100 years later, suggest what you should think of her.

Because Bird took more precautions with her public image, modern scholars take her more seriously than they take Fontaine.

Diaries are, by nature, more introspective and emotional than letters. Fontaine did not need to revise heavily in the moment and had a more acceptable forum in which to discuss her feelings and indiscretions as well as her findings than Bird. Because her journals did not become public record until well after her death, Fontaine's public image has largely been constructed by her editor and, later, her biographer. Neither of these figures had access to her work until more than forty years after her death nor did they have any reason to guard her reputation for her. As he condensed her twelve volumes of travel diaries into two thin books, Cater omitted many facets of Fontaine's character. Today, the public remembers his finite construction of her.³⁴ Though both authors were recognized as scholars in their time period, their travel literature underwent editing processes that differ drastically. Accordingly, their modern day reputations contrast greatly.

Isabella Lucy Bird and Margaret Fontaine intended for future generations to remember their impressive travels and transformations from proper Victorian ladies to bold travelers who happen to be female. They chose to document their lives abroad in letter and diary form, and it is fitting that those structures were maintained upon publication as both formats could be characterized as feminine. Bunkers and Huff explain, "much writing by women follows the form of a daily allowance and . . . because of its circumstantial constraints, much of the writing by

³⁴ Some scholars other than Cater have made the trip to the Norfolk Museum to look at the complete contents of Fontaine's journals. As her writing has not been digitized, however, only those who live in or have the means to travel to Norfolk can read beyond Cater's condensed volumes.

women has been disallowed, silenced, or rendered nonexistent” (6). This tactic of a “daily allowance” for writing prevents thoughts from piling up. Women carved out chunks each day to record their observations, enabling them to include more detail and give each idea its own space. It is an attentive writing method. The daily form is further feminized by stereotype. Letters and diaries are perceived as “‘emotionally naked’ writings ‘predicated on privacy’” (Bloom 23); women have generally been considered emotional beings. By maintaining the original format of their travel narratives, Bird and Fontaine are conceding to the norms of their home culture. They go on conventionally masculine ventures and atone for that content via ladylike presentations.

For both Bird and Fontaine, their choice of letter and diary format attests to their attachment to their socialized selves. When she corresponded with her sister, Bird opted to stay in touch with a world that made her feel literally sick. Though Bird’s books do not include Henrietta’s responses, she did answer. Henrietta’s accounts of her day-to-day life would have been a consistent reminder to the elder Bird of an alternative life she might have had if she had stayed in Europe. Similarly, Fontaine wrote “acceptably” by maintaining the English woman’s practice of journal keeping, a habit she began as a teenager, entrenched in the customs of provincial England. Bird’s letters and Fontaine’s diaries reveal genuine traces of their socialized selves, but particularly for Bird, maintaining those structures would have been a conscious editing choice. By publishing her experiences as letters, she helped compensate for her revised identity by further highlighting the elements of her socialized culture that she maintained. To some extent, her socialized self became performative so the public would read less judgmentally.

Though true, these women's travel narratives contain elements of fiction that are sometimes unintentional and sometimes quite deliberate but ultimately inevitable. In the process of reconciling the socialized and renovated self in writing, the author becomes a character, and that character is the assumed author. For this reason, readers should take creative necessity and opportunity into account when approaching any work of nonfiction; Bird and Fontaine are perceived differently from each other today because the role of fiction is different in their writings. Bird had greater need and opportunity to edit herself than Fontaine did. She needed to revise herself first to entertain her sister and again to entertain the general public of Victorian England; she had a very conservative image as a Christian woman to guard. She also had greater opportunity to create, as she published and republished fairly often throughout her life. By contrast, Fontaine did much less of her own editing, so the image of herself that she presents is comparatively genuine; she bequeathed even the teenaged journals by which she was embarrassed to the Norfolk Museum. Her personal narrative was in no way distributed by her in her life. As someone else revised her work and image, however, the genuine Margaret Fontaine recorded in those journals has become more obscured. Many of her thoughts and ideas were lost when her twelve volumes of observations and experiences were reduced to two brief books that dwell on her love life. She was not just a woman with sexual feeling just as Bird was not just an invalid and academic, but the editing process has skewed their genuine characters.

As they traveled through places like Hawaii, the Colorado Territories, the Alps, and Syria, Bird and Fontaine adapted to each society in which they lived. They spent months at a time among a variety of peoples, truly living in their cultures. Isabella Bird felt she belonged at sea or in the mountains. In *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains* she often speaks of the men treating her respectfully and as though she were one of them. She was viewed as a capable

woman in a way she was not at home. In England, she was considered a well-educated philanthropic woman, which was about as much as a lady could be. Despite her womanly accomplishments, she was primarily characterized by her physical frailties. In the American West, however, she was smart and very able-bodied. She became a famed horsewoman. She was strong enough to protect herself from rattlesnakes and other wild creatures and felt no need to carry a gun in a land where most men did. Astride her willful horse, she navigated terrain many men could not. Though she often mentions the medicinal properties of the mountains to suggest that she is not just traveling for fun, readers can easily forget she is an invalid. Her socialized self becomes a much smaller part of her identity the further from Great Britain she goes.

The same is true of Fontaine. Though she always resisted Victorian culture, she found her place among men, butterfly hunting. When she eventually returned to England, she found her place among men in the scholarly community; she remains among the most well-traveled entomologists and deserves recognition for her contributions to the field. Her biographer reports that Fontaine often denied permission for butterflies to be named after her, but a few varieties have been given her name anyway.³⁵ Modern entomologists continue to refer to her work. Many of Fontaine's successes, however, have been ignored by scholars of women and travel writing.

Isabella Bird and Margaret Fontaine flourished abroad. The rapid technological growth of the nineteenth century made travel available to the English middle class; tourists covered Europe. Though these ladies utilized the technology of the rail and steamship, they were far from tourists. They did not travel to major cities to visit monuments and artworks. They traveled across oceans, through woods, and over mountains in search of ideals that were distinctly not those of Western Europe. Their accounts of discovery—of places, peoples, and themselves—are

³⁵ Scott-Stokes lists a minimum of eight instances. A couple insects are also named after Kahlil Neimy (269).

valuable works of travel literature. They participate in a cultural shift, joining a genre and professions previously reserved for wealthy men. In documenting to remember and perhaps explain their unconventional happiness, Isabella Lucy Bird and Margaret Fountaine help adjust the norms that made them feel so confined.

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