Female Colonial Travel Writing as a Critique of Victorian Gender Stereotypes and Roles: A Case Study of F.D. Bridges’s *Journal of a Lady’s Travels Round the World* (1883)

Abstract

Making recourse to Virginia Woolf’s “Professions for Women” (1931), I have studied the manner in which F.D. Bridges criticizes the patriarchal representations of Victorian women in her *Journal of a Lady’s Travels Round the World* (1883). In her text, she not only accounts for her experiences of travel in foreign countries but also inserts a discourse that lies counter to male definitions of women’s roles as “household angels,” confined in the domestic space and deprived of power. With the strength she demonstrates through her experiences of travel, she criticizes the fact that women are considered to be ‘the weaker sex.’ She also cultivates a quest for knowledge so as to carve her place in the ‘public sphere’ of knowledge and power and to criticize the practice of representing women as uneducated and ignorant. Last but not least, she highlights the degraded condition of the foreign women in an attempt to call for a universal enfranchisement of women abroad and in her country. All the three elements allow Bridges to fight against the “phantom” of the “angel in the house,” which, according to Woolf, needed to be “killed” in order for a woman to impose her authorship.

Keywords: F.D. Bridges, travel writing, gender stereotypes, feminism, colonialism

A great deal of scholarship has dealt with Victorian society in terms of its patriarchal rules and “separate spheres” ideology of gender relations. In the nineteenth century, women were confined to the domestic space and attributed the gendered role of “Angel[s] in the House” (Woolf 357); they were barred from the “professions” which were “exclusively owned by men” (Woolf 360). Women were excluded from economic, political and intellectual areas where they had slight or no power at all. Therefore, some of them felt the need to fight this condition, and writing became a means that allowed them to do so. Almost every literary genre that was popularized in Victorian times included the female author’s
intent to examine gender roles. The colonial expansion of the time helped travel writing to flourish; the female writers who contributed to this genre were willing to include gender as a congenial space for polemics. Contemporary scholars have highlighted the fact that Victorian female travel writers were influenced by the category of gender in their representations of colonialism and race relations. Sara Mills (1991) argues that “women’s travel texts are constructed in the process of interaction of colonial textual constraints and constraints of gender” (40). Mills claims that “a gendered colonial discourse study” serves to highlight that female travel writers scrutinized the concept of gender in order to pinpoint the ideologies and practices of colonialism (195). She also points out how these authors conform to – or depart from – colonialist and patriarchal discourses. She asserts that “there are statements within the texts that are clearly colonialist, but there are also statements which undermine them” (62). Similarly, Antoinette Burton (1994) argues that most women writers about India produced texts that placed them within the British colonial culture. For her, these authors represent aspects of British imperial ideology. However, they also include gender issues put forth for discussion by examining the condition of women in India. She claims that “the case for British women’s emancipation […] depended on images of an enslaved ‘Oriental’ womanhood” (65). Reina Lewis (1996) does not differ so much from Burton and Mills in putting forward the idea that there were “gender-specific discursive pressures on the production and reception of women’s representation of the Orient” (15).

1. Travel Writing: Contesting the “Angel in the House”

Though contemporary scholars such as Lewis, Burton, and Mills mention the attribute of the “angel in the house” of the Victorian woman, they do not focus on its manifestation in colonial travel writing produced by female authors. Therefore, further research is needed in order to underscore the extent to which the category of gender predominates in texts that are supposed to be dealing with travel and ensuing issues related to the contact between the European and the non-European. I intend to do so by analysing a travelogue entitled *Journal of a Lady’s Travel’s Round the World* (1883) written by F.D. Bridges, a British national who in 1879 travelled from Greece through Egypt, India, China, Japan to the United States with her husband. Mary F. McVicker states that Bridges “seemed to have been particularly interested in the arts and in the shrines and monasteries” (45) of the countries they went to. This touristic interest is highlighted by Loraine Sterry, who claims that “travel to Japan had become very popular with leisure travellers because it offered a taste of the ‘exotic East’” (231). She cites Bridges as one of these “leisure travellers” and occasionally draws to her text in her analysis of writings by other (female) British travellers. However, Bridges did not limit herself
to describing the locations she visited as a tourist; she was also interested in the conditions of local women as compared to the Victorian ideal of womanhood. This interest in women is analysed by Karen M. Morin and Jean Kay Guelke in their “Strategies of Representation, Relationship, and Resistance: British Women Travellers and Mormon Plural Wives, ca. 1870–1890” (1998). Morin and Guelke argue that Victorian women travel writers attempted to place themselves in a “terrain that had been previously described by American and European traveling men” (437). Therefore, discussing the question of Mormon “plural marriage” allowed them to differ from previous male discourse. While most male writers either propagated “lurid reports about the Mormons” or wrote “Anti-Mormon novels” (437), the British female travellers were attracted to Mormon women. They also discussed Mormon men’s objectification of their women. Morin and Guelke consider Bridges as one of these British female travellers to Utah among the Mormons.

My paper relies on Virginia Woolf’s “Professions for Women” and her definition of the patriarchal construct of women as “angel[s] in the house” in order to argue that Bridges effectively criticizes the stereotypes of Victorian women. In her travelogue, she accounts for her experiences in foreign countries, but she also questions the dominant social/cultural definitions of women’s roles as “household angels” confined in the domestic space and deprived of power. Her journeys, and the physical and moral force she demonstrated through them, allow her to dispute the fact that women were socially-relegated to the condition of the ‘weaker sex’ in her times. She also disseminates knowledge about the colonies so as to carve her place in the “imperial archive” (Richards 6) and to criticize women’s representation as uneducated and ignorant. Added to this, highlighting the degraded condition of the foreign woman helps her to substantiate the need to emancipate women abroad and in her own country. Therefore, criticizing gender stereotypes and roles allows Bridges to fight against the “phantom” of the “angel in the house,” to use Woolf’s parlance.

Woolf claims that the act of writing by a British woman necessitated a struggle against the predominance of this social construct. According to patriarchal principles, the “angel in the house” was a woman restricted to the domestic space. She was also not expected to be intellectually, socially, or economically independent. She was rather supposed to “sympathize with the minds or wishes of others” (Woolf 357). In other words, a Victorian woman was required to obey patriarchal imperatives and to avoid expressing her own mind. Woolf argues that women’s quest for a full recognition as authors demanded a “[k]illing [of] the angel in the house,” a task which became part of their “occupation” (358). Besides, the “angel in the house” was associated with many “prejudices” which had to be “overcome” (359). One effective way for Victorian women to challenge the patriarchal ideology of womanhood was to write about colonialism in a manner including a critique of socially-pre-inscribed gender roles. According to Lewis, European women saw themselves as:
beneficiaries of a structure of systemic differences that, whilst it placed them as superior in the West/East divide of colonialism (the relative privilege of the European traveller in the Orient), also placed them as other and inferior in the gendered divides of European art and society (women’s limited opportunities for a professional art education). (4–5)

In Britain, female fervour for travel writing can explain British women’s quest to transcend their domestic status as the ‘Other.’ Indeed, the second half of the nineteenth century witnessed a popular interest in travel which resulted in the production of numerous travel books by such authors as Mary Kingsley, Isabella Bird, Ellen M. Rogers, among others. The rejection of women’s texts both by publishers and the male readership was a characteristic of the Victorian period. Thus, travel books allowed them to circumvent this prejudice. Moreover, emphasizing imperial ideas in these books helped them to covertly discuss gender issues.

Bridges proves the role of the “angel in the house” ideal in the perpetuation of gender stereotypes which she criticizes. In fact, she dismantles some demeaning stereotypes that are associated with Victorian women like weakness and emotional behaviour. By drawing parallels between women of the countries she visits with her fellow countrywomen in Britain, she disputes women’s limited roles in the ‘public sphere.’ She, therefore, includes a call for their participation in public debates. In her text, as a woman, she tries to surmount prejudices like being ascribed vulnerability outside the family space and an assumed lack of education and independent thought. In addition, she vehemently criticizes women’s exclusion from debate on public issues by the “separate spheres” ideology of the time. Diana Cordea defines this ideology as:

...a conception about men and women and their roles which was very typical for the Victorian era [...] peoples saw a clear distinction between the home, which was the quiet, monotonous and defending sphere of the women, and the world, the great outdoors where men only were allowed to perform their social duties and work in order to support their families. (116)

The difference between the “home” and the “world” is that the former puts limits to women’s roles while the latter allows men to assume endless possible positions. Besides, women’s alleged domesticity prevented them from infringing on areas of power and influence. However, men’s roles “in the great outdoors” allow them to be active citizens in their society and nation.

2. The Female Traveller: Deconstructing Gender Stereotypes

F.D. Bridges dismantles negative stereotypes attributed to women, focusing on her own capability to overcome gender prejudices like weakness, passivity, and
emotional behaviour. Though she travels with her husband, she emphasizes her power to bear difficulties that result from travelling. This is meant to undercut the prejudice of moral (emotional) and physical weakness attributed to women. Therefore, she intentionally recounts the difficult experiences of travel. She always manages to get over them because she has been endowed with moral power and physical endurance. She asserts that both she and her husband were not spared from “rough journey[s]” (35), “difficult” progress (41) and “fever” attacks which she attributes to a mix of human and environmental factors. Indeed, the “unsatisfactory condition” (41) of roads, the alternation of hot and cold weather and occasional inhospitality of people did not make things easy for them. Yet she sustains her confidence in the force of her own character. In Egypt, she meets a patriarchal Sheikh whose sexism she retorts to in the following manner: “we have often climbed mountains six times as high as your Pyramid, and will not be pushed like ‘the daughter of an ass’” (20). After being immobilized again by “the tiresome ague fever,” she states: “as this is the third attack, I know how to treat myself, which is lucky, considering there is no doctor in Thibet” (119). According to Sara Mills, accounting for the strains of travel is a feature of female travel writing:

Although it is obviously a feature of all travel writing, women writers have to describe the physical difficulties of the journey, because they might run the risk of not being believed, with reference to discourses of femininity, that is, a text of what women are capable of. However, despite the frequent allusion to the hardships of the journey, there are repeated references to the narrator’s ability to overcome them. (141)

In accordance with this aspect, Bridges describes the difficulties she faces in order to indicate her ability to rise above them and to revise the gendered stereotype of the ‘weak’ and ‘emotional’ woman.

The author argues that women must be considered equal to men in cases related to their disposition to cope with adversity. She proves her point by describing two adverse incidents in which she acted like her husband so as to protect themselves or their property. In Greece, they defended themselves and their belongings against a group of hostile men. She writes: “The sons of Greece swarmed over the ship and fell upon us, each man striving to secure us for his own boat; but H. addressed them in forcible English; I took up a defensive position in front of our luggage, and they fell back in confusion” (3). Similarly, she recounts another experience when a group of inhospitable Indian boatmen were forcing them to disembark a boat but managed together to insist that they stay onboard:

We embarked this morning, but our Kashmiri boatmen, having got us on board, became very violent, and wanted to force us to take a third boat. This was merely a piece of imposition; but it was not till H. had raised a stout walking-stick over the heads of the boatmen, and I had “assumed an offensive attitude” in the rear with a large umbrella, that they consented to proceed. (72)
Clearly, she acted in the two situations with *sang froid*. What is implied here is that as a traveller Bridges does not need to be chaperoned by her husband. She rather sees him as a companion. This is her way of departing from the “system of chaperonage” (Mills 3) that nineteenth-century female travellers were subjected to. She also differs from other female travellers who were inclined to “fulfil cultural expectations which viewed them as the weak, passive ‘other’” (Worley qtd. in Mills 70).

The author’s relaxed behaviour is illustrated by her sedate reaction to disaster in Japan. Indeed, in Yokohama she had experienced an earthquake to which she reacted calmly even though she was from a country that was not known for seismic activity. One night, she and her husband were awakened by a strong quake, but after they observed the damages it had caused outside their room they “went asleep again” (278). In this situation, she could have rushed outside thinking it was less dangerous, but she was aware that it was “no use running into the streets, for the falling tiles” (278) could be deadly. Bridges shows that she behaved just like her husband. She also writes about a group of French, English and German men who reacted differently than the Japanese, being unaccustomed to earthquakes: “How curiously [their] national characteristics come out!” (279).

Apart from discrediting the Victorian idea that women are emotionally and physically inferior to men, Bridges maintains that she is educated and informed and is willing to share her knowledge. She, therefore, participates in the empire’s dialectic of knowledge and power, to borrow an idea developed by Edward Said in *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (1978). Her text is replete with information that nineteenth-century Orientalist scholars were circulating at the time. Sometimes, her expertise in areas like linguistics or archaeology also transpires through her text. For instance, she plays the role of a linguist when she explains the words “OM, MANY PADMI, HAN” claiming: “Various meanings are given for these mystic words, but the most intelligible is that they express the excellency of the law of Buddha as typified by the lotus, – the symbol of the universe and perfection” (87). This implies that she is able to explain the mysteries of the Orient in the same manner as male European Orientalists such as Sir William Jones. She also wears the mantle of an archaeologist when she tries to decipher the meanings of historical edifices and cultural artefacts she comes across in India. For example, she writes about a temple in Sanchi: “The date of its erection is somewhat uncertain; most probably the tope [sic] itself dates from about 300 B.C., the gateways from the first century A.D.; the records of their stone carvings representing scenes from the life of Sakyamuni, and the early Sanskrit writings on the same subject, agree” (49).

The previous semantics and the reference to Sanskrit writings allow us to deduce that she holds the sort of knowledge shared by Orientalist linguists and Buddhologists. In fact, in the episodes she devotes to South Asia, the author demonstrates that she has expert knowledge in Buddhism and the language of its
scriptures. For instance, when she describes people who give alms to the needy as a practice of their religion, she writes that they do so “to ‘make their souls,’ or, in Buddhist phrase, ‘acquire merits’” (211). Added to this, she provides scientific explanations of the exotic landscapes, their fauna, and flora, thus proving that she is able to transgress the romantic sublimation of other female travellers (Mills 180–181). For example, Bridges explains the reason why exotic butterflies “were wonderful examples of ‘protective imitation,’ nature having fashioned their wings exactly like half-weathered wings to deceive greedy creatures who might prey on them” (206). Even if the word “wonderful” may sound emotional on her part, she actually shows a scientific interest in the insect and its environment. Instead of merely sublimating the sight of the butterflies, she examines its characteristics and explains them as a lepidopterist would do.

Bridges deconstructs the prevalent Victorian stereotypes of the woman by using her own experiences in the countries she visits in order to ideologically empower herself beyond the social constrains of the “angel in the house.” In her Journal of a Lady’s Travels Round the World, Bridges constructs an image of herself (and the woman) beyond the conventional domestic sphere, physically and morally disposed to cope with adversity in foreign – and often hostile – lands, and knowledgeable enough to educate her readers on different cultures. Her personal experience of different cultures in the course of her travels also allows to scrutinize the socio-political consequences of stereotyping women in a transnational comparative context.

3. The Female Traveller: Constructing a Transcultural Perspective

In her Journal of a Lady’s Travels Round the World, Bridges draws a parallel between the socio-political restrictions imposed on British and Oriental women. This is apparent when she compares an Indian princess’s limited political power to the “caged” female attendees in Britain’s House of Commons. She remarks: “she [the princess she meets] is ‘Purdah,’ that is, enveloped from head to foot in a large sheet, with small holes cut out for the eyes; and thus takes her part in political councils as effectually screened from public view as an Englishwoman in the Ladies’ Gallery of the House of Commons” (45). The “screening” of Indian women from public view in the political arena deprives them of their right to hold their own political point of view or to have their say in a public debate. The author draws this analogy with the British ladies’ “cage” in the House of Commons in order to assert her critique of the political repression of Victorian women. The rare examples of women who were authorized in the house “were considered to be absent even though they were present” (Richardson 142). It follows that a few upper-class Indian and British women were allowed into political venues but only conditionally and as spectators hidden from the public and never as legislators.
Bridges draws yet another analogy between the notions of the “angel in the house” and “the light of the harem” (184). The second concept is meant to describe the restriction of the Emperor of Jehanghir’s wife to the harem. In a sociological study about the meaning of the harem for Muslim woman, Fatima Mernissi writes:

You are in a harem when the world does not need you.
You are in a harem when what you can contribute does not make a difference.
You are in a harem when what you do is useless.
You are in a harem when the planet swirls around, with you buried up to your neck in scorn and neglect.
Only one person can change that situation and make the planet go around the other way, and that is you. (214)

Mernissi’s definition of the harem is the ideological equivalent to the domestic space where the British “angel in the house” is confined. Arguably, the words “light” and “angel,” associated respectively with the Muslim harem and the British Victorian household, serve as smokescreens to hide women’s disempowerment; they are celebrated as guardians of their private spaces and are not supposed to infringe upon the male-centred world of power.

Bridges provides the telling example of a Muslim Indian couple that she meets during her travels: “We paid the ‘Light of the universe’ a visit this afternoon, and were received by her husband. In spite of Musalman custom she is the only wife, and he seemed quite proud of his accomplished spouse” (33). The husband calls his wife the “light of the universe” because she is educated. Yet, despite her education, she remains confined to the household. Bridges argues that the husband holds “advanced opinions” on “female education” (33) but remains reluctant to allow his wife to enter the external (male-dominated) world where her education could possibly effect change: “See my wife’s little world, which she cannot leave to see the real world” (33). It is in the “real world” that his wife’s education would make a difference not inside the household. The “real world” in the quote corresponds to the “public space” where real power is exerted. However, “light of the universe,” like other women, is barred from taking part in this area of influence.

Bridges argues that women’s participation in the exercise of power would only be beneficial for the public. She believes that if given the opportunity women would excel in leadership. To illustrate her point, she writes:

Should the occasion arise, no doubt the little lady with whom I was conversing would gird herself up to great deeds on the side of order, as valorous, perhaps as that Indian princess, the Rhani of Jhansi, who, dressed as a cavalry officer fell fighting sword in hand while leading a charge against our troops during the Mutiny. (45–46)

The author argues that if only women were allowed to hold a role outside the domestic space, they would prove to be competent and capable of contributing to significant socio-political changes in their countries. Because British women were
also barred from spheres of power and influence, one may deduce that Bridge’s example of the role of the Indian princess in the Indian Mutiny is, in fact, a covert judgement on the British (Victorian) society.

The feminist gist of the parallel drawn between the condition of British (Victorian) and Oriental women is more emphatic when the author expresses her sympathy towards her Oriental “sisters” (Burton 1, 7). In her journal, Bridges maintains that most Indian women are reduced to the state of domestic slaves who are stripped of their fundamental rights to liberty and education. One of the scarce moderate Muslims she meets in India tells her: “‘We Musalmans keep our wives in prison; they are prisoners who have committed no crime’” (33). This lack of freedom is illustrated by the social repression of widows. Bridges emphasizes that even though the practice of sati or the burning of widows was abolished, they continue to be “sacrificed to the memory of their husbands, being shut and not allowed to re-marry (often when only ten or twelve years old)” (191). The author asserts that the English can do a more efficient job in India if they concentrate their efforts on improving the condition of its women:

We English are accused of keeping native society too much at arm’s length in India, but as long as a very important element in social life – the women of a country – are in such a state of utter degradation as both the Mohammedan and Hindoo female population are here, it is difficult to imagine that anything like friendly social intercourse between two races can exist. (34)

This quote underscores the author’s own thought about the need for Britain’s involvement in the improvement of the social life of Indian women. Besides, the indefinite article “a” in the words “the women of a country” is used by Bridges in order to appeal for an equal transnational treatment of all women.

Moreover, Bridges puts emphasis on how important this improvement is for implementing harmonious relations between Indians and Anglo-Indians. This idea of dialogue as the “best policy” for imperial stability was elaborated subsequently by Edward Morgan Forster in A Passage to India (1924). By intersecting issues of gender and empire, she is integrating “imperial feminism” (Burton 1). According to Burton, this notion is another characteristic of female travel writing. Burton argues that Victorian women avoided discussing exclusively gender matters in their texts where they also dealt with imperial policy and ideology in order to put themselves in the “imperial culture” and to reach a reluctant male audience. This was also another way for them to take part in public debate pertaining to partisan issues of empire. Bridges is no exception to this. For example, she sides with British Liberals’ nurture of the virtues of respect and tolerance to maintain British rule in India in opposition to Conservatives’ recourse to force:

there comes a time when fear ceases to be the only incentive to duty, and moral influence must take the place of coercion, so certainly will a day come in the history.
of India when force will no longer suffice to maintain our influence, and when, let us hope, the lessons of wisdom taught by a strong but righteous power may take effect, and assure England, better than weapons of war could, the allegiance of our fellow-subjects in Asia. (66)

This quote proves Bridges’s stance on the necessity of changing imperial policy in India in order to uphold British power. She vindicates the shift from the use of force to the implementation of a “righteous power.” It was her way of negotiating her own space within the “public sphere” of power from which she was barred as a Victorian lady.

The author illustrates the need for a universal enfranchisement of women by highlighting the gradually changing roles of women in the countries she visits. She is satisfied by the fact that women in Burma enjoy participation in the economic sphere of their society. She writes that it “was pleasant to find women (who here in Burmah seem to transact all business)” (215). In addition, she asserts that in Japan a movement has taken place “in favour of modifying “the subjection of women”” (334), though this process sparked also a rise in the protective attitudes of conservative Japanese men willing to maintain “the natural and just authority of the man” (334) in opposition to “the rising generation of women, encouraged in Government schools by ‘foreign devil’ teachers to assert themselves” (334–335). Bridges clearly connects the Japanese gender roles to the European subjugation of women when she states: “Some ancient folk in Japan are ready to agree with the husband of a learned lady of the last century in Europe that ‘A wise woman is a foolish thing’; and hesitate to disturb that docile and placid ignorance which they regard as ‘a very excellent thing in a woman’” (335). This quote implies that nineteenth-century European men changed their attitude toward women’s access to education while Oriental men did not. This statement is too simplistic because in reality education continued to be a male privilege in Europe. Even if few women had access to it, they were subjected to male prejudice. One explanation for this discrimination is that the author’s colonialist stance makes her adhere to the ideology of Western enlightenment prevailing over pretended Oriental ignorance.

Bridges extends the universalism of female enfranchisement to women in the United States. She is particularly interested in Mormon women and the rising concern with women’s rights on the West coast. She argues that Mormon women were subjugated to a mix of religious and patriarchal domination. According to Mormon faith, “Mormons were to ‘multiply’ wives, because, unlike other unprofitable servants, they made good use of their ten talents (ten wives)” (393). The author raises the question of women’s participation in religious preaching when she asks about “what proportion the womenkind bore to the population” (391) of saints, a question that is evaded by Brother Orson Pratt, her interlocutor. Nevertheless, she claims that Mormon women enjoy some fundamental rights that are not allowed elsewhere in the United States. For example, they were allowed
to vote. The editor of *Women’s Exponent* tells her: “Yes, we all vote in Utah.” For the author, the Mormon lady “seemed to think there was no need to agitate for woman’s suffrage” (397). Bridges also anecdotally recounts how a group of American women extended their feminist empathy to her by defending her dignity. At a post-office in San Francisco, she went to retrieve her personal mail, and the female workers at the office refused to hand it to her husband: “zealous no doubt for women’s rights” (341), they were, in fact, defending her right for privacy.

**Conclusion**

F.D. Bridges’s *Journal of a Lady’s Travels Round the World* adds to the plethora of travelogues written by female authors (Mary Carpenter, Isabella Bird, Mary Kingsley, among others), texts which looked to negotiate women’s place in the public debate and to criticize gender-based roles and stereotypes. The category of gender constitutes a significant “structure of attitude and reference” (Said 1994, 52) in Bridges’s text. According to Said, the works that are related to this structure are primarily concerned with metropolitan issues like class struggle in British society but also make “reference” to the colonial condition and even maintain an “attitude” of support of empire or lack thereof. My analysis demonstrates that the opposite holds true in the case of Bridges’s travelogue. In fact, her text is a book of travel in distant, sometimes colonial, countries; but it is no less interested in domestic gender questions. The question I ask, therefore, is to what extent the critique of gender stereotypes and the vindication of women’s space in the ‘public sphere’ advocated in Bridge’s journal effectively fostered the emergence of the *fin de siècle* “new woman,” an ideal of womanhood that departed from the patriarchal “angel in the house” construct. In other words, my interest resides in the *Journal of a Lady’s Travels Round the World* as a pioneering text, antedating the revolutionary late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century modernist deconstructions of gender stereotypes. Concomitantly, my article focuses on how the genre of travel writing was appropriated by F.D. Bridges to propagate a transnational and transcultural ideal of gender equality.

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Notes

1 Sara Mills has mainly focused on travel writings by Alexandra David-Neél, Mary Kingsley and Nina Mazuchalli. Antoinette Burton has made reference to other female travellers but does not limit herself to books like Mary Carpenter’s *Six Months in India* (1868) and Josephine Butler’s *New Abolitionists* (1876) *Silent Victories* (1900); she extends her interest to periodicals like the *Englishwoman’s Review* and its concern with the committed work of selected British women for the promotion of the rights of Indian women. Reina Lewis, on her part, focuses on works in painting by Henriette Browne and in prose by George Eliot.

2 Lorraine Sterry divides the travellers into two categories: “travellers by default” and “travellers by intent.” Among the former, she cites Mrs. Christopher Pemberton Hodgson, Mrs. Hugh Fraser and Baroness Albert d’Anethan. Among the latter, she cites Anna D’A, Alice M. Frere, Annie Brassey, Isabella Bird and Marie Stopes.

3 Thomas Richard defines the “imperial archive” as “a fantasy of knowledge collected and united in the service of empire” (6). The kind of knowledge circulated by late nineteenth century writers was in the form of “taxonomies” (6). In other words, the knowledge was categorized according to areas of interest to the empire, like geography, ethnography, philology, history and others.

4 I cite these three examples of Victorian female travellers because they travelled to different countries. Mary Kingsley was mainly in colonial West Africa. Her most widely studied work is *Travels in West Africa* (1897). Ellen M. Rogers was in French Algeria; her travel text is *A Winter in Algeria: 1863–1864* (1865). Isabella Bird, however, was a prolific writer and a worldwide traveller. She was in and wrote about Persia, Asia, North America and the Pacific. Among her works are *The Golden Chersonese and the Way Thither* (1883), *The Hawaiian Archipelago* (1875) and *A Lady’s Life in the Rocky Mountains* (1879). These authors contributed to the British Orientalist tradition. This contribution allowed them to put their names in public debate. However, they also discussed gender issues in their texts by focusing mainly on the condition of women in the countries they visited or themselves as Victorian women breaking away from the domestic space.


6 In *Orientalism*, Edward Said argues that Orientalist writers are involved in “a dialectic of information and control” (36) which assumes that knowing the Orient and Orientals means “to dominate […], to have authority over” them (32). This is why the imperial enterprise was accompanied by scholarly interest classified into disciplines like ethnography, geography, botany and others.
This dialectic corresponds to Thomas Richard’s idea of the “imperial archive” discussed earlier.

7 In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said means by the “structure of attitude and reference […] the way in which structures of location and geographical reference appear in the cultural languages of literature, history, or ethnography, sometimes allusively and sometimes carefully plotted, across several individual works that are not otherwise connected to one another or to an official ideology of ‘empire’” (52).

References


