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# Victorian Women and the Gendering of Mountaineering in the Alps

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## ABSTRACT

This article explores the gendered segregation of Victorian mountaineering, highlighting how societal norms sought to confine women to passive roles within the alpine landscape. As Elizabeth Le Blond declared, ‘there is no manlier sport in the world than mountaineering’, encapsulating the pervasive attitudes of the era. Despite such views, several women like her navigated these constraints, forging spaces of resilience and agency. Victorian guidebooks and literature often advised women to avoid strenuous terrains and instead focus on more gentle activities, reinforcing a narrative that segregated their participation. Yet, through travel narratives, artistic depictions and personal accounts, many women subtly subverted these boundaries. This paper also examines the complex relationships between female climbers and local male guides, as evidenced in the writings of Amelia B. Edwards, revealing how these interactions both challenged and reinforced societal expectations. By uncovering these nuanced dynamics, the study argues that while mountaineering was predominantly male-dominated, women played a significant, yet deliberately overlooked, role in its history, negotiating and redefining their place within the mountains.

Victorian women climbed mountains – the Alps especially. This simple fact, long overlooked in traditional mountaineering histories, has been increasingly brought to light by scholars examining the intersections of gender, space and physical achievement in the nineteenth century. Ann Colley and others have demonstrated that Victorian women were not confined to the valleys but actively ventured into the heights, contesting assumptions about their physical capabilities and redefining the boundaries of their participation in mountaineering culture.<sup>1</sup> Scholarship has also highlighted how men, through their control of mountaineering narratives, organisations and the press, contributed to undermining and obscuring women’s presence and accomplishments in the mountains.<sup>2</sup> We now recognise that the Alps were not simply bastions of conquest and heroic intrepidity for men but a distinctly gendered space, where authority, exclusion and belonging were ceaselessly contested.

Yet, fully grasping women’s relationship to mountaineering requires moving beyond questions of presence or absence. The real complexity lies in how women navigated such gendered spaces – how they asserted authority through observation rather than conquest, how they negotiated relationships not only with male guides but also with other women, and how they documented their experiences in ways that both challenged and, at times, reinforced prevailing gender norms. While much attention has been devoted to documenting their presence in the high Alps, their agency extended far beyond the summits. Women engaged with the alpine landscape on multiple levels – not only as climbers but also as travellers, cultural observers, artists and writers – shaping perceptions of the mountains through movement, narrative, representation and interaction. Expanding the focus beyond high-altitude ascents reveals how they reshaped the gendered geography of the Alps at every elevation.

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Having examined how Victorian climbers framed the Alps as a space of both national rivalry and competition that upheld male prerogatives, this article shifts focus to women's engagement with the mountains, where gendered segregation dictated both their access and roles. In the valleys, Elizabeth Tuckett's illustrated travelogues offered a female perspective on the Alps, blending artistic observation with social commentary. In the alpine highlands, where pastures and lower peaks formed a liminal space between the valleys and the high Alps, Amelia B. Edwards combined travel writing with ethnographic inquiry, asserting intellectual authority in a domain where women were often relegated to spectatorship. At the highest elevations, Elizabeth Le Blond and other female climbers defied entrenched expectations, pioneering women's participation in winter mountaineering and challenging assumptions about female frailty. By tracing women's agency across these gendered zones, this article reassesses their crucial role in shaping the cultural and material history of Victorian mountaineering, showing how their alpine engagement extended beyond isolated ascents to a broader negotiation of authority and exclusion.

## 1 | Lads in a Holiday Mood

In 1871, the Alps became Europe's playground. Leslie Stephen's acclaimed bestseller, *The Playground of Europe*, not only introduced the majestic landscapes of the Alps to the wider public but also encapsulated the era's burgeoning interest in mountaineering as a symbol of adventure, intrepidity and character-building.<sup>3</sup> Stephen's vivid descriptions and personal anecdotes transported his readers to the soaring peaks and breath-taking vistas, experiencing the thrill of conquest and the sublime beauty of nature from the comfort of their armchairs.<sup>4</sup> Despite the seemingly universal appeal of the subject, the narratives and experiences shared within the pages of Stephen's work revealed a more selective reality. The Alps, as portrayed in this seminal text, were not a playground for all; they were, in essence, a realm reserved for the daring and the privileged. This was a playground for young, affluent men.

This gendered exclusivity revealed itself from the very outset of the book as an oblique reference to language. In the preface to his volume, in which Stephen compiled his accounts previously written for the intimate circles of the Alpine Club, he candidly confessed the urge to adapt his prose for a broader, more inclusive audience:

I am possessed with a nervous feeling, like that of a gentleman entering an evening party with a consciousness that his neckcloth is badly tied, and endeavouring by an utterly futile contortion to put it right at the last moment [...] The case, then, is this. I have endeavoured to remove from these papers one glaring fault. Most of them were originally written for a small and very friendly audience; and whilst the pen was in my hand, I had a vision before my eyes of a few companions sitting at the door of some Swiss inn, smoking the pipe of peace after a hard day's walk, and talking what everybody talks, from archbishops to navvies; that is

to say, what is ordinarily called 'shop'. I was simply prolonging pleasant chats about guides and snow-slopes and arêtes, and ropes and crevasses, which had a strange interest at the time, and were delightful even in the recollection.<sup>5</sup>

Stephen's nervousness underscores his awareness of the coded language that permeated his earlier writings, a language forged in the camaraderie of male mountaineers, redolent of tobacco and bound by ropes of shared exploits. The discomfort and self-consciousness associated with presenting oneself to a different, perhaps more scrutinising audience, brought him to 'perform the painful operation of self-mutilation' by excising slang and bad jokes.<sup>6</sup> This rhetorical castration not only highlights the attempt to sanitise his accounts for a larger public but indirectly represents the stripping away of women and their contribution to alpine adventures. Such adventures were thus framed as an exclusive interaction among young lads in a holiday mood, establishing the Alps as a playground where the presence of women was an anomaly rather than a norm.

The bad jokes exchanged among lads during a quick summer holiday would, a few years later, offer Douglas Freshfield a vignette to capture the quintessence of the English mountaineer's jaunty spirit:

Our Alpine Clubman affords while in the Alps an example of almost perpetual motion [...] He dashes from peak to peak, from group to group, even from one end of the Alps to the other, in the course of a short summer holiday. Exercise in the best of air, a dash of adventure, and a love of nature, not felt the less because it is not always on his tongue, are his chief motives. A little botany, or cartography, may come into his plans, but only by the way and in a secondary place. He is out on a holiday and in a holiday humour. You must not be surprised, therefore, if the instruments with which one of the party has burdened himself give rise to more bad jokes than valuable observations. For the climbers are in capital training, and can afford to laugh uphill – a power which is freely used, even at moments when the peasant who carries the provision sack is appealing audibly to his saints.<sup>7</sup>

The brisk pace of the English mountaineer serves here as a symbol of lightness in various dimensions: a lightness of spirit, as evidenced by 'more bad jokes than valuable observations'; a lightness of equipment, with climbers able to maintain a cheerful demeanour even when local guides face difficulties; and a lightness of objectives often perceived as lacking serious significance. It goes without saying that the 'party' enjoying such high-spirited mood was composed exclusively of young men. Upon their return, they would hastily compose 'a ten-page paper for the *Alpine Journal*', detailing the most 'adventurous of a dozen *grandes courses*, full of misspellings of local names', and of the patois spoken with their guides, and 'utterly devoid of serious aim or importance'.<sup>8</sup>

Freshfield's commentary on the frequency of 'bad jokes' over 'valuable observations' in mountaineering circles attests to a recurring motif that Stephen popularised in his writing – a motif that would find significant resonance within the genre of alpine literature, evolving into a mannerism that forms part of its stock in trade. Noel Annan remarked that Stephen's light-heartedness arguably served as a shield for the deeper, sentimental bonds that the author developed with the mountains – a way for him to engage with the sublimity of the peaks without losing the human touch of vulnerability.<sup>9</sup> Stephen's playful banter, scattered across his narratives, served as a lofty shroud, subtly covering the depth of his intimate attachment to the alpine scenes:

We poor mountaineers are occasionally fixed with our own careless talk by some outsider who is not in the secret. We know ourselves to be a small sect, and to be often laughed at; we reply by assuming that we are the salt of the earth, and that our amusement is the first and noblest of all amusements. Our only retort to the good-humoured ridicule with which we are occasionally treated is to adopt an affected strut, and to carry it off as if we were the finest fellows in the world. We make a boast of our shame, and say, if you laugh, we must crow.<sup>10</sup>

Stephen portrays mountaineers as a close-knit community, aware of their peripheral status to the uninitiated outsider, yet imbued with a collective pride that borders on the defiant. This self-awareness of being a 'small sect', often the subject of ridicule, does not diminish their spirit; rather, it fuels a form of *esprit de corps* that elevates their pursuits to a sacred echelon above all other amusements. This bravado, a blend of jest and earnest, served not only as a shield against external judgement but also as a rite of passage that cemented their male-bonding identity.

## 2 | Gendered Zones

The last quotation above is taken from an article that found its way to *The Playground of Europe* from a periodical other than *The Alpine Journal*, the primary journal for mountaineers. It was first published anonymously in *The Cornhill Magazine* a few years earlier and included in the book as its concluding chapter with little to no alterations.<sup>11</sup> Stephen's contribution was pivotal in redefining the mountain not merely as a colossal structure to be admired from afar but as an object measured by the rigour of muscular experience. By advocating for a 'real living belief' over a 'dead intellectual assent', he placed the essence of mountaineering in the physical and visceral engagement with the mountain's form.<sup>12</sup> This concept moves beyond abstract admiration or scientific quantification, rooting the understanding of mountains in the tangible, exhaustive effort required to climb their walls. In that article, Stephen articulates a vision of mountaineering that intertwines the physical exertion of the climber's body with the monumental nature of the mountain landscape, offering a nuanced appreciation of these majestic formations as experienced through the lens of personal physical endeavour.

Defined as such, mountains transcend their role as mere natural formations, morphing into landscape entities comprehensible in

their full, tangible dimension only to a select few men who engage with them through the rigours of mountaineering. In this context, the Alps delineate a space of segregation, separating those who can intimately know their vastness through a direct physical challenge from those who cannot: 'The ordinary tourists – the old man, the woman, or the cripple, who are supposed to appreciate the real beauties of Alpine scenery – may look at it comfortably from their hotel'.<sup>13</sup> This distinction not only separates the tourist from the mountaineer but also implicitly draws lines between the young and the old, the strong and the weak, and, by extension, between men and women, thereby casting the mountains as a realm where such binaries are not merely observed but are deeply ingrained in the fabric of alpine exploration.

The English mountaineer, characterised by youth, strength and implicitly masculine traits, is positioned as the sole archetype capable of fully engaging with and appreciating the mountains' majestic challenges and spiritual mysteries. In contrast, those deemed tourists, including the elderly, the physically less able, and women, are relegated to a passive engagement, presumed to appreciate the alpine scenery from the remote comfort of their hotels.<sup>14</sup> Stephen, however, does not confine all women to the valleys. In a previous chapter of *The Playground of Europe*, he intricately distinguishes between different zones of experience in the Alps by resorting to an effective botanical comparison:

Travellers, like plants, may be divided according to the zones which they reach. In the highest region, the English climber – an animal whose instincts and peculiarities are pretty well-known – is by far the most abundant *genus*. Lower down comes a region where he is mixed with a crowd of industrious Germans, and a few sporadic examples of adventurous ladies and determined sight-seers. Below this is the luxuriant growth of the domestic tourist in all his amazing and intricate varieties.<sup>15</sup>

Travellers are neatly distinguished into categories of mountaineers, sightseers and tourists, each occupying distinct zones within the alpine landscape, much like plants are distributed across various ecological tiers.<sup>16</sup> In this intermediate zone, akin to the pastures that serve as a buffer before the rugged realm of rocks and ice, a few adventurous women find their niche. It is a landscape where they venture to admire the scenery, standing at the threshold to the more forbidding altitudes. This area serves as a natural demarcation line, distinguishing the crowded valleys, alive with *tables d'hôtes* and hotel gatherings, from the desolate, challenging extremes of the higher peaks. It embodies a realm of both possibility and boundary for women who seek to venture into the mountains beyond the conventional confines, bridging the populated lowlands with solitary heights.

Frances Trollope's *Petticoat Government* (1850) concludes with a vivid portrayal of sightseers in the Dolomite Mountains, providing a case in point that resonates well with Stephen's later insights into the varied motivations driving travellers to explore the Alps across distinct zones. The novel describes an enthusiastic scenery-hunter near Cortina d'Ampezzo, leaping 'from a bank with a sketch-book in one hand and a pencil in the other', eager to aid fellow countrymen in navigating the

'bold hills and the narrow valleys, the dark forests and the little flowery meads, the rushing waters and the frowning rocks of the region'.<sup>17</sup> This depiction stands as one of the earliest portrayals of the Dolomite landscape in English literary fiction, capturing a passion 'so essentially characteristic of the inhabitants of *les Îles Britanniques*'.<sup>18</sup> The description of a walk off the beaten track into 'a path not easily passed at full speed' reveals insights into the realm of sightseers, hinting at an exploration that extends beyond the comfort of the valleys. Despite its rugged surroundings, the path has been carefully maintained and transformed into 'a pleasant walk for no ungentle feet'.<sup>19</sup> Stephen's intermediate zone, where 'few sporadic examples of adventurous ladies' are to be found, is here anticipated as a gendered space in which rough nature is domesticated by careful human intervention.<sup>20</sup>

### 3 | Vigils in the Valleys

Elizabeth Tuckett, an accomplished artist-illustrator and author, captures her reader's attention from the outset in her charming 'family sketchbook', *Pictures in Tyrol and Elsewhere*, with its unusual chapter title, 'Mountaineering in an Omnibus'.<sup>21</sup> The 'omnibus', whimsically illustrated on the volume's frontispiece, acts here as a trope for the kind of assisted exploration and gendered point of view that permeates the entire narrative. Here is how she describes such 'unromantic conveyance' at Lermoos in Tyrol:

This time we determined to try a new conveyance, and rejoiced in securing a large omnibus with windows at the side, behind, and in front, space enough for two besides the driver, and for our luggage on the roof [...]. It certainly was an odd and unromantic conveyance for a journey among the mountains, but we found it eminently practical, and as it was impossible to procure anything like an ordinary close carriage, and equally impossible to drive in an open one, we were thankful to secure our *Stellwagen* and four strong horses, who carried us over the pass at a steady pace.<sup>22</sup>

The Alps are observed from the windows of a carriage or a hotel ('just outside our windows rose the great *Zugspitze* in all the rose glow of a clear sunset'), and even during moments of adventure outside, the excursions are typically conducted on the back of a mule or pony, always under the guidance of a chaperon.<sup>23</sup> The focus is entirely on the scenery and its colours; the zone inhabited by these ladies is mostly confined to the valleys or along major thoroughfares:

It is so hopeless by any words to describe the exceeding loveliness of everything that surrounded us, that one hesitates to attempt a bad copy of a most perfect picture. Every inch of the way was a study in itself, of jewelled moss and fresh grass, dewy and sparkling, with soft heaps of brown twigs and ground-ivy, amongst which pansies raised their violet heads, and white flowers could nestle; each stone was covered with grey or golden lichen creeping up to meet the tufts of bright

green ferns, which seemed to spring out of the rocks; little streams made a sweet babbling among the crevices and fell in delicious cascades over the bigger pebbles, and floated away leaves and twigs and broken stems till they disappeared in the great stream which flowed beside the road.<sup>24</sup>

Tuckett's accounts stand as vibrant examples of the zonal division in the Alps that Stephen would describe just a few years later, showcasing her artistic outlook and segregated experiences during the alpine excursions led by her brother, Francis Fox Tuckett, an esteemed member of the Alpine Club.<sup>25</sup> From 1861 to 1870, he organised climbing holidays that included the ladies of his family and friends.<sup>26</sup> Tuckett's illustrated books serve as amusing holiday records, peppered with sketches that range from humorous to cosy, capturing the sociable moments of a group of ladies in the Alps as they await the return of their male companions from peak climbing ventures.<sup>27</sup> These sketches uniquely capture the alpine experience from a woman's viewpoint, as they mingled with other tourists and locals under the watchful eye of a guide, who accompanied them in their excursions on the lower slopes near the villages.

Their prevailing state is characterised by an expectant waiting for the men's return or in joyful celebration of their successful climbs with a hero's welcome, a sentiment that occasionally deepens into anxiety. In Garmisch-Partenkirchen, for instance, the mounting concern becomes palpable as they await the arrival of the last coach of the day, which, to their dismay, arrives without 'the mountaineers'. Tuckett glosses this heightened state of concern with the words: 'the ladies begin again anxiously to count the hours'.<sup>28</sup> This reveals not only the constant mental strain associated with the uncertain outcomes of these daring expeditions but also their side-lined role in the face of the mountaineers' pursuits. Tuckett experiences mountaineering indirectly by giving artistic expression to the exploits of her brother and his companions, capturing their adventures through her illustrative lens. Only on rare occasions the men agree to join the ladies on gentle excursions, such as the time in Agordo, when, after four days of trekking to climb the Pale di San Martino in the southern Dolomites, they 'condescended to a stroll with them over the Cereda Pass to Primiero'.<sup>29</sup>

Their moments of anticipation are eloquently captured in the numerous sketches featured in *Zigzagging Amongst Dolomites*, a book composed entirely of vignettes adorned with spirited captions. On the amiable pastures dotted with wildflowers of the Seiser Alm, under the towering presence of the Schlern rock, Tuckett and her companions found ways to engage themselves with various activities. Some dedicated themselves to painting wildflowers and creating illustrations for the book while their friend entertained the group by reading Charles Kingsley's *Westward, Ho!* aloud.<sup>30</sup> Another lady engaged in her needlework, bringing a sense of domesticity to the rugged alpine setting. Glances were cast towards the sky, accompanied by hopeful remarks on their early start and the anticipation that their mountaineering counterparts, having completed their daring adventures, would soon join them. Their guides, one old and one young, occasionally amused themselves with clumsy dances nearby, 'as Pan and an old goat might have

done before English tourists invaded Arcady'.<sup>31</sup> This blend of artistic, literary, and practical pursuits against the backdrop of waiting illustrates the multifaceted ways in which Tuckett and her female friends experienced the mountains, even from a distance.

In their travels through the Dolomites, Tuckett and her companions immersed themselves in the diverse cultural experiences of the regions they visited, combining ethnographic curiosity with artistic pursuits.<sup>32</sup> Their journey took them to St Ulrich in the Gardena Valley, where they were captivated by the wooden toys crafted by Christian Gottriffer, a woodcarver whose work had found favour in Victorian England.<sup>33</sup> Their artistic exploration continued at the studio of Giuseppe Ghedina in Cortina d'Ampezzo, and their historical interest led them to the house of Titian in Pieve di Cadore with great zeal.<sup>34</sup> They participated in the religious ceremonies that Tyrol was known for, engaged in cooking sessions with local ladies and interacted with the community to gather picturesque sketches.<sup>35</sup> This combination of ethnography and artistic activities allowed them to capture the essence of the Alps beyond its natural scenery. They linked the awe-inspiring mountains with verses from poets like Byron, Wordsworth and Goethe, but also Felicia Hemans and Frederic Myers, marrying the physical beauty of the Alps with expressions of literature, offering a comprehensive celebration of alpine culture and beauty.<sup>36</sup>

#### 4 | Climbing for Vistas

In her renowned travelogue, *Untrodden Peaks and Unfrequented Valleys: A Midsummer Ramble in the Dolomites*, Amelia Edwards, a pioneering writer, Egyptologist and early advocate for women's travel, recounts achieving what she claims to be a first ascent. Here is the backstory:

Hereupon Clementi, *à propos*, as it would seem, of nothing, says briskly: 'Would the Signoras like to make a first ascent?' 'A first ascent', I repeat vaguely, adding a softening drop of brown madder, and so turning the whole pool into a tender pearly grey. 'What do you mean?' 'I mean, would the Signoras like to be the first to mount to the top of the Sasso Bianco?' 'The Sasso Bianco!' says L., beginning to be interested in the conversation. 'Where is the Sasso Bianco?' Clementi points to my sketch, and then to the mountain opposite. 'But that is the Monte Pezza!' I exclaim. 'Scusate, Signora – the Sasso Bianco is the summit of the Monte Pezza. No traveller has ever been up there. It is new-new-new!' 'How can it be new?' I ask, incredulously. 'It is not a very high mountain.' 'Scusate ancora, Signora – it is not a mountain of the first class; but it is high, very high, for a mountain of the second class'.<sup>37</sup>

The guide 'Clementi' is in fact Clemente Callegari, who, along with Giuseppe Ghedina, accompanied Edwards and her companion Lucy Renshaw (referred to throughout the book as 'L.') on their 'midsummer ramble' through the Dolomite region.<sup>38</sup> Callegari offered Edwards the chance to venture beyond her com-

fortable intermediate zone – situated between the valleys and the peaks – and imbue her journey with a touch of mountaineering adventure. The Sasso Bianco is here qualified as a 'mountain of the second class', overlooked by male mountaineers and, by implication, deemed suitable for women: 'Because, Signora, the Sasso Bianco is too difficult for ordinary travellers, and not challenging enough for the Club Alpino'; it is a mountain that English mountaineers would 'swallow at one mouthful'.<sup>39</sup> This characterisation resonates with Stephen's intermediate zone, situated between the socialised realms of the ordinary tourist and the impenetrable regions of the mountaineer.

Callegari's proposition seeks in fact to expand these boundaries rather than surpass them. Edwards and her companion would still qualify as 'sightseers' who venture in the highlands to admire the scenery: 'I begin to look at my mountain with more respect, and to take extra pain with my sketch'.<sup>40</sup> The mountain is hers already, despite the initial hesitation to tackle it: 'I venture to remind Clementi that L. and I are only "ordinary travellers" and, as such, might find the Sasso Bianco too tough to be swallowed in even many mouthfuls'.<sup>41</sup>

Throughout the conversation, Callegari's enthusiasm for them to earn the distinction of a first ascent is palpable, countering Edwards's reservations with persuasive zeal. Ghedina, on the other hand, remains cautious, weighing their capabilities thoughtfully and holding back his judgement. The mere mention of '*prima ascensione*' ('first ascent') casts a spell, imbuing the Sasso Bianco with an allure that elevates it above other mountains, surrounding its peak with an aura of mystique and singular appeal ('Those words "*prima ascensione*" are Cabalistic, and haunt the memory strangely').<sup>42</sup> This exchange encapsulates the dynamic interplay of ambition, caution and the lure of uncharted achievements in the context of Victorian alpine exploration, illustrating the broader themes of gendered perspectives and the stretching of physical and metaphorical boundaries in the pursuit of adventure. Edwards ultimately dedicates an entire chapter to this second-tier mountain, adopting a rhetoric that carefully steers clear of the bombastic jargon typical of male mountaineers:

Now I will not say that the Sasso Bianco is an ill-favoured mountain – Heaven forbid! Nor that it is an unimportant mountain; nor even that it is a small mountain. I will not depreciate it at the beginning in order to rehabilitate it by a *coup de théâtre* in the end. Neither will I affect to undervalue it for the sake of establishing an ingenious parallel between myself and the Fool. At the same time I am anxious not to exaggerate its peculiar qualifications and virtues. For it is with mountain-tops as with other playthings – having sought to achieve them in the first instance because we value them, we go on valuing them because we have achieved them.<sup>43</sup>

The ascent to the mountain is not framed as an exploit. It is its central and prominent location that renders it particularly alluring to those who travel not for the climb itself but for the panoramic splendour it promises:

But the Sasso Bianco stands in the very centre of the Dolomites, like the middle ball upon a Solitaire board, surrounded on all sides by the giants of the district. If one could imagine a fine, detached mountain, clear on all sides, occupying, say, the position of the village of Leuk in the valley of the Rhone, and high enough to command the whole circuit of the Oberland, Monte Rosa, and Mont Blanc ranges, that mountain would fairly represent the kind of position which the Sasso Bianco holds in reference to the scenery by which it is encompassed.<sup>44</sup>

Edwards retains the perspective of a 'sightseer', who climbs to see rather than seeing through the act of climbing, contrasting with Stephen's portrayal of the mountaineer for whom vision is intertwined with the physical act of ascending. She is, therefore, almost polemically surprised that the painter Josiah Gilbert, who the previous summer had ascended nearby the Monte Fernazza with Francis Fox Tuckett, missed the opportunity to admire 'the much finer view' that the Sasso Bianco 'necessarily commands'.<sup>45</sup> The competition here is not between mountaineers but between 'scenery hunters'.<sup>46</sup>

## 5 | The Monstrous Feminine

Becoming a mountaineer, that is crossing the boundary to reach the top zone, would have implied adopting masculine traits for a Victorian woman. That Edwards might have held such a view is revealed in her encounter with the 'Phenomenon' at Corvara – a female traveller who boldly defies the norms of femininity with her masculine attire and demeanour. Her gender ambiguity led Edwards to use the neutral pronoun 'it' emphatically in describing the encounter with her. This woman, with sandy hair and crimson complexion, whose age was as indistinct as her attire – donning what could either be seen as a long kilt or a short petticoat – exuded the 'masculine attributes' that granted her a freedom to traverse the Dolomites unrestrained, a liberty Edwards as a Victorian lady could not fully embody. She is encircled by men – including Callegari and Ghedina – engaging in conversations about her daring and solitary adventures:

Returning presently to the inn, just as the drizzle thickens and the light begins to fail, we encounter a Phenomenon. It stands in the little yard between the Albergo and the Dependance, discoursing and gesticulating in the midst of a group composed of the Rottenaras, our guides, and a few miscellaneous men and stable-boys. It wears highlows, a battered straw hat, and a brown garment which may be described either as a long kilt or the briefest of petticoats. Its hair is sandy; its complexion crimson; its age anything between forty-five and sixty. It carries a knapsack on its back, and an alpenstock in its hand. The voice is the voice of a man; the face, tanned and travel-stained as it is, is the face of a woman. She is gabbling German – apparently describing her day's tramp across the mountains – and

seems highly gratified by the peals of laughter which occasionally interrupt her narrative.<sup>47</sup>

Edwards portrays the Phenomenon as both captivating and confounding: a figure embodying independence and a troubling defiance of gender norms. There is a certain admiration for her unbridled spirit, yet she represented a threat to the societal expectations Edwards was bound to. As Joan Rees observes, she embodies 'a grotesque travesty of the English lady traveller'.<sup>48</sup> This portrayal may indeed be, as Patricia O'Neill suggests, a strategic fabrication from Edwards' imagination, designed to cast her travelling group in a favourable light by highlighting their mental fortitude and cultured demeanour, as opposed to blind adventurism and alienating behaviour.<sup>49</sup> In any case, such encounters with women seeking to fulfil their desires for freedom through actions considered unfeminine or culturally taboo brought forth the unsettling concept of the monstrous feminine for female Victorian travellers.<sup>50</sup> This not only carried the profound risk of self-obliteration but also the threat of being erased from societal acknowledgement.

The Phenomenon gleefully shared her mountain exploits with the men on the main square, oblivious or indifferent to the societal constraints that dictated how a woman should act and appear. Seeing her there, in the quaint town of Corvara, just after a visit to the local parish church to admire the altar pieces, Edwards found herself irresistibly drawn to the 'tremendous peroration' she uttered in answering a question about the usefulness of guides:

'A guide?' she exclaims, replying to an observation of some by-stander. 'Not I! What do I want with a guide? I have carried my own knapsack and found my own way through France, through England, through Italy, through Palestine. I have never taken a guide, and I have never wanted one. You are all lazy fellows, and I will have nothing to do with you. Fatigue is nothing to me – distance is nothing to me – danger is nothing to me. I have been taken by brigands before now. What of that? If I had had a guide with me, would he have fought them? Not a bit of it! He would have run away. Well, I neither fought nor ran away. I made friends of my brigands – I painted all their portraits – I spent a month with them; and we parted, the best comrades in the world. Ugh! guides, indeed! All very well for incapables, but not for me. I am afraid of nothing – neither of the Pope nor the Devil!'<sup>51</sup>

The Phenomenon frames here danger as inconsequential, dismissing fatigue, distance and even encounters with brigands as trivial. Her rhetoric of self-sufficiency directly challenges gendered assumptions that positioned women as vulnerable and in need of protection. By rejecting guides and asserting her ability to navigate landscapes independently, she embraces risk as a marker of competence – an attribute typically associated with male adventurers.<sup>52</sup> Edwards, in turn, underscores the gendered dimension of risk-taking, portraying the Phenomenon in almost caricatured terms – an embodiment of radical defiance that

pushes the rejection of feminine propriety to its extreme. Ghedina then offered his own perspective, characterising the Phenomenon as a ‘*Signora molto brutta e molto allegra*’ (‘a very ugly and very cheerful lady’).<sup>53</sup> His remark acknowledges the Phenomenon’s striking departure from conventional femininity – her disregard for beauty as a social currency aligning with her rejection of gendered expectations. That evening, her decision to dine at the guides’ table, delighting them with her presence, deliberately challenged conventional social hierarchies and gendered boundaries. Edwards, for her part, seemed relieved to learn that the Phenomenon was German and not a fellow countrywoman.

Edwards’s portrayal of the Phenomenon is so vividly Dickensian in its detail that it verges on implausible. Remarkably, nothing in the description marks her as a mountaineer, except for the notable detail that she eschews the assistance of guides; rather, she mirrors many of Edwards’s own stated interests, which Edwards is quick to highlight: ‘She paints, she botanises, and I think they said she writes.’<sup>54</sup> These shared traits between the two women are striking, given Edwards’s portrayal of herself as a pioneer in exploring the Dolomites. The German Phenomenon, who intriguingly possesses abilities akin to those of Edwards, encapsulates the tension between the era’s rigid gender roles and the liberating call of the mountains – a call that could propel one to shed conventions but also to risk becoming an outsider within one’s own society.

This encounter forced Edwards to grapple with her own femininity and its bounds. While the Phenomenon revelled in the laughter her stories provoked, Edwards was left to ponder the thin line between admiration and disquietude, between the desire for such freedom and the safety of traditional roles, making the Phenomenon a haunting symbol of what society often fears and misjudges in powerful, unconventional women. The episode, therefore, seems to serve as a narrative strategy, delineating a gendered approach to mountain exploration. Edwards’s own style contrasts sharply with the boisterous camaraderie of male mountaineers, humorously captured by Stephen as bad jokes shared among young men on holiday. Through her depiction of the Phenomenon, Edwards appears to resist the notion of fully embracing the mountaineer identity if it means relinquishing her gendered privileges, presenting an alternative, yet equally valid, mode of engaging with the mountainous landscape.

## 6 | Women in the Heights

The offer from Clemente Callegari, a seasoned local guide, to lead Amelia Edwards on a first ascent of the Sasso Bianco is a testament to the shifting perceptions of women in mountaineering during the late-nineteenth century. That women were daring to venture beyond the treeline into the traditionally male-dominated realm of high-altitude mountaineering was becoming an acknowledged phenomenon within the mountains. Callegari’s offer to Edwards, made in spite of Giuseppe Ghedina’s reservations, represents a bold challenge to a status quo perhaps more entrenched in the clubs of London than in the chalets of Switzerland. This underscores a time when the accomplishments of women climbers, though still perceived as anomalies, began to gain visibility and recognition amidst the towering peaks of the Alps. A glance through various travel books from the mid-

nineteenth century onwards reveals an evolving landscape where the presence of women in high altitudes became an increasingly recognised reality.

The pioneering spirit of these adventurers is vividly captured in a range of published narratives that offer insights into the mountaineering holidays of women in the nineteenth century. Mrs Cole’s *A Lady’s Tour Round Monte Rosa* (1859) provides an early look into such excursions, while *Swiss Notes by Five Ladies: An Account of Touring and Climbing in 1874*, penned anonymously by Mary Taylor along with contributions from her companions, adds to the depiction of the collective spirit of these women climbers.<sup>55</sup> The list, though far from being exhaustive, includes Anne Lister’s detailed accounts of her ascents in the Pyrenees (1838), Frederica Plunket’s *Here and There Among the Alps* (1875), Emily Hornby’s *Mountaineering Records* (1907) chronicling her numerous climbs, and Elizabeth Le Blond’s extensive narratives of her ascents.<sup>56</sup> These accounts defied the prevailing views of women’s capabilities and place in the adventurous world of mountaineering.

In his discussion of Gottlieb Studer’s fourth volume of *Ueber Eis und Schnee*, which charts the highest peaks in Switzerland and the history of their ascents, the reviewer from *The Alpine Journal* highlighted that ‘three ladies are named as having climbed the Finsteraarhorn’.<sup>57</sup> The conventions of book reviewing and the subject matter of Studer’s text naturally prompted the reviewer, probably William Coolidge, to scrutinise the comprehensiveness of the documented ascents. He notes, for example, that the author failed to acknowledge Martin Conway’s *The Zermatt Pocket-Book*, but overall he praised the effort as comprehensive.<sup>58</sup> However, the mention of the three female climbers in Studer’s volume – a number he found surprisingly limited – sparked this insightful commentary:

In endeavouring to keep pace with ladies’ ascents an author attempts the impossible, since many ladies are too modest to record their exploits. Thus, where three ladies are named as having climbed the Finsteraarhorn, the number ought to our knowledge to be at least doubled.<sup>59</sup>

In fact, Studer’s account cites more than three women. The American Meta Brevoort, Coolidge’s aunt, who undertook several ascents in Switzerland with him and his guides, is frequently referenced. On other occasions, his notes are more generic, such as his mention of Anna and Ellen Pigeon as ‘the Misses Pigeon’.<sup>60</sup> This terminology hints at how the two sisters, often mentioned in *The Alpine Journal*, were commonly known.<sup>61</sup>

Echoing Coolidge’s observations on modesty as a barrier to publicly sharing their alpine achievements, the Pigeon sisters’ *Peaks and Passes* (1885), a short book in which they exposed their mountaineering tours from 1869 to 1876, was published privately, intended for a select audience. Between 1872 and 1876, the sisters amassed an impressive climbing record, conquering sixty-six peaks over 10,000 feet and sixty passes over 9000 feet, among them some of the Alps’ most formidable mountains such as the Dom, Monte Rosa and the Matterhorn, which they climbed twice, achieving the first female traverse from Breuil to Zermatt

in 1873. Despite their remarkable accomplishments, the sisters faced hostility from their male counterparts; Ellen once confided to Coolidge that ‘in days gone by many Alpine Club’s members would not speak to us’.<sup>62</sup>

By the time women’s contributions to mountaineering began to gain recognition, alpine literature had already seen significant expansion.<sup>63</sup> An anonymous article in *Fraser’s Magazine*, likely penned by Leslie Stephen, observed already in 1859 that alpine literature had burgeoned to such an extent that tourists found themselves at a crossroads, unsure of which publications to read, bring along or avoid.<sup>64</sup> As the century progressed, the abundance of guidebooks even led to the creation of guides specifically designed to help readers navigate the increasingly complex landscape of alpine writings.<sup>65</sup> Switzerland, as portrayed in these writings, became a ‘playground’ for a distinctly male British endeavour, described as a land meant for active exploration and enjoyment, a ‘kind of gymnasium for mind as well as body’.<sup>66</sup> Against this backdrop of overwhelming male-dominated discourse, the unique perspectives and achievements of women in the mountains risked being overshadowed and possibly overlooked.<sup>67</sup>

Coolidge’s popular *Swiss Travel and Swiss Guide Books* is offered to his aunt, with a dedication that celebrates her role in nurturing his passion and knowledge for the mountains: ‘To the memory of my dear aunt Meta Claudia Brevoort, to whom I owe, amidst countless other blessings, my love for and my knowledge of the great mountains, which none have ever loved more truly and few have known better than she did’.<sup>68</sup> Despite this personal tribute to a woman who exerted a profound impact on his mountaineering journey, Coolidge’s review of Swiss guidebooks notably omits the contributions of female mountaineers. Women authors are mentioned for their contributions to tourism, ethnography and the artistic dimension of the region, casting a shadow over the narratives and achievements of female climbers, whose stories of resilience, adventure and exploration remain underrepresented and undervalued in mountaineering circles.

## 7 | Sport for the Sake of Sport

A case in point is offered by a review in *The Alpine Journal* that immediately follows the one on Studer’s *Ueber Eis und Schnee*. It is devoted to Elizabeth Hawkins-Whitshed’s *The High Alps in Winter; or, Mountaineering in Search of Health* (1883), which she released under her married name, Mrs Fred Burnaby. In the alpine literature, Elizabeth Le Blond is known under three further variants of her name: Mrs Fred Burnaby, Mrs John F. Main and Mrs Aubrey Le Blond.<sup>69</sup> Starting in the winter of 1882–1883, she undertook numerous climbs with her guide, Eduard Cupelin, chronicling her experiences in *The High Alps in Winter* (1883) and *High Life and Towers of Silence* (1886).<sup>70</sup>

In his review for *The Alpine Journal*, Coolidge delivered a sharply critical assessment, presenting *The High Alps in Winter* as ‘probably the flimsiest and most trivial that has ever been offered to the Alpine public’.<sup>71</sup> He acknowledges that the subject matter held promise, given its novelty to the general public and the spirited nature of Le Blond’s winter mountaineering feats, which had previously stirred excitement among alpine climbing enthusiasts.

However, he contended that the book failed to meet these high expectations, presenting only a collection of perfunctory sketches, artificially extended into a volume by the use of a large font. Rather than insightful recollections or engaging narratives, the book fixates on trivial mishaps and jokes, contributing to the very elements that have marred much of alpine literature. His attitude highlights the challenges female authors faced in gaining recognition and respect within domains traditionally dominated by men, such as mountaineering literature:

The critic, after watching in vain for more satisfying matter, has to remind himself that he is dealing with a lady’s book, and the book of a lady who has written to amuse an idle hour. Her narrative, he gladly allows, is simple, intelligible, and as to difficulties and dangers, free from most of the exaggerations of tourists.<sup>72</sup>

The critique was undeniably severe and likely reflects a broader societal attitude, especially considering that during the same period, Elizabeth’s great-aunt, Lady Bentinck, voiced her concerns to her mother with the words, ‘Stop her climbing mountains! She is scandalising all London and looks like a red Indian!’.<sup>73</sup> Photographs from that era depict her climbing in a skirt that ended just above her knees, a striking example of the compromises women mountaineers had to make between practicality and prevailing fashion norms. Women like Le Blond navigated these constraints by adapting their attire, shortening their skirts or finding ways to lift them when necessary.<sup>74</sup> Reflecting on these experiences, Le Blond later acknowledged in her memoir the profound impact of the mountains on her life, crediting them with freeing her from the constraints of societal expectations.<sup>75</sup>

The Alpine Club, founded in 1857, maintained a strict men-only policy until 1974. In response, women established the Ladies’ Alpine Club in 1907, which Le Blond directed from 1907 to 1913, though it remained relatively small, never exceeding 161 members throughout its existence until 1975. Similarly, other prestigious clubs in the mountaineering community, such as the Climbers’ Club initiated in 1898, allowed female participation in activities but only formally admitted women into their membership in 1975. The Scottish Mountaineering Club, dating back to 1889, did not open its membership to women until 1990 following intense discussions, even though Scottish women had already formed the Ladies’ Scottish Climbing Club in 1908 – a club that continues to operate. Women’s clubs mirrored the structure of their male counterparts, maintaining exclusivity based on social standing, athletic achievement and gender.<sup>76</sup>

Women’s involvement in mountaineering developed both independently and yet under the influence of their male counterparts’ achievements, particularly because numerous female climbers undertook expeditions alongside men – be they husbands, fathers, brothers or friends – who were affiliated with prominent male-exclusive mountaineering clubs.<sup>77</sup> This dynamic positioned female mountaineers in a unique space: They were carving out their own narratives and experiences in the mountains, while also navigating the challenges and perceptions shaped by a domain historically dominated by men. As a result, the achievements and contributions of women in the field often unfolded within

the complex interplay of seeking recognition and establishing their legitimacy in an activity where their male companions' memberships in esteemed clubs might overshadow their own endeavours.

The opening sentence of Le Blond's *True Tales of Mountain Adventure* does not leave any room for doubt: 'There is no manlier sport in the world than mountaineering'.<sup>78</sup> But the truly daring aspect to highlight here is not just the depiction of mountaineering as a quintessentially masculine activity, but rather its categorisation as a sport – one deemed unsuitable for women. Even Stephen acknowledged that mountaineering was merely a sport, a viewpoint that implicitly suggests women's exclusion from participation:

It is a sport which, like fishing or shooting, brings one into contact with the sublimest aspects of nature [...] Still it is strictly a sport – as strictly as cricket, or rowing, or knurr and spell – and I have no wish to place it on a different footing. The game is won when a mountain-top is reached in spite of difficulties; it is lost when one is forced to retreat; and whether won or lost, it calls into play a great variety of physical and intellectual energies, and gives the pleasure which always accompanies an energetic use of our faculties.<sup>79</sup>

Yet, Stephen endeavoured to elevate mountaineering beyond its classification as just a sport. He sought to imbue it with a sense of nobility and purpose, attempting to transform perceptions and highlight the deeper values and personal growth it could offer to those who engage with the mountains.<sup>80</sup> What Le Blond challenged, when she insisted that mountaineering is a 'sport purely for the sake of sport', was the very effort to ennoble it almost to the level of a spiritual activity, tying it to notions of modernity and valour.<sup>81</sup>

Stephen's endeavour to cast mountaineering as a noble pursuit was in fact intricately linked to broader narratives of progress and human achievement – narratives that Peter Hansen has eloquently mapped out in his work.<sup>82</sup> It was, however, a male history. By participating actively and prominently in mountaineering, Le Blond posed a direct challenge to the male-dominated story of mountaineering as an emblem of modernity – a modernity that, in reality, relegated women to secondary roles. Her assertion that mountaineering was simply a sport, rather than a pursuit imbued with nobility and progress, exposed the gendered contradictions within these very narratives of modernity. Rather than merely disrupting a male-coded tradition, her participation revealed that mountaineering, like modernity itself, was not a neutral or universal space, but one shaped by exclusionary ideals that sought to define who could claim physical and intellectual authority over the mountains.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Ann C. Colley, *Victorians in the Mountains: Sinking the Sublime* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 101–141; see also Cicely Williams, *Women on the Rope: The Feminine Share in Mountain Adventure*

(London: Allen and Unwin, 1973); Rebecca A. Brown, *Women on High: Pioneers of Mountaineering* (Boston: Globe Pequot Press, 2002); Riccardo Decarli, *Pareti rosa: Le alpiniste trentine di ieri e di oggi* (Trent: Società Alpinisti Tridentini, 2006); Tanja Wirz, *Gipfelstürmerinnen: Eine Geschlechtergeschichte des Alpinismus in der Schweiz 1840–1940* (Baden: Hier+Jetzt, 2013); for later developments, see Julie Rak, *False Summit: Gender in Mountaineering Nonfiction* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2021); for a useful anthology of primary sources, see David Mazel (ed.), *Mountaineering Women: Stories by Early Climbers* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1994).

<sup>2</sup>Michael S. Reidy, 'Mountaineering, Masculinity, and the Male Body in Mid-Victorian Britain', *Osiris* 30, no. 1 (2015), pp. 158–181; see also, Carol A. Osborne, 'Gender and the Organisation of British Climbing c.1857–1955' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Lancaster University, 2005), and Clare A. Roche, 'The Ascent of Women: How Female Mountaineers Explored the Alps 1850–1900' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Birkbeck, University of London, 2015).

<sup>3</sup>Leslie Stephen, *The Playground of Europe* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1871); for an overview, see Peter H. Hansen, *The Summits of Modern Man: Mountaineering After the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013); Peter L. Bayers, *Imperial Ascent: Mountaineering, Masculinity, and Empire* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2003); Reuben J. Ellis, *Vertical Margins: Mountaineering and the Landscapes of Neoimperialism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001); Jim Ring, *How the English Made the Alps* (London: John Murray, 2000). Leslie Stephen was not only a prominent Victorian literary figure and mountaineer but also the father of the writer Virginia Woolf and artist Vanessa Bell. For a comparable gendered portrayal within the context of high-altitude scientific exploration, see Bruce Hevly, 'The Heroic Science of Glacier Motion', *Osiris* 11 (1996), pp. 66–86.

<sup>4</sup>On armchair-travellers, see Catherine Waters, *Special Correspondence and the Newspaper Press in Victorian Print Culture, 1850–1886* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 29–57; Care Pettit, 'Exploration in Print: From the Miscellany to the Newspaper', in Dane Kennedy (ed.), *Reinterpreting Exploration: The West in the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 80–108.

<sup>5</sup>Stephen, *The Playground of Europe*, vii–viii.

<sup>6</sup>Stephen, *The Playground of Europe*, viii.

<sup>7</sup>Douglas W. Freshfield, *Italian Alps: Sketches in the Mountains of Ticino, Lombardy, the Trentino, and Venetia* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1875), pp. 182–183.

<sup>8</sup>Freshfield, *Italian Alps*, p. 183.

<sup>9</sup>Noel Gilroy Annan, *Leslie Stephen: His Thought and Character in Relation to His Time* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1951), pp. 86–87, p. 299.

<sup>10</sup>Stephen, *The Playground of Europe*, pp. 270–271.

<sup>11</sup>Leslie Stephen, 'The Regrets of a Mountaineer', *The Cornhill Magazine* 16, no. 95, November 1867, pp. 539–555.

<sup>12</sup>Stephen, 'The Regrets of a Mountaineer', p. 545.

<sup>13</sup>Stephen, 'The Regrets of a Mountaineer', p.545; on the aesthetic distinction between observing mountain beauty from afar and experiencing it through direct contact with their rocky formations – a debate Stephen engaged with Ruskin – see Kevin A. Morrison, 'Embodiment and Modernity: Ruskin, Stephen, Merleau-Ponty, and the Alps', *Comparative Literature Studies* 46 (2009), pp. 498–511.

<sup>14</sup>See Vanessa Heggie, 'Bodies, Sport and Science in the Nineteenth Century', *Past and Present* 231 (2016), pp. 169–200.

<sup>15</sup>Stephen, *The Playground of Europe*, p. 184.

<sup>16</sup>In discussing Stephen's passage, Reidy, 'Mountaineering, Masculinity, and the Male Body in Mid-Victorian Britain', pp. 178–179, rightly identified a precedent of this gendered zoning in Charles Dickens,

- 'Foreign Climbs', *All the Year Round* 14, no. 332, 2 September 1865, pp. 135–137; in addition to Dickens, however, Stephen draws an intriguing distinction between national mountaineering inclinations, allocating industrious Germans to the intermediate zone and reserving high altitudes for the intrepid English climber. For an analysis of the nuanced differences between German and English mountaineers, see William Bainbridge, *Topographic Memory and Victorian Travellers in the Dolomite Mountains: Peaks of Venice* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020), pp. 209–211; William Bainbridge, 'Mountains Run Mad: Picturesque Signatures in the Dolomites', in Christos Kakalis and Emily Goetsch (eds), *Mountains, Mobilities and Movement* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 255–283, here pp. 275–276.
- <sup>17</sup> Frances Milton Trollope, *Petticoat Government* (London: Henry Colburn, 1850), pp. 326–327.
- <sup>18</sup> Trollope, *Petticoat Government*, p. 324.
- <sup>19</sup> Trollope, *Petticoat Government*, p. 327.
- <sup>20</sup> Stephen, *The Playground of Europe*, p. 184.
- <sup>21</sup> Elizabeth Tuckett, *Pictures in Tyrol and Elsewhere: From a Family Sketch-Book* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1867), pp. 3–52.
- <sup>22</sup> Tuckett, *Pictures in Tyrol and Elsewhere*, p. 26.
- <sup>23</sup> Tuckett, *Pictures in Tyrol and Elsewhere*, p. 25.
- <sup>24</sup> Tuckett, *Pictures in Tyrol and Elsewhere*, pp. 26–27.
- <sup>25</sup> Stephen would contribute to Tuckett's almost legendary stature: 'Tuckett will occupy a place similar to that of the wandering Ulysses in Greek fable, or the invulnerable Sivrid in the lay of the Niebelungs. In every part of the Alps, from Monte Viso and Dauphine to the wilds of Carinthia and Styria, the exploits of this mighty traveller will linger in the popular imagination'. See Stephen, *The Playground of Europe*, p. 199.
- <sup>26</sup> Colley, *Victorians in the Mountains*, p. 111.
- <sup>27</sup> Elizabeth Tuckett, *How We Spent the Summer or "A Voyage en Zigzag" in Switzerland and Tyrol, with Some Members of the Alpine Club* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green 1864); *Beaten Tracks, or Pen and Pencil Sketches in Italy* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1866); *Pictures in Tyrol and Elsewhere* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1867); and *Zigzagging Amongst Dolomites* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1871).
- <sup>28</sup> Tuckett, *Zigzagging Amongst Dolomites*, p. 36.
- <sup>29</sup> Tuckett, *Zigzagging Amongst Dolomites*, p. 20.
- <sup>30</sup> Charles Kingsley, *Westward Ho! Or, The Voyages and Adventures of Sir Amyas Leigh, Knight of Burrough in the County of Devon* (Cambridge: Macmillan, 1855). The choice of this novel, with its focus on the adventures of men overseas and its distinct themes, may have been a deliberate inclusion, reflecting some of the intrepid values shared by Tuckett's party.
- <sup>31</sup> Elizabeth Tuckett, 'Sketches Among the Dolomites', *Good Words* 12 (1871), pp. 784–785.
- <sup>32</sup> This outlook was fully developed in Rachel Harriette Busk, *Household Stories from the Land of Hofer, or Popular Myths of Tirol* (London: Griffith and Farran, 1871); and more diffusely in Rachel Harriette Busk, *The Valleys of Tirol: Their Traditions and Customs, and How to Visit Them* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1874). See context in Bainbridge, *Topographic Memory and Victorian Travellers in the Dolomite Mountains*, pp. 224–229.
- <sup>33</sup> Tuckett, *Zigzagging Amongst Dolomites*, p. 63.
- <sup>34</sup> Tuckett, *Zigzagging Amongst Dolomites*, pp. 57, 59.
- <sup>35</sup> Tuckett, *Zigzagging Amongst Dolomites*, p. 45.
- <sup>36</sup> Quotations are used throughout the book to provide captions to panoramic depictions of mountains, presented within quotation marks but without attribution; this suggests that Tuckett assumed these lines would be recognised by her readers.
- <sup>37</sup> Amelia Ann Blanford Edwards, *Untrodden Peaks and Unfrequented Valleys: A Midsummer Ramble in the Dolomites* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1873), p. 206. See William Bainbridge, 'Amelia B. Edwards and Romantic Egyptology', *Journal of Victorian Culture* 29 (2024), pp. 266–286.
- <sup>38</sup> Giorgio Fontanive, *Clemente Callegari 'battistrada': Terza guida alpina dell'Agordino* (Belluno: Tipografia Piave, 1999), p. 9, in which a significant *attestato* is transcribed, signed by Edwards and Renshaw, 'recommending him to travellers'. For insights into the dynamic between female alpine travellers and their guides, see Kathryn Walchester, 'Alpine Guides, Gender, and British Climbers, 1859–85: The Boundaries of Female Propriety in the British Periodical Press', *Victorian Periodicals Review* 51 (2018), pp. 521–38.
- <sup>39</sup> Edwards, *Untrodden Peaks*, p. 207.
- <sup>40</sup> Edwards, *Untrodden Peaks*, p. 207.
- <sup>41</sup> Edwards, *Untrodden Peaks*, pp. 207–208.
- <sup>42</sup> Edwards, *Untrodden Peaks*, pp. 208–209.
- <sup>43</sup> Edwards, *Untrodden Peaks*, p. 299.
- <sup>44</sup> Edwards, *Untrodden Peaks*, p. 301.
- <sup>45</sup> Edwards, *Untrodden Peaks*, p. 302.
- <sup>46</sup> William Bainbridge, 'Titian Country: Josiah Gilbert (1814–1893) and the Dolomite Mountains', *Journal of Historical Geography* 56 (2017), pp. 22–42, see p. 25. See also Stefano Cracolici, 'Diffrazioni d'autore: Arthur John Strutt e Francis Wey su un viaggio in Calabria del 1838', in Leonardo Passarelli and Maria Saveria Ruga (eds), *Arte e politica in Calabria: Opere e immagini del Risorgimento e dell'Italia unita* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubettino, 2022), pp. 29–55, here p. 54.
- <sup>47</sup> Edwards, *Untrodden Peaks*, p. 362.
- <sup>48</sup> Joan Rees, *Amelia Edwards: Traveller, Novelist and Egyptologist* (London: Rubicon Press, 1998), p. 29.
- <sup>49</sup> Patricia O'Neill, 'Destination as Destiny: Amelia B. Edwards's Travel Writing', *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 30 (2009), pp. 43–71, see esp. pp. 51–52.
- <sup>50</sup> Ruth Y. Jenkins, 'The Gaze of the Victorian Woman Traveler: Spectacles and Phenomena', in Kristi Siegel (ed.), *Gender, Genre, and Identity in Women's Travel Writing* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), pp. 15–30, here p. 18.
- <sup>51</sup> Edwards, *Untrodden Peaks*, p. 363.
- <sup>52</sup> For the connection between 'hardy' masculinity and risk-taking in travel accounts, albeit in relation to an earlier period, see Sarah Goldsmith, *Masculinity and Danger on the Eighteenth-Century Grand Tour* (London: University of London Press, 2020).
- <sup>53</sup> Edwards, *Untrodden Peaks*, p. 363.
- <sup>54</sup> Edwards, *Untrodden Peaks*, p. 363.
- <sup>55</sup> Mrs Henry Warwick Cole, *A Lady's Tour Round Monte Rosa, with Visits to the Italian Valleys of Azasca, Mastalone, Camasco, Sesia, Lys, Challant, Aosta and Cogne, in a Series of Excursions in the Years 1850–56–58* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1859); [Mary Taylor], *Swiss Notes by Five Ladies: An Account of Touring and Climbing in 1874* (Leeds: Inchbold and Beck, 1875).
- <sup>56</sup> See Colley, *Victorians in the Mountains*, p. 103; for Lister's unpublished accounts on her travels in the Pyrenees, see Vivien Ingham, 'Anne Lister's Ascent of Vignemale', *The Alpine Journal* 73, no. 317 (1968), pp. 199–204; Frederica Plunket, *Here and There Among the Alps* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1875); Emily Hornby, *Mountaineering Records* (Liverpool: J. A. Thompson and Company, 1907); on Le Blond, see below, note 70.

- <sup>57</sup> [William Augustus Brevoort Coolidge], 'Reviews and Notices', *The Alpine Journal* 11, no. 79 (1883), p. 306. Coolidge's likely authorship, as main editor of the journal, is evidenced by his unsigned reviews, while others were signed; it is likely that Coolidge was referring to this passage in Studer's account: 'Im Jahr 1874 wurde das Finsteraarhorn von Herrn Albert Millot und seiner Gemahlin bestiegen. Diese Dame bildet somit nebst ihren Vorgängerinnen, Miss L. Walker und Fr. E. Brunner aus Bern, das Trio der weiblichen Finsteraarhornbesteiger' ('In 1874, the Finsteraarhorn was ascended by Mr. Albert Millot and his wife. This lady thus forms, alongside her predecessors, Miss L. Walker and Miss E. Brunner from Bern, the trio of female Finsteraarhorn climbers'). See Gottlieb Studer, *Ueber Eis und Schnee: Die höchsten Gipfel der Schweiz und die Geschichte ihrer Besteigung*, vol. 4 (Bern: Dalp, 1883), p. 2.
- <sup>58</sup> [Coolidge], 'Reviews and Notices', p. 306, referring to William Martin Conway, *The Zermatt Pocket-Book: A Guide-Book to the Pennine Alps, from the Simplon to Arolla: Intended for the Use of Mountaineers* (London: E. Stanford, 1881).
- <sup>59</sup> [Coolidge], 'Reviews and Notices', p. 306.
- <sup>60</sup> Studer, *Ueber Eis und Schnee*, vol. 4, p. 210.
- <sup>61</sup> They are mentioned as such in Aubrey Le Blond, *True Tales of Mountain Adventure: For Non-Climbers Young and Old*, 2nd ed. (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1903), pp. 153–154, devoting to their feats an entire chapter based on a contribution they made for *The Alpine Journal*.
- <sup>62</sup> Peter Holger Hansen, 'Pigeon, Anna (1832–1917)', in Henry Colin Gray Matthew and Brian Harrison Oxford (eds), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Anna Pigeon and Ellen Abbot, *Peaks and Passes* (London: For private circulation, 1885). For the representation of Victorian female climbers in periodical reviews written by men, see Walchester, 'Alpine Guides, Gender, and British Climbers, 1859–85', pp. 524–526.
- <sup>63</sup> Bainbridge, *Topographic Memory and Victorian Travellers in the Dolomite Mountains*, p. 113.
- <sup>64</sup> Leslie Stephen, 'Alpine Literature', *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* 60, no. 356, August 1859, pp. 232–222, here p. 232.
- <sup>65</sup> William Augustus Brevoort Coolidge, *Swiss Travel and Swiss Guide-Books* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1889).
- <sup>66</sup> Stephen, 'Alpine Literature', p. 233.
- <sup>67</sup> On the overshadowed presence of women in mountaineering literature and their recent emergence in mountaineering historiography, see Clare Roche, 'Women Climbers 1850–1900: A Challenge to Male Hegemony?', *Sport in History* 33 (2013), pp. 236–259.
- <sup>68</sup> Coolidge, *Swiss Travel and Swiss Guide Books*, v.
- <sup>69</sup> Peter Holger Hansen, 'Le Blond [Née Hawkins-Whitshed], Elizabeth Alice Frances (1860–1934)', in Henry Colin Gray Matthew and Brian Harrison (eds), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). See also Markus Britschgi and Doris Fässler, *Elizabeth Main (1861–1934): Alpinistin, Fotografin, Schriftstellerin: Eine englische Lady entdeckt die Engadiner Alpen* (Luzern: Diöpter, 2003).
- <sup>70</sup> Mrs Fred Burnaby [Elizabeth Le Blond], *The High Alps in Winter or, Mountaineering in Search of Health* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1883); [Elizabeth Le Blond], *High Life and Towers of Silence* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1886).
- <sup>71</sup> [Coolidge], 'Reviews and Notices', p. 307.
- <sup>72</sup> [Coolidge], 'Reviews and Notices', pp. 306–307.
- <sup>73</sup> Elizabeth Le Blond, 'Then and Now', *Yearbook of the Ladies' Alpine Club*, 1932, pp. 4–8, here p. 6; Brown, *Women on High*, p. 84.
- <sup>74</sup> On the dress code and technical equipment for female mountaineers, see Kate Strasdin, "'An Easy Day for a Lady...': The Dress of Early Women Mountaineers", *Costume* 38 (2004), pp. 72–85.
- <sup>75</sup> Elizabeth Le Blond, *Day in, Day Out* (London: J. Lane, 1928), p. 90.
- <sup>76</sup> Delphine Moraldo, 'Women and Excellence in Mountaineering from the Nineteenth Century to the Present', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 37 (2020), pp. 727–747; for a comparison with France, see Delphine Moraldo, 'Gender Relations in French and British Mountaineering', *Revue de Géographie Alpine* 101 (2013).
- <sup>77</sup> Moraldo, 'Women and Excellence in Mountaineering', pp. 728–729.
- <sup>78</sup> Le Blond, *True Tales of Mountain Adventure*, ix.
- <sup>79</sup> Stephen, *The Playground of Europe*, p. 267.
- <sup>80</sup> Delphine Moraldo, "'Mountaineering is something more than a sport": Les origines de l'éthique de l'alpinisme dans l'Angleterre victorienne', *Genèses* 103 (2016), pp. 7–28.
- <sup>81</sup> Le Blond, *True Tales of Mountain Adventure*, p. ix. On the intellectual fascination of mountains, see Robert Macfarlane, *Mountains of the Mind: A History of a Fascination* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2003).
- <sup>82</sup> Hansen, *The Summits of Modern Man*.