

# Re-embodiment North. A Feminist Analysis of Conceptual Metaphor in Women's Exploration Literature About the Canadian Arctic<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract** – In this article, the author develops cognitive linguistics conceptual metaphor theory and feminist theory to propose a way of analyzing women's travel writing set in northern Canada. She argues that women's travel literature set in northern Canada at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century challenges mainstream North American literary discourses about northern Canada by engaging in specific metaphors that connect physical movement to cultural ideas relating to empire, gender, and race. She analyzes the way that such metaphors occur in the travel writing of American Elizabeth Taylor (1856-1932) and Canadian Agnes Deans Cameron (1863-1912).

Over the past few years, scholars have shown that women's travel writing set in northern Canada often complicates and challenges mainstream literary representations of the north.<sup>2</sup> I explore how North American women's travel literature set in northwestern Canada at the turn of the 20th century uses recurring metaphors that connect the physical experience and movement of the traveller to cross-border ideas of empire, gender, and race. In this article, I show how two travellers in particular, American Elizabeth Taylor (1856-1932) and Canadian Agnes Deans Cameron (1863-1912), use images of the female travelling body in northern Canada to promote women's rights and

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<sup>1</sup> Parts of this article are adapted from sections of the author's doctoral dissertation, "Frontiers of Philosophy and Flesh: Mapping Conceptual Metaphor in Women's Frontier Revival Literature, 1880-1930," Vancouver, University of British Columbia, 2012, 320 f.

<sup>2</sup> See Sherrill Grace, "A Woman's Way: From Expedition to Autobiography," Mina Benson-Hubbard, *A Woman's Way Through Unknown Labrador*, Sherrill Grace (ed.), Montréal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004 [1908], p. xvii-lxxvi; Sherrill Grace, *Canada and the Idea of North*, Montréal, McGill University Press, 2001, 346 p.; Tiffany Johnstone, "Seeing for Oneself: Agnes Deans Cameron's Ironic Critique of American Literary Discourse in *The New North*," *Nordlit*, vol. 23, 2008, p. 69-87; Barbara Kelcey, *Alone in Silence: European Women in the Canadian North Before 1940*, Montréal and Kingston, McGill-Queens University Press, 2001, 227 p.; Wendy Roy, *Maps of Difference: Canada, Women and Travel*, Montréal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005, 296 p.; Wendy Roy, "Primacy, Technology, and Nationalism in Agnes Deans Cameron's *The New North*," *Mosaic*, vol. 38, n° 2, 2006, p. 53-78.

to challenge dominant ideas of gender and race. I compare Taylor's early *Outing* publication "A Woman in the Mackenzie Delta" (1894-1895)<sup>3</sup> with Cameron's influential 1909 travel book entitled *The New North* (1909).<sup>4</sup>

I begin by introducing the type of travel literature that I see Taylor and Cameron as writing, as well as the methodology I have adapted for reading travel literature about northern Canada. Specifically, my methodology combines cognitive linguistics work on frames and conceptual metaphors with feminist theory. I identify the key metaphors in travel literature about northern Canada and show how and why women travellers use such metaphors differently. Secondly, I do a comparative close reading of such metaphors in the above texts by Taylor and Cameron.

## Metaphors of Northern Travel

I draw on the work of feminist theorists and cognitive linguists to show how female travellers embody meaning in their northern adventure texts. In their influential work on conceptual metaphors including *Metaphors We Live By* (1980)<sup>5</sup> and *Philosophy in the Flesh* (1999),<sup>6</sup> George Lakoff and Mark Johnson show how we use metaphors in our thoughts, daily language, and literature to understand abstract concepts according to our bodily experience. Lakoff and Johnson define conceptual metaphor as the mapping from experiential knowledge onto abstract concepts.<sup>7</sup> This idea that the body influences our abstract reasoning contrasts with feminist work on the body. For instance, in her influential *Bodies that Matter* (1993), Judith Butler argues that socially constructed concepts, especially relating to sex and

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<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Taylor, "A Woman in the Mackenzie Delta. Part I.—Northward to Athabasca," *Outing Magazine*, October 1894, p. 44-55; "A Woman in the Mackenzie Delta. Part II.—From Athabaska Lake to the Arctic Circle," *Outing Magazine*, November 1894, p. 120-132; "A Woman in the Mackenzie Delta. Part III.—Among the Eskimos," *Outing Magazine*, December 1894, p. 229-235; "A Woman in the Mackenzie Delta. Homeward Bound," *Outing Magazine*, January 1895, p. 304-311.

<sup>4</sup> Agnes Deans Cameron, *The New North: An Account of a Woman's 1908 Journey through Canada to the Arctic*, David Richeson (ed.), Saskatoon, Western Producer Prairie Books, 1986. Rpt. of *The New North: Being Some Account of a Woman's Journey through Canada to the Arctic*, 1909, 360 p.

<sup>5</sup> George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1980, 256 p.

<sup>6</sup> George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought*, New York, Basic Books, 1999, 640 p.

<sup>7</sup> Georges Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

gender, are imposed upon and performed by the body.<sup>8</sup> As cognitive linguists Bruce McConachie and Elizabeth Hart argue, “[e]mbodiment, in Butler’s scenario, is thus something that happens *to* the body, is an imposition *upon* the body by culture,”<sup>9</sup> while according to cognitive linguists, “language and discourse are *themselves* embodied: They are *cognitively* embodied.”<sup>10</sup> While cognitive linguistics and feminist camps tend to locate themselves on opposite ends of the cognitive/cultural spectrum, they both see the body as at the centre of how meaning is negotiated on a daily basis, and can thus offer valuable insights into the study of travel literature. I combine these two approaches by using conceptual metaphor theory to help provide a richer and more detailed feminist analysis of how meaning emerges through representation of the body and, more specifically, how the travelling female body rewrites ideas relating to gender, citizenship, and nationhood. This is a useful interdisciplinary approach to studying representations of northern Canada. By looking at conceptual metaphors in northern travel writing, I offer a way of reading the patterns of cultural meaning embodied in the many seemingly factual travel accounts of northern Canada. These metaphors also show how meaning operates in such texts across geographical, ideological, and disciplinary boundaries.

I see writers such as Taylor and Cameron as part of what I call *frontier revival literature*—a genre of semi-autobiographical travel literature written about the Canadian northwest at the turn of the 20th century. This previously unexplored genre consists of first person tourist adventure accounts that were published in the northeastern American *fin de siècle* publishing industry. They were written by and for urban easterners on both sides of the Canadian/American border and in the style of east coast journalism. These texts are set in northwestern Canada and often employ distinctly American discourses of cultural progress. They describe the northwest as a site in which to *re-live* and *revive* popularized versions of American manifest destiny rhetoric that promote the broader North American continental expansion of white, Anglo-Saxon culture. Most importantly, frontier revival texts contain recurring motifs of physical movement. I build on earlier work by Canadian literature and print culture scholars on Canadian expatriate

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<sup>8</sup> Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, New York and London, Routledge, 1993, p. 10.

<sup>9</sup> Bruce McConachie and Elizabeth F. Hart, *Performance and Cognition: Theatre Studies and the Cognitive Turn*, London and New York, Routledge, 2006, p. 30.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

writers who published in the States<sup>11</sup> and American writers who wrote about Canada.<sup>12</sup> I argue that turn-of-the-century travel texts by Canadians and Americans set in northwestern Canada signal the intersection of Canadian writers publishing in the United States and Americans writing about Canada at the time. Because of the cross-border nature of this genre, it shows how Americans represented Canada at the time and how Canadians participated in such representations. Important recent work has also been done on turn of the 20th century women's journalism and print culture in Canada<sup>13</sup> and the United States,<sup>14</sup> as well as on Canadian women's involvement in the American publishing industry,<sup>15</sup> and on women's writing about northwestern regions of North America<sup>16</sup>. Such recent scholarship has shed light on how women on both sides of the border took advantage of new opportunities for women in the North American publishing industry. I expand this work by analyzing an actual genre in which women on both sides of the border participated. I explore how women on both sides of the border engage in dominant cultural discourses in relation to their cross-border male peers, thereby refashioning masculinist discourses to suit their often feminist goals.

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<sup>11</sup> See Jean Barman, *Constance Lindsay Skinner: Writing on the Frontier*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2002, 416 p.; James Doyle, *The Fin de siècle Spirit: Walter Blackburn Harte and the American/Canadian Literary Milieu of the 1890s*, Toronto, E.C.W. Press, 1995, 151 p.; Nick Mount, *When Canadian Literature Moved to New York*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2005, 210 p.

<sup>12</sup> See James Doyle, *North of America: Images of Canada in the Literature of the United States 1775-1900*, Toronto, E.C.W. Press, 1983, p. 185.; Tiffany Johnstone, "The Language of Faith and American Exceptionalism in Lure of the Labrador Wild," *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies*, vol. 21, n° 2, 2006, p. 291-308.

<sup>13</sup> Janice Fiamengo, *The Woman's Page: Journalism and Rhetoric in Early Canada*, Toronto, Buffalo and London, University of Toronto, 2008, 256 p.; Carole Gerson, "Wild Colonial Girls: New Women of the Empire, 1883-1901," *Journal of Commonwealth and Postcolonial Studies*, vol. 3, n° 1, 1995, p. 61-77; Marjory Lang, *Women who Made the News: Female Journalists in Canada, 1880-1945*, Montréal and Kingston, McGill-Queens University Press, 1999, 392 p.

<sup>14</sup> Jean Marie Lutes, *Front Page Girls: Women Journalists in American Culture and Fiction 1880-1930*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2006, 240 p.

<sup>15</sup> See Jean Barman, *op. cit.*; James Doyle, "Canadian Women Writers and the American Literary Milieu of the 1890s," *Rediscovering Our Foremothers: Nineteenth Century Canadian Women Writers*, Lorraine McMullen (ed.), Ottawa, University of Ottawa Press, 1990, p. 30-36; Carole Gerson, *op. cit.*

<sup>16</sup> See Brigitte Georgi-Findlay, *The Frontiers of Women's Writing: Women's Narratives and the Rhetoric of Westward Expansion*, Tucson, The University of Arizona Press, 1996, 351 p.; Elizabeth Jameson and Sheila McManus (eds.), *One Step Over the Line: Towards a History of Women in the North American Wests*, Edmonton, The University of Alberta Press, 2008, 480 p.; Nancy Pagh, *At Home Afloat: Women on the Waters of the Pacific Northwest*, Calgary, University of Calgary Press, 2001, 198 p.

I understand frontier revival literature in terms of a frontier revival *frame*. In cognitive linguistics, frames are “system[s] of concepts” that are related to and trigger one another.<sup>17</sup> Frames are important in understanding the cultural significance of conceptual metaphors by helping us to detect and analyze the way metaphors relate to each other in specific contexts. Frontier revival authors evoke conceptual metaphors through what I identify as a frontier revival frame—a blueprint that resembles classic journeying archetypes in literary history. This frame consists of: a metonymic urban/eastern traveller; a cyclical northwestward journey; a struggle in the wilderness involving a loss and renewal of control; and a return home.

I identify several interconnecting conceptual metaphors in the frontier revival frame that are important in travel literature. The **LOCATIONAL EVENT STRUCTURE**<sup>18</sup> (LES) metaphor maps types of movement onto abstract knowledge of events pertaining to actions, causes, changes, states, and purposes.<sup>19</sup> This metaphor is defined by Lakoff and Johnson as follows:

States Are Locations (interiors of bounded regions in space)  
 Changes Are Movements (into or out of bounded regions)  
 Causes Are Forces  
 Causation Is Forced Movement (from one location to another)  
 Actions Are Self-Propelled Movements  
 Purposes Are Destinations  
 Means Are Paths (to destinations)  
 Difficulties Are Impediments To Motion  
 Freedom Of Action Is The Lack Of Impediments To Motion  
 External Events Are Large, Moving Objects (that exert force)  
 [...].<sup>20</sup>

I also see the **LOCATIONAL EVENT STRUCTURE** metaphor as interacting in the frontier revival frame with the **LOCATIONAL SELF** (LS) metaphor whereby *Normal Locations* convey *Self-Control*.<sup>21</sup> As well, travellers often compare themselves to containers through the **SELF AS CONTAINER** (SC) metaphor whereby the *Self* is a Bounded Location and

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<sup>17</sup> Charles J. Fillmore, “Frame Semantics,” *Linguistics in the Morning Calm*, The Linguistic Society of Korea (ed.), Seoul, Hanshin Publishing Co., 1982, p. 111.

<sup>18</sup> Complex conceptual metaphors—metaphors that are made up of several mappings—generally appear capitalized in conceptual metaphor scholarship.

<sup>19</sup> Georges Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 274.

in the contrasting OBJECTIVE STANDPOINT (OS) metaphor in which Self-Perspective is *Being Outside* of the *Container/Self*. Lakoff and Johnson describe the SELF AS CONTAINER metaphor as *Containment* mapped onto *Self-Control*.<sup>22</sup> As well, they define the OBJECTIVE STANDPOINT metaphor as mapping a *Lack of Containment* onto *Self-Control*, or more specifically, *Self-Control* through *Perspective* whereby “[v]ision from the outside is knowledge from the outside—objective knowledge.”<sup>23</sup> An example in everyday language would be “*step outside yourself*.”<sup>24</sup> I consider both metaphors to be related to the LS and LES metaphors because they map *Normal Locations* onto types of *Self-Control*. However, they offer opposite concepts of *Self-Control/Normal Location* as either *Containment* or *Lack of Containment*. These two metaphors help to convey the thematic tensions evoked by physically moving in between, through, and at the edges of *Bounded Locations/States* in travel literature. These interacting metaphors also touch on several other metaphors such as *Knowing is Seeing* and *Control is Up*<sup>25</sup> that map experiential knowledge onto abstract domains relating to the self.

Women writers tend to embody the roles of the frontier frame in different ways than their male peers. They emphasize the novelty of their personal, physical movements and are more self-reflexive about their experiences; they often imagine their appearance in self-deprecating terms through the eyes of Aboriginal people or other travellers. They also often express ambivalence about more traditional *Destinations/Goals* of exploration, and foreground the goal of personal freedom. They also embrace the very loss of *Bodily/Self-Control* on the trail (that their male peers see as threatening) to focus more on their alienation from their own cultural norms and to renegotiate, rather than reassert, ideas of cultural progress.

### Elizabeth Taylor (1863-1912)

In 1892, Elizabeth Taylor travelled to the Canadian Arctic and in 1894 and 1895 she published her travel account in a series of articles for *Outing* magazine based in New York. Born in 1856 in St. Paul, Minnesota, Taylor was the daughter of James Taylor, the US consul to Winnipeg who was a known

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 275.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 277.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

supporter of American expansionist ideas.<sup>26</sup> She would, therefore, have been aware of eastern American discourses about expansion into northwestern Canada at the time. She also appears to have been connected to eastern American perspectives on Canada through her friendship with Ernest Seton-Thompson. Barbara Kelcey points out that Taylor met Seton-Thompson in art school in Paris, where he was planning an arctic voyage and encouraged her to travel to northern Canada.<sup>27</sup> As Nicholas Mount observes, Seton-Thompson was a nature writer, one of the founders of the boy scouts, and an instrumental figure amongst Canadians who adopted and participated in the American fixation with the Canadian wilderness at the turn of the 20th century.<sup>28</sup> Taylor's contact with Seton-Thompson, along with the fact that she published accounts of her trip in the prominent eastern wilderness magazines *Travel* and *Outing*, suggest her close proximity to the cross-border literary climate of frontier revival literature. Taylor's connections to American political and literary discourses about the Canadian wilderness, and more importantly northwestern Canada, confirm her deliberate engagement with such discourses in her text. The fact that she had to overcome the concerns of both her father and Hudson's Bay Company officials in order to embark on her journey<sup>29</sup> suggests that Taylor was well aware of how gender norms were embedded in imperialist perceptions of northwestern Canada, and that she knowingly subverted such norms in her text.

Taylor's opening references to Oliver Wendell Holmes' poem, "The Two Streams", use conceptual metaphor to represent her physical journey as an individual and cultural rite of passage. She begins by quoting the last two lines of the poem and then observes, "I had wished to visit the Far North ever since the time when, as a little girl of ten years old, I had read Dr. Holmes' beautiful poem, 'The Two Streams,' and had resolved that in the years to come I would follow the great river to the 'frozen tide'."<sup>30</sup> Taylor's discussion of "the years to come"<sup>31</sup> as a river that she follows invokes the LES and LS metaphors by mapping the bounded physical path of the Athabaska river onto her lifetime. Her image of "follow[ing] the 'frozen tide'" represents her physical journey towards the *Destination* of the Mackenzie Delta as the pursuit of a major life *Goal*. This process of testing the boundaries of the

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<sup>26</sup> Barbara Kelcey, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Nick Mount, *op. cit.*, p. 100-108.

<sup>29</sup> Barbara Kelcey, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

<sup>30</sup> Elizabeth Taylor, "A Woman in the Mackenzie Delta. Part I.—Northward to Athabasca," *op. cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

contained spaces of the river source, the Canadian border, the rivers themselves, and the Arctic Circle, conveys an idea of *Movement/Change* out of a fixed *Location/State*. It also suggests a *Movement/Change* towards a state of increased perspective that she explicitly links to male models of physical mobility set in the northwestern Canada of frontier revival literature.

Holmes sets “The Two Streams” in northwestern Canada and describes the continental divide, from which two different rivers head north and south: “From the same cradle’s side,/From the same mother’s knee, —/One to long darkness and the frozen tide,/One to the Peaceful Sea!”<sup>32</sup> It is worth noting that Holmes describes Canada as a contained female space from which these two rivers run. His American idea of continental unity is not only enacted in the setting of a mythic northwestern Canadian last frontier, but is also clearly gendered. The cradle of the Rockies maps a *Bounded Location* onto a protective and limiting *State* that he describes as female, which evokes the restriction of women to the domestic sphere. In contrast, the two opposing streams emanating from this female source indicate a more masculine model of testing the boundaries and, therefore, defining and redefining ideas of manifest destiny on both sides of the border. This passage from Holmes’ poem epitomizes the distinctly masculine model of cultural self-definition in frontier revival literature that Duncan and Taylor emulate for their own purposes. The description of the Athabaska river as leading to “darkness and the frozen tide” emphasizes the idea of northwestern Canada as a significant northern boundary above the United States that must be crossed in order to gain perspective on American identity. Taylor’s admission that her dream to follow this northern path is a “childish resolution [...] not to be thought of for a woman unused to the rigor of an Arctic winter”<sup>33</sup> reminds the reader that by testing the limits of her physical strength, as well as the various boundaries of her journey, she takes on a more masculine role in stimulating debate around citizenship and identity. The use of this quote at the beginning of her text reminds the reader of her desire to extend the symbolic significance of this role to women and to include them in such debates.

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<sup>32</sup> Oliver Wendell Holmes, *The Complete Poetical Works of Oliver Wendell Holmes*, New York, Grosset and Dunlap Publishers, 1890, p. 100.

<sup>33</sup> Elizabeth Taylor, “A Woman in the Mackenzie Delta. Part I.—Northward to Athabasca,” *op. cit.*, p. 44.



Taylor repeatedly compares herself to the supplies that are transported to H.B.C. posts along the river so as to convey the conflict between herself and the ideas of cultural progress that she enacts. At one landing point, she says, “[o]ur camp effects were soon piled up on a car, I was perched on top of the load, and with two Indians pushing behind I was trundled in fine style to the end of the track to begin camp-life there.”<sup>34</sup> The verbs “perched” and “trundled” describe her as a kind of parcel that the male guides manoeuvre on the trip. Both verbs suggest that she is not in control of the *Force/Cause* of her *Movement/Change*. They also portray such *Force/Cause* as emanating from an *External Event/Large Moving Object*, reminding us that she does not necessarily have agency on her journey.<sup>35</sup> Her containment in the overall moving object of the boat and in the implied metaphor of packaged supplies evokes stereotypical portrayals of women on the frontier as confined to the domestic sphere. Her reference to the Aboriginal men “pushing behind” also suggests their ambivalence to the journey in that they are part of the *Force/Cause* of the journey, while relegated to the back of the group, as opposed to leading the way. The image of being taken “to the end of the track to begin camp-life there”<sup>36</sup> portrays her ambivalent relationship to the *Force/Cause* of her journey. She achieves a *Destination/Goal* that pushes the edges of a frontier space, but by beginning camp life there she takes on a domestic role and seems to represent a stereotypically feminine, domestic image of imperialist northwestward expansion. However, this idea of being “taken” to this *Destination/Goal* implies ambivalence to both traditional concepts of domestic femininity, as well as to the wider imperialist connotations of setting up camp in a remote frontier location. Taylor’s ambivalence associates her female perspective in the wilderness with an ongoing negotiation with, rather than assertion of, imperialist ideas of progress. In this light, her new “camp life” suggests a new cultural beginning based on a potential revision of gender roles.

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>35</sup> White male travellers were also highly dependent on (often Aboriginal) guides. However, they gloss over this dependency by describing their physical movements as more autonomous than they actually were. The tendency of women authors to describe their movements as dependent on others also reflects an awareness of different social expectations around male and female behaviour. It conveys in some cases a more anti-imperialist perspective that seems to accompany their sense of increased physical dependency on others.

<sup>36</sup> Elizabeth Taylor, “A Woman in the Mackenzie Delta. Part I.—Northward to Athabasca”, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

Taylor also goes against the traditional *Destinations/Goals* of frontier revival literature through her disinterest in returning home. When describing her reluctance to leave one of the camps, she states, “that small island might have been in the land of the lotus eaters.”<sup>37</sup> Taylor’s allusion to Homer’s *Odyssey* here is paradoxical in a way that is typical of female frontier revival authors. On the one hand, the idea of a lotus land symbolizes a kind of delay in pursuing an ultimate goal. More specifically, this delay is characterized by a state of pleasure and escape that has the capacity to make one forget one’s goal. The fact that Homer’s travellers get waylaid by women in lotus land is of course a significant undercurrent to her allusion. By relating to the men in this literary allusion, she emphasizes that her travels represent an appropriation of masculine roles. She destabilizes entrenched gender dichotomies associated with travel whereby women are seen as static *Obstacles/Impediments* to the *Movement/Change* towards a *Destination/Goal*. Taylor expresses delight at her increased personal freedom on her journey, and she seems to suggest that this freedom is in opposition to the social conventions that she is expected to assert and conform to as either a woman or as a traveller. On the other hand, the very fact that she articulates this longing to escape her own social background through an allusion to Homer ironically situates this very sense of alienation in the context of masculine heroism, and thereby legitimizes it as part of an overall pursuit of cultural progress. This allusion to Homer’s lotus land is also important in its implicit reference to a cyclical model of a masculine journey that begins and ends at the same place—a model that underlies frontier revival literature. When thought of as a physical point along a cyclical journey, “lotus land” also connotes a point somewhere on the outer periphery of the circle, relatively far away from the beginning point of her journey. Since this return usually represents a restoration of *Bodily/Self-Control* in frontier revival texts, her allusion to “lotus land” implies a lack of interest in restoring cultural control at the end of her text. However, once again, this very image of testing the boundaries of a contained space (in this case the cycle of the journey itself) suggests an increase in perspective and knowledge that male frontier revival authors see as necessary to their overall journeys. She conveys this sense of distance from her original starting point as a means of achieving perspective in her claim that “the world we had left seemed too far away for any disturbing sense of a feeling of homesickness.”<sup>38</sup> This image suggests a process of having moved outside of a contained space and transitioned out of a particular *Location/State*. The idea of not wanting to return to her previous *Location/State* evokes

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

the testing of cultural boundaries in the frontier revival frame, but takes it one step further by not wanting to restore the original boundaries or return to the original *Location/State*. By calling on the frontier revival frame in this way, Taylor rebels against the Anglo-Saxon imperialism of her male peers, while also suggesting that her rebellion is heroic, redemptive, and necessary for improving ideas of cultural progress.

### Agnes Deans Cameron (1863-1912)

Born in Victoria in 1863, Agnes Deans Cameron traveled to the Mackenzie Delta in 1908 and published *The New North* in 1909. She was outspoken about women's rights and had groundbreaking success as a teacher, traveller, journalist, writer and lecturer. In 1890, she worked as a teacher in Victoria, becoming the first female high school instructor in British Columbia, and going on four years later to work as the first female principal in the province.<sup>39</sup> Involved in organizations such as the Canadian Women's Press Club, the Y.M.C.A., and the suffrage movement,<sup>40</sup> Cameron promoted "equal rights" feminism<sup>41</sup> and was outspoken about education reform,<sup>42</sup> believing that students should be taught "responsibilities of citizenship."<sup>43</sup> These interests in education reform, citizenship, and women's rights inform *The New North* at every turn and should guide modern readers to look beneath Cameron's use of imperialist frontier expansion rhetoric to her underlying inquiries about human rights and ideas of cultural progress. Cameron's outspoken beliefs ultimately led to her suspension from her job in 1901, after which she worked for Canadian and American magazines.<sup>44</sup> When she lost her job in 1906, Cameron moved to Chicago to work for the Western Canadian Immigration Association.<sup>45</sup> Similar to Taylor, Cameron was immersed in a cross-border literary climate and presented a feminist perspective on it. As a later writer, she presents a more explicitly new woman perspective on the north. Cameron wrote the book while working for the Western Canadian

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<sup>39</sup> Roberta J. Pazdro, "Agnes Deans Cameron: Against the Current," Barbara Latham and Cathy Kess (eds.), *In Her Own Right: Selected Essays on Women's History in B.C.*, Victoria, Camosun College, 1980, p. 102.

<sup>40</sup> David Richeson, "Foreword to the Spectra Edition," David Richeson (ed.), *The New North: An Account of a Woman's Journey through Canada to the Arctic*, Saskatoon, Western Producer Prairie Books, 1986, p. viii.

<sup>41</sup> Roberta J. Pazdro, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

Immigration Association in Chicago and she confidently adopts a cross-border, white, Anglo-imperialism in her text. By reading past the surface language of frontier expansion, we can discover Cameron's actual interests in promoting the rights of women and Aboriginal people, and in questioning ideas of cultural progress. This underlying meaning occurs largely on the level of the body throughout the text.

Cameron tends to subvert many of the metaphors of movement that she uses on the surface to justify expansion into the northwest. In Arctic Red River, she stays for several days with an Inuit family. She imagines addressing the local Inuit people as a whole, lamenting, "my best wish for you is that civilisation may never reach you."<sup>46</sup> Once again, movement across the frontier represents a cultural passage through time with the assumption that increased industrialization and development of frontier territories coincide with cultural improvement and progress. As with her previous metaphors of frontier expansion, Cameron portrays the movement of "civilization" as a *Large Moving Object/External Event* with its own *Force/Causal* agency that she participates in with critical distance. Cameron's wish that civilization not reach the Inuit is ironic in different ways. First of all, her questioning of the *Destination/Goal* of frontier expansion suggests that such expansion may not be as synonymous with a kind of natural cultural progress as it seems. Furthermore, Cameron's presence in the Arctic demonstrates that she herself is part of the imperialist encounter between Anglo-Saxon travellers and Inuit people. She adds, "this intrusion of the whites has changed the whole horizon here; we can scarcely call it the coming of civilization."<sup>47</sup> This idea of changing the horizon evokes the OS metaphor and associates the *Movement/Change* of frontier expansion with the celebrated process of pushing boundaries in adventure literature. However, her use of the word "intrusion" and her objectification of outsiders as "the whites" suggest that she attempts to speak on behalf of those who are on the opposite side of Anglo-Saxon expansion. She represents the north as a *Bounded Location/State* that is disturbed by frontier expansion. Her hesitation to "call it the coming of civilization" questions the way ideas of civilization have been defined as movement, and reminds us that while movement may connote change, such *Movement/Change* does not necessarily represent progress. Cameron skillfully acknowledges this underlying conceptual metaphor of *Movement/Change*, while also separating it from distinctly cultural and imperialist ideas of progress.

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<sup>46</sup> Agnes Deans Cameron, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

Cameron's use of photography raises interesting questions about how to interpret the photography of female travellers in northern Canada. At the turn of the century, photography began to change the face of travel writing due to its heightened promise of objectively and reliably representing the first-hand perspectives of travel writers. As Wendy Roy points out, Cameron uses Kodak cameras (which first appeared in 1888) and an Underwood typewriter to appeal to "the traveller's conventional claim to be first, a claim that she enlarged to include the sometimes complementary and sometimes contradictory categories of gender, geography, ethnography, and nationalism."<sup>48</sup> Publications such as *National Geographic* fostered a North American cultural climate in which "visualizing a culture or place became synonymous for actually being there"<sup>49</sup> and visual images promoted American imperialist goals.<sup>50</sup> Photography also played a prominent role in representing northwestern frontier settings and expressing "Euro-American entitlement to the frontier."<sup>51</sup> The illusion of objectivity in ethnographic photojournalism at the time was connected to a deeper denial of the cultural agendas and biases of photographers and their audiences because photography offered a short hand means to *Sight/Knowledge*.<sup>52</sup> As Lisa Bloom points out, popular ethnographic photography such as the material in *National Geographic* was presented to readers as a democratizing medium that provided geographical information to average people outside of elitist circles of scientists, academics, or travel writers.<sup>53</sup> For Cameron, the stakes of

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48 Roy notes that "[t]ravellers have traditionally enforced claims both to primacy and to uniqueness through technologies of representation and communication that include diaries, maps, and illustrations" (Wendy Roy, "Primacy, Technology, and Nationalism in Agnes Deans Cameron's *The New North*," *op. cit.*, p. 54). It is important to be aware of how new technological advancements in photography influenced the writing of female travellers who would have been more dependent on proving themselves according to such technology, while also more vulnerable to having their appearances judged by readers and potential publishers.

49 Lisa Bloom, *Gender on Ice: American Ideologies of Polar Expeditions*, Minnesota, University of Minnesota Press, 1993, p. 60.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 60-61.

51 Carol J. Williams, *Framing the West: Race, Gender, and the Photographic Frontier in the Pacific Northwest*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 9.

52 In *On Photography*, Susan Sontag argues that "[c]ameras define reality in the two ways essential to the workings of an advanced industrial society: as a spectacle (for the masses) and as an object of surveillance (for rulers). The production of images also furnishes a ruling ideology. Social change is replaced by change in images" (Qtd. in Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2000, p. 5). The paradox that Sontag identifies here lies in the way that images, which often appear to democratize knowledge and access to information, also distract people from social realities and are, despite seeming neutral or lacking in cultural bias, often monitored and used by those in power to control and exploit those who are not.

53 Lisa Bloom, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

her photographs were high as she knowingly entered into this larger climate of wilderness photography because she had to use discourses of photographic authenticity and objectivity to prove her credibility as a travel writer and as a woman traveller.

While Cameron insists on the reliability of first-hand knowledge, she repeatedly emphasizes the ultimate indeterminacy of *Sight/Knowledge* so as to convey a paradoxical idea of self-reflexive subjectivity that she sees as more reliable than empirical approaches to travel writing. Roland Barthes reminds us that “the reading of the photograph is [...] always historical”<sup>54</sup> and it is important to remember that Cameron’s role as an outspoken and iconoclastic female travel writer both appealed to her reader’s identification with imperialist discourse, while also challenging their assumptions about ideas of gender and race within that discourse. A striking feature of Cameron’s work is her overall avoidance of what Wexler refers to as “the innocent eye”<sup>55</sup> of American female photojournalists at the turn of the 20th century, a photographic gaze of domestic neutrality. As Roy observes, Cameron’s use of photography “shows her as someone who included among her claims to uniqueness the fact that she challenged strictures about the appearance and behaviour of a woman traveller.”<sup>56</sup> However, in all her photographs, Cameron’s own female body seems to disrupt claims to objective *Sight/Knowledge*.<sup>57</sup> She connects ideas of photographic authenticity to the very subjectivity and changeableness of ideas of gender, race, and nationality. Rather than hiding behind the camera so as to tap into an illusion of authorial objectivity and cultural control, Cameron puts her own incongruous body front and centre to force her readers to look more closely at the complexities of such categories of identity.

Cameron plays with the metaphor of the country as a text through photography and in visual references to herself in iconoclastic authorial roles. For instance, she hints at the struggle to make the reader *See/Know* her experience in the north in phrases such as “let me try to give you the picture.”<sup>58</sup> Cameron’s focus on photography is probably the most striking aspect of *The New North* because of the number of dramatic portraits of the author

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<sup>54</sup> Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath, New York, Hill and Wang, 1977, p. 28.

<sup>55</sup> Laura Wexler, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>56</sup> Wendy Roy, “Primacy, Technology, and Nationalism in Agnes Deans Cameron’s *The New North*,” *op. cit.*, p. 58.

<sup>57</sup> See Figures 1-3.

<sup>58</sup> Agnes Deans Cameron, *op. cit.*, p. 257.

herself in odd and sometimes shocking poses, such as the picture of Cameron holding a severed moose head.<sup>59</sup> These photographs, along with Cameron's self-conscious fixation on guiding the reader's *Sight/Knowledge*, constantly remind us that she brings a sensationalist *new female* body and text to the reader, and one that is captured with the *new* means of photography in a way that is much more stark than the lady-like illustrations of other similar female adventure writers such as Sara Jeannette Duncan, Elizabeth Taylor, and Grace Gallatin Seton-Thompson. The body that Cameron brings to the reader is disorderly and provocative. She is masculine in build and dress and in the poses she assumes, and she appears in several photos to stare out at the reader in an almost confrontational, haughty manner. By confidently taking on masculine poses, she represents a sense of imperialist masculine authority. However, Cameron plays up the novelty of her gender at every turn in photographs such as her graphic portrait with the moose head. The *newness* of Cameron's body relates not merely to her femininity in masculine roles, but also to the jarring and somewhat graphic representation of the ambiguity of such roles. Cameron's wry expression, along with photographs such as the above that imply her manipulation of the *Sight/Knowledge* of the reader, show that it is impossible to distinguish between masculinity and femininity. The newness that Cameron evokes through these photographs lies in a jarring juxtaposition between the literalness of photography and the utter ambiguity of her gender identity in the north.

### New Women/New North

Representations of travelling bodies in northern Canada at the turn of the 20th century embodied important debates about citizenship and identity—debates that would have been instantly recognized by readers familiar with travel metaphors of the day. Understanding the network of metaphors embedded in northern travel can provide crucial insight into the “ideas of north”<sup>60</sup> that figure so prominently in Canadian literature and culture. By recognizing these metaphors of northern travel, I provide insight into texts that may otherwise appear to be lacking in literary or historical significance, thereby putting important and counter-cultural perspectives on northern Canada back on the literary map. The extensive use of conceptual metaphor in the texts of Elizabeth Taylor and Agnes Deans Cameron, despite their differing backgrounds, is testament to the force of such metaphors in shaping

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<sup>59</sup> See Figure 1.

<sup>60</sup> I borrow this term from Sherrill Grace, *Canada and the Idea of North*, *op. cit.*

perceptions about northwestern Canada, and in engaging in broader North American debates about citizenship and identity. Authors such as Taylor and Cameron remind us of the importance of metaphors of physical movement in providing a voice—or what Butler would call “cultural intelligibility”<sup>61</sup>—to disenfranchised writers with alternative perspectives on journeying north. In documenting their travels, Cameron and Taylor re-embody the metaphors of northern travel and challenge assumptions about gender and race underlying dominant literary representations of the northwestern Canada.



Figure 1. Agnes Deans Cameron, “A Magnificent Trophy,” 1909, *The New North: Being Some Account of a Woman’s Journey through Canada to the Arctic*, New York and London, D. Appleton and Company, 1910 [1909], p. ii, frontispiece.

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<sup>61</sup> Judith Butler, *op. cit.*, p. 2.



RE-EMBODYING NORTH



Figure 2. Agnes Deans Cameron, “My Premier Moose,” 1909, *The New North: Being Some Account of a Woman’s Journey through Canada to the Arctic*, New York and London, D. Appleton and Company, 1910 [1909], p. 347.



Figure 3. Agnes Deans Cameron, “The Site of old Fort McLeod,” 1909, *The New North: Being Some Account of a Woman’s Journey through Canada to the Arctic*, New York and London, D. Appleton and Company, 1910 [1909], p. 352.