Perilous Pilgrimage: A Lady’s Flight into the Rocky Mountain Wilderness

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Abstract

“Perilous Pilgrimage: A Lady’s Flight into the Rocky Mountain Wilderness” is comprised of four thematically linked essays set in the Colorado Rockies. In these essays I probe my fascination with masculinity at an early age, the impact of my rape at age twenty-two, the dependency and resentment that undermined my marriage after the rape, and my quest after my divorce fifteen years later to define myself on my own terms. The link joining these strands is the tension between my drive for independence and my disassociation from my mind and body as a result of the rape.

“Perilous Pilgrimage” revisits three pivotal stages of my life: childhood, young adulthood, and middle age. As a youngster vacationing with my family in Rocky Mountain National Park, I was drawn to men who rescued lost hikers and climbed mountains. Fred Bowen, the caretaker of our rented cabin in the park, and the two California school teachers who were the first to conquer the Diamond on Longs Peak, appeared to have more freedom than I did as a middle-class girl growing up in the 1950s. That conviction was reinforced after I moved to Colorado at age seventeen. Four years later I graduated from college and began dating a man who introduced me to the thrill and terror of mountaineering. After leading me up numerous mountains, he became my husband, and we made our home in Manitou Springs, Colorado. Once married, I could no longer repress the unresolved issues of my rape and identity quest, and I revolted. At age thirty-nine, I embarked on a solo quest to reclaim that sense of wonder and independence I had felt as a child exploring Rocky Mountain National Park. Included in my essays are references to historical figures with similar urges as mine, such as the 19th-century English explorer George Augustus Ruxton and English travel writer Isabella Bird. My search for refuge and redemption in the Colorado Rockies replicated a centuries-old pattern.

Checksum

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Comments

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Pollution is the introduction of contaminants into an environment that causes instability, disorder, harm or discomfort to the ecosystem i.e. physical systems or living organisms.