

“All is not Skittles and Beer in the Land of the Cherry Blossom:”  
Women Travel Writers and American Imperial Influence in Meiji Japan,  
1890-1910

By

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## Introduction

The Opening of Japan by Commodore Matthew C. Perry and the United States in 1853 marked the beginning of an intense fascination with everything Japanese in the West. Western white women expressed particular fascination with everything Japanese ranging from clothing, art and art styles, poetry, commercial goods, and expressions of gender in a movement called Japonisme. As this fascination took hold in society, women began to carve out spaces for themselves in art and anthropology, fields that had previously been dominated by men.<sup>1</sup> American and British women were at the forefront of this Japanese aesthetic movement, especially in regard to travel narratives and travel guides. However, while both British and American women wrote from an imperial perspective, American writers distinctly wrote from the stance of American Exceptionalism. The United States was unique and therefore, its approach to imperialism was unique due to being based in economic dominance compared to the traditional military dominance exhibited by Great Britain. By emphasizing America's exceptional imperialism, these women simultaneously elevated their own gendered positions and cemented Japan's status as the exotic "inferior other."

With the Opening of Japan, the United States announced itself as an imperial power to contend with the likes of Great Britain. The 1830s through the 1850s saw the implementation of Manifest Destiny and the expansion of the United States from sea to shining sea.<sup>2</sup> It was only natural that this notion of Manifest Destiny would prompt the United States to see to grow across

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<sup>1</sup> Mari Yoshihara, *Embracing the East: White Women and American Orientalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 3-11.

<sup>2</sup> Amy Kaplan, "Manifest Domesticity," *American Literature* 70 No. 3 (Sep. 1998): 582-584.

the Pacific Ocean. With this extension came the caveat that it was only the right and duty for those of the Anglo-Saxon race, a race perfected on the American continent.<sup>3</sup> Those who were not of that descent and the Protestant religion were excluded and inferior. It was nigh impossible for those outsiders to become part of the Anglo-Saxon elite.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, despite the rapid Westernization of Japan since it's "Opening," it would firmly be in the inferior position to the United States.

This racial inferiority was only emphasized by the perceived cultural inferiority. Japan was seen as safe, beautiful, and infantile. It was the ideal locale for women, accompanied by a male escort or alone, to visit. Its "backwards" ways made it the perfect escape from the rigors of the West and the constraints placed upon Western women. The beautiful and exotic nature of Japan created a prolific genre of writing. Works written by men were considered authoritative sources, while the works written by women were deemed trivial.<sup>5</sup> The first generation of women travel writers who visited Japan started in Great Britain and were led by Isabella Bird. Bird was at the forefront of the Japonisme movement and travel writing on China and Japan. In the shift from the nineteenth to twentieth century, the dominant women writers changed from British to American as Great Britain's influence in China waned and America's interest in China as a slowly westernizing power increased.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-6.

<sup>5</sup> Lorraine Sterry, *Victorian Women Travellers in Meiji Japan: Discovering a 'New' Land* (Folkestone, UK: Global Oriental, 2009), 12-13.

<sup>6</sup> Julia Kuehn, "China of the Tourists: Women and the Grand Tour of the Middle Kingdom, 1878-1923" in *Asian Crossings: Travel Writing on China, Japan and Southeast Asia* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008), 113-130.

Between the literary tradition of the British writers and the rich travel writing tradition in the United States, the women who traveled to and wrote on Japan had established formats and expectations to work with when crafting their works. Alice Mabel Bacon and Tsuda Umeko's *Japanese Girls & Women*, Gertrude Adams Fisher's *A Woman Alone in the Heart of Japan*, and Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore's *Jinrikisha Days in Japan* utilize an intersection of gender and imperialism unique to the United States and its relationship with Japan. Their position as representatives of imperial power in a foreign country allowed them to take on masculine roles in their private lives. They viewed Japan through a Western imperial lens and that lens colored their impressions of Japan. However, when they wrote about their private life for public consumption, they needed to adhere to the gender standards in order to make their subversion of gender norms while out of the metropole acceptable.<sup>7</sup> Basing their subjects on Japan served the simultaneous purpose of commodifying Japan and giving the women authority that would not normally have been afforded them.

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<sup>7</sup> Monica Anderson, *Women and the Politics of Travel, 1870-1914* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2006), 20.

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## Historiography

The purpose of this thesis is to examine how white middle-class non-missionary American women used the intersections of race, gender, and imperialism when writing about Meiji Japan to create an elevated place for themselves at the turn of the twentieth century. This topic has yet to be fully explored by scholars; the only works directly related focus either on the British women writing on Japan in this time period, such as Lorraine Sterry's 2003 article "Constructs of Meiji Japan: The Role of Writing by Victorian Women Travellers," or on the missionary women who went to proselytize the nation. Therefore, this thesis will pull from several distinct but related fields such as post-colonial studies, cross-cultural studies, and travel narratives in order to properly contextualize it in greater scholarship. Despite what the current scholarship implies, American women were interested in Japan before the 1920s and their works were distinct enough from their British sisters to warrant larger analysis.

The first group of scholars to be discussed is those whose works are related the closest to the argument posed by this thesis. Lorraine Sterry in "Constructs of Meiji Japan: The Role of Writing by Victorian Women Travellers" begins to expand scholarship to include analysis on women writers in this time period, although her focus is exclusively on British women who wrote on Meiji Japan. Instead of focusing on specific works such as those by Isabella Bird, she analyzes the larger field to note what the larger patterns were in women's writing and how they related to Japan. Sterry argues that not only did Victorian women write in an entirely different style from their male counterparts, they also focused more on the interpersonal relationships and minutiae of life in Japan. This difference in focus lead to books authored by women to have a

richer description of the country in this time period. She also argues that because Victorians viewed Japan as an infantile and morally safe destination, women felt more comfortable traveling there on their own; indeed, their accounts, both written and visual, simultaneously created and perpetuated this view.<sup>8</sup>

Sterry then published the book *Victorian Women Travellers in Meiji Japan: Discovering a 'New' Land* in 2009 that elaborates on the arguments made in her earlier article. In this book she argues for the study of women's travel writings on Meiji Japan. Due to Japan's unique position of being both a colonial and independent territory, its travelers being limited to uninteresting ports, and its inability to be properly eroticized, scholars expressed little interest in studying the works. The women focused on the minutiae of life in Japan which was deemed trivial by male contemporaries and the Japanese themselves. However, Sterry argues that this attention to the intimate details of daily life in Meiji Japan is what makes these women's works so important. They provide a better understanding of Meiji Japan than the general histories do not.<sup>9</sup> She categorizes her sources into groups based upon their reasoning for and duration of travel. By doing so she can also focus on the societal influences exhibited on these women's works that dictated the topics and the type of travel covered.<sup>10</sup>

Laurence Williams builds on the work done by Sterry in his article "'Like the ladies of Europe'? Female Emancipation and the 'Scale of Civilization' in Women's Writing on Japan, 1840-1880," published in 2017. Just like Sterry, Williams focuses on British women and how

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<sup>8</sup> Lorraine Sterry, "Constructs of Meiji Japan: The Role of Writing by Victorian Women Travellers," *Japanese Studies* 23 no. 2 (2003): 176.

<sup>9</sup> Sterry, *Victorian Women Travellers in Meiji Japan*, 8-15.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-18.



British women specifically wrote on Japan. Where he differs from Sterry is that he focuses on how British women wrote about Japanese women and used them to comment on British society and politics.<sup>11</sup> However, his argument is weakest is when he includes analysis of Alice Mabel Bacon's *Japanese Girls & Women* to conclude his argument. Throughout his article, Williams emphasizes British women, British politics and society, and Great Britain's relationship to Japan. Bacon, as he readily states, was an American woman and therefore commenting on American women's plight. He argues that Bacon was inheriting the tradition of women writing on foreign cultures to veil criticism of their own as exemplified by Isabella Bird, but using an American source is jarring after his exclusive focus on Great Britain.<sup>12</sup> This argument also ignores the main purpose of the book which was that it was a joint effort between Bacon and Tsuda Umeko to gain foreign support for increasing women's education and rights in Japan.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, Williams incorrectly states that Bacon was first introduced to Tsuda Umeko when she arrived in Japan to teach at the Women's English Preparatory School in Tokyo.<sup>14</sup> While it is true that Bacon was introduced to Tsuda through their mutual friend Yamakawa Sutematsu, Bacon and Tsuda were introduced while Tsuda and Yamakawa still resided in the United States. Bacon traveled with Tsuda and Yamakawa across the United States when it was time for them to go back to Japan and Tsuda sought out Bacon specifically to fill the teaching position at the Peeresses' School.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Laurence Williams, "‘Like the ladies of Europe’? Female Emancipation and the ‘Scale of Civilization’ in Women's Writing on Japan, 1840-1880," *Studies in Travel Writing* 21 no. 1 (Feb 2017): 19.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 29-30.

<sup>13</sup> Barbara Rose, *Tsuda Umeko and Women's Education in Japan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 84-89.

<sup>14</sup> Williams, 30.

<sup>15</sup> Umeko Tsuda, *The Attic Letters: Ume Tsuda's Correspondence to her American Mother* (New York: Weatherill, 1991), 293-294; Janice P. Nimura, *Daughters of the Samurai: A Journey from East to West and Back* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2015), 147.

The second group to be discussed are the pivotal works that discuss the intersection of race and imperialism. Since this work is a study of the relationship between the East and the West, Edward W. Said's *Orientalism* published in 1978, his subsequent work *Culture and Imperialism* published in 1993, and Gayatri Spivak's chapter "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* published in 1988 are essential for establishing the imperialist gaze and the impact it has on interactions between the "dominant" Westerners and the "subordinate" Other.<sup>16</sup> Said defines the term "Orientalism" as "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient."<sup>17</sup> This definition establishes that all interactions had by Europeans and the British in the Middle East and by Americans in the Far East are based upon a presumption of power that influences all perceptions and reflections of the subordinate Eastern cultures.<sup>18</sup> In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said furthers his discussion of Orientalism by applying it to a larger analysis of international imperialism and resistance to that imperialism. Said organizes his analysis around popular novels produced during the height of the British and French empires in order to demonstrate how entrenched the imperial mindset was in society and how these novels perpetuated imperialism in the metropole.<sup>19</sup> An empire's culture is what defines who is the "us," who is the "them," and therefore works produced by that culture need to be assessed through the lens of imperialism.<sup>20</sup> The aim of this thesis is to further Said's

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<sup>16</sup> Aimé Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism* is a pivotal work in the post-colonial studies field with his argument on the violence inherent in colonialism and how it corrupts both the colonized and the colonizer. Césaire's *Discourse* can be found in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* edited by Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman.

<sup>17</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 3.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-3.

<sup>19</sup> Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993), xii.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, xiii.

argument in *Culture and Imperialism* and in *Orientalism* by applying his framework to works produced by American women. Said does not fully address American imperialism before World War II, which he readily admits is due to his own personal interest in the British and French empires' impact on the Middle East.<sup>21</sup> America engaged in imperialism in the Far East long before World War II, although it was in a slightly different form from the traditional empires of Great Britain and France. Just as Said argues that *Robinson Crusoe* was a work entrenched in imperialism, so were the works on Japan produced by American women.<sup>22</sup>

Spivak directly builds off of Said to apply the issue of Occident vs. Orient onto imperialist scholarship as a whole and onto the topic British involvement in India and the practice of *suttee*.<sup>23</sup> Here the silence of the subaltern voice in scholarship and in primary materials is addressed and ultimately Spivak states that “there is no space from which the sexed subaltern can speak.”<sup>24</sup> Spivak highlights the complicated notion of agency for colonial subjects when discussing the archival record, especially the imperial record. The Indian woman is merely an agent for ideas and moral to be enacted upon by the British. In the same way, Japanese women were treated as blank canvases upon which American women could place their own judgements. Any agency given to the Japanese women is overshadowed by the impact the American women had on them because Japan was firmly placed in the lower and inferior position.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., xxiii.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., xii-xiii.

<sup>23</sup> Gayatri Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Chicago, University of Illinois, 1988), 90.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 103.

The reason Japan was placed in the inferior position was due to the racial politics that dictated the Western world, but particularly in post-Westward expansion United States. The work that comprehensively analyzes American expansion is *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* by Reginald Horsman published in 1981.<sup>25</sup> Horsman traces the evolution of the term “Anglo-Saxon” and how it is applied by American society, specifically “in suggesting how and why by the mid-nineteenth century many Americans were less concerned with the liberation of other peoples by the spreading of republicanism than with the limitless expansion of superior American Anglo-Saxon race.”<sup>26</sup> The American Anglo-Saxon race was viewed as superior and therefore it was America’s right and duty to expand Westward as far as she could go. This view also meant that those races distinct from the American Anglo-Saxon race, such as the Native Americans and African-Americans, faced either subordination or extinction. Though Horsman ends his analysis in the 1850s with the aftermath of the Mexican-American War, he does establish the foundations for American expansion across the Pacific and the beginnings of a commercial empire.<sup>27</sup> It was this assuredness in Anglo-Saxon superiority that allowed for the United States to open Japan and for American women to treat the Japanese as the exotic foreign other.

The belief in Anglo-Saxon superiority took on an explicitly gendered tone when utilized by the suffrage movement. In order to obtain the vote, suffragists inserted themselves into the

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<sup>25</sup> For those interested in the racial politics in the United States and the definition of whiteness, I recommend Matthew Frye Jacobson’s *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (1999). Jacobson continues Horsman’s argument by exploring American definitions of race and whiteness past the Mexican-American War which is where Horsman ends his timeline in *Race and Manifest Destiny*.

<sup>26</sup> Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 6.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 297-303.

imperialistic discourse and made the state of women relative to empire. The main component of the suffragists' argument was that it was the duty of white women to save brown women from brown men and this mentality resonated with more than just the women involved in suffrage. Women who visited foreign countries took it upon themselves to assess the condition of their fellow sisters and often found it lacking.<sup>28</sup> In her book *White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* published in 1999, Louise Michele Newman "[hopes] to shake up what [she sees] as a lingering complacency in egalitarian liberalism as an effective means of addressing issues of racial, gender, and class inequalities."<sup>29</sup> The struggle for women's suffrage was a complex issue among the women fighting for it, especially among the white women. Newman argues that white women were able to gain political concessions for themselves through cementing the place of "patriarchal domesticity" and social darwinism in the burgeoning American empire abroad and assimilationist trends at home.<sup>30</sup>

Expanding upon Newman's work is Allison L. Sneider's book *Suffragists in an Imperial Age: U.S. Expansion and the Woman Question 1870-1929* published in 2008. While Newman focused on the assimilation projects for Native Americans, African Americans, and Chinese immigrants in the United States, Sneider focuses upon the involvement of white suffragists in the

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<sup>28</sup> Marnie S. Anderson's "Women's Agency and the Historical Record: Reflections on Female Activists in Nineteenth-Century Japan" located in *Journal of Women's History* is a particularly poignant source for researchers interested in Japanese women's activism in the Meiji Period. Scholarship notably ignores the role and impact Japanese women had in gaining better rights during this time period. Often, the focus is on the men and the belief that the men's and women's groups did not interact. Anderson proves this theory wrong while also addressing the complicated gender and political issues facing activist groups under the restrictive Meiji government.

<sup>29</sup> Louise Michele Newman, *White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 20.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

United States's westward expansion and growing territories.<sup>31</sup> Suffragists were able to use the language of empire to push for what they wanted by making the vote a national issue and a marker of Anglo-Saxon superiority. Often this meant that the suffragists would argue for the vote for their fellow "sisters" in order to save them from their savage male counterparts with the hope that the suffragists would then get the vote at home. Thus woman's suffrage was closely linked to the birth of empire in the United States.<sup>32</sup>

After the topic of women and empire, this thesis turns to the more specific topic of women travel writers and empire. The scholarship on women travel writers is an extensive and diverse field, however there has yet to be any extensive study on non-missionary American women who traveled to Japan in the period post-1853 and then wrote about their experiences. Instead, greater focus is placed on American women who stayed in post-antebellum United States or on Isabella Bird and other British women travel writers, largely to rectify a noted silence in the study of Victorian travel writers.<sup>33</sup> In order to understand the American writers, the British pioneers need to be understood as Margaret McFadden argues in *Golden Cables of Sympathy: The Transatlantic Sources of Nineteenth-Century Feminism* published in 1999, women across the Atlantic were in communication with each other and neither existed in a

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 21; Allison L. Sneider, *Suffragists in an Imperial Age: U.S. Expansion and the Woman Question 1870-1929* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 5-8.

<sup>32</sup> Sneider, *Suffragists in an Imperial Age*, 91 & 136. For more information on how Manifest Destiny mixed with empire in antebellum America, I highly recommend Amy Kaplan's article: "Manifest Domesticity," *American Literature* 70 No. 3 (Sep. 1998). Here she defines how women were the ones designated to shape and protect the societal boundaries of a rapidly expanding United States.

<sup>33</sup> For more scholarship on the relationship between travel writing and imperialism see *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* by Mary Louise Pratt. Her work specifically focuses on the European gaze and scientific analysis of the contact zone.

vacuum.<sup>34</sup> In this book, McFadden discusses how the advent of female travel coincided with the birth of the middle class and the advancements of technology. Not only were women traveling their own versions of the Grand Tour, they were also doing it unaccompanied either by a male companion or a companion in general. By doing so, these women “were powerful by virtue of their class, which was more important their sex.”<sup>35</sup> Additionally, when traveling unaccompanied they became gender-less representations of their imperial power.<sup>36</sup>

Monica Anderson in her book *Women and the Politics of Travel 1870-1910*, published in 2006, discusses British women travel writers and how their influence in Empire both at home and abroad was largely overlooked by their male peers and recent scholarship. The common perception was that women travel writers merely echoed the words of their male counterparts or were mere enactors of domestic imperialism. Anderson argues that “that for a Victorian woman traveler to write other than within the prevailing representations of empire would have meant writing against the very self-identities on which late nineteenth-century British society grounded itself.”<sup>37</sup> Female travel writers, especially those in Victorian England, simultaneously subverted gender norms in their travel, while reaffirming their imperial identities in their printed works.

Elizabeth McAdams in “Isabella Bird and Japonisme Travel Writing: Common Interests,” published in 2014, focuses her argument around Bird and her accomplishments while also fleshing out the definition of Japonisme. For McAdams, Japonisme encompassed more than the

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<sup>34</sup> Margaret H. McFadden, *Golden Cables of Sympathy: The Transatlantic Sources of Nineteenth-Century Feminism* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 1-14.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Anderson, *Women and the Politics of Travel*, 33.

art movement in Great Britain and also included the scientific Japanologist texts. Her argument is that while Japanologist writers were primarily male and Japonisme was associated with female writers, Bird and her fellow travel writers bridged the gender gap to create texts that, though technically defined as “Japonisme,” were as serious as the male texts.<sup>38</sup> Maureen Mulligan further argues McAdams’ point that through travel writing, these British women were creating a new genre and scholarly legitimacy for themselves. In “Women’s Travel Writing and the Legacy of Romanticism” published in 2016, Mulligan argues that women’s travel writing was influenced by Romanticism. Through associating with this style of writing and focusing on personal narratives, the British women elevated themselves from basic tourists.<sup>39</sup>

In terms of American women travel writers, Jennifer Bernhardt Steadman in *Traveling Economies: American Women’s Travel Writing*, published in 2007, discusses the proliferation of travel writing produced by women in post-antebellum America. She states that travel writing revealed the restrictive gender norms placed upon the women while simultaneously subverting them through the travel itself. To best demonstrate this dichotomy, Steadman focuses on white and African-American women who traveled for work as opposed to the majority of scholarship that focuses upon wealthy women who traveled for pleasure or women who were displaced and forced to travel. She also clarifies that she does not equate travel with agency, but instead sees it

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<sup>38</sup> Elizabeth McAdams, “Isabella Bird and Japonisme Travel Writing: Common Interests,” *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920* 57 no. 4 (2014): 480-481.

<sup>39</sup> Maureen Mulligan, “Women’s Travel Writing and the Legacy of Romanticism,” *Journal of Tourism & Cultural Change* 14 no. 4 (December 2016): 323.



as part of a combination of other factors that work to subvert the restrictive gender norms in place.<sup>40</sup>

Last to cover in the discourse surrounding women travel writers is Steve Clark and Paul Smethurst's *Asian Crossings: Travel Writing on China, Japan and Southeast Asia* (2008).<sup>41</sup> With this compilation of scholars, Clark and Smethurst seek to create an intervention in the postcolonial discourse surround China and Japan by reminding scholars that both of those countries existed long before Europe became a world power. As they state "The essays in this volume continually negotiate the vexed question of how far it is possible to transpose generic norms and developmental sequences based on European travelogue, whose multiple variants include pilgrimage, voyage literature, Grand Tour, natural history, picturesque sightseeing, and whose participants include colonial administrator, journalist-spy and post-modern pasticheur."<sup>42</sup> Of particular interest in this volume are the chapters by Shizen Ozawa and Julia Kuehn. In his chapter "Erasing Footsteps: On Some Differences between the First and Popular Editions of Isabella Bird's *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan*," Ozawa discusses the relationship between travel writing and identity and how women like Bird used their writing to redefine their gender while also being constrained to it. In her chapter "China of the Tourists: Women and the Grand Tour of the Middle Kingdom, 1878–1923," Kuehn focuses upon travel writers in China and traces the

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<sup>40</sup> Jennifer Bernhardt Steadman, *Traveling Economies: American Women's Travel Writing* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2007), 5-9.

<sup>41</sup> Laurence Williams and Steve Clark have worked together in the past with their article "Isabella Bird, Victorian Globalism, and 'Unbeaten Tracks in Japan' (1880)." Here, Clark and Williams focus on Isabella Bird and how she single-handedly revolutionized Victorian travel writing and women's travel in general.

<sup>42</sup> Steve Clark and Paul Smethurst, *Asian Crossings: Travel Writing on China, Japan and Southeast Asia* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008), 4.

shift from predominantly British women to American women writers and the impact that had on perceptions of China in the West.<sup>43</sup>

The aforementioned scholars provide the context through which to analyze travel narratives and related texts. The combination of history, cross-cultural, and literary focus demonstrates how both disciplines are needed to understand these works both as historical documents and works of literature. However, the scholars ignore American women writers assuming they were an extension of the British. When they do discuss American women's travel narratives from the Far East, the focus is either placed upon China in the nineteenth century or Japan in the 1920s and onward. With this paper and its focus on the late nineteenth to early twentieth century, I aim to, at least partially, fill the gap in scholarship around this topic. Furthermore, by focusing on American women, I argue that they were distinct from their British forebears and contemporaries due to the unique quality that is American Exceptionalism that is present in their works. The United States was in the process of defining a uniquely American empire in the Pacific and the women I focus on were enactors of that empire whether they realized it or otherwise.

The texts I will specifically discuss are a range of travel narratives, travel guides, and culture studies written by American women about their visits to Japan at the turn of the twentieth century. By analyzing these works through feminist and imperial lenses, this thesis will demonstrate the pervasiveness of American Exceptionalism and how it colored America's imperialism and the authors' perceptions of Japan. Therefore the focus will be on perceptions of

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<sup>43</sup> Shizen Ozawa, "Erasing Footsteps: On Some Differences between the First and Popular Editions of Isabella Bird's Unbeaten Tracks in Japan" in *Asian Crossings: Travel Writing on China, Japan and Southeast Asia* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008), 87-98; Kuehn, "China of the Tourists," 113-130.

Japan held by the Westerners who traveled there. These texts will also demonstrate a distinctly female view of Japan and how these women used their gender and Japan's exoticness to create a space for themselves in the predominantly male field of travel. The texts to be discussed trace the spectrum of reactions to Japan that American women experienced when confronted with the foreign other. Whenever a Japanese name is listed, it is written in the traditional Japanese order of last name then first name.

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## Chapter 1: America's Exceptional Imperialism in Travel Writing

At the request of her old friends Lady Oyama Sutematsu and Tsuda Ume, Alice Mabel Bacon took a temporary leave of absence from teaching at the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in Virginia to teach English at the Empress's Peeresses' School in Japan.<sup>44</sup> From 1888 to 1889, Bacon taught the daughters of Japan's elite while fully immersing herself into Japanese culture and language. During the first week of school, she decided to consult the textbooks she brought with her to determine their relevance for her course schedule:

I have been looking over my text-books since I came back, among others an American "Universal History," in which I find the following statement: "The only historic race is the Caucasian, the others having done little worth recording." It seems to me that this will be a very interesting piece of news to a class of Japanese girls who are already quite familiar with the wonderfully stirring and heroic history of their own country. I asked Miné what she thought they would say to that, and she replied that she should think they would say that the book was written by a Caucasian. I have decided to skip the introduction which contains the statement, so as to avoid showing to my pupils the self-conceit of my own race.<sup>45</sup>

The American "self-conceit" referred to by Bacon was prevalent enough that her Japanese students would not be surprised to see it stated so plainly in their textbook. Indeed this type of blanket statement on world history was representative of how white Americans viewed themselves as superior to those not part of the Anglo-Saxon race.

Bacon's embarrassment stems from her awareness of being a representative of the United States and its ideals in a foreign country. Due to living in an area "where the influence of foreign

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<sup>44</sup> Barbara Rose, *Tsuda Umeko and Women's Education in Japan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 96; Janice P. Nimura, *Daughters of the Samurai: A Journey from East to West and Back* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2015), 211-212.

<sup>45</sup> Alice Mabel Bacon, *A Japanese Interior* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1894), Internet Archive, 12-13.

ideas was as yet but little felt” and working at a conservative “anti-foreign” school managed by the Imperial Household Department, her every action was under scrutiny and judged accordingly as a member of a foreign country with imperial ambitions.<sup>46</sup> When the Empress visited the Peeresses’ School, Bacon had the opportunity to meet her. However, before she could meet the Empress, the Empress’s attendant grabbed Bacon by the arm under the impression that “unless physical force were applied to restrain her, that outside barbarian would rush right into the imperial presence.”<sup>47</sup> Bacon was affronted by his manhandling since she had spent the previous day preparing her mannerisms for the Empress’s visit. She made a concerted effort to embrace Japanese culture, yet in the aftermath of her day with the Empress, Bacon felt grateful that she was a “free American woman” and did not have to live her life as the constrained Japanese women did.<sup>48</sup>

Despite Bacon’s willingness to immerse herself in Japanese culture, she still held to the belief that Americans and American society were superior. She was not alone in this belief as the majority of her fellow Anglo-Saxon Americans viewed the world in the same manner. According to Reginald Horsman, by 1850, the American Anglo-Saxon race was separate and superior and “destined to bring good government, commercial prosperity, and Christianity to the American continents and the world. This was a superior race, and inferior races were doomed to subordinate status or extinction.”<sup>49</sup> This sentiment is evidenced by the line in the textbook

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., v-vii.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 197.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 197-199.

<sup>49</sup> Horsman, 2.

claiming that non-Caucasian races had no history worth recording. It was also this same sentiment that drove international policy in the wake of Manifest Destiny.

The United States successfully dominated its portion of the American continent by the middle of the nineteenth century. During their westward expansion, the United States began to concern itself with international investments through the acquisition of new territories such as Puerto Rico and Hawai'i. The aftermath of the Mexican-American War established the United States as an imperial force and raised questions as to what a uniquely Anglo-Saxon American imperialism would look like.<sup>50</sup> Formal colonies required the supervision and potential addition of nonwhites into the United States and therefore an empire like that of Britain and Europe was rejected. Instead Americans believed that the natural course of Anglo-Saxon evolution was that the race would eventually “outbreed” and “replace ‘inferior’ races.”<sup>51</sup> Economic and commercial domination was the superior way for Americans to exert their control internationally as the endeavors of “superior people were confidently expected to transform the world while bringing unprecedented power and prosperity to the United States.”<sup>52</sup> Since the United States expanded as far West as it could go on the continent, it was time to reach further out into the Pacific. As United States Senator Albert J. Beveridge stated, “Our largest trade henceforth must be with Asia. The Pacific is our ocean.”<sup>53</sup> Claiming entire oceans was the right of the American Anglo-

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 272.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 297.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Albert Beveridge, “In Support of an American Empire,” *Record*, 56 Cong., I Sess., 704-712.

Saxon race. With Great Britain gaining greater influence in the Pacific, the United States needed to make Japan its first foothold in this new economic imperialism.<sup>54</sup>

In this newly expanding United States that encountered peoples and cultures different from its own, women became important imperial actors both at home and abroad. The suffrage movement was closely linked to expansionism as white women used the “language of empire” to justify giving themselves and their nonwhite sisters in the newly acquired territories the vote. On the one hand, why should nonwhite men like the Native Americans achieve the right to vote before civilized white women? On the other, the vote would protect nonwhite women from the barbaric nonwhite men as was the appeal for Hawai'i.<sup>55</sup> Raising these issues allowed the white suffragists to ally themselves with the larger issue of international suffrage, and by doing so, they were able to turn themselves into “agents of American culture on a global stage.”<sup>56</sup> They established themselves as the purveyors of American civilization to their nonwhite sisters as it was their duty to “uplift” them. This idea permeated American society as American women judged the condition of their sisters abroad to determine how civilized the foreign lands were. As these middle to upper class white women, like the missionaries who went before them, traveled unaccompanied by men to these uncivilized lands to spread American ideals, they “‘transcended’ their femaleness and represented the imperial power.”<sup>57</sup> Not only were they exporting American

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<sup>54</sup> Hideo Ibe, *Japan, Thrice-Opened: An Analysis of Relations between Japan and the United States* (New York: Praeger, 1992), 26.

<sup>55</sup> Sneider, *Suffragists in an Imperial Age*, 63-68, 91.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>57</sup> McFadden, *Golden Cables of Sympathy*, 46.

civilization, but they were also reaffirming American Anglo-Saxon racial superiority simply through their presence.

In fact, the ability of women to even travel to Japan was a direct consequence of American imperialism. American women traveling in and around Japan were, by definition, imperial representatives due to the forced “opening” of Japan by Commodore Perry. If Japan had a choice, none of the women discussed would have been able to visit Japan as a tourists, let alone write their books. However, the United States’ desire for economic dominion over the Pacific made it so that Japan had to give special concessions to Americans over the other imperial powers. Due to centuries of isolation, Japan was not diplomatically or militarily equipped to combat Commodore Perry and his warships upon their arrival. These “unequal treaties” were eventually revised once Japan proved itself to be worthy of negotiating with the dominant West. It was the changes made in the passport system and extraterritoriality for Americans that created a need for revised editions of travel guides and for renewed interest in travel to Japan. Japan was officially deemed safe for women to travel to unprotected and greater travel access was granted specifically to Americans. It was no wonder then that in their writings on Japan, American women expressed their own country’s exceptional superiority over a country that was America’s first step in economic imperialism.<sup>58</sup>

### **Extremes of Exceptionalism**

The three texts to be discussed are a range of travel narratives, travel guides, and culture studies written by American women about their visits to Japan at the turn of the twentieth

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<sup>58</sup> Ibe, *Japan, Thrice-Opened*, 1-10; Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore, *Jinrikisha Days in Japan* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1902), Massachusetts Historical Society, iv-v.



century. Each of these texts demonstrates the pervasiveness of American Exceptionalism and how it colored America's imperialism and the authors' perceptions of Japan. They also demonstrate a distinctly female view of Japan and how these women used their gender and Japan's exoticness to create a space for themselves in the predominantly male field of travel which will be discussed in depth in the next chapter. Even though they do not explicitly write with an American empire in mind, they still perpetuate it since their perceptions on Japan as recorded and spread in their books confirms the view that America is the superior country. As Said states, "All cultures tend to make representations of foreign cultures the better to master or in some way control them."<sup>59</sup> These women write on Japan from the position of it being an "other" that can be consumed. By claiming to be definitive sources, they shape the perceptions of Japan for the Americans unable to visit and further the impression of a safe, quaint people.

These texts trace the spectrum of reactions to Japan that American women experienced when confronted in the land of the foreign other. Japan lacked the potential for danger and adventure found in other "exotic" countries like the extremely diverse India. Instead, Japan's safe designation meant that women who traveled there were in the "unique position of being able to move freely within a society which accepted -- even welcomed them."<sup>60</sup> Some, like Alice Mabel Bacon and Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore, embraced this Japan and found it to be a beautiful place and people. Scidmore, however, viewed Japan more as an aesthetically pleasing tourist locale and lamented Japan's moves to Westernize as it lost the charm that she so loved. Some, like Gertrude Adams Fisher, viewed Japan as a place that a person should visit because it was

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<sup>59</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 100.

<sup>60</sup> Sterry, *Victorian Women Travellers in Meiji Japan*, 13.

expected, but found very little there worth visiting. To her, the Japanese were a backwards and rude people as evidenced by her statement that “all is not skittles and beer in the land of the cherry blossom.”<sup>61</sup> However, regardless of how these women personally felt about Japan, they viewed it firmly through the imperialist gaze of an American abroad.

When Gertrude Adams Fisher took it upon herself to visit Japan on her own, she visited every place that the Japanese would give her access to, and some they willingly would not. It was during her travels that she had an interesting conversation with a Japanese woman on the train:

One day in the train, a wee creature cuddled up on her knees to me and began a voluble output of the lingo. I nodded and grinned like an idiot, but her astonished gaze told me I was unsatisfactory. At last she ventured, “Air you a chreeschin? Me too, me chreeschin.” This is the constant query of the native, and, though I had started out with a confident reply, constant hammering of the question had brought doubts as to my surety, and in despair I sometimes startled the native with the answer, “No, I am an American.”<sup>62</sup>

This exchange demonstrated how Fisher saw herself while in Japan: an American before she was a Christian. Yes, she sometimes corrected the Japanese people inquiring into her faith by stating her nationality instead, but those absentminded answers speak louder in how Fisher orients herself in foreign lands. To the Japanese, she was the foreign other, a curiosity. By asserting that she is an American, she is able to reestablish her superiority as not only were the Japanese wrong in assuming she was a Christian, she was a member of the country that was responsible for their reintroduction to the world.

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<sup>61</sup> Gertrude Adams Fisher, *A Woman Alone in the Heart of Japan* (Boston: L.C. Page & Company, 1906), Internet Archive, 9.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

Fisher recounted the tales from her travels in *A Woman Alone in the Heart of Japan* along with her often negative comments on the Japanese and their culture. Her observations are rooted in American exceptionalism and the belief that by embracing American culture, Japan can lift itself up from its backwards ways. At one point she remarks: “At every turn the comparatively brusque foreigner has an object-lesson in good manners, for those Japanese are graceful and enticing, even though they mean nothing, or are a cloak for trickery.”<sup>63</sup> Fisher was constantly paranoid that her Japanese servants were mocking her and talking about her behind her back.<sup>64</sup>

Her observations throughout are tinged with this combination of compliment and criticism. Despite all the access afforded her by being an American and a member of The Welcome Society, Fisher still complained about not being able to visit the entirety of Japan.<sup>65</sup> She complains that the Welcome Society is only trying to scam foreigners out of their money even though as a member of the Welcome Society she was able to visit an asylum and have tea with *geisha*.<sup>66</sup> In the opening of *A Woman Alone in the Heart of Japan* she states that “It pays to visit the Flowery Kingdom, even though one becomes acquainted with the seaport towns only.”<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>65</sup> The Welcome Society was a tourism group funded by the Imperial Household that would “welcome foreign visitors to Japan and to render them every assistance during their stay” with the explicit purpose to “promote and facilitate between Japan and foreign peoples such intimate intercourse as will tend to dispel racial prejudice and to break down the barriers between East and West.” Prominent members of the Japanese government and the majority of Foreign Ambassadors to Japan were members. By becoming a member, the group would organize travel around Japan and provide access to various institutions in Japan such as hospitals, schools, mental asylums, etc. The other perk of the Welcome Society was that they provided trusted tour guides for a small fee. Women’s Rest Tour Association Records, 1891-1992; *Guidebook for Tourists in Japan*, 1906. 1111--94-M173, folder 2.12. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>66</sup> Fisher, *A Woman Alone in the Heart of Japan*, 179-219.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 1.

Indeed, it seems that she only visits Japan as it was the thing to do as at this time “Asia was not just fashionable, it was a sign of taste and erudition.”<sup>68</sup> If simply acquiring Asian collectibles and having Japanese gardens made one the peak of culture, then visiting Japan elevated Fisher even further than the rich socialites. She made herself an authority on and over the Orient by inserting herself into the culture and turned it into a product to be consumed.<sup>69</sup> This desire to superficially consume Japan explains Fisher’s disdain for the quaintness of the culture. She was not visiting Japan out of a need to genuinely experience the culture and the people, but instead she visited to make a judgement as to how technologically and culturally modernized the country truly was.

Fisher was not alone in wanting to visit Japan at the turn of the twentieth century. In order to handle the influx of tourists, the Japanese government created the Welcome Society, a tourism board who granted its members access to a variety of locations such as schools, hospitals, asylums, etc. along with various perks such as certified tour guides. The Society’s purpose was “to promote and facilitate between Japan and foreign peoples such intimate intercourse as will tend to dispel racial prejudice and to break down the barriers between East and West.”<sup>70</sup> Fisher did not believe in the Society’s altruistic mission and decried it as a money-making scheme to scam foreigners, despite joining it herself.<sup>71</sup>

During her various explorations of Japan under the purview of the Society, Fisher used her accounts to cement America as the gold standard to compare Japan to and find it lacking. She

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<sup>68</sup> Noriko Murai and Alan Chong, editors. *Inventing Asia: American Perspectives Around 1900*. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2014), 11.

<sup>69</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 3.

<sup>70</sup> Women's Rest Tour Association Records, 1891-1992; *Guidebook for Tourists in Japan*, 1906. 1111--94-M173, folder 2.12. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>71</sup> Fisher, 179-219.

mentions a discussion she had with a Japanese merchant who was educated in the United States and comments that it was his American education that allowed him to be successful.<sup>72</sup> After visiting one of the new women's universities, Fisher proudly stated that "Day has dawned for woman in Japan" and was happy for her Japanese sisters.<sup>73</sup> Later she stated that in relation to the women's universities, "Japan owes many a modern impulse to America."<sup>74</sup> By giving America the credit for Japan's modernization, Fisher removed any agency Japan may have had in its own changes while also elevating American influence over the European powers in Japan. As one of the privileged women to live in the United States, Fisher gave herself the legitimacy to comment on Japan's efforts for women's education. Fisher used American Exceptionalism to create authority and space for herself to comment on and solidify Japan's inferiority.

The woman question in Japan was a topic that was at the forefront of Fisher's investigation into its modernization. As mentioned previously, she commented on the state of women's education and she further concerned herself with the condition of the *geisha* in Japan. Her discussion of *geisha*, just as with her discussion of women's education, was where she was the most vehement about America's superiority over Japan. According to the West, "the social position of women reflected a country's level of civilization" as the Japanese leaders were coming to understand, and Fisher was quick to emphasize.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 258.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 260.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 369.

<sup>75</sup> Marnie S. Anderson, "Women's Agency and the Historical Record: Reflections on Female Activists in Nineteenth-Century Japan," *Journal of Women's History* 23 no. 1 (Spring 2011): 38.

When meeting with a young Japanese prostitute named “Katie,” Fisher commented that Katie enjoyed speaking with the American women who visited her and wondered if that was born out of “a longing to sit with one of [her] great sisterhood whose life was altogether different?”<sup>76</sup> Within the same section, when describing Katie, Fisher wrote “within this public den, pretty little Katie, known rather for her gentle beauty and her winsome ways than for her evil life, drew upon my tender love. She looked so sweet and innocent that one quite forgot she was a hardened little sinner.”<sup>77</sup> In her description of her interactions with Katie, Fisher placed herself firmly in the elevated position of the elder sister who lamented at the life of her little sister and refers to Katie as one would a pet or small child. Obviously then, it would be the duty of her American sisters to try to comfort her even as no action was taken to help Katie out her circumstances by Fisher or any of the American women who visited her. Instead, Katie was used as an example of why Japan was inferior to the United States: young girls like Katie were placed in this position of sin, which would not happen, in the United States. She was simultaneously a passive participant for Fisher to place her opinions upon and an active participant in her life of sin as one does not become “a hardened little sinner” passively.

Fisher continues this particularly Western condemnation of Japan’s morality when discussing the *geisha* under the incorrect assumption that they were nothing more than glorified prostitutes. Due to its licentious practices, Japan was a place where Christian morals needed to be put aside in order to simply exist or take in the spectacle. When visiting Kyoto, Fisher witnessed the annual procession of *geisha* and stated, “it is not a sight for the prude, and the

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<sup>76</sup> Fisher., 24.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 21.

ordinary Christian throws away scruples and principles in a measure when he lends his countenance to the strange, sad spectacle.”<sup>78</sup> She then proceeded to spend a sizable section speculating on the mindset of the individual *geisha*, how miserable they must be. She then continues to ponder what life was like for the poor *maiko*, or future *geisha*, as they train for the future life of sin. The irony of her actions were also clearly lost on Fisher. Before the start of the *geisha*’s procession, she details her efforts to push people out of the way to ensure she had the perfect view yet places herself upon the moral high ground when describing the scene by stating: “To us the spectacle seemed sad and revolting.”<sup>79</sup> Her audience of American readers could then be satisfied, along with Fisher, that though they were avidly reading about the procession of *geisha*, they were still above the Japanese by virtue of their inherent moral compass as both Christians and Americans for deploring the entire practice.

### **Japan as the Pseudo-Equal**

Where Fisher placed Japan as the inferior other in order to establish her own authority and America’s superiority, Alice Mabel Bacon placed Japan as the equal to America in order to create her own and cement America’s elevated position through her book *Japanese Girls & Women*. Due to her experiences living in Japan and her close relationships with Japanese women, Bacon had a more nuanced understanding of Japanese culture than Fisher and was overall more appreciative of their differences. However, Bacon still couched her analysis of Japanese culture

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 47.

in the language of American Exceptionalism by using Japan's treatment of women to gauge its level of advancement.

Bacon first came into contact with Japan when her father, prominent Reverend Leonard Bacon, agreed to host a young girl from Japan then named Yamakawa Sutematsu or "Stematz" as her American friends called her. Sutematsu was one of five girls to come to Japan as part of the Iwakura Mission (1871-1873), an attempt by the Meiji government to convince the United States to revise the unequal treaties. Due to Sutematsu and Alice being the same age, they became fast friends for the ten years that Sutematsu stayed in the United States. Through her friendship with Sutematsu, Alice came into frequent contact with the other Japanese girls who opted to stay in America long after the unsuccessful diplomatic portion of the Iwakura Mission concluded. It was through Sutematsu that Alice befriended Tsuda Umeko, the youngest of the five girls sent to America at only seven years old.<sup>80</sup>

Tsuda was taken in by the Charles and Adeline Lanman and unlike Sutematsu, who had an older brother studying at nearby Yale to remind her of national ties, Umeko fully embraced American ideals. While living with the Lanmans from ages seven to seventeen, she "soaked up [their] upper-middle-class priorities: self-improvement and intellectual curiosity balanced by a Protestant piety convinced of its own righteousness and eager to rescue those still laboring in the dark."<sup>81</sup> On their return to Japan, Umeko and Sutematsu joined the efforts by missionaries to spread Christianity and modernize Japan. In particular, they took up the cause of women's education, though Umeko invested herself more to it than Sutematsu due to divergent life

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<sup>80</sup> Nimura, *Daughters of the Samurai*, 59-103; Rose, *Tsuda Umeko and Women's Education in Japan*, 17-25; Ibe, 47.

<sup>81</sup> Nimura, 118, 154.



paths.<sup>82</sup> Umeko went on to teach at the Peeresses' School and eventually founded her own school for girls, the "Women's Home School of English," in 1900.<sup>83</sup>

Before founding her own school, Umeko went back to America to get her college degree from Bryn Mawr in 1889. While there she joined Bacon, who was once again teaching at the Hampton Institute in Virginia, and together they wrote *Japanese Girls & Women* with the first edition published in 1891. In the introduction to the work, Bacon stated that "it has also been carefully revised and criticized; and many valuable additions have been made to it by Miss Umé Tsuda" and that her contributions were what gave the book its value.<sup>84</sup> Although, it is unclear as to what Tsuda's direct contributions were as the text is exclusively from Bacon's perspective.

When Houghton Mifflin & Co. requested that Alice write a second edition, Tsuda wrote to Adeline Lanman stating that "every spare moment we have has to go on the book."<sup>85</sup> However, in the letters following that one, whenever she refers to the book, she gives sole ownership of *Japanese Girls & Women* to Alice with comments such as "She is very busy rewriting her book" and "her artist has given her such trouble and anxiety."<sup>86</sup> These comments give the impression that the book was entirely Alice's creative endeavor with Tsuda merely

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<sup>82</sup> The reason Sutehatsu was not as involved in championing women's education in Japan was that within a year of returning to Japan, she married Lord Oyama Iwao, the minister of war. Her new position made it impossible for her to teach and open a school as she had planned with Alice Bacon. Instead, her position allowed her to be a patron of such schools and focus on being a visual leader of what an educated Japanese woman looked like. She still maintained her friendship with Alice and Alice dedicated *Japanese Girls & Women* "To Sutehatsu, the Marchioness Oyama in the name of our girlhood's friendship unchanged and unshaken by the changes and separations of our maturer years this volume is affectionately dedicated." Nimura, 179-182.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 259.

<sup>84</sup> Alice Mabel Bacon, *Japanese Girls & Women* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1902), Massachusetts Historical Society, vii-x.

<sup>85</sup> Tsuda, *The Attic Letters*, 365.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 365, 371.

providing the Japanese connections and cultural insights. The letters from the time surrounding the writing of the first edition of *Japanese Girls & Women* are not included in the bound volume *The Attic Letters*. Her involvement with the book is acknowledged in a section timeline, “Ume spent the vacation at Alice’s house in Hampton, Virginia, assisting her in writing *Japanese Girls & Women* (1891),” but there are no letters from the summer of 1890.<sup>87</sup> It is worth noting that, Tsuda’s letters to Adeline Lanman were transcribed into book form by current members of her school now renamed Tsuda College. There was a committee that decided which letters should be included and it is possible that there were no letters for that entire year, despite the fact she wrote constantly to Adeline, or the committee decided to not include them. Despite the confusion surrounding the extent of Tsuda’s involvement, what is clear is that Bacon gave her half of the royalties while she was alive and on her death gave Tsuda the copyright to *Japanese Girls & Women*.<sup>88</sup> However, since there Tsuda’s direct involvement is unclear and the book is situated as views on Japan from Bacon’s perspective, for rest of this thesis, Bacon will be referred to as the sole author.

*Japanese Girls & Women* “traces the training and daily life of women of each class, invariably concluding that their lives are far from ideal.”<sup>89</sup> Unsurprisingly, the book was well received in the West as the moral of the book was that Japan needed to adopt Western ideals on women if it wanted to be truly civilized. Bacon knew that the reaction in Japan would be hostile, so in an effort to protect Tsuda, Bacon took authorship credit while Tsuda received a small

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 324.

<sup>88</sup> Rose, 88.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 84.

mention in the preface.<sup>90</sup> However, despite the initial hostile reaction, The Welcome Society listed it under the Books of Reference section of their pamphlets for English-speaking tourists.<sup>91</sup>

The goal of *Japanese Girls & Women* was accomplished, at least in America, as in the aftermath of the book's positive reception, Tsuda was "encouraged to transform her informal Bryn Mawr talks into a full-fledged campaign to seek support for Japanese female education from American women's organizations."<sup>92</sup> Bacon and Tsuda saw it as their goal to uplift the unfortunate Japanese women and the only way to do was through the involvement of the same women who claimed that Hawai'ian women needed to be saved from the savage Hawai'ian men. In an edited volume of letters, Bacon compared her young female students to the "poor little pickaninnies" that she taught in Hampton, Virginia by observing "that their lives are more or less stunted and cramped by their circumstances of their birth, the pickaninnies by poverty and the disabilities of their low social position, the peeresses by the rigid restraints and formalities that accompany their rank."<sup>93</sup> Therefore, despite both Bacon's and Tsuda's respect for Japan, they still promoted America's superiority and Japan's inferiority as a modern civilization at the end of their analysis in *Japanese Girls & Women*.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>91</sup> Women's Rest Tour Association Records, 1891-1992; *Guidebook for Tourists in Japan*, 1906. 1111--94-M173, folder 2.12. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>92</sup> Rose, 89.

<sup>93</sup> Bacon, *A Japanese Interior*, 10.

<sup>94</sup> Since it impossible to tell from the book itself which portions were written by Tsuda, if any, that the book is presented as based upon Bacon's own observations, and that to Bacon's contemporary Americans she was the only author, I will refer to Bacon as the sole author of *Japanese Girls & Women* moving forward in this thesis.

In *A Woman Alone in the Heart of Japan*, Fisher noted any instance where Japanese society was different from America's and used that to emphasize its inferiority, especially in terms of childrearing or women's education. Bacon, in *Japanese Girls & Women*, does the opposite of Fisher and instead presents Japanese customs in a matter-of-fact tone and then provides her own analysis based on her experiences. Japan is different but equal as opposed to different and therefore wrong. Fisher stated "Neglect and ignorance, not willful cruelty as the distress of the little ones" when describing how the Japanese raise their children.<sup>95</sup> Bacon, on the other hand, discussed how the Japanese loved and celebrated their children and in some instances, were better at taking care of their children than Americans. One specific instance that she notes where the Japanese were better with children was in terms of clothing. Japanese baby clothing was less restrictive than Western clothing and therefore easier for a mother to put on a child and for a child to wear. Although, Bacon does admit that Japanese fabrics were more difficult to wash. Therefore, she offered a compromise that placed equal value on both Japanese and American cultures:

For model clothing for a baby, I would suggest a combination of the Japanese style with the foreign, easily washed materials, — a combination that I have seen used in their own families by Japanese ladies educated abroad, and one in which the objections to the Japanese style of dress are entirely obviated.

Neither culture better than the other and Bacon implies that the Japanese were smarter for combining the best of East and West. If America wanted to maintain the superior position, they needed to adapt to new cultures and new ideas.

The second edition of *Japanese Girls & Women*, published in 1902, had several additions that the previous edition did not. The first addition was color illustrations by noted Japanese

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<sup>95</sup> Fisher, 12.

artist Takeuchi Keishū. The other two additions were chapters on the home, which she could not include in the first, and a final chapter summarizing the advancements Japan had made since the first edition in 1891. The tones of these two chapters embodied the contradiction inherent in Bacon's work and possibly Bacon herself. Bacon aimed to dispel any myths surrounding Japan to show that they were equal to the United States, yet she could not escape the pervasiveness of American Exceptionalism that affected how she viewed Japan.

In the chapter on the home, Bacon denotes all of the practices that occur inside the domestic sphere with various anecdotes. To close this chapter that she felt the lack of made the first edition incomplete, Bacon wrote:

There is no space in this work for a more detailed picture of life in a Japanese home. Enough has been said in this chapter to show that it is made up on many little things, — of cares and sorrows and pleasures, and just as is life in any American home, it is the little things we care about that made the oneness of the family, and the nation, and the oneness, too, of humanity, if we can only understand one another.<sup>96</sup>

Her goal of demonstrating the humanity and equality of the Japanese to the American public appeared to be complete. However, in the “Ten Years of Progress” chapter, Bacon seemed to undo that sentiment. The title alone implied that the Japan of the past was the antithesis of progress and betterment. In this chapter, she mentioned how women were gaining momentum in obtaining equal rights and education. Bacon contributed that and the rest of Japan's progress to the spread of Christianity and concludes “If Japanese women are ever to be raised to the measure of opportunity accorded to women in Christian countries, it can only be through the growth of Christianity in their own country, and for that reason a study of that growth is pertinent to a study

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 295.

of their condition.”<sup>97</sup> Furthermore, Bacon held America and its treatment of its women as another benchmark of a civilized country when she concluded “the ideal home of Europe and America is the product of a more advanced civilization than that of Japan.”<sup>98</sup> Despite the previous chapters and her claims that Japan is not inferior, Bacon still held Japan to the ideal of America and found it lacking.

### **Japan as Exotic Locale**

The previous two texts by Fisher and Bacon demonstrate the breadth of Americans’ reception of Japan ranging from disgust to appreciation, respectively. The final text to be analyzed falls somewhere in the middle — where Japan’s culture was lauded for its uniqueness but still viewed as inferior in comparison to America. *National Geographic* writer Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore’s book *Jinrikisha Days in Japan* and her previous pamphlet *Westward to the Far East: A Guide to the Principal Cities of China and Japan* incited the idea of a Grand Tour of China and Japan. In fact, this proposed tour was influential to the point that women who completed their Grand Tour in those locales included all of Scidmore’s stops. Scidmore built upon the legacy of Isabella Bird, but instead created a trip where different exotic sites were visited and contact with the locals was established.<sup>99</sup> This emphasis on interaction with the

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 317.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 297.

<sup>99</sup> Nina Storchlic, “The Woman Who Shaped *National Geographic*,” *National Geographic*, February 2017; Julia Kuehn, “China of the Tourists: Women and the Grand Tour of the Middle Kingdom, 1878-1923,” in *Asian Crossings: Travel Writing on China, Japan and Southeast Asia* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008), 115-127.

people and the middle ground between respecting the different culture and supporting American Exceptionalism led for *Jinrikisha Days in Japan* to become the standard for women travelers.

Scidmore formatted her book as a travel guide, tracing her steps from the steamship to Japan and then detailing what cities to visit in what order mixed in with personal anecdotes from her own ventures to Japan. This format circumnavigated the established acceptable epistolary format for female travel writers and gave Scidmore an authoritative masculine voice.<sup>100</sup> Japan's exotic nature and practices were a constant topic for Scidmore along with the efforts the country took to modernize. However, unlike Bacon where Japan's differences were simply to be noted, Scidmore remarked on them as one would an amusing spectacle. Japan was never truly in an equal position to America and words of praise could still be considered demeaning. For example, when discussing Japanese gardens, she stated "The Japanese are the foremost landscape gardeners in the world, as we Occidentals, who are still in that barbaric period where carpet gardening seems beautiful and desirable, shall in time discover."<sup>101</sup> This comment followed in the vein of Bacon, however she continued this praise for superior gardening skills with:

Their genius has equal play in an area of a yard or a thousand feet and a Japanese gardener will doubtless come to be considered as necessary a part of a great American establishment as a French maid or an English coachman. From generations of nature-loving and flower-worshipping ancestors these gentle followers of Adam's profession have inherited an intimacy with growing things, and a power over them that we cannot even understand. Their very farming is artistic gardening, and their gardening half necromancy.<sup>102</sup>

The very superiority that Scidmore was just lauding suddenly becomes a way to put the Japanese to use for Americans and keep them in the subordinate position. This sentiment was then echoed

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<sup>100</sup> Williams, "Like the Ladies of Europe?," 18; Anderson, *Women and the Politics of Travel*, 32.

<sup>101</sup> Scidmore, *Jinrikisha Days in Japan*, 11.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-12.

in a *New York Times* review of *Jinrikisha Days in Japan* where the author exclaimed over the abilities of Japanese gardeners as if they were a fascinating curiosity: “Think of the capabilities of a garden only forty-feet square, and that is big enough for a Japanese gardener!”<sup>103</sup> The people themselves and their practices become an exportable good to be marveled at within a proper American home.

Indeed the fitness of the Japanese to serve as domestic servants was a topic that was discussed in all three of the texts with quite differing opinions. Scidmore, having already established that the Japanese make superb gardeners and should become a staple in any well-established home, went on to state “there is no servant problem, and house keeping is a delight” and that “the musical language contributes not a little to the charm of these people, and the chattering servants seem often to be speaking Italian.”<sup>104</sup> Her evaluations echo those made by Bacon; however, Bacon cautions that the way Japanese servants keep house is different from the way Western servants do. She cautions that so long as American women give general orders allow them to work in the way they deem best, “she soon yields to their protecting and thoughtful care for herself and her interests, and, when she returns to America, is loud in her praises of the competence and devotion of her Japanese servants.”<sup>105</sup> If the head of house does not, they come to the same conclusion that Fisher had: that the servants were lazy, unintelligent, and laughing at their stupid Western mistress.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> “NEW PUBLICATIONS; THE TRUE JAPAN. JINRIKISHA DAYS IN JAPAN. By Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore. Illustrated. New-York: Harper & Brothers,” *The New York Times*, June 22, 1891.

<sup>104</sup> Scidmore, *Jinrikisha Days in Japan*, 22-24.

<sup>105</sup> Bacon, *Japanese Girls & Women*, 247.

<sup>106</sup> Fisher, 8.



According to Scidmore, Japan's innovations and relationship with America have it set to be one of the eight great "civilized" world powers.<sup>107</sup> The preference given to American tourists over European was another way to denote Japan as civilized:

The American tourist was trusted to behave without such minute instructions, and at Kobe could visit the Kencho and ask a permit to visit Kyoto[sic] without the intervention of his consul—a recognition of freedom and independence of the American citizen, and a tribute to the individual sovereignty of his nation.<sup>108</sup>

Japan's recognition of American superiority then allowed America to acknowledge Japan as the superior of the Asian countries: "After the muddy rivers, dreary flats, and brown hills of China, after the desolate shores of Korea, with their unlovely and unwashed peoples, Japan is a dream of Paradise, beautiful from the first green island off the coast to the last picturesque hill-top."<sup>109</sup> Despite writing the one of the most popular travel guides on China, Scidmore still placed Japan in the superior position due to a combination of aesthetics and acknowledgement of America's superiority.<sup>110</sup>

Finally, after Scidmore spent her book tracing her travels and impressions of the uniqueness and aesthetic beauty of Japan, she ended her guide by pondering the superiority of cultures and peoples. Throughout *Jinrikisha Days in Japan*, she simultaneously lamented and lauded Japan's modernization and made part of her goal for this book to note the areas of Japan that were, according to her, still quintessentially Japanese. However, Japan's modernization, military conquests in China, and steady rise to join the civilized world powers caused anxiety as

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<sup>107</sup> Scidmore, *Jinrikisha Days in Japan*, iii.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 46-47.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>110</sup> Kuehn, "China of the Tourists," 115.

to who was better: America or Japan? These concerns were how she began her concluding chapter:

And after the foreigner has spent months or year in the midst of these charming people, what has he discovered them to be? What does the future hold for them? To what end did Commodore Perry precipitate upon them the struggle and ferment of the nineteenth century? The present generation ceasing to be what their forefathers were, what do they expect of their descendants? Is our work thoroughly to occidentalize them, or will they slowly orientalize us? Which civilization is to hold, and which is the better? These are the unsolvable problems that continually confront the thoughtful observer.<sup>111</sup>

The only concrete conclusion that she drew was that if Japan was to fully modernize and lose what she deemed to be “Japanese culture” then Commodore Perry “should be rated as their worst enemy.”<sup>112</sup> However, if Japan were to be like China and use America’s example of betterment, then Japan “will surpass the world in the next century.”<sup>113</sup> America’s exceptional influence once again removed Japan’s agency and was the singular driving force in Japan.

### **America’s Singularity**

All three of the previous texts place America as the single greatest influence on Japan in its quest to modernize and be on par with the Western powers. Even when discussing Japan as an equal to the United States as Bacon did, they still placed America in the superior position. By Bacon initially stating that Japan was either equal or better in certain regards, the instances where America was the better were in starker contrast. Bacon essentially stated that even though Japan was the equal of America, it still chose to use American practices which then places America

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<sup>111</sup> Scidmore, *Jinrikisha Days in Japan*, 368.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 375.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

back into the elevated superior position. The contrast cemented America's and the West's position over Japan and its semi-colonial status.<sup>114</sup>

This sentiment was especially evident in regard to women's education and liberation. When discussing this topic, Bacon and Fisher used the status of women as a veritable "litmus test" for a country's level of civilization. American women were better educated than Japanese women, which reflected that America was more civilized than Japan. In the case of Scidmore, Japan's using the United States as a civilized model cemented the United States's place as the superior Western imperial power over Great Britain and Europe.

Regardless of how benign these women saw their observations on Japan and its culture, "it is indeed the case that even the apparently innocuous urge to know can involve the tacit appropriation of another culture by encoding it in the terms of the traveller's presumptions."<sup>115</sup> These women, when writing on Japan, were encoding it with their own lens of American Exceptionalism born from a century of expansion. They further demonstrated distinctly gendered definition of American imperialism with their focus on bettering the condition of their Eastern Sisters who lived either lives in sin or ignorance. It was their manipulation of their gendered positions that aided them in adopting the masculine imperial voice when discussing Japan. While Fisher was content to merely see and comment upon the condition of Japanese women, Bacon directly involved herself in the education of these women by teaching at the Peeresses's School and by helping to write the book that galvanized Tsuda's cause for American women. *Japanese Girls & Women* would not have been as successful as it was in garnering support if there was not

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<sup>114</sup> Sterry, *Victorian Women Travellers in Meiji Japan*, 7.

<sup>115</sup> Susan Castillo and David Seed, editors, *American Travel and Empire* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), 2.

already a pervasive culture of privileged white women rescuing the less fortunate. Japan's exoticness placed it in the position of the inferior other that these American women could then impose their imperial views upon and elevate themselves to become representatives of America's burgeoning imperial expansion. However, it was not only Japan's exoticness, but also gender politics that allowed for these women to position themselves as superior. By either catering to or subverting the gender expectations while firmly feminizing Japan, these women became imperial representatives abroad and scholarly authorities at home.

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## Chapter 2: Gender and Authority on the Exotic Other

Due to gender politics, the works written by men on Japan tended to be viewed as more scholarly and authoritative than those written by women. Their “surveys” and “histories” usually described the politics of Meiji Japan and the larger issues affecting the men of the country. Japanese women were either studiously ignored topics in their works, or in less academic works, infantilized or eroticized by men. Instead, the women who traveled and wrote on Japan were expected to fill in the informational gap.<sup>116</sup> When Alice Mabel Bacon first published *Japanese Girls and Women* in 1891, it was the first and only book discussing Japanese women of all social classes. Her hope with writing this book was “that the whole fabric of Japanese social life will be better comprehended when the women of the country, and so the homes that they make, are better known and understood.”<sup>117</sup> Her focus on and access to Japanese women made her book a unique contribution to the vastly oversaturated market of books on Japan. Her “boldness” paid off as *Japanese Girls & Women* was published to rave reviews with the *New York Times* stating “There is no reason why, then Alice Mabel Bacon’s work should not be fully accepted and we are positive that if carefully read a better comprehension will be had, not alone of the women, but of the condition of Japan.”<sup>118</sup> This review along with The Welcome Society’s inclusion of *Japanese Girls & Women* on their list of recommended reading for those interested in Japanese culture and Houghton Mifflin’s desire for an updated second edition demonstrated the success of Bacon both

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<sup>116</sup> Williams, 18.

<sup>117</sup> Bacon, *Japanese Girls & Women*, vii-ix.

<sup>118</sup> “NEW PUBLICATIONS; JAPANESE CIVILIZATION. JAPANESE GIRLS AND WOMEN. By Alice Mabel Bacon. Boston and New-York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co.,” *The New York Times*, August 17, 1891.

at home and abroad.<sup>119</sup> Bacon was deemed a scholar on Japan, a traditionally male dominated title, because she simultaneously affirmed her gender by writing on women and subverted her gender by writing a scholarly work on a foreign other.

Writings on Japan were so prolific due to a perfect storm of circumstances. First were the advancements made in cross-continental and cross-Pacific travel. In 1869, the transcontinental railroad in the United States was completed allowing Americans on the East Coast access to the ports on the West Coast. Also in 1869, the Suez Canal was completed which created a shortcut from Europe to Asia, allowing tourists from the Continent to visit the Far East in far less time than ever before in the increasingly swift steamships. These advancements in the latter half of the nineteenth century meant that “by the mid-1880s, a Bostonian could reach San Francisco in seven days by train and, allowing for a brief layover there, would reach Yokohama in less than four weeks.”<sup>120</sup> These circumstances meant that, while travel was still limited to those who had the means, more of those people could travel to Japan with little effort.

These advancements particularly suited Americans in the aftermath of Manifest Destiny, as the American people were singularly interested in traveling and expanding as far as they could. As Foster Rhea Dulles noted, “This urge to travel-in the nineteenth century as in later days-was a distinctive American characteristic. It was born of a restlessness, a sense of adventure, an insatiable curiosity that was part of our Anglo-Saxon inheritance and also a

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<sup>119</sup> Women's Rest Tour Association Records, 1891-1992; *Guidebook for Tourists in Japan*, 1906. 1111--94-M173, folder 2.12. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass; Tsuda, 364-365.

<sup>120</sup> Frederic A. Sharf, “A Traveler’s Paradise,” in *Art & Artifice: Japanese Photographs of the Meiji Era* (Boston, MA: MFA Publications, 2004), 8.

product of an expanding frontier environment.”<sup>121</sup> Americans visited Japan in such prolific numbers that a Japanese poet wrote:

What are those strangely-clad beings  
Who move quickly from one spot of interest to another  
Like butterflies flitting from flower to flower?

These are Americans.

They are as restless as the ocean,  
In one day they will learn more of a city  
Than an inhabitant will in a year.

Are they not extraordinary people?<sup>122</sup>

Although Scidmore recorded this poem with the assumption that it was written praising Americans for their desire for travel, it is also possible that the poet’s intention was a bit more sarcastic by expressing a distaste for the presence of Americans. For American women, Japan was the ideal place to exercise their newfound ability to travel both across the United States and across a large body of water as travel was now considered to be safe for women to do either accompanied or unaccompanied by a man.<sup>123</sup>

In addition to the ease of travel, Japan itself was particularly appealing to Victorian travelers due to its inherent duality of being both “old” and “new.” Japan was “new” in the sense that it successfully isolated itself for over two hundred years and the only book written on it by a Westerner, Englebert Kaempfer’s *The History of Japan*, was older than that. Therefore, any information on the recently opened Japan was considered new. Visiting the country offered “the possibility of ‘first time’ experiences, which implied the potential for adventure and unique

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<sup>121</sup> Foster Rhea Dulles, “A Historical View of Americans Abroad,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 368 (Nov. 1966), 12.

<sup>122</sup> Scidmore, *Jinrikisha Days in Japan*, 46-47.

<sup>123</sup> McFadden, 1-14.

discoveries.”<sup>124</sup> Simultaneously, Japan was considered “old” because it was a simple, ancient country that was less advanced than the West and therefore innocent and child-like. Its idyllic landscapes and its “gentle, nurturing” people appealed to Western travelers seeking to escape from their own increasingly modernized and complicated homes.<sup>125</sup> Visitors to Japan wanted to both indulge in and write about their new experiences in old Japan. Through their writing they could craft a representation of Japan that was knowable and controllable. As Scidmore wrote in *Jinrikisha Days in Japan*, “Bewildered by its novelty and strangeness, too many tourists come and go with little knowledge of the Japan of the Japanese, and, beholding only the modernized seaports and the capital, miss many unique and distinctly national sights and experiences that lie close at hand.”<sup>126</sup> The foreign becomes known in a superficial manner that does not threaten American hegemony.<sup>127</sup> Japan becomes a commodity to be artificially consumed by the visitor in order to establish their social superiority because they had the means and ability to travel to Japan.

For women especially, Japan was the ultimate safe harbor to travel to. The accessibility to travel meant that more women, middle class and up, could travel to anywhere in the world they wanted. In Europe, the tourism industry began to boom as more and more women undertook their Grand Tours in order to become well-rounded examples of their gender.<sup>128</sup> In the Far East,

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<sup>124</sup> Sterry, “Constructs of Meiji Japan,” 176.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Skidmore, *Jinrikisha Days in Japan*, iv.

<sup>127</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 100.

<sup>128</sup> McFadden, 39-40.



women were the predominant travelers especially in China and Japan.<sup>129</sup> Japan was deemed “old-fashioned and therefore, on the surface at least, non-threatening. Importantly, for women, Japan was seen as a safe country, both physically and morally. When travelling accompanied or alone, women were treated with courtesy and respect.”<sup>130</sup> Therefore, Japan was the ideal place where women could move outside of traditional gender roles while also appearing to adhere to them on the surface regardless if that was their intention or not.

Japan’s benignity was both created by and contributed to Japan’s status as the inferior other to the Western powers. The fact that Perry had little issue creating treaties with Japan was taken as a sign by Americans that the Japanese were weak, “not the least for having ‘given up’ without a single battle.”<sup>131</sup> Its status as the new old world meant that there was intense desire to study it and to document experiences had while touring its ports and cities. At the basis of this desire to know and to possess was the premise that Japan was inherently different from the West and by emphasizing these differences, writers on Japan affirmed the West’s superiority. The fact that “Japan had a broadly developed network of roads, well-maintained irrigation systems, and a well-educated population; some believe that the level of literacy may have been unsurpassed in the world at that time” mattered little when Japan lacked the basic amenities of the industrial West.<sup>132</sup> America and the West became the civilizational gold standard against which Japan was judged to be lacking, equal to, or even rarely, superior to.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Kuehn, 129.

<sup>130</sup> Sterry, “Constructs of Meiji Japan,” 173.

<sup>131</sup> Ibe, 9.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 2-4.

Travel writing was the perfect vehicle for cross-cultural analysis and the establishment of authority. Traditionally, travel writing “was a published book-length description of the journey of a white wealthy male either abroad to a foreign country (or a series of foreign locations) or to the unexplored frontier of his own country.”<sup>134</sup> However, this did not mean that women were not traveling and writing about their travels. Although the Civil War hindered the growth of women travelers in the United States, as the West expanded and travel became more accessible, more and more women were traveling and writing about it. As the nineteenth century progressed, American women traveled not just across the continent but to foreign locales; in fact, this trend was so common that women became the primary gender driving the newly created tourist industry in places such as Europe.<sup>135</sup>

They traveled for a variety of reasons ranging from “to support themselves, to serve their communities, to enter national and international political debates, to criticize social and political institutions, and to demonstrate their own and their gender’s and race’s fitness for the rigors of public life.”<sup>136</sup> As they traveled, they subverted the traditional gender, race, and class norms even if that was not their intention. Their writings demonstrated that women were leaving the home and taking a more active role in the public sphere, which made men anxious. Large numbers of political cartoons and parodies were made of traveling white middle-class women, often painting them as bumbling naive bimbos because the unsavory alternative was that women were capable of traveling and navigating foreign spaces on their own. If women could successfully travel and

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<sup>134</sup> Steadman, 16.

<sup>135</sup> McFadden, 39-40.

<sup>136</sup> Steadman, 5.

then write about their travels, then they were fit for “the rigors of public life” and could demand further rights for themselves.<sup>137</sup>

Be that as it may, because their travel contained such fraught social implications, how they portrayed themselves, their gender, and their home country was under intense scrutiny. Often this meant that for white middle to upper class women, the privileges associated with their socio-economic class began to work against them as they were held to higher standards of femininity in their actions.<sup>138</sup> Therefore, in their writing, the women had to carefully navigate the difference between their public and private thoughts and lives when portraying themselves. The multi-genre nature of travel writing lent itself to that endeavor, allowing the women writers to discuss their travels while holding to prescribed gender notions.<sup>139</sup>

Nineteenth century women held to prescribed gender norms through the use of a self-deprecating tone, the use of epistolary style of writing as that was deemed particularly suited to their gender, and the avoidance of topics deemed unwomanly such as politics.<sup>140</sup> The titles of their works usually denoted the fact that they were written by a woman, unlike the works by their male compatriots that were classified as histories or surveys.<sup>141</sup> The epistolary style gave the impression that they were merely engaged in a conversation with a close group of acquaintances as it was not proper for a woman to “instruct the public.”<sup>142</sup> This meant that, unlike their male

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 1-5.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 16-18.

<sup>140</sup> Sterry, “Constructs of Meiji Japan,” 174.

<sup>141</sup> Williams, “Like the Ladies of Europe?,” 18.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

counterparts, their writings held more intimate details and focused on the people and their interactions as opposed to the “bigger picture” of the locale as a whole.<sup>143</sup> It was this focus on the intimate details and their personal responses to their travels that helped to distinguish the women as serious travel writers as opposed to mere tourists that they were presumed to be.<sup>144</sup> These women could establish themselves as authorities on Japan because they utilized the gender constructions to focus on the areas that their male counterparts did not to add depth to the cross-cultural discussion.

### **Alice Mabel Bacon and Scholarly Authority**

The marks of female travel writing in the nineteenth century were disclaimers, epistolary style, and the lack of controversy. Alice Mabel Bacon perfectly fits each of those criterium in her writing because, even though she discusses the controversial topic of women’s education and autonomy in Japan in *Japanese Girls & Women*, she still adhered to established imperial assumptions. The status of women was used to decide a country’s civility and as Japan was already in the inferior position, criticisms of its society were acceptable and perfectly natural when comparing it to the superior United States. In *A Japanese Interior*, Bacon adhered to the accepted epistolary style by publishing the letters she wrote home while she was living and teaching in Japan.<sup>145</sup> In both her works, she maintained her female humility by starting her books with self-effacing prefaces acknowledging her own small contributions to the field and the immense help given to her by friends and acquaintances. During the preface for *A Japanese*

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<sup>143</sup> Sterry, “Constructs of Meiji Japan,” 174.

<sup>144</sup> Mulligan, 323.

<sup>145</sup> Bacon, *A Japanese Interior*, v.

*Interior*; Bacon states “The book is more a picture of the life of one foreigner among the Japanese, and a record of her thoughts about their civilization and her own, than it is an authority on Japan in general, or on any particular phase of life there.”<sup>146</sup> Then in the introduction to *Japanese Girls & Women*, she states “If subsequent events show that my observation has been incorrect, I can only say that what I have written has been ‘Thing-as-I-See-It,’ and does to claim to being the ‘Thing-as-It-Is.’”<sup>147</sup> She continually undermined her own authority, the very thing that gave her books credence, in an effort to appear humble. But it was through her very fidelity to established gender norms that Bacon was able to establish herself as a powerful authority on everything Japan.

Japan was fascinating to the Westerners who initially became obsessed with owning Japanese goods and imitating Japanese aesthetics. This movement was called “Japonisme” and it was through this movement that women were able to establish themselves in the traditionally male dominated spaces of anthropology and art.<sup>148</sup> However, it was also this movement that prevented women from having their works be considered scholarly. The dismissive descriptor of “Japonisme” was relegated to works by women while their male counterparts claimed the title of “Japanologist.”<sup>149</sup> People who could be classified as a Japanologist “were exclusively male, almost always government employees, and happy to assert their individual ‘expertise’ over other claims, even those from native speakers.”<sup>150</sup> Japonisme writers, however, were usually women

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., xiii.

<sup>147</sup> Bacon, *Japanese Girls & Women*, v-vi.

<sup>148</sup> Yoshihara, *Embracing the East*, 3-11.

<sup>149</sup> McAdams, “Isabella Bird and Japonisme Travel Writing,” 480-481.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

who traveled for a variety of reasons, wrote on a variety of topics, and their only common denominator was that their works were on Japan. Their works, like Bacon's *Japanese Girls & Women*, sought to expand the field and gave voice to the native speakers, unlike their male counterparts.

Women who wanted to write serious works on Japan had to fight against an already saturated market and against being dismissed as a work of fancy. Bacon was keenly aware of this when justifying the case for her book:

It seems necessary for a new author to give some excuse for her boldness in offering to the public another volume upon a subject already so well written up as Japan. In a field occupied by Griffis, Morse, Greey, Lowell, and Rein, what unexplored corner can a woman hope to enter? This is the question that will be asked, and that accordingly the author must answer.<sup>151</sup>

By focusing her book on Japanese women and the domestic sphere, Bacon created a niche for herself to be deemed an authority. The various friendships she maintained with Japanese women allowed her the access her male counterparts could never obtain. Additionally, even though she states that she is not on the same level as the male writers, she still groups herself with them by suggesting her work would be compared against them. She emphasizes that none of them could obtain the access she had and therefore implies that her work is as important and scholarly as theirs despite her veneer of humility.

Throughout *Japanese Girls & Women*, Bacon took a gendered analysis of Japanese women and Japanese culture. She wrote in a neutral tone for the majority of the work, but her comparisons between the East and the West were from the perspective and knowledge of a

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<sup>151</sup> Bacon, *Japanese Girls & Women*, vii.

woman. When discussing childrearing, she begins by neutrally describing Japanese practices, then suggests that American women might be wise to embrace those practices:

After all these festivities, a quiet, undisturbed life begins for the baby, — a life which is neither unpleasant nor unhealthful. It is not jolted, rocked, or trotted to sleep; it is allowed to cry if it chooses, without anybody's supposing that the world will come to an end because of its crying; and its dress is loose and easily put on, so that very little time is spent in the tiresome process of dressing and undressing. Under these conditions the baby thrives and grows strong and fat; learns to take life with some philosophy, even at a very early age; and is not subject to fits of hysterical or passionate crying, brought on by much jolting or trotting, or by the wearisome process of pinning, buttoning, tying of the strings, and thrusting of arms into tight sleeves. The Japanese baby's dress, though not as pretty as that of our babies, is in many ways much more sensible.<sup>152</sup>

By using this strategy of explanation, comparison for reference, and ultimate judgement, Bacon could demonstrate her knowledge of Japan and make it understandable for her reader while also reaffirming her gendered stance.

This can also be applied to the “Ten Years of Progress” chapter added to the second edition of *Japanese Girls & Women*. The ultimate goal of *Japanese Girls & Women* was to encourage Japan to properly educate its women and to galvanize Americans to push Japan to that conclusion.<sup>153</sup> This did not change with the second edition and the “Ten Years of Progress” chapter expressed Bacon's disappointment with Japan's slow advancements in the case of women. She concluded that “If Japanese women are ever to be raised to the measure of opportunity accorded to women in Christian countries, it can only be through the growth of Christianity in their own country, [...]”<sup>154</sup> Despite the respectful description she gave of Japanese culture, she still concluded that Christianity would be the greatest agent of change for

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>153</sup> Rose, 84.

<sup>154</sup> Bacon, *Japanese Girls & Women*, 317.

the better in Japan, at least for women. By couching her entire work on Japanese women and speaking authoritatively on women's issues as a fellow woman, Bacon could safely argue that Japan was not so different from America and not to be considered wholly inferior. She maintained the position of the demure, Christian woman in order to comment on imperial matters. Her style of analysis that adhered to establishing gendered and imperial conventions led to a New York Times review stating that "the author of this volume under notice seems to us to have shown not alone careful research, but to have treated a delicate subject with uncommon skill."<sup>155</sup> She was able to turn a potentially controversial topic into a scholarly and commercial success.

As if the first edition of *Japanese Girls & Women* was not enough to establish Bacon as an authority on Japan, she published *A Japanese Interior* in 1894. *A Japanese Interior* was an edited volume of letters written by Bacon during the time she lived in Japan and taught at the Empress's Peeresses's School.<sup>156</sup> Unlike in *Japanese Girls & Women* in which Bacon wrote in a scholarly and masculine style by publishing a culture study, *A Japanese Interior* followed the traditional female style of being epistolary, though she does not say who she was writing to so consistently. Despite the formatting difference, her two works share similar themes when it comes to writing style and content. She continues the self-deprecating tone when she continually insisted that "The book is more of a picture of the life of one foreigner among the Japanese, and a record of her thoughts about their civilization and her own, than it is an authority on Japan in

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<sup>155</sup> "NEW PUBLICATIONS; JAPANESE CIVILIZATION. JAPANESE GIRLS AND WOMEN. By Alice Mabel Bacon. Boston and New-York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co." *The New York Times*, August 17, 1891.

<sup>156</sup> Bacon, *A Japanese Interior*, v-xiv.



general, or on any particular phase of life there.”<sup>157</sup> While the tone is the same as she took when she begged her audiences’ patience in *Japanese Girls & Women*, the omissions are different. Here, when it is her private thoughts on display as opposed to simply stated facts, Bacon retreats to third-person narrative and rejects her observations having any authoritative power. Yet, on the following page she undermines her own attempts to be seen as a simple traveler when she states

My thought throughout the work of editing these letters has been to preserve, so far as possible, without violating confidence, or that sweet seclusion that is so characteristic a feature of Japanese home life, the little touches of nature that make the whole world kin, and bring into one human brotherhood all races under heaven.<sup>158</sup>

She claims that her opinions and experiences are by no means universal or authoritative but then continues to say that her experiences can hopefully bring different peoples closer together. These contradicting statements reflect her anxiety about the public versus the private self that is suddenly on display with this book.

The version of Bacon that is portrayed in *A Japanese Interior* is a woman who traveled to a foreign land completely on her own, without a male companion and at the bequest of her female Japanese friend. Therefore, her actions in Japan and her opinions are under intense scrutiny to see if she adhered to gender roles in the ways she clearly was not. Just as she used a male writing form to write on feminine topics, Bacon deviated by traveling to and living in Japan without a man, but did it to teach English, an accepted female profession, in an established and nonthreatening country. Therefore, in the case of Bacon, a woman became an authority by writing and traveling to a country already deemed acceptable for women to visit and speaking on

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid., xiii.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., xiv.

issues concerning women. She was able to be taken seriously by male contemporaries without threatening their dominant hegemony.

For all of the success of her works, there were still those who saw Bacon as overreaching her station and as merely one of many women who decided to write on their travels. In March 1895, British war artist and correspondent Frederic Villiers wrote an article for *The New York Times* entitled “Truth about Port Arthur.”<sup>159</sup> The Japanese army captured Port Arthur during the first Sino-Japanese War 1894-1895. What made Port Arthur so memorable was that, in retaliation for the Chinese mutilation of Japanese soldiers’ bodies, the Japanese army, under Lord Oyama, massacred the entire population of the Port, some two to three thousand people.<sup>160</sup> In this article, Villiers implied that the massacre was carried out by a bloodthirsty group of *samurai* dressed in plain clothes. Alice took immense issue with his assertion that the *samurai* were involved and immediately wrote into *The New York Times* to express her displeasure and to correct the points he had gotten wrong in order to protect the noble reputation of the *samurai* in America.<sup>161</sup> Needless to say, once Villiers saw her letter, an intense argument was sparked in the Letter to the Editor section of the *The New York Times*.

It is through this argument that how Alice was perceived by male authorities is gleaned. In his response to Alice, Villiers makes a point of noting that Alice did not sign her name with either a “Miss” or “Mrs.” in front and continues to mention it as if it was a major slight against

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<sup>159</sup> “Villiers is Dead; Writer of War,” *The New York Times*, April 6, 1922.

<sup>160</sup> Stewart Lone, *Japan's First Modern War: Army and Society in the Conflict with China, 1894-95* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), 154-157.

<sup>161</sup> Alice Mabel Bacon, “CREDULOUS MR. VILLIERS; Apparently Misinformed About the Samuri of Japan. BRAIN AND SWORD OF THE EMPIRE Criticism of the War Correspondent's ‘Truth About Port Arthur’ -- Perhaps Some Joker Misled Him,” *The New York Times*, March 26, 1895.

her character. He assumes a condescending tone when addressing her points and argues that any information she claims to possess came from Murray's popular guidebook: "Probably Mrs. or Miss Bacon will now be enlightened on a point which her guide book cannot enlighten her. I am glad Murray failed her in this, for probably her column of amusing criticisms on my article might never have appeared."<sup>162</sup> To him, it was implausible that a woman would have the intimate knowledge of the *samurai* class asserted by Bacon and that she was overstepping her bounds by trying to criticize him on masculine subjects.

Their back-and-forth continues for several more letters where Alice demonstrates intimate knowledge with various minutiae of Japanese society and skillfully corrects Villiers without resorting to harsh personal attacks as Villiers did. During their letters, Villiers learned of Alice's strong connections to the *samurai* class as that was the social class of Umeko and Sutomatsu.<sup>163</sup> Indeed he claims, that due to her close ties to Lord Oyama, Sutomatsu's husband, she was particularly biased when defending the *samurai* as he argues it was partially Lord Oyama's fault that the massacre at Port Arthur even occurred.<sup>164</sup> Although, this personal attack seems underhanded and his condescending tone does not help his case, he is not wrong about her prejudice towards the *samurai* class. In *Japanese Girls & Women*, Bacon argued that Japan needed to look to the example of the *samurai* women in order to move forward and become a force on an international scale.<sup>165</sup> Instead of Bacon being discredited by being a woman who got

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<sup>162</sup> Frederic Villiers, "FREDERIC VILLIERS DEFENDS HIMSELF; A Reply to Alice Mabel Bacon's Criticism of His Article on Japan," *The New York Times*, March 27, 1895.

<sup>163</sup> Nimura, 49-50.

<sup>164</sup> Frederic Villiers, "Buts This Is Not Lindley Murray," *The New York Times*, April 3, 1895.

<sup>165</sup> Rose, 86-87.

her knowledge through guidebooks, Villiers argued that Bacon was now discredited for her political connections in Japan.

The culmination in their debate is that Villiers gave Bacon the final word, which she used to eloquently summarize their discussion, take responsibility for an incorrect fact, and point out that Villiers never actually addressed the false statements that started the argument in the first place. She concluded “Should Mr. Villiers think it worth while to step forward and confess now that [he] has made a blunder, I shall regard it as even more the act of a gentleman than his chivalrous offer to me of the last word.”<sup>166</sup> Throughout the debate Bacon was professional in her responses and demonstrated her knowledge of Japan while still putting Villiers in his place for his condescending words. She even comments that she was waiting for someone else to correct Villiers, once again assuming the humble female persona, but as no one did, she took it upon herself to defend the *samurai*.<sup>167</sup> Bacon was assured enough of her authority on Japan, as given to her by the success of *Japanese Girls & Women*, to confront a well-known and respected war correspondent in a public setting like *The New York Times*.

The moment in this entire debate that cemented Bacon’s clout and notoriety as a scholar on Japan was when George Foster Peabody, unprompted, wrote in to the *The New York Times* to defend Bacon’s honor from Villiers. Peabody, a prominent financier and philanthropist, wrote: “I cannot refrain from asking of you further space to set forth a few facts bearing upon the points, because it seemed to me that the very marked ignorance indicated by Mr. Villiers, particularly

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<sup>166</sup> Alice Mabel Bacon, “MAIN ISSUE IGNORED BY MR. VILLIERS; Alice Mabel Bacon Closes the Controversy Over the Term ‘Samurai,’” *The New York Times*, April 7, 1895.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

with reference to a person so well known as Miss Bacon, deserves to be corrected.”<sup>168</sup> He then proceeded to lay out five bullet points explaining just how intelligent and knowledgeable Bacon was on Japan and her writings and that she was a well-known entity to the American public through her written works. In regard to *Japanese Girls & Women*, he stated: “Miss Bacon has published a book on Japanese women, which has had many favorable notices, and was spoken of by Sir Edwin Arnold as one of the best works on Japan that he had seen.”<sup>169</sup> This one letter written in the defense of Bacon succinctly summarized her importance in the study of Japan. Through her books and articles, Bacon established her place as an accepted scholar on the country to the American public. It was this place that allowed her to be considered an equal in a male dominated field. Though she subverted her gender role to travel to and write a scholarly work on Japan, her adherence to conventional female topics made it possible for her to elevate herself from the level of a mere female travel writer to the position of a nationally, and possibly internationally, recognized authority.

### **Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore and Gender Neutral Authority**

Unlike Alice Mabel Bacon who traveled to Japan under her own power or with female companions, Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore traveled to Japan accompanying her brother, George Scidmore, who was the Consul General at Yokohama.<sup>170</sup> However, this does not undermine her

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<sup>168</sup> “George Foster Peabody (1852-1938),” *Broadcasting & Cable* (May 16, 2005): S7, *Academic OneFile*; George Foster Peabody, “Letter to the Editor 1 — No Title,” *The New York Times*, March 30, 1895.

<sup>169</sup> George Foster Peabody, “Letter to the Editor 1 — No Title,” *The New York Times*, March 30, 1895.

<sup>170</sup> “MISS ELIZA SCIDMORE DIES IN GENEVA AT 72; Author of ‘Jinrikisha Days in Japan’ and Other Books of the Far East,” *The New York Times*, November 4, 1928.

authority as a scholar on Japan. By the time *Jinrikisha Days in Japan* was first published in 1891, Scidmore was an acknowledged and celebrated travel writer on Alaska, China, and the Far East.<sup>171</sup> She forsook the society life in Washington D.C. to become a travel writer and photographer and traveled to the recently acquired Alaska in 1883 when she was twenty-seven. After that trip, Scidmore became a prominent contributor to *National Geographic* and provided the magazine's first color photographs. Her photography centered around the women and children of the Far East, depicting them with the Kodak camera given to her by the Smithsonian Society. She was the first female correspondent for the magazine and the first female elected to its board. Throughout her life she was an active member of the magazine and shaped it to become what it is today. When Japan was opened, she fell in love with the country and began the petition to bring the cherry blossom trees, now in Washington D.C., to the United States. Scidmore continued to live in Japan for periods throughout the years until her death in 1928, served as a goodwill ambassador for the United States to the country, and "especially devoted herself to cementing friendship between Japanese and American women."<sup>172</sup>

In her writing, Scidmore fluctuated between female and male gender standards in order to strike a gender-neutral tone for *Jinrikisha Days in Japan*, unlike Bacon, who only slightly deviated from standards dictated by her gender. Scidmore's gender was never hidden from the audience who was already familiar with her from her articles on the Alaskan wilderness and her

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<sup>171</sup> Nina Storchlic, "The Woman Who Shaped *National Geographic*," *National Geographic*, February 2017. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/plus/lost-and-found/woman-shaped-national-geographic-eliza-scidmore/> .

<sup>172</sup> Storchlic, "The Woman Who Shaped *National Geographic*"; "MISS ELIZA SCIDMORE DIES IN GENEVA AT 72; Author of 'Jinrikisha Days in Japan' and Other Books of the Far East," *The New York Times*, November 4, 1928.

articles on Japan written for *Harper's Bazaar* and *The Cosmopolitan Magazine*.<sup>173</sup> Instead, she subverted her gender by positioning herself as a representative of an imperial nation in an inferior nation. By acting as a representative of America instead of just a female tourist, Scidmore was able to access places and have experiences that would normally have been reserved for men had she been in the United States or anywhere else in the West.

Her gender-neutral status was due to the fact that, as a representative of the dominant imperial power, she was automatically elevated above the local population regardless of the fact that she was a woman and in a secondary position in the metropole.<sup>174</sup> In *Jinrikisha Days in Japan*, Scidmore recounts visits to both spaces reserved for men such as the clubhouses and places reserved for women for tea ceremonies.<sup>175</sup> By removing her gender from the forefront, her travels became accessible to both genders despite women's favoritism, and she was able to authoritatively comment on all aspects of Japanese life including politics nationally and internationally. Although, interestingly enough she claims that "no foreigner [was able to penetrate] to that sacred centre," referring to the Japanese home, yet Bacon published her first and second editions of *Japanese Girls & Women* in the same time period.<sup>176</sup>

Scidmore was aware of how her gender was publicly perceived and how to portray herself to best success. When she first started writing, she would publish under "E.R. Scidmore" and was mistaken for a man. She catered her articles depending upon which magazine she was writing for. In *Harper's Bazaar*, she wrote about the status of women in Japan yet for *The*

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<sup>173</sup> Strohlic.

<sup>174</sup> McFadden, 46.

<sup>175</sup> Scidmore, *Jinrikisha Days in Japan*, 86-91.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 374.

*Cosmopolitan Magazine* she merely discussed teapots and chopsticks.<sup>177</sup> With her Canadian Pacific Railway Company commissioned travel pamphlet *Westward to the Far East: A Guide to the Principal Cities in China and Japan*, Scidmore perfected the use of the gender-neutral tone to describe the best routes through China and Japan and what sites to visit.<sup>178</sup> This was the same tone that she then used throughout *Jinrikisha Days in Japan* to make her book appeal to a wider audience.

In the second edition preface of *Jinrikisha Days in Japan*, Scidmore only gives a cursory nod to the established convention of disclaimers for women writers. She starts her book by stating:

This book has only attempted to present some of the phases of the new Japan as they appeared to one who was both a tourist and a foreign resident in that country. No one person can see it all, nor comprehend it, as the jinrikisha speeds through city streets and over country roads, nor do any two people enjoy just the same experiences, see things in the same light, or draw the same conclusions as to the remarkable people. Japan is so inexhaustible and so full of surprises that to the last day of his stay the tourist and the resident alike are confronted by some novelty that is yet wholly common and usual in the life of the Japanese.<sup>179</sup>

She confidently speaks of her experience in Japan and only takes a sentence to exercise humility and acknowledge her book's limitations. As she continues to justify why the reader should buy and read her book, she allies herself with "scientists, scholars, and specialists, the poetic and the political writers" who wrote on Japan by stating that they missed the minutiae that makes Japan

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<sup>177</sup> Strohlic.

<sup>178</sup> Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore, *Westward to the Far East: A Guide to the Principal Cities of China and Japan* (Montreal: Canadian Pacific Railway Co., 1891).

<sup>179</sup> Scidmore, *Jinrikisha Days in Japan*, iii.



wonderful to visit.<sup>180</sup> Just as Bacon did, Scidmore aligns herself with the male writers before her while also highlighting that their lack of connection with the “true Japan” prevents them from accurately portraying it. It is Scidmore and Bacon’s attention to detail and connection, a characteristic of nineteenth century women writing on Japan, that made their books successful.<sup>181</sup>

Scidmore’s familial connection meant that she gained greater access to government officials in Japan, including the Empress. Bacon’s sole connection to the Empress was limited to the fact that she visited the school that Bacon taught at. Scidmore, on the other hand, was invited to the palace to meet the Empress and knew more about the international politics surrounding Japan. Discussing politics was something usually avoided by female travel writers unless they were commenting on the politics of the land they were visiting as Bacon did. Scidmore devoted more of her book to politics than would be expected of a writer simply recounting adventures and travel routes in Japan. Part of her political discussion is focused around recounting the scandal at the Japanese court of the Empress wearing western clothing, something completely acceptable for a woman to remark upon. However, her discussion of the issue was not merely that of clothing styles but instead of the political maneuvering at court:

The Empress ordained and defended this change of dress in a famous court circular, whose chief argument seemed to be that the alteration from the sitting and kneeling etiquette of the Orient to the standing etiquette of the Occident required western fashions for women as well as men. Every lover of the picturesque protested, but it was all suspected that this manifesto was a shrewd political move of Count Ito’s to convince the treaty powers that the Japanese do not differ from other civilized people. Should the sacrifice of the old life and the beautiful national dress help to secure for Japan a revision of the shameful and unjust treaties forced upon her from 1854 to 1858, and promote the political

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid., iii.

<sup>181</sup> Sterry, “Constructs of Meiji Japan,” 174.

liberty and commercial prosperity of the country, the Empress's patriotic iconoclasm may be justified.<sup>182</sup>

Scidmore definitely takes a political stance regarding Japan's relationship with the United States as evidenced by her description of the Unequal Treaties. Her political stance is that Japan is losing too much of what makes it unique and beautiful to behold in its rapid Westernization. While this stance can certainly be perceived as an anti-American stance, and therefore a bold stance for her to take, she couches her argument as an imperial civilian lamenting the loss of a treasured vacationland. Japan is an imperial commodity to be viewed and experienced and its attempts to become equal ruins the effect.

Viewing Japan through the imperial lens afforded Scidmore credibility not traditionally gifted to female works. In fact, the headline of her 1928 obituary references *Jinrikisha Days in Japan* as a way for readers to understand the great impact of the departed.<sup>183</sup> A 1891 *New York Times* review of *Jinrikisha Days in Japan* compared Scidmore to her male contemporaries and found her writing to be either equal or superior to their level.<sup>184</sup> Whereas Bacon adhered to the restraints of her gender, Scidmore adopted the imperial identity in order to elevate herself and her works to the level of authority.

### **Gertrude Adams Fisher and Insecure Authority**

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<sup>182</sup> Scidmore, *Jinrikisha Days in Japan*, 129.

<sup>183</sup> "MISS ELIZA SCIDMORE DIES IN GENEVA AT 72; Author of 'Jinrikisha Days in Japan' and Other Books of the Far East," *The New York Times*, November 4, 1928.

<sup>184</sup> "NEW PUBLICATIONS; THE TRUE JAPAN. JINRIKISHA DAYS IN JAPAN. By Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore. Illustrated. New-York: Harper & Brothers," *The New York Times*, June 22, 1891.

Gertrude Adams Fisher in *A Woman Alone in the Heart of Japan*, fluctuated in her use a gender-specific or gender-neutral tone when recounting her observations and experiences traveling around Japan. Her title certainly suggests that she planned to take a gendered approach to her writing and it follows the standard naming convention of denoting whether a woman wrote the work by the title.<sup>185</sup> The acknowledgement that she traveled unaccompanied meant to elevate her work and mark it as unique as Japan was quite far to travel unaccompanied by even a female companion. However, Fisher changed her tone depending upon what she was discussing in her text. She simultaneously identified herself as a woman and as a representative of the American imperial endeavor.

Unlike Bacon or Scidmore, who aligned their writings with either persona, Fisher fluctuated between the two and was sometimes both at the same time. This tone shift reflected the difficulty faced by Fisher to establish her own authority. Bacon wrote a scholarly work on a topic heretofore uncovered and Scidmore was already a household name and established writer on Japanese culture. Fisher, on the other hand, was writing one of many female travel narratives that pervaded the nineteenth century, albeit on a country that not many could afford to travel to. In order for her work and observations to be taken seriously, she needed to definitively place Japan in the position of exotic inferior other and establish her own superior gendered position.

A mark of nineteenth century female writing was the “avoidance of authoritative pronouncements.”<sup>186</sup> Fisher certainly did not hesitate to make authoritative pronouncements especially in her impressions of the Japanese: “The little people of bows and smiles see no

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<sup>185</sup> Williams, “‘Like the ladies of Europe’?,” 18.

<sup>186</sup> Shizen Ozawa, “Erasing Footsteps: On Some Differences between the First and Popular Editions of Isabella Bird’s Unbeaten Tracks in Japan” in *Asian Crossings: Travel Writing on China, Japan and Southeast Asia* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008), 88.

reason for our aggressive speech, pushing ways, and abrupt manners. They have time to be polite. To them life means more leisure and less money.”<sup>187</sup> In observations such as this one, Fisher staunchly gave her impressions and stated them in a blunter manner than would be assumed of a female Victorian writer. She continually expressed her opinion of Japan and how exactly she found it and its people lacking. She was constantly paranoid that the politeness of the Japanese people was a front and she made little effort to engage with them on more than a superficial level.<sup>188</sup>

However, she emphasized her gender as that was part of the draw of her book, as evidenced by the title. The parts where she seemed the most engaged were the parts that concerned women such as women’s education, childrearing, and the *geisha*. These were also the areas where she was the most authoritative. In the childrearing section, she commented from the perspective of her gender to find the Japanese childrearing practices questionable at best when she stated: “Neglect and ignorance, not willful cruelty as the distress of the little ones.”<sup>189</sup> She considers the Japanese women to be part of her greater sisterhood and therefore when she writes on them she speaks about them as a concerned older sister, such as when she visited a young prostitute.<sup>190</sup> Yet it is during the *geisha* portion that she forgoes her gendered stance to become an imperial spectator, for that is the only acceptable way for her to view the spectacle. It would not

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<sup>187</sup> Fisher, 17.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 24.

have been decent for a good Christian, American woman to view the parade of *geisha* and *maiko* through the street. Instead, she describes the event as a genderless spectator.<sup>191</sup>

Depending on the situation, Fisher needs to eschew her gender to make herself an authority — and an acceptable one at that. Fisher sought to embody the persona of the imperial traveler, but she still needed to adhere to gender conventions much more than Scidmore due to her lack of established reputation. Indeed, Fisher followed the publishing standards for female travel works, especially those on Japan, through her title and the inclusion of photographs from her trip. Photographs of Japan were particularly appealing since they depicted a staged and picturesque land that appealed to the author's audiences.<sup>192</sup> By outwardly following gender norms, Fisher then could use the text to assert herself as the imperial traveler and adopt the gender-neutral language associated with that title to justify her various actions in Japan and experiences. The combination allowed for her work to be taken seriously and for Fisher to attempt to be considered an authority on Japan and its Westernization.

### **Conforming to Gender to Create Authority**

Travel writers in the nineteenth century had to follow a set formula, regardless of whether or not it was official. Women writers in particular had to be careful of how they presented themselves and their actions in their published works as the private became public through that process. Some women, like Fisher and Bacon, followed the established formulas to have their work taken seriously, despite the fact that they were already subversive through the action of

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 36-47.

<sup>192</sup> Sterry, "Constructs of Meiji Japan," 178-179.

travel. Bacon, in particular, needed her work to be taken seriously as one of the goals for *Japanese Girls & Women* was to garner support for Japanese women's education. Bacon and Tsuda needed to craft Bacon's persona to be palatable, as women travel writers needed to "accommodate [themselves] to the rest of society, must live by the judgements of others in order that her Self may be both seen and heard."<sup>193</sup> Others like Scidmore established their authority by eschewing their gender and become imperial actors abroad. By representing the metropole abroad, they were automatically elevated to the same level as men and could gain previously denied access. In both of these instances, the reason the women were successful is because they cemented Japan's position as the studied and exotic inferior other. It was Japan's inferior position that allowed them to assume the power of imperial enactor and allowed them to become accepted authorities on a country already deemed ideal for the women to visit.

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<sup>193</sup> Anderson, *Women and the Politics of Travel*, 20.

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## Conclusion

Japan was the idyllic escape for the industrial West, especially for women seeking to escape the constraints of daily life and to explore a land perfectly preserved from Western influence, at least in the beginning. There was no threat to their person and no moral issues in visiting Japan on their own, unaccompanied by a male escort. The country accommodated itself to Western demands by providing access to its people and changing customs, which notably included separating the public baths by gender.<sup>194</sup> Although, Japan was only accommodating to a point, as it had seen the damage wrought by imperialism in their fellow countries like China and refused to be colonized. While the restrictions placed upon Western visitors proved irksome, the visitors were not there to truly experience a different culture. Instead, they were there to consume the banal image of Japan sold to them by tourist industries and by the works printed by those who traveled before them.

Women, when they wrote about their time in Japan usually filled their books with photographs or commissioned art pieces to document the beautiful land they visited.<sup>195</sup> In *A Woman Alone in the Heart of Japan*, Fisher peppered her text with photographs of points of interest or of herself partaking in local customs such as an image of herself seated in her first *jinrikisha*. Not only was she taking advantage of the relatively new medium of photography, but she was also documenting her version of Japan. For the second edition of *Japanese Girls & Women*, Bacon commissioned gorgeous illustrations from one of the premiere illustrators in

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<sup>194</sup> Fisher, 7.

<sup>195</sup> Sterry, "Constructs of Meiji Japan," 178-179.

Japan, Takeuchi Keishū. Color illustrations depicting Japanese culture and folk life made Alice state that the second edition was “the prettiest book on Japan out.”<sup>196</sup> Through Fisher’s photographs, and Bacon’s illustrations, women went to Japan expecting their own version of what they described: a quaint country with unusual beauty. They wanted their own piece of Japan, and if the thriving commercial photography industry in the port of Yokohama alone was any indicator, they succeeded in capturing a superficial piece of the exotic land.<sup>197</sup>

The women’s photographs and travel narratives fed into the stereotypical image of Japan as beautiful and infantile and in turn encouraged more women to go to Japan seeking the image of Japan they were promised.<sup>198</sup> The cycle continued as works and images on Japan continued to be produced as they made Japan feel knowable and obtainable. They saw the Japan that they wanted to see, and that the Japanese government wanted them to see, if the travel restrictions and limited access provided by The Welcome Society were indicators. For the casual traveler, that was acceptable, however for those who wanted to know the “true” Japan and position themselves as more than the typical tourist, that was unacceptable.

Women travel writers in particular had to work even harder to be differentiated from tourists as opposed to the men of their field, despite the decades of women travel writers who saturated the nineteenth century. Therefore, they needed to gain access and have personal experiences in a Japan not seen by the casual visitor. American women, as members of the unofficial imperial power in Japan, were given greater access than other Western women. When

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<sup>196</sup> Tsuda, 388.

<sup>197</sup> Sebastian Dobson, “Yokohama Shashin,” in *Art & Artifice: Japanese Photographs of the Meiji Era* (Boston: MFA Publications, 2004), 15-38.

<sup>198</sup> Sterry, “Constructs of Meiji Japan,” 180.



they wrote about their experiences, they were writing from an implicit position of power given to them based upon their race and national citizenship. They were “dominating, restructuring, and having authority” over Japan and the Japanese people.<sup>199</sup> Their works served to moralize and civilize the country for Western sensibilities.<sup>200</sup> Their image of Japan was what Americans at home in the metropole perceived to be true and that was the Japan they sought, as evidenced by the popularity of works by Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore. Women purposefully recreated Scidmore’s travels to try and capture some of her agency and knowledge of the other for themselves.

By writing on a destination like Japan, Alice Mabel Bacon, Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore, and Gertrude Adams Fisher claimed imperial and masculine power for themselves while still adhering to accepted social constructions on what travel was acceptable for women. Cloaked in the confidence afforded by their belief in America’s exceptionalism, these women traveled to a foreign land and assumed access not normally given by the Japanese. They expressed their concern for their Eastern Sisters and, in the case of Bacon and Tsuda, did their Christian and American duty to uplift them. Despite their differences in opinion on Japan, all three women expressed a distinctly American understanding of Japan and its place in Western dominated international stage.

Their status as imperial actors gave them the social leeway to thwart the expectations of their gender, however when it was time to make their private ventures public, they again needed to adhere to the judgements of others. Gertrude Adams Fisher adhered to the gendered conventions expected of a woman’s travel narrative with only minimal divorcing herself from

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<sup>199</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 3.

<sup>200</sup> Anderson, *Women and the Politics of Travel*, 32.

her gender in her text. Alice Mabel Bacon and Tsuda Umeko, on the other hand, skillfully manipulated the gender expectations to carve out a lauded place in the scholarly and masculine field related to culture studies on Japan. By adhering to the conventions for women's writing and by writing on women, they were able to make the political case for women's education in Japan and create an authoritative space for themselves. Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore made her name for herself at *National Geographic* and in the press through her ability to switch between masculine and feminine writing. Her focus on unknown territories and the feminized East allowed for her to subvert her gender in her writing. However, their literary successes would not have been possible if Japan had not been placed in the position of the "inferior other" by the United States and other members of the West. It was through these combinations of factors that these women were able to make a name for themselves and cement America's imperial position at the turn of the twentieth century.

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Japan's cherry blossom season famously begins in April and lasts for around two weeks. The best places to see the blush-tinted blooms are in Maruyama Park, Mount Yishino, Himeji Castle and Fuji Five Lakes. Here's our expert guide...  
Where is the best place to see the cherry blossoms in Japan? You'll find sakura hotspots in over 1,000 locations across the country so picking the best can prove tricky. 1. Yoshino It's probably Japan's most famous cherry-bloom destination, where a carpet of blushing blooms cascade the mountainsides. They bring stacks of bento boxes, and bottles of beer and sake emerge from coolers, followed by shouts of "kampai!" cheers. The event gets more raucous as the moon comes up and the sake slips down. Japan's iconic flower represents the beauty and brevity of life. Every spring a tapestry of pink blooms blankets the island nation of Japan, starting in the south and crawling northward. Cherry trees, or sakura, symbolize the evanescence of human life in Japanese culture—their blossoms are both brilliant and brief. In Tokyo, urban dwellers emerge from their homes and offices to take pause underneath the fleeting bloom, their daylong celebrations stretching into the night. According to folklore, the mountain deity traveled to rice paddies on floating cherry blossom petals and nurtured the crop. Thus, a long bloom became synonymous with a fruitful harvest. Because of this relationship to rice—which sustained human life—the tree was regarded as sacred.