

Isabella Bird: An Argument for Mobility and a Changed
Definition of New Womanhood

by

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Abstract

I argue that mobility and ideas of New Womanhood were mutually constitutive by the late nineteenth century onwards. Through Isabella Bird's writing and biographies, I find that she, and by extension others of the fin-de-siècle, connected mobility with Christianity and modernity in a Western imperialist context. Her biographers are discussed as representatives of each generation's feminist view of New Women. I focus on Bird's writing about Korea, where she advocated missionaries and views on race and Orientalism in ways that were not simply echoes of contemporary British jingoist ideas. For example, she concluded that Russia should take over Korea after the First Sino-Japanese War. Studying Bird reevaluates and historicizes the definition of New Womanhood by emphasizing how privileges of mobility and Christian missionizing were assumptions built into fin-de-siècle writing by "New Women," despite how late thinkers characterized them as secular progressives, like the feminist movement.

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INTRODUCTION

In January of 1873, the “quaint and buttoned-up little figure” of 39-year-old Isabella Bird arrived in Hawaii, known to her as the Sandwich Islands.¹ Still a relatively inexperienced traveller, Bird proved herself a natural at professional travel during this trip. Her intended destination had been Australia, but during the long boat journey from England some of her fellow passengers convinced her to change her plans.² In Hawaii she quickly made friends and formed connections that led to her helping to prepare a dinner party for the local sheriff and the king of Hawaii, King Lunalilo. She and the King formed a friendship with romantic potential, as Bird’s 1970 biographer Pat Barr implied, noting that the King “must have enjoyed meeting Isabella, for he called the next afternoon bearing a verse he had composed to wish her God-speed on a journey she was about to take...he escorted her to the steamer and ‘helped with the luggage’!”³ Bird’s response is illustrated in the fact that she kept her plans to leave the island and wrote in a letter home to Edinburgh that she, “found him peculiarly interesting and attractive, but sadly irresolute about the mouth and [she] saw from little things that he could be persuaded into anything.”⁴ Given her advancing age and the pressure that would have been upon her to marry and, perhaps, “settle down,” another woman in Bird’s position may have considered remaining in Hawaii longer to entertain the possibility of a romance with a king, especially since she admitted an attraction to him and she had been persuaded to change her travel plans earlier in her trip. But Isabella Bird chose to stay on the move.

¹ Pat Barr, *A Curious Life for a Lady: The Story of Isabella Bird* (London: Macmillan & Company Limited and John Murray Limited, 1970), 23.

² *Ibid.*, 22.

³ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 42.

This disposition towards mobility was further proven in a letter exchange with her sister, Henrietta. Bird wrote from Hawaii to Henrietta in Edinburgh that her new surroundings were paradise and that the two of them could have a good life there together. To Bird's surprise, Henrietta wrote back accepting her sister's offer and stating her intent to join her in Hawaii.⁵ Bird received this reply on the day she was leaving Hawaii and quickly "squashed it very flat."⁶ As Barr characterized it, "Hennie's role was the traditionally female one of waiting and watching... Hennie had to be a stay-at-home to whom all happy wanderers return, trailing their bright tales behind them."⁷ In this vein, Bird's wanderlust could be enabled only if her sister maintained her traditionally feminine, "settled" role "at home" in Edinburgh vis-à-vis Bird's mobility abroad. Again, she prioritized her own mobility over other options.

Through her choices to reject King Lunalilo and continue with the next leg of her journey, and to revoke her invitation to her sister, Bird rejected contemporary ideas of femininity, such as marriage, domesticity, and "settling down" in pursuit of her vocation as a professional traveller and travel-writer. Bird was resolute in her need for mobility and would take courses of action that enabled it.

This thesis posits that Bird and women like her who insisted on cultivating their own personal mobility ought to be considered within the category of "New Women" and that mobility, itself—as a priority and possibility for these women—formed a crucial component of ideas about modernity and power that grew up within the context of the New Woman. The generic definition of New Womanhood, as will be discussed in more detail later in this introduction, typically assumes the New Woman to be a white woman from Western Europe or

⁵ Barr, 51.

⁶ Ibid., 52.

⁷ Ibid., 52.

North America during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, who was unmarried and financially independent, usually because she was a published author. In much secondary historical writing, New Women have come to be associated with a modern, secular version of feminism that developed in the early to mid-twentieth century.⁸ What made this generation of women, considered to be the first wave of “New Women,” novel was their disruptiveness to what many considered was the traditional social order: that it was a woman’s natural role to stay within the domestic sphere; nurture those around her, especially males; and act as a civilizing influence on them. Instead, the “New Woman,” was thought of as transgressing into the public sphere, earning wages, buying consumables for herself instead of her family, and modeling brash opinions and behaviour.⁹ Recent scholarship has begun to interrogate the superficiality of this characterization and the limitations of this definition by considering case studies of women in this long fin-de-siècle period and finding that they do and do not fit this vision: some were deeply religious, many were politically conservative in some ways and progressive in other ways.¹⁰ At times they enjoyed privileges and accepted them as natural, at other times they railed against the privileges of others and ideas about the natural social order. The door is open for a richer, more nuanced definition and understanding of New Womanhood in this period. This thesis considers Isabella Bird as a case study of New Womanhood at the turn of the twentieth-century and emphasizes her prioritization of mobility as the quintessential facet of her modernity and disruptiveness. This did not mean that Bird was socially or politically progressive or even feminist; she embraced her whiteness and Christianity to her advantage, especially to obtain

⁸ Lyn Pykett, *The “Improper” Feminine: The Women’s Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing* (New York: Routledge, 2006), ix, accessed February 27, 2017, MyiLibrary.

⁹ Ann Heilmann and Margaret Beetham, eds., *New Woman Hybridities: Femininity, Feminism and International Consumer Culture, 1880-1930* (London: Routledge, 2004), i, accessed February 27, 2017, MyiLibrary.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, i.

mobility. For a Western European or North American woman to be considered a New Woman, she needed mobility. Mobility was typically thought of as an attribute only possessed by white, Christian, male colonizers. The New Woman therefore needed to use her whiteness and Christianity as much as possible in order to reject her femininity and use her agency to express modernity, disruptiveness, and mobility. Downplaying her femininity allowed her to appear as close as possible to the archetype of the mobile. However, it should be noted that Bird was an early example of New Womanhood. Born in 1831 and establishing her writing career in the 1870s, she and her contemporaries may or may not have participated in the 1890s-specific New Woman movement. Instead they can be seen as anticipating New Women and therefore relevant to this discussion. Bird would go on to be independently travelling and writing during the 1890s, after having helped to set the stage for the 1890s phenomenon.

Bird is a perfect example of a New Woman and the need to adjust the term's definition. The standard definition does not fit her because she was committed to Christianity, never expressed feminist ideals, and she eventually married. But she should be considered a New Woman because of her success as a travel writer, her adventurous spirit, her long list of places she travelled to and feats she accomplished on her own, and her steadfast resolve. She was modern in her independence of wealth and emotions, and she was disruptive with her rejection of gender norms and her lifelong pursuit of mobility. To obtain mobility, Bird placed her whiteness and Christianity in the foreground of her books, but did not emphasize her gender. When writing about other cultures, she did so as a white observer reporting on foreigners in a deeply Orientalist fashion. When she travelled, she connected with local missionaries, and when she wrote she described other religions extensively and perceived them as superstition. She was a strong advocate of missionary work, and dedicated many pages in her books to the status of Christianity

in the locations she visited. Her books, and other writing like it, were perceived as important to the advancement of scientific and cultural knowledge about other races, and she used them as a platform for advocacy of missionaries. Bird's whiteness and Christianity were components of her success as a travel writer and therefore the qualities that allowed her to become mobile and a New Woman. It is worthwhile to reevaluate the definition of New Womanhood because it has been so influential in the feminist movement, which will be explored when Bird's biographies are discussed. Its impact on previous iterations of feminism indicates that it has influenced modern feminism, making it a valuable task to re-examine the term.

My thesis will center on the themes of mobility and through it show how ideas of gender, race, empire, and religion became imbricated in ideas of travel, travel writing, New Womanhood, and Isabella Bird as an individual. It will develop a new definition out of the shifting meanings of New Womanhood to better understand that the mobility that this generation enjoyed occurred through strengthening of socio-cultural ideas, including racism, imperialism, and Christian missionizing. At the same time, New Women opened ideas of the public sphere including women in gainful employment. It was a process of transgressing some boundaries while solidifying others in pursuit of mobility and therefore New Womanhood, which were deeply intertwined.

Primary Sources

I have chosen three of Isabella Bird's books to consider. Two of them were *The Yangtze Valley and Beyond*, published in 1899, and *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan*, published in 1881. *Unbeaten Tracks* is particularly noteworthy because of what it reveals about her view of race. When she went to Japan she found the changes of the Meiji Restoration noticeable, even though

she had never been there before. She was disappointed in most of Japanese society.¹¹ What she did enjoy was the company of the Ainu, who she perceived as primitive and therefore more authentic, which was what she was looking for in a journey to Asia.¹² This engagement with Orientalism was one of the ways with which she employed the archetype of who was meant to be mobile: white, Christian, male colonizers.

The most important book of Bird's, which is the focus of this thesis, was *Korea and Her Neighbors*, published 1897. Bird was fortunate enough to be in and around Korea during one of its most tumultuous moments of recent history: the First Sino-Japanese War, during which China and Japan fought for control of Korea. Like all her books, this one begins with several chapters depicting Bird's route through Korea and her observations on race, geography, religion, and culture. But this time, the book turns into a form of war reporting. She wrote at length about her experience of the beginnings of war, her flight from Korea as war approached, the way war played out, and the political turmoil afterward. It ended with her assessment that the best option for Korea was for Russia to take control of the country.¹³ This decision was a product of Bird's religious upbringing, her perception of race that is demonstrated in *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan*, and her observations of the war.

Literature Review

There are three areas of secondary literature that are immediately relevant to this study: New Woman historiography, studies in mobility, and studies on Bird, specifically. In looking at

¹¹ Isabella Bird Bishop, *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan: An Account of Travels on Horseback in the Interior Including Visits to the Aborigines of Yezo and the Shrines of Nikkô and Isé, Vol I* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1881), 9, accessed February 27, 2017, <https://archive.org/details/unbeatentracksin01birduoft>.

¹² *Ibid.*, 96.

¹³ Isabella Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors: A Narrative of Travel, with an Account of the Recent Vicissitudes and Present Position of the Country* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1898), 392, accessed February 27, 2017, <https://archive.org/details/koreaherneighbor00bird>.

New Woman historiography, financially and personally independent women of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century did not set out to be “New Women”. But the idea has been codified into a role that has been studied and given many definitions. *The Oxford Companion* defined it as women from “a new generation of active women, who believed in women's suffrage, equal educational opportunities for women, sexual independence, and what they called rational dress.”¹⁴ This definition is a list of positions on political and social topics, rather than a characterization of temperament or lifestyle. While a woman who was well described by the *Oxford Companion*'s definition would certainly have been modern and disruptive, not many modern and disruptive women could fit into the *Oxford Companion*'s interpretation. Bird, a religious woman, did not advocate for sexual independence. Her works did not acknowledge her own sexuality at all and did not recommend sexual freedom for others, but this should not disqualify her from being a New Woman. A woman like Bird, who did not adhere to the secular version of feminism which revered her, needs to be included in our conceptions of New Womanhood because the way she connected her religion to mobility and to Christianity challenges the link that is perceived between secularism and progressivism.

In her introduction to *A New Woman Reader: Fiction, Articles, and Drama of the 1890s*, Carolyn Christensen Nelson wrote that the term “New Woman” was coined by Sarah Grand in an essay in March of 1894. Nelson wrote that Grand used the term to describe women who had “solved the problem and proclaimed for herself what was wrong with Home-is-the-Woman's-Sphere, and prescribed the remedy.”¹⁵ Over the following months the term was used in other

¹⁴ Jenny Stringer, "New Woman," in *The Oxford Companion to Twentieth-Century Literature in English*, Oxford University Press, 1996, <http://www.oxfordreference.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/view/10.1093/acref/9780192122711.001.0001/acref-9780192122711-e-2091>.

¹⁵ Carolyn Christensen Nelson, ed., *A New Woman Reader: Fiction, Articles, and Drama of the 1890s* (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2001), ix, accessed February 27, 2017, http://books1.scholarsportal.info.proxy.library.carleton.ca/viewdoc.html?id=/ebooks/ebooks0/gibson_crkn/2009-12

publications and parodied until a stereotypical image of a New Woman emerged. According to Nelson, these New Women rejected “the constrictions of the feminine or womanly sphere”¹⁶ which “seemingly aligned the New Women with the decadents of the period because both groups refused to be contained by their culturally assigned gender roles.”¹⁷ The New Women, along with “decadents” like Oscar Wilde and Ernest Dowson, rejected the superiority of biological nature and what biology had meant for cultural expectations of lifestyle and sexuality. Because they rejected the gender norms of their time, New Women were stereotyped as “mannish”.¹⁸ Nelson’s characterization of New Women, informed by Grand’s early interpretation of her peers, was much like the *Oxford Companion*’s in that it was largely based on taking a position on a social issue that was disruptive and coincides with second wave feminism. While women like Bird pushed for decreased domesticity and increased education, and work, all of which were modern and disruptive concepts, not everyone who can be considered a New Woman would have done so. A rejection of domesticity should not be considered a condition of New Womanhood because domesticity does not necessarily contradict a woman’s mobility, modernity, and disruptiveness. In this paper domesticity is considered the role that was often imposed upon Western women where they were required to take care of the home, where they would stay, while their husbands and sons would go out into the workplace and the world. The concept can also be seen applied to England as a domestic, safe space from the rest of the world. It is a gendered dichotomy where the domestic is considered settled, while the un-domestic is mobile and foreign. I argue that, since New Womanhood was an expression of modernity, disruptiveness, and mobility a woman did not necessarily need to give up any semblance of

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¹⁶ Ibid., ix.

¹⁷ Nelson, ix.

¹⁸ Ibid., x.

domesticity. She could be modern, mobile, and have a disruptive impact on her family, community, and the world, but still maintain her domestic role.

Lyn Pykett, in the introduction to her volume *The 'Improper' Feminine: The Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing*, wrote that women novelists became popular in the 1860s, but New Woman writing specifically became prominent in the 1890s. Pykett confirmed that the new genre was widely read and publicly discussed until it became an important part of literary culture at the time. Despite, or perhaps because of that, the most significant New Woman novels disappeared until second-wave feminism rediscovered and reclaimed them in the 1970s.¹⁹ Pykett's interpretation of New Womanhood focused on the writing of literature and, with a direct line, connected the movement to second wave feminism. The goal of Pykett's volume was to demonstrate that the "female sensationalists of the 1860s and the New Woman writers of the 1890s occupy an important place in the cultural history of the nineteenth century"²⁰, and were essential to the development of fiction and to create a unique and separate list of nineteenth century women's literature instead of assimilating the genre into the larger category of "English literature masterpieces."²¹ Of course, Pykett wanted women's sensational novels and New Woman writing to be part of literary history, but she believed that it needed to be placed in their own cultural moments in order to be made visible. Doing so, Pykett wrote, would alter literary periodization and genres. The use of New Woman literature in second wave feminism that Pykett described is an example of the way New Womanhood has been defined by narrow characteristics.²² In this case, it was the act of writing and publishing along with possession of a viewpoint that suited a more modern reader's political stance. Pykett's writing informs my

¹⁹ Pykett, ix.

²⁰ Ibid., ix.

²¹ Pykett, ix.

²² Ibid., x.

understanding of the role New Women had in their time and place, as well as the way second wave feminism interpreted their legacy, which is vital to understanding Pat Barr's 1970 biography of Bird.

Ann Heilmann and Margaret Beetham's volume *New Woman Hybridities: Femininity, Feminism and International Culture, 1880-1930* looked at the meanings imposed upon the New Woman in United Kingdom, Canadian, North American, European, and Japanese culture. It focused on hybridities of these roles—the variety of ways that nationality and ethnicity affected the “modern woman” and defined her in international consumer culture and feminist writing. It presented a broader and more inclusive view on New Womanhood and introduced the concept of modernity and disruptiveness as defining features of New Women.²³ Since the 1970s, the New Woman has been garnering academic interest and has been seen as many things: “an emblem of sexual anarchy, an agent of mediation between mass market and modernist cultures, or as a symptom of the consolidation of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century political liberation movements.”²⁴ Heilmann and Beetham wrote that this variety of roles into which New Women have been categorized has become a contested area of culture and politics, especially in conjunction with the stereotypes applied to them during the movement. They note that “the disciplines of history, literature, cultural studies, and women's studies”²⁵ have all extensively studied the nature of New Womanhood, making it difficult to say anything new about the topic. However, they wrote that the focus of their study, hybridity, made it unique.²⁶ The view that New Women have been categorized inconsistently and that a new, hybrid view of New Women is needed is fundamental to my argument. Its international scope and comparison between

²³ Heilmann and Beetham, 2.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, i.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

nationalities allowed Heilmann and Beetham to see that New Womanhood was consistently associated with “the modern and with the disruptive.”²⁷ This is an essential and perfectly phrased way of framing New Women, and one which will be applied to Isabella Bird. The New Woman phenomenon spanned decades and continents, and meant different things for different people. While it is a concept imposed on women rather than one that was actively sought out, the qualities of modernity and disruptiveness unite the way these women are considered in modern scholarship. *New Woman Hybridities* viewed hybridity as a positive identity in order to “reverse the discourse”²⁸ that stigmatized people who were not within certain boundaries of class, race, religion, and nation. The way that “traditional femininity and the modern living”²⁹ formed together, combining the old and new, was a focus of Heilmann and Beetham’s, and is exactly the sort of hybridity and inclusivity that forms the new definition of New Womanhood and allows Bird, along with other women who did not publish written works or share politics with modern progressiveness, to be considered New Women. Like Heilmann and Beetham incorporated different cultures into New Womanhood, my thesis will connect it with mobility as a through-line of New Women. While not all New Women explicitly sought mobility, many did and it was a desire that made them modern and disruptive, and gave them more opportunities to acquire and express the hybridities discussed by Heilmann and Beetham. While my thesis will not actively engage with Heilmann and Beetham’s concept of hybridity, they are an excellent example of how others are re-examining the category of the New Woman to become more inclusive.

In Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton’s volumes *Moving Subjects* and *Bodies in Contact*, mobility and intimacy were used as ways to study empire. For them, bodies were a way

²⁷ Ibid., 2.

²⁸ Heilmann and Beetham, 3.

²⁹ Ibid., 4.

to find evidence for women's history because it is so lacking among standard forms of records.³⁰ In a discussion of the meaning of space, they wrote that space is often thought of as a surface which people move across, or a fixed site on which power is "deployed or circumvented" and suggested a new, "more dynamic, even kinetic model"³¹. Such a conception views the ground and space as constantly moving, with the people inside it adjusting. They used bodies as a way to historicize intimacy and claimed that "crosscultural sexual relationships are seen as forces that 'connect' or 'anchor' white men into non-European communities"³², meaning that mobility is seen as belonging to colonizers while the indigenous are static. In this way, immobility represented the local, the domestic, and the "primitive." Ballantyne and Burton found that modern work repeats and continues these ideas and assumptions that the local was native and stationary, and "intimacy is bestowed, visited, forced"³³ upon it. This is exactly the sort of logic exercised by Isabella Bird in her writing. The way Bird interpreted her surroundings through a deeply Orientalist eye, much like those discussed by Ballantyne and Burton, allows us to see how mobility and New Womanhood were deeply connected. Bird, to gain mobility, needed to reinforce ideas of race and Christianity through her travel writing.

New Directions in Travel Writing Studies, edited by Julia Kuehn and Paul Smethurst, views mobility as essential to any study of travel writing.³⁴ This volume mentions Isabella Bird specifically in Steve Clark's essay "A Study Rather Than a Rapture", which was about Bird's book *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan*. *Unbeaten Tracks* was published three times. Clark noted that

³⁰ Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, eds., *Bodies in Contact: Rethinking Colonial Encounters in World History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 4.

³¹ Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, eds., *Moving Subjects: Gender, Mobility, and Intimacy in an Age of Global Empire* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 3.

³² *Ibid.*, 5.

³³ *Ibid.*, 6.

³⁴ Julia Kuehn and Paul Smethurst, eds., *New Directions in Travel Writing Studies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 7.

critics have said that her book was about an impending rapture because of Japan's exoticness and growing power. Instead, Clark argued that over the course of those republications Bird grew "self-awareness of her imperial commitments."³⁵ He wrote that Bird was expressing a more subtle and ideologically-driven response to finding a global power in Asia.³⁶ The volume also discussed infrastructure as a necessity for modern travel, but one which was not included in travel narratives because it did not fit in with the romantic ideal of the landscape held by the writer and their readers. Bird adhered to this idea, except in the case of Japan. In Japan she observed a society which had been strongly influenced by Western Europe because of the Meiji Restoration. Because of that, Bird viewed her surroundings as inauthentic and she therefore drew attention to the infrastructure she observed. Kuehn and Smethurst informs my understanding of Bird's writing, specifically about Japan, by questioning what Bird chose to mention and what she chose to omit. In doing so, Kuehn and Smethurst drew a strong connection between mobility and New Women travel writers like Bird and provided proof of Bird writing and then receiving feedback which she used to alter her politics.

Mobility was understood as a commodity in Liz Montegary and Melissa Autumn White's volume *Mobile Desires: The Politics and Erotics of Mobility Justice*. "Put simply, this volume understands mobility as a violently and unfairly distributed resource, and seeks to transform the political, economic, and cultural structures that make the freedom of movement possible for some and impossible for others."³⁷ This is how mobility will be conceived of in this paper: a commodity for which New Women like Isabella Bird used their whiteness and Christianity to acquire. Montegary and White also acknowledged that mobility could be considered a negative

³⁵ Ibid., 4.

³⁶ Kuehn and Smethurst, 4.

³⁷ Liz Montegary and Melissa Autumn White, eds., *Mobile Desires: The Politics and Erotics of Mobility Justice* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 4.

thing, as capitalism has depended on coerced mobility, meaning that mobility cannot be equated with freedom or seen as inherently good.³⁸ The ability to stay in place can be equally important, but not to women like Bird. For her, a benefactor of western capitalism, mobility was a life's pursuit. In this thesis mobility will be engaged with as a commodity rather than a space, as argued by Ballantyne and Burton. The way that Bird pursued mobility suits Montegary and White's conception of mobility perfectly.

Isabella Bird is a suitable case study of the connection between mobility and New Womanhood because, as her biographers and the historians who have studied her have oft noted, she led a unique life of independence and constant, intriguing travel. For information on Bird's life and character I have looked at a selection of her own books as well as two biographies. The first, *The Life of Isabella Bird (Mrs. Bishop)* was published in 1908 by Anna M. Stoddart, who was a personal friend of Bird's. Published only four years after Bird's death and written by someone who admired her greatly, the book sounds eulogistic and sycophantic at times, but is also an insightful look at the way that Bird viewed her world and how her contemporaries viewed her. It is largely a secondary source on the stories of Bird's life, but it includes several anecdotes about interactions between Bird and Stoddart herself, making it in part a primary source.

The second biography is *A Curious Life for a Lady: The Story of Isabella Bird* by Pat Barr. This book was published in 1970, during the second wave feminist movement. As Pykett noted, second wave feminism was when the concept of the New Woman and the works they produced resurfaced and were reinvigorated.³⁹ *A Curious Life for a Lady* takes an extremely

³⁸ Ibid., 4.

³⁹ Pykett, ix.

different look at Bird's life than Stoddart's biography. While they share dates, facts, and anecdotes, Barr's work is a skeptical and in-depth look at Bird's personality, fears, and inadequacies. Deeply psychological and perceptive, Barr revealed the intricacies of Bird's religious trouble.

Was Isabella Bird a New Woman? What was a New Woman, and why is a new definition of her needed? New Women were understood by their contemporaries and Second Wave feminists in different ways which were informed by each era's preferred set of feminist beliefs, meaning that these women were defined by and contributed to the foundations of modern feminism. But what does mobility have to do with her? Through analysis of Bird's books and ideas of Montegary and White as well as Kuehn and Smethurst, it can be seen that mobility can be considered a commodity, one which was thought to be possessed by a white, male conqueror rather than the "feminized" indigenous. For New Women like Bird, mobility was both a goal which would allow them freedom and lifestyle, and a means of obtaining further mobility and independence. Therefore, when she contributed to and reproduced narratives of religious and racial Orientalism, she was also contributing to her own mobility.

New Women gained notoriety and stereotypes because the movement was vocal and spread through the publishing of fiction in books and periodicals. New Woman literature started years before Sarah Grand coined the term. Not all of the genre was written by women, but they all featured strong heroines, either fictional or real, who rebelled against societal expectations and the economic and educational limitations imposed on women. These works also drew attention to women's sexuality and psychology, and often centered around unfavourable portrayals of marriage.⁴⁰ By the time Sarah Grand first introduced the term "New Woman," the

⁴⁰ Nelson, xii.

genre had developed and more women were finding success in publishing their novels.⁴¹ The literature industry as a whole moved from the three-volume novel and lending libraries of the nineteenth century towards the one-volume novel that readers bought for themselves.⁴² Nelson wrote that because of this transition, “publishers became more willing to publish daring novels and in increasing numbers women began to publish.”⁴³ As the way that readers consumed their literature changed, so too did the content of that literature and New Women writing found its footing. So pervasive was the idea of the woman novelist that many of these novels’ heroines were themselves female writers.⁴⁴ Female travel writers like Bird found similar success in this new marketplace.

The idea of New Womanhood has transcended its initial literature-based movement. The New Women’s literature craze did not last, as the books continued to be published after the 1890s but no longer packed the same shocking punch and were not received with the same popular fervour as they used to. Despite the short-lived nature of their prominence, their legacy continues in the contributions that they have made to the development of literature and culture.⁴⁵ While the movement was originally centered around the publishing of literature that supported strength and independence in women, the idea of New Womanhood today does not need to be based on whether or not the woman is a published writer. The community formed around literature because it was a public, vocal way for its members to earn money and reach out to one another. But, like my contention that New Womanhood should not be contingent on a certain set

⁴¹ Ibid., xi.

⁴² Ibid., xii.

⁴³ Nelson, xiii.

⁴⁴ Ibid., xiii.

⁴⁵ Ibid., xiv.

of opinions, not all New Women had to publish written material in order to be considered part of the movement. The title “New Woman” goes beyond a genre of literature.

Literature on mobility studies, New Women, and Isabella Bird are highly interconnected through ideas of women’s modernity and disruptiveness, and Bird herself. Each category fits in with the other, as New Women expressed mobility and pursued it, and Bird was an extremely mobile New Woman. Although Bird is the subject which bridges the initial gap between mobility and New Women studies, mobility is the concept from which many New Women gained that title, and the thing that made Bird worth studying. Mobility is the subject from which New Women’s modernity and disruptiveness, and Bird’s historical significance, are borne. By centering mobility in this analysis of New Womanhood, a new appreciation of the fin-de-siècle period and the New Woman movement can be gained because of the way Bird connected religion and mobility completely. For her, Christianity had to be mobile in order to be brought to as many people on Earth as possible, which to her was the ultimate duty of Christians. Such a conception of Christianity was disruptive and mobile, allowing us to better understand her New Womanhood.

Methodology

The following sections are organized chronologically to focus on different groups of books and periods in her life which I will analyze, with the accompanying portions of Stoddart and Barr’s biographies. I will present arguments on the factors which contributed to her assessment that Korea should be ruled by Russia, and that she used her qualities of whiteness, Christianity, modernity, and desire, in order to obtain her goal: mobility.

When discussing travel writing it is imperative to recognize Edward Said's *Orientalism*. My understanding of Orientalism is strongly informed by his work, and when analyzing Bird's writing on other cultures the term will be employed often to describe how Bird describes the "other" of different races and religions, and how she codes herself. She strongly engages with the colonialist trope of viewing other cultures as ancient, stagnant, closed off from the world, and immobile. My ideas of travel writing are also informed by Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, where Pratt argued that travel writing produced "the rest of the world"⁴⁶ for Europeans and analyzes the way that these readers engaged with expansionism and empire.⁴⁷ My approach to imperial history follows along the lines of Catherine Hall and Philippa Levine, which is to view colonial, imperial, and domestic events in imperial Britain as mutually constitutive. Such a position allows me to see past assumptions of "home" versus "away" that are so strongly represented in writings like Bird's, and to view mobility as a commodity that was not simply held by citizens of the metropole and withheld from "primitive" subjects of the empire. These ideas connect directly with mobility, as it was integral to Bird's travel writing in both the way she perceived the world and the way she represented it to her audience. While she rarely referred to the conditions and cultures of Western Europe, her original home, she made clear that the sights she viewed in these "exotic" locations were "away," and the "other." To her, mobility meant the ability to travel the world with ease and communicate with outsiders, and she felt that she accomplished that with travel writing. This means that mobility was Bird's main priority: it meant that she was able to be free of gendered expectations of domesticity, to be financially independent by her travel writing, and voice her message that Christianity needed to be spread around the world.

⁴⁶ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 5.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, i.

By Christianity, what is meant is a specific kind of liberal evangelicalism practiced by Bird and others of her time which prioritized the conversion of souls to Christianity rather than the sect of Christianity that introduced them. As Bird travelled the world she used connections formed by networks of missionaries to make her way, but did not elaborate much on the sort of Christianity they practiced or what her own specific beliefs were. To her, it did not seem to matter which form of Christianity was being taught to new converts around the world so long as their souls were being saved. This form of evangelicalism should not be confused with the Christian fundamentalist Evangelicalism movement which emerged in the twentieth century, which was largely a reaction to the liberalism of Bird and her likeminded contemporaries.

Scope and Organization

I argue that New Womanhood is based on modernity, disruptiveness, and mobility. This means that the term could potentially include women from any time or place. However, my thesis will ground the definition in the movement which originated the term, starting in the 1890s and ending in the early twentieth century. This is in part because my subject, Isabella Bird and her journey to Korea, took place during this era. But it is also because the project is largely a discussion of early feminism, and how the New Woman movement informed it and continues to affect modern feminism. It looks at how this early feminism expressed itself in different ways, including in people like Bird who never publicly referred to themselves as feminists or voiced beliefs in the advancement of women's rights. It also does not try to find New Women of other races and religions because Bird is the focus of this paper. To try to compare her to non-white, non-Christian women would be beyond the scope of my thesis because her whiteness and Christianity were essential to her New Womanhood and to this thesis.

As previously stated, Bird's books tended to follow a consistent chronological format, following her on her route while she informed the reader of the sights and characters she encountered. Along the way she provided relevant information on the culture, race, population demographics, flora and fauna, religion, and government. They were meant to be comprehensive overviews of each location's geography, culture, and history, and to provide an entertaining tale with educational value. They were well received in her time and several have been republished. Her two very different biographies provide a wealth of information which Bird never shared in her books, so a combination of these sources provides a balanced and more complete image of Bird's life and insight into the perception of New Women during each era of publication. Stoddart and Barr wrote their biographies more than sixty years apart, leading to their versions of Bird's life depicting idyllic examples of New Womanhood and progressiveness projected onto Bird's actions. Stoddart wanted Bird to be seen as a sensible, independent, and devotedly religious woman, so that was how she portrayed her. Barr was part of a movement of feminism that favoured a secular progressiveness, so in Bird she emphasized a troubled connection to religion. In this way, both books are primary sources on the feminism of their times.

This thesis begins with an overview of Bird's parentage, her early life and family, and the religious lessons that would influence her throughout her life. Then, before embarking on an overview of her life's story, in a brief section entitled "Bird's Character" I will take stock of how she was represented by her biographers and how she interpreted her world and goals. This section is also an early assessment of the differences between the biographies as primary sources on feminism.

The next section, "Early International Travel and Writing", details Bird's first trip abroad on her own and the new world that opened up for her. It includes salient points from her trips to

mainland North America and Hawaii, which involved two potential love affairs and draws conclusions on her mobility from her rejection of these men. Bird's book *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan* is the focus of the next section, "Japan", which allows us to understand the way Bird viewed race and foreign religion, and the influence of outside cultures on areas which she considered primitive and stagnant. This would later prove fundamental to her perception of Korea.

Before moving further with analyses of Bird's books, it became necessary to discuss two of the most important people in her life, which was done in the section "Henrietta Bird and Dr. John Bishop". Both are necessary for an understanding of how Bird viewed herself in terms of gender. Her sister played the role of the domestic woman who stayed at home so that her sister could travel the world. Dr. Bishop, who Bird married once her sister died, proposed marriage to Bird several times before Bird finally, reluctantly, accepted. Their relationship reveals that Bird did not consider herself feminine or want to live a life that adhered to the standards of femininity of her time. This section reveals how Bird dealt with and downplayed her femininity in order to stay mobile. She may not have been doing so intentionally, but the result was that traditional ideas of femininity were not strongly or at all represented in her books. While Bird resisted the conventional roles of women, which was often restricted to domestic wife and mother, she was not necessarily rejecting femininity entirely. Instead, she can be seen as embodying a different version of femininity than was accepted and expected by her culture.

The next two sections, "Korea" and "A Route Through Korea and its Neighbours" provide an overview of Bird's book on Korea, her perceptions of it, and the route she took through Korea, China, and Russia during this trip. It discusses the preface to the book, which is largely a defense of missionaries, and then leads into the next section titled "Religion and

Missionaries” in which I discuss the ways Bird perceived Christianity, missionary work, and foreign religions. I argue that she used the platform of her books to advocate for missionaries because it was one of the ways in which she embraced her Christianity to further her mobility.

“Empire, International Relations, and War” covers the portions of Bird’s book which discusses the war and political crisis which emerged in Korea while she was there. It reveals how Bird felt about colonialism and leads to her conclusion that Russia was the best option for Korean rule. This decision was the result of a culmination of her religious beliefs, views on race, and perception of the narratives being portrayed by media. Such media was analyzed for its conclusions on mobility, race, religion, and empire in the next section, “Newspaper Coverage”, which covers the way *The Times* and *The Illustrated London News* perceived the situation in Korea. Most of the opinions expressed in these newspapers asserted that Japan or China were the appropriate rulers for Korea. However, Bird suggested Russia, indicating that although she was reproducing and contributing to the narratives presented by the newspapers, she was still willing to be disruptive by coming to a different conclusion. That conclusion was motivated by her mobility, and the perception of Korea as a domestic, isolated, ancient, and stagnant place, and convictions on the spread of Christianity that Bird held. This was an instance in which her New Womanhood was demonstrated: her decision was the product of a lifetime of mobility and influenced by her modernity, disruptiveness, religious history, and past experiences of race. This is the argument presented in my conclusion. New Womanhood was attained through use of modernity, disruptiveness, and mobility in order to embrace whiteness and Christianity to be able to further express mobility, disruptiveness, and modernity.

Mobility has a strong relationship with New Womanhood. It is a through line connecting a variety of women and allowing them to express modernity and disruptiveness, the qualities

which make them New Women. The qualities typically possessed by those who are conventionally thought of as New Women—whiteness, Christianity, and Orientalist attitudes on race—were used by Isabella Bird and her contemporaries to make her mobility, a quality that was thought of as masculine, more palatable to her audience. Mobility was not a traditionally feminine trait. She coded herself as mobile, which was only possible because she promoted her whiteness by viewing other cultures in a deeply Orientalist light, and her Christianity by advocating for missionaries in her books. She had commercial success from her travel books, therefore she had success because of her mobility. This success would then allow her to continue travelling, giving her the mobility she desired.

ISABELLA BIRD

Isabella Bird can be referred to as a New Woman, but she would never have called herself one. She possessed characteristics that can be called modern and disruptive, which allow us to consider her a New Woman, but she was also firmly traditional and old fashioned by other measures. She inherited money from her father, but also made her own income as an author. She married, but reluctantly and late in life. She was fiercely independent, both financially and emotionally. A well-known author, Bird wrote dozens of works in the form of religious periodicals analyzing hymns and travel books about locations all over the world. She was educated, religious, independent, a traveller, perceived as masculine, and formed stronger bonds with women, her sister in particular, than she ever did with men. Her ability to embrace some traditions allowed her to express modernity by breaking expectations on religion and gender roles, which enabled her to obtain the mobility she desired throughout her life. A brief overview of her family history and upbringing sheds light on the origins of the contradictions that she expressed between modernity and tradition. Her old-fashioned qualities were largely rooted in her religious education and her family's traditional makeup, but her family also fostered the characteristics that led to Bird's New Womanhood and mobility.

Born on October 15, 1831 in Boroughbridge Hall, Yorkshire, Isabella Bird was part of the movement of women writers of the 1860s identified by Pykett.⁴⁸ According to Anna Stoddart, Isabella Bird's extensive family was the source of her character and religious foundations. Some of her relatives were prominent within the Church of England and the secular British Empire. Her great-great-grandfather, Thomas Bird, had success in India and America.

⁴⁸ "Bishop [Bird], Isabella Lucy (1831–1904)," Dorothy Middleton in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. David Cannadine, May 2005, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/view/article/31904> (accessed March 1, 2017).

Thomas Bird's grandfather, Sir George Mертins, was Lord Mayor of London. Robert Bird, Isabella's grandfather, owned and rented property at which they hosted extended family during the summers.⁴⁹ Isabella's father was Edward Bird. Three of his siblings went to India, "a happy-hunting ground for lads in the days of the East India Company"⁵⁰, to be involved with the spreading of Christianity in addition to advancing their careers. Long before Isabella was born, the connection between mobility, religion, and personal glory was established in her family. Her male relatives were able to express mobility freely, but according to Stoddart, it was solely because of the desire to spread their religion. Stoddart wrote that there was a profound hunger within the souls of the Birds to spread England's Christianity to the world, and that Isabella Bird possessed this desire as well.⁵¹ The mobility which Isabella aspired to was being expressed by her family members in a religious context, which sheds light on why missionaries featured so prominently in her travel writing later in life.

A thirty-five-page document written by Isabella at the time of Edward's death is all that exists on his career, which is worth discussing because of his profound influence on his daughters.⁵² He was born in 1792, the youngest of six siblings. Stoddart recorded an anecdote in which, while on vacation from studying the law in London, he was encouraged to read the Bible with his brother-in-law Reverend J. Harrington Evans. At the time he was not interested until the reverend called attention to Edward's disinterest, at which point Edward began to study the Bible voraciously. He became very religious and begged God for forgiveness, and, according to Stoddart, was a changed man.⁵³ In 1825, Edward and his first wife moved to India, where

⁴⁹ Stoddart, 2.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 5.

Edward was “a barrister of the Supreme Court in Calcutta.”⁵⁴ Although Edward was able to travel without committing to missionary work, the journey would become tainted by religious trouble, according to Bird’s biographers. While they were there his wife gave birth to a boy. Tragically, the mother and son died of cholera. Edward came back to England with the intention to return to India, but according to Stoddart he found Calcutta to have too much sin and “callous unrighteousness”, which filled Edward with a new resolve to spread the gospel.⁵⁵ Although it seems that he wanted to spread it at home rather than to India’s “callous unrighteousness.”⁵⁶ Edward’s mobility was more connected with work and then the terrible loss of his first wife and son than with religion and missionary work. He can be seen as an example to his daughter Isabella of the possibility of travel for work. Edward was born into a family that was heavily involved in India as both imperial territory and a place in need of Christianization, although he was never a missionary. He has been universally characterized as deeply committed to his faith.

Edward Bird moved to Boroughbridge in Yorkshire, where he met the Lawsons.⁵⁷ The Reverend Marmaduke Lawson and Mrs. Lawson had two daughters, both of whom were well educated. Edward became good friends with the family, especially one of the daughters, Dora. In order to illustrate their perfect piousness, Stoddart recorded an anecdote in which Dora Lawson used her own money to rent a room closer to the church so that she could teach Sunday school.⁵⁸ Edward Bird married Dora Lawson and they had two daughters: Isabella and Henrietta. Both the Bird family and the Lawson family were “responsible, solid members of the upper middle classes”, and so “the world into which she came was secure, earnest, dutiful, kindly, devout.”⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Stoddart, 6.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵⁶ Barr, 163.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁵⁸ Stoddart, 8.

⁵⁹ Barr, 163.

Her family's commitment to the Church of England and to the British Empire's ventures in India played heavy roles in Isabella's upbringing. Isabella Lucy Bird was born in 1831, and the following year Edward moved their family to Maidenhead in Berkshire where, according to Stoddart, he was extremely popular and he loved his work. In 1834, Henrietta was born and the family was complete.⁶⁰ Stoddart's portrayal of Dora and Edward Bird made them out to be the ideal couple who demonstrated piety, modesty, and love for their daughters. The emphasis placed on their devotion to their faith and Edward's commitment to the spread of Christianity reveals that the narrative Stoddart was writing was placing religion at the forefront of Isabella's upbringing and extending that perfect piety to her.

Barr and Stoddart both portrayed Isabella's childhood with an air of positivity and innocence, and agreed that Isabella's intelligence and adventurous spirit was nurtured by her parents. Although she was in poor health from the beginning, her parents kept her outdoors as much as possible, and her father was encouraged by the doctor to take her on a cushion in front of him while he rode to his parish. Stoddart believed that this allowed her to learn to ride early, and that these rides allowed her to easily ride any animal or vehicle later in life during her travels.⁶¹ She could express herself easily from a young age, so her parents recognized Isabella's intelligence early. Her parents were cultured individuals who taught their daughters to think for themselves. Isabella's abilities were fostered by her parents, especially their mother, who taught the daughters herself.⁶²

One of Stoddart's goals of her biography was to make the case that from a young age Bird was an exceptional person who demonstrated all the religious virtues that Stoddart valued.

⁶⁰ Stoddart, 8.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 12.

Robert Bird, Isabella's grandfather and the head of the clan, hosted the family every summer at his Taplow estate.⁶³ Isabella appeared to have enjoyed these summers, but found the long periods of standing during Sunday services to be painful. This was the time when her lifelong health problems were developing. Stoddart noted that it would have been easy for Isabella to choose to stay in bed for all her days, but her character would never allow that.⁶⁴ Isabella spent time with her cousins and, Stoddart wrote admiringly, even though Isabella was younger than some of her cousins she "was recognised amongst them all as a superior, whose opinions on religious, social, and even political subjects were to be courted and quoted."⁶⁵ To Stoddart, the summers at Taplow and the early years of Isabella's chronic pain are a testament to her intelligence and exceptional nature, as well as her commitment to practicing her faith even if it meant causing her physical pain.

Bird's extended family was enthusiastic about "causes". She had relatives in India, and every summer at Taplow she would hear stories about "poverty, moral degradation, spiritual barrenness"⁶⁶, and the need for more missionaries. Family members would tell her about the plight of slaves, long after slavery had been abolished. She was subjected to plenty of Protestant guilt which made sure that Isabella knew how lucky she was to be born in her position, and not an "uneducated grass-hut native, the unwanted baby in the Calcutta streets."⁶⁷ There was a clear attitude that Bird was meant to have: those who had not been introduced to Christianity were likely living in squalor and lacking in morals and spirituality, and it was the obligation of every Christian to help, especially those like Bird who had the financial means to do so. These values

⁶³ Stoddart, 13.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁶⁶ Barr, 166.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 166.

and goals necessitated mobility. Bird was introduced to the idea that missionaries and mobility went hand in hand, making religious work a viable means of obtaining mobility.

These experiences were fundamental to the way Bird would go on to approach her travels and the way she represented the world to her readers. The narrative she was given as a child is entirely in step with the way Mary Louise Pratt described travel writing in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. In *Imperial Eyes*, Pratt argued that travel writing produced “the rest of the world” for Europeans and analyzes the way that these readers engaged with expansionism and empire.⁶⁸ The Birds at Taplow seem to have engaged with the empire primarily as Christians. Christianizing the world and providing pity and charity for the less fortunate, like those unwanted babies in India, was the most important aspect of Christianity that was being put forward by Stoddart and Barr’s representations of Bird’s youth. Bird was being taught to view others, particularly those in areas that were not Christian and were considered uncivilized, as people in need of her Christian charity. This affected the way she wrote about unchristian and “uncivilized” places because she never advocated for the expansion of the British Empire. Instead she pleaded with her readers to help the spread of Christianity. It could be argued that the spread of one intrinsically suggested the spread of the other, but to Isabella and the Birds, as per Stoddart’s representation of them, what was more important than empire was Christianizing the world. Their mobility was deemed worthwhile because they, as Christians, were doing God’s work by bringing Christianity to the “uncivilized” reaches of the world and saving those who had not heard of Christianity before.

Edward Bird focused more on strengthening Christianity at home. He moved his family from Tattenhall to Birmingham. He wanted a new location because the locals in Tattenhall were

⁶⁸ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), i.

not as receptive to him as he had hoped.⁶⁹ He was committed to his ideals, and willing to move his family around England in order to find communities where he felt his ideas could be properly acknowledged and accepted. Barr confirmed these movements around the country and that Edward “struggled for the souls of his parishioners,”⁷⁰ but Stoddart took the narrative further. The image that Stoddart painted with this story is that Isabella Bird and her family were pursuing righteousness and doing their best to spread the true word of God even when no one would listen. Stoddart depicted the Birds as missionaries in their own home, and framed Edward as someone who was simply doing his best, and his flock abandoned him. Again, this contributed to an idyllic representation of Isabella’s family that informs the way Stoddart meant for her readers to perceive Isabella. While Edward Bird was not travelling abroad anymore, his frequent decisions to move his family around Britain is also an expression of mobility, and in each destination he performed his own version of missionary work, further connecting mobility and the spread of Christianity for the Bird family.

Isabella Bird had been experiencing back pain for years, and the way she handled it can be interpreted as a sign of her New Womanhood. Barr and Stoddart agreed that she could have spent her life giving in to the pain, but she refused to do so and that was a testament to her strength.^{71,72} In 1850, when she was 18-years-old, her health was so poor and her pain so terrible that she needed an operation, which Barr reported to be “partially successful”.⁷³ Stoddart wrote that “of the operation itself no record remains, beyond the fact that a fibrous tumour was removed from the neighbourhood of the spine. In after years she was subject to long period of

⁶⁹ Stoddart, 16.

⁷⁰ Barr, 167.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁷² Stoddart, 15.

⁷³ Barr, 167.

suffering in that region of her back.”⁷⁴ These periods of back pain were a common theme throughout her life. They were both her reasons to stay home and her reasons to travel the world. At different points in her life, Barr and Stoddart wrote that the doctor prescribed international, sea-faring voyages in order to improve her health.^{75,76} At other points, they wrote that she spent hours in bed writing and receiving visitors in order to fill the hours while she was overcome with back pain.⁷⁷ This contradiction of reactions to her back pain suggests that perhaps her pain was a tool that she found she could use to her advantage. Perhaps she used the existence of her spinal tumour and crippling pain in order to receive the means necessary for her international travel, as her first voyage was funded by her father. This point cannot be deemed as much more than speculation, but there is a clear contradiction in responses to her pain. The assertion can be made that she was using her back pain as a way to use “the system”: to take advantage of existing stereotypes about women of her status and the way they would handle pain in order to see the world when she wanted and stay secluded at home to work when she wanted. Whether she was conning her doctor and loved ones or not, the result is the same. She was encouraged to go on her travels and able to work in seclusion because of her pain, and these were the moments in her life which produced her legacy: her travel and her writing. By taking her chronic pain and using it to her advantage she was expressing her agency to obtain mobility and the chance to write, which would give her the opportunity for further mobility.

Edward Bird still struggled in Birmingham so he decided to move his family yet again. This time, the Birds went to Wyton, where the local population was not particularly religious.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Stoddart, 25.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁷⁶ Barr, 168.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 174.

⁷⁸ Stoddart, 44.

When Edward Bird died on May 14, 1858, Isabella wrote a memorial sketch about him. His death strongly affected her health.⁷⁹ He had developed within her a strong religiousness and a love of nature. He had funded her on her first international voyage, and encouraged her to write a book about her trip when she returned, sparking the beginning of her writing career. Her writing and this initial travel, along with the lesson she learned that religion was an acceptable reason for travel, was what allowed Isabella to realize her passion for mobility and sets the stage for a study of her life.

⁷⁹ Stoddart, 45.

BIRD'S CHARACTER

Much like the way Isabella Bird was sometimes inconsistent in the way she fell into categories of modernity versus tradition, she was a travel writer who is difficult to categorize. Pat Barr cited a review of one of Isabella Bird's books which called Bird "the ideal traveller".⁸⁰ Barr wrote that Bird was talented at describing her surroundings, much in the way that Mary Louise Pratt described the way that travel writers reproduced and recreated the empire for readers at home. However, Bird rarely wrote about locations within the British Empire. According to Barr, most English ladies who travelled extensively did so "as reluctant 'dependants' of their husbands"⁸¹, and stayed on the beaten track. Bird did neither. She avoided any popular tourist towns or attractions, and she avoided the Empire. In this way, her career was inconsistent with many travel writers who took the opportunity of the "British World" to travel. There was a movement of travel writers that Barr associated with Bird: "Isabella Bird belonged, in short, to that colourful band of travelling individualists of the late nineteenth century who, for all their eccentricities, had one feature in common—an innate, abiding, intensely emotional distaste for the constraints imposed by their own highly civilised society."⁸² Such a description agrees with Pratt's assessment of travel writing. The need for mobility to get away from one's usual surroundings is not racially charged, but Bird's desire to leave her own "highly civilised society"⁸³ and see the more "natural," "untouched" parts of the world demonstrated a degree of racial Orientalism in her mobility. Unlike these other ladies who were "reluctant 'dependants' of their husbands", Barr depicted Bird as owning and pursuing her mobility on her own terms, which suits the ideal of a completely independent, proto-second wave feminist New Woman.

⁸⁰ Barr, 14.

⁸¹ Ibid., 14.

⁸² Ibid., 15.

⁸³ Ibid., 15.

Barr's characterization of Bird being superior to these other women may be true, but the implied degradation of women who travelled with their husbands suggests that Barr was seeking in Bird a more independent heroine who rejected male companionship.

Barr and Stoddart wrote differing interpretations on Bird's personality. Stoddart sang more praises for Bird when she wrote that Bird was a great traveller who went into the wilderness and the "unknown" completely alone, and would not let anything stop her: not poor health or even danger. She described Bird, admiringly, as someone who could be dominant over strangers through her "womanly graces of tranquil manner, gentle voice, and reasonable persuasiveness."⁸⁴ Stoddart believed that everywhere Bird went, servants were devoted to her and locals acquiesced.⁸⁵ Barr only somewhat agreed with this sentiment, writing that Bird was "emotional and highly-strung"⁸⁶ but able to adapt herself well to new surroundings. She could tell that she did not look like she fit into these surroundings, and that "natives often poked fun at her."⁸⁷ But Barr wrote that Bird did not show any bother. However, Barr also described Bird as a young woman in unflattering ways. She wrote that when Bird began her first international voyage at the age of twenty-three, she had never been especially witty, beautiful, far from home, rebellious, or in love.⁸⁸ Perhaps such an uncomplimentary description was meant to make Bird seem as though she was even more of an impressive lady because she was able to overcome these shortcomings. These contradictory personality assessments set up Bird as two completely different people at the outset of her career, and colour the rest of her life story in different ways.

⁸⁴ Stoddart, vi.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, vi.

⁸⁶ Barr, 32.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 168.

Stoddart painted Bird as a woman who possessed saint-like selflessness and devotion to Christianity. According to Stoddart, wherever Bird went she helped people as much as she could, and went on her journeys half because she loved the adventure, and half because she loved “healing, nursing, and teaching”⁸⁹ the locals with her brief education on medicine. In reference to all of the locals she encountered on her travels, both “civilised and savaged,”⁹⁰ Stoddart reported that “On her deathbed she cried aloud, ‘If I could only do something more for them!’”⁹¹ “She longed to serve every human being with whom she came in contact”⁹², wrote Stoddart, who believed that Bird’s intentions when going around the world were pure, selfless, charitable, and did not offer any contradictions at all with Bird’s moral or religious beliefs.

Barr’s assessment of Bird’s character was very different. Her biography included letters to a friend in which Bird wrote that she wanted to be the type who had no selfish desires, like her mother and sister, but she found she was selfish and could not live in self-denial.⁹³ She had the moral inclination to do charity work ingrained in her since she was a child, but she could not commit her life to it. Later in her life, when she was in Britain for a full three years, Bird compulsively kept herself busy with public and private charity because, Barr wrote, she felt the need to help people like the ones she had seen suffering while she was abroad.⁹⁴ She felt that Christianity was a force for good, and that the most effective way to spread its message was with missions, especially ones that were medically equipped. However, Bird was also feeling tremendous guilt and inadequacy. Barr encapsulated it when she wrote that Bird felt:

a personal conviction, verging on guilt, that she had not the moral strength, the charity of soul or the sweetness of temper that graced those whom she had so loved

⁸⁹ Stoddart, vi.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁹¹ Stoddart., 24.

⁹² *Ibid.*, vi.

⁹³ Barr, 260.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 180

in the past. Compared with theirs, her life had been one of thoughtless self-gratification; she had much to atone for; *her* redemption, she felt, still had to be earned.⁹⁵

Despite Stoddart's best efforts to paint Bird as a saint, and the religious messages within Bird's own books, Barr wrote that she felt her life had been one of selfishness. Since childhood, her relatives had been venturing all over the world, like Bird did. However, they went as missionaries rather than tourists and travel writers. Early in her career, Bird did not begin or contribute to any missionary efforts while she travelled, she solely used writing as a reason for mobility rather than Christianizing. The combination of her deeply felt need to get away from home and be on her own in "less civilised" parts of the world; along with deep-seated religious ideals of selflessness, charity, and self-denial, led to a crisis of confidence within Bird later in her life. The knowledge that she had these qualities within her; the desire for mobility, the suffocation she felt at home, the freedom she felt while she was enjoying herself abroad, and the shame she felt for taking these trips for selfish reasons; contributes to a complex portrait of Bird's character. Such complexity was not included in Stoddart's portrayal of Bird, which contributes to the idea that Stoddart and Barr had very different goals. Barr wanted to include the difficulty Bird had with following her religion in order to make her a more sympathetic character to modern, secular, progressive readers, while Stoddart wanted to make Bird more sympathetic to her contemporaries of early twentieth-century readers.

⁹⁵ Barr, 262.

EARLY INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL AND WRITING

In the early 1850s, when Isabella Bird was in her late teens and early twenties, her health was severely troubling her. Although her spinal tumour had been removed in 1850, her back still pained her and she was now suffering from insomnia. Her doctor prescribed a “sea-voyage”, which Barr characterized as the “classic remedy for single, highly-strung, rather too intelligent young women of the period.”⁹⁶ In the early summer of 1854, she set out on such a trip. It was this initial gendered fact which allowed her to have her first attempt at mobility. However, it would not be her approach to mobility in the future. Later it would become apparent to her that Christianizing and Orientalist views of race were the opportunities for mobility. But in this moment, the opportunity was only available to her as a disabled young woman. Accompanied by a cousin’s husband on her ship, Bird set out for a tour through North America, especially Canada. She had £100 from her father and permission to stay for as long as the money lasted.⁹⁷ The book that Bird wrote based on this journey was personal, informal, and full of colourful characters. Bird had never kept a journal of her inner thoughts as a young woman, so up until the publishing of this first book there is no record of her private self.⁹⁸

Stoddart wrote that “Miss Bird proved to be an excellent sailor, enjoyed her meals, and observed her fellow passengers.”⁹⁹ It seems as though Stoddart would have written that Bird was an expert at everything under the sun, but on this particular topic she and Barr were in agreement. Barr wrote that Bird was in a state of wonder during her travels from Halifax onward, that all her pain and depression fell away as soon as she arrived, and that she was “immensely

⁹⁶ Barr, 168.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 168.

⁹⁹ Stoddart, 29.

resourceful and energetic.”¹⁰⁰ The fact that Stoddart and Barr could agree that Bird was invigorated by and skilled with her first overseas trip is a testament to the passion Bird felt for travel. Her wanderlust and the health benefits travel brought her are corroborated by her own books, Stoddart, and Barr.

Some of Bird’s assessments of the Americas reveal further traditional leanings. Bird claimed to have had all of her prejudices melted away while she was in America, but that was clearly untrue.¹⁰¹ She disliked the way that Republicanism caused “mingling of ranks”: a system where people of different classes would interact in a way that was freer and new to her.¹⁰² She preferred the British constitutional monarchy, and believed that Republicanism would not last long.¹⁰³ Despite her old-fashioned objections to the classes “mingling”, Barr wrote that these social conditions meant that a lady could travel on her own in America in a way that she would not be allowed to do in England.¹⁰⁴ Although Bird benefitted from Republicanism because it allowed her to be the independent she was at heart, her traditional values of class separation kept her from approving of the concept. In this instance, Bird was existing as a very modern and independent New Woman while also maintaining beliefs that made her very conservative. However, she still travelled on her own, immersed herself in the culture, and wrote a book about her experience, which makes her as much a New Woman as anyone. Her first journey abroad led to her first time writing down her thoughts and observations, and her first business opportunity in the form of literary success, meaning that mobility gave her the chance to become a New Woman.

¹⁰⁰ Barr, 169.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 171.

¹⁰² Ibid., 171.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 172.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 172.

She made her way from Halifax to New England, through the American Midwest to Chicago, Detroit, and Cincinnati, and then back to Halifax to return to England. She was gone for seven months, and upon her arrival back at home she only had £10 left.¹⁰⁵ Stoddart wrote that she was “better in health, full of animation, and devoutly thankful to be once more with her parents and sister in the peaceful rectory of Wyton.”¹⁰⁶ Bird’s body and mind were dramatically improved by her trip to Canada and the United States, and thus began a need to travel that remained fervently within her until the very end of her life.

While she was away, Bird sent letters home to her family. They kept the letters and, upon her arrival back in England, her father saw potential in her writing and encouraged her to turn those letters into a book. Stoddart remarked that her letters were so full of facts and statistics that it was easy to make the transition from letter to book format.¹⁰⁷ At this point Bird became acquainted with John Murray, who would go on to publish all her books and be her lifelong friend. He took her on for this initial project, which he titled *The Englishwoman in America*. The book started printing in November of 1855, was published in January 1856, and soon sold out.¹⁰⁸ Barr wrote that Bird’s motivation for writing the book was fuelled by the sadness Bird felt about being back at home. She wrote that the only way Bird could deal with her depression was by reliving her travels through her writing. Even after *The Englishwoman in America* had become a success, Barr wrote that Bird’s spirit was dwindling as she remained in England. So, she embarked on a second transatlantic trip, about which very few records remain. This was in part

¹⁰⁵ Stoddart, 35.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 38.

because of her father's unexpected death. She returned early and was deeply affected by the loss.¹⁰⁹

After the success of her first book, Bird was approached by Murray to write another book about America, but this time focusing on religion. The book discussed the variety of religions and geographies in America, and “abounds in graphic description and illustration, and ends with the declaration of her steady faith in the growth of Christianity throughout America and the great country's destiny in carrying out God's purposes towards the human race.”¹¹⁰ Bird was clearly influenced by Christianity from early in life, no doubt because of the exposure she had to missionary ideals since she was a child. In 1859 she published *The aspects of religion in the United States of America*, marking the beginning of Bird's religious writing career, setting the example for her that religious literature could provide her with mobility when invalidity did not.¹¹¹

Bird embraced Christianity wholeheartedly. She did not suggest changes to the way Christianity was practiced. The only change she suggested was for more people to convert worldwide and for more Christians in the “civilized” world to give up the comforts of home, devote their lives to God, and travel to the parts of the world where people had not been informed about Christianity. In this way, she had conflated Christianity with mobility. The form of Christianity which she advocated was mobile, active, and involved average Christians performing the mobile duty of bringing their religion to the rest of the world. She was completely supportive of the missionary endeavour. It was part of what allowed her to be mobile. She used connections to missionaries around the world for places to stay and guides in new

¹⁰⁹ Barr, 173.

¹¹⁰ Stoddart, 47.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 47.

places, promotion of missionaries reconciled her need for mobility with her lifetime of religious teachings on self sacrifice, and it contributed to the financial success of her books which allowed her to travel more. The connection she established between mobility and Christianity was modern and disruptive, and a staple of her New Womanhood. Due to the way she would constantly advocate for missionary work, this connection is one of the strongest themes of her writing, religion, and mobility.

The next major trip that Bird took, which produced a book, was to Hawaii. To her, they were known as the Sandwich Islands. However, it was not her intended destination. In 1872, when she was thirty-nine-years-old, Bird set out for Australia on a journey that was intended to improve her mental and physical health. Her previous travels had always temporarily helped her health, but she still had chronic backaches during the intervening years she spent in Edinburgh with her sister Henrietta. At first the trip was a failure. She wrote to Henrietta from Australia about her melancholy and sickness, and how she hated the environment and the people. She still felt all the pain and depression she was trying to escape.¹¹² After that her destination was California, and for the first leg of that journey she was headed for New Zealand. On the way, her luck changed when she met a fellow passenger: a woman on the boat whose son was sick. The seas were rough and perilous, and as she helped nurse the boy to health, his mother asked her to come with them to Hawaii. Bird said yes.¹¹³

The conclusion that Barr drew from this episode was that Bird was more interested in the thrill of the journey than the destination.¹¹⁴ Once she was faced with adversity and adventure, Bird no longer felt weighed down with melancholy as she had earlier in the voyage. One could

¹¹² Barr, 20.

¹¹³ Ibid., 21.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 22.

assess that this story argues that Bird was an extremely nurturing person, and that it was a selfless act for her to abandon her original travel plans in order to accompany an ailing child across the Pacific. But once she arrived in Hawaii, neither of her biographers mention this boy or his mother again. Bird herself did not mention him in the book she would write about her time in Hawaii, or any of her successive books. Throughout her biography, Barr proved time and again that Bird did not have the nurturing spirit that she desired: the one possessed by her sister Henrietta and her eventual husband, Dr. John Bishop.

Hawaii was known to the world as the nearest thing to paradise when Bird arrived there in January 1873. It proved wondrous enough for her spirit to be lifted even though on the outside she was “quaint and buttoned-up”.¹¹⁵ When she arrived at this unexpected destination she had no connections, but she made friends and contacts quickly. Although she had only planned on staying for three weeks, she ended up staying seven whole months and considered staying forever. The hotel where she stayed was comfortable, but Bird hated it. She did not want comfort and luxury, she wanted to see authenticity and the places that had yet to be touched by “civilized” and therefore modern and Christian society.

Bird’s time in Hawaii was largely spent outside the typical tourist destinations. This trip in particular had a strong role in shaping her life because there she discovered the Hawaiian riding dress, which consisted of a Mexican saddle, which Barr called “a very masculine affair”,¹¹⁶ coupled with riding trousers that she wore concealed under her normal skirts for years. She never published the fact that she wore them, even though they were so useful to her. They allowed her to ride astride and therefore “she could gallop comfortably at last—at one with the

¹¹⁵ Barr, 23.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 29.

steed, instead of perched inflexibly on its side.”¹¹⁷ She loved her time riding through Hawaii alone, in a way that she could not when she was around what she considered civilized society. Her love of solitude was a lifelong passion. She would ride astride while she was on her own, then cover her pants with skirts and ride side saddle when she got close to town. According to Barr, she did this not because she wanted distinctively to defy social convention by wearing pants, but because she simply did not want to follow them herself.¹¹⁸ However, Barr wrote she did follow those conventions once she came to town in order to avoid the trouble it may have caused.¹¹⁹ This anecdote conveys a certain degree of modernity, as she was willing to wear pants for practicality’s sake. But it also demonstrates a resistance against disruptiveness. If she did not care about being disruptive then she would have no reason to ride side saddle and hide her trousers when approaching a town. In this instance, Bird was combining modernity with conservativeness, adding another instance in which she treaded a line of traditionalism and New Womanhood, in the context of independent mobility and a rejection of gender norms.

During her time in Hawaii, Bird made many friends and even helped to prepare a meal that the Sherriff was hosting for the King of Hawaii. King Lunalilo, Bird wrote, was under considerable influence from foreign imperialists. Barr wrote

The loudest cheers of all greeted this overt suggestion that foreign influence in the Island’s affairs was predominant, but not necessarily desirable. It was of course logical. Foreigners had introduced the whole western-style apparatus of constitutional government and then had to provide trained officials to make it function. Most members of the Hawaiian Cabinet therefore, were American lawyers, missionaries, business men, teachers; foreigners headed the new ministerial departments at pleasantly adequate salaries, for those days, of four thousand dollars a year each.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Barr, 29.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

The Hawaiian government at the time, decades before it joined the United States, was already experiencing extensive American influence. Bird did not support a western-style government takeover of places like Hawaii, Japan, and Korea. Her version of Orientalism preferred that these “uncivilized”, “wild” places remain untouched and authentic. This opinion may have, in part, been formed by the way events played out while she was in Hawaii.

Bird’s help in preparing the dinner for the King was appreciated, and she was able to meet King Lunalilo himself. They formed a friendship which, according to Barr’s description, sounded like it could have encroached on romance, had Bird been willing to stay in Hawaii long enough. The King came to visit Bird where she was staying having written a verse for her, and helped her with her luggage as she left for another island. Bird wrote home that she “found him peculiarly interesting and attractive, but sadly irresolute about the mouth and [she] saw from little things that he could be persuaded into anything.”¹²¹ The mild, hesitant attraction she felt would be a cornerstone of Bird’s relationships with men for the rest of her life. I argue that, since she was so committed to mobility, she felt that she could not commit to a relationship with a man. Marriage carried the expectation that Bird, as per traditional gender roles, would give up most of her mobility and become domestic by caring for her home and husband. This led to her resisting marriage until later in life and enjoying independence for most of her adult life, which was a qualifying factor to be a New Woman. In this way, the New Woman’s marital status can be connected to a drive for mobility.

Within the year, King Lunalilo was dead, reportedly led astray by white foreigners.¹²² To Bird, the price that her friend King Lunalilo, and by extension the rest of Hawaii, paid for the island’s close relationship with Western civilization was disastrous. Bird always preferred to see

¹²¹ Barr, 42.

¹²² Ibid., 43.

the parts of the world that had not been “tainted” by the West, perhaps in part because she saw the West’s effect on Hawaii as detrimental and spoiling of the nation’s natural state. The way she described the Hawaiian king, as “irresolute” and easily persuaded, then later led away from his power by Western influence of a different race is very similar to how she would go on to describe the king of Korea when he was deposed.

From Hawaii, Bird set out for Colorado and the Rocky Mountains, “where, people say, the elixir of life can be drunk.”¹²³ In a way, that is exactly what she found there. She found freedom and the first (and perhaps only) romantic passion of her life there. It was a subject on which Barr and Stoddart held different interpretations. While Bird was out riding one day, she met a man — “one who was in some respects closer to her ideal of manhood than she had ever dared hope for.”¹²⁴ She met Jim Nugent, also known as Rocky Mountain Jim. Nugent showed Bird around his local area of Colorado, and the two even climbed a mountain together.¹²⁵ However, Bird soon felt that she had to get away. Again, she resisted romance, which could have inhibited her mobility.

Nugent had many stories of scuffles and gun fights with his fellow wild Rocky Mountain men. Once she parted ways from Nugent she went on deep into the mountains but could not stop thinking about him.¹²⁶ Bird’s interaction with Nugent was new to her. She had never “had to do” with people like him, and the way she reacted to that was perhaps part of why Nugent was attracted to her. She was unsettled by the relationship, and wrote to her sister that although she was afraid to leave him, she felt she had to.¹²⁷ Bird did not keep a journal of her inner thoughts

¹²³ Barr, 60.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 91.

when she was a young woman, so her letters and books are all that exist to peer into her mind. No records exist of romance within her before she encountered Rocky Mountain Jim. Her reaction to Nugent, as well as her eventual husband John Bishop, indicate a discomfort with romantic love and affection.

From Barr's perspective, Bird was taken with Nugent. He operated completely outside of social conventions, yet he was not a "shallow flirt", the kind she would have seen through. Nugent was clever and cultured: qualities that defined Bird herself and which she required in her friends. And, most important of all, he was free.¹²⁸ Bird's entire life was spent in pursuit of open space, wildness, and freedom, which made Nugent her ideal man. Although he was mobile, the possibility of marrying Nugent could have impeded Bird's mobility because of societal expectations that a married woman would not travel the world alone on horseback, and would instead dedicate her time and efforts to maintaining a home for her husband. If the free and mobile Nugent was her husband, then Bird may have been required to be a domestic and traditionally feminine wife, which could have altogether stopped her from travelling.

On her relationship with Nugent, Barr wrote that "For the first time in her life, as far as we know, and certainly for the last, her whole nature was aroused—her keenly developed instincts of compassion and warmth, her latent, hardly touched sexuality. She blamed herself for her involvement and vulnerability, and blamed him for his lack of reticence."¹²⁹ Barr's claim that Bird's true feelings were a passionate love and latent sexuality that she hid does not coincide with Stoddart's version of events. No mention was made of a romantic attraction to Jim Nugent in Stoddart's biography. Perhaps Stoddart found that an attraction between a man and a woman who spent time alone in the mountains of Colorado was too risqué, or carried certain

¹²⁸ Barr, 72.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 88.

implications which Stoddart did not want to represent her dear friend. There are not many instances when Barr mentioned Stoddart's biography in her own work, but on his absence from Stoddart's book Barr wrote the following: "There was so much more sheer life, drive, passion in both Jim and Isabella than in trim, bloodless, conventional Miss Anna Stoddart who seldom left her Scottish hearthside and who could only begin to compass Isabella's experiences by cutting them savagely down to her own size."¹³⁰ Barr saw Stoddart's omission of Rocky Mountain Jim as a reflection of Stoddart's own character and painted Stoddart as a woman and biographer who could not truly understand her good friend Isabella Bird because she did not share any of Bird's lust for adventure, passion, or mobility. Barr herself was outlining the stark difference between her perspective and Stoddart's. Barr wanted to emphasize all the aspects of Bird's personality and life which would make her out to be a more passionate New Woman, and Stoddart wanted Bird to be seen as more in line with traditional Victorian values.

In the summer of 1874 Isabella was in Edinburgh, about to join her friends on a trip to Switzerland, when she received a letter from Colorado. She discovered that Jim Nugent had been shot by one of his compatriots. Bird claimed that she did not dwell on it because it was too painful to do so, but Barr believed that Bird must have been making an understatement and that Bird must have been deeply affected by Nugent's death.¹³¹ Barr noted that later in life, Bird wrote in a letter to a friend asking that she not be presented as in love with Nugent: "it was pity and yearning to save him that I felt."¹³² It could be that Bird made similar remarks to Stoddart, and that is why Stoddart's biography presented a very different telling of Bird's relationship with Rocky Mountain Jim. The first time that Jim Nugent was mentioned in Stoddart's biography it

¹³⁰ Barr, 95.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 96.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 98.

was to say that her “guide” had died, and it made her “indescribably sad.”¹³³ Stoddart described him as “a man of good birth and university education, who had unhappily yielded to ruinous habits and had drifted down to the precarious freedom of a trapper’s life”.¹³⁴ In her telling, he was a good, wholesome man who had simply been led astray soon before he met Bird. Stoddart wrote that Bird’s presence brought out all the goodness in him and smoothed out all the traits that may have deterred a lesser woman. She wrote that Bird was a good influence on him who got him to stop drinking, cursing, and fighting, in order to make him “a considerate gentleman”¹³⁵. In Stoddart’s telling of their parting, Nugent was desperate for her to stay and Bird had a motherly, teacher-like, saintly departure in which she urged him to stay on the path to righteousness and helped him give up his sinfulness.¹³⁶ The facts that Stoddart listed were absent from Barr’s telling.

The existence of Nugent in Bird’s narrative lends complexity to her character and credence to the idea that mobility was the most important quality for her to have. She could easily have stayed with him for much longer, as she had stayed in Hawaii for an unexpectedly long time. Bird could have lived the rest of her days in Colorado if she had chosen to do so, but throughout her life Bird demonstrated that she resisted love and the idea that she may have to stay in one place. She turned away King Lunalilo, Rocky Mountain Jim, and for years she rejected John Bishop before finally agreeing to marry him. Nugent’s wildness could be seen as the perfect answer to Bird’s need for freedom, but she turned him away. It cannot be known what exactly Bird thought about Nugent or the reasons she had for herself to leave at the time, but it

¹³³ Stoddart, 83.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 83.

can be seen that she consistently demonstrated a pattern of choosing mobility over other options, and that was what happened when she left King Lunalilo and Nugent.

Bird made her way through the rest of Colorado and then returned to Europe. Over the following few years, she was busy writing and publishing books about her journeys to Hawaii and Colorado. Stoddart's praise for *Six Months in the Sandwich Islands*, which was published in 1875, results from her admiration for the way Bird was able to describe the sights she saw with such detail. She ascribed this detail to the fact that the book was a compilation of letters which had been written in situ, rather than a book written later, based on faded memories.¹³⁷ The apparent accuracy with which Bird reported the state of the world delighted her readers. Although she was not promoting the subjects of her writing as potential colonies for empire, her work was enjoyed just as much as any travel writing which follows the ideas of Pratt's *Imperial Eyes*. Stoddart wrote that the book received positive reviews, and even letters from Hawaii, stating how accurate the book was.¹³⁸ At this point she became established at the top of the travel writing field. The always-adoring Stoddart not only wrote Bird as a successful travel writer, but she was also a great business woman who ran her charities with financial stability, unlike most.¹³⁹

A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains was first published in 1879, and was very well received. Her writing style was liked because, as one reviewer put it, Bird was so masculine.¹⁴⁰ She was furious over the assertion that she was masculine. Barr connected this reaction to the fact that Bird had recently refused a marriage proposal from a man who would eventually become her husband "in order to continue living in devoted harmony with her sister for whom

¹³⁷ Stoddart, 85.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 89.

¹³⁹ Stoddart, 91.

¹⁴⁰ Barr, 184.

she cherished an abnormally intense love. It was a most inappropriate moment to so much as hint that Isabella was in any way ‘masculine’, wanting perhaps in the conventional responses to the opposite sex, and flaunting her difference by the wearing of trousers.”¹⁴¹ Perhaps she was feeling especially sensitive to the idea that she was lacking in femininity, since she had been so forcefully rejecting the usual characteristics of femininity in her time and place. This anecdote may appear to contradict my argument that she was rejecting her femininity so that she could better stay mobile, but I believe that my argument remains valid and that Bird’s reaction to being called masculine was because she was not aware that she had been de-emphasizing her gender. Whether she knew it or not, Bird was coding herself as white and Christian in her books and was not drawing attention to her gender, and the way she pursued mobility led to a pattern of rejecting traditional gender roles of her time.

Bird had returned home from Colorado in 1875, so by 1878 she was experiencing all her usual pains: “neuralgia, ‘intermittent fevers’, spinal pain, bouts of listless depression.”¹⁴² It cannot be stated with certainty that these health problems were as overwhelming as they were made out to be. But regardless, she used them as an opportunity to get what she wanted, which was international travel. To cure her many ailments her doctor again prescribed travel, and she immediately wanted to either visit the Andes or Japan. It was recommended to her at the time that Andes were not a good choice, so she decided on Japan.¹⁴³ Bird had discovered that roaming was “her vocation, the talent and passion for the rest of her life when so much else would fall away. And roamers, as she knew in her bones, were doomed to leave even the fairest anchorage.”¹⁴⁴ She knew that her life’s calling was to roam the earth, and that it meant she would

¹⁴¹ Barr, 185.

¹⁴² Ibid., 99.

¹⁴³ Stoddart, 98.

¹⁴⁴ Barr, 59.

always be leaving behind the people she loved most. Her constant movement meant that she could not be weighed down by relationships, whether romantic, friendly, or familial. This was her strongest quality, and the most independent, disruptive, and modern.

JAPAN

Japan was already an attractive destination for “globe-trotters”¹⁴⁵. It was perfect because it was perceived as foreign and mysterious but not wild, dangerous, or dirty. Barr noted that Bird’s 1878 journey to Japan occurred just at the beginning of the “mob” of western visitors who toured Japan over the next thirty years, which was why she felt she had to escape the crowds of Japan’s cities and get to the hinterlands. She called her book *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan* because, as Barr put it, Bird could feel the feet of the crowds closely behind her.¹⁴⁶ When Bird arrived, Stoddart wrote, Japan was changing faster than any other country in known history. Bird and Stoddart perceived this to be solely because of Western influence.¹⁴⁷ Even Barr viewed Japan through a heavily Orientalist, colonialist lens, when she wrote that it was “Asia’s up-and-coming country” and that twenty-five years before, when Japan was still secluded, the Americans had forced the Tokugawa Shogun to sign a treaty that “eventually led to the opening of the country to foreign trade.”¹⁴⁸ The way Barr saw it, the Japanese had been “waiting” for the West.¹⁴⁹ Such a characterization of the Meiji Restoration ignores Japanese agency in transforming their own culture and is therefore incomplete and inaccurate.

Bird’s own interpretation of Japanese westernization was different. She enjoyed Japan but preferred the parts of it that she perceived to be untouched by Western influence, meaning the communities that did not remind her of European culture. It had been nine years since the “magnificent and complicated system of Japanese feudalism was swept away”,¹⁵⁰ as Bird put it.

¹⁴⁵ Barr, 102.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 102.

¹⁴⁷ Stoddart, 100.

¹⁴⁸ Barr, 100.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 100.

¹⁵⁰ Isabella Bird Bishop, *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan: An Account of Travels on Horseback in the Interior Including Visits to the Aborigines of Yezo and the Shrines of Nikkô and Isé, Vol I* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1881), 10, accessed February 27, 2017, <https://archive.org/details/unbeatentracksin01birduoft>.

Such a statement suggested that she saw the old Japanese regime as an asset, and to a certain extent a shame that it went away. She commented that there was a strong international presence in Japan's cities, which included five hundred foreigners who formed part of the new government.¹⁵¹ She was commenting on the mobility of others coming to Japan, and able to make these comments because of her own mobility. Mobility allowed her to see Japan, form Orientalist opinions on race, and express them to an English-speaking Western audience who provided her with funds to gain further mobility and New Womanhood.

To get to Japan, Bird crossed the Atlantic, travelled all the way through America, and then sailed the Pacific too. When she arrived in Yokohama, she was not keen on it. She found it bland, dull, and solitary. However, ever the informed and polite traveller, Bird wrote that she would try not to be judgemental right away because there was much more of Japan to see.¹⁵² Another initial impression was that the country was "much governed", that Japan had a heavily involved, vigilant government.¹⁵³ Whether she meant this as a compliment or a criticism is unclear, but her appreciation of "untouched" wild foreign-ness indicates that perhaps she would rather the new government be more relaxed, meaning more "authentic."

To Bird the division between old and new was clear. From Yokohama, she took a train to Tokyo, on a railway that had been built by English engineers. She enthusiastically remarked on and listed the multitude of Christian missions in Tokyo, including Presbyterians and Methodists.¹⁵⁴ Her opinion on religion in Japan was complex and changed throughout her visit. At first, she admired the architecture of Buddhist temples and saw them as an expression of

¹⁵¹ Bird Bishop, *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan vol. I*, 27.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 34.

ideas.¹⁵⁵ She learned about Buddhism: what it meant, what they believed in, and described it in a non-judgemental tone, having seemed to understand and respect it.¹⁵⁶ However, she was not wholly accepting of it. Barr wrote about an encounter between Bird and a Buddhist man in which she discovered that they both disliked the godlessness and materialism of Japan. While she enjoyed the exchange, it left her feeling melancholy. Barr wrote that it “only confirmed in her view that Buddhism was a shell of a faith, beautiful, but empty of meaning and purpose, Isabella was relieved to return to the haunts of the living.”¹⁵⁷ This exchange was part of a process that led Bird to be an advocate for missionary work. While she liked to discuss Buddhism and appreciated its attraction, she saw it as empty of truth or direction and distracting from Christianity. It led her to question the fact that all of these good people she was meeting in Japan could never go to heaven just because the Church had not done a good enough job of spreading Christianity to them. She considered that perhaps heaven could take in those who had never converted.¹⁵⁸ Such a consideration did not align with her own faith, so it was not an idea that she espoused often. So Bird decided to promote the spread of Christianity rather than the idea that people of other religions could get into heaven. She commented on the guilt that she and all other Christians who were not missionaries should feel for not going out into the world to save their brethren from “unspeakable horror.”¹⁵⁹ The connection which Bird felt between Christian responsibility and mobility is clear. Her statement that it was all Christians’ duty to save their fellow man by introducing them to Christianity and converting them requires access to mobility. Although she pressured Christians so heavily to go on missions, she herself was never a

¹⁵⁵ Bird Bishop, *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan vol. I*, 64.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 215.

¹⁵⁷ Barr, 120.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 119.

¹⁵⁹ Bird Bishop, *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan vol. I*, 202.

missionary. As a missionary she would have been able to travel, but perhaps she felt it would have required her to stay in one location for too long, inhibiting her mobility. Or, perhaps she simply used these Christian messages as a way to promote herself as Christian, making her constant mobility more normal to an audience which viewed mobility as a commodity possessed by white, European, Christian men.

Everywhere in Japan that missionaries arrived, the Buddhists increased their presence there too, which, according to Bird, led to Buddhism remaining popular among the poor. She acknowledged Shintoism as the state religion, but disregarded it as “a rude form of nature and myth worship, probably indigenous, containing no moral code, and few if any elements of religion”.¹⁶⁰ Bird doubted Christianity’s future in Japan, and wrote that she did not believe that Japan was “ripe for the reception of Christianity.”¹⁶¹ Missionaries had made thousands of converts, but still there were millions more Japanese people who were not taken with it. Bird believed that the biggest obstacle to Christianity in Japan was that the people were too materialistic and therefore not religious-minded, without the instincts needed for conversion. She got this impression in part from the Japanese representatives she could speak with: the few English-speaking Japanese people she met, who were educated and often agnostic. Japanese students educated in England and the United States reportedly told Bird that only the uneducated and the clergy cared about Christianity. She was frustrated with Japan’s lack of Christian faith. At a local hospital that was practicing Western medicine, she asked a lecturer about teaching religious instruction alongside medicine, and Barr wrote that he laughed “with undisguised contempt. ‘We have no religion,’ he added, ‘and all your learned men know that religion is

¹⁶⁰ Bird Bishop, *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan vol. II*, 9.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 331.

false.”¹⁶² This gets to the crux of the matter for Bird: Japan was engaging with Western invention and institutions without the adoption of Western faith.

Bird saw Japan as using all the fruits of Christian civilization without incorporating Christianity itself. This frustrated and confused her. She and many other Christian visitors were dismayed by the lack of religious faith in Japan. The “so-called enlightened western institutions”,¹⁶³ to many Westerners, were linked implicitly to Christianity. To have these institutions without Christianity was to be missing an essential part of it, and because of this she saw Japan as very materialistic. She saw Japanese Shintoism as myth and nature worship, and Buddhism as more worthy but not believed in by many people anymore. She feared that atheism was taking over. To Bird, this was the biggest problem facing Japan’s future: they had adopted European qualities to their institutions and culture without also taking on Christianity. This implied materialism and atheism, and Bird hoped that they would take on Christianity’s “manliness”.¹⁶⁴ This gendered term she used for Christianity provides further testament to the idea that defining herself as a strong Christian made it easier for her to suit the archetype of who was thought to be mobile: mostly Christian white men. To her, “proper” modernity was Christian and an essential part of her modernity and progressiveness. This is evidence for why New Womanhood needs to change to include Bird: she helps us understand how people of her time and place, Britain during the fin-de-siècle, understood modernity as Christianity. A part of that Christianity was missions, meaning mobility. Mobile Christianity was essential for modern progressiveness.

¹⁶² Barr, 112.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 112.

¹⁶⁴ Bird Bishop, *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan vol. II*, 357.

As for the Japanese people, Bird generally approved of their character and culture. She wrote that she was surprised to find them so courteous and pleasant, and described their temperament as polite, as opposed to what she saw as China's dominating temperament.¹⁶⁵ She wrote that she found all Japanese children to be well behaved, quiet, and willingly obedient, unlike English children. The affection she perceived among families was, in her view, a great asset to the Japanese people.¹⁶⁶ They had everything but Christianity.

Despite all of this praise and these generalizations of goodness, Bird wrote extensively about how truly unattractive she found Japanese people. She wrote "Though the women, especially the girls, are modest, gentle, and pleasing-looking, I saw nothing like even passable good looks."¹⁶⁷ Japanese industriousness, resourcefulness, and commitment to family were not enough to hold back Bird's relentless attack on her perception of Japanese faces. Bird approved of the character of the ladies she met, but strongly disapproved of their kimonos, as she found them too restrictive and impractical, and thought the women wearing them looked silly when attempting to perform regular tasks.¹⁶⁸ She could not approve of the social convention to wear narrow, impractical kimonos, as she herself was willing to wear riding trousers to travel more efficiently.

Such an opinion carried a religious connotation with it. The connection between physical beauty and goodness has been a staple of Western thought for centuries: "To the ancient Greeks a beautiful body reflected a beautiful soul and proximity to the gods."¹⁶⁹ According to medieval schools of thought, beauty was "the result of an overall vision of the universe for which each

¹⁶⁵ Bird Bishop, *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan vol. I*, 49.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 143.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 79.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁶⁹ Claus Bossen, "Beauty," in *The Oxford Companion to the Body*,: Oxford University Press, 2001, <http://www.oxfordreference.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/view/10.1093/acref/9780198524038.001.0001/acref-9780198524038-e-87?rskey=nzKZbW&result=8>, para. 10.

positive attribute of the created world finds its origin and its coherence in God. As such, beauty is identical with God and is present in created realities only as a participation in beauty... Visible beauty is a vestige of God which favours our intellectual grasp of him and authorizes our symbolic return to him.”¹⁷⁰ Her critique of foreign fashion and appearances both follows an Orientalist trope of ranking foreign women’s attractiveness and makes Bird sound more practical and potentially more masculine by showing disinterest in any dress which could be impractical, but it also had religious significance. The conclusion that Japanese people, especially the women, completely lacked attractiveness reinforced the perceived godlessness of these people to her audience, as “The ugly body is thus a body whose difference from the normal body is turned into deviance.”¹⁷¹ By deeming Japanese people to be unattractive, Bird was making a statement about deviance, lack of goodness in their souls, and lack of closeness to God. Her perception of Japanese beauty would later contrast strongly with her views on the Aino people.

When Bird made her way to Yezo she found the freedom that she craved whenever she travelled. Yezo, also spelled Ezo, has referred to the northern islands of Japanese archipelago. Bird referred to the main northern island Hokkaido as Yezo in her journey northward. At the time, the central Japanese government was attempting to colonize Yezo for two reasons, both of which were justification for settler colonialism: to give land and space to the people who overcrowded the southern Japanese islands, and to have a tactical defensive position against Russia.¹⁷² Bird noted that Britain distrusted Russia as much as Japan did at that time, thus further establishing a connection between Britain and Japan. Both were interested in colonization, and

¹⁷⁰ Tiziana Suarez-Nani, “Beauty,” in *Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages*,: James Clarke & Co, 2002, <http://www.oxfordreference.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/view/10.1093/acref/9780227679319.001.0001/acref-9780227679319-e-319?rskey=aUbN8N&result=318>.

¹⁷¹ Claus Bossen, “Ugliness,” in *The Oxford Companion to the Body*,: Oxford University Press, 2001, <http://www.oxfordreference.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/view/10.1093/acref/9780198524038.001.0001/acref-9780198524038-e-969?rskey=tQ9IM5&result=3>, para. 3.

¹⁷² Bird Bishop, *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan vol. II*, 4.

both had a fear and suspicion of Russia.¹⁷³ Although Bird demonstrated a certain amount of patriotism for Britain and did not express disapproval of Japan's colonial expansion, she demonstrated a disappointment over the spreading of Western-influenced Japanese culture to the Aino people, and the loss of their own "primitive" culture.

Although the modern Romanization of their name is Ainu, Bird referred to the Russian and Japanese indigenous group as Aino. She saw the "hairy Aino"¹⁷⁴ as a completely different race than the Japanese in terms of temperament and physical appearance. Much like the contemporary British description of the people of Africa, Bird described the Aino as stupid and submissive, meaning that if the Japanese, in this analogy, are the British then the Aino are African, and are to be conquered.¹⁷⁵ A distinct parallel was being drawn between Britain and Japan. Bird did not create this parallel, but she was certainly reproducing and contributing to it, as she would later reproduce and contribute to the discourse on the state of Korea during and after the First Sino-Japanese War, which will be discussed later in this thesis.

Bird did not consider the Aino to be civilized for a variety of reasons. In a trope of colonialism, Bird considered the fact that the Aino did not have a written language to mean that they did not have a history or traditions.¹⁷⁶ Again, such a statement sounds similar to other colonizing projects and the way that oral tradition was and continues to be perceived. Bird reported that the relationship between the Aino, who she referred to as "complete savages", and foreign missionaries was not friendly.¹⁷⁷ Although the Aino were not Christian, not grounded in a written history, and were not considered "civilized" in Bird's interpretation, Bird still

¹⁷³ Bird Bishop, *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan vol. II, 4.*

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 50.

absolutely loved her time with them. Her need for mobility extended to the need to get away from the Western version of civilization and be surrounded by people whom she felt were new and foreign to her, which fueled her on her travels and drove her to become the modern, disruptive, New Woman she was.

Bird wrote that the Aino had never seen a foreign woman before, but that they were not excited by the prospect. She attributed the lack of fuss made over her to be because the Aino were naturally apathetic and unintelligent.¹⁷⁸ Many orientalist generalizations were made about them in order to paint them as primitive and savage, but she enjoyed her time with them. Bird described them as large and physically intimidating, but sweet and innocent, like a savage child.¹⁷⁹ She noted that some Aino men were educated in Tokyo, only to be pulled back into their old savage lifestyle.¹⁸⁰ This could be considered an acknowledgement that Aino people were, in reality, no less intelligent than any person from a society she believed to be civilised, but the sweeping generalizations persisted throughout her writing. From her perspective, they were immobile while she was mobile. They were traditional and Eastern, while she was modern and Western. Their existence and culture fuelled her own identity, which was being crafted in response to the Aino and other cultures she perceived as backward and immobile.

Women in the Aino community were cited by Bird as being hard working, as they woke early in the morning to work, sew, and “seem never to have an idle moment.”¹⁸¹ She wrote that all the Aino were polite, but that they had not learned that from Japan because it was not a civilized sort of politeness, it was a “savage politeness”.¹⁸² The exact meaning of such a

¹⁷⁸ Bird Bishop, *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan vol. II*, 56.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 109.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 69.

statement is unclear. She referred to their lifestyle as savage and monotonous, but still better than the lives of many Christian Englishmen.¹⁸³ Even though or perhaps because of their “savageness”, to Bird, they were better people than some inhabitants of the “civilized” world, which reaffirmed the idea that Bird consistently preferred to spend her time among societies that were foreign and unfamiliar to her.

Two main differences arise in Bird’s perceptions of the Aino versus the Japanese. First, she viewed the Aino as less civilized than the Japanese. Second, she saw the Aino as vastly better looking than the Japanese people. Bird wrote that she had become tired of the hideous appearance of Japanese people, and found the Aino women to be savage and powerful looking, but with gentle smiles and “womanly” spirits.¹⁸⁴ The reason behind her approval of Aino women’s looks was based entirely in race. She wrote that they were “very handsome, and it is a European, not an Asiatic, beauty.”¹⁸⁵ A comparison to Spanish faces was drawn, meaning Bird viewed them as more European-looking and therefore more beautiful than Japanese women. Again, she was invoking ideas held by her Christian audience about physical appearance’s connection with goodness of the soul and closeness to God. Her favouring of European-type faces over Asian-type faces contradicts with her preference for foreignness of company and adds another realm in which Bird treads a line of modernity and tradition.¹⁸⁶

Parallels were clearly being drawn between Britain and Japan during this time. It is unlikely that Bird was the one to first observe the likeness, as the Meiji Restoration had been established and continuing for a decade by the time Bird arrived in Asia. However, the fact that she made these connections and was observing the cultural changes so keenly indicates that she

¹⁸³ Bird Bishop, *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan vol. II*, 72.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

was in tune with the political landscape of Asia and potentially any other places she visited. This set the precedent for when Bird was later in Korea at a time of political upheaval and immense cultural change. She was educated on the arguments in place, reiterated them for the reader, and established her own opinions on the topic. The opinions she espoused, as well as opposing opinions, were all published in English newspapers of the day. Bird was a part of the system of political expression, tapped into the community, and represented these opinions in her own words.

Bird enjoyed the new face that Japan was putting forward, but she did not love it. As Barr put it,

New Japan lacked what she always termed the “grooviness” (and to Isabella this of course meant unexciting, hidebound) of the irredeemable, backward-looking, essentially immutable Orient that gave her true solace. She deplored, during this and later visits to Korea and China, the ‘hopeless darkness’ in which the oriental peasant lived; he was, she felt, ignorant, superstitious, bigoted, crafty, cruelly used by those in authority over him and cruelly bound by custom.¹⁸⁷

Bird’s particular form of orientalism longed for places where she perceived people to have these “grooviness” qualities because they were so different than her home in Britain. For Bird, the people of Britain had a civilized and modern society where people were not “ignorant, superstitious, bigoted” or controlled by old, outdated custom. Being among people who were, to her, was freedom from the confines of modern society which gave her such melancholy and suffocated her. That is what Bird found in “New Japan”: a parallel of the Western European civilization from which she was desperately trying to escape. The Orientalism she engaged in was both a result of her mobility and also contributed to her mobility. To her audience, it improved her writing because it reinforced common ideas about Japan and other cultures of the time, making her books appear educational and culturally important.

¹⁸⁷ Barr, 102.

John Murray wanted to publish the book that resulted from this trip right away.¹⁸⁸ It was first printed in October of 1879, then a second edition was printed in November, and finally a third in January 1880.¹⁸⁹ It would prove to be a high point in her writing career. Stoddart posed the idea that Bird's books on Asia were different from the others because they were "more masculine", more "intellectual and spiritual". She believed that these books were not as exuberant as the book on Hawaii, and that within them Bird demonstrated less prejudice.¹⁹⁰ Stoddart showed herself to have a lack of, or perhaps outdated, understanding of Bird's work. There was a tremendous amount of prejudice and assumptions made about race, gender, and religion within Bird's books on Asian locations. Of course, such prejudice and orientalism in relation to East Asia and such foreign races would have been seen through a completely different lens when Stoddart wrote her analysis of Bird since she published it in 1908. However, Stoddart even missed the mark when interpreting her own friend and contemporary's perceptions of Japan. Stoddart also stated that Bird saw the westernization of Japan as a positive thing that saved Japan: that it was a rebirth. She wrote "how astonishing the spirit breathed into the nostrils of Japan, how quickly its form responded to the spirit", and that Bird had seen Japan when it was "half awake"¹⁹¹. This language implies that since Bird went there, Japan had converted en masse to Christianity and been saved and reborn. Of course this is not what happened, demonstrating that Stoddart's goal was to further connect Bird with Christianity and to voice the idea that Westernization was a Christianizing and therefore saving influence on Japan. Stoddart wrote that

¹⁸⁸ Stoddart, 109.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 108.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 140.

Bird enjoyed “New Japan”, when in fact it was just the sort of western-style society she was constantly running away from.¹⁹²

Barr did not make the same miscalculation as Stoddart. Barr wrote about Bird’s affection for “grooviness” and understood her love of the unfamiliar. This difference supports Barr’s idea that Stoddart did not truly understand her subject’s passionate nature. The difference between their interpretations of Bird’s time in Japan is also reflective of the authors’ desires to convey Bird as either a ladylike, proper representative of her class and generation, or a rebellious New Woman and early feminist.

Bird’s time in Japan established her ideas on race, Christian duty, and the way she would portray her own gender. She consistently reiterated popular conceptions of Japan, such as its similarities to Britain, reinforcing the associated Orientalist perceptions of Japan and the Aino, therefore coding herself distinctively as white. The way she condemned Japanese women’s restrictive kimonos engaged with tropes of gender. By decrying the kimono for being impractical and writing so little about it she was resisting expectations that she, as a woman, would marvel at foreign fashion and pay significant attention to it. Her displeasure with it employed her Orientalism and so did the way that she ranked Japanese attractiveness below that of the Aino and, presumably, below Britons. By imbuing herself with the authority to rank the beauty of other races, she was coding herself as a white, outside observer and a colonizer. Her long passages about Japanese religions and the duty of Christians to save the souls of individuals all over the world who had never heard of Christianity firmly cements her devotion to touting a Christian narrative, while also revealing her hypocrisy and potential true motive. She was never a missionary herself. Instead, like always, she chose a path which would further allow her to

¹⁹² Stoddart, 140.

remain mobile. By prominently displaying these qualities of whiteness and Christianity while deemphasizing her own femininity, she was taking on the qualities of those who were typically considered mobile: white, Christian, male colonizers. This access to mobility allowed her to make her living as a writer and demonstrate the qualities of New Womanhood: modernity and disruptiveness. Her time in Japan also cemented her association between Christianity, imperialism, and modernity. For her, and potentially others of her time, Christianity was modernity. The issue she took with Japan's material modernity and colonizer-style mobility was based on its lack of Christianity. Bird viewed modernity and mobility to be essentially interlinked with Christianity. For Japan to have the Western-styled mobility and modernity without the Christianity that had underlain it in Europe was, to Bird, to be materialistic and empty.

HENRIETTA BIRD AND DR. JOHN BISHOP

Though Bird's book *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan Volumes I & II* was a success, Isabella was unable to feel satisfaction from her triumph for very long. In June of 1880, Henrietta Bird succumbed to a long battle with typhoid.¹⁹³ Isabella was devastated. Henrietta had been Isabella's inspiration behind all her travel books. The books were borne out of the letters written to the Bird family, especially Henrietta. The praise that Isabella received for her vivid representations of life in foreign lands only came to be because of her desire to relay her adventures back to her beloved sister.¹⁹⁴ The relationship revealed much about Isabella's nature and New Womanhood because she and her sister contrasted so deeply. Isabella's lifelong goal of mobility required an anchor like Henrietta to stay behind in England or Scotland while she was travelling. Her devotion to her sister was both her reason for staying unwed and, after Henrietta died, her reason for marrying John Bishop. She was extremely reluctant to enter into this marriage because she did not want to be rendered immobile, domestic, and dependent. She married him largely because it was a dying wish of Henrietta's.

Descriptions of Henrietta's character from both Stoddart and Barr, and from other sources that they cite, consistently painted her as a sweet, gentle, quiet person from an early age. Stoddart described her as full of light, studious, more spiritual than Isabella, and exceptionally devoted to studying the Bible. Stoddart wrote about Henrietta just as flatteringly as she described Isabella. Henrietta was established as the quiet young lady who preferred to stay out of the spotlight. The demure wallflower foil to Isabella, the strong-willed adventurer.¹⁹⁵ The immobile domestic Christian versus the mobile modern Christian.

¹⁹³ Stoddart, 119.

¹⁹⁴ Barr, 181.

¹⁹⁵ Stoddart, 16.

Their relationship was unique, and led Barr to speculate about its nature. Barr, in the form of a psychohistorian, cited Stoddart's comment that the two sisters complimented each other perfectly, forming a "perfect combination", and elaborated on this vague statement when she wrote "indeed, whether consciously or not, Isabella had for years envisaged herself and Hennie as being, to an extent, one entity. The letters wrote home from abroad contain many passionately affectionate passages in which Hennie is referred to as 'it'."¹⁹⁶ This "perfect combination" idea was furthered by Barr, who cited several letters between the sisters in which Isabella called the two of them "it", a single being.¹⁹⁷ It is a testament to the closeness that Isabella felt with Henrietta even though Isabella could hardly stand to be home with her for more than a few months at a time. Barr's reader is led to believe that Isabella's wanderlust was unquenchable and caused not by Henrietta or any flaws in her character and home, but because Isabella's need for adventure was insatiable.

Barr went even further into speculation on the sisters' relationship when she wrote that it followed traditional lines of male and female roles, with Isabella in the male "husband" role, and Henrietta in the "wife" role.¹⁹⁸ Such a characterization is problematic and is representative of the sort of psychological analysis that was popular among Barr's peers. Barr qualified her statement by writing that it was not an intentional dynamic. She wrote that Isabella never set out to be masculine, but she needed Henrietta's more distinct femininity in order to complete her own femininity.¹⁹⁹ To say that Isabella's femininity was incomplete implies a very narrow definition of feminine, and that is the version that Henrietta embodied: quiet, spiritual, and forever staying at home while her counterpart is away. It appears to be very true that Isabella lacked these

¹⁹⁶ Barr, 187.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 186.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 165.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 187.

qualities, but that does not mean that she was not embodying her own version of femininity. This version of femininity could be called New Woman femininity: a modern, disruptive, independent woman that defied traditional views on what was feminine and what was not. It is surprising that Barr did not acknowledge it as such. Barr, who wrote her book about Isabella in the 1970s during the second wave feminist movement which revitalized New Woman literature, saw her subject as a New Woman and a complete individual with admirable accomplishments, but could not qualify her as a feminine person. Perhaps Barr did not see New Womanhood as falling under the umbrella of femininity, but rather a masculine pursuit for independent women. This perspective overlaps with the idea that Bird had to avoid portraying herself as the stereotypically feminine person so that she could remain mobile.

After Henrietta's death, Isabella felt guilty for having neglected her sister.²⁰⁰ Isabella wrote to John Murray that Henrietta had been her entire inspiration for writing, but now that the inspiration was gone, Isabella was unsure about her future.²⁰¹ The small Scottish town of Tobermory had been Henrietta's home for years before her death. She had a cottage there which she kept for herself, but was also the only home base that Isabella had left to go back to after travelling. Henrietta had been heavily involved in the Tobermory community, so when Isabella went back there to go through Henrietta's things after her death she tried to take up Henrietta's charity work too.²⁰² For a few years after John Bishop renewed Henrietta's expired lease so that Isabella could retreat to the cottage to write and keep up the local charity.²⁰³

Not only did Isabella feel guilty for neglecting her sister after she died, but she also felt it during Henrietta's lifetime. Particularly while she was in Hawaii. Isabella thought of Hawaii as

²⁰⁰ Barr, 187.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 188.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 187.

²⁰³ Stoddart, 158.

paradise and Britain as a dreary, boring place. Isabella felt enough guilt for leaving her sister behind in cold, wet Britain that she wrote to Henrietta trying to convince her that they should move to Hawaii permanently. In Hawaii, Isabella wrote, no one would ridicule them for having shabby furniture. It would seem that Isabella did not find that she had been easily able to keep up with social convention in her home country, and had felt shame for the state of her home and furniture.²⁰⁴

Isabella's description of Hawaii to Henrietta was so utopian that she actually convinced her to come to Hawaii. Henrietta, who had been described on all accounts as a homebody who shrank away from the spotlight, wrote back to her sister that perhaps she should come to Hawaii. Isabella received the letter just as she was about to leave for the next leg of her journey in the Rocky Mountains. She hastily responded to her beloved, lonely sister that no, the two of them could certainly not move to Hawaii.²⁰⁵ Why would Isabella write such an offer to Henrietta, if she had no intention on following through? It was reported by many that Isabella's inspiration for writing was Henrietta, and Isabella's knack for descriptive writing only came about because of her desire to inform Henrietta about her experiences abroad. It seems that the offer to start a new life in Hawaii together turned out to be little more than one of these letters: an idyllic depiction of a new foreign place that Isabella had become infatuated with. She was completely taken with Hawaii and her adventure there, but the thought of her sister arriving and the two of them being tied down to just the one location was unacceptable. For Isabella, feeling that she was able to be free and untethered was far more important than living in paradise. Even if it meant letting her sister down after raising Henrietta's hopes so high. This anecdote supports the idea that Henrietta's role was that of the traditional female counterpart to Isabella's traditional male

²⁰⁴ Barr, 51.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 52.

role. Henrietta stayed in Britain and kept a home for Isabella to come back to throughout the whole of her life.

When Isabella was in Britain, she only spent part of her time with Henrietta. She had home bases with her sister in Tobermory and Edinburgh. The summer when she came home from Hawaii and the Rockies, Isabella was feeling robust and tanned. However, as usual, she was starting to get sick again. This time, her sickness began right at the end of her journey. The summer was supposed to be spent with just her and her sister in their cottage at Tobermory, where there was “no room for a third.”²⁰⁶ However, it was around this time when Dr. John Bishop came into the Bird ladies’ life, when he became an “intruder”, as Barr put it, on the sisters’ cottage. Dr. Bishop was an established and well liked doctor from Edinburgh who treated Isabella and Henrietta, and he was in love with Isabella.²⁰⁷

Dr. Bishop became friends with the Bird sisters in the mid-1870s after Isabella returned from Hawaii and America. After this trip, Isabella became interested in studying botany and “microscopy.”²⁰⁸ This was an interest she shared with the doctor and allowed their friendship to develop further. For Bishop, it went beyond friendship, as he was attracted to Bird’s intelligence. He proposed to her for the first time in 1877, which she refused. However, he continued to pursue her, and she continued to run.²⁰⁹ This is the point at which, as previously mentioned, Bird demonstrated some sensitivity about her femininity. Reviews of her books referred to her writing style and her tendency to use riding trousers as masculine and that infuriated her. She wrote to Murray that the Hawaiian riding dress was in fact worn by ladies, and so were the other unique

²⁰⁶ Barr, 182.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 182.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 183.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 183.

articles of clothing she wore.²¹⁰ The idea that outside viewers perceived her as masculine, compounded with her refusal to settle down with either Jim Nugent or Dr. Bishop, appears to have given Bird pause for thought. But not enough to stop her from travelling or inspire her to reject a marriage proposal until years later. When she initially returned from Japan in 1880, Bishop still wanted to marry Isabella. She found him sweet, but at the time she was unable to see herself giving up her mobility by getting married.²¹¹

Isabella was only convinced to marry after the end of Henrietta's life. When she was sick with typhoid, Dr. Bishop was her doctor. He and Isabella took care of Henrietta in her final days.²¹² Henrietta wanted Isabella to marry someone that she herself trusted, and at the end of her life that meant that she recommended that Isabella marry Dr. Bishop. Once Henrietta died, Isabella felt as though choosing not to marry him would mean that she was wasting a treasure. Stoddart wrote that Bishop's consoling her had helped during this time, and it was at this point that she finally allowed his love to affect her.²¹³ He had loved her for years, and was the only one who knew what the end of Henrietta's life had been like for Isabella. Six months after Henrietta's death, Isabella wrote to John Murray that she was getting married.²¹⁴ Even Stoddart noted that Isabella probably would have continued to refuse Bishop if Henrietta had lived.²¹⁵ Her strong relationship with her sister appears to have been the only thing that could convince Bird to marry and potentially giving up her mobility.

²¹⁰ Barr, 185.

²¹¹ Ibid., 183.

²¹² Stoddart, 117.

²¹³ Barr, 188.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 188.

²¹⁵ Stoddart, 141.

Isabella Bird married Dr. John Bishop on March 8, 1881²¹⁶ from a member of her family's home in Warwickshire.²¹⁷ Bird wrote that when Bishop arrived he looked handsome and she was impressed that her critical family liked him so much. Barr wrote "Impeccable though the bridegroom's behaviour was, Isabella, the fifty-year old bride, deliberately blighted the ceremony by her dramatic and ruthless insistence that it should resemble a second funeral."²¹⁸ It had been nine months since Henrietta died, but Isabella's grief was too strong to allow herself to feel festive at her wedding. Perhaps she was mourning two things: Henrietta's life, and her own mobility. However, Isabella maintained the right to go abroad if she ever needed a change, meaning that even though Isabella was getting married she was not committed to the idea of "settling down." Barr wrote that Isabella wore black, wept before the ceremony, and had no guests or a honeymoon.²¹⁹ Her telling of Bird's wedding is depressing to a comical extent and in it there is no question that Barr's Bird did not really want to get married.

Stoddart's interpretation of the wedding was different. She noted that it was sombre, but not that Bird wept and made it into a funeral. However, Stoddart did acknowledge some trouble. She wrote that perhaps Bird did not yet love her husband, although she at least respected him.²²⁰ Another piece of information that Stoddart mentioned was that she reminded her readers to keep in mind that Bird was fifty-years old at this time.²²¹ The comment implied a desperation, that perhaps Bird was marrying this man who was ten years younger than her because she could at least respect him and did not want to be alone. Although Barr and Stoddart agreed that the marriage was off to a troubled start, their reasoning was very different. To Barr, Bird was a

²¹⁶ Stoddart, 146.

²¹⁷ Barr, 189.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 189.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 189.

²²⁰ Stoddart, 146.

²²¹ Ibid., 146.

modern independent woman who was marrying to fulfill her beloved sister's dying wish. To Stoddart, she was getting past her prime and reaching out for companionship.

Notes of sadness haunted the entire marriage. After they married, Mr. and Mrs. Bishop moved to Edinburgh. There, Bird wondered if he would ever leave her due to her endless grief.²²² Barr interpreted Bird's writing and actions soon after her marriage as self-pity. Bird wrote that her husband left her alone too much, even though she herself would leave him for weeks at a time, and when they were together they were as active as she wanted.²²³ Even Stoddart acknowledged that Isabella was unpleasant for a time after Henrietta's death because she became obsessed with it.²²⁴ Despite Bird's criticism of her new husband, he was at the very least supportive of Isabella travelling on her own.²²⁵ However, she never went overseas by herself during their marriage, in part because of Bishop's health. Not long after their wedding Bishop got sick and would remain sick for the rest of his life.²²⁶

Their marriage was brief, but long enough for Isabella to develop real love for her husband. Even though her marriage involved the need to nurture and to be restrained from travel, both of which Barr believed were conditions that Isabella found intolerable, it seems that Isabella was able to find happiness during her marriage, despite the extreme sadness and remorse she displayed at the outset.²²⁷ Isabella and John took care of each other throughout their marriage, as the pair was an uncommonly unhealthy couple. In 1883, John collapsed and was diagnosed with pernicious anaemia, but he remained cheerful. In September of 1884 Isabella wrote "He is happy, everything, however distressing, is 'all right'. He says that these weeks have been the

²²² Barr, 189.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 190.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 191.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 189.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 191.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 193.

happiest time of his life. His mind is very clear and bright; he is full of fun, interest, and thought for others.”²²⁸ These kind, admiring words indicate an affection for her husband that was not present on her wedding day. Over the next eighteen months, as John Bishop remained cheerful, Isabella took care of him. They went to Tobermory, and then to the French Riviera to escape the Scottish winter. The two travelled through spas and hospitals in France as she continued to care for him, and wrote passionately about him and their love.²²⁹ According to Stoddart, John was so sick during their tour of France that he could hardly perceive what was happening.²³⁰ On March 6, 1886, John died, which happened to be two days before their fifth wedding anniversary. He was buried the very next day.²³¹

Isabella took her husband’s death well in comparison to her sister’s. She expressed frustration that she did not return his love until so soon before his death, and continued to write about him affectionately: “He was always so happy, so interested in every one and everything, so enthusiastic, so grateful and loving that it did not seem as if he *could* die.”²³² After his long illness his death must not have been unexpected, but it is clear that Isabella felt it deeply. Stoddart wrote that she became more spiritual after an initial “wave of anguish overwhelmed her. But in her grief there was a new element, a throbbing and stirring of her spiritual life, a sense of the world which her husband had entered, and, as she said herself she ‘was brought face to face with Jesus Christ.’”²³³ After a bout of depression and a sense of being overwhelmed with grief she turned to her religion for comfort. Like she did after Henrietta’s death, Isabella went back to Tobermory to mourn her late husband.²³⁴

²²⁸ Barr, 192.

²²⁹ Ibid., 192.

²³⁰ Stoddart, 169.

²³¹ Ibid., 175.

²³² Barr, 193.

²³³ Stoddart, 176.

²³⁴ Ibid., 186.

Bird wrote to John Murray that, as the sole heir to her father's assets and a widow with no children, she now had plenty of money and no obligations.²³⁵ Barr noted that for someone who loved freedom so much it must have been at least a bit exciting: she had nothing tethering her to any home, she had disposable income, and she had established a following for her writing. She wrote that she was open to travelling eventually, but was not interested yet because she was not as strong as she used to be.²³⁶ She lived for another eighteen years and published five more books. Bird proposed to Murray that she might go on a tour of medical missions because Bishop had inspired that interest in her. She also decided that she wanted to erect a memorial to Bishop by building a mission hospital somewhere it was needed.²³⁷ Barr framed this moment as Bird putting together the idea that she would set up a hospital and collect knowledge, but the real reason for the endeavour was that it was good for her health and happiness. However, Barr concluded that Bird felt she could not simply travel for her own pleasure because her late husband and sister had been such selfless people.²³⁸ By conveying her travel as part of a religious, charitable, medical mission, Bird was finding a way to justify her need to participate in what she believed, due to her religious upbringing, was a selfish act of indulgence. In order to do this she went to Ireland and took a three-month nursing course. It gave her the knowledge she would use to establish her hospital, treat people she met all over the world, and it improved her own health.²³⁹ It was not purely missionary work, it was a compromise that allowed her to continue travelling wherever she wanted.

²³⁵ Barr, 194.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 194.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 194.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 195.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 195.

Her plans for a hospital in John Bishop's memory were set in motion during a journey to India and Kashmir. The main purpose of her time in Kashmir was initially to make contact with the missions there. She oversaw the building of the memorial hospital and visited medical missions in the area.²⁴⁰ Of this time, Stoddart wrote "In addition to the 'John Bishop Memorial Hospital' at Srinagar she desired to provide a small hospital and dispensary in memory of her sister, Henrietta Bird, and made many visits and inquiries to secure the site and building."²⁴¹ Stoddart depicted Bird as having been in charge of and involved in every step of the hospital's construction. Perhaps because she was not involved in the spreading of empire, Bird did not write any books about this journey and project. After her time in India was done, Bird returned to Edinburgh. Without any close family remaining, Edinburgh qualified as her home but there was no one tethering her to it.²⁴² Barr believed that Bird felt a void whenever she was in Tobermory, but that those feelings were dulled when she was away. Bird wrote that it was awful to have "no home"²⁴³ to go back to. Sadly, the memorial hospital dedicated to her late husband was soon destroyed by flood. She did not return to rebuild it or set up a new hospital elsewhere.²⁴⁴ Instead, she dedicated her time and money towards more travel and contributing medical help to whoever she encountered who needed it during her travels.

Journeys in Persia and Kurdistan, published in 1891, was Bird's next book. Barr interpreted Bird's experience in the Middle East as a time when she observed unattractive people and incompetent government. Barr also wrote that Bird felt lucky in comparison to the locals and superior to them. Bird viewed the Middle East as a place that was trapped in the past:

²⁴⁰ Stoddart, 208.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 219.

²⁴² Ibid., 244.

²⁴³ Barr, 260.

²⁴⁴ Stoddart, 250.

Something, too, must be set down to the grateful spirit of self-dependence which legions of domestics have not availed to subdue, and to the love of adventure which not even the nineteenth century can extinguish. Or is it that in the East and amid scenes where life and its environment have not varied for thousands of years, where nomad Abrahams still wander with their flocks, there Rebecca still dips her skin in the well, where savage forays perpetuate the homeless miseries of Job, western man casts off the slough of artificial civilisation and feels he is breathing again with his ancestral stock, the atmosphere that nurtured his kind?²⁴⁵

To her, the Middle East had “not varied for thousands of years” and the world that historical figures knew was still alive. This conception of the East as a place that did not progress and was frozen in time demonstrates that she was fully invested in the classic Orientalist idea that Western Europe was a place of progress and “the East” was for backwardness. While Europe was in a constant state of forward progression, Asia was stagnant and ancient. However, as previously stated, Bird’s particular form of Orientalism meant that she preferred to experience this supposed “backwardness” because she viewed it as a more authentic journey that allowed her to be freer than the “civilized West.” While she would never refer to Korea as a place where “nomad Abrahams still wander”, because she saw it as lacking in religion, Korea was considered a more backward and primitive civilization than its neighbour, Japan. But she did not want to “civilize” Japan or Korea, meaning she did not recommend that Japan introduce its new Western-styled institutions. She consistently expressed ambivalence towards the civilizing mission, unlike the travel writers analyzed in *Imperial Eyes*.

Her next book was about Tibet, called *Among the Tibetans* and published in 1894. Tibet was already a very religious place when Bird visited, meaning that she perceived it as a place that would require considerable work by missionaries. She even met with some missionaries and was impressed by their resolve to convert Tibetans.²⁴⁶ Despite her dislike of Japan for being

²⁴⁵ Barr, 246.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 205.

“irreligious,” she also found flaws in very religious Tibet. She reported that the area she was in was polyandrous, and that they pitied Bird for not having a man in her life.²⁴⁷ Divergence from monogamy was problematic for Bird and coloured her perception of Tibet. She observed that Tibetans would use prayer beads over and over as part of contemplation, but Bird believed that most of them were not truly performing the intended prayer. She saw them as simply “idle and unholy”.²⁴⁸ Asia seemed to be facing an impossible criteria from Bird: to lack religion was unacceptable, and to have a strong religion was to have one’s faith questioned and turned into an opportunity for Christianization.

By this point, Bird was in a new stage of her life. Her parents were long dead, her sister had passed, and now her husband was gone too. She wrote that she was unable to enjoy travel as much as she had before, now that her sister was dead, but it is clear that she still took pleasure in it since she continued to travel, write, and publish.²⁴⁹ There must have been a feeling of freedom associated with her loneliness. She could do what she had always wanted: travel out of interest to wherever she wanted in the world. Stoddart observed that by this point in her life, Bird’s attitude on missionaries and her skill in travelling had grown and changed. Bird used to experience fatigue and break downs during her travels, but had since learned how to handle it.²⁵⁰ As for missionaries, Bird noted that at this point she saw the un-Christianised world as being in great need. When she was younger she would have avoided missions while travelling, but now she believed that missionaries needed help.²⁵¹

²⁴⁷ Barr, 212.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 213.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 199.

²⁵⁰ Stoddart, 261.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 271.

Henrietta was instrumental in the development of Bird's writing career, and therefore responsible for her mobility and New Womanhood. As the recipient of the letters that were compiled into her books, the keeper of Bird's home, and Bird's best friend, Henrietta was an essential part of Bird's life. Her relationship with Bird was compared by Barr to that of a wife and husband, where Henrietta was the feminine domestic who stayed home for Bird, the "husband", to come back to after her travels.²⁵² Perhaps this comparison is too simplistic to capture the relationship between the sisters, but it is true that Henrietta was confined to her home, especially when Bird revoked her offer for them to live in Hawaii, and that Bird's mobility was contingent upon her deemphasizing her femininity.

When Bird eventually married Dr. John Bishop she retained her right to travel without him, but did not. They toured France together, but it was not comparable to her journeys to Japan, Hawaii, and other far-off places. The wedding was a bleak second funeral for Henrietta, and the pair were sickly throughout their five-year marriage. However, despite the troubled beginnings, Bird's many rejections of Bishop's proposals, and the sacrifice of her mobility, she grew to love him. Her choice to marry him at all is confusing and disrupts her pattern of making choices that result in the most mobility for her. The exception was made, according to Barr and Stoddart, out of love and grief for her sister. After Bishop's death, Bird went straight back to embracing mobility and New Womanhood as she travelled, wrote, and strengthened her Christian message in order to better measure up to the selfless piety exhibited by her sister and her husband.²⁵³ Her marriage had required her to demonstrate more of the domesticity expected of the women of Bird's time and place as she stayed in Western Europe, hosted parties, and cared for her ailing husband. She had ceased writing and travelling. Once she was on her own

²⁵² Barr, 187.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 338.

again she resumed as soon as she could and regained her New Womanhood. Being able to travel freely again was what enabled her to write and make money again, and led to her making judgements on race and further embracing Christianity and promoting missionaries. As a wife, she was forced to acknowledge and perform her gender. As a widow, she was free to be mobile and instead emphasize her whiteness and Christianity, and subsequent New Womanhood.

KOREA

In this new stage of her life Isabella Bird was not tethered to anything or anywhere, she had medical training, and had amassed considerable savings from inheritances and earnings on her books. She was in a new and exciting stage in her life and choosing to use her books to promote missionaries during long journeys. As Stoddart put it, “she gave up all thought of returning to England, and planned an extended missionary tour in China to follow on a brief residence in Seoul. Early therefore in January, 1895, she landed, after a very stormy passage, in Chemulpo.”²⁵⁴ She seemed to be ready to leave Britain behind, and determined to aid the Christianizing mission everywhere she went.

Bird’s New Womanhood would be expressed in Korea. Her religious view had been formed by her experiences as a child of a devout family, her dealings in secular but modernizing Japan, and the guilt she felt for pursuing a life of pleasure and adventure rather than self-sacrifice. Her views on race were informed by her extensive travel all over the world, but especially her trips through Asia, a place she saw as stagnant and backward: tropes of Orientalism and immobility. Finally, she had shown herself to be informed about international politics when she went to Japan and expressed awareness of its recent history in the Meiji Restoration, and then reproduced the narratives that were commonly expressed at the time. In Korea, these factors would culminate into a demonstration of modernity and disruptiveness when she reproduced much of the public discourse on the political landscape after the First Sino-Japanese War, but contrary to most other opinions, made the assertion that Russia was best suited to taking control of Korea. Asia was one of the most alluring destinations for her, and going there allowed her to form and express these Christian, Orientalist, modern, and disruptive

²⁵⁴ Stoddart, 293.

viewpoints which made her a New Woman. Travelling there represented an expression of her own mobility and an opportunity to spread Christianity to places she viewed as backward, unchristian, and immobile.

Korea and Her Neighbours was published in 1897. Its preface was written by Walter C. Hillier, a British diplomat and expert on the Chinese language and culture. He wrote that it was his honour to introduce her, and reinforced the idea that Bird was an established travel writer.²⁵⁵ His preface was less an endorsement of Bird and more an expression of support for missionaries. His objective was to take a closer look at missions and dispel the common opinion that missionary work in places like Korea was futile and unnecessary, and to take a moment to appreciate Bird for having her book portray an argument of support for his opinion. To Hillier missions were not just for religious purposes, but academic endeavours as well:

...it is to missionaries that we are assuredly indebted for almost all we know about the country; it is they who have awakened in the people the desire for material progress and enlightenment that has now happily taken root, and it is to them that we may confidently look for assistance in its farther development. The unacknowledged, but none the less complete, religious toleration that now exists throughout the country affords them facilities which are being energetically used with great promise of future success.²⁵⁶

Clearly, Hillier felt that society owed a debt of gratitude to missionaries for their work in collecting cultural information and their spreading of “material progress and enlightenment”. This interpretation of missionary work connected Christianity intrinsically with the idea of progress and the civilizing mission. So not only had missionaries travelled to the furthest and most “exotic” places on Earth, they had gone as representatives of the “civilized West” to physically bring progress and the concept of religious tolerance, and send back information analyzing the culture and expanding Christendom’s understanding of its future conquests. This

²⁵⁵ Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors*, 1.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

process required Christians to be mobile, and resulted in the greatness of commerce that Hillier perceived in Western Europe. The idea that missionaries were important in a Western European understanding of the world was further reinforced when Hillier wrote that missionaries were overlooked in “their utility as explorers and pioneers of commerce.”²⁵⁷ For Hillier, missionaries were not just tools of Christianity and fact collecting, but of exploration and setting up receptiveness for future economic activities. Truly, because of their Christian mobility, missionaries were meant to represent everything important for Western European society: religion, knowledge, and commerce.

Hillier seemed to be directly addressing a contemporary conversation about the usefulness of missionaries, and weighing in. It seems that a common consensus that he has observed in the Western European community is that the people viewed them as useless or outdated. Perhaps this is why he discussed missionaries’ economic roles so much:

I venture to think that much valuable information as to channels for the development of trade could be obtained by Chambers of Commerce if they were to address specific inquiries to missionaries in remote regions. Manufacturers are more indebted to missionaries than perhaps they realize for the introduction of their goods and wares, and the creation of a demand for them, in places to which such would never otherwise have found their way.²⁵⁸

It seems that missionaries’ religious importance was no longer enough for some people to consider them worthwhile, so Hillier argued that British manufacturing, industry, and trade have relied heavily on connections established by missionaries, and therefore they deserve credit and support.

Since Bird allowed her publisher John Murray to choose Hillier’s writing as the preface of her book, it is safe to assume that she agreed with his statements. Although she did not

²⁵⁷ Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors*, 4.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

directly express these opinions themselves, I assert that Hillier's opinion, that the public's loss of support for missions was unjust, was one of Bird's own theses in *Korea and Her Neighbours*. Of course, it was largely a part of her overall pattern of promoting her Christianity and whiteness in order to better obtain mobility. Additionally, relevant pieces of her life all contribute to this assertion: her time with pro-missionary family while she was young, her family and sister's commitment to charity, the selflessness she perceived in her late husband, and especially her previous comments that Christian Britons had become too willing to live their lives in luxury, as Stoddart wrote:

She had noticed, on her return from the East at the end of 1890, a great increase in the private luxury of English families—even those sincerely religious—in the multiplication of costly personal accessories, in food, clothing, amusements; a new luxury beginning in the nursey, invading the school, enervating the young, so that it was more and more difficult to win, from the ranks of those who lived at ease, followers of a Master who consecrated the missionaries He sent out to poverty, danger, and toil.²⁵⁹

To be against the comfortable lifestyles and increase of “personal accessories” was to voice dissent against the very British manufacturers that Hillier appealed to in her own preface, and instead favour the disruptive opinion that it was all Christians' duty to forgo the quality of life that industrialism and imperialism had afforded them. This interpretation of Christians' religious obligation required that all Christians be mobile, visiting foreign places and saving them with the civilizing force of Christianity. Bird prioritized the need for religious devotion, missionaries, and the Christianizing of the world over the need for commerce and manufacturing.

Stoddart went on to quote Bird's own writing, in which she expressed her frustration and confusion with the state of religion and commerce she found in England:

May it not be that we are called to more self-sacrifice and self-denial than we have used or are trying to use? Can we hear of souls perishing, as they are perishing, and yet continue to use the silver and gold which we constantly say are the Lord's for

²⁵⁹ Stoddart, 273.

other purposes—and not His? I know that reasons are given for not giving up luxuries and I should not venture to condemn them in any way... I would only say, regarding the oft-repeated argument, that if people gave up these superfluities “it would be so bad for trade,” that there is one word of the Master which very often occurs to me, “What is that to thee? Follow thou Me.” It may be that the way of the Cross is harder than of old, and that the steep of Calvary—which we all must climb if we are to suffer with Christ and to be glorified with Him—is more rugged than of old. I know not.²⁶⁰

This passage is filled with conflict. Bird found that the people of her home were no longer living in a way that she believed to be congruous with Christianity. She saw a need for self-sacrifice and giving up worldly possessions to better follow God. People had evidently been saying that if people were to live in the self-denial she described, where they stopped using silver and gold in order to better help the souls she saw perishing, then trade would be negatively affected. But Bird was not convinced that this was a worthy excuse. She disregarded the concern by quoting the Bible. In this instance, Bird was expressing New Womanhood through disruptiveness, but was also expressing a firmly traditional and anti-modern stance on lifestyle and commerce. She believed that this mobile form of Christianity would save the souls of those who the missionaries converted, and the souls of Britons who were finally mobilized to fulfill their duty. The stance she took against modern lifestyles that involved leisure and comfort contributed to her disruptiveness and also demonstrates that for Bird, mobility and religion went hand-in-hand: it was an essential part of a Christian’s duty to convert others in foreign, “uninformed” parts of the world.

This passage and Stoddart, who published it, made Bird out to be disappointed with the modern world and steadfast in her own belief. As previously stated, Bird’s internal struggle to balance her faith with her “selfishness”, meaning her need to travel for leisure, was prominent. Perhaps this contributed to Bird’s reasons for funding John Bishop’s memorial hospital and

²⁶⁰ Stoddart, 273.

pursuing her medical training: she felt she needed to develop her contribution to missions in order to reconcile with her feelings about Christians' requirement for self-denial with her personal need to travel.

In 1894 when Bird was preparing for her journey to Korea, she found that her friends had never heard of the country and did not know where it was. Her book begins with an amusing anecdote in which she lists some of her friends' best guesses as to where in the world Korea might be located: "many interested friends hazarded guesses at its position, — the Equator, the Mediterranean, and the Black Sea being among them, a hazy notion that it is in the Greek Archipelago cropping up frequently. It was curious that not one of these educated, and, in some cases, intelligent people came within 2,000 miles of its actual latitude and longitude!"²⁶¹ This perceived lack of public knowledge on Korea became a theme of *Korea and Her Neighbors*, which leads the audience to read the book as an anthropological enterprise and educational experience. She prefaced the book with the statement that the work was meant to be a "study of the leading characteristics of the Mongolian races"²⁶² and filled its introductory chapter with textbook-like descriptions and statistics on Korea's geography, economy, and people. She believed that there was a gap in public knowledge about Korea and portrayed this book as a reaction to and cure for it, directed at people who were not familiar with the "Hermit Nation". From her perspective, a lack of familiarity with Korea was common and understandable because she believed that the nickname Hermit Nation had been earned and that its qualities were the sort that not only hid it from the world but "repelled investigation."²⁶³ These are loaded statements. To refer to Korea as a "Hermit Nation" and state that it has "repelled investigation" is to invoke

²⁶¹ Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors*, 11.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 11.

ideas of isolation and stagnation: the opposite of mobility. By holding the opinion that Christians were obligated to be mobile and bring Christianity to the world, and stating that Korea was completely cut off from the world, was to set up a dichotomy of mobility versus immobility in which Bird, a representative of the ideal mobile Christian, contrasted with the backwards and uninformed Hermit Nation of Korea. Through this depiction of Korea, it can further be seen that Bird's ideology coalesced Christianity, mobility, and disruptiveness.

Barr's assessment of Korea in 1894, when Bird was visiting, painted it as an unfriendly, backward place that was entrenched in the past:

In 1894 Korea was still known as 'The Hermit Nation' that turned an unsociable, unchanging, elderly face to the world. So unsociable was it, the story went, that its coastal areas had been deliberately deforested in order to present the bleakest, most inhospitable and discouraging aspect to the stranger. And the lack of change was such that its King belonged to a dynasty dating from 1392, which managed to survive until 1910. But the Korean image was disintegrating, had begun to do so in 1866 when citizens of several western nations landed 'to trade, rob, kill or, what was equally obnoxious to the regent and his court, to make treaties,' says William Griffis, the American historian, who conclude that 'the fires of civilization were beginning to smoke out the hermit'. During the next decade or so 'obnoxious treaties' which opened some ports to foreign trade were forced upon the Korean authorities, who sent this plaintive note to the leader of one early American expedition: 'This people and Kingdom have lived in enjoyment of their own civilization for four thousand years and want no other. We trouble no other nations. Why should they trouble us? Our country is in the furthest east, yours in the furthest west. For what purpose do you come so many thousands of miles across the sea?'²⁶⁴

Even in 1970, after Japanese colonialism and the Korean War, the old Korea was represented by Barr as a place that was mysterious and completely disconnected from the world. Instead of viewing a dynasty which lasted from 1392 until 1910 as an impressive, noble accomplishment, it was used as a sign that Korea was stagnant and unchanging. Barr was engaging with Korea in classic Orientalist fashion. Inclusion of a statement that civilization was causing the end of Korea's hermit-like quality implied that there was no civilization before western influence

²⁶⁴ Barr, 272.

began. This reiterates Bird's portrayal of Korea as isolated, stagnant, and immobile, as opposed to the civilizing influence of Western mobility. Barr's statements also offer the viewpoint that it was the Americans who had the strongest western influence on Korea, rather than Japan, Britain, or any of the European countries which had been sending missionaries for decades before Bird's arrival.

The issue of which country has had the most influence over Korean affairs was contentious while Bird was there, and it led into the debate over which country should oversee Korea. This debate was conducted publicly in newspapers for the years leading up to, during, and following the First Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895. For this project, I have analyzed relevant material from *The Times* and *The Illustrated London News* and found that Bird engaged with the dialogue being discussed in these newspapers, reflecting the discourse, and reproducing it in her own words in her book on Korea. Just like what was written in the newspapers, Bird wrote that China was ancient and disorganized, Japan was European-like and well organized, and Korea was in need of an outside ruler. In this way, *Korea and Her Neighbors* was meant to address two topics: missionaries and Korean colonization. It became a moment in which she expressed her modernity and disruptiveness, mobility, Christianity, and race. I will argue that her decision that Russia was the best choice for Korea displayed her modernity and disruptiveness, and therefore her New Womanhood too. Everything that made her a New Woman such as her opinions that resulted from mobility and the observations she expressed because of her mobility through and around Korea at this time, will all be assessed in the following sections.

A ROUTE THROUGH KOREA AND ITS NEIGHBOURS

This section contains a summary of Bird's journey through Korea and provides some context for my analysis of Bird's mobility and observations about Korea. She arrived in the Korean port town Chemulpo, which is now known as Incheon and located in the Northwestern corner of South Korea, close to Seoul. When *The Times* reviewed her book, they published the following details about her route through Korea: "Mrs. Bishop's first long journey in Korea was made from Seoul up the Han, the greatest of Korean rivers, along its southern branch, back again to the junction of the two branches, then up the northern branch to the head of the navigation, when she travelled overland to the monasteries of the Diamond Mountain, and so to the northern treaty power of Wönsan, whence she returned by sea to Chemulpho, the port of Seoul, just as the war was beginning."²⁶⁵ During the war, Bird travelled through China and the Southeastern portion of Russia closest to Korea. Then, she returned to Korea to re-evaluate it and survey the post-war, Japanese-ruled landscape. *The Times* described the second half of her time in Korea as follows: "One other journey Mrs. Bishop made in Korea. It took her westwards from Seoul to Hwang-ju, and up the Tai-döng river to the town of Ping-yan, where she visited the scenes in the great battle which decided the fate of the Chinese; proceeding northwards for some days' journey, she descended the Tai-döng, whence she got carried in a small Japanese transport to Chemulpho."²⁶⁶ From her first arrival in Chemulpo to her departure for England, her trip lasted from January 1894 to March 1897.

²⁶⁵ "Mrs. Bishop's 'Korea'," *The Times*, January 13, 1898, accessed August 6, 2016. http://find.galegroup.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/ttda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=TTDA&userGroup=ocul_carleton&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=AdvancedSearchForm&docId=CS84075053&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

At the beginning her journey, she took in her surroundings and reported them to her audience in ways that consistently cast a light of stagnation and filth on Korean people. The dirtiness of Korea is the most prominent feature of the early portions of *Korea and Her Neighbors*. It was represented as an ancient, backward, superstitious place that was clearly coming under gradual Japanese control. Later she began to cast Korea in a more positive light, as she became more enamored with its “grooviness”, as she perceived its status as “trapped in the past” to be an enjoyable quality. While she initially saw Koreans as lazy and greedy, she would later attribute that quality to be due to Chinese misgovernment rather than an inherent quality of the “Korean race”. Bird emerged at the end of her journey with an affection for Korea and an opinion on its future, that it should be ruled by Russia, which reflected her religious experience and disruptive nature, as Russia was an unlikely candidate in the eyes of *The Times* and *The Illustrated London News*.

Regardless of where she placed the blame for the laziness, backwardness, and superstition she perceived among Korean people, these descriptors characterized Korea as immobile, in contrast to her Western European Christian mobility. Therefore, to write that Korea’s immobile laziness was because of the tyranny that reigned over them, was to suggest that just rule would result in industriousness and, by extension, mobility. Bird’s message was clear: immobility was represented by laziness, backwardness, tyrannical misgovernment, and a lack of Christianity; while mobility related to industriousness, progressiveness, just government, and Christianity. Mobility was intrinsically linked with Christianity for Bird because she believed that Christians had an obligation to travel and spread Christianity. Doing so would save the souls of the missionaries and foreign converts, spreading Christianity and therefore mobility

along with it. Christianity and mobility were linked for Bird as part of her modernity, disruptiveness, and New Womanhood.

When she arrived in Chemulpo, Bird could immediately see Japan's control over it. Bird noted that due to recent treaties a short list of Korean ports had opened up to foreign commerce, and noticed that there was no English mercantile presence in Korea thus far.²⁶⁷ To her, the Japanese presence in Korea was strong. She wrote that Korea had been growing more and more rice because that was what the Japanese asked them to do, presumably because she saw Japanese merchants buying up rice in preparation for a war that, Barr notes, only they knew was coming.

Bird wrote

The rice bustle gave Chemulpo an appearance of a thriving trade which it is not wont to have except in the Chinese settlement. Its foreign population in 1897 was 4,357... The reader may wonder where the Koreans are at Chemulpo, and in truth I had almost forgotten them, for they are of little account. The increasing native town lies outside the Japanese settlement on the Seoul road, clustering round the base of the hill on which the English church stands, and scrambling up it, mud hovels planting themselves on every ledge, attained by filthy alleys, swarming with quiet dirty children, who look on the high-road to emulate the *do-lessness* of their fathers. Korean, too, is the official *yamen* at the top of the hill, and Korean its methods of punishment, its brutal flagellations by *yamen* runners, its beating of criminals to death, their howls of anguish penetrating the rooms of the adjacent English mission, and Korean too are the bribery and corruption which make it and nearly every *yamen* sinks of iniquity.²⁶⁸

Based on these initial remarks, Bird did not have many positive things to say about Korea. In Chemulpo she found that the Korean population was minor and inactive, and their community outside the town was rough and dirty. The image she painted of Korean society in this passage was telling. The pristine Japanese settlement and the English church stood at the top of a hill while down in the mud lay the Koreans, in "filthy alleys, swarming with quiet dirty children". From the beginning, she perceived Korean people as lazy and corrupt, and repeated these

²⁶⁷ Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors*, 19.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 33.

opinions frequently throughout the book. She saw Korea as stagnant and in a cycle of cruelty and “do-lessness”, under the yoke of the yamen, which was the local seat of the Chinese Empire. Clearly, Bird was vocal and opinionated on Korea’s economic and social state. The way she set them up indicated early on to the reader that she was ready to see a change in Korean leadership and would use the perceived Korean societal decay to bolster her claim in support of one of the foreign powers who were vying for rule over Korea in the following few years.

From Chemulpo Bird “was carried the twenty-six miles to Seoul in a chair with six bearers.”²⁶⁹ This fact was alluded to lightly in her own book, and only plainly stated by Barr. Her image as a daring solo traveller who faced the elements all alone was true at times, but at other times she was carried in a chair. She did not think highly of Seoul when she first arrived. One passage in particular, which was printed in her book, Barr’s book, and *The Times*’ review of Bird’s book, painted a vivid picture of Bird’s initial impressions of Korea and how her opinions of the place changed.

I know Seoul by day and night, its palaces and its slums, its unspeakable meanness and faded splendors, its purposeless crowds, its mediaeval processions, which for barbaric splendor cannot be matched on earth, the filth of its crowded alleys, and its pitiful attempt to retain its manners, customs, and identity as the capital of an ancient monarchy in face of the host of disintegrating influences which are at work, but it is not at first that one “takes it in.” I had known it for a year before I appreciated it, or fully realized that it is entitled to be regarded as one of the great capitals of the world, with its supposed population of a quarter of a million, and that few capitals are more beautifully situated.²⁷⁰

With Seoul, and all of Korea by extension, Bird decided early on that she found the place dirty and the people backwards. But after spending enough time there and getting to know the people, the landscape, and the culture, she changed her mind and grew to find Korea beautiful. Her version of Orientalism was clearly at play in Korea. Use of the words “ancient monarchy” and

²⁶⁹ Barr, 273.

²⁷⁰ Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors*, 38.

“barbaric splendor” indicate a perception of Korea as old, backward, romantic, and unchanging. Such a perception led to her initial idea that it was dirty and uncivilized, but like her opinion that the Ainu of Japan were barbaric but charming, she was taken in by Korea’s perceived “untouched” quality and “grooviness”; its resistance against the version of civilization she was used to in western Europe.

On April 14, 1894, Bird began her five week journey up the Han River.²⁷¹ She travelled in an Asian style boat called a sampan which was crewed by a man who she referred to as Kim, and his hired man. As her companions, Bird had one Mr. Miller, a young missionary who offered to help, along with a servant to supplement gaps in his knowledge of Korean. That servant was a man named Wong, “a Chinese servant... a fine, big, cheery fellow, with inexhaustible good-nature and contentment”²⁷². Her description of Kim was very different:

Kim was paid \$30 per month for the boat, and his laziness was wonderful. To dawdle along, to start late and tie up early, to crawl when he tracked, and to pole or paddle with the least expenditure of labor, was his policy. To pole for an hour, then tie up and take a smoke, to spend half a day now and then on buying rice, to work on my sensibilities by feigning exhaustion, and to adopt every dodge of the lazy man, was his practice. The contract stipulated for three men, and he only took one, making some evasive excuse. But I have said the worst I can say when I write that they never made more than 10 miles in a day, and often not more than 7, and that when they came to severe rapids they always wanted to go back.²⁷³

Kim’s lazy antics pepper the journey to provide comic relief. He reflected a dishonesty and complete lack of industriousness that Bird put forward for the whole population of Korea. Although Kim was mobile enough that Bird relied on him for transportation, the character Bird presents only possessed enough mobility for him to transport the crew as little as possible each day and put up a fight while doing it. The “lazy Korean” personified by Kim was crude,

²⁷¹ Barr, 277.

²⁷² Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors*, 66.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 70.

uncivilized, and resistant to any work at all, meaning that although he possessed a working, moving boat, he still did not have the qualities Bird associated with mobility such as industriousness, Christianity, and modernity, and was in fact immobile because he refused to use his boat for as much mobility as he could have.

The intrepid party's adventure up the Han continued for five weeks and came to an end not because they had reached Bird's desired destination at the end of the river, but because the rapids had become too severe and Kim went on strike.²⁷⁴ They reversed direction down the Han River for a few days until they decided to take the road instead. To travel by road Bird, Mr. Miller, and Wong needed ponies. Barr described the ponies by writing "for ferocity and pigheaded recalcitrance, the Korean pony was unequalled, even in Isabella's considerable equine experience."²⁷⁵ With such unhelpful hired help and the forces of Korean nature against her in the form of ponies and rapids, it is a wonder that Bird made it as far as she did and loved Korea like she eventually would. It was under such difficult circumstances that Bird thrived and most enjoyed her mobility.

It was around this time that the political circumstances of Korea were becoming less certain and more dangerous. Barr wrote "another man in Chemulpo who lost his head that day was the British Vice-consul, who arrived in a very agitated state at Isabella's inn to say that, in his view, the situation was perilously explosive and that she, a defenceless elderly widow, should leave the country immediately."²⁷⁶ As tensions between Japan and China steadily increased and violent singular events stirred hostility, Bird became concerned enough about her safety that she was willing to put her plans on hold.²⁷⁷ However, she was still remaining mobile in an area she

²⁷⁴ Barr, 280.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 280.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 286.

²⁷⁷ Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors*, 184.

had never been to before. A common thread throughout Bird's writing and those who wrote about her was her daring nature. The fact that, after receiving this advice, she went to the British Consulate and then departed on a rough journey to China, indicated that this was a threat worth taking seriously.²⁷⁸ She was correct, as on August 1, 1894, war was declared between Japan and China. According to Barr, on "1 August, when the Sino-Japanese war was officially declared, Isabella, battered but undefeated, was in Mukden, describing and photographing the Chinese troops as they went tramping through the old Tartar city on their way to Korea. They looked the losers they would be, she thought."²⁷⁹ At the outset of the war Bird was in the Chinese city Mukden and from the beginning she saw the Chinese troops as unfit for victory. This opinion would be reflected in her further discussions of the political landscape and her ideas for the future of Korea.

For the next few months, Bird travelled through China. Meanwhile, in Korea, "the Japanese relentlessly pushed the Chinese back out of Korea during a series of sharp, cruel encounters."²⁸⁰ The consensus among reporters for *The Times* and *The Illustrated London News* was that the old-fashioned Chinese were poorly equipped for battling the modern, European-style military of Japan. In November of 1894 she boarded a German boat destined for Vladivostok, the Russian port town near the northern tip of Korea.²⁸¹ Near there she encountered a settlement of Korean people in Russian territory which she found intensely interesting. She commented that the Koreans on this settlement were much more industrious, productive, and clean than Koreans in Korea, and that it was because they had the benefit of Russia's influence

²⁷⁸ Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors*, 184.

²⁷⁹ Barr, 287.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 288.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 288.

and oversight.²⁸² The introduction of a new government led to what Bird perceived as a more modern and industrious society, breaking away from the stagnating, isolating, backward ancient rule that had led to “laziness” among Korean people. Because the Korean people under Russian rule had passed to the opposite side of Bird’s dichotomy and characteristics, it can be inferred that they gained the quality of mobility even though they were not necessarily travelling, in part because they were associated with Russia, which had more to do with Christianity than China did. Bird’s connection between mobility and Christianity is clear in this example.

Finally, in the new year, she returned to Korea: “In January 1895, Isabella was at last able to return to Korea, whose affairs had dominated her interest during the six months’ absence. In Manchuria the war still raged and the Japanese were still winning it”²⁸³. She remained in Korea until the summer of 1895, when “she went to China for a few months, where she lectured to the Hong Kong Literary Society on Korea and Lesser Tibet and then travelled by houseboat to Swatow, Hangchow, and Shao Hsing.”²⁸⁴ Her lectures in China contribute to Bird’s image as an intellectual and her statements that *Korea and Her Neighbors* was meant to be an academic, educational work that was meant to inform the reader about Korean culture rather than a creative interpretation of a swashbuckling adventure.

Following her summer tour through China, Isabella went to Japan for a brief time. However, as Barr put it, “her ailments and desire for quiet seemed to evaporate when, in early autumn, she heard rumours of fresh disasters in Korea and, like a good war reporter on the scent, took the next steamer back to Chemulpo.”²⁸⁵ Barr’s characterization of Bird was a war reporter

²⁸² Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors*, 225.

²⁸³ Barr, 288

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 291.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 293.

was apt. Bird covered the conflict extensively, weighed in on it, and was praised by reviewers as an authority on the topic. Her reaction to the praise was recorded by Barr:

“No other book is so satisfying in its presentation of the facts of nature and man in Korea today,” applauded the *Nation*; and Isabella was “amused” to find herself “transplanted in to the ranks of political writers and quoted as an ‘authority on the political situation of the Far East.’” In fact, she told her publisher in confidence, “the reviewers are so ignorant of the subject that they are afraid to commit themselves by fault-finding!”²⁸⁶

Bird’s work on Korea had earned her ringing endorsements as an authoritative source on politics in East Asia, but she felt that perhaps her book’s merits in this regard were being overstated, and that the reviewers were simply so poorly informed that her own work would seem impressive no matter what. Bird rarely showed weakness or signs of insecurity, so this comment should be interpreted as a bit of self-deprecating humour and a mild joking insult in response to sycophantic praise. Regardless, she was being praised and established as an authority on international affairs. Such a status is a testament to her success as a travel writer and participation in writing and publishing, the most commonly thought of career for New Women. In regard to her profession, Bird fit into the more narrow definition of New Womanhood.

The “fresh disasters in Korea”²⁸⁷, as Barr put it, that drew Bird back to Chemulpo were the pinnacle of political intrigue. Seoul was in uproar over the assassination of the Queen of Korea. After investigating the events and milking her contacts for information, Bird went up the north-west coast along the old route to China. Along the way she passed through Pyongyang, where a decisive battle had taken place between China and Japan the previous year.²⁸⁸ In this region, she noted “the further north she went the poorer the land became... only officials could afford to eat rice; peasants scratched meagre crops of potatoes and millet from stony soil, ate also

²⁸⁶ Barr, 334.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 293.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 295.

scraps of stiff ancient fish and seaweed, made nothing but skimpy gauze for cheap black hats.”²⁸⁹

The misery and inequity between the rich and poor are common themes of Bird’s notes on Korea, which made her comments upon her final trip to Seoul so meaningful.

In 1896, at the tail end of her journey, Bird returned to Seoul and saw significant changes. The streets were wider and cleaner, young boys were selling newspapers, and there were policemen patrolling.²⁹⁰ These were changes made by the Japanese imperial government, and while Bird appreciated the changes in sanitation and infrastructure she mourned the loss of “grooviness”. She always preferred the “old way” of a country’s tradition and would have preferred that Korea remain like the Ainu: separate from Japanese modernism. She saw Japan’s modern culture as unique and different from that of Western Europe, but it was not different enough for her to love it like she loved the Ainu people or Korea before Japanese colonialism.

Finally, in early 1897, it was time for Bird to go back home to England. Barr published a letter Bird wrote to John Murray before she left:

“The high pressure of life in all departments, whether of work or pleasure is tremendous. I dread returning to England, for though I shall try to keep out of the season and must do so from necessity, the mere rush of the movements about me will I fear be more than I could bear, and I shall have to leave home again.” Still, she would try to “settle” in some nice “old-fashioned cottage within an hour of London (*not* Waterloo or Liverpool Street) close to a purely agricultural village” where she hoped to rest for a while and see hardly anybody. But the prospect was unappealing: “Indeed I am returning to England with a very bad grace. I am far more at home in Tokyo and Seoul than in any place in Britain except Tobermory, and I very much prefer life in the East to life at home...”²⁹¹

Bird was clearly dreading the prospect of returning England. There are obvious signs of anxiety in her description of life in England, as she described the desire for seclusion and the feeling that she was more at home in Asia than she was in Britain. However, despite

²⁸⁹ Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors*, 295.

²⁹⁰ Barr, 299.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 333.

her trepidations over being back in England, she departed from Asia in March of 1897 and never returned.

RELIGION AND MISSIONARIES

As previously stated, *Korea and Her Neighbors* was a book largely concerned with religion and the importance of missionaries. The preface defended missionaries, presumably as part of a larger conversation about whether their work was still relevant or not. The book itself even includes chapters called “Mukden and its Missions”, “Exorcists and Dancing Women”, and “Dæmonism or Shamanism”, and an appendix titled “Mission Statistics for Korea 1896.” Bird also made frequent reference to and commented on the topic throughout the other chapters. It is obvious that religion was an important factor in her assessment of Korea in this book. As previously stated, I argue that for Bird mobility and Christianity were linked together. However, Barr suggested a different interpretation of Bird’s actions. Barr believed that Bird was just telling herself that she was interested in observing missions in Korea and China, and that she went to Asia because she was tired of the life she had in Mull; tired of speaking engagements and petty arguments and critics. She wrote that Bird wanted the freedom of Asia, and to be able to ride a horse.²⁹² It is true that Bird used the social merit and credibility of studying missions and Korean religion to escape a life in England that she found both dull and anxiety-inducing. However, that is no reason to discredit Bird as a deeply religious individual. Her deep-rooted Christianity informed all her choices in life and opinions expressed on paper, and it certainly should not disqualify her from being considered a New Woman: a category which has been developed by and associated with secular feminism. The relationships between Bird’s Christianity and mobility, and her mobility and New Womanhood, strengthens the idea that there is space for religiousness in New Womanhood, which is linked with mobility. She used her faith to her

²⁹² Barr, 270.

advantage, to move forward with her travel and as part of a method of publishing her work and increasing her credibility as a mobile woman.

According to Barr, missionaries saw Korea as a perfect goal destination because there was no state religion, which was interpreted as a complete absence of religion among the population. For that reason, in Seoul “The Roman Catholics had a cathedral with a small spire, the Methodists a mission school, the Presbyterians a hospital, the Anglicans a mission press and English church of the Advent, the Sisters of St Peter a Community House.”²⁹³ A Christian presence had been established in Korea long before Bird arrived, and it had come from the Catholics, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Anglicans in the forms of cathedrals, hospitals, and schools. Bird wrote “The great majority of the American and French residents are missionaries, and the most conspicuous objects in Seoul are the Roman Cathedral and the American Methodist Episcopal Church. The number of British subjects in Korea in January, 1897, was 65, and an agency of a British firm in Nagasaki has recently been opened at Chemulpo.”²⁹⁴ Reporting on population facts and the number of converts each denomination had achieved in each region was an enormous part of Bird’s books. Barr wrote that “The missionaries were generally held in high esteem in the country, and Isabella formed a high opinion of their work in the fields of education and social reform.”²⁹⁵ The height of their esteem is debateable, as the missionaries had made very few converts by the time Bird arrived, but it certainly was true that Bird admired their work and endorsed the value of missions wholeheartedly, as part of an argument in favour of the continued support of missionary work.

²⁹³ Barr, 276.

²⁹⁴ Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors*, 20.

²⁹⁵ Barr, 294.

Barr's statement that the missionaries viewed Korea as religious was put forward by Bird too. In her introductory chapter, Bird wrote

“There is no national religion. Confucianism is the official cult, and the teachings of Confucius are the rule of Korean morality. Buddhism, once powerful, but ‘disestablished’ three centuries ago, is to be met with chiefly in mountainous districts, and far from the main roads. Spirit worship, a species of shamanism, prevails all over the kingdom, and holds the uneducated masses and the women of all classes in complete bondage. Christian missions, chiefly carried on by Americans, are beginning to produce both direct and indirect effects.”²⁹⁶

Bird perceived and was involved with reproducing the idea that Korea had no national religion, as she perceived and reproduced narratives about the First Sino-Japanese War and which nation should take Korea into its empire. She saw the American missionaries as having the greatest impact on making converts to Christianity and away from the “cult” of Confucianism and spirit worship.²⁹⁷ Her statement that these cults held “the uneducated masses” in “complete bondage” carries a tone of radicalism and conveys complete belief in the superiority and truth of Christianity. One would expect that, if she wanted Korea to stay ancient and “groovy”, she would not want Christianity to take hold and potentially lead to colonization, commerce, and a “civilizing” process. Bird wanted Korea to get rid of one form of backwardness, irreligiousness, and keep the other, which was its traditional culture. In this way, she presented a contradiction: she associated Christianity with the modernity, progressiveness, and mobility she saw in Western Europe and although she wanted Christianity to spread, she did not want it to become modern in the fashion of Britain. In this way she was prioritizing her own Orientalism and the pleasure she took in her personal mobility over the mobility of Korean people. Her relationship to modernity was complex and although she wanted Christianity, and therefore mobility, to spread everywhere she did not want these newly Christian places to modernize.

²⁹⁶ Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors*, 21.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

One of the first places wherein Bird established a connection with missionaries in Korea was Busan, a town on the southeast point of the peninsula. The one oasis in this “decayed and miserable town”²⁹⁸ was the home of three Australian women who were missionaries and the reason Bird went to Busan. They lived in a “native compound”, meaning a residence on a normal street among Koreans, which Bird determined to be acceptable. She wrote “Except that the compound was clean, it was in no way distinguishable from any other, being surrounded by mud hovels.”²⁹⁹ At this early point in Bird’s journey she was already establishing a stark difference between Koreans and everyone else: Koreans lived in dirty homes and misery, and outsiders were the opposite. In fact, to Bird, these Australian ladies had been able to make a better home for themselves in Korea than any of the Koreans had. When describing their home, Bird wrote “The mud walls were concealed with paper, and photographs and other European knickknacks conferred a look of refinement. But not only were the rooms so low that one of the ladies could not stand upright in them, but privacy was impossible, invasions of Korean women and children succeeding each other from morning to night, so that even dressing was a spectacle for the curious.”³⁰⁰ The visits of “curious” Koreans, the absence of privacy, and the idea that private moments were being made into a public spectacle, separate Koreans from Bird and her readers not just in terms of lifestyle but also posed Koreans at odds with Western morality. The Australians had managed to take “decayed and miserable” conditions and, through consumer goods, turn it into a European-style home with “a look of refinement.” This dichotomy of sanitation and lifestyle was set up early and reinforced throughout the book as part of a process

²⁹⁸ Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors*, 28.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 28.

that, in addition to their perceived irreligiousness, made Koreans foreign and exotic to Bird's readers.

Not only had these three Australian missionaries made a decent home, but they were proving themselves exceptional and daring Christians by being there. Bird wrote "Friends urged these ladies not to take this step of living in a Korean town 3 miles from Europeans. It was represented that it was not safe, and that their health would suffer from the heat and fetid odors of the crowded neighborhood, etc. In truth it was not a 'conventional thing' to do."³⁰¹ Bird was impressed that they had chosen to go to Korea despite warnings, and that they were choosing to live among the Korean people: "Without any fuss or blowing of trumpets, they quietly helped to solve one of the great problems as to 'Missionary Methods,' though why it should be a 'problem' I fail to see. In the East at least, every religious teacher who has led the people has lived among them, knowing if not sharing their daily lives, and has been easily accessible at all times."³⁰² She appreciated their commitment to spreading Christianity and the fact that they did so without the need for the comforts of home. Bird represented the missionary women as having a sort of robust femininity, which she appreciated, perhaps because it was the sort of femininity she found in herself as she travelled the world in riding trousers on her own. These women were embodying the cure to the sort of complacent Western Christianity that she had previously railed against. It was a disruptive form of Christianity, which required Christians, regardless of gender, to bring Christianity to new places in a very physically involved and mobile manner. The issue of "Missionary Methods" that she raised, which has apparently been a problem, indicates that vocal members of the public were opposed to the way that missionaries conducted their work.

³⁰¹ Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors*, 28.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 29.

Bird described the duties of these missionaries by saying that their “‘mission work’ now consists of daily meetings for worship, classes for applicants for baptism, classes at night for those women who may not come out in the daytime, a Sunday school with an attendance of eighty, visiting among the people, and giving instruction in the country and surrounding villages. About forty adults have professed Christianity, and regularly attend Christian worship.”³⁰³ These missionaries were committed to their work and providing their community with ample opportunities to learn about their message, and they appear to have had some success. Her final note on the Australian missionaries was to say: “I mention these facts not for the purpose of glorifying these ladies, who are simply doing their duty, but because they fall in with a theory of my own as to methods of mission work.”³⁰⁴ Bird was using these Australian ladies as an example of how wholesome, effective, and self-reliant missionaries could be. Missions all over Korea were claiming significant numbers. Bird cited Roman Catholic missionaries in the province Kyōngsang who reported two thousand converts in thirty towns and villages, and that the success had been perpetrated by two priests who had spent all their time travelling Korea, living among the people, and engaging with the culture.³⁰⁵ Bird’s comments on the Australian missionaries were influenced by Bird’s views on race and religion. Her comments on Korean lifestyles and supposed filthiness involved tremendous othering as context for her statements on their religion and to state a case for why Korea needed Christianity so desperately to bring mobility and, by extension, industriousness.

The Australians and the Roman Catholics were not the only foreign missionaries in Korea. In her early chapters, Bird constantly reinforced the image of an international presence in

³⁰³ Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors*, 29.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.

Seoul and Korea at large. In Seoul there were Russian diplomats, American Methodist Episcopalians, American Presbyterians, and an entire district dedicated to a Japanese community.³⁰⁶ She cited a series of treaties starting in 1883, which first allowed foreigners into Seoul, as the reason for this international presence and the beginning of a gradual cultural change.³⁰⁷ She further discussed the cultural changes when she wrote about Catholicism's history in Korea:

One of the most remarkable indications of the changes which is stealing over the Hermit City is that a nearly finished Roman Catholic Cathedral, of very large size, with a clergy-house and orphanages, occupies one of the most prominent positions in Seoul. The King's father, the Tai-Won-Kun, still actively engaged in politics, is the man who, thirty years ago, persecuted the Roman Christians so cruelly and persistently as to raise up for Korea a "noble army of martyrs."³⁰⁸

Not only was Korea the Hermit Kingdom, but Seoul was the Hermit City. For Bird, Seoul was acting as a representative for the kingdom, in terms of its large population of foreigners and response to Christianity. The notes on the strength of Catholicism, represented by the completion of a cathedral, contrasted with the persecution Catholics had suffered by previous Korean royalty. It suggests that Bird felt Christianity had triumphed in Korea over its adversaries of shamanism, spirit worship, and superstition. Christianity's success in Korea represented a triumph over ancient stagnant backwardness and an opening up to the world, as Korea could not be a Hermit Kingdom if it had welcomed missionaries of all kinds.

A physical presence of religion was important to Bird's interpretation of the religion. After comments on the lack of beautiful public buildings in the form of tombs and temples, Bird wrote "The absence of temples is a feature of the other Korean cities. Buddhism, which for 1,000 years before the founding of the present dynasty was the popular cult, has been 'disestablished'

³⁰⁶ Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors*, 20.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 37.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 38.

and practically proscribed since the sixteenth century”³⁰⁹. She wrote that Buddhism was difficult to find in Korea. Instead, Confucianism had taken up the mantle as a predominant religion. However, Bird believed that Confucianism was producing too few temples for it to create any “signs of religion”³¹⁰, which causes the visitor to think that Koreans were not religious at all. To Bird, this was a very bad thing. To her Western Christian eye, architecture indicated presence more than any other factor.

Bird knew there was religion in Korea, but she would never have called it that. She wrote “Ancestral worship, and a propitiation of daemons or spirits, the result of a timid and superstitious dread of the forces of Nature, are to the Korean in place of a religion. Both, I am inclined to believe, are the result of fear, the worship of ancestors being dictated far less by filial piety than by the dread that ancestral spirits may do harm to their descendants.”³¹¹ She could acknowledge the popularity of ancestral worship and the importance it played in the lives of Koreans, but she did not see it as a religion. Instead it was a cult, in part because she wrote that it was motivated by fear, not love. This statement indicates that Bird understood her religion as being motivated by love instead of fear, and that it was a fundamental principle of Christianity and of a legitimate religion in general. Her definition of religion was clearly narrow. She considered the most established faiths in Asia to be superstitions that held its believers in “bondage”. Throughout her life, Bird became more and more committed to the importance that religion be spread to free all its converts, who were previously blinded by superstition. Her history of doing so had allowed her to acquire her mobility and make further assessments on

³⁰⁹ Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors*, 60.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 61.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 61.

foreign religions, meaning that her decision to continue emphasizing the importance of mainstream Protestantism throughout her life was motivated by the desire to stay mobile.

While Bird wrote favourably about the missions in Korea, she was often pessimistic about their longevity and future. She wrote “The idea of a nation destitute of a religion, and gladly accepting one brought by the foreigner, must be dropped. The religion the Korean would accept is one which would show him how to get money without working for it. The indifference is extreme, the religious faculty is absent, there are no religious ideas to appeal to, and the moral teachings of Confucius have little influence with any class.”³¹² This passage is indicative of the way she viewed Korean people and spirituality. She did not believe that Korea would be receptive to a religion brought in by foreigners. By extension, this means that she did not see Korea as a colony that was open for British religious intervention. It also indicates that she did not think missionaries would be effective in Korea, which is a confusing statement that contradicts one of the theses of her book. She clarified the thought by writing that Koreans will only accept a religion that is financially profitable but does not require work. Bird had a fixation on the idea that Korean people were lazy and obsessed with money, which she eventually explained was a result of circumstances rather than an innate quality of the “Korean race”. However, with statements like “the religious faculty is absent,” perhaps her views were a combination of the idea that they are lazy and greedy because of circumstance and because of racial tendency.

If one focuses on the idea that Bird viewed Koreans as lazy and obsessed with money because of their circumstances, then one can also accept her statement that she does not believe a nation that does not have a state religion will easily accept one brought by outsiders, while still

³¹² Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors*, 64.

maintaining the integrity of her thesis that missionaries do good and important work. This is because Bird believed that Koreans were only lazy and greedy because the way their society and government was organized led to the poor being unable to accumulate wealth. According to Bird, whenever a peasant was able to save some money, it was soon forcibly taken from them by the local officials under penalty of arrest.³¹³ In Bird's mind, this led Koreans to have little motivation for work and to a secretive, miserly attitude towards money. However, there was hope for the Koreans in the form of a new government. Bird believed that a new government system overseen by an outside power could reform Korea in a way that allowed the people to be more industrious, more safe with their earnings, and therefore more open to religion, giving the missionaries a better chance at success.

Such a conclusion was reached in part because of her time at the Korean settlement in Russia. Of her time there and the state of peasants in Korea, she wrote:

Travellers are much impressed with the laziness of the Koreans, but after seeing their energy and industry in Russian Manchuria, their thrift, and the abundant and comfortable furnishings of their houses, I greatly doubt whether it is to be regarded as a matter of temperament. Every man in Korea knows that poverty is his best security, and that anything he possesses beyond that which provides himself and his family with food and clothing is certain to be taken from him by voracious and corrupt officials. It is only when the exactions of officials become absolutely intolerable and encroach upon his means of providing the necessaries of life that he resorts to the only method of redress in his power, which has a sort of counterpart in China. This consists in driving out, and occasionally in killing, the obnoxious and intolerable magistrate, or, as in case which lately gained much notoriety, roasting his favorite secretary on a wood pile. The popular outburst, though under unusual provocation it may culminate in deeds of regrettable violence, is usually founded on right, and is an effective protest.³¹⁴

She noted that it could be easy to mistake Korean people's nature to be lazy, but Bird knew that they could be industrious and energetic under Russian rule. Bird believed that the only reason

³¹³ Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors*, 337.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 337.

that foreigners had this misconception was because Korean peasants had been forced to remain in poverty as a form of protection. She even endorsed violence as an effective form of protest. These thoughts and observations led her to the conclusion that the best course of action for Korea would be to come under the rule of Russia. This indicates that she believed Korean people had the potential to be mobile, modern, Christian, and industrious, if only they had the proper leadership.

Even though Bird found terrible fault with the lack of religion she perceived in Korea, she understood that they had no reason to want Christianity at the time. Of Christianity's prospects in Korea, she wrote,

The Korean has got on so well without a religion, in his own opinion, that he does not want to be troubled with one, specially a religion of restraint and sacrifice which has no worldly-good to offer. After nearly twelve years of work, the number of baptized native Protestant Christians in 1897 was 777. The Roman Catholics claim 28,802, and that the average rate of increase is 1,000 a year. Their priests live mostly in the wretched hovels of the people, amidst their foul surroundings, and share their unpalatable food and sordid lives. Doubtless, mission work in Korea will not differ greatly from such work elsewhere among the older civilizations. Barriers of indifference, superstition, and inertness exist, and whatever progress is made will probably be chiefly through medical missions, showing Christianity in action, and native agency, and through such schools as I have already alluded to, which leave every feature of Korean custom, dress, and manner of living untouched, while Christian instruction and training are the first objects, and where the gentle, loving, ennobling influence of the teacher is felt during every hour of the day.³¹⁵

Bird believed that Christianity was not as successful in Korea as it was in other "older civilizations" because it did not offer profits. She wrote that Korean "indifference, superstition, and inertness" would continue to prevent Christianity from becoming more popular, but if it was going to, it would do so through medical missions, schools, and showing the benefits of Christianity. Bird's assessment that Koreans were disinclined to convert to Christianity because of their greed was both a racialized statement and a call for Christians to use their mobility to

³¹⁵ Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors*, 65.

join the missionary cause, because to her the immobile Koreans needed additional help to convert.

Bird's perception of Korean spirituality was similar to how Bird experienced Japanese religion. She expressed disappointment over Japanese materialism, found Buddhism to be an attractive but spiritually hollow faith, and was shocked when a young and educated Japanese man told her that all educated people in this modern world knew that all religions were untrue.³¹⁶ Her reaction at the time was to feel sorry that the good souls of Japan would be condemned to eternal damnation, and to feel greater resolve for the spread of Christianity and missionary work.³¹⁷ Japan's circumstances and the reasons that Bird perceived it as religion-less were different than they were for Korea, but her reaction was the same: to deem the local "cult" or "superstition" as false and perceive their popularity as the result of materialism, and to conclude that further spreading of Christianity was the most important project for the Western observer to undertake.

There were political angles to Bird's religious interpretations of Japan and Korea. As previously stated, Bird was appalled that Japan was adopting institutions from Western Europe but not religion from there. To her, the political, military, and social institutions which had been borne out of Christendom could not exist without Christianity.³¹⁸ While she admired their industriousness, close familial bonds, and social graces, she believed that their success was not built on the foundation that was supposed to be there. It appears that to Bird, industry was linked with Christianity in an inseparable way. This is an argument for the idea that she connected industriousness with Christianity and mobility. Perhaps this is another reason she preferred the

³¹⁶ Barr, 112

³¹⁷ Barr, 113.

³¹⁸ Bird Bishop, *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan vol. I*, 314.

Ainu and Koreans: they had not adopted Western institutions, so their lack of Christianity was less offensive to Bird.

Bird saw Korean peasants as lazy and greedy, which contributed to her reasons for thinking Christianity would never truly catch on in Korea. But, she believed that she only saw them that way because of the corrupt, old, brutal Korean government, which had been overseen by China. If China's authority were to disappear and Russia were to take over, then she believed that all of Korea could be like what she saw in "Russian Manchuria": industrious Koreans working on a productive settlement in clean homes.³¹⁹ If more Koreans were able to live like that, then it stands to reason to say Bird would see Christianity as having a good chance of success in Korea. This representation of Koreans led to Bird's statement that a stronger missionary presence was needed in Korea than usual. This web of opinions on Korea, Russia, and Chinese imperial rule demonstrated that to Bird there was a link between Christianity, mobility, and modernity in the form of industriousness. There was a clear effort by Bird to make this book a cultural study of race and religion in Korea, rather than gender. She continued her pattern of placing emphasis on her whiteness and Christianity, while leaving her gender out of most of her analysis. What allowed her to make these statements, make money selling books, and be a New Woman, was her incredible mobility all over Korea and China during this journey.

³¹⁹ Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors*, 337.

EMPIRE, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, AND WAR

Bird's interest in foreign cultures extended from race and religion to the political landscape. As part of her efforts to produce an educational and culturally significant assessment of Korea, the scope of this book was broader than most because of the war. Per her image as a daring New Woman, she embraced the conflict and used her mobility to become educated on the conflict, observe parts of it first hand, and collect information to form an educated opinion and report it to her readers. Bird was keenly interested in political and military conflict and actively took part in reproducing narratives on the First Sino-Japanese War that were published in newspapers, as well as contributing to the dialogue herself by publishing her book to an established audience. She reproduced the underlying assumption among articles published in *The Times* and *The Illustrated London News*: Korea needed outside rule. In the preface of *Korea and its Neighbors*, Walter Hillier wrote:

Much, however, still remains to be done; and the only hope of advance in the direction of progress—initiated, it is only fair to remember, by Japan, and continued under Russian auspices—is to maintain an iron grip, which the Russian Agents, so far, have been more careful than their Japanese predecessors to conceal beneath a velvet glove. The condition of Korean settlers in Russian territory described by Mrs. Bishop shows how capable these people are of improving their condition under wise and paternal rule; and, setting all political considerations aside, there can be no doubt that the prosperity of the people and their general comfort and happiness would be immensely advanced under an extension of this patronage by one or other civilized Power. Without some form of patronage or control, call it by what name we will, a lapse into the old groove of oppression, extortion, and its concomitant miseries, is inevitable.³²⁰

Progress and reform was possible for Korea and already underway, initially by Japanese oversight and then continued by Russia. Hillier cited Bird's observance of Koreans in Russia, just as I have, as an example of Bird's reasoning. He clearly expressed the underlying assumption that was previously mentioned, that Korea had potential for prosperity but only

³²⁰ Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors*, 3.

“under an extension of this patronage by one or other civilized Power.”³²¹ By this train of thought, Korea was not civilized and it needed an outside power, which was civilized, to show Korea kindness and express its paternalistic rule. The dichotomy set up earlier in Bird’s book between an industrious, mobile, Christianity under just rule versus lazy, immobile, religion-less Korea under ancient tyrannical rule was clearly being applied to her analysis of the First Sino-Japanese War. The continued absence of popular Christianity and threatened existence of the Chinese imperial government meant to Bird that Korea was still immobile and backwards, meaning they needed new and better government if they were ever to become industrious and open to Christianity.

Hillier went on to explain that the timing of Bird’s visit was fortunate because “At the present rate of progress much that came under her observation will, before long, be ‘improved’ out of existence”³²². The inevitable train of progress would eventually change and erase most of the things Bird saw in this old, unchanging version of Korea. Hillier went on to write: “though no one can regret the disappearance of many institutions and customs that have nothing but their antiquity to recommend them, she has done valuable service in placing on record so graphic a description of experiences that future travelers will probably look for in vain.”³²³ He did not express the same sort of dismay and longing for the old, untouched way of things that Bird felt, but he acknowledged its value in that it was interesting to him. This again reminds the reader that *Korea and Her Neighbors* was meant to be received as an educational, anthropological project in addition to an example of the need for missionaries.

³²¹ Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors*, 3.

³²² *Ibid.*, 4.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 4.

As previously stated, Bird was in China when war was declared between China and Japan on August 1. The war was composed of a series of military engagements between China and Japan on Korean and Chinese soil, and according to Barr, resulted in

loss and humiliation for the Chinese, new forms of national chaos and frustration for the Koreans, and, for the victorious Japanese, triumphs which soon lost their savour and turned to gall. Ostensibly, Japan had sent the troops which Isabella saw to help the Korean King quell the Tong-hak rebellion which had indeed broken out, and to protect its own nationals. In reality, their coming was the result of long-term military and political strategy aimed at ousting China from its traditional position as suzerain over Korea, and implementing instead a Japanese policy of reform and indirect control. Already the Chinese whom Isabella saw that eventful June day in Chemulpo seemed to have foreseen the worst results of this exercise. They had quite lost their heads, she says, and “frenzied by race-hatred and pecuniary loss” were transformed into madmen.³²⁴

The consensus on the First Sino-Japanese War, as reported by Bird, settled into a narrative, and then articulated by Barr seventy-five years later, was that the war was an embarrassment for China. The embarrassment was followed by a period of significant reform for Korea under Japanese rule. At the outset, the Japanese claimed they were sending their troops to help the reigning King of Korea against a rebellion and protect Japanese residents in Korea.³²⁵ However, as the newspapers were keen to report, the Japanese clearly had planned in advance for the requirements of a longer stay. This made it clear that the sending of their troops was a ploy by the Japanese Empire to establish troops in Korea to oust the Chinese Empire. The idea that the Japanese tactic was to use deception is common throughout the newspaper’s representations of the war, and so is the idea that the Japanese were infinitely more equipped for battle than the old, tired, disorganized Chinese Empire.

The results of Japanese takeover were discussed at length by Bird, Barr, British newspapers, and Koreans for the past century. The significance and severity of the takeover

³²⁴ Barr, 286.

³²⁵ Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors*, 178.

contributed to the idea that “practically all Koreans, from the royal family downwards, traditionally and thoroughly hated the Japanese, and the Japanese, pursuing their policy of modernisation with the hot-headed zeal of the newly converted, lacked tact and consistency of judgement.”³²⁶ A racial hatred between Japanese people and Korean people was an oft repeated issue among European representations of the conflict. So too was the idea of Japan as a young empire with a zealous approach to reform. Barr went on to elaborate on the difficulties that, in her view, Japan had while attempting to reform Korea:

One of the many consequences of these indiscriminate reforms was an epidemic of government resignations on the time-honoured oriental ground of “official sickness”. To these, the King usually published... a standard reply: “We have examined your resignation. These are times of re-organisation when the entire realm is affected and things profitable and harmful are to be determined. Why then do you plead sickness? Resign not, but take up your duties and attend immediately (or soon) at your Department.” Probably the official thus “advised” did return to his department; equally probably he did nothing much when he got there. *Yang-bans* were past masters of the arts of inertia and passive non-cooperation, and the Japanese soon found that it was much easier to defeat the Chinese in battle than to reform the Koreans at home. In April 1895, the treaty of Shimonoseki brought the Sino-Japanese war to an end, and as the Japanese had been completely victorious they naturally expected to retain supremacy in Korea—but the opportunity was bungled.³²⁷

Following Japanese takeover, the Korean administration experienced a wave of government employees resigning. However, after being convinced by the King to go back to work they would be lazy and uncooperative, proving that the Japanese effort to govern Korea would be much more difficult than they found facing the Chinese military to be. The idea that Korean people had an irrational hatred of Japanese people contributed to the idea that Koreans were lazy and in need of outside help.

³²⁶ Barr, 290.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 290.

Not long after the end of the war, Japan lost even more control with two events: the assassination of the Queen of Korea, and the forced Royal Proclamation against the Korean top-knot. These two events would set the tone for Japanese imperial rule over Korea, and were both covered at length by Bird. She dedicated an entire chapter to the death of Empress Myeongseong, or, informally, Queen Min. During the earlier segments of Bird's tour through Korea, she had the privilege to meet with the royal family at their palace in Seoul. For the first visit Bird was accompanied by Mrs. Underwood, a friend and an American medical missionary. Of that initial meeting she wrote "Her Majesty, who was then past forty, was a very nice-looking slender woman, with glossy raven-black hair and very pale skin, the pallor enhanced by the use of pearl powder. The eyes were cold and keen, and the general expression one of brilliant intelligence."³²⁸ Her appreciation of the Queen's looks was very different than Bird's representation of Japanese women, whose faces, she was convinced, had no qualities at all which could be described as beautiful. Because of the perceived connection between physical beauty and goodness of soul and connection to God, Bird's approval of Queen Min's appearance communicated to her audience that the Queen was someone with the potential to convert to Christianity and therefore justify rule of Korea.

Bird described the Crown Prince as "fat and flabby" and she thought of him as "completely an invalid", and wrote that the King was "short and sallow", nervous, and relied on the Queen's prompting to maintain a conversation.³²⁹ However, she was impressed by the grandeur of the palace and with "the grace and charming manner of the Queen, her thoughtful kindness, her singular intelligence and force, and her remarkable conversational power even

³²⁸ Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors*, 252.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, 253.

through the medium of an interpreter.”³³⁰ Bird’s affection for Queen Min was clear. Her approval of a local monarchy was not an especially disruptive or modern opinion to have. Queen Min’s charms further illuminated the reasons behind her death. As Bird continued to meet with Queen Min, she grew to respect her intelligence and become more impressed with her. She was unsurprised that the Queen had so much political influence, and therefore, so many enemies.³³¹ Because of her influence over the political landscape and obvious control over the King and Crown Prince, she became a target during the changing of regimes.

On October 8th of 1895, after Japan had militarily defeated China and began their informal rule of Korea, Queen Min was assassinated.³³² Bird included in her book a letter written a month before the event, from Count Inouye to the Japanese Government. The Count was a Japanese Minister and a trusted friend of the Queen’s. In the letter to his government he wrote that he had subdued the Queen’s suspicions of the future and convinced her that Korean independence was Japan’s main concern, along with ensuring the Royal Family’s longevity.³³³ Bird believed that these assurances led the King and Queen to lower their guard, which resulted in her death. The death of the Queen caused a local frenzy and stirred international interest. At the time, it was not known who had committed the crime.³³⁴ While the Korean people began to figure out what had happened and the ambassadors in Seoul became involved in outrage, the King was living in terror of another attempt on his life under house arrest in his palace.³³⁵ Bird reported that, throughout October and November, “The gloom was profound”³³⁶ as royal activities came to a halt and the old regime was up-ended. It appeared to be not just gloomy, but

³³⁰ Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors*, 255.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 259.

³³² *Ibid.*, 273.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 262.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 277.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 260.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 280.

tense too, as “a number of foreign warships lay at Chemulpo, and the British, Russian, and American Legations were guarded by marines.”³³⁷ These foreign legations convinced the King to release the information that the Queen had been killed, which fostered hostility towards foreigners in Korea. The Queen’s death may have removed her and potentially her family as a political threat, but it did not turn Koreans against the old regime or immediately strengthen Japanese control over the peninsula. At this point Bird was leaving Seoul, which she found regrettable, as “every day brought fresh events and rumors, and a coup d’état of great importance was believed to be impending; but I had very little time at my disposal before proceeding to Western China on a long-planned journey.”³³⁸ Bird truly was acting as a war correspondent, and as engaged as a reporter would be.

As the new Cabinet and the Japanese overseers attempted to maintain control after the Queen’s death and public unrest, they began introducing reforms. Early on the reforms were accepted, but trouble started again with the Hair-Cropping Edict. On December 30th, 1895, a Royal Edict was issued declaring that the traditional Korean hairstyle of the topknot was uncivilized and would now be outlawed.³³⁹ The topknot had been a staple of Korean culture and manhood for centuries. A man was required to have one to get married, to be considered as able to provide, and to be seen as a grown man who was worthy of respect.³⁴⁰ Bird reported that the publishing of this Edict led to violent outbursts all over Korea. She was amazed: she wrote that the Koreans had endured substantial reforms, injustices, and changes, including a military takeover by the Japanese, but this reform crossed their line and was the cause of rebellion. When the idea had been proposed in years past, Westerners had endorsed the idea of having the Korean

³³⁷ Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors*, 280.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 282.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 359.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 360.

topknot outlawed, but were concerned that they would be unable to do so because of public backlash. Guards at the gates of Seoul were posted to cut the hair of men who entered the city.³⁴¹ Even the King and the Crown Prince endorsed it and cut their hair, but were under house arrest meaning that they were clearly forced to do so.³⁴²

It was popularly believed that the edict was caused by the Japanese in an attempt to make Koreans more Japanese, which led to riots and some deaths.³⁴³ In rural areas, the local magistrates were caught between a rock and a hard place. If they followed the Royal Edict and cut their hair, they would be thrown out of office by the locals. If they kept their hair long, then they would be ignored by the Cabinet.³⁴⁴ Bird wrote that public reaction was so great and the prospect of cutting men's hair short was so serious that "A father poisoned himself from grief and humiliation because his two sons had submitted to the decree. The foundations of social order were threatened when the Top Knot fell!"³⁴⁵ Whether or not this anecdote was true, the topknot was so important that she felt it illustrated the severity of the situation.

At this moment of high tensions, in February of 1896, the King and the Crown Prince escaped from the palace and took refuge at the Russian Legation and the King issued a new proclamation. In this new statement he was strong willed, expressed pride in their ancient dynasty, denied pardons for traitors and called for a death penalty for them, and condemned the topknot edict.³⁴⁶ This new edict was soon followed by another, in which the King asked soldiers to come to the Russian Legation to protect him, and stated that the Japanese people in Korea were to be protected. Bird noted that some believed the King would become a pawn of Russia,

³⁴¹ Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors*, 364.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, 362.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, 364.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 364.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 364.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 366.

but she believed this was untrue.³⁴⁷ She would later conclude that the best choice for Korea was to take control away from the Japanese and give it to Russia. As the government that had led Koreans in Russian Manchuria to become industrious, it suited Bird's ideology to support them as the rightful ruler of Korea because she linked industriousness and Christianity together. Therefore, if Russia replaced the old corrupt government they could make all of Korea productive and therefore more open to Christianity.

As the old Ming Chinese-styled government dissolved and a new system was put in place, the new Japanese system became more integrated with Korean culture and was accepted by the King³⁴⁸, even though part of Japan's goal was to reduce the King's power.³⁴⁹ The new reorganized system settled and reforms were put into place. Korea had gone from being under the control of China with semi-independence, to the midst of a war between two potential overseers, to a new government system under Japanese rule. Under Japan, there was a period of turmoil over the Queen's assassination and the topknot controversy, which led many outside spectators. As Korea adopted the Japanese reforms and the new system became established, the world speculated on the state of Korean politics. *The Times* and *The Illustrated London News* had been reporting on the situation for years, leading up to and during the war.

Bird's part in this was that of a reporter who travelled the nation and surrounding areas to collect information from locals, missionaries, ambassadors, and public officials she met along the way, and then relayed that information to her readers. She was used to the exercise of using exceptional mobility to gather information on local cultures, but this war in Korea brought out a new side of her work. The opinions she expressed were often in tune with those of British

³⁴⁷ Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors*, 368.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 372.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 373.

newspapers, which will be analyzed in the next section, indicating an awareness of what others like her were saying about the war at that time. Again, throughout her experiences in the war, she did not draw attention in her books to her own gender. In fact, while discussing the political conflict, she generally stopped writing about her religion. Instead, the focus became a racial look at the military and political conflict between Korea, Japan, and China. The same was true of newspaper coverage. From her perspective, the relationship between these nations was more rooted in an ethnic conflict and uncivilized behaviour by the associated race than in an absence of Christianity. Her faith only became involved in her discussion of the war when she pronounced that Russia would be the best ruler of Korea. In this situation, her New Womanhood was expressed with extensive mobility because she was able to travel so freely throughout Korea and China, which allowed her to write at length about the First Sino-Japanese War and therefore expand her audience and gain further means for mobility.

NEWSPAPER COVERAGE

In *The Times* and *The Illustrated London News*, China, Japan, and Russia were each suggested as the most suitable ruler of Korea. Bird concluded that Russia was the best option for her own reasons: her opinions of Chinese management of Korea, Japan's modernization and religion, and Russia's Christianity and success with their Korean settlement. The belief that Russia would help Korea to become less lazy and more industrious, meaning that they would become open to converting to Christianity. This was the best possible outcome for Bird. She shared opinions with some of the articles covered in this work, and disagreed with others. The one thing that all of the coverage agreed upon was that Korea could not be completely independent. Bird's coverage of events contributed to her role as a New Woman because her investigation of the war led to an unusual conclusion, showing disruptiveness, and demonstrated her commitment to Christianity, which problematizes previous definitions of New Womanhood and indicates the need for a broader interpretation. Her use of mobility to express her Christianity and whiteness is a demonstration of how mobility allowed her to be a New Woman. Coverage of the war was an expression of mobility itself, as it involved Western European observers informing a similarly situated audience on the events of a foreign and supposedly isolated, ancient, backward place. The exercise of reporting facts which presented Korea as backwards and in shambles, and then proclaiming the best solution for their troubles, is positioning the newspapers as knowledgeable and mobile, and Koreans as isolated and immobile.

Coverage of the conflict in Korea began as early as December 1892, in *The Times's* series of articles titled "Notes From the Far East". This one was called "The Political Future of

Korea”.³⁵⁰ Its author believed that outside powers were taking control of Korea and only representing their own interests rather than Korea’s. The author was captivated by Korea’s situation: he wrote “A more anomalous political condition certainly does not exist in the world than that of a country which itself claims to be both independent, and can produce powerful evidence in support of either hypothesis, and as to which outside Powers advance pretensions of suzerainty, control, protectorate, alliance, most-favoured nation treatment, or technical equality”³⁵¹. To this outsider, Korea was in a position of contradictions and at the mercy of outside powers. It is true that at various times and in a variety of treaties and conflicts, Korea claimed to be independent of China, subordinate to China, and to have certain resources and routes exclusive to China. The article went on to detail Korea’s geographic location between China, Russia, and Japan, and claim that Korea’s current circumstances came about because of its physical position, and because of China’s policy on other nations’ involvement in Korea. The reporter was not sure what would come of the situation, but viewed Korea’s position as having been “woven by the wits or the wiles of the stronger at the expense of the weak.”³⁵² This reporter had uncommon sympathy for Korea and believed that it was at the mercy of local powers.

The article went on to detail parts of the shared history between Korea, China, and Japan, to describe some of China’s diplomatic blunders, and to say that Japanese people were “active and businesslike” and “possessed of capital”, whereas Koreans were “indolent”³⁵³. It becomes clear that the reporter’s sympathy was borne out of pity that the inferior Korean race was doomed to be forever controlled by the superior neighboring races, as the reporter wrote that

³⁵⁰ “Notes From the Far East,” *The Times*, December 31, 1892, accessed January 31, 2016, http://find.galegroup.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/ttda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=TTDA&userGroup=ocul_carleton&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=AdvancedSearchForm&docId=CS100849567&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0.

³⁵¹ *The Times*, “Notes From the Far East,” December 31, 1892 (para. 1).

³⁵² *Ibid.*, para. 1.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, para. 2.

Japanese people understood how to give loans and make Koreans pay extra for them, and that Japanese colonists and merchants had control over this “weaker country”, while China’s relationship with Korea was ceremonial and tradition-based.³⁵⁴ These characterizations of the Japanese relationship with Korea versus China’s, and the nature of Japanese people versus Korean people, are similar to those that Bird expressed in her writing, but her opinion on the “Korean race” improved because she happened to see them prosper under Russia’s tutelage. This experience informed her views on Korean people and allowed her to see their potential if they had a more just and better organized government overseeing them.

The London Illustrated News began coverage of the conflict on July 28, 1894. It reported that the “outbreak of war between China and Japan in Corea seemed to be imminent on July 24”³⁵⁵. There was already interest even though not much had happened yet, from their perspective. They covered the basics and stated that there were rumours that China and Japan had declared war on each other due to Japan’s interference in Korea. Its tone indicated that the audience was already somewhat familiar with the context of the conflict, and that the paper was weighing in on a conversation that was already going. It described Korea’s environment, its dealings with Japan, and wrote that Korea was an “unwarlike” place with a British embassy and ships from the British navy.³⁵⁶

On August 4, 1894, the *Illustrated News* published a full-page image of a Japanese ship, the Yoshino-Kan. It was made of metal, had smoke stacks, and looked formidable and modern.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., para. 2.

³⁵⁵ “Home and Foreign News,” *Illustrated London News*, July 28, 1894, accessed August 15, 2016, http://find.galegroup.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/iln/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ILN&userGroupName=ocul_carleton&tabID=T003&docPage=article&docId=HN3100144076&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0 (para. 19).

³⁵⁶ “Corea, between China and Japan,” *Illustrated London News*, July 28, 1894, accessed August 15, 2016, http://find.galegroup.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/iln/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ILN&userGroupName=ocul_carleton&tabID=T003&docPage=article&docId=HN3100143970&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0 (para. 1).

The article detailed an early military skirmish between China and Japan, described the Japanese warships as “powerful”³⁵⁷, and depicted the Chinese military as cowardly deserters. It said that Korea was inhabited by a “Mongolian race” who were not “savage”, but had had the least contact with “modern civilisation” and was the furthest from “European progressive influences”.³⁵⁸ It was also told to the readers that Korea had been rejecting foreign influences, and ideas and customs of its neighbours.³⁵⁹ Such was Korea’s representation to the world at the outset of war, along with that of Japan and China. Korea was written as an isolated place that had been trapped in the past, and China was disorganized and ill-equipped for war and for running Korea. In contrast, Japan was modern. It had modern, European style ships, was open to outside ideas, and was militarily superior to its neighbors. Not all the articles published in *The Times* or the *Illustrated News* agreed with the exact stances written in this one, but the general images of Korea as isolated, China as falling from a former glory, and Japan as modern and on the rise, were reproduced time and again. Not just by newspapers, but by Bird herself. While this article implied that Japan was the best choice for Korea by ranking it as possessing the best military and contrasting its modernity with Korea’s isolation and backwardness, Bird, as previously stated, believed Russia was the best suitor. While she agreed with each individual nation’s assessment, she did not believe that Japan was the best choice.

Once news reached Europe that war had been declared between Japan and China, the *Illustrated News* published a multi-page spread of details on the war, notes on Korean culture, and photos from Korea which depicted the palace, Korean officials’ court dress, and *Ki-sang*

³⁵⁷ "The Impending War in Eastern Asia," *Illustrated London News*, August 4, 1894, accessed August 15, 2016, http://find.galegroup.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/iln/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ILN&userGroupName=ocul_carleton&tabID=T003&docPage=article&docId=HN3100144076&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0, 131.

³⁵⁸ *Illustrated London News*, “The Impending War in Eastern Asia,” August 4, 1894, 136.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 136.

who were the Korean dancing women who would entertain diplomats and members of the Cabinet and court.³⁶⁰ The article mistakenly wrote that war between China and Japan had “suddenly”³⁶¹ commenced, ignoring the tensions that had been building between the nations for years and the circumstances of the Japanese’s troops in Korea, which was under the pretense of helping the Korean King during a rebellion. Instead it was “sudden”, as if it was an irrational, nonsensical altercation. The author wrote that Koreans were “genial and kind-hearted, but extremely lazy, and in this respect present a marked contrast to the restless Japanese and the industrious Chinese.”³⁶² This article was not so much about who would take over Korea, but an overview of the culture and the nation’s position among its allies. There was a consistent depiction of Korean people as lazy, childlike, and foolish. This was a classic colonial approach and validated the underlying assumption throughout Bird and all newspaper coverage that Korea needed an outside ruler’s help.

An article which argued for Korea remaining under the supervision of China was published on August 28, 1894, titled “The Invasion of Korea” and was written by *The Times*’ special correspondent in Asia. After a summary of events in the war thus far, the author listed some of the reforms Japan wished to implement in Korea: reform the military “under competent instructors”³⁶³, reform education to a modern system, and reform the local and federal governments “under proper responsible heads.”³⁶⁴ The choice of these descriptors is telling. The

³⁶⁰ “Sketches in Corea,” *Illustrated London News*, August 11, 1894, accessed August 9, 2016, http://find.galegroup.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/iln/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ILN&userGroupName=ocul_carleton&tabID=T003&docPage=article&docId=HN3100144198&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² *Illustrated London News*, “Sketches in Corea,” August 11, 1894.

³⁶³ “The Invasion of Korea,” *The Times*, August 28, 1894, accessed January 31, 2016. http://find.galegroup.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/ttda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=TTDA&userGroupName=ocul_carleton&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=AdvancedSearchForm&docId=CS167959324&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0 (para. 7).

³⁶⁴ Ibid., para. 7.

author understood the current Korean institutions as backward, old-fashioned, and crafted by unworthy minds, and Japanese influence would correct that. Despite publishing an interpretation that stated China had implemented a system in Korea that was stuck in the past, the author suggested that China was still the natural choice for rule over Korea.³⁶⁵ This was because the Japanese Government had stated there was only one reason for their presence in Korea: to reform the administration because they had an obligation to do so since Korea was so close by, and China would never do it.

But the reporter was not convinced by that statement. He believed that Japan would not simply make minor changes to Korea, but would subjugate Korea whether that was their intention or not. This was because the reporter saw that over the last three hundred years of “clear authentic history” between Japan and Korea, Japan had invaded and had the role of “Asiatic conqueror” but never attempted to reform Korea.³⁶⁶ China, which was Korea’s “traditional protector” had never attempted reforms either.³⁶⁷ Between the two of them, Japan was the most modern nation but China had shown itself to have the capacity to do good for Korea. The author wrote that Korea and China were racially allied, and that Korea and Japan were natural racial enemies³⁶⁸, a factoid that was repeated constantly throughout Bird’s writing and coverage of the war. The author concluded that no matter what, Korea was in a precarious position because it was caught between three powerful neighbours but was too weak to properly manage these relationships.³⁶⁹ Due to that position, Korea was losing its “national character”³⁷⁰

³⁶⁵ *The Times*, “The Invasion of Korea,” August 28, 1894 (para. 15).

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 15.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 15.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, para. 22.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, para. 23.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, para. 23.

and independence was out of the question. Therefore, since China had been kind to Korea and there was a “racial link” between them, China was the best option for rule over Korea.

Another article published in *The Times* on November 26, 1894, reproduced the same images of Korea, China, and Japan, but came to a different conclusion: that Japan was the obvious choice for Korea. To this author, that was because China was irrational, barbarous, and undemocratic as opposed to Japan’s practicality and civilized society.³⁷¹ In this article, there was a conflict of Chinese conservatism pitted against Western progressiveness. It was written as an evil, fading conservatism.

Much of the available sources of information to the British public about the First Sino-Japanese War at that time consisted of the same opinions and facts repeated over and over. All of these opinions have been explained: Korea was unfit for independence and filled with lazy, uncivilized people; Japan was modern and forward thinking with an eternal racial hatred between themselves and Koreans; China was old, failing as an empire, losing the military fight against Japan, and doing little to help Korea; and Russia was a major player but a wild card and even more of a mystery than backward, uncivilized Korea. While these characterizations were shared by Bird and her newspaper reporting counterparts, they all arrived at different conclusions about who should take control of Korea. Bird was clearly participating in, contributing to, and reproducing the narrative presented back home in Britain. As Barr put it,

While in Russia she visited the Korean settlements in Siberia that were the main object of her journey. The settlers, living in neat prosperous villages in the region of Possiet Bay, were proof, in her eyes, that the Korean could develop into an industrious, honest, orderly worker if conditions were favourable. Consequently, a principal thesis in her book on Korea is that the people were redeemable and had

³⁷¹ “Japan and Korea,” *The Times*, November 26, 1894, accessed January 31, 2016. http://find.galegroup.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/ttda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=TTDA&userGroup=ocul_carleton&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=AdvancedSearchForm&docId=CS218291066&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0 (para. 4).

great potential; it was the corrupt and oppressive system of government that had so impoverished and devitalised the country.³⁷²

Barr wrote that this was one of Bird's theses in *Korea and her Neighbors*: that Korean people had the capacity to become productive and happy people if they could throw off the yoke of tyranny that the Korean and Chinese governments had imposed on them for so long. Based on her observations in the Korean settlement in Russia, compounded on her problems with China and Japan, Bird concluded that Russia was the key to Korean success. She wrote:

...surrounded by an apathetic, dirty, vacant-looking, open-mouthed crowd steeped in poverty, I felt Korea to be hopeless, helpless, pitiable, piteous, a mere shuttlecock of certain great powers, and that there is no hope for her population of twelve or fourteen millions, unless it is taken in hand by Russia, under whose rule, giving security for the gains of industry as well as light taxation, I had seen Koreans in hundreds transformed into energetic, thriving, peasant farmers in Eastern Siberia.³⁷³

This settlement was not mentioned in any of the war reports in *The Times* or *The Illustrated London News*, and Russia was never discussed as a viable candidate for leadership of Korea. But Bird, who had seen Korean people as a dirty and pitiful, saw them prosper in Russia. Her approach to international travel, which was to take the roads less travelled, led her to an experience which gave her a singular, disruptive voice among other British opinions being published at the time. This experience redeemed her hope for them and finally there was a viable option for Koreans to be successful without their old corrupt government system; and without the tenuous, strained and mistrusted authority of the Japanese. On top of the proof she had witnessed of Korean prosperity in Russian Manchuria, Russia was Christian, and to Bird Japan was irreligious. The weight she placed on the importance of Christianity tipped the scales in Russia's favour.

³⁷² Barr, 288.

³⁷³ Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors*, 330.

Bird's assessment of the war was modern and disruptive, and done in the fashion of a New Woman: published in a book which made her an independent living. It was only possible because of her mobility. It was modern and disruptive because she was able to travel on her own and put forward a new and unusual interpretation of the war. Bird's decision that Russia was the best option had strong religious and racial implications. She, and the journalists covering the war for *The Times* and the *Illustrated London Times* made frequent statements on the "national racial hatred"³⁷⁴ between Korean and Japanese people, and all carried the colonialist assumption that Korea was uncivilized and could govern itself. On top of these Orientalist, racial statements which cast herself as an impartial, white observer, Bird added religion to her perspective. The idea that Japan could have Western institutions without Christianity or, according to Bird, any strong religion at all, was not acceptable to her. Nor was the Chinese regime which had allowed Korean peasants to appear to her as so lazy initially. The success she had seen Korean people have under Russian rule and Russia's Christianity was enough to convince her that Russia should have rule of Korea. She did not write that she based her opinion on how each nation treated women or the masculinity of each culture. Gender was a minor part of her decision and narrative on Korean culture. This is in keeping with Bird's pattern of choosing options that would allow her the most mobility: to emphasize her whiteness and Christianity rather than her gender so that her mobility could be more in keeping with her audience's presumed perception that mobility was a white, Christian, and male property. Contemporary ideas on mobility, and its connection with industry, modernity, and Christianity, were used constantly in the discourse on Korea, China, Japan, Russia, and the First Sino-Japanese War. The link between these characteristics is clearly drawn, as it is also drawn to New Womanhood through Isabella Bird.

³⁷⁴ *The Times*, "Notes From the Far East," December 31, 1892 (para. 2).

CONCLUSION

The New Woman has been defined within the narrow parameters of a woman in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century who was a published author, never married, and held beliefs that aligned with modern feminism. This version of feminism entails a secular progressive set of politics. I assert that this iteration of New Womanhood is not inclusive enough, and should be expanded to new guidelines which include modernity and disruptiveness. Such a definition would include women who were independent and modern, but who held traditional beliefs and expressed their agency within conservative or religious realms. Isabella Bird was one such woman. In some regards she was very modern and progressive, but in other ways she was conservative and entirely traditional. Bird can certainly be qualified as a New Woman. She made her own money by publishing several travel books; she was fiercely independent, both financially and emotionally; she refused to marry, until later in life; and she embraced close female friendship above relationships with male suitors, especially her friendship with her sister. I also argue that New Womanhood is connected to mobility. Bird's success as an author, one of the essential qualities to her New Womanhood, was her writing. Her illustrious career was only possible because of her mobility. Her legacy was caused by a cycle of New Womanhood writing and mobility. Her mobility allowed her to travel and write, which made her an independent living, which allowed her to travel and write more.

In this thesis, I have argued that Bird's interpretation of events in *Korea and Her Neighbors* was influenced by the relevant public discourse that was occurring in the English press at the time of her visit, of her writing, and of publishing the book. I also argue that this interpretation was the result of a culmination of factors from her life that contributed to and demonstrated her New Womanhood. Not only did she observe the discussion, she also

participated in it by publishing a travel book which reproduced that discourse and contributed her own understanding of the events. This understanding of Korea was informed by her experiences as a devotedly religious person, and her journey to Japan.

Throughout her life, Bird held her Christian principles close to her heart. Her faith in Christianity was deeply rooted from birth, as she was the daughter of a minister and born into an extended family that was active in their religious communities. This family taught her from a young age that sacrifice, self-denial, and missionary work were essential parts of a Christian life. The support of missionary work she expressed was in part a result of guilt. She was taught that self-denial was an extremely important quality, and she observed it in the people she loved most: Henrietta, and her husband John Bishop. But she could not stand to live a purely charitable lifestyle. She needed the thrill of independent travel to feel fulfilled, and to treat her chronic ailments. So instead of performing missionary work herself, she used her travel books as a venue to advocate for the continued importance of missionaries and discussed how missionaries might best win converts in her surroundings. In the case of Korea, she suggested medical and educational missions—the sort that had something tangible to offer locals. This was her contribution to missionary work and her way of connecting her need for independence and modernity with her faith. With a narrower definition of New Womanhood there would be no room for Bird's advocacy of missionary work. Since it has been established that Bird can be considered a New Woman, then the definition of New Womanhood must change.

Another reason for Bird's ardent support of missionaries was her mobility. If mobility can be considered a commodity that is unfairly distributed, favouring those who are white, male, and Christian, then if Bird wanted mobility it was necessary for her to emphasize her whiteness and Christianity in order to overshadow her gender. This meant that wherever she went, Bird

would extensively discuss local religions and the prospects of Christianity and missionaries. She would also report on local culture and races in a deeply Orientalist fashion.

When Bird travelled to Japan she much preferred the Ainu people of Hokkaido over the Japanese people on Honshu because the Ainu had not adopted the European institutions being introduced elsewhere in Japan. She loved their “wildness” and the “untouched” quality she perceived in them. To her they were “savages” but with a “childlike sweetness” that she loved.³⁷⁵ Bird loved the appeal of places that she viewed as “untouched by civilization”, unchanging, and authentic. Her Orientalism meant that she preferred locations which she thought were unchanging and had stayed the same for centuries. To Bird the Ainu composed a stagnant society that was untouched by the progress of Western civilization, which meant that she could be unrestrained and free from the societal pressures she felt at home. The contrast between Bird’s assessments of the Ainu versus the people of Honshu set up her reactions to Korean people. To her, Koreans were equally stagnant, and while she initially disliked the conditions of Seoul she grew to love it because she viewed it as trapped in its ancient past and untouched by civilization. However, she did not advocate for the civilizing mission, as she had seen that havoc it caused in Hawaii with the death of her friend King Lunalilo. She wanted these locations to stay as “uncivilized” and stagnant as ever, so long as they became Christian. Evidently, to Bird, Christianity did not inherently mean the introduction of industrialism or Western-styled civilization. Unlike Mary Louise Pratt’s analysis of travel writing in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Bird’s books were not advertising her destinations as potential future British colonies. She avoided travelling within the British Empire because what she

³⁷⁵ Isabella Bird Bishop, *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan: An Account of Travels on Horseback in the Interior Including Visits to the Aborigines of Yezo and the Shrines of Nikkô and Isé, Vol II* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1881), 109, accessed February 27, 2017, <https://archive.org/details/unbeatentracksin02birduoft>.

wanted most from travel was to be away from familiar cultures, societies, and institutions. Her version of Orientalism, which distinctively did not approve of the civilizing mission, was disruptive for her field and contributed to her status as a New Woman. It was also entirely dependent upon her mobility, as she was only able to experience these cultures and form these opinions because she was so mobile.

When Bird went to Japan in the late 1870s she experienced a Japan that was in the midst of the Meiji Restoration. The Japanese government had been selectively incorporating pieces of European culture into Japanese society. Bird appreciated the changes because she viewed the affected areas as civilized, but she could not love it. Due to their adoption of Western-style institutions, Japanese society appeared more industrious and civilized than she expected. She admired those qualities but was conflicted. To Bird, Japan did not have a religion, only superstition.³⁷⁶ This meant that Japan had adopted the institutions of Western Europe without taking on the Christianity they were based on. Not only that, but according to Bird, they were not based on any religion at all. This was not something she could approve of and served to further her disappointment that Japan had been through this change.

When Bird arrived in Korea during January of 1894, she found the people dirty, greedy, and lazy. By the time she left for good in 1897 she had grown to love Korea. She felt the same sort of Orientalist, exotic love for Korea that she did for the Ainu in Japan. Frequent references to its ancient royal line and connection to China, which to her was a place of backwardness, led to a depiction of a stagnant Korea. Missions had been practicing there for decades, but at that time Christianity had not attracted the number of converts it needed in order to be considered a success. Bird believed that it would continue to flounder among Koreans as long as their current

³⁷⁶ Bird Bishop, *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan* vol. I, 9.

government remained in charge. She believed that they were only greedy and unproductive because any success was met with violence. She reported that once a peasant succeeded at saving some money, the local official would ask for it as a loan. If the peasant agreed, they would likely never get their money back. If they refused, they would be arrested. Bird concluded that under such a corrupt system, Korean peasants had no incentive to work hard because they could never benefit from the pay they would earn from industriousness. She wrote that they needed to appear poor as a defense against their local officials and had a miserly attitude towards the work they were willing to do.³⁷⁷ Because of the greed and laziness and immobility she perceived among Koreans, Bird also concluded that Christianity could not succeed in Korea because Korean people were disinterested in a religion that did not offer a potential for financial gain.³⁷⁸ Thus, by changing the government, Koreans could stop being lazy or greedy, could form a more productive society, and would be ready to accept Christianity. Due to her upbringing and commitment to the spreading of Christianity, Bird's goals in her book was to advocate mission work and recommend strategies for them.

As part of her advocacy of mission work and war reporter-like style of writing, Bird put forward the theory that Russia was the best candidate for taking over Korea as an imperial ruler. This belief was in part due to her lack of faith in the other options. She had deemed that China had failed to establish a fair and just government, and she viewed Japan's hold on Korea as tenuous after they assassinated the Queen and attempted to outlaw the Korean topknot. She also repeated the common idea that Korean and Japanese people had a natural racial hatred between them, making cooperation impossible. Finally, as previously stated, she disliked the absence of Christianity from Japanese institutions. In Russian Manchuria, she observed a Korean settlement

³⁷⁷ Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors*, 337.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 64.

which proved to her that Russia could fulfill all the obligations of a government at which Japan and China had failed. In the Korean settlement, she witnessed a community which she saw as industrious and functional, filled with people who were happy and healthy.³⁷⁹ The combination of China and Japan's shortcomings along with the success of Koreans under a Christian, Russian rule, led to her conclusion that Russia would allow Korea to flourish and become Christian.

Her idea that Russia was the best option for Korea was disruptive. It is clear that she was in tune with the public discourse on the First Sino-Japanese War, which in this paper was represented by articles from *The Times* and *The Illustrated London News*, because she repeated many of the same ideas. In this common public narrative, Korea was small, out of touch, uncivilized, and in need of governance; China was old, barbaric, and failing; and Japan was modern, had substantive military strength, and was civilized. Bird repeated these ideas about Korea, Japan, and China in the 1890s just as she had repeated ideas about Japan during the 1870s, which viewed Japan as very similar to Britain. While the newspapers all shared similar depictions of the nations at play in the First Sino-Japanese War, they came to different conclusions on what the outcome should or would be and for what reasons. Bird held the unpopular and disruptive opinion that Russia should take over Korea and all its strategic, military value.

Bird consistently treaded a line of old and new, progressive and conservative. She was modern and independent enough to be a woman who only married late in life and travelled the world by herself largely using her own money, but she did not use her books to advocate for women's rights. She had genuine love for the foreign cultures she came in contact with, but she routinely referred to them as savage and would dismiss their faiths as superstitious lies. This

³⁷⁹ Bird Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors*, 229.

dichotomy of progressive and traditional that existed within Bird reinforces the idea that a broader, more inclusive definition of New Womanhood is need—one that can account for the spectrum of ideals that any New Woman might have. The dichotomy came about through the need to be a mobile New Woman, while also needing to be conservative when it came to religion and race, so that she could remain mobile. Although she may have perceived her religious views to be modern, because of how much she asserted that Christians must do more travelling to spread Christianity, the fact that she was religious at all was perceived as traditional and an outlying quality by Barr and others of the secular progressive feminist movement.

This dichotomy was dealt with very differently by two of Bird's biographers. Anna Stoddart, who was a friend of Bird's, published her biography *The Life of Isabella Bird (Mrs. Bishop)* in 1908. Pat Barr published *A Curious Life for a Lady: The Story of Isabella Bird* in 1970. Each biographer presented a different version of Bird's life because they were written by women with different perspectives on New Womanhood and progressiveness. Stoddart wrote Bird as sensible and strong, independent and possessing of a singular, unwavering devotion to Christianity. Barr, on the other hand, added more colour and doubt to her depiction of Bird. She wrote her as a New Woman who struggled to adhere to the faith she had been taught to follow since she was a child. In doing so, Barr was portraying Bird with a version of feminism that was more similar to that of the 1970s, which favoured a secular feminist progressiveness. Both tended to ignore the dichotomy of old and new within Bird, instead favouring whichever version of her set of opinions that suited their individual forms of feminism.

Bird's book *Korea and Her Neighbors* was an instance in which her religion, Orientalism, and New Womanhood coincided in a way that offers new and interesting insight into New Women's religious experiences, and serves as precedent for expanding the definition

of New Womanhood. Her need for mobility and her principles of self-denial were reconciled when she used travel writing as a cultural study and venue for promoting missionary work, which also allowed her to emphasize her Christianity. She would do the same for her race, as she consistently observed other cultures through a distinctly white observer's lens, judging how civilized or primitive it was and discussing the nature of each race she encountered. Doing so allowed her to offset her femininity and appear closer to the archetype of a mobile person: a white, male, Christian. By offering a solution to the Korean political crisis which involved an opportunity for the expansion of Christianity she was reaffirming her faith and justifying her need to travel. Her need to promote missionaries is a testament to her views of religion, and her desperate need to travel is a testament to her modernity, independence, and disruptiveness. All of these qualities—religiousness, conservativeness, modernity, and disruptiveness—were operating when she decided that Russia was the best equipped to take control of Korea. New Womanhood was intertwined with mobility. It was attained through the use of modernity, disruptiveness, and mobility and required that one embrace what qualities they could in order to make their mobility possible. For Bird, and some women like her, that meant perpetuating Orientalist ideas about race, and promoting forms of Christianity through missionaries. This allowed New Women to further express their mobility, modernity, and disruptiveness.

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