

NATIONAL SUBJECTS, INTERNATIONAL SELVES: FEMINIST  
SELF-FASHIONING IN MEIJI JAPAN AND NINETEENTH CENTURY  
COLONIAL INDIA

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of Cornell University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

by

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May 2007

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NATIONAL SUBJECTS, INTERNATIONAL SELVES: FEMINIST  
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“National Subjects, International Selves: Feminist Self-fashioning in Meiji Japan and Colonial India,” is a historical and literary-critical inquiry into the complex relationships that Asian women in the 19C forged across the North-South divide. I argue that when such women overstepped the bounds of nation to embrace a larger sisterhood, they placed themselves in an anomalous position with regard to the nation-state—as citizen-subjects and as feminists. In particular, I examine the work of Japanese feminist and educator Tsuda Umeko (1864-1929) in conjunction with that of the Indian feminist Pandita Ramabai (1858-1922) for both of whom an engagement with the task of female education and social reform at home became possible through the emotional and material support provided by their American counterparts. Reading Ramabai’s *The High-caste Hindu Woman* (1888) together with *Japanese Girls and Women* (1891) co-authored by Tsuda and her American friend Alice Bacon I focus on the logic of the triadic encounter between Tsuda, Ramabai and the American women who espoused their cause. I analyse these two texts in terms of the key paradox underlying the Japanese understanding of their own Asianness: while they sought to identify with the ‘civilised’ West the Japanese at the same time could not but recognize cultural affinities with India and thereby ‘Asia.’ In the dissertation, my historical-semantic survey of the emergence of ‘Asia’ in the Japanese imaginary in this period is offset by an examination of 19C constructions of ‘ideal’ womanhood that sought to locate woman within the nation. Here I describe Tsuda’s uncomfortable

relation to her country and its language because of her early life in America; I suggest that Tsuda's commitment to the cause of international sisterhood had the paradoxical effect of making her acquiesce to the Meiji's state's project for a modern 'Japanese' woman. Finally, my examination of Tsuda's voluminous correspondence with her American mother as framed in Ôba Minako's biography and translation of these letters seeks to draw attention to the fact that both 'Asian' and 'Japanese' continued to be reinscribed in this period, most effectively through discourses extolling the so-called uniqueness of the Japanese language.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Asmita Satish Hulyalkar was born in 1974 in Aurangabad, India. She finished her BA in Psychology from Fergusson College, Pune University (India) in 1995. She went on to do an MA at University of Southern California, completing her thesis under the supervision of Dr. David Bialock. She joined the Cornell Graduate Program in 1998. Asmita lives in Brooklyn with her husband.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe my interest in Tsuda Umeko, one of the two women who is central to my thesis, to Gordon Brown. This initial interest was welcomed and sustained at Cornell University under the valuable guidance of Brett de Bary who served as the Chair of my committee, and to who I am grateful to for her unstinting warmth and support in the long years that I took to write. I am also happy to acknowledge my intellectual debt to Naoki Sakai from whom I learned a great deal. I am grateful to Durba Ghosh for taking the time to read the thesis when it was in its final stages. I should also thank Karen Brazell and Kyoko Selden for their gracious help and support over the years. Many thanks also to Meera Kosambi who was generous with her time, spending one entire summer with me reading Ramabai's Marathi texts. I would also like to extend my gratitude to Hirata Yumi, Ueno Chizuko and Gauri Viswanathan for their active interest and support in the project; I thank the Japan Foundation for a generous fellowship in the year 2002-03 which enabled me to consult the Tsuda archives located in Tsuda College. I am particularly grateful to staff of the archive and especially Yuko Takahashi.

My friends at Cornell have been a source of support and intellectual stimulation. I would like to thank Yukiko Hanawa, Vyjayanthi Ratnam, Mark McGuire, Daniel McKee, Masaki Matsubara, Trent Maxey, Setsu Shigematsu, Paola Iovene, Sarah McKibben, Jolisa Gracewood, and Sheetal Majithia.

I like to think that my late grandfather Dr. Madhusudan Hulyalkar and my beloved uncle Shrihari Khanwelkar would have been particularly pleased to see this project come to a conclusion. To my grandmother, my parents, and my sister I owe a special debt for their patience and trust in me. To my friends Neeraja, Manjiri, Vrinda, Shrikant, and Saurabh a loving thank you. George and Nishith also deserve a heartfelt

thanks for their patience with me and for lending a ear during particularly difficult times. Finally, I would also like to thank Milind. I am quite sure that without him I would not have finished. To him my deepest and most loving thanks.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This dissertation builds on two late nineteenth century problematizations of the relation between nation and gender; the name indigenous patriarchy gave to this issue was “the Women’s Question.” Suggesting that the concerns implicit in this “question” in Meiji Japan bore an instructive resemblance to its elaboration in late nineteenth century colonial India, I track in each setting the emergence of the notion of the “ideal woman” and its existential and personal cost for women who sought to elaborate their own very singular idea of historical will. What was at stake for elite nationalist patriarchy was the need to portray an incipient nation-state in the terms not just of the modernity of its material substance but in terms of the perfectibility of its humanity, of which the female body, socialized as feminine, was the exemplary instance. Woman was the subject uniquely poised to challenge and transform custom, law and sanction. To be at once modern (hence, civilised and on par with the “universal”) and traditional (i.e., espousing national values and therefore “particular”) demanded a very specific kind of gender reform, one focused predominantly on education and on the restructuring of the household. While this sphere of gender reform remained primarily within a male agenda, feminist scholars have argued that more and more educated women had begun at the time to participate in the arena of reform, particularly in the all-important field of women’s education. Thus, while on the one hand the codification of the “ideal woman” set up normative standards for what a woman ought to be, the role of women in the question of reform also afforded a heterogeneous domain of constrained freedoms for female subject formation.

One of the key emphases of this dissertation is the need to keep in view the international horizon of reform, the essential tie between such reformism and its adequation to the Western modern. At the time, women in nation formation were for

the first time being conceived of as universal subjects, but crucially not yet as citizen-subjects. The idea of imagining women as universal subjects came with a paradox; the aim was to particularize woman as a national subject embodying qualities that made her the symbol of the national (and by the same token the evolving dominant) tradition. Within the context of the Indian and Japanese Women's Question it is therefore worth noting that the national category of women came into existence under a Western gaze, and within an international framework and therefore necessarily within the comparative mode. The "Asian woman" determined as a sign of barbarity or civilization was thus from her very birth an international figure.

The case of Tsuda Umeko (1864-1929), one of the two central figures in this dissertation illustrates this point well. The youngest member of the 1871 Iwakura mission, she was among the first group of women sent to study in America with the assumption that she would upon her return inculcate her own female compatriots with ideas of educated and civilised womanhood.<sup>1</sup> In 1882 Tsuda returned to Japan, by which time the climate in the field of reform was beginning to take a conservative turn. Although no longer thought to be "Japanese" enough to fit the mold of the ideal woman, Tsuda did however go on to participate and play a significant role in the construction of this state-sponsored ideal in unexpected ways. Yet, as I demonstrate in Chapters Two and Four, she was also critical of this image of the Japanese woman and the landmark educational institution she set up, the Tsuda Eigaku Juku, bears the mark of this essential critique .

The other key figure whose works I examine is Pandita Ramabai (1858-1922), an Indian educator and feminist of some repute.<sup>2</sup> A contemporary of Tsuda's

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<sup>1</sup> For detailed biographical information see Barbara Rose, *Tsuda Umeko and women's education in Japan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Riichi Yoshikawa, *Tsuda Umeko den* (Tokyo: Tsuda juku dosokai, 1956).

<sup>2</sup> Meera Kosambi, Introduction to *Pandita Ramabai through her own words: selected works*, by Pandita Ramabai (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000).

(although the two women never met), Ramabai's work in the field of women's education resembles Tsuda's activities closely. While Tsuda spent the better part of her early life in the United States, Ramabai's childhood was unusual in that, having received from her mother a training in Sanskrit and Hindu law, she was exceptionally well-educated. Her career in social reform which started in 1882 with her work at the progressive Arya Mahila Samaj in the Bombay Presidency, and her first volume in Marathi *Stree Dharma Niti* [*Morals for Women*] (1882) both provide ample illustration of Ramabai's basic beliefs about women's education. Not surprisingly, these views garnered for Ramabai both attention and notoriety, for what she was in essence suggesting was that women were not merely objects but also the subjects of their own reform. In the midst of this activity Ramabai, aged twenty-four and recently widowed, decided to travel to England to pursue the study of medicine much against the advice of her fellow reformers. Her original plan to study medicine there failed, but in 1883 she caused further uproar because of her unexpected conversion to Christianity. The reason for this was plain. Ramabai during her travels in 1878 had been "discovered" in Calcutta by male reformists impressed by her unusual grasp of the Sanskritic tradition in law, and had bestowed upon her the title of a Pandita or scholar and a Sarasvati, after the goddess of learning. For the enthusiastic bourgeois male reformers she had been the "ideal Hindu woman"; her sudden and unexpected conversion to Christianity was a rude shock that quickly made her appear alien and anti-national. Unable to cope with the growing isolation and in disagreement with her spiritual mentors over her understanding of the Christian faith, Ramabai left England in 1886 to travel to the United States at the invitation of Dr. Rachel Bodley, the Dean of the Women's Medical College in Philadelphia. Ramabai's initial plan was to stay only for three months, but in America she was an instant success and her planned short visit lengthened to three years. As I discuss in Chapter Four, the reasons for her

success were multiple. As a public figure who appeared to conform to their pre-conceived notions of the “native” Hindu woman ideally placed for Western financial assistance, Ramabai could not but have made a great impression on the benevolent White women social activists of the time. Much of this success of course came with the publication of her volume *The high-caste Hindu woman* in 1887, a text which powerfully presents the narrative of the abject widow in dire need of reform. With the sales of her book (which over the next decade went into as many as ten reprints) and the self-sufficiency that came with the funds she had managed to gather abroad for the establishment of her school for widows (Sharada Sadan), it seemed as though her reputation at home would redound to her newfound international credit.

The similarities between Tsuda’s and Ramabai’s life are limited, their actual or factual convergence on the international scene perhaps even coincidental. But what is crucial for this dissertation is the picture of their common travail and the historical resource they provide us for understanding the often complicitous nature of feminist engagements with the state, an engagement never a matter of choice for activists such as Tsuda and Ramabai, and certainly not for postcolonial feminist activists today. Their unique upbringing, their conversion to Christianity (Tsuda was converted when she was still a child), their participation in the reform of women’s education, and finally their presence in the international arena where they managed to present their ideas to Western (American audiences) and garner substantial support—this disparate set of conditions establishes the fundamental contemporaneity of Tsuda and Ramabai’s work. We continue to be moved by the questions they raised a century in advance, questions that have to do with the notion of secularism put in place by a Western modernity, the neglect of the girl-child in nationalist educational programs, and the continuing sanctioned ignorance of the benevolent donor North with regard to the cultural and social peculiarities of the South.

Tsuda returned to Japan in 1882; in 1889 she went back to the United States again in 1889 to study at Bryn Mawr. It was during this time that she co-authored with her American friend and supporter Alice Bacon the volume *Japanese girls and women* (1891), a text that bears some similarity to Ramabai's book published only a few years earlier. Like Ramabai, Tsuda was interested in making the most of her American visit. The funds that the book generated and the Philadelphia Committee scholarship that Tsuda was able to set up during this time created an opportunity for Japanese women in subsequent years to undertake short stints of study in American colleges. Tsuda returned in 1892, but travelled again to Denver in 1898 to represent Japan at the Convention of the General Federation of Women's Clubs. As an employee of the Tokyo Peeresses' School, credentialled as a "representative" of Japan, Tsuda had very little opportunity during this trip to articulate her own potentially controversial thoughts on women's education. We should remember though that as much as Tsuda's image as the ideal Japanese woman may have been in doubt at home, in the international arena there could not have been for Western eyes a more perfect "representative" of the Japanese woman. It was also during this trip that she traveled to England where she met with Dorothy Beale, a good friend and supporter of Ramabai. Upon her return, Tsuda finally resigned from the Peeresses' School and established her own school in 1900. Engaged primarily in training women to be English teachers, Tsuda like Ramabai had the more ambitious aim of making women independent and self-reliant. Moreover the Tsuda Eigaku Juku, like the Sharada Sadan, was also a boarding (residential) school where teachers and students not only studied together but also attempted to live like a family.

I am interested then in examining the ways in which Ramabai and Tsuda worked on the national scene but were also recipients of international help, carving out their "national" identities within the very interstices of the national and the

international. This complex negotiation reflects, it seems to me, one specific moment in the life of “internationalism,” suggestive not of a fully developed “feminist” identity as much as the difficulties of occupying a *feminist position*. Each of the chapters in this dissertation therefore engages with a generically disparate range of texts to examine Tsuda and Ramabai’s location within the national and beyond it in the space of the international.

Using the concept-metaphor of an encounter, Chapter Two focuses on analyzing Tsuda’s early struggles with her identity as a “Japanese” and her relation to her mother-tongue. Here I move between two texts: the first is Tsuda’s correspondence (in English) with her American “mother” Mrs. Adeline Lanman, published in a single volume titled *The Attic Letters: Ume Tsuda’s Correspondence to Her American Mother* (1991). Written over three decades following Tsuda’s eleven-year stay in America, the letters detail the everyday aspects of Tsuda’s life and also lay out many of her incipient ideas about Japanese women’s education. But more significantly, these letters draw attention to Tsuda’s conflicting feelings about being “Japanese,” and her longing for America. The second text that I refer to is the translation of Tsuda’s letters into Japanese by the feminist writer Ôba Minako published in 1991. Ostensibly a biography of Tsuda, *Tsuda Umeko* serves a dual purpose: it seeks to introduce the bulk of Tsuda’s English writings to her Japanese readers, while also implicitly functioning as an “autobiography” of Ôba herself. In other words while Ôba’s *Tsuda Umeko* is a narrative of Tsuda’s life, Ôba self-avowed identification with Tsuda (based on an ostensible similarity in their American experience), enables Ôba to “imagine” Tsuda’s story as being not just about Tsuda but also about herself. The chapter thus discusses the problems with imagining Tsuda’s subject-position in the neat categories of nationalist/elitist/feminist reform. The

chapter asks whether Tsuda's identity as a feminist is as much an *identity* as it is a *position* from where Tsuda's (or Oba ventriloquizing Tsuda) critique of the idea of a homogenous nation and the unproblematized relation between nation and mother tongue can be seen to emerge. Tsuda's ambiguous identification as a Japanese, her uneasy grasp of her own mother-tongue also lead her to reflect upon the idea of home. "At home" neither in Japan nor the United States, Tsuda's revision of the idea of home relocates it (perhaps with its disciplinary implications left intact) to a third space somewhere between political and civil society—the residential school for women. Such a location not only subverts the inexorable tie between patriarchy and home, but also serves to refashion the critical link between nation and home. Ôba on her part expands the idea of this home further, by examining the role of the "mother" in such a household. Establishing Tsuda as the maternal figure (but *not* the biological mother) at the head of this home, Ôba in her own text invites her readers to participate in something like a communal home (a prefiguration of a kind of utopic future community) no longer accountable to acceptable definitions of home, nation and the mother-tongue.

While Chapter Two alludes to the idea that Tsuda's nationalism and internationalism cannot be thought of in opposing terms, Chapter Three moves this argument into a broader framework. Here I look at Japan as it stands on the cusp of becoming a "modern" independent nation-state on the one hand and a quasi-colonised nation on the other. And it is Ramabai's visit to Japan en route to India (from the United States) in 1888 that, I suggest, highlights Japan's double bind. By this token, Japanese reformers from within the Women's Question move between identifying themselves with the inferior status of their Indian sisters while at the same time distancing themselves from Ramabai (the representative Indian woman), arguing that they are in fact culturally closer to their American counterparts. The texts examined in

this chapter are varied: I focus on the writings that appeared on Ramabai in Japanese in the leading Meiji women's magazine, the *Jogaku Zasshi*. Ranging from short biographical sketches to more critical writing, the articles in *Jogaku zasshi* give a clear sense of the interaction between Ramabai and her Japanese interlocutors as it takes place in the imagined proximity of America. As can also be evinced from these texts the figure of Ramabai was fascinating for her Japanese audiences; they reflect a clear desire on the part of the Japanese to emulate Ramabai's success. Ramabai's speeches in Japan however articulate her own agenda: as in America, she wished to garner Japanese support (in terms of financial help for her cause). But more significantly, she also saw Japanese women and Japan's progress (its incipient modernity) as a model that Indian reformers could emulate. Ramabai's encounter with the Japanese is however complicated by the American presence on both a real and an imaginary register. The triadic structure of "pity," "compassion," and "help" implicit in Ramabai's depiction of the Indian woman invites her listeners to participate in the reform of the Indian woman. The American presence however reminds the Japanese that they are in no position to extend "help" or "compassion" to the Indian woman; this can only be the prerogative of a Western woman, the only real donor and the only universal subject. In the final instance the implicit suggestion to the Japanese audience is that that they turn their attention to the reform of their own women. In choosing to analyze for the first time the reports surrounding Ramabai's visit to Japan I attend to the possibility (a road not taken) of a "practical relation' between Indian and Japan that helps draw out the peculiarities of their colonial moment. Moreover such a move sets up a South-South comparison, anticipating the pan-Asianism of Rabindranath Tagore and Okakura Tenshin who proposed a compact between Japan and India to counteract Western imperialism. That such a gesture eventually failed is a sign that the Japanese at that moment could not forge a practical connection with India, engrossed



as they were (and perhaps continue to be) in the deeply narcissistic identification with the West that Naoki Sakai's work has taught us so much about.

Building upon the comparatist mode that I set up in Chapter Three, the final chapter examines Tsuda and Ramabai's activism on the international scene. Here I examine Tsuda's close ties with an American woman Alice Bacon, who was instrumental in helping Tsuda establish her own educational institution for women in 1900 in Tokyo. With Tsuda's help Bacon authored the text *Japanese girls and women* (1891) whose aim was to give the American women a "true" idea of the face of Japanese womanhood. Here I read Tsuda's/Bacon's text in conjunction with Ramabai's *High-caste Hindu woman* (1887), also published with the aim of raising funds for Ramabai's school for girls in India. Evidence suggests that Tsuda/Bacon borrowed from Ramabai not so much in content but in strategy; here the Japanese woman (like the Indian woman) is created as a universal subject whom Western women are obliged to take cognizance of and therefore to help. Shaped as it is by the growing interaction between women of the Western and non-Western worlds and therefore liberal humanist in tenor, the language of these two texts is also marked by missionary discourse on the "native" woman. I demonstrate how Ramabai and Tsuda (natives to the Western eye) comply in part with these images of "natives" using missionary-speak to make their own case for the native woman, while also resisting such naming, fixing, objectifying. These efforts as I suggest necessarily take place against the backdrop of the emergent notions of the universal category of woman, which in turn provide a foundational basis for the idea of an emerging "international sisterhood. That Tsuda's name is rendered absent from the final print version of the Bacon text is itself a sign that material conditions of textual production amply demonstrate the tie between power, structural asymmetries between North and South and a sisterhood without borders. Tsuda and Ramabai's remarkably rich association

with Western women is what helps us read in their work an understanding (not always articulated as such) of the limits and possibilities of an international identity, of an internationalism as such. We should remember that Ramabai's identity as an Indian or Tsuda's as a Japanese is also in a sense fleshed out in the course of this engagement, suggesting that their "nationalism" is elaborated *differentially* not at "home" but *elsewhere*. This line of argument allows me to return to the question of "home" and the fundamentally different notions of lived space (exemplified in their residential schools for women) which Tsuda and Ramabai adumbrate in the interstices of the national and international. Understood as native/Japanese/Indian, Tsuda and Ramabai are assimilated willy-nilly to a comparative framework already operating under the sign of the Western woman as universal subject. The name we would give such a comparative framework, as I elaborate at length in Chapter Three in a discussion of Sakai and Spivak, is "Asia." In locating Ramabai and Tsuda advisedly as Asian women, I turn finally to the ethico-political urgency of addressing our imaginary Asias.

By juxtaposing texts from different locations—such as Tsuda's correspondence and Oba's biography in Chapter Two, and *Japanese girls and women* and *High-caste Hindu woman* in Chapter Four—I hope to draw attention to the fact that the lives of Tsuda and Ramabai cannot be studied in isolation. Much of the previous scholarship on these women does precisely this, and in doing so reproduces the neglect in Japanese studies of the very meaningful intersections and interconnections in their lives. Tsuda's correspondence, for instance, is a part of her dialogue with her American "mother." When read as such it highlights the inconsistencies of Tsuda's narrative, underscoring the fact that identity is in fact most often a matter of inter-subjectivity and self-reflexivity. In contrast an examination of this corpus in isolation would yield a figure of the historical Tsuda who cuts an

impressive figure but remains entirely unmarked by contradictions. As I suggest in these pages, the voice of another, a product of an “encounter” with the other figured as radical alterity, involves always a complicated but necessary irruption in the domain of subjectal self-identification: this is itself a sure indication that in our own encounter with literature, the experience that the text generates does not actually exist prior to the reading of it.

Moreover, engaging different texts in dialogue with each other also allows me to examine the problem of how to compare. We should not fetishize chance connections, but we should I believe make an effort not to atomize what is really a certain continuum of efforts, energies, desires and wills in the feminist internationalism of this period. Tsuda’s and Ramabai’s different trajectories do not in any simple way predetermine their connection with each other; here, any possibility of sameness is always already precluded by a logic of difference. The historical conditions of late nineteenth century foreclose the possibility of any relationship between these two women, given the refraction of all identification in the direction of the “West.” Among women only white missionaries or temperance workers had the privilege of travelling to various parts of Asia; their narratives play a significant role in thinking about Asian women in unified terms. Tsuda and Ramabai’s stories are important precisely because they interrupt this unified narrative, and because they are finally and most poignantly not at home in the phantasmatic Asia that straddles our imaginary modern.

## CHAPTER 2: WRITING *TSUDA UMEKO*<sup>1</sup>: BIOGRAPHY AND ITS EXCESS

The letters that Tsuda Umeko wrote to her American foster mother, Mrs. Adeline Lanman have received a wide press since their publication in 1991. Their lengthy correspondence began in 1882, only a few days after Tsuda had left the Lanman home in order to return to Japan after her eleven year-long stay in the United States. They continued until the time of Mrs. Lanman's death in 1914.<sup>2</sup> Edited, compiled and published in a single volume titled *The Attic Letters: Ume Tsuda's Correspondence to Her American Mother*, the story behind their publication hinges on the unexpected discovery of Umeko's letters in 1984, in the attic of the main school building at Tsuda College, a college that Tsuda founded in 1900.<sup>3</sup> Although the correspondence as such constitutes both Lanman's and Tsuda's letters, *Attic Letters* is a compilation of letters that only Tsuda wrote and does not as such include any of Lanman's missives.<sup>4</sup> In the short preface, editors in fact imply that these letters can be read singularly (i.e. in the absence of their addressee) to throw light on Tsuda's experiences and her own particular set of social-historical conditions. I will discuss their significance of this in greater detail.

The letters are of interest for Tsuda, as we know, wrote as a young Japanese woman of a somewhat unusual background. She was among the first group of women, and the youngest of the lot, to accompany the Iwakura Mission to the United States in

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<sup>1</sup> By this, I refer here to the person and to the title of Ôba Minako's work on Tsuda. *Tsuda Umeko* (Tokyo, Asahi Shinbunsha, 1990). This chapter is in part a discussion of the disjuncture between the "person" and her "life."

<sup>2</sup> As the Introduction states, correspondence between 1912-14 is lost. Umeko Tsuda, *The Attic Letters: Ume Tsuda's Correspondence to Her American Mother*, ed. Yoshiko Furuki et al. (New York: Weatherhill Inc., 1991), xi. This volume will henceforth be cited as *Attic Letters*.

<sup>3</sup> A short Preface and Introduction provide key details regarding the discovery of these letters. Three important points emerge here: first, that these letters were meant for private consumption and therefore the Preface serves as an "apology" to the historical Tsuda. Second, and in relation to the first point, the compilers quite openly admit that the letters have been heavily edited to almost one third of their original volume.

<sup>4</sup> Tsuda's and Lanman's letters can also be found in at Tsuda Daigaku Juku where accessed in the manuscript form. It is worth noting that they are filed separately and not as a "correspondence."

1871. The mission's goal, at once specific and vague, was to inculcate in its young wards the values of an American education and civilisation, and to ensure that on their return they could impart these values to their own countrywomen.<sup>5</sup> Given the highly personal nature of the text, it is Tsuda's letters more than any of her other writing that reflect this unusual upbringing and convey the sense that she was a very self-conscious writer, acutely aware of her own peculiar relation to sites of social and personal belonging. Moreover, Tsuda was a keen commentator on the times she was living in, and by the same token her letters express the mood and sentiment of the mid- to late-Meiji period. The importance of the text thus lies in the fact that it gives us—its modern readers—an intimate portrayal of the Meiji period (1868-1912) and the Meiji state's contradictory and frequently shifting public agendas. The letters also give us a sense of the personal travails of Tsuda, and her concerns with what it meant to *be* “Japanese.” Written with great attention to detail and from an intimate realm, the letters present a slice of Meiji life, a perspective on the Meiji “everyday” which cuts across the larger discourses on women, education and social reform that were then prevalent and hotly debated primarily among the Meiji male intelligentsia. And, precisely because what Tsuda wrote were letters, they resist as a genre any easy assimilation to a certain unalterably periodized view or theory of the Meiji period.

Before we proceed, a word on the epistolary genre is necessary. A crucial generic feature of letter writing is that it marks an “absence”—an absence and therefore a “distance” from the one to whom the letter is being written. The epistolary genre then is marked by the fact that there is always a pre-determined reader, who is

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<sup>5</sup> For the specific goals of the men who put together the project of including the young women as a part of the Iwakura mission see, Barbara Rose, *Tsuda Umeko and Women's Education in Japan* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1992). See also, Yûko Takahashi, “Saisho no joshi ryûgakusei haken no keiei: Tsuda Umeko no haikai wo chûshin ni,” *Otona to kodomo no kankeishi* 2 (1996): 91-110; Yûko Takahashi, “Chûbei jidai ni okeru Mori Arinori to joshi kyôikukan—Tsuda Umeko to joshi ryûgakusei no setten kara,” *Tsuda Juku Daigaku kiyô* 35 (March 1997): 47-71. For Mori's views on women's education see, Arinori Mori, *Education in Japan: A Series of Letters Addressed by Prominent Americans to Mori Arinori* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1873)

not present and with whom a relationship is sustained (and also generated) through the act of letter writing. Once written, there is a necessary submitting to postal networks whereby the missive travels through “public” space in order to reach its intended “private” audience. Many writers of letters, including Tsuda, insisted often quite explicitly that their missives were meant for private consumption only. Publication aside, Tsuda often asked Lanman to burn her letters after reading.

It is significant that while many of Tsuda’s readers take into consideration the “private” nature of her writing, they do so by reading the letters as a “diary.” Admittedly Tsuda herself referred to her writing as “journal-like” and indeed it has a quality of immediate everyday-ness much like a diary.<sup>6</sup> More crucially, the writers of these letters are co-respondents to each other, empowered with the right to demand a response from the other; as such they are equally invested in “generat[ing] and to enforc[ing] resemblance,” a kind of continuum in tone and accountability between different patches of the correspondence (and the changing moods and circumstances of the writers).<sup>7</sup> It would be a mistake then to read the diaries for their everyday qualities without attending to the unpredictability of the everyday itself and especially to the question of mood (affective ups and downs, attacks of boredom, indifference and ennui). Such a mode of inquiry would amount to what Mary Jacobus has called a

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<sup>6</sup> The public “apology” tendered to Tsuda in the preface of *Attic Letters* for an intrusion into her “private” space acknowledges the private-ness of the writing, but in doing so also implicitly denies issuing an apology to Lanman thereby entirely disregarding the fact that by this logic there ought to be also an apology made to Lanman for removing the letters from her space of private consumption. In other words, the letters belong to Lanman as much as they belong to Tsuda; “reading” them as a diary disregards their structural elements as much as it ignores the fact that a correspondence never speaks univocally.

<sup>7</sup> See Mary Jacobus, “Reading Correspondences” in *Reading Woman: Essays in Feminist Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 279. Jacobus is reading correspondence between women to argue that paying heed to the structural elements of epistolary writing enables one to read identity as not uniform or whole but as always fractured and shattered. Reading in-difference enables woman to be posited not as meaning (or lack thereof) but to constitute the very thing that approaches meaning.

“reflective” or “*specular* model of literary enquiry which treats art as some sort of a mirror to life.”<sup>8</sup>

In treating the letters as simply a historical record or a document which throws light on Tsuda’s life and her times, one invariably ends up ignoring crucial structural features of the epistolary genre. And yet this is how these letters have mostly been read.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, when critical scholarship does taken into account the relationship between Tsuda and Lanman it cannot but argue that close ties transcended all difference of race and nationality. The letters are analysed primarily to demonstrate the extent to which the Lanmans (and especially Adeline) “influenced” Tsuda. Thus, instead of analysing the correspondence as a part of dialogic exchange between two women separated by great distances but nonetheless intertwined in each other’s lives via an on-going “conversation,” we have an analysis which simply mines these missives for as much “information” as they can provide about Tsuda’s life. Another aspect of the Tsuda-Lanman relationship that is often stressed is that the bond between them was akin to one between a mother and her daughter; rarely if at all does this mode of inquiry examine the implications of such a characterization. For it ought at the very least to compel us to examine Tsuda’s relation to her own “absent” Japanese mother-figure. Instead, critics seem to rest content in stressing the central role of Lanman in Tsuda’s upbringing and in tracing Tsuda’s personality in its most compelling traits—her charm and her strong-willed nature—back to Mrs. Lanman.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 285. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>9</sup> Most of these analyses that I am referring to are “biographies” whose over-arching purpose is to focus on a single life.

<sup>10</sup> See Rose, Yûko Takahashi, “‘Victorian jidai no katei’ to saisho no joshi ryûgakusei: Tsuda Umeko no Lanman ka uekire no kei wo chûshin ni,” in *Tsuda Juku Daigaku kiyô* 30 (March, 1998): 261-83. In the book length study on the various relationships that Tsuda fostered with other men and women throughout her life Takahashi’s central thrust remains the same. She is primarily interested in analysing the myriad bonds [*hizuna*] that Tsuda fostered with other individuals, especially American woman. See *Tsuda Umeko no shakai shi* (Tokyo: Tamagawa Daigaku shuppanshi, 2002). In Chapter 3, I examine Takahashi’s analysis of one such bond between Tsuda and her American friend and supporter Alice Bacon.

Moreover, taking their intimacy as an *a priori* sign of their “closeness”<sup>11</sup> makes it seem as though the letters need only be read as the place where such a relation can be discovered. In other words, to merely “unveil a [relationship] within the text” is tantamount to positing notion of woman as “content” and not as a “reading effect”—the latter alone would, according to Jacobus, constitute in the strictest sense a “feminist reading” of the text of letters. Such a reading would move to a focus on “reading the internal difference by which the letter refuses an univocal meaning.”<sup>12</sup>

In an effort to avoid the pitfalls of mere information-retrieval, I propose an approach more in line with Jacobus’ notion of a “feminist reading.” Consider then what it might have meant for Tsuda to confide (for over thirty years) her thoughts about Japan and her family, her longings and fears about her future, as well as the more mundane aspects of her everyday life in Tokyo to a woman who was, for the better part of Tsuda’s life, not only located at a great physical distance, but also entirely at a remove from her in terms of class, race and nationality. What does this tell us the ways in which Tsuda’s keen awareness of race and nationality pervades her writing and places it on a transnational backdrop? And most crucially it helps us take stock of Tsuda’s engagement—open-ended and wide-ranging—with the enigma of her own fraught sense of being Japanese and being American. I emphasize ‘co-respondence’ here as a way of shifting our focusing to the various “encounters” or “exchanges” that comprise the arc of Tsuda’s life. I want to argue that the notion of

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<sup>11</sup> See Arnold Weinstein, *The Fiction of Relationship* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988) as an instance of a study which analyses narrative from the point of view of relationships. Although Weinstein's volume is entirely devoted to studying how relationships in fictional narratives can be thought of as a starting point in literary criticism, his study also provides useful suggestions to think of the Tsuda-Lanman correspondence from the perspective of a relationship. As I will examine later in the chapter, such a perspective also makes us re-think how these letters then “read” when removed from the context of a correspondence. Furthermore, what happens to Tsuda’s part of the correspondence when Ôba Minako, her biographer, uses the letters as her primary source material to write Ôba's life, reading “letters” as a “diary” and thereby divesting them of their fundamental generic epistolarity?

<sup>12</sup> Jacobus, “Reading Correspondences,” 292.



the writing a life cannot be referred to a straightforward ordering of subjectivity.<sup>13</sup> I do not wish to produce yet another icon of Tsuda but to examine how the figure of Tsuda as a “Japanese-woman-feminist-educator” has been put together over the last century by scholars. I do this by focusing primarily on the texts written by Tsuda and those about her in order to uncover the inconsistencies in this figuration.<sup>14</sup>

Two kinds of exchanges, or perhaps more aptly “connections,” taking place across space and time are explored in this chapter. The first is with Lanman, Tsuda’s interlocutor for three decades. The Tsuda-Lanman correspondence allows us to investigate how Tsuda is figured as part of a surrogate mother-daughter relationship, as well as how she comes to identify herself as a “Japanese” within the space that this relationship provides. The second encounter is with Ôba Minako, Tsuda’s feminist biographer, who through the writing of the text titled *Tsuda Umeko* (1990), produces a biography which is also a staging of her encounter with Tsuda. The primary source material for *Tsuda Umeko* is Tsuda’s letters, now freely translated or should we say transcribed, in a narrative that in a sense places Tsuda in quotes. The generic indeterminacy of Ôba’s text places it somewhere between the two genres of autobiography and biography, for the text is as much about Ôba as it is about Tsuda, reinscribing that life by the mark of its own singularity. It is Ôba’s gaze renders that singularity strange as though the icon of Tsuda was reflected in the curved mirror of Ôba’s own memories. To Ôba’s credit, her rewriting and translating Tsuda’s letter calls to us to participate in the community of women whose engagement with each other comes out of an engagement with the figure of Tsuda. As the reified image of

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<sup>13</sup> My point here is not to suggest that all writing about “life” presumes a subject that exists prior to writing. Much of the current scholarship in fact is critical of precisely such an approach; moreover there are various instances of specifically feminist and deconstructive approach that reject an idea of a “singular” life which writes or makes itself available to writing (by others)

<sup>14</sup> Reading texts, or more specifically reading them literarily in order to be able to grapple with the inconsistencies that they throw up is to come “face-to-face” with a “Tsuda” that is very different from reading texts to construct a truthful narrative about the historical Tsuda’s life and work.

Tsuda is attenuated in this uniquely historical way it comes to exemplify in a wholly new way the act of “reading woman.”

My reading of the *Attic Letters* and Ôba’s *Tsuda Umeko* takes place against the backdrop of two kinds of scholarship.<sup>15</sup> While biographical writing on Tsuda’s life occupies a far greater space than any critical studies done on her work, both kinds of analyses centre around the writing of Tsuda’s life. In other words, neither engages with the work of Tsuda herself; Tsuda’s letters serve primarily as “evidence” for what was a tumultuous period in Japanese history as well as proof of Tsuda’s difficult and unusual life. While rigorous critical appraisals of Tsuda’s letters have been infrequent and are of relatively recent vintage,<sup>16</sup> it is worth noting that there are to date four published biographies and one unpublished manuscript centered around Tsuda. The earliest one is by Riichi Yoshikawa published first in 1930 and re-printed in 1956,

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<sup>15</sup> Other than analyses which are specifically Tsuda related and to whom I refer to in the body of the text, I would also like make a note of scholarship in the field of Japan studies which specifically deals with the relation between women and writing. Within the Japanese context, there is a substantial body of scholarship that examines the theme of women’s self-narratives within the genre of diary literature (*nikki bungaku*) and also to a much lesser extent within the epistolary genre. This scholarship focuses primarily on women’s texts from the Heian and mediaeval periods, analysing women-authored texts to trace the connection between authorship and gender. See Chieko Ariga, “Dephallicizing Women in Ryukyo shinshi: A Critique of Gender Ideology in Japanese Literature,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 51, 3 (August 1992): 565-86; Paul Gordon Schalow et. al. eds., *The woman’s hand: gender and theory in Japanese women’s writing* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996). Tomiko Yoda represents a new kind of scholarship which reads Heian texts through the lens of modern conceptions of nation and national history. See *Gender and national literature: Heian texts in the constructions of Japanese modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004) In the post-war years, the study of women-authored texts in the Meiji period has been confined primarily to a study of literary texts that women might have produced. Recent works by, Yumi Hirata, *Josei hyogen no Meiji shi Higuchi Ichiyo izen* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1999), and Rebecca Copeland, *Lost leaves: women writers of Meiji Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2000) have suggested that we move the focus away from Higuchi Ichiyo, but the fact remains that their revisionist arguments have been restricted to re-examining the literary genre. That is to say, Meiji literary studies still do not explore sufficiently other modes of expression that women may have chosen. Those that do so from an historical point of view, reading Meiji women’s work as being (rightly) historically important. For instance see, Anne Walthall, *The Weak Body of a Useless Woman: Matsuo Taseko and the Meiji Restoration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). A text such as *Attic Letters* which does not fall neatly into the category of literary studies then is taken up for a historical analysis thereby ignoring the texts literary qualities.

<sup>16</sup> There is now new and interesting scholarship that is coming out which takes a more critical view of Tsuda’s life and her circumstances. See, Yûko Takahashi et. al. eds., *Tsuda Umeko o sasaeta hitobito* (Tokyo: Yûkûhaku, 2000). Most of the essays in the volume however take a very “historical” point of view and as such are not oriented to reading the letters for their “literary value.”

followed by Takako Yamazaki in 1962, and Ôba Minako's in 1990, all of which bear the same title: *Tsuda Umeko*. The most recent contribution is by Yoshiko Furuki in 1991, to date the only English-language work. Only the last two biographical works rely on the letters, albeit in very different ways. Yamazaki's work relies on the earlier biography and also focuses on a history of Tsuda College. Yoshikawa's work, which comes closest to an "autobiography" is based on the papers of Anna Hartschorne, a close friend and confidant of Tsuda.

To be sure, not all published biographies read Tsuda's life in exactly the same way. What holds them together is the singular quality of Tsuda's experiences as a young girl; each author tries to re-imagine the circumstances that led to the act of sending such a young girl abroad. In taking the reader through all the travails of Tsuda's life, the majority of such accounts attend to the power and force of her will. While Ôba's transcription of Tsuda's letters casts a somewhat different light on the letters themselves, I argue that Yoshikawa, Yamazaki, and Furuki all tell and retell the same story with different emphases, and base themselves on "facts" that are assumed to be more solid and incontrovertible with each retelling. What they do not provide us with is a sense of that ambiguous space wherein the figure of Tsuda can be seen to appear and fade away in all its poignancy, interrupting the biographer's linear narrative. Unable to capture the "mood" of Tsuda's exchanges, her correspondence is for her biographers merely an interplay of already existing subjectivities.

How can one read these letters against the veridicality critics tend to unthinkingly attribute to a biographical life? For one, my effort in this essay will be to highlight the incessant play between production and evidence. For instance, one could argue that the letters provide evidence of the upheavals of the Meiji period, even if the textual presence of such upheavals has more to do with Tsuda's eleven-year sojourn in the United States and the dawning sense of her ambivalence with regard to the racial

implications of being Japanese/American. By the same token, and in keeping with the problem of the relation between what is happening inside and what is happening outside the text, let us pause for a moment here to consider the relation between the event (the eventmental) and the everyday, for both constitute limit-terms in broadly complimentary ways. An event (such as the event of my death) can never be experienced in its moment “as” as an event without being assimilated to the everyday. But the everyday itself is nothing if not heterogeneous to itself, since every everyday is different, unrepeatable even as it enters into the cycle of incessant return, which is itself the temporal basis of return. Mori Arinori’s assassination in a letter by Tsuda (dated February 15, 1889) is not simply a historical event she happens to take note of; the register of that death—which leads her to ask: “what will all the countries of Europe think of Japan’s minister’s being murdered in this way?”—emerges always from out of the circle between event and everyday in her own life.<sup>17</sup>

### **Reading the Tsuda – Lanman correspondence**

Let us then turn to a consideration of the aspects of Tsuda’s correspondence, for this enables us to position her letters firmly within the realm of epistolary genre. Tsuda’s letters begin, for most part, with the marking of a day and date as is generic convention. Should Tsuda be on the move there is also the additional recording of the place name. This is quite conventionally by the name of the addressee—“Dear Mrs. Lanman” or “My dearest Mrs. Lanman.” Letters end on a similar note of affection, usually in form of, “I am Your little Ume” or “Yours affectionately Ume.”<sup>18</sup> They are

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<sup>17</sup> *Attic Letters*, 327-28.

<sup>18</sup> It is interesting to note that each of Tsuda’s letters in the original have the form of a letter—in other words, they begin with an invoking of the name of an addressee and end of with a signature (the self naming—authoring of the letter). In contrast to this, in their published format, some “letters” bear the name of the addressee but hardly any carry Tsuda’s signature. Structured then as they are in the volume *Attic Letters* they do “appear” at the first glance to be more of a part of as journal or a diary than a letter. Lanman’s unpublished letters begin and end with similar kinds of greetings such as “oceans of love and kisses,” or “yours lovingly” etc.

always addressed to an immediate other, marked by the other's title or name, and signed by the author's own. Over time and in the case of a substantial or a lengthy amount of correspondence the names, oft repeated, gradually become immaterial. This repetition of names, along with the circular routes which they traverse, is a sign of the potential interminability the correspondence.<sup>19</sup> As the private space of the letter is sealed off as it were from the public gaze outside, the two implicit conditions of possibility of this correspondence are also established—the “public” nature of this transaction, which cannot occur without the elaboration of an interiority confided to the intensely “private” act of writing.

The writing itself takes place in a physical place sequestered and claimed in advance as “one's own;”<sup>20</sup> its temporality is similarly recessed: tucked into a day crowded with details, teeming with people; brought out to annul the dread onset of tedium. It transpires after a long day of “day of visitors,”<sup>21</sup> on a Sunday afternoon when she has but “little to do or think,”<sup>22</sup> or as the last consecrated act of the wakeful day before sleep. But a letter may well flout the confines of the diurnal; today's letter could surface again on the morrow, its completion hastened by the impending departure of a steamer. For the postal circuit is the aegis under which each letter finds its mark. One is reminded of Madame Sévigné in whose letters, as Goldsmith reminds

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<sup>19</sup> The endless-ness of this correspondence is made all the more obvious when in the physical space of the letter (on the very paper that it is written) we find that both Tsuda and Lanman continue to write until all space is exhausted. The letter ends and begins on the same page and every bit of empty space is covered with ink. Consequently, where the opening greeting (“My dear Mrs. Lanman”) marks the beginning of the letter writing (a conversation), in that *very same space* the closing remarks (“Your loving Ume”) marks its end. The two greetings thus form a loop, a closed circle as it were, within which conversation takes place. As the “inside” (private place) is *marked in*, the very same gesture *marks off* what lies outside. “Desire” is then to be contained within the circle, it is that which propels the writing.

<sup>20</sup> This construction of ‘one's own space’ achieved via letter writing, is a feature that we find in Tsuda's letters but also in those of women's personal correspondence during this time. Thus, while construction of such a space cannot be necessarily termed strictly as a generic feature, it is certainly a feature that can be commonly found in many women's correspondences.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 175. Lanman is even more explicit in this matter than Tsuda, and even states that she has allocated Sunday to write to Umeko, and suggests that Tsuda do the same. See, undated (sometime in 1885).

<sup>22</sup> See letter dated January 29, 1883, *Attic Letters*, 36.

us, there is “an obsessive attention to the mechanics of receiving messages” highlighting the writer’s “desire to transform the letter into a spoken dialogue.”<sup>23</sup> And despite the frequency of exchanges between the French mother and daughter, as with Tsuda and Lanman who race to catch every outgoing post, the “schedule of mail delivery” and the every banal material detail of the postal circuit are noted with the greatest fascination. Not only is the time of writing and of sending a letter registered after the fact, but the should ritualized “postal routines” find themselves disrupted, infinite care is taken to reorganize them. Tsuda makes note of when her letter does make it to the next departing steamer, but also more tellingly when it does not, as well as when (in case she is travelling) Lanman should or should not “expect” her letter.<sup>24</sup> Interruption in the ritual leads to a disruption in the writing. Thus, as Goldsmith notes, letters are either a response to a recently received message or have the appearance of the provisional, where the tone is “apologetic and articulates a stronger sense of isolation from the addressee.”<sup>25</sup> Here there is no referentially certifiable “response” and the mode of address turns inward, moving from “interlocution to monologue.”<sup>26</sup> The writer’s speech is constrained by the addressee’s silence (or lack of response), and yet the postal rite makes it imperative that a letter be sent. Not to receive a response is

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<sup>23</sup> See Elizabeth C. Goldsmith, “Giving Weight to Words: Madame de Sévigné’s Letters to Her Daughter,” in *The Female Autograph*, ed., Dona C. Stanton (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 98.

<sup>24</sup> See *Attic Letters*, 128-29 for Tsuda’s concluding lines in letters written when she is travelling with Ito Hirobumi’s family for instance. See also the following remarks where Tsuda suggests that Lanman mail her letters directly to the Ito residence instead of sending them to her parents address. “Suppose you send my letters directly here. ... It is just as easy and as well.... I go home every Saturday and Sunday regularly, but if the mail comes in some other time, I have to wait for it or else they send it especially and as I am always as impatient for [your] letters as you say you are of mine, it is nice to get them early” (p. 138). See also letters dated January 24, 1907 (447-49) and February 28, 1907 (449) as two more instances of such details.

<sup>25</sup> See Goldsmith, “Giving Weight,” 98.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* Admittedly, Goldsmith here is speaking of the “mother’s” letters to her daughter, while my point of entry is Tsuda’s (daughter’s) letters to the “mother-figure.” Yet, we can see that both in the case of Tsuda and Lanman, a similar sort of difference between letters written as responses and those letters that are provisional. In one such letter dated February 28, 1884 (*Attic Letters*, 137) where Tsuda is writing in response to Lanman’s epistle, she takes great care to respond and repeat in her own letter the things mentioned in Lanman’s as dialogue. Correspondence enables a “conversation” of sorts; it becomes possible to become a part of the Lanman household via letters and simulate presence.

to experience an oblivion which can only be dispelled by a unilateral gesture: “It’s only been a week since I closed my letter to you,” writes Tsuda at one point, “but as a steamer leaves the end of the coming week and Sunday afternoon is my best time for writing. [So] I begin this, though I truly have nothing to write to you.”<sup>27</sup> Conversely a response from the other side is read with such avid interest that that the next letter must register this avidity itself: “I have been looking over the things you sent me,” writes Tsuda. The length of time that elapses between receiving a letter and responding to it is filled in by meditating on its contents. While letters may be well have to negotiate the public, impersonal nature of the postal circuit, the desire is always that the privacy in which these epistles are produced be replicated at the other end. Protestations of devotion are not uncommon: “this letter only intended for your own and Mr. L’s reading;”<sup>28</sup> “[y]ou know I write for you and Mr. Lanman alone, and there are few... of my letters [which are] for your ears alone.”<sup>29</sup> An ardent mapping of the postal trajectory, tracing the itinerary that a missive may have taken, is another common preoccupation.<sup>30</sup>

The content of each piece is personal, private, full of delicate circumstance calling out for empathy from the cloistered space in which it was written—the themes of Tsuda’s letters range from acute loneliness, to her alienation from Japanese life and her frustrated attempts at mastering Japanese.<sup>31</sup> In the early years after her “return” to

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>28</sup> Of the news that she gives, especially her opinions on matters relating to Japanese people or customs she often writes something like “*please please* don’t copy extracts or show to anyone outside. I do hate to have my letters shown all around.” Ibid., 125, or letter dated December 7, 1882, 23.

<sup>29</sup> See letter dated December 7, 1882, Ibid., 23. Also letter dated December 28, 1883, Ibid., 28-29. Here she expresses “alarm” when she hears from Mrs. Lanman that Mr. Lanman wishes to publish her letters.

<sup>30</sup> For instance: “I found out that the steamer left later than one day later than I expected, so I have time to send you another wee bit of a letter...” or “I have just about half an hour at most to scratch off a line to you this afternoon. As the mail left just *one week* ago, I had not noticed the mail intelligences in the paper, and felt perfectly easy, because it is very unusual to have only one week’s interim between the steamers.” *Attic Letters*, 84, 159. Of Lanman’s letters see for instance letter dated January 11, 1894.

<sup>31</sup> See for instance an early letter dated January 6, 1883, *Attic Letters*, 29-33 in which she writes: “Sutematsu has not half the trouble in language.... She speaks very nicely, understands and makes herself understood in everything, though her language is far from being fluent, while poor little me is

Japan, the letters are the only means by which she can give vent to her distress; each speech act is act of mute defiance.<sup>32</sup> The language of the letters is made to bear the weight of an alienated mother tongue; English fills in the gaping hole where Japanese should have been: soon after she returned to Japan in May 1883, Tsuda wrote to Lanman in a perhaps particularly trying moment, “you must remember that my lack of language prevents me from conversing much with Japanese [people], even if I do meet them, and I do very seldom, and when I do, I generally talk on very few topics.”<sup>33</sup> And where language itself is not the problem, the topic broached alludes to taboo issues.

Marriage is one such topic. Despite her growing loneliness, and the marriage of her two closest friends Tsuda had refused to get married.<sup>34</sup> Yet, with no permanent vocation in sight, her main worry was how *not* to become a “responsibility” for her family which had limited resources. “I don’t want to be a burden to the family (though they would not consider me so),” she wrote to Lanman on the day that Sutematsu Yamakawa got married, “at an age when girls are married and you know, all women expect to be taken care of and in event of the father’s death, all property goes to the sons, for women are all away from home. So in a little while... I must get work, and pay unless I am married.”<sup>35</sup> To make matters worse, Tsuda thought her family’s

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perfectly deaf and dumb. I verily believe it is *as hard for me as a foreigner*, and I have no talent for languages.” My emphasis.

<sup>32</sup> See Linda S. Kaufman, *Discourses of Desire: Gender, Genre and Epistolary Fictions* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1986), 17-27, for a similar argument. Examining the “content and form, mode and genre” of love letters in the epistolary genre, Kaufman is interested in examining how each writing transgresses the generic limits, creating a dialogue between the writer and her addressee, expressing simultaneously desire and revolt in writing and against the act of writing.

<sup>33</sup> *Attic Letters*, 71.

<sup>34</sup> Although Shige Nagai was slated to get married in December 1882, a few months after Tsuda and Sutematsu Yamakawa returned to Japan, at that time the question of Sutematsu’s or Tsuda’s marriage was not even on the horizon. Moreover both had also hoped to open their own school and made rudimentary plans about it as early as 1883 (*Ibid.*, letter dated November 11, 1883, 104-05). The question of Sutematsu’s marriage however, came up as early as March 1883, and it was a little more than a year after the two girls return that Sutematsu got married (November 11, 1883). During this time (from March 1883 onwards), we find Tsuda deeply affected by Sutematsu’s decision to marry and also engulfed by a loneliness. Finally she decided not to get married at all, and she wrote to Lanman quite explicitly that she should not expect her “to make such a marriage [as Sutematsu’s] or marry at all.” See *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 105-06.



generosity stemmed from their belief that she had suffered many “ills” in America. Tsuda shared the loneliness of her position and the awkwardness of her situation only with Lanman, begging the latter to keep this correspondence “private.”<sup>36</sup>

Following Kaufman’s, I would like to suggest that even without this explicit reference to a taboo subject (such as “marriage”), there is in the very act of writing a certain performance of transgression. Letter writing, as she suggests (following Derrida and Barthes), has a certain quality of being in the moment: unlike a memoir it lacks a historical perspective, and possesses a quality of presentness. What this momentariness reflects is the desire for shared time with the other, yet what it reminds one of is the very lack of that moment.<sup>37</sup> The moment desired is that of togetherness—of being one with the person to whom the letter is being written to. A defining feature of a conversational exchange is precisely this and according to Goldsmith an epistolary exchange seeks to replicate this model. But Goldsmith also suggests that a letter (and its necessary response) exceed the logic of a conversation despite the fact that both are based on the principle of reciprocity and exchange,<sup>38</sup> for letters enable one to meditate upon words sent across postal circuits. And, unlike in a conversation it is only when the reader “reads” and mulls over the words sent across to her, that the writer’s writing gains value, acquires weight.”<sup>39</sup>

Via the medium of a letter what Tsuda is trying to simulate is also a conversation, yet the absence of her addressee, as we know, denies the possibility of a “real” conversation. “Thank you for saying everyone misses me and praises me,” she

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>37</sup> I am here referring to her discussion of Barthes and Derrida as both referring to epistolary writing as being the “writing-of-the-moment” which makes writing look as if it is merely composed as “outbursts of language (84). Derrida in his text *The Post Card*, according to Kaufman has suggested that a letter only moves step-by-step which is synonymous with writing-in-the moment. Both Derrida and Barthes are interested in meticulously examining the underlying assumptions that go on to structure a text suggesting the extent to which the roles of a reader, writer and critic are fluid. See Linda Kaufman, *Special Delivery: Epistolary Modes in Modern Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 81-130.

<sup>38</sup> See Goldsmith, “Giving Weight,” 96-103.

wrote in a letter dated January 6, 1883, “[t]ell them I long to see them too.... Your letters bring back old times so vividly that it seems hard to finish reading and look around and realize where I am really.”<sup>40</sup> Here is another instance, a letter on the eve of Tsuda’s departure for America in 1907 when she was slated to meet Lanman shortly: “[j]ust a line tonight. Such a busy day... I feel as if I could not do any writing, and indeed what is the need to try and put one’s thoughts down on paper, when we can so soon see each other and talk.”<sup>41</sup> Lanman’s letters to Tsuda also allude to a similar sentiment. “I am sorry to send you such a poor letter,” she writes in one of her missives where she claims she has no interesting “news” to give Tsuda except for that of “home.” “But,” the same letter continues, “it [the letter] will do to tell you we love you and wish you were here to chat with us [Mr. Lanman and I], instead of writing letters. Yet, what a blessing it is that we can write and reassure our love.”<sup>42</sup> Writing of the moment, in the moment (the “time” in which Mr. and Mrs. Lanman are together in their home, and Adeline is writing while Mr. Lanman is “snoring in his rocking chair by a bright coal fire”)<sup>43</sup> makes present by bringing to mind absence, vividly invoking Tsuda’s presence/absence at the scene.<sup>44</sup>

To the extent that letter-writing may be constituted as a transgressive act, it is also an act through which a self is articulated. Dena Goodman, who takes up the question of gendered subjectivity in women writing letters in the context of eighteenth century France, has argued that the letter becomes the primary place where the self is

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>40</sup> *Attic Letters*, 29

<sup>41</sup> Letter dated December 14, 1906, Ibid., 447. Emphasis mine. On January 8, 1907 Tsuda was to depart for the United States with her sister Yona. The purpose of this trip was mainly fundraising along with also meeting Mrs. Lanman. See also letter dated January 22, 1902, Ibid., 378. “How I wish I could just peep in on you in the old home which I recall so vividly. ... What a good pow-wow we could have if I could only peep in on you!”

<sup>42</sup> See letter dated February 4, 1889 by Lanman to Tsuda. Emphasis mine.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Time and again, as I will discuss below, the scene that Tsuda is called to, in which her presence is desired is the scene of “home.”

constructed.<sup>45</sup> Because the “privacy” of a letter can provide a safe and a sympathetic space, it enables its writer a place to articulate a self that is at once reflective and also oriented towards the other (her reader); this self is thus intersubjective. This means that we might be able to think of the letters as a space wherein Tsuda discovers herself, albeit in the presence of the other, i.e., her reader and interlocutor. From this perspective, letter writing functions not only as a transgressive act but also a transformative one.<sup>46</sup>

Just as writing can be construed as a process of self-discovery, correspondence can be imagined as that which makes a relationship possible. Goodman’s larger point about epistolary exchange is that just as letter-writing provided the necessary space and privacy for the cultivation of the self it could also facilitate friendship, and functions as the matrix and the medium of a relationship.<sup>47</sup> It is not as though bonds of affection did not exist between Tsuda and Lanman prior to letter writing.<sup>48</sup> Rather what I am suggesting here is that letter-writing sustains, solidifies and fosters a relationship where perhaps none might have existed had both women not written so avidly to each other. For leaving aside the first eleven years that Tsuda spent in the Lanman household from the age of seven, she did not, from the time she returned to Japan until Lanman’s death in 1914 spend more than a total of three years in the

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<sup>45</sup> Goodman’s context is of 18<sup>th</sup> century France and she is discussing two different sets of correspondence maintained by young women with a “friend.” Using the Habermasian notion of public sphere as her starting point, she argues that while women were encouraged to create a private space (be self-reflexive via modes of letter writing etc.) they rarely had the same access to the public sphere as men (of similar social and economic standing). Consequently, the paradox is that while a sense of “privateness” is encouraged (the necessary pre-condition for subjectivity to exist) this individuality can never be demonstrated in a public arena. Thus she concludes that letter-writing is at once an arena of freedom (a space where one can articulate the self, and come to an awareness of one’s subjecthood) and also a highly limiting space for women writers (for *only* here are they allowed to speak freely). See “Letter Writing and the Emergence of Gendered Subjectivity in Eighteenth-century France,” *Journal of Women’s History* 17, 2 (Summer 2005): 9-37.

<sup>46</sup> In the context of love-letters, Kaufman sees this as a form of “self-address”—every letter to the beloved [the other]... aided by reading and writing involves a “self-creation and self-invention.”

Kaufman, *Discourses of Desire*, 25.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>48</sup> I have argued this also in the Chapter Four in the context of Alice Bacon’s relationship with Tsuda.

company of Lanman. Thus, unless letters were written and correspondence was kept up in the three decades that they spent apart it would have been impossible to sustain the “bonds of affection” such as that which Yûko Takahashi claims to have existed between the two women. I wish to here steer away from a tautological argument, which suggests that “bonds of affection” enabled the women to write, or conversely adopt the view that writing was simply a reflection of the affective ties that existed between the two women. For this would the possibility that the experience of letter writing and reading bears an intimate relationship to the experience of a friendship. Tsuda could write to Lanman because she felt close to her, but the writing itself was the very structure within which the intimacy of their relationship could find its proper surface of emergence.

Many of Lanman’s letters began with a declaration that she had “no news to give,” or that hers was a “poor” letter; yet this was often followed by six to seven pages of writing. In keeping Tsuda “up to date” with the happenings of the Lanman household, Lanman’s letters often reflect a kind of interior monologue:

I am just rattl[ing] of this, to get these things off my mind, on paper, this morning and will let go it all go for the rest of the day. ... I wish I had Mr. L[anman]’s disposition to throw off trouble and you too have it. I envy you that great blessing, but would not take it away from either of you even if I could, because if you both were like me, I should be wild in worrying about you. ... Whenever anything worries me...I just hand it over to Mr. Lanman,... but as he is not at home, you are getting the full benefit of my chapter of woes.<sup>49</sup>

This suggests that writing can transpire even when there is “nothing” to write about.

“Putting words on paper” thus becomes the means by which the relationship is written (and articulated), constrained as it might be by the limits that the genre of epistolarity

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<sup>49</sup> From an undated letter from early part of 1889. See also for instance another letter from the same year. It starts off in a hurry after Lanman had finished all her morning tasks which then in the letter she describes to Tsuda. “And so it goes,” she writes, “you have a chapter of home—doing not very interesting things.” See also February 4, 1889; August 15, 1893 (“excuse this stupid letter and remember that we all love our Ume.”)

places upon such a relation. Adeline Lanman, speaks of Charles (her husband) and Ume(ko) in one breath, within the same sentence over and over again thereby making the relationship at once familial and familiar. Conversely, it is also the writing and re-writing Tsuda's name within the context of the home that makes Tsuda a part of Lanman's inner circle, *as if* she is part of family. In a letter written on November 6, 1898, almost immediately after Tsuda had visited Lanman, Lanman wrote, "I am now writing in the little room, being tempted by sunshine to write you in the corner, where you used to study, in the long ago, and is now occupied and yet there are pleasant echoes of the past all around me."<sup>50</sup> Referring to a letter that Lanman received from (Tsuda's friend) Alice Bacon, Lanman writes to Tsuda: "if she says all that, what must I feel. I certainly thank our Lord for sending you to me as a child...." And from there she continues to reminisce about the past: "when I think of the running in and running about...the pleasant chats we had, [I had] the proud feeling that my dear little Ume was so bright and winning in her ways. When I hid myself and heard the talk [she] so charmingly rendered,<sup>51</sup> the old lady did pick up her ear with pride [thinking] that she had had a share perhaps in the development of character." Lanman here is referring to herself, and in a moment of self-praise expresses a "proud feeling" contemplating on the role that she herself might have played in making Tsuda the impressive woman that she has become.

Such pride speaks of affection, but it also underlines the fact that her relation to Tsuda is of a specific nature. Tsuda's entry into the Lanman household when she was a mere child, and the Lanmans a middle-aged and a childless couple, no doubt structured the relationship in very specific ways. Letters indicate that the two women

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<sup>50</sup> See also letter dated June 12, 1894 from Lanman to Tsuda which expresses a similar feeling. Lanman writes, I am writing "sitting in your old room at the leaf desk that is pulled out from the lower bureau where I think you used to write at times."

<sup>51</sup> While there is no mention of the exact details of the talk she is referring to, Lanman is most likely referring to one of the fund-raising talks that Tsuda delivered while on this visit.

thought of each other as “friends” but given the extent to which Adeline played a role in Tsuda’s upbringing, this relationship can be construed as a child-parent one. Many of the things that Lanman in particular did for Tsuda are in fact suggestive of this. Lanman for instance, regularly gave presents to many (American) family members on behalf of Tsuda. Furthermore she also regularly passed Tsuda’s “news” to many of her other acquaintances, and insisted that Tsuda write to her on a priority basis and more regularly than to any one else. Surely, as especially Tsuda’s early letters indicate, the Lanmans and particularly Adeline provided a strong emotional anchor when Tsuda was faced with loneliness and homesickness. Only a few months after she had returned and in a particularly frustrated moment, Tsuda wrote, “Oh! Mrs. Lanman. I cannot be of any use. I feel very discouraged and bewildered... perhaps it were better for me had I never left Japan.”<sup>52</sup> At another times, Tsuda expresses annoyance quite openly when met with what she felt were unreasonable expectations on part of Lanman. The letter opens thus and is worth quoting at length:

I...felt surprised that you made such a fuss about not getting a letter and worried yourself. Had it been under ordinary circumstances it might have been natural,... though no sickness alone would prevent me from writing to you. ... Now Mrs. Lanman, I understand how you feel, and how it is all out of your love for me, but it makes me feel uncomfortable to think that even the excuse of a sister lying dangerously ill...will not in your mind account for my not writing a letter. You acknowledge yourself I have written faithfully, and I will try to do so always, but do not...tell me that you are wild and anxious on account of one mail. It makes your love for me a selfish one and makes it hard on me.

The same letter concludes in the following manner: “P.S. You should forgive my outburst at the beginning of the letter. I wrote just at the heat of the moment, and did not mean to say so much. But please *dear*, Mrs. Lanman don’t worry so much.”<sup>53</sup> Yet

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<sup>52</sup> See letter dated March 18, 1883, *Attic Letters*, 51.

<sup>53</sup> See letter dated March 20, 1886, *Attic Letters*, 244-46.

another written at the close of 1884 expresses just how the extent of her emotional connection with the Lanmans, especially Adeline.

Be sure my thoughts will be with you [on Christmas], for I have never forgotten Christmases of old times. I was truly thinking you did everything in the world for me.... I shall never forget it, and never will cease being grateful for the great love you so freely poured out and gave to a poor little child that found shelter with you. I have been rich in love anyhow, and no one can take that away. I can never, never forget that, never can tell you how I thank you for all your care of me. Don't you remember how you used to plan and think over Christmas and your presents to me...? Does it not seem ages ago? And just think now of your little girl's being twenty years old and a teacher!<sup>54</sup>

Such an outpouring of emotion, interwoven as it with other thoughts that Tsuda might write about, matters related to her work at the Peeresses School, news about her family etc., highlights the particularly epistolary mode of expressing affection. First, expression of emotion (love, loneliness, etc.) is necessarily one aspect of the letter written; emotion does not exist in isolation but is interwoven with the “news” that letters are meant to share. Thus, Tsuda moves from one topic to another, of which an articulation of emotion is one part. What is crucial here is that the expression of an emotion *frames* the rest of the conversation that takes place via letters. It is significant to note that while letters express often how much she misses Lanman—the letters are, after all, at least in part an expression of a desire to fill the absence—she is equally adamant about the fact that she does not want to be *in* America. “I [do] not ever hide from you that very often I think of America as a dear place,” she writes in May 1883, but, “I never want to become an American citizen. ... it is something to be with one's own people, and where one belongs.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> See letter dated December 21, 1884, *Attic Letters*, 172.

<sup>55</sup> See letter dated June 23, 1883, *Attic Letters*, 82. See also an earlier letter expressing a similar emotion, dated February 26, 1883, *Ibid.*, 47. She writes, “you must not think from anything I say in my letters,... that I am not content here and happy. I would not come back to America even if I could, because this is my country and home, and duty keeps me here.”

In expressing this clearly, Tsuda was guided by a strong sense of duty that she felt towards playing a role in the betterment of Japanese women, but it also clearly suggests that articulation of emotions of love and affection could only be a part of the letter for as such she did not desire to be in America, with Lanman. The epistle is thus an expression of a desire, but this desire is sustained by the distance between the addressor and addressee, specifically by the absence of the addressee. Letters thus frame the expression of emotion, for without the epistolary exchange there can be no expression (and exchange) of love and gratitude. A crucial reason for this form of expression also lay in the fact that Tsuda faced especially in her early years an acute language barrier. Lacking in sufficient Japanese to communicate with her family members, Tsuda often expressed this frustration in her letters. The problem was particularly highlighted with her mother, who, as letters attest to, spoke no English at a time when Tsuda's Japanese was far from being sufficient to communicate with.

Tsuda's relations with her own mother were complicated and went far beyond the language barrier that they faced. In this situation therefore Adeline Lanman as one can well imagine fulfilled at once the role of a surrogate mother (who acted as Tsuda's friend); this was of course an untenable relation given their obvious differences in "race and blood." The sentiments expressed in the letters are a mark of the difficulties with regard to Lanman and Tsuda's own mother Hatsuko. My point here is that such emotions have no other place but in letters, for to want to be physically in America with Mrs. Lanman would be entirely contrary to the affection that Tsuda was supposed to feel for her mother and life in Japan. Lanman thus is a surrogate mother, and can only be such, and the letters articulate a desire precisely for this relationship, whose generic limits it cannot exceed. Writing here mediates a desire for the mother-figure, yet this is a mother that she cannot invoke except within her correspondence.



A word needs to be said here about Tsuda's relationship to her own mother, for it is the presence of Hatsuko, Tsuda's biological mother, that bars Tsuda from calling Lanman "mother." Almost all scholarship concerning Tsuda mentions the part that Sen, her father, played in sending her to the United States, as well as his continued presence in her life after she returned.<sup>56</sup> Tsuda too mentions him frequently in her letters. Around the time that her own unmarried state became an issue, she wrote to Lanman stating explicitly that she was under no pressure from him to get married.<sup>57</sup> The female relative that is accorded the most mention in the letters is Tsuda's elder sister Koto.<sup>58</sup> The relation between Tsuda and her mother seems to be left at the mercy of go-betweens such as Koto, and this must have no doubt impeded meaningful conversation between the two women. One can imagine that the problem was only exacerbated once Koto married and left home. Thus, Tsuda's letters to Lanman reflect for most part the virtual absence or absencing of her mother, save for a few remarks about her mother's health.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Takahashi's work which traces the influence of various personalities on Tsuda's life and upbringing, barely mentions her mother for instance. For the role played by Tsuda Sen in sending his daughter to America see, Rose, *Tsuda Umeko*, 12-13.

<sup>57</sup> Regarding Tsuda's father it appears that Shige out of her concern for Tsuda also corresponded with Lanman in which she mentioned Tsuda's father Sen. See Tsuda's response in letters dated May 25, 26, 27, 1883, *Attic Letters*, 70-75.

<sup>58</sup> Koto and Sen also visited the United States, and Koto spent a brief time with the Lanmans. Of that time, Mrs. Lanman wrote fondly to Tsuda speaking of how similar she felt the two sisters were. See also letters dated November 23, 1882 and January 16, 1883, *Attic Letters*, 14-19, 34, as an instance of the extent to which she depended on Koto. On the topic of marriage and why she could not get married Tsuda wrote: "because I don't know the Japanese language and customs, and I never could take care of myself in this country without Koto to help me... I will dismiss this subject [of marriage] until I am twenty."

<sup>59</sup> An early letter, written on April 11, 1883 acknowledges the distance between the mother and daughter. Responding to Lanman's question about whether her own mother and father were satisfied with her education, Tsuda wrote to Lanman: "I do not know and how can they tell anyway? My mother cannot talk to me to ask—how and what I have studied are mysteries to her. I could pretend much learning, and she could not understand, especially as I talk so little Japanese. And American culture is very different from Japanese training, so from an *American* standpoint she does not know whether I act politely or rudely, refined or not.... Both Father and Mother know that Japanese ways are new to me, and so they don't criticise me." See *Attic Letters*, 59. The letter expresses that distance from her mother not only linguistic but also cultural. See also letter dated June 18, 1883, *Ibid.*, 77-79, where communication it seems had improved somewhat after her long illness: "we are delighted that mother seems so well and active, working away in the house... and going out everyday. ... She seems to have

Not only separated by language, but also by age and time, one must also note that Tsuda's correspondence with her mother during the time spent in the United States was meagre and after a certain point mediated through her father.<sup>60</sup> As an addressee of Tsuda's letters, therefore, Mrs. Lanman was of added significance; the problem is of the real mother versus the surrogate mother, where the "real" is caught literally in the act of translation and hence elusive,<sup>61</sup> while that which stands in its place of the real is made of flesh and blood, and yet can only serve as a reminder of the real. The representational (the surrogate) thus is reiterated through writing: every "writing" of a letter whose addressee is "dear Mrs. Lanman" is at once an invocation of the absent mother, *and* also literally the "writing" of a mother (into the fabric of Tsuda's life). This should alert to the notion that writing is as important as the relationship it ostensibly represents.<sup>62</sup>

Moreover, we must also not forget that Tsuda's choice of the epistolary rather than the diarist's mode is itself worth noting. In other words, she chose a means of documentation addressed to an "other" rather than the "self," suggesting a writerly

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recovered truly.... Mother thinks that since she returned I can understand so much more—in fact, any little thing, not complicated, I can say perfectly, and what Mother says, I can make out somehow."

<sup>60</sup> Tsuda wrote thrice to her parents during the time that she was in Washington before arriving at the Lanman household (between June and October 1872). Thereafter as we know she was at the Lanman household until 1882. Between 1873 and 1882 we have eight letters. Of all the eleven letters three are addressed to her father and the rest to her mother. Almost all of these letters saving the first one written from the Lanman household soon after she arrived are formulaic and short, usually expressing receipt of the parent's letter, general news about her and her activities. Only the first letter where she writes poignantly of the house she sees in her dreams alludes to how much she might have been homesick. After October 1872 all letters are in English including the ones to her mother, and one can imagine that Tsuda's mother must have had to rely on her husband for translating them. Tsuda's relation with her mother thus from very early on is "caught in the act of translation." The original manuscripts are a part of the Tsuda archive. Parts of these letters are quoted in Yoshiko Furuki, *The White Plum: A Biography of Ume Tsuda* (New York: Weatherhill Inc. 1991), 20-21. See also Ôba, *Tsuda Umeko*, 67-72.

<sup>61</sup> I use the word "translation" here specifically because Tsuda's mother is accessible to her only via the act of translation. That this very primary relationship requires the presence of a translator also draws attention to Tsuda's relation to Japan itself, a "place" to which, for Tsuda "access" requires translation or mediation. I raise this issue again the final chapter and my discussion of the book Tsuda wrote with her American "friend" Alice Bacon about Japanese women.

<sup>62</sup> By using the term "spectral" here I am also referring to the fact that writing does not only generate relationships as much as it also alludes to a kind of an extra-subjective agency where "writing" as an act is driven by something that is outside one self, and one's own subjectivity.

desire not only of and for an-other, but also the need to construct a self always present to “one-self” as an-other, sutured in the act of writing.<sup>63</sup> That Tsuda’s choice was a conscious one is clear from one of her early letters. Closing one particularly long letter, she wrote: “you are my journal that I write to just when I feel like it—only there is some interest to keep the journal up.”<sup>64</sup> In 1898 when Tsuda travelled to Denver to attend the International Congress of the Federation of Women’s Clubs, followed by travel through Europe between November 1898 and January 1899, she again chose to keep a “record” of her travels by means of letters. Of her “journal writing” she wrote to Lanman: “[my] records [are] scanty, and yet enough to tell you something of what I am doing, and to recall the scenes I passed through when I read them later on. They will serve as glimpses of my life for you, though I don’t want you to show them to anyone.”<sup>65</sup> This shows that even Tsuda’s journal writing, advisedly a genre of private and reflective record keeping, had a intended audience even if a highly restricted one. What was internalized through her writing was Lanman’s perspective; this was how Tsuda was able to produce an interiority, bring about an internal transformation in herself. Such writing and self-fashioning which takes place in the presence of another, necessarily highlights the contradiction inherent in the project of writing a biography which assumes the self as being complete and singular. Instead, writing “self” in the presence of an-other, as in the case of Tsuda bespeaks of a self-fashioning that is always an unfinished compact, and bears a paradoxical relation to sites of identity-formation. Self is created as interiority is generated, yet this interiority must necessarily have an audience that constantly acknowledges this self. The epistle as a form of writing consequently refers us to the predicament of a Tsuda *undecidably and*

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<sup>63</sup> Tsuda in fact did keep a journal in her later life. See, Yoshiko Furuki et. al eds., *Tsuda Umeko Monjo* (Tokyo: Tsuda College, 1984), 261-368. These entries do not match the richness and detail that marks Tsuda’s letters.

<sup>64</sup> See letter dated February 20, 1883, *Attic Letters*, 46-47.

<sup>65</sup> See letter dated December 28, 1898 where Tsuda is writing from England. This letter accompanies her record as it also explains its purpose. (Only the letter is included in the volume). *Ibid.*, 344.

*agonistically* poised between “writing for and about the self” but never without an “other.”

Tsuda’s comments on “letter-writing” (from a letter to Mrs. Lanman on the subject of the Japanese prose style as compared), further highlight the extent to which the site of the letter was literally the place where for Tsuda the self was articulated and interiority generated. In August, 1883 she wrote:

The Japanese system of letter writing is never used to communicate words, thoughts, and actions *as if* in conversation, exchanging thought for thought. Great men in literature or intimate friends never write and write such long letters that tell of all the minutiae of everyday life—the letter writing is so formal, it does not admit of it. It is only used to tell some important thing, to congratulate, to announce birth, death, or marriage, for business, for especial reason, or to occasionally let different families hear how they get along. Husbands and wives write to each other to tell each other how they are, but they don't tell everything that they would talk about. Hence to Japanese, the desultory, friendly correspondence to be kept up constantly is very hard, and even we, who write in English, get affected by it and feel lazy about writing. ... I don't suppose it is possible to judge of a Japanese scholar about his life and mind simply from his letters; there are no such books as letters telling opinions, and criticisms, and showing the character distinctly. Letters are so formal and so polite. It is hard to learn to write them even.<sup>66</sup>

Clearly what is at stake here is that the “mode of writing” chosen by Tsuda is an epistolary one, but it also functions as an autobiography, a particularly intimate form of writing. It is to legitimize the “I” the desire to transform oneself which provides the subject for the narrative of the letter.<sup>67</sup> As Kaufman has argued, letter writing is as much an address to the other, as it is a form of “self-address” aiding creation of the self. There is, therefore, a *double* address; the self functions as the subject and the object of the discourse, and the addressee serves as the witness to this transformation. Now, what Tsuda explicates is the difference between formal and informal styles of writing: “the Japanese,” Tsuda complains, only write about “events,” unlike “we who

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<sup>66</sup> See letter dated August 28, 1883, *Attic letters*, 89-90. My emphasis.

write in English” for whom the everyday is itself the event. And therefore, she writes, reading the letter of a Japanese scholar one would never have a clue about his “life and mind.” The suggestion here is that her style of writing unlike the Japanese one is more natural, that letters serve as a transparent medium, nothing more than a vehicle for conveying her thoughts. What Tsuda is probably unaware of is the fact that she too has internalized a certain style of writing, within which writing without effort is itself an aspect of artifice. Given Tsuda’s education within the Anglo-American tradition, and taking into account the nature of her contact with Lanman and other friends and acquaintances in the United States, one can presume that she was herself familiar with the same epistolary writing styles as was Lanman.<sup>68</sup> Perhaps, one can even construe that she was far better aware of letter writers such as Sévigné and their style than she was conscious of the Japanese diary literature or writing tradition in Meiji and before.<sup>69</sup> It is noteworthy that Tsuda draws a line of distinction between “us” (speakers of English?) versus them the “Japanese.” This line drawn between us and them, between “I” and them is subject to constant change, and just as Tsuda comes to articulate herself in the presence of another in her missives, her self-identification is impelled by the fact that around her she finds none that are like her. In other words, a constant misrecognition makes it thus all the more necessary to subject herself to an identification via a letter, wherein she writes to someone who recognize her. Writing the details of her everyday, every minutae of it, is therefore literally writing her-self.

Contemporary scholars such as Yûko Takahashi, Barbara Rose and others (particularly her biographers) who have read Tsuda’s letters for their historical worth

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<sup>67</sup> Jean Starobinski, “The Style of Autobiography,” in Seymour Chatman ed., *Literary Style: A Symposium* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 285-294.

<sup>68</sup> As Goldsmith’s reading of Sévigné’s letters suggest, the supposed clear line of distinction between the public reading of the letters and the act of private writing (and presumed closed readership) is actually quite ambiguous.

<sup>69</sup> Although this is beyond the scope of this chapter and dissertation, it would be interesting for instance to compare Tsuda’s epistolary writing with Makiko’s Diary, or even other contemporary Meiji women

for the “social world,” and her role as a Japanese educator and feminist do not focus on the stylistic or formal aspect of Tsuda’s letter writing. That is to say, neither Takahashi nor Rose stress the tensions inherent in Tsuda’s close relationships with women such as Lanman or her other American friends such as Alice Bacon or Anna Hartshorne. Identifying these simply as “friendships” Takahashi in particular is interested in tracing the *hizuna* or “bonds of affection” that existed between Tsuda and Bacon, and Tsuda and Hartshorne.<sup>70</sup> In a similar vein, the Tsuda-Lanman relation is understood unproblematically as that between a mother and a daughter. To make the point about “friendship” Takahashi uses Tsuda’s letters extensively and effectively but the argument does not move beyond her deploying the letters to prove that there existed a relationship prior to the writing. It is perhaps her’s (and Rose’s) overriding concern to establish Tsuda’s place in the history of Japanese feminism, (that has been heretofore mostly ignored) that forecloses the possibility of reading the letters for their literary value.

Furuki, the author of Tsuda’s biography in English also deploys Tsuda’s letters as “evidence” in a manner similar to Takahashi and Rose. The most interesting aspect of her biography is that epilogue is written in the form of a letter,<sup>71</sup> addressed to Tsuda herself, and written in a style that is perhaps meant invoke in the reader’s mind the earlier Tsuda-Lanman correspondence. It engages with Tsuda in a striking manner, as if one were writing to a close “confidante” and informs her of the developments Tsuda College has made since the time of Tsuda’s death. The letter also seeks to assure its addressee (Tsuda, and perhaps also us) that even after so many years the students at

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writers who wrote in the autobiographical vein. Makiko Nakano, *Makiko's diary: a merchant wife in 1910 Kyoto*, trans., Kazuko Smith (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995)

<sup>70</sup> Hastings analysis of Rose’s work is pertinent here. She makes the point that in investigating Alice Bacon’s contribution and assistance to Tsuda’s school, Rose sees Bacon (and Hartshorne) as “reliable witnesses, without taking into account what investment these American women might have had in viewing Japanese women in a particular way.” See, Hastings, 626. In Chapter Three of this dissertation where I delve into the details of Tsuda’s contribution to the writing of *Japanese Girls and Women* and discuss the thorny problem of her authorship I have argued along similar lines.

Tsuda College retain a trace of the original “spirit of independence and individualism” a spirit which is in keeping with Tsuda’s personality herself.<sup>72</sup> Such a letter reveals, perhaps unwittingly the way in which Furuki reads Tsuda’s correspondence as she incorporates it within the writing of her own biography. For Furuki, “letters” are simply a source of information and are to be read as such.

Indeed, as Sally Ann Hastings’ review correctly notes, Furuki’s text, “incorporates” the letters “into the existing corpus” to make a point about how Tsuda was not simply an educator but also a feminist. While Hastings’ review no doubt draws attention to the ways in which “letters” get used in Furuki’s analysis, her point of inquiry is actually less focused on the nature of this evidence. Rather, the thrust of Hastings’ review is that letters as such count as “flimsy evidence” and should not be entirely relied upon for their “truth” value.<sup>73</sup> This however, entirely forecloses the possibility of examining the contradiction in the letters themselves, and the extent to which the letters complicate the ways in which Tsuda is figured as a feminist or an educator (or both). My point here is thus no so much about whether Tsuda is a “feminist” and/or a “educator” but to be more aware of what constitutes as “evidence” and examine ways in which this evidence is produced.

Such is not the case with Ôba’s reading of the letters which bespeaks her own literarily charged imagination. As I will demonstrate in the latter half of this chapter, Ôba’s transcribing of Tsuda’s letters into the physical space of her biography, (albeit in its translated form) presences Tsuda to her readers in ways that are analogous to Tsuda’s presencing of Lanman in their correspondence. Thus while Ôba is no less interested than Furuki in underscoring the uniqueness of Tsuda’s life, she does so by

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<sup>71</sup> The Epilogue is titled “All those Blossoms: A Letter to Miss Tsuda.” See Furuki, 139-50.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 148-49. In fact Furuki’s letter begins with an explicit mention of what her reasons are for writing the letter.

<sup>73</sup> Hastings, 624.

bringing to her text the literary quality of Tsuda's letters. Ôba's text moves with Tsuda, at Tsuda's pace, encompassing us, its reader into Tsuda's everyday.

While being cognizant of the stylistic aspect of Tsuda's writing, how do we read the context of Tsuda's text, so as to not unproblematically recover Tsuda as the subject of Japanese feminism? For Tsuda's writing expresses a subjectivity that is not pre-formed, as much as it expresses a struggle for attaining some sense of a self. This "self" is necessarily inter-subjective and bears the trace of an other, and is articulated over the course of writing the letters. One writes, as Kaufman has argued, because of a "desire" for the other. It is to presence the other, through which one also *presents* oneself, and becomes present-able as it were. "Desire is infinitely transcribable, yet ultimately elusive and is therefore reiterated ceaselessly," she argues, making note of that which propels writing.<sup>74</sup> Yet, and as Goodman has suggested, the endlessness of the correspondence not only marks the fact that what is to be written is the self that is infinitely transcribable, but that this self can only be explicated in the letter, in the presence of another.<sup>75</sup> The space of writing, that is to say, the space of the letter marks, according to Goodman the limit of the freedom for the woman to express herself; which is the primary reason why correspondence cannot be put to an end, for that would also naturally put the freedom of the letter writer also to an end. Following this argument, it would also mean that Tsuda in order to express herself must write, emphasising yet again writing's creative and transformative role.

### **Locating the "self"**

What then does Tsuda write about? An enduring theme in Tsuda's letters is her focus on the idea of "home." Tsuda writes about home and all its aspects—what and who physically constitutes it, as well as what appears to her strange or alternatively

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<sup>74</sup> Kaufman, *Discourses of Desire*, 24.

<sup>75</sup> Goodman, *Letter-writing and Emergence of Gendered Subjectivity*, 27.



familiar. The desire for a “home,” is one of remembering her old home that she shared with the Lanmans, as well as that of making Japan a home, a process both difficult and frustrating for Tsuda, as early letters indicate. The shifting boundaries between what constitutes as unfamiliar and familiar within the home, and between the canny and the uncanny reflect the extent to which her sense of a “home” *and* “self” are in a state of flux. That there is no singularity in the idea of the home, or a “native place”—a *furusato*, suggests, perhaps more keenly than anything else in Tsuda’s writing that her sense of identity is as fractured as is her notion of home.

This section of the chapter uses “home” as a point of entry to examine the ways in which Tsuda articulates her “self.” As I suggest above, the two notions—of home and of self are not separate issues but intimately intertwined. The logic of this becomes increasingly apparent as we read Tsuda’s letters which move constantly between her Japanese abode and her American home, demonstrating the ways in which her “American” ways affect the way in which she interacts with the physical space of Japan.

In one of her earliest letters, dated November 23, 1882 Tsuda focuses predominantly on the new “Japanese” home she has entered and introduces the workings of such a home. Such a letter, which begins as follows, also illustrates how closely her sense of self is tied to the way she articulates the notion of a home. “Many things I have to tell you, but firstly it is so lovely to have a Christian home to come to. ... Oh, how much better is my lot than the others!”<sup>76</sup>

This moment establishing familiarity is followed by explicating difference but within the context of how “naturally” she takes to home: The Japanese food tastes very nice... but at every meal there is bread and something foreign for me as they don’t want me to get sick. ... All the things I eat, the taste comes

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<sup>76</sup> For this citation and the ones that follow see *Attic Letters*, 14-19. This long letter written in the very first week after her arrival continues over many pages; she began writing it on November 21 and the last “entry” writing is done on November 29. It is also accompanied by a drawing of Tsuda’s family house made by Tsuda herself, but not included in the *Attic Letters*. See, *Ibid.*, 13-21.

back and is as natural as possible. Last night when I was with Shige we tried every kind of mess (?) imaginable .... [But] the hardest thing is taking off the shoes. ... I shall get accustomed to this as well as sitting down. I can't yet sit down [in a] polite fashion, but they don't make me at all." While it appears from Tsuda's descriptions that most of the family sleeps on mattresses placed on the floor, she writes, "my father has a bedstead for me, and I have linen [in American style] underneath but a Japanese cover over, and I like it so much.

Epistolary conversation shifts easily from discussion of Japanese home and what occupies its physical space to her perceptions of this space. The same letter continues,

I have not seen enough to express my opinion of the country, and of my impression but though many things come back to me, still it does not seem natural at all. ... I feel constantly as if I was not to stay, but more as if I was visiting. [But] do not worry about me, dear Mrs. Lanman. I am in such a happy home... and so though I may find it hard to get accustomed to many things and often feel strange and lonely ... soon I shall feel better that this is my own true home and America only a preparing. ... You must come, Mrs. Lanman sometime to Japan. I cannot in the faintest way make you realise the vast difference in the two countries. I could not expect you to do Japanese ways, but you could get along in foreign style. Japanese people look so nice in their dresses, and I think many of their ways are nice.

But she continues more optimistically a few paragraphs later, "[i]n spite of my bringing up and... my American ways entirely, it is not one half as strange or as hard for me to do Japanese ways as for an American, so you see we are more Japanese than what people give us credit for, and someday, if I ever return to America, your ways seem difficult." Such optimism notwithstanding, it took many years for Tsuda to be "more Japanese than American," and the sombre note on which the November 23rd entry concludes reflects perhaps most poignantly Tsuda's position for the many months if not years to come:

this evening I don't know what has come over me. ... I feel quite blue, and long so much for one glimpse of you, and to think your eye will rest on these words written now so far away makes me envious of the letter. I want one good talk with you and to tell you so much. It is so hard that my language is unknown to these people, and though I have Koto and Father...it is not unnatural that at first everything should seem so strange. Japanese ways and

customs are so different that I long to jump around, rush wildly and yet not have it thought strange.

All the time I am thankful for my Christian and foreign home comparatively, but still I feel so strange, like a tree that is transplanted.... And think to what different soil I have been transplanted. ... I [am] puzzled so often to know what to do. How much to keep of American ways, and how much to go back, and so often I wonder how I am going to do any good to my country-women. ... Sutematsu and I think that even if no obstacle offers itself, and all is made easy for us to return to America... a moral obligation would make us stay in Japan and treat it as our home.

The final few lines of the letter before it is sent out are as follows: “to be sure I often think of America with affection, and hope someday to revisit it, but still I am Japanese and must stay here. I think of you often and nothing will ever make me forget my old home.”<sup>77</sup>

While this is not the only letter where Tsuda writes of the difficulties of a Japanese home or makes frequent comparisons with the American life that she shared with the Lanmans, I have focused on this epistle in particular because it brings to fore the many of the aspects of Tsuda’s struggles in identifying herself as Japanese, while not entirely letting go of what she perceived as being her “Americanisms.” The last few lines especially highlight the back and forth movement between “keeping American ways,” “treating [Japan] as our home,” and also being able to write—perhaps less emphatically than she may have wished, that after all “I am Japanese.” That such a double identification was not as problematic as it was complicated is clear from the kind of metaphors that Tsuda uses to think about her particular situation. The symbol of a “tree,” transplanted from one soil into another, and the covers on her bedstead, where the Japanese bedcover lies over American linen perhaps best give us a sense of the compromises that she was willing to make to relate her American life to what she perceived as a “Japanese” way of life; significantly, both metaphors suggest

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<sup>77</sup> The final few lines cited here are from the part of the letter written on November 29, 1882. This page is followed by the drawing that I mention above. See *Ibid.*, 21.

she is unwilling to let go of what she has grown up with in order to adapt to her new Japanese surrounds.

The passage above ends as we noted, with Tsuda writing to Lanman, that she feels to be under a moral obligation to treat “Japan as home” suggesting thereby that Japan is as yet for her unhomely, a “non-home.” Crucially what would make the new home “homely” are the banal physical objects such as having furniture to sit on, and not having to take off shoes as is the Japanese custom, but also a more intangible feeling, what for Tsuda is a “Christian sense,” which pervades her new home enabling her to write, “how much better is my lot than the others.” The movement between the homely and the unhomely is overlapped by another set of values that Tsuda uses frequently to record her comfort or discomfort; in her writing we find an almost obsessive recording of things that she finds either natural or unnatural. Yet, what is curious about Tsuda is that which she finds “natural,” or states that she will naturally take to, be it Japanese food, etiquette, or language is in fact what cannot come to her naturally. For as the passage above demonstrates, her struggles with language and food, not to mention customs suggests something quite startling: at a time when the cultural identity of the Japanese nation-state is in the process of solidification, what Tsuda highlights is an element of uncertainty by pointing out that there is no clear line of connection between “being Japanese” and feeling “at home” in Japan.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, this disconnect also questions fundamentally what is it that came to be identified as Japanese and how it was related to being Japanese.<sup>79</sup> By the end of the letter what

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<sup>78</sup> Tsuda’s constant marking of the dissonance she experiences between her habits and the customs she is confronted with mark the very unnaturalness of relation between any particular thing and the unproblematic connection that is established between it (be it food, or a way of wearing one’s shoes) and national belonging.

<sup>79</sup> Arguably one can state that the central concern of nation-formation was that one feel a part of the national community without consciously having to identify with any specific aspect of it, and that national belonging—especially successful national belonging was marked by the fact of being a part of the larger national community via the sharing of the same national sentiment. Such an argument would make Tsuda’s sense of discomfort or lack of fit a moot factor which has nothing to do with her “feeling Japanese.” While this may be true, my point here is that by drawing attention to the various factors that

becomes most clear is Tsuda's not un-expected feeling of contradiction, what some have read as confusion about her identity. For on the one hand, she includes herself in the "we" of the Japanese stating rather optimistically that it is not as hard for her to do "Japanese ways" as it might be for an American and that some day she might find her (Mrs. Lanman's ways) difficult. But only a few lines later, the pendulum swings the other way and what she so easily claimed to be hers, is othered and objectified as she writes about how hard she finds "Japanese ways" implying that what are "Japanese" ways are quite distinct from where she stands. As Tsuda lives the contradiction of being "at home" but also not quite finding herself to be "at home" in her Japanese house and by extension Japan, she resorts to writing and thereby, I suggest, suspends momentarily the feeling of unhomeliness. Writing grounds her, and it is in the physical space of writing that she finds home. Her longing for "one good talk" with Mrs. Lanman, and her envy for the letter itself upon which will rest the eyes of her dear reader underscore not only her degree of alienation but also just how much rests upon putting her thoughts on paper and having a pre-determined reader in whose hands the words of the letter will find their weight and also a "home."<sup>80</sup>

There is irony, too, which needs to be examined, and of which perhaps Tsuda is as yet unconscious. When she writes both, that "I am Japanese" and also that "soon I shall feel better that this is my true home," Tsuda highlights a disjunction between being Japanese and yet feeling not at home in Japan. The paradox for Tsuda can be stated thus: while I am Japanese, it is my American ways that inhibit from this Japanese-ness from becoming manifest. The "I" in both cases is one and the same, but

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Tsuda feel uncomfortable with exposes the very manner in which national sentiment is produced, whereby because one belongs to the nation, one takes to its dress, custom and language naturally. Tsuda's discomfort highlights two things. First, that the linkage between belonging and that which allows us to belong is not to be taken for granted. And second, that belonging necessarily also invokes a sense of non-belonging, or having one's sense of identity elsewhere, of having it divided and being heterogeneous.

<sup>80</sup> I am borrowing here Goldsmith's idea of words as gaining "weight" through "extended play of repetition and leisurely meditation." See *Giving Weight to Words*, 102.

it is also necessarily split at the very moment she articulates herself, for until Tsuda returns to Japan and is othered she cannot come to a realisation that she is in fact both Japanese and American and yet also unable to in-habit either of these categories fully. Moreover, it is her being “ill at ease” in Japanese that in turn objectifies Japan and Japanese, suggesting that there is no easy continuum between the two. Therefore in Tsuda’s writing we find that the line that separates the “I” / “us” from the “them,” and the “we” from the “they” or “Japanese” are constantly shifting. The point here is not so much that these lines are arbitrarily drawn, as much as that their shifting underscores the fundamental problem with understanding the categories such as Japanese or American as being “natural.” Tsuda’s “I” is split as it moves between and occupies simultaneously two different identities due to the American ways she espouses and the Japanese woman she wants to become. Moreover, Tsuda’s being “ill at ease” in Japanese language and yet also simultaneously claiming to belong to Japan draws attention to the fact that there is in fact no natural connection between language and nation.<sup>81</sup>

Brett de Bary’s reading of Morisaki Kazue’s “Two Languages Two Souls” is particularly useful when examining the heterogeneity of Tsuda’s “I” constituted as it is by her inhabiting two languages English and Japanese. In reading Morisaki’s essay against the grain of an “area studies text” de Bary has argued convincingly the importance of approaching the text by paying attention to its “multiplicity as well as its dialogic dimensions.”<sup>82</sup> Morisaki’s “returnee” (*hikigaesha*) status, the “term used for

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<sup>81</sup> This, as I mention above is a startling fact in the context of language movements such as *genbun itchi* which towards the end of the nineteenth century were immersed in the standardization of a modern Japanese language following the one national language for one nation theory. Tsuda’s letter dated October 13, 1883 mentions a “language movement which is trying to simplify Japanese language and literature” perhaps give us a sense of exactly the extent to which Japanese frustrated Tsuda. The movement is no doubt “creditable and good” she writes, “if things were as they want it, I could read now instead of toiling years and years over hieroglyphics.” *Attic Letters*, 100.

<sup>82</sup> See Brett de Bary, “Morisaki Kazue’s “Two Languages Two Souls”: Language, Communicability and the National Subject,” in *Deconstructing Nationality: Cornell East Asia Series, No. 24*, eds. Brett de Bary et. al. (East Asia Program, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, 2005), 231-32.

settlers in former Japanese territories ...at the end of the war,” plays out in her writing. It highlights, as de Bary notes, the uneasy commensurability between the individual and the state and it does so by suggesting that an identity is necessarily heterogeneous and that there is no easy assimilation between “being Japanese” and Japan. As a “returnee” and writing in a language in which she feels ill at ease, Morisaki writes about her committing the act of “writing in Japanese” in the following words: “Although what I want to say is straightforward and not circuitous... I am the kind of person who becomes circuitous as soon as I attempt to recruit the medium of language.”<sup>83</sup> By drawing attention to language and subjectivity, Morisaki is, as de Bary argues, alluding to the “divided and dissonant subjectivity of the narrator, [and also] propos[ing] Japan itself as a multilingual state and therefore as a site of coexisting incommensurable regimes of signification.”<sup>84</sup>

While Tsuda’s language falls short of such eloquence, her own predicament, her halting and often times reluctant identification with “being” Japanese bespeaks of something similar to Morisaki’s notion of a heterogeneous identity. For Tsuda too, as we have seen above, speaks from multiple locations. Moreover, and unlike Morisaki, Tsuda hardly ever wrote in Japanese. Besides her voluminous correspondence, which is in English, her speeches and newspaper articles delivered or published in the United

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 237.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 239. Morisaki’s thesis however is not limited to simply expressing dissonance between language and subjectivity. As de Bary demonstrates, her central theme is also to argue against the myth of the unified nation for such a construction only serves to exclude other language communities from the nation. Moreover, collapsing the “I” into the national “we” she argues, enables a writing of the collective national history whereby individuals are dissuaded from taking war responsibility. For, it is the belief that the self is inviolable that allows “ordinary people” to get away with assuming no responsibility. Morisaki’s aim thus is to make us re-examine the easy slippage between the “I” and the “we.” It is also to highlight, via the existence of more than one language the internal division that exists within the “I.” Morisaki’s essay thus, as de Bary points out, “suggests the possibility of occupying multiple positions, including the historically incommensurable (242). Although Tsuda’s double location/ locution cannot perhaps been seen as incommensurable, the sense of the historic incommensurability perhaps best comes out in the encounter between Ramabai and the Japanese. I have discussed this in the following chapter.

States, also in English constitute a significant part of her work.<sup>85</sup> Her struggle with Japanese in a Japan she never fully in-habits, her ease with English, and her simultaneous desire to be “naturally” Japanese suggest a series of incommensurate positions that Tsuda occupies, and suggest the conflicting relations between the idea of “home” “mother tongue” and “nation.” That Tsuda occupies multiple positions and speaks from within these various locations at a time when nation and national language is being consolidated highlights starkly the extent to which these ideologies are reductive, and to what extent a concurrence is sought between the “I” and the “we” as belonging to the national community identified as “Japanese.”

Tsuda thus in-habits at least two entirely incommensurable positions. There is the “I” that stands outside of Japan—what can be termed a non-Japanese “I” in whose voice she records her observations about Japan and thereby objectifies the Japanese, carving out a position for herself which is entirely at odds with the “Japanese race.” But then, there is also the other “I” which declares equally emphatically that she is in fact one of the Japanese and different in “blood and race” from the American Lanman. What is interesting about the Tsuda however, is that the “non-Japanese I” does not cohere easily with her American identity or the position she intermittently adopts of being a surrogate daughter to the American Mrs. Lanman. Tsuda in fact was quite critical of what she identified as the American/ Western position that she encountered in the attitudes of the many missionaries that she met after her return to Japan. The following three passages taken from her letters written at different times, suggest the complexity of Tsuda’s identifications/ affiliations while also alluding to the complexity of the “I” constantly in the state of oscillation.

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<sup>85</sup> Of Tsuda’s written work in Japanese we know of some essays she wrote and published in the *Jogaku zasshi* on the topic of health and hygiene. There is some suggestion in her letters that her essays on health published in Japanese are based on the volume *Health and Hygiene* that she received from Lanman. See letter dated May 27, 1883, *Attic Letters*, 73. Also, and significantly, Tsuda, it appears decided to give her first graduation address in Japanese ostensibly to quieten her many critics who commented in one way or another about her lack of mastery of Japanese.



Tsuda's segue into any topic ranging from the condition of women in Japan to comments on the Japanese "race" is done by addressing a specific situation that strikes her either as "strange" or challenging. Speaking about the very different customs related to visiting people's houses as guests, Tsuda's observation of women as hosts is as follows: the visitors are always men and "I never meet them, or any of us women either, but we have to wait on them."<sup>86</sup> In the following sentence however, the tone shifts from the specific to the general; if Tsuda had been "one of them" until now, the "I" (until now a part of the gender specific "we") now stands outside as it objectifies the "women" it writes about.

Men's parties are the only ones in Japan. Women are as quiet and lazy as cats about doing anything for themselves. They are only waiters for men. ... Japanese women cannot talk or entertain anyone of the opposite sex. My heart goes out to *Japanese women* and I burn in indignation at their position, while I blame them too. Japanese men I cannot blame, because they are spoiled, brought up and treated to lord over their sisters and mothers. ... *Their ways* of thinking and acting, their foolish fears of appearing manlike, their ignorance and superstition and their slowness, and *they* don't expect better treatment from men.<sup>87</sup>

Such objectification achieves two goals: first, it enables Tsuda to identify with the universal "we" (of the universal category of "woman") without succumbing to the particularities of "Japanese woman." Moreover, such an objectification also provides a point of entry into identifying and naming the "women" whose condition she wants to ameliorate.

Lest Tsuda's stand vis-à-vis Japanese women sounds very similar to position of missionaries, the next few lines demonstrate the difference in the two positions.

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<sup>86</sup> Tsuda in keeping with her sense of a certain Victorian morality that she imbibed in the Lanman household was very clear here and elsewhere about making a distinction between "women" and "ladies." The "women" she argued were the geisha to whom many men turned to for entertainment and intellectual conversation. Through education she hoped that there would be a class of women who would be companions to these men, so that men instead of turning to geisha would turn to women of their own class. To this extent she even hoped to establish an "anti-geisha" society with Sutematsu's help. See letter dated March 16, 1887, *Attic Letters*, 282-83.

<sup>87</sup> See letter dated May 23, 1883, *Attic Letters*, 69. My emphasis.

From Tsuda's perspective, the missionaries and particularly American missionaries only looked down on the Japanese; interestingly enough, in Tsuda's description of the missionaries, the "I" that writes becomes a part of the Japanese "we."

Oh, the missionaries make me so mad.... Here in Japan where living is so cheap ... the missionaries revel in luxury. ... Why then are the schools [that they establish] so poor [and] food so miserable ... that it is if only for the lower classes? Why then instead of giving themselves more than three courses and a dessert, don't they take care of their scholars? Are *we* so far below *them* that their common sense, religion, and charity cannot reach *us*?<sup>88</sup>

And elsewhere a similar sentiment is expressed in a diatribe directed particularly against Americans, (both missionaries and laymen), when she writes to Lanman that she finds them particularly "narrow-minded." "All foreigners like nothing Japanese, and think everything American is truly unsurpassable," she writes. "They truly look down upon us and it makes me furious."<sup>89</sup>

What Tsuda wished for of course, perhaps somewhat naively was that both Japanese and American would learn to see the "good in each other and be more liberal."<sup>90</sup> As the location of the "I" swerves between becoming a part of the Japanese "we" on the one hand, and objectifying the Japanese so that they become the "other." Interestingly, Tsuda interestingly deploys the loneliness of her own position to argue that it is she who is better placed than the both the missionaries and "natives" to reform the Japanese woman. "*I* know both sides you see," she writes to Mrs. Lanman, "and understand and feel with both so much."<sup>91</sup> Her education, she points out to Lanman is "far above a Japanese woman...having seen the world."

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<sup>88</sup> See letter dated September 3, 1883, *Ibid.*, 90. My emphasis

<sup>89</sup> See letter dated March 18, 1883, *Ibid.*, 51. My emphasis. See also 58. See also, October 8, 1884, *Ibid.*, 170

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> See letter dated October 19, 1883, *Ibid.*, p. 101. See also letter dated May 23, 1883, *Ibid.*, p. 69-71 for similar references to the uniqueness of her position.

And yet, although Tsuda retains a somewhat ambiguous identity as a Japanese always critical of the easy assimilation of the “I” into the national “we,” we also find in her writing that she wants to be desperately identified as being “racially” Japanese. In Tsuda’s writing, an acknowledgment of her loneliness is concomitant with a display of nationalistic fervour, poised as she is between the singular (un-assimilable) “I” and the national “we.” The following letter demonstrates with a particular poignancy the paradox of her situation,<sup>92</sup> and her desire to be identified as a Japanese. “You know, I never want to be an American citizen, she wrote in a letter dated June 23, 1883,

it is something to be with one’s people where one belongs. And you would have never known it, but do you know that I have often felt so in America? Although...I grew up in every way purely American, mind, ideas, and all...many times I have felt that I was of a different race and blood in America, that there were none whose blood was kin to mine, who had the characteristics of our race. ... And in many ways I am Oriental. [From the American girls] I am different I know, and I don’t expect it to be overlooked. Here at least in spite of my drawbacks my face is not an alien’s and this is my nation and my country, and I am one of Japan’s daughters. ... Whatever comes, my place is here.<sup>93</sup>

In the first reading, these sentiments bespeak of unabashed patriotism. If one were to read it more closely however, some interesting aspects about Tsuda’s heterogeneous identity emerge. First, it is important to note that Tsuda’s line of reasoning is based on the mind/body division, thereby allowing herself to identify herself in physical terms as a part of the Japanese race, while also acknowledging that mentally (in mind and body) she is “purely American.” As the following letter adduces, it is the physical markers, and particularly behaviour that is deployed to judge the extent of her Japanese-ness. “No foreigner can wield a brush like Japanese and Chinese ... and I am glad I am Japanese so much anyway. ... I am fast getting to

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<sup>92</sup> See for instance a letter dated March 8, and April 11, 1883 Ibid., 47-49, 58-59.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 82. My emphasis, except “whatever” which has emphasis in the original. In a similar vein we have a few days later: “One’s own country and blood must be best, and nothing even if one gives up much, compensates for those” (113).

be a regular native and soon nobody will recognize me at all.”<sup>94</sup> Or her comment on Sutematsu, which suggest that she is fast becoming a “regular Japanese wife” because “she obeys Mr. Oyama [her husband] like a child, and asks his permission to go out anywhere. She... makes but a few calls...is always on hand when Mr. Oyama is at home. She is really like a Japanese wife and does not assert her independence at all.”<sup>95</sup>

While Tsuda acknowledges the disjuncture between her mind and ideas which are “purely American” and her body—her “race and blood”—which is “Oriental” what she is arguing is that the latter is unalienable from her own being. In other words, her claim to Japaneseness, her inalienable right to it as it were, comes by virtue of the physicality of the bodily gestures and not the workings of the mind. Furthermore, Tsuda insists that only she could have known that she was different, and that Lanman would have “never known” of this disjuncture. In reserving the right to state, “I am different, *I know*” Tsuda here executes a double move: she expresses an inalienableness from Japan that is manifest in the physical body, while also arguing for an ability to move mentally in and out of the limits that this identity “as a Japanese” places upon her. In other words, Tsuda on the one hand claims that her physical body makes her undeniably “Japanese” but having said that, she remains free to choose to move outside the limits of this “Japaneseness.” When she writes that, “whatever comes my place is here,” the emphasis is on her notion of “place.” Tsuda seeks to be a part of this “place” through bodily gestures, enacting a Japanese-ness so that she too becomes one of the “natives” and over time unrecognizable despite her difference. It is worth noting that Tsuda engaged with equal fervour in debates surrounding the dress reform for instance, and was very conscious about her own

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<sup>94</sup> See letter dated September 19, 1883, Ibid., 94. Other instances such as Tsuda’s interest in the dress reform movement and her support for the Japanese dress, or her comments on her own hair—“the one thing that I have that is real Japanese like... is the way my hair grows (101), also suggest that “appearance as a Japanese” was vital for Tsuda to be seen as Japanese.

<sup>95</sup> See letter dated December 18, 1883, Ibid., 115. Once again it is Sutematsu's behaviour that marks her as a “Japanese wife.”

physical appearance which she wanted to be “Japanese.” And yet she also wrote, “keep to some extent my foreign ways” Tsuda writes early on, stating further that she should especially allow herself to “remain a little foreign at least... until my tongue becomes first Japanized.”<sup>96</sup> The desire to master “Japanese” language is tied with the physical in-habitation of being Japanese. Yet, paradoxically Tsuda’s language of “thought,” remained English well past her early years in Japan, as her letters to Lanman attest.

The mind/body (or face) split that Tsuda asserts, indeed creates within her own writing speaks volumes at once about Tsuda’s sense of alienation from Japan, and her simultaneous affiliation along racial lines. To a certain extent the fact that Tsuda is deploying “race” to argue that she is undeniably and unalterably “Japanese” is not surprising given her context of late nineteenth century, when linkages between race and national progress were being made in Japan and elsewhere. From her comments about other “Asiatics,” it is clear that Tsuda’s views were in line with civilizational theories of the time. Interestingly, but not surprisingly these views and the extent to which she objectified “Japanese” made it seem that she was closer to the missionary point of view than a “native” than she aspired to be.<sup>97</sup> Leaving that point aside momentarily, what is crucial here is that Tsuda deployed the mind/body split to be Japanese and at the same time question the easy commensurability between the “I”

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<sup>96</sup> See letter dated February 20, 1883, *Ibid.*, 43-47. In the same letter Tsuda also makes note a various other customs that bring out the different between her “American” and her family’s or acquaintances’ “Japanese” ways. In one long paragraph at the beginning of the letter Tsuda is particularly interested in making a point that language and dress must match, as she writes, “I shall not fix my hair in such a bothersome [Japanese] way because everyone will think I am pure Japanese” indicating thereby that both are physical markers, and one as equally important as another to be seen as Japanese.

<sup>97</sup> See letter dated April 27, 1883, *Ibid.*, 66. When the question of Tsuda teaching young men in a mission school came up and the other Japanese male teachers objected, her criticism of the Japanese men was scathing. Tsuda wrote, “The [teaching opportunity] fell out because the Japanese [teachers] don’t want a woman. National prejudice! It’s a wonder that Japanese, unlike other Asiatics, allow woman a soul.” See letter dated, March 7, 1885, *Ibid.*, 184. For the kind of comments Tsuda had about Japanese people as a “race” see for instance, letter dated February 20, 1883, *Ibid.*, 43-44. Here Tsuda writes, The Japanese are, as a rule, not a deep feeling race—they are generous, impulsive and light-hearted, and make the best of everything, and are stoical but I don’t think they are deep hearted. They don’t feel so keenly love, hatred, or gratitude.”

and the “we” that a Japanese (national) identity presumed. For Tsuda’s “I” in the course of her writing inhabits multiple and heterogeneous locations all of which are not easily commensurable with the national “we.” And yet as complicated as these various positionings are, Tsuda, we find, is unwilling to *not* “be” Japanese. As is the case with Morisaki, Tsuda seeks for a commonality between the “I” and the “we” but is reluctant to limit herself to this narrow definition of “Japaneseness,”<sup>98</sup> wherein the “I” simply like many other I’s becomes unproblematically a part of the national “we.” For her, criticism of Japanese customs, or the position of women stems precisely by refusing to participate in the national “we,” but also speaking with the first pronoun “I” that speaks as a “Japanese” albeit only fleetingly.

Re-reading the “we” as a “junction between the “I” and the “non-I”<sup>99</sup> (following Emile Benevise in de Bary’s analysis), allows Morisaki, as it does also Tsuda to occupy the position of the oscillating “I” that moves in and out of the commonality that the national “we” proposes. However since this “we” is inherently that which places a limit on the oscillating “I,” it also enables Tsuda to be critical of such a “we” while never having to forgo the sense of community that the “we” presents. Consequently, what Tsuda is working with here is the “givenness” of being “Japanese.”<sup>100</sup> While in the case of Morisaki, “givenness” might be understood as “un-

<sup>98</sup> Because, as de Bary argues, Morisaki defines “I” as a shifter”—meaning that which excludes others and at the same time signifies some meaning as well to an indefinite number of others it is an “empty sign that must be repeatedly grounded through ...[in] specific instances of discourse.” This enables the “I” to sustain its sociality without having to necessarily give in into the “we.” Thus rather than easy assimilation between the I’s into a (national) “we” (as Watsuji the twentieth century philosopher has suggested), Morisaki (in agreement with Emile Benevise), reads “we” as simply the “junction between the “I” and the “non-I.” This is precisely what enables the “I” to speak individually but not in isolation and away from a community. See de Bary, 243-45.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> This term “givenness” once again comes from de Bary’s analysis of Morisaki. De Bary draws on the work of Rey Chow whose use of the term “givenness” suggests that “subjectivity is not purely individual but an effect of historical forces” that are beyond any individual consciousness (246). In Morisaki’s writing “givenness” is interestingly translated as “un-freedom”—un-freedom from the social responsibility that one bears because that is the source of one’s consciousness. In effect what this suggests is that, one cannot be absolved of one’s responsibility (or the un-freedom) that comes with the access that one has to specific subject positions which comes via language. Therefore paradoxically while “cultural and linguistic instability” is what allows for the heterogeneity of the “I,” the “I” is also

freedom” from social responsibility, in the case of Tsuda too it is understood as “un-freedom” albeit from a certain Japaneseness, that she simultaneously claims to be hers and yet seeks to also redefine it by refusing the easy commensurability between the “I” and the “we.”<sup>101</sup> Significantly, Tsuda is able to, via writing, bring to the surface the heterogeneity of the “I” whose very contours are determined by “cultural and linguistic instability.”<sup>102</sup> Her letters highlight the very tension between the “I” that oscillates, and the very same “I” that seeks to fix itself via linguistic and cultural markers within the place that is called “Japan.” In doing so, she not only makes a point about the “I” that never quite fixes itself in any one pre-determined identity, but also, about “Japan” as a place which cannot simply have a singular meaning.

The extent to which Tsuda is engaged with the question of the physical place/space called Japan throws some light also on her preoccupation with the idea of “home.” That “home” is identified with “Japan” is a given, and in Tsuda’s personal correspondence the significance of this cannot be underestimated. Tsuda however, as we know, also has another “home” that she shared with the Lanmans, and the letters are peppered with nostalgia for this home. The landscape of home is important for Tsuda in order to be able to share with Lanman her “innermost thoughts”; it is the sense of shared physical space with Lanman—the “home” that allows her to write. Home is the “safe haven” just as writing is, and as letters come to take the place of conversations that she could be having with Lanman in their shared “home.” This “home” is an unchanging entity for Tsuda, something that she returns to via writing

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bound by a linguistic responsibility via the language for it is only through language that “the subject has access to specific, culturally inflected subject positions” Ibid., 246-47.

<sup>101</sup> In this context for instance, it is crucial to recognize that Tsuda is *not* making a case for a hyphenated identity such as Japanese-American. That is to say, despite her predominantly American upbringing, which makes her have “American ways,” and a Japanese racial identification on the basis of which she claims to be “Japanese,” she is not interested in straddling the two identities so as to occupy both by being a Japanese-American. Rather, through out Tsuda’s writing, that I examine above we find a conscious struggle to identify as a “Japanese” but by breaking the regime of the national “we.” Thus once again my point is that it is the easy commensurability of the “I” and the “we” that Tsuda’s writing brings to fore.

and also re-creates in writing. But it is also a home that she does not wish to return too, or return perhaps only to visit in order to be able to establish a new home for herself in Japan, a place that is already supposed to be her home, but which also never quite is.

The numerous references to both the physical aspects of her Japanese and American home describe Tsuda's her emotional attachment to both these place, and the extent to which question of home is tied with her own identity as a Japanese.<sup>103</sup> In the following section I do not focus upon the idea of "home" as yet another theme in their correspondence.<sup>104</sup> In other words, I am less inclined here to simply draw out the relations that Tsuda made between her American and Japanese home, as much as I hope to engage with Tsuda's fundamental critique of the notion of home. Just as her writing is critical about the easy commensurability between the "I" and the "we," it also questions our fundamental understanding of "home" as a "safe haven" a place that one is attached to often in emotional and irrational ways. Thus, while I once again turn to Tsuda's notion of home, I do so to examine the ways in which her articulation of the idea of "home" is deeply connected with her identity that occupies multiple subject positions and articulates itself from these varied locations.

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<sup>102</sup> I borrow this phrase from de Bary writing about Morisaki (244).

<sup>103</sup> Reading the Tsuda-Lanman correspondence in tandem, that is to say, not simply reading Tsuda alone one is struck by the extent to which Lanman too was obsessed with the idea of "home" with concerns ranging from the well-being of its members (that is she herself and Mr. Lanman) to being worried about its upkeep after Mr. Lanman passed away. Lanman is at once in her letters relieved to have a "nice home" and at the same time overwhelmed by the responsibilities that having a "nice home" places upon her. That said, the point here is that an obsession with the physical space defined as home, descriptions of it, and the various embedded meaning that having a home implied says something about the relation between women and home in a late nineteenth century American context. Some of Tsuda's preoccupation with these notions can also be traced to this, as that fact that "katei" and women's relation to household/ home was of some significance in topics that catered around the modernizing of women in Meiji Japan as well.

<sup>104</sup> While this section begins with precisely such an argument—as "home" being an enduring theme in her letters, I move away from this idea in the following section. Having already deployed the idea of home as a point of entry into Tsuda's articulations of the self, I move away from "home" as a theme to examine the potential that the *idea* of "home" presents for Tsuda to be able to negotiate between the "I" that is incommensurable with the "we" and the "home" that is incommensurable with "Japan."



### **The notion of “home” in Tsuda: Location/locution**

An un-alien-ness that is a given for Tsuda vis-à-vis her relation to Japan is expressed via bodily markings such as the shape of her face and the colour of her hair not to mention the clothes that she wears. While Tsuda identifies herself as Japanese, her writing demonstrates a certain consciousness of occupying this identity. A statement such as, she better remain a little bit “foreign” until she masters the language, and the comment that “soon I will become a native and nobody will recognize me at all,” provides a clue to this anxiety. This feeling of un-alien-ness vis-à-vis her relation to Japan resonates with Tsuda’s desire to find a “home” in Japan, or more specifically to make Japan as home. What this home is, or Japan as home is however, as early letters demonstrate, an ambiguous idea at best. I have already cited parts of her letter that provided her addressee, Mrs. Lanman with physical descriptions of her Japanese house. These descriptions, interspersed with Tsuda’s nostalgia for her American home, seek to not only to bring out the stark contrast between the two very different kinds of spaces that Tsuda occupied, but also draw attention to the her early struggles with trying to define the idea of “home,” and the relation between “home” and a physical space that it occupies. An interesting instance of this is the fact is that references to “Japan” in Tsuda’s early letters, and indeed for most of her life, almost always only refer to the space of “Tokyo.”<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> This can be adduced by her comments on Kyoto suggesting that outside Tokyo, a place such as Kyoto had no space in Tsuda’s national imaginary. The letter dated April 21, 1884, bemoans the fact that Japan (unlike America) as yet does not have one common language. “Is it not strange that in a small country like Japan, there should be so many provincialisms, ... that sometimes a Japanese needs an interpreter to talk to him countryman?” She continues along the same vein a paragraph later: “Tokio (*sic*) is so much more advanced than any other place in Japan that I would not leave Tokio for anything in the world. ... Is it not strange that while in America extending extending for thousands of miles, nearly the same language and customs are known, and in a few hundred in Japan it is so different? I am rather glad to have such a stable language as English to fall back upon, even at the loss of my changeable native tongue, which is yet rather difficult.” See *Attic Letters*., 153-54. The heterogeneity of Japan caused confusion for Tsuda suggesting that Japan as a place was only limited to her own existence and life in Tokyo.

Tsuda articulation of her racial affiliation to Japan which enables her to “belong” is, however, simultaneously marked by her alienation from this place, and the “strangeness” of Japan is most often marked by her reference to the strangeness of her situation, and her bewilderment that she felt when faced with varied customs and habits that were entirely new to her. Yet, despite these “in-homely” aspects of her Japanese life, Tsuda emphasised over and over again that she could not leave Japan for this is her “home,” or more precisely she much make this her home. What then is the relation between “home” and “Japan”? Furthermore, how does this complex identification of Japan-as-a-home relate to the heterogeneity of the “I” which locates from multiple subject positions?

At the very least, Tsuda’s complex set of identifications implies that the idea of a home is not a simple one, charged as it is with Tsuda’s profound sense of alienation as well as of belonging, both of which is expressed simultaneously in her letters. Just as in the case of Morisaki, it is the dis-unity of the “I,” its state of being in oscillation provides a point of entry for examining the way Tsuda approaches the question of a “home.” With no easy unity between “we,” “home,” and “nation,” the mode of “oscillation” is borne out of Morisaki’s, or in this case Tsuda’s, “linguistic inability.”<sup>106</sup> It is the linguistic inability, or rather “instability” that ultimately determines the contours of Morisaki’s relation to Japan-as- home.

As the letters that I cited earlier demonstrate, the problem is less with the lack of having a “home” for Tsuda as much as being able to come to terms with the limits of this new home. In her struggle to come to terms with Japan as a home, Tsuda rejects the notion of a normalized home and opts instead of creating her own home, which takes the form of a “boarding school.” Indeed, in a letter written as early as 1883 at a time when Tsuda is caught up in the problem of defining a “home”, she confides in

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 242-45.

Lanman stating that that the “only kind of school I want, where I could influence the most,”<sup>107</sup>

The problem of home is caught up also in the problem of national language, specifically that of the “mother tongue.” The relation to the home is necessarily bound to the oscillating “I.” “Already alienated in language, the *hikigaesha* subject cannot find an abiding home in any national linguistic regime,” de Bary writes of Morisaki.<sup>108</sup> Similarly in the case of Tsuda, alienated as she is the language that she must in-habit, Tsuda’s notion of an home too is also haunted by an “otherness” which it cannot control. This “other” in the case of Tsuda, is also the source of her language. For Tsuda, her language (“my” language) lies elsewhere, which leaves her feeling, at often times “insulated” while amongst the Japanese people. Tsuda’s discomfort comes from the fact that her origin is not here but there. i.e., somewhere else.<sup>109</sup> The disjuncture for Morisaki as for Tsuda is between the “my” and the “language” and this resonates with the incommensurability between the home and the nation. The critique here is not of the home per se, but of the easy slippage between home and the nation to which is bound the “homogenous we.”

Tsuda, while not a *hikigaesha* (the term is historically bound), is plagued by isolation, caught as she is between the disjuncture of language which is to be her

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<sup>107</sup> See letter dated June 10, 1883, *Attic Letters*, 77.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 245. Notice here that there is a mirroring between the discomfort in in-habiting a “national” language (for Morisaki and Tsuda,) and the discomfort in unproblematically in-habiting Japan “as home.”

<sup>109</sup> By drawing attention to the fact her presence in Japan is “haunted by an otherness,” and by suggesting that the origins that lie elsewhere cause the dis-connection between the “my” from the “language,” Morisaki is, in effect making a point also about the disjuncture between mother and nation. The “Korean” mother is the origin that Morisaki cannot talk about if she is to fit the “national linguistic paradigm” which allows her to make Japan the home but at the cost of the mother who must necessarily be “lost” in order to recover her home. Morisaki rejects such a home, as she refuses to reify, in de Bary’s words, “essentialize national culture in terms of an origin.” See de Bary, p. 247-48. Tsuda’s struggle to at once speak of Lanman as the mother, as the source of her “mother tongue” which she cannot name as such, and of rejecting this mother (tongue) because she already has a Japanese mother (and mother tongue), speak of a similar problematic. This contradiction exposes once again that within the national linguistic regime, unless home, mother (tongue), and nation fall in one clear line, their dissonance results into the loss of a (singular) idea of a “home.” The critique of a “home” that Tsuda engages in as I explicate below also has its *origins* here.

“mother tongue” and her home with which she identifies in “racial” terms and yet does not feel at-home in. Letters, such as the following underscore over and over again, the extent of the dissonance between the “I” and the national “we.” “My life and experience is a strange one,” Tsuda writes to Lanman in a letter dated August 12, 1883; “Did I not go on living and doing one way, and then change as suddenly as plunge into water?”<sup>110</sup> And else where in the same vein the isolation is emphasized by pointing out that for her there is no easy assimilation with the national “we,” for “we have no friends, no true real friends, but each other, our ways of thinking are very different from Japanese [and] very different from foreigners.”<sup>111</sup>

As Tsuda struggles with the language in which she finds no stable identity,<sup>112</sup> not to mention a home, we find that her criticism is directed less explicitly at the “national linguistic regime” as much as it is aimed against the notion of the “home” itself, whose very foundation is based on the heterosexual contract between a man and a woman. Thus, while Morisaki questions the very fundamental linkage between home and nation and between language and national identity, Tsuda not only takes this argument a step further, but also gives it a slightly different colour. No doubt, Tsuda is similar to Morisaki in sensing that her relationship to Japanese is unstable and hence cannot constitute an “abiding” home. But the point here is not simply limited to the returnee-subject, whose unfamiliarity or anxiety with the language makes her uncomfortable in-habiting the “home.” Rather the point is that, it is this discomfort that exposes the problematic linkages between home and language, and the reification of national culture which deploys language—“mother tongue” to determine who falls within and outside the boundary of the (national) “we.”

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<sup>110</sup> See *Attic Letters*, 88.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53. Emphasis mine. Tsuda’s “we” refers to her two friends Shige and Sutematsu. See also letter dated September 19, 1883, *Ibid.*, 95 for a similar reference.

<sup>112</sup> See letter dated April 21, 1884, *Ibid.*, 153-54.

The question of Tsuda's marriage is a topic, which sheds interesting light on Tsuda's understanding of home and her relation to it. When confronted with the question of her marriage, we know from Tsuda's letters that she is deeply troubled by the notion. The reasons are multiple; as she writes to Lanman it is hard for her to understand a union that is not based on the idea of (romantic) love and she is very critical of male-female relationship where a woman might be of equal rank to the man but is not treated as rank "mentally."<sup>113</sup> But as she admits the decision to put off marriage (before she rejects the idea entirely) has also much to do with her sense of discomfort in a Japanese home, and of course the all encompassing problem which is one of language.<sup>114</sup> When her two closest friends, the part of the circle that form her "we"—Shige and Sutematsu—get married, Tsuda is faced with the choice of either being married and set up her own "Japanese home" or to reject this idea, albeit with great difficulty, and choose to be alone.<sup>115</sup> As many of the letters written in 1883 attest, the question of marriage is quite central, and its rejection poses a risk of further alienation from a society in which Tsuda already feels ill at ease. The following letter, written at a time when Tsuda lacks any definitive teaching prospects, and is worried

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<sup>113</sup> See for instance letter dated, March 27, 1883, *Ibid.*, p. 56. In the same light see also her criticism of Hirobumi Ito with whom she interacted closely being a teacher of English for his wife. See December 21, 1883, *Ibid.*, p.113-118, particularly p. 118. Tsuda also complained the of the fact that unlike in America, young men and women had very little chance of social interaction, a fact which in her eyes seriously impeded the chances of an equal marriage. See letter dated February 20, 1883, where she once again makes a distinction between her position on this versus the "Japanese" perspective. *Ibid.*, p.45.

<sup>114</sup> Tsuda's rejection of the marriage norms and Japanese home life has also much to do with the very different Victorian upbringing that she received as a child in the Lanman household. See, Yûko Takahashi, "'Victoria jidai no hoomu' to saisho no joshi ryûgakusei: Tsuda Umeko no Lanmanka ukeire no keiei wo chûshin ni," *Tsuda juku daigaku kiyô* 30 (March 1998): 261-83.

<sup>115</sup> See letter dated November 11, 1883 where Tsuda confides in Lanman that although her feeling about Sutematsu's imminent marriage are "mixed," how much better it would have been for her and her friend stayed unmarried and "worked and taught and helped everything with me." In the same letter she tells Lanman that she must not be used to be "all alone" and a "teacher." See *ibid.*, p.105. Only a few pages later in a letter dated December 18, 1883 we find Tsuda complaining about the newly married friend stating that she has now become a "regular Japanese wife." *Ibid.*, 115. For thoughts on the difficulty of facing life "alone" and be respected without getting married see also, letters dated February 20, 1883. *Ibid.*, 44.

about being a burden on her family members, gives a clue about the extent to which the topic of marriage is tied to her sense of alienation and a lack of a “home”:

I am not going to marry unless I want to. I will not let circumstances or anybody force me into it. I want to have my school and never marry, though I do not say that shall never do so, because it is so hard, so very hard to get along alone. ... It is so hard to feel yourself as different from others and be looked on with contempt! If only I could do my own way, and not have everybody think me strange, just because I am not married.<sup>116</sup>

Another letter, a few days later expresses a similar theme, “[I do hope] that it is feasible for me to have a school, and not shock proprieties, and that I may live with some other object other than marriage—hateful theme.” Referring to Lanman’s concern over her, she even wrote to Lanman stating emphatically that, “I [won’t] allow anybody to discuss [marriage] for me. ... Marriages are made up often and I will not be made up now.”<sup>117</sup> Clearly, as the above letter indicates, Tsuda is aware that marriage is perhaps her single point of entry in the “social,” and her refusal to get married would only exacerbate her loneliness. Reading the last few lines however, also suggests that perhaps Tsuda’s rejection of marriage also came from the fact that she was herself acutely aware of her own awkward position in the marriage market and was perhaps unsure and insecure as to whether anyone would approach her at all given the extent to which she was still an outsider in the society. Critical scholarship however tends to err more on the side of this as being Tsuda’s conscious decision, implicitly thereby making a case for her “individualism” (and ostensibly her “feminism”). While my point here is not to either think of this as a “choice,” conscious or otherwise. Instead, I am more interested in examining the linkages between the rejection of marriage and by that logic also a rebuttal of a heterosexual

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<sup>116</sup> See letter dated June 8, 1883, *Ibid.*, 75. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>117</sup> See letter dated June 9, 1883, *Ibid.*, 77.

contract, which in Tsuda's understanding was critical for the foundation of a home-life.

One cannot forget that Tsuda's making of such a decision, consciously or otherwise, comes at a time when the Meiji state is explicitly involved not only in structuring of the household (*katei*) along the lines of Victorian household, but also invested in locating the woman—the wife and the mother at the centre of such a household. The “Woman Question,” its formulations and contours debated in magazines such as *Jogaku Zasshi* and by male Meiji intellectuals such as Mori Arinori and other members of the *Meiroke Zasshi* are engaged precisely with the theme of how to educate a woman so as to make her modern yet fully imbued with “Japanese” values. In these debates, the relation between woman and home is central, and her link to the nation crucial, founded upon the basic premise of a heterosexual contract. The question of women's education is of course the key which links the various aspects of these debates: it aims at reforming women so as to make them good wives of their husbands, but also more importantly become good mothers, playing the central role in the household which functions as a smaller version of the modern nation-state.<sup>118</sup>

Tsuda's rejection of marriage in lieu of her educational endeavours is significant because it at once rejects this notion of a household (that is based on a marriage and a heterosexual contract) while simultaneously also proposing that the core aspect of what constitutes such a household, is in fact the “education of woman,” thereby fundamentally altering the relation between “home” and “education.” Such a move on her part, I argue does not refuse a relation to the household as much as it questions the relation between the home and woman's education, and in doing so, indirectly re-works the conceptual meaning of “home.” No longer is the home simply a space, or which engenders a heterosexual contract, or that which is enabled by it.

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<sup>118</sup> This in short is really the core of the *ryōsai kenbō* (“Good Wife Wise Mother” ideology). I discuss this in greater detail in Chapter Four.

Nor is that which leaves the relation between woman and the nation-state unquestioned, thereby making home and Japan synonymous with each other. Rather, by drawing attention to the project of education, which play a fundamental role in creating the modern (yet traditional) “Japanese woman,” Tsuda vision fundamentally alters the role that education plays in the creation of a modern home. The key point here is that, although Tsuda like the Japanese state is invested in the production of the Japanese woman, the “modern woman” that Tsuda’s education agenda envisions does not fit that neatly with the state sponsored ideal woman located at the heart of the modern *katei* (household/ home). Her critique of the home, and her educational endeavours thus questions, as it also alters the naturalised relation between “woman,” “home” and by extension “nation.” But more than that, and perhaps due to her own fraught relation to the Japanese home, it also raises a very fundamental question about the meaning of a home.<sup>119</sup>

The key terms in the letters that I have cited above are marriage (its rejection), work (it acceptance) and the loneliness (the inevitable by-product if one is to choose the latter over the former). While such a mapping may also make it seem, somewhat erroneously, that Tsuda chooses one option over other consciously, I wish to remain alert here of that fact that such is not necessarily the case. Rather than making this an argument about Tsuda’s individuality, or of a “subject” who can ostensibly “choose” one option over other, I attempt to examine how the idea of work and of marriage get juxtaposed against each other. Tsuda’s emphatic refusal of marriage, may well come from the fact that she is unable to get married; the point however here is that marriage

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<sup>119</sup> The two volumes by Koyama Shizuko lay out the general argument of the establishment of the *katei* (home) and its relation to women in Meiji period. See *Katei no seisei: Josei no kokuminka* (Tokyo: Keisou shoubou, 1999), and *Ryōsai kenbō to iu kihan* (Tokyo: Keisou shoubou, 1991). The term “home” was defined as “*katei*,” according to Koyama first by the *Jogaku zasshi* which began publication in 1885. In the February and March issues of 1888, *Jogaku zasshi* carried editorials with the title “Nihon no katei” [Japanese home] after which the terms became common parlance over the years, and especially in the second and third decade of the Meiji Period. See, *Katei no seisei*, 29-30. After that



is seen as antagonistic to the kind of work that Tsuda wishes to pursue, despite the fact that the state centred *ryôsai kenbô* ideology is not opposed to women's work as long as it retained woman at the centre of the *katei*, the very *katei* whose very idea Tsuda finds limiting. What, then, is it about Tsuda's notion of a household and of "work" that simply makes it unfeasible to make both possible simultaneously? Furthermore, what kind of an education is Tsuda proposing which radically alters the conceptualization of a home (and a household)? Before turning to Tsuda's educational agenda let us look momentarily at an alternative view of the "home," as imagined by immigrants and women of colour that Chandra Talpade Mohanty proposes.

In a very different context from that of late nineteenth century Meiji Japan, Mohanty examines a modern autobiographical narrative of Minnie Bruce Pratt (1984) to suggest that "identity" and "home" do not necessarily form a single, unproblematic connection with each other, thereby arguing that there exist "contradictory relations between experience, identity, and community."<sup>120</sup> Elsewhere in the same volume Mohanty goes on to argue that the home is far from being a safe and a comforting space. Rather, and especially for women (including migrants and people of colour) she sees "home" as such is a patriarchal, white and disciplinary concept that is not "a comfortable, stable, inherited and familiar space." Mohanty then via her analysis of Pratt goes on to suggest that "being at home" and "not at home" in a certain place are not necessarily opposite terms, as much as they are contradictory. In other words, not being at home is a matter of realizing that home is an "illusion of coherence." Taking cue from the notion of home as a disciplinary concept, she reminds us of the fact that, the nineteenth century construction of the "home" is precisely centred around making

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Koyama also goes on to cite the various articles that were published in the *Jogaku zasshi* under the general heading of *katei*.

<sup>120</sup> I am referring here to the autobiographical narrative of Minnie Bruce Pratt, "Identity: Skin, Blood, Heart," that Mohanty analyses in her volume, *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, practising Solidarity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003)

us believe in the myth of unity that a home creates, providing comfort, albeit falsely, with its stable contours which in often do not exist. Lack of same-ness, stability and comfort-ability however does not mean that there is no longer a desire for unity, for one's identity is inherently tied in with one's notion of home, as is clear from Tsuda's fraught relations to her own home. But, a fractured identity such as Tsuda's inevitably leads to the question of the unity of home; in Tsuda's case as we have seen the oscillating "I" resonates with the constant shifting between what Tsuda imagines as a "home." But since a desire for the home remains, for it is tied to the core of one's sense of the self, Mohanty suggests that one continues to strive for it by constantly re-working its perpetually shifting boundaries. Thus, "home" become a "product of work, of struggle" wherein its inherently unstable and contextual boundaries are constantly being re-evaluated. Mohanty defines such a home as a "community," for unlike a "home" which hides beneath its surface the tensions that make the home imaginable and give it unity and oneness, the structure of a community is far more open to change with a commitment not to the foreclosure of conflicting tensions but rather with an allowance for an imaginative reworking of differences in order to enable "social transformation."<sup>121</sup>

The vision of home as community that Mohanty articulates is invested in thinking of home as a "politically charged space" in service of a radical social transformation. The subjects of her analysis are migrants, immigrants, and women of colour whose relation to the state, often tenuous, making it all the more imperative to re-imagine home as space wherein the fraught relations between identity, and experience can be negotiated. While the subjects of Mohanty's analysis differ substantially in terms of experience, from the social spaces that Tsuda inhabits, Mohanty's analysis is important because it brings to the fore certain crucial issues

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

which concern our reading of Tsuda's notion of home as well. First, it questions the standard notion of a home as space with stable contours. The splitting of the "I" demands that we read Tsuda's letters always keeping in mind the differing perspectives from which she speaks. This very heterogeneous "I" then also alludes to the fact that a "home" cannot be unitary or singular. Mohanty, moreover, by exposing the patriarchal underpinnings of a home, also draws attention to the fact that the idea of "home" needs to be historicised. In other words her analysis denaturalizes the otherwise reified concept of a home, reminding us also the extent to which the "home" serves the modern nation-state and how the investment in the notion of a home is central to the governance of the nation-states' citizens. Finally, Mohanty, also makes the critical link between "work" and "home"—in her analysis work is not located outside of a home, as much as it is part which constitutes the *very process* of home-making. This is particularly important, for Tsuda as we know, is less interested in rejecting the notion of the home, as she is with re-working this very idea.

In the letters that I examine above, Tsuda's determination to establish her residential school—for that is where she feels she can wield her influence the most, is starkly contrasted with the idea of marriage which will bind her in family, and by that logic home life. Tsuda as I have already suggested rejects home for work. Taking Mohanty's point into consideration however, the same move on Tsuda's part can also be "read" not as a explicit rejection of the home, but rather as a perspectival shift which allows one to re-imagine the school as a home.<sup>122</sup> If we are to examine the

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<sup>122</sup> I am aware here that a "school" is as much a disciplinary tool as a "home" is in late nineteenth century. As many scholars, and particularly Timothy Mitchell whose work *Colonising Egypt* informs my analysis, have shown the educational institutions especially those in emerging nation-states were created and relied upon by the state to convert "masses" into national "citizens." Therefore by suggesting here that Tsuda reworks the idea of home as a school I do not in any way hope to imply that this institution (of a school) is any less bound to the state than the home is. If anything, the home ostensibly afforded a "private" space away from the purview of the state, to which even the school cannot lay claim to. Tsuda's reworking of the school as a home, thus provides an interesting counterpoint to this separation of the public/private, despite the fact that both are equally engaged in the creation and disciplining of individuals and citizens of the nation-state.

letters over a period of time, a striking aspect of her life that one notices is that Tsuda's time in Japan was marked constantly by movement. Tsuda it seems rarely stayed in any single dwelling for any long period of time; her sustained relations were more pronounced with the space of her school than home.<sup>123</sup> For instance, while at "home" i.e. at her parents' house, Tsuda was perpetually concerned that she was a burden to them especially after she rejected the choice of a marriage. Thus as a single woman, Tsuda's choice of dwelling was entirely determined by her work; she came to inhabit spaces almost always with other women, and after the founding of her school in 1900, lived primarily on school grounds.

The space of a school thus becomes identified with the space of the home, and the community it provides becomes analogous to her family. In the present day context, this, itself perhaps does not bespeak of a radical re-working of "home"; in fact if anything it only suggests a simple reinstatement of a the physical space of home with that of a school. In Tsuda's case, her home becomes her school and her centre of her life—this physical space. There are two crucial things however the demand attention here. First, Tsuda bears the influence of a later nineteenth century model of a Victorian household having grown up in such a home; her setting up of school is thus informed by this model of a home. In 1887, several years after her return to the Japan, we have a letter which speaks of her nostalgia for the "old home": "the only things that have not changed and never will change for me are my love and gratitude for you

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<sup>123</sup> Having "returned" to Japan after staying in the United States for over a decade, Tsuda in the early years found herself in her parents home. The first year is full of travails many of them which she recorded for Lanman, and that I have cited above. In November 1883 Tsuda moved to the house of Ito Hirobumi to act as a teacher and interpreter for his wife. But that did not last for long, and by June 1884 she had moved out. Tsuda moved out again in July 1886 to share a house with her cousin, and later again in 1888 she and her cousin (in a different house) shared space with Alice Bacon who had come to teach at the Peeresses School. In 1892 after her return from the U.S. Tsuda set up house with her cousin where a few students also lodged with them. Through these moves, it is important to remember that Tsuda moves as an "individual." After many more moves, and the establishment of her own school Joshi Eigaku Juku in September 1900, Tsuda's home became her school. We find her either living on the premises itself or close by; many of these years were also spent with sharing the space with Alice Bacon especially during the times when Bacon was also teaching at the school (1900-02).

two dear people. I love to think of you two, the same unchanged couple sitting by the fire in your cozy room, just as I left you. It is so nice to think of you always thus. ... Someday when you are least expecting it, I will come in upon you and find you in your old places, and I, I will take mine between you.”<sup>124</sup> Tsuda clearly saw here place with the Lanmans in the way she did not in the Kamakura house of her Japanese parents whom she visited regularly. In mail written over three decades we find no reference of the kind that I cite above with regards to her Tsuda’s own parent’s dwelling. Tsuda did however write of her own homes often wishing fervently that Mrs. Lanman could see their house and the garden.<sup>125</sup> Significantly, as the letter written in 1901 indicates, the funds for her house (which to be in the vicinity of her school) also came from the Philadelphia Committee responsible for paying much of the school expenditure.<sup>126</sup> Clearly the relation between the school and the home was intricately tied, and Tsuda spent much of her “home-life” in the company of her students and other teachers.<sup>127</sup>

The second aspect that needs to be highlighted is that, with Tsuda’s life so closely tied in with her school her “family” came to be constituted of other teachers, students, and particularly friends such as Alice Bacon and Anne Hartshorne who assisted her in the working of the school. Perhaps, the difference between her “home”

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<sup>124</sup> See letter dated January 29, 1887, *Attic Letters*, 277. See also a similar sentiment expressed in a letter dated January 22, 1902, 378, and letter dated November 28, 1906, 446, where once again there is a desire to visit the “old home.”

<sup>125</sup> See letters dated, January 16, and February 4-5, 1904, *Ibid.*, 403-04.

<sup>126</sup> See letter dated February 20, 1901, *Ibid.*, 362. The Committee was established in 1900.

<sup>127</sup> One must also note that Tsuda travelled frequently abroad for the purpose of collecting funds for school, and in that context also speak of the condition of the Japanese women (First, from 1888- 1992 when she studied at Bryn Mawr College and later at Oswego during which time she conceived the “Women’s Scholarship for Japanese Women. In 1898, to attend the International Congress of Federation of Women’s Clubs in Denver, Colorado, after which she also travelled to Cambridge, Oxford, Paris and also Cheltenham College, in England where Ramabai had also spent time earlier. The again in 1907 for fundraising and rest.) Many of the speeches she gave during this time are recorded in the *Tsuda Umeko Monjo* [*The Writings of Tsuda Umeko*] (Kodaira: Tsuda juku daigaku, 1984). During such times, she usually did visit Mrs. Lanman, in the “old home.” But these forays I want to suggest also are significant because they speak of her shuttling back and forth between what she sought to make her own “home” in Japan, i.e. her school and that of the Lanman’s world and her own “old home.”

and that of her friends such as Sutematsu and Shige highlights most starkly the extent to which Tsuda's "home,"—made up primarily of women who came together in their endeavour to work for the education of Japanese girls, was so fundamentally different from the model of the "home" (*katei*) which founded on the principle of a heterosexual contract and sustained through the "work" of a "good wife and a wise mother." Thus, what Tsuda sets up can be defined nominally as a school—one must not forget the desire she articulated early on, which was to see up a boarding school to yield most influence, yet what it effectively is, is a reworking of the idea of home.

The central core of such a home is the community of women who engaged in, to deploy Mohanty's terms, the radical transformation of the Japanese woman. The "product" of Tsuda's work taken up in this community of women is the "modern and educated Japanese woman," who on the surface does not differ as much from the state sponsored ideal, but whose very education comes out of a radical re-working of the notion of the home. That Tsuda worked with the notion of a community, as perhaps an alternative to the patriarchal home assumes even greater importance when we take into account the objects of her educational agenda. As the letters unequivocally note, Tsuda wished to primarily educate the upper class young women,—women who she believed had the least access to missionary schools, and over whom the state sought most control.<sup>128</sup> "I had always wanted to help [Japanese women]," Tsuda wrote early on in one of her letters. The life of a Japanese woman, she continued,

is sad. In blind ignorance she does everything—a most respectful, obedient, and dutiful way must be hers to her husband. Her children are more his than

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<sup>128</sup> See letter dated December 4, 1883, *Attic Letters*, 109. Tsuda felt that the lack of missionary access had of course something to do with the missionaries themselves given their condescending ways, but that it also had much to do with the higher classes as well and their particular narrow-mindedness. And despite her criticism for the missionaries themselves, this alludes to the fact that she did find the quality of education in missionary schools higher than the options that the state provided, aided also by the fact that the missionary school education was also imbibed with Christian morals. In this context, she identified herself as a "Japanese" and thought that she was particularly suited to educate them, because of her greater access to them, as well as what she considered a better education. See letter dated, April 11, and May 23, 1883, *Ibid.*, 59, 70.

hers. She brings them up anyway, often in ignorance. She is not often loved, often a plaything, oftener like a servant—but little educated she believes herself perfectly happy, if she has a home, a husband and children. ... But all these things could go, if it were not for one great thing, the ignorance, the sad lack of education, and also the want of Christian morals.<sup>129</sup>

Despite the fact that Tsuda did modify her position on the Japanese women considerably and over years so as to suggest that not all women lived in such pathetic conditions, or that many were better off than their “Asiatic sisters,”<sup>130</sup> these few lines above give a glimpse of the core of Tsuda’s educational agenda. Moreover, the passage also suggests in clear terms who she considered to be the ideal objects of her educational agenda. It was for precisely to have access to such women, and for the fact that it was a government job, that Tsuda agreed to take up the position at the Peeresses’ School in 1885. The letter written to Lanman expressing her joy with the hope that she could have access to the “highest and best girls in land” who would go on to “influence... the fate of [Japan]”<sup>131</sup> attests to this. While Tsuda has been criticised for her rather conservative and especially elitist standpoint, by seeking to work with women in high-rank and thereby participate in educational endeavours that were not all that different from state sponsored goals, one cannot miss the point that what Tsuda hoped for, via her educational agenda was to also introduce a new idea of the home within the very highest circles of the Japanese society, wherein women would not be simply wives and mother but also individuals. One could thus say that the thrust of Tsuda’s work is directed precisely at those sections of the Japanese society, which were marked out for reform by the state. The Woman Question was very much a question of modernising the upper class of women, as well as creating a stable bourgeoisie at whose centre would be the educated yet traditional woman, the locus of the modernizing nation-state.

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<sup>129</sup> See letter dated August 12, 1883, Ibid., 86.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>131</sup> See letter dated February 7, 1885, Ibid., 180-81.

That Tsuda directed her reform at the same class of women and yet sought to fundamentally re-structure the home bespeaks of a double move. By identifying the school-as-home, and furthermore, by seeking to establish a boarding school she at once questions the fundamentally patriarchal division between home and work division that the establishment of the *katei* sought to put in place. In other words, it is the neat division of the inner/outer sphere, with women firmly ensconced in the inner sphere that is questioned when no longer are women simply relegated to the inner sphere. Tsuda's re-structuring of the home at whose centre lies the upper-class woman, also an object of the state's interest, suggests that Tsuda is in fact presenting an alternative to the ideology of "*ryōsai kenbō*." Moreover, Tsuda's community established via the notion of the school-as-a-home does not stand outside of the disciplinary boundaries of the home (or of a school, for after all both are disciplinary frameworks put in place by the modernizing nation-state) as much as it seeks to destabilise these notions, so that we maybe able to question them. To what extent she was successful is difficult to say, but the fact comes as no surprise that many of the first generation of Japanese feminists were educated at Tsuda Eigaku Juku. Paradoxically, the first wave feminists and generations after consider Tsuda a conservative educator hardly worthy of being called a "feminist."

Reading Tsuda's letters against the grain allows us to examine the contradictions in Tsuda's articulations of her self, and its relation to the question of home. Admittedly, Tsuda's educational agenda is developed in greater detail and in far more concrete ways, than what we find in her correspondence with Lanman, in the countless speeches that she delivered in America and the more formal correspondence that she carried out with Americans who provided financial help for her school. Yet, the Tsuda-Lanman correspondence, which does not present anything more than the most basic structure of her educational agenda, significantly provide a glimpse of the



inherent contradictions in Tsuda's thinking—complexities that get flattened out in the “event” of writing a biography. Moreover, the correspondence, between Tsuda and Lanman, a woman wholly different from herself in terms of race, class and nationality and age, reminds us of a sociality of the “I”—a sociality which nonetheless cannot be unproblematically subsumed under the national “we.” This sociality is necessarily an important aspect of writing letters; within the Tsuda-Lanman correspondence it is put to an end when Lanman dies.

It is this pattern of sociality, generated out of a desire to make Tsuda available to her readers (outside the scope of her letters), that becomes the basis of Ôba Minako's *Tsuda Umeko*. Although a “biography” Tsuda retains some of the sociality, as we have now Ôba moving back and forth between writing about herself and writing about Tsuda. Ôba's narrative thus takes up the challenge of the epistolary medium as she tries to read Tsuda through her letters but without the interrupting voice of Lanman. In the following section I will examine what such a reading does to the genre of biography, and the kind of figure of Tsuda that it produces.

### **Ôba reading Tsuda—Another introduction**

The most striking feature of Ôba's text is that Tsuda's letters take up a physical space in Ôba's writing. Ôba's biography thus, significantly differs from the rest is that, Tsuda's letters, inasmuch as they are transliterated, actually obtrude and take up space, in Ôba's narrative apparatus. Moreover, as the letters physically take up space in Ôba's writing, their “physical” presence also interferes in Ôba's telling of the life of Tsuda. I examine the extent to which Ôba's writing of *Tsuda*<sup>132</sup> is also an act of Ôba writing her-self. If this is the case, what light does it cast on Tsuda's letters, if in this correspondence it is not Lanman but Ôba who acts as Tsuda's interlocutor?

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<sup>132</sup> Note that the title of Ôba's text *Tsuda Umeko*, or *Tsuda* in short, appears in italics while the proper name, Tsuda does not.

In Ôba's retelling of Tsuda's story (via a re-writing of Tsuda's letters) there develops a kind of a conversation between Tsuda and Ôba. This kind of "conversation" suggests a non-circular, open-ended "turn" towards Tsuda on part of Ôba; the narrative pushes forward by moving back and forth between Ôba's tale and that of Tsuda's, resulting into a narrative that constitutes something more than a monologic, (re)telling of one story. The desire on Ôba's part to speak with/for Tsuda and at the same time to weave her own life-story into the narrative considerably enriches, complicates and even undoes the biographical text.

As part of my argument, I will examine whether Ôba's text can be located somewhere between a biography (a simple narrative of an unfolding of one's life and identity, and essentially a monologue), and a dialogue between two entities whose positions constantly fluctuate vis-à-vis each other. Not only does Ôba occupy the position of Tsuda's interlocutor, but she also takes on the role of Tsuda's correspondent replacing Lanman in the writing of *Tsuda*. What kind of an interaction does this produce? The remainder of this chapter focuses on Ôba's reading of Tsuda's letters in the text, *Tsuda Umeko*. As against the earlier part of this chapter which delved into the letters of Tsuda as they exist as part of a correspondence, I approach Tsuda's letters here via Ôba's "biography" in order to analyse in detail how the "writing of a life," which is what a biography is, interfaces with the writing of the letters, whose very mode subverts a retroactive narrativization. The following section focuses on the textual aspects of the narrative to see how the two voices interweave and what such intertextuality produces. The final section, addresses some larger question that Ôba's *Tsuda* raises, namely with regard to the question of representation. Here I am concerned with whether Tsuda's voice can successfully intervene in the retroactive (re)production of her own life which is biography? If that is possible, can such a "biography" break away from, or indeed subvert a regime of representation at

whose core the genre of biography is constructed? The reading of Ôba's text presents a counter point to Tsuda's own "act of writing." Thus, while the correspondence stages an encounter between Tsuda and Lanman, Ôba's biography suggests another encounter between two women separated not only across space but also time.

### Reading Ôba reading Tsuda

Ôba's book length volume titled simply *Tsuda Umeko*, marks the author's move away from the strictly fictional writing that Ôba is best known for. To be sure, analyses of Ôba's fiction argue that her writing has always had a feminist bent, and that Ôba has also engaged in prior critical writing most notably in *Onna no dansei ron*, *Yawarakai feminizumu e* etc.<sup>133</sup> Scholars such as Michiko Wilson, who has written critically on Ôba's text *Tsuda*, makes a somewhat problematic distinction between political activism and an critical textual intervention, arguing that Ôba's "radicalism" has not translated into activism. Instead (Wilson would argue) Ôba prefers the space of the text, a space from which she doubtless mounts a scathing attack on the patriarchal aspects of social life in Japan.<sup>134</sup> Wilson claims that the writing of *Tsuda* marks for Ôba a move away from earlier affiliations, since despite her lack of direct "political involvement, a keen interest in the inherent political implications of socio-cultural issues...is [nonetheless] evident" in *Tsuda*. *Tsuda*, in other words, is Ôba's only text, which consciously combines her literary ideas with her political interests.<sup>135</sup> Describing the text as a "literary biography," Wilson argues that *Tsuda Umeko* is

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<sup>133</sup> See, (Tokyo: Chûô Kôronsha, 1982). The latter is a collection of interviews with nine women. See, (Tokyo: Seidôsha, 1992). Other than these two works, there are several other non-fictional as well as fictional works where Ôba deals with questions relating to the "meaning of literature" and "women's relation to language."

<sup>134</sup> Michiko Niikuni Wilson, *Gender is a Fair Game: (Re)Thinking the Fe(Male) in the Works of Ôba Minako* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1999). See Chapter Three "Artist as Cultural Critic as Woman," 46. Henceforth cited in the main text as "GF."

<sup>135</sup> According to Wilson writing *Tsuda*, not only marks Ôba's own socio-political leanings, but is for Ôba also a "rite of passage,... an opportunity to re-examine the question of gender." Ibid., 49.

“much more than a biography; it is an intimate dialogue between two kindred spirits.”<sup>136</sup>

The intimacy comes from the fact that Ôba, according to Wilson “instinctively identif[ied] with Umeko.”<sup>137</sup> Writing about Tsuda came naturally to her, because both of them had led similar lives. Ôba, as Wilson informs us, also spent eleven years in the United States, where she struggled with the task of mastering a foreign language, before realising their life-long dreams at the age of thirty-six. Moreover, in terms of writing styles and personalities, the similarities are even greater—both women’s political views about the patriarchal society in which they lived are highly critical yet essentially non-combative. Outwardly then, Tsuda as well as Ôba exude a calm yet critical exterior; and yet, as Wilson points out, “Umeko’s sober and critical observations of Japanese and American society are matched in range and force by Minako’s interpretations of America.”<sup>138</sup>

Ôba’s “identification” with Tsuda is fascinating for Wilson to the extent that it articulates Ôba’s own position vis-à-vis the “question of gender.” That is to say, while describing *Tsuda* as a biography and an “intimate dialogue” Wilson’s analysis of the actual text is limited to the extent to which Ôba discloses her own position in the text. Reading *Tsuda*, for Wilson therefore, is an exercise in bringing together in one single concept the prose of Tsuda’s world and the prose of Ôba’s writing. Wilson’s central concern is to examine the ways in which Ôba like Tsuda is hostile toward a straightforward political stance, preferring a writing style at once humorous, elusive and candid.<sup>139</sup> However, considering that Wilson is primarily in Ôba’s narrative style, she

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 47-48. Wilson’s distinction between “writing” and “politics” is analogous to the distinction made between the “textual” and “political.” See Rey Chow’s article, “When Whiteness Feminizes...: Some Consequences of a Supplementary Logic,” *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 11, 3 (1999/2000): 137-68.

is interested in examining the ways in which Ôba's writing develops without delving into the details of Tsuda's correspondence. Thus, in Wilson's writing, Ôba's commentary on Tsuda takes priority, and therefore even though she explicitly identifies *Tsuda* as a biography, her own reading is completely devoid of Ôba's own textual analysis. A central paradox, one that completely escapes Wilson's notice is that Ôba's reading of Tsuda, is at least in textual terms almost entirely based on Tsuda's large corpus of letters. One is compelled to ask: if Ôba's *Tsuda* is to be read entirely in order to know Ôba, as Wilson expects us to, why label the text as biography and not an autobiography?

Wilson's greater emphasis on how the text constitutes the core of Ôba's position as a "writer and a critic,"<sup>140</sup> forecloses the possibility of reading the inherent paradoxes of Ôba's project, and questioning its very status as a "biography." By focusing simply the similarities between the two women's lives, Wilson becomes far too invested in establishing a connection between the two women. Within the text however, this connection takes place by the means of an "encounter" which leads to an intimacy. Leaving the dynamics of this "intimacy" unexamined however, Wilson entirely ignores the extent to which this intimacy is a result of a dialogue that the text brings about.

The central problem in Wilson's analysis thus, is that it does not engage with the constitutive ambivalence of Ôba's text. In other words, although she does gesture toward the question of intimacy in Ôba's text, this idea of intimacy is based on the pre-formed identities of both Ôba and Tsuda; it is not an intimacy that develops via writing, from within writing as conversation. In Wilson's text writing is simply a representation of an already existent intimacy.

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<sup>140</sup> Wilson, *Gender is a Fair Game*, 48.

For instance, Wilson does not take into account that the speaking subject, the “I” (*watashi*) who speaks in shifting modes, and often simultaneously from several locations. This “I” speaks in Tsuda’s voice as well as Ôba’s, and at times causes confusion for the reader, who cannot know which “I” is speaking. As multiple narrators located in different times and places engage with each other, a dialogue ensues and the narrative movement forwards takes place on the basis of this dialogue (the “I” is at once spoken of and spoken to; its performativity is for this reason irreducible). More importantly, it is this dialogism that supports intimacy and not the other way around. The question then is not so much about who, but more importantly *what* this text is about? How does, *Tsuda* as a text provide a place, a scene, a site where both Tsuda and Ôba are written?

Ôba’s “biography” is to a large extent a re-writing (in Japanese) of Tsuda’s letters to Adeline Lanman.<sup>141</sup> Ôba’s text allows Tsuda to narrate her story in her own voice (via the letters). But because the letters appear in Japanese in *Tsuda*, Tsuda’s narration at a very fundamental level is interrupted by the voice of Ôba who is the translator of the letters. The question of translation, and the fact that Ôba’s plays the role of a translator is both interesting and significant and I will deal with it separately. It is also crucial to note that interruption of Tsuda’s voice takes place in yet another way: Ôba’s narrative structures Tsuda’s story as it is also structured by it. The narrative on the one hand, can only move in synchrony with Tsuda’s letters. Yet, it is also Ôba’s own story that pulls Tsuda’s letters in a certain direction: not only does

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<sup>141</sup> One could argue that the letters were only “discovered” in 1984 so Yamazaki and Yoshikawa both of whom published their biographies in 1930 and 1962 respectively has no access to this material. But the fact remains that their texts lie very much within the realm of narrating “a life”—whole and structured in every way. “External facts” provide enough proof for this particular narrativisation. Furuki’s biography falls within the same category in spite of having access to the letters. The last chapter in “The White Plum,” reads as the narrator, Furuki speaking to Tsuda. However, this cannot, under any circumstances, be called a “dialogue.” For Furuki writes, in the most mundane way telling Tsuda about school related developments and the progress the Tsuda students have made. In other words, it lacks the intimacy build in her text vis-à-vis her relation with Tsuda. Perhaps what makes Ôba’s biography

Ôba disregard Tsuda's "time," by either making huge leaps in terms of the dates which mark Tsuda's letters, but depending upon the content Ôba pulls the argument into "her" own time<sup>142</sup> Thus, given Ôba's own interest in writing about herself, the direction *Tsuda* takes is constantly a matter of a struggle between Ôba and Tsuda.

Before proceeding a close reading of the text, let us look for a moment at the text's "story-line." The text of *Tsuda* is divided into ten chapters, and begins with Tsuda's return to Tokyo in 1882 after her lengthy stay with Mr. and Mrs. Lanman. The chapters narrate Tsuda's life chronologically, starting with the time of her return to Japan, and we hear about Tsuda's "past" (about the time before her return to Japan only via flashbacks). The story ends with Tsuda's death. Each of the chapter provides the details of any events in Tsuda's life primarily Tsuda's perspective. The strength of this text thus lies in Ôba's ability to interpret the figure of Tsuda based primarily upon the reading of letters. Unlike many other biographies Ôba relies very little on historical research; if any "event" in Tsuda's life is narrated, Ôba primarily provides an interpretation of what she reads in Tsuda's letters. Other characters, while well delineated and maintaining a strong presence remain mostly marginal. Ôba as a narrator, provides the perspective of an interpreter (of Tsuda's letters) as she also performs the role of a translator.

Tsuda's story begins in *Tsuda* with a date—a marking of time. The narrative opens with a letter by Tsuda written to Lanman only hours before she arrived in Japan. It is only after we read through this missive, as yet unmarked by name, place and genre (for it could be a part of a letter or a diary and has no signature) that we encounter Ôba's voice for the first time. Ôba's intervention is both brief and matter of fact, providing the bare minimum information about the genre, signer, and signee,

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different is that she calls it a "literary biography," although what "literary" means remains a question and open to interpretation.

<sup>142</sup> This is particularly marked from Chapter Seven onwards, where Ôba not only skips dates, but the argument becomes more fragmented as it speaks increasingly in Ôba's voice.

before we move on, once again to another letter. The first few pages therefore inscribe time, and establish the relative present, i.e., the “present time” of the one who writes the letter, from where we as readers are to begin the story. Both letters are written in 1882; the brief interlude between the two letters provides an explanation for why these letters were written in the first place, drawing us to the events of 1871, when the decision to send the five girls with the Iwakura mission was made. Immediately following the first letter, Ôba writes by way of explanation:

This is the letter that Tsuda Umeko penned in her cabin just before the ship Arabia which had left the docks of San Francisco on November 19, 1882 was due for arrival in the Yokohama harbour. Umeko was one of the five girls, who had been sent to America eleven years ago in 1871 by the Hokkaido reclamation office of the Japanese government.<sup>143</sup>

In this way, for the time being, the “present” is marked by 1882. There is however still only one “I” which speaks, that is that of Tsuda’s, and indeed the very first voice that we encounter via the letters is hers. The brief interlude provides another narrator, yet unnamed but who structures the narrative, and it is only several pages later, halfway into the first chapter, that the second narrator’s identity is established as another “I” (also, *watashi*). The new identity, that of Ôba’s, validates its position in the text by revealing the basis of the relationship it has with Tsuda, a connection which we are to understand as the clarification, or perhaps justification of why she can write about Tsuda. The second “I” writes, “[m]ore that twenty years ago, while the Japanese people were still trying to shake off the weight of the word post-war, I left Japan to live in America for eleven years. Upon reading Umeko’s letters I am reminded of my thoughts upon returning to Japan which by that time was going through a development boom.”<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Ôba, *Tsuda*, 8

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 16.



What such a connection elaborates is the link between the two women, a link expressed via an experience prior to writing. This experience justifies the writing, as it clarifies Ôba's intervention in the text; "I can understand her because we have had similar experiences."<sup>145</sup> The second narrator (Ôba), by giving justification for her presence in the texts suggests an important narrative move: Ôba's voice opens up Tsuda's letters for a dialogue. For Ôba, narrating Tsuda is simply not enough for the story; Ôba's story also needs to be narrated. But the second story cannot be told without first providing a justification—I too lived in the United States for eleven years. My writing (that is Ôba's) of Tsuda comes after this experience, without which Ôba as "I" cannot write. This secondary narrative then props itself on the primary narrative: Tsuda grounds Ôba., and from early on both function as each other's mirrors.<sup>146</sup>

Seven of the ten chapters of *Tsuda*, are organised around the physical transcription of Tsuda's letters by Ôba. In these chapters, we do encounter Ôba's voice mostly by way of explanation. The space between Tsuda's letter and Ôba's commentary (on it) is simply marked simply by a *kugi kakkô* (equivalent to the English quotation marks) and an indentation. In very concrete terms therefore, Tsuda's voice is located within Ôba's narrative. But the markers indicating a change in voice are somewhat ambiguous and often easily missed. Moreover, while marked off by an indentation, Tsuda's voice does not necessarily bear a difference in terms of "tone." More specifically, Ôba's voice imitates Tsuda's making it necessary at times to re-

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<sup>145</sup> This is in fact the line of argument that Wilson takes up in her analysis. See, Wilson, *Gender is a Fair Game*, 46-7.

<sup>146</sup> Starobinski's analysis of an autobiography as a narrative is useful here. His argument is that an autobiography has two addressees and the two I's in the text move to satisfy the needs for these two addressees. There is the monologic "I" (which is discursive) and then also the "I" which responds to history. A dialogue, conversation ensues between the two, there is space between the two, and because this space is maintained a narrative is created and the story progresses. In a similar way, one can imagine that Tsuda's discursive "I" which resists narrativization, comes to be located in "history" via Ôba's "I."

read the text in order to clarify who exactly the writer is.<sup>147</sup> Ôba's narrative thus not only structures Tsuda's, but it also freely intermingles with the latter's voice, and posits itself as an immediate response to Tsuda. The two voices can speak in each other's presence, and to each other, thereby making *each other present*. Ôba's presence is expressed in two ways. As an interpreter of Tsuda's text, Ôba's provides an explanation for Tsuda's letter. Yet more often than not, it also merely repeats Tsuda's words, a repetition which acquires the tone of confirmation. A typical passage in the text as we shall see below, transcribes Tsuda's letter in part or whole, followed by Ôba's reading of it.

Chapter Three "Annoyances" begins with a quote from Tsuda's letter to Lanman where she is complaining of her frustrations regarding Japan. The particular criticism is of missionaries on of Tsuda's favourite topics of discussion. Tsuda (in Ôba's translation) writes,

Well, we young girls feel these small things greatly and grumble to you about it, but foreign missionaries have no idea about the real thing. Because they all live in their own neighbourhoods, they do not understand anything about this. We, who live in the normal Japanese homes, can present a fresh view on Japanese ways since we have just come back from America.<sup>148</sup>

A few lines later, we encounter Ôba's comments, with an imperceptible change in voice; it is at first difficult to recognise the shift in register.

This view of the missionaries is interesting. Besides this, there is also other criticism of the missionaries. They stay in their high place and refused to mix with the Japanese as they look down upon them. Moreover, even after living in Japan for a long time they cannot speak Japanese very well, and there is not even a single foreigner who speaks Japanese correctly....

The missionaries are only concerned with their own denominations. Their minds are very narrow and they are incapable of evaluating other ways that are not American. As human beings who have the privileged position of judging

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<sup>147</sup> See for instance Ôba, 38-43.

<sup>148</sup> Ôba, *Tsuda*, 52

the external world, they are supposed to acknowledge the merits where it lies in the two countries. And yet, they do not acknowledge the points where Japan is indeed progressed. For them anything American is better than Japanese, disliking everything Japanese. There are even those who will not even touch a Japanese sweet, and not enter a Japanese kitchen. One cannot say that the Japanese food is the same as American food; it is nevertheless wonderful food.<sup>149</sup>

As the second passage above indicates, there is in fact very little in terms of tone and style to indicate that that speaker has changed, save the first line, which states, “this view of the missionaries is interesting.” With only shift in the register, Ôba’s comments read as continuation of Tsuda’s voice, rather than as a commentary on what Tsuda has already articulated. This elaboration, a certain kind of repetition, lends credence to Tsuda’s speech for it marks it by an acknowledgment. But, an immediate recognition or identification (on the part of Ôba) also signifies a direct engagement with Tsuda’s text through which Ôba’s voice perpetually interweaves its own concerns. In the re-telling of Tsuda’s story, Tsuda’s concerns also become those of Ôba’s.

A structural ambiguity in the text—two texts really, that of Ôba’s and Tsuda’s) arises from the fact that both voices speak in a present tense. Furthermore, the “you” in Tsuda’s speech seems to be addressing Ôba, and in its address encouraging Ôba to comment upon the behaviour of the missionaries. In other words then, Tsuda’s voice not only calls forth her own identity, but also instigates Ôba for a participation in this identity, and an articulation of her own. Conversely, Ôba in identifying with the “we” (*watashitachi*) participates in the dialogue by responding in the present, and speaking in the now. Thus, “we” and “I” mirror each other, as they respond to, and counter each other in the present. The use of the present tense, thus allows for a simultaneous presence-ing, a textual space wherein thoughts can be encountered face-to-face as it were, for exchanging and elaborating upon “common” ideas regarding the world.

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 53.

It is worth noting that, in transcribing Tsuda's letters in Ôba's narrative, Ôba always leaves out any marks of an addressor or an addressee. Thus, although Tsuda's letters are framed by something akin to "[m]y dearest Mrs. Lanman," and "[y]our own little Ume,"<sup>150</sup> when transcribed in Ôba's narrative they bear only the marks of an indentation and sometimes a date. Without an addressor, Tsuda's letters move, firstly from a privatised world shared only by its intended readers, to a public domain where they become available to history. In Ôba's reading specifically, they open up to Ôba for conversation.<sup>151</sup> With no addressee, Ôba can now read them and incorporate them within her own text as her own, as if they speak directly to her.

At this point the question becomes whether they can even be considered as "letters," and indeed, as Ôba points out twice, she reads them as Tsuda's diary. The shift in the genre, providing the reader with Ôba's orientation vis-à-vis Tsuda's "letters" happens in the first few pages. That the letters are written to Adeline Lanman is mentioned, following which immediately her presence is rendered absent and unnecessary. Ôba tells us that "[t]hese letters are almost diary-like" (*hotondo nikki no yoo na tegami*) and are written by Tsuda to Adeline Lanman who loved Tsuda as her own daughter.<sup>152</sup> Lanman's departure marks Ôba's arrival; it is she who will now read the diary/letters, and imagine the "I" as speaking to her. The figure of Tsuda thus, in absence of any markings becomes available for Ôba to lay a claim to, and make as her *own* correspondent. Ôba occupies this position by laying claim to Tsuda's experience as her own. Having gone through a similar experience as Tsuda (eleven

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<sup>150</sup> See January 7, 1886. Other variations of this include "[e]ver your own little Ume," and "I am Your own little Ume Tsuda."

<sup>151</sup> As I have argued above, Ôba deploys the "you" in Tsuda's text to refer to herself, i.e. Tsuda. Leaving out the original addressee (Mrs. Lanman) of the letter then, the "I" and the "you" comes to form a circle in which there is no need of the original addressee.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 9. Here Ôba uses Tsuda's own words to describe what she thinks of the genre in which Tsuda writes, that is a diary. Tsuda does in one of her letters, describe the "privatised" and "intimate" nature of her writing as an act of writing a diary. See letter dated February 20, 1883, *Attic Letters*, 46. Ôba however uses the words "as if," as if unaware of Tsuda's own naming. Interestingly then, what Ôba writes sounds like her own move (fictional?) and own reading of Tsuda's act.

years spent in the United States, etc.), Ôba justifies her direct connection to Tsuda and her need for direct one-on-one contact.<sup>153</sup>

The genre of biography demands that “truth” be told about the one whose story is written. In contrast, an autobiography makes allowances for fictional, artistic and literary choices. Can Ôba’s intervention in the text then be regarded as a device to assure her reader, that what is told is the truth, that she herself can validate it? If this were the case, re-inscription of Tsuda’s letters should suffice in providing the text its truth-value. The problem of the text of *Tsuda* however is that its structure makes it necessary for Ôba to be present in order to tell Tsuda’s story. In other words, Ôba’s act of ventriloquism is fundamental to sustaining Tsuda’s voice in the text. But given the circular movement between “I/we” and “you,” each referring back to the other/oneself, Tsuda also has to speak for Ôba in order to sustain herself in the text,<sup>154</sup> for often Ôba records in the two registers—one which elaborates which tells Ôba’s own story.

Thus we encounter Ôba’s voice not only when she repeats Tsuda but also insists that we read her tale. Her presence in the text is most marked in Chapter Eight, where Ôba engages in lengthy accounts of her journey to Bryn Mawr College, the college where Tsuda studied between 1889 and 1893. The focal point of this discussion is a comparison of Tsuda’s experience at Bryn Mawr with Ôba own experience as a student at Tsuda College in the post-war period. This entire chapter, is replete with the imagery of “home,” and Ôba’s longing for this *imaginary* “home.” Ôba, while ostensibly interested in finding out what “home” means for Tsuda,

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<sup>153</sup> It is interesting to note that while the exchange between Tsuda and Lanman is based on a difference (in terms of race, class etc.) between the two women, Ôba lays claim to being Tsuda’s correspondent by making a case for their “similarities.”

<sup>154</sup> This Tsuda cannot survive in the text without Ôba is significant point. In a important sense then the back and forth movement between Ôba and Tsuda resonates between the movement between Tsuda and Lanman.

surprisingly, does not in any detail present Tsuda ideas about home. Instead she deploys Tsuda's experiences to question her own relation to home, and Japan.

As Ôba travels to Bryn Mawr, we find that her experiences of travel lead her to discuss her own relation to Tsuda College, as she identifies this place as "home." Consequently, this chapter begins not with a letter written by Tsuda, but with Ôba's journey to Bryn Mawr. The following words set the tone for the textual/experiential identification between the two women.

It is a season in which the mornings and the evenings quickly gather a chill, and in the autumn sunshine of daytime, the leaves acquire a deepening colour of gold. When autumn arrives, I am always reminded of the four years that I spent during my youth at the dormitory in the Musashino.

Two years ago, when I visited Bryn Mawr located on the east coast of America...it was precisely this season. ... On a campus surrounded by woods where leaves were deepening in the colours of red, gold and yellow, I for some reason felt that I had stayed there before.

How many times during my days at [Tsuda] College had I heard the name of this well-known college on the East coast of America? The founder Tsuda Umeko had studied at this college and thanks to the scholarship that she had set up upon her return [to Japan] that many of Tsuda graduates had studied there.... I, who had not seen this campus even once before, [upon my visit] felt that I had seen it somewhere and had also studied there.

When Japanese visit places from the beloved classics, such as Oowa sanzan and Minawa-san for the first time in their lives, there is a sense that one has returned to one's old home (*furusato*). The strange thing is that, I felt something similar when I visited Bryn Mawr for the first time. This is the extent to which we Tsuda students heard stories about Bryn Mawr during our four years that we lived at Tsuda. It was only when I visited Bryn Mawr thirty years later that I was able to ascertain with my own eyes exactly how the atmosphere of Tsuda resembled Bryn Mawr's ambience.<sup>155</sup>

As the reader travel with Ôba from Philadelphia to Bryn Mawr, the reader is engulfed in memories that come crowding in for Ôba. As her thoughts get caught up in the physical beauty of her surrounds, Ôba questions the existence of a single origin.

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 191-92.

Suggesting that we constantly try to find in a new place the memories of an older location, she writes,

even if the name of this place was different I felt that I was connected to this land in some complicated way. Without even being conscious of it I was fostered in its idiosyncrasies (特徴を育て), and in its climate I can see its elements which were built into me.<sup>156</sup>

This passage above establishes Ôba's strong sense of identification not only with Bryn Mawr (which reminds her of Tsuda College), but also with Tsuda's experiences. A few lines later, the story abruptly "returns" to Tsuda's time. Ôba narrates Tsuda's experiences at Bryn Mawr, writing about her growing dissatisfaction with the Peeresses' school, and how these years at Bryn Mawr helped Tsuda formulate her desires to establish her own school. Consequently, this chapter is central to the narrative of *Tsuda* because it is here that Ôba culls from Tsuda's letters the latter's grievances regarding education of the Japanese women. The chapter ends with a return to Ôba, and Ôba's past spent at Tsuda College. In conclusion Ôba quotes from the words of a former student of M. Carey Thomas (the Dean of Bryn Mawr College at the time that Tsuda studied there).<sup>157</sup> The words, we are to discover are of none other than Tsuda's herself, rendered at one of the speeches that Tsuda delivered at Tsuda College. They speak of the need to believe in the strength of a woman, and have as such the quality of timelessness in them, which is precisely what Ôba hopes to invoke.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>157</sup> Thomas was the dean of Bryn Mawr College, which was established in 1885. Tsuda's letters to Thomas indicate that many of the founding principles of Tsuda College were based on Bryn Mawr and Thomas' beliefs about what women's education ought to be. For some of their correspondence see, *Tsuda Umeko Monjo*. Also see, Yûko Takahashi, "M. Carey Thomas," in *Tsuda Umeko o sasaeta hitobito*, 98-123.

<sup>158</sup> These words are: "Everybody has forgotten that I studied at Bryn Mawr, but I have certainly not forgotten the words that you said to us as you stood at that chapel every morning and spoke to us." Here Ôba, takes over and writes, "This is what you said—Believe in the strength of a woman (*josei no chikara wo shinjinasai*)—Believe in woman." Ôba, *Tsuda*, 210

The extensive citations delineate Ôba's strong desire to invoke her own "experience" while writing, but also to validate this experience by writing about the subject of her biography, Tsuda, the one who validates such writing. In Ôba's writing, the time which Ôba writes in stands for the "present" time, but there is also a "past" times, specifically two pasts—one, which belongs to Ôba, and the other, which is Tsuda's. The narrator Ôba speaking in the present, thus posits herself vis-à-vis her own past making it the subject of narration and hence to be narrated. The narrated story requires that she articulate a precise connection with her past, and this connection is made via Tsuda's experience. Bryn Mawr and its surrounds remind Ôba of her own time at Tsuda College. The "I" (*watashi*) of Ôba the narrator, which is singular up to this point splits into two, in this moment of recall. Thus, we have the present "I," (of Ôba's) and the "I" from thirty years ago.<sup>159</sup> The former can identify the latter only in the context of encountering each other in one's past life, when Bryn Mawr reminds her of Tsuda College. Significantly, this confrontation, a basis for recognition and synthesis of one's own identity, cannot take place in Tsuda's absence. For as Ôba writes, she has travelled the same route twice before, but it is only this time when she came expressly in search of Tsuda's roots that such a recognition happens.<sup>160</sup> Significantly, Ôba's recognition allows Tsuda's return back into the narrative (for until then, the textual space is literally taken up by Ôba's memories). Within the textual space of *Tsuda*, Tsuda's return to the United States seven years after she left for the first time, takes place simultaneously with Ôba's return, thirty years after she has graduated from Tsuda College in a different time and place.

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<sup>159</sup> Following Starobinski, I suggest that this is the monologic- discursive "I" (of the present) and the historical "I" of the past. Both of these are necessary; moreover the distance between the two is necessary in order for the narrative to move further. The presence of the "I" which is of Tsuda's complicates the narrative, and the text moves ambiguously between a biography and an autobiography (287-88).

<sup>160</sup> Ôba, *Tsuda*, 203.



It is worth noting here that for Tsuda's story to be told, it has to be couched within a larger tale, that of Ôba's which cuts across the boundaries of both time and space. Ôba's travels to Bryn Mawr in present time, brings her face-to-face with not only Tsuda's past, but also more importantly her own past. Travel to Bryn Mawr enables Ôba to come to terms with her own past and that of Tsuda's. This identification is what allows Ôba to imagine an intimacy between them; it is also what allows her to speak of herself, in a narrative that is supposed to be about Tsuda.

As the space between the present (Ôba's time) and the past (Tsuda's time) closes down literally swallowing the time difference, the final words reaffirm necessary insignificance of its addressor and addressee. The text moves away from being simply that about Ôba or Tsuda. Ôba's claim that the origin of the words "believe in the strength of a woman" are unknown enables them to become free floating, applicable to anyone, ready for endless repetition and doubling. Like an oath or perhaps a declaration, these words stand apart from the rest of Ôba's text, its evocation invokes a different order of time, which is a more generalised and universalised time from which all women speak and are spoken to.

### **The "real" and "representational" in *Tsuda***

The time of biography writing differs from the time of writing a letter or indeed a diary. As much as letters constitute the present moment, and always resist narrativization, on the biographer lies the onus of reinventing the past, of re-telling and re-reading its subject so as to make her available to the present. A biography, (written based on letters), provides an overarching sense of order to a seemingly endless "non-story" of the everyday. Its mode is meant to be markedly non-desultory and non-illusory. In terms of time and space, it draws attention to a certain path taken by an individual, a charting of an individualised space which interacts with its environs yet

stand separate from the rest. Biography is thus to a great extent about individualisation, not of a “self,” but of an-other, a movement from privatised time to public time which is also a time of history writing. It is also a movement from the “everyday” which cannot be narrativised to that which can be “represented.” Biography thus, fundamentally is a mode of re-presentation, achieved by a gathering together of a life. Because its mode is always the juxtaposing of a an individual vis-à-vis the social (other), its representation happens within the realm of the public. A biography thus is a staging of an individual within and without the social. It is an aspect of writing history, and necessarily embedded within the larger movements of history making.

Timothy Mitchell’s persuasive argument about modernity’s relation with time and space suggests that what is called modern should not be thought of as a stage in history, as much as “a staging of history.”<sup>161</sup> An overwhelming concern of the modern is with what is “real,” and the distinction between the “real” and that which is merely “representational.” The space that opens up between the real and the imagined is thus occupied by “representation,” and it is in the desire to re-represent what is real, that there occurs an endless repetition. Representation thus, becomes our point of entry into the real. The crucial point in Mitchell’s essay, is that as much as representation comes to stand in for the real, representation never posits itself “as” real, and as such is always aware of this difference. That is to say, representation always stands separate from a “reality” which is “out there.” Representation as a feature of modernity then has two effects: first, representation claims to speak for /of a reality which is “out there”; secondly, representation constantly highlights its own artificiality, its own secondary-ness when compared to the unquestioned primacy and vitality of that reality as the source and guarantee of knowledge. Precisely because representation is not

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<sup>161</sup> Timothy Mitchell, “Introduction,” *Questions of Modernity*, ed., Timothy Mitchell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000)

simply a replication, and there cannot be only one, each representation has to be effectively different from other representations. The production of modernity, Mitchell then reasons, involves the staging of these differences.<sup>162</sup>

A biographical mode of writing, is situated precisely at this dis/juncture between the real, and the representational. Its mode is always representational, harking back to a real and whilst making space for its narrator to imagine, within reason and history. This representational is necessarily opposed to everyday. A biography for this reason cannot incorporate within itself for instance the subversive elements of the everyday. To be successful it has to be authoritative. The goal of representation is to erase the excess with which the everyday is marked, and to provide access to the essential core of the real. Representation then can be said to have a metonymic relation to the everyday, a relation that is at once fully realised and yet never entirely knowable. The aim of the biography is to make claims about the truth that an individual it represents, after having divested it of its excesses.

Ôba's in her portrayal of Tsuda, is, as the following quote explicates, less interested in Tsuda's public persona and more concerned with her identity as a "woman." The text seeks to orient the reader towards discovering who the "real" Tsuda is, but Ôba is also equally interested in articulating her own relationship to Tsuda and thus making the text about herself and not just Tsuda. In the final sections of the text Ôba writes:

Will not my contemporary readers read Tsuda as a person full of life? For that very reason, it is difficult to call this work a scholarly text. Rather I want my reader to think of it as an image of Umeko that Ôba Minako, who has followed the path of literature, has drawn. And hence, other than those letters I have not really referred to any other material. ... I have not written this book to give its readers an instance of a leader of women's lives of the time of my mother and

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid, 26.

grandmother. Instead, I want to revive a figure of Tsuda Umeko as a woman who dreamed to broaden the lives of women.<sup>163</sup>

As Ôba's herself admits, her portrayal of Tsuda rests almost entirely on the latter's personal letters, written in "private" time. Ôba's reading of Tsuda's letters is meant to convey her sense Tsuda as-an-individual, and above all, to tell a story of the kind of "woman" that Tsuda *really* was. In Ôba's texts of *Tsuda* thus, the letters *acquire* order; and it is their *ordering* that enables Ôba to have a "story" that needs to be told, a story ostensibly of the kind of a woman Tsuda "really" was. While Ôba explicitly rejects writing a history, private time nonetheless becomes public as Tsuda becomes person-able. While there might be other "stories" (representations) of Tsuda, Ôba is emphatic when she claims that it is her reading of Tsuda that comes the *closest* to who Tsuda really was. She writes, "others have seen Umeko as a figure in history," but for Ôba, Tsuda is a real live woman "whose veins are coursed with life-blood."<sup>164</sup>

As in the instance given below, we have Ôba as a narrator in two roles: first, presenting Tsuda's views on women, and secondly, drawing upon these views to "tell" the reader why Tsuda had the views that she did. The letters represent the "ultimate truth"—they in a sense have to do so in order for Ôba to tell the "real" story. Ôba therefore, constructs not only the representation but also the real (the "letter" is such a reading become truth telling transparent texts). For example, Ôba reads Tsuda's remarks the possibility of her own marriage as follows: "In no way was Umeko a man-hater, and she did not dislike men. Rather, she always charmed the opposite sex. You could even say that I judge her to be a young woman fully capable of attracting men."<sup>165</sup> By reading Tsuda's letter as a part of her own (i.e. Ôba's) larger narrative of Tsuda-as-a-woman, Ôba reads Tsuda's comments on marriage to have a

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<sup>163</sup> Ôba, *Tsuda*, 261-62. In this case, the word "image" is a translation of *zô*, and "figure" is a translation of *sugata*.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 261.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 168.

representational value. Secondly, by inserting her own judgement as a part of the narrative, Ôba positions herself as the rightful re-presenter of the truth telling letters.

What gives Tsuda the subject position of a “woman” that Ôba claims to bring to the forefront is, therefore, not the presence of Tsuda herself in the text as much as Ôba’s sympathetic reading of her position. That is to say, Ôba’s own positionality vis-à-vis Japanese women, a concern akin to Tsuda’s is what gives the figure of Tsuda its “life blood” in Ôba’s text. Not surprisingly then, she wants her reader to read this text as an image of “Umeko written by Ôba Minako.”<sup>166</sup> Ôba’s naming herself asserts that the text is as much about herself as about Tsuda; by citing herself, she invokes her readers to not only imagine Tsuda, but also to remember her as they read *Tsuda*. We as readers therefore necessarily participate/ are implicated in her double move—“reading Ôba reading Tsuda.”

The text of *Tsuda* which begins with Tsuda’s letter ends on the note where we have Ôba reminding her readers of her own position as the author of the text *Tsuda*. This is done however not so much to claim the text as her own, but rather to *open* the text (her’s and Tsuda’s letters) for a further reading that invokes women to participate in the community of women who are “reading Tsuda by Ôba” and also “reading Ôba by reading Tsuda.” Ôba terms the identification that she feels with Tsuda as “(s)kinship” (*skinshippu*).<sup>167</sup> The text calls upon others like her (her readers) to experience this identification. The calling forth in Ôba’s *Tsuda* is, I read as a way of engaging in a community of women across time and place. It places the figure of Tsuda at the centre of such a community; Ôba’s reading of it, specifically the translation of it, makes it a figure that attracts attention from similar and like-minded women.

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 261.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 209.

Ôba's text as a biographical narrative makes two claims: one, that in imposing a representational–biographical apparatus that wilfully writes a life, Ôba strives to orient her reader to read Tsuda in a specific way. Ôba's second (Romanticist) claim is that she is trying to portray the “life-blood” coursing through Tsuda's veins. The latter, the lived “life” of the subject, which is the focus of Ôba's text, is a kind of a metaphysical guarantee for her writing of a life, or biography, of Tsuda, a writing whose secondary-ness or derivativeness to that actually lived life (Tsuda's) is given at the outset. So what we have is Tsuda-as-Individual, propped up by the prosthetic device of biography; Ôba seems to admit that, given the impossibility of a direct access to that life, there can be no other recourse than to the regime of representation.

In *Tsuda*, Ôba chooses to depict Tsuda's private persona, using letters to “show and tell” Tsuda's individuated subjectivity. The intrusion of public time, which is certainly present in Tsuda in the form of historical dates and other individuals, remains simply that—an “intrusion,” in Ôba's narrated life-story as well as and importantly in Tsuda's subjecthood. In other words, the subjecthood that bespeaks the fundamental force of her personality (her charm, wit, humour, and straightforwardness) thus is constituted and in existence prior to the “showing and telling” that Ôba engages in via a reading. Within the space of staging modernity, this move, which delineates a “woman” as a forceful figure who “personifies” subject-hood stands at the opposite end from the move which portrays “woman” as the “ground,” caught in the conflict between “tradition” and “modernity.” Both are representations to an equal degree, and can be considered as analogous to the “telling” of “experience” and its relation to “identity.” That is to say, taking subjectivity for granted makes allowances for the truth-value of the experience, for then experience is located in subjecthood, and such can be only experienced via subjecthood. A subject who can “know” can articulate well; that is not the case when we work the other way around,

and doubting the very presence of a conscious subjecthood and argue that it comes to existence via experience.<sup>168</sup>

Why then does Ôba feel the need for a fully articulated subjectivity prior to the act of writing? Why does “telling” a story of an other eventually mean narrating oneself, where one loses the boundary between the self and the other? Gayatri Spivak in addressing the question of the role of a (woman) translator writes of the need to have an articulated subject prior to writing. “The task of the translator,” she points out, “is to facilitate the love between the real and the shadow, a love that permits fraying, holds the agency of the translator and the demands of her imagined or actual audience at bay.”<sup>169</sup> And elsewhere in the same essay she judges the task of the translator to be less ethical and more erotic;<sup>170</sup> such is the intimacy that translation demands. The question of translation comes up of the question of “intimacy” and why a reading of Tsuda also entails a reading of Ôba. The reason is, at least in part, has something to do with Ôba’s own sense of a fraught relation that she bears to the language that she uses.

Ôba’s other writings also provide some clue to comprehending this relationship. Critical scholarship, particularly dealing with Ôba’s fictional works, has argued that Ôba’s protagonists (read “subjects”) often tend to be maternal figures—sometimes silent, passive and amorphous, while at other times forceful yet disconsolate. Moreover, in many of her stories, and specially in “The Three Crabs” (*Sanbiki no kani*) which brought her recognition, the willingness or the unwillingness of the maternal role is played out within the home, what Sharalyn Orbaugh describes

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<sup>168</sup> The argument is particularly important in the context of representational politics that women-as-subjects get caught in. Her basic argument is that there is no pre-formed identity before experiencing the experience. Rather identity articulates itself as experience is articulated. Similarly, there is no agency prior to writing, and as Spivak points out that “a writer is written by her language, and it is the writer that “writes agency.” See, Gayatri C. Spivak, “Politics of Translation,” in *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 179.

<sup>169</sup> See Spivak, “Politics of Translation,” 181.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 183

as the “compulsion of home.”<sup>171</sup> The home then is the locus vis-à-vis which maternalism is articulated and the argument follows that, if a woman is to have a “home” she ought to be maternal. Just as Tsuda bears a complicated relation to “home” so does Ôba. Tsuda’s struggle to find what home is, finds voice in Ôba’s relation to Tsuda and significantly, what Ôba understands as “home.” Ôba’s symbolic return to Tsuda, her sense of a déjà vu at Bryn Mawr clarifies the extent of Ôba’s investment in Tsuda, as it also conveys to us that writing *Tsuda* is as much about Tsuda as much about herself. Secondly, it speaks of Ôba’s return home, and the inherent circularity of her movement, for it at this moment that she writes, “I have come a full circle.”<sup>172</sup> Tsuda college is not only her alma mater, but also her symbolic “home.” This home however is not presided by a “maternal” mother, but by Tsuda who is not a maternal but stands in for a mother figure, metonymically represented in the alma mater.)<sup>173</sup> Herein, lies the slippage between “mother” and “maternal,” a fundamental break in a certain staging of modernity, in representing a mother’s relation to home.

Bu inserting herself consciously into the text *Tsuda*, and by establishing a maternal relationship with Tsuda, Ôba, I suggest, is positing different order of relationship between herself, Tsuda and the all the other women out there (who bear some relation with Tsuda, physically or symbolically). She sees them ensconced in a

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<sup>171</sup> Sharalyn Orbaugh, “Ôba Minako and the paternity of Maternalism,” in *The Father-Daughter Plot: Japanese literary women and the law of the father*, eds., Rebecca Copeland and Esperanza U. Ramirez-Christensen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 119-64 Where I don’t agree with Orbaugh is that she too assumes and reads in Ôba a subject prior to its articulation. That is, the maternal figure (Yuri, in the story “The Three Crabs”) is understood as maternal prior to any articulation of her role. Here is a slippage between Yuri who is a “mother” (physically) but does not necessarily assume “maternal” responsibility.

<sup>172</sup> Ôba, *Tsuda*, 248.

<sup>173</sup> Compare this with the following in Tsuda’s letter which startlingly reveals a similar sentiment: “Though I am so happy and glad in my life and work, and enjoy it, I do have hours of loneliness, among those who are so different from me, and who are not related by blood or ties to me, and I would give a great deal, a good many hours of my life, *just to be your little girl* and pet again, and not know of the world beyond the four walls of a *loving home*.” See letter dated January 27, 1884, *Attic Letters*, 132. Emphasis mine.



community of women, the basis of which is *not* a mother-daughter relationship, thereby foreclosing the need for a “maternal” mother. What she enunciates is a more primal relationship, based on a need for “love” between women that leads women to “care” for each other.<sup>174</sup> Within this community, Tsuda’s individuated consciousness makes her available as an inspiration. But in order to be read as such, she has to be read in the singular, sufficiently contextualised, but never fully implicated in the voices that surround her. The letters then read in the singular, provide access to Tsuda’s life-blood. It is via the intimacy of writing, where one reads and writes in, the other’s writing as one writes oneself, that the intimacy is established, the basis of an community based on eros fore grounded. This eros, or eroticism, is that which Spivak articulates, a love “between the original and its shadow” without which no writing can happen.<sup>175</sup> Conversely writing and community only happens as one writes. This love is then the ethical foundation of this community of women in which no maternal figure exists for there is no need for it.

The underlying concern of the latter half of the chapter has been to examine the limits and possibilities of the representation of “individualism” for a feminist project. My reading of Tsuda’s letters as a part of the Tsuda-Lanman correspondence suggest that such an individualism can only be articulated as a part of a community. The epistolary mode then presents a range of subversive possibilities, suggesting thereby a way out of the regime of representation. This is not to suggest however, that they provide an access to a “different” modernity, or indeed an “alternative” one.

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<sup>174</sup> As I have already stated the references to Tsuda Umeko’s real mother Hatsuko are hardly present in the text, saving a single exchange of letters between Adeline Lanman and Tsuda Hatsuko. I think the point that the real or pseudo mother is absent from the text is important. What is present is the fictional mother, to whom the relation is *not* maternal. This forms a community of women. Oba successfully does not make Tsuda her mother although she replicates the format of a mother-daughter relationship (between Tsuda and Lanman) in her letter writing.

<sup>175</sup> Spivak, “Politics of Translation,” 181-83.

Eventually, the mode of biographical writing, also succumbs as we see to the idea of a community within which the self expresses oneself and also finds a home. I take up this idea of community again in the final chapter, where I examine the significance of friendships, and what the potential might be of a community across transnational lines.

## CHAPTER 3: THE LOGIC OF A TRIADIC ENCOUNTER—PANDITA RAMABAI, HER JAPANESE AUDIENCE AND THE AMERICAN PRESENCE

### Introduction: Pandita Ramabai arrives in Tokyo

On her way back from the United States to India in late 1888, Pandita Ramabai the Indian feminist and educator visited Tokyo and Yokohama. Ramabai carried with her glowing references from Frances Willard, the president of World Women's Christian Temperance Union (WWCTU),<sup>1</sup> and was received warmly in Japan. During this short visit, she not only spoke to the members of the Tokyo Christian Temperance Union in Tokyo, the Japanese branch of WWCTU, but also gave interviews to the members of the *Jogaku zasshi* (a then leading Meiji journal). Amongst the elite (and Christian) Japanese men and women of the time interested in issues of gender reform and lives of Western women, we can imagine that Ramabai, considering her novelty, must have caused quite a stir. Her very short stay in Japan, only about two weeks produced nothing less than ten essays, interviews, and newspapers articles providing her readers with information about everything from her life story to her views on the status of women's education in India, and of course her perceptions of Japanese women. That her arrival on the Tokyo scene was taken quite seriously can be attested by the fact that none other than Tsuda Sen conducted an interview with her; this was published in the one of the issues of the *Jogaku zasshi* along with her essays translated from English.

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<sup>1</sup> In Japan Willard's name was of course linked with the temperance, an arena of work that in the 1880s the Japanese had also begun taking an interest in. An article with the title "A Letter from Mrs. Willard" was published in *Jogaku zasshi*, 106 (April 1888): 9-10. *Jogaku zasshi* will be hence forth referred to as *JZ*. See also the following which carried a reference of Willard and Ramabai's friendship. "Ramabai's Progress in Japan," *JZ*, 156 (April 1889): 1. Ian Tyrrel has also made a note of Willard's visit to Japan in his volume *Woman's World, Woman's Empire: The Woman's Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective, 1880-1890* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

While Ramabai's short-lived but intense appearance in the Japanese press seems today to be of minimal interest, the articles that I discuss here suggest the enduring mark that Ramabai left on her Japanese audiences. One must not forget that in the late nineteenth century, Ramabai was perhaps the most celebrated and visible Indian woman in her own country as well as the United States. While already relatively well-known in the Indian reformist circles especially in Bengal and Maharashtra, Ramabai had achieved international fame after the recent publication of her *High-caste Hindu Woman*.<sup>2</sup> Even the Indian male intelligentsia who had been extremely critical of her conversion had for the most part grudgingly acknowledged the mark that she had made in America.<sup>3</sup>

That Ramabai's three year stay in the United States was a success can be attested by the fact that she left her mark on the various American feminists, suffragettes, and temperance workers that she met during this period.<sup>4</sup> Across the United States Ramabai travelled giving public lectures, and addressing women's groups. As newspaper reports from that period attest to, she spoke "eloquently" about the "pathetic" conditions of Indian women.<sup>5</sup> Reminding the American women of their Christian duty toward their less blessed Indian sisters, she asked for the financial

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<sup>2</sup> Pandita Ramabai, *The High-caste Hindu Woman* (Bombay: Maharashtra State Board for Literature and Culture, 1981, reprinted from Philadelphia: Self-published, 1887;). I refer here to the reprint published in Westport, Hyperion Press, 1976. Although I will refer to this volume later in the chapter, a detailed discussion is present in Chapter Four.

<sup>3</sup> See articles from *Kesari* (Marathi newspaper) cited in Pandita Ramabai, *Pandita Ramabai Through Her Own Words: Selected Work*, trans. and ed. Meera Kosambi (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 25.

<sup>4</sup> Ramabai sailed for Philadelphia from England in February 1886 with the intention of attending her kinswomen Dr. Anandibai Joshee's graduation from the Philadelphia Women's Medical College. The three month stay extended to almost three years; it was in late 1888 that Ramabai left the United States for India, and it on the way back when she stopped in Tokyo.

<sup>5</sup> The following chapter discusses in greater detail the kind of response that Ramabai elicited in America. Primarily Ramabai's American experience is recorded in her letters to Sister Geraldine. Pandita Ramabai, *The Letters and Correspondence of Pandita Ramabai*, ed. A.B. Shah (Bombay: Maharashtra State Board for Literature and Culture, 1977). She also wrote a volume which records her experiences after she returned to India. Pandita Ramabai *United States chi Lokasthiti ani Parampara* [The Peoples of the United States] (Reprinted by Bombay: Maharashtra State Board for Literature and Culture, [1889] 1996)

support of which she received in plenty. The formation of Ramabai Association with headquarters in Boston, and branches all over the United States, illustrates Ramabai's success, as does Dr. Rachel Bodley's—dean of Philadelphia Women's Medical College—hearty endorsement of Ramabai's volume, *The High Caste Hindu Woman*. Ramabai's encounter with Frances Willard was equally notable. Sharing ideas of women's upliftment and temperance, the two women were to maintain a correspondence for the rest of their lives, and it is said that Willard always kept a picture of Ramabai on her desk.

Ramabai's reception in Japan was enthusiastic, as can be attested from the magazine and newspaper reports that we have of her. This period of contact was however very brief—she arrived in Yokohama on 19<sup>th</sup> December 1888 and left on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1889. Except for what appeared in the Japanese press in the few months preceding Ramabai's visit and following it, the details of Ramabai's travels to Japan seem at best, to be lost to obscurity.<sup>6</sup> As in America, what had initially piqued Japanese interest in Ramabai was the publication of her volume in the earlier year. I will discuss the content and implications of this text elsewhere; suffice here to say that by the time Ramabai arrived in Tokyo the success of this volume had already preceded her, so much so that in order to support her cause *Jogaku zasshi* was willing to run an advertisement for the book at almost no cost, to bring further publicity to Ramabai and her cause of Indian women's education.

Focusing primarily on Ramabai's short stay in Japan this chapter examines the kind of impact that Ramabai had on her Japanese audiences as can be adduced from the contemporary magazine and newspaper articles. News about Ramabai was available to her Japanese audiences mainly via three sources: One is the

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<sup>6</sup> In Ramabai's papers we have a single letter written to Sister Geraldine, dated 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1889, which gives her impressions of Japan. Ramabai, *Letters and Correspondence*, 226-30.

aforementioned *Jogaku zasshi*. Other two sources carrying shorter articles and news pieces include the *Tokyo fujin kyôfu zasshi*, a magazine that carried primarily news of temperance activities, and the *Yomiuri shinbun*.<sup>7</sup> My focus on the *Jogaku zasshi* essays and articles is in part because it is here that her visit received the most thorough treatment. Moreover, in absence of copyright laws several of the same articles were re-printed in the temperance magazine, the *Tokyo fujin kyôfu zasshi*.

In examining this Japanese-Indian encounter, the crucial factor that needs to be kept in mind is that this relation was mediated in both in ideological terms and in very concrete ways by an American presence. Not only was Ramabai's actual arrival in Japan preceded by stories of her glowing success in the United States, but the Japanese themselves were very keen to follow in the footsteps of the American response to Ramabai. Moreover, as I discuss below Ramabai traveled with an American woman, Dr. Emma Ryder who also spoke in Japan on Ramabai's work. In this chapter, I delve into the logistics of this triadic encounter between Ramabai and her Japanese audience, and the American presence (both real and imaginary). I do this against the background of late nineteenth century articulations of Woman's Question and its implications within the larger debates of nationalism and colonialism.

Although this chapter primarily focuses with Ramabai and her interactions with the Japanese, I keep in mind here the kind of example that Ramabai inadvertently also sets up for Tsuda Umeko. Both women it must be mentioned were native teachers in their own countries with an educational agenda that was different from the male nationalist/ reformers and the missionary class. Moreover, both engaged substantially with international audiences to garner support for their educational endeavours. Although it is unknown whether the two women actually met, the following lines

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<sup>7</sup> *JZ* (Kyoto: Rinsen shoten, 1985-1904); *Tokyo fujin kyôfu zasshi* (Tokyo: Fuji shuppan, 1888-93). This later came to be known simply as the *Fujin kyôfu zasshi*; *Yomiuri shinbun* (Tokyo: Yomiuri shimbunsha).

suggest that Tsuda keenly followed Ramabai's movements and was impressed with her work. In January 1889 she wrote to Lanman, "I imagine her [to be] a very smart, intellectual woman."<sup>8</sup> Soon after Ramabai's departure Japan in 1889, Tsuda left for her second trip to United States, during which time she too (perhaps following Ramabai's footsteps) garnered funds and support for her cause of Japanese women's education).<sup>9</sup>

### **The Woman's Question (*Fujin mondai*)**<sup>10</sup>

Before proceeding to analyze the relations between Ramabai and her Japanese interlocuters, I pause here briefly to dwell on the topic of Woman's Question (*Fujin mondai*) as it was articulated in late nineteenth century colonial India and Meiji Japan. Specifically I am concerned with the ways in which women's education was understood as a part of the Woman's Question.<sup>11</sup> My emphasis here is less on the actual conditions of this education as it was put in place, as much as it is on the ideological tenor of the arguments that were made in favor of women's education. I begin by stating briefly what educators/feminists such as Tsuda and Ramabai understood as the key factors in women's education; following this, I tie it to the larger debates of the time surrounding the role of women in the society in general.

Tsuda's educational endeavours for the upliftment of Japanese womanhood stressed on the necessity of a practical education that would provide gainful

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<sup>8</sup> See Umeko Tsuda, *The Attic Letters: Ume Tsuda's Correspondence to Her American Mother*, ed. Yoshiko Furuki et al. (New York: Weatherhill Inc., 1991), 325.

<sup>9</sup> I discuss this trip in Chapter Four.

<sup>10</sup> The "Woman's Question" has been alternatively also referred to as the "Women's Question." The two terms suggest a different in the emphasis; I use the former through out.

<sup>11</sup> Many articles in *JZ* suggest that the question of women's education was indeed central to the topic of "Women's Question." See, "The Future Japanese Nation (Women's Education)," *JZ*, 141 (December, 1888): 1-6. Other articles such as the following also link it up with the question of women's role in the home etc. "The Future Japanese Nation (A Vital Question)," *JZ*, 137 (November 1888): 1-3; "The Future Japanese Nation (The Mother in the Home)," *JZ*, 140 (December 1888): 1-5; "Women's First Step toward the Society," *JZ*, 149 (February 1889): 15-17; "The Wife," *JZ*, 144 (January, 1889): 10-11.

employment for women. In this, her goals were not dissimilar from Ramabai's who argued for women's education precisely so that they could become self-reliant and independent. By the time Ramabai or Tsuda came on the educational scene in India and Japan, the field of the "native" women's education was already populated largely by missionaries, some government initiative (in Japan), and work done by male reformers. Tsuda however, as we know did not think very highly of the missionaries, and neither did Ramabai—both were particular critical of their condescending attitudes towards the "natives." An additional problem in the Indian context was that of caste rigidity. Strictures governing the social interaction of the upper classes, which as Ramabai often explained, made missionary work particularly difficult.<sup>12</sup> In principle at least both women had support of male reformers in their endeavours. Native women in charge of education of other women, was not only a respectable profession for the "ideal" woman, it also provided the male reformers with their own counter-image of a woman, that challenged the Western representations of "native" women as illiterate. Certainly, Ramabai until she remained in the Hindu fold, was idolised precisely because she provided the Indian nationalist male bourgeoisie with an image that strongly challenged the colonial image of the Indian woman as being subject to pathetic conditions, a chattel of male fancies and hence reflective of India's barbaric tradition.

Ramabai and Tsuda's educational plan however came with a twist, for neither articulated marriage as the ultimate goal for an educated woman.<sup>13</sup> In the case of Ramabai, her first school, Sharada Sadan, established in 1889, soon after her return to Pune from the United States sought to provide education mainly to child-widows

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<sup>12</sup> As I have noted in Chapter Two, there are many references details Tsuda's views on missionaries. The articles in *JZ* that I discuss below clarify Ramabai's critical stance.

<sup>13</sup> Tsuda Eigaku Juku, as I have already discussed, aimed to educate girls who came from all walks of life. While it did not openly contradict the institution of marriage, its manifest aim was to provide women with an education that would train them to be teachers and thus be employed, so as to not get married simply for the lack of better options. I also discuss this more in Chapter Four.



(although the school was open to all castes and classes), who within the Hindu and patriarchal familial setting were subject to the worst kind of brutality.<sup>14</sup> Ramabai's highly acclaimed volume lays out precisely the plight of these widows, articulating the untold suffering of widows and especially child widows at the hands of patriarchy and rigid social customs. Thus, while at a certain level both women fit the notion of the "ideal woman" as codified by the male bourgeoisie, they also complicated this notion in varied ways by re-defining the goals of female education. For instance, while the male ideal image of a woman was that of a educated and a *married* woman (a companionate wife and an educated mother to be specific), both women themselves remained single throughout their lives—Tsuda never married out of choice, and Ramabai following the death of her husband only a year after marriage remained a widow, albeit one stepped outside of her social boundaries and raised her voice against social injustices against women and particularly the nature of Indian widowhood.

Ramabai's (and Tsuda's work) and the problems they faced within the emergent national state become clearer when we examine in greater detail that logistics of the "Woman's Question." The central focus of this question was how to address the relation between women and the state. More specifically, the problematic was one of making woman, especially middle-class women a part of what Benedict Anderson has successfully argued as emergence of an "imagined community." Post-colonial scholars such as Partha Chatterjee, and others have suggested that women as a part of the anti-colonial nationalist struggle came to represent the inner "spiritual" core

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<sup>14</sup> Starting from mid-nineteenth century, the question of women's education, their status within a family, and the question of widow re-marriage were topics hotly debated amongst the conservative Hindus, social reformers and (British) government officials. That the topic of women had less to do with the actual changes that were brought about in women's lives, and functioned more as grounds for articulating the decline of a "glorious civilization" can be seen in studies by scholars such as Uma Chakravarti, "Whatever happened to the Vedic Dasi? Orientalism, Nationalism and a Script for the Past," in *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, ed. Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989), 27-86; Lata Mani, "Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India," in *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, ed. Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989), 88-126.

of the nation.<sup>15</sup> This spiritual core located in the “home” was what would enable Indians (specifically men) to counter the forces of colonialism in the outer domain wherein interaction with the colonizers was not only inevitable but also necessary. This “woman” as an embodiment of the “spiritual” space was however, not the illiterate woman. She was to be a educated mother and a companionate wife; more importantly her very presence now re-defined what was understood as “tradition”—invoking a perfect balance of “modern” qualities necessary for the national progress and a “traditional” aesthetic (now re-articulated) defined by the correct amount of chastity, virtue and selfless-ness. In this re-forming of the woman, the key factor was of course education.

Post Meiji Restoration, women’s roles within the larger social and also national (and not simply familial) framework also came under surveillance with an emergence of the idea of the modern nation-state. Caught in the mire of unequal treaties, and hoping to forestall succumbing to the same fate that almost all other Asian nations found themselves in, Japan sought to modernise itself along the lines of Western nations. With civilisation and enlightenment as the key words in the early decades of Meiji, the central focus in this modernisation process amounted to a great extent to the implementing of new education policies. National education promised the idea of a national citizenry: citizens all equal and independent but also under the protective umbrella of the modern sovereign Emperor who would serve as the head of the family-nation-state. The rise of the modern Japanese woman was therefore very

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<sup>15</sup> Partha Chatterjee, “The Nationalist Resolution of the Women’s Question,” in *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, ed. Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989), 233-253; *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991); Sumit Sarkar, “The Women’s Question in Nineteenth Century Bengal,” in *Women and Culture*, ed. Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (Bombay: Research Centre for Women’s Studies, SNDT Women’s University, 1994), 103-12.

much within the national framework, and can be traced via the trajectory of the national educational policies.<sup>16</sup>

As was the case with India the notion of education and social reform are closely interconnected. Gender reform implied changes implemented in the arena of women's education; the idea was to re-form women so that they would better suit the purposes of nation building. As was the case with colonial India, in Japan too, cultural practices came under surveillance; the implications were that unless the Japanese became more civilised in their cultural practices, viz., marital relations, idea of prostitutions, dress, language etc. in the absence of which catching up with the West was a unattainable dream. Needless to say, women were not only closely tied in with, but in fact formed the core of many such cultural agenda. The notion of the "home" based on the principles of a companionate and a "loving" marriage between husband and wife, instead of the traditional household, *ie* was to become the founding principal and the goal for women's education.<sup>17</sup>

The codification of the status of women within the emergent nation-state was very much structured as a response to the Western gaze. And in this respect, the response on part of the male bourgeoisie, nationalist intelligentsia, and social reformers in Japan and India was similar. On the one hand, there was move to modernise certain practices—for instance, as the structure of a nuclear family was put into place, the nature of relationship between husband and wife came to be articulated

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<sup>16</sup> Shizuko Koyama, *Ryôsai kenbô to iu kihan* (Tokyo: Keisô shobô, 1991); Sharon H. Nolte and Sally Ann Hastings, "The Meiji State's Policy towards Women," in *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945*, ed. Gail Lee Bernstein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 151-174; Takenori Oku, "'Kokumin kokka' no naka no josei: Meijiki wo chûshin ni," in *Onna to otoko no jiku: Nihon josei saikô*, vol. 5 *Semegiau onna to okoto: kindai* [Time Space of gender: redefining Japanese women's history, vol. 5], eds., Nobuko Kono and Kazuko Tsurumi (Tokyo: Fujiwara shoten, 1998), 415-50.

<sup>17</sup> This is not to suggest that *ie* stopped being the basic unit of social organisation. On the contrary the *ie* gained increasing importance and was not abolished until after WWII. Thus, contrary to the relatively loose structure of *ie* in Tokugawa, the boundaries of this household were re-codified in Meiji making the *ie* a far more definitive structure. The idea of "home" introduced in Meiji therefore does not seek to replace the *ie* as much as it seeks to impose a new way of re-imagining the *ie*.

in the language of “companionate marriage” whose model was apparently taken from the West. However concomitant to the desire of appearing civilised in the eyes of the West was also the need that Japan maintain its own uniqueness.<sup>18</sup> That women were at the core of both these aspirations is the key to understanding the logic of the “Woman’s Question.” Thus while expected to be civilised in the “modern” (read—Western) sense, they were also made as the timeless repositories of the past.<sup>19</sup> The latter equated women with “national tradition,” timeless and outside of history. Women thus were at once written *in* to the trope of national progress, by being constituted as the core of the nation, and also written *out* of it as bearers of the golden past. The celebration of Heian period as the golden age in Japanese history, the gradual exclusion of women from the sphere of the political and their immersion in the arena of the social are some of the examples which indicate the extent to which women became the cultural markers of the society. In the Japanese case, the Imperial Rescript of 1899 provided the final consolidation of women’s roles in the nation. This consolidation of women’s roles came via the ideology of the “good wife, wise mother” (*ryōsai kenbō*). This discourse had two central facets to it: first, it presented the image of a Japanese woman as “modern,” that is to say, educated, and tied in to the notion of a modern family. Second, she was also presented as specifically Japanese—chaste, virtuous and entirely selfless as only a “Japanese” woman could be. The qualities of the ideal “good wife and wise mother” thus simultaneously defined what it meant to be modern (yet not Western) *and* Japanese.

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<sup>18</sup> Joseph M. Henning has argued that in the field of Japanese art Meiji artists (such as Okakura) often times played along with, and in fact re-created quite persuasively images of Japanese women as kimono-clad lovers of natures, embodying a traditional essence, a theme that circulated in Western Orientalist images of the “Japanese woman.” The point here of course is that both Japanese and Westerners participated in the discourse on Orientalism. Joseph M. Henning, *Outposts of Civilization: Race, Religion, and the Formative Years of American Japanese Relations* (New York: NYU Press, 2000).

<sup>19</sup> Chatterjee, *Recasting Women*, 244-49.

The ideological discourse surrounding the codification of women's roles does not in any way imply that the practical aspects of women's lives felt any immediate repercussions. Nor was it the case that stipulations regarding women's roles once made were not subject to questioning and sustained subversion on the part of women, class structures also social movements. And yet, if we are to examine the textual evidence in the form of the changes that accompanied the curriculum of women's education over the many decades of Meiji we see increasing attempts to restrict women's sphere to the socio-cultural. For instance, in the legal arguments surrounding the question of dress reform, a woman's traditional kimono remained while men adopted the Western mode of dress; similarly curriculum in girl's schools made feminine subjects such as cooking and sewing a compulsory part of a woman's education.

The articulation and apparent resolution of the "Woman's Question" which came about with the codification of women's role in the society, in Meiji Japan and colonial India points out the interesting similarities in which both emerging nation-states responded to the Western gaze and articulated a position for women that simultaneously responded to the need for being traditional yet modern. That women such as Tsuda and Ramabai responded to this codification also under the public gaze and often in the presence of Western eyes is a point worth noting.<sup>20</sup> In the following sections I turn to examine the actual narrative of Ramabai's representation of the Indian woman in the Japanese context, and the kind of "help" that this representation elicited from her audiences. I begin by examining the "space" of *Jogaku zasshi* to determine some of the reasons why this space became the locus of Ramabai's critical stance.

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<sup>20</sup> I delve on this point more in Chapter Four. Ramabai and Tsuda it must be noted wrote and published their texts abroad and very much under the American gaze.

### *Jogaku zasshi*

Ramabai's stopover in Tokyo and Yokohama was brought to the attention of the reading public mostly via the publication of essays on her in magazines such as *Jogaku zasshi*. While this magazine sought to deal with "women's issues," and as such catered to female audiences, in reality it also accommodated men's interest in questions of gender reform.

The magazine was launched in July 1885.<sup>21</sup> *Jogaku zasshi*'s illustrious editor was Iwamoto Yoshiharu, an avowed Christian, who not only used the journal to articulate women's issues but also clearly saw it as vehicle for Christian idealism. A magazine such as *Jogaku Zasshi* thus drew attention to the Christian underpinnings of gender reform in Japan and the explicit links drawn between Christianity and alleviation of women's condition.<sup>22</sup> While *Jogaku zasshi* gave voice to Iwamoto's beliefs about the current status of women, bespeaking his own explicit goal to raise Japanese women's respectability, in theory at least it also meant to provide an arena for women to raise their own issues, and most significantly to produce literature fit to be read by other women.<sup>23</sup> In particular therefore, Iwamoto, under whose auspices the magazine took shape, saw it as the means by which to promote women writers, believing that women given their "sensitivity" would be most suitable for writing

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<sup>21</sup> It was provided with an English title—"The Woman's Magazine"—and most of the issues have a Japanese and an English table of contents. For a thorough introduction to the *JZ* see, Nao Aoyama et. al., *Jogaku zasshi shosakuin* (Tokyo: Keio Tsushin, 1970); Michael Brownstein, "Jogaku Zasshi and the founding of *Bungakukai*," *Monumenta Nipponica*, 35, 3 (Fall 1980): 319-336; Rebecca Copeland, *Lost Leaves: Women Writers of Meiji Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 7-51.

<sup>22</sup> As Imperial Rescripts in the late 1880s sought to move away from this explicit Christian stance and locate women's progress within the realm of a Confucian ethic, what is important to note here is Christianity as far as gender reform was concerned existed less as a religious belief as it served to provide the ideological underpinning for the articulation of women's progress. The work of many male reformers in Meiji, (Christian or otherwise) interested in the question of gender reform such as, Nakamura Masanao and even Fukuzawa Yukiichi clearly deployed "Christian" notions to better argue in favour of betterment of women's conditions. A series of articles titled "Women and Religion," *JZ*, 144-149 (January – February 1889) lay out some of the essential arguments. See also, William Braisted Reynolds, *Mei roku zasshi* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976); Ivan Hall, Mori Arinori (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 174-86, 238-54.

<sup>23</sup> Brownstein, "Jogaku zasshi," 321.

stories which then other women would read. But topics of women's respectability, and questions about the grander aim of literature was also of interest to other men like Iwamoto and the magazine in reality catered to two kinds of audience. According to Michael Brownstein one kind of this audience was the housewives for whom topics such as "managing the home, ...healthcare, child-raising and Western fashions were of interest." The second category was that of men like Iwamoto interested in issues pertaining to women's education, and other key topics in the arena of social reform.<sup>24</sup> Of course there were also women readers in the second category; these were girls who had received an education in most cases at a missionary school.

The central focus of the magazine therefore two-fold. While on the one hand it consciously maintained a rather simple-minded attitude about providing practical information to women about household matters, at another level it sought to raise the stakes higher, by questioning the role of literature in reforming society, providing space for discussing current affairs etc. That Iwamoto constantly juggled between these two apparently rival aims can be attested by the fact that he moved back and forth between providing political commentary and the aims of women's literature.<sup>25</sup> To solve this problem, Iwamoto, beginning in June 1892, started publishing the

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<sup>24</sup> Brownstein, "Jogaku zasshi," 321-22.

<sup>25</sup> For example, upon the emergence of a rival popular magazine in 1887, *Kokumin no Tomo*, in the market, Iwamoto rose to the occasion by writing a critical editorial on a topic that was on the mind of the reading public—the costume ball held at the Prime Minister's residence. See *JZ*, 65 (May 1887). In May 1889 again, in order to make space for a discussion of the upcoming Diet elections, Iwamoto made space in *Jogaku zasshi* available by cutting the home-study section (Brownstein, "Jogaku zasshi," 325). Meanwhile, the kind of discussion of literature and fictional works found in the magazine had also undergone a change; while the growing emphasis had been to have women publish and write for other women, Iwamoto's own reading of literature, to be evaluated on moral rather than aesthetic grounds, provoked criticism from other serious literary figures in the field such as Uchida Roan and Mori Ogai. Clearly, at least in the literary arena, Iwamoto's thoughts distanced other serious (male) thinkers to publish in the magazine. During this time, and after the Diet elections, Iwamoto once again tried to steer the magazine in the direction of women's issues; in mid-1890 he felt the need to once again use the magazine to voice the practical concerns of women by writing about home-related issues. But the Imperial Rescript of Education passed in October 1890 frustrated Iwamoto's goals; instead of focusing on practical issues which were supposedly of interest to his female readership his writings moved in the direction of an intellectualism that would appeal to men, and his more educated female readers.

magazine under two separate covers. The “white cover” issues were dedicated to literature and social reform, the “red cover” issues to topics related to home. Eventually this did not last very long and the magazine entirely split into two. What is noteworthy here the magazine’s myriad and often contradictory goals reflect the atmosphere surrounding the question of women’s reform in the period between 1885 and 1892. This suggests that as the scope of “Woman’s Question” were being defined, what was also being articulated was the extent to which women’s reform functioned as a subset of the larger categories of “social” and “political” reform.<sup>26</sup>

### ***Jogaku zasshi*’s interest in Ramabai**

*Jogaku zasshi*’s myriad readership and seemingly contradictory goals from the time the magazine was founded in 1885, until the time after Ramabai’s visit to Japan, reflect the larger problematic that the magazine struggled with—viz. how to define the relation between women and politics, women and social reform, and the articulation of women’s roles in the society. The space allocated to Ramabai in *Jogaku zasshi* then perhaps bespeaks of this very conflicting impulse. One can even argue that the kind of attention that was accorded to Ramabai would not have been possible in the latter days of the magazine when its goals were more streamlined, for the interest that Ramabai must have generated could hardly have catered to a readership which looked forward to reading practical tips on housekeeping.

This coupled with the fact that Ramabai arrived in Japan at the time when the Japanese reformers such as Iwamoto were themselves interested in the future face of Japanese womanhood must have given additional impetus to deploying *Jogaku zasshi* as the vehicle to publicize her visit. Here was a highly educated woman, travelling

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<sup>26</sup> I examine the Woman’s Question from the point of view of the emerging idea of “social” in Chapter Four.



alone around the globe with the message of temperance, and working toward alleviating women's social conditions, a topic close to the heart of Japanese reformers themselves. Given *Jogaku zasshi*'s myriad aims and an audience with wide-ranging interests, one can imagine that articles on Ramabai in *Jogaku zasshi* must have fulfilled many goals at once. On the one hand, she must have appealed to the intellectual reader (assumed to be male) desiring knowledge about the outside world and the kinds of issues that Ramabai was interested in, viz. bringing to fore the true condition of Indian womanhood, and seeking help to ameliorate their condition. That she was a woman, with a specific interest in women's education must have also appealed to her women readers (both intellectual and otherwise) in search of representations of model woman. From *Jogaku zasshi* we get the sense that amongst the like-minded Japanese the effect of Ramabai was thus two-fold. As Tsuda's letter to Lanman attests, she was no doubt an inspiration to some. Secondly, and surprisingly for her audiences, her visit also provided an insight into the fact that the condition of women in India and Japan was not altogether dissimilar. The second point is particularly noteworthy, for as I will discuss below, it is in the re-telling of Ramabai's story in the Japanese media that in fact helped Japanese, interested in articulating the position of Japanese womanhood, to distinguish their own position vis-à-vis the West and other Asian countries.

In *Jogaku zasshi* the earliest article on Ramabai appears in August 1888 (Nos. 121, 122). These two short pieces titled simply as "A History of Pandita Ramabai Sarasvati," provides a brief history of Ramabai life. Over the next six months—the last piece of news appears in February 1889 (No. 146)—we see a total of eighteen news items concerning Ramabai of which four are editorials (i.e., "leading articles"). This does not include the brief notes on her in the *Yomiuri shinbun*, nor does it take into

account the pieces published in *Tokyo fujin kyôfu zasshi*, many of which were reprints of the *Jogaku zasshi* pieces.<sup>27</sup>

Of the many pieces, the most significant are: a translation of Ramabai's lecture titled "The critique of both hemispheres," [*Ryôhankyû no hihan*] published in two September issue (Nos. 129, 130).<sup>28</sup> The first of these issues devotes space to yet another introduction of Ramabai (following the two-part introduction in issues 121/122 mentioned above), with an essay by Sasaki Tojuko titled "The heroine of India: Ramabai" [*Indo no joketsu Ramabai fujin*]. Issue number 142 carries an interview with Ramabai done by none other than Tsuda Sen.<sup>29</sup> In the same issue we also have another bio-picture of the "educator" Pandita Ramabai and the call to raise money for her cause. The request for money is repeated again in an issue published in January 1889 (No. 143) soon after Ramabai had left Japan. Another lengthy essay is also dedicated to Ramabai's speech on the "Condition of women's education in India," [*Indo joshi kyôiku no keikyô*] a two-part article published as a part of the *Jogaku zasshi* series called "Topics of Women's Education" in two January issues (No. 142, 146). This is a transcription of the speech that Ramabai delivered apparently at the request of Tsuda Sen.

In addition to these, we also have brief notes telling *Jogaku* readers how to contribute to Ramabai's cause, news items describing the sale of her books, as well as informing the readers about the work of Ramabai Association. An important aspect of published material on Ramabai also includes work on her by American authors, or

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<sup>27</sup> See the following issues of *Tokyo fujin kyôfu zasshi* (TFKZ henceforth.) TFKZ, 5 (August, 1888): 95-96; 6 (September, 1888): 135; 7 (October, 1888): 148-50; 9 (December, 1888): 205-06; 10 (January, 1889): 233; 10 (January, 1889): 235; 11 (February, 1889): 271-275; 15 (June, 1889): 384; 25 (May, 1890). For *Yomiuri shinbun* see issues from the following dates, December, 12, 22, 25, 28, 30, 1888. (There are three announcements on the December 25<sup>th</sup> issue.) See also the final issue of May 4, 1889.

<sup>28</sup> According to the translator of this essay, this was first published in the United States. There is no record of this American publication. *JZ*, 129: 201-03, and 130.

<sup>29</sup> See *JZ*, 142 (September 1888). Tsuda it seems interacted with Ramabai at length. He was also instrumental in taking Ramabai to Kamakura.

transliterations of speeches that she gave in the United States. “The Critique of Both Hemispheres” for instance is such a translated piece. In addition, Ryder’s speech on Ramabai’s life was published in January 1889 (No. 143). The most lengthy description of Ramabai’s views on religion are conveyed to the Japanese readers via an interview conducted with Ramabai by an unknown American interviewer.<sup>30</sup>

Publications on Ramabai can thus be said to fall into four main categories of the *Jogaku zasshi*. One of this was the “Biography” which as the heading suggests, introduced Ramabai to her readers. The second was the category of “Interviews” which provided access to Ramabai’s thoughts in a more direct manner. The third category was that of Ramabai’s own speeches, of which one was a translation (“Critique”), and the other was explicitly addressed to her Japanese audiences. Finally the fourth category was made up of small news items which fell broadly under the rubric of “Miscellaneous” or “Latest news.” The final category is not unimportant, for while it provided readers with the trivial information concerning Ramabai’s life—who she met, what places she visited, it succeeded in incorporating her, albeit for a very short time, in a part of larger community of women and men who read these magazine. Given that between August 1888 and January 1889 news about Ramabai appeared in almost every other issue of the *Jogaku zasshi*,<sup>31</sup> explaining in part her celebrity status. One can argue that by the time she left her readers must have either seen her in person or must have had at least some notion of her work. Not only did the details of her stay but even those surrounding her departure from Yokohama did not go unnoticed. Iwamoto Yoshiharu himself went to bid her farewell but apparently narrowly missed her departure. Thus in one of the final articles about Ramabai that Iwamoto himself

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<sup>30</sup> See *JZ*, 144 and 145 (January 1889).

<sup>31</sup> The issues that have some news about Ramabai are: 121, 122, 129, 130, 142-146. Her picture appeared in the December issue (141), right after she had arrived in Japan.

wrote, he provided his readers with an address for sending their correspondence to Ramabai.<sup>32</sup>

### **Relation between biography and hagiography: Articulating the “gift”**

The two main biographies of Ramabai, the first published in August before she arrived, and the second in form of a speech delivered by Ryder (published soon after Ramabai left in January) present an interesting contrast of the ways in which the Indian feminist was perceived in a fundamentally different ways by her Japanese and American interlocuters.<sup>33</sup> Both narratives describe Ramabai as compelling figure; both focus on the sheer grit and determination with which she led an unorthodox life following the death of her parents, then siblings and finally her husband.<sup>34</sup> Both praise Ramabai, for championing the cause of Indian widows and women’s education in India. However, what is worth noting is that that while the first essay maintains a closer resemblance to Ramabai’s actual life (as we know it from the historical facts), the second essay (by Ryder) published soon after Ramabai’s departure, takes on a life of its own, assuming a tone of a hagiography.

In reality, the second essay hardly provides any new information on Ramabai. Moreover, instead of focusing on aspects of her difficult life until the time she arrived in the United States, it presents the Japanese readers with a forceful representation of what the Americans did to alleviate Ramabai’s struggles, and therefore draws attention to how the American women vicariously contributed to the future well-being of Indian

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<sup>32</sup> See “Ramabai has already left Japan” in *JZ*, 143 (Jan1889): 27.

<sup>33</sup> Dr. Emma Ryder, a woman doctor from New York who was accompanying Ramabai to India. The note to the readers that accompanies the translation of her biography in *JZ* describes Dr. Ryder as a Temperance Union worker, and a close associate of Frances Willard who was traveling to India with Ramabai in order to help the latter in her work. Her introduction of Ramabai was the one presented at the lecture meeting held at the Tokyo Christian Temperance Union and published in the magazine with the idea that it may include some new information of interest to Ramabai’s admirers.

<sup>34</sup> The first biography titled “Pandita Ramabai Saraswati,” appeared in two parts in *JZ*, 121 (Aug 4, 1888): 22-24; and *JZ*, 122 (Aug 11, 1889): 46-48. The second appears titled “Story of Pandita Ramabai” appears in *JZ*, 143 (Jan 5, 1889): 24-26.

womanhood. The second narrative elevates Ramabai to the level of greatness that is unsurpassed and certainly absent in the first; no longer do the details of her life matter, moreover, many of the “facts” presented here are simply incorrect. For instance the first biography describes her as the “child of the forest” describing in substantial detail the facts of Ramabai’s life especially the sad circumstances of her older sister’s marriage. The second essay states that Ramabai spent her childhood in the Himalayas (which is factually incorrect); furthermore there is no mention of her sister, whose unfortunate marriage was the main reason why Ramabai’s father decided against her early marriage. Nor is there in the second essay any reference to the accolades Ramabai received in Calcutta, or any mention of the fact that Ramabai and her ideas about women had already gained some prominence while she was still in India. Instead, what we have is a story of a life of relentless hardship. Ryder points out that only after she traveled to the United States that Ramabai struggles were finally acknowledged.

It was of course true that Americans to a great extent made Ramabai’s story a successful one, a story that opened doors for her elsewhere (such as Japan) in ways that were unimaginable for her time. In America, (as we will see later) Ramabai railed vociferously against the “pitiable” conditions of Indian womanhood. What she called upon was the “sympathy” of her audiences, and in her narrative the two terms—sympathy and pity—play off against one another to create a circle of compassion within which Ramabai (and her fellow Indian “sisters”) were to be located. Ryder’s essay makes this point well. Within Ryder’s story we (as the readers) are persuasively led to believe that until the “American women” emerged on the scene there was no hope for these Indian women desperately in need of help. The larger-than-life picture of Ramabai’s life that Ryder paints, then suggests that while Ramabai’s battles had been fought in isolation until she came to the United States, it was here that she first

encountered real support. Ryder sums up the coming together of the widows cause and the American interests in the following few sentences:

When in the United States [Ramabai] encountered many people she spoke about the pitiable condition of Indian widows [*aware* (憐れ)*naru sôfu*] and lack of education for women. The American women sympathized with her [*kore wo awaremi* (憐れみ)]. We promised that we would exert ourselves to help free (provide salvation to) the Indian women.<sup>35</sup>

This “encounter” becomes the key factor which allows for pity (pitiable) and compassion to work together, placing them in a face-to-face relation with each other. Neither is possible without the presence of the other, that is to say, pity cannot be evoked without compassion, and the latter requires pity without which it cannot launch itself. Not surprisingly then, Ryder’s text loses its hagiographic elements precisely at the moment when the encounter between the Indian woman and her American audiences takes place. No longer does Ramabai need to be located outside history, (a basic characteristic of a hagiographic narrative); yet for the encounter to take place in the first place, for it to work in the salvific manner it has to rely upon the prior existence of a hagiography. The aura that surrounds Ramabai departs, (it has to exit) when “history,” by way of the entry of Americans makes its presence felt.

Since this is a speech addressed specifically to Japanese audiences, the essay, not surprisingly, ends on the note telling Japanese women what they can and ought to do to help Ramabai’s cause. As hagiography ends where history begins, the “feeling” of compassion of American women provides the necessary impetus to move into the domain of “action.” That is to say, compassion or sympathy translates into monetary help, thereby allowing the domain of “feeling” to successfully translate into the sphere of “action.” In Ryder’s narrative, it is this activity of gathering funds that the Japanese men and women are invited to; the biography ends on a practical note—she urges her

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 25

Japanese readers to contribute to Ramabai's cause, since the funds that were gathered in Ramabai's name in the United States are not enough.

Here then we have interesting situation: Ryder, an American woman narrates to a Japanese audience a story of the Indian feminist, Ramabai. While most of this story is dominated by the hardship/ suffering (*konnan*) that the Indian women face, the Japanese audience, as we already know, are told that it is the American people who bring some relief/ help (*kyûsai*) to Ramabai. The freedom is to Ramabai's person—herself a widow with a desire to help other widows, and the notion of gift(ing) is postulated is dependent upon Ramabai's capacity to make the suffering *present*. While American monetary contribution is perhaps the most “material” help that they provide Ramabai, it is really their intense “feeling” for her work, their compassion for her cause, that provides an impetus to this fund raising. The funds collected however are not enough, and it is here that that the role of the Japanese audiences comes into play. Ryder's text provides them with a concrete opportunity to help the cause of this Indian woman and her “pitiable” sisters. It allows them to be a part of the American (sponsored) event of being the donor for a good cause. The strength of the American donation, a “gift” however rests on a more powerful structure than what simply a monetary donation can and will allow. At the base of their philanthropy lies the act of compassion, and it is this compassion that is in effect considered as endless.

Can the Japanese participate in this compassionate act? The act of giving, establishes for the Japanese givers a previously un-imagined unity with the American cause; they too can participate in the benevolatory act that up until now only the American donor could bestow. By participating in the compassionate act *now*, they too can bestow upon this woman their help, which up until now they were merely recipients of by way of the work that foreign missionaries had done in Japan. Ryder's hagiographic narrative of Ramabai's life stresses on how entirely this compassion was

lacking in her own socio-cultural milieu—the Indian men and women she had approached for help had only shunned her—making the act of the American and now the Japanese people all the more powerful. That Ramabai was full of praise for the work that the Japanese had done in the field of education further enhances the Japanese donor status, as it *separates* the Indian woman from her Japanese audience, and *does away with the similarity* between Japan and India. And yet, Ryder’s very last sentence of this hagio/bio-graphy puts the Japanese back in their place. She urges her audience to “go out in the world and engage themselves in the field of education the way Ramabai has done” and hopes that they will channel their enthusiasm to work towards the amelioration of the pitiable condition of women in their own country.<sup>36</sup>

The last sentence suggests that Japanese do possess this “feeling” of compassion that defines the American response to Ramabai. Having once recognized this quality however, Ryder also unequivocally urges them to direct this compassion at *themselves* in order to serve their own women who are in need of it. Her narrative thus is significant for two reasons: first, this hagio/bio-graphy of Ramabai serves as an indirect way to make Japanese aware of their own feeling of compassion which should rightly drive them (as it drives the Americans) to the actual work of ameliorating women’s conditions. Second, more importantly, having once recognized this quality, the Japanese are clearly told that they are in no position to direct this compassion towards anyone else as they are themselves in dire need of it. Implicitly then what this statement clearly suggests is that, the position of the Japanese is after all not all that different from their Indian counterparts. Think of Ramabai and follow in her footsteps when you begin the work of education in your own country, Ryder appeals to them, indicating thereby that the Japanese actually fall more in the category of the recipient of help rather than its giver. The ground that separates the “donor” from the “donee”

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 26.



then, is after all not the physical fact of money itself as much as it is compassion, which while the Japanese might possess they are not in the position to give away. Which is why, the Japanese cannot participate in the act of compassion, the final transcendental gift, but take part only in the mundane act of making a monetary donation, thereby reaffirming the fact that the power of the donor in the final analysis can only rest with the American donor.

The notion of giving and receiving compassion predicates the idea of a “shared time.” At the moment in the text when the hagiography becomes a biography, when the benevolent gesture of the American makes its appearance, two other presences also need to be identified: that of the donee who is the recipient of this benevolence, the Indian woman/women (Ramabai and her absent but imaginary sisters), as well as a third party—the Japanese whose support/help/donorship, and even “compassion” is called upon to be directed not at the other but at themselves.

Gift once recognized as a “gift” initiates a circle of economy—a debt is put in place and it demands gratitude on part of the donee. (Thus, money is exchanged in return of gratitude, and compassion is marked by the presence of pity.) The Japanese giving-of-money is marked by gratitude on the part of the donee, i.e. Ramabai; compassion the Japanese cannot give, since they are told by the Americans that they are not in a position to give any. This “giving” and “taking” takes place within historical time under the watchful eye of the American. Yet, what I wish to argue is that, in this moment of contact between Ramabai and her Japanese audience, (where the latter caught in a position that is at once similar but also different from the Indian woman), what is also possible is a moment of a sudden and an unexpected alliance between the two. This is a sharing of a “present” between the Japanese desire to “give” compassion to the Indian woman’s cause that in effect, and *in time* is impossible due to the American presence. The American presence tries to ensure that

the giving can only be monetary, but a simultaneous presencing of the Japanese and the Indian means that the “gift” can be something more than monetary. But, this takes place in a kind of a shared time *outside* historical time, and it is fragile; the very next moment we are back in history with Ryder’s words of advice to her Japanese audience. The “radical forgetting” that Derrida speaks of has already happened—the Japanese literally cannot and ought not to even imagine what compassion towards an other might mean, since they need to help themselves first.<sup>37</sup>

Paradoxically then, what does get articulated in the language of “higher calling” that provides impetus to the giving, this “compassionate feeling” cannot really be given; while what the American donors give to their the Indian donee is termed as the gift, it cannot really be a “gift.” It is the Japanese who are incapable of giving—they who cannot give anything more than money for they have to help themselves first as they are reminded—who become the real donors. The forgetting makes the gift elude itself, it is the very condition upon which the gift can be articulated as such, yet forgetting a gift does not mean the non-appearance or non-experience of the gift.<sup>38</sup> Its transient nature is caught in an instant and as Ramabai leaves Japan the moment happens, but is inevitably lost.

As much as the forgetting has to take place on the part of the donee, i.e. in no manner should she reciprocate, or be aware of the gesture that was made, the point is that the donor too should remain unaware of the gifting and the forgetting as well, lest he/she becomes engaged the economic structure of debt, which would annul the gift. As the text demonstrates however, the American donor is far too aware and conscious of her important and powerful status. Ryder in establishing the singularity of the American people, stresses the fact that it was in the United States that Ramabai first

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<sup>37</sup> This notion of “gift” is informed by Jacques Derrida’s reading of the gift in *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

received help for her project; neither Ramabai's own country men and women, nor the British were willing to support her cause. The singularity of the (American) donor then establishes the donor's subject status. The giver of the supposed gift, of this act of benevolence recognizes herself as such which paradoxically makes giving of the "gift" actually impossible. What supposedly makes this giver (the Americans) a more powerful giver is apparently the fact that it can give what no one else can or could. But from the way we understand a gift, this compassion is not, and indeed cannot *be* the gift, for because of what it expects in return it is already embroiled in the circle of economy and therefore of debt and gratitude.

The presence of a gift suggests a possible unity that takes place in the shared time. But given the elusive nature of the gift and a shared time that is fleeting, combined with instantaneous forgetting that makes possible to conceive of the gift in the first place, the time and place of an alliance (between the Indian and the Japanese) is indeed highly a tenuous one. Moreover this fragile alliance, (which eventually sinks into impossibility) can only be shared because neither Japanese audience (the supposed donor) nor the Indian woman (the supposed donee) can articulate themselves as subjects. Yet in that single moment of an alliance they also do contribute something to each other, perhaps suggesting a spectral affiliation (pointing to a future pan-Asianism). It is impossible however for such a trans-national coalition to survive; for it to manifest itself, there must be subjects wanting to be a part of this coalition. But the Japanese and Indian women (people/citizens?) are in no way "subjects" in the way the Americans are defined as "subjects"; if they (the former) had been "subjects" in the latter sense, paradoxically the "gift" would not have been possible.

The momentary connection between Ramabai and her Japanese audience then bespeaks a moment of lost trans-national alliance. This is a moment that cannot be recovered when Japan later in history becomes an imperial nation. But at this moment,

in the moment of vulnerability the structure of the gift provides of a glimmer of what could have been possible, but yet to remain possible had to actually remain *un-*manifested.

### **The triadic relation between “compassion,” “pity,” and “help”**

The simultaneous encounter between Pandita Ramabai, her Japanese audience, and Emma Ryder (signifying a certain sort of an American presence) makes a statement about who is called upon to “witness” the suffering of the “pitiable” condition of Indian womanhood. In this encounter, the category of what is considered as “pitiable” gets codified; that which is “pitiable” is presented as a specific human condition that can, not only be articulated but also eventually ameliorated. In the following sections, as I delve into the dynamics of the Japanese–American and Indian–American encounter, I will focus on the logistics of this triadic encounter. I suggest that the key terms in this discussion of the “condition of Indian woman” without which the encounter would make no sense and indeed not be able to take place are: pitiable (*awaremi*, *sanjô wo awaremi*), compassion/ benevolence (*aware*, *renmin*), relief/help (*kyûsai*, *herupu*).

One of the longest articles dealing with Ramabai in the *Jogaku zasshi* is an interview that she did with Tsuda Sen, the father of Umeko.<sup>39</sup> Given Tsuda’s personal connections with the editor Iwamoto, and his proficiency in English it is perhaps not surprising to Tsuda was chosen for this task. Moreover, from other essays that Tsuda wrote for *Jogaku zasshi*, it is also clear that he was, at this time, involved in temperance work, an area of activism close to Ramabai’s heart. And finally, it was also through Tsuda Sen’s good offices that Ramabai agreed to give a lecture for the members of *Jogaku zasshi* (apparently, initially she was slated to speak only to the

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<sup>39</sup> See *JZ*, 142 (December 1888): 275-79.

members of the Tokyo Women's Temperance Union), and was able to travel to Kamakura, a visit that she mentions of fondly in her letter to Sister Geraldine.<sup>40</sup>

The importance of this essay/interview lies in the fact that not only does it draw a link between the three terms (mentioned above) via which the condition of Indian womanhood is articulated, but it also makes clear the nature of Japanese interest in Ramabai. Furthermore, what is significant is that the Japanese interviewer who provide the insight of this relation is a male thinker/reformer, interested in issues of women's reform no doubt, but nonetheless a *male* reformer, thereby proving the point that questions of women's modernity as debated in the field of gender reform were often if not always negotiated via a masculine intervention.<sup>41</sup>

What is the "subject" of this interview? The very first idea that is defined in the text is that of the "high caste woman" (*hai kasuto no fujin*), who as Tsuda puts it is in need of a "home" (*hoomu*). While the specifics of this high-caste status, and particularly the women is whose name Ramabai speaks is discussed, it is worth noting Tsuda here prefers to leave the term "high-caste" high-caste as is, without translation.<sup>42</sup> Representation in this context works at two levels here: it functions at the level of Ramabai representing the cause of the Hindu woman. Secondly, it also works at the level of translation. How can we possibly consider the distance between "*kôshô fujin*" and "high-caste" in order to imagine the similarity and difference that exists simultaneously? I propose that holding on to the *original* term ("high-caste") could indicate two things: one, it serves as a reminder for the earlier Japanese system of social classes, hence providing for the reader a point in similarity from her own history; and second, it also serves to establish a distance from this past by using the

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<sup>40</sup> Ramabai, *Letters and Correspondence*, 229.

<sup>41</sup> While one can only speculate on this matter, it is worth wondering whether Tsuda Umeko could have done this interview. At this point in time however, Umeko had very little public persona. Moreover, while she was still in Japan at the time of Ramabai's visit she left very soon for United States in 1889.

<sup>42</sup> Elsewhere in a different essay we do have the translation *kôshô fujin* of the "high-caste" woman, but Tsuda's usage indicates that the term could also be understood as it were without the translation.

word “high-caste” to refer to a specific Indian condition. Importantly, in the translation, what is left out is the “Hindu” of the “high-caste *Hindu* woman.” I will return to this point later.

The presence of this high-caste woman is validated entirely by her suffering, for if it was not her suffering, and her pitiable condition she as such cannot become the topic of conversation and cannot aspire to become the subject of history. It is therefore the condition of “suffering” that introduces this woman in the conversation in the first place. The three terms, “pity,” “compassion” and “help” or “relief” enable us not only to speak of this woman, but in effect also provide the means to have a triadic encounter. In Tsuda’s interview with Ramabai it becomes clear the “compassion” is the crux on which rests the intersection of the quality that is “worth of being pitied” and “of bestowing pity on that which is deserving of pity.” Ramabai’s comments on this matter are worth quoting at some length:

When one nation sees the cruel conditions in another nation, there is a feeling of compassion which is natural. There is at this time a mutual interest in doing things that will make conditions better. In reality, the condition of Indian women at present is in need of compassion from another nation. At this time when I hear that Japanese people will provide relief [to the Indian women] I cannot but be gratified. Moreover, [today] Japan is in a position of bestowing compassion, on their Indian sisters who are in need of it. If [or when] in the future India has cast of this burden, and can provide help to Japan, we will certainly take it upon us as our responsibility.<sup>43</sup>

There are several interesting ideas worth noting in this passage. The first point is the “compassion” while defined as a “feeling” and therefore possibly an *immeasurable* quality in effect becomes an object, a sort of a commodity, that can be given by one set of people (nation) to another, thereby making it available for exchange. The second point is that not only is this quality considered “natural” but also that this exchange is natural. And finally, it is a quality that is assumed to exist apriori, “naturally” so to

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<sup>43</sup> See *JZ*, 142:276.

speak; it can be invoked under proper circumstances, which makes it is available for exchange. As the passage above suggest, the narrative of suffering suggests one such circumstance wherein the quality can not only be rightly invoked but also made available for exchange.

In the passage above it is important to note that, the manifestation of this quality of “compassion” is made available only via the presence of exchange. I will discuss this point a little later. As is clearly expressed in Ramabai’s text, the problem however is that while this quality is imagined to be “natural,” and quite easily present among the Americans and also to an extent among the Japanese (although this is contested), it is quite clear that at present, it is not available for giving or for exchange among Indians themselves. This is precisely the reason why Ramabai needs to turn abroad for help.

The Japanese audience certainly made a note of this point (as did the American audience) as can be evidenced from Sasaki Tojuko’s introduction to Ramabai’s essay titled “The Critique of Both Spheres,” published a few months before the Tsuda’s interview.<sup>44</sup> The essay opening lines follow a usual course: the author makes a comment about Ramabai’s greatness having led a life of excessive trials and tribulations. Following an exposition of the term “child widow” (*yônen kafu*), where the reader is told why the condition of these women (girls often as young as six years of age) is so full of hardship, Sasaki explains that Ramabai’s work has been precisely to reform the conditions of these women. The main fault, it is argued, lies with “custom” (*shûkan*), which has remained unchanged for centuries. As this custom has solidified into a “law” there have been thousands of child widows who have had no other choice but to sink into a lifeless existence (*shitai ni hitoshiki chinbotsu suru*).<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> See *JZ*, no.129: 201-03, and 130. The translation was preceded in issue 129 by an essay titled “The Heroine of Indian: Mrs. Ramabai,” 200-01, by Mrs. Sasaki Tojuko.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

One of the central themes of Ramabai's address then, (which follows Sasaki's introduction) is a critique of a rigid high-caste Indian society: Ramabai argues that, not only does custom not allow daughters (of upper-caste Hindu families) to be sent to Christian schools for the fear of conversion, but it also does not strive to reform its own notions of education within the limits of its own religious beliefs.<sup>46</sup> "Religion" (shûkyô) thus becomes linked with "custom" an indicator of the "stubbornness" of Indians.<sup>47</sup> It is this understanding of the custom then that blinds the widow's socio-familial milieu, setting her apart, and making it impossible for supposedly "natural" categories of "pity" and "compassion" to work. Clearly then while compassion on the one hand is understood as a "natural" quality, in Ramabai's world it is not a quality that is all that "naturally" present in all humans beings.

Dipesh Chakrabarty's discussion of the birth of the modern subject in colonial Bengal, and its relation to the different understanding of compassion within the context of Enlightenment thinkers and Indian reformers such as Rammohan Roy is pertinent here.<sup>48</sup> According to Chakrabarty, the first theory of compassion argues that it is a quality that is present at large and at best present in all human beings. That is to say, the capacity for sympathy is understood as a general feeling which a person feels for the larger mankind. It is this quality that makes a person a human, and while it is ever present in the individual, he/she needs to be educated to recognize and respond to it. An individual, subject to reason, therefore can occupy a subject position, when s/he can not only recognize suffering, but also by recognition become a fellow sufferer. In

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 202.

<sup>47</sup> This article was certainly not the first time that the idea of the "cruel custom" is introduced in Ramabai's writing. For her English language readers, it was most clearly articulated in *The High-caste Woman*, where Ramabai presented a compelling synopsis of the relation between "Hindu law" and "cruel custom" and how the latter was to a great extent responsible for the low status of Indian women, especially the "high-caste woman." I have discussed this in greater detail in Chapter Four.

<sup>48</sup> *Provincializing Europe: postcolonial thought and historical difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 117-48.



other words then compassion is acknowledged as a universally present sentiment; it is that which lies at the basis of human nature making people “human” beings.<sup>49</sup>

As Chakrabarty points out, this understanding of compassion differs from the Bengali understanding of sympathy. “Sympathy” (*sahanubhuti*) in this context, he argues, refers to a particular and not a general quality, whereby only individuals with a “heart” (*hriday*) have access to it. In other words, sympathy here does not depend on the “natural facility of imagination”; having a “heart” is an exceptional rather than a rule. It is a “gift” that some individuals possess, and it was the quality of this gift that allows them to be compassionate towards others and understand their suffering.<sup>50</sup> From there Chakrabarty goes on to discuss how these two separate notions of sympathy were often interwoven to give rise to the idea of a modern subject in the peculiar conditions of nineteenth century colonial India. The important point is that within the development of the interiority of the subject the two ideas of sympathy (as at once universal and innate to specific individuals) to a certain extent remain incommensurate.

Within the context of Ramabai’s call for help and her discussion of the suffering of Indian women, “compassion” was at work in both registers. Thus, while the eventual hope was that Indians too would one day be capable of pitying the conditions of their own womankind as well as those of other countries, at present they were caught in the stronghold of custom which made it impossible to see with any clarity the condition of their womenfolk. If we are to examine closely Ramabai’s educational agenda then, as it was articulated to the Japanese, we discover that her desire was that education would teach girls/women not only simple arithmetic, reading and writing but make them into thinking individuals, who exercised their right to

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 126-28. The Bengali social reformer Raja Rammohun Roy is one such example.

freedom. In “Critique of the Two Hemispheres” she points out to her Japanese audience that the goal of educating the child widows was to help them “establish a position for themselves in the world, ...to give them enough strength to judge for themselves and lead an independent life.”<sup>51</sup> Clearly then, her agenda was to inculcate what can be generally termed as “reason”; it was this capacity to reason that would make them human beings capable of judging their own situation and that of others with some amount of independent thinking. Reason by the way of education was that which would lift the dark cloud of suffering that had descended upon them. While this was an aim for the Indian society in general, Ramabai’s work was to focus on a group of women, whose conditions she identified as being the most “pitiable.” At this particular historical juncture however, she also realized that since this help was not forthcoming for the Indian circles and that she need to tap other resources elsewhere for aid. From this perspective, “compassion” was to be understood as a quality present in all humans, although its historical emergence was irregular. It could, on the one hand, be undermined due to the stronghold of custom, as was the case in India. On the other hand, compassion could also be defined as a specific quality present in those who were particularly equipped with the capacity to “imagine” the suffering of Indian women, which is to say the Americans and perhaps also the Japanese.

Defining “compassion” in such specific terms, enabled Ramabai to not only articulate what “suffering” was, but also defined suffering as a specifically historical problem that could be eradicated. Within the larger context of discourse of social reform in nineteenth century, one can argue that the idea of “reform” itself rested first on the creation and then the isolation of the “social,” accompanied by a simultaneous defining of the malaise of the social, and finally addressing the ways in which this

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<sup>51</sup> See, *JZ*, 130: 227.

malaise could be treated, and the “social” conceivably restored.<sup>52</sup> Thus while in Ramabai’s case suffering was the axis along which women’s condition was articulated, this identification was not simply limited to “defining” the problem of women. Beginning with defining who these women were, and thereby creating, so to speak, the category of the “high-caste Hindu woman,” Ramabai next launched on delineating the contours of this category of “suffering,” constituted in historical terms, followed by suggesting the ways in which this problem could be articulated. Needless to say, this is not to argue that the suffering did not exist prior to Ramabai’s articulation of it. Ramabai’s strength lay in her articulation of this problem in an international arena, and in enabling Western (American and British) and Japanese women to discuss the cause, nature and ways of ameliorating of the “suffering.”

For Ramabai, an expression simply of “pity” (*renmin*) on part of the foreign “sisters” in whose presence the suffering of Indian women was detailed was not enough. That is to say, “pity” without the accompaniment of very specific aid, in her words, “help”, was not equal to compassion. In the interview with Tsuda, there is a particularly insightful passage which touches upon the various registers at which the question of pity was addressed. When asked by her interviewer how she compared the “feeling” that the English women presumably had for the pitiable Indian widow as compared to the Americans, Ramabai’s response was highly critical of the former

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<sup>52</sup> Many essay in the volume, Patricia Uberoi ed., *Social reform, sexuality and the state* (New Delhi: sage Publication, 1996) deal with this topic. See also the following for the relation between articulation of suffering, and the rhetoric of help. Thomas S. Haskell, “Capitalism and the Origins of Humanitarian Sensibility, Part I,” *The American Historical Review* 90, 2 (April 1985): 339-61, Thomas S. Haskell, “Capitalism and the Origins of Humanitarian Sensibility, Part II,” *The American Historical Review* 90, 3 (June 1985): 547-66; Thomas W. Lacquer, “Bodies, Details and Humanitarian Narrative,” in *The New Cultural History: Essays by Aletta Biersack et al.*, ed., Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 176-204. Lacquer is particularly insightful on the emergence of the notion of “humanitarian aid.” According to him, what is crucial to what he calls as the “humanitarian narrative” is the necessity of establishing a relationship between “facts [or objects of suffering], compassion and action.” Furthermore, he states, the narrative only works, when one can establish a relationship to the object, or in other words, when “external objects acquire any particular relation to ourselves...so as to engage with our emotions” (179-80).

group.<sup>53</sup> She wrote of British women that out that they did have feeling of pity for the Indians, and particularly the condition of Indian women. But “while they lamented their state, they were willing to neither spend time nor money to bring any relief to the Indian people.”<sup>54</sup> Ramabai’s point here of course was that simply “lamenting” was not sufficient. What Indian women needed was “not just a feeling of *pity* (*renmin no kan*) but *help* (*herupu*), and feelings of *sympathy*” (*dôjô no kan*).<sup>55</sup> In comparison Ramabai was full of praise for the Americans, who expended energy to help their Indian widows and worked for their relief.<sup>56</sup> The key word obviously then was “help” which indicated that as far as Ramabai was concerned feeling had to translate into some form of action. This also means that for Ramabai “sisterhood” could only be attained via the category of help; according to this definition, the British women were certainly not worthy of being called “sisters.”

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<sup>53</sup> Ramabai’s critical stance vis-à-vis the British had several facets. Her conflicted and complicated relationship with the Wantage sisters, in whose care Ramabai’s daughter Manorama spent many childhood years was one aspect of it. Furthermore, Ramabai’s sustained critique of British colonialism, Christian missionaries (many of them who came from Britain) meant that the relationship between Indian and British women was far more complicated than her relationship with American women. While Ramabai’s speeches in Japan such as the one that I discuss here draw upon the contrast that she felt between the British and American response to her call for “help,” her critique of British colonialism is also a significant part of her American travelogue, *United States chi lokasthiti ani parampara* (1889). See also, Meera Kosambi, translated by Meera Kosambi as *The Peoples of United States* (2003) Many scholars such as Kosambi, in Pandita Ramabai, *Pandita Ramabai’s American Encounter: The Peoples Of the United States* (1889), trans. and ed. Meera Kosambi (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 1-52; Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 118-54, have discussed Ramabai’s criticism of Britain from many different aspects. That her Japanese audience was interested in her feelings vis-à-vis both, and that they fashioned their own position in this light is worth noting. Interestingly enough, the American women in trying to distinguish their own position from the British women also noted this fact. Ryder’s herself in her Introduction of Ramabai in *JZ*, 143, clarified the American position as being distinct from the British stance.

<sup>54</sup> Ramabai had the following to say about British men: “they did not know think of anything but their own profit and believed only in self-interest...they [did] not the know the first thing about the suffering of Indian women suffer, and perceive[d] Indians to be an *inferior being* [劣等の種族].” My emphasis. See, *JZ*, 142: 277. (In the text is accompanied by a gloss in katakana which provides the reading of the kanji as “inferior being.” Presumably here we have access to Ramabai’s “own words.”)

<sup>55</sup> My emphasis. Once again the reader is given access to the author’s words, the words in Japanese are accompanied by a katakana gloss which reads as “pity” and “sympathy.”

<sup>56</sup> *JZ*, 142: 278.

### **The significance of the encounter and the problem of witnessing**

The discussions around the theme of the “pitiable” Indian woman, and the essays that were written in Japanese magazines on Ramabai were as suggested earlier, predicated upon an encounter, or rather the many encounters that occurred between Ramabai and her Japanese audience—men and women in whose presence she spoke, who translated her work (people interested in the question of gender reform such as Iwamoto, Tsuda Umeko and her father Sen), the general audience who read her essays, and those who we can assume were interested in Ramabai simply out of curiosity. Content-wise, Ramabai’s speeches not only named the “object” of “pity” and therefore of “help,” but also provided means to ameliorate this “suffering” via “sympathy” (“feelings” defined in very specific terms). Ramabai’s *presence* then without a doubt “made present” the suffering of Indian womanhood in general.

From shift from (Ramabai’s) *presence* to her *making present* (the condition of Indian women) indicates a movement of sorts. There are two important questions that come up here. First, does Ramabai make present what already exists? If so what is the gap—the shift, as it were—that exists between the present but in-articulatable suffering—which can only arise from the heterogeneity of experiences of the suffering, and that which is codified as a workable category—the category of the “high caste Hindu woman/widow” formulated by Ramabai? Given this situation, how does (Ramabai’s) own presence work in specific ways to make present this suffering (occurring elsewhere)? That is to say, what specifically gets named/ articulated in the presence that makes “suffering” a category that its audience (in this case the Japanese audience) can respond to, and work upon in order to ameliorate the conditions of Indian womanhood? In this context, as I will discuss below, it is worthwhile to note how Ramabai’s *physical* presence was perceived, and how her biographies repeatedly comment on Ramabai’s own widowed status. And yet, Ramabai is never the voiceless

Indian widow, in whose name she seeks help. Between this *presence* and *making present* then, there is a certain kind of a displacement and it is here that the question of representation arises.<sup>57</sup>

Representation thus works at two levels: one is at the level of portrayal of the high-caste widow's by Ramabai; the other is the white and Japanese woman's depiction of Ramabai/widow in need of help. Within the space of an encounter, this double effect coincides with the earlier formulation of *making present* and *presence*. *Witnessing* Ramabai invokes the suffering of the innumerable Indian widows, it also draws attention to the awareness of the audience to its own humanity, figured specifically in terms of compassion or benevolence. "Witness" then, functions simultaneously as the noun and a verb: the white woman witnesses (or acknowledges) her own compassion, thereby becoming an embodiment of her compassion, a *witness of it* (used here as a noun), as she becomes a *witness to* (verb) the suffering (as configured in Ramabai). Within the Japanese context however, the position of the white woman is taken up by the Japanese intellectual (men and women), thereby further complicating this binary relationship. That is to say, the relatively simple power dynamic between Ramabai and her American audience, is problematised by the presence of the third party, viz. the Japanese audience.<sup>58</sup> Within the logic of a

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<sup>57</sup> The space between the "real" and its "representation" (image) and why this distinction becomes important in modernity as discussed by Timothy Mitchell in *Questions of Modernity* is useful here. I have already discussed this in greater detail in Chapter 1. Timothy Mitchell, "The Stage of Modernity," in *Questions of Modernity*, ed. Timothy Mitchell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2000), 1-34.

<sup>58</sup> Within this triadic encounter, the question really is about who is located outside the "loop," that is to say, who constitutes the "third party" outside of the binary relationship? Within this particular historical context of late nineteenth century, the encounter between Indians and Japanese was a far greater an anomaly than the contact of each of these emerging nation-states with what was generally understood as "West." The travels of number of Japanese to the United States, and Indians to Great Britain attest to this fact. This is not to suggest that there were no direct relations between Japan and India. For the Japanese, India was already a part of their imaginary as the birthplace of Buddhism; see Toshio Yamazaki and Mitsuru Takahashi ed. *Nihon to Indo: kôryû no rekishi* (Tokyo: Sanseido, 1993). Within a specifically feminist context, Ramabai's contact with the Japanese intellectual scene was certainly out of the ordinary, a fact which the Japanese sense of awe and wonder vis-à-vis Ramabai attests to. Returning to the earlier question then, within the context of Ramabai's meeting with the Japanese intellectuals in Tokyo and Yokohama, it is difficult to determine who lies outside the binary

Japanese–Indian encounter then, the “white woman” in effect becomes the third party who a once stands outside the relationship, and yet, also regulates it in significant ways. This white woman in the context of Ramabai is specifically Emma Ryder (who accompanies Ramabai), who speaks specifically as an American woman, but also generally in the name of the “white women,” questioning as we have already seen, whether the Japanese are really capable of “benevolence,” and capable of being “witnesses” to the suffering of Indian woman.

This then is no longer a singular case of the white woman interacting with the brown woman; rather it is a triadic engagement—an engagement between the singular Indian representing the Indian womanhood and the Japanese women, which if not mediated, then at least presenced by the American (white) woman. For the moment then, we can imagine the following formulation: There are three assignments within this triadic structure. In the first relation between Pandita Ramabai and the American woman (in absence of the Japanese), Ramabai is the representative of the Indian women’s cause; her presence as their representative is validated by the American audience, who (as I have argued above) is *witness to* (verb) the suffering, as she is a *witness of* (noun) her own compassion. The second is the relationship between the Japanese audience and Ramabai. The American presence in whose shadow this connection becomes manifest is complicated by the fact that Japanese occupy at once the position of the subject who witnesses and the object of this witnessing.<sup>59</sup> That is to

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relationship. The position of the “white woman” (read American audience) was certainly usurped by the Japanese, but given the overall Euro-centrism in matters of “civilisation,” “progress” and even “feminism,” the presence of the “white woman” within the Indo-Japanese encounter could not be negated entirely either. Moreover this can also be amply demonstrated by my earlier analysis of Emma Ryder’s introductory speech that she gave to the Japanese audience.

<sup>59</sup> This bespeaks of the birth of the modern subject, based as it is on the idea of an “unified” individual subject, who in his/her indivisibility is at once aware of one’s interiority (i.e. one’s witnessing of one’s own sympathy), as s/he is cognizant of the other’s suffering (i.e. one’s awareness of the other’s suffering). See Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*; and also Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds., Larry Grossberg and Cary Nelson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 271-313 in which she discusses the construction of the unified Western subject of history.

say, on the one hand, the Japanese awareness of the Indian suffering replays as it affirms the American desire to be benevolent to their Indian sisters. And yet on the other hand, the American presence, via Ryder, also makes the Japanese aware that before they submit themselves to the Indian cause, they need to witness the condition of their own womanhood. Ryder's speech therefore makes the Japanese mindful of their own position, or rather their own failing or lack—which is, their supposed present incapability of offering their Indian sisters anything more than simply monetary help. As can be evidenced from the Japanese engagement with Ramabai, intellectuals—men and women—interested in Ramabai did in fact offer Ramabai some tangible “help,” most obviously in the form of money.<sup>60</sup> An yet, within the logic of a mimetic desire, there was also a desire to “give” something larger, the intangible gift of “compassion,” a *feeling* whose presence was debated. Which is to say, that while the American woman regarded the Japanese as incapable of bestowing compassion on anyone outside of themselves (after all they needed it more), the Japanese did not doubt the presence of this quality, and yet remained ambivalent with regard to who its object should be. Tsuda Umeko's forthright comment to Mrs. Lanman stating that Ramabai should “not expect much from the Japanese, as Japan is doing...her best to educate her own women” such that women such as Tsuda will feeling the need to help their Indian sisters were also aware that the needs of their own countrywomen came first.<sup>61</sup> Thus, as I have suggested earlier the exchange between the Japanese and their Indian visitor does manifest itself in the form of a “gift,” and yet, the possibility *and* the impossibility of it remains, at best, indeterminable because the Japanese position is at once caught between subjecthood and objectification. The premise of a gift forecloses the possibility of being a “subject,” but the impossibility of

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<sup>60</sup> The details of the funds collected for her Ramabai's cause, and the methods of making contributions were made public in the *JZ* on a number of occasions. See for example, news items in *JZ*, 142, (December 1888), and *JZ*, 143 (January 1889).

<sup>61</sup> *Attic Letters*, 325.



its manifestation (as a gift) also poses the question of subjectivity and what this “subject-hood” entails in the first place. The dual positionality of the Japanese, its witnessing of the suffering of the other from within its own benevolence (which we must remember is not and cannot be realized for the structure of the gift to work), *and* the need to bear witness to one’s own status, i.e. the condition of its own womanhood—this is precisely where the position of the subject and the object collapses into one. Within the context of the third relation between the Japanese audience and the American presence we become aware of the fact that for the Japanese position to be validated as the subject, it seeks a necessary connection with the American position, which is to be at once that of being benevolent and also simultaneously establish distance between the Indian woman whose cause they attend to. “Sympathy” therefore while being translated into help, crosses over from an earlier meaning of being equal in suffering, or suffering equally.<sup>62</sup> The Japanese desire to *be coeval* with the American subject position makes the “gift” eventually an impossible endeavor. And yet, from the perspective of the American Ryder, the two positions (American and Japanese) cannot be commensurate, or equal in sharing the feeling “sympathy” for the Indian cause.

In seeking “help,” Ramabai’s stance towards her British, American and the Japanese audience also varied depending on who she was turning to for aid. Ramabai, as we know was far more critical of her British audiences than she was of her American interlocutors. Of Japan, Ramabai had nothing but words of praise,<sup>63</sup> and her

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<sup>62</sup> Following Chakrabarty’s analysis, the Sanskrit word “*sahanubhuti*” (equal + feeling, translated into English as “sympathy”) is a mark of a man who possesses “*sahriday*” (with heart). Drawing upon the aesthetic theories of *rasa shastra* (aesthetics), Chakrabarty, in *Provincializing Europe*, points out that *sahanubhuti* was not understood as a general quality, but a specific characteristic of a person with *hriday* (124-7). This he points out is different from the positions of Smith and Hume, for whom the idea of ‘sympathy’ entailed “the practice and faculty (of another European word) ‘imagination.’” *Sahanubhuti* unlike “sympathy” was ‘not dependent on a naturally given mental faculty like “imagination”; it was rather seen as a characteristic of the person with “*hriday*” (126).

<sup>63</sup> See letter dated January 3, 1889 from Ramabai to Sister Geraldine in Shah, *Letters and Correspondence*.

comments on what she perceived as Japanese women's advancement were astute and on the mark. She wrote to Geraldine: "women are treated much more respectfully in Japan than any other Oriental country. They are by no means as free as Western women, but there is no... caste system.... They show a great deal of intelligence and all signs point to the happy day that is to dawn upon the women of Japan." From her observations of the men who attended her talks, she notes that they were "very gentlemanly and treated women with [the] greatest respect. I am very much pleased with all this and rejoice to think of the great possibilities of progress in Japan."<sup>64</sup> Japan, particularly Japanese women in Ramabai's eyes were more progressive than their Indian counterparts, but not as advanced as the American woman, who from Ramabai's point of view had acquired the highest status. From Ramabai's interactions with the Japanese then we have this distinct sense that she saw the Japanese women's position as not only inspiring, but as far as the Indian woman was concerned also attainable as the first step taken in the direction of true freedom. The kind of relation then that Ramabai sought to establish with her Japanese audience is one of equality. In her interview with Tsuda Sen, the language of compassion works on the principle of exchange. As gratified as she is to hear about the Japanese interest in Indian women, she also points out that while at present the Japanese maybe in the position to be sympathetic to the Indian cause, if in the future the Japanese are deserving of compassion their Indian sisters will take up the responsibility of "help." Compassion here is understood not only a commodity of exchange (as discussed earlier), but a very specific kind of exchange. In this specificity it lacks the grander and universal elements of benevolence which the Euro-American notions of compassion and sympathy.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 228.

The triadic relationship between the Indian and the Japanese in the presence of the American, then lays bare the workings of compassion, sympathy, pity and help. Key to the formulation of a subject position is Ramabai's own presence as well as her representation of the "pitiable" Indian woman. It is the capacity of Ramabai to present the cause *of* the Indian woman, as well as the audiences' representation of her *as* the Indian woman that lies at the basis of validating emotions of compassion, sympathy and help, giving her the right to *speak*. That is to say, the discourse of representation validates her presence as a (speaking) subject. It is to this question of representation that I will now turn to.

### **The question of representation: (Ramabai's persona)**

Two images of Ramabai were particularly appealing to her Japanese interlocutors: one focused her physical appearance, the other is an interest in her stance as a Christian. I suggest that Ramabai's plea for help was rendered all the more powerful because of her capacity to narrate heartrending narratives of the suffering of Indian widows. She spoke fearlessly for her cause, as many Japanese and American audiences noted, and we find many references to her impassioned manner of speech and her "fiery" eyes. Interest and even curiosity regarding Ramabai's appearance, or for that matter that of many Asians (perceived as "Orientals") within the Western world was by no means rare.<sup>65</sup> Meera Kosambi has pointed out that while Ramabai was received with warmth and affection by many people she met during her American visit, the first response to Ramabai was almost always based on her appearance.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> In an age when descriptions of physical qualities presented in highly racial terms was the norm, physical appearance was in fact often the starting point of delineating anyone's work. Most of Tsuda Umeko's descriptions all for in fact start with an account of a her "small stature and Japanese dress" followed inevitably with a note on her "perfect English." Cited in Barbara Rose, Tsuda Umeko and Women's Education in Japan (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 84.

<sup>66</sup> See Ramabai, *Pandita Ramabai*, 23-24. The following quote by Caroline Healy Dall is also found in *Ibid.*, 24.

Described overtly in racial terms, Ramabai's physical appearance from the point of view of her feminist friend and biographer Caroline Healy Dall was as follows:

"Ramabai is strikingly beautiful. Her face is a clean-cut oval; her eyes dark and large, glow with feeling. She is a brunette, but her cheeks are full of colour."<sup>67</sup> Moreover, Ramabai's acceptability on racial grounds, combined with her religious affinity with her American audiences, was often juxtaposed with her humble beginnings. This juxtaposition takes place most effectively in Dr. Rachel Bodley's "Introduction" to *The High Caste Hindu Woman*. It is worth noting here that Ramabai's physical appearance validates her authenticity as an Indian woman/widow. Bodley writes:

Pundita Ramabai, the high-caste Brahman woman, the courageous daughter of the forest, educated, refined, rejoicing in the liberty of the gospel, and yet by preference retaining a Hindu's care as regards a vegetable diet, and the peculiarities of the dress of Hindu widowhood.<sup>68</sup>

Kosambi, who quotes almost exactly the same passage in her translation of Ramabai's *Peoples of The United States* (1889), reads Bodley's Orientalist overtones as neatly merging with perhaps her authentic admiration for Ramabai. In Ryder's address as well, Ramabai's presence as an authentic (original) "Hindu" is combined with her later "Christian" identity (needless to say, the two form incommensurable quantities); both images combine within the logic of an Oriental mystique.

Needless to say, even in terms of image, the Japanese encounter with Ramabai, is one that is already addled with American visions of Ramabai. That is to say, not surprisingly, the Japanese writers in their essays reiterated many of these American impressions. As we have already seen, the earliest biographies published in the August

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<sup>67</sup> See earlier footnote. That Ramabai's looks were viewed favorably, is clear from the fact that, Ramabai's kinswoman Anandibai Joshi for whose graduation the former had traveled to the United States was perceived negatively as a "mulatto."

<sup>68</sup> Rachel L. Bodley, Introduction to *The High Caste Hindu Woman*, by Pandita Ramabai Sarasvati (London: George Bell and Sons, 1888), xxv.

issue of *Jogaku zasshi*, describes her as the “child of the forest,” stressing constantly upon the great hardships that she suffered as a child.<sup>69</sup> This narrative is marked by two characteristics: first, what constitutes as her “biography” is not only a story of Ramabai’s suffering in India but also her life in America. Second, the larger history/story of Indian womanhood/widowhood is tied in with Ramabai’s personal story of hardship in a way that makes it impossible to make a distinction between Ramabai’s personal narrative and that of Indian womanhood. Part I opens with proclaiming Ramabai as the “singular” Indian amongst twenty million people, who has raised her voice to speak of the deplorable status of the Indian woman. Her singularity however quickly dissolves into a depiction of the “general” condition of Indian widows (of whom there are hundreds and thousands, we are told). The narrative/ biography actually moves fluidly between telling Ramabai’s own story and providing the readers with a more “general” story, that of the Indian widow (the latter supposedly in Ramabai’s own voice).

The central focus of this essay is a transcription of Ramabai’s speech in the United States, providing many details about the pitiable conditions of young widows. The emphasis here is not so much on the historical conditions of Indian patriarchy or the origins of this “cruel custom” as much as it is on simply presenting or perhaps *re-presenting* a “realistic” picture of the everyday lives of the young widows. Thus the essay notes the “criminal” status that high caste women are accorded with upon the death of their husbands, and records the ritual practices such as regular shaving of hair, rough clothes, and very little food, that endorses this idea of widows as criminals.

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<sup>69</sup> See *JZ*, 121 (August 1888): 22-24; *JZ*, 122 (August 1888): 46-48. In the above discussion of this biography I have argued that this constitutes the Japanese version of Ramabai while Ryder’s narrative provides the American version. It is still quite likely that this particular biography (published in issues 121 and 122) also borrowed some or much of its text from work published in English. The exact source of it is however unclear. In Part II of this essay, published in issue 122, there is a clear borrowing from the speech of Ramabai while she was in the United States. Again, the specific source of this speech is not known.

As the “high caste” woman and “criminal” (*zainin*) become two sides of the same coin, in Ramabai’s narrative this becomes her most scathing critique of Indian widowhood.<sup>70</sup> The story ends by informing the Japanese readers of Ramabai’s current activities: her successful stay in the United States and more importantly the American response to this narrative of “suffering.” The American response was one of “sympathetic support” the readers are told, a theme that reiterated over and over again in all essays published henceforth on Ramabai. This anonymous writer/translator writes, “upon hearing this story the American women shed tears, and in many universities and schools Ramabai Association were set up.”<sup>71</sup> Part Two ends on the note of asking Japanese men and women to participate in the help that they can provide Ramabai through the purchase of her book. The story of Ramabai’s life that begins with a description of her as a “child of the forest” concludes with a detailed description of how the American audiences “saw” her. In significant ways, this description foreshadows the way in which Ramabai was going to be “seen” in Japan.

References to Ramabai’s physical features as well as her charismatic presence are also found in other essays in the *Jogaku zasshi*. In two successive issues published in January 1889, soon after Ramabai’s departure from Japan, we have a transcription of the speech that was presented to members of the *Jogaku zasshi*. What we also have is an short piece titled, “Perceptions of Ramabai and Her Work” written possibly by Tsuda Sen.<sup>72</sup> This short write-up focuses only briefly on Ramabai’s work; most of the text is filled with descriptions of Ramabai’s impressive physical presence, her important work and how and why the Japanese must help her in her activities.

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<sup>70</sup> This in short is also the gist of Ramabai’s *High-caste Hindu Woman*, which I discuss in detail in Chapter 3.

<sup>71</sup> *JZ*, 122:21.

<sup>72</sup> *JZ*, 143 (January 1889): 14-15. There is also another description of Ramabai’s physical appearance in an interview with Ramabai conducted by Tsuda Sen in the previous issue. See *JZ*, 142 (December 1888): 275. Here, based on her light complexion he describes her as resembling someone from “Portugal.”

Ramabai's simplicity is juxtaposed against her forceful manner of speech reflecting her enthusiasm and passion for her work. And as the following passage elucidates, what really makes a mark on the Japanese is her ability to carry herself in midst of Americans. Narrating a friend's experience who apparently observed Ramabai (perform) in front of a large gathering of American men and women in Washington D.C., the writer of the *Jogaku zasshi* describes her as follows:

She stood alone as an Eastern/Oriental stranger amongst them. Standing bravely without lowering her her gaze in their midst, she stood as a single woman from a ruined nation surrounded by noble men and women of America. Wearing the native costume of her country, and as a vegetarian, she spoke emphatically yet calmly about her views. Without paying any heed to the different congregations and their attacks on her, she declared her beliefs. Such a sight is certainly not a common one. If one sees this short woman with dark skin and unsightly face mingle with noble Western women, engaging with them in a pleasant banter, one comes to a realization that this woman is actually a heroine [*jojôfu*].<sup>73</sup>

This passage works simultaneously in two registers: first, it serves to validate an image of Ramabai as viewed through the eyes of an American woman. Thus as I have suggested above, the image of Ramabai that circulated within Japanese circles was the image that was already manufactured within the Western (specifically American context). Japanese references to racial markings (short stature and dark skin), indicating racial inferiority mirror similar descriptions of Ramabai in the American press. Secondly, this passage also marks an unstinting admiration that the author felt for Ramabai. This admiration is not simply at the level of Ramabai's work for the widows; within the context of the passage quoted above, it is Ramabai's ability to carry herself with poise amongst Westerners that impresses the author of this text most. We can imagine that after all the setting of an "Easterner of a different race" in the context of "Western women of noble families" (i.e. American women) is a situation

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

that the Japanese could well identify with, given that they perhaps saw themselves in a similar position vis-à-vis Westerners. Ramabai's (physical) presence thus once again marks the original problem of identifying with Ramabai as a non-Western figure, and hence available to Japanese for identification as well as admiration, while also at the same time distinguishing themselves from this position (i.e., that of the Indian women and India in general) understood as inferior to Japan's own.<sup>74</sup>

For the Japanese then who engaged actively with her, Ramabai's presence was useful for it enabled them to strengthen a sense of an identity of their own womanhood. Constant self-references on the part of the Japanese indicates that they sought to measure Japanese progress within a comparative framework. In Ramabai's interview with Tsuda for instance, he was not only keenly interested in knowing what Ramabai thought of the Japanese, but also contextualized her comments on Indian women by providing his thoughts on Japanese women. When asked to comment, Ramabai also was full of praise for the progress in the position of Japanese women, and particularly taken in by the speed of this progress in the field of education. Moreover, since Ramabai's own framework within which she articulated the need for an improvement in the condition of widows was that of a "nation," she was full of praise for the Japanese women's "love for their country" (*aikokushin*).<sup>75</sup> Progress (or advancement) in the condition of women was thus clearly measured in nationalistic terms, and yet what the comparative framework also establishes is that "Woman's Question" by itself

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<sup>74</sup> In various contexts the Japanese including Tsuda Umeko made it clear that the position of Japanese women was far superior to other women in Asia. I discuss this point in greater detail in Chapter Four. While most often the point of comparison was China and Korea, there are a few instance in which there are also comparisons with Indians (information provided by Ramabai must have certainly aided this comparison). Interestingly what went hand in hand with the simultaneous distancing and identification with Ramabai was also this unabashed admiration and envy for the "freedom" that American women supposedly had access to. In her letters to Lanman, Tsuda repeatedly mentioned that the American woman should be thankful for her "strong mind, ideas, strength of decision...and her position" (70). Of course the women that both Tsuda and Ramabai perceived as "free" and "decisive" belonged mostly only to a certain class of American society. I will discuss this in greater detail elsewhere.

<sup>75</sup> See Tsuda's interview with Ramabai in *JZ*, 142:278.



and on its own terms was an important *and* a valid question with or without the measure of national progress.

In schematic terms, Ramabai's arrival in Tokyo and her encounter with the Japanese can be understood as producing an effect of "seeing-from-a-distance" or a "tele-vision." Within a "tele-visual" framework Ramabai is, for the Japanese, a woman who arrives from elsewhere, presenting to them the conditions of this "other place" (India) which is *not* the West, and hence as such does not have a dominant place in their imaginary. Yet this "other place" is *also* the West, for interest in Ramabai is guaranteed by the fact that she comes with the validation of the West. Due to the latter, the Japanese are required to "watch" Ramabai, are in fact almost obliged to pay attention to her, for she comes with the imprimatur of the West, which has not only endorsed her "authenticity" but also made her into a "success." The Japanese find themselves in the position where they are not only enamored by Ramabai's success but also wish to become capable of carrying forth this wave of success, by making Ramabai's stay in Japan as successful so as to appear commensurate with the West.

The Japanese self-fashioning runs along two parallel trajectories. First, theirs is a response that tows the line of American response to Ramabai, so as to appear to be *like* the Americans. Secondly, there is also this idea that stems from their admiration for Ramabai, that they wish to fashion themselves after her. The implicit message of Ramabai's portrayal in the Japanese media then seems to be that if we too can create an image of hers akin to her we will also be successful in the West. *And also* there is a second message: if we can make her successful here in the same manner that the Americans have we too be taken seriously by the West. That is to say, from the point of view of Japanese interested in Ramabai, her arrival to Japan from elsewhere carried with it both hopes of emulation of her American success, and well as emulation in more personal terms of the success that Ramabai as an "Easterner" could achieve in

the West. When Ramabai turned to the Japanese for “help,” and promised the same in return in a distant future, she too took part in the identificatory logic via the framework of equality and exchange.<sup>76</sup> The Japanese audience interested in Ramabai *also* via the logic of emulation, read the relation with Ramabai as being equal, in that they saw it as being *identificatory*, and hence at least in part outside the East-West power dynamic.

What was it then that Ramabai brought with herself? In other words, what implications did the figure of Ramabai carry within itself, and what narrative did her voice con-figure? I suggest that Ramabai’s presence is tied in with her “visuality”—both as someone who re-presented the case of the “voiceless” Indian widows and who herself was a Hindu widow. Within the Japanese narratives the space between the two often collapses; documenting the suffering of the Indian widow is at times the same as writing Ramabai’s history,<sup>77</sup> the only difference being, as *Jogaku Zasshi* claims, that Ramabai is the only one amongst the many million widows of India who chose to raise her voice against the atrocities of the “cruel custom.” Ramabai therefore in her garb of a widow presents a vision of an “authenticity” for she carries the mark of the class of woman who she speaks about, and is thus the very embodiment of the “real thing.” This vision however is complicated by the fact that despite being a widow Ramabai also speaks of precisely the things that render her class and caste of women voiceless. For the Japanese then, the “en-visioning” of Ramabai’s as a framing of the Indian woman itself consisted of many images, each differing from the other only slightly and carrying in it the very idea of a multiple, or fractured identity. This multiple positioning *of* Ramabai, *by* Ramabai enabled her to be at once seen at once as a

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<sup>76</sup> *JZ*, 142:276. As has already been discussed above Ramabai’s gesture of reciprocal help in the distant future marks an establishment of equality with her Japanese contemporaries. This imagined reciprocity makes way for an identification with each others position.

<sup>77</sup> We have already seen this in Ramabai’s first biography. See *JZ*, 121 and 122, (August 1888) attest to this fact.

feminist, a widow, a native, and also an Indian woman with the all important American endorsement<sup>78</sup>. Clearly Ramabai shuttled back and forth between at least two locations: the *native* locale of India in which she was a widow much maligned for her critique of Indian widowhood not to mention her conversion to Christianity, and yet also grudgingly admired for her scholarly learning and also her success in the West; and the Western *metropolis*, where she was the “authentic” native, feminist and champion of rights of Indian women. In between these two places that she also occupies the space of Japan—Tokyo, as the quasi-metropolis—falls nowhere, or perhaps more precisely somewhere indeterminably between the two.

### **Quasi-location: The nature of ambivalence**

It is this quasi location, neither here nor there, that directs our attention to two things: first, the necessarily ambiguous relation between Ramabai’s “face/figure” (her figural presence which reminds one of the “widow”) and her “voice” (her speech in lieu of women who cannot speak and whose miseries she ventriloquizes). Second, we realise that there necessary some ambiguity that is at play in imagining Ramabai as the “modern subject” because not only is she colonized “native” but also a woman and hence doubly removed from the realm of subjecthood.<sup>79</sup> Ramabai’s presence in Japan, a location that is neither “local” nor truly “metropolitan” draws attention to the fact that subjectivity as Ramabai embodies it is neither singular nor whole. Rather it necessarily rests or even “props” itself on ambiguities; the space/s from which Ramabai speaks only serve to create a myth of the whole.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>78</sup> I explore the relation between “native” and “authentic” in greater detail in Chapter Four.

<sup>79</sup> That is to say, “subjecthood” proper, which is guaranteed in different ways by being male and Western. See the next footnote.

<sup>80</sup> See Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” 278. What Spivak draws attention to is precisely the myth of a unified, whole subject (that is to say, the Western Male Subject) who, while not bereft of contradictions nonetheless stands as the unified subject of history. With good intentions this subject seeks to give voice to the voiceless Other, urging the other to speak, thereby invariably constituting the Other in ways that the subject-of-West/ Western subject imagines himself/herself. The American

Ramabai's presence and her utterance thus draws attention to herself, but more importantly, it also draws elsewhere, to an "outside" (or the outer limit) of what she "is." More specifically, it directs us towards the "widow" who as we are constantly reminded, can neither be seen nor heard. The constant invocation of the *outside of the frame*, puts in place, and thereby en-frames the figure of "Ramabai"; the invocation of the outside-the-frame on part of Ramabai and also on part of those who wish to help her then reminds us of what Timothy Mitchell has argued about the role of representation in the construction of modern selfhood.<sup>81</sup> For the self to be seen as a *modern* self it demands a spectator; consequently those who "see" and who are "seen" both become performative things who "function as a code to be followed or deciphered."<sup>82</sup> What then do we make of Ramabai who in drawing attention to her "figure/ body" and her "voice" deployed both in varying ways to embody a modern subjectivity.

Before proceeding however, I wish to clarify that this move is not to suggest that Ramabai's agency can be in any form recuperated (or recovered), nor is it to take part in search of any lost identity of Ramabai; instead what I wish to suggest is that we need to take a closer look at the ambiguities in Ramabai's position as they manifest themselves in the space of Japan. Furthermore the ambiguity of Ramabai's position is mirrored in the fact that Japan on the world scene itself shares this ambiguous position, where it is not quite under colonial yoke, but is also not entirely unfree of Western pressures.

I examine this idea of ambiguity by turning to by Homi Bhabha's use of the term "hybrid," and deploying his notion of "ambivalence." Both terms articulate the

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response to Ramabai and the ways in which they constituted the figure of Ramabai suggests precisely this. The British response to Ramabai, particularly that of the Wantage sisters in whose charge Ramabai converted to Christianity is even more clear on this point. Reading *Letters and Correspondences* we are well aware that Sister Geraldine and others imagined Ramabai in the garb of a "native missionary."

<sup>81</sup> See Mitchell, "The Stage of Modernity," 16-25.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

instable relation between the colonizer and the colonized object/ subject. “Hybridity” as Bhabha uses it, draws attention to the doubleness or in-betweenness of cultural or national identity. Bhabha defines “hybridity” as a “*problematic* of colonial representation” whereby the “authority” of the colonial knowledge is constantly questioned and undermined by the simultaneous presence of the native “denied” forms of knowledge which enter the colonial discourse.<sup>83</sup> “Hybridity” thus becomes a source of and site of colonial resistance. The concept of “ambivalence” refers again to the conflictual relationship between the colonial and colonized subjects; Bhabha argues that the relation between the two is not where the colonized subject can be seen as simply constituted by its colonizer. On the colonial landscape “natives” (“mimic” men in Bhabha’s terms) necessarily return the gaze of their masters not fully but partially and confusingly, thereby “displacing the gaze.” “The observer becomes the observed and the ‘partial’ representation rearticulates the whole notion of *identity* and alienates it from essence.”<sup>84</sup> It is important to note here that in Bhabha’s argument, *agency* is not located specifically with either the colonizing subjects nor with the colonized; instead as Robert Young has pointed out, “agency gets moved from a fixed point into a process of circulation” thereby becoming a discursive strategy. The colonizer invested in representing the colonized subject, is interested in creating a “body of knowledge” (Orientalist discourse), but the ambivalence of what is being “fixed” in the colonial discourse, i.e. the colonized subject makes power relations far more equivocal.<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, as Bhabha argues elsewhere, it is important to note that ambivalence works both at the level of *enunciation* and also at the level of *address*.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Homi Bhabha, “Signs taken for wonders: questions of ambivalence and authority under a tree outside Delhi, May 1817,” *Critical Inquiry*, 12, 1 (August 1985): 145-65; Robert Young, “The ambivalence of Bhabha,” in *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London: Routledge, 1990), 148.

<sup>84</sup> Young, “Ambivalence of Bhabha,” 147.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 150.

Ramabai's interaction with her American and Japanese audience/ donors is interesting precisely because it lays bare the very working of this ambivalence. On the one hand Ramabai is viewed as one of the many Indian women whose suffering she gives voice to. On the other hand, her strong personality bespeaks of her aura that allows her to speak in a manner that raises a call for an alleviation of their suffering. She is thus at once one among the many (sufferers), and yet also singular in her courage. Her interactions with the Japanese and American in the space of "Japan" only heightens this sense of ambivalence. In the triadic encounter between Ramabai, the American Ryder, and the Japanese audience, we have seen how each play a substantial role in not only constructing the other but also constructing an image of oneself available for a consumption by the others. Conversely Ramabai's American success provides the necessary validity to her cause thus enabling it to make sense to the Japanese. Yet simultaneously, Ramabai also deploys the logic of similarity with the Japanese, that allows her to speak of the condition of Japanese and Indian women in terms of (a future) equality. On part of the Japanese, as we have seen above, there is a simultaneous identification and distancing from the cause of the Indian women. What is important to remember here is that the various positionings happen in tandem; nationalist, anti-colonialist, "Asian" and non-white, feminist and individual identities are carved out at once.

Ambivalence works in the figuration of Ramabai at two distinct levels. One is at level of Ramabai's "figure." Ramabai's physical presence is powerful and awe-inspiring. Yet paradoxically what she also represents is the figure of the "pathetic" widow, that she *is* (seen as), but also *is not*. The shifts between Ramabai's figural presence as a widow, and one among the suffering millions, and her singularity therefore requires greater analysis. Secondly, a certain ambivalence also exists at the level of Ramabai's narrative about the Indian woman/widow, in the very text where

not only is the suffering of the widow articulated but also the audiences' response. It is important to note here that the nature of this response is not left to the audiences' whim, but already embedded in the narrative.

That Ramabai's interaction with her interlocutors happens via a series of events—speeches, interviews and such that to the members of *Jogaku zasshi* and *Tokyo Fujin Kyôfu Zasshi*, suggests that the structure of the relations (between various parties) is caught, so to speak in the moment of a “dialogue,” giving this interaction a sense of immediacy. The terms employed to carve out one's own position vis-à-vis the others bespeak of the fluid relations with each other but also the flexible nature of one's own position. And it is on these fluid surfaces that the positions of the addressor and addressee and the “authenticity” of each position is mapped out.

What are these “fluid” surfaces that we speak of? In an earlier discussion of Ramabai's deployment of terms such as “suffering,” “compassion,” “pity,” “benevolence,” “help” etc., I have argued that these concepts, used strategically, elicit a certain specific response from audiences in America and in Japan, thereby creating the narrative of the suffering Hindu widow. Tsuda's verbatim translation of the code word “high caste” as indicates that Tsuda on his part chose to keep it *untranslated* so as to maintain its sheer visual impact via its presence in the written text. Furthermore, the employment of terms such as “compassion,” or “benevolence” as a response to “suffering” etc. inscribes this narrative of the widow/woman with *feeling*. As Ramabai plots the discourse of the “suffering” of the Hindu widow, we, as Ramabai's audience are not only told of what this “suffering” (and also how to ameliorate it), but also provided with the precise vocabulary, which are to be employed in order to *make sense* of this suffering. This process I suggest puts the *structure of feeling* in place.

In order to elicit feeling, Ramabai uses words that are at once familiar and yet unfamiliar. The term “sympathy” for instance which emerged in discourses of

Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, and which comes to be understood as a sentiment which corroborates the notion of a national imagined community, is given a new twist in Ramabai's text. The use of the sentiment "sympathy" in nationalist discourse necessarily is prefaced upon equality amongst the national brotherhood; Ramabai takes the term outside the framework of the nation, as she calls upon her audiences outside of India to express sympathy for the cause of Indian woman, thereby deploying the term to create a framework of "international sisterhood." Needless to say, whether a true transnational alliance can at all succeed remains a question.

Of course in this period there is a structure of missionary work already at place in colonial India. I discuss this structure in greater detail in the following chapter. Suffice here to say that Ramabai consciously positions herself *within* the terms of missionary discourse which enables her to deploy the same terms as those used by the missionaries to speak of the "plight of the Indian woman" while simultaneously also subverting the ways these terms are used. For instance, in making the shift from "benevolence" to "sympathy" Ramabai sought to establish a structure of equality between the donors of aid/help and the donee, viz. the Indian woman. What however confuses matters is that Ramabai, in furthering her appeal for help from foreign women, also uses the logic of the missionary discourse by deploying terms such as "benevolence" in order to receive aid from the international, primarily American community. In fact the cleverness of Ramabai's argument lies in the fact that she successively interweaves the various, often contradictory terms together, thereby providing her readers with a text that suggests familiarity but also newness. Kosambi has also suggests something similar when she argues that Ramabai's deployment of Christian terminology cuts two ways: for her American (Western) readers it provides a familiar context within which help can be provided to their "Indian sisters" without



demeaning the latter to a lower status. Secondly, couched within a Christian discourse it makes “help” on part of her readers and well-wishers an obligatory task, a duty which becomes a measure of their humanity.<sup>87</sup>

In the Japanese texts about or by Ramabai that we have examined so far in this chapter, the question of deployment of terms such as “compassion,” “benevolence,” etc., what I call codings, becomes even more complicated. For one, Ramabai’s Japanese audience bears a different relation to Christianity than does her American audience. Thus while it seems that Ramabai spoke primarily in midst of those who were Christian converts (members of the *Jogaku Zasshi* and *Tokyo Fujin Kyôfu Zasshi*), or men and women who were aware of arguments made in Meiji about the relation between women’s reforms and the narrative of progress as espoused by Christian principles, it is clear that the relation of Ramabai’s Japanese audiences to Christianity was fundamentally different from that with her American audiences. Secondly, the nature of exchange with her Japanese audiences, which as mentioned above was more in the form of short exchanges, newspaper articles did not allow for a sustained analysis of the terms that Ramabai used either to represent the condition of Indian widows or to elicit sympathy for them. Finally, there is the problem of translation. Ramabai most definitely communicated with the Japanese in English; what we have however is Japanese transcriptions of her speeches and writings. In almost all cases except two,<sup>88</sup> the name of the translator is absent and perhaps deemed unnecessary so as to leave the “authorial” voice with Ramabai. Aided by the structural format the narrative content, Ramabai’s texts then create a *structure of feeling* which is paradoxically underscored by an immense fluidity in the “codings” that she uses to

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<sup>87</sup> While Kosambi makes this her central point in her reading of Ramabai’s *High-caste Hindu Woman*, here I would also like to thank her for the various discussions that she had with me regarding this point in summer 2003.

<sup>88</sup> Tsuda Sen’s name is one name that appears prominently not surprisingly because he is was her interviewer. The other name we have is of Sasaki Tojuko.

elicit this “feeling.” I turn next to these contradictory terms that are put to use by Ramabai, and how these terms give her text its inherent ambiguity, which is at once subversive and powerful.

Ramabai’s discourse on the Indian woman runs along two parallel tracks. At the level of “representation,” she names the subject of her narrative (and hence the object of help) as the “high-caste Hindu woman” whose pitiable position (*awaremu chii*) is due to the cruel conditions and hardship (*sanjô/ zankoku/ kokutai no jô*) that she is subjected to. Critical of the widow’s social status, Ramabai stresses that that, the Indian society, blinded by custom/ law views the widow as a mere criminal whose sins (*tsumi*) committed in her previous life are supposedly responsible for wretched existence in her present life. The true criminal therefore is the Hindu “custom” and it is toward this custom that reform needs to be directed.

The thrust of Ramabai’s reform is however not directed at the social;<sup>89</sup> it is aimed at the amelioration of the condition of this specific “object of pity” that she identifies as the “high-caste Hindu woman.” The parallel trajectory to *representation* thus orients Ramabai’s audiences towards ways of thinking about their own *response*, which is to say how to alleviate this suffering. The crux of Ramabai’s argument lies in understanding the word “pity,” for it is that which is at once forms the basis of *representation* and of *response*. “Pity” (or “pitiable”) is at once to depict the condition of the Indian woman, as well as refer to what the proper response would be to this condition. “Pity” therefore, is the central term that *links* the one who enunciates his/her condition as it were and hence embodies it, with the addressee who himself/herself is not “pitiable” yet capable of expressing it for something outside of his/her own person. Pity however is not the only word which structures the response to the widow’s

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<sup>89</sup> I have discussed elsewhere the relation between Ramabai’s educational agenda and the sphere of the “social.” At this point one needs to be aware that although Ramabai’s goal is to improve the conditions of the widow, in the final analysis what she envisions is how this widow (the educated widow now), marks a threshold, wherein she becomes a sign for the critique of the social.

suffering. Another response is that of expressing “lament” (*nageku*). Lament however is hardly enough; “suffering,” as we have seen earlier, must be ideally counteracted by “compassion,” or “benevolence,” the two key terms in Ramabai’s discourse. Furthermore, this “feeling” Ramabai insists, must eventually be translated into concrete “relief” or “help” on part of the one who pities. The final code word which orients Ramabai’s readers towards figuring out their response the widow, is “sympathy.”

The significance of plotting the reader’s response thus works two ways: first, as mentioned above, it orients the reader towards the other, by way of providing a correct response. Secondly, it directs the reader towards what he/she is meant to intrinsically possess, which is his/her own humanity. It is eventually this “humanity” to which Ramabai draws attention to, compelling thereby a sympathetic/ compassionate/ benevolent response on part of her audience.<sup>90</sup>

Ramabai’s deployment of these key words which structures the response of her audiences—Japanese or American, both predominantly Christian, no doubt also makes allusions to the use of these words elsewhere. That is, the words which Ramabai chooses to use are already loaded terms, alluding to certain specific relations between the recipient of the feeling, and the giver of it. “Sympathy,” for instance, translated roughly as “equal feelings” appears in Japanese in the Meiji period, referring quite specifically to equal status between the two persons between whom sympathy exists.<sup>91</sup> As discussed above, in 19<sup>th</sup> century, the space where sympathy manifests itself becomes the nation-state, and the feeling of brotherhood is premised upon imagining sympathy between a fellowship of individuals.

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<sup>90</sup> The idea of bringing an awareness to one’s own “humanity” is more clearly explicated in *The High-caste Hindu Woman*, than in Ramabai’s shorter pieces published in *JZ* and other Japanese media. As such the word “humanity” does not appear in Japanese; there is however a clear allusion made to it, as being the final reason (to provide “help”).

<sup>91</sup> This is not between two social predicaments but between two persons.

“Compassion” and “benevolence” on the other hand, can both be understood within context of the Christian missionary discourse. Both allude to a certain notion of charity whereby the one who gives is spiritually higher than the one who receives. The Japanese term that I translate as “compassion,” meaning “love/pity” suggests a giving of some-thing, wherein the giver has that which the receiver does not. The dictionary meaning of “compassion” reads as “a feeling of loving pity from one that is higher to that which is lower” It could however be argued that, the presence of “love” in this relationship somewhat negates the hierarchical relation which may be inherent in the idea of “pity,” one of the two compounds which make up the word “compassion.” This notion of compassion stays close to the Christian notion of “compassion” wherein God takes in Himself the suffering of others, and returns with compassion. This therefore can be construed as a moment of “translation.” I call this translation because not only does “compassion” speak of the relation between the higher and the lower, but by also invoking its Christian meaning it diffuses (thereby re-interpreting) the inequality inherent in the relationship. Furthermore, the act of compassion, on the one hand, becomes firmly ensconced in the idea of one’s duty—Christian or otherwise—and yet cancels out the idea that the object of compassion is to be viewed as simply a “victim.” Indeed, Ramabai is careful so as to not construct the image of a widow as a “victim.” The distinction between a “victim” and object who deserves “pity” is tenuous, but Ramabai’s use of compassion successfully invokes the latter without alluding to the former. Similar to compassion is “benevolence,” which also makes a reference to charity, specifically Christian charity, thereby falling within the framework of a missionary discourse. In fact in Ramabai’s text it is difficult to make a distinction between the use of these two words, as both are used interchangeably.

The word “pity” whose Japanese translation can mean something like “feeling” for another,” “to share the feeling of another” draws attention to a much longer history of the use of the word. Interestingly enough, as we have seen, the translator of Ramabai’s text also uses the word “pity” (in katakana in Japanese) denoting thereby the foreign and hence different status of the word from the more traditional “*aware*.”<sup>92</sup> This deployment of “pity” clarifies the specific response that Ramabai wants, or for that matter *does not* want from her audiences. Ramabai, one can assume is aware that “pity” is used to articulate a relation of inequality between the two parties. That is to say, the one who grants pity (donor) is at a higher position than one who is the object of pity (donee). In criticizing this stance therefore, Ramabai argues that such feelings of “pity” should not be the basis of “help.” Throughout the narrative, we also find “pity” used in the first sense, that is as a “feeling that is shared with another” and in this usage the meaning of “pity” comes close to the her understanding of “benevolence” and “compassion.” In the schema of response structured around Ramabai’s representation of the Indian woman/widow we find then that the terms “pity,” “benevolence,” “compassion,” and “sympathy” move around fluidly; the boundaries of each remain somewhat ambiguous and so to an extent one term can replace the other. Significantly, they all desist from allowing the reader/audience to imagine their object of “help,” as a “victim,” ensuring thus that the encounter between the donor and the donee is not marred by logic of inequality.

In an age of colonialism and high imperialism, in an era marked by theories of civilisational hierarchy, strangely enough the narrative of the “Indian woman” in whose name Ramabai seeks help remains free of a “power play.” Indeed it is Ryder’s

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<sup>92</sup> One could perhaps also imagine that “pity” was the actual word that Ramabai used, and that the translator chose to quote Ramabai verbatim. Irrespective of whether this actually happened or not, it is still significant that the translator chose to provide a gloss in katakana of the English word [ピティー] for the Japanese word.

biography of Ramabai (and not a text by Ramabai herself) that reminds the Japanese audiences that relations between the donor and the donee, or for that matter even between two donors which as Ryder suggest can never be equal. The absence of structures of power, illusory and elusive at best, reminds us of the logic of the “gift” which always takes place outside time and history, and as such speaks of the rupture of the present. Ramabai’s narrative then presents an intangible moment when the relation between the Indian woman and her foreign counterpart is not perceived in terms of their actual historical conditions, but is imagined in terms of the possibility of an international sisterhood.

The suspension of the dynamics of power is tenuous and at best, workable only at the level of the narrative. One must not forget that Ramabai’s success in bringing forth “help,” lies not so much so in the actual suspension of power relations as much as in working with an ambiguity inherent in the Christian missionary discourse. In other words, Ramabai uses the terms already present in the missionary discourse to at once further her own agenda as well as to mark a commonality with the missionary cause.

Yet, what also complicates matters is that Ramabai’s own identity is tied in with Christian notions of self, and she in fact mobilized this very notion of “self,” freed from the shackles of “custom,” to promote her own specific idea of an *educated* Indian womanhood. Education then, as Ramabai understands and promotes, is heavily influenced by Christian principles; this being tied with the idea of self.<sup>93</sup> It is thus crucial to understand that Ramabai’s careful use of Christian terminology, also the basis of missionary work in the field of women’s education identifies the very ambivalence stance of missionary work. By articulating “help” within the context of

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<sup>93</sup> For instance, Ramabai’s goal stated clearly in the “Critique of Two Hemispheres” pointed out that she wanted to widows to help them “establish a position for themselves and lead an independent life” (227).

“benevolence/ pity/ compassion” Ramabai to use missionary terminology to suit her own purpose. But by using these “Christian” terms she also implicates herself within their discourse exposing herself to the abuse of the missionary narrative which aimed at reforming the Indian (now read: heathen woman).<sup>94</sup>

Ramabai’s stance is a difficult one. To construct an encounter between the recipient of help and its giver along the lines of the missionary discourse, deploying its Christian terminology, and yet to *empty out* from this structure the essential “in-humanity,” the sanctioned non-co-evalness of the other that makes it possible—that is, the inherent implication of the recipient as a victim and racist framework that supports this notion—makes it possible for us to understand why this structure can be imagined as being at once *outside of history* (thereby allowing one to imagine a relation of an idealized equality between the donor and the donee) and also at the same time *in history* (for it is here that Ramabai’s “help” actually materializes itself). Ramabai thus uses the missionary discourse to her own ends but is also compromised by the same principle. What her narrative creates is not so much a framework for re-visioning the relation between the one who helps and the one is helped as much as a “clearing”—a narrative space out of which history (i.e., the present) needs to be left out, is consciously left out, in order to create the idealized equality devoid of power structures. And yet, paradoxically, Ramabai cannot afford to take leave of the compromises implicit in historical time; she cannot not take cognizance of the historical present, for her project is, at its heart, a practical one. Thus, as we know, she is not interested in a response that simply expresses “pity” for the Indian woman, the correct response already encoded in her text demands that pity be translated into actual

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<sup>94</sup> From the missionary point as well, (for example the Wantage sisters who schooled Ramabai during her time in England) Ramabai’s simultaneous participation in the Christian ethic, but her disbelief in the Anglican church created substantial furore. Viswanathan in *Outside the Fold* has termed as this as Ramabai’s heretical stance as a Christian, 134. I have dealt with Ramabai’s engagement with the missionary discourse in detail in the next chapter.

help.<sup>95</sup> And for this to happen Ramabai needs to take into account the historical structures of inequality, esp. racial inequality and hierarchy, put in place by colonialism and imperialism. These structures invariably position Ramabai's object of "help," viz. the Indian widow/ woman, as also the one of "pity." I suggest that it is Ramabai's framework of *nationalism*, via notions of nationalistic identity and nationalistic pride, that then allow *counteracting* the singular logic of "pity"—provided by *inter-national* channels of "help" and "compassion," for the latter invariably end up translating the pitiable widow into the abject "victim." Ramabai by providing space for the victim to be perceived alternatively as the object of pity (but not victim) with one nation bestowing pity upon another, locates the woman (the object) specifically within the "Indian" context. In doing so she tried to imagine her as the subject (no longer the object, and released gradually from her sub-alternity) of her future self-emancipation.

These codings thus refer, on the one hand, to the ambivalence of the missionary discourse. On the other hand, they also gesture towards the complexity of the visual performance that Ramabai puts up via the text. Ramabai's Japanese audiences not only encounter "the" Indian woman, but they also encounter (in Ramabai's text) their (expected and correct) response via a series of codings that constantly refers to each other, and therefore to *itself*. That is, the Japanese words for compassion, pity, and benevolence function as a play upon the same terms over and over again, implying therefore that their individual meaning of each word (pity/ benevolence/ compassion) is as much determined by the other as it is by itself. Ramabai's text therefore works as much to subvert the missionary discourse (and also be used by it), as much as it plays up the constant self-referencing of the terminology that structures the response. This self-referentiality bespeaks of Ramabai's rhetorical

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<sup>95</sup> It is Ramabai's translation of "pity" serves as a term of critique as well as of compromise.



usage of the terms. That is to say, as the codings refer to reach other and eventually to themselves they become a part of a circular argument in which each key term can no longer stand outside of the context that the other key words provide.

The narrative rhetoric thus cuts two ways: the terms that are familiar (within Christian missionary networks) are suddenly rendered as far more unstable within Ramabai's texts thereby forcing her audiences to re-examine the "familiarity" of their responses; and secondly, because rhetoricity plays, as it were, at the level of reader response, it provides a space for three very different kinds of (subject) positions to encounter each other. They meet each other within the field of representation—presenting themselves and re-presenting their stance towards the other, wherein who this "other" is constantly undergoes a change. The space of "Japan"—the quasi-metropolitan location—neither wholly the "West" (America) nor the true "East" (India) identifies with this very instability of the code-words in Ramabai's usage. The repetitive element (in the usage of the codings) at the narrative level recurs, interestingly, in the positions that the Indian woman, her American companion and the Japanese audience take. The Japanese, for instance, wish to formulate their response to Ramabai along the lines of the American response. Similarly, Ramabai's dreams for the Indian woman a future along the lines of what the Japanese women enjoy in terms of social, especially educational status. And yet in this play of repetitive-ness, they also mark out their individuality and their difference from the other. The space of Japan, this non-colonized, non-imperializing location then presents with a startling immediacy the fact that the positions that these different "identities" (or "nationalities," for the lack of a better word) take are fundamentally *heterogeneous*. Ambivalence as a narrative strategy therefore works precisely because of this heterogeneity. Just as the American position cannot be simply narrowed down to a "Western" position, (here, Ramabai's critique of British women cannot be forgotten),

similarly Ramabai's position also cannot be simply seen as a "colonial" one (her remarkable shuttling back and forth between national and inter-national space attests to this fact). The position of Japan remains by far the most interesting. Indeed, in political terms it is neither colonized like most of Asia, but nor is it entirely West-identified. Japanese interest in Ramabai is at once marked by pity but also by envy and admiration, with a desire to emulate her success in the "West." The complexity of the Japanese response to Ramabai then marks not only the instability of Japan's position vis-à-vis what it perceived as its "outside," but also betrays of the instability of what is to be understood as "Japanese-ness." Caught thus in the moment of *coming into being* this entity known as the Japanese nation-state, this surprise encounter with Ramabai marks the very heterogeneity of what Japan *is*.<sup>96</sup>

Ramabai, on her part also invokes this heterogeneity. In her portrayal of the atrocities committed against women by the men-folk of her country, in her depiction of the "high-caste *Hindu*" woman who is at once identified as an "Indian" woman and yet cannot be named as such, and most importantly in her exposure of the serious pitfalls of Hinduism, what Ramabai presents is an image of India which is neither unified or homogenous. In fact she does not speak of India and its "civilizational greatness" at all, as those who come after her such as Swami Vivekananda and

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<sup>96</sup> One could argue that Japan in 1889 is not in the state of "becoming," an nation-state but in fact *is* this state at this point. However, one should also note that 1989 is an interesting year, for it is in '89 that the Imperial Constitution is promulgated. Moreover, I am speaking of heterogeneity specifically in the context of the ways in which the relationship between women and nation was being formulated at this time in Japan. The "good wife wise mother" as an ideology gets defined only around 1899 so this in deed a period of flux as relations between women and nation are being articulated. Also, if we re-examine the conditions under which interest in Ramabai is generated in the first place among members of the *Jogaku zasshi*, it is worth noting that, as far as the "Woman's Question" was concerned, the late 1880s was still a fluctuating time period. One of the fundamental questions raised in this debate was what was the relation between women and politics. One then needs to ask the following question: Had Ramabai visited Tokyo a few years later, would essays on Ramabai even have been published in the same magazine? With *Jogaku zasshi* being divided into two different magazines (the "white" and "red" cover issues) it remains a question as to which issue would have provided a space for Ramabai. Thus, there is something undeniably unstable at this time, it is a period of experimentation and formation which allows for this heterogeneity to emerge. Ramabai's presence, clearly an unexpected and a surprising one draws attention to this heterogeneity.

Rabindranath Tagore are wont to. Instead what Ramabai draws attention to the internal structures of inequality, and the inferior position accorded to women in the name of “custom” which over centuries becomes codified as the “Hindu law.” Considering that the 1880s in India is the time when the Indian National Congress was set up, and the nationalist movement was in its embryonic stages, this was a time of streamlining heterogeneous practices into national practices; in other words, it is the time of putting into place “disciplines” of various kinds—be it that of education, language, or dress.<sup>97</sup> On the part of Ramabai then, to make an argument that reveals the internal flaws of what was being constructed as the “social” was certainly remarkable.<sup>98</sup>

Ramabai’s own identity is also marked by this very heterogeneity. Here is a woman—Christian, high-caste Brahmin, and a widow—who speaks from an international platform, where she is seen as an “Indian” woman, and yet her very presence constantly poses the question of what it means to be this “Indian.” Contradiction is at the heart of Ramabai’s persona—she speaks as a “native,” but again her Christian persona constantly questions what her authenticity is as a “native,” and also as a “Christian.” Ramabai’s stance as a Christian deserves some attention then, because not only did it add greater aura to her persona (and surprisingly for her audience, something to identify with), but it also reveals once again the shuttling back and forth between various facets of her personality that Ramabai achieved so effortlessly in the international arena. The following section focuses on the ways in which Ramabai’s Christian identity played out in the context of Japan.

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<sup>97</sup> See Partha Chatterjee ed., *Texts of Power: Emerging Disciplines in Colonial Bengal* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995). Also if we examine the discourse around social reform which on the one hand, pays heed to the amelioration of certain “backward/evil/barbaric” social practices, while on the other hand, also plays a substantial role in reorganizing the space into distinct categories of the social and the political.

<sup>98</sup> Ramabai was certainly not the first one or the only one to draw attention to these flaws. The social reform scene was particularly strong in Bengal and Maharashtra, both areas where Ramabai closely interacted with the male reformers. Ramabai however was one of the few if not the only one who spoke of the “Woman’s Question” in this way to an international audience.

## Ramabai as a Christian in Japan

The Japanese were no doubt intrigued by Ramabai's Christian beliefs and like the Americans juxtaposed her Brahmin upbringing with her Christian adulthood; in doing so, the Japanese reports of Ramabai too did not fail to note that her Brahmin (Hindu)-ness and Christian-ness functioned in complementary ways as two facets of her personality. The incident delineating Ramabai's presence in Washington D.C., noted in the *Jogaku zasshi*, comments on Ramabai's authenticity (described via "native costume" and racial markings) along with her stating how she spoke fearlessly about her "beliefs." Ramabai's Christianity must have interested the Japanese partly because they accorded Ramabai's confidence in the international arena to her Christian identity. Moreover, it also perhaps suggested to them ways in which the Japanese themselves could adopt Christianity without having to forgo their native identity. As far as the Americans were concerned, Ramabai's Christian beliefs provided the necessary leverage to identify themselves with her cause, thereby providing her with the necessary "help."<sup>99</sup> In contrast, in the Japanese case, her embodiment of Christian beliefs without forgoing her native Indian-ness presented the figure of Ramabai as a model for emulation. That is to say, it was Ramabai's double identification, as an Indian and also as Christian, that was of interest to them. Indeed one of the central questions that the *Jogaku zasshi* asked of Ramabai was: what was her understanding of the relation between Hinduism and Christianity?

An interview conducted by an (unknown) American reporter and published in its translated version in *Jogaku zasshi* provided the Japanese readers with Ramabai's views on the comparative value of Christianity and Hinduism in the modern world.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Kosambi has argued convincingly that it was Ramabai's successful deployment of her Christianity that allowed her to carve a niche for herself amongst her white, upper-class (and Christian) American audiences. Thus while Christianity served as a wedge for Ramabai in the American context, from the point of view of her audiences, this very figure of a *Christian* Ramabai propelled them to help her cause. See also footnote 86.

<sup>100</sup> See *JZ*, 144 and 145 (January 1889).

Upon being asked to compare the Bible with the Hindu Vedshastras, Ramabai responded that both, if studied carefully, would guide its reader to the same light and love. The problem with the Hindu text however, she continued, was that it did not explicate the relationship between man and God, which is to say, it did not clarify what the relation between man and God ought to be, and how one worked his/her way to God. In Christianity, this guidance to man is provided by Christ, (a figure which is absent in Hinduism). Thus, while Hinduism teaches love and beauty, it is Christianity that becomes the practical guide for the present. What shows man his way in the world today is the Gospel as preached by Christ, which is the Word of the God—the new law for the present. And it is Christ who spreads the word of God to all places and all peoples. That is why she concludes,

making the old law as a part of one's body, it should be over-lapped it with the spirit of Christ's law. This spirit I believe will give new life once again to the body that has been dead [for so long].<sup>101</sup>

The passage is key for a number of reasons: first, it elucidates the complex relationship that Ramabai formulates between man and God and how this relation is understood differently within the Hindu and the Christian law. Based on her reading of the scriptures, Ramabai believed that a central problem with (high brahmanical) Hinduism is that it did not allow women to have direct access to salvation [*moksha*]. As a female, a woman could only attain salvation via service to a male (her husband), only then might she be born as a man in her next life, upon which she could strive for true salvation.<sup>102</sup> The importance accorded to the relation between man and God then clearly seeks to find a way out of this problem.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> See *JZ*, 145:69.

<sup>102</sup> See, Ramabai, *The High-caste Hindu Woman*.

<sup>103</sup> The voluminous correspondence between Sister Geraldine and other members of the Anglican community with Ramabai makes it amply clear that the latter was deeply concerned about the relationship between God and man, and particularly the place of Christ with relation to both. Not surprisingly in her understanding of this relationship she was deeply aware of, what she considered, the

Secondly, the word of God as preached by Christ is linked with notions of belief as “practice,” and how practice is related to “progress.” This progress as we know is clearly measured in terms of *national* progress. By making practice as the central theme of progress then, Ramabai locates progress at the *experiential* rather than at the transcendental level. This progress articulated as “experience” allows us to understand the present moment that the world finds itself in as a *historical* moment. In this present, which is located in historical time, there is a possibility for change, for having a past and a future, and a present that provides space for a struggle to ameliorate past sufferings and formulate better possibilities for the future. In other words then, belief understood in terms of practice makes way for the radical possibility of re-imagining the present via *struggle* (which itself manifests through belief). Given Ramabai’s social agenda which is the alleviation of women’s condition of women, especially through education, it is clear why this radical notion of belief is important.<sup>104</sup>

This experience, to make the final point, is *lived* through the body of the believer. Interestingly enough, what Ramabai hopes for (in ideal terms) is not a negation of one’s original belief but a re-fashioning of the original. The idea of overlapping allows for the two systems of belief to exist not so much as with each other (i.e. side-by side), but as thoroughly integrated with each other.<sup>105</sup> Significantly however, it is the presence of Christianity, and not the original presence of the older system of belief that resuscitates the *dead* body. I will examine the symbolic value of

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pitfalls of Hinduisim—the necessarily ambiguous relation between humans and Gods, and the understanding of God Himself. One of her key arguments was thus against Trinitarianism; she believed Christ to be a messenger of God but not His Son. For more on this debate see, Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold*, 136-41.

<sup>104</sup> This notion of struggle compares in interesting ways with Tsuda’s notion of community, and a “home” which is also envisioned as a product of “struggle.”

<sup>105</sup> Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold*, 118-52.

this “dead body” later in this section. Suffice here to say that, the role of the physical body remains central to Ramabai’s fashioning of the self.

The simultaneous acceptance of varied belief systems, and the link between national progress and Christianity must have certainly appealed, and in many senses cohered with the understanding that the Meiji intelligentsia (mostly male) conceived of the relation between Christianity and the Japanese nation state.<sup>106</sup> Similarly, Ramabai’s discussion on the topic of conversion (including her own conversion), and its effect on one’s allegiance to the nation-state must have also struck a chord with her Japanese audience many of whom were themselves converts. While this is too large a topic to be discussed here, I will present only briefly here the way in which Christianity, as an institutional religious structure comes into play in the articulation of the Japanese “Women’s Question,” and especially the link between gender reform and Christianity.

The earliest Christian missionary influence was felt in Meiji Japan in the field of women’s education, and the first girl’s school established in Yokohama, the Ferris Seminary was a run by missionaries. While the Iwakura mission that traveled to the United States in 1872 did not explicitly espouse Christian beliefs, the five girls who were sent as part of it—one of whom was Tsuda Umeko—were dispatched with the implicit belief that they would learn the ways of the civilized world and upon their return teach these values in the women of Japan. Of the three who stayed for the entire period of time, all converted to Christianity, and while the link between the “civilized” ways of America and their Christian beliefs was not overtly articulated their conversion was not perceived as anti-national. On the home front, it is clear that in the 1870s at least, the question of gender reform (and for the matter social reform in

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<sup>106</sup> T. Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Stefan Tanaka, *Japan’s Orient: Rendering Pasts into History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

general) was taken up by male nationalists or reformers many of whom were either Christian converts or well-informed in matters of the usefulness of Christian principles for national progress. The publication of *Jogaku zasshi* managed by Iwamoto Yoshiharu attests to the influence of Christian thought in the field of women's reform. In another instance, the argument in favor of monogamous marriage, and ban on the system of concubinage criticized an earlier system (within which marriage was far more loosely defined) as practice which was not only amoral but also barbaric. "Barbarism" here carried with it connotations of "heathenism" thereby implying Japan's non-civilized and non-Christian status. The 1870s thus was the decade when the lines of difference between Westernization, modernization and I would add Christianization remained fluid. By the mid-1880s the anti-Christian backlash had set in, and the promulgation of the new Constitution suggests a move away from an earlier less critical stance towards Christianity. In the field of education, by the 1880s more number of girls' schools also came to be set up by non-Christians, with government run schools growing in numbers; yet it can be argued that as far as women's issues were concerned, it was in the educational field that foreign Christian missionary organization as well as native Christians had the greatest amount of impact. However, in the increasingly conservative climate of the 1880s and the -90s the missionary schools in particular came to be criticized for their somewhat liberal agenda; it was during this period that, the schools which came to be established by the Japanese Christians provided the middle ground as they moved away not only from the excessive freedoms promised by missionary schools but also the increasingly restrictive curriculums of the government run schools. Tsuda Umeko's *Eigaku juku* provides one such example. Most Japanese Christians it must be noted were themselves critical of missionary activity finding the latter's position far too condescending towards Japanese and eventually culturally far to "foreign" to be



sustained for long-term in the Japanese environment. It would come as no surprise to us then if Ramabai's own position as a Indian Christian and her vociferous critique of the missionary work reverberated with the Japanese stance, especially vis-à-vis missionaries.<sup>107</sup>

Before I proceed to discuss this last point in further detail, I would like to once again reiterate the fact that the way in which Ramabai's two audiences, Japanese and American responded to her "Christian-ness" was necessarily different. Thus for the Japanese convert as for Ramabai, the dilemma of how to be "Japanese" (or "Indian") and also "Christian" was a problem that remained perpetually open to contestation in a way that the question simply remained moot for their American counterparts.<sup>108</sup>

Ramabai's point of view stated earlier, with regard to the overlapping of the older belief system with the newer one then was must have be especially pertinent to her

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<sup>107</sup> Clearly there was also the class issue that was at play here. Just as way Ramabai was able to carve a niche for herself in the mostly upper-class white (Christian) audience that she addressed to in the United States, one can presume that Ramabai's audience in Japan was not only Christian, (or at least sympathetic to Christianity) but also predominantly elite. The class factor no doubt must have made a significant impact in Ramabai's appeal, and it can be assumed that she was addressing an audience that was perhaps aware of or could identify with, so to speak, the suffering that was particular to the upper-class woman.

The author of a short piece titled "Comment on Ramabai and her Work" [女博士ラマバイおよび其事業を評す] in *JZ*, no. 143 (January 5, 1889) confirms that Japanese interest in Ramabai did have something to do with her stance vis-à-vis the missionaries. The author states that while her work was not directly linked to missionary work, it could still be described as the work of Christ's disciple (キリスト教徒の事業). Thus while the Bible was definitely to be not taught in her school, Ramabai's whole work is infused by a belief in Christianity. He further adds, "to take this great responsibility in a single handed way bespeaks of a great readiness/resolve..." This is why, the author (who we imagine must be Tsuda Sen) states that he has decided to do an interview with her to know more about her work and objectives.

<sup>108</sup> Admittedly persecution of Christians ran along very different lines in late 19<sup>th</sup> century colonial India and Meiji Japan. In the case of Ramabai, as a woman with no familial ties, the persecution resulting into social isolation was particularly acute, and much of Ramabai's social isolation in Indian reformist circles was caused by the fact that she was a Christian. Moreover it must also be mentioned here, that in discussing Ramabai's conversion I do not mean to conflate the categories of "Hindu" and "Indian."

Clearly Ramabai embodied both positions while she also spoke as Christian. In the Japanese case, such as Tsuda Umeko's the situation is quite different, for the two categories that she straddles are "Japanese" and "Christian." Given her American upbringing, it must also be pointed out, that Tsuda's American-ness was yet another position that comes to play. The point however here is that there was in Tsuda's (or very generally speaking in Japanese) case no other religious category that came to play as strongly as Ramabai's "Hindu-ness." In any case, the relation between women and conversion (to Christianity) within the context of nation and nationalism remains for most part a under-researched topic. In this field, Viswanthan's work on Ramabai remains seminal.

Japanese audience (many of whom were converts), because it opened up the possibility of straddling multiple positionalities without having to forgo any location. Ultimately this straddling then becomes a powerful position providing the necessary space whence Ramabai can, not only represent the “pitiable” widow, but also represent herself as the Hindu/upper-class/upper-caste/Christian/widowed *authentic* “Indian” woman. As one convert speaking to another convert, what also made Ramabai’s position all the more appealing was the fact that not only did she seem to successfully move between various locations, but that her conversion seemingly enabled her to embrace *at will* what she chose to believe in Christianity. While this is precisely what was understood as “heresy” by her English mentors, Gauri Viwanathan suggests that, from another perspective it also became a mark of “Ramabai’s modernity.” This modernity, Viswanathan points out, “derive[d] less from her repudiation of Hindu tradition than from her embrace of an ideology of free will and choice.”<sup>109</sup> The point that Ramabai makes about “over-lapping” various faiths then points precisely in the direction of her modern “subjecthood.” Ramabai’s successful deployment of Christianity to produce a narrative that is at once familiar and yet also singular (for she clearly does not espouse a missionary position) thus certainly left its mark on her Japanese audiences. As we have already seen, the visual impact of Ramabai’s successful performance as the lone Indian woman who held her ground amidst Americans and left them enthralled by her fearless speech did not go unnoticed amongst the Japanese, who, not only identified with her position but also wished to emulate this feat.

Moreover, what also must have made an impression, one can imagine, is the *singularity* of Ramabai’s agenda that comes across in this process. Ramabai’s position and the agenda that she put forth—that of reforming the lives of Indian women (upper-

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<sup>109</sup> Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold*, 144.

caste Hindu widows to be specific) undoubtedly overlapped with the Christian missionary work as well as with the work of male social reformers in India. Yet Ramabai's singularity, and thereby her uniqueness presented itself by various ways—via her choice to articulate the heterogeneity of India on the international scene, her ambivalence vis-à-vis missionary discourse, the strategic deployment of Christianity coupled with her own straddling of multiple positionalities. Between Ramabai's *face* (which marked her singularity) and her *figure* (in the widow's garb which identified her as an high-caste Hindu widow—one among the many), and between her *speech* (articulating the condition of the millions of suffering widows) and her *silence* (which invoked the voiceless-ness of the same widows) one is finally able en-vision the specter of Ramabai. And it was in the fleeting presence of Ramabai, literally and metaphorically, (at once real and yet unreal, for she was like no other) that the Japanese find themselves identifying with something that is at once real yet and also transient. Crucially, I argue, it is in this transient space that the Japanese-ness is located.

### **Critique of the missionaries**

Much of Ramabai's (heretical) self-fashioning as a Christian was shaped against the existing missionary narrative which identified its objects of help—the Indian women (widows or otherwise) as clearly heathen “victims” who then would be saved by the intervention of a missionary. Ramabai's refusal to become a “native missionary” surfaced in various different contexts; it was based not only on her fundamentally different understanding of Christianity (based on a close and a literary reading of the Bible), but also on a radically different conceptualization and what education was meant to achieve. Ramabai's educational agenda was of special interest to the Japanese Christians also because of their own interest in women's education.

*Jogaku zasshi* thus records Ramabai's concrete educational plans for the institution that she wished to establish as well as her critique of missionary work in the educational field. Ramabai's speech titled "The Status of Indian Women's Education" published in two parts in the *Jogaku Zasshi* in early January 1889, soon after Ramabai had already left for India delves into many of these ideas.<sup>110</sup> While many of the other pieces (by Ramabai) published in *Jogaku zasshi* were translations of speeches or interviews that had been done in America, the significance of this particular talk lies in the fact that it seems it have been written especially for her Japanese audience.<sup>111</sup>

The talk begins with a brief history of the slow decline of the condition of the Indian women who, as Ramabai tells her audience, had opportunities to education and employment that were comparable to men in the (distant) but glorious past. This present downfall of the class of women is, according to Ramabai, comes as the result of the laws passed by Brahmins, and it they who are responsible for the present-day situation where women have becomes slaves (*dorei*) to men. In the last few decades efforts are being made once again to provide women with education, but Ramabai is critical of these efforts claiming that they are either half-hearted, insufficient or simply ineffective. On the one hand, government schools that take upon the task of women's education do not pay sufficient attention to improving women's intellect. The lone establishment (Calcutta University) which provided higher education only taught three subjects which was hardly sufficient, she argues. In short, her larger point is that, "there is no desire to provide women with higher education."<sup>112</sup> The influence of missionary schools—the other major player in the field of women's education do not fare any better remaining marginal due to cultural differences or more importantly because of the native fear of conversion. The problems with missionaries as Ramabai

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<sup>110</sup> See *JZ*, 143 and 146 (January 1889).

<sup>111</sup> Besides the interview that Ramabai did for Tsuda Sen, this is the second place where Ramabai directly addresses Japanese audiences.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

argues in this essay and elsewhere were multiple,<sup>113</sup> has much to do with both the missionary prejudice and their condescending attitude towards the natives, as well as the stronghold of custom in the lives of upper-caste Hindus. Under such circumstances, girls from these families receive only the basic training; thus, they not only have “no strength to hold their ground” but also receive no training to become teachers for child widows.<sup>114</sup> The missionaries however were also partly responsible for the pathetic situation of women’s education Ramabai argued. Missionaries, on their part, she points out, “were interested only in religious welfare (spreading their religion). If one were to leave aside the Christian aspect of their work they were nothing more than normal teachers.”<sup>115</sup> The commentator for *Jogaku zasshi* who appended his/her comments to Ramabai’s essay concurred with Ramabai, arguing that Christian missionaries who traveled to new lands with little or no understanding of the places they traveled to was truly lamentable. Interested simply in proselytization, they ignored the important work of Ramabai and gave her a cold treatment, which was indeed very sad.<sup>116</sup> The concluding comments thus not only supported Ramabai’s position but also more importantly gave some clue to the similar position that the Japanese found themselves in, in their relations with foreign missionaries.<sup>117</sup>

### **Life of the mind/ death of the body: Ramabai’s educational agenda**

Caught between the Hindu orthodox custom on one side, and fear of missionary proselytization leading to social isolation on the other, the woman/girl-child who is married off early often becomes a widow, sometimes when she as young

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<sup>113</sup> A critique of missionary work also occupies a better part of another essay titled “The Critique of Two Spheres.” See *JZ*, 129 (September 1888): 201-03; and 130 (October 1888): 226-28. For other details, see earlier in this chapter where this essay has also been discussed in a different context.

<sup>114</sup> *JZ*, 130:226.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 227

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

<sup>117</sup> Tsuda’s letters serve as a rich reference to this condescension that she claimed the Japanese constantly faced at the hand of the missionaries. In Chapter Two, I have discussed this in greater detail.

as nine. This young girl once widowed, Ramabai points out, is then thought of as a “criminal” with the hope that she departs this world as soon as possible. In this way, the ineffective way of imparting education (missionary or otherwise) coupled with the native indifference to women’s status becomes the key factor in articulating how a poorly educated--semi-illiterate “girl” becomes first, via marriage the illiterate “wife,” and then often the un-educated (child) “widow,” who is consequently accorded the status of a “criminal.” In other words, the only subjectivity (or subject-status) available to the woman who is a “non-subject” in the first place, is that of a criminal—a position that is at once dangerous as it is socially unviable. That is to say, the woman as a “widow,” as a “criminal” had no place inside the social; her negative subjectivity came to play only as a sign of the boundary which marks the access to the social. It is to this figure of the widow that Ramabai directs her attention to in detailing her educational plans.

Before examining Ramabai’s educational agenda, I will first dwell briefly on this idea of status of a widow-as-a-criminal as it is articulated in Part Two of Ramabai’s biography that was published in the issue of August 1888. Ramabai’s central point here is that the “high-caste” status of women/widows and her identity as a criminal are two sides of the same coin. Two points suggested in this essay are worthy of being reiterated here: first, both “statuses” (that of being a “high-caste” and a “criminal”) delineated the woman as the “non-subject,” and a slave to men. Second, it is the widow’s body which bears the mark of the sins she has committed in her previous life. These marks then bring her criminal status to the surface of her body and her very being.<sup>118</sup>

In narrating the manner in which the sins of the previous life were physically re-inscribed on the surface of the body, Ramabai provides her readers with

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<sup>118</sup> JZ, 122: 47

descriptions of the widow's life. Girls as young as fourteen or fifteen who had never until then cut their hair, Ramabai pointed out, were (once widowed) made to shave their heads every two weeks. Often times they cried not knowing what they were being punished for. Widows usually had only one piece of rough clothing and were allowed to eat only once a day that too in isolation. Moreover, it was considered extreme bad luck if the gaze of any member of the family befell on the widow's face the first thing in the morning. Not only did she carry with her the sins of her previous life, but everyday existence became the grounds for committing new sins in the present life. As a result, for the most part a child widow lived a pitiful existence, restricted as her life was to indoors where she has access neither to friends nor conversation.<sup>119</sup> As Ramabai's picture delineates, the life of a widow was as good as a non-existent—a life which was lived as if she were already dead. Indeed, as Sasaki "Introduction" to Ramabai's "Critique of Two Spheres" suggests, under the shadow of the Hindu custom now codified into law, widows succumbing to this life of hardship "lived their lives with *dead bodies*" (*iki nagara shitai ni hitoshiki*).<sup>120</sup>

What this story suggests is that sin (as an internal category) manifests itself outwardly as an external sign, where the widow's body (and her presence) is literally marked by her criminal status.<sup>121</sup> Ramabai's agenda for re-establishing widows as

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> See Sasaki's "Introduction" in *JZ*, 129 (September 1888): 200. My emphasis.

<sup>121</sup> The link between high-*caste* and criminality needs to be examined further. That is to say, what is it of "caste" in particular that marks the body in ways that it can lay itself open to becoming criminalized? In the regulative discourse of 19<sup>th</sup> century colonial India, caste, ethnicity, tribe all become subject to a regulative discourse, whereby they all becomes accessible so to becomes available for being marked as criminal. Within the Japanese context as well, one must note that it is the "samurai woman" (similar to the upper-caste Hindu [Brahmin] woman) who is subject to not only surveillance but also to codification. The other aspect of this argument that is important is that it is not only women but "girls" (as children) who via their naming become subject to a surveillance. One such fiction writer whose writing stories drew attention to the girl child is Higuchi Ichiyo. See Robert Danly, *In the Shade of Spring Leaves: The Writings of Higuchi Ichiyo, a Woman of Letters in Meiji Japan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981). See also Karatani Kôjin, "The Discovery of the Child," trans. Ayako Kano and Eiko Elliot, in *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, translation ed. Brett de Bary (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 114-35. The fiction of writers such as Higuchi Ichiyo drew attention to the child and specifically the girl child in interesting ways during this period. As we will see in the

members of the society involves a play on this external/internal divide. Without really addressing the external markers, or rather, leaving them as they are, she proposes a re-working of the mind. Thus when the *body* becomes minded within the regulative psychobiography of the Hindu discourse on widowhood, the *mind* for Ramabai becomes the central focus of education. Hence although, the “high-caste woman” through a quick turn of fate can potentially become the “criminal,” making these two categories two sides of the same coin, Ramabai’s distinction of the body from the mind allows the body to remain a part of this equation while liberating the mind from socio/cultural/religious/ and colonial surveillance.

What then does Ramabai propose by way of an educational program which would potentially improve the life of these “pitiable” widows? Stated most succinctly Ramabai wanted to, “make women superior beings (*kôshô shitai*), and to make the very core of their persona pure/beautiful (*honshin wo kiyoraka ni shitai*).”<sup>122</sup> The thrust of Ramabai’s agenda rested on inculcating reason in the minds of these young girls and providing them ways to be independent so that they would not have to stay dependent on their families. The female population that Ramabai’s school would serve then, she stated, would be the large numbers of young widows who were, for the most part, unwanted by their families and had no access either to the indigenous or missionary schools. In her school, Ramabai explained to her audience, she would teach students not only the traditional subjects such as literature but also provide training in household chores (lest anybody argue that these women were capable of any practical household work). The final goal of this kind of an education would be to teach them to lead a *free* (independent) life, (*jiyû na seikatsu*), so as to be able to benefit/ profit from what they had learned.<sup>123</sup> Stated slightly differently elsewhere,

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following chapter both Tsuda and Ramabai in their texts spend some amount a time delineating the life of the girl-child prior to the advent of “adulthood.”

<sup>122</sup> JZ, 146:86.

<sup>123</sup> JZ, 143:9.



Ramabai's goal then was to help these child widows establish a position for themselves in the world as soon as possible, and to give them enough strength to be able to think for themselves and lead independent lives.<sup>124</sup> Eventually Ramabai hoped that these women would themselves take up the vocation of teaching, educating future generations of women (and widows). In the present state, she lamented, they were not only incapable of supporting themselves or becoming teachers for the future generations, but "they could not even hope to live independently and away from men."<sup>125</sup> The last point here implies that while Ramabai did not see an immediate possibility of a female community, she certainly imagined it as a future possibility. This possibility then envisioned an alternative to the patriarchal home, an escape from the hardship of the family, and the law as it conceived a radical new subjectivity. To say the least, in a society that was riddled with caste orthodoxy Ramabai's goal in all practical terms was difficult to attain; yet, I will argue below, what she proposed by way of education and development of the self was nothing short of revolutionary.

The core of Ramabai's reformist educational agenda entailed a re-figuring of the child-widow by installing in her a sense of self. In other words, it entailed re-forming the *mind* of a child-widow, a category which prior to its articulation did not even exist. As we have seen above, the basis of this self was to come from teaching the women to think for themselves and to imagine an independent existence outside the strictures of the family. The independent existence would lead them to *freedom* (自由). *Freedom* in the present moment was conceived as being opposite to the state of *un-freedom*, or the existence wherein woman was enslaved to man and depended on the latter for his existence.<sup>q</sup> While in practical terms, free (or independent) existence

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<sup>124</sup> JZ, 130:227.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 226.

<sup>q</sup> Ramabai's understanding of the relation between "slavery" and "freedom" informed her reading of freedom as it could be imparted through education. See chapter "Domestic Conditions" in Kosambi, *Pandita Ramabai*, 114-18.

could not have been immediately feasible or perhaps even desirable for most women, the suggestion behind this idea was to re-instate in women a sense of identity which could only come once this freedom was experienced.

For Ramabai this was an idea that was neither impossible or even utopian. In speaking of the “glorious past” of Indian women,<sup>126</sup> she informed her audiences that Indian women, in the distant past, before they were to be enslaved by structures of the Hindu law and patriarchy, were in fact educated and practiced different vocations. Moreover, as Ramabai discovered in England and America, free existence was possible even in the contemporary age. In America, she met women who as politicians, doctors and even missionaries who were working for the improvement of the society.<sup>127</sup> Crucially, freedom in Ramabai’s understanding then did not demand an escape from the social, as much as it entailed a reinstatement into the very social that curtailed women’s freedom. In other words, freedom was paradoxically understood in terms of an ethical responsibility towards the social, the very social whose boundaries were marked by the criminality of the child-widow.<sup>128</sup> Importantly enough, the widow, having undergone the transformative act of education wherein her mind has been inculcated with a new set of reflexes and a capacity to reason, does not (re-)enter the

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<sup>126</sup> See Chakravarti, “Vedic Dasi.” 27-86.

<sup>127</sup> *JZ*, 146: 85.

<sup>128</sup> While gender reform and the re-conceptualization of the relation between the women and nation-state changed with the “resolution” of the “Women’s Question,” as argued by Partha Chatterjee, I suggest that women’s relation to the social still remained one of marking the boundary. Thus, although Chatterjee has argued that the inscription of women’s as the bearers of the spiritual, and the distinction of the national body into the domains of the political and spiritual resolved the question of the position that women were supposed to occupy, or the identity that were supposed to espouse, the fact remains that even as bearers of the spiritual domain women became not the central occupiers of this category as much as its gatekeepers. As gatekeepers then they maintained a position of marginality to the same extent that the widows marked by their criminality maintained the status of an outsider to the arena of the social. For Japanese “resolution of the Woman’s Question,” see Hirota Masaki, “Notes on the “Process of Creating Japanese Women” in Meiji Period,” trans. Suzanne O’Brien, in *Women and Class in Japanese History*, ed. Hitomi Tonomura et. Al. (Ann Arbor: Centre for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 1999), 197-219.

arena of the social as a disembodied figure,<sup>129</sup> but rather as an educated widow who simultaneously bears the sign of social malaise as she also becomes a marker of its emergent critique.

The widow in her new guise then can be marked first and foremost as the site of a *struggle*; her newly acquired reasoning is not so much a sign of her individuality as much as symbol of the effort that the *national* now must engage in, in order to progress, which is to move forward. To reiterate then: via the vocational aspirations that Ramabai lays out in order to re-figure the widow, Ramabai makes it amply clear that an educated widow-woman exists—and can only exist—simultaneously as a part of the social as well as the implicit critique of this very social. That is to say one position cannot exist without the other.

Ramabai's idea of the "overlap" attests to the general critical stance that she proposes here, for what she is arguing in favor of is the co-existence of multiple belief systems that exist through engaging with each other. Ramabai's sense of radical critique takes into account the simultaneous presence of the both "freedom" and "un-freedom." The availability of an education for the widow does not do away with the "un-freedom" that the social forces upon her, as much as it presents the possibility of questioning this un-freedom and thoroughly engaging with it. Ramabai's Christian beliefs come to play in this constant struggle that the widow lives with. Having no access to the transcendental, this faith comes to be understood as something through which the widow lives her everyday life of constant struggle. It is a position not so much of power as much of the ability to engage in a critique. To be able to open the possibility of a critique then is to begin thinking of the subjectivity that the widow

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<sup>129</sup> The notion that the figure of the widow is a disembodied one is a crucial idea yet one that has not been subjected to any discussion at least in the Japanese essays by and on Ramabai. The criminal status accorded the widow had much to do with its disembodiment; moreover it also has to do something with the fact that her sexuality is assumed to be dangerous—present at large but under the control of no one. How this sexuality played out in her identity as a criminal demands for more detailed analysis. There is no mention of this unbridled sexuality in the Japanese discussions of the widow.

embodies. And it is the possibility of this *critique* that according to Ramabai eventually resuscitates the “dead body” of the widow, giving it life.

### **Relation between the “national” and the high-caste Hindu woman**

The site of struggle eventually expands from the social to the national, and for Ramabai, the importance of national, especially “national progress” cannot be underestimated in articulating her educational agenda. In face of heavy criticism on part of her own countrymen and women after her conversion Ramabai was perhaps, not surprisingly, particularly sensitive to the relation between women and nation, and the role that women’s education played in articulating this relation. Thus, while she remained highly critical of what she perceived as the obvious lack of effort on part of the nationalist bourgeoisie to alleviate the condition of the “pitiable” widows, (and in fact pointed out that this was one of the main reasons why she sought outside help), she nonetheless also maintained that women’s progress had to be understood within the space of the nation. That “nationalism” and terms such as “national progress” were strategically deployed by Ramabai in order to garner support for her educational plans could be one way of understanding the presence of nationalism in her narrative of the widow. However just as her belief in Christianity ran a deeper current,<sup>130</sup> so did Ramabai’s argument that considered “national progress” as being crucial for women’s progress. Moreover, in the presence of her international audience Ramabai made a careful distinction between her Christian-influenced (but anti-missionary) stance and her nationalism, convincing her audience that the two were not necessarily at odds with each other. This articulation must have particularly struck a chord with her

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<sup>130</sup> Other than the role that Ramabai’s understanding of Christianity played in the articulation of her educational agenda, scholars such as Viswanathan have also successfully argued that her conversion served as multi-pronged critique of colonialism, imperialism and anti-colonial nationalism. Having said this, one must however not assume that Ramabai’s deployment of her Christian beliefs was simply strategic.

Japanese listeners. Although one imagines that since many of them were converts, and hence perhaps sympathetic to her dilemma (since by the late 1880s they themselves were often accused for being anti-national), Ramabai's articulation of this double position must have provided them of at least one example of how to work with this divide.

One way of dealing with this was to address the problems that Ramabai faced when she turned outside for aid. Seeking help internationally made her countrymen (in particular) feel "ashamed" Ramabai pointed out, yet, she also noted that when she did turn to them they refused to aid her in her work.<sup>131</sup> She however drew a line when it came to depending on missionaries; as stated elsewhere, her stance was less against the educational opportunities that they provided as much as it was against their selfish proselytism and condescending attitudes towards indigenous peoples. The speech that Ramabai delivered in Japan then clearly ends on the note which supports women's education for a nationalist cause.<sup>132</sup> Affirming that foreign nations have only been able to achieve social progress, familial progress, and the betterment of the nation on account of encouraging women's education, she pointed out that no nation could progress if the same educational opportunities that were given to its men were not given to the nation's women. In her concluding remarks Ramabai points out that if women in her country are provided the same opportunities as women elsewhere have access to they will be able to work equally energetically in spheres of politics and law, and there will "no war, no strife, and none who will walk on the path of evil."<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> JZ, 146:86.

<sup>132</sup> In the context of late nineteenth-century, when anti-colonial struggles were just beginning to gather speed, it is worth noting that Ramabai's educational agenda would not have made much "sense" had it *not* been couched in the nationalist rhetoric. Given the extent to which "humanitarian" aid was couched in language of either religion or one nation-state helping another, it was even more important that Ramabai identify herself as specifically as an *Indian* woman who was speaking a representative for her country women. I address this in greater detail in the following chapter.

<sup>133</sup> JZ, 146:87.

Providing access to the space of the “nation” in Ramabai’s educational program then achieves three goals. First, it serves to inscribe the marginalized widow into not only the space of the social but also the national body, but in a manner that was subversive and hence alluding to the heterogeneity of this national body. Second, imagining women as a part of a national body, and understanding their education as part of service to the agenda of national progress serves as a great equalizer on the international scene. Which is to say, having once inscribed women as national subjects allows them to engage on potentially equal grounds with women of other nations. This possibility is simply never available in a missionary discourse, where the giver of help always maintains a stronger position than its recipient. And finally it makes women not only social subjects but also viable political subjects capable of carving out political positions for themselves.

### **Ramabai as a feminist/nationalist/internationalist: Possibility of a “trans-national sisterhood”**

What then do we make of Ramabai who captivated audiences on an international scene speaking from the multiple and often conflicting positions of a woman, a Christian, a high-caste Hindu woman, a widow and also an Indian? How was she simultaneously and alternatively perceived as all these things and perhaps also as a feminist? Moreover, what are the implications of referring to Ramabai as a “feminist;” can this term be used to denote the identity of a woman from a colonized nation in the late nineteenth century, at a time when feminism was hardly half a century old in Europe and America? This final section addresses the question of Ramabai’s Indianness and her feminism.

First the name “Indian.” Ramabai while identifying herself as an Indian on the international scene was, nonetheless extremely critical of the then burgeoning

“Indian” nationalism for not paying enough attention to the question of women’s education. Moreover, as we know Ramabai’s discourse often invokes the term “Hindu” along with “Indian” but to her credit does not conflate the two. In her narrative, the former is being deployed specifically to describe the invidious customs implicit in Brahmanical law, as well as to assign a specific category, an “identification” as it were, to the “high-caste *Hindu* [Brahmin] widow” in whose name she speaks. While the use of “Hindu” is thus mostly self-referential, the deployment of “Indian” is, on the other hand, for the sake of the other, which is to say the audience to whom she speaks. “Hindu” therefore becomes “Indian” when the “case” of the Indian woman is presented on the international scene, when the “Indian” identity is invoked in the presence of other national identities such as “Japanese” or “American.” That “Indian” and “Hindu” nonetheless remain separate and hence different, however attests to Ramabai’s own care with regard to not only the specificity of the situation of the “Hindu” woman/ widow, but also an awareness of the heterogeneity of Indian-ness, an ideological stance which, as I have argued earlier, is remarkable for her time.<sup>134</sup>

Ramabai’s identification as a “feminist” is closely tied in with her identification as an “Indian.” That is to say, the term feminist can only be attached to Ramabai’s name if Ramabai could be in the first place identified as an Indian. Thus it is crucial to understand that the question of Ramabai’s nationalistic alliance remains central to a discussion of their identity as a feminist, even though Ramabai herself might be critical of this idea of the “nation.” It is however important that the authenticity of being an Indian comes from the fact that she is acknowledged to be a “Hindu.” Ramabai’s garb of a widow is a sign of this Hindu-ness; on the international

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<sup>134</sup> In the Japanese discourse on Ramabai, she is referred to as an “Indian woman” (印度婦人). What is interesting is that in Tsuda Sen’s translation of the “high-caste Hindu woman” the word *Hindu* is left out. While it would be incorrect to argue that he (or Japanese writers) did not acknowledge the suffering to be particularly “Hindu,” it is curious how “Hindu-ness” somehow slips out when the status of the *Indian* woman is compared somewhat unfavorably with the Japanese woman.

scene this Hindu-ness is indeed acknowledged but eventually figured as Indian-ness, and it is this Indian-ness which marks her as the proper recipient of help. It must be remembered that Ramabai's gradual absence from the international scene (and her marginalisation on the national scene) is marked by the advent of her striking Christian stance. After the failure of Sharada Sadan, Ramabai entirely moved away from the nationalist reformist struggle and went on to establish a refuge centre for victims of the 1898 plague. This school retained an educational agenda in principle but was markedly different from Sharada Sadan in two significant ways: it did not cater only to the needs of the high-caste Hindu woman, and it was explicitly run as a Christian institution.<sup>135</sup> As someone who could no longer be explicitly identified as an "authentic" Indian (marked by her Hindu-ness) it is not surprising that Ramabai lost the favour of her international audiences who had so adored her. In moving between the identities of an "Indian," "Hindu" and a "feminist" it is necessary that we acknowledge that Ramabai chose to deploy the category of "Indian" to counteract the elements of racial and other forms of inequality on the international scene. To what extent this stance was successful is hard to say, but the fact that Ramabai fell off the international radar after her critical breaking off from the nationalist reformist agenda suggests that Ramabai can only be an "Indian" as long as this position is authenticated by being a "Hindu."

The term "feminist" needs to be considered separately since it has been applied to her retrospectively, especially in the last decade of the twentieth century when she was rediscovered. How then does Ramabai appear as a feminist? I argue that just in the way Ramabai needed to be seen as a Hindu in order to appear Indian on the international scene, similarly did she need to "be" Indian in order to be seen as a

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<sup>135</sup> Ramabai's final writing give some sense of the extent to which she had turned away from the Hindu/Indian reformist agenda. Her last project for twelve years before her death was focused on the translation of the Bible from Hebrew into Marathi.



“feminist.” The question that we thus need to ask today is whether it is possible for third world feminists to be identified as simply feminists without also having this identity linked to a nation-state of which for the most part they remain critical.

In the case of Ramabai, I suggest that it is more productive if we stop ourselves from undue haste in labelling Ramabai as a feminist; rather, we should see her self-positioning as something that is akin to adopting a feminist stance. This notion of a *critical feminist stance* in the case of women such as Ramabai (who are caught within changing identifications of Hindu-ness and Indian-ness) is closely linked with the idea of the diaspora. What allows us to consider Ramabai as a “diasporic subject”?

Diaspora, I suggest refers simultaneously to two places outside of itself: one is the origin that is invoked, a location to which the diasporic subject constantly alludes to and yet to which it cannot return it. The other is the utopian future, caught for Ramabai in the trans-national moment. It is this moment which one works towards yet never quite reaches. The understanding of Ramabai’s feminist identity is closely tied with the relations that Ramabai performed on the international arena. And just as the trans-national framework eventually held more promise than success, the feminist position that Ramabai potentially carves out for herself rests more on the sense of promise than on any hope that it has for success.

Ramabai’s feminism I argue arises from the multiple positions that she occupies, and the position of the modern subject that she espouses on account of the fluidity of her positions. Feminism then in Ramabai’s case has little to do with a stable agential standpoint from which a wholly self-identical subject continuously struggles for either gender equality, rights to equal education or any other specific feminist cause. In other words, while she is specifically invested in the alleviation of the condition of child widows in India, what she is more interested in quite crucially is to be able to carve out a position from where one can engage in a dialogue. What

Ramabai aspires for vis-à-vis the educated widow is the same position that she aspires for herself. Feminism for Ramabai then is less an identity, than it is a “position,” a kind of space wherein one can simultaneously play a part in the discourse of national struggle or of female emancipation but also serve as voice that constantly critiques these positions even as it seeks to uphold them. The voice with which Ramabai speaks then, and which intermittently refers to her body in the garb of a widow, and also to her face marked by its singularity, eventually reminds us of *our* ethical responsibility not only to her but more importantly to her call for a constant questioning of categories and formation of new alliances. In the final analysis therefore, while the idea of a trans-national framework fails at a practical level, Ramabai’s attempt nonetheless constantly reminds us of what is possible. Therein lies the threshold for struggle and its unending potential.

It is significant that this *unstable* feminist identity manifests itself in Japan, reflecting Japan’s own unique instability (un-colonized, but not quite). It reflects the very in-between-ness of the kind of feminist identity that Ramabai espouses. “Japan” then as an inter-national space literally in-between the national and the international succeeds, if only momentarily, in invoking the *trans-national* in the gesture that it makes towards Ramabai.

In the following chapter, I examine in greater detail this idea of an international sisterhood, identifying it as a set of relations that provide space from women such as Ramabai and Tsuda to articulate their feminist positioning. I do so via a discussion of their two texts, Ramabai’s *The High-caste hindu woman* and Tsuda Umeko’s *Japanese girls and women*.

## CHAPTER 4: AT HOME IN A GLOBAL SISTERHOOD? LOCATING TSUDA AND RAMABAI IN INTERNATIONAL FEMINIST FRAMEWORKS

*The high-caste Hindu woman* (1887) written by Pandita Ramabai, and *Japanese girls and women* (1891) authored by Alice Bacon, an American woman and a close friend of Umeko Tsuda bear at the first glance a close resemblance to each other.<sup>1</sup> Written in English and published in the United States, the two texts attracted the immediate attention of an audience interested in foreign and exotic cultures, with a particular fascination for the lives of “Oriental” women.<sup>2</sup> The appearance of the two texts was timely: given the fact that they were produced in a milieu where missionary and temperance narratives had already created substantial interest and concern amongst Western women for their so-called “heathen” sisters, the texts served to provide an “authentic” narrative, one which was based on a “native,” insider view of the true conditions of Asian womanhood. Not surprisingly therefore, reviewers in the print media often pitted the two volumes against each other.

My concern in this chapter is to read the two texts in tandem so as to examine the ways in which the narratives they produced are interconnected not only with one another but also with some of the larger questions of the time. In order to do so, I focus on the content of these two texts and also delve into the “material” conditions that went into their production. The case of Alice Bacon’s *Japanese girls and women* is particularly worth noting because this text does not bear the name of its co-writer, Tsuda Umeko. The larger concerns which shape my argument in this chapter are the

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<sup>1</sup> Pandita Ramabai, *The High Caste Hindu Woman* (Bombay: Maharashtra State Board for Literature and Culture, 1981, reprinted from Philadelphia: Self-published, 1887;). I refer here to the reprint published in Westport, Hyperion Press, 1976. Alice Mabel Bacon, *Japanese girls and women* (Boston, New York: Houghton, Mifflin, 1891). All page numbers in this refer to the 1901 edition published by the same publisher. These texts are henceforth cited in the footnotes as *HCHW* and *JGW* respectively.

<sup>2</sup> For instance *JGW* received endorsement from women such as M. Carey Thomas the Dean of Bryn Mawr College. *HCHW* is endorsed by a long Introduction by Rachel Bodley, Dean of Medical School of Philadelphia.

following: First, I am interested in examining the ways in which a growing interaction between women from the Western and non-Western worlds shaped the language of these two narratives. In other words, my question is: how did the already present discourse on the “native” woman shape the “authentic” rendering of texts written by women who were identified on the international scene as “natives?” Second, in examining the two texts in tandem, I am particularly concerned with the ways in which the discourses on the “native” woman (produced either by “natives” themselves or “white” women) took place against the background of emergent notions of a universal category of woman, which in turn provided a foundational basis for the idea of an emerging “international sisterhood.” Even as Ramabai and Tsuda sought aid for their educational endeavors in India and Japan respectively by turning to American women for financial help, and despite their effort to comply with the demands of an American audience so as to obtain its “help,” they nonetheless resisted being read as “native” women only too eager to conform to the dominant image of the “Asian woman” created by missionary narratives.

Through analyses of the two texts I suggest that “sisterhood” was a complicated affair. Tsuda and Ramabai present two perspectives on how non-Western women negotiated structures of international sisterhood which on the one hand held the promise of friendship but also required submission to Orientalist renderings of Asian womanhood. By identifying Ramabai and Tsuda as “Asian” I do not wish to undermine the very different positions that they often occupied vis-à-vis Western women, nor do I wish to simplify the category of Western or for that matter American women as a monolithic one. Ramabai, for instance, admiring as she was of the middle-class American women she worked with, was nonetheless critical of them when it came to the question of racial difference. Therefore a closer examination of the heterogeneous discourses surrounding women’s identities and positions in

contemporary Japan and India serves to highlight the suspect nature of a supposedly homogenous “Asian” feminism.

Through a successful engagement with Western women, Tsuda and Ramabai both comment on the limits and possibilities of an international identity and of an internationalist positioning. Moreover, as we shall see, Ramabai’s identity as an Indian or Tsuda’s as a Japanese is also carved out in the course of this engagement. This makes the question of travel (entailing contact, encounter, chance meetings) an important one, for as I will argue below, Tsuda’s and Ramabai’s “nationalist” identities are carved out not at “home” but *elsewhere*. This line of argument highlights the importance of a “home” in late nineteenth century discourses on women, and in particular draws attention to the significance of “home” for Tsuda and Ramabai. Examining the twin metaphors of home and travel, Inderpal Grewal<sup>3</sup> has argued that for women traveling abroad in colonial India, “home” was often not that which was left behind. In fact the significance of travel lay in the fact that these women traveled in search of a “home”—not necessarily a physical place that embodied the idea of “home” as much as travel undertaken in search of a self. Using Grewal’s argument, I ask: what is the relation between Ramabai’s and Tsuda’s internationalist stance and their relation to a “home” either real or imaginary? What role do their educational endeavors perform, specifically their schools often described as “homes” for girls, in the construction of the idea of “home?” Moreover, what connection can be made between their travels and their writing, for in the case of both women it was the texts that were produced elsewhere—in a moment of “travel” so to speak—that allowed them to narrate the “true” condition of women *at home*. In conclusion I turn once

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<sup>3</sup> Inderpal Grewal, *Home and Harem: Nation, Gender, Empire, and the Cultures of Travel* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996)

again to the space of the international and the possibilities it opens up for being “at home.”

I begin the chapter with discussing these two texts in some detail.<sup>4</sup> This is followed by an examination of the relationship between the idea of the “social” and “woman” understood as a universal category, marker of a certain universalism. Following this I turn my attention to examining the context in which the two texts were produced. In the final sections I return to the texts again to analyze the extent to which Tsuda and Ramabai’s discourse is immured in the very contradictions of international sisterhood.

### **The two texts**

With Alice Bacon as its author, *Japanese girls and women* is a text that claims to provide its reader with a true picture of the condition of women in Meiji Japan. As regards content, the purpose of the volume was twofold—first, as its preface states, it is to draw attention to the “forgotten half” of Japanese society,<sup>5</sup> which is to say its women; and secondly, as I would like to suggest, it is to locate the Japanese woman as a subject on the world scene.

Even as much of the text is focused on giving its reader a true picture of the “present” condition of the Japanese woman, it also provides a brief historical narrative of each of the social classes in Japan, delineating the special characteristics of women coming from each class background. Particular emphasis is placed on the lives of women from a samurai background; their condition is also compared with that of peasant women and women belonging to the geisha class. The twelve chapters of the

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<sup>4</sup> Although the two scholars (Meera Kosambi and Yuko Takahashi) who have produced substantial work on Ramabai and Tsuda have referred to *HCHW* and *JGW* intermittently, there is in their work, no sustained analyses of these two texts. I refer to the work of both these scholars over the course of this chapter. Barbara Rose lays out the general argument of *JGW* in her volume *Tsuda Umeko and Women’s Education in Japan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 84-90.

<sup>5</sup> *JGW*, vii-viii.

text (with the thirteenth chapter and appendix added to its 1901 revised version) fall primarily into two categories. Chapters either provide descriptions of the women belonging to different social classes (such as peasant, samurai, imperial and so on), or narrate women's different "life-stages" (childhood, marriage and divorce, old age etc.). Given that the focus of the text is on the current condition of Japanese woman, the strongest criticism that the text presents is that the condition of women is far from ideal. Linking the condition of women with the theme of national progress, the central thesis is that in order to attain the position of a civilized nation-state the status and position of women needs to be improved. Thus far the argument stays relatively close to the contemporary reformist (Japanese) male agenda which stressed the crucial link between women's education and national progress.<sup>6</sup>

*Japanese girls and women* however provides a twist to this agenda in two significant ways—first, it makes men directly responsible for the present-day position of women, and hence responsible also for changing the situation. Consequently, Bacon argues that it is men—husbands and fathers, and also crucially the very legalism of the state which guarantees that men undertake no part in the child's training, keep the woman in the position of a servant and a dependent, and then while in a marriage turn outside to a geisha for companionship. In this situation, Bacon points out, it is the women who are rendered "helpless."<sup>7</sup> She therefore suggests the following as a panacea for such evils: "for the sake of the future of Japan: either to raise the standards of men with regard to women, or to change the old system of education for girls."<sup>8</sup> Moreover, she argues that in order for women's lives to change they needed to be seen and to perceive themselves as "individuals." "The women of Japan must be "self-

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<sup>6</sup> The *Meiroku zasshi* and *Jogaku zasshi* are some of the journals which record the interest of the male reformers in the betterment of women's status. I have argued elsewhere that the contours and the logic of this reform agenda follows closely the argument made by Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993)

<sup>7</sup> JGW, 116.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 289.

reliant,” know how to do some definite work in the world beyond the work of the home,” the text states emphatically, “so that their position will not be the one of dependence upon father, husband or son.”<sup>9</sup> Although such a demand is never made explicit, *Japanese girls and women* is asking not only for the individualization of female identity, but also for a fundamental re-structuring of the Japanese household which forces the male to take more responsibility, and for the woman to be an equal to man in the space of marriage and work. Significantly, it is the “samurai” woman who is to lead this change; the text, despite presenting a comparative overview of the lives of different kinds of women, remains eventually interested primarily in the samurai woman as the bearer of the most abject status but also precisely for the same reason a figure harboring in her self the potential to be the future citizen-subject of the Japanese nation.<sup>10</sup>

Two other striking aspects of Bacon’s narrative are the emphasis on the constant changes in a woman’s life, and the fact that these upheavals take place within the space of the nation-state. Paradoxically, despite the present position of dependence and subservience of the Japanese woman, the text paints a picture of unwavering optimism. Underscoring the theme of constant change, the text stresses the fact that a change in the condition of women will usher in a better future for both the woman and the nation. Pride in the nation indirectly draws attention to Japan’s independent status, and no effort is spared to inform the reader that the condition of a Japanese woman, be it a samurai or a peasant woman, is far superior in comparison to her Asiatic sisters. The text is therefore as invested in presenting a picture of the Japanese woman in the manifold aspects of her being (as a wife, mother etc.) as it is committed to discerning in her the figural indications of a (future) citizen-subject of the nation. Significantly

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>10</sup> Note that that contrasting image to the “samurai” woman is the “geisha.” The latter left the men “bewitched” and “beguiled” and lacked any “higher moral virtues” of the samurai woman. Ibid., 287-89.



both the effort at presenting the Japanese woman as she “is” and her proleptic characterization as a “citizen-subject” complement each other, for it is only as a citizen-subject (the text seems to say) that she can truly be the “modern” wife/mother, one who could then conversely serve the urgent demands of the modernizing state. Significantly, one must note that it is through reading the Japanese woman as a citizen-subject that the text seeks to find a place for her on the world scene, thereby allowing her to be read as a woman under the sign of the universal. The point is that she can be a woman on the world scene (and not simply a wife, mother and so on) *only* if she is first understood also as a national subject.

Is it possible to read *Japanese girls and women* as a narrative that draws its perhaps unselfconscious inspiration from an earlier text written in the same vein, viz. *The high-caste Hindu woman*?<sup>11</sup> For instance, the adjective “Japanese” which inflects the “girls and women” in Bacon’s text clearly links the progress of women with the promise of nation-building. As the text constantly reminds us, Japan is on the path of progress and women play a central role in this process. It is a striking contrast when we turn to Ramabai’s text; there the words “high caste” and “Hindu” that modify “woman” in the title do none of the progressivist work “Japanese” does in Bacon’s title for her book. We are never told why Ramabai’s project focuses on women locked into high-caste patriarchy save for her claim that this is the class of women in India that languishes under the most dire stricture. But unlike in *Japanese girls and women*, no easy line is drawn between the betterment in the condition of the Hindu woman and the progress of the nation.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, while at the first glance, the two texts appear to

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<sup>11</sup> As we know from articles in the *Jogaku Zasshi* the fame of Ramabai and *HCHW* had reached Japan prior to Ramabai’s arrival there and thus certainly prior to the publication of *JGW*. There is however no concrete evidence of the fact that Tsuda had read this text before listening to Ramabai in Tokyo. See letter dated January 5, 1889 in Umeko Tsuda, *The Attic Letters: Ume Tsuda’s Correspondence to Her American Mother*, ed. Yoshiko Furuki et al. (New York: Weatherhill Inc., 1991), 325.

<sup>12</sup> Ramabai is must be noted does not dwell on the topic of “caste” very much at all. Other than a brief historical synopsis of why “caste” originated—in Ramabai’s words for an “economical division of labour” (*HCHW*, 3), and its latter day degeneration into an “article of Hindu faith” (4), she does not

be organized in a similar ways, they differ substantially in terms of content. While *Japanese girls and women* is marked by its unwavering optimism, we return again and again in Ramabai's text to her despairing realization of the condition of the Indian woman, and specifically of the Hindu widow. Thus, while chapters of the *High-caste Hindu woman* also lay bare the lived experience of women at different stages in their lives, the overwhelming sense is one of profound grief over the terrible stagnation in women's lives.

The chapters in Ramabai's volume can be divided into two categories. A set of chapters is marked with headings that speak of the problems of women in relation to a certain life stage—these bear the titles, “Childhood,” “Marriage,” and “Widowhood.”<sup>13</sup> A parallel interwoven narrative however also seeks to explain how the abject conditions that women experience in each of these life stages are consequent upon the role that “law,” “religion” and “custom” play in the society. The three terms used interchangeably are deployed by Ramabai to explain how women remain bound by the patriarchal system in which they are nothing more than “slaves.”<sup>14</sup> The text spends a considerable amount of time in delineating the difference between these three terms. Ramabai explains that social customs form the fabric of daily living: “each

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speak much on this matter. It should be noted though that in the very final chapter Appeal, there is a link drawn between women and nation. But such a link is tenuous at best. The thrust of Ramabai's argument is making the case of the Hindu woman-widow “knowable.” I speak of this in greater detail elsewhere.

<sup>13</sup> In her very first chapter, “Prefatory Remarks” Ramabai points out that this division of the life stages of a woman is according to the sacred law given in the Code of Manu and other texts (6). One can thus, from early on in the text anticipate Ramabai's reliance on scripture for authenticating her voice.

<sup>14</sup> As Kosambi writes, Ramabai in the United States met people from a variety of backgrounds speaking of her wide-ranging interests. She visited Harriet Tubman's home, the African-American activist, and was generally interested in the condition of slaves and history of slavery. While Kosambi writes that “her sympathy for their plight seems to have stemmed from prevailing liberal rhetoric rather than personal knowledge” Ramabai's deployment of the term in her own text might also have been an attempt to connect in the minds of the American people a similarity between the condition of “slaves” and Hindu woman, thus making their plight seem more “familiar” and “immediate” to their own history. See Meera Kosambi, Introduction to *Pandita Ramabai's American Encounter: The Peoples of the United States (1889)*, by Pandita Ramabai, trans. and ed. Meera Kosambi (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 26.

custom when it is old enough... takes the form of religion.” Customs, founded “for the most part on traditions are altogether independent of canonical writings” understood as scripture, yet (she goes on to argue) in most cases custom comes to achieve a status above religious scriptures and law, whereby it begins to dictate and delineate the position of women. Coupled with scripture, custom works to ensure a fettered existence for a woman, be it as a child, a wife, a mother or a widow.<sup>15</sup> Like scripture, which Ramabai cites extensively, the “law” (a term used interchangeably with the term “scripture”) is at times overruled by the cruel custom, and on occasion goes so far as to uphold barbaric customs. For instance neither intermarriage, female infanticide or the salvaging promise of marriage for a woman is laid down in law or scripture. Yet, fathers routinely defend the killing of extra girls born in the family as if a girl were a “mosquito or other annoying insect”<sup>16</sup> and they are often willing to go to any extent to marry off their daughters under duress in order to avoid excommunication under customary law.<sup>17</sup>

For a reader with no knowledge of Hindu law, Ramabai’s careful reading of scripture, not to mention her presentation of the varied and competing scriptural views regarding woman’s status and her parallel perspectives on contemporary custom which at times differed from and at times concurred with law must have been dazzling. By presenting scriptural evidence Ramabai could lay claim to discursive authority on historical grounds alone and that too from an insider’s perspective, for her interpretation of scripture presumes a high level of education (a point that the Introduction to Ramabai’s text written by Rachel Bodley makes much of). Moreover, this fact acquires added significance when we remind ourselves that the central focus of this text is raising money for the education of Hindu women. Furthermore,

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<sup>15</sup> *HCHW*, 3.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-21.

Ramabai's heavy reliance on scripture also positions her firmly within the high-Hindu reformist tradition of the late nineteenth century; that she argued from within this tradition must no doubt have enhanced the impression that hers was an authentic voice from within the fold.<sup>18</sup>

From the point of the view of her readers, the fact that Ramabai could weave a narrative that presented scriptural evidence along with "real-life" stories redolent of the triumph of custom over law bespoke of her capacity to tell a story that was not just scholarly in depth but also ethnographic in scope. Almost every page of the book, and especially the three chapters that deal with the regulative psychobiography of a woman, supply examples of how a high-caste woman is at every stage made to "*feel* the misery" of her birth.<sup>19</sup> Such vignettes are interspersed with accounts of material practice underscoring her point about "cruel custom." For instance (she writes), amongst the Rajputs it is a "universal *custom*" that when a daughter is born "the father coolly announces that 'nothing' has been born into his family, by which expression it is understood that the child is a girl."<sup>20</sup> In the chapter "Married Life" custom is once

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<sup>18</sup> Lata Mani, "The Debate on *Sati* in Colonial India," in *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, eds., Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989), 88-126. Examining the discursive aspects of the debate on *Sati* in late nineteenth century colonial Bengal, Lata Mani has argued that as women became emblematic of tradition, the discursive forays that went into either supporting tradition or prohibiting (in this case of the practice of *Sati*) became a "question of *scriptural* evidence" (89). In other words, although the various participants of the debate (including British officials, male Hindu reformers representing indigenous progressive position, and conservative orthodoxy) disagreed considerably on the role of women in tradition, the fact is that all deployed scriptural evidence to argue for their position. Moreover, as "scripture" came to play the role of "evidence," all *also* agreed that scripture was necessarily superior to "custom" (110). In this process, Mani's thesis argues the figure of the "widow" (the object/subject of *Sati*, the *Sati* herself) was entirely marginalized; she become neither the object nor subjects of the discourse, but the very grounds on which *Sati* is contested, and on which "scripture/ tradition/ law are elaborated" (115-17). Mani's other point is that the marking the scriptures as "evidence" in this way also entailed an ordering of the "heterogeneous and unwieldy corpus that was designated as 'scriptures'" (110). The Code of Manu (a *Smriti*) which despite its problematic status retained the important role of serving as evidence for the status of Hindu women in society is a case at point. As we see in the case of *HCHW*, Ramabai too presents evidence primarily from the Code of Manu.

<sup>19</sup> *HCHW*, 10, 48-49. As I have discussed elsewhere, these heartrending details skilfully put into play structures of compassion and pity so as to induce the proper response, which was one of help.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-14.

again blamed for the lack of any “happy family life” since “breaking” the bride’s “spirit” is what the “discipline” of custom is about. For a married woman in the Hindu household, her lived space is strictly speaking “the back of the house where darkness reigns perpetually.” There the child bride is “brought to be forever confined.”<sup>21</sup> The misery of the high-caste Hindu woman attains its greatest poignancy when she is widowed either as a child or before she has borne male offspring. Referring to Sati as one of the practices that the widow is subject to, Ramabai once again turns to scripture and the dissonance between scripture and custom. Her position on this is similar to the male liberal reformist position: “the self-immolation of widows on their deceased husband’s pyre [Sati] was evidently a *custom* invented by the priesthood after the code of Manu was compiled.”<sup>22</sup> Yet while making a case regarding Sati based on scripture, Ramabai who is particularly cognizant of how the practice actually plays out in the lives of widows, makes a stunning declaration that is *anything but* in line with the liberal reformist position. By stating that “the momentary agony of suffocation in the flames was nothing compared to her lot of the widow,” she astutely draws attention to the fact that for a widow living instead of dying might actually prove to be the worse option of the two, for little did people realize the “true state of affairs.”<sup>23</sup> Her description of the life of a widow among the Brahmans of Western Indian is couched in the following words.

A widow is called an ‘inauspicious’ thing. The name ‘rand’ by which she is generally known, is the same that is borne by...a harlot. .... The young widow’s life is rendered intolerable in every possible way. ... [She] is always looked upon with suspicion, and closely guarded as if she were a prisoner, for fear that she may at any time bring disgrace upon the family by committing an improper act. ... She is closely confined to the house, forbidden even to

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 24. I will speak later about the significance of the metaphors of darkness, confinement and its relation to home.)

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 41. Her critique of Sati cites the argument of Raja Rammohun Roy, a well known Bengali reformer of the time, who himself used scripture to cite evidence against Sati (44)

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 42-46.

associate with her female friends. Her life then destitute as it is..., void of all hope, empty of every pleasure and social advantage becomes intolerable, a curse to herself and to society at large.<sup>24</sup>

With no escape from such a “prison-home” and completely ignorant because of her “densely-darkened mind” of “any art by which she may make a honest living” she is quite understandably driven to suicide. “Oh cruel, cruel is the custom that drives thousands of young widows to such a fate,”<sup>25</sup> Ramabai despairs, and along with her so do we her readers. In the final analysis, this plaint is a segue to Ramabai’s plan for establishing a school for widows, but here she does not forget to take benevolent indigenous patriarchy to task for suggesting that widow remarriage is an adequate solution.<sup>26</sup> The chapter on widowhood ends on a dark note: caught between the futility of remarriage and the abolition of Sati (a practice that, though barbaric, nonetheless seems preferable to a life of abjection as a widow), Ramabai astutely points out that neither presents a woman with any real choice.

The terms that Ramabai uses to illustrate the texture of a woman’s life—metaphors of darkness, prison and confinement—are, as I will suggest later in the chapter, borrowed from missionary narratives. But I want to note here that Ramabai’s interweaving of custom and scripture produces a reading of the high caste Hindu woman as nothing more than a “non-being.” Occupying the space of “darkness,” her being rendered as “nothing,” the high-caste Hindu woman is the figure of unfreedom posited at the degree-zero of agential subjecthood, a point between two imponderables, that of undertaking sanctioned suicide (Sati) or living the life of the

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 46-47.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>26</sup> Ramabai here is referring to the 1856 Widow Remarriage Act. Without naming names, Ramabai’s remark is clearly directed at the moderate Maharashtrian reformer M.G. Ranade who under paternal pressure did exactly the same there were a great many men who took oaths that if they became widowers would married a widow if they were to remarry again. But in face of potential excommunication “no sooner had their wives died they forgot all about their oaths and married pretty little maidens” (*HCHW*, 51).

dead in a self-extinction that would entail at the same time her complete and total foreclosure from the field of representation. Here Ramabai's account of the condition of woman between custom and scripture prefigures quite remarkably Lata Mani's relatively recent reading of woman as neither object nor subject but simply the grounds for benevolent patriarchal debate. In fact, as Ramabai so insightfully suggests, the figure of a woman is not a "figure" at all. Born as "nothing," taken to be an "impersonal being" after marriage, and condemned to the status of an "inauspicious thing" once widowed, she is for all practical purpose *no woman* at all: the high-caste Hindu woman is not. What is made available to the reader is a figure of suffering that occupies the non-place of that constitutive absence, and it is this "figure" that is paradoxically constituted (after covering over the abyss of her historical extinction) as a "woman" now amenable to "help," a likely donee for the eager American donor. The project of education then is at its core a reformist one that invokes female agency at a kind of pragmatic crossroad, making the unknowable (how widows suffer) into the knowable (universalizable life-histories), but not without turning the thinkable (the Hindu woman's abjection) into the unthinkable (her horrific effacement from the Hindu social text); the first move restores the high-caste Hindu woman to humanity, the second to history. The articulation of suffering is the key to effecting this transformation; it is that which makes the woman knowable and hence ultimately available for reform or restoration through education.<sup>27</sup>

Besides "custom," which would be the chief perpetrator of women's misery, two other factors explain for Ramabai women's low status. One reason is ascribed to the "lawless rule of the Mahometan [*sic*] intruders" from the 12<sup>th</sup> century CE, which to

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<sup>27</sup> Kosambi has argued that Ramabai took the question of the oppression of Indian womanhood beyond the problem of simply "naming" it. Like the missionaries of this time, Ramabai was interested in bringing to light the condition of the "oppressed" Indian womanhood. However, she did not focus only on women's seclusion "but on the related concealment of their problems" (including marital harassment, the systematic ill-treatment of the widow etc.). See Kosambi, *American Encounter*, 32.

her mind had much to do with “universalizing infant marriages in India.”<sup>28</sup> The strongest criticism is however reserved for the British government. Indeed the text of *High-caste Hindu woman* serves as a powerful critique of the civilizing rhetoric of British imperialism, now severely compromised in the terrain of colonialism. Ramabai presents countless instances to illustrate the fact that while women have undeniably suffered at the hands of the custom, British law has done nothing to alleviate the situation; in fact as Ramabai puts it sarcastically, its so-called “enlightened rule” has only helped make matters worse. The much celebrated case of Rakhmabai, a non-Brahmin upper-caste educated woman whose husband brought a case against her in court because she wished to terminate a marriage between them that had no legal sanction, illustrates Ramabai’s point well.<sup>29</sup> The following passage written in defense of Rakhmabai then sums Ramabai’s critique well. It is a “wonder,” she writes

that a defenseless woman like Rakhmabai dared to raise her voice in the face of the powerful Hindu law, the mighty British government, the one hundred and twenty nine million men, and the three hundred and thirty million gods of the Hindus, all these have conspired to crush her into *nothingness*. We cannot blame the English Government for not defending a *helpless* woman; it is only fulfilling its agreement made with the male population of India. ... Should England serve God by protecting a helpless woman against powers...of ancient institutions, Mammon would surely be displeased, and British profit and rule in India might be endangered (37, my emphasis).

Ramabai here, in a single stroke, lays out for her reader a devastating critique of those who in her opinion are the chief perpetrators of women’s degradation. She draws attention to the predicament of woman caught uncannily between Hindu and British law, helpless and reduced to a cipher. For the anomalous status of British colonial law

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<sup>28</sup> *HCHW*, 17.

<sup>29</sup> The case was celebrated in American newspapers as well, and no doubt Ramabai’s readers had heard about it. For its full account see Antoinette Burton, “From Child Bride to ‘Hindoo Lady’: Rukhmabai and the Debate on Sexual Respectability in Imperial Britain,” in *American Historical Review*, 103, 4 (October 1998): 1119-46; Meera Kosambi, “Gender reform and competing state controls over women: The Rakhmabai case (1884-1888),” in *Social reform, Sexuality and the State: Contributions to Indian Sociology, Occasional Studies* 7, ed., Patricia Uberoi (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1996), 265-90.



hinges on its lack of any relation to “Christian” ideals; the law upholds the interests of Indian men while furthering the aims of colonialism, dedicated as it is to the propagation of an unabashedly imperialist national creed with no other interest than that of economic domination and exploitation. So critical a statement of British governance, calling into question the very ethical basis of its rule over another nation, gathers further ballast when the reader is reminded that it is her (the reader’s) “Christian” duty to come to the aid of these “oppressed” Indian woman.<sup>30</sup> In invoking in her readers a sense of Christian duty Ramabai writes as an “insider,” a professor of Christian faith. She writes to remind her readers of their Christian duty to help “these” high-caste widows, who literally until a moment before in the text are referred to as “my sister-widows.”<sup>31</sup> The gap between “us” and “them” thus effectively closes, if only momentarily. “I venture to make this appeal” she writes, “because I believe that those who regard the preaching of the Gospel of *our* Lord Jesus Christ to the heathen so important...will deem it of first importance to prepare a way for the spread of the Gospel by throwing open the locked doors of the Indian *zenanas*,<sup>32</sup> ...whereby they will be able to bear the dazzling light of the outer world.” The book ends with the following words: “In the name of humanity, in the name of your sacred responsibilities as workers in the cause of humanity, and, above all, in the most holy

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<sup>30</sup> Ramabai diabolically, by drawing attention to the hypocrisy of the British government, was in fact asking her (American) readers to examine the relation between Christianity and civilization, given that the Americans were also a Christian nation. In Ramabai’s argument, the “so-called Christian British rule” is crucially juxtaposed then with the call of help directed at women in the “highly-favoured lands” (viz., the United States) so as to “bestow freely talents of whatever kind they may have” in the aid of the Hindu woman (64-65).

<sup>31</sup> *HCHW*, 50 and 63. My emphasis.

<sup>32</sup> The term “zenana” is particularly potent. If we are to go by missionary narratives (I will examine them in the following sections of this chapter) this was a term already familiar to Ramabai’s readers and conjured images of darkness and confinement of “heathen” women living in prison like conditions. Bodley too uses the terms in her Introduction, writing of Ramabai that she wants a “Hindu zenana [to be] transformed into a Hindu home” (xiv). Who the agent would be of such a transformation was a complicated matter, and as Kosambi points out that while for Bodley the agency lay in American women, for Ramabai it was matter of transformation through “self-help.” See, Kosambi, *American Encounter*, 25-26.

name of God, I summon you true women and men... to bestow your help quickly, regardless of nation, caste and community.”<sup>33</sup> The summons to a common humanity presupposes difference but the idea of representation here requires that humanity to be unmarked, perhaps even “fuzzy” (to use Inderpal Grewal’s word). But this fuzziness is not a consequence merely of travel; it is the sign of the beliefs that Ramabai as a Christian shares with her American sisters.<sup>34</sup> The trait of “humanity” is reinscribed with Christian values, but the reverse holds too: to be a true Christian—and not simply a “so-called” Christian who is in reality an imperialist—one must demonstrate one’s capacity to be humane. This is what will form the basis of reform, the transformation (transmutation; transfiguration) of women from “nothings” into “human beings.” The movement from the nothingness of the darkling zenana to the “dazzling light” irradiating becoming human in the Christian sense constitutes the upward force of education, the transformative agenda of making-human that is at the heart of Ramabai’s act of writing. In the end Ramabai’s proposal is simple, direct, succinct: what is needed is an educational institution that will provide a home to widows, enabling them to be independent of their relatives and furthering their self-reliance. The alternative would be dire social catastrophe: were such a pedagogic program to be thwarted, the “Hindu nation” will die a “miserable and prolonged death.”<sup>35</sup>

The last statement alludes to the fact that education was for Ramabai not just potentially ameliorative for women but also restorative of the life of the nation: it was essential for the “nation” understood in terms of the future as a horizon of hope. The

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<sup>33</sup> *HCHW*, 65-66.

<sup>34</sup> See Grewal, *Home and Harem*, 17. Using this term in the context of travel Grewal’s emphasis is on how Ramabai through her wanderings in India was able to establish a connection between different women in India based on the fact that they all suffered exploitation at the hands of the Hindu patriarchy. Thus she came to see women as a group despite their social cultural differences from place to place. Moreover, as I state above, here the community that Ramabai wishes to inculcate the Hindu woman in the international community of women (under one faith), and not a national community, although it is the high caste women, who in her final analysis will be potential national subjects.

<sup>35</sup> *HCHW*, 55.

chapter titled “How the Condition of Women tells upon Society” puts Ramabai’s education agenda firmly within the framework of the nation. “The complete submission of women under the Hindu law has in lapse of years converted [women] into slavery-loving creatures,” she writes: how can we then expect these “imprisoned mothers... to bring forth children better than themselves?”<sup>36</sup> For the men who occupied positions of social and political influence in Ramabai’s time, her stance against patriarchy and her critique of Hinduism for its structural effacement of female agency could not but come across as anti-national. This is a telling characterization on their part; it applies little to Ramabai’s meticulous unraveling of Hindu law and custom in *High-caste Hindu Woman*. Instead the response of male reformers (whether liberal or conservative) exposes the direct link between patriarchy and nation-formation. Hers was a critique directed particularly at this linkage, and this is why their uproar rang loud. More crucially, she saw no “outside” space (outside the social) from where to critique the nation; she proceeded to occupy the ‘inside’ (the very sanctum sanctorum of the social) that was Hindu law, a space coded millennially as male—where female suicide, the unthinkable limit of female social existence, could itself work only under the sanction of male way of dying—but she redeployed this very standpoint of a patriarchal juridico-legality, risking complicity with it, using it to launch an attack on the patriarchy implicit in the very idea of a nation. If Ramabai’s global outreach is a consequence of her canny understanding of Christian humanism, her polemic against Hindu law has all the self-incrimination and rage of the whistleblower—she is nothing if not complicit with the law as an instance of the Hindu mode of power. She is critical of high Hinduism as a high Hindu; she comes

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 54-55. The final few lines of Bodley’s Introduction which directly quote Ramabai’s words also make explicit this relation between woman and nation. Ramabai’s call to Western women is made precisely so that “this hated and despised class of women, educated and enlightened,...[will] by God’s grace...redeem India!” See Rachel L. Bodley, Introduction to *The High-caste Hindu Woman*, by Pandita Ramabai (London: George Bell and Sons, 1888), xxviii.

down hard on British imperialism because its Christianity rings hollow to the ear of a true Christian. More Christian than Christian, more Hindu than Hindu, Ramabai bears the marks of a double complicity: hers is a politics of complicity and contamination that does not adhere to pure, autoimmune positions. We should remember that the results were personally unsettling. Having first hailed Ramabai as a “Sarasvati” (the Goddess of Learning), male reformers in Bengal and Maharashtra alike recoiled in alarm when she turned against them the very expertise as a Sanskritist schooled in Hindu law that had earned her their admiration.<sup>37</sup>

If Ramabai does cast the Hindu woman, particularly the high-caste woman as the object of much needed reform and therefore potentially as someone who would work for the redemption of Hindu nation, what kind of a subject position does she envision for the woman? Moreover, who if any is the “Indian woman” irrespective of class and caste who could occupy such a position? While the text barely focuses on the conditions of women who are not Hindu or high-caste, the following statement does suggest that to her mind it was the Hindu high-caste woman who would lead the nation out of its current state, The “high-caste people [of India] rank as the most intelligent; they have been a refined and cultivated race for more that two thousand years.... A little care and judicious education... will make them competent teachers.”<sup>38</sup> Ramabai’s narrative is thus less about inserting the high-caste Hindu

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<sup>37</sup> From the perspective of reformers, Ramabai’s stance was also read as anti-national because of her conversion to Christianity. After her conversion, Liberal reformers for instance denounced her conversion by criticising it as being “fickle,” suggesting that such a quality was “peculiarly female.” See *Induprakash* (22 October, 1883), cited in Uma Chakravarti, *Rewriting History: The Life and Times of Pandita Ramabai* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 2000), 321. Another newspaper, *Kesari* run under the auspices of the conservative reformer Tilak, lashed out against her in a review of her book *United States chi Lokasthiti ani Pravasavritta* [The Peoples of the United States] by suggesting that criticising “the male sex...is a bad habit she has formed” *Kesari*, January 7, 1890). Cited in Meera Kosambi, “Tracing the Voice: Pandita Ramabai’s Life through Her Landmark Texts (unpublished MS), 5. The actual establishment of her education institution did changed the tide somewhat temporarily until she was again accused for converting her wards. See, Meera Kosambi, “Multiple Contestations: Pandita Ramabai’s educational and missionary activities in late nineteenth century India and abroad,” in *Women’s History Review*, 2, 7 (1998): 198.

<sup>38</sup> *HCHW*, 60.

woman into the nationalist narrative than it is about identifying *this* woman, textually representing this category as the object of reform, without which as she cogently argues the nation can only remain weakened by its own internal fatigue. *High-caste Hindu woman* is without doubt a critique of nation, but it is a critique specifically of the present form that the nation has taken under Hindu patriarchy, as manifested in the tumultuous coming together of native custom and colonial rule. At the far side of the historical nation is the millennial kingdom: we must “await the advent of the kingdom of righteousness, wherein the weak, the lowly and the helpless shall be made happy.”<sup>39</sup> It can hardly be gainsaid that the educated high-caste Hindu woman alone wields the redemptive power of the new nation; she alone bears the promise of the nation understood as a promise of the future: she is that promise, that pledge. Two things are of significance here: first, the project of reform in Ramabai’s schema generates a subject whose very core is humanist, professing a certain Christian faith (while not necessarily Christian *religion*). Second, by suggesting that the Hindu high-caste woman can redeem the nation, she is paradoxically *writing* a script for a nation that can only have as its national subject the high-caste Hindu woman.<sup>40</sup> It is significant that lower-caste women are written out of this program; Ramabai argues that such women have access to greater freedom than their upper-caste counterparts in more flexible forms of sociality—they cannot, they need not serve as the objects of national pedagogy; the nation should not be invoked here in this case as the kindly eye that would modulate and elicit their desires.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>40</sup> As I have suggested elsewhere Ramabai’s educational project also goes on to suggest that it is not just the high caste Hindu woman, but the “widow” (the most abject of all positions) who is the new “subject” of the emergent nation-state. I also speak further on this point later in the chapter.

<sup>41</sup> In *HCHW*, Ramabai argues that the lower castes are not in need of upliftment because they are relatively free to practice various trades and professions in part due to economic necessity, and hence do not suffer the same abject treatment as the high caste woman (56). The latter indicates a certain blindness on Ramabai’s part; other scholars have demonstrated that Muslim women in various parts of India certainly suffered in similar ways at the hand of male patriarchy and particularly so in terms of the

In a certain sense, one could argue that Ramabai's miscognition of caste is a blindness both instrumental and systematic. Her explicit aim in this text as we know is to raise funds for her educational project in Pune as much as to raise an awareness of the plight of the Hindu woman. 'Mothers and fathers' dwelling in American homes are urged here to "compare the condition of your own sweet darlings at your happy firesides with that of the millions of little girls of corresponding age in India, who have already been sacrificed on the unholy altar of an inhuman social custom."<sup>42</sup> The cause of the "Hindu widow" neatly forecloses the dissonance between her specific condition and the problems of "Indian womanhood;" in the most indirect way Ramabai suggests to American women that helping the Hindu woman would be the same as helping their Indian sisters.

A crucial aspect of Ramabai's text is also that the "figure" of Ramabai is at once subject and object of her enunciative act: she is represented as the author of the text even as she herself shares some of the characteristics of the women the text is about. This point is brought to the reader's attention early in the text. Bodley points out in her Introduction that Ramabai's own "life-history" could very well have gone down the path of the Hindu woman that she writes about; she too could have been widowed, have remained uneducated, may well have led her life in utter abjection. From the perspective of the American reader, the success of Ramabai's text lies precisely in the fact that she can write as *one of them*, and yet also as someone who escaped such misery thanks in part to her education and more crucially her conversion—hers is a double exemplarity, at once familiar and distant to her American readers. For she is also at pains to dissociate herself from her "sister-widows;" she could never really *be* one of them. What she seeks to draw attention to is the

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kind of education they had access to. See for one example Bharati Ray's study of Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain. *Early Feminists in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002)

<sup>42</sup> *HCHW*, 60.

unknowable and effectually unwritable life of the Hindu widow, she who cannot yet be constituted as a knowing much less a knowable subject. Ramabai is thus invested in producing a reading of a woman (high caste and Hindu) who strictly speaking does not offer herself *to* a reading, whose world is literally and metaphorically impenetrable—dark and unavailable—posed as the limit of any imagined solidarity, unthinkable (in the terms I have used above).<sup>43</sup> This tenebrous core must then be palimpsested by a decipherable “frame” (decipherable by virtue of her own exceptional status), that which avails itself of another reading as if by relay, a reading by way of Ramabai as conduit toward the white woman for whom the text is produced.

Thus unlike *Japanese girls and women*, a text that is very much invested in suggesting that a Japanese woman needs to improve her lot in order to attain a certain sense of individuality, Ramabai’s polemical tract is *not* about the constitution of the self, for such a self would lie at the limit of its own possibility. In Bacon’s terms, a good education is clearly the first step in fabricating these individualized selves; a solid education laced with a sense of Christian morality will (she believes) enable women to step outside their servile dependence; the progress of women will seamlessly guarantee the progress of a nation. Implicitly what the text argues is that access to individuality will ensure for the Japanese woman her own particular place in the international sisterhood of women. Ramabai’s project is also one of instilling self-reliance, yet it is not necessarily one of fostering individualism. She imagines women as serving in a community (a provisional community, itself the figure for the future community of the nation)—a community engaged in education and in the service of

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<sup>43</sup> Spatially also she is located in the innermost recesses of the house. This location and its lack of access to the external world is what Ramabai tries to convey to her reader. What is thus portrayed is less the figure of the woman, as much as her “conditions of inaccessibility.” I will touch in greater detail on this topic at the end of the chapter where I discuss Ramabai’s specific education plans. For a detailed narrative for the overarching discourse on women’s education around this time, see Meera Kosambi, “A window in the prison house: women’s education and the politics of social reform in nineteenth century western India,” *History of Education*, 29, 5 (2000): 429-42.

God. *The high-caste Hindu woman and Japanese girls and women* thus present two ways of inserting the specific Japanese or Indian woman into the universal category of woman. But accompanied by this insertion into the universal is a certain hollowing out of the universal itself: that is to say, “woman” as irreducible to itself, emerging as a categorically exceptional (indeed, an exception to category itself) to any generalized notion of “Indian” or “Japanese” woman.

I turn now to examining the ways in which the idea of a universal category of women came into being in the nineteenth century. I delve into this through an analysis of the relation between the Woman Question and the development of the idea of the “social.” As I argue below, it was the constitution of women as subjects of the social sphere that enabled the creation of a space enabling western and non-western women to interact with each other in an “international arena.”

### **The idea of the “social” in the “Woman Question”<sup>44</sup>**

The “Woman Question” as it was came to be conceived in mid-nineteenth century was invested, first and foremost, in identifying “women” as a universal category, across markers of difference such as class, caste and kinship. (I do not mean “universal” here as an “international” category as much as conceptualizing women as a group whose interests surmounted their class or other differences.) In Britain and the United States, this category of “women” had much to do with the concomitant emergence of another category which was that of the “social.” The relation between the two was made as follows: women’s ability in the arena of domestic life “naturally” made them different from men, suggesting therefore that “if women’s sphere was the

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<sup>44</sup> In Chapter Three, I have examined the “Women’s Question” specifically in the context of Meiji Japan and colonial India. The “Woman Question” (alternatively also known as “Women’s Question”) deals with some of the larger implications of this question. The use of the term “woman” instead of “women” also highlights the fact that the former is more focused on woman as a gendered category, while the latter speaks of specific historic subjects/objects such as “Japanese,” “Indian” women, etc.



domestic, then... the social world [should] become a great arena for domestic intervention.”<sup>45</sup> The space of the “social” thus not only sought to define the locus of women’s primary identification, but more significantly, it also gave a very specific future-oriented ring to the “Woman Question.” That is to say, the “Woman Question” drew attention to what women could become—as “individuals” and of course as a part of a “social” group. While the “Woman Question” thus kept women out of the political sphere, it nonetheless implied that women had their own place in the arena of change and progress (especially national progress, although not of the political kind); they were not merely a static entity—the “repositories of the past and tradition” so to speak. As Denise Riley has suggested, “the production of the social (not only) allowed a space where women could be rehabilitated or re-formed, but whose improvement women could also engage themselves in.”<sup>46</sup>

That women were to be the objects and subjects of (social) change is the key, for this made it plain that all women were not made “equal,” did not occupy the social (and therefore the “national”) in equal ways, and therefore, although there might exist a universal category of women, they were *not* all equal subjects. Over the course of the nineteenth century as the “social” became the *other* of the “political” and a “women’s sphere,” it made women the central objects and also the agents of reform. Reform, which in effect meant *social* reform implied a re-working of everything that lay outside of the political sphere; an arena wherein women in particular, and by extension the family and the domestic space which constituted the “social” became the object of reform. Over the course of the nineteenth century, as the “social” (within the national context) came to be increasingly delineated, shaped and exhaustively defined, the arena of reform within which women functioned as *social workers* extended from

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<sup>45</sup> Denise Riley, “Am I That Name?” *Feminism and the Category of ‘Women’ in History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 46-47.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 46-49.

national space to the international scene. This in case of Britain meant its vast empire. Britain's territorial expansion with its quest to bring "civilization" to the non-Western world, along with a phenomenal growth in possibilities of travel around the globe assured that channels for "social" work in an international space were becoming increasingly available. In this way the task of emancipating women "at home" was extended to emancipating women in the colonies newly acquired through imperial expansion. Moreover, the development of the field of "social science" aimed at "formaliz[ing] the elevation of 'women'" gave additional good reason for "women of one degree [to] act upon women of a different class or different race, with the consequent moralization of all." The "social" thus, at home and abroad produced a "proper field on which female goodness could be exercised."<sup>47</sup>

The latter half of the nineteenth century in Britain and also United States is marked by women, mostly elite, middle-class, and white, making forays into the international scene with the ostensible desire to improve the social conditions of their "sisters" in Asia and Africa. Amongst American women, Patricia Hill points out, three kinds of "social" activities were particularly favored in the 1870s: missionary work (at home and abroad), temperance work, and women's clubs.<sup>48</sup> All of these activities stressed (in varying degrees) the importance of civic reform, "self-culture" and extending a hand of help to improve conditions elsewhere by way of economic help or by actually sending women on foreign missions. The World Women's Christian Temperance Union (WWCTU) for instance played an enormous role in forging international bonds as they also built upon older structures of evangelical missions.

Were women more inclined towards internationalism than men? Ian Tyrrel has suggested that internationalism amongst women had much to do with the

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 53-55.

<sup>48</sup> Patricia Hill, *The world their household: the American woman's foreign mission movement and cultural transformation, 1870-1920* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985).

unavailability for them of the option of participating in the process of nation building.<sup>49</sup> Writing in 1915, Katherine Anthony, a feminist and novelist, noted that the “disenfranchisement of the whole sex, a condition which has existed throughout the civilized world until a comparatively recent date, had bred in half the population an unconscious internationalism.”<sup>50</sup> The point here is that amongst men a granting of suffrage coincided with the rise of nationalist loyalties that in turn reinforced the sense of homosocial brotherhood at the basis of a self-guaranteeing political order. Excluded from this “political” identity but relocated within the domain of freedoms opened up by the corresponding feminization of the “social,” women’s work sought at once to surpass the national (i.e. political) while also re-working the social and therefore feminizing it in women’s own terms—moving the social as a space of female subjection to one of subjectivation, from confinement to the proliferation of new desires and social energies.<sup>51</sup> The term “international sisterhood” which came to express both the scope and the nature of relations between different kinds of women had one important implication—given women’s tenuous connections with the political sphere of the nation-state, and relegated as they were to the arena of the “social,” sisterhood (unlike brotherhood) gave women a sense of community to which women “belonged” in outstepping national boundaries, albeit in varying degrees: this is how women worked to move the social into feminine sociality, broaching female friendship as a counterpoint to the political. By this token the scope of this friendship surpassed ties between individuals and grew as we shall see into a momentous internalization and reinscription of the political itself.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ian Tyrrell, *Woman’s World, Woman’s Empire: The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective, 1880-1890* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 35-37.

<sup>50</sup> Cited in Tyrrell, *Woman’s World*, 35 and 54.

<sup>51</sup> Riley, “*Am I That Name?*,” 50.

<sup>52</sup> All female organizations such as the WWCTU were in fact organised along the lines of nation-states, and made it a point to use terminology for their workers which not only mirrored the terms used in the

Understandably, since women's physical movement was a concomitant of the lines of imperial acquisition, the international temperance movement spread with the ascendancy of Anglo-American culture, and particularly relied on Britain's strong imperial connection with the greater part of the world. Anglo-American women's internationalism thus most certainly exploited and made full use of imperial political expansion in Asia although it very clearly understood its own domain of work as that of the "social." The "social" thus in effect did tie in with the "political" in myriad and intricate ways. It is important to understand that women's internationalism was elaborated in a crucial way through the idea of women's work as part of the greater "civilizing mission," wherein the idea of the "white man's burden" was mirrored by the impulse to define the notion of a "white woman's burden."<sup>53</sup> Thus while the contact between missionary women, temperance workers, and their "eastern sisters" may often have also fostered close relationships one ought to also remember that that such "friendships" were never unmarked by power and race. Within the framework of the colonial modern, the differential relations between religion, civilization, and the status of women nonetheless fell into a continuum, and both missionaries and temperance workers agreed more or less that the relative position of a religion in the hierarchy of world religions depended on a nation's civilizational status, which in turn depended on the status of its women. It seemed to them unarguable that only in Christian lands did women enjoy the highest degree of freedom, a necessary feature of their having achieved along with men the highest form of civilization. In effect therefore the emancipation of women in non-Christian lands was not possible without the first step of Christianization. Missionaries and temperance workers deemed this triadic relation as more or less a constant presupposition in their international work

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political sphere of the nation-state. Moreover there was also an insistence, as in the case of Willard, of how a woman and *not* a man was the "leader of the whole world."

<sup>53</sup> Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

particularly in non-Christian lands, although the latter also attempted view other religions in a positive light. Temperance workers in Asia were not afraid to admit that “‘colored people’ were as worthy [of improvement] as whites,” thereby suggesting that both qualified as *human*, but it was at the same time assumed that they (i.e., “colored people”) were “worthless unless saved.”<sup>54</sup>

Instead of understanding the relations between Western women and their non-Western counterparts under the rubric of “friendship” (understood in the unproblematic sense of bilateral bonds of affection) I argue that this relation can be comprehended better in terms of “service”—what one can do for, what one can give to one’s friend. Service itself can be understood predominantly in two ways—service to other women, imagined as powerless and defenseless in their own social and religious sphere, as well as service to the greater (Christian) God. When engaging with Western women, to what extent did Tsuda and Ramabai succeed in becoming equal participants in a global community whose very structural asymmetries ensured their relegation to the status of objects of a Western woman’s “service”? For instance, to what extent did women such as Ramabai comply with the images of the “Oriental women” that missionary narratives produced? As suggested above, though Ramabai’s own text is marked by the vocabulary of missionary discourse in her analysis of the Hindu woman, this is hardly a sign of her acceptance of those terms (though it may be a sign of her strategic deployment of her own status as a convert to Christianity in the present and as a high-Hindu widow in the past). There is evidence to show that she reworks

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<sup>54</sup> Tyrell, *Woman’s World*, 104. Tyrell has discussed the complex relationship between missionaries and temperance workers particularly when it came to their stand on religion. Drawing a line of connection between liquor and Christian belief, the WCTU and its international counterpart in its foundational moment had an implicit critique of Christianity which distinguished it from the work of the missionaries and made it far more amenable to view other religions in a positive light. The WWCTU however in order to work effectively in foreign countries and particularly in Asia also needed the missionary base and in fact worked frequently with the missionary base in colonial/semi-colonial situations. In this case it was not possible to alienate those who believed that redemption could only come through Christianity (i.e. the missionaries). As a result the WWCTU position vis-à-vis evangelical workers was ambiguous as it was fraught.

these terms deftly in her own way, providing her reader with new understandings of such typical instances of missionary-speak as “pity” and compassion.”<sup>55</sup>

### **Woman as subjects of “humanity”**

At the time when Western women’s engagement in “serving” their Eastern sisters was undergoing tremendous expansion, the “women’s question” as an issue concerning specifically Japanese and Indian women was also being highlighted in Meiji Japan and colonial India.<sup>56</sup> Here I wish to draw attention to the fact that this discourse on how to modernize the Indian/Japanese woman while retaining her Japaneseness or Indianness, took place necessarily under a Western gaze. In other words, the earliest activity in the arena of reform at the hands of male intellectuals and reformers, particularly in the field of gender reform, began explicitly or implicitly under Western pressure. It was within the realm of an emerging *modern* nation-state in Japan and of a growing nationalist movement in India that the three-way relationship between nation, woman, and civilization was codified. It was here that womanhood coded now as “ideal” became central to the discourse of national progress towards a certain civilizational horizon .

The cultural significance of “woman” was underscored in the field of education, a task in which nationalist reformers participated with great fervor. The red

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<sup>55</sup> Post Edward Said’s ground-breaking analysis of “Orientalism” scholars such as Anne McClintock, *Imperial leather : race, gender, and sexuality in the colonial contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995) and Ann Stoler, *Carnal knowledge and imperial power : race and the intimate in colonial rule* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 2002) have convincingly argued the extent to which the East, or more specifically the peripheries of Europe have played a role in configuring the identity of the metropolis, that is of Europe. Naoki Sakai has forcefully made a case for the futility of the binary distinction between the “East” and the “West” suggesting that both Europe and Asia are not only a heterogeneous fields of experience but also in some sense are empty terms. The very futility of the terms however does not deny them the ideological import of either the “West” and its “rest,” as it does not do away with the common usage of Asia and Europe in common parlance making them extremely “value-loaded. See Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity: On “Japan” and Cultural Nationalism*, Foreword by Meagan Morris (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 172-73.

<sup>56</sup> I have already discussed this in Chapter Three.

thread running through the myriad arguments made in women's reform—in everything ranging from more favorable marriage practices by raising the legal age of marriage, to changes in relationships between husband and wife as well as questioning women's employment opportunities—was the keen interest in reforming all those practices that cast the nation in an unflattering light. An early slogan in Meiji, '*onna mo hito nari*' (women must become people too), indicates the extent to which it became necessary to conceive of a woman as "human" in order to then make her available to a modernizing impulse aimed at her functions as wife and mother.

The magazine *Meiroke zasshi*, which illustrates the view of the members of the Meirokusha founded in 1873, is a good instance of such rhetoric among such major Meiji intellectuals as Fukuzawa Yukichi, Nakamura Masanao and Mori Arinori, all of whom were invested in adapting Western liberal thought toward improving the conditions of Japanese women. While they and others like them may not necessarily have agreed on the actual terms of reform, their extensive travels to the West prior to 1873 resulted in their acceptance at least in principle of Western criticisms of Japan's treatment of its women. Impelled by a desire to eradicate these practices, their writings primarily reflect a re-examination of custom, especially those aspects of it that now seemed "cruel" and which, in serving to sever women from their common humanity with men, thwarted Japan as an internal hurdle in its own path to modernization. The inclusion of the five girl-children (including Tsuda) as a part of the Iwakura mission sent to the United States in 1871 is an instance precisely of such a desire on the part of contemporary reformist patriarchy. The latter's programmatic aims far exceeded the mere education of woman; men such as Mori sought more ambitiously to evolve a whole new ideal of exemplary womanhood. Although it is true that such a reformulation of the ideal was primarily aimed at the upper-class and elite woman and tended to ignore the heterogeneity of women's lived experience, the important point is

that such an *ideal* quickly became the new *reality*. It was the ideality of this perfectible humanness in a woman that made it possible for her in turn to adequate the universal category of ‘woman.’ In other words, redirecting women in late nineteenth century India or Japan toward this *identifiable* figure of womanhood had the effect of docketing ‘woman’ in the position of the universal, bearer of generalizable possibilities.

Tani Barlow’s recent work on the construction of “women” as subjects in China is particularly useful in understanding this point. She contends that the category of woman as it is understood in present Chinese social theory was stabilized in the 1920s and 30s and had its origins in the international sphere. Barlow writes that just as “European enlightened feminism is inconceivable in the absence of colonialism, Chinese enlightened thought takes place only in relation to the Great Powers and their various urbanities.” Moreover this was so not only in the 20s but also prior to this point. Thus, although a feminist position along the lines of sexual division—that is to say, the centrality of sex to the women’s question—came to be solidified in the context of contemporary debates happening elsewhere in Europe, United States and Japan only in the 1920s, Barlow suggests that the “pre-eugenicist tradition of Chinese feminism was also internationalist;” the crucial difference was that at this stage it was far more concerned with “citizenship rather than sexuality.”<sup>57</sup> Barlow detects traces of an internationalist presence in the pre-1920’s period by examining women’s journals in the early decades of the twentieth century. Barlow’s work attests to the process by which the simultaneous textual representation (the very coevalness) of Western and Chinese women in these journals served to relocate Chinese women’s struggles in an international matrix, with the implication that the greater freedom available for

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<sup>57</sup> Tani E. Barlow, *The question of women in Chinese feminism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 65.



Western women was to be seen as a historical condition, requiring an examination of the problem of the historicity of freedom itself. There was an immediate, pragmatic windfall: for it seemed as though all that Chinese women had to do was to struggle for their rights—if they did so, they would achieve similar levels of freedom. The question of women then at the national level, in drawing an arc between civilization and women’s status, thus already implies women as (struggling to be) subjects at the level of the international. Willard’s deployment of the “polyglot petition” for instance received an endorsement from women across national bounds precisely because she could invoke the sentiment that women irrespective of nationality were being unrepresented or wronged, and that too often paradoxically *within* the space of the nation.<sup>58</sup> Barlow’s main point here then is that the “supplement of nationalism was always *internationalism*.”<sup>59</sup> Giving the example of Willard she points out that although such women functioned and indeed often appeared on the scene as subjects marked by their nationalities, their understanding of their own achievements was always calibrated along the lines of international influence. While such a point of view did nothing to dispel the relation between women’s status and the place of the nation in the civilizational hierarchy, it nonetheless managed to create a space to discuss women’s questions on an international stage.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, as I have already mentioned above, such internationalism put Chinese, Japanese, Indian and Anglo-American

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<sup>58</sup> As Tyrell and others have pointed out such internationalism necessarily changed in character when women received franchise. Katherine Anthony’s citation given above attests to this.

<sup>59</sup> Barlow, *Chinese Feminism*, 68.

<sup>60</sup> See Margaret H. McFadden’s *Golden Cables of Sympathy: The Transatlantic Sources of Nineteenth-Century Feminism* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1999), 39-40. Although McFadden’s analysis is entirely restricted to the networks established between American women and their European counterparts, it is instructive on the matter of how these women’s exchanges and particularly their travels back and forth helped internationalize the “woman’s question.” This internationalization had as much to do with travelling between the continents becoming faster and cheaper as well as the increasing acceptability of women travelling alone, that is in an “unprotected manner.” Moreover, as McFadden also points out, the development of the print culture gave an immense boost to the circulation of travel writing by women, as did the growth of postal networks which made the travel of letters not only faster but also cheaper.

women on the same scale, suggesting that a betterment in status though unattained in the present was nevertheless attainable in the future. Barlow's final point then is that no matter which Chinese women we may think of (distinguished as they might be from each other by markers of class, caste or kinship), "women in Chinese feminism" were 'always already...internationalized subject[s].' The goal of such feminist initiative is that it seeks to make women into *national* subjects through a struggle for the rights to citizenship; yet the success of this struggle is measured not only at the national but also the international level.<sup>61</sup>

Following Kumari Jayawardena's analysis of anti-colonial, nationalist and feminist traditions amongst Asian women,<sup>62</sup> Barlow usefully suggests that "national salvation" remained a preoccupation for intellectuals engaged in the women's question not just in twentieth century China but also elsewhere. The truth is that women's access to such internationalism remained asymmetric, linked as it was to the regionally specific itinerary of nationalism. Feminism is hardly imaginable as a basis of mass mobilization in late nineteenth century India or Japan. Instead what we have at this time is the sheer incipience of feminist positions that are as yet tentative, in fraught negotiation with the nationalist male intelligentsia. One need hardly add that the historical conditions of colonial India and Meiji Japan gave rise to different understandings of their relations with the Western world. By this token, Tsuda and Ramabai were equally invested in the idea of the international but sought very different things out of this investment. This does not disprove Barlow's point about the internationalism of "Chinese women"; in fact as I suggest above this also holds true of Indian and Japanese women in their respective feminist locations. It is worth

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<sup>61</sup> Barlow, *Chinese Feminism*, 71.

<sup>62</sup> Kumari Jayawardena, *Feminism and nationalism in the Third World* (London : Zed Books, 1987)

stressing nonetheless that the connection between the national and the international is not singular; internationalism as much as nationalism is not the same everywhere.

### **Narratives of the “Asian” woman by Western travelers**

With a growing body of Anglo-American women traveling eastwards in the quest for saving their “heathen” sisters, there was a tremendous surge over the course of the nineteenth century in the number of narratives generated in Britain and the United States documenting Western women’s experiences in foreign lands.<sup>63</sup> These stories were often published in journals and institutional magazines such the *Heathen Woman’s Friend* (*Woman’s Missionary Friend* after 1886), *Union Signal* (a WWCTU magazine), *The Englishwoman’s Review*, *Womanhood* and London Missionary Society’s *Quarterly News of the Women’s Work*.<sup>64</sup> Produced with the aim of imparting readers at home with a view of the world, specifically the everyday lives of women elsewhere, these magazines performed the double role of justifying the work of women missionaries in the field while also allowing a textual place/space from where readers could be called upon not only to sympathize with the cause but also to

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<sup>63</sup> The idea of “women’s work for women” was a major force contributing to the upsurge of women’s participation in the missionary movements in nineteenth century America. By 1830’s Marjorie King points out, women represented 49% of all missionaries in America, a figure which by 1890 became 60%. See her essay titled “Exporting Femininity, Not Feminism: Nineteenth Century U.S. Missionary Women’s Efforts to Emancipate Chinese Women,” in *Women’s Work for Women: Missionaries and Social Change in Asia*, ed., Leslie A. Flemming (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), 117. For other scholarship on the theme of missionary work and its scope in Asia and particularly India and Japan, see also Jane Hunter, “The Home and the World: The Missionary Message of U.S. Domesticity” in *Women’s Work for Women: Missionaries and Social Change in Asia*, Leslie A. Flemming (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), 159-68; Susan Thorne, “Missionary-Imperial Feminism” in *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice*, eds., Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1999), 39-65. For book length studies see, Burton, *Burdens of History*; Rui Kohiyama, *Amerika fujin senkyoshi: rainichi no haikai to sono eikyō* (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1992)

<sup>64</sup> The *Heathen Woman’s Friend* will henceforth be cited as *HWF*. For a reading of British feminist periodicals during this period with a particular focus on the *Englishwoman’s Review*, see Antoinette Burton, *Burden of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 97-126. For a reading of the references to Japan in the *Englishwoman’s review* see, Kawamura Sadae, “‘Englishwoman’s Review’ shi ni miru Nihon josei,” *Joseishigaku* 5 (1995): 56-66.

contribute funds for international work.<sup>65</sup> It is difficult to assess the exact scope of their readership and the nature of the influence of these journals; one can however imagine that a monthly magazine such as the *Heathen Woman's Friend* published by the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society (WFMS) of the Methodist Episcopal church must have been read avidly by women contributing to this particular mission. What was constituted as an *authentic* point of view regarding a certain "heathen" land was necessarily circumscribed in two significant ways: information could only be provided of those places where the WFMS had its own base, and where (female) missionaries were actively engaged in working with natives. Secondly, the authenticity of their reportage was always inflected by their Christianizing impulse. Native communities that resisted all manner of goads toward progress or fell afoul of evangelization were roundly condemned or simply ignored. In short, the readers and the writers in this magazine and others of its kind necessarily tied their enthusiasm to the general progress of the missionizing impulse.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> The task of raising funds is particularly important because unlike in the case of temperance women who fell under the control of an organization that was managed entirely by women (the WCTU), women missionaries fell under the control of male missionaries and did not have an access to their own funds. Missionary women's magazines therefore which served to foster intimate relationship between the readers of these magazines and the missionaries abroad who wrote in often used the magazine as a conduit for circulating their need for financial aid. Contributions were of usually of two kinds—women/readers at home sent hand-made goods, letters and prayers; moreover on some occasions they also sent money directly to women in the field (Thorne, "Missionary-Imperial Feminism," 44). An additional aim of such magazines, especially feminist periodicals (i.e. not connected with any kind of missionizing activity) which took great interest in reporting the conditions of women elsewhere, particularly "Asian" women, was to also establish and consolidate ideas of self, of womanliness, and the role of women as feminists and citizens of an imperial state. The periodicals, Burton has argued, can be read as "terrain where feminist footholds were mapped and feminist reform strategized" (Burton, *Burdens of History*, 116). Furthermore and in line with mapping of self-identity, she points out that, "in absence of recognized female constituency, feminist periodicals could stand for English women.... It was a kind of an 'imagined community' that simultaneously institutionalized a collective sovereign self and created an audience before whom that collectivity could represent itself and its 'evolving identities'" (124). See also, Rika Sakuma Sato, "'Kiyoki shijō de gokōsai wo' Meiji makki shōjo zasshi tōshoran ni miru dokusha kyōdōtai no kenkyū [A Study of Correspondence Columns in Japanese Girls' Magazines (1902-1913)]" *Joseigaku* 4 (November 1996): 114:41.

<sup>66</sup> In the case of the *Union Signal* the official magazine of the WWCTU, the limiting factors were of course slightly different. That is to say the representation of women in the far-off lands was driven by the successes or failures relating to temperance work in those places. In Asia, Tyrell has pointed out that temperance workers worked in closed alliance with missionaries; yet since their driving impulse of their

Information was usually disseminated in form of memoirs, correspondence, travelogues or travel notes, and through formal reports of “progress” in missionary activity. The deliberately informal and intimate style of writing served to provide a firsthand account of the personal risks taken by white women traveling to unknown lands. Importantly of course, it also registered with equal facility the condition of women elsewhere, not forgetting to account for the strange, mysterious and seemingly inhuman customs of these lands. As Susan Thorne points out, tracts of missionary writing “abounded with ‘heart-rending details’ of female infanticide, child marriage, forced prostitution, polygamy, widow-burning” in the case of India,<sup>67</sup> foot-binding in China, and rampant prostitution and concubinage in Japan. The enumeration of distant horrors attesting to the very reason why these nations were considered “heathen” in the first place was meant to move the “spirit of the reader.”<sup>68</sup> Interestingly, in the non-missionary magazines (and especially in periodicals such as the *Englishwoman’s Review*, which Antoinette Burton has characterized as ‘feminist’ in content) the reader was often presented with competing points of view of “heathen” women; it was never enough to provide positive or negative evaluations of native life. The contrasting perspectives, Burton argues, were meant to “turn the debate into a choice for the readers between horror and compassion at the ‘sight’ of Indian [or heathen] woman. ...Readers [in this way] were encouraged to struggle within themselves for the

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work was not evangelization, there are instances which show that the temperance workers resisted making quick judgements about the relationship between lack of progress in Asian nations and Christianity. The fact however remains that they did believe in the superiority of Christianity, and hence in their representation of “Asian” women were constrained by similar issues.

<sup>67</sup> Thorne, “Missionary-Imperial Feminism,” 52

<sup>68</sup> See Thorne, citing Jemina Thompson (1841), 52. The “gift” then of missionary benevolence was considered to be the salve to the condition of heathen women.. As I have also argued in the last chapter and as Thorne argues succinctly, “British women’s piety [was]... dependent upon their Hindu sisters *needing* help—which is to say, piety... [was] predicated on the projected absence in the colonized woman and/or her society of some quality, strength or virtue which the missionary project implicitly ascribed to their English benefactress (53). As I will discuss in greater detail below, this construct of course had major repercussions of the way sisterhood was constructed.

‘correct’... attitude toward ‘Oriental womanhood.’”<sup>69</sup> The aesthetic enjoyment whether in horror or fascination with regard to the tableaux of foreign life was overlaid with an interest in a kind of critical and discerning moral engagement, a matter both of rectitude and rectification. Significantly, reportage itself was couched in the language of personal adventure, threat and discovery. In other words, readers were told that what had come to be “known” was necessarily through personal contact between the women travelers and their “native” contacts. “Special friendships” were therefore often alluded to as a source of the missionaries’ information about the true conditions of natives. As Jane Hunter notes, missionaries often claimed that native women felt a special affection for “unmarried missionaries,” and were happy let them into their lives to share their “joys and sorrows.”<sup>70</sup> Needless to say, this special connection became the guarantee of authentic information, which received further validation from the spate of adoptions by missionary women of young native women and children, about whom they wrote back to their readers at home. All this only served to underscore the larger questions at issue in missionary work, such as the significance of the Christian ministry in “heathen” lands and the uncertain native capacity for progress, which is to say the imponderability of their successful Christianization. The point of such ethnography was to inspire young women at home to take up the great task of “saving” their non-Western sisters by following suit; the reading of firsthand reports was their best preparation for work abroad.<sup>71</sup>

As for the system of correspondence, which included “personal” correspondence between two women writers through the pages of the magazine, or

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<sup>69</sup> Burton, *Burdens of History*, 106-07.

<sup>70</sup> Hunter, “Home and the World,” 162.

<sup>71</sup> See *HWF* 19, 2 (August 1887): 35 as one example. An essay titled “Dr. Abel Stevens on our Zenana Work in India,” addresses the progress that can be made in *zenana* work and points out the readers at home that this is a “extraordinary opportunity” for “well-educated women” to “win the chief glory of that moral and social revolution which all observers here see speedily approaching” (35). Also see “To Young Women Thinking of Missionary Work,” *HWF* 21, 5 (November 1889): 122.

between one woman writing from abroad and her many readers at home responding to her, it appears to have served two purposes. First, it registered the vast amount of information about foreign lands collected by missionaries and temperance workers on site; the dissemination of such material through epistolary means captured the immediacy and involvement of actual contact with other cultures.<sup>72</sup> The tantalizing narrative glimpse of a life saved from ruin was especially welcome to this readership. Thus we have details of how a native woman previously “saved” was now furthering Christ’s good work by turning catechist. Occasionally the reader at home also has access to the newly reformed native via a poem or a short piece that she may have written.<sup>73</sup> Such writing—a representation of what the countless millions *could become*—gave audiences in the Anglo-American world a chance to hear the voice of the native herself, incontrovertible proof of her redemption at the hands of the white woman. Furthermore, the attestation of a “life saved” also provided enough justification to ask for money to then help these poor orphans.<sup>74</sup> In this sense, the lives

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<sup>72</sup> There was in fact a special section titled “From Missionary Letters” in the *HWF*. Here we find letters covering a wide range of topics and including of course appeals for monetary help as well as reportage on various kinds of work being done. Note also that while the nature of this correspondence differs substantial in terms of its nature and content from the “private” correspondence that I examine in Chapter 1, both kinds of correspondence still demonstrate a development of a space in which a certain kind of a “friendship” gets articulated.

<sup>73</sup> “Saving” girls deemed as “orphans” was the special prerogative of missionary women, more so even than temperance workers for obvious reasons. Girls were most often being saved from their “cruel” husbands and “wicked” parents. The implicit idea that supported such adoptions according to Thorne was that the sense of “family life in a Christian sense” did not exist among the “heathens” and their only hope was that once removed from their parents missionaries would provide them “proper moral guidance” (55). We thus have in *HWF* for instance, numerous examples of young girls being saved and then “transformed” because of their association with the missionaries. Not surprisingly, since this transformation was brought about most effectively through education, missionaries not only favoured boarding schools but that schools were often called “homes” with clear allusion to the ideals of a Christian home suffused with Victorian ideology. See also next footnote.

<sup>74</sup> See, “What you can do for India,” *HWF* 19, 4 (October 1887): 88-89, by a local worker Mrs. Selina May as an instance, of the right which women missionaries felt to ask for money in order to save “these girls from lives of shame... by way of education and Christianity.” The earlier part of the essay paints the current miserable existence of these girls, blaming for most part their parents and especially their father for being lazy and “licentious,” given to “gambling and debauchery” thereby further endorsing the urgent need to help these girls. See also, “From Two India [*sic*] Girls,” *HWF* 25, 5 (November 1893): 138; “A Japanese Missionary’s Work,” *HWF* 25, 11 (May 1894). For pictorial representations see “A School at Nagasaki” *HWF* 14, 2 (August, 1882); “Four Japanese Women” *HWF* 15, 9 (March

of women who traveled abroad were interwoven not only with those of their female readers at home, but were also very intimately connected with the thick social element (the fascinating ethnographic datum that was the sociality) of the natives they came into contact with. The act of correspondence was central to the production of these connections, and it was this network of contact that lay at the heart of the making of an international sisterhood.

Besides providing a space for the representation of an alien way of life, the letters also registered the personal cost of missionary work, especially loneliness and the longing for home. As Hill has suggested,<sup>75</sup> magazine articles and more specifically correspondence often served as a kind of personal support network for women in the field, often for extended time periods. The point of such correspondence, as Hill notes, was at least in part to sustain the morale of such women by insisting on the importance of their work. Thus, the very act of exchanging letters in and of itself also formed the basis of one kind of sisterhood. For women who had left the familiar arena of the social-familial, such correspondence recreated older structures of social relationships but in a different format. “Letters exchanged,” Hill writes, “were to replicate the confiding and affectionate tones of communiqués between mother and daughter, sisters, female kin, and intimate friends.”<sup>76</sup>

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1884); “Hakodate Girls,” *HWF* 16, 5 (November 1884). In all these a group of “native” girls—reformed and one can assume converted are present with one white woman. The faces are usually nonetheless dark, perhaps as a marker of their racial characteristics. It was highly common to use adjectives such as “little” or “dark-haired” and “black-eyed” to the descriptions of these girls; almost no description of a white woman describes her as “little.” The rendering of pictorial images deserves its own attention that I do not have the space for here.

<sup>75</sup> Hill, *World their household*, 63.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. Also, Thorne notes that the intensity of the women’s work abroad combined with the manner in which this information and their own feeling were conveyed to women at home suggested two things: first, that women had more of an “intimate and ‘living relationship’ with the foreign field than their male counterparts” (“Missionary-Imperial Feminism,” 118), and that second, women were naturally more in tune with their cultural environs which made them at once the authentic informants of the condition of “heathen women” and best suited for the task of their redemption.



This kind of a sisterhood generated and sustained via postal networks worked in at least two complimentary but dissimilar ways. As mentioned above, at one level it grew out of correspondence between missionary or temperance women working abroad and their female readers at home. This sisterhood was based necessarily on the idea of “sameness”—the two groups of women were both Christian, racially “white,” and equally invested in bringing the light of Christianity to non-Christian lands.<sup>77</sup> Women in the field saw themselves as representatives of Victorian womanhood, bearers of Christian morality, and as purveyors of Western values; but in flouting the norms of Victorian domesticity by turning to a difficult life abroad they were also in some sense counterexamples to the model woman of the time.<sup>78</sup>

The other kind of sister was the native woman, the object of reform and of missionary compassion. Marjorie King is correct to point out that this particular notion of sisterhood rested not on the idea of sameness but on the notion of difference.<sup>79</sup> This woman was first a native (recipient of the gift of missionary charity) and only secondarily a sister.<sup>80</sup> And in the same vein, periodicals of the non-missionary variety

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<sup>77</sup> Missionaries in particular and Western women in general including temperance workers were the bearers of the “white woman’s burden.” See Kumari Jayawardena, *The White Woman’s Other Burden: Western Women and South Asia During British Rule* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>78</sup> Interestingly enough, as Thorne suggests, while British feminists tried to reach across racial divide in their missionary-feminist endeavours to “save” and also to educate “heathen” women to model their lives after their own ideologies, these women, mostly middle-class were less unwilling to negotiate gender relations across class divide. Hence, Thorne points out that, while in the missionary auxiliaries within Britain, “cross-class contacts did occur, working class women were perpetually reminded of their subordinate status” (“Missionary-Imperial Feminism,” 59). The profession of “sisterhood” was thus primarily a middle-class affair, and the “relations of subordination and domination” that these women espoused did affect gender relations across class and racial divide, a fact that, as she rightly points out, haunts even present-day Western feminism. In this context it is also worth noting that even “Asian” women such as Tsuda and Ramabai reproduced this bias to a certain extent. Both women in different ways suggested that reform needed to begin with women of the upper class and caste as their lives were (amongst all different *kinds* of women), the most cloistered and also most subject to rigid caste/class rules. While this is indeed true, their own orientation further endorses the fact that late nineteenth century “international sisterhood” was a space inhabited by women who were relatively well-off, and better educated than most of their fellow country-women.

<sup>79</sup> King, “Exporting Femininity,” 120.

<sup>80</sup> See Chapter Three and Thorne who argues this in the context of the racial underpinnings of British missionary-imperial feminism (“Missionary-Imperial Feminism,” 52-53). Drawing connections between British (imperial) feminism and global sisterhood Thorne’s point is also that the “missionary

such as the *Englishwoman's Review*, which on their part brought the “Indian woman ‘home’ to British feminist audiences...and made colonial women seem like ‘sisters under the skin’” never flinched in using the paternal rhetoric of the “imperial family” to characterize Indian women as daughters of their British mothers.<sup>81</sup> Thus, despite the concept of sisterhood, which seemingly encompassed all women in an international sphere, thereby presuming equality, the promise of this sisterhood was at best an allusion. As King writes in the case of Chinese women and their encounter with American missionaries, “images of non-Christian women... were contrasted with the idealized, emancipated, even elevated status of Christian women” suggesting thereby that “American women [in effect] could not really identify with such miserable creatures.”<sup>82</sup> The native woman became, via this logic, the “antithetical other” an example of what a “woman” ought not to be. In short, the other woman was from the very first encounter a thoroughly defamiliarized entity; by no means can she be understood as a mirror-image of the Christian woman from the metropolis. Having said this, it is also true that such a differential logic co-existed in a dialectical tension with an equally powerful belief in the universality the female condition. That the racially white, Christian woman—particularly the missionary or temperance worker—was the central link and the principle mediator in the vast and growing expanse of global sisterhood is well attested by the fact that story after story records *her* success in the arduous rectification of social habit abroad: here the domain of the social is nothing if not the threshold for a nation’s access to civilization. Moreover, these

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connection between British feminists and the empire helped to establish the imperial coordinates of Western feminisms conception of global sisterhood” (52). The use of the term “native” is also interesting because it is a term that is sutured at both ends. On the one hand, the “native” is a necessary, if almost a valorised category for without it the work of the missionary cannot take place. The native in a sense then justifies the missionary position. On the other hand, the “native” himself /herself cannot occupy the subject position; in the writings of the missionaries, her (the native’s) presence is simultaneously brought to life and also continuously effaced. Both Tsuda and Ramabai as “natives” in the United States play on the ambiguity of this positioning. I will discuss this shortly.

<sup>81</sup> Burton, *Burdens of History*, 121.

<sup>82</sup> King, “Exporting Femininity,” 120.

narratives also endorse the fact that women and not men were in fact better suited to this role, validating thereby their nondomestic energies expended abroad.<sup>83</sup> It is then within this tension of global and local, native and white, that we need to further examine Ramabai's and Tsuda's attempts to situate the "high-caste Hindu woman" and "Japanese girls and women." Before I move on to the discussion of these two texts, let us take a last look at the emergence of the figure of the 'Asian' woman in writings produced at some remove from missionary correspondence.

A principal theme running through the narratives of redemption of the "lost souls," which is to say native women, is one of the "transformative" powers of Christianity.<sup>84</sup> Transformation as code for redemption is closely linked to the idea of travel, in concrete terms with the notion of movement. Redemption literally took place in tandem with the Western woman's access to "native" women's quarters.

Addressing the question of zenana work as a necessity for the "enlightenment of India's *secluded* millions,"<sup>85</sup> an article by a certain Mrs. Bradley tells a tale of "travel"

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<sup>83</sup> See for instance, "Woman's Work in India," in *HWF* 14, 3 (September 1882): 57-58 for another exegesis on the special work of missionary women among the natives, as being different from the work of male missionaries. "The sphere of [female] workers is wider than the mere school room. They penetrate the homes of people in a way which male missionaries cannot" (57). This is also precisely the point of a short piece titled "Christian Women in India" *HWF* 24, 10 (April 1893): 241-42. It discusses the fundamentally different role played by men and women when they are posted abroad and suggests that even though Christian women form "numerically [the] smallest class of women in India" the work that they do which is that of bringing the "religion of freedom" to the heathens makes them worth even far more than the work of men in the Empire. And while they strive to make this as a Christian land, at present, they (i.e. Christian women) "stand as the representatives of all the women of India as they will be when they are free." This final sentence which at once marks the sense of distance and the sense of affiliations between the white woman and her heathen charge is significant for it at once alludes to the idea of sisterhood while also implying that such a sisterhood is never equal.

<sup>84</sup> Letters or stories in which native women "confessed" to this transformation became particularly powerful narratives. For a particularly poignant example see, Mrs. J. T. Gracey, "The Story of Rathinam, the Persecuted Brahmin Lady," *HWF* 15, 3 (September 1883): 53-54.

<sup>85</sup> Mrs. M.A. Bradley, "Female Education in India," *HWF* 21, 1 (July 1889): 8-10. "Zenana work" in the words of the same author is described as "an organized system by which educated ladies visit the women and girls who are *confined* in palaces and homes of all the cities of India to carry to these *secluded* ones education, light and love" (9, my emphasis). A substantial amount of textual space in *HWF* is also devoted to long descriptions of travel undertaken by missionary woman. See for instance, Miss Fisher, "Itinerating on Kucheng District," *HWF* 21, 3 (September 1889): 58-60; Miss Holbrook, "On the Way Home from Osaka," *HWF* 14, 4 (October 1883): 81-82. Often times, descriptions of natural beauty, cultural sites provided the means to describe people.

that a Western woman needed to undertake in order to bring about a transformation in the lives of natives:

In the first place she who desires to become the possessor of this new accomplishment [which is to say the agent of conversion] must leave her home...cross wide seas and travel over continents. ... She must devote days and months to the study of a strange and difficult language. She must wend her way through narrow streets, up winding stairways, into filthy courtyards, which open into darkened and poorly ventilated rooms... She must share the narrow verandah with a buffalo, the cow.... She must educate herself to endure the sickening odor of the *hookah*,... and the smoky, stifled atmosphere caused by the cooking....<sup>86</sup>

Here transformation is first effected by the white woman's transformation of herself through the study of a "strange and a difficult" language, and also by physically moving away from the "freedoms" of the Western world to the "secluded" homes of the natives.<sup>87</sup> The distance to be traveled is seemingly substantial not only in physical but also symbolic terms. Without this self-transformation it is clear that the redemption of the other, i.e. the "heathen" woman will not be possible. The "seclusion" of the space that the white woman enters is marked by narrow-ness, filth, darkness, and smoke, all which can only lead to a "stifling" not only of the senses but also of the soul. The "work" then is to eradicate this darkness, a sign of the unfree mind of the native woman, and bring her to light, that is to say freedom.<sup>88</sup> This explains the pictorial depictions in magazines of the new schools that missionaries had built, thereby affirming the link between an open space and an open mind.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> *HWF* 21, 1:9.

<sup>87</sup> What is also driven home is the fact that without travel the true conditions cannot be understood. In an article titled, "More about the Calcutta Girls' Boarding School," *HWF* 22, 5 (November 1890), Mrs. E.L. Knowles writes that although she has tried to describe the work often, people at home do not understand its importance. To do so, they "must follow me into the lanes and bazaars of the big city..." insisting thereby the centrality of travel as well as its justification in missionary work.

<sup>88</sup> As I pointed out however in the first part of this chapter, missionary discourse focuses primarily on the theme of seclusion, rather on the details of concealment.

<sup>89</sup> Typically such buildings are large with wide open spaces around them. (In contrast to this is the crowded bazaar deemed as "Oriental.") See for example an illustration of "Tokio [*sic*] Home," *HWF* 13,

Moreover, such a link also drew upon an earlier connection made between Christianity and freedom, and the constitution of individuated consciousness in this process.

Secondly, as the visual metaphors symbolizing darkness, seclusion and filth serve metonymically to represent the real native “woman,” what remains absent, perhaps not surprisingly, is a depiction of the native woman herself. A portrayal of her conditions, in other words, suffices to somehow convey the utterly deplorable status of the woman herself. (One should note here in passing the relative absence of images of women prior to reform; etchings of “native women” post-transformation abound.) Indeed, what is brought to the attention of the reader is the picture of *redeemed* native women who as “educated, refined wives and mothers, substitute knowledge for superstition, and womanly dignity and equality for abject slavery and forced subjection,” becoming a powerful symbol of the nation’s civilized future.”<sup>90</sup> Thus the author concludes with the reassuring prospect that all over the country from the distant Himalayas to Tamil Nadu in the south previously “ignorant” girls were fast becoming educated, “engaged in some good work among their own people,” and missionary reports were full of “enthusiasm and encouragement.”<sup>91</sup> The substance of the “oriental” woman is nothing if not rectifiable as culture or custom; it is only the flip side of being “civilized,” and it is through the transformative process that this distance between the two narrows down.

Colonial India and China were not the only sources of such compelling narratives of transformation. Japan was seen to have “awakened [to the] love of progress in the path of Christian civilization,” making it the focus of a great deal of triumphalism among the Christian workers residing there; but missionaries were quick to point out that paganism continued to conspire in keeping Japanese women in the

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4 (October 1881): 77-78. See also Maina Chawla Singh, *Gender, religion and “heathen lands”*: *American missionary women in South Asia (1860s – 1940s)* (New York: Garland Publishers, 2000)

<sup>90</sup> *HWF* 21, 1 (July 1889): 10.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

“darkside.”<sup>92</sup> Stories of conversion provided by Miss Josephine Carr, who writes during her trip to Aoyama about the pleasures of seeing “ignorant, heathen girls [being] transformed into well-educated Christian women,” or the anecdote from Miss Holbrook recounting how “the Spirit [came in] as sweet breezes from above, with joy, peace, and healing in their wings,” to embrace a group of newly baptized Japanese girls<sup>93</sup>--all suggest that Japan was at once a sign of great success and of the work that remained.<sup>94</sup> The problem of native concubinage was considered a particularly thorny one; Buddhism and Confucianism were understood to be chiefly responsible for this particular breach of morality. Against this backdrop, it appeared that Christianity alone could “save Japanese women”; moreover, to counter the problem of concubines, a “Christian marriage [would have to] form the basis of a new household in Japan.”<sup>95</sup>

These narratives of transformation sustained by notions of Christian superiority and of Christianity’s historical relation to progress, give the magazine’s readers at the very least a substantial amount of information about the places and people with whom the missionaries interacted. That this authentication was achieved to a great extent through a “textualization” cannot be disregarded. This “textualization of Indian woman” Burton writes, implied that “Indian women were not considered suitable materials in and of themselves: they became proper texts, catechisms even... as they were explained, modified and put to feminist use.”<sup>96</sup> Such stereotyping ensured two things: first, the written text (be it through missionary journals or feminist periodicals) became as Burton points out the “mediator and the *translator* of certain versions of

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<sup>92</sup> See Mrs. Flora Best Harris, “Two Daughters of Japan: Part I,” *HWF* 16, 11 (May 1885): 254-56.

<sup>93</sup> *HWF* 14, 7 (January 1883): 158; Mrs. Caroline Van Petten’s essay “The Yokohama Training School” *HWF* 22, 4 (October 1890): 76-77.

<sup>94</sup> In the same essay mentioned above, *HWF* 16, 11 (May 1885), Harris is also full of praise for Japan’s “chivalrous spirit, her newly awakened love for progress in the path of Christian civilization, and... the longing of her people for a purer faith.” But first looks are “deceptive,” she points out, “Buddhism and other pagan religions permit no happy homes,” 255.

<sup>95</sup> *HWF* 8, 11 (May 1877): 247.

<sup>96</sup> Burton, *Burdens of History*, 101-02. For Mani’s argument see, “Contentious Traditions,” 88-126.

Indian women” to an audience in Anglo-American world.<sup>97</sup> And secondly, the anonymity imposed on the Indian (or Japanese) women by the ceaseless circulation of stories of their derogatory status enabled a wholesale assimilation of all Indian (or Japanese) women into an undifferentiated otherness, which led in turn to a kind of Manichean division of the historical world into white (Christian) and the native (heathen). Burton correctly ascribes this Manicheanism to the manner in the Indian woman’s life was mediated to a Western audience—she was the subject not of a representation but of a translation, moving her subjectivity from the promise of verisimilitude (representation invokes a real that exists elsewhere) to the ever shifting horizon of translation-transformation (within the terms of a transformative alienation from its origin). The idea of transformation was, as we have seen earlier, central in missionary narratives of the “heathen” woman. Textualization then implies the act of translation and of transformation. And paradoxically while the act of translation brings the “heathen” woman into the discursive realm, it also transforms the woman into a *mere* discursive strategy whereby she can only serve as the ground for consolidating the self-identity of the Western woman and imperial interests. In other words, in the realm of the textual the native woman *qua* subject no longer figures here. It is worth recalling that Tsuda-Bacon and Ramabai’s texts also in effect serve to textualize the subject of their narrative, which is the Japanese or the Hindu woman. But there is one fundamental difference between these narratives and those of the missionaries. To take one instance, although the Hindu woman is textualised and thus clearly marked out as the object of compassion, Ramabai’s goal in the text is in fact to transform this woman from an unknowable to a known being. Her text thus installs the woman *as subject* even as it textualises that subject. By the same token, Bacon’s narrative speaks of women’s need to aspire to a kind of individualism and demands on their part a

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<sup>97</sup> Burton, *Burdens of History*, 101. My emphasis.

transformative act but one in which women are understood as subjects of their own transformation.

What then happens when women such as Tsuda or Ramabai arrive on a representational scene overlaid by narratives of the heathen women? I examine later how Ramabai and Bacon/ Tsuda put these existing narratives to use in their texts. Suffice here to say that when Ramabai and Tsuda arrived in the United States they were preceded by the dissemination of narrative s on the pitiable Indian woman and the deplorable conditions of her existence, as well stories that drove home the need in Japan to create a Christian home whereby the Japanese woman could be “saved” from the gross inequality she had suffered at the hands of native (non-Christian) religious practice. If we think of Tsuda and Ramabai as native informants negotiating the shuttle that continues to this day between the subaltern at home and the metropolitan migrant abroad, one might say that they were compelled to operate within a native informancy sutured at both ends.

Moreover, one of the most striking aspects about a journal such as the *Heathen Woman's Friend* is that textual space was allocated with some distributive justice to natives of various countries (i.e. wherever the Episcopal Methodist Church had a mission). Very often then on a single page we have stories about women in Japan, China, Korea and India interwoven with each other to form a single yet complex narrative of the “Asian woman.” Such a format reinforced the possibility of comparison—the reader at home could quite easily move back and forth between very different kinds of stories, and yet she could encounter all of them in the *same* space and time. Coupled with this is also a more direct kind of comparison—in response to a question, “what is the position of woman in Japan?” a study guide in one issue of the journal stated quite clearly that it is “[b]etter than in most other Asiatic countries. She is not secluded, as in India or China.” It pointed out, however, that “the same



sentiment concerning woman's inferiority prevails in Japan as in all Eastern countries."<sup>98</sup> In a similar vein, the author of another essay titled "Two Daughters of Japan," points out that although "the life of the mass of Japanese women" is above that of "Asiatic womanhood," one cannot forget "the shadows that still darken thousands of homes." Shortly thereafter follows a sketch of the life of a Japanese woman; the opening line is: "her childhood, unlike that of her Hindoo [*sic*] sister, is a comparatively happy one."<sup>99</sup> One can assume then in this case that the situation of the Hindu sister is already a known one, made familiar via similar narratives circulating in that textual space. What I wish to suggest here is that the comparative framework juxtaposes various types of women with each other, constructing these types even *as* it deploys them within a framework of "Asia." The name "Asia" is thus particularized—it comes to refer to the singular, a representation that is then easily juxtaposed with the figure of the universal that is Europe.<sup>100</sup> Similarly within the universal category of women, there is also the particular "Asian woman" and this woman is necessarily constructed via the deployment of such multiple and simultaneous comparisons, under the very sign of "Asia." The "Asian woman" thus is at once particular, different from the West, and yet generalizable as homogeneous.

It is worth remembering that this "Asia" is rendered authentic through travel and ethnography; it is sustained through a kind of sanctioned comparatism;<sup>101</sup> its

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<sup>98</sup> "Uniform Study for October," in *HWF: Supplement* 9 22, 3 (September 1890)

<sup>99</sup> Harris, "Two Daughters" *HWF* 16, 11 (May 1885): 255.

<sup>100</sup> See also Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity*, 154-58.

<sup>101</sup> That a comparatist framework is enabled does not necessarily mean that anything and everything can be compared. It is along the vanishing line running between different points in Asia, connecting the familiar with the unfamiliar; that what can be compared and cannot be is determined. That is to say, as the various identities of Koreans, Japanese etc. get retroactively constructed, what is also laid out as a part of the comparatist project is what identities can be conceived of as "thinkable opposites" and hence comparable (such as West/ non-West, Japan/Asia, Japan/China) as well as what are "unthinkable opposites" (such as India/Japan). As we will discuss below, in the case of the latter a practical relation is thought of as impossible; there can be then no historical relation between the two entities based in the present moment. A relation then that does get conceived of is one wherein the two entities can simply be thought of as possessing a series of ahistorical immutable properties. See Sakai's discussion of Watsuji Tetsurō's *Fūdo* [*Climate and Culture*] in *Translation and Subjectivity*, 129-31.

particularity as Asia is marked as eternally the same but also eternally different from itself. For Europe would seem to be the only subject capable of self-representation. Europe serves as the transcendental guarantee of representation itself, that which validates and endorses all representation. And yet, even as Asia is particularized, it is not as though its heterogeneity disappears: it is possible to understand its heterogeneity as one that is encrypted and remains in place inside its apparent homogeneity.

### **The naming of Asia**

Naoki Sakai's essay "You Asians" addresses precisely this binary conceptualization of Europe and its other, which is Asia.<sup>102</sup> Sakai argues that Asia is defined in its very exteriority to Europe as Europe's Other. Conversely, Asia can only ever be understood as that to which the modern arrives from elsewhere (via the civilizing mission of the West); it can never be the seedbed of the modern. Modernity is then understood to have emanated from the West. Consequently "the putative unity of the West, [and its] dominant and universalistic position is sustained by the insistence on the equally putative unity of Asia, the subordinate and particularistic position."<sup>103</sup> Sakai here is concerned with asking if the ontological status of Asia can ever be conceived of as underived from the self-representation of Europe.

Sakai's contention is that for Asians to refer to themselves as "we Asians" is problematic. He argues that until the late nineteenth century Asia and Asians were construed as anthropological objects of study. One should not forget that "the name Asia originated outside Asia. ... It is a term in the service of constitution of Europe's self-representation as well as its distinction."<sup>104</sup> Such an Asia "could never be

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<sup>102</sup> Naoki Sakai, "'You Asians': On the Historical Role of the West and Asia Binary," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 99, 4 (Fall 2000): 789-817.

<sup>103</sup> Sakai, "You Asians," 801.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 791.

conscious of itself before being invaded by the West.”<sup>105</sup> One cannot, under such circumstances, think of the “historical colonization of Asia by the West [as] something accidental to the essence of Asia, [but as] essential to the possibility called Asia.”<sup>106</sup> This point is particularly significant when we consider the ways in which the narrative of the “Asian woman” is constructed via the missionary tracts enabling the production of “Asia” (and by the same token the “Asian woman” as an anthropological subject, the object of Europe’s modernizing impulse and its benevolent gaze). Whereas Asia exists for Sakai as a representation for Europe’s narcissistic self-representation, in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s reading (“Our Asias”) Asia exists as an absent (mythical) but essential entity.<sup>107</sup> Where then is the woman located in these two readings of Asia? Is she located in the site of an Asia whose representational status is guaranteed by the self-identity of the West (in Sakai’s formulation) or in the place of the mythical but essential Asia (in Spivak’s formulation that I explicate below)? I suggest that the figure of the native woman operates comes to be determined by both instantiations of Asia. She enables Europe to imagine itself as the subject of benevolence and philanthropism with regard to her; but she also speaks from multiple positions which in the end resist any simple homogenization of Asia, even as they cohere around a desire for Asian origin. She is a figment of Europe’s imaginary adequation of itself, but she is also the place of a heterogeneous desiring of Asianness.

To return to Sakai’s argument however, it is clear that if Asia is to be thought of as Europe’s Other it is something then that the modern comes to, rather than that which emanates from Asia itself. But instead of viewing modernity as emanating from a single origin, Sakai then proceeds to argue that the time of modernity is never singular, and that modernity is inconceivable unless we think of it in terms of a

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 792.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 791.

<sup>107</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Our Asias,” Unpublished MS.

multiplicity of histories. While scholars such as Timothy Mitchell too have suggested that the time of the modern must be thought in terms of the problem of the denial of coevalness to the non-West, Sakai's particular emphasis is on thinking modernity as an instance of contact between regions and peoples regardless of geographic and cultural distance; the pivot for this contact is the act of translation.<sup>108</sup> The central feature in his argument hence is that modernity "cannot be considered unless in reference to translation."<sup>109</sup> Translation is not simply to be thought of as the means to communication, but is to be imagined as a *space* which makes possible conversation between disparate groups of people; such a conversation takes place as a way of discussing and disputing the "appropriateness and validity" of the translation itself.<sup>110</sup> The point here then is to rethink modernity in terms of a constitutive multiplicity of modes imagined and experienced through *contact*—contact understood not as a unidirectional process, but as an experience that transforms both parties in relation to each other.<sup>111</sup> To think of modernity in this way is to recognize its heteronymous nature, for modernity is for Sakai never in stasis; it is instead a kind of violent transformative dynamic that arises from social encounters among heterogeneous people."<sup>112</sup>

Sakai's conceptualization of the experience of modernity as multiple and multi-directional, a figure of translation and transaction, works against eighteenth and nineteenth century notions of the West's civilizing mission which could not conceive

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<sup>108</sup> See Timothy Mitchell, "The Stage of Modernity," in *Questions of Modernity*, ed., Timothy Mitchell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000) 1-34.

<sup>109</sup> Sakai, "You Asians," 797.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 798.

<sup>111</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992). In her discussion of European narratives of travel to non-European parts of the world Pratt uses the term "contact zone" to emphasize the "interactive, improvisational dimensions of colonial encounters." "Contact zone" in her argument is synonymous with the "colonial frontier" (6-7). Using Pratt's notion here, I am thinking of "contact" that happens between Western and non-Western women in the space of the metropolis.

<sup>112</sup> Sakai, "You Asians," 799.

of Asia except as a colonial entity. To return then to the very first question that Sakai raises about the exteriority of Asia to Europe, it is clear that just as there is no “externality between an imperial nationalism and a nationalism,” Asia and Europe also exist only within a state of co-possibility, which is to say that they are imbricated in each other.<sup>113</sup> To refer to ourselves as “we Asians” then is to play into the hands of the binarism that Europe generates for its own self-representational ends. In effort to “emphasize the *fluidity* of the very distinction between the West and Asia rather than its persistence” Sakai suggests that we deploy the pronoun “you” in place of the “we.” The pronoun “you,” unlike “we,” is nominalistic; it helps break through the “putative exclusiveness of our cultural, civilizational, and racial identity,” since it calls upon the other—one’s addressee—to transact with this Asianness and Europeanness in an open and provisional way. As Sakai suggests, “*Asians* must be a vocative for invitation,” an invitation precisely to engage in the creative act of translation between the singular and the generalizable, moving back and forth but in a manner that opens up the circle of the “I” and the “we.”<sup>114</sup>

The key terms for us in Sakai’s analysis are “translation” and “invitation” wherein translation is not a representational but a creative process. He suggests that we reimagine the term “Asian” as referring not to cultural and geographic exclusivity but to a code for its persistent critique. He does not ask that we disregard the word “Asian” altogether: his point is that we redeploy it to address the workings of the very exclusivity through which Europe speaks of its own putative unity. To be sure, in the missionary narratives examined above the term “barbaric” becomes synonymous with being “Asian,” and Asia is meant to imply what Europe is not but what Asia should nonetheless aspire to be. And yet, having attained “civilization” it is almost as though

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<sup>113</sup> This is also the reason why I have argued elsewhere that Ramabai’s and Tsuda’s identities as “Indian” and “Japanese” are constructed not “at home” but rather on the international scene.

<sup>114</sup> Sakai, “You Asians,” 812.

an Asian modernity can only ever be a derivative of Europe's own modular path to the modern. The point is that our self-address as "we Asians" is a sign that we have internalized the politics of cultural exclusion. By this token, and crucially for our purpose, a "contact zone" must be understood as a space where missionaries themselves cannot remain unaffected, simply affirming their own humanism and benevolence in culturally neutral terrain. Sakai insists that we rethink this space in terms of processes of "translation," whereby cultural difference is not only in fluid state, but where its establishment and reinstatement is constantly questioned.

It is possible to argue along these lines that Tsuda and Ramabai's interpersonal encounters in the Western enable them to, as it were, *return* the gaze of the Asian woman, directing it back to the West but not necessarily in a way that is entirely cognizable by the West. To be sure, the American fascination with Tsuda and Ramabai is premised on the desire to confirm and sustain an American notion of the universal benevolent subject that comes to the aid of Asian women. But what Ramabai and Tsuda proceed to do is to understand not just the colony but the metropolis itself as a zone of "contact"—they seem willing to work with those preconceived Western notions of "Asian" womanhood, if only to elicit from such self-aggrandizing benevolence the crucial financial and moral backing they need to carry their own often beleaguered agendas through. In this sense, it is not Ramabai and Tsuda's presence in the Western world that makes them seem modern and Western; it is in fact their ability to *re-present* themselves in this zone of potentially vertiginous contact but always *in proxy for* (and by the same token at some physical and moral distance from) their own native constituencies. Portraying themselves as Asians of a specific kind but speaking in proxy for Asians out there—these twin representational moves implicit in the two women's metropolitan activism are a sure sign that "Asian" womanhood (as missionary tracts seem to suggest) cannot be constructed in the singular as one. One

should add that placed next to a Western universalism that authorizes itself to name the Asian, their sense of historical mission (their historicity) remains fragile, particularistic, and always questionable if generalized. That is to say, the proper noun “Asia” and the adjective Asian itself necessarily remain within the realm of the particular and the specific. The seemingly repetitive citations of these terms ensure however that the myth of Asia remains a tangible, perhaps even fungible reality in whose sustenance *and* subversion Tsuda and Ramabai play a role. Asia is indeed an ‘invitation’ to these women to work with an Asianness that can only be inhabited uneasily, under the sign of the uncanny.

The point is that this uneasy inhabitation can only ever derive its resources from the field of representation itself, a field that as Sakai’s work reminds us, remains within the order of the Western power to name. In other words, we must inhabit that field and at the same time perform a critique (initiate new habits) from within that field. To use a phrase from Spivak’s meditation on “Our Asias,” we must absolutely (the imperative calls upon us without absolution to) “iterate this citation.” In other words, we “cannot not” rehearse our own implication in the field of representation itself. The proliferation of difference that such secondary citation can potentially unleash makes it possible for us to imagine, to embrace actively, perhaps even to hope for a singular, specific, irreducible Asia, one that would be the fictive (possibly liberating and emancipatory) origin of our own inaugural “self-representation.”

Spivak’s essay itself begins by taking into account the construction of Asia within the colonial encounter. The European reference to Asia is tied to “European continental self-reference” since it arose with the territorial expansion that itself began in the fifteenth century. Nor can “anti-colonial culturalism” necessarily provide the cultural cement to think of Asia as one unified category.<sup>115</sup> To think of Europe and

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<sup>115</sup> Spivak, “Our Asias,” 2.

Asia in bilateral terms is to fall back into a sanctioned Eurocentrism. Asia as a continent, she writes, “is plural;” Europe only “named it progressively...[and hence] the claim to the name is unevenly divided.” One cannot gloss over the historicity of the power to name “Asia”; moreover, given the continent’s plurality, one cannot reduce the name to our own regional identity.<sup>116</sup> Spivak’s reference to the word “Asia” alludes to two things: first, it underscores the sheer material spatiality or locatedness of the imagined territory “Asia”; and secondly it also refers to the term’s use as a “place-holder in the iteration of the citation.”<sup>117</sup> Elsewhere in the essay she writes that the only way to speak of the plurality of “Asia” is to resist the “desire for an origin in a name.” She proposes therefore to “deal with ‘Asia’ as “an instrument of altered citation: an iteration.” For the very “possibility of the desire for a singular origin [lies] in its iterability.”<sup>118</sup> The point is that though “Asia” exists heterogeneously to itself only in the plural, it is nonetheless cathected by us with a desire for a unified “Asia”—one cannot but invoke in the present that which no longer exists in the present but is already past, for “Asia” is also the place of our belief (hope, desire) that iteration can reproduce that singular origin.

While Spivak in her essay is no doubt concerned with the present-day place of “Asia” in a hyphenated Asian-American identity (as well as the role of pedagogy in the production of Asia as a plural term), I believe her insights also shed light on the emergence of “Asia” as a continent in the late nineteenth century. As we have seen, the multiple repetitions of the terms “Asia,” “Asiatic,” and “Asian” help construct Asia as a whole. As crucial as Sakai’s essay is for rethinking the binarism implicit in the usage of the term Asia and for re-presenting “Asia,” it is usefully supplemented by Spivak’s emphasis on the inherent plurality of this word, and her insistence that its

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 5.



iteration alerts us at once of Asia's plurality *and* of its singularity. One cannot forget, indeed one is not allowed to forget that Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Indian understood as nationalities denote national identity: Japanese women are not the same as Indian; and yet, their plurality in the end gives way to the gaze that marks "Asia" as singularly one.<sup>119</sup> Therein lies the paradox that it is precisely the citing of Indian, Japanese, Chinese, Korean woman in missionary narratives that enables Tsuda and Ramabai to work with a comparative framework. Conversely, both *The High-caste Hindu woman* and *Japanese girls and women* deploy the comparative frame to locate the Indian or the Japanese woman within a nationalist framework; moreover, comparison also enables the two to be measured against each other on the international scene. One should remember that a comparative framework articulates not only sameness but also difference. In short, to examine the two texts as they reference each other is to rehearse the problematic implicit in the term "Asia."

Rabindranath Tagore, the Indian poet and proponent of pan-Asianism who interacted closely with Japan's Okakura Tenshin, wanted (as Spivak reminds us) to claim the world as his home, and argued in favor of pan-Asianism as a counterpoint to both Western imperialism and nationalist exceptionalism. Similarly, Ramabai's desire to establish solidarity first with the Americans and later more avidly with the Japanese suggests that her notion of "Asia" was at once utopian and practical. Ramabai's itinerary traversed the relatively new routes that had opened up between India and the United States; the path of her wanderings took in as well the wholly unfamiliar, as we

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<sup>119</sup> As "Asia" is in the process of being constructed as a "whole" the simultaneous identification of Chinese, Japanese, Indian etc. as "heathen" also constructs national categories of women. As much as the singular origin of the continent "Asia," is in doubt there is also enough evidence also to question the homogenous identity of the nation-state as well. In other words, as "Asia" is getting constructed then, so are the "Chinese," "Indian" etc. Increasingly then as Sakai states in the case of Watsuji, the practical relation between the observer and his/her relation to the object gets articulated along statist-national lines, with no other relation possible. The anxiety of an open relation in this was in repressed. Interestingly enough, the rich travel details from the missionary tracts at once succeed in "unifying" the nation, as well as presenting the "plurality" of the conditions under which women lives and their status depending on caste, class and geographical location as varying and myriad.

can see from her short forays in parts of South East Asia and Japan on her homeward journey. The detour through the South East could well be read as a gesture toward pan-Asianism. The ambiguous nature of the connections that she might have made in Japan at the time is a sign at once of a kind of voluntary embrace of the idea of Asia, as well as of the fact that such connections were necessarily fragile and eventually untenable.<sup>120</sup> Again, this final imponderability confirms the extent to which “Asia” was at once self-identical and plural if not discontinuous with itself, for inter-regional solidarities such as those between Indian and Japanese women seemed at the time to lie within the realm of the unimaginable. Again, it is worth recalling the necessarily *internationalist* scope of the idea of a uniform “Asia” even as it remained plural and varied, its heterogeneity irreducible. Such is the meaning of Asia that resonates in the practice of Ramabai and Tsuda, and this is why their work anticipates the later internationalism of Tagore and Okakura. In short, their status as native informants was a function of their generalized Asianness, but it could not acquired the mark of authenticity so crucial for their Western patrons without their investment in the ethnographic thickness, the sheer raw data of Asias south and east.

In the analysis of the Tsuda and Ramabai texts below, we will try to see how both women understood their complex relation to national identity but always did so within an internationalist frame of reference. Before turning to a discussion of the textual contents however, let us pause to examine the specific backdrop against which the two texts were produced. The aspects of textual production that ask for our scrutiny here are the images of Tsuda and Ramabai circulating in the American media (complicating thereby the existing notions of an “Asian woman”) and the conditions under which the texts themselves were published, only to be recontextualized within

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<sup>120</sup> I discuss in Chapter Three why such a relation was impossible to conceive.

already extant narrative, typographic or figural frameworks embedded in the social text.

### **The production of the two texts—material conditions**

The profile of the “pitiable” Hindu woman and the “oppressed” Japanese wife was ready at hand to reporters in the Anglo-American world when Tsuda or Ramabai arrived on the scene, so that the press’s fascination with these two women had an element at once of the familiar and the strange.<sup>121</sup> The spate of articles in *The New York Times* attest to the contemporary interest in tracking Ramabai’s movement across the country.<sup>122</sup> Tsuda attracted comparatively little notice, one possible reason for which could be that she was at the time of her second visit to the US in 1889 not as recognizable a public presence as Ramabai. Moreover, her connection to Americans remained within familial networks which only gradually gave way over the next three years to public interventions.<sup>123</sup> But it was really the publication of *Japanese girls and women* which give Tsuda public recognition; the book resulted in Tsuda’s being invited to speak at women’s clubs in areas such as the Northeast before audiences eager to hear about the question of Japanese women and reform.<sup>124</sup> Yet there remains one crucial difference between the extent of name recognition that Tsuda and Ramabai achieved. This is that while *High-caste Hindu woman* was marked as Ramabai’s text

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<sup>121</sup> For instance, the *HWF* was also responsible for popularizing Ramabai’s name in the United States.

<sup>122</sup> See for example news items informing readers about her talks held at various places: “To Help Indian Child Widows,” *New York Times*, May 7, 1889, 8; *New York Times*, April 4, 1887, 2; “To Help Hindu Women,” *New York Times*, February 17, 1888, 5. The following suggests that Ramabai’s name continued to be circulated in the American media even after her departure from the United States. “Good Words for Ramabai,” *New York Times*, March 16, 1893, 8.

<sup>123</sup> For details about her second trip to the United States see Rose, *Tsuda Umeko*, 81-123.

<sup>124</sup> In 1891 Tsuda spoke at Massachusetts Society for the University Education of Women. The title of this talk was “Education and Culture: What Japanese Women Want Now.” In the same year on August 22, she also gave another talk titled “The Education of Japanese Women” which I discuss later in the chapter. See Umeko Tsuda, *Tsuda Umeko monjo* [*The Writings of Tsuda Umeko*], ed. Yoshiko Furuki et al. (Kodaira: Tsuda Juku Daigaku, 1984), 18-32. These are recorded under two headings as it is in two parts.

inasmuch as it was authored by her, *Japanese girls and women* did not bear Tsuda's name. I will return to this point in a moment.

Although their visits to the US did overlap very briefly, the two women never shared the same stage while in America. This explains why their public appearances were never connected in the popular mind. It was their writing that eventually found a common audience, as can be gleaned from what one journalist, Caroline Dall of the *Washington Tribune*, had to say about *Japanese girls and women*. For Dall, here was a book which “stands in relation to Japan just where Ramabai's *High-caste Hindu woman* stands in relation to India.”<sup>125</sup> The basis for such a comparison rested in great part on public knowledge of Tsuda's co-authorship of the Bacon book.<sup>126</sup> The texts were brought together because they both seemed to express a native viewpoint; in missionary journals this meant an insight into the “status of women” in Japan and India. Admiring the “remarkably true picture” that Bacon had presented of “the abject ‘subjection of women’” in Japan, one writer pointed out that the condition of women in that country could not after all be very different from that of women in India and China.<sup>127</sup> A *New York Tribune* review (from which I quote below) concurred more or less with the missionary understanding of “Asia” as well. Critical of the subservient position of Japanese women, the *Tribune* reviewer observed rather grudgingly that they seemed to fare better than most “Asiatics”: “Other Orientals treat their women as animals; seclude them jealously; refuse them any education;.... But the Japanese perhaps at the bottom are less selfish than these other Asiatics [who] seek their own pleasure...by raising their women as high as possible, according to their own

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<sup>125</sup> *Washington Tribune*, March 22, 1891. Caroline Wells Healey Dall was the author of the work on Anandibai Joshi and was also very familiar with Ramabai's work. See *The Life of Dr. Anandabai Joshee, Kinswoman of Pundita Ramabai* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1888)

<sup>126</sup> Ibid. Dall writes: “[Miss Tsuda] has given so much assistance to Miss Bacon in adding to her work that her friend asserts that a large part of whatever value it may possess is due to her.”

<sup>127</sup> *The Literary World*, May 1891.

standards.”<sup>128</sup> The idea of a civilizational divide between Europe and Asia played no small role in this seamless movement between scenes of Asian subjection, despotism and barbarism.<sup>129</sup> The sheer facility with which such comparison was conducted also meant that the deplorable condition of women’s status in India could metonymically stand in for the condition of women in China. The image of a single “Asia” or “Asian womanhood” became the only common link between these disparate tableaux.

A consistent theme in the reviews is the regard for authenticity—a concern that no doubt affected the sales of the texts. Dall thought Bacon’s volume compared well with Marchioness of Dufferin’s text on Indian women.<sup>130</sup> While the Marchioness’ book was full of “pleasant descriptions” it was also “full of hasty observations,” uninformed by a “scientific” temper. Ms Bacon’s book, on the other hand, gave the impression that “she lived on most intimate terms with cultivated women.”<sup>131</sup> What is at stake here is not the identity of the women authors themselves (both non-Asian in this case) but the “intimacy” (which is to say immediacy) or otherwise of relations with their objects of enquiry. Still another reviewer extolled Bacon’s tone of “modest” yet “profound sympathy.”<sup>132</sup>

The authors of texts were themselves at pains to bring out the sense of their genuine proximity to lives lived elsewhere. (Ramabai was of course a native herself; hers was a kind of self-authentication inasmuch as the news she brought from antique lands bore a powerful autobiographical imprint.) As mentioned above, *Japanese Girls*

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<sup>128</sup> “Women in Japan: The Most Charming of Their Sex,” in *New York Tribune*, 1891.

<sup>129</sup> For a more in-depth discussion of the triadic relation between pity, benevolence and help see Chapter 2. See also Thomas Lacquer, “Bodies, Details and Humanitarian Narrative,” in *The New Cultural History: Essays by Aletta Biersack et al.*, ed., Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 176-204. He has argued that a “humanitarian narrative” only works, when one can establish a relationship to the object, or in other words, when “external objects acquire any particular relation to ourselves...so as to engage with our emotions” (179-80). Certainly one can think of newspapers and the print media in general fulfilling this role of establishing these relations.

<sup>130</sup> Marchioness of Dufferin et. al., *Our vice-regal life in India: selections from my journal, 1884-1888* (London: J. Murray, 1889)

<sup>131</sup> See Dall, *Washington Tribune*, March 22, 1891

<sup>132</sup> *Literary World*, May 1891.

earned its claim to authentic reportage in great part due to Tsuda's presence in the text (if only in the Preface). The *relation* between Bacon and Tsuda is crucial; but so is the fact that Tsuda's name remains absent in the main body of the text or in place reserved for the name of the author. Its representational stature rested for its readers on Bacon's having spent a substantial period of time in Japan, her close ties with the Japanese, and on the non-authoritative subjective tone she adopts in the text.<sup>133</sup> In the preface to the revised edition published in 1896, Bacon stated her account is of "Things-as-I-see-It" and *not* "Things-as-they-Are." Such a claim unequivocally asserts the authorial role Bacon had arrogated to herself.<sup>134</sup> How then does one separate the author from the native informant (Tsuda herself) whose hidden presence authorizes the text to speak of women out there? Can we speak here of a dissonance between nativeness and authenticity, the two poles of native informancy, raising the question of who has the right to speak and for whom?<sup>135</sup> In the case of Tsuda, this problem gains in poignancy because Tsuda's identity as a "Japanese" woman was itself constantly under erasure. To inhabit the position of the "native informant" may have been problematic for her,

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<sup>133</sup> This declaration of one's subjectivity, expressed via the statement that hers is a "subjective" narrative is tied up in complex ways with the narrative as being in fact an *objective* narration of the *true* conditions (of Japanese womanhood). In other words, the subject position cleverly marks itself as *subjective* while purporting to argue that what it speaks of are objective facts. The *objectivity* comes from the object itself, who is unable to speak on its own account. This slippage is particularly marked in the case of Bacon's authorship, for as a Western woman writing about Japanese women the text marks a tension between these two categories, and Tsuda is employed precisely to write out this tension as well as to highlight it. This tension is marked out in the space between the author's name "Bacon" and the text's name "*Japanese Girls and Woman*." Clearly what is also partly brought to the reader's attention is that Bacon herself is *not* Japanese, but that her narrative nonetheless is still authentic, because of her relation to the authentic voice that exists as a trace. In the case of Ramabai also, a tension no doubt exists between her authorial position, and the women she writes about. Yet in Ramabai's case unlike in Bacon's, her audience perceives there to be an apparent continuation between these two positions. It is Ramabai (the *high-caste Hindu woman*,) who writes (about) the *high-caste Hindu woman* (as in the title of her text), thereby neatly erasing the distance between the two.

<sup>134</sup> While Bacon's clarification of the book as being her subjective opinion takes away from Tsuda authorial responsibility a significant and matter of practical importance is also that it does away with Tsuda having to face any criticism that might come the way of *Japanese Girls*. As I will discuss below, this fact is central to leaving out Tsuda's name from the book.

<sup>135</sup> This is precisely the problem that continues to haunt the writing of and about women writing from outside the trans-Atlantic nexus. See Chandra Talpade Mohanty et. al. eds., *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).

but it could be a matter of presupposition for her American interlocutors and audience: for them her Japanese-ness seemed out question, self-apparent. The ambiguous, seemingly ghostly presence of Tsuda marks the *Japanese Girls* in certain specific ways and deserves more attention here. Does Tsuda's relation to the text and to Bacon serve merely as a useful historical point of reference in the text requiring only a lengthy footnote, or is her presence more insistent and perhaps even interruptive of the narrative, questioning the very nature of authorship? Delving into the details of the interaction between Tsuda and Bacon around the time of the text's publication sheds some light on the complex conditions under which bonds of sisterhood were forged across national boundaries, helping uncover the fraught nature of the power dynamic that existed in relations between Western and non-Western women. Let us turn for a moment to examine the conditions of the publication of *Japanese Girls and Women*.

The correspondence between Tsuda and Bacon suggests that the volume was conceived of in the summer of 1890 when the two women spent time in the Hamptons. At this time Tsuda had already been at Bryn Mawr College for about a year and was on leave from her post as a teacher at the Peeresses' School in Tokyo. She was to remain here until 1892 observing the workings of Bryn Mawr and spending a semester honing her pedagogical skills at Oswego Teacher's School. Alice Bacon was an old friend of Tsuda's and the "host sister" of Yamakawa Sutomatsu.<sup>136</sup> Bacon was six years older than Tsuda and unmarried; like Tsuda she was interested in social reform. While they had maintained contact over the years as an outcome of their common ties with Sutomatsu, their friendship became particularly close after the latter's unexpected marriage.<sup>137</sup> Sutomatsu and Tsuda had shared in their early years a vision for women's education in Japan, a vision that Bacon apparently had always been aware of and had

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<sup>136</sup> Sutomatsu Yamakawa [Oyama] was one of Tsuda's closest friends and ally in personal and professional endeavours. For a details of their relationship refer to Rose, *Tsuda Umeko*, 59-61.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid. I discuss the details of this marriage in Chapter Two.

always found fascinating. It seemed as though Sutematsu had in getting married reneged on that initial youthful compact. In the mean time Tsuda had made a conscious decision to remain single. Under such circumstances, it was understandably Bacon to whom Tsuda turned for both emotional and psychological support. Indeed, as the Bacon-Tsuda correspondence suggests, it was with Bacon that Tsuda now came to share her plans for future work. In June 1888 Bacon came to Japan for the first time; thereafter for the next two years, she was employed at the Peeresses' School on the recommendation of Sutematsu.

Over the course of 1888-89 Bacon wrote letters home about her life in Japan; these became the basis of her later volume, *The Japanese Interior*,<sup>138</sup> a text that seeks tantalizingly to “walk the reader” through the life of the Japanese people, providing a glimpse of a Japan that foreigners could rarely access. Although this text maintains a decidedly “Western perspective” on things Japanese, the volume as a whole tries, as Yuko Takahashi has also noted, to establish a “Japanese” point of view at some remove from the missionary perspective. It is quite likely that Bacon was assisted in the writing of this volume by Sutematsu and Tsuda, and it is arguable that it was Tsuda's criticism of the missionaries that Bacon was giving voice to.<sup>139</sup> Takahashi takes note of Tsuda collaborative work with Bacon over *Japanese Interior* but tends to understand this rather simplistically as an outcome of their friendship. Because she fails to problematize the status of Tsuda (and Sutematsu) as native informant Takahashi leaves unasked the question of textual authority and authorship.

A similar sort of a problem exists in her analysis of *Japanese girls and women*. Here again Takahashi is primarily interested in delving into the nature of the female *bond* (*hizuna*) that the three women shared. This connection, she argues, transcended

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<sup>138</sup> Alice Bacon, *A Japanese Interior* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1893).

<sup>139</sup> See, Yûko Takahashi, “Bacon-ka no ‘musume’ tachi to Tsuda Umeko no ‘hizuna,’” in *Tsuda Umeko no shakai shi* (Tokyo: Tamagawa daigaku shuppan, 2002), 105-56. I have discussed Tsuda's criticism of the missionary perspective in greater detail in Chapter Twwo.



all ideological differences between United States and Japan, enabling the three women to work earnestly towards the betterment of the conditions of Japanese women.

Although a certain kind of Japanese nationalism is clearly at stake in this text, one that is tied inextricably to notions of Victorian womanhood, Takahashi cannot but see this as an aspect of affective ties.<sup>140</sup> To be sure, from one perspective Tsuda's entire project and certainly *Japanese Girls* can be conceived of as an attempt to re-fashion the ideal of Japanese womanhood along the lines of Victorian womanhood, within the limits put forth by the Japanese nation-state. But the point is that the dynamic of such a friendship can never remain undetermined by relations of power, by the imperial-colonial lines of contact between Japan and the United States. We cannot disregard the fact that Japan was at the time of writing this book perceived as an object of American benevolence and the recipient of the latter's civilizing gaze.

The preface to *Japanese girls and women* spells out with some clarity the basic purpose of the tract. "While Japan as a whole has been closely studied," writes Bacon, "one half of the population has been left entirely unnoticed, passed over with brief mention, or altogether misunderstood. It is of this neglected half that I have written, in the hope that the whole fabric of Japanese social life will be better comprehended when the women of the country...are better known and understood." But what is more crucial for us is the Preface's reference to Tsuda—the only trace of Tsuda in the book. Revealing the source of her "intimate" knowledge Bacon concedes that she has been "peculiarly fortunate in having enjoyed the privilege of long and intimate friendship with a number of Japanese ladies. ... In closing, I should say that this work is by *no means entirely my own*. ... It has also been carefully revised and criticized; and many valuable additions have been made to it by Miss Ume Tsuda. She has...given much time and thought to this work; and a large part of whatever value to may possess is due

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<sup>140</sup> Takahashi, *Tsuda Umeko no shakai shi*, 131.

to her.”<sup>141</sup> What explains Tsuda’s relegation to the Preface in this fashion? Some clues can be found in the correspondence between Bacon and Sute-matsu. Letters exchanged between the two women from the end of 1890 until August 1891 clarify that it was Sute-matsu who while in Japan at the time cautioned Bacon of the problems that might arise if Tsuda’s name appeared as the co-author.<sup>142</sup> The problem lay in Tsuda’s employment at the Peeresses’ School, for the viewpoints expressed in the volume—a criticism of the current status of Japanese women including the state of women’s education, and an attack on the patriarchal stance of Meiji officials vis-à-vis women’s role in the family—could cost Tsuda her job; moreover the text’s co-authorship by a compatriot may well offend Japanese “national pride,”<sup>143</sup> especially since Tsuda herself had traveled to the US under the auspices of the Meiji government.<sup>144</sup>

A related problem, although one that we do not find clearly articulated in the scholarly literature, was arguably that of Tsuda’s identity as a “Japanese” woman. To repeat a point that I have made earlier, Tsuda could not, having grown up in the

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<sup>141</sup> *JGW*, ix-x. My emphasis. The only other Japanese woman mentioned by name is that of Sute-matsu Oyama, to whom the volume is dedicated.

<sup>142</sup> See letter dated August 6, 1891 from Sute-matsu to Bacon (File II, no. 6). This and other letters in the Bacon correspondence are archived in File II of the Tsuda Archives at Tsuda College. Because of the “conservatism that was sweeping through the educated classes” and because Tsuda was a government employee Sute-matsu suggested that it would be better to “be safe than sorry,” for “if Tsuda [wrote] too strongly she [was] likely to be criticised.” The implication was that Tsuda’s own marginal position on the Japanese social scene coupled with the fact that she was in the United States while on leave from Peeresses’ School would make it extremely difficult to continue her work in Japan after she returned. Rose who makes a similar point also suggests that Tsuda’s contribution to the volume is “heavily disguised.” See Rose, *Tsuda Umeko*, 88-89. Rose’s analysis however is limited to suggesting that Tsuda’s contribution to the volume was substantial and that while in America she enjoyed the volume’s success. In other words, In Rose’s work, an erasure of Tsuda’s name as the author of the text does not reflect on the nature of the friendship between Bacon and Tsuda.

<sup>143</sup> Letter from Sute-matsu to Bacon, August 9, 1891 (File II, no. 7)

<sup>144</sup> For Tsuda, her employment at the Peeresses’ School was important for several reasons: first, it was the first real appointment as such since her return to Japan where she felt she could directly repay her debt to her nation. Second, she felt that this would allow her to play a significant role in the education of a class of women who she believed would lead the way improving the status of Japanese women. Tsuda’s initial excitement was quickly gave way to disappointment as she realised that not only could she exercise no such change but that there was very little way to impart any “progressive” (meaning her own “Western”) beliefs to her students. Still it was a prestigious job and one that she could not afford to leave under unfavourable circumstances. See Rose, *Tsuda Umeko*, 70-76; Takashashi, *Tsuda Umeko no shakai shi*, 62-65.

United States, aspire to conform to the mold of an ideal Japanese woman, and this despite her samurai background. One can assume that her lack of proficiency in Japanese, her long years spent in the United States made her appear as something of a curiosity and in part an outsider, as someone whose “Japanese-ness” was always under question.<sup>145</sup> The ambiguities extend to Tsuda’s feminism. At times, she explicitly endorsed the nationalist cause; at other moments, she seemed to struggle with the likelihood of her eventual marginalization in the Japanese circles she moved in. The dangers to her government employment apart, this vexed question of belonging provides the single most important reason for Tsuda’s name to remain absent from *Japanese girls and women*. Given that in 1890 Tsuda was at the beginning of her career in women’s education, it might have seemed more judicious to appear as a “native informant” in a Western woman’s text rather than endorse in an outright manner a reading of the Japanese women’s question that could only evoke a backlash.<sup>146</sup>

Further proof of the fact that Tsuda was indeed the co-author of the text is provided by correspondence between Bacon and Tsuda. A letter dated 7 December 1890 stated clearly that during Bacon’s lifetime half of the proceeds from the sale of the book would go to Tsuda. Moreover, after Bacon’s death Tsuda would hold the copyright to the book.<sup>147</sup> All this information attests to is the fact that the problem of the text’s authorship was a complicated one. On the one hand Tsuda’s name had to be written out to ostensibly “save national pride,” and yet the “help” of the “native

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<sup>145</sup> No one was more conscious of this fact than Tsuda herself. In fact, early on, she used every opportunity to “appear” Japanese in public situations. I discuss this in greater detail in Chapter 1. See also Rose, *Tsuda Umeko*, 41.

<sup>146</sup> Clearly Ramabai’s vociferous critique of Indian male patriarchy suggests that she shared no such qualms. Yet, in the case of Tsuda and Ramabai it is important that we remember that it is their naming as a “native informant” and indeed this aura of their “native-ness” that enables the two texts to be so successful.

<sup>147</sup> In this letter Bacon also states if ever a problem arises regarding copyright this letter should serve as proof.

woman,” had to be publicly acknowledged in order to endorse the authenticity of the text. This is indeed the starkest of ironies: for the sake of the Japanese public Tsuda’s name had to disappear from the text, whereas her textual presence was necessary if not crucial to the successful publication history of the book in the United States. In other words, the native informant whose presence lent an aura of authenticity to news from afar in the metropolis was the very same national citizen-subject that foreclosed or effaced itself at the other end of the representational divide, opting (not unproblematically for Tsuda) to reach for the cloak of anonymity, fearing to hurt “national pride.”<sup>148</sup> Here is the place to ask: to what extent does *Japanese girls and women* give voice, however obliquely, to Tsuda’s views on Japanese women and particularly her criticism of female education in Japan? Moreover, how did the text serve as a sort of vehicle to promote not only the “truth” about the condition of Japanese women but also enlist the help of American women in gathering funds for an educational project in Japan? The idea of a boarding school for Japanese girls was not new for Tsuda; as early as 1883 she had expressed her hopes for such a project in a letter to Lanman: not only did she prefer working in her own school to being married and settling down but the school had to be residential if she was to wield any influence over its pedagogic choices.<sup>149</sup> Following the work of Hirota Masaaki and Yuko Takahashi I will examine shortly the nature of this influence. But first, I turn to Ramabai to examine her status as the “native informant.”

Ramabai as we know came to the United States at the invitation of Dr. Rachel Bodley. Although the initial visit was slated for three months it soon extended to almost three years. Once in America, writes Meera Kosambi, it was for Ramabai a

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<sup>148</sup> The carving out of Tsuda’s national identity in an international space follows the line of argument in Sakai’s “You Asians” where he states that there is “no externality between imperial nationalism and nationalism,” 812.

<sup>149</sup> See letter dated June 10, 1883, *Attic Letters*, 77.

case of “instant mutual admiration.”<sup>150</sup> Between 1886 and ’89 Ramabai traveled the length and breadth of the country lecturing on the condition of the Indian women and the urgent need to educate them. It was in the midst of this visit in June 1887 that *High-caste Hindu Woman* was published, a volume so successful that it had to be re-printed immediately in the very next year. The most clear reason for its writing was, as we know, to raise awareness of the “true” conditions of Hindu woman, and more importantly to raise funds to open a school for high-caste Hindu widows in Pune.<sup>151</sup> In this endeavor she could not have asked for more positive results. She had been unable while in England to garner any substantial monetary support for her plans, but the US was a fertile hunting ground for support and aid. By December 1887 Ramabai had established the multi-denominational Ramabai Association of Boston with the help of sympathetic men and women of a predominantly Unitarian persuasion.<sup>152</sup>

Contributing in large measure to Ramabai’s success was also the force of Ramabai’s persona. Glowing appraisals of Ramabai’s work draw attention to this

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<sup>150</sup> See Kosambi, *American Encounter*, 22-26. According to Grewal, Ramabai’s instant recognition also had something to do with the fact that the Philadelphia audience (Ramabai’s first audience) found her articulation of the condition of the Indian woman as something that they could identify with. Another Indian woman (and a distant relative of Ramabai’s) Dr. Anandibai Joshi had spoken earlier amid the same audiences on the conditions of Indian womanhood. This speech in which Joshi had defended the Hindu marriage customs had apparently shocked the audiences leaving them distressed and confounded. Not only had this vision not fit in with the audiences’ existing ideas of Indian womanhood, but it had also left them feeling unsure of the role that they, as liberal supporters, could play in the improvement of the Indian condition. Grewal has suggested that Ramabai’s view which contrasted significantly from Joshi’s must have relieved her audience, affirming their belief in their ability to play the role of “benevolent sisters.” See, *Home and Harem*, 197-98.

<sup>151</sup> This was not the first time that Ramabai had written a book to fund a project. *Stree Dharma Niti* (reprinted by Kedgaon, Pune: Ramabai Mukti Mission, [1882] 1967), her first book length study in Marathi funded her travel to England in 1883. Similarly, *Pandita Ramabai yancha England cha pravaas* (Bombay: Maharashtra State Board for Literature and Culture, 1988) paid for her trip to the United States.

<sup>152</sup> The organization covered a number of Ramabai Circles in various cities across the United States. (By early 1890 there were seventy-five such circles.) Each of these promised a specific amount of monetary support (about five thousand each in annual subscriptions) towards a (secular) school which Ramabai was to start after her return to India. The promise of financial aid earned Ramabai the praise of leading male reformers who were otherwise extremely critical of anti-patriarchal stance. See, *Kesari*, February 12, 1889:3. See also Kosambi’s *American Encounter*, 22-23 for details regarding how much funds *HCHW* generated as well as the details of the monies generated by Ramabai Association.

persona itself and to her “remarkable character.” Thus, it was not uncommon for Ramabai’s thoughts on the condition of the Hindu widow to be presented *in tandem* with vignettes of her physical profile.<sup>153</sup> For instance, a report on a speech Ramabai gave in Brooklyn begins by describing her as “a slender, delicate woman about 30 years old” before proceeding to address the contents of her speech.<sup>154</sup> Replete with racial markers, the characterization goes on to account for the “flowing white garments of her native land” that she wore. What is more, it strikes the reporter that her speech employed a “simple and beautiful” variety of English prose. She told the story of the “wrongs of the Hindu women without in the least striving for an effect.”<sup>155</sup> The making of such an image in the American media was supported by the widely available facts of Ramabai’s life. Newspaper articles were quick to point out that her widowed and high-caste status lay at the heart of her concerns in her book. She was for her audience one of the many widows whose lives required “benevolent” intervention; but she was also someone whose very presence in their midst implied that she was not easily assimilated to the species of women she spoke for. Newspapers impressed upon their readers that there was in fact no one quite like her—she alone

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<sup>153</sup> The articles in *Jogaku zasshi* attest to this as well. Although Tsuda was not subject to a similar relentless public gaze, the few recorded comments with regards to her appearance and her manner of speech etc. suggest that she too was coded as “Asian” or more specifically non-Western. For instance, her description when she spoke at one of the meets (sometime around 1891, exact date and author unknown) was as follows: she is “bright, intelligent and very charming. She speaks English without an accent and wears the American costume which does not become her like her native dress. She is petite with seductive, swaying movements that particularly captivate foreigners visiting Japan.” See File II, no. 29 in Tsuda Archives. As the passage elucidates, Tsuda was for the “Western eyes” clearly native. What is worth noting is that Tsuda at some of these meets seems to have comfortably donned on the “Western dress” perhaps much to the disappointment of her audiences. This suggests yet again the extent to which “representation”—the exhibitive qualities of either the Indian or Japanese “woman” were tied with imagining the Orient.

<sup>154</sup> “To Help Hindu Women,” *New York Times*, February 17, 1888.

<sup>155</sup> Kosambi, *American Encounter*, 23-24. That Ramabai’s appearance was perceived in a positive light as compared to Anandibai Joshi’s (“like a stout dumpy mulatto girl”) [Dall, 1888, 115, cited in Kosambi, 24] was a sign, according to Kosambi, of “racial acceptability rather than merely one aesthetic appearance.” The adjective “little” “applied to both women had a patronizing ring” she suggests, a sign of their “racial inferiority,” 24.

could with her “sublime faith” help the cause of “23,000,000 widows”!<sup>156</sup> Meera Kosambi’s remarks are apropos here: Ramabai functioned as an *educated native informant* moving easily between different positions, “meld[ing] a Hindu Brahmin mystique with faith in Christianity, an Oriental aura with a Western education, [and] an insider’s knowledge of an ‘oppressed Hindu womanhood’ with an outsider’s constructive critique” played an enormous role in the volume’s success.<sup>157</sup> In her, as Inderpal Grewal argues, the Americans had found a “sister” who would form the link between them and the suffering but faceless Hindu widows in India—she it was who would provide that persona, that face, that mask *for* them.<sup>158</sup>

Significantly, the very articles in the popular press that highlight the stark specificities of Ramabai’s life never fail to highlight the American commitment to Ramabai’s cause.<sup>159</sup> Story after story recounts how Ramabai was the only native (and a woman to boot) who had put forward the cause of the Hindu woman with such unstinting courage, and that no one but Americans had come forward to help her. Speaking of Sharada Sadan (Ramabai’s school) the *New York Times* article states in no uncertain terms that, “it is the Hindu woman’s pluck which has brought it into existence and it is American generosity that supports it. Such an example of humanity is above all praise.”<sup>160</sup> It is not surprising that newspapers continued to write about Ramabai for the next ten years or so after she had left the United States. Her prominence in the print media serves as an important reminder of the inherent tension in Ramabai’s self-production as an “Indian-Hindu woman;” against the backdrop of pre-existing images of the native in the American media Ramabai’s profile acquires

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<sup>156</sup> *New York Times*, March 23, 1901

<sup>157</sup> Kosambi, *American Encounter*, 24.

<sup>158</sup> Grewal, *Home and Harem*, 198.

<sup>159</sup> I have mentioned elsewhere the constant American emphasis to distinguish their own position from that of the British. In a similar vein, American press also made no bones about emphasising the uniqueness of their own generosity vis-à-vis Ramabai.

<sup>160</sup> See “Her Work Winning Praises,” *New York Times*, July 30, 1893. This is the very “humanity” that Ramabai has also invoked in her chapter “Appeal”

something of a blur—she conformed to none of these stereotypes, but they nonetheless came to form a kind of penumbra around her own iconic presence.<sup>161</sup> Ramabai (like Tsuda) may have been far from the ideal Indian woman “at home;” in the international arena she came to be precisely named as such. *High-caste Hindu woman* is necessarily, by this token, a product of Ramabai’s energetic lobbying as much as it bears traces of the particular requirements of the American scene. The text stands at the intersection of a complex set of negotiations between Ramabai (whose presence was registered in such terms as Indian/ native/ widow/ high-caste Hindu) and her American interlocutors (who understood themselves as Western/ white/ civilized) and it is these series of negotiations which in a sense ensured the great public acclaim the book went on to earn.

In sum, along with the particular set of conditions that produce such texts it is important that we attend to the representational histories that frame them in advance. I am referring particularly to missionary narratives, which I have already examined in detail. What I also wish to draw out as one crucial thread here is the overlap and dissonance between the two texts themselves, caught up as they are in varying conceptualizations of the question of women and their relation to the nation. Ramabai and Bacon-Tsuda both produce a certain idea of a “woman” –whether Indian or Japanese—who is bound to familial-national networks but yearns to broach the scene

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<sup>161</sup> The “production,” of Ramabai continued even after she had left the United States. As the *New York Times* article published in 1901 suggests by this time her name was synonymous with the cause of the Hindu widow. Countless narratives told a story of her life, suggesting that Ramabai was indeed an authority on the topic of Indian widow and reform. See, “Pandita Ramabai,” *New York Times*, March 23, 1901. This article stated that, “she is fearless in exposing the inconsistencies of the Hindu religion... and entreats her Western sisters not to be satisfied with the outside beauties of the grand philosophies of the East.” The last part is clearly directed against Swami Vivekananda’s excessive praise of Hinduism as he presented it at the World religions Conference held in Chicago in 1893. Helen Dyer’s volume, *Pandita Ramabai: The Story of Her Life* (London: Morgan and Scott, 1900) demonstrates the impact of Ramabai’s views on the British-American world. See also Pandita Ramabai, Introduction to *The Wrongs of Indian Womanhood*, by Marcus B. Fuller, (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant Anderson and Ferrier, 1900). This last text carried an Introduction by Ramabai, suggesting thereby that the name Ramabai now stood as a sign for “authentic.”



of international mobility. What, where, who is this “Indian/Hindu,” this “Japanese” woman that these texts evoke? The presupposition of such mobility in the itinerary of a life lived as a feminist (however retrospective that characterization may be) takes us to another crucial set of questions we must proceed to address. For one may well document female experience in the performance of patriarchally allocated roles (the girl-child, the wife, the mother) but how do we shift our critical gaze from this domain of relative unfreedom to that of the female subject who speaks out against her own oppression and broaches feminist agency? It seems to me that we ought to resist the unproblematic understanding of this transformation as an instance of mobility, modernity, or enlightenment, or as a dramatic transition from unfreedom to freedom conducted under the auspices of Europe.<sup>162</sup> What the texts in question ask us to undertake is a critique of the gendered racialization of the Eurocentric modern with which such highly empowered women could well have been complicit. In the final section I turn to these issues by examining the practical aspects of Tsuda’s and Ramabai’s educational agenda.

### **A return to the two texts and a return to “home”**

Besides drawing parallels between Ramabai’s narrative of the Indian woman and the already existing discourses on Indian womanhood, Bodley’s Introduction also suggests congruencies between Ramabai’s educational agenda and that of missionaries. Citing from the text, Bodley states that Ramabai’s mission was to work until the “Hindu *zenana* [was] transformed into the Hindu home, where the united family [could] have ‘pleasant times together.’”<sup>163</sup> While the terms in Ramabai’s

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<sup>162</sup> Grewal, *Home and Harem*, 210-11. I have also already discussed this issue in more general terms earlier in this chapter. For the mapping of this conflict in the later years and in the Indian context see Mrinalini Sinha ed., *Mother India: Katherine Mayo* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 1-62.

<sup>163</sup> *HCHW*, xv-xvii. Bodley is citing from page 26 of Ramabai’s text.

program echo missionary-speak, did Ramabai necessarily share with missionaries their vision of a “home?” Moreover, what was the relation between this home and Ramabai’s school? It is to this question that I turn to in this last section.

The text of *High-caste Hindu woman* amply demonstrates Ramabai’s awareness of the existing educational framework in India. The chapter, “How the Condition of Women Tells Upon Society” documents not only the missionary and governmental educational effort in India, but also the inherent problems that such a system posed.<sup>164</sup> Ramabai was well aware of the missionary rhetoric of “rescuing women from darkness,” and her educational agenda appears at first glance to conform to its fundamental paternalism. A short entry in the *Heathen Woman’s Friend* in 1883 close to three years prior to Ramabai’s visit to the United States, discloses a Ramabai already committed to women’s education along missionary lines. Her goal (the article notes) is “the abolition of child-marriage and the cruel treatment of widows, and the establishment of true family life, depend[ent] upon the Christian education of both young men and women.”<sup>165</sup> Another report on the cultivation of moral responsibility and self-respect among women pointed to three “hindrances”--“child-marriage, caste and the habit of keeping women in seclusion” (the last seemingly rampant in northern and eastern India).<sup>166</sup> On closer inspection it would appear that Ramabai’s endorsement of the missionary line is never univocal, incised as it is by a competing narrative of the oppressed Hindu widow. One can detect here an hint of national pride: given the chance to educate herself in the correct way, Ramabai argues, the upper-caste Hindu woman could well become “competent teachers and able workers.”<sup>167</sup> Foreign assistance and patronage could never be enough, if only because the true

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 57-59.

<sup>165</sup> *HWF* 14, 8 (February 1883)

<sup>166</sup> Reverend B. H. Badley, “City Schools for Girls: North India,” *HWF* 16, 5 (November 1884), 100-02.

<sup>167</sup> *HCHW*, 59-60.

agent of change was the native woman herself. Ramabai's account of that woman with its interweaving strands drawn from her rich analysis of Hindu custom and law, her insight into the nature of colonial rule and its implications for women, and her precise elaboration of the kind American effort she was calling, all contribute to what is a keen reappraisal of the very idea of social reform and Christian ministry at some remove from the dominant strains of missionary as well as British colonial thinking.<sup>168</sup> Ramabai's self-fashioning and articulation of the Indian woman literally invites her American readers to participate in the new *bildung* of the Indian woman, leading to a transformed idea of the very object of reform. Between Ramabai and her American interlocutors then the interaction occurs at various levels and registers. She is after all a "Christian" woman (not white herself but educated) who has shown herself to be capable of interacting with white women (and men); she is at same time clearly a native herself, a Hindu widow; and finally she is at the more practical level an individual negotiating with her foreign donors, which is to say the mostly middle or upper middle class American public interested in her cause.

The specific plan that Ramabai put forth before her audiences was the promotion of "women-teachers of our own nationality." Her aim was to establish a school for high-caste widows where they would receive "shelter and education."<sup>169</sup> The necessity of providing shelter is crucial to Ramabai's plan, for as she argued elsewhere, unless there was a promise of shelter where women could come freely without the fear of losing caste, it was unlikely that they would take such recourse in the first place. Ramabai proposed that in such a "house" widows would learn the means of earning a "honorable and independent living." Enrollees would "combine Eastern and Western learning" in what was avowedly a form of "*secular* education;" it

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<sup>168</sup> Articles such as the following distinguished the American position for the British stance. "Indian Child Marriages," *New York Times*, November 23, 1890; "Rukhmabai Free," *HWF* 20, 4 (October 1888), 9.

<sup>169</sup> *HCHW*, 60-61.

would instill in them an understanding of different religions to ensure that they would did not “speak irreverently of any religion or sacred custom.” It would be an education that would be designed primarily to “open the eyes and ears of those who long [had] dwelt in the prison-house of ignorance, knowing literally nothing of God’s beautiful world.”<sup>170</sup> In conclusion Ramabai stressed that in order to make this “home” a reality she could not entirely rely on the support of her own community, for Hindu gentlemen for most part “only ridicule[d] this proposal or silently ignore[d] it.”<sup>171</sup> But she insisted that such an institution had the ability to be self-supporting, and the help that she sought in monetary terms was only temporary. For it was more crucial to make women “self-reliant,” to realign their desires in the direction of personal transformation and agency—even if for Ramabai, as mentioned above, the upper-caste woman alone could serve as the object of this pedagogy.

Note that Ramabai employs the phrase “our own nationality” instead of “native” as a clear sign that the nation alone provides the necessary horizon for the newly educated woman. While Ramabai is for the most part critical of native patriarchy and male prescriptions for the advancement of women, the text also makes clear that the educated woman is to be the central civilizing force in taking the nation on the path of progress. Yet where Ramabai crucially differs from her male contemporaries among indigenous reformists is the place she reserves, after the to-be-modern mother and wife, for the self-reliant woman. Education for Ramabai is essentially an ascent into the light from out of darkness and invisibility; it is a disciplining of the individual latent in the abject woman. The schoolroom is the testing ground for such a project, for the school is for her a model for the perfect society. The individual that benefits from such schooling attains the perfectibility of the modern

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 63-64.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 65.

national subject.<sup>172</sup> This is the point where the converging lines of accord between elite nationalism and the idea of the new woman break away from each other; for here Ramabai broaches the problem of the high-caste Hindu widow.

Where in the hierarchy of the caste system is the widow located? She is the subaltern, the figure of complete abjection, foreclosed from the social text. It is this very figure that is to be turned back toward her original promise from outside of the caste system and restored to her individual idea of her own freedom. Raised out of caste, but redefined in what specific terms? A certain reverence for liberal Christian values holds up this pedagogic design from the outset. It is almost as though the woman subject to such rectification is to be moved from one kind of discipline (the lived, everyday day discipline of caste) to another discipline which is that of the self-subjectification of the subject in the modern mode of power.<sup>173</sup> This disciplining incumbent upon the mind/body distinction is also, as Timothy Mitchell argues, what generates a crucial dichotomy—self-reliance and self-help presuppose the division between mind and body; it is the self that is to supervise in the future this realignment of wills. In other words, ignorance is first identified as a trait to be taken up for reform, where it is to be transformed through education into the spirit of industriousness.

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<sup>172</sup> See Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 111-14. His discussion of the role of modern education that enables not only the construction of the individual but also the formation of the mind/body dichotomy central to the creation of the political subject is key here.

<sup>173</sup> Mitchell's discussion on colonial education is particularly relevant here. He argues, following Michel Foucault, that the modern forms of power which seek to discipline via schooling create this mind/body division and that in fact this division is produced by the new ways in which power gets constructed. Moreover, the power of working upon an individual, offered by modern schooling, he writes, is the "hallmark and the method of politics itself" (Ibid., 102). In other words, individuals once formed then with the mind/body dichotomy can be understood as political subjects which go on to constitute society, 104-111. That reform entailed first an identification of the object of reform which was to be followed by a disciplining is also the central thesis in many of the essays in Patricia Uberoi ed., *Social reform, Sexuality and the State* (New Delhi: Sage Publication, 1996).

That such a project takes place in what she calls a “home” rather than a school draws to attention to the fact that home is the central locus for the disciplining of female desires. This is very much in keeping with the progressivism of her male counterparts. As we know, late nineteenth century reformers both in India and Japan closely linked modern womanhood and specifically motherhood with the transformation of the household, a key factor in the nation-state’s ability to reproduce itself.<sup>174</sup> Ramabai borrows this idea of a home and identifies it with her notion of the school. What is noteworthy however is that men find no place in her idea of a home; we can discern here a fundamental overthrow of patriarchal relations and a radically reworking of the idea of home. When Ramabai established the Sharada Sadan for widows in Pune in 1889 soon after she returned from the US, influential male reformers sat on the board of trustees, incongruous figures in the all-women setting of the Sadan.<sup>175</sup> If home within the patriarchal order of things was a place of confinement and shelter Ramabai agenda, the idea of the Sadan as a home was opposed to such overt forms of discipline: it was a space of nurture and growth for widows,<sup>176</sup> women who would now proceed to conduct their lives in autonomous ways (not unmarked by

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 111-12. As Mitchell has pointed out, such an argument suggested that the modern political subject would first make his appearance in the household; the “home” thus functions as a crucible of nation.

<sup>175</sup> Leading social reformers supported the Sadan and men such as Dr. R.G. Bhandarkar, M.G. Ranade and Telang sat on the board of trustees. Initially even those critical of her, such as the conservative newspaper *Kesari* was impressed with her success and showered her with praise. Her “marvellous deed” of collecting funds was applauded while her conversion was regretted. But the general tenor of the article was that if “her conduct is straightforward, people will shortly develop a trust in her.” *Kesari*, February 12, 1889 cited in Kosambi, *Through Her Own Words*, 10-11.

<sup>176</sup> Meera Kosambi, “The Home as Social Universe: An Analysis of Women’s Personal Narratives in Nineteenth Century Maharashtra,” in *House and Home in Maharashtra*. eds., Anne Feldhaus and Irina Glushkova (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), 82-101. Kosambi examines various personal narratives to trace the meaning that “home” holds for its writers in 19<sup>th</sup> century Maharashtra. Her conclusion, with which I concur is that, institutions such as Ramabai’s Sharada Sadan, or D.K. Karve’s (a male reformer) Anath Balalishram (founded in 1896) performed not only the necessary work of educating women and making them self-reliant but also succeeded in creating “an alternative social universe for women,” 100.

modern modes of discipline, as we have seen)—but in this they were accountable, so Ramabai believed, only to God.<sup>177</sup>

What would be the points of convergence here with Tsuda's educational program? Both Takahashi and Masaki Hirota, who have provides cogent analyses of *Japanese Women*<sup>178</sup> agree that it was Tsuda's second visit to the United States that turned her toward the idea of women's advancement through education. While Takahashi seems to think that Tsuda's incipient ideas on Japanese women alone gave the necessary direction to Bacon's volume, Hirota for her part suggests that Tsuda drew a great deal from Bacon's work to formulate her own ideas on Japanese reform. It is true that Tsuda's interactions with Japanese prior to the arrival of Bacon were limited to upper-class women, but this does not imply (as it does to Hirota) that because this is Bacon's perspective, Tsuda's is necessarily a "Western" way of looking at Japanese womanhood.<sup>179</sup> Takahashi is willing to concede Bacon's influence on Tsuda but she maintains nonetheless that the *Japanese Women* gave Tsuda a chance to reassess her own views on Japanese women and her ideas concerning reform.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Significantly, and perhaps ironically the school also eventually failed because Ramabai was accused of "converting" her students to Christianity. See, Kosambi, *Through Her Own Words*, 11, for the details of conservative attack on the school in 1891 where Ramabai was accused for "proselytization." This happened after Ramabai moved the school from Bombay to Pune. Following the scandal, the advisory committee resigned and many of the reformers withdrew their support. An enquiry committee sent by the Boston Ramabai Association exonerated Ramabai but her marginalization from the mainstream Hindu society was now complete. Interestingly, Ramabai's founded in 1896, Mukti Sadan (House of Emancipation). This was openly Christian institution and aimed at "rescuing" victims of the famine in Central Provinces and Gujarat in 1896. Moreover, most victims came from lower castes. Here too Ramabai established a "female kingdom" yet that which was cut from the mainstream aspects of the society. See also, Kosambi "Multiple Contestations," 198-99.

<sup>178</sup> Yuko Takahashi, "Umeko Tsuda and educational reform in modern Japan : from bicultural child to international feminist," (PhD diss, University of Kansas, 1989), 143-45. For a more detailed discussion of Bacon's influence on Tsuda see Takahashi, *Tsuda Umeko no shakai shi*, 142-43. Takahashi also cites Riichi Yoshikawa (Tsuda's biographer) to suggest Tsuda's influence on Bacon, 143. See also Masaki Hirota, "Kindai erito josei no identiti to kokka," in *Gendaa no Nihon shi Part II*, eds., Haruko Wakita et. al., (Tokyo: Tokyo daigaku shuppankai, 1995), 13. For Takahashi's discussion of Hirota see 145-46.

<sup>179</sup> Hirota, "Kindai erito josei," 212-13.

<sup>180</sup> Takahashi, *Tsuda Umeko no shakai shi*, 146.

In effect then, although the two scholars differ on the question of who exerted greater influence on whom, both agree that Tsuda's perspective on Japanese women was considerably shaped by her experiences in the United States, and that Bacon's place in Tsuda's thinking cannot be underestimated. Consequently both identify Tsuda's stance with white middle-class American feminist values, making it impossible for us to think of the text as occupying a particular position within a larger discursive framework of late 19<sup>th</sup> century feminism—a position that necessarily straddles ideas of Victorian womanhood on the one hand, and the centrality of the nation-state in the construction of ideal womanhood on the other. My point is, what if we were to conceive of *Japanese girls and women* as being either Bacon's or Tsuda's text? To be sure, Tsuda spent a great deal of time at Bryn Mawr formulating her ideas regarding women's education in the presence of small local audiences. Her double emphasis on education and Christianity is already apparent at this early stage, as is her belief in the necessarily moral purpose of education. There is a practical aspect to these musings: Tsuda speaks of her desire to establish under the guidance of M. Carey Thomas, dean of Bryn Mawr, a Japanese Scholarship Committee (later known as the Philadelphia Committee) that would fund a year's study at Bryn Mawr every four years.<sup>181</sup> The plan for such a committee is a kind of blueprint for Tsuda's future work.<sup>182</sup> A public address delivered in Philadelphia in 1891 highlighted some of Tsuda's main concerns: these consisted of the need for scholarships and of the urgency of conveying to audiences an idea of the present condition of Japanese women. Speaking of the main problem of women in Japan she noted that "social customs have assigned a secondary place to woman, and she is considered unfit for responsible work, because she has grown unfit to think for herself." Two crucial things seem to be

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<sup>181</sup> Rose, *Tsuda Umeko*, 93-94.

<sup>182</sup> It is perhaps of some interest to note that as far as we know Bacon did not publicly speak about Japanese women, that it is to say did not give speeches, and that this can almost exclusively be seen as Tsuda's endeavour.



lacking “to remedy the evil—Christianity and education, and of these the need is sore.”<sup>183</sup> Elsewhere in the same speech, she praised the kind of education that the girls in the Peeresses School received but argued that, “this learning alone is not going to satisfy the great longings of their hearts...their happiness is not the education they will receive. It must be combined not with the old Buddhistic [*sic*] religion, but with Christianity.... Mere education and freedom without the undercurrent of religion and morality must needs be a very doubtful experiment.”<sup>184</sup> A solution to the problem is suggested a little later in the same text: such an education was needed especially for women of the higher classes (where the greatest inequalities existed between the sexes), and where Christian missionaries could not gain access what was needed was the following. “A well-educated, cultivated, native woman, even though she is herself not of high rank” who would find “her way to the homes of this exclusive class, and through education, the lessons of Christianity could be taught.”<sup>185</sup> This in short is the crux of Tsuda’s educational agenda. The scholarship it was hoped would help bring about this necessary change. It would, as Tsuda pointed out, “educate Japanese girls according to American methods” and teach them the “benefits of a Christian civilization.”<sup>186</sup> Interestingly enough, the sorts of teachers that Japan needed and the education that would prepare them for such a vocation seemed to require the kind of educational worker of whom Tsuda herself seemed the best example at hand!<sup>187</sup>

Such a plan clearly articulates Tsuda’s larger goals, but what it does not do is to express her ambition to establish her own school.<sup>188</sup> We have already observed the

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<sup>183</sup> Tsuda “The Education of Japanese Women,” 22.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>187</sup> Rose, *Tsuda Umeko*, 97.

<sup>188</sup> Tsuda in public presented far more conservative opinions than what she opined in private. For instance she had very little to say of the Peeresses’ school that was positive, yet in public as she was eager to present a positive picture. As against that, in a (private) letter to Thomas written in 1898, discussing scholarship matters Tsuda admitted that she did not feel that the public opinion concerning women’s education had “changed its attitude to women [and that]... the feeling about women [was]

absence of any scathing criticism of the government's reform practices in her portrayal of the conditions of Japanese womanhood. But what is striking is that Tsuda's essays published around the same time such as "Woman's Life in Japan" and "The Education of Japanese Women," bear close affinities to the views expressed in *Japanese girls and women*. Nor can we overlook the role of the nation-state in Tsuda's articulation of modern Japanese womanhood; the link between the betterment of the conditions of Japanese womanhood and the future of the Japanese nation cannot be underestimated.<sup>189</sup> This fundamental convergence between woman and nation is clear when Tsuda complains that "real progress is impossible while the growth is all in one half of the society, and Japan cannot take a high stand until the women as well as the men are educated."<sup>190</sup> Despite the implicit endorsement of nation, it is easy to see that Tsuda wanted her efforts to go in directions that had been ignored by existing government and Christian (missionary) educational initiatives. Tsuda hoped that education would open up "new avenues for employment and of self-support, so that it may be possible for a woman to be independent."<sup>191</sup> Many "colleges, and universities for men [had] been established all over the land" she noted, as "Japan struggled to take her place among the sister nations in the progress and learning which this century had brought."<sup>192</sup> But with "all these advances for the nation, and much progress for men,...no corresponding advantages had been given to women. ... [Not] until women were elevated and educated could Japan really take a high stand. Women must have

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exceedingly conservative." See letter to M.C. Thomas dated May 20, 1898, *Tsuda Umeko Monjo*, 387. Another letter written in 1899 to Mrs. Morris, an American friend and a staunch supporter of the scholarship committee expresses a clear desire to "carry out [her] own ideas of education" complaining that while she was at a government school she was not free to try out her own ideas. *Ibid.*, 384

<sup>189</sup> The crucial role played by the nation-state in articulating the proper role for women in the society is also a central concern in *JGW*. Once again it must be mentioned that Tsuda's own views as elucidated in her speeches mirrors closely the ideas in Bacon/ Tsuda's 1891 volume.

<sup>190</sup> Tsuda, "The Education of Japanese Women," 32.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*

their rights regarded and be an influence for the good in society.”<sup>193</sup> Yet, as critical as she was of the lack of interest in women’s education, Tsuda also made it a point to note that Japanese women were “far from being in the position of women in India and China.”<sup>194</sup> Buddhism from India and Confucianism from China were responsible for this in those countries, whereas Christianity was always tied to progress; here Tsuda noted that the influence of Christianity was growing day by day in her own country, and the “influence of Buddha and Confucius growing year by year less powerful in Japan” and that the former alone would save Japanese women from degradation.<sup>195</sup>

Takahashi and Hirota too have noted that while Tsuda (as her letters to Adeline Lanman amply illustrate) disapproved of the condescending attitude of Christian missionaries towards “natives,” her endeavour to fashion Japanese womanhood along the lines of Victorian ideals was not entirely different from the missionary efforts of reform. Her ideas about race, in particular her understanding of Japanese racial characteristics, were clearly marked by missionary and colonial attitudes. Hers was an Orientalist gaze (as Takahashi argues) but the latter was determined by nationalism in a very specific sort of a way. That is to say, Tsuda saw the reform of Japanese women as first and foremost part of a national agenda. The nation became the social basis for talking about the betterment of the conditions of Japanese women—it was for the nation that their status was to be elevated. Consequently, without an improvement in their status, Japan as a nation could not realize or *become* itself. The argument is of

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>194</sup> That the status of Japanese women was far better than most other Asian nations is a point that Tsuda makes repeatedly. Also see, her criticism of Korea following her father’s visit there, in an article by Tsuda “The Hermit Nation: A Native Japanese Scholar’s Notes on Corea [*sic*],” *New York Daily Tribune*, December 9, 1893. Here she writes that the condition of their women is “worst of all women in the world excepting women in India. ... Women are not called by name [and] are thus almost without identity.” See also, “Japanese Women and the War,” *The Independent*, May 9, 1895. Here she writes somewhat negatively of the Japanese woman’s status but again in a similar comparative framework: “although a woman is not burned on the funeral pyre of her husband nor does her religion condemn her to be an outcaste, yet Eastern customs prevail in regard to the relation between man and woman.”

<sup>195</sup> Tsuda, “The Education of Japanese Women,” 20

course circular, and it admittedly echoes aspects of the male nationalist agenda which places women at the center of a nation's self-actualization. The critical difference however is her focus, which is not on the state-sponsored ideal of the good wife, wise mother but rather on fostering in women an independent spirit that will make them good wives but also men's equals.<sup>196</sup> The desire to elevate women's status has much to do with bringing Japan culturally closer to the West; significantly, it is also reflective of a desire to distance Japan and particularly "Japanese women" from the rest of Asia. What is interesting to note here is that in this process "Japanese women" emerge as specific entities: class difference and division is effaced, but more crucially Japanese women are particularized as the *Japanese* woman, even as generalized as part of the universal category of woman much in the sense of "Asian" I have discussed above. Moreover, Tsuda's interest in creating "native teachers" involves a certain refashioning of herself from within a "Japanese" identity and as an ideal woman. In figuring such an ideal, Tsuda achieves two things simultaneously—she maintains the centrality of the nation in the formation of the Japanese woman *and* she does away with her own insurmountable distance from the ideal. Indeed, as the nation becomes itself, she also by this process, *becomes* a "Japanese woman" at home and by same token a native informant abroad.

In this sense then, *Japanese girls and women* deploys woman from within the terms of a narrative strategy that is many ways quite different from that of *High-caste Hindu Woman*. Unlike *High-caste Hindu Woman*, Tsuda-Bacon's text is primarily interested in positing an ideal, with its central focus on how Japanese women at this point in time are striving towards this ideal. One of the central metaphors in *Japanese Girls* as we have seen is that of change, a change indicating a movement of sorts from the old to the new, from the degraded status to the modern ideal; but the ideal itself is

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<sup>196</sup> See Chapter Three for a discussion of "good wife wise mother" (*ryōsai kenbō*) ideology.

significant, for the text seems to indicate that the future of Japanese women can only be their reinscription as “Japanese” from within the Japanese modern. *Japanese girls and women* is thus as concerned with portraying the “true conditions” of the forgotten half of the Japanese society as much as it is also interested in setting up the conditions for the production of the ideal Japanese woman from within the triumphal advance of the Japanese nation-state into modernity. This is precisely why it is worth thinking of this text as an articulation of a certain *moment* and as a particular *instance* in the larger history of the construction of the idea of Japanese women. It is therefore more productive, it seems to me, to read it as a *position* taken on the question of Japanese womanhood rather than a self-sufficient screed reflecting the ideas of a particular self-identical author as is Ramabai’s *High-caste Hindu Woman*. The latter as we know invokes no such ideal, and espouses a far more personal perspective on the condition of the Hindu/Indian woman, tracking a movement of the high-caste Hindu women into the visibility of the social mainstream. Ramabai’s text is not about the future as such (the nation-state as a horizon of hope) but restricts itself to the upliftment of the Indian woman. Unlike *Japanese girls and women*, which is forward-looking in the sense that it holds within itself the *promise* of when the Japanese woman will *become* “Japanese” and “woman,” Ramabai’s text achieves this actualization in the present moment itself. Her subaltern woman is the pivot of a radical turnaround of which her present visibly abject state is a necessary threshold, but a threshold in the present. And it is perhaps this making-visible in Ramabai of the present condition of women that is perhaps so attractive to the Japanese in the first place.

In sum, rather than read the two texts as similar or dissimilar to each other, I believe it is more fruitful to imagine them as being in dialogue with each other and within Western narratives of female advancement. Written not at home but abroad, they nonetheless locate the modern Indian or Japanese woman firmly within the

framework of the home in India and Japan. The path to this home however can only be traced through international frameworks of sisterhood, for both texts are conceptualized and written elsewhere (that is, not at home) and make obvious their debt to Western “sisters.” To be sure, the agency of the Western woman is itself severely limited in terms of the kind of help that she can give and the kind of friendship that she can extend. The idea of home no doubt suggests a return, but it is a return to a radically re-fashioned home which involves a potentially severe undermining of patriarchal structures. Both Ramabai and Tsuda eventually set up residential schools invested in developing women’s minds and bodies; male forms of surveillance were not disregarded here but placed firmly outside of these homes. The schools housed communities of women, and it is this notion of community that enabled such women to extend a gesture of friendship towards the larger community, that is to say to the international sisterhood of women.

Sadly, the gesture was doomed to failure. The idea of a worldwide community of women died its own death. One must remember that in the first instance it was a community that existed because women had long suffered from a marginal and beleaguered status within the nation-state. A comparative framework was absolutely necessary for sisterhood to work, but as the idea of nation-state gained momentum, as women gained the right to vote the women’s movement became increasingly ensconced within the nation-state. The era of active international comparison had faded away; the earlier frameworks that had allowed an Indian, African Japanese, Chinese, and American woman to exist on the same page gradually ceased to exist. *Japanese girls and women* and the *High-caste Hindu woman* are compelling documents that propound the idea of a conversation between various kinds of women from under the aegis of the international, but they are also some of the last

testimonials to that dialogue of sisters as it gave way to the rampant exclusivism and homosociality of the nation-state.

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- File I: (A) Letters from Tsuda Umeko to her parents between 1872 and 1881.  
 (B) Letters to Adeline Lanman  
 (C) Letters exchanged between Sen Tsuda and Adeline Lanman

File II: (1) Letters to Tsuda Umeko from her parents and Lanmans (excluding letters from Mrs. Lanman)  
(2) Letters between Tsuda and her siblings  
(3) Letters from various American friends to Tsuda , including Alice Bacon's letters (1887-1914)  
(6) Letters from close friends to Tsuda (including Yamakawa Sutematsu)  
(7) Papers concerning her trip to England (1888-89)

File IV: (1) Address to Tsuda College graduates  
(2) Tsuda's translations  
(3) Papers related to Tsuda's thoughts on the women's question (*shakai fujin mondai*)  
(4) Papers related to Tsuda's thoughts on education  
(5) Papers related to Tsuda's thoughts on religion and history  
(7) Tsuda's speech at Karuizawa titled "Women's Movement in Japan" on October 13, 1915.

File V: (A) and (B) Papers concerning the founding of Eigaku juku.  
(C ) Letters from Shige Nagai to Adeline Lanman.  
(D) Address by M. Carey Thomas at Eigaku juku on July 18, 1915.

File IX: (A) Papers related to Tsuda's conversion, and her religious beliefs.  
(C) Letter from Tsuda to Ito Hirobumi (1907)  
(D) Miscellaneous papers including article on Tsuda Umeko published in *Outlook* (August 30, 1913)

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