Botanical Journeys and China's Colonial Frontiers: 1840-1940

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Abstract

Over recent years, a body of scholarship has emerged on the topic of European and American travel writing in China. This thesis contributes to this growing field by examining four writers who travelled in China and worked as plant collectors and botanists. Largely forgotten today, these writers were influential and successful in their own day.

Despite differences in geographical location and historical period, there are a number of common links that make a comparison of these travel writings productive. As travellers seeking botanical rarity and novelty, these writers explored regions of China unknown in the West, which over a period of one hundred years expanded outwards from the fringes of the treaty port areas to more remote regions of China's southwest. These writers, therefore, were on the frontiers of Western knowledge of China, and an examination of their writing provides important insights into the ways in which racial, geographical, and ecological differences were articulated and understood in the context of colonial and scientific exploration.

While discussing how such differences have imperial significance, this study will also call attention to the instability of colonialist discourse in the context of China. Rather than focus exclusively on questions of imperialism, this study will show how representations of China's periphery regions also speak to metropolitan literary and cultural concerns, and a close reading of these travel writings shows that China offered powerful imaginary landscapes for home audiences.

This project is organised chronologically and the chapters are divided according to the authors, with the exception of the first chapter where I introduce the historical and theoretical framework of the study and the final concluding chapter where I consider the significance of this study in the context of modern China.

Acknowledgements

During the course of this project, the experiences of travel and research have been simultaneous. I have found myself writing in disparate locations: in an attic flat in Canterbury overlooking a spectacular cathedral, in a cottage surrounded by tall pine trees in the forests of Western Canada, and in a second story apartment facing a garden and surrounded by sky scrapers in the heart of a very large city in China.

As this thesis was written in the flux of travel, it is in many ways, and perhaps not always consciously, a defense of travel writing and of travellers who do their best under the circumstances. My circumstances would most certainly have been much more difficult had it not been for the generous support from my supervisors, friends, family, and colleagues.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my doctoral supervisors Dr. Rod Edmond and Dr. Donna Landry. Dr. Edmond had me writing at an early stage and instilled me with the confidence to test new ideas and approaches. His advice is always direct, clear, and precise. Without his clarity and guidance, I am afraid I would still be writing a literature review or in the library searching for the 'perfect' topic. Dr. Landry's direction became increasingly important and influential as the thesis developed. Her eye for detail helped to sharpen this thesis, and her astute comments, remarks, and words of encouragement were invaluable in shaping the direction of the study.

In the course of the PhD program, I was fortunate enough to receive financial assistance from a few agencies and institutions. I would like to thank the Canadian Centennial Scholarship Fund, the University of Kent for selecting me for an Overseas Research Scholarship, and the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada for the award of a doctoral fellowship. I would also like to thank the School of English at the University of Kent for providing me with a stimulating research environment, and the opportunity to gain valuable teaching experience. I also would like to thank the School of Humanities at the University of Kent for the generous funding that allowed me to continue my Mandarin studies while in the living in Canterbury.

Last but not least, I am especially grateful to my parents who provided me with support and encouragement throughout my journeys.

Preface: A Note on Romanization

Several different Chinese romanization systems have been developed over the course of history. The system most commonly used during the period under discussion was the Wade-Giles system, developed by Thomas Wade and later revised by Herbert Giles. Many of the writers examined in this thesis use place and proper name spellings that follow the Wade-Giles system, but in some cases they use the Chinese Postal Service spellings, or at other times, appear to follow idiosyncratic inventions that follow no known system. In order to avoid confusion, this study will follow the now standard Chinese Hanyu Pinyin system, which is currently the official romanization used in China. The spelling of Hanyu Pinyin is significantly different from the Wade-Giles system, although technically the pronunciation should be the same. Where a historical spelling is used in quoted material, the Hanyu Pinyin spelling will be given in brackets.

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Introduction: Botany, Travel, and Colonial Discourse

Recent historical and critical work on travel writing has shown the diverse ways in which travel writing can raise urgent questions about the politics of representation, about the continuities between the colonial past and the postcolonial present, and about the economic, and globalizing projects of modernity. In the context of China, studies by Nicholas Clifford, Jeffrey Dupée, Susan Thurin, Colin Mackerras, and Jonathan Spence have outlined significant trends and tropes in Western representations of China. [1] Most recently, the collection of critical essays in *A Century of Travels in China: Critical Essays on Travel Writing from the 1840s to the 1940s* (2007) addresses the historical and cultural significance of Western travel writing in China. From a Chinese perspective, new and emerging work by Hu Ying, Wang Liping, Emma Tang, and Richard Strassberg have explored the cultural and historical importance of travel narratives to China's imaginative understanding of itself.[2] This thesis will contribute to this existing body of scholarship by examining four writers who travelled and botanized in China during the nineteenth and

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[1] See Nicholas Clifford, *'A Truthful Impression of the Country:' British and American Travel Writing in China, 1880-1949* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), Jeffrey N. Dupée, *British Travel Writers in China – Writing Home to a British Public, 1890-1914* (Lewiston, N.Y: Edwin Mellen, 2004), Susan Schoenbauer Thurin, *Victorian Travelers and the Opening of China, 1842-1907* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1999), Jonathan Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent: China in Western Minds* (London: Norton, 1998). Colin Mackerras, *Western Images of China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[2] See Hu Ying, 'Reconfiguring Nei/Wei: Writing the Women Traveler in the Late Qing,' *Late Imperial China* 18 (1997): 72-99; Wang Liping, 'Paradise for Sale: Urban Space and Tourism in the Social Transformation of Hangzhou' (Ph.D. diss. University of California, San Diego, 1997); Emma Tang, 'Travel Writing and Colonial Collecting: Chinese Travel Accounts of Taiwan from the Seventeenth through the Nineteenth Centuries' (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1997); Richard E. Strassburg, ed., *Inscribed Landscapes: Travel Writing from Imperial China* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1994).

early twentieth centuries: Robert Fortune whose travels took place during the 1840s and 50s, Frank Kingdon-Ward whose career as a plant collector in China ranged from the 1910s to 30s, Reginald Farrer who made two separate trips to China during the 1910s and early 20s, and Joseph Rock who travelled and lived in China on and off from the 1920s to 1940s.

The overarching aim of this study will be to place these botanical journeys within the larger historical context of European and American colonialism in China. Discussing such a 'colonial' history of China is by no means a straightforward task (demonstrated by the fact that some prefer the terms 'semi-colonial' or 'informal imperialism' when discussing historical relations between China and the West). It is necessary, therefore, to expand on some of the historical and theoretical issues at stake before beginning a more detailed analysis of the travel writing itself. This introductory chapter will explore some of these larger problems and theoretical challenges.

Given its prominence in discussions of imperial history and travel writing studies, a logical place to begin is Edward Said's seminal text, *Orientalism* (1979), which so influentially articulated the ways in which Western imaginings of the East could be informed by the historical processes of imperialism. For Said, the idea of the Orient functioned ideologically and imaginatively as 'a way of coming to terms' with 'the East', and as a 'contrasting image' of Europe's idea of self. In Said's interpretation, travel writing and other European colonial representation functioned systematically as part of a discourse of knowledge and power. Said writes:

> Unlike the Americans, the French and British – less so the Germans, Russians, Spanish, Portuguese, Italians, and Swiss – have had a long tradition of what I shall be calling Orientalism, a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western Experience. The Orient is

not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience. Yet none of this Orient is merely imaginative. The Orient is an integral part of European material civilization and culture. Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles.[3]

For Said, such divisions were articulated through a range of academic and non-academic texts, and despite diversity in texts and genres, a remarkably consistent 'Orient' remained:

> Related to this academic tradition, whose fortunes, transmigrations, specializations, and transmissions are in part the subject of this study, is a more general meaning for Orientalism. Orientalism is a style of thought based upon ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident." Thus a very large mass of writers, among who are poet, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, "mind," destiny, and so on.[4]

He then continues:

> the phenomenon of Orientalism as I study it here deals principally, not with a correspondence between Orientalism and Orient, but with the internal consistency of Orientalism and its ideas about the Orient . . . despite or beyond any correspondence, or lack thereof, with a "real" Orient.[5]

Although Said focused primarily on the Arab world and the Middle East, one might extend such an analysis to Europe's imagining of the Far East. During the nineteenth century, China became increasingly connected to the Western world through the trade of commodities such as silk, porcelain and tea. In several instances, European powers exercised military strength in order to gain more favourable terms of trade. At the same

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[3] Edward Said, *Orientalism* [1978] (New York: Vintage, 1979). pp. 1-2.
[4] Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 2-3
[5] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 5.

time, academic disciplines emerged, and writers of various types attempted to come to terms, and in many ways, to essentialise Chinese customs and characteristics. The field of Sinology was a nineteenth-century construction that depended upon a consistent, stable, and coherent idea of the country and its people. As with other Orientalist disciplines, Sinology sought to erase ethnic and cultural differences within China in favour of an 'internally consistent' monolithic view. Efforts to essentialise China can therefore be thought of in the context of imperialism: from Said's perspective, understanding China would have a direct relation with ways of controlling it, disciplining it, and ultimately subduing it.

Yet not everyone would agree with such an assessment. Indeed, the issue of Orientalism and its appropriateness to the context of China has become a point of contention for many studies. In *A Truthful Impression of the Country:' British and American Travel Writing in China, 1880-1949* (2001), Nicholas Clifford takes issue with Said and similar lines of criticism that tend to align Western travel with discourses of power, expansion, and conquest. While accepting the usefulness of certain critical concepts in colonial discourse analysis, Clifford remains deeply sceptical of studies that he claims deny the existence of historical realities. By evoking Isabella Bird's travel narrative of the same title, Clifford's 'Truthful Impression' argues against the trend in contemporary criticism to rely upon words like 'imaginings' or 'inventions' in their titles; such approaches, Clifford argues, end up 'seeing translations of the travel writers as no more than "inventions" or "imaginings," as if the object, once translated, existed only in

the mind of the person representing it, no more real, say, than in Roland Barthes's fictive Japan.'[6]

In another recent study of Western travel writing in China, Jeffrey Dupée similarly questions the appropriateness of Orientalism in a Chinese context, arguing that China has its own semi-colonial history that is different from other areas of the world that were colonised by Europeans:

> As post-colonial studies have proliferated more extensively over the past several decades and continue to do so in the future, China will most likely be subject to greater scrutiny in this field. The point should also be made that China was never colonized by European powers. Treaty port enclaves, railroad and mining concessions, and related Western encroachments, however humiliating to the Chinese, created a distinctly different relationship than that which arose between European powers and indigenous peoples of many areas of West Asia, South Asia, and Africa. The Chinese were subjected to imperialist aggression and discrimination, but they were viewed as people constituting a separate and independent political realm. Western influence, although significant, was arguably less pervasive than in other parts of the world.[7]

Dupée makes the important point that we need to consider the historical specificity of Sino-Western relations during this period, but he does not further elaborate on how European relations with China were 'distinctly different'. Dupée, in fact, might be guilty of downplaying the very real and violent history of Western imperial aggression in China.

Treaty port enclaves and other Western encroachments were more than simply 'humiliating' to the Chinese. Consider Robert Bickers' description of British interests in China at the beginning of the twentieth century:

> Under the protection and jurisdiction of the union jack in China at the start of 1927 might be found the following: a Crown colony, two leased territories, two British-dominated international settlements, six concessions and a settled

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[6] Nicholas Clifford, *'A Truthful Impression of the Country:' British and American Travel Writing in China, 1880-1949* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), p. 14.
[7] Jeffrey Dupée, *British Travel Writers in China -- Writing Home to a British Public, 1890-1914* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 2004), p.8.

presence in cities and towns stretching from Manchuria to the borders with Burma. British interests penetrated deep into the interior of the country through shipping lines and railways and through commercial and missionary networks. Britain in China extended beyond the treaty ports, and beyond any strict legal definition of what constituted the treaty port world. Treaty port *mores*, patterns and expectations were to be found wherever in China Britons lived, worked or travelled. Where there were British subjects, there was Britain in China.[8]

British, along with other foreign incursions (including Japanese) have been shown to have radically transformed China's economy, society, and perception of self during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Such a history was indeed violent: three wars were fought by Britain on Chinese soil (1839-42, 1857-60, 1900). Robert Bickers notes that in 1919 only about 106 [about 6 percent] of China's 1,704 *xian* [counties] were without some form of missionary presence. Almost 2000 Britons worked for British missionary societies in China in 1919, running 384 mission stations.[9]

Although Clifford makes the important point that travel writing can describe very real historical realities, it must also be shown that there was no shortage of colonialist discourse during this period, often appearing in the form of stereotyping and essentialising of 'Chinese characteristics', simplistic understandings of China's 'tragic decline', or outright racist views of European superiority over non-Western people.

The history of Western/Chinese relations cannot, perhaps, be fully resolved on the level of theory. Bickers describes how British interests in China were often contingent upon local circumstances and were often 'private' rather than strictly 'imperial' in nature:

> In the years after the 1842 Treaty of Nanjing, which delivered that depot – Hong Kong – and first opened China to British residence and trade, a British presence developed in China which was neither formally colonial nor merely definable as 'informal influence'. Hong Kong nominally became an orthodox colony.

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[8] Robert Bickers, *Britain in China: Community, Culture and Colonialism, 1900-49*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 10.
[9] Bickers, *Britain in China*, p. 69.

> Administrative forms and practices were recognisable within the context of the wider British empire and the policies and practices of the Colonial Office, which administered the territory. What evolved in the parts of the rest of China in the interstices of the system of treaties fashioned between the Qing state and the foreign powers was quite singular, and owed no direct loyalties, or dues of obedience, to the British state. This was largely private enterprise imperialism: as such it was also international in character, even when it was nominally British.[10]

Theories such as Orientalism imply a coherent system of knowledge and power, yet the 'informal', 'private', and 'international' nature of British interests create a more complex and disorganised picture.

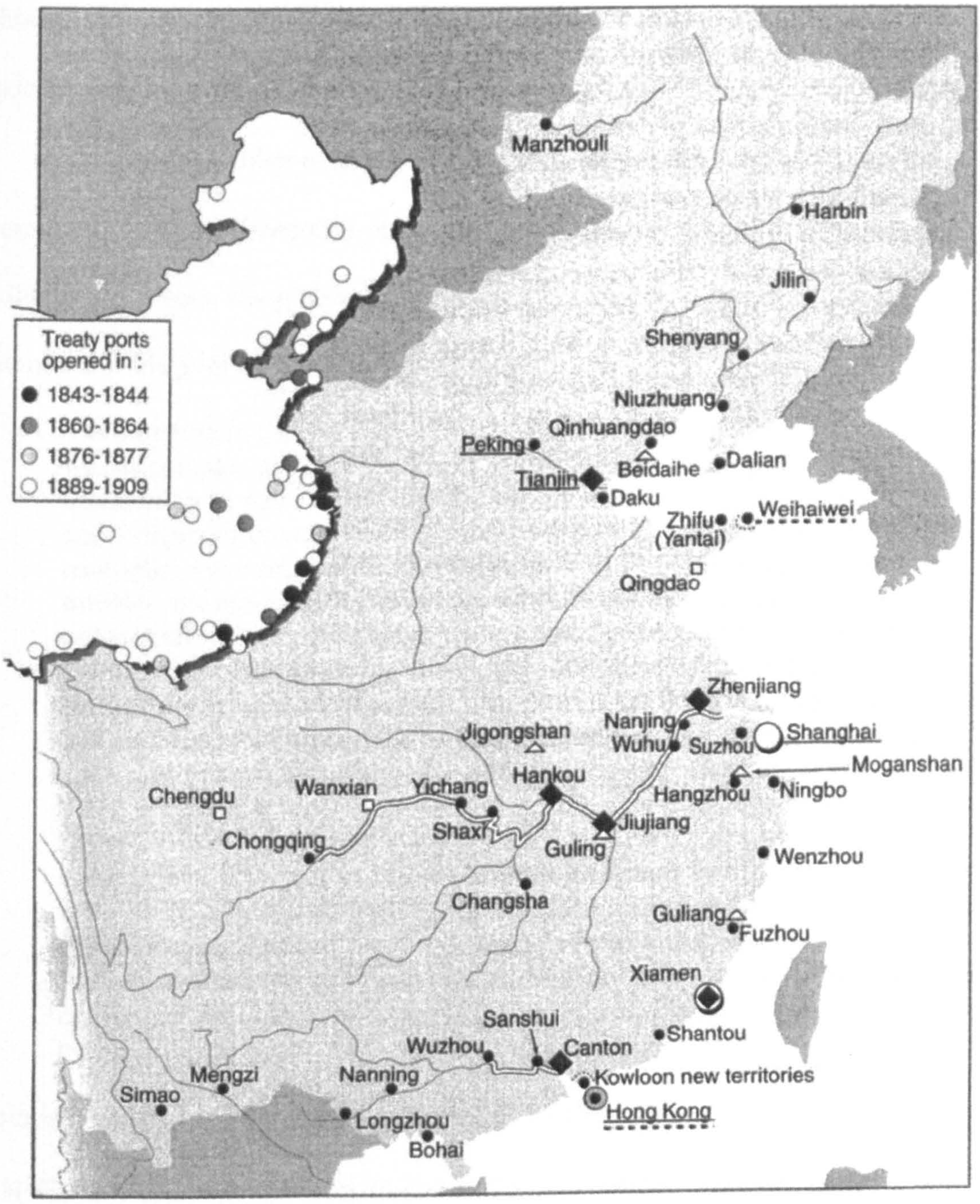
James Hevia has further challenged any straightforward assessment of imperialism in the context of China. According to Hevia, Western powers sought to exercise colonial power through various means of coercion and through a 'pedagogical' campaign of conversion and discipline. For Hevia, the events following the Boxer Uprising of 1899-1900 are particularly telling as they reveal the ways in which Western authorities in China exercised 'symbolic warfare'. Describing the ruthless execution of Chinese boxers and the widespread looting and destruction of Chinese historical sites, Hevia writes:

> The victors aimed . . . to do more than merely retaliate; they also wished to teach the Chinese lessons for the future so that such catastrophes would not recur. The two sides of symbolic warfare – the retaliatory and the pedagogical – are important for understanding actions taken by powers in and outside Beijing.[11]

In a later and more extensive study, *English Lessons: The Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century China* (2003), Hevia further develops the argument that imperialism in China often presented itself as pedagogical project. In this study Hevia further emphasises the 'disorderly' and 'inconsistent' nature of colonialist representation in

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[10] Bickers, *Britain in China*, pp. 5-6.
[11] James Hevia, 'Leaving a Brand on China: Missionary Discourse in the Wake of the Boxer Movement', *Modern China* 18, 3 (1992), 304-32 (p. 305).



China in 1927. From Robert Bickers, *Britain in China* (1999), p. 11

China, and discusses the difficulties inherent in the 'China' and 'West' division that underlies several studies.

By citing a number of Said's critics, Hevia argues that 'the East was not a passive recipient of an external coercive regime of power: colonialisms were transformed in multiple encounters, along class, race, and gender lines, between colonizers and colonized.'[12] He goes on to emphasise the complex history of colonialism in China:

> The situation in China through much of the second half of the nineteenth century was as complex as that to be found in settings where European political control appeared to be more formalized. Moreover, as in other instances of Euroamerican and indigenous contact, the China scene presents us with a number of seemingly contradictory developments that defy easy historical interpretation and raise troublesome moral issues. How, for example, do we reconcile the obviously venal opium trade with the well-intentioned missionary activities in nineteenth-century China, particularly when we recognize that both sought to penetrate and reconfigure the same bodies and polity? What are we to make of a use of force that justifies its self-interested violence on the grounds of abstract principles generated from a moral, humanist tradition and that, after World War II, provided the intellectual foundations for a concept of universal human rights? How are we to deal with and interpret direct aggression that claims to stand for the rule of law and presents itself as doing the good work of universalizing that rule? How are we to understand the willingness of some Chinese in this century to reject long-standing cultural beliefs and forms of indigenous knowledge and embrace Western science and political forms at the same time as they claim to be staunch anti-imperialists? How does one distinguish, within reference to whose interests, between the 'positive' and 'negative' impact of the West in China?[13]

We might extend Hevia's list of quandaries. For example, how do we interpret the blatant sympathy for China and Chinese traditions that run through nineteenth and twentieth-century travel writing? What do we make of the fact that missionaries in China, similar to other travellers, wore Chinese clothes, learned Chinese languages, and adopted certain Chinese cultural practices? Can such adaptations be viewed merely as colonialist designs,

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[12] James Hevia, *English Lessons: The Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century China* (London: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 19.
[13] Hevia, *English Lessons*, p. 20.

titillating Orientalist performances, or do they represent more complicated forms of cultural hybridity?

In his widely read history, *The Search for Modern China* (1990), Jonathan Spence discusses Western influence in China in ways that further trouble any overarching theory of knowledge and power. While acknowledging the pernicious effects of imperialism Spence also discusses other forms of exchange and encounter. For example, Spence discusses the ways in which Christian missionaries in China made significant contributions to Chinese society, particularly in relation to education and the status of women. Spence also discusses how missionaries greatly advanced medicine in China, especially in the fields of anatomy, surgery, and dentistry. Furthermore, according to Spence, missionaries provided invaluable assistance to Chinese scholars who were translating Western historical, scientific, and technical texts.[14] Susan Thurin makes similar points by raising the question of foot binding and the work of missionaries such as Alicia Little, showing that while such missionary writers certainly had their presumptions and cultural biases, one cannot deny their humanitarian impulses.[15]

Indeed, what do we make of the fact that many Chinese reformists and intellectuals around the turn of the century – prominent writers such as Wang Tao and Kang Youwei – were also closely aligned with European missionaries, often assisting in translation projects? Further questions arise when we consider that missionary presses had a strong influence on the development of modern Chinese literature. According to

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[14] Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (London: Hutchinson, 1990), pp. 206-8).

[15] See Susan Schoenbauer Thurin, 'Travel Writing and the Humanitarian Impulse: Alicia Little in China', in Douglas Kerr and Julia Kuehn, eds., *A Century of Travels in China: Critical Essays on Travel Writing from the 1840s to the 1940s* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007), pp. 91-104.

Patrick Hanan, missionaries published numerous Chinese language newspapers, tracts, and novels that were widely distributed throughout China. Such novels (including European classic fiction translated into Chinese) found their way into popular circulation. Hanan writes:

> Tracts, at first given away free and later sold cheaply through an elaborate network of colporteurs as well as through bookstores, were the main proselytizing instrument in the nineteenth century, and missionaries, particularly in the early period, compiled scores of works in Chinese … There were surely enough copies of such works circulating in China, particularly in the cities, to satisfy the curiosity of any literate person.[16]

Hanan goes on to discuss the influence of translated (and to some extent hybridized) missionary novels on the development of Chinese fiction in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. How then do we interpret such reformist literature such as Liu E's *Travels of Laocan* (1906), a text that closely echoed European 'colonial' sentiments and criticisms of traditional Chinese culture? Such a merging of cultural traditions clearly troubles the divisions between self and other that theories of colonial discourse, such as Orientalism, rely upon.

Botany, Landscape, and Empire

The history of Britain's botanical empire, and its relationship with China, raises other contentious issues. In recent historical studies, the history of plant collecting and botany has been discussed in relation to other facets of imperial expansion. In *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (1986), Alfred Crosby has

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16 Patrick Hanan, *Chinese Fiction of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (NewYork: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 60.

illustrated the ways in which European expansion was often greatly facilitated by the introduction of new plants and animals. For Crosby, the impact of European expansion was due as much to the expansion of European biota as it was to the movement of peoples and cultures. Along with carrying diseases, new plant and animal introductions transformed the landscape and local ecosystems.

As plants changed the way colonial locations appeared and altered the way indigenous people lived in relation to their environments, the very ideology of expansion and colonisation could be imagined, and in some ways justified, through the language of botany. In another more recent study, *Nature's Government: Science, Imperial Britain, and the "Improvement" of the World* (2000), Richard Drayton argues that European science, and in particular botany, was central to British imperial rhetoric during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Drayton makes the case that botany was central to the notion of 'improvement', both in terms of its practice and the discourse that it espoused. Drayton reveals the ways in which Britain's numerous botanical and agricultural missions in Asia, Africa, and the Pacific contributed to the economic exploitation of indigenous people and provided an imaginative and moral framework through which Britain's religious and administrative hegemony could be sanctioned.

Similarly, Anthony Pagden has observed how the impulse to force flora and fauna into classical botanical and biological categories provided a stable mode of interpreting the new and the non-European. Pagden describes how such categories of natural science were employed in early exploration writings of America in order to 'make the new continent in some degree commensurate with the old.' Through such botanical and

biological categories, 'the Amerindians were located and re-located in a variety of temporal and spatial relationships to the European and the Asian.'[17]

In the context of the South Pacific, Rod Edmond has described the colonial garden as a trope for success in missionary writing: 'The organic metaphor became a kind of mission statement. It offered rich figurative language for describing and naturalising the process of conversion; cultivation and civilisation were synonymous.' Edmond writes: 'Natural history therefore had a many sided importance, as knowledge, ideology and metaphor in the colonisation of Tahiti.'[18]

The correlation between botanical and imperial practices is even more apparent when we consider the fact that many prominent explorers, missionaries, and travel writers were also botanists. Alexander Humboldt, Joseph Banks and Joseph Hooker were trained botanists, motivated by the search for new plants as much as by the discovery of new lands and people. The scientific mind, organised around schemes of classification, would provide a lens – a kind of epistemological grid – through which natural variations could be assessed and categorised. Such biological and botanical hierarchies could inform 'scientific' understandings of race, and the 'natural' relationships between various human categories. Botanical science, and the classification schemes on which it depended, supported troubling racial hierarchies; in fact, the founding father of taxonomic botany, Carl Linnaeus, also pioneered defining concepts of race. Linnaeus proposed that inside of *Homo sapiens*, there were four subcategories: *Americanus*, *Asiaticus*, *Africanus*, and

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[17] Anthony Pagden, *European Encounters with the New World from Renaissance to Romanticism* (London: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 10.
[18] Rod Edmond, 'Translating Cultures: William Ellis's Missionary Writing', in Margarette Lincoln, ed., *Science and Exploration in the Pacific: European Voyages to the Southern Ocean in the Eighteenth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1998), pp. 147-61 (pp. 160-1).

Europeanus. Such a crude model may not have been universally accepted, but it established a number of stereotypes: Native Americans were reddish, stubborn, and angered easily; Africans were black, relaxed and negligent; Asians were sallow, avaricious, and easily distracted; Europeans were white, gentle, and inventive. Obviously, Linnaeus's races were skewed in favour of Europeans, establishing a 'scientific' rationale for ideas of racial superiority.

In the introduction to a recent collection of essays, Peter Hulme and Russell McDougall discuss the ways in which the disciplines of botany and ethnography often existed in close proximity to each other:

> If in the early stages of 'discovery', cartography and navigation had been the key sciences related to imperial expansion, by the nineteenth century botany and ethnology went alongside the development and expansion of colonial possessions, botany producing much economically important information while ethnology was crucial for the native administration which would produce peaceful conditions in the Empire and, where necessary, a compliant workforce. Botany and ethnography were both seen as 'natural' sciences, and the same individuals often pursued both.[19]

The overlap between these disciplines during the nineteenth century raises important questions about the authority of certain writers. Botanists were not simply plant hunters, but were often more generally regarded as scientific experts. It also shows that there was collusion between ways of viewing the land, and ways of classifying or subduing the people who lived there. Descriptions of landscape, therefore, are not simply a matter of aesthetics, but could also contain ideological and colonial assumptions.

The idea of landscape is admittedly a broad concept, but it is nevertheless crucial to a discussion of botanical exploration. Work in colonial and postcolonial criticism has

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[19] Peter Hulme and Russell McDougall, 'Introduction: In the Margins of Anthropology', in Peter Hulme and Russell McDougall, eds., *Writing, Travel, and Empire* (London: I.B. Taurus, 1997), pp. 1-18 (p. 10).

explored the ways in which discourses of landscape were often complicit with the aims of Empire. In a recent collection of scholarly essays, *Landscape and Empire: 1770-2000* (2005), various contributors discuss the relationship with views of land and their larger political and ideological agendas. For example, Peter Hulme's essay on the landscape of new imperialism in Dominica provides a provocative discussion of the ways in which the physical terrain could be viewed and transformed by imperial attitudes. According to Hulme, the colonial desire to settle and develop the landscape of the West Indies was imagined in terms of 'natural' obligation and often shaped in relation to late nineteenth-century ideas of tropicality, climate and disease. By examining the letters of Henry Hesketh Bell, a colonial administrator for the island of Dominica, Hulme shows how the wild interior of Dominica was made amenable through sexualised terms of productivity and development. He then goes on to offer an insightful reading of Jean Rhys' story 'Pioneers, Oh Pioneers' in terms of its satirical, often ambiguous, engagement with discourses of white masculinity, landscape and degeneration.[20]

Chinese Gardens and Landscapes in Historical Focus

The above examples show that botany and ideas of landscape have clearly been complicit with the aims of imperialism. However, a close look at the context of China offers a slightly different historical picture. Perhaps the most significant fact that cannot be overlooked is that Europeans in China confronted already existing and highly

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[20] Peter Hulme, 'Undeveloped Estates: Dominica and the Landscape of the New Imperialism', in Glenn Hooper, ed., *Landscape and Empire, 1720-2000* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 93-111.

sophisticated systems of botany and horticulture. In the extensive and ongoing study *Science and Civilisation in China*, Joseph Needham and others have challenged the historical assumption that the West simply 'had science' first, convincingly showing that, although they differed from the European systems of naming and classifying, Chinese methods of understanding the natural world were perhaps no less scientific. Needham writes: 'The idea often prevalent that traditional Chinese botanical nomenclature was in some sense "unscientific" is closely connected with the prejudice in the European, and now in the modern, mind, that nothing can be scientifically identifiable unless it bears a Latin name.'[21] Needham points to the ways in which European botany separated the language of the plant world from the common people, arguing that one of the greatest differences between China and Europe was that the latter had a dead language in its past history from which scientifically defined names could be formed, and set off permanently from the names of country folk and farmers. In China, there was no such background of another tongue, and the distinction between 'scientific' and popular language was never made.

Needham describes the long history of plant identification in China, pointing out that Chinese woodcut illustrations of plant forms preceded the art of the German fathers of botany in the sixteenth century by more than five hundred years. According to Needham, the Chinese botanical tradition was unhindered by the Dark Ages in Europe,

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[21] Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, vol. 6, pt. 1, eds. Joseph Needham, Nathan Sivin, and Gwei-Djen Lu (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. xxvii.

and therefore made slow and steady growth.[22] Speaking of the role of Chinese pharmaceutics, Needham makes a similar case:

> Did the Chinese have and use the most important active principles known classically in the Western world since the time of Dioscorides, or not? As it turns out, the answer is almost never no; but there are several modified forms of the affirmative answer. It can be just yes, but in some cases one has to say 'yes, and much earlier', and in other cases 'yes, but from a different plant source', or in others yet, 'yes, but a different active principle'. Only occasionally does one have to say 'yes, but later', and of course there remain many interesting cases of pharmacological active principles never known to the traditional West at all.[23]

While the aim of this thesis is not to assess who 'had science' first, Needham's research casts critical light on European claims of scientific superiority and origin. It also shows that European efforts to impose Western ideas of landscape onto China might not always be successful or stable.

In 1841, the missionary and Sinologist Samuel Wells Williams would declare that 'Botany, in the scientific sense of the word, is wholly unknown to the Chinese.'[24] Given what we know of Chinese botanical history, such a statement reveals both arrogance and ignorance among early European observers. In his study of European naturalists in Qing China, Fan-ti Fan describes the numerous challenges that botanical explorers faced during the nineteenth century. Fan describes how botanists during this period were hampered by language barriers and confined by travel restrictions – botanical 'exploration' often consisted of simply visiting local gardens and markets. Although they might justify their explorations in terms of a larger scientific purpose, the reality was that many of these early travellers were very much at the mercy of Chinese merchants and

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[22] Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, p. xxv. 23
[23] Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, p. xxiii.
[24] S. Wells Williams and E. C. Bridgman, *Chinese Chrestomathy in the Canton Dialect,* vol. I (Macao, 1841), p. 436. 25

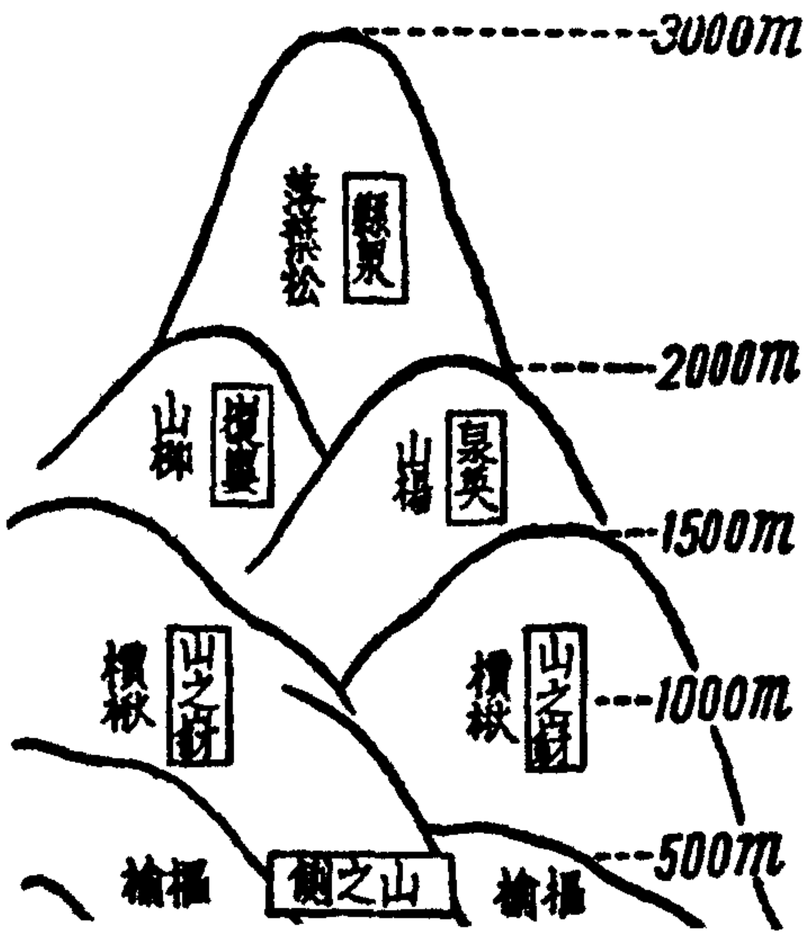
gardeners. 'Without prior knowledge of China,' writes Fan, 'they could not communicate with the Chinese effectively and could not have the immediate support of their home institutions so far away.'[25] Instead, European botanists in China depended on local patrons and would often consult existing Chinese botanical writings in order to identify and locate desired specimens. Relying upon Chinese botanical texts such as the *Zhiwu mingshi tukao* and the *Guang qunfang pu* often created confusion and occasionally outrage among European naturalists. Fan describes how many Europeans expressed outrage regarding the apparent lack of organisation and pictorial detail in Chinese botanical texts, but were often unaware that several of these texts had their own methods of organisation. Some texts were not, in fact, strictly 'botanical' and had other culinary, literary, medicinal, and historical purposes.[26] Therefore, while Western natural scientific writing on China might occasionally express a sense of European scientific superiority, such views cannot be taken as historical fact.

In terms of gardening aesthetics and landscape design, however, China was much more consistently recognised and admired. At least as far back as the eighteenth century, Chinese landscapes had a unique place in the British imagination. A prominent example is the case of Kew Gardens, which from its conception has incorporated Chinese themes. During the eighteenth century, inspired by Sir William Chambers' writings on Chinese architecture and garden design, various Chinese pagodas and structures were built at Kew. Perhaps the most well known example is the one hundred and sixty three-foot

Chinese Pagoda that was built in 1761 and is the only example of early Chinese

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[25] Fa-ti Fan, *British Naturalists in Qing China: Science, Empire, and Cultural Encounter* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 24.
[26] Fan, *British Naturalists in Qing China*, pp. 108-9.











(*above left*) Ecological altitude zones described in the *Guanzi* book; from Needham, *Science and Civilisation* (vol. 6, p. 52)

(*above*) Botanical illustrations from *Chu Phu* (1299 AD). G.P. Chapman and Yin Zheng Wang write: 'the *Chu Phu* of 460 A.D. or thereabouts on bamboo appears to be the earliest monograph of any plant group in any culture. It is partly in the form of poems and recognises bamboos as "neither herb nor tree". There is considerable awareness of morphological detail, habitat preference and holocarpy. There is too a distinction, inferred between what we now call pachymorph and leptomorph rhizomes. Subsequent treatises on bamboo appeared in 970, 1299, and the 14th century and in 1670. That of 1299 has impressively detailed illustrations.' G.P. Chapman and Yin-Zheng Wang, *The Plant Life of China: Diversity and Distribution* (London: Springer, 2002), p. 6. The illustration above is from Needham, *Science and Civilisation* (vol. 6, p. 393).

(*left*) Botanical illustration from *Zheng Lei Ben Cao* (1108 AD). From Needham, *Science and Civilisation* (vol. 6, p. 240)

ornamental architecture that exists today. Chambers' *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (1763) argued that 'authentic' Chinese gardens should provide 'beautiful irregularities' and should project 'the pleasing, the terrible and the surprising'. Chambers, who had travelled to Canton and observed the gardens there, alleged that the Chinese appreciated ruins as picturesque reminders of the passage of time 'to indicate the debility, the disappointments and the dissolution of humanity; which full the mind with melancholy and incline it to serious reflections.'[27]

Ray Desmond has rightly pointed out that such theories of Chinese garden displays probably had more to do with Chambers' own theories 'dressed in the fiction of a Chinese intermediary.'[28] However, while such eighteenth-century efforts to represent Chinese natural life and landscape aesthetics must be viewed in relation to European Rococo fashions for *chinoiserie*, they also say something about the fact that China did, in fact, have a well-established tradition of gardening. During the eighteenth century, European writers such as Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Goldsmith often used 'China' as a foil in order to comment or criticize Europe, but this is not to take away from the fact that there would have been many things in China to actually admire or imitate.

Real or imagined, such a history poses difficulties for any straightforward examination of landscape and empire in China. Unlike in other colonial locations, Chinese landscapes might offer a way for Britain itself to 'improve', rather than the other way around. In terms of the history of European botanical exploration, China was not as much the object of 'improvement' as it was the source of abundance. By the nineteenth

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[27] Ray Desmond, *Kew: The History of the Royal Botanic Gardens* (London: Harvill with the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, 1995), p. 54.
[28] Desmond, *Kew: The History of the Royal Botanic Gardens*, p. 46.

century, Chinese plants were far and away the most popular in European gardens, as gardeners and explorers began to fully realise China's botanical potential (Chinese flora is much richer than that of Europe and North America. There are 225,000 species of plants in the world, and of these China has 30,000).[29]

In terms of the material history, we can and should point to European and American imperialist appropriation of resources during the nineteenth century, as mining projects, roads and other agricultural projects disrupted local communities, environments, and sometimes led to the exploitation of indigenous workers. For example, it is well documented that one of the main causes of unrest amongst the Boxers were the railroads built by foreign firms, allegedly done with a disregard for local beliefs and views of the landscape.[30] However, history also tells us that Western transformations of the Chinese landscape might not have always been destructive: for example, Spence makes the important point that in the case of agriculture, Western missionaries were instrumental in introducing new seed strains to Chinese farmers and also assisted in reforestation projects.[31]

Although studies such as Drayton's have been useful in explaining the ways in which discourses of botany and improvement functioned within larger imperial contexts, there are difficulties in accepting the universality of this argument. In many literary

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[29] Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, p. xxvi.

[30] It is commonly asserted that the Boxers objected to the railroads because of they disrupted the principles of *feng shui*. While this may have been the case, one must be aware of the larger Western narrative that consistently aligned the Boxers with irrationality and ignorance. See Paul Cohen, 'Humanizing the Boxers', in Robert Bickers and R.G. Tiedemann, eds., *Boxers, China, and the World* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), pp. 179-98. It needs to be recognised, therefore, that the Boxers likely had other, non-spiritual/superstitious reasons for objecting to the railroads.

[31] Spence, *Searching for Modern China*, p. 208.

critical studies of Western imperialism, one finds a persistent alignment of indigenous landscapes with femininity, harmony and 'nature' while European views of the land are somewhat predictably linked with masculine control, colonial development and exploitation. Mary Louse Pratt articulated such a gendered argument of landscape and empire in her study, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992) and then later Anne McClintock made a similar case in *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest* (1995). Since then, this line of argument has appeared in numerous literary critical histories of colonial encounter. For example, in their essay 'Environmental Orientalisms,' Suzana Sawyer and Arun Agrawal point out the sexualised and gendered nature of imperial views of landscape. They write:

> The female body, both literally and metaphorically, was a primary terrain on which European colonialism asserted its power. Within a nascent colonialist discourse striving to legitimize and appropriate its fantastic "discoveries," the Western gender hierarchy served as a template through which to assert domination. Land gendered feminine and sexed as an inviolate female body was ripe for exploration and conquest.[32]

In another essay, Cynthia Davis examines how postcolonial and African-American writers such as Jean Rhys, Jamaica Kincaid, and Zola Neale Hurston resist Euro-centric colonialist garden aesthetics, and through their diasporic writing posit a more ecologically grounded view of landscape. By citing the work of Crosby and others, Davis makes the case that Britain's network of botanic gardens, with its centre at Kew in London, led to a global commodification of tropical landscape and reinforced the power of the British Empire. Davis also provocatively suggests that 'the soldier and the botanist

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[32] Suzana Sawyer and Arun Agrawal, 'Environmental Orientalisms', *Cultural Critique* 45 (2000), 71-108 (p. 72).

are the two pillars of empire'.[33] These perspectives are not without merit, and in some ways they will apply to travel writing on China (in the third chapter of this thesis, I will discuss this issue of gendered landscape in greater depth). However, despite the usefulness of such approaches, there is an increasing need to nuance and more rigorously examine the historical documents that inform such critical perspectives.

A similar line of criticism appears in an examination of John Thomson's photography of China. Here, Thomas Prasch argues that Thompson's photography and 'manipulative skills' offered an imperialist view of China. According to Prasch, Thompson's photographs were linked with the larger ideals of European scientific progress and imperial expansion: 'From the land to the people themselves, China was presented as territory to be remade by the forces of English power and commerce.' Unfortunately, in examining landscape in such de-historicised terms, Prasch's study of Thomson's photography falls into abstractions and murky generalisations; for example, he argues that Thomson's imperialist view was capable of 'imposing familiar classifications and hierarchies on the unfamiliar Other at empire's edge in a way that would facilitate and justify the extension of the British empire.'[34]

A close reading of travel texts on China reveals that the outward gaze of travellers was by no means unidirectional or easily capable of imposing such hierarchies. A common feature of travel writing on China is the image of a traveller confronting curious

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[33] Cynthia Davis, 'The Garden of Resistance in Diasporic Literature: An Ecocritical Approach', in Glenn Hooper, ed., *Landscape and Empire, 1720-2000* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 195-205 (p. 204).

[34] Thomas Prasch, 'Mirror Images: John Thomson's Photographs of East Asia', in Douglas Kerr and Julia Kuehn, eds., *A Century of Travels in China: Critical Essays on Travel Writing from the 1840s to the 1940s* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007), pp. 53-62 (p. 55).

local inhabitants who, often rather obtrusively, stare with wonder at the utter foreignness of the Westerner in China. Tamara Wagner quite rightly describes such reversals as eliciting various reactions, ranging from 'discomfort or unease to appreciative self-irony',[35] while Susan Thurin suggests that such reversals create a more dynamic interplay between Chinese Occidentalism and Western Orientalism:

> The Chinese racializing of the foreign visitor demonstrates the reverse of Pratt's findings on the 'gaze' . . . The 'foreign devil' meeting the 'celestial' and the 'barbarian' meeting the 'barbarous' represents a unique combat between counter-stereotypes, a simultaneous Orientalizing and occidentalizing.[36]

The ways in which travellers view themselves being viewed as another aspect of travel writing that is in many ways unique to the Chinese context. The question of the occidental gaze needs to be treated carefully, case by case, and throughout this thesis, I will examine these moments in greater depth. At this point, however, it is useful to suggest that such moments of being watched can create a more self-conscious and introspective travel text, one where European scientific authority over the landscape is not entirely self-assured.

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[35] Tamara Wagner, 'Sketching China and the Self-Portrait of a Post-Romantic Traveler: John Francis Davis's Rewriting of China in the 1840s', in Douglas Kerr and Julia Kuehn, eds., *A Century of Travels in China: Critical Essays on Travel Writing from the 1840s to the 1940s* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007), pp. 13-27 (p. 24).
[36] Susan Schoenbauer Thurin, *Victorian Travelers and the Opening of China, 1842-1907* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1999), p. 20.

Botanical Travel and Ecology

A trend in recent postcolonial criticism has been to examine environmental degradation as another aspect of European imperialism's destructive legacy. For example, in their essay 'Green Postcolonialism', Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin write:

> Under European colonial rule, the resources of the invaded, conquered and settled territories were exploited for imperial profit; and cash cropping and other European agricultural practices usually replaced hunting and subsistence farming, thereby damaging established ecosystems, reducing soil fertility, or even, as in the case of the Sahara, resulting in desertification. Whatever the extent of the change, the dispossessed frequently faced poverty and starvation, and the original accommodated relations between environment, humans and animals were fractured, sometimes beyond repair. European hegemony replaced such broken communities with hierarchical ontologies and European epistemologies imposed or imbibed through colonial institutions.[37]

There is a very real risk here of bifurcating our worldview into either positive or negative moral terms. The above quote implies that Europe is aggressive, industrialised, and environmentally destructive while the non-European counterpart is passive, closer to nature, and inherently peaceful. History is reduced into relatively simplistic colonial and postcolonial historical paradigms, as victimised communities are described as 'broken', 'fractured', and 'dispossessed'. Such terms not only isolate 'them' from the rest of the global community, but also imply an irreparable loss of agency, denying postcolonial communities any future ability to take control or responsibility for their own environmental actions. And once again, as in Prasch's examination of Thompson's photography, we have 'hierarchies' and 'ontologies' being imposed. While such notions might be appealing in theory, one wonders how these abstractions actually function in

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[37] Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, 'Green Postcolonialism', *Interventions* 9, 1 (2007), 1-11 (pp. 1-2).

real historical terms, and how exactly they become imposed through 'various colonial institutions'.

In *Green Imperialism* (1995), Richard Grove has challenged such assertions by discussing the complex relationship between imperialism and environmental history. For example, Grove describes how some of the world's first reforestation and conservation projects took place in colonial settings. According to Grove, Euro-American environmental views did not simply spring out of Western intellectual traditions, but drew from the colonial peripheries for inspiration. Grove writes:

> Early environmentalism has generally been interpreted as a specifically local response to the conditions of western industrialisation, while conservation has been seen as deriving from a specifically North American setting. Moreover, such Anglo-Americans as George Perkins Marsh, David Thoreau and Theodore Roosevelt have been so securely elevated to a pantheon of conservationist prophets as to discourage the proper investigation of even their European counterparts, let along those from elsewhere.[38]

Grove continues by arguing that 'very little account has ever been taken of the central significance of the colonial experience in the formation of western environmental attitudes and critiques.'[39] While acknowledging the ecologically exploitative nature of colonialism in regions such as South Africa, Grove's study emphasises the essentially heterogeneous and ambivalent nature of the colonial state, challenging monolithic theories of ecological imperialism. Arguing against the grain of postcolonial ecological criticism, Grove contends:

> As colonial expansion proceeded, the environmental experiences of Europeans and indigenous peoples living at the colonial periphery played a steadily more dominant and dynamic part in the construction of new European economic

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[38] Richard Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens, and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 2.
[39] Grove, *Green Imperialism*, pp. 2-3.

> activity than on the peoples and environments of the newly 'discovered' and colonised lands.[40]

Grove's study is primarily concerned with the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but his arguments have relevance in the context of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century China. From the perspective that Grove suggests, China can be viewed not just as a site for imperialist expansion and appropriation, but also as a place where travellers could imagine a different kind of relationship between humans and nature, and reflect on the state of their own domestic, or the larger global, environmental situation.

Beyond the Postcolonial: China in the World System

During the nineteenth century, the plant itself would have provided a way of visualising imperial and imaginative connections with China. As the trade in plants was controlled and supported by various botanical gardens throughout the empire, and while the idea of the empire could variously be imagined as 'flowering' and 'growing', such metaphorical understandings could also call attention to the interconnections and entanglements between the core and the stems. Both geographically and imaginatively, China was at the extreme edge of the British Empire, and within China itself, the writers I will discuss in this study were on the very fringes of the world known to Europeans. Despite their distance, their writings and the plants that they collected would feed and enrich the metropolitan centres.

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[40] Grove, *Green Imperialism*, p. 3

In our contemporary context, we might think of such a dynamic relationship in terms of 'systems'. Work in globalization studies and international economics offer different perspectives on the material and imaginative relations between China and the West. The world-systems approach to international relations – advocated by writers such as Giovanni Arrighi, Andre Gunder Frank and Immanuel Wallerstein — posits a view of global capitalism beyond the nation-state level, and instead emphasises the developing and dynamic relationship between centres and peripheries. Wallerstein locates the origin of the modern world-system in sixteenth-century Western Europe and defines it as follows:

> A world-system is a social system, one that has boundaries, structures, member groups, rules of legitimation, and coherence. Its life is made up of the conflicting forces which hold it together by tension and tear it apart as each group seeks eternally to remold it to its advantage. It has the characteristics of an organism, in that it has a life-span over which its characteristics change in some respects and remain stable in others. One can define its structures as being at different times strong or weak in terms of the internal logic of its functioning.[41]

More recently, Andre Gunder Frank has argued that China has historically had a central role in the world economic system, a fact one needs to bear in mind when looking at the larger cycles of economic development.[42] I will return to Gunder Frank's theory of a Sinocentric world economy in the next chapter; at this stage it is necessary to simply remark that Gunder Frank's positing of China's historically interconnected and dominant role in the global economy offers a way of thinking about 'imperial' relations outside of the Saidian Orientalist paradigm.

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[41] Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System* (New York, Academic Press, 1974), pp. 347-57.
[42] See Andre Gunder Frank, *Reorient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (London: University of California Press, 1998).

Other critics have stressed China's historically central economic role in the world system. Robert Markley states that '[r]ather than being hamstrung by its retrograde "Asiatic mode of production" and stunted by it "oriental despotism", China emerges as the economic engine for the early modern world – the most populous, wealthiest, and among the most technologically sophisticated nation before 1800.'[43] Dates here are significant, yet one must not follow them too rigidly. Throughout the nineteenth century China would continue to be perceived as a highly civilised, economically powerful, and in some ways culturally and morally superior nation. By taking such historical work into account, this study will challenge conventional historiographies that are largely based on the West's highly visible technological, scientific, or military innovations during the nineteenth century.

Instead, we can examine travel writing and other cross-cultural representation in terms of two-way traffic, between competing economic centres and peripheries. While the world-systems approach covers a broad range of discussions and debates, general principles inherent in this approach allow us to avoid monolithic ideas of imperialism and the reductive logic of East and West. Examining historical relations in more flexible, contingent, and 'systematic' terms offers a way of keeping various social, political, literary, and ecological perspectives in a more comparative critical focus.

Taking into account the systematic two-way traffic between China and the West, I will examine this travel writing within both imperial and domestic social and literary contexts. In some cases, the very notions of 'metropolis' and 'imperial periphery' will be shown to be conflated and blurred. Such a perspective will reveal that imperialism did not

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[43] Robert Markley, *The Far East and the English Imagination, 1600-1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 11.

just happen 'over there' and that travel writing has a strong relationship with domestic literary and social cultures.

In order to explore imaginative, commercial, and moral relations between China and Britain during the nineteenth century, I will begin by discussing the writings of Robert Fortune, who travelled in China during the 1840s and 50s. Fortune's travel books are important in a general historical sense because they provided rare insights into Chinese society and British attitudes towards China during a formative historical period. During the period following the Opium War (1839-42), as British travellers and missionaries moved inland and recorded their impressions, long-held stereotypes about China were both confirmed and contested. Fortune's travel writing communicates a sense of ambivalence towards the nineteenth-century European colonial project in China, and is unique insofar as it relies on the language of botany to convey conflicted notions of European 'natural' presence there. Much of the imaginative power of botanical imagery is enhanced by the fact that two plant commodities underpinned the nineteenth-century British economy: opium and tea, both of which were linked imaginatively and materially with China. The successful circulation of these commodities was necessary for the vitality of the empire, and given their economic importance, tea and opium took on a range of symbolic and imaginative associations. Fortune's engagement with the 'botanical' – both on a material and on a symbolic level – could provide a logic through which colonial relations with China could be perceived, justified, and understood, but could also serve as a camouflage for certain vulnerabilities and fears within the British civilising mission.

Fortune travelled in China during a period when Europe experienced unprecedented economic growth, industrialization, and environmental degradation. Observers such as Engels and Carlyle would remark on Britain's social and ecological decline while others like Malthus would establish a direct connection between a rapidly expanding British population and diminishing resources. Gardens, botanic gardens, and greenhouses became increasingly important to Victorians as a means by which to contain anxieties of environmental decline and to memorialise the loss of nature. Exotic plants could function as symbols of imperial conquest representing the flowering state of empire, but could also remind Britain that its own resources were desperately inadequate in the face of wild and uneven economic growth and consumption. Traditionally perceived as a stagnant civilisation ruled by a despotic Confucian class, China would increasingly be viewed as a land of abundance and an essential market for European goods. Following the first Opium War, China would be viewed as both booming and 'blooming' – its potential labour market and natural resources seemingly inexhaustible. My examination of Fortune's travel writing will therefore address how China was understood in terms of the complex ecological, demographic, and economic crisis facing Britain during this period.

The next chapter will discuss the writings of Frank Kingdon-Ward, and in particular his first travel book *Land of the Blue Poppy* (1912). Here I will continue to assess representations of landscape and natural space in China, and in particular how discourses of Romanticism inform Kingdon-Ward's understanding of China's more remote regions. Similar to Fortune, Kingdon-Ward's primary motivation for travelling to China was to collect plants, but he also shares Fortune's literary aspirations. In many

ways, Kingdon-Ward's writing calls to mind Romantic ideals and aesthetics, as he describes landscapes in sublime terms and evokes notions of pastoralism and rustic country life, ideas that have a long tradition in English literature. Kingdon-Ward's view of his own masculinity is also linked to the Romantic imagination, and I will show that his stories of botanizing in China's mountainous regions offer gender-critical interpretations that have particular meanings in a British literary context. Kingdon-Ward's observations of minority people in China's southwest, Southeast Tibet, and Upper Burma – the Tibetans, the Lutze, the Minchias, the Naxi – are similarly informed by a Romantic gaze, one which is often gendered and sexualised in nature. The ways in which such peoples are described, categorized, and identified in relation to their environment not only offers insights into the ways in which a Romantic and botanical gaze can inform ethnographic distinctions, but also provides important insights into the ways in which China as a whole was imagined.

Moving from Robert Fortune to Kingdon-Ward, we can track important changes in the genre of travel writing. Helen Carr notes that as the nineteenth century came to a close, the role of the travel writer became increasingly akin to that of the novelist. She describes modern travel writing as being comprised of three stages:

> From 1880 to 1900, the long, 'realist' instructive tale of heroic adventure remained dominant. In the years from 1900 to the First World War, the 'realist' texts have not disappeared, but much travel writing becomes less didactic, more subjective, more literary. By the interwar period, which saw a surge in the popularity of travel and travel writing, the literary travel book had become the dominant form: many of the best known examples of the genre were written by writers equally or better known for their fiction or poetry.[44]

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[44] Helen Carr, 'Modernism and Travel (1880-1940)', in Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 70-86 (p. 75).

Such a framework is useful in understanding the changes in travel writing as a genre. Not only did travel writers become increasingly literary, travel became a more acceptable narrative form for novelists, as was the case with late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writers such as Conrad, Haggard, Kipling, Stevenson, London, and Maugham.

The blurring between traditionally non-fictional and fictional modes of writing meant that in modern travel writing taken-for-granted identities of self and other were no longer as stable as they had been in the past. Carr writes: 'Modernist texts register a new consciousness of cultural heterogeneity, the condition and mark of the modern world; in both imaginative and travel writing, modernity, the meeting of other cultures, and changes are inseparable.'[45] Modernism, in this sense, is a potentially liberating force, which can open up literary and travel texts to a new kind of cultural and political sensitivity. Modernism in a cultural and literary sense could be politically reactionary and ideologically challenging. To be modern, as an artist, meant to be exiled. In this sense, modern writers sought out frontiers, borders, and the perceived limits of civilisation in order to question it.

Keeping Carr's model in mind, Kingdon-Ward's travel writing can be understood in terms of its interplay between realist and the modernist modes of travel writing; his writing may not be as subjective or literary as some later post-First World War writing, but compared to earlier nineteenth-century works, it signals a shift in style, tone and narrative. As Kingdon-Ward's travel writing, like other travel writing during this period, became more self-consciously literary, it also became implicated in larger intellectual and 'modern' trends: psychoanalysis would reveal the fragility of human rationality;

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[45] Carr, 'Modernism and Travel', p. 74.

traditional hierarchies of civilisation and society would be disturbed by works such as J.G. Frazer's *Golden Bough* (1903), which revealed the savagery beneath the surface of British society and put Christianity on a par with primitive or pagan myths; while works such as Hobson's *Imperialism* (1902) would question the morality of imperialism, revealing the domestic economic entanglements of imperial expansion.

Travel writing on China, I will show, contributed to such a shift in British literature. Such a movement from realist text to subjective literary travel writing is perhaps most apparent in the writings of Reginald Farrer, whose work enjoyed a brief vogue during the late teens and early twenties. Similar to the other writers I examine, Farrer faced the task of balancing the botanical with other more familiar aspects of travel writing. Along with conventional travel writing motifs and themes, as well as the expected botanical digressions, Farrer's travel writing contains many literary references and echoes.

Farrer's self-professed 'Janeism' (fanatical devotion to Jane Austen) provides an important dimension to his travel writing; indeed, even in the context of China and Tibet, Austen's fiction is pervasive: it provides not only a way of writing, but a way of seeing and viewing landscape. Farrer's 'Janeism' is further significant in terms of the author's sexual identity; during the early twentieth century, such tightly knit and secretive groups of predominantly male Jane Austen fanatics were often linked with homosexuality, a notion is that implied in Kipling's story *The Janeites* (1924). Farrer's sexual orientation, which might be biographically uncertain, is textually apparent through various innuendoes and references. This queer dimension to Farrer's travel writing offers another

critical perspective on how China's periphery regions helped to formulate and in some ways interrogate conventional ideas of colonial masculinity.

While Farrer's botanical writing can be read as a reconfiguration of 'natural' terms of gender and sexuality, his use of irony and literary references place him firmly within the ethos of modernism and the First World War. To a significant degree Farrer performs his travel writing in a modernist, even a surrealist mode. Throughout Farrer draws attention to the subjectivity of his own writing, often problematising the stable basis on which observations can be made.

The last writer I will examine is Joseph Rock, whose role as a botanist, ethnographer, and linguist brought him some fame during the 1920s and 30s. In examining Rock's writing and photography, I describe how he contributed to Romantic and utopic ideas of 'lost worlds' in China and Tibet. During his time in Southwest China, Rock wrote nine articles for *National Geographic Magazine*. Although *National Geographic Magazine* is clearly different from the other forms of travel writing I have examined in this thesis, it is useful to consider how the magazine has its roots in earlier travel writing. Rock's articles contain echoes of earlier travellers and reduplicate common tropes about China and its minorities, many of which are conveyed through his photography. In examining Rock's articles and visual images one must keep in mind that the individual responsibility of the author is questionable; *National Geographic Magazine* was clearly edited and packaged for a global mass market by a team of editors. Therefore, it is important to examine Rock's articles in terms of the institutional framework and ideological goals of the magazine, and especially in the context of mid-twentieth-century America.

An examination of Rock's later ethnographic writing serves as an important counterpoint to his earlier, more popular writing. In the last decades of his life, Rock produced a significant body of scholarship on the Naxi people, a minority group in China's Yunnan province. Rock's linguistic and ethnographic work resembles travel writing in some ways, describing his journeys in the southwest of China, and often oscillating between objective and subjective modes of description. In discussing Rock's journalism and travel writing, James Clifford's notion of 'ethnographic surrealism' is particularly useful in interpreting how travel writing during this period was able to assume modernist avant-garde formal structures and aesthetics. The avant-garde and surrealist elements of Rock's travel writing/ethnography are made even more apparent when we consider the intertexual relationship between Rock and Ezra Pound's *The Cantos*, which contain numerous references to the Naxi people and Rock's scholarship. Traditionally, Rock has been read as a footnote to Pound; in this study I will invert the lens by examining Rock's text as a primary source, once again arguing, as I have elsewhere in the thesis, that travel writing in China needs to be viewed in a dynamic relationship with metropolitan literary cultures.

In the end, it is hoped that this study will offer some complexity to ongoing debates about the status of China in the Western imagination. In Western academic circles, travel writings and other forms of colonialist representation on China have until very recently been marginalised in favour of texts and histories where the European colonial historical context was seemingly more explicit and one-sided. On the other hand, in China today, the pernicious nature of foreign imperialism during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is an entrenched idea that plays into the country's nationalist

narrative of progress. [46] These stories of botanical exploration are now largely forgotten, but it is hoped that by bringing them to light this study can offer some new perspectives on a history that is ongoing and continues to have political and ideological uses.

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[46] Classic accounts of imperial history from a Chinese perspective are Hu Sheng's, *Imperialism and Chinese Politics* (1955) and Ding Ming, et al., *Diguozhuyi qinhua shi* [History of Imperialist Aggression Against China] (1958 but reprinted as recently as 1992). According to Bickers, such texts are 'broad-brush attacks on an external scapegoat that is rarely defined.' Bickers also notes other more recent histories, such as Sa Benren and Pan Xingming's *Ershi shiji de ZhongYing guangxi* [Sino-British Relations in the Twentieth Century] (1996), which similarly defines British imperialism as 'a rhetorical villain'. According to Bickers, more complex and nuanced historical treatments emerge out of the recent trend towards local histories among some Chinese scholars today. See Bickers, *Britain in China*, p. 7.

Through the Eyes of a Barbarian: Robert Fortune's Botanical Travels in China

This chapter examines the travel writing of Robert Fortune (1812-80), a British botanist who travelled to China to collect tea shrubs and other plants during the 1840s and 50s. Fortune travelled and wrote during a high time of British imperialism in China, and his account of the country, along with his descriptions of the landscape and collection of the flora, can be viewed in terms of a larger Western project of imperial surveillance and commercial expansion. However Fortune's vision of Britain's colonial role in China and his own position as an authoritative scientific traveller are by no means stable or consistent, and a historically contextualised examination of his writing reveals the self-conscious and often self-effacing quality of his travel texts.



A notable turning point in British botanical history took place in 1818 when Thomas Reeves, who was then the chief inspector of the East India Company in Macao, sent a plant from China to the Horticultural Society's garden in Chiswick. This *Wistaria Chinensis* became known as the floral wonder of the world, and by 1839 grew to be 180 feet long, covered 1800 square feet of wall and produced 675,000 flowers. Along with Reeve's other specimens sent from China, this magnificent plant spectacularly conveyed China's potential for botanical exploration and inspired the directors of Kew Gardens and the Horticultural Society of London (later, in 1860, to become the Royal Horticultural Society) to send a full-time plant collector to China.[1]

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[1] Wolfgang Frank, *China and the West* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967) p. 28.

In 1842, the Horticultural Society of London chose Robert Fortune, a Scottish gardener, to go on an exploratory trip to China. Fortune, who was trained in Edinburgh and who was then superintendent of the garden in Chiswick, was to collect both ornamental and useful plants, and to gather information about Chinese horticultural and gardening methods. On his first trip, Fortune spent three years in China, exploring areas little known to foreigners, and bringing back several new plants to England. Shortly after his return, he published his first travel book, *Three Years' Wanderings in China* (1847). After a brief time in London as a curator of the Chelsea Physic Garden, Fortune returned to China in 1846, this time employed by the East India Company to collect tea plants and seeds, with the aim of establishing a tea industry in the northwestern provinces of India. By 1851, Fortune had introduced some 2000 plants and 17,000 sprouting seedlings of tea to India and was instrumental in the organisation and design of the tea plantations there.[2] In 1852, he published his second Chinese travel book, *A Journey to the Tea Countries,* which describes his 1848 voyage. He went on to write two more travel books based on subsequent trips, *A Residence among the Chinese* (1857) and *Yedo and Peking* (1863). Fortune was one of Britain's most well known travellers in the Far East. He ended up living and travelling in China for over a decade, making five journeys to the country between 1843 and 1861, and working for various institutions and private collectors

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[2] According to Fan-ti Fan, the tea plants that Fortune introduced did not survive once planted in India. However, the Chinese technology and the agricultural methods that he introduced led to the eventual success of the tea plantations in Assam. See Fa-ti Fan, *British Naturalists in Qing China: Science, Empire, and Cultural Encounter* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 82-3.

including the East India Company (twice), the Horticultural Society of London, and the US Patent Office.[3]

In historical terms, Fortune's arrival on the plant-collecting scene is somewhat belated. Joseph Banks, the great English naturalist who was instrumental in bringing the Linnaean system of classification to Britain, and who was regarded as having transformed Kew Gardens from a pleasure garden to an institution of science, died some twenty-five years before Fortune's arrival in China. Yet natural scientists such as Joseph Hooker and Robert Lindley were continuing Banks' work, and during Fortune's time, Kew gardens and British botanical exploration around the world was entering a new phase. Technological developments facilitated the transportation and storage of plants. In the 1830s, the Wardian case was invented, an airtight glass container resembling an aquarium, which allowed plant seedlings to be transported from far off countries. Fortune was the first collector to send home large numbers of living plants in these portable greenhouses. Around the same time, glasshouses began being manufactured in England, the most famous of which was the Palm House at Kew Gardens, which was built in 1844-8 by Decimus Burton and Richard Turner. These greenhouses were equipped with stoves, which could control the temperature, and allow tropical plants to survive cold British winters.

Such technological developments in garden architecture and plant transportation facilitated the growth and institutionalisation of botany and natural science in Britain. By the time Fortune travelled in China, Britain clearly understood the commercial and

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[3] Ray Desmond, *Dictionary of British and Irish Botanists and Horticulturists: Including Plant Collectors, Flower Painters, and Garden Designers* [1977] (London: Taylor & Francis, 1994), p. 257.

imperial importance of plants and botany; whether it was Amazonian rubber, quinine, opium, or tea, growing or controlling the transportation of plant products was a key to global economic dominance. Although there would always be private collectors who sought far off specimens for their exotic and aesthetic appeal, the rise of botanic gardens such as Kew called for a more systematic approach to interpreting the natural world. Referring to Bruno Latour's notion of 'centres of calculation', John Gascoigne writes: 'If a centre of calculation has as its goal a scale map of the world, or of a certain portion of the natural objects of the globe, the happy randomness of many of the earlier virtuosi, with their bowerbird collections of curious objects which had no apparent relation, was of little use.'[4] Gascoigne argues that centres of calculation allowed for a systemic understanding of the natural world, and the imposition of a greater order on fields that had previously been regarded as incomprehensible or chaotic. During the late eighteenth century, botanists and natural scientists, therefore, were much more institutionalised than earlier gentleman collectors. British botanists and scientists relied on a system and the necessary institutions and disciplines that went along with it. By 1840s, Kew Gardens and the Horticultural Society of London and their botanical gardens were established institutions, functioning as important centres of research and organisation. Botanic gardens sprang up in various key locations in the British Empire, and these numerous satellite botanic gardens throughout the empire facilitated plant transportation and research in the colonies.

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[4] John Gasgoigne, 'The Ordering of Nature and the Ordering of Empire: A Commentary,' in *Visions of Empire: Voyages, Botany, and Representations of Nature*, ed. David Philip Miller and Peter Hanns Reill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.108.

Tea, however, created difficulties for British botanists and merchants. Not only were the tea shrubs difficult to grow and transplant, little was known about the actual process of manufacturing tealeaves into a form that would suit European tastes. The problem was exacerbated by the fact that Chinese had a monopoly on the tea trade, and attempts to grow the plant in other locations were largely unsuccessful. During the late eighteenth century, Joseph Banks, along with others at the Horticultural Society of London, realised the economic importance of transplanting the notoriously finicky tea shrub. In 1796, George Staunton, a trained botanist sent by Banks and second in command in Lord Macartney's trade embassy to China, described how it is 'highly probable, that we may, sometime hereafter, furnish ourselves with this useful article, without depending on the will or caprice of a foreign power.' He wrote: 'Measures have been taken to introduce the culture of tea in such of the British territories of Hindostan as appear to be most congenial to its growth.'[5] However, these early British efforts to establish a tea industry in India were largely unsuccessful due to travel restrictions in China, problems of plant transportation, as well as a lack of knowledge about tea production, and agricultural techniques.

Robert Fortune was therefore sent to China in order to address the long-standing problem of British reliance on China for tea, and he arrived in China at a moment in history when travel restrictions were loosening. Before the Treaty of Nanjing in 1842, foreign trade and travel were severely restricted in China, and European interests were managed by the Hong merchants who fixed prices, collected customs dues, and

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[5] George Leonard Staunton and Harrison, *An Authentic Account of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China* (London: W. Bulmer and Co. for G. Nicol, 1797), pp. 16-7.

controlled the quantity of trade. Contact between Chinese merchants and European traders was strictly regulated. European traders were only allowed to do business at Canton (now Guangzhou) during a specified trading season and were even prohibited from learning Chinese. The Hong provided translators and functionaries to attend European ships, and they managed European behaviour while in port. European trade interests were further limited due to the fact that in Confucian social hierarchy, peasants, scholars, and craftsmen all took precedence over merchants.

After the war, with the establishment of the five treaty ports, things improved somewhat for Europeans. Learning Chinese was officially permitted, and Europeans gained some trading privileges. But travel was still restricted to a thirty-mile radius of the treaty areas, and the terms of trade were still viewed by many as unfair. Chinese intermediaries were still accused of unfairly elevating the prices of commodities and 'squeezing' British merchants.

While the relative freedom to travel in China gave Fortune an opportunity to research the different methods and tea production and to gather samples of the best and finest plants, the newly opening China also provided him with a chance to record his impressions for a British audience that was clearly interested in 'things Chinese'. On a cultural and material level, China's connections with Britain were becoming more apparent and spectacular during this period. Prominent examples of such displays of China's material culture were Nathan Dunn's exhibition of 'Ten Thousand Chinese Things' displayed at Hyde Park Corner (which included a two-story pagoda), and the Chinese junk *Keying* (brought over in 1842 by 'a few enterprising Englishman' and a crew of about 30 Chinese sailors) which attracted crowds of curious Londoners to the

shores of the Thames.[6] Written during the 1840s and 50s, Fortune's travel writing addressed this curiosity about China's emerging and 'opening' role on the world stage and provided rare insights into areas of the country beyond the treaty ports.

Some critics and historians have regarded Fortune's travel writing in terms of its complicity with British commercial and imperial ambitions in China. In his broad survey of Western representations of China, Colin Mackerras makes a short, dismissive reference to Fortune in a larger discussion of nineteenth-century British imperialism. He writes:

> The tone of Fortune's book on his *three years' wanderings in the northern provinces* is very high-handed towards the Chinese. Although he does sometimes make a favourable judgment about them, it is always based on the superiority of British and Western civilisation over Chinese.[7]

A more detailed and nuanced account of Fortune's travels can be found in Susan Thurin's study of Victorian travellers in China, where she dedicates her first chapter to Fortune. Although Thurin acknowledges Fortune's sympathy for China, especially in terms of his admiration for Arcadian ideals and simple country ways in China's rural areas, she views his gathering of tea and other plants in China in terms of a larger Western imperial project of accumulation, appropriation and asserting of European presence in China.[8]

There are, indeed, moments when Fortune asserts European superiority and conveys certain stereotypical understandings of China. Fortune begins his first book by relating a number of 'facts' about China. By the 1840s and 50s, the cult of *chinoiserie* in

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[6] On Dunn's show and the *Keying,* see Richard D. Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1978) p. 292.
[7] Colin Mackerras, *Western Images of China* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 55.
[8] Susan Schoenbauer Thurin, *Victorian Travelers and the Opening of China, 1842-1907* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1999).

Europe was long over, and Fortune begins his first book *Three Years' Wanderings* by taking issue with the eighteenth-century European tradition of idealising China:

> Shut out from the country, and having no means of getting information on which we could depend (for independent of Chinese statements, the accounts written by the Jesuits were in many instances grossly exaggerated), it is not to be wondered at if the works in our language were more remarkable for the exhibition of the imaginative power of their authors, than for the facts concerning China and the Chinese. We were in the position of little children who gaze with admiration and wonder at a penny peep-show in a fair or market place at home. – We looked with magnifying eyes on everything Chinese; and fancied, for the time at least, that what we saw was real. (*TYW*, pp. 3-4)

Fortune continues: 'the curtain which had been drawn around the celestial country for ages, has now been rent asunder; and instead of viewing an enchanted fairly-land, we find, after all, that China is just like other countries' (*TYW*, p. 4). He then places China within a global hierarchy: 'although they are not entitled to the credit of being equal to, much less in advance of the nations of the West in science, in the arts, in government, or in laws; yet they are certainly considerably in advance of the Hindoos, Malays, and other nations who inhabit the central and western portions of Asia' (*TYW*, p. 11).

He goes on to write that the Chinese are insufferably vain: 'They, from the highest Mandarin down to the meanest beggar, are filled with the most conceited notions of their own importance and power; and fancy that no people however civilised, and no country however powerful, are for one moment to be compared with them.'[9] Another 'fact' that Fortune relates is that Chinese people are incapable of telling the truth, and that past accounts of the country have relied on Chinese sources. This is a recurring theme

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[9] Robert Fortune, *Three Years' Wanderings in the Northern Provinces of China: Including a Visit to the Tea, Silk, and Cotton Countries: With an Account of the Agriculture and Horticulture of the Chinese, New Plants, Etc*, [1847] (London: Mildmay, 1987), pp. 2-3. Further references to this work will be abbreviated *TYW* with page references given parenthetically in the text.

throughout his writing, as Fortune remarks on the various ways in which the Chinese cannot be trusted to tell the truth. He writes: 'No dependence can be placed on the veracity of the Chinese. I may seem uncharitable, but such is really the case.'[10] Although he does not go into the issue of politics to any great length, he does state that the government of China is corrupt, weak and ineffective (*TYW*, p. 8). In the same context of discussing China's 'true' character, he describes China as a half-civilised state that, while it may have been ahead of Europe many years ago, has not progressed despite its long history (*TYW*, p. 5). There are still other instances where he refers to the 'Chinaman' like behaviour of his servants, which he equates with dishonourable, cowardly or petty behaviour.

Many of these negative stereotypes sprang out of a European frustration towards China's historical dominance in trade. The utter failures of the British trade embassies of 1796 and 1816 narrativised the outrageous failure of British entrepreneurialism in the face of Chinese unwillingness to accept British demands for a more open market and for more favourable terms of trade.[11] Emperor Qianlong's well-known retort to British requests for more open terms of trade, which was addressed to King George III during Lord Macartney's embassy in 1796, summarised the Chinese position in unequivocal

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[10] Robert Fortune, *A Journey to the Tea Countries of China and India* [1852] (London: Mildmay, 1987) p. 21. Further references to this work will be abbreviated *JTC* with page references given parenthetically in the text.

[11] The Macartney trade embassy asked for the establishment of a permanent embassy in Beijing, the abolishment of the term 'barbarian' from official documents, and the abolishment of the edict that forbade foreigners from learning Mandarin. All of these requests were denied. China's refusal to establish a new trading partner at this point in history can be explained in terms of Qianlong's fear of overextending the Empire in light of the widespread violence and ethnic unrest in the Western provinces of China. The Amherst Embassy, on the other hand, was largely unsuccessful due to Lord Amherst's refusal to kowtow before the Emperor.

terms: 'We have never valued ingenious articles, nor do we have the slightest need of your country's manufactures.'

For many European merchants in China, Qianlong's refusal to accept European modernity functioned as 'proof' of Oriental vanity and backwardness, and justified a European civilising presence in China. Indeed, China had long been understood by Europe as a static civilisation, but increasingly during the nineteenth century, its stasis became a central trope for understanding European own sense of modernity, captured in Tennyson's lines from 'Locksley Hall' (1835):

> Not in vain the distance beacons. Forward, forward let us range, Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change.
>
> Thro' the shadow of the globe we sweep into the younger day; Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay.[12]

'A cycle of Cathay', then, epitomized China's indefinite, ageless status.[13] Edward Said has described this atemporalization of the East as part of the 'Orientalizing strategy' of the West: 'faced with the obvious decrepitude and political impotence of the modern Oriental, the European Orientalist found it his duty to rescue some portion of a lost, past classical Oriental grandeur in order to "facilitate ameliorations" in the present Orient'.[14]

David Porter has illustrated how Europe built up a 'discourse of commerce' in regard to China and the West during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Porter has elucidated the extent to which notions of free trade and images of circulation and restraint were key conceptual frameworks in European imaginings of China. By

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[12] Alfred Lord Tennyson, 'Locksley Hall,' in *Tennyson's Poetry: A Norton Critical Edition* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1971), pp. 94-100, lns 180-3.
[13] 'Cathay' is the Anglicized version of 'Catai', the name that was given to China by Marco Polo. The word 'Catai' derives from 'Khitan', the name of a tribe ruling predominantly in Northern China during Polo's visits.
[14] E. W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Routledge, 1978), p. 79.

examining writers such as Adam Smith, Defoe, Addison, and Lillo, Porter has shown that free trade was understood as a 'guarantor of social order and stability' and achieved a kind of 'axiomatic status with respect to civilized society'.[15] Porter states: 'the economic metaphors of circulation and blockage are systematically adapted from the commercial context to intellectual, linguistic, and social spheres.'[16] An example of this connection between the economic and the imaginative can be found in Defoe's proposition that 'circulation is the life of general commerce' or in his view of economic prosperity where he states that

> Men's Tastes, like all other Parts of Nature, require Variety and Change; the very Air we live by would be fatal, without a fresh Succession, and a new Circulation. No Part of the World can vie with the East-Indies, in the Variety and Goodness of its Product, and consequently no Trade can so well humour and satisfy the Pleasures of every Man's arbitrary state. Fashion and Custom, and indeed the Nature of Things, having fix'd and set a Value on the East-India Goods, they are become necessary to all the nations of Europe; and Men can be no more restrain'd from them, than they can from their Food and Raiment[17]

China, on the other hand, is continually aligned with 'imagery of obstruction, languor, and tedious monotony.'[18] In examining writings by late eighteenth-century observers of China such Henry Ellis and John Barrow, Porter shows that China was largely understood and described in terms of dullness and constraint and by evoking images of obstruction and blockage.

In his study of British naturalists in Qing China, Fan-ti Fan discusses the desire for facts among British botanical and natural scientific travellers in China in relation to

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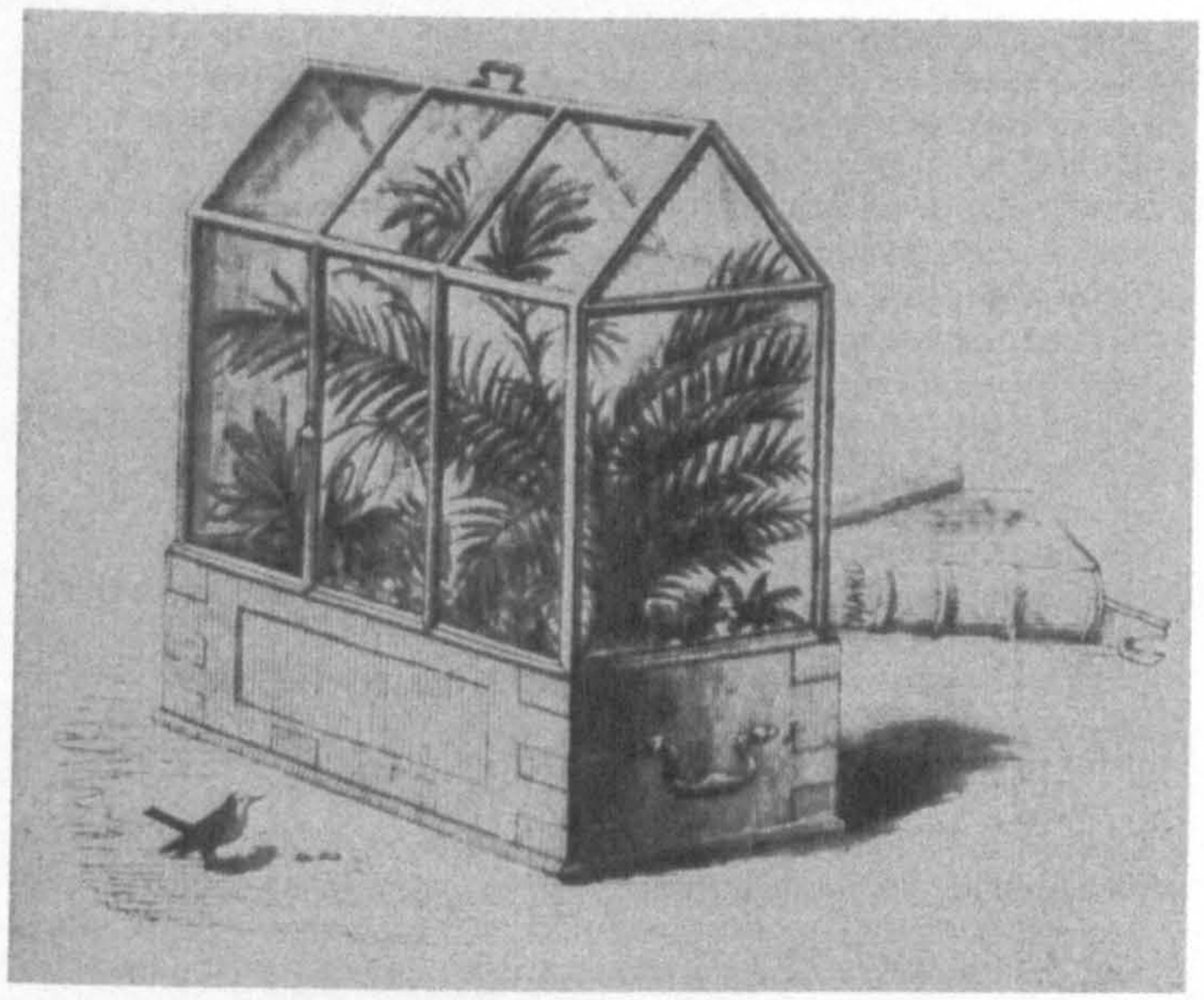
[15] David Porter. 'A Peculiar but Uninteresting Nation: China and the Discourse of Commerce in Eighteenth-Century England.' *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 33, 2 (2000), 181-99 (p. 185).
[16] Porter, 'A Peculiar but Uninteresting Nation.' p. 188.
[17] Daniel Defoe, *Some Considerations on the Nature and Importance of the East-India Trade* (London: John Clarke, 1728), 71-73.
[18] Porter, 'A Peculiar but Uninteresting Nation.' p. 188.

ideas that the Chinese were unable to grasp facts, and were often lost in a world of fantasy and myth. The West could be regarded as 'enlightened' and pursuing knowledge for a greater good, whereas the Chinese accumulated knowledge for 'jealous' purposes. The search for factual knowledge that is so prevalent in the writings of Fortune and other naturalists in China, according to Fan, could also provide a sense of epistemological authority: knowledge was useful and it would bring material benefits to everyone, including the Chinese. Fan is careful to place his argument within the 'informal' context of British imperialism, but nevertheless he makes the cogent point that the faith in the universal validity of factual knowledge instilled European natural scientists with the right to go beyond borders.[19]

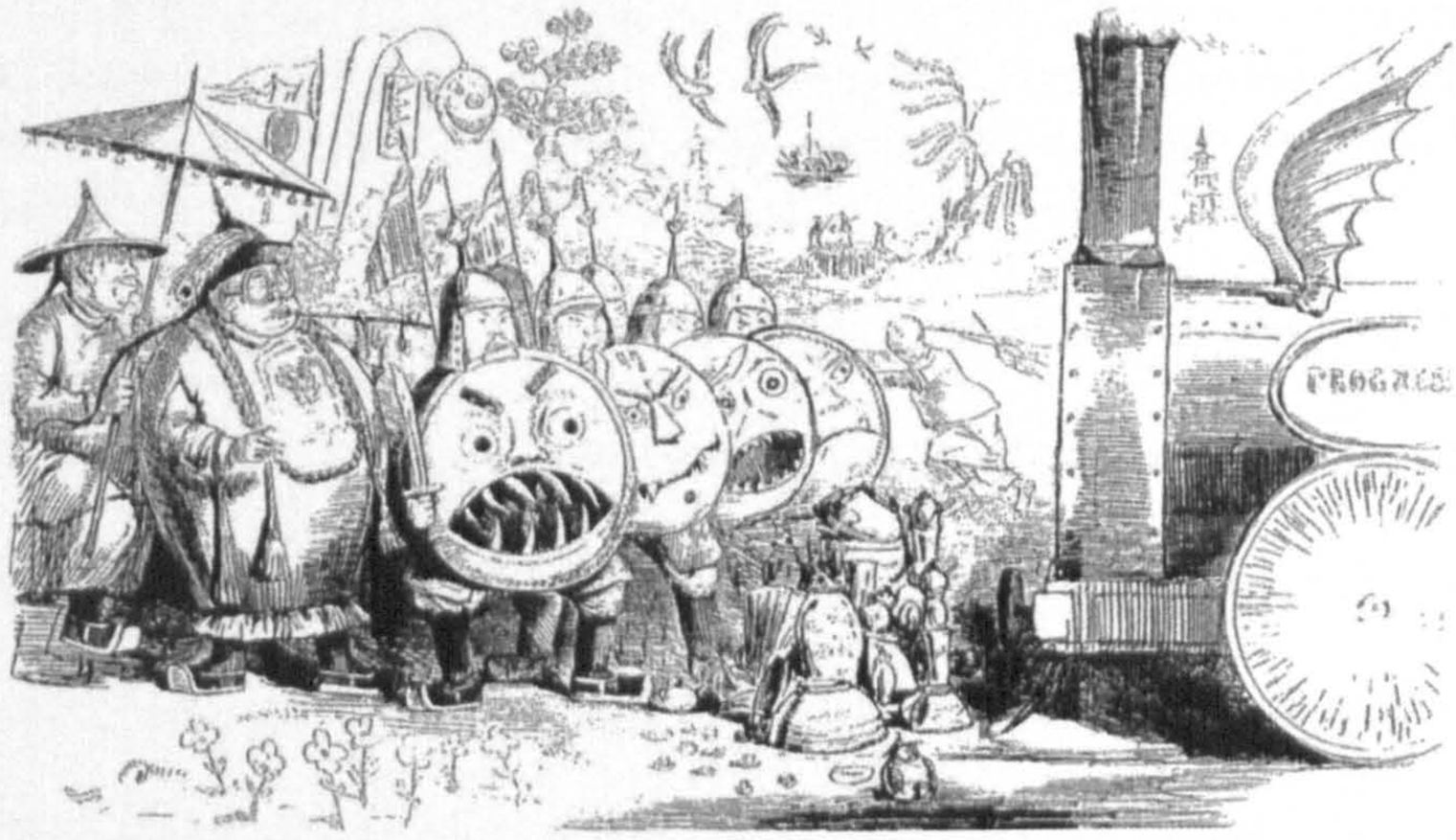
Such views of British imperialism, however, need to be coupled with the more obvious but nevertheless crucial point that Fortune, along with his fellow observers of the country, knew relatively little about China. Ignorance is certainly no excuse for imperialist, colonialist or racist ideas, but in the case of China, the lack of knowledge about the country created instability in beliefs as much as it created small mindedness and prejudice. It must be understood that in terms of travel writing, virtually no Europeans – not since the Jesuits of the seventeenth century – had described China's central provinces, let alone the western regions. Several texts on China that did exist were based on outdated sources. Fortune, along with other contemporary Western observers of China, still referred to Du Halde's *The General History of China* (1736) as an authority, a widely influential text of dubious historical accuracy that was translated from a French version that was based on early Spanish work that was itself composed from various seventeenth-

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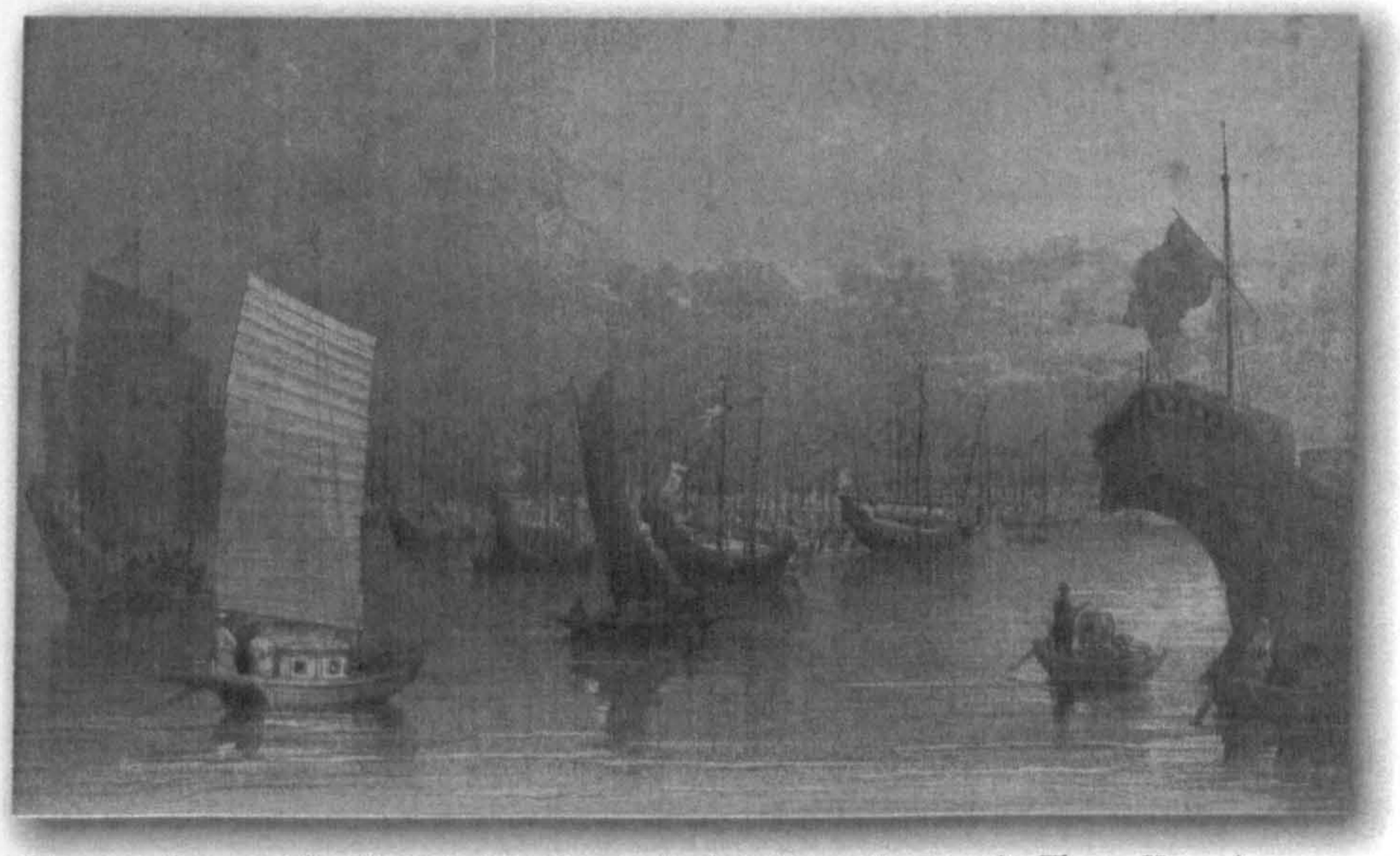
[19] Fan, *British Naturalists,* pp. 88-90.



The wardian case. The invention of this portable greenhouse in the 1830s revolutionised the transport of plants over long distances. Robert Fortune was the first botanist to successfully use the wardian case, allowing tea plants to be transported from China to India. From Donald P. McCracken, *Gardens of Empire: Botanical Institutions of the Victorian British Empire* (1997) , p. 104.



'China and England, Stoppage and Progress' *Punch* 3 September, 1885.



'Forest of masts' in Shanghai harbour. A plate from Fortune's *Three Years' Wandering* (1847).

century Jesuit sources. New major works of Sinology that were being published – works such as Samuel Wells Williams's *The Middle Kingdom* (1848), or Walter Medhurst's *China and its Prospects* (1838) – were not written in China, but within the treaty ports, Malacca, or Macau. Chinese literature in English translation was minimal and Chinese/English dictionaries and Mandarin language primers were crude and limited.

Even one of the West's foremost experts on China, Walter Medhurst, acknowledged the lack of understanding that existed between the West and China:

> The Chinese have a proverb, that he who judges of the circumstances of others, without a thorough acquaintance with them, is like a man at the bottom of a well, attempting to form an opinion of the heavens. It is to be feared, that the Chinese have been at the bottom of a well, with regard to foreigners, and that we are not unfrequently at the bottom of a well, with regard to them.[20]

Even after the First Opium War when travel restrictions were beginning to loosen, the vast majority of foreigners did their business on the coast and stayed there. Frustrated by their continual marginalisation, and limited in what they could see or do, many British travellers in China during this period also lacked the conceptual framework through which to understand China's cultural differences, and so all too easily fell into crude stereotypes.

Historical work has shown that Chinese accounts of the British were similarly distorted. Lin Zexu's letter written to Queen Victoria, which was later printed in the *Times*, provides an interesting Chinese perspective. There remains some question of whether or not Queen Victoria ever read the letter, but it certainly was well known to a wider audience. Written in high Confucian style, Lin asks:

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[20] Walter Henry Medhurst, *China; Its State and Prospects, with Especial Reference to the Spread of the Gospel; Containing Allusions to the Antiquity, Extent, Population, Civilisation, Literature and Religion of the Chinese* (London: Crocker & Brewster, 1838), p. 99.

> Let me ask, where is your conscience? I have heard that the smoking of opium is very strictly forbidden by your country; that is because the harm caused by opium is clearly understood. Since it is not permitted to do harm to your own country, even less should you let the harm be passed on to other countries – much less to China! Of all that China exports to foreign countries, there is not one single thing that is not beneficial to people; they are beneficial when eaten, or of benefit when used, or of benefit when resold; all are beneficial. Is there a single article from China that has done any harm to foreign countries? Take tea and rhubarb for example; the foreign countries could not get along for a single day without them.[21]

Lin's appeal to a moral sense of responsibility would have been hard to ignore; however, his letter reveals certain misunderstandings on behalf of the Chinese that may have detracted from its intended effect. Although it should be acknowledged that rhubarb and magnesia was used sometimes as a Victorian remedy, Lin's belief that foreign countries could not get along for a single day without rhubarb is overstated. Lin also makes the mistake of believing that opium was illegal in Britain, when of course, this was not the case (in Britain opium was sold in the form of laudanum).

Lin's high moral tone and his misunderstandings about the West can be understood in relation to a larger conservative trend in Chinese administration during the early half of the nineteenth century. In a special edition of *Renditions*, dedicated to Chinese perceptions of the West, editor Eva Hung writes:

> Even after the fiasco of the opium war, when both the existence and military strength of the foreign powers were beyond a doubt, the traditional frame of reference still held sway: however formidable Western technology was, there was no question that China was culturally and morally superior. The majority of government officials who achieved their status through the civil service exams – the elite 'pure stream' 清流 [*qing liu*]– held particularly fiercely to this belief.[22]

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[21] Qtd. in William Theodore De Bary et al., *Sources of Chinese Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 203.

[22] Eva Hung. 'Preface.' *Renditions: A Chinese-English Translation Magazine* 53-54, Chinese Impressions of the West (2000), v - vii (p. vi).

Early to mid nineteenth-century scholarly writings on the West reveal a number of biases and occasionally express wild misunderstandings. Wei Yuan's *Illustrated World Geography* (1842), and *A Short Account of Britain* (1843) which was based on an interview conducted with a captured British soldier, are a case in point. Wei writes:

> I have heard that westerners can extract eight ounces of sterling silver from every hundred pounds of Chinese lead they buy. After the refining process the remaining ninety-two pounds of lead can be sold at its original price. But for the silver to be usable the eyes of a Chinese person have to be added in the process; westerner's eyes are of no use … This is the same as opium addiction; only the Chinese, and not westerners, are susceptible.[23]

Along with such fearful anti-Western propaganda, much more accurate and balanced information about the West was also emerging. Of particular importance was Xu Jiyu's *A Concise World Geography*, which was published in ten volumes in 1848 and contains few distortions, serving as one of the most important nineteenth-century Chinese geographical and historical references on the West. Chinese understandings of the West then, were undergoing a transformation, just as Western views of China would radically change as more documentation, translation, and travel writing emerged during the later half of the century.

Keeping this context in mind, Fortune's texts reveal a complex and unfolding imaginative and material engagement with China – one that cannot be simply assessed in terms of either complicity or resistance to empire. While China was viewed as a static society unable or unwilling to progress, it could also be understood as having cultural integrity, philosophical richness, and to use the words of Medhurst, 'superior polish'.

Indeed, as some of China's more positive traits were recognised, the country could

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[23] Yuan Wei, 'Selections from 'an Illustrated World Geography (海國圖至)' ' in *Renditions: A Chinese-English Translation Magazine*, ed. Eva Hung, et al (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong: Centre for Translation Projects, 2000), 14-8 (p. 17).

function as a foil for the West's fears of cultural disintegration and corruption. Nigel Leask writes:

> The metaphorical structure of temporalization worked in both directions: in a period of massive historical nostalgia in Europe it was very far from being simply a mechanism for denigrating the 'antique' in relation to 'the modern'. Classical or feudal tropes frequently served to highlight the corruption or social disaggregation of the traveller's own native modernity when applied to 'antique lands', as well as (in a more familiar imperialist vision) privileging that modernity in relation to Oriental stasis and 'underdevelopment'.[24]

Even in the above quoted Tennyson's poem there is a certain hesitation that cannot be overlooked. Referring to the far away 'summer isles of Eden,' Tennyson's narrator pauses to consider the possibility of escape, the notion of a better and freer world: 'There methinks would be enjoyment more than in this march of mind, / In the steamship, in the railway, in the thoughts that shake mankind' (165-6).

The Emperor Qianlong's view that Britain's innovations were merely 'ingenious articles' and that China had no need for European commodities could be interpreted as 'vanity,' but it could also remind Britain of its own economic vulnerability and, to use Leask's terminology, 'social disaggregation'. It appeared that China was not participating in the 'march of the mind,' and nor did it want to. While at the same time, England was industrializing at a social and environmental cost. In Victorian Britain, foreign goods became more available and more conspicuous; the age of progress was also an age characterized by a fear that luxury would lead to corruption, and that the centre would not hold. The outbreak of the Opium War only served to remind Britons how their reliance on luxurious consumption and foreign commodities was morally dubious. The question of opium and the conflict with China served as anxious reminders of Britain's own sense

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[24] Nigel Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 1770-1840: 'from an Antique Land'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 49-50.

of moral stagnation, corruption, as well as its own increasingly fraught foreign connections and shifting imperial geographies.

As a plant collector and a botanist, Fortune is an easy target for critics arguing that the project of natural science was complicit with the larger forces of European imperialism. Indeed, botanists and natural scientific travellers have received their fair share of scorn in cultural and literary studies of British imperialism. Much of theoretical framework for conventional literary critical interpretations of natural scientific travel writing was laid out in Pratt's study that drew attention to the imaginative 'mapping' of the world through natural scientific exploration during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. From Pratt's perspective natural scientific collection was an act of appropriation: 'Natural history extracted specimens not only from their organic or ecological relations with each other, but also from their places in other peoples' economies, histories, social and symbolic systems.'[25] Thurin shares this view, and describes Fortune's collecting in terms of appropriation. 'In Fortune's case,' writes Thurin, 'occupation and acculturation collude in the business of empire.' Fortune's 'realistic' descriptions of the country, according to Thurin, can be viewed as an attempt to 'rob it of its aura'.[26]

Yet such an interpretation of Fortune's 'gathering' of plants fails to fully address the historical context of exchange in China, where collecting plant and animal specimens was often a business – indeed, one where Europeans did not always have the upper hand.

Fortune, like other early botanists in China, often purchased his plants from dealers,

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[25] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 31.
[26] Thurin, *Victorian Travelers,* p. 29.

markets or local gardening syndicates; in fact, in many cases he appeared to have paid too much. Pratt's idea of a 'contact zone' offers a way of thinking about the complex interface between cultures, and the ways in which colonial subjects were created and managed, not through simple terms of conquest or domination, but rather in terms of negotiation and interaction. According to Pratt's model, the chips were often stacked in favour of the Westerner, or in other words, 'within radically asymmetrical relations of power'.[27] In the case of China, this would not always be the case, and one must not assume that the Chinese were the passive victims of Western cunning; in fact, it is just as likely that many of the people Fortune dealt with were quite business savvy and even willing to play on Fortune's weaknesses. As in any functioning and competitive economic system, there would have no doubt been a tendency to take advantage of newcomers or outsiders.

Historical work in comparative economics has shown how from at least the sixteenth century onwards China's tribute system allowed for a relatively centralised and controlled system of international trade, which was stabilised and supported by a vast accumulation of precious metals. Andre Gunder Frank has illustrated that China's export economy of silk, porcelain, cotton and tea functioned as a 'sink' for silver, and concludes that the world economy was Sinocentric before the nineteenth century.[28] Such a historical interpretation of a world economic system posited by Frank and others challenges us to reconsider the imaginative geographies of empire that are so often evoked in travel writing studies and literary critical examinations of colonial history. Notions of centre

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[27] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes,* p. 7.
[28] See Andre Gunder Frank, *Reorient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (London: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 108-117.

and periphery, metropole and margin, need to be re-configured within the historical context of highly populated and economically sophisticated China, especially on the south coast and Peal River delta. Frank notes that by 1800 Canton (now Guangzhou) and its neighbouring city Foshan had a million and a half residents between them, a population that equals the urban population of all of Western Europe put together.[29]

Although conventional histories often mark the decline of China and the rise of the West during the beginning of nineteenth century, neat markers of paradigm shifts have to be treated cautiously. Despite the coercive use of military power during the war of 1839 to1842, and although the trade imbalance between Britain and China was being redressed by the import of Indian-grown opium, European interests were by no means stable or secure in China during Fortune's time. According to J.Y. Wong, China maintained an export surplus well into the mid-nineteenth century. For example, in 1854 the trade imbalance was over £8 million sterling, as the value of British exports to China was 91 percent of that of the imports from China.[30] Clearly Britain needed China more than China needed Britain: for example, in Canton sales of tea to Britain consisted of less than 15 percent of the annual crop.[31]

In particular, the British economy required a steady flow of relatively inexpensive tea, almost all of which was exported from China. During the 1850s Chinese imports represented only eight percent of the total UK import market, but tea was particularly important because of the tea duty that was leveraged in Britain. From 1835 to 1858, the

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[29] Frank, *Reorient,* p. 109.
[30] J. Y. Wong, *Deadly Dreams: Opium, Imperialism and the Arrow War (1856-1860) in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 335.
[31] Kate Teltscher, *The High Road to China: George Bogle, the Panchen Lama and the First British Expedition to Tibet* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), p. 4.

tea duty represented twenty one percent of the total UK customs dues, which was approximately nine percent of the total gross UK revenues.[32] To put this in perspective, the annual amount leveraged from tea duties alone could almost sustain the Royal Navy for the year.[33]

Such a re-consideration of economic history, I would argue, betokens a reinterpretation of cultural representations and their political and ideological leanings. Fortune's work on tea plants had very real economic and indeed imperial significance, yet gaining access to the tea, silk and porcelain markets in China was no simple matter. The southern coast of China was a global centre of world exchange – a fiercely competitive place where Fortune and other European merchants and travellers would have had relatively limited agency. Fortune's lack of agency and vulnerability is reflected by the simple fact that during his travels, he is swindled by plant dealers, attacked by pirates twice, and robbed of his possessions on a few occasions. While Fortune sometimes uses these conflicts in order to bolster his image as a brave European adventurer, occasionally likening himself to a hero out of a novel by Sir Walter Scott, at other times his vulnerability is laid bare.

Consider the following episode where Fortune describes a journey up the coast of Fujian province. Fifty miles north of Amoy (now Xiamen) Fortune's ship sets anchor near a place called Chimoo Bay. Desiring to go ashore, Fortune is told by people on the ship that the area is inhabited by 'an independent and lawless race' of opium traders, but despite these warnings he decides to send his servant to collect some plants (*TYW*, p. 50).

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[32] Wong, *Deadly Dreams,* p. 346, p. 349.
[33] Wong, *Deadly Dreams,* p. 350.

Despite instructions to go inland, his servant returns with a few plants that were obviously taken from the landing place on the shore. Fortune writes:

> I felt much annoyed by this, and scolding him pretty sharply for his conduct; but he excused himself by saying, that he durst not go in the direction to which I had pointed, as he would have been beaten and robbed by the Chinchew men. This I did not believe at the time, and imagined that it was laziness on his part … I therefore determined to set out myself on the day following, and give him the treat of a long walk for his misconduct. (*TYW*, p. 56)

Fortune continues his story by recounting how others on the boat pleaded with him to avoid going ashore because of the dangerous Chinchew men, but he insists on going ahead. After a brief period of collecting plants and interacting with curious villagers, he is surrounded by a group of people whom Fortune suspects as having bad intentions. At last, the men pull out knives and start to extract objects from his pockets. Running from the men, Fortune becomes separated from his servant, but eventually finds him surrounded by a pack of thieves,

> My servant was pale with fright when I reached him, and very much excited; nor did he fail to remind me of all he had said the day before. I felt there was no denying we were in dangerous company. (*TYW*, p. 57)

Fortune clearly takes some pleasure in taking himself down a notch, as he exposes the folly of his earlier distrust for his servant. One hundred pages later, Fortune is robbed again, and once again a local person warns him – this time a Chinese soldier – not to go any further. The result is, again, described in anti-heroic terms and he is forced to return home completely deprived of his money and almost all of his clothes, without even an umbrella or hat to protect him against the glaring sun (*TYW*, pp. 159-60).

Thurin draws attention to Fortune's class background and suggests that his relatively low social position in Britain is reflected in his treatment of the Chinese people

he encounters, where he often assumes the arrogant tone of a colonial master.[34] While it is true that Fortune occasionally deals harshly with his servants, one must not assume that an upper-class traveller would have behaved any better. Furthermore, the above incident illustrates that Fortune's control over his servants and his high-handed attitude was not always consistent or effective. While stories of piracy and robbery were not uncommon in travel writing on China and were sometimes used to show the indignities that Europeans suffered or functioned as proof of China's lawlessness and ineffective government, it is also clear in Fortune's writing that he was robbed because of his own folly and inability to read the situation properly. Fortune's mishaps, therefore, expose his relative lack of knowledge and his highly visible and precarious position on the periphery of a closed economic and social order.

According to Fortune, Chinese people in the south are particularly villainous, and the reason for this, he suggests, has to do with environmental factors. In *Three Years' Wandering* he discusses the differences between the northern temperate zones of China and the southern tropical regions, concluding that the north is less subject to the excesses of heat and cold, and is therefore more suitable for Europeans and Americans (*TYW*, p. 279). It is worth noting here that 'north' has a relatively limited meaning, as Shanghai was the northern limit of foreign trade during this period. According to Fortune the natives in the tropical south are 'nothing less than thieves and pirates' while those in the north are relatively 'quiet, civil and obliging' (*TYW*, p. 10). Such dualisms in describing tropical and temperate characteristics were not uncommon in the nineteenth century. Peter Hulme has demonstrated how such binary ethnographic categories in the Caribbean

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[34] Thurin, *Victorian Travelers,* p. 48.

and Pacific delineated people as either innately warlike or peaceful. Hulme writes: 'Although offered as ethnographic descriptions, these divisions in fact represent differential indigenous responses to European presence, and frequently they act as self-fulfilling from the describer's perspective'.[35]

There is certainly reason to believe that Chinese in the south would have had reasons to act harshly or even violently towards foreigners. During Fortune's day, Chinese perceptions of the British, especially near the city of Canton, were at an all time low. Wong describes the British crowd in Hong Kong and Canton as primarily consisting of reckless merchants, drunken soldiers and thugs, a group that was often 'exceptionally aggressive and bellicose'.[36] During the early 1840s British soldiers were accused of raping local Chinese women, and there was another well-known case when soldiers apparently opened tombs to view how Chinese embalmed their dead. Stories of foreign barbarity and indignities spread rapidly amongst the Chinese. Local Cantonese men formed anti- foreign militias, and the city of Canton was closed to foreigners. The situation only worsened when merchants insisted on gaining access to the city, and on a few occasions attempted to force their way into the city brandishing pistols. These conflicts put strains on relations between merchants and colonial administrators who were increasingly becoming distressed about political backlash and the possibility of rebellion.[37]

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[35] Peter Hulme, 'Dominica and Tahiti: Tropical Islands Compared,' in *Tropical Visions in an Age of Empire*, ed. Felix Driver and Luciana Martins (London: University of Chicago Press, 2005) pp. 77-90 (p.80).
[36] Wong, *Deadly Dreams,* p. 67.
[37] On the causes and responses to the closure of Canton city see Wong, *Deadly Dreams,* pp. 129 – 30.

Landscape, Growth and Colonial Discourse

Such a tense social scene is apparent in Fortune's ambivalent descriptions of the colonial landscape. In *A Journey to the Tea Countries*, Fortune describes Hong Kong as a new and thriving colony, where planted trees and shrubs grow luxuriantly, and where gardens create picturesque views. Private gardens contain the best and most beautiful plants found in China and some are even imported from India. He describes how 'many of the inhabitants have taken up the matter with great spirit, and have planted all the grounds near their houses' (*JTC*, p.5). Chinese banyan trees, imported from elsewhere in the country, 'grow rapidly with little care' (*JTC*, p. 6). Indian rubber trees are noted as succeeding well. Chinese cinnamon plants flourish, as do the coconut trees brought over from the Straits. He describes the fruit trees as 'all succeeding as well as could be expected, considering the short time they have been planted' (*JTC*, p. 7). The *Pinus sinensis*, a plant that is 'badly treated by the natives', is now allowed to 'show itself in its natural beauty, with its fine green foliage reaching to the ground' (*JTC*, p. 8). Flowers, particularly orchids, 'thrive well and are almost always in bloom' (*JTC*, p. 9).

With their associated connotations of cultivation, reason, and progress these foreign gardens could provide a symbolic framework through which British imperial and commercial efforts could be understood. Later, in Fortune's initial impressions of Shanghai, botanical and capitalist imagery merge in the image of 'the forest of masts' of 'goodly foreign ships' (*JTC*, p. 12). The town is of considerable size and has all but replaced the 'wretched Chinese hovels, tombs, and cotton-fields' of his first visit (*JTC*, p. 13). Fortune describes the Chinese as 'moving gradually backwards into the country . . .

reminding one of the aborigines of the West.' He then qualifies his statements by observing an 'important difference that the Chinese generally left of their free will and were liberally remunerated for their property by the foreigners' (*JTC*, p. 13). The displacement of the Chinese is intensified by the image of the former residents slowly removing all of their effects, as well as 'the bodies of their deceased friends, which are commonly interred on private property near their houses.' Fortune further elaborates:

> Hence it was no uncommon thing to meet several coffins being borne by coolies or friends westward. In many instances when the coffins were uncovered they were found totally decayed, and it was impossible to remove them. When this was the case, a Chinese might be seen holding a book in hand, which contained a list of the bones, and directing others in their search after these last remnants of mortality. (*JTC*, p. 13)

The image of Europeans planting garden sanctuaries while the Chinese exhume the remains of their ancestors creates a startling and uncanny image of dispossession and of the soil being cleared for new growth. The image of the Chinese carrying the coffins away clearly outlines boundaries between radically different social rituals and values; but from a colonizing perspective, it is also an image of China in its most heathen and corrupted form, blindly adherent to a cumbrous and decaying past and bound by the rigid authority of ancient laws. The image of the retreating Chinese residents of Shanghai conforms to a larger colonialist narrative of China's inevitable decline. Fortune, like many other contemporary observers of China, viewed China as a once great civilisation that was now tragically in a state of decay. He writes:

> There can be no doubt that the Chinese arrived at its highest state of perfection many years ago; and since then it has rather been retrograding than advancing. Many northern cities, evidently once in the most flourishing condition, are now in a state of decay, or in ruins; the pagodas which crown the distant hills, are crumbling to pieces, and apparently are seldom repaired; the spacious temples are no longer as used as they used to be in former days … It is very true that these are heathen temples, and the good in every land will hail with delight the day when

> these shall give way to others which shall be erected to the true God; but nevertheless such is the fact, that these places are not supported as they used to be: and from this I conclude that the Chinese, as a nation, are retrograding rather than advancing. (*TYW*, p. 9)

Here the decay is set up against the idea of new growth, retrogression against progress.

This pattern, of course, is an all too familiar form of colonialist discourse, similar to the 'fatal impact narrative' that can be seen in other geographical locations. From this simplified view of history, China's certain decline could be viewed as a justification for the civilising mission in China, which during the mid-nineteenth century began to build momentum.

However, in other ways the future of colonial life in Hong Kong was less than certain. Fortune's descriptions of salubrious growth in the colony are troubled by the harsh reality of disease, death and moral corruption amongst the colonists. While China could provide a fertile ground for colonial development, its tropical character could also paradoxically take life away. Fortune remarks on the serious health problems on the island. Soldiers, he notes, were taking ill and dying in the hundreds.[38] Along with physical decline came a sense of social and moral degeneration:

> Since the island of Hong-kong has been ceded to England, the foreign population in it has much been changed. In former days there were only a few mercantile establishments, all known to each other, and generally most upright and

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[38] Robert Martin, a British government official, reported that African and West Indian fevers in Hong Kong were endemic, causing 1526 soldiers stationed there in 1844 to visit the hospital 7893 times (an average of five visits per soldier). According to Martin's report, in one year there were 440 deaths out of the total soldier population, a ratio of 1.3/5. Although he suggests that the illnesses may have been be related to rainfall, drainage, and Hong Kong's geological features, he concludes that there was 'no apparent cause for the disease.' Robert Montgomery Martin, *Reports, Minutes and Dispatches, on the British Position and Prospects in China.* Unpublished, 1846), p. 7. This item is available at the Canterbury Cathedral Library, in Canterbury, UK.

> honourable men. Now people from all countries, from England to Sydney, flock to the Celestial country, and form a very motley group. (*TYW*, p. 17)

Other contemporary accounts of Hong Kong and the newly built town of Victoria are less guarded. An American writer, Osmond Tiffany, wrote:

> The Chinese suffered many indignities at Hong Kong; no doubt the rascally natives deserved punishment often, and were only kept in check by the strong arm of power; but the worthless adventurers of the town took every occasion to disgust the Chinese, and did not even spare any portion of its better inhabitants. Scapegoats and scoundrels from the purlieus of London, creatures that only missed Botany Bay by good fortune, were to be found in the town of Victoria, lording it over the natives, many of whom were more respectable and respected than they had ever been or ever could be.[39]

In such accounts, Hong Kong is described as a fraught terrain over which fears of moral degeneration conflict with colonial certitude, and the categories of 'civilised' and 'savage' are at risk of being overturned.[40] Indeed, such impressions of Hong Kong reveal that for many Western observers, British behaviour on the China coast was less than admirable.

Fortune's travel writing reveals the insecure dimension to colonialist understandings of the land, and is often strained by opposing ideas of viewing and of being viewed. In his observation of a church cemetery in Shanghai, Fortune suggests that the colonists may be able to learn from the Chinese. He remarks that 'in the course of good time we may perhaps take a lesson from the Chinese, and render this place a more pleasing object than at present.' He continues:

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[39] Osmond Tiffany, *The Canton Chinese, or the American's Sojourn in the Celestial Empire* (Boston: James Monroe, 1849), p. 257.

[40] More insights into the social scene of Hong Kong appear in Martin's report where he states that out of a population of 12, 361 inhabitants in Hong Kong in 1844, there were only 1,000 women. The census included 'ninety-seven women slaves, and female attendants and thirty-one brothels, eight gambling-houses, and twenty opium shops' (Martin, *Reports, Minutes and Dispatches,* p. 13).

> Were it properly laid out with good walks, and planted with weeping willows, cypresses, pines, and other trees of an ornamental and appropriate kind, it would tend to raise us in the eyes of a people who of all nations are most particular in their attention to the graves of the dead. (*JTC,* p. 14)

Landscape improvement in this sense, runs both ways, and his sensitivity to what the Chinese might think of these European landscapes reveals a fundamental nervousness in the idea of settlement. Such instances reveal that Fortune was not only interested in observing the Chinese, but was also concerned with in the ways in which Europeans were in turn being watched and scrutinised by the Chinese.

Disguise and Botanical Espionage: Fortune's Travels Beyond the Treaty Ports

Throughout his writing, Fortune appears sensitive to, and in many ways intrigued by, the fact that Britain would need to maintain appearances in order to counteract the widespread Chinese belief that Westerners were 'barbarians'. While there is historical evidence to show that many Chinese did, in fact, use the term to refer to non-Chinese visitors, the idea of being perceived as a 'barbarian' could serve different functions in colonialist writings. In one sense, it could serve as proof of incorrigible Chinese vanity. This is clear from a number of colonialist records, including the Treaty of Nanjing, which stipulated that the term be changed in official and diplomatic correspondence. In another way, however, the idea of being watched and scrutinised by local Chinese terms might serve a textual function, creating a self-reflexive, and in some ways a satirical space where different cultural norms, manners, and ideas could be explored.

In Fortune's writing, clothes and codes of fashion become important ways of exploring questions of cultural relativism and cross-cultural perception. While his

outward gaze searched the landscape, judging its suitable aesthetic value, his wandering view of China would often come back to himself.

Fortune was certainly not the first to be interested in Chinese clothes. China has a unique history of cultural cross-dressing, as the fascination with Chinese clothes and material culture goes back several centuries. Since perhaps as far back as Marco Polo, Europeans have been fascinated with Chinese clothes and fashion. Prominent examples of books with visual images of Chinese fashion were Du Halde's influential and widely read *General History of China* (1726) and then later William Alexander's *Costumes of China* (1805). This admiration for 'things Chinese' clearly set China apart from other non-European colonial locations where European codes of fashion and domesticity were often symbolically linked with the conversion of indigenous peoples. In the context of the South Pacific, Rod Edmond has discussed how missionary interest in clothes and clothes-making reconciled competing narratives about the status of the civilising mission. Wearing European-style clothes and living in European style houses, in this context, became the visible index of Christianity and civilisation.[41] Anna Johnston has also remarked on how European missionaries in the South Pacific attached importance to clothes, pointing out, for example, how missionaries forced indigenous women to wear European style bonnets.[42]

In some ways the opposite would be true in the context of China. Appealing to this exotic interest in Chinese material culture, Fortune adopts a Chinese appearance and performs local social customs in order to blend in. His disguise certainly had a practical

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41 Rod Edmond, *Representing the South Pacific: Colonial Discourse from Cook to Gauguin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 111.
42 Anna Johnston, *Missionary Writing and Empire, 1800-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 147-54.

purpose. Wearing the appropriate clothes, and even shaving one's head in accordance to the custom at the time, was a common practice for travellers and missionaries who sought to venture into areas beyond the allowable day's journey from the treaty ports. Early Jesuit missionaries adopted the dress of Confucian scholars, and nineteenth-century British travellers and missionaries such as Walter Medhurst, Hudson Taylor, and Robert Morrison also wore local clothes when they travelled in China.

Aside from any practical reasons, Fortune's descriptions of his Chinese costume clearly provided a performance for home readers. According to his own account, he was able to pass himself off as a traveller from 'beyond the Great Wall':

> My head was shaved, I had a splendid wig and tail. Of which some Chinaman in former days had doubtless been extremely vain, and upon the whole I believe I made a pretty fair Chinaman. Although the Chinese countenance and eye differ considerably from those of a native Europe, yet a traveller in the north has far greater chance of escaping the detection than in the south of China, the features of the northern natives approaching more nearly to those of Europeans than they do in the south, and the difference among themselves also being greater. (*TYW*, pp. 252-3).

It may be hard to believe that a white Scottish man would be able to successfully disguise himself within China in the way that Fortune describes, but there might be some credence to his story if we consider that Fortune travelled at time when most people outside of the treaty ports would have never seen a European before. Fortune may have also been viewed as member of a minority group, perhaps as a Kazak or Uygur from the north of China whose features are more akin to Europeans. His inability to speak with locals would not necessarily have compromised his disguise, given that people in the south of China spoke Cantonese, and Fortune was posing as a traveller from the north where most people would have spoken Mandarin.

Elizabeth Chang's recent essay on the travels of Walter Medhurst (1796-1857) in China offers a particularly insightful way of reading Fortune's disguise. Medhurst was a prominent missionary who wrote extensively on China, and Fortune refers to his works throughout his writing. Medhurst also describes himself as travelling in disguise, and his travel writing needs to be viewed in a close intertextual relationship with Fortune's.

Medhurst's *A Glance at the Interior of China Obtained During a Journey to the Silk and Green Tea Countries* (1850) was published three years after Fortune's first book and two years before his second, and similarly describes an undercover foreigner trying to pass in China. 'In order to accomplish a journey into the interior of China,' Medhurst writes that

> it is necessary, if the individual undertaking it be a foreigner, to assume the Chinese dress, to shave the front part of the head and temples, and to wear what is commonly called a tail. The traveller should also be able to converse readily in the Chinese language; and conform himself, as much as possible, to the habits and manners of the natives.[43]

Clearly, Fortune looked to Medhurst as an authority and followed his advice on wearing Chinese clothes and adapting to local customs. For Chang, the travel writings of Medhurst and Fortune reveal a common concern with visuality and larger insights into Victorian society. Referring to the use of visual rhetorical devices, Chang contends that the travels of Medhurst and Fortune suggest 'a radically alternative visual aesthetic to the European tradition.' Chang writes: '[Medhurst's] narrative, full of inspections, looks, gazes, stares, peeps, as well as, of course, the "glance" of the title, offers us an opportunity to engage with the debate about nineteenth-century visuality in Victorian

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[43] Qtd. in Elizabeth Chang, 'Converting Chinese Eyes: Rev. W.H. Medhurst, "Passing," and the Victorian Vision of China', in Douglas Kerr and Julia Kuehn, eds., *A Century of Travels in China: Critical Essays on Travel Writing from the 1840s to the 1940s* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007), pp. 27-38 (p.27).

terms.'[44] She goes on to relate the use of visual rhetoric to 'contested acts of division and exchange between the two empires':

> While scarcely a handful of Victorians were following Medhurst in adopting a complete Chinese *habitus*, millions were taking on some sign or symbol of China in the china cabinets, wardrobes, tea tables, and beyond. I argue that these acts must be read on a continuum – placing a piece of blue and white china upon the mantelpiece carried, in however small a way, the same mental accommodation to a uniquely foreign aesthetic as Medhurst's complicated self-transformation. Both acts make meaning from a concurrent delineation and erasure of difference – the china plate is at once exotic and domestic, Medhurst's body is both English and Chinese.[45]

While discussing the display of porcelain in relation to such missionary writing on China might appear somewhat incongruous, Chang's examination of Medhurst's travel writing in terms of its connection with domestic space in Britain is nevertheless highly suggestive. The crucial point here is that during the nineteenth century, China could be a place of transformation, not simply a site where European fears or ambitions or colonial designs could be inscribed.

As Britons saw their homes become more 'Chinese', the exotic performance of Chinese domestic habits may have had a particular appeal and resonance. For example, the idea of controlling chopsticks seemed to be a point of fascination for Victorians. Consider Geraldine Guinness's description of Robert Morrison,[46] the first British Protestant missionary in China, written in 1893:

> Picture him then, as winter drew on, settled with his Chinese servants in the narrow quarters he had furnished with a few coarse articles for daily use; dressed just like the natives in cotton gown and thick-soled shoes, with a braided queue

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[44] Chang, 'Converting Chinese Eyes', p. 29.
[45] Chang, 'Converting Chinese Eyes', p. 30.
[46] Morrison arrived in China in 1809, and later went on to be the first to translate the Bible into Chinese.

> and long tapering nails; living on native food prepared in native style, and already quite adept in the use of chopsticks.[47]

Along with all of the other visual trappings, using chopsticks is a true indicator of cultural assimilation. Fortune similarly provides glimpses into the Chinese domestic scene. He describes numerous instances of tea drinking, pipe smoking, and even describes how Chinese people clean themselves with hot towels after eating. Such descriptions of local habits might be familiar enough in travel writing, but Fortune's interest in reporting these everyday domestic customs could also reveal a larger Victorian preoccupation with Chinese counter-civility.

Not surprisingly, chopsticks play a prominent role in Fortune's writing. Early into his second book he comments on how 'I had not eaten with chop-sticks for three years, and I had not confidence in my talents to use them' (*JTC*, p. 42). He therefore misses dinner:

> As it was quite certain that I should draw the attention of the Chinamen upon me, for nothing would astonish them so much as a person using chop-sticks in an awkward manner. I was therefore obliged, reluctantly I confess, to abandon all ideas of a dinner on that day. (*JTC*, p. 42)

The next day he finds that he 'had not quite forgotten the art of eating with these highly-civilised instruments' and he is so hungry anyway that he finds himself 'disregarding the presence of the Chinese' (*JTC*, p. 47). There is an arch tone throughout this passage, and the comedy is not lost on Fortune who describes the incident as giving some 'uneasiness' at the time, but then providing 'a good laugh' in retrospect (*JTC*, pp. 41-2). Such incidents were clearly intended to offer Victorians an insider's view on the 'real' China. According to Thurin, Fortune's use of disguise was not only a means by which he could

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[47] Geraldine Guinness, *The Story of the China Inland Mission.* vol. I, (London, 1893), p. 25.

achieve his goal of commercial espionage, but also a way by which he could assert his control and deceive the local Chinese:

> Fortune's 'transvestism' is a kind of traveller's game with a number of implications, including an abhorrence of being a 'typical tourist' and a desire to deceive the 'natives' by appearing to be one of them. As a method of controlling unfamiliar situations, disguise provides the traveller with a sense of security. Fortune's thrill in passing as someone else is linked to his sense that it privileges him to go 'where no Englishman' has ever been.[48]

Fortune clearly takes pleasure in his trickery and deception and in going where, by his own account, no Englishman has ever been. It must be said, however, that Fortune does not simply enjoy tricking the 'natives' but also the opportunity of deceiving Europeans as well. Consider the following passage where, upon returning to Shanghai after his trip to Suzhou and Hangzhou, he remains in his Chinese clothes, and surprises his friend:

> When I arrived, I was obliged to go on shore in my Chinese dress, as the English one had been stolen by my midnight visitor. The disguise, however, was so complete, that I was not recognised by a single individual, although I walked up the street where I was well known, and even my friend Mr. Mackenzie, with whom I was staying, did not know me for the first few minutes after I sat down in his room. (*TYW*, pp. 261-2)

Clearly, the Chinese disguise serves as a comic device. At one point he describes an American missionary in Ning-po (now Ningbo):

> He was an American Medical Missionary, and was dressed *à la Chinoise*, tail and all complete, but truth compels me to state that his dress was a rather ludicrous one. Afterwards when my knowledge of the Chinese costume was more complete, I have often laughed when I thought of the figure the little doctor must have appeared in the eyes of the Chinese. The large flowing gown which he wore was almost too fine for a mandarin, while the hat was one commonly worn by servants and coolies. The English reader, if he wishes to understand the strange sort of appearance the doctor presented, must imagine a London judge clothed in his fine black flowing gown, and wearing the hat of a dustman. (*TYW*, p. 85)

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[48] Thurin, *Victorian Travelers*, p. 33.

Once again, Fortune is intrigued by how things might appear 'through Chinese eyes', and the above passage demonstrates Chang's thesis that dressing and acting Chinese might also entail an alterative way of viewing. But the comic intention here, and the laughter it evokes should also not be overlooked. While the foreign traveller is unwittingly the object of ridicule, the implication is that despite his knowingness, Fortune himself would have been susceptible to similar fashion blunders. The satire here is directed outward, but it perhaps a nervous laughter that implicates Fortune as a possible object of critique.

Fortune appeared to have worn his disguise only when he absolutely needed to, and in most of his travel writing, he preferred his European clothes. Nevertheless, in his English clothes he is still the exotic object of interest, this time with a different audience. For example, while collecting plants in Fujian, he writes: 'On my way towards the hills, I was frequently surrounded by hundreds of Chinese, and was evidently considered a great *natural curiosity*' (*TYW*, p. 53). Such gazes from the local inhabitants reverse the colonial equation and challenge the reader to reconsider the authority and 'natural presence' of the European traveller in the field. Later, Fortune describes the surprise that local people expressed when they encountered him collecting plants on a remote island near Chusan (now Zhoushan):

> The surprise of the simple inhabitants, many of whom had never left the island in their lives, was often very great when I came down unexpectedly upon their little villages. The reader will easily credit this, if he will only picture to himself the surprise and astonishment with which a Chinese would be regarded were he to appear suddenly in some secluded village in the highlands of Scotland or Wales, where no such phenomenon had ever been seen before. (*TYW*, pp. 228-9)

In another example, Fortune describes another imaginary reversal when he attracts the attention of local priests while visiting a temple on the island of Poo-to (now Putuoshan). This time Fortune is wearing English clothes:

> They came up politely to me, examining my dress and everything about me with the most earnest curiosity … Before judging harshly of the Chinese let the reader consider what effect would be produced upon the members of a *Christian* church by the unexpected entrance of a small-footed Chinese lady, or a Mandarin, with his gold button and peacock feather mounted on his hat, and his long tail dangling over his shoulders. (*TYW*, p. 187)

In both of these above passages, Fortune describes his 'exotic' appearance in relation to a hypothetical Chinese visitor to Britain, an idea that is reminiscent of De Quincey's nightmarish Malay who appears unexpectedly in the remote English countryside. De Quincey's Malay, who later 'runs amok' in the writer's opium-riddled mind, in some ways epitomises the indistinct and troubling nature of the Far Eastern other in the British Romantic imagination. By reversing the imaginary geographies and cultural perceptions, Fortune, at least temporarily, turns Orientalist ideas of self and other upside-down.

Another literary precedent that Fortune evokes is the Chinese traveller to England who was depicted in Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World* (1762). Goldsmith's satirical account is told from the perspective of a Chinese traveller who writes letters back to China, describing Britain as an exotic and curious civilisation. Here Goldsmith uses China as a satirical tool with which to attack the frivolous affection for *chinoiserie* among the British aristocracy, and his interest is an alternative civilisation, or as a fair comparison with Britain, is a prominent and influential example of using the country as a foil. Despite Fortune's earlier attempts to distance himself from a more sympathetic eighteenth-century view of China, his descriptions of performing Chinese habits and manners nevertheless reveal an engagement with an earlier tradition of viewing China in

highly self-reflexive terms. For Goldsmith, 'the genius of a country should be investigated with a kind of experimental enquiry: by this means we should have more precise and just notions of foreign nations, and detect travellers themselves when they happened to form the wrong conclusions.'[49] Goldsmith writes in an eighteenth-century register, demonstrated by his use of the term 'genius' which during the period would denote the essential feelings or spirit associated with a place. However, Fortune shared Goldsmith's sense of viewing China as a source for 'experimental enquiry', and his interest in 'cross-dressing' needs to be viewed as part of an ongoing literary tradition that evoked the comic and 'experimental' possibilities of China.

Opium, Tea and the Imperial Body: China's Material and Imaginative Connections

Chang's discussion of Medhurst's travel writing in relation to material culture suggests a way of reading travel writing in terms of both domestic and imperial locations and in relation to larger economies of trade and commercial traffic. China had 'domestic' importance, both in the sense of Britain's 'domestic' economy, but also in terms of the increasing import of Chinese products into British homes. The commodities of tea and opium, both of which carry complex metaphorical and moral significance, bring together a number of metropolitan and imperial concerns. Closely linked to bodies –in individual and in larger national or imperial terms – the materialist history of tea and opium speaks to the intimate nature of Britain's transformative connections with China.

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[49] Oliver Goldsmith, *The Citizen of the World, or, Letters from a Chinese Philosopher, Residing in London, to His Friends in the East* [1762] (London: Folio Society, 1969) p. 101.

Consider Fortune's observation of an opium smoker while on a boat journey near Hang-chow (now Hangzhou):

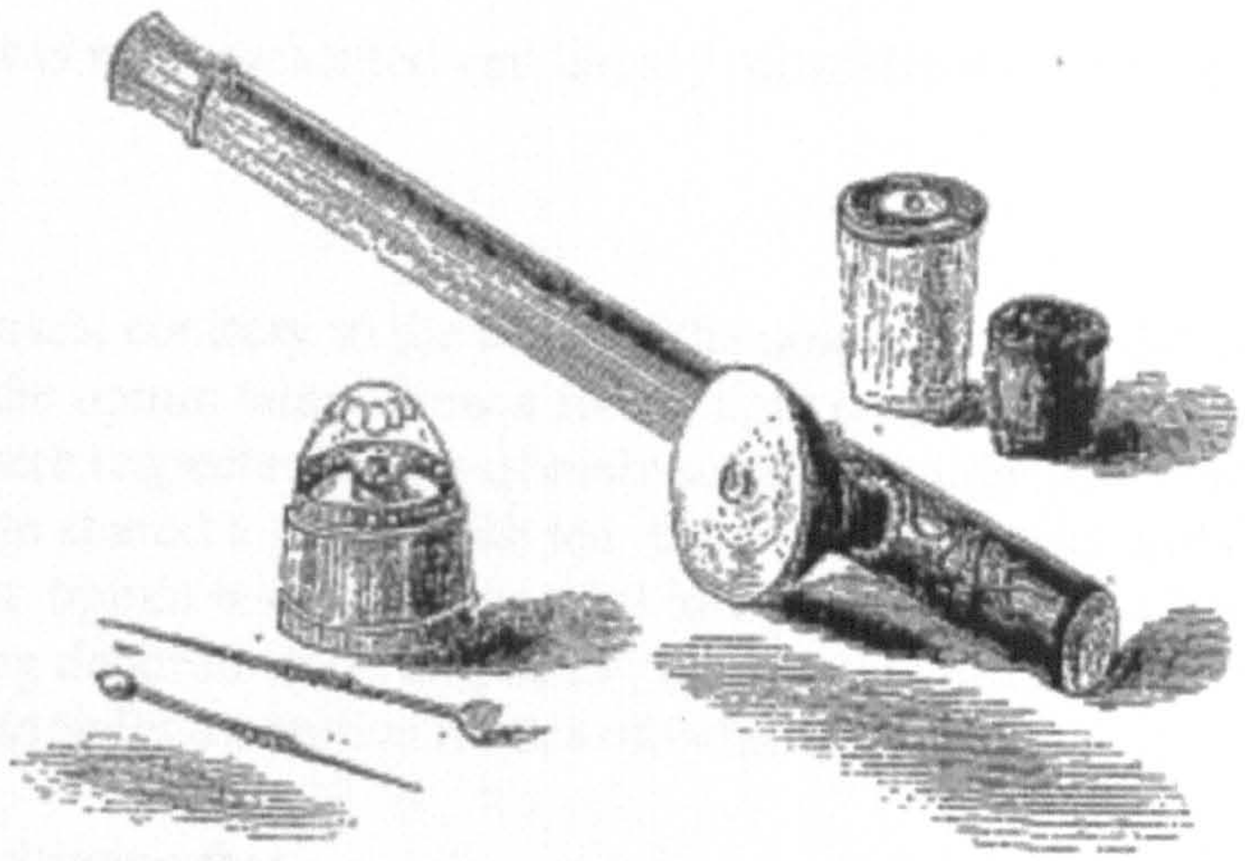
> His bed was surrounded with silk curtains, his pillows were beautifully embroidered, and his coverlet was of the richest and softest satin. Everything about him told of luxury and sensual pleasures. But let me take a peep inside his bed-curtains and describe what I saw on the first day of our acquaintance. The curtains were drawn close round . . . He was clothed in the finest silks, and had lain down on his side upon a mat; his head resting on one of the embroidered pillows. A small lamp was burning by his side, an opium-pipe was in his mouth, and he was inhaling the intoxicating fumes . . . the fumes having done their work, and he was now in his 'third heaven of bliss' . . . The effects which the immoderate use of opium had produced upon this man were of the most melancholy kind. His figure was thin and emaciated, his a cheeks pale and haggard hue . . . His days were evidently numbered . . . I could not help feeling what a piteous object is man, the lord of Creation, and Noblest work of God, when sensuous pleasures and enjoyments take such a hold. (*JTC*, p. 50)

Such lurid descriptions of opium smoking in China served various political and ideological purposes, often eliding the drug's complex social and medical history. In *Narcotic Culture* (2007), Dikötter, Laamann and Zhou argue that opium's destructive effects were often greatly exaggerated during the nineteenth century: 'opium rarely undermined the health or shortened the lives of the majority of smokers in nineteenth-century China.'[50] In most cases, they write that 'habitual opium use did not have significant harmful effects on either health or longevity: moderate smoking could even be beneficial, since it was a remarkable panacea in the fight against a wide range of ailments before the advent of modern medications.' They continue:

> Opium was extremely effective in fighting fever, blocking dysentery, relieving pain, suppressing coughs and abating hunger. Negative representations often confused the medical symptoms of the diseases, against which opium was taken as a palliative, with the imagined physiological effects of 'addiction'.[51]

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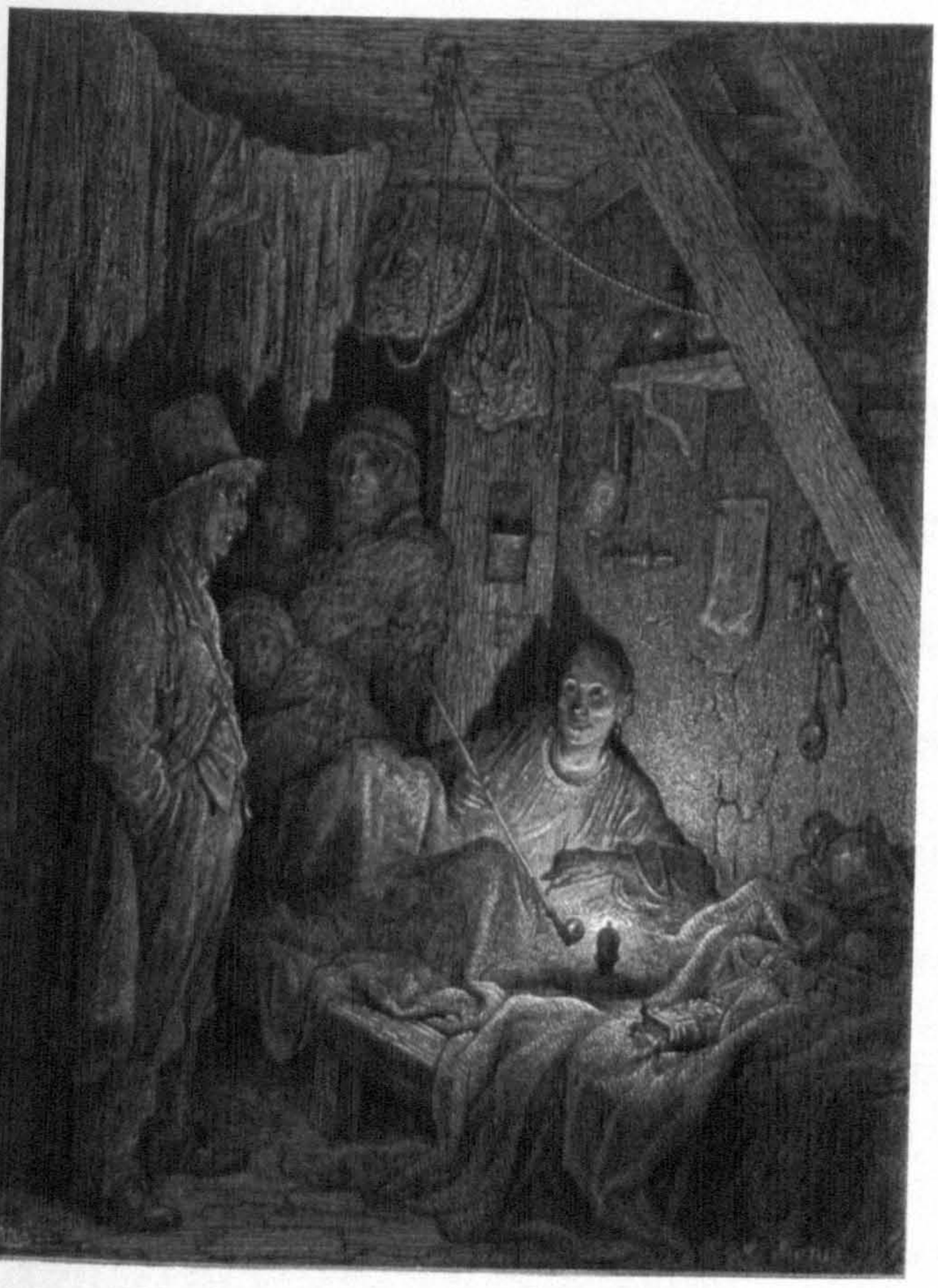
[50] F. Dikötter, L. Laamann, and X. Zhou, *Narcotic Culture: A Social History of Opiates in Modern China* (Swindon: Economic and Social Research Council, 2004) p. 2.
[51] Dikötter, *et al.*, *Narcotic Culture*, p. 3.



Opium Pipe.

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Opium pipe and opium smoking paraphernalia. From Robert Fortune, *Three Years' Wandering*, p. 242.



The Mystery of Edwin Drood' by Gustave Doré. In 1872, Doré and Blanchared Jerrold produced a volume of sketches and observations entitled *London: A Pilgrimage*. This woodcut of an East End opium den was inspired by their visit and by Charles Dickens' unfinished novel of the same name.

Narcotic Culture also discusses the ways in which the entire process and social setting of opium smoking was misrepresented and largely misunderstood by western missionaries and travellers:

> opium houses, contrary to the myth of the opium den as a dark and depraved trap in which the opium lamp threw a feeble light on the gaping mouths of dazed addicts, were respectable sites of male sociability in which small amounts of opium were shared together with tea, fruit, sweets, snacks and food. In a culture of restraint, opium was an ideal social lubricant, which could be helpful in maintaining decorum and composure, in contrast with alcohol which was believed to lead to socially disruptive modes of behaviour.[52]

They continue by arguing that

> 'Opium' and 'China' have become all but indistinguishable in the popular imagination since the end of the nineteenth century, although opium consumption was common in many other parts of the world … Britain was awash with opium at all social levels until the beginning of the twentieth century: in a drinking culture dominated by caffeine and alcohol, it was generally taken in liquid form.[53]

Indeed, the use of drugs and their methods of ingestion need to be viewed in culturally relative terms. Chinese people were often unable to drink alcohol as a form of recreation, given that for many, alcohol caused a 'flush reaction,' leading to nausea, extreme drowsiness, and a higher vulnerability to alcohol poisoning. For many Chinese, opium was a form of recreation, and smoking it was a perfectly acceptable way to partake. Furthermore, smoke has a particularly positive meaning in Chinese culture: Dikötter, Laamann and Zhou suggest that the positive reception of smoking in China may have had something to do with the positive meanings traditionally associated with the image of smoke itself: in traditional medicinal practices, for example, 'Healers used the fumes of burning herbal drugs to exorcise demons and release the evil *qi* (vapours or energy).'[54]

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[52] Dikötter, *et al.*, *Narcotic Culture*, p. 7.
[53] Dikötter, *et al.*, *Narcotic Culture*, p. 9.
[54] Dikötter, *et al.*, *Narcotic Culture*, p. 28.

Fortune's above description is rich with metaphorical and Orientalist significance. Opium, and more specifically, *smoking* opium, is aligned with Eastern luxury, nightmarish 'gothic' seduction, and moral stagnation. In Fortune's description, the smoker comes to represent China itself, as passive, lost in reverie, and indeed slowly dying. By implication, the West could be viewed as free, vital, and expanding. Susan Thurin has argued that Fortune's descriptions of opium smoking played into colonialist and racist ideas of the period. She writes: 'There is no more vivid illustration of the racism inherent in the opium trade than when Fortune contrasts the images of the traders with those of the users.' She then continues by stating that 'Fortune unfailingly represents opium smoking as the difference between the British and the Chinese, the saved and the damned'.[55]

Such a condemnation of Fortune's representation of opium smoking as racist and colonialist may be overstated. While Fortune describes opium smokers in lurid and exoticised terms, elsewhere his description of the drug and its effects on people is more balanced. At one point he describes how opium was not always used in excess: 'Since I have often seen the drug used, and I can assert that in the great majority of cases it was not immoderately indulged in.' Furthermore, according to Fortune, the problem was comparable with 'the use of ardent spirits in our own country' (*TYW*, p. 240).

One must also keep in mind that during this period opium addiction in Britain was common, although the drug was taken in the form of laudanum. Ideas of opium addiction, therefore, may not have always so easily defined self and other in the ways that Thurin

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[55] Thurin, *Victorian Travelers*, p. 49.

suggests.[56] In this sense, Fortune's descriptions can be viewed as both defining China's otherness, but at the same time addressing metropolitan concerns and anxieties. While realising the colonial significance of opium representation, Fortune's descriptions of opium smoking's deteriorating effects must also be viewed in relation to the problematics of intercultural exchange, and the perceived decline of moral values and social cohesion in Britain. The opium smoker is something abject – something that, in Kristeva's terms, attracts and repulses, is both foreign yet utterly familiar.[57]

Fortune's depiction of the opium smoker, similar to De Quincey's Malay, can be interpreted in terms of a larger anxiety about the opium trade with China, which by the 1840s was expanding rapidly. Missionaries commonly spoke out against the trade, creating widespread uncertainty and dissent amongst liberals of the day. While Eastern Orientalism was corrupting and nightmarish, it was ultimately the West that was responsible for the circulation of the drug. De Quincey, we must remember, was the one who gave the opium to the Malay – 'enough to kill three dragoons and their horses' – and was then surprised to see the Malay eat the whole amount.[58] De Quincey fears that it would kill the man, but after the Malay leaves, he hears nothing more about him, except, of course, in his dreams where this exotic visitor haunts him. Opium, then, can be viewed in terms of its over-determined symbolic weight, carrying multiple significations of Orientalism, self-scrutiny, and imperial guilt.

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[56] See Alethea Hayter, *Opium and the Romantic Imagination* (London: Faber & Faber, 1968).
[57] See Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).
[58] Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater,* in Duncan Wu, *Romanticism: An Anthology*, 3rd ed. ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006). pp. 810-820 (p. 814).

It is of further significance to consider that both Fortune's and De Quincey's accounts reveals a larger tension between rational will/liberty/control and irrational enslavement/excessive passion, themes which runs through a number of gothic novels such as Lewis's *The Monk* (1795) and Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya*, or *The Moor* (1806), to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818). Such themes had a particular currency during the period, and can be further understood in relation to fears of individual and national degeneration. Again, the problem of excessive commodification, shifting imperial geographies, and the debate over luxury pervades and registers the fear of corruption and cultural decline within the imperial project.

The theme of losing control functions similarly in moments of 'Oriental enchantment' where Fortune's text seems at once to identify and to pull away from the perceived allure of difference. For example, during Fortune's description of his visit to the Bohea Mountains, where he stays with the monks and observes Buddhist ceremonies, he describes the temple as looking 'more like an enchanted palace than the dwelling of man' (*JTC,* p. 309). Such notions of being enchanted run parallel to the discourse of addiction or seduction, so prevalent in the description of the opium smoker. In another instance Fortune writes: 'The lake, covered with flowers, the wooded mountains, the ancient temples, and the glorious flood of light which scattered over the scene from a clear sky, made one almost fancy oneself in a scene of enchantment' (*JTC*, p. 351). At still another point, high in the Wuyi Mountains, Fortune describes a moonlit scene, where 'a solemn stillness reigned around . . . broken by the occasional sound of a gong bell in the temple.' Although it was getting darker by the moment, Fortune describes himself as

being 'in no hurry to go in-doors'. He then stops and observes the strange rocks and temples:

> I sat down on a ledge of rock, and my eyes wandered over these remarkable objects. Was it a reality or a dream, or was I in some fairy land? The longer I looked the more indistinct the objects became, and fancy inclined to convert the rocks and trees into strange living forms. (*JTC*, p. 235)

Running analogous to the theme of obsession and addiction in opium discourse, the hallucinatory effect of the scenery and its association with darkness and heathen religion imply a fear of losing control through China's enchantment. In Fortune's text such notions are dealt with by an unambiguous assertion of Christianity and the need for missionaries in China: 'And yet it was melancholy to think that, however fair and enchanting to look upon, and however beautiful the scenery was around it, a cloud more dark than the thundercloud rested upon it, for it was but "an altar erected to the unknown God"' (*JTC*, p. 309). He goes on to offer a prophetic vision of China:

> a few years will see a vast change in China; it may be that another war and all its horrors is inevitable, and whenever that takes place this vast country will be opened up to foreigners of every nation. Then the Christian missionary will be able to extend his labours to those far-distant stations amongst the Bohea hills which I have just been describing. (*JTC*, p. 310)

By describing the East in terms of luxury, enchantment, and a loss of control, Fortune reinforces the imperial logic of missionary discourse. In a similar vein, Walter Medhurst wrote about China's overwhelming numbers, 'one third of the human race, and one half of the heathen world, held by one tie, and bound by one spell.'[59] The notion of 'waking China' or 'breaking the spell' became predominant tropes in missionary writing. Chinese religion, like opium smoking, was a heathen pleasure: it was a false, dark, and a corrupting ecstasy. Although 'a consistent Protestant', in discussing the influence of the

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[59] Medhurst, *China; Its State and Prospects,* p. 69.

Catholic Church in China, Fortune writes that 'the Roman Catholic church has led the way, and amidst many dangers and difficulties has given us some noble examples of self-denial and heroism' (*JTC*, p. 310). Again, the discourse of luxury and the importance of 'self-denial' lend credence to the Christian position which functions as a sober remedy to the perceived excessiveness and enslavement of Eastern culture.

Fortune's attention to the opium paraphernalia in the accompanying illustrations further draws attention to the heathen nature of opium, equating luxury and corruption with religious ritual. The opium smoker in Fortune's description is similar to De Quincey's Malay whose 'adorations' and 'slavish gestures' and statuesque features are aligned with idol worship. De Quincey's Malay and Fortune's opium smoker, like gothic monsters, are abject presences consisting of both attraction and repulsion; both serve as reminders that the luxurious enchantment of the East, and its corrupting influence, is much closer to home, much more overlapping and imbricated, than perhaps realised.

Tea: the Salubrious Alternative

Fortune's interest in tea drinking in some ways functions antithetically to his representations of opium smoking. If opium was the marker of China's heathen nature, then tea signified its highly civilised status. Throughout his travels in China, Fortune expounds the natural and healthy qualities of tea. An important part of his mission in China was to uncover the process of making black tea, a process he provides a full account of in *Three Years' Wandering*. In *Journey to the Tea Countries*, Fortune further remarks on the process, and describes how green and black tea come from the same plant

but in the case of black tea, large quantities of gypsum and ink are added to give it its colour; then, 'the workmen then turned the leaves rapidly round with both hands, in order that the colour might be equally diffused' (*JTC*, p. 92). Fortune goes on to note how that if any drinker of coloured tea was present during the operation,

> their taste would have been corrected, and, I may be allowed to add, improved. It seems perfectly ridiculous that a civilised people should prefer these dyed teas to those of natural green. No wonder the Chinese consider the natives of the west to be a race of 'barbarians'. (*JTC*, p. 93)

He continues by doing some calculations and explaining how

> In every hundred pounds of coloured green tea consumed in England or America, the consumer actually drinks more than half a pound of Prussian blue and gypsum! And yet, tell the drinkers of this coloured tea that the Chinese eat cats, dogs, and rats, and they will hold up their hands in amazement and pity the poor celestials! (*JTC*, p. 94)

From one perspective, Fortune's insistence on the superiority of pure green tea can be understood in terms of his overall mission to establish a tea industry in India. Part of Britain's problem in the past, was not so much in getting the plants to grow, but in reproducing the colouring process. If only the domestic market would start drinking green tea, then many of the East India's problems would be solved. By expounding the greatness of plain green tea, Fortune may have been attempting to sway public opinion for the benefit of the East India Company.

In another less commercial sense, Fortune's preference for pure green tea, free of milk and sugar, reflects a deeper appreciation for the perceived simplicity and morality of Chinese culture and civility: 'we drank our tea, which I found most refreshing, in its pure state without sugar or milk' (*JTC*, p. 186). In another passage, he describes the residents of Chusan (now Chushan) and Ningpo (now Ningbo), and equates good manners, friendship, and moral behaviour, with tea drinking:

> They were very civil to me, and treated me with great kindness. They had little to offer but their good will; and this they showed by asking me to sit down in their houses, or, what was often preferable, under the awning in front of the door. Here they never failed to offer a draught of the national beverage – tea. I do not know of anything half so refreshing on a hot summer's day as a cup of tea; I mean pure and genuine as the Chinese drink it, without sugar or milk. It is far better and much more refreshing than either wine or beer. It quenches thirst, is a gentle stimulant, and wards off the fevers incident to such a climate. (*JTC*, p. 116)

In expounding the benefits of tea, Fortune participates in a discourse that associated tea with temperance, civilised behaviour, and health. During the period, many viewed tea as moral alternative to alcohol or coffee, and Fortune later reiterates this theme by quoting Cowper's well-known line from *The Task* (1785) which describes tea as, 'the cup / that cheers, but not inebriates' (*JTC*, p. 262).

Fortune's quote from Cowper, and his repeated advocacy of tea without sugar, also resonates with the abolitionist movement in Britain, and the association of sugar with slavery. For many poets and writers during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, sugar was viewed as a sensuous luxury, associated with the exploitation of slaves in the West Indies.[60] Cowper and Coleridge were vocal in their denunciation of the commodity, aligning the reaping of sugar in the colonies with the blood of slaves. Robert Southey was another prominent abolitionist poet who described sugar in such bodily terms, referring to tea as the 'Blood-sweetened beverage'.[61] By drawing attention to the ink that stains the coloured teas of British and American teas, Fortune not only creates a visceral image of contamination, but also plays on the nineteenth-century interest in the body and the human circulatory system as potent metaphors for imperial and economic structures. Therefore, Fortune's representations of tea and opium, their ingestion and

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[60] See Charlotte Sussman. 'Women and the Politics of Sugar, 1792.' *Representations* 48, Autumn (1994), pp. 48-69

[61] Robert Southey, *Poems: 1797* (Oxford: Woodstock Books, 1989), p. 369.

relative effects on the human body, speak to the larger body politics of imperialism and international trade.

Fortune, China and Ecology

Fortune's interest in discourses of health and the body can also be understood in terms of larger problems of ecological and social vitality. When reading Fortune's travel writing one must keep in mind that during the early Victorian period Britain's metropolitan centres experienced unprecedented environmental degradation. In his study of nineteenth-century London, Dale Porter describes how Londoners' intensive use of coal for hearth fires, and the introduction of gaslights in the 1830s, helped raise the ambient temperature of the city an average of eight degrees Fahrenheit (with a corresponding rise in humidity) compared with the surrounding countryside. Air pollution caused from coal fires caused chronic respiratory ailments among its less fortunate citizens and blocked out perhaps three-quarters of the sunshine normally enjoyed by country towns. Due to the rise in temperatures, Porter describes how plant and animal life would have been limited to only those capable of living with humans symbiotically. He writes that

> Rats monopolized the city's sewers, and wrens proliferated amid the piles of manure in city streets. Pigeons, of course, adapted well to a regime of garbage and building ledges. Long before Darwin, they selectively bred for dark colouring as camouflage against the soot-covered buildings.[62]

Anthony Wohl has described the effects that such environmental problems had on public health, explaining how the lack of effective sewer drainage led to numerous cholera

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[62] Dale H. Porter, *The Thames Embankment: Environment, Technology, and Society in Victorian London* (Akron, Ohio: University of Akron Press, 1998), p. 108.

outbreaks during the mid-nineteenth century. The panic that ensued from the spread of disease, which was often exaggerated by the press, and its obvious links with environmental degradation, spawned reforms in urban planning as well as a new anxiety about the obviously detrimental effects of industrial progress.[63] The decline of environmental standards no doubt had something to do with rapid urbanisation: Raymond Williams states that 'London between 1821 and 1841 grew by twenty percent; Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds and Sheffield by more than forty percent; Bradford by sixty-five percent.'[64] Given such ecological changes, it is perhaps not surprising that it was also during this period that many environmental ideals were first articulated. In 'Culture and Environment: From Austen to Hardy,' Jonathan Bate points out that *Oxford English Dictionary*'s earliest example of the word 'environment' in the context of physical or geographical setting is Thomas Carlyle writing in 1830 of the 'picturesque environment' around Bayreuth.[65] Bate writes that

> I suspect that the word 'environment' began to be applied to social contexts exactly because of the feeling of the alienation of city-dwelling which was identified by Wordsworth and others. That is to say, prior to the nineteenth century there was no need for a word to describe the influence of physical conditions on persons and communities because it was self-evident that personal and communal identity were intimately related to physical setting. The influence of, for instance, the climate and the soil was taken for granted. But from the late eighteenth century onwards, there was an increasing awareness of industry's tendency to alter the quality of our surroundings, even to influence the air we breathe. In several passages of *The Task*, Cowper notes with alarm the effects of smoke on the health of city-dwellers. The most often quoted line of *The Task*, 'God made the country, and man made the town' (*T* 1.749), is famously false -- historians of the countryside have demonstrated that, especially in a crowded

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[63] See Anthony Wohl, *Endangered Lives: Public Health in Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983).
[64] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973) p. 152.
[65] Jonathan Bate, 'Culture and Environment: From Austen to Hardy', *New Literary History* 30.3 (1999), 541-560 (p. 550).

> island such as Britain, most rural landscapes (felled, planted, and ploughed) are influenced by the hand of man every bit as much as all urban ones – but Cowper nevertheless registers an enduring intuition that the country offers a natural environment, the town an artificial one. The word 'environment' emerges as a sign of that difference.[66]

Travel writing must also have played a part in such early 'environmental' thought. As I have already discussed in the introduction to this thesis, Richard Grove has argued that Western environmental thinking developed, in part, through the history of imperialism. From this perspective, Fortune's botanical travel writing can be understood as prototypical ecological writing that contributed to emerging ideas of the environment.

In Fortune's writing, China's simple rustic appearance appealed to a sense of Britain's, and perhaps more specifically Scotland's, own pre-industrial past: 'The Chinese cottages, amongst the tea hills, are simple and rude in their construction, and remind one of what we used to see in Scotland in former years' (*TYW*, p. 204). Elsewhere he writes: 'In every cottage throughout this district the traveller meets with the spinning-wheel and the small hand-loom, which used to be common in our country in days of yore, but which have now given way to machinery' (*TYW*, p. 273). Farmers in China, according to Fortune, are treated with an unparalleled respect: 'The *profession of agriculture in China* has been highly honoured and encouraged by the government of the country, from the earliest times down to the present day. The husbandman ranks higher here than he does in any other country in the world' (*TYW*, p. 290). Fortune clearly admires the simplicity and ingenuity of Chinese agricultural methods: 'Every agricultural operation in China seems to be done with the greatest regularity, at certain stated times,

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[66] Bate, 'Culture and Environment', p. 551.

which experience has proven best, and in nothing is this more apparent than in manuring of the cotton lands' (*TYW*, p. 226). In his view of China's countryside, families appear to be intact: 'As farms are generally small, they are worked almost entirely by the farmer and his family, consisting sometimes of three or even four generations, including the old grey-haired grandfather or great-grand-father, who has seen the crops of four-score years gathered in his barns' (*TYW*, p. 270). In terms of the surrounding nature, Fortune occasionally describes China as a plentiful land that exceeds Europe in beauty and abundance: 'As an agricultural country, the plain of Shanghae is by far the richest which I have seen in China, and is perhaps unequalled by any district in the world. It is one vast beautiful garden' (*TYW*, p. 125).

Such attention to the non-industrialised environment can be read alongside fears of losing social cohesion in Britain– ideas that appear in much of literature of the period, most notably in the Condition of England novels of the late 1830s, 40s and 50s. Novels such as Dickens' *Hard Times* (1854) and Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848) provided utterly bleak descriptions of working-class life. The 'Young England' movement addressed similar social concerns, captured in Disraeli's *Sybil* (1845), which described England as a country of two nations: the rich and the poor. China's localism and social cohesion could be perceived as an idealised feudalism, running parallel to a preoccupation with a medieval past during the Victorian period. In his essay *Chartism* (1839) Thomas Carlyle wrote, 'A feeling very generally exists that the condition and disposition of the Working

Classes is a rather ominous matter at present; that something ought to be said, something ought to be done, in regard to it.'[67] In this essay, Carlyle recalls a feudal period when

> the old Aristocracy were the governors of the Lower Classes, the guides of the Lower Classes; and even, at bottom, that they existed as an Aristocracy because they were found adequate for that. Not by Charity-Balls and Soup-Kitchens; not so; far otherwise! But it was their happiness that in struggling for their own objects, they *had* to govern the Lower Classes, even in this sense of governing. For, in one word, *Cash Payment* had not then grown to be the universal sole nexus of man to man; it was something other than money that the high then expected from the low, and could not live without getting from the low. Not as buyer and seller alone, of land or what else it might be, but in many senses still as soldier and captain, as clansman and head, as loyal subject and guiding king, was the low related to the high. With the supreme triumph of Cash, a changed time has entered; there must a changed Aristocracy enter. We invite the British reader to meditate earnestly on these things.[68]

Carlyle's description of a time before the 'cash nexus' would appeal to a Victorian audience longing for an alternative to the harsh social realities of modern industrial life.

In the same way, Scott's descriptions of the chivalry and romance of the Middle Ages, most notably in *Ivanhoe* (1819), may have had a similar appeal, as would have Disraeli's preoccupation with Anglo-Saxon democracy in *Sybil*. China, as described by Fortune could be viewed nostalgically in relation to Britain's lost and irrecoverable past.

In this later travel book, *A Residence Among the Chinese* (1857), Fortune continues to focus on rural landscapes, often describing them in ideal terms. In his travels outside Canton, he writes:

> Here is no apparent want, and certainly no oppression; the labourer is strong, healthy, and willing to work, but independent, and feels that he is 'worthy of his hire'. None of the idleness and cringing is here which one sees amongst the natives of India, for example, and other eastern nations.[69]

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[67] Thomas Carlyle, 'Chartism,' in *Thomas Carlyle: Selected Writings*, ed. Alan Shelston (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p. 190.
[68] Carlyle, 'Chartism', pp.193-4.
[69] Robert Fortune, *A Residence among the Chinese: Inland on the Coast and at Sea* (London: John Murray, 1857), p. 38.

Here is another example of 'splitting otherness' as the comparison of Chinese workers with colonial subjects in India supports troubling colonial stereotypes of both 'Chinese industry' and 'Asian idleness'. Aside from this simplistic distinction of Eastern cultures, however, Fortune's description reveals an interest in a closer relationship between workers and the surrounding ecology, as he describes the 'fertile' nature of the land and its interconnected waterways. At times, his descriptions of idyllic life in the country certainly evokes the European pastoral tradition, such as when he describes the hills 'teeming with industrious and happy people', or when he states that 'I doubt if there is a happier race anywhere than the Chinese farmer and peasantry.'[70] At other times, his descriptions evoke a prelapsarian paradise: 'I looked with delight on the beautiful scene spread out before me, and thought within myself, if Nature is so beautiful now, what must it have been before the Fall, when man was holy!'[71]

While such descriptions can be read as expressions of Romantic pastoralism, there is also a sense of a distinctly non-Western way of living, viewing, and interacting with the natural world. Perhaps there is not only an idealisation of Britain's own past, but also an admiration for China's present state in Fortune's writing. In *A Residence Among the Chinese* Fortune speaks of paying and receiving visits from Chinese friends, many of whom are Buddhist monks or fellow gardeners. His many descriptions of long sessions of drinking tea and viewing the surrounding scenery can be interpreted in terms of their transformative potential, but also as offering an alternative way of 'seeing' the natural world.

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[70] Fortune, *A Residence among the Chinese*, p. 99
[71] Fortune, *A Residence among the Chinese*, p. 28.

Robert Weller has discussed the ways in which landscape painting, gardening, and poetry were traditionally important in defining Chinese conceptions of nature. He discusses Chinese landscape painting and the tradition of *shanshui* (mountains and water) as capturing some specific traditional ideals of nature:

> Rather than showing a natural world apart from human interference, these paintings tend to depict a flow of energy that runs through both humans and the environment. This cosmic energy -- *qi* in Chinese -- characterizes everything in the world, constantly changing its character and altering its manifestations through yin and yang, and through the five elements of wood, fire, earth, metal, and water. It runs through complex paths in our bodies, creating health and illness. It runs though mountains and streams, creating areas of stronger and weaker power. It connects kinsmen to each other, and all of us to the broader environment.[72]

Therefore, according to Weller, unlike Western traditions that often tried to capture a pure nature apart from human beings, people form an inevitable part of the Chinese landscape. 'Because qi flows through everything,' he writes 'there is no fundamental distinction between the human and physical worlds, or between culture and nature.'[73]

Weller defines the traditional belief in *qi* as originating during the Han period, and defines the larger philosophical system in terms of 'anthropocosmic resonance'; that is, 'a mutual relationship between humanity and the cosmic order of heaven, in which each of the parts resonates sympathetically with all the others.'[74] Such early philosophies had a profound effect on later intellectual and religious traditions in China, and in particular on ideas of how cosmic energies could be generated from everything in the world, mountains and people included.

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[72] Robert P. Weller, *Discovering Nature: Globalization and Environmental Culture in China and Taiwan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 22.
[73] Weller, *Discovering Nature*, p. 40.
[74] Weller, *Discovering Nature*, p. 23.

Weller also describes related Chinese traditions, including gardening and the concept of *fengshui*, a practice that sought to gain spiritual and material advantage from the harnessing of natural energies. By drawing from ideas of *fengshui*, traditional Chinese gardens have important artistic and philosophical meanings. Weller writes: 'garden designers recreated the same kinds of energy that flowed through the larger world . . . Humans did not imitate nature so much as they molded its greatest forces as partners.'[75] According to Weller, Buddhism also offered a specific view of nature. Although strictly speaking, Buddhism denies the existence of a material world, through the principle of reincarnation, it also reveals that 'at a fundamental level … all living things are the same and humanity has no special privileges.'[76]

Fortune's travel writing offers glimpses into such traditional Chinese views of nature, suggesting connections between discourses of ecology, landscape, morality, health and the body. Paintings of traditional Chinese landscapes that accompany his descriptions of Chinese landscapes offer a sense of a non-western natural aesthetic, while tea drinking is described as an all-encompassing social and moral act, an aesthetic experience closely linked with ideas of social order and harmony. Describing his experience of sharing a cup of warm tea with a high priest of a temple (a man who receives him with dignified 'Chinese politeness'), Fortune once again expostulates his obsession with the untainted quality of the Chinese green tea: 'Reader, there was no sugar nor milk in this tea, nor was there any Prussian blue or gypsum; but I found it most refreshing, for all that it lacked these *'civilised'* ingredients.'[77] He later expounds:

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[75] Weller, *Discovering Nature*, p. 39.
[76] Weller, *Discovering Nature*, p. 31.
[77] Fortune, *A Residence among the Chinese*, p. 32.

> The Chinese as a nation are a quiet and sober race: their disturbances when they have them are unusually noisy, but they rarely come to blows, and drunkenness is almost unknown in the county districts, and rarer even in densely populated cities. In these respects the lower orders in China contrast favourably with the same classes in Europe, or even India.[78]

For Fortune, food and drink are crucial markers of civilised moral conduct, a notion that is later reiterated when he takes a boat voyage. Here, he remarks on how the boatmen's food was much healthier than the dry salt and biscuits that British sailors traditionally ate: 'The dinner of the Chinese sailor is not a whit more expensive, but much more agreeable, healthy, and civilised.'[79]

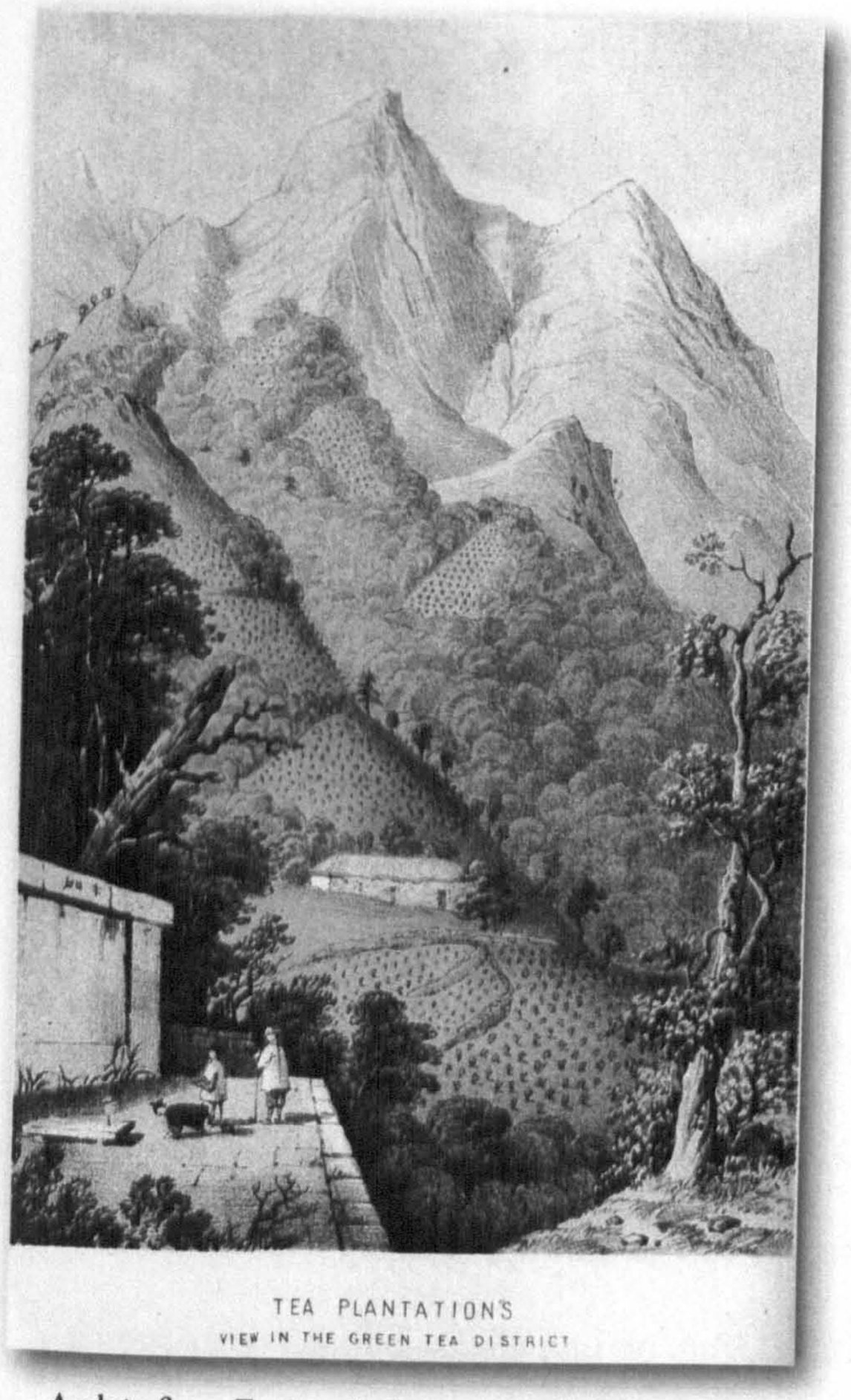
Fortune's interest in the civilising effects of eating healthy food and drinking pure green tea can be read in terms of a wider interest in traditional Chinese ideals and the possible connections between morality, civilised society, and the health of the individual body. In *A Residence Among the Chinese*, he describes his experience of being cured by traditional Chinese medicine: 'Medical men at home will probably smile as they read these statements, but there was no mistaking the results.' He then explains:

> That they are not surgeons I am fully prepared to admit; that they are ignorant of many of our most valued vegetable and mineral medicines is also true; but, being a very ancient nation and comparatively civilised for many ages, many discoveries have been made and carefully handed down from father to son which are not to be laughed at without understanding.[80]

Fortune's interest in an effective medical practice that is beyond the grasp of Western scientific reason is picked up elsewhere in the narrative. Next to a mountaintop temple, Fortune once again suggests the existence of something beyond his comprehension. Here, the monks of the temple allow Fortune to view an ancient and precious relic, one that

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[78] Fortune, *A Residence among the Chinese*, p. 37-8.
[79] Fortune, *A Residence among the Chinese*, p. 43.
[80] Fortune, *A Residence among the Chinese*, p. 106.



A plate from Fortune's *Journey to the Tea Countries* (1852).



A plate from Fortune's *Journey to the Tea Countries* (1852). The image appears to be a reproduction of a traditional Chinese *shanshui* [mountain water] style painting. The caption states, 'A Chinese Bird's eye view of the Stream of "Nine Windings" and strange Rocks'.

would emit special characteristics and effects to the true believer. Fortune writes: 'It might have been my imagination, I dare say it was, but I really thought I saw something unusual in the thing, as if some brilliant colours were playing about it.'[81]

Doing Business in China and the Negotiation of Self

While at times falling into stereotypical ideas about 'the Chinese', the above examples reveal that Fortune's travel writing offered glimmerings of a deeper, more sophisticated understanding of cultural differences and non-Western traditions. In terms of business conduct, Fortune's ability to play by local rules is a skill that he increasingly appeared to have acquired. In his second book, he describes his dealings at the Fa-Tee gardens, which was a commonly visited market just outside Canton. Fortune meets there with a well-known dealer, A-ching, in order to find out about his methods for packing tea seeds for shipment to Europe, which had up until that time been unsuccessful. He presents A-ching with a gift, 'a rare and curious plant', in exchange for information, concluding, after a comic episode of speaking pidgin to each other, that the old man was in fact not boiling or poisoning the seeds in any way (*JTC*, pp. 131-2). Here the gift giving and the ability to communicate in pidgin clearly smooth the way.[82] In another case, Fortune describes his friendly encounter with old acquaintances at a garden outside of Shanghai:

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[81] Fortune, *A Residence among the Chinese*, p. 34.

[82] Pidgin 'languages' on the China coast could in fact be rather complex and difficult to learn, often consisting of Cantonese, Portuguese, or English words within Chinese grammatical forms. According to the OED, the term 'pidgin' derives from a Chinese corruption of the English word 'business': 'the jargon, consisting of English words often corrupted in pronunciation, and arranged according to Chinese idiom, orig. used for intercommunication between the Chinese and Europeans at seaports, etc. in China, the

'Ah, you have come back!' 'Are you well?' 'How did the plants get home?' 'Were they much admired in England?' were the questions that were rapidly being put to me by the old nurseryman and his sons; at the same time they brought a chair, and asked me to sit down under the awning of the cottage. I told them that most of the plants had arrived safely in England, that they had been greatly admired, and that the beautiful *Weigela* had even attracted notice of her Majesty the Queen. All these statements, more particularly the last, seemed to give great pleasure... (*JTC*, p. 317)

Not only does this episode show Fortune as having cultivated *guanxi* (connections of trust), but by describing the Queen's appreciation of the flower, he also appears to have learned something about *mianzi* (giving face). While there is a danger in using such concepts too freely, and essentialising or simplifying Chinese cultural practices (even in the present day these terms are used and abused by 'experts' on China), there is nevertheless a sense that Fortune learned to adapt to a different set of social codes, and his eventual success in his business dealings reveals his development as a character.

It is also important to remark that while Fortune often celebrates the idea of an 'open' and a Christian China, and welcomes the day when 'the naturalist can roam unmolested' in China's hills (*JTC*, p. 247), nowhere does he advocate the use of military force. Fortune viewed the Treaty of Nanjing as a folly, and instead advocated the quiet and peaceful breaking down of barriers (*JTC*, p. 120). In fact, his view of a peaceful solution can be understood in terms of Victorian liberal conscience, which was later during the century galvanised against the issue of British military aggression in China, leading to the defeat of Palmerston in parliament.[83] While simplistic and crude

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Straits Settlements ... 1826 B. HALL Acct. Voy. Corea (rev. ed.) vi. 287, I come to see about your pigeon. Ibid. 288, I afterwards learned that..'pigeon', in the strange jargon spoken at Canton by way of English, means business.' The fact that the term was created through contact on the China coast speaks to the global centrality of China's trade network.

[83] See Wong, *Deadly Dreams*, p. 214.

stereotypes of China may have contributed to what James Hevia calls the 'symbolic war' against China, which often consisted of 'teaching' rather violent and destructive 'lessons' to the Chinese, we must be careful to avoid lumping all kinds of travel writing and Western representations together.[84]

After accomplishing his mission and transferring the tea plants and seeds to India, *A Journey to the Tea Countries* ends on a high note of imperialism, celebrated though the botanical image of the *Victoria regia* flower 'growing luxuriantly' in an Indian garden. Fortune writes: 'it will soon reign as the queen of flowers in every land, and, like our beloved sovereign whose name it bears, the sun will never set on its dominions' (*JTC*, p. 398). However, while Fortune's botanical mission is the raison d'être of the narrative, and provides a coherent beginning and end, beneath the imperialist storyline is a self-conscious and at times humorous exploration of European limitations.

In a 1936 review of a reprint edition of *Three Years' Wandering*, C.M. McDonald wrote that Fortune's text not only offered insights into China, but also, like a Victorian novel, provided glimpses into nineteenth-century British society. Thus, he writes:

> we share the interest of the Mandarin in the foreigner, his waistcoats, watches and weapons, his ways of life and his ways of thinking. Fortune set out to give us a picture of the Chinese, with fascinating results, and in doing this he has given us in fair measure a picture of himself which is often hardly less interesting.[85]

The conventional approach to travel writing and to Western efforts to understand China would be to confine interpretation of Fortune's writing to the Orientalist discursive paradigm described by Said. Orientalism in Said's sense essentialises the East as

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[84] See James Louis Hevia, *English Lessons: The Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century China* (London: Duke University Press, 2003).
[85] C. M. McDonald. 'Rev. Of *Three Years' Wandering in the Northern Provinces of China* by Robert Fortune', *Pacific Affairs* 9, 4 (1936), 603-5 (p. 605).

subordinate to the West, and naturalises Western colonial presence there. However, by examining how an encounter with China can complicate and in some ways blur distinctions between metropolis and colonial periphery, this study of Fortune's writing reveals the difficulties and limitations of such an approach.

The Travels of Frank Kingdon-Ward: An Eye for Plants in a Modern Age

In this chapter, I will examine the travel writing of the botanist and explorer Frank Kingdon-Ward (1885-1958). Kingdon-Ward's writing provides a productive comparison with Robert Fortune's earlier work, and offers important insights into the ways in which British travel writing as a genre evolved from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century. Furthermore, an examination of Kingdon-Ward's writings will shed light on the ways in which western ideas of China also changed during this period.



After Robert Fortune, plant collectors continued to explore many regions of China, discovering and bringing back new plant species to Europe and America and other regions. In the 1860s, the Jesuit collectors Armand David and Jean Marie Delavay covered large areas of northern and central China, bringing back thousands of new species of both plants and animals to Europe. During the same time, the Russian Grigori Pontanin undertook three separate expeditions in Gansu and Mongolia. By the turn of the century, botanical collectors moved further into unexplored territories. Western Sichuan, Yunnan, Eastern Tibet, western Gansu, and Northern Myanmar became particularly well known for their botanical diversity and abundance (for botanists today this area of South Central China is still referred to as a 'hotspot' of biodiversity). The

British collectors George Forrest, Ernest Wilson, Reginald Farrer (whose writings I will discuss in the next chapter), William Purdom and Frank Kingdon-Ward were particularly successful in exploring the southwest of China during the late nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth centuries.[1]

Of all of these collectors, Frank Kingdon-Ward was one of the most successful. Born in Manchester, son of Harry Marshall Ward, a lecturer in botany at Cambridge, he studied botany and natural sciences at Cambridge, and seemed destined to lead a life as botanist and researcher. However, in 1906 Kingdon-Ward's father died expectedly, leaving his family in a difficult financial situation. Kingdon-Ward left university after only two years, and through a professor of Chinese at Cambridge, gained a position teaching English at a public school in Shanghai. Unsatisfied working as a teacher, Kingdon-Ward quickly left this post and accepted an invitation to join an American zoological expedition up the Yangtze River to the borders of Tibet. During this expedition, he discovered three vertebrates new to science, establishing his reputation as a field scientist, and kindling a lifelong passion for exploring the interior regions of China and Tibet. Shortly after, in 1912, Kingdon-Ward began his career as a professional plant collector by accepting a contract from Arthur Bulley, a wealthy Liverpool cotton broker who founded Bees of Chester, a leading firm of nursery owners. This expedition to the mountains of Southwest China yielded a haul of horticultural novelties. It was on this journey that Kingdon-Ward wrote *The Land of the Blue Poppy* (1913), and as the title of

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[1] See Alice M. Coats, *The Plant Hunters: Being a History of the Horticultural Pioneers, Their Guests and Their Discoveries from the Renaissance to the Twentieth Century* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970).

his book suggests, it was also on this trip that Kingdon-Ward made one of his most remembered botanical discoveries, the blue poppy (or the Cambridge blue poppywort).[2]

Compared to other writers and plant collectors of his era, Kingdon-Ward was certainly one of the most prolific. Over the course of fifty years, he went on over twenty expeditions to Tibet, Northwest China, Burma (now Myanmar), and Assam (now part of Northeast India), and ended up writing twenty-five books that describe his expeditions in these regions.

As botanists who were required to locate and transport seeds and plants, Robert Fortune and Frank Kingdon-Ward pushed geographical limits and described areas of China that were largely unfamiliar to contemporary readers. Perhaps it was this sense of liminality in their writings that allowed both Fortune and Kingdon-Ward to reach beyond a specialised botanical readership and capture popular attention. As I have already discussed, Fortune's work came at a time when British audiences knew very little about China, as travel restrictions had only recently been lifted. By the time Kingdon-Ward wrote in the early twentieth century, however, most readers would have had an entirely different idea of the country. In 1842, there were five treaty ports; by comparison, in 1911, there were over fifty. Fortune's relatively limited excursions outside of the treaty ports, which in the 1840s and 50s were quite adventurous and even dangerous, would have been commonplace by the turn of the century.

As China became increasingly explored, mapped, and written about by western travellers, the relatively unknown mountainous regions of western China and Tibet

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[2] Biographical information on Frank Kingdon-Ward can be found in Charles Lyte, *The Plant Hunters* (London: Orbis, 1983); Euan Hillhouse Methven Cox, *Plant-Hunting in China: A History of Botanical Exploration in China and the Tibetan Marches* (London: Collins, 1945).

became popular destinations for travellers and adventurers. By the turn of the century, the British entrepreneur Archibald Little successfully introduced steamboats to the Yangtze, dramatically reducing the travel time between the coast and Chongqing (then known to many Westerners as Chungking). Independent travellers soon followed and increasingly looked to Tibet and places in China's west as desirable settings for adventure and exploration. Henry Savage Landor, adventurer and grandson of the famous Victorian poet Walter Savage Landor, wrote of his spectacularly disastrous journey that resulted in his violent expulsion from Tibet in 1899.[3] A decade later, another well known 'sport adventure' was that of John Weston Brooke and C.H. Meares who explored western Sichuan and Tibet. Brooke became the first Englishmen to meet the Dalai Lama and was later killed in China during a skirmish; Meares went on to take part in Scott's ill-fated Antarctic expedition.[4] Still another well-known adventurer and writer of the period was George Morrison who, reminiscent of Robert Fortune, wore Chinese clothes for much of his journey. Morrison published *An Australian in China* (1895), which documented an overland trip through China into Burma.

During the early years of the twentieth century, Sven Hedin's accounts of travel overland through Central Asia into China and Tibet from the west were particularly influential in geographical circles, and eventually won him a gold medal from the Royal Geographic Society. Further scholarly interest in China's peripheries came to the fore

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[3] Landor later wrote: 'I had been told of the terrible trials one had to endure to reach it. The natives of Tibet were fanatically barbarous. A white man going into that country had no chance of coming back alive. All that gave me an invincible desire to visit that strange country.' Qtd in Peter Hopkirk, *Trespassers on the Roof of the World: The Race for Lhasa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 114. See A. H. S. Landor, *In the Forbidden Land: An Account of a Journey in Tibet.* Heinemann, 1899).

[4] Brooke's and Meares' journey is documented by W.N. Fergusson in *Adventure Sport and Travel on the Tibetan Steppes* (1911).

with Auriel Stein's archaeological discoveries of lost cities in the Taklimakan desert. Several other travel books and surveys on Southwest China were also published in the first decades of the twentieth century. H.R. Davis's, *Yunnan, the Link between India and the Yangtze* (1909), was particularly influential for later travellers, as it provided maps and detailed descriptions of routes through the region. Other books included M. Carthy's *The Province of Yunnan* (1910), Archibald Little's *Across Yunnan* (1910), and one most popular of the period, Edwin Dingle's *Across China on Foot* (1911), which drew attention to the southwest of China as an overland route to Burma.

In some ways, these travel narratives can be read in terms of their colonial or imperial significance. Recent postcolonial criticism has revealed the extent to which the processes of mapping, cartography, and photography can promulgate and reproduce imperial geographical perspectives. Matthew Edney has discussed how surveying, particularly the establishment of the Great Trigonometrical Survey, allowed the East India Company to control, consolidate and unify the territories of the South Asian subcontinent. Mapping, according to Edney, was an integral part of the mercantile history of India. Map-making and surveys were some of the processes through which Company officials tried to transform a land of 'incomprehensible spectacle into an empire of knowledge.'[5] Other critics, such as Anne McClintock, have similarly pointed out the ways in which maps are also a technology of possession, often implying that those with

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[5] Matthew Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. 2.

the capacity to make such cartographical representations must also have the right of territorial control.[6]

Although Britain never did colonize the western regions of China in any sense, in the context of Britain's 'Great Game' with Russia it was clear that this area of the world, linking China with the British-held territories of India and Burma, had geo-political significance. This political and imperial interest in the area was made blatantly clear when Britain invaded and occupied Tibet in 1903-04. The importance of cartography and maps was also apparent when British colonial administrators appropriated areas of southern Tibet during the Simla Convention (1913-4). During this time, Henry McMahon drew the infamous 'McMahon line' between Tibet and India, annexing a 9,000 square kilometres of Tibetan territory.

Colonial interest in Western China was also present in the form of missionary activity. It is perhaps no surprise that missionaries were some of the first to venture into China's west, and many of them, such as the British missionary Samuel Pollard (1864 – 1915), were successful in converting China's minorities to Christianity.[7] In the period following the Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901) – when hundreds of Western missionaries were killed in peasant revolts throughout the country – China's minorities provided a new direction and a sense of hope for Christian organisations in China. Unlike the rest of China, where missionaries were being rejected by the local communities, the minorities on the periphery of the country were 'available' in a sense. There are a number of reasons

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[6] See Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest* (London: Routledge, 1995).

[7] Perhaps more than any other European (certainly more than any other Englishman), Pollard was regarded as an authority on China's southwest during the early years of the twentieth century. Living in Yunnan for over twenty years, Pollard is often considered as being the most successful missionary in China (in terms of numbers of converts).

for this historical fact. John Shepard writes that, 'Marginal groups were known to convert en-masse when it appeared that an alliance with the local mission station would bring some benefit vis-à-vis the local government, such as advantage over rival groups in litigation or protection from Chinese officials.'[8] Whatever the reasons for the success, the conversion of China's minorities offered hope that Christianity could gain a foothold in China.

Western China, therefore, was attractive to travellers for a number of religious, humanitarian, mercantile, romantic, scientific, and political reasons. It would be wrong to read all of these travellers in the same context and as contributing to the same 'colonial project', but we can nevertheless make connections between their writings, considering their larger imaginative and political contexts. In particular, I would like to focus on Kingdon-Ward's attraction to Southwest China. Although I will refer to his other writings, the focus of this chapter will be on *The Land of the Blue Poppy*, as it is his most well known work.

Hegemony and Difference

Kingdon-Ward's travel writing is continually involved in the process of creating and enforcing differences: ethnographic differences between Chinese, Tibetans and other minorities, as well as geographical and epistemological differences between discovered and undiscovered lands, the familiar and the strange. In many ways, these divisions can

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[8] John Shepard, 'From Barbarians to Sinners: Collective Conversion among Plains Aborignials in Qing Taiwan, 1859-1895,' in *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, ed. Daniel H. Bays (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996) 120-137 (p.120).

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feed into larger discourses of imperialism. Consider Stuart Hall's discussion of hegemony and difference:

> I have always understood hegemony as *operating through* difference, rather than *overcoming* difference. People imagine that the subordinate group in a hegemonic formation must be reconstituted in the image of the dominant formation. On the contrary, hegemony is an authority which can be constructed *only* by continuing to recognise difference... Hegemony is the process, never complete, of trying to create some formation out of persistent, contradictory differences which continue therefore to need the work of 'unifying'.[9]

In more specific historical terms, Peter Hulme has also written on the ways in which ethnic differences could contribute to larger colonial processes. Hulme discusses the pervasive Carib/Arawak dualism that runs through exploration, travel and anthropological writing about South America and the Caribbean. According to Hulme, the nomadic Caribs were traditionally described as fierce, intrusive and cannibalistic whereas the agriculturally based Arawaks were seen as gentle and peaceful.[10]

Hulme shows how this 'stereotypical dualism' can be traced from early contact narratives to anthropologic writing of the twentieth century. By critically examining the colonialist history of representation, Hulme questions the scientific basis for such ethnographic taxonomies: 'such classifications are almost always arbitrary – unlike in, say, those of botany or historical linguistics, where typologies are also genealogies.'[11] By pointing to the terminology of conventional twentieth-century anthropological divisions, Hulme argues: 'Although the classification claims validity through its scientific

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[9] Stuart Hall, 'Fantasy, Identity, Politics', in Erica Carter, James Donald, and Judith Squires, eds., *Cultural Remix: Theories and Politics of the Popular* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1995), pp. 63-9 (p 69).
[10] Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492-1797* (London: Methuen, 1986), p. 47.
[11] Hulme, *Colonial Encounters*, p. 51.

objectivity, it carries with it, as the terms "marginal" and "civilisation" attest, a set of unexamined evolutionary premises.'[12]

In the previous chapter, I described how north/south or temperate/tropical divisions often informed Robert Fortune's impressions of China. In the case of early twentieth- century travel writing on China, the differences between the east and west of China, might be thought of in similar terms, as such dualities and ethnographic taxonomies contributed to larger relative understandings of 'civilised' and 'marginal' status. Descriptions of the region's ethnic diversity are full of significations that reinforce larger distinctions: notions of movement/stasis, expression/conformity, blitheness/constriction, fitness/physical weakness or sickness related to larger conceptions of either Han Chinese or minority culture. While to a modern reader such efforts to particularise between different ethnic groups may appear facile, during this period such classification and identification were common. One only needs to look as far as Arthur Smith's classic study, *Chinese Characteristics* (1890), where he defines twenty six essential characteristics of the Chinese race including face, economy, industry, politeness, disregard for accuracy, intellectual turbidity, contempt for foreigners, absence of public spirit, conservatism, filial piety, benevolence, mutual suspicion, absence of sincerity, absence of nerves, and absence of sympathy. Smith was an American missionary who lived in China for twenty-two years, and his study was taken seriously as an authority on 'Chinese characteristics' well into the twentieth century (it went through five editions).[13]

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[12] Hulme, *Colonial Encounters*, p. 52.
[13] Arthur Smith, *Chinese Characteristics* [1890] (London: Oliphant & Co., 1900).

Accounts of China's minorities, I would argue, both contributed to and were defined against such efforts to essentialise and particularise the 'characteristics' of Chinese culture. Kingdon-Ward's descriptions of minority people often rely upon larger assumptions of civilisation and culture. For example, observing the inhabitants of the Mekong River valley, he writes:

> Happy people! What do they know of the strife and turmoil of the western world? We wear ourselves out saving time in one direction that we may waste it in another, hurrying and every hurrying through time as if we were disgusted with life, but these people think of time not in miles per hour but according to the rate at which their crops grow in the spring, and their fruits ripen in the autumn. They work that they and their families may have enough to eat and enough to wear, living and dying, where they were born, where their offspring will live and die after them, as did their ancestors before them, shut in by the mountains that bar access from the outer world.[14]

Here is a Romantic view of primitive life that is familiar enough in colonialist writing.

All the tropes of 'primitive' and 'untainted' culture are in place: inaccessibility, carefree innocence, and an inherent attachment to nature along with its changes and rhythms. By describing the people as being unambiguously happy, living in harmony with the river, and keeping themselves alive off the land, clearly Kingdon-Ward idealises their agricultural lifestyle, and simplifies the complexities of their society.

However, it is also important to recognise the ways in which such formulations of ethnic difference are expressed in oppositional terms. Kingdon-Ward is particularly admiring of Tibetan culture, an ethnic difference he often articulates in relation to Chinese culture. He writes:

> The Tibetans always strike me as being so much more jolly and irresponsible than the Chinese, who are just as sedate and gloomy when enjoying a holiday as at any

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[14] Frank-Kingdon Ward, *The Land of the Blue Poppy: Travels of a Naturalist in Eastern Tibet*, [1913] (London: Cadogan Books, 1986), p. 225. Further references to this work will be abbreviated *LBP* with page references given parenthetically in the text

> other time. The latter never seem able for a single moment to shake off the idea that life is a serious fever which has to be borne, and consequently they never take risks. (*LBP*, p. 61)

Here Tibetans and Chinese are set up in a kind of polar opposition, and the alignment of the Chinese with death and morbidity in some ways resonates with Robert Fortune's description of Chinese carrying the bones of their ancestors. In another sense, the idea of Chinese people viewing life as 'a serious fever' is set up against the idea of Tibetan fitness and health.

Elsewhere Kingdon-Ward describes the simplicity and rustic charm of the Tibetans he encounters. Consider the following passage:

> Lower down, where the trees began, we passed a few yak herders huddled under a tree, their long course cloaks wrapped closely round them, a black smoking fire their sole comfort. Wet and cold as we were, our plight was far less miserable than theirs, though they were doubtless quite happy. To keep up our spirits Gon-ton and I sang songs as we rode along; after all there was a fine feeling of freedom and irresponsibility while in the company of these happy-go-lucky resourceful Tibetans, and when a man feels in first-rate health, a few hardships only make him the more conscious of his fitness. (*LBP*, 146)

In some ways, Kingdon-Ward's descriptions of Tibetans ring of earlier nineteenth-century Romantic descriptions in Britain's own 'minorities'. One only needs to consider the many nostalgic descriptions of Scottish highlanders in Sir Walter Scott's novels and other Romantic literature to find similar language and values inscribed onto hill-dwelling people. Still in other ways, the Tibetans might be viewed as shepherds or other rustic figures so common in the poetry of Wordsworth and others.

However, while harmlessly Romantic in one sense, such divisions could have other effects and purposes. One needs to keep in mind that this period witnessed an unprecedented rise in anti-Chinese views. Robert Bickers has discussed the 'Treaty Port

propaganda' that was produced by 'China experts' during this period.[15] By the 1910s and 20s, stereotypical and often pejorative ideas of China or 'Chinese characteristics' were common topics in popular books as well as more 'scholarly' work. Travel writing, like other forms of Western 'expertise' on China, would contribute to this history of imperialism and racism. Many of these attitudes became reinforced in the West through popular 'Yellow Peril' pulp fiction, such as the mystery novels of Sax Rohmer, or through popular dramatic performances, such as those that featured London's Limelight district, an area of the city inhabited by Chinese immigrants.

As China's apparently vast and 'infectious' population spread into the Western world, a number of countries – including Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United States – adopted anti-Chinese immigration policies. Jack London's story, 'The Unparalleled Invasion' (1910), is a disturbing contemporary response to concerns over China's 'contaminating threat' to Western civilisation. In the story, European powers and the United States decimate China by dropping glass tubes carrying deadly microbes from airplanes onto the country. China, in the end, is destroyed, but the action is viewed as a justified response to the danger of an overwhelming Chinese population.

Compared to such extreme responses, Kingdon-Ward's travel writing provides a relatively balanced and informed view of China and Chinese people. Nevertheless, there are moments when he takes a hard line against 'the Chinese', and in many cases such views are described in relation to China's other minority people. For Kingdon-Ward, the Chinese are guilty of looking down on Tibetans, and on one occasion he resorts to violence to redress this. At one point in his travels, he discovers that one of the Chinese

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[15] Robert Bickers, *Britain in China: Community, Culture and Colonialism, 1900-49* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 22-66.

soldiers accompanying his party had stolen a copper kettle from a Tibetan hut where they stayed the night before. Kingdon-Ward writes:

> Feeling suspicious, I asked him where it came from, and somewhat crestfallen, he replied that he had brought it away from the hut. I was so annoyed with this brazen confession that I hit him in the face with my fist, whereupon clumsily tripping over his rifle he fell in a heap to the ground, and lay like a half-empty sack of corn, bleeding from the cut on his lip. I now ordered him to take it back to the hut immediately, and convinced that he would only help himself to something else by way of compensation if he could, I escorted him myself, prodding him in the back with my gun and threatening to shoot him if he ever did such a thing again. (*LBP*, p. 208).

In this example, the act and threat of violence are clearly incommensurate with the crime itself; while playing on the stereotype that 'the Chinese cannot be trusted', the passage also simultaneously places the Western traveller in the role of protector and disciplinarian. Standing above the soldier, and then behind him and leading him by gunpoint, Kingdon-Ward's stern command is visually established.

James Hevia has written on the overlap between pedagogical and imperialist discourses in turn of the century representations of China. According to Hevia, the period after the Boxer Rebellion witnessed an unprecedented Western response, one that was both violent and coercive.[16] The Chinese, during this period, needed to be 'taught a lesson', as western colonial powers waged a symbolic war against China. While Kingdon-Ward's travels brought him far away from the violence that erupted a decade earlier, his violent outburst can be understood in terms of such imperialist/pedagogical logic. Kingdon-Ward's abortive career as a schoolteacher, which he left behind in Shanghai, is in some way re-enacted as he leads the Chinese soldier back to the scene of

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[16] See James L. Hevia, 'Leaving a Brand on China: Missionary Discourse in the Wake of the Boxer Movement', *Modern China* 18, 3 (1992), 304-32.

the crime, almost in the same way that a disobedient pupil is led off to see the headmaster.

Landscape and Perception

Landscape provided Kingdon-Ward with another important way of understanding and interpreting the differences within China. Kingdon-Ward was clearly attracted to the sublime, a predominant mode of viewing and representing natural landscapes in the European Romantic tradition of travel writing. He describes this area as being divided by four rivers: the Salween, Irrawaddy, and the Mekong, which rush out from the Tibetan plateau and empty south into Burma, and the Yangtze which flows south and then eastwards from Tibet through China. He writes:

> There is no more a remarkable strip of crust on earth than that where the great rivers of eastern Tibet almost jostle each other in the eagerness to escape the roof of the world. They issue from Tibet through a grooved slot in the backbone of Asia, and are squeezed between two of the mightiest uplifts in the world . . . The gap is narrow – barely 70 miles wide – and through it the four loud rivers rush.[17]

In *The Land of the Blue Poppy*, he refers to the area through which he travels as 'the Land of Deep Corrosions':

> There is spread out before the traveller not so much a land of high mountains as a land of deep valleys; it is not this barrier beyond barrier, peak on peak which he sees in splendid array that impresses him, but these gloomy gorges into which none but the eagles wheeling far overhead can peer; gorges whose presence is realised rather than seen, with black shadows torn into every spur. (*LBP*, p. 255)

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[17] Frank Kingdon-Ward, *Himalayan Enchantment: An Anthology* (London: Serindia, 1990), p. 46. This is a collection of Kingdon-Ward's writings, chosen and edited by John Whitehead.

Scientifically speaking, such fragmentation in the earth provided Kingdon-Ward with a lifetime of botanical work, as the gorges and divisions create a maze of diverse ecosystems and plant life. However, the language used in Kingdon-Ward's above descriptions also reveals a more Romantic engagement with the landscape.

The above description of gloomy gorges, 'whose presence is realised rather than seen,' fits with a classic Burkian aesthetic model. According to Burke, the sublime moves the imagination to awe and instils it with a degree of horror by what is 'dark, uncertain, and confused,' whereas 'the Beautiful,' is accentuated by light.[18] In Burke's philosophy, while the relationship of the sublime and the beautiful is one of mutual exclusiveness, either one can produce pleasure. The sublime may inspire horror, but one receives pleasure in knowing that the perception is a fiction. Such descriptions of sublime landscapes were commonplace in travel writing of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

In many ways, Romanticism, and especially nineteenth-century British Romanticism, provides both impetus and a way for Kingdon-Ward to interpret and come to terms with the surrounding region. Although sublime aesthetics are commonplace in European travel writing, they must not be taken at face value, and can imply a range of beliefs and values. Romantic writers often described natural places – especially landscapes such as forests, chasms, and mountains – as regenerative spaces that could inspire the imagination. Sublime landscapes took on a mythological status, as national symbols, and as places where individuals could test the strength of their character and

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[18] See Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* [1757] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). Part I, Section VII.

their faith. Although not always explicitly religious, accounts of human exploration into the natural or wild world could evoke Christian myths and moral codes. Such sublime places could also imply different degrees of civilisation or ecological distinctions between the human and the non-human, the pristine and the tainted, the fallen and un-fallen.

As many westerners looked to China's west for opportunity, crucial distinctions between Chinese and the Chinese minorities were also inscribed on the landscape. As a botanist, Kingdon-Ward took pleasure in diversity, changes in colour and variations in landscape. He describes his 'keen eye for plants' and is quick to note any changes in the surrounding vegetation (*LBP*, p.11). He is repulsed by the Chinese settlements that have been largely cultivated; instead he is attracted to areas that are wild and often inhabited by 'tribal' minorities. It is important here to point out the ways in which the language of botany and landscape informs understandings of the people who might live there: terms such as wild, uncultivated, exotic, and savage all have botanical as well as social meanings. In Kingdon-Ward's view, Chinese settlements would be associated with excessive cultivation – their villages and farms were viewed as having encroached on the natural wildness of the landscape, leaving nothing to grow freely.

There are a number of other binary divisions that underlie Kingdon-Ward's descriptions of the landscape and give it an aura of being an undiscovered land, beyond the familiar and knowable world of the British Empire. Johannes Fabian has discussed the ways in which time often defines the unequal relations of self and other in anthropological writing. He argues that 'primitive' is a temporal concept and draws attention to the number of ways that anthropology and ethnographic representations

depend on a 'persistent and systematic tendency to place the referent(s) of anthropology in a time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse.'[19] Fabian goes on to show that in anthropological writings the other is denied a place in the present through a series of methods and techniques; forms of taxonomic descriptions such as maps, charts, and tables provide visual references of the other's culture.

Kingdon-Ward's descriptions of the land often convey such temporal distinctions. The conditions of travel are rough and dangerous. Rivers often need to be crossed by sliding across a single rope, high above the rushing waters below. Early in his travels he describes how the Tibetans measure time using such rope bridges. By measuring the lengths of rope bridges in relation to the position of the sun, the Tibetans are able to judge the time of day: 'rough as the method sounds, it is surprising how accurately a Tibetan who understands European methods will tell the time by glancing at the sun' (*LBP*, 51-2). In Kingdon-Ward, crossing the border into Southwest China meant crossing into a different temporal and perceptual space. Consider the opening passage of *The Land of the Blue Poppy*, where he describes crossing the border into China from the British administered region of Burma:

> On the fourth day we crossed the bridge which marks the frontier between two Empires. To us in our little island, a frontier sounds a more or less nebulous quantity, something drawn rather whimsically on maps, and a chronic source of petty international jealousies as difficult to define as the boundary line that gives rise to them. But this elusive idea becomes almost a physical reality when one crosses the frontier of a British possession overseas, thus bringing to a focus, as it were, the days which are past and all that lies before one in the new world. Especially is this the case on the return journey, when the hardships are over . . . Not that I felt the efforts of the Public Works Department – erect telegraph poles and taut wires, reliable bridges, miles posts, and rest-houses provided by a paternal government – filling a long-felt want; but simply that the act of crossing

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[19] Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 31.

> our own frontier again, with all that the frontier stood for, made my heart throb a little more quickly. (*LBP*, p. 5)

This passage is carefully constructed, and evokes a number of symbolic distinctions about the perception of empire on both sides of the border. In his recently published article on Kingdon-Ward, Erik Mueggler interprets this description of the border crossing in terms of imperial visual modalities and the way they are brought to bear on the landscape. Mueggler suggests that Kingdon-Ward's use of optical technologies, such as the camera and the theodolite (a complex instrument used for land surveying that Kingdon-Ward carried with him and often struggled to use correctly), offered a means of disciplining and structuring his perceptions and descriptions of the landscape. Mueggler writes:

> To the west, space and time stretched out towards Bhamo and Delhi, delimited precisely by the erect, taut, and regular markers of telegraphic poles and mile posts. To the east, the 'long months' were given over to a telescopic optic; they were drawn together and flattened into a 'vista'. It could not be more clear that the frontier was a border between two very different sets of requirements for perception: on the side of the British Empire, the requirement, conditioned by the presence of the 'paternal' imperial state, that perception move in accordance with foundational, disciplined, rhythms of time and space; on the other side of the new, chaotic Chinese Republic, a requirement, conditioned by the perceived absence of that state, that perception find its way to the views supported by other foundations altogether.[20]

Mueggler contends that Kingdon-Ward's writing on Southwest China, on the periphery of empire, was a 'labor of perception', and he, along with other botanical explorers were 'traversers and reformulators of early twentieth-century time-space.'[21] Kingdon-Ward's writing, which Mueggler views as a process of revising and reading, was a means of

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[20] Erik Mueggler, 'The Lapponicum Sea: Matter, Sense, and Affect in the Botanical Exploration of Southwest China and Tibet', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 47 (2005), 442-79 (p. 452).
[21] Mueggler, 'The Lapponicum Sea', p. 445.

working through 'perceptual dilemmas' that were caused by the practices of walking, seeing, gathering and mapping.

Mueggler observes that early into his travels Kingdon-Ward abandoned efforts to measure time according to the European methods of mileposts and maps, and instead adjusted to local ways of measuring the journey time in stages:

> The time of empire, measured in the routes and stages of Major Davies [sic] map and the mileposts and telegraph poles on the border's Western side, is deliberately dispensed with, in an effort to measure the world in the rhythms of the walking body.[22]

The relationship with the body itself is something that becomes heightened as Kingdon-Ward explores this exotic region. Physical fitness, again, becomes an important defining feature of the region's difference, as the world is aligned with basic bodily needs and energies.

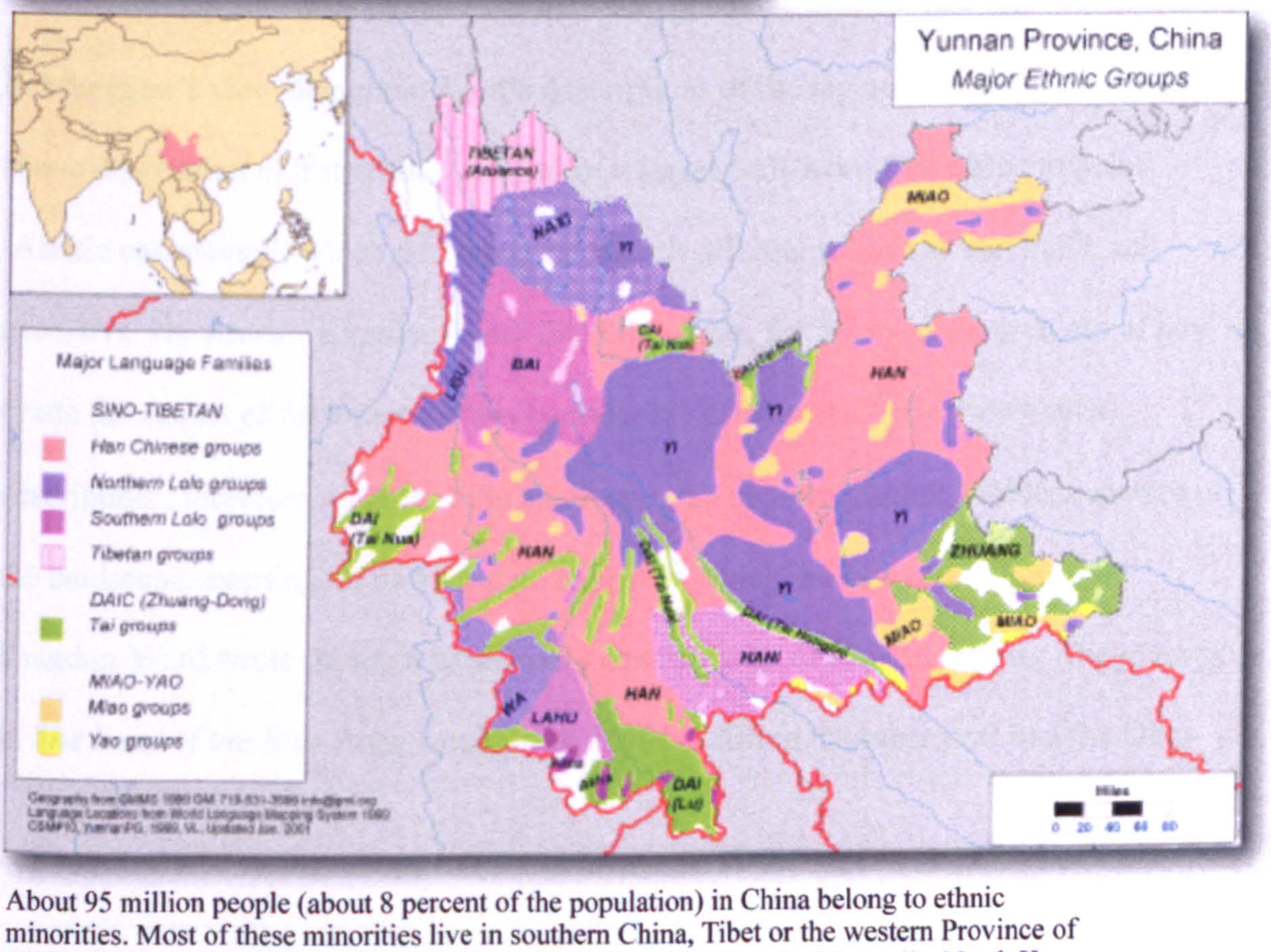
Mueggler views Kingdon-Ward's process of writing – from writing in his journal with a steel-nib pen, to revising his work into publishable form – as a technology of perception, and he then contends that such a technological mode of perception often sought to render the landscape in purely visual terms, and admitted no voices of the indigenous people. His writing, according to Mueggler, 'was a means for disciplining perception to the demands of optical technology, of filling in the enormous voids in representation that these technologies left open, and of preserving the prestige of the photograph, especially, as a model for perception.'[23] Kingdon-Ward, according to Mueggler, was a 'monadic observer' who sought to represent the terrain in a single register, as though through an optical instrument.

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[22] Mueggler, 'The Lapponicum Sea', p. 455.
[23] Mueggler, 'The Lapponicum Sea', p. 446.



A map highlighting the botanically abundant areas of South Central China.



About 95 million people (about 8 percent of the population) in China belong to ethnic minorities. Most of these minorities live in southern China, Tibet or the western Province of Xinjiang or near the borders of Burma, Laos, Vietnam, India, Russia, Mongolia, North Korea and the former Soviet republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The above map illustrates the ethnic and linguistic makeup of Yunnan.

This reading is suggestive, yet there are nevertheless moments when Kingdon-Ward clearly breaks out of any sort of 'monadic' or disciplined visual mode. Consider his description of the border town of Tatsienlu (modern day Kanding, in western Sichuan province), where the reader is presented with a cacophonous and bewildering scene:

> The city was a place of surprises. It was on this jabbering, slouching crowd of the strangest people on earth, which ebbed and flowed listlessly through the narrow streets, that the Chinese shopkeepers, like parasites of Machiavellian cunning, grew fat. Amongst this motley throng were tall, bony men, wrapped in greasy skins, who lived their lives in the saddle, with the terrible rigours of nomadic life in the mountains stamped on the hard-lined faces, bringing musks; derelicts from monasteries sacked during recent fighting, bringing wonderful paintings and idols saved from the wreckage; pilgrims from Lhasa; yak herdsmen taking out the tea brought in on the backs of Chinese coolies; and strange primitive men, with nothing save their ponies and their long guns.[24]

In Mueggler's view, Kingdon-Ward's descriptions of the region's diversity – such as the above description of Tatsienlu – are part of a larger well-worn Orientalist trope of 'Asiatic cacophony', which portrayed the British colonial subject as unreliable and excessive. He writes: 'Kingdon-Ward liked this trope, for it solved the problem of how to evade the claims of the voices of this landscapes' inhabitants.'[25] He views such descriptions, therefore, as part of the landscape, 'an inconsequential babble, a feature of the landscape, exerting no force and no appeal.'[26] Mueggler also reminds us that Kingdon-Ward wrote during a particularly chaotic stage of Chinese history (the journey in *The Land of the Blue Poppy* took place in 1911, during the same year that the Qing

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[24] Ward, *Himalayan Enchantment* , p. 4. Tatsienlu is now the known as Kanding in Chinese or Dardo/Darsedo in Tibetan. It is a booming city in Sichuan province with a population of over 80,000 (mostly Chinese). The city still functions as a staging post on the road to Lhasa.

[25] Mueggler, 'The Lapponicum Sea', p. 465.

[26] Mueggler, 'The Lapponicum Sea', p. 466.

Dynasty collapsed), and so such views of China's chaotic nature would have a particular resonance during this time.

Such descriptions may in fact function as a kind of Orientalist trope, but in another sense, they could represent local life as incommensurable and overflowing, as laying bare, rather than 'disciplining' the limited perspective of the traveller or ethnographer. Mueggler's point certainly offers another way into reading the persistent oscillation between notions of order and diversity in travel narratives of the Southwest, but while the region could perhaps align 'Asiatics' with chaos and randomness, it could also reveal the very limitations of the viewer and the very difficulties and subjective nature of perception.

While there are stereotypes in play in the above description – for example, once again the fitness and hardworking nature of the minorities is played off the parasitic fatness of the Chinese – the passage is unable to contain the abundance of contrasting sensory images. In many ways, the account reveals the limited scope of the viewer, and the grammatical organisation communicates a sense of speed and confusion.

Furthermore, it is a noisy place – this is not a 'monadic observer', nor is this a world that is merely visual or cartographic as Mueggler suggests. Instead, it is a place that has its own rhythm, and its own pulse as the human travel ebbs and flows. Furthermore, the passage makes use of fragmentary and disconnected imagery – a literary style that was becoming increasingly common during the period. The description is alive with sight, sound and smell – the teas, musks and greasy skins; it is a place aligned with violence and randomness, a place where objects – for example, the ancient relics saved from an obscure conflict – are uncannily unhinged. It is also a location that suggests a

harsh post-Darwinian world order where people are oppressed and compete with one another. At the end of the description, the strange primitive men are enigmatic subalterns, seeming to defy any sort of ethnographic categorisation. Kingdon- Ward's travel writing, therefore, can be viewed as less self-assured and consistent in its narrative aims.

Such an interpretation creates problems for, and reveals the limitations of, theories of colonial discourse. Indeed, the collusion between visual aesthetics and imperial power has been almost taken for granted in many postcolonial studies of travel writing and imperial history. Mary Louise Pratt has been particularly influential in arguing for the importance of critically reading representations of landscape within the historical context of colonial expansion and appropriation. The 'monarch-of-all-I-survey scene,' according to Pratt, is for Victorian travellers 'a brand of verbal painting whose highest calling was to produce for the home audience the peak moments at which geographical "discoveries" were "won" for England.'[27] Pratt makes the point that visual aesthetics provide a powerful mode of colonialist representation:

> The 'contact' perspective emphasizes how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other. It treats relations among colonizers and colonized, or travelers and 'travelees,' not in terms of separateness or apartheid, but in terms of copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power.[28]

The crux of Pratt's argument, however, rests on the notion of 'anti-conquest' which refers to 'strategies of representation whereby European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony.' Pratt goes on to argue: 'the main protagonist of the anti-conquest is a figure I sometimes call the "seeing

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[27] Mary Louise Pratt. *Imperial Eyes: Studies in Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 201.
[28] Pratt. *Imperial Eyes*, p. 7.

man," an admittedly unfriendly label for the European male subject of European landscape discourse – he whose imperial eyes passively look out and possess.'[29]

However suggestive, there is a structural difficulty with the notion of the anti-conquest narrative: namely, any traveller could be guilty without a trial. In other words, it is impossible to prove that a traveller is not, in fact, asserting a kind of hegemonic gaze that recast relations in Europe's favour; any kind of neutral or even sympathetic observation could be construed as being a 'strategy of innocence'. For Mueggler and Pratt, visual modalities all too easily relate to unequal colonial power relations. However, as the above description of Tatsienlu demonstrates, a close reading of Kingdon-Ward's writing shows that the traveller in not always able or willing to maintain such a hegemonic gaze.

One difficulty of such an approach is that it fails to recognise and appreciate the dialectical nature of cross-cultural perception. In the previous chapter on Robert Fortune, I discussed how in the context of China, westerners could face the reversal of a 'colonising gaze'. One such moment happens in the city of Dali, where Kingdon-Ward meets a Chinese man carrying a bird in a cage:

> to my great surprise this Celestial addressed me in French, pronounced with a perfect Parisian accent. Recovering from my momentary amazement I was about to reply when I suddenly discovered that I did not know one word of French, or at least could not put my tongue to it! … I was annoyed to think that I could have answered his questions in Chinese, but not in French; while on the other hand had I answered in Chinese I should have been still further humiliated when he spoke in his own tongue . . . At last I resurrected a few half-dead words and attempted a remark, but it was a deplorable failure and he corrected me with a faultless accent. Never had I felt more ignorant of French! (*LBP*, 16-7)

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[29] Pratt. *Imperial Eyes*, p. 7.

In this passage, Kingdon-Ward is relegated to the position of cultural inferior, humiliated and unable to speak. While the term 'celestial' connotes a sense of vanity, and in some ways the Chinese man, with birdcage in hand, may be a caricature of an excessively refined and educated Han Chinese, there is a clear sense of Kingdon-Ward being outfaced by the local man because of his inability to speak a European language. Such moments reveal a more complex 'contact zone', one where power relations may not always be in Europe's favour.

Viewing outwards and possessing, as Pratt would have it, could therefore be reversed and turned inwards, or in other cases, the travellers' imperial vision could be confounded or obscured. In Southwest China, demarcation lines, categories, and borders were (and still are) highly complex and overlapping. Schemes of classification that the botanist, ethnologist, or missionary sought to impose on the unfamiliar world would be doomed to fail in the face of unexpected hybridity and complex, mutually dependent histories. In some situations, Kingdon-Ward appears confident in his ability to categorise the people whom he encounters:

> The Lutzu tribe, amongst whom we now found ourselves, are interesting for the reason that they seem to indicate an irruption of the tribes of the west. That they have come down the Salween valley from Tibet, representing one of the links in a chain of emigration in that direction, I do not believe, and so far as language is any test, the Lutzu tongue seems to bear no resemblance to Tibetan than could be accounted for by the fact that the Lutzu are a small tribe enclosed by Tibetans who, being great travellers and traders, have long been in and out amongst them. The English language has been influenced much in the same way by Norman, but is not related to it. (*LBP*, p. 77)

However in other situations, he is clearly less certain:

> attention might be focused on the differences of features between them and the Chinese, and I suppose a trained anthropologist, who would know what to look for, would remark these without such external aids. There can be no question that for instance that even the Panthays or Yunnan Mohammedans who have

> intermarried with the Chinese for centuries, still retain a certain distinctiveness which makes them easily recognisable. But I confess that these more subtle differences baffle me. (*LBP*, p 202)

This is a central tension in Kingdon-Ward's writing: the desire to recognise versus the inability to distinguish or identify.

> The notion of hybridity troubles long-standing racial hierarchies, and in this area of the world, it is inescapable. Such ideas of cultural adaptability are not only challenging to systems of racial taxonomy, but are clearly empowering, as in Kingdon-Ward's description of his translator and guide Gan-ton:

> He was in the first place a curious mixture, a Catholic Tibetan, speaking Yunnanese and Lutzu fluently, and sufficient of the Moso and Lissu tongues to make facetious remarks to almost any tribesman we met; but he did not take his religion very seriously, and was a proselyte or a staunch Lamaist indifferently according to the nature of the task he was called upon him to perform. Nevertheless he was intelligent and resourceful, always cheerful, and though in some respects a knave, I found him an invaluable guide, interpreter, and companion during two trying journeys. (*LBP*, p 46)

Gan-ton's fluid social identity, linguistic abilities, cultural competence, and knowledge of the country are clearly empowering, so much so that Kingdon-Ward is literally lost without him.

Masculinity, Imperialism and Landscape

Pratt's concept of the 'seeing man' assumes an inherent connection between perception and masculinity in colonialist representation. It also implies that ideas of masculinity are not only stable and consistent, but are in many ways central to the imperial project. McClintock has similarly described the ways in which colonialist and in particular natural scientific writing often relied upon masculine language:

> All too often, Enlightenment metaphysics presented knowledge as a relation of power between two gendered spaces, articulated by a journey and a technology of conversion: the male penetration and exposure of a veiled, female interior; and the aggressive conversion of its 'secrets' into a visible, male science of the surface.[30]

There are cases when Kingdon-Ward evokes such distinctions in his descriptions of landscape. For example, in the above quoted section, where he describes the border crossing from Burma, the 'paternal' land of empire with its 'erect telephone poles' and 'mile posts' is symbolically aligned with masculinity. Alternatively, China's undefined ground across the border is described elsewhere as the fertile land of corrosions and gorges, which can be viewed in terms of femininity and the female body.

In other ways, Kingdon-Ward's attitude to the landscape can be understood in relation to his gendered view of self. The idea of sportsmanship runs through Kingdon-Ward's writing: like animal hunting or mountaineering, plant hunting is described as a kind of 'man's game' that involves a necessary element of danger. In this way, the landscape itself can function as a test and a way of defining conventional masculine ideals. Considering the relative adventure-value of the Mekong River, he writes:

> Perhaps I had not been sufficiently ill-used by this extraordinary river to have a deep affection for it. The traveller, buffeted and bruised by storm and mountain, cherishes most the foe worthy of his steel. (*LBP*, p. 224)

Still in other ways, Kingdon-Ward asserts conventional masculine ideals. McClintock has discussed how women were the 'boundary markers for imperialism', often serving as mediating threshold figures (in the case of ships, maps, ect.).[31] In Kingdon-Ward's travel writing, the women he encounters play a role in defining such boundaries, and are like so many of the rare exotic flowers he seeks to collect:

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30 Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 23.
31 McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, p. 23.

> Many of the Mantze[32] girls look extremely pretty, tricked out with heavy silver bangles, ear-rings, and necklaces or coral or turquoise. Of course that is not all. Dark-blue skirts hitched up behind and hide boots reaching to the knee give them an Amazonian appearance which is rather enhanced by the coils of black hair, closely interwoven with strands of crimson twine, bound turbanwise round their heads, and the handsome, open face with its large dark eyes, from which the light flashes and dances when they smile.[33]

There is a sexual dimension in his description of this 'extremely pretty' girl, as the focal point of the description pans down the body and then returns to the face: from the earrings to the boots, and then back up to the flashing dark eyes. He surveys the woman as he would survey the land. The sentence 'of course that is not all' seems to knowingly suggest the best is yet to come. The attention here to jewellery is typical for anthropology of the time, and echoes other earlier travel writing to the region, but Kingdon-Ward's attraction to the girls he described and photographed goes beyond the anthropological; the exotic here merges with the erotic, and the effort to categorise, to particularise, along with the measure of aesthetic value borrows from the botanical.

While there may be elements of harmless playfulness or connoisseurship in Kingdon-Ward's attention to the local women, his aesthetic choices here also can reveal troubling underlying racial hierarchies. In other colonial contexts, such as in the Pacific,

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[32] Kingdon-Ward, perhaps unknowingly, uses the term 'Mantze' which is actually a derogatory term often used by Chinese or other groups. Another derogatory term that appears in European travel writing to describe these people is 'Lolos.' The people prefer to call themselves 'Nosus' (the term that I will use). The differences between these terms was apparently lost on Kingdon-Ward. The official term now used by the PRC is Yi, which designates these people as one of officially recognised minorities in China. There are numerous sub-groups (at least 7), and a total population today of 2.6 million. They live in the southwestern mountains – Sichuan, Yunnan, and Tibet. Many believe that the group was displaced during the reign of Genghis Khan. They speak Yi, a Tibetan-Burman language, and have a pictographic alphabet.

[33] Frank-Kingdon Ward, *Himalayan Enchantment: An Anthology* (London: Serindia, 1990), p. 101. This is a collection of Kingdon-Ward's writings chosen and edited by John Whitehead.

eroticised representations of indigenous women were common. Rod Edmond has remarked that such representations could communicate both sexualised meanings and at the same time racial hierarchies: discussing Byron's poem *The Island*, Edmond remarks that 'blushing Polynesian women both sexualised and categorised them, placing them outside the conventions of representation for black peoples.'[34] In a similar way, Kingdon-Ward's attention to the 'sunburnt' skin places these minority women into a different racial category from the Chinese or other racial groups.

In his descriptions of physical beauty, Kingdon-Ward appears attracted to the women who most resemble Europeans:

> Here I saw one of the most beautiful girls I have ever come across, a graceful lustrous-eyed creature, with warm sunburnt complexion. One meets such beauties sometimes among the Lutzu, more often amongst the Moso or the Tibetan tribes, and instinctively one wonders where they come from, for they possess no obvious Mongolian feature, neither prominent cheek-bones, nor almond shaped eyes, and scarcely even the distinctive colouring, for the complexion may be so light as to resemble that of a European. Their straight black hair and black eyes alone betray them.[35]

In other passages, following a somewhat predictable racial hierarchy, he comments on the unattractiveness of darker skinned women. Speaking of the Lutzus,[36] he writes:

> They were, without exception the filthiest people I have ever come across . . . Their complexions were darker, and their features, instead of being Mongolian, were, if anything, more negritoid than those of their relations down the river. (*LBP*, p. 93)

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[34] Rod Edmond, *Representing the South Pacific: Colonial Discourse from Cook to Gauguin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 75.

[35] Ward, *Himalayan Enchantment*, p. 101-2.

[36] Lutzu is an outdated term, which was considered offensive by some. Here Kingdon-Ward is probably referring to the Nu, an officially recognised minority in China who inhabit the Nu River (Salween) in Yunnan province. Today there are about 27,000 Nus in China. They do not have a written language, and they follow Tibetan Buddhism and local animism. The Nu have historically been exploited by other groups, often working as slaves and porters.

All too often, subjective aesthetic choices are merged with ethnographic language, establishing a hierarchy of taste, and in the above passage becoming conflated with a discourse of cleanliness.

McClintock's provocative suggestion is that imperialism would borrow from the language of sexuality in order to naturalize the process of colonial expansion. In other ways, she describes how gendered language would provide a thrill for home readers, further playing a role in the definition of self and other. McClintock refers to the 'porno-tropic' element of colonialist writing, as images of non-Western women created a fantasy element for mostly male readers:

> Renaissance travelers found an eager and lascivious audience for their spicy tales, so that, long before the era of high Victorian imperialism, Africa and the Americas had become what can be called a porno-tropics for the European imagination – a fantastic magic lantern of the mind onto which Europe projected its forbidden sexual desires and fears.[37]

Kingdon-Ward's descriptions might be thought of in similar terms. Consider the following example where Kingdon-Ward describes a Mosuo[38] woman:

> I can imagine nothing more charming, nothing in better taste, than a well-dressed Moso girl. She wears a white or perhaps dark blue skirt, closely pleated lengthways after the manner of a skirt-dancer's costume, reaching well below the knees; a dark blue blouse tied around the waist . . . Nor is it too much to say that many a Moso girl is wonderfully pretty, with a round good-natured face, regular features, a light complexion which is most readily described as sunburnt, and

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[37] McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, p. 22.

[38] The modern Chinese pinyin spelling is Mosuo [pronounced *Moswo*] (the term which I will use). Despite many differences, Mosuos are often confused with the larger group, the Naxi [pronounced *Nashee*] (or Nakhi in older texts). To add to this confusion, Mosuos are not given their own official designation by the PRC and are today considered as part of the Naxi, despite the fact that they speak a different language from the Naxi (the language is Naru which is Tibetan-Burman). Today, there are around 50,000 Mosuos living in Yunnan and Sichuan, mostly near Lugu Lake. Within Chinese society today, Mosuo society is known for its matriarchal social system, and the women allegedly choose husbands in a system known as 'walking marriages.'

> large dreamy eyes, though the general expression is one of considerable animation.[39]

Such a description might not, as McClintock suggests, project 'forbidden sexual desires and fears', but it might offer a sense of titillation and sexual abandon.

Another consideration is that 'botanical journeys' themselves have a history of being aligned with exotic sexual behaviour. In *Sex, Botany and Empire: The Story of Carl Linnaeus and Joseph Banks* (2004), Patricia Fara has described how in the early days of botany, the practice of collecting plants was closely aligned with sexual language and behaviour.

Fara describes how the Linnaean system of classification 'relied on counting the numbers of male and female sexual organs inside flowers' and how Linnaeus used terms such as 'bridal chamber' and 'nuptials' to describe different groups and types of plants.[40] 'For prudish Britons,' Fara writes, 'this sexualised version of nature verged on pornographic, and battles over botanical textbooks resembled current debates about allowing children to watch violent videos.'[41]

Fara illustrates how Joseph Banks's exploits in the Pacific were a gift for gossip among columnists and satirists, describing how for years after Banks's return to England, caricatures, pamphlets and articles mocked his alleged sexual activities with Polynesian women during the voyage.[42] Fara describes one such satirical illustration of Banks by Matthew Darly in 1772 entitled, 'The Botanic Macaroni':

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[39] Ward, *Himalayan Enchantment*, p. 101.
[40] Patricia Fara. *Sex, Botany & Empire: The Story of Carl Linnaeus and Joseph Banks* (Thriplow: Icon, 2004), p. 11.
[41] Fara. *Sex, Botany & Empire,* p. 11.
[42] Fara. *Sex, Botany & Empire*, p. 8.

> Ineffectually smiling and clutching his magnifying glass, Banks is a botanical libertine whose excessive desire for women has been replaced by an obsessive preoccupation with plants. Botany now may seem a harmless scientific pursuit, but in the late eighteenth century it was fraught with sexual allusions.[43]

Fara also describes how Erasmus Darwin's poem 'Loves of Plants' (1791) further reinforced the close connections between botany and sexual promiscuity.[44] Although separated by over a hundred years, Kingdon-Ward's botanical journeys can be viewed as carrying some of these earlier sexual overtones.

In still another sense, Kingdon-Ward's admiration for 'country girls' could recall a Romantic literary mode. Consider Wordsworth's, 'To The Highland Girl Of Inversneyde,' where he describes an unattainable, exotic shepherdess whose 'few words of English speech' and 'homely ways and dress' capture the poet's Romantic gaze.[45] It must be remembered that botany began as an institutionalized science and as a popular activity for the leisure class during the late eighteenth century, when at precisely the same time Romantic poets and writers began producing imaginative literature that often advocated a return to nature. During this time, many writers such as William and Dorothy Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Clare were amateur botanists; conversely, as the writers examined in this thesis demonstrate, several botanists were also writers with imaginative ambitions.

There is certainly a risk in overanalyzing Kingdon-Ward's descriptions of the women he encountered. They need not be 'boundaries of empire', nor need they be objects of his exotic fantasy, nor need they be throwbacks from Romantic poetry -- it is

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[43] Fara. *Sex, Botany & Empire*, p. 11.
[44] Fara. *Sex, Botany & Empire*, p. 42-3.
[45] See William Wordsworth, 'To The Highland Girl Of Inversneyde', in Charles Eliot, ed., *English Poetry II: From Collins to Fitzgerald* (New York: P.F. Collier and Son, 1909), p. 107, lines 41, 51.

simply that the sheer number of these descriptions in his writing raises questions about the gender and sexual politics at stake. Perhaps the very repetition is itself significant. How stable *is* Kingdon-Ward's robust, heterosexual male identity? And how confident is his muscular attitude towards the landscape? Is the 'seeing-man' always as self-assured as Pratt suggests?

In other travel writing on China during the period, ideas of excessive travel in China were sometimes connected to a threatening sense of degenerative Chinese 'femininity'. Consider Somerset Maugham's description of expatriate residents of Hong Kong, which appears in his collection of travel stories, *On a Chinese Screen* (1922):

> China bored them all, they did not want to speak of that; they had only known just so much about it as was necessary to their business, and they looked with distrust upon any man who studied the Chinese language. You could hire an interpreter for twenty five dollars a month, and it was well known that all of those fellows who studied Chinese were queer in the head.[46]

In 1900, the American traveller Eliza Scidmore described a similar idea:

> Something queer comes over the best of men when they get very far in the Chinese language and its classical literature. They become abnormal, impersonal, detached, dissociated from the living world, from the white-skinned, red-blooded human world of the West. Something in the climate, some mental microbe gets into all of us here in China. The longer we stay here the less we see and the less we are fitted to judge.[47]

Both Maugham's and Scidmore's descriptions imply 'going native' in the context of China, although both also have a satirical edge. Maugham is clearly differentiating himself from the views of the expatriate population, while Scidmore targets the mental microbe, but nevertheless identifies herself with it and it within herself. Nevertheless, in

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[46] W. Somerset Maugham, *On a Chinese Screen* [1922] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 14.
[47] Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore, *China: The Long-Lived Empire* (New York: Century Co., 1900), p. 456.

each case, such descriptions imply that the West is 'human' and 'living', whereas China is presumed to be 'inhuman' and 'dead' in some way. The reference to 'red-blood' is also particularly important here, as it corresponds with images of vitality and circulation that appear in Kingdon-Ward and in other travel accounts. The notion that the climate would have some effect on the mentality, or would cause a 'mental microbe' to invade the body, likens the effects of 'going native' to the visceral and immediate fear of contracting a disease. Moreover, the use of the word 'queer' is of particular interest, possibly implying a kind of degenerate homosexuality in those who have gone too far in adjusting themselves to the 'feminine' Chinese culture (according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the first usage of the word 'queer' as pertaining to homosexuality appears in 1922. Maugham's usage of the word may have this connotation, although with Scidmore, perhaps not). In this way, Kingdon-Ward's adventures on the periphery can be understood in relation to 'threatening' ideas of a 'feminine', 'static', and 'overly refined' Chinese Han culture.

Foot binding and Saving Chinese Women

In her essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' Gayatri Spivak discusses the ways in which European imperialism often consisted of 'white men saving brown women from brown men'.[48] Spivak was referring to the colonial context of India, and the British abolition of

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[48] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988) pp. 271-313.

suttee during the nineteenth century, but the view that Western colonial actors would focus on the treatment of women has some resonance in the context of China.

In the case of China, the practice of footbinding was a commonly recurring theme, one that would continually appear in travel writing, photography, and missionary writing. Similar to the practice of suttee in India, footbinding became the focus of humanitarian efforts. Dorothy Ko has discussed the ways in which the anti-foot binding movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries helped to strengthen the Western missionary movement and often 'encapsulated the European fascination with the grotesque and pathological Extreme Orient.'[49] Through such missionary organisations as Rev. John MacGovern's *jie chanzu hui* (Quit binding feet society), western missionaries had a common focus and a visceral cause. 'Bound feet' argues Ko,

> came to represent all that was wrong with traditional China: oppression of women, insularity, despotism, and disregard for human rights. Such reflections are grounded in the present, affording a progressive view of history, that things are getting better; our lives are freer than theirs.[50]

From Ko's perspective, the way the Chinese 'treat their women' also becomes an important aspect of Western colonialist discourse (although she also makes the important point that the discourse of foot binding played a crucial symbolic role in nationalist definitions of Chinese modernity within China). This is not unusual in travel writing and early anthropology, where women were the objects of cultural difference – their clothes, their jewellery, their feet, and their attitudes towards the foreign observer were often understood as essential features of the culture as whole. Indeed, the relative treatment of women in a particular society was often seen as a prime marker of the degree of

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[49] Dorothy Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding* (London: University of California Press, 2005), p. 53.
[50] Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters* , p. 10.

'civilisation attained' in missionary writing. Anna Johnston argues that in case of India and elsewhere

> the treatment of women was a crucial marker of civilisation and advancement, and … until the Indian community reformed its treatment of women it could become neither a Christian community nor a modern nation.[51]

According to Johnston, therefore, women functioned as textual devices in larger narratives of conversion and progress, and descriptions of depraved or uncivilised women gave missionaries extra impetus to come to the rescue. One might add that contemporary debates about Muslim women wearing a veil in some Western countries function in a similar way, as a range of political, cultural and ideological concerns are played out over the issue of women's visibility.

But footbinding could also, once again, be a marker of difference. Since minority women did not practice footbinding, they were often the point of comparison and difference with Han women. Consider the following passage by missionary Samuel Pollard, which describes a minority village in Sichuan:

> The student of ethnology finds himself in his element when he reaches the populous western provinces of China. … The small footed Chinese women with the long baggy trousers is but one of the many women on the market, and her crippled, unnatural walking motion compares very unfavourably with the quick, upright, graceful movements of the hillwomen, who would scorn to bind their feet, and who walk like women of a conquering race. Miao men with double pigtails, Nosu women with long skirts almost sweeping the ground, hill lasses with short skirts of many colours and long plaits of hair almost golden at the tips, strapping Min-Chia women bearing huge bundles of firewood hung by a strap around the forehead, here and there a Babu man with his long felt cape made, pleats and all, in one piece, women with curious horns on the heads, others with huge combs stuck crosswise in the back of their hair, long skirts and short skirts, wide trousers and no trousers, shoes of many colours and shapes and, prettier and more graceful of all, the five-toed natural foot, revealing no trace of deformity

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[51] Anna Johnston, *Missionary Writing and Empire, 1800-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 87.

> and equal to a hearty exciting dance on hillsides – these the traveller sees in markets of many parts of West China.[52]

The grammatical organisation of the passage – the long list of different movements, colours, and attributes – creates a vivid and exotic picture. In Pollard's account the minority people of the hills are hearty folk – the 'hill lasses' conjure up images of Scottish highlanders. Pollard was from Cornwall, and so he no doubt takes some extra pleasure in describing the folk element of the people here. While at the same time there is an effort to categorise the people, and a certain pleasure in being able to identify and fix characteristics on them.

In Pollard's above description, the natural feet of minority women represent the perceived freedoms and excesses in their society. The minority people are described in colourful and diverse terms, characteristics that can be viewed in relation to the perceived conformity and restrictions of traditional Han Chinese culture. He writes:

> In relations of the sexes the aboriginals of West China differ widely from the Chinese. The purdah and zenana are unknown among the former. In fact they have gone to the other extreme. Men and women freely mix together, and talk without restraint. With the majority of the tribes and clans this has resulted in gross immorality.[53]

By making similar distinctions between Han and minority people, Kingdon-Ward echoes Pollard. Observing a Tibetan dance, Kingdon-Ward writes:

> The Chinese, so far as I know, have no country dances like these, indeed they do not dance at all, and would consider any mingling of the sexes on terms of equality highly improper. Even in the theatres women are not allowed to act with men, their place being taken by men dressed for the part. (*LBP*, p. 121)

Here Kingdon-Ward reduplicates stereotypes of Chinese culture and further articulates his preference for highland, rustic culture.

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[52] Samuel Pollard, *In Unknown China* (London: Seeley Service & Co., 1921), p. 52.
[53] Pollard, *In Unknown China*, p. 171.

Such descriptions can be viewed in relation to other nineteenth- and early twentieth-century travel accounts in China, where Han Chinese women are often described as aloof, or behind closed doors, away from the seeing eyes of the traveller. In some cases, such as in Fortune's writing, they are conspicuously absent. When they are visible in travel accounts their bound feet are the subject of much attention and scrutiny.

Although Kingdon-Ward does not directly discuss footbinding, the 'saving brown women' colonial mentality appears in his writing. At one point in his travels, he describes how one of the soldiers in his party attempts to strike a woman with a whip:

> My second soldier proved willing to go to even greater lengths in my service than the first had done, for a certain woman having made some trouble about changing ponies, he rode straight at her with an uplifted whip, prepared to lay it across her bare shoulders, a chastisement which she escaped by dashing into the house. For the second time I interfered, and dismounting, took the whip from him and threatened to beat him with it if he did not behave. (*LBP*, p. 147)

Here, it would appear, Kingdon-Ward is enacting the classic 'white man saving brown women from brown men' script, only instead of conforming to the familiar colonialist logic, Kingdon-Ward writes: 'I am bound to confess that this was more because I wanted the whip myself than because I disapproved of his action.' He then explains:

> On general principles I consider it neither expedient nor of the slightest use for a traveller to interfere blindly with native customs, and I am sure the woman was far more astonished to see me tackle the headman than she would have been to feel the whip across her shoulders. Also I doubtless would have made myself very unpopular with the other villagers, who resent any form of interference with their ruling class. However I secured the whip, a very nice leather one, though I gave the man a rupee for it afterwards. (*LBP*, p. 147)

In a flippant, comical tone, Kingdon-Ward describes a no-win situation; and playing with the reader's expectations, he conveys a shocking lack of gallantry. Kingdon-Ward's role as a disciplinarian is again made clear enough by his high-handed attitude towards the soldier. Also, the idea that physical abuse towards women is simply an aspect of 'native

customs' all too easily assumes that such practices are normal, accepted, or in some way 'cultural'. But it is nevertheless significant that he does not choose to save the woman. As with 'the seeing-man', the idea of 'white men saving brown women from brown men' is different in practice as it is in theory, and while his selfish response might not be commendable, his policy of non-interference is understandable enough.

Kingdon-Ward, Romanticism, and Ecology

While theories of colonial discourse, such as the gender critical ones I have been discussing, offer valuable insights into travel writing, ultimately, one needs to read the texts themselves. One very large risk is examining travel writing entirely in terms of its relationship with Empire is that it can occlude other important interpretations. I have already discussed Kingdon-Ward's interest in landscape and sublime aesthetics, but his relationship with the natural world goes beyond mere politics of representation or literary style. In many ways, Kingdon-Ward is an ecological writer, although he would have not used these terms to describe himself.

One needs to keep in mind that during Kingdon-Ward's time, the expression of 'environmental issues' was becoming more common and articulate in British society and literature. During the early years of the twentieth century, imperialism and international trade, along with massive improvements in travel and communication technology, made societies increasingly more interconnected and aware of each other. Helen Carr writes that

> by 1880 the American Transcontinental Railway and the Trans-Indian Peninsular Railroad had been built, the Suez canal opened, and if Jules Verne's *Around the*

> *World in 80 Days* was a fantasy when published in 1873, by 1890 an American woman journalist, Nellie Bly, had been around the globe in a mere seventy-two.[54]

The effects of such movement, of such shuttling back and forth of people, commodities and currencies, began to have an impact on writers like E.M. Forster whose novel *Howard's End* (1910) is in many ways concerned with the effects of technological innovation, urban growth and the disruptive effects of modern cultural change. In an early essay, entitled, 'The Machine Stops', written two years before the publication of *Howard's End*, Forster described his anxiety towards such new forms of transportation:

> It comes quickly, and if I live old I shall see the sky as pestilential as the roads. It really *is* a new civilisation . . . The little houses that I am used to will be swept away, the fields will stink of petrol, and the airships will shatter the stars.[55]

In *Howard's End*, forms of transportation and their environmental impact come under scrutiny, especially motorcars which are depicted as a particularly obnoxious, unstoppable, and brutal mode of locomotion, capable of producing road kill and 'dust, and stink, and cosmopolitan chatter.'[56] The tension between walking and other forms of transportation is one that runs through *Howard's End,* as Leonard Bast's long night-time walks are set up against the motorcars of the Wilcox family.

In some ways reminiscent of Bast's long perambulations, Kingdon-Ward's travels are deliberate, methodical, and largely done on foot. In the case of Kingdon-Ward, walking provided a different perspective of the land. On one trip, Lord Cawdor, a

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[54] Helen Carr, 'Modernism and Travel (1880-1940),' in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) pp. 70-86 (p. 74).
[55] Qtd in Stallybrass, 'Introduction,' *Howards End*, [1910] (London: Folio Society, 1973), p. 10.
[56] E. M. Forster, *Howards End*, [1910] (London: Folio Society, 1973), p. 213.

wealthy amateur ethnologist accompanying Kingdon-Ward on a trip through the Himalayas into Tibet, commented on Kingdon-Ward's slow pace:

> Move at his pace – God knows how he does it . . . – There's not much companionship to be got out of such a chap – It drives me clean daft to walk behind him – Stopping every 10 yards and hardly moving in between – In the whole of my life I've never seen such an incredibly slow mover.[57]

The connection between walking and writing has been a topic of much discussion among literary critics, as many of the most well-known British Romantic writers were also great walkers (often botanizing as they went): Dorothy and William Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Clare not only enjoyed walking as a leisure activity, but represented, indeed romanticised, the act of walking in their poetry.[58]

Donna Landry has offered insightful readings of walking and its ecological significance in Romantic literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, arguing that walking in Romantic literature was often defined against the tradition of hunting.[59] Botanizing, according to Landry, was a particularly important mode for Romantics, a form of non-blood sport hunting that would appeal to emerging ecological sensibilities. It is therefore important to consider Kingdon-Ward in relation to the Romantic tradition, and to keep in mind the ways in which the acts of walking, plant collecting, and writing are linked to the Romantic imagination and to historically evolving ecological ideas.

In the American Romantic tradition, Thoreau was a regular walker, and praised the simplicity of the activity:

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[57] Qtd. in Mueggler, 'The Lapponicum Sea', p. 457.
[58] See Anne D. Wallace, *Walking, Literature and English Culture: The Origins and Uses of Peripatetic in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994); Robin Jarvis, *Romantic Writing and Pedestrian Travel* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997).
[59] Donna Landry, *Invention of the Countryside: Hunting, Walking, and Ecology in English Literature, 1671-1831* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001).

> I come to my solitary woodland walk as the homesick go home. I thus dispose of the superfluous and see things as they are, grand and beautiful. I have told many that I walk every day about half the daylight, but I think they do not believe it. I wish to get the Concord, the Massachusetts, the America, out of my head and be sane a part of every day.[60]

Walking, in Thoreau's view, is a way to become grounded, a way to view the land for its natural beauty rather than its political and geographic designations. Kingdon-Ward's writing often strikes a similar chord:

> It is interesting to compare one description with another and to note how very different the same journey may appear to different people whose interests in life are more or less different. As for me, I have an eye for plants, and take more than a passing interest in men and things; and to my mind the high plateaux between the deeply-scoured, trench-like valleys, now blazing with scarlet rhododendrons and pink camellias, afforded such charming landscapes that I was almost oblivious to everything else. (*LBP*, p. 11)

Kingdon-Ward's slow pace and eye for plants made him a different kind of traveller and a different kind of writer. Indeed, his texts can be viewed as a species of nature writing, as they offer readers new ways of thinking about the human relationship with the environment, and celebrate the human capacity to live in closer relation to the land, or to use Thoreau's phrase concerning his time in Walden woods, 'to live deliberately'. However, unlike Romantic nature writers such as Thoreau, Kingdon-Ward's vision is often infused with a pessimistic world-view, and an inexorable sense of decline. In the following passage, he vividly describes a receding glacier:

> For the first time I saw, perfectly clear against the china-blue sky and quite close to us, the northernmost of the snow-peaks, the black buttress of Tsa-ya, a massive tower down whose near wall there crawled, its blunt arms out-thrust aimlessly like a giant amoeba, all that was left of what must have been a glacier. It was the oddest site imaginable, that white fungus-like growth, clinging to the cliff, its blunt-nosed pseudopodia protruding stiffly from its much-scratched body; with

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[60] From Thoreau's Journal, January 7, 1857. Quoted in *I to Myself*, in Jeffrey S. Cramer ed., *An Annotated Selection from the Journal of Henry D. Thoreau* (New York: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 302.

> icy grip enfeebled by approaching death, it now hugged the rock it had so mauled and gashed; its tentacles clawed weakly at the face of the tower they had so wounded. And as it hung there dying, dying in the stillness, I stood spellbound.[61]

In another passage, he describes a similar state of natural decay:

> The damp and darkness of the fir forest with its bamboo undergrowth was a wonderful breeding-ground for moss, while the coils and coils of green unhealthy-looking lichen flung insidious tentacles round every tree, slowly choking the life out of it. Nothing was more sad on that dismal plateau than to see the struggle which was raging dumbly between host and parasite – the one immense, stern, and upright, the other insignificant, crawling, and deadly. On the edge of the forest great bare masts, shrouded with this gnawing death, which hung in tattered festoons from the stumps of branches, rose grimly into the sky. (*LBP*, p. 24)

Looking back into the late nineteenth century, such images of natural decline can be connected to fears of cultural extinction, ideas that were common during the period. It has been argued that together with degeneration and decadence, the weakness of both heterosexual and homosexual men, effeminacy (which brought with it the threat of sterility and national extinction) was a central concern of the fin de siècle and its medical experts. The perceived threat brought on by the industrial revolution, modern technology, urbanisation, and by an accelerated pace of life was associated with 'degeneration' and the decline of European society. As I have already discussed regarding the Jack London story, China played an instrumental role in such fears.

Looking forward into the twentieth century, however, Kingdon-Ward's descriptions of natural decline can also be viewed in terms of a more contemporary ecological perspective. Nature, in this view, is susceptible to human interference, fragile, and capable of dying out altogether. In this way, the interface between humans and nature is fraught with ethical and even aesthetic uncertainty. The smooth and harmonious

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[61] Kingdon-Ward, *Himalayan Enchantment* , p. 131.

communion with nature that writers such as Wordsworth advocated is unsustainable in the face of modern technology and blatant environmental deterioration.

While I have already discussed how Kingdon-Ward often evoked Romantic tropes of the natural world, it is equally important to realise that his writing also reveals the ways in which such European aesthetics do not always translate when describing a foreign landscape. For example, early in *The Land of the Blue Poppy* Kingdon-Ward decides to go hunting by himself (this time for birds) and ends up getting lost. Knowing the risk of wandering off alone in unfamiliar terrain, he nevertheless proceeds into the forest by himself in order to find a way of rejoining the main group that he was travelling with. Reflecting back on the incident, he writes: 'It was partly from a love of plunging into anything which offered a certain amount of novelty, and partly from sheer laziness' (*LBP*, p.25). But rather than retrace he steps, he walks deeper into the forest, encountering thick bamboo groves and canebrake. 'Sometimes,' he writes:

> I emerged momentarily from the brake, hot and angry, and finding the trail, recklessly followed it till it disappeared, but always come again to this appalling fence of jungle, which was slowly crushing the strength out of me. Even the beautiful sight of masses of the blue *Primula sonchifolia* in the dampest parts of the forest, sometimes growing right in the icy water derived from the melting snow, failed to compensate me for this torture, or to rouse my enthusiasm. (*LBP*, 25-6)

Further into the forest he plunges, until eventually he is forced to give up and spend the night sleeping fitfully under a tree. The next day, he manages to retrace his steps, and eventually resorts to eating flowers in order to keep himself going:

> I remembered with glee that at the base of each rhododendron corolla was a big drop of honey. However, after sucking a score of flowers without obtaining much nourishment, I started eating the whole thing, which, though glutinous and insipid, was not altogether nasty. (*LBP*, 28)

Eventually, night falls again, and as a result of his physical exhaustion, he begins to lose touch with reality:

> Progress became slower; extraordinary hallucinations grew upon me, and I found myself continually halting to step over large boulders which did not exist except in my imagination, while in doing so I blundered clumsily into every obstacle which the path presented, slipped over the bank on one side, and walked into the bushes on the other. Helpless birds fluttered along the ground before me, so that I stooped down on more than one occasion to pick one up; strange animals moved in the thickets; every light visible in the city was dancing up and down like a will-o'-the-wisp, and some poplar trees along the sky-line to the right seemed to be swaying violently to and fro as though bending before a gale, yet the night was perfectly still. (*LBP*, p. 31)

In many ways, Kingdon-Ward's description of his survival in the woods can be understood as a scripted event, one that plays on a number of Romantic ideals. His description of being lost is typically Romantic, as his encounter with nature has mystical and supernatural overtones. Consider Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey*, where he suggests that nature has gratified his physical being, excited his emotions, and ultimately allowed him 'a sense sublime/Of something far more deeply interfused,' of a spiritual force immanent not only in the forms of nature but 'in the mind of man'. Though not necessarily in the same terms, Blake, Coleridge, Byron and Shelley also make a similar connection between the world of nature and the world of the spirit. Furthermore, the whole idea of being lost is a common theme in Romantic literature: for example, Book Six of Wordsworth's *Prelude* describes an episode of being lost in the Swiss Alps and having to spend the night exposed to the elements:

> We left the town
> Of Gravedona with this hope; but soon
> Were lost, bewildered among woods immense,
> And on a rock sate down, to wait for day.[62]

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[62] William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co. 1978), p. 408, lines 688-702.

Kingdon-Ward's hallucinations and the description of the forest at night also evoke gothic literary aesthetics, further aligning his writing with the Romantic tradition.

While evoking such Romantic ideals and aesthetics, the passage that describes his experience getting lost also reveals the very limitations of the Romantic European perspective. In this foreign landscape his vision is obscured by the utterly alien bamboos and canebrake. This is clearly not a walk in the Lake District. Furthermore, while there might be a certain Romantic thrill to being lost, Kingdon-Ward's obvious frustration reveals that he is out of his depth, both physically and culturally: the scripted role of the Romantic traveller/walker/botanist is left behind as even the picturesque flowers he encounters along the way fail to impress him. This episode, early in the narrative, demonstrates that humans are vulnerable in nature, and if they are to survive, they need to interact with it, and respect it.

Throughout his writing, Kingdon-Ward describes numerous encounters with natural barriers, and rather than interpret such events simply in terms of adventure or mastery, we can assess the ways in which they might encourage ecological awareness. Consider the following passage, where he describes the transition through various kinds of terrain:

> So dense was the vegetation that one of the loads was wrenched from the saddle as we brushed through, and after that came marshy ground and thickets of willow, till finally climbing up between really magnificent fir trees, we reached the main pass and emerged quite suddenly on to the grassland plateau once more. (*LBP*, p. 145)

This passage reveals not only how Kingdon-Ward's writing demonstrates sensitivity to natural barriers and different ecological zones, but also how his narrative itself is structured through natural barriers and interactions.

In Kingdon-Ward's texts, such natural barriers offer a sense of structure for the narrative. The idea of a chronotope was used by Mikhail Bakhtin to explain a spatial-temporal matrix used in narrative: a chronotope provides a stable way of understanding a particular genre, but it can also help to structure time and space in narrative. In travel writing, this concept is particularly useful; for example, train travel and mountaineering literature would both evoke certain chronotopes that would also carry specific expectations and values about the people and places encountered on these journeys. Throughout Kingdon-Ward's travel writing, time and space are measured in relation to the rivers, mountain passes, and stages of a particular journey on the trail. Indeed, crossing over a river or searching for its source has both mythological and biblical echoes, and the notion of going up river towards an elusive origin is a recurring motif in Kingdon-Ward's travel writing. The goal in *The Land of the Blue Poppy* is the town of Menkong, which is near the headwaters of the Salween River. In later travels he similarly follows rivers, perhaps most explicitly in *The Riddle of the Tsangpo Gorges* (1926) where he ventures into Tibet to find the source of the elusive gorge. In a world without mile markers, Kingdon-Ward relies on rivers to understand his physical and geographical position. While providing a sense of one's own position, the rivers also provide an endpoint. Therefore, in many ways, the narrative is itself dictated by the terrain.

Kingdon-Ward's observations of people living in close harmony with nature is part Romanticism, part colonialist trope, but also partly true. From an eco-critical perspective, there is something desirable about the non-technological measurement of time and space, something utterly pragmatic and sensible about measuring routes in terms of days in the saddle or on foot, and indeed, something appealing about the way that

Tibetan people measured time by examining the span of a bridge. The place that Kingdon-Ward describes is a land that has not only a different way of life and a different attitude towards nature, but a completely different rhythm and pace.

The sport aspect of Kingdon-Ward's writing can also be viewed in terms of its ecological import. Discussing seventeenth and eighteenth-century hunting narratives and poetry, Landry describes how the writers such as Margaret Cavendish and Charlotte Smith encouraged a more imbricated relationship between humans and nature, and through their representations of sports and hunting in the countryside, addressed questions of human stewardship of land and animals. Furthermore, such writers, Landry argues, expressed an intimate knowledge of local landscapes, and often articulated a linkage between human and the non-human worlds that anticipates contemporary social ecological concerns.[63] In some ways, Kingdon-Ward's plant hunting can be viewed in relation to this social and literary history, and as part of an ongoing tradition of ecological hunting literature.

In the previous chapter on Robert Fortune, citing Richard Grove, I suggested that non-Western landscapes and environmental ideals may have had some influence on early Western environmental thinking. In the case of Kingdon-Ward, one can make a similar case. Kingdon-Ward's travels in China and Tibet need not be always thought of in terms of his engagement with European ideals, literary traditions, or social concerns. It may be a relatively obvious point to make, but one needs to keep in mind that Kingdon-Ward's writing describes a foreign world, and while this difference could be constructed in a number of ways, it can also be taken at face value.

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63 Donna Landry, 'Green Languages? Women Poets as Naturalists in 1653 and 1807', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 63:4 (2000), 467-489.

Throughout, Kingdon-Ward expresses an awareness and respect for local beliefs, customs, and religions. At one point, he describes how Tibetan people built rock cairns and adorned them with prayer flags. Marvelling at the amount of time it must have taken them to construct the monument, he writes: 'what is time to a man who is trying to acquire merit and stifle desire!' (*LBP*, p.133). Although he goes no further in expressing his interest in Tibetan Buddhism, his descriptions of travelling light, with few possessions are in many ways compatible with the spiritual ideals of the region. While he does not directly identify with them, he often shares the trail with pilgrims. In his travels, Kingdon-Ward celebrates the life on the trail and is sensitive to the local codes of conduct and etiquette: he is always vigilant in terms of generating respect. He takes pleasure in describing the importance of keeping good karma (although he does not use the phrase): for example, in returning small favours like a cup of butter tea or a warm bed to sleep in, with small gifts. While the values of local hospitality and reciprocity have cultural equivalents everywhere, his descriptions of walking and riding among the people of Southwest China are something unique, valuable, and ethically appealing.

Conclusion: Towards an Organic Ideal

The call to push westward has particular resonance with a Romantic frontier idea that would often appear in earlier travel narratives and colonial literature in America and other contexts. For Kingdon-Ward's contemporaries, the Southwest of China was an undiscovered gem and a land of mystery and opportunity. Samuel Pollard describes the region in enthusiastic terms:

> Forget those little, almost impudent gunboats which hold up the flags of several nations before the gaze of the busy farmers and traders of the richest province in all China, and one of the finest countries in the whole world. Do not fancy you have yet seen the real Yangtse. Press on farther. The greatest mysteries of all lie towards the sunset, and he who would speak to the heart of the mighty river must diligently resist the temptation to stop, and keep on crying: Westward Ho![64]

The concluding words of *The Land of the Blue Poppy* foretell Kingdon-Ward's lifelong interest in the region and echo other Romantic utopian descriptions:

> Convinced as I am that with its wonderful wealth of alpine flowers, it numerous wild animals, its strange tribes, and its complex structure it is one of the most fascinating regions of Asia, I believe I shall be content to wander over it for years. To climb its rugged peaks, and tramp its deep snows, to fight its storms of wind and rain, to roam in the warmth of its deep gorges within sight and sound of its roaring rivers, and above all to mingle with its hardy tribesmen, is to feel the blood coursing through the veins, every nerve steady, every muscle taut. (*LBP*, p. 273)

Kingdon-Ward did, in fact, wander over this part of Asia for years, and he returned to the region regularly throughout his life (it is said that at the age of seventy-three, shortly before his death, he was still planning an Asian trip). Such a utopian landscape that Kingdon-Ward helped to create – with all of its gendered, ideological, and ecological resonances – would be instrumental in defining the region in the British imagination and would also inform later travel writers.

Raymond Williams has influentially discussed how the idea of an organic community never really existed, and that it was always an idealisation of the past, serving various cultural and economic imperatives. As I have already shown, idealisations of the past, like the idealization of the 'primitive' people who had supposedly escaped the corrupting influences of modernity, could often support a colonialist logic of scientific and cultural superiority. Nevertheless, some myths, perhaps, are necessary and fruitful as

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[64] Pollard, *In Unknown China*, p. 29.

they offer a way of making sense of the world, and in some cases the vision of a better one.

Reginald Farrer and the Modernist Turn: Botanizing on the Eaves of the World

In this chapter, I will examine the gardening and travel writings of Reginald Farrer (1880-1920). In the first part of this chapter, I will examine Farrer's discriminating eye for plants and consider how his gardening writing offers insights into changing social and literary concerns during the late 1910s. In the second part of this chapter, I will focus more closely on Farrer's travel writing in order to explore how Farrer's engagement with modernist literary aesthetics 'translates' China for the domestic reader.



Frank Kingdon-Ward and Reginald Farrer were two very different kinds of travellers and two very different kinds of writers. If Kingdon-Ward was a Romantic who wrote largely in a descriptive mode, Farrer was a modernist who wrote in a more self-conscious, ironic and literary style. While Kingdon-Ward aligned himself with a more conventional heterosexual identity in his travel writing, Farrer challenged traditional notions of gender and sexuality through queer innuendos, and campy humour. Indeed, while Kingdon-Ward often celebrated his role as an explorer on the periphery of empire, Farrer's travel books read more like a parody of such accounts.

While a comparison of Kingdon-Ward and Farrer can only go so far, it is nevertheless important to consider that these two writers were acutely aware of each other, and in some ways fashioned their personalities and their writings in relation to each other. According to E.M. Cox, a British botanical explorer who travelled with Farrer, Kingdon-Ward and Farrer met at one point in a small village in Yunnan and the three

decided to travel back to Rangoon together. The exact details of this trip are unknown, but in his biography of Farrer, Cox relates how there was a heated exchange about who had the privilege to collect plants in a remote corner of Southwest China. The 'terrible Boxing-Day row', as Cox later described it, brought out the worst of Farrer's volatile personality. Cox wrote: 'It is odd that a man of so many brains should think himself a combination of God, Demosthenes, and George Moore all rolled in one.' He then observed: 'If I had been K-W I would have hit him.'[1] It is a wonder that Kingdon-Ward and Farrer do not refer to each other in their writings, but perhaps the silence itself is significant.[2]

One of the most important differences between the two is that Farrer approached plant collecting more as an art than as a science. While both of the explorers may have had obsessive tendencies, Farrer's passion for botanical discovery bordered on manic. Charles Lyte provides a telling description of Farrer's habitual botanical scanning:

> Farrer was totally absorbed when he was botanizing, with eyes only for plants, and he would often trip and stumble because he never looked where he was putting his feet … his legs usually looked like a ploughed field; but he cared little … When he was travelling between collecting grounds, through botanically dull country, he would drift off into a kind of trance . . . His lips would move for hours on end, while he imagined conversations or concocted themes.[3]

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[1] See Euan Hillhouse Methven Cox and Reginald John Farrer, *Farrer's Last Journey. Upper Burma, 1919-20* (London: Dulau & Co., 1926). Quoted in Shulman p. 110.

[2] One of the few references to Kingdon-Ward in Farrer's writing appears in a flower description in *The English Rock Garden*. One detects a level of competition or resentment: '*P. albiflos* leads us far from the humble haunts of Primroses. It is a plant almost legendary in its beauty, not yet attained, nor for many years to be attainable by the small garden. It carries two noble white flowers at the top of its scrape, and glorifies the high Atuntzu Range by the Mekong-Salween Divide, the special paradise of new beauties of the race. Kingdon Ward discovered it and named it; on Kingdon Ward depend our hopes for its introduction. No peril at the hands of fierce Tibetan monks should be too high a price to pay for it.' (*The English Rock Garden*. vol. II. p.107).

[3] Charles Lyte, *The Plant Hunters* (London: Orbis, 1983), p. 143.

In terms of his botanical knowledge, Lyte describes Farrer as being

> an amateur… He hunted plants with he eye of an artist, seeking beauty above all else. Pure botany meant little to him, and as a result his herbarium collections were the despair of scientists.[4]

Farrer lacked professional seriousness and instead approached plant collection and gardening with a kind of experimental, comic passion. A telling example of Farrer's eccentricity is recounted in a recent BBC article, which playfully refers to Farrer as 'the shotgun gardener,' describing one incident where he loaded a shotgun with seeds collected on his foreign travels, and fired them into a rock cliff and gorge in his native North Yorkshire.[5]

Given his erratic behaviour, it is not surprising that Farrer had an unusual upbringing. He was born with a cleft palate and when he was young had a severe speech impediment. As a young boy, several operations were performed, none of them successful (later in life he wore a heavy moustache to hide the scars). He was born into a wealthy family: his father, J.A. Farrer was a Liberal member of Parliament several times, and owned the estate of Ingleborough, near Clapham in Yorkshire. Farrer was educated at home, but eventually went to Oxford where he finished with mediocre results (he took a second in Mods and a third in Greats).

As a young man at Oxford, Farrer developed a desire to be a writer, and composed short plays and several poems. After graduating, he travelled to the European Alps, Russia, and Ceylon. He collected plants in the Italian Alps and wrote about his

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[4] Lyte, *The Plant Hunters*, p.142.

[5] 'The Shotgun Gardener', *BBC One: Inside Out – Yorkshire & Lincolnshire,* June 16, 2003, website: (http://www.bbc.co.uk/insideout/yorkslincs/series3/gardening_shotgun_yorkshire_reginald_farrer.shtml), retrieved June 16, 2008.

travels in gardening magazines. In Ceylon, he converted to Buddhism, much to the chagrin of his family. Although Farrer's earlier fiction was never published, he found success in gardening writing, travel writing, and literary criticism (especially on Jane Austen, a topic that I will discuss later in this chapter). In many cases, all of these interests merge and his writing ends up being a rather odd amalgam of adventure, poetic reflection, gardening, and botany.

Farrer's travels to China were particularly productive in both botanical and literary terms. *On the Eaves of the World* (1917) and *Rainbow Bridge* (1921) document Farrer's botanical exploration of Gansu and Qinghai provinces with William Purdom between 1915-16. The first expedition, described in *On the Eaves of the World*, took place in the Satanee Alps (now the Qilian Range) during the summer months of 1915. The second expedition took place further north in the Datung Mountains, which is described in *Rainbow Bridge*. These mountain ranges are in Gansu and Qinghai, provinces in the north west of China that border on the Tibetan plateau to the west and the Gobi desert to the north.

In the first lines of his first Chinese travel book *On the Eaves of the World*, Farrer describes his decision to go to China in poetic terms: 'Fate has her hints for those who keep good watch; and the gates of heart's desire may be found ajar at the most unlikely times.' He describes his first meeting with William Purdom, an experienced plant collector who had already travelled extensively in China, as such a fated opportunity, and by offering to pay Purdom's expenses, 'the thing was settled, and the plan was born.'[6]

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[6] Reginald John Farrer, *On the Eaves of the World*, vol. 1 (Edward Arnold: London, 1926), p.1. Further references to this work will be abbreviated *Eaves* with page references given parenthetically in the text.

By all accounts Farrer and his travelling companion Purdom were an odd pair. Charles Lyte describes their differences:

> Purdom was a tall, athletic figure, withdrawn but quietly and charming, while Farrer was stocky, tending to plumpness, dark haired, with a heavy moustache … [Farrer] had a harsh grating voice, and, when he chose, a deliberately rude manner; genuine expressions of affection could be wiped out by merciless sarcasm. Purdom had started life as a garden boy and graduated to Kew, while Farrer had always had his own gardeners to carry out his horticultural designs.[7]

The description reveals underlying differences of class and privilege that separated Farrer from other travellers and collectors including Kingdon-Ward and Purdom. Like Kingdon-Ward, Purdom collected as a profession and was employed by Veitch and Sargent, a British nursery; Farrer had his own personal literary and botanical motivations.

Farrer's avid literary interests, unconventional life, and artistic approach to plant collecting need to be considered in relation to his contemporary society, and especially to the radical changes that were taking place in literary and artistic circles. It is significant that Farrer was related to the Sitwells, a wealthy family who supported the Arts during the early twentieth century. Similar to the Bloomsbury Group, the Sitwells – and in particular the three siblings Edith, Osbert, and Sacheverell –provided a social network for modernist writers, collecting and publishing several anthologies, the most important of which was *Wheels* (Nancy Cunard and Aldous Huxley were perhaps the best known contributors). Although not directly part of the Sitwell clique, as a cousin Farrer was known to them and throughout his life maintained a correspondence with Osbert Sitwell (who wrote several books, including a travel book on China, *Escape With Me: An Oriental Sketchbook* [1940]). While Farrer did not directly contribute to the Sitwells'

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[7] Lyte, *The Plant Hunters,* p. 140.

literary projects, his unusual life was at least the subject of their interest. Osbert Sitwell provides a telling and vivid description of Farrer:

> From his birth, he had carried a slightly Mongol look, which in turn had been emphasised – though in this instance not acquired, as if often the case – by long periods in China … His hair was black and grew rather low on the forehead, his dark eyes were, in hackneyed phrase, speaking eyes, beyond any I have seen. They shone with that particular and urgent light that is only to be noticed in the eyes of the deaf or of those who encounter some physical difficulty in utterance. Yet this in his case was unaccountable, for he possessed no hesitation in his speech, which at its worst, sounded like one of those early gramophones fitted with a tin trumpet. His manner was bland, but, albeit possessed of the capacity to be extremely considerate, he was impish by nature, and so, since he had also the power of identifying, with an intimidating speed and certainty, hypocrisy and pretentiousness, there were, even in his most clement, occasional sly digs and prods for all in his conversation.[8]

Sharp, satirical, and occasionally irritating – Farrer's speaking and prose style can be described in similar terms. As a botanist, as an explorer, and certainly as a writer, Farrer does not appear to conform to any typical model. His prose is quirky, at times quite insightful and hilarious, while at other times pompous, with gratuitous literary references or brief quotations in Greek or French. Nevertheless, his writing captures the experimental nature of modernist writing and provides fresh insights into changing attitudes towards literature and travel writing during this period.

Farrer's Modern Garden

I will begin by discussing Farrer's gardening writing, and consider the ways in which this writing engaged with its modernist cultural context, raising a number of concerns and

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[8] Osbert Sitwell, *Noble Essences or Courteous Revelations. Being a Book of Characters and the Fifth and Last Volume of Left Hand, Right Hand! An Autobiography* (London: Macmillan & co., 1950), p. 17.

themes that appear later in his travel writing. Farrer's biographer Nicola Shulman describes Farrer as one of the central figures in the revolution that took place in gardening during the early twentieth century. In his earlier gardening writing, published during the early 1910s, Farrer extolled the need for gardeners to focus on the individual characteristics of plants, challenging conventional Victorian gardening practices, which tended to use plants primarily for their colour. Shulman describes the ostentatious use of flowers in Victorian gardening schemes:

> It was said in the mid-century that a man could measure his wealth in his bedding list: ten thousand for a squire, twenty for a baronet, thirty for an earl, forty for a duke, and for Alfred de Rothschild, who wished to make his position clear, forty-one thousand. In the bedding system, the plant itself was not important; it was merely a colour element in a scheme. Apart from the heat needed to make it bloom, its needs were not consulted. Its natural qualities – leaf, habitat, shape of flower – were viewed not as an ornament but as a challenge to the levelling hand of the designer … By the end of the century the bedding art had refined itself into the practice of 'carpet bedding'. For this, dwarf plants were laid out in more elaborate devices, like garlands, ribbons and bows, monograms, or letters forming the names of proprietary brands.[9]

Shulman recounts how by the turn of the century, the gardener and writer William Robinson changed such practices by introduced hardy plant gardening, which emphasised natural growth of perennials, shrubs and lawns. He also advocated the wild garden, spoke highly of cottage gardening and, more specifically, is known for being the originator of the herbaceous border (which consisted of hardy instead of ornamental plants). In his book *The English Flower Garden* (1897), Robinson wrote vehemently against carpet bedding and the use of greenhouses, and he argued for a renewal to bring plants into their natural state.

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[9] Nicola Shulman, *A Rage for Rock Gardening: The Story of Reginald Farrer, Gardener, Writer and Plant Collector* (London: Short, 2002), pp. 38-9.

Farrer was an alpine or rock gardener, and like Robinson, he wrote passionately against the Victorian practices of bedding-out. Although today rock gardening may not be familiar or particularly meaningful for readers, Shulman explains: 'To the Edwardian eye, a limestone rockery planted up with alpine flowers would carry the refreshing connotation of a wild mountain landscape, and would confer a cosmopolitan distinction upon its owner, as being one who visited the Alps in summer and saw these tiny beauties for himself.'[10] Rock gardening was, in fact, a form of hardy plant gardening, and Farrer took this form of gardening to new levels. He was particularly successful in transplanting the notoriously finicky alpine plants to an English climate.

As a writer, Farrer's descriptions of flowers, and his attention to their details, were stylistically innovative. According to Shulman, 'Up until now, serious garden writers delivered their advice in tones of omniscient authority, remote and unassailable.' In his writing, however, Farrer pays particular attention to individual details of plants, often describing them in poetic, literary language. Farrer's *My Rock Garden* (1907) sold well, and stayed in print into the 1940s. His *The English Rock Garden* (1919) sold even better, and truly launched Farrer's career as a gardening writer; today, horticultural enthusiasts still regard *The English Rock Garden* as a classic work.

Vita Sackville-West praised Farrer's writing, rating him just below D.H. Lawrence as a 'writer of flowers', and calling him 'half-poet, half-botanist'.[11] Farrer's botanical poetic style influenced Sackville-West's later poetry, and she makes direct references to Farrer and other botanical explorers in *The Garden* (1946). Farrer's connection with Sackville-West, which I will expand upon later in this chapter, reveals

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[10] Shulman, *A Rage for Rock Gardening*, p. 42.
[11] Shulman, *A Rage for Rock Gardening*, p. 49.

that Farrer's writing, although relatively obscure and specialised, had some circulation in literary circles. Discriminating and enthusiastic, *The English Rock Garden* is an idiosyncratic text. Consider the following description:

> *P. soldanelloeides*, like all members of the marvellous group to which it gives its name, is a species august in its rarity no less than in its beauty. It is a tiny frail jewel of the high passes in Sikkim, with delicate tufts of soft little oblong-obovate foliage, deeply feathered into many lobes, and sending up a fairy-fine stemling of an inch, whose bell-shaped calyx is the base of a swelling pendent bell of waxen snow-pure white, preposterously large for the plant … For its due rites of worship, see under *P. Reidii*, which is a sort of gross and glorious incarnation of this unearthly elfin beauty.[12]

The botanical diction – term such as 'obovate' and 'calyx' – is intermingled with more subjective poetic language. While Farrer's prose style is at times purple, there is a self-consciousness and comic dimension to his botanical descriptions. Some of his other botanical descriptions are not so flattering:

> *S. rivularis* may very rarely be seen by stream-sides far in the Scotch highlands. It is a valueless and difficult weedlet, like a weakly, diminished, and quite inferior tiny-flowered form of *s. cernua*.[13]

Or similarly,

> *Ph. Confusum* is not a species likely to trouble either traveller or gardener. It is too rare for one, and too ugly for the other.[14]

The English Rock Garden is full of such lavish praise and acerbic disapproval of individual plants. Other of Farrer's plant descriptions contain a sense of discriminating connoisseurship:

> *Premula secudiflora*: the outside of the bell is a waxen dulled flesh-colour, filmed with a strange powdery bloom, and suffused with lines and nerves and flushings

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[12] Reginald Farrer, *The English Rock Garden*, vol. II, (London: T. C. & E. C. Jack Ltd, 1919), p. 184.
[13] Farrer, *The English Rock Garden*, v. II, p. 309.
[14] Farrer, *The English Rock Garden*, v. II, p. 72.

> of claret and deep rose, with blue mysteriously suggested over the whole, omnipresent as the faintest of tints, like a whiff of onion in a good salad.[15]

Even non-gardener readers could find themselves strangely absorbed by Farrer's descriptions of plants; one after another, some long and some short, and each starting with a heavy Latin name, Farrer's plant descriptions can almost be read as a catalogue of jokes, or in some ways as a parody of a traditional botanical text.

In the introduction, Farrer explains that his chief aim in writing the book is to bring botany to a practical and popular level, and to help gardeners make aesthetic choices: 'with distraught eye one peruses long lists of Potentillas and Violas which are so many strings of naked names, without the least guidance as to which are good or bad, tall or short.'[16] Of *The English Rock Garden*, Shulman writes: 'it is a masterpiece of translation, an early dictionary, that puts into vernacular what had been protected for the use of few by the language of scholarship.'[17] In his introduction to the *English Rock Garden*, Farrer writes:

> It cannot be expected that the amateur, however keen his zeal to know his plants, is going to subjugate himself to such wearisome jargon of the professional … What is this? – 'a peripteral Hexastyle with a pronaos and a posticum' … Of all sciences, indeed, botany has the worst name for this kind of cant, and the words 'botanical description' arouse shivers in the boldest.[18]

But the effort to write in a more literary style goes beyond the question of accessibility. Farrer justifies his 'personal note' in writing by explaining how his writing is not entirely to be taken as a work of authority:

> It may be my endeavour, all through the book indeed, to preserve the vivid and personal note, at any cost to the arid grey gravity usually considered necessary to

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[15] Farrer, *The English Rock Garden,* v. II, p.180.
[16] Farrer, *The English Rock Garden,* v. I, p.xii.
[17] Shulman, *A Rage for Rock Gardening*, p. 94.
[18] Farrer, *The English Rock Garden.*, v. I, p.xiii.





Two of Reginald Farrer's botanical discoveries:
(*top right*) Viburnum fragrans or Viburnum Farreri,
(*top left*) G. Farreri.

(*right*) William Purdom

(*below*) Gansu Province China

(*bottom right*) Farrer botanizing







the dignity of a dictionary; not only that so the work may perhaps be more readable and pleasant, but also that other gardeners, finding their best-beloveds, maybe, here slighted or condemned, may be able to mitigate their wrath by constant contemplation of the fact that such opinions are but the *obiter dicta* of a warm-blooded fellow-mortal, not the weighed everlasting pronouncements of some Olympian lexicographer, veiled in an awful impersonality that admits no appeal.[19]

In Farrer's botanical writing, even the divisions of natural species, is anything but fixed. He writes: 'No botanist has it in his power to alter an authorised specific name: all botanists of repute have a perfect right to redistribute races at their pleasure.'[20] Along with making his work more readable for enthusiastic gardeners, Farrer offers a subjective reordering of the plant world.

In Farrer's descriptions of flowers, geographical places also evoke aesthetic qualities. Indeed, *The English Rock Garden* has a kind of Oriental, exotic flare. Although Farrer describes plants from around the world, he often focuses on plants from the Far East. This is due, no doubt, to his experiences travelling in China and Japan, but it also has to do with the fact that during this period China was the new frontier for botanical discovery. He writes that there is no ' keeping abreast with the ever-rolling stream of novelties that is nowadays setting as strongly towards us from China.'[21]

Woolf's 'Kew Gardens': Botany, China, and the Modernism

At this point, I will more closely evaluate Farrer's literary contexts in order to illustrate the shared concerns and themes in Farrer's writing with other imaginative literature

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[19] Farrer, *The English Rock Garden*, v. I, p.xxvi.
[20] Farrer, *The English Rock Garden*, v. I, p.xvi.
[21] Farrer, *The English Rock Garden*, v. I, p. xl.

during this period. In doing so, I would like to suggest that Farrer's interest in the imaginative geographies of the Far East, along with his persistent re-ordering and irreverence for conventional scientific designations and hierarchies, are symptomatic of a larger cultural turn during this period. In order to better place Farrer's writing within a modernist context, I will turn to Virginia Woolf's short story 'Kew Gardens' (1919), which was published during the same year as Farrer's *The English Rock Garden*.

Consider how the opening paragraph of Woolf's story, which contains a vivid description of a flowerbed at Kew, resonates with Farrer's botanical writing:

> From the oval-shaped flower-bed there rose perhaps a hundred stalks spreading into heart-shaped or tongue-shaped leaves half way up and unfurling at the tip red or blue or yellow petals marked with spots of colour raised upon the surface; and from the red, blue or yellow gloom of the throat emerged a straight bar, rough with gold dust and slightly clubbed at the end. The petals were voluminous enough to be stirred by the summer breeze, and when they moved, the red, blue and yellow lights passed one over the other, staining an inch of the brown earth beneath with a spot of the most intricate colour. The light fell either upon the smooth, grey back of a pebble, or, the shell of a snail with its brown, circular veins, or falling into a raindrop, it expanded with such intensity of red, blue and yellow the thin walls of water that one expected them to burst and disappear. Instead, the drop was left in a second silver grey once more, and the light now settled upon the flesh of a leaf, revealing the branching thread of fibre beneath the surface, and again it moved on and spread its illumination in the vast green spaces beneath the dome of the heart-shaped and tongue-shaped leaves. Then the breeze stirred rather more briskly overhead and the colour was flashed into the air above, into the eyes of the men and women who walk in Kew Gardens in July.[22]

Much has been written about Woolf's description of the flowerbed. Some have viewed the garden as a visual feature, reflecting Woolf's interest in painting and the visual arts. Kendall Johnson writes, 'Instead of a backdrop for character-driven plot, the garden becomes a formal centerpiece, composed of patches of color, angles of perspective, and

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[22] Virginia Woolf, 'Kew Gardens,' in David Bradshaw ed., *The Mark on the Wall and Other Short Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 11-17 (p. 11).

rays of light.'[23] Edward Bishop, on the other hand, views Woolf's description of the flowerbed in terms of Woolf's modernist writing style:

> Again, Woolf is gently forcing the reader out of his established perceptual habits, raising questions about the nature of discourse and the conventions used to render it. And, just as she has placed the reader within the garden, so with each successive dialogue she moves deeper, below the flat surface of words, to reveal that, like the apparently flat flower-bed, language too has cliffs and hollows.[24]

These interpretations are convincing enough, but there is another way to read this passage and interpret Woolf's story that takes into account the cultural and literary context of modern gardening writing. Like Farrer's descriptions, Woolf's flowers are strangely alien, and Woolf uses euphonic assonance with words such as 'gloom', 'voluminous', and 'illumination' to emphasise their mysterious Otherness. While the flowerbed appears as a kind of sanctuary, these multi-coloured flowers, with their large leaves, appear as exotic imports, not native flowers. Woolf's flowers may or may not have been Chinese imports, but the exotic otherworldly nature of the flowers echoes with Farrer's botanical descriptions.

Plants are not easily contained in Farrer's and Woolf's writing. In Woolf's description, the microscopic attention to fibres and leaves could be botanical, but the poetic language betrays a sense of agency beyond human reason. There is nothing in Woolf's description of Farrer's irony or connoisseurship, yet both writers describe these flowers in sensual terms. In Woolf's description, the intimate language and close focus – words like flesh, tongue, and throat – carries the passage into an erotic register.

Furthermore, the flower-*bed* is a contained, possibly secret place. Given what we know of

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[23] Kendall Johnson, 'Critical Essay on 'Kew Gardens',' in *Short Stories for Students* (Detroit: Gale Group, 2001) pp. 25-36 (p. 26).
[24] Edward Bishop, 'Pursuing "It" through "Kew Gardens"', *Studies in Short Fiction* 19, 3 (1982), 269-275 (p. 272).

Woolf's life, one can read such flower imagery in feminine terms – as an escape from the male world that is represented by the phallic-like pagoda later in the story. Later, Eleanor's desire to escape from her husband further emphasises this possible lesbian subtext.

Both Farrer's and Woolf's descriptions of plants are painterly, and display an interest in the visual arts. Indeed Woolf's 'Kew Gardens' was written in self-conscious and visual fashion, and Woolf's letters demonstrate, she clearly had her sister in mind, Vanessa Bell, who eventually did the illustrations and cover of *Monday or Tuesday* (1921).[25] Yet Woolf's description of this thriving bed of botanical life at Kew Gardens, with its attention to detail, can also be viewed as part of a modernist natural aesthetic – one that challenges the reader to consider experiential life from a disordered and sensual perspective.

Of course, the title of Woolf's story, 'Kew Gardens', suggests an imperial history that further challenges the reader to consider the origin of the plants and the status of the 'natural order'. The experience of war and the decline of empire become apparent when Eleanor encounters a mentally disturbed old man. As the man's eyes search the garden for spirits of the dead brought on by 'the war', he first proposes to hook up a machine through which widows can summon the dead spirits of their husbands. Distracted by the sight of a 'woman's dress . . . which in the shade looked a purple black', he tries to approach her but is caught by the supervising William, who diverts his attention with a flower. The old man bends his ear to the flower and begins speaking about 'the forest of

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[25] Virginia Woolf, Nigel Nicolson, and Joanne Trautmann, *The Letters of Virginia Woolf* (London: Hogarth Press, 1975) p. 38.

Uruguay which he had visited hundreds of years ago in company with the most beautiful woman in Europe.'[26]

John Oakland has discussed this encounter with the old man in terms of the cultural context of war and the decline of Empire:

> There is a logic in the old man's words and actions that reflect the social tensions pervasive in England and evident in the specific history of Kew. In referencing Uruguay, the old man draws attention to the imperial design of the Kew grounds. The old man's quest for dead spirits may violate conventions of sanity--of sequential time and ordered space--but in doing so he emphasizes the symbolic pretension of the garden's imperial collection and implies the general breakdown of the imperial social order.[27]

In such a disturbed social order, China enters into the story as a possible escape or reorientation. After walking with her husband in the gardens, Eleanor desires to leave her husband behind, 'forgetting her tea, wishing to go down there and then down there, remembering orchids and cranes among wild flowers, a Chinese pagoda and a crimson crested bird; but he bore her on'. Woolf does not make the character's motivations clear, but China here can be viewed as an imagined escape from the confines of an unhappy marriage, as the cranes and orchids, along with the pagoda clearly evoke an Oriental sense of natural beauty. Yet Eleanor's imagined China is never attained, and instead the story ends as she faces an uncanny merging of the mechanical and the Oriental:

> But there was no silence; all the time the motor omnibuses were turning their wheels and changing their gear; like a vast nest of Chinese boxes all of wrought steel turning ceaselessly one within another the city murmured; on the top of which the voices cried aloud and the petals of myriads of flowers flashed their colours into the air.[28]

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[26] Woolf, 'Kew Gardens', p.14.
[27] John Oakland, 'Virginia Woolf's 'Kew Gardens'', *English Studies* 68, 3 (1987), 264-273 (p. 269).
[28] Woolf, 'Kew Gardens', p. 17.

Here the botanical imagery is sharply juxtaposed with futurist imagery of machinery in a cacophonous metropolis, and here again China enters into the imagination of Woolf's character at a pivotal moment. As in the garden itself, the alien exotic is conflated with the domestic. In Woolf's story, the metropolis has gone mad, and exotic images of the Far East offer a further sense of dislocation. There is also a sense in which the botanical imagery contrasts with the mechanical images of the metropolis. As we will see later in Farrer's writing and elsewhere, notions of the botanical and the mechanical function in direct opposition during this period, providing a metaphorical structure for modernist inquiries into the 'nature' of post-imperial order.

The exotic flowers, the cranes, the pagoda and the Chinese boxes: these images show how Woolf, as a modernist, drew creative energy from the Far East. For Woolf, the influence of Far Eastern arts would have been unavoidable. The School of Oriental and African Studies was founded in 1916 at Finsbury Circus, in close proximity to Bloomsbury. Such academic interest in the Far East brought an increasing awareness of poetry and visual arts from Japan and China. Farrer's descriptions of Chinese plants in his travel writing might evoke such Oriental images. For example, consider how his description of a wild Mouton tree peony suggests a Chinese painting: 'carried at the top, elegantly balancing, that single enormous blossom, waved and crimped into the boldest grace of line, of absolutely pure white, with featherings of deepest maroon radiating at the base of the petals from the boss of golden fluff at the flower's heart.'[29] Woolf's and Farrer's botanical descriptions can be viewed in light of Imagism; their pictorial

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[29] Qtd. in Shulman, 'A Rage for Rock Gardening', p. 82.

descriptions of the botanical life are dislocated and rather than stand in for a larger whole, they are self-contained as fragments.

Ezra Pound's poetry demonstrates how modernists looked to the Far East and to classical Chinese culture as a source for new creative energy. Pound's 'In a Station of the Metro' (1913) was written in a Japanese haiku style, typifying Imagism's economy of language, and relying on a botanical image to evoke Chinese or Japanese painting. Also, similar to Woolf's ending to 'Kew Gardens', the mechanical and the botanical are intertwined. However Pound's interest in Chinese classical culture was clearly expressed in *Cathay* (1915), a collection of Chinese poems based on the earlier translations of Ernest Fenollosa.

Pound's interest in classical Chinese at this historical moment clearly speaks to Europe's sense of decline in the context of the First World War. It is no coincidence that the first poem of the *Cathay* collection, 'The Bowmen of Shu', is an anti-war poem:[30]

> Our defence is not yet made sure, no one can let his friend return.
> We grub the old fern-stalks.
> We say: Will we be let to go back in October?
> There is no ease in royal affairs, we have no comfort,
> Our sorrow is bitter, but we would not return to our country.
> What flower has come into blossom?
> Whose chariot? The General's.
> Horses, his horses even, are tired. They were strong.
> We have no rest, three battles a month.
> By heaven, his horses are tired.[31]

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[30] The 'Song of the Bowmen of Shu' was attributed to 'Kutsugan, 4th Century B.C.' in the orginal, 1915 edition, then to 'Bunno, reputedly 1100 B.C.' in the 1916 edition. Bunno is the Japanese name for Wen Wang 文王 or 'King Wang' of the Zhou dynasty. A more scholarly translation of this poem is Ode no 167 by James Legge, *The Chinese Classics* IV. 258.

[31] Ezra Pound, 'Cathay' [1915], in Hugh Kenner, ed., *The Translations of Ezra Pound* (London: Faber & Faber, 1970), p. 189.

By drawing from classical Chinese, Pound evokes a sense of timeless human struggle. The tension between the authoritative figure of the General and the bowmen also addresses the issue of class that pervades First World War poetry. Pound's poem shows how botanical and seasonal images in Chinese poetry speak to the general psychological state of the characters. The General's flower that has blossomed represents his elevated status, whereas the bowmen can only observe the emptiness of winter: 'When we set out, the willows were drooping with spring, / We come back in the snow, / We go slowly, we are hungry and thirsty.' The botanical here functions metaphorically, but without the connectives that would normally be found in English poetry. Pound's translations bring out a vision of nature that is more 'pictographic', and often capture still life botanical images: the 'Sennin Poem by Kakuhaku' begins: 'The red and green kingfishers / flash between the orchids and clover.'[32] Therefore by drawing from classical Chinese, Pound is able to both represent China, and make a specific comment on the dismal state of Europe in 1915.

Although Pound did not read Chinese at this point, he 'translated' the poems in *Cathay* through the notes of the American Sinologist Ernest Fenollosa. Fenollosa's writing on the nature of the Chinese language clearly influenced Pound's poetic theory of Imagism. In 1919 Pound published an essay in *Little Review* by Ernest Fenollosa called, 'The Chinese written character, as a Medium for Poetry'. In this essay, Fenollosa rather cryptically suggests that Chinese characters provide a more direct access to ideas and 'things'. He writes: 'Chinese poetry [...] speaks at once with vividness of painting, and

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[32] Pound, 'Cathay', p. 200.

with the mobility of sounds … In reading Chinese we do not seem to be juggling mental encounters, but to be watching *things* work out their own fate.'[33]

Achilles Fang has pointed out that Fenollosa erroneously postulated that the Chinese language is inherently pictographic and ideographic: 'What concerns us here is the thesis that the Chinese think and feel in concrete terms, hence are eminently poetic in the working of their mind and the Chinese characters are pictograms and ideograms and nothing else.'[34] What Fenollosa and Pound failed to recognise is that while Chinese does have pictographic and ideographic elements, it functions just like any other language, syntactically and according to morphemes (not 'ideas'). In his study of the history of the Chinese language, John De Francis discusses this 'ideographic myth': 'Chinese characters represent words (or better, morphemes), not ideas, and they represent them phonetically, for the most part, as do all real writing systems despite their diverse techniques and differing effectiveness in accomplishing the task.'[35] Similarly, in his discussion of early eighteenth-century perceptions of the Chinese language, David Porter writes,

> Most Chinese characters are not, properly speaking, ideographs; their form rarely conveys sufficient semantic information to establish the meaning of a word, while they often do provide significant phonetic clues as to their pronunciation. The early history of Western responses to the Chinese script, however, reveals a long-standing, almost compulsive desire to read it as an impossibly pure form of signification and to systematize its notations in a relentless quest for an origin and transcendent order.[36]

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[33] Ezra Pound, 'The Chinese written character, as a Medium for Poetry', in Lawrence S. Rainey ed., *Modernism: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005). pp. 99-112 (p. 102).
[34] Achilles Fang, 'Fenollosa and Pound', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 20, 1 (1957), 213-238 (p. 215).
[35] John DeFrancis, *The Chinese Language: Fact and Fantasy* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984), p. 42.
[36] David Porter, *Ideographia: The Chinese Cipher in Early Modern Europe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 9.

In many ways, Fenollosa's understanding of Chinese draws on this older European tradition of viewing Chinese as 'an impossibly pure form of signification'. Such a view is further problematic because it tends to align Chinese with surface or 'poetic' meaning. But if there is a linguistic inaccuracy in Pound and Fenollosa's understanding of Chinese, then this mistake itself is interesting in the context of modernism.

In Woolf's 'Kew Gardens' there is an interest in the perceived poetic and concrete nature of China that is analogous to Pound's and Fenollosa's theory of Chinese poetic expression. Woolf's evocation of the botanical imagery, which echoes Farrer's writing on Chinese exotic plants, intensifies the exotic and alluring nature of the Far East. In Woolf's descriptive style, the reader is denied access to interior subjectivity. Kendall Johnson writes: 'In a story, one expects character development and a plot in which the characters do something; instead, the reader of "Kew Gardens" notices a fundamental shift that relegates human activity to a mere visual feature in the final paragraph.'[37] Woolf evokes images of China in order to capture something concrete and essentially poetic, as something 'ideographic'.

These references to China reveal how the modernist metropolis was viewed as fraught, unstable and bound up with the imperial in the minds of modernist writers. In examining the works of writers such as Conrad and Eliot, Rod Edmond has shown how the metropolitan nature of modernism was highly unstable, implicated with the imperial, and bound up with historicized and scientific notions of degeneration and cultural decline. Edmond argues that although modernism was a metropolitan phenomenon that 'drew from the outposts of empire', the result was often disturbing and unsavoury: 'The

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[37] Johnson, 'Critical Essay on 'Kew Gardens', p. 36.

'empty cisterns and exhausted wells' of Europe needed replenishment, but what flowed in from outside was unsettling, untreated and possibly contaminating.'[38] However, when we consider Woolf's and Farrer's botanical descriptions, the modern horticultural – both as a practice and a discourse – can be viewed as functioning in direct relation to troubling imperialist notions of decline. If Conrad imagined Greenwich as a site of foreign invasion, radical temporal disturbance, and bodily dismemberment, then Woolf saw Kew as an uncanny source of new life and possible reorientation. In such an imaginative context, gardening, plant collecting and botany did cultural as well as practical work – if the metropolis was crumbling, diseased and contaminated in the minds of some modernist writers, then images of China could stand in and suggest the possibility of regeneration, of new and potentially liberating sources of poetic expression.

Desire and Belatedness: Farrer's Orientalism

I will now turn my discussion to Farrer's travel writing on China, and make further links with modernist literary writing of the period. Such literary connections will shed light on the complex and diverse ways that China was imagined, and will exemplify the ways in which travel writing – along with so much imaginative literature of the period – changed after the First World War.

Farrer's *Rainbow Bridge* begins during the winter, in Lanzhou, which is the capital city of Gansu province. In the first forty pages of the book, Farrer establishes a

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[38] Rod Edmond, 'Home and Away: Degeneration in Imperialist and Modernist Discourse,' in Howard J. Booth and Nigel Rigby, eds., *Modernism and Empire*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 39-60 (p. 59).

mood of desolation and isolation. The most striking feature of these first pages is the way in which the landscapes of Lanzhou are aligned with coldness, infertility and death. He describes the hills around the city as 'a land of death and the dead'. He continues: 'This country is so old that the dead are everywhere: from each bank or scarp nameless earth-coloured bones protrude from the dead ages, and in weatherworn clefts or scoops of the loess you can see skulls.'[39] Although he is repulsed by the sight of these human remains, he understands the relativity of his own perceptions, explaining, 'to the Chinese mind, there are few offences more ugly and disastrous than to remove an abandoned bone, or disturb the sleeping dead.' However the horrific sight of a child's dead body follows this moment of cultural relativism:

> But the valleys and dry ravines concealed among the Golden Hills have by no means even lost their sepulchral value: and as you go, the squeal and scurrying flight of disturbed kites will make you suddenly aware that their focus, under that bit of dull red rag among the stones, is the derelict body of some forlorn outcast child. (*Rainbow*, p. 25)

In this passage, Farrer reduplicates a common colonialist trope of Chinese cruelty (the observation of Chinese remains echoes Fortune's earlier observations of Shanghai).

Indeed, accounts of infanticide in China were not uncommon, particularly in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century writings. In *On a Chinese Screen* (1922), Somerset Maugham similarly describes a scene where infanticide is shockingly discovered:

> Suddenly I understood what the queer little building was. It was a baby tower . . . The odour was the odour of putrefaction. A living little boy came up and told me

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[39] Reginald Farrer, *Rainbow Bridge* [1921], (London: Cadogan Books, 1986), p. 24. Further references to this work will be abbreviated *Rainbow* with page references given parenthetically in the text.

> while I stood there and made me understand that four babies had been brought to the tower that morning.[40]

The use of the indefinite article 'a' implies that such places are common in Chinese villages. While there is historical evidence that infanticide did occur in China, descriptions of the practice need to be critically examined. In missionary and colonialist writings, infanticide is explained as a Chinese cultural problem, which is often connected to the treatment of young girls and the preference among the Chinese for male babies. However even at the time, these ideas of Chinese infanticide were not universally accepted. In 1875, British diplomat and Sinologist Herbert Giles countered the widespread myth of female infanticide in China in his *Chinese Sketches* (1875):

> A great deal of trash has been committed to writing by various foreigners on the subject of female children in China. The prevailing belief in Europe seems to be that the birth of a daughter is looked upon as a mournful event in the annals of a Chinese family, and that a large percentage of the girls born are victims of a wide-spread system of infanticide, a sufficient number, however, being spared to prevent the speedy depopulation of the Empire . . . Such [statements are] very misleading, and cannot, in these days of enlightenment on Chinese topics, be allowed to pass unchallenged.[41]

Giles goes on to counter the cultural explanation of infanticide by offering examples of how Chinese girls were, in fact, revered by parents. But whatever the 'evidence' for or against, the most plausible explanation for infanticide is that it existed, and still exists, because of extreme desperation brought on by poverty: it has very little, if anything, to do with 'culture'. Indeed, the accusation of infanticide was used for various purposes, not only from a European perspective: it was a common theme in Chinese anti-missionary

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[40] W. Somerset Maugham, *On a Chinese Screen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p.106.
[41] Giles, Herbert Allen. *Chinese Sketches* (London: Trübner and Co., 1875), p. 157.

propaganda, as Christian missionaries were often accused of killing Chinese orphans for wicked religious reasons.

In any case, Farrer's observation of human remains and the 'derelict body of an outcast child' has a striking effect at this early point in the narrative, setting up a view of Chinese culture that is unproductive, moribund and unable to progress. Such views are further apparent in descriptions of the city itself: 'There are strange old temple courts to visit in the city, yards of grey quiet filled with a moss-grown ancient silence, so solemn under the venerable trees that the cloisters and the dark vacant theatre seem haunted, and the towering old bronze incense-burner to be on guard' (*Rainbow*, p. 27). Another description similarly describes the city's signs of decrepitude: 'It would take long labour to explore the many corners of beauty in Lanchow: each suspect alley may lead to some vast abandoned building, derelict examination-hall, or tower of coloured tiles' (*Rainbow*, p. 28). Such gothic descriptions of ruined, haunted temples and abandoned, derelict buildings, function in a typical Orientalist fashion – China's beauty is relegated to the past: its days of grandeur are over. Such views that China was crumbling and in a state of inevitable decline were prevalent after the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911, an event that Farrer describes luridly: 'the Manchurian Line came crashing to its end in 1911 and brought down the Dragon Throne in its fall' (*Rainbow*, p. 28).

While it is important to view such language as Orientalist discourse, such imagery also reflects back on the state of Europe during the period, and with European fears of devolution and cultural decline. Farrer's above quotation 'from each bank or scarp nameless earth-coloured bones protrude from the dead ages,' echoes with lines from Tennyson's *In Memoriam* (1850):

So careful of the type? but no;
From scarped cliff and quarried stone
She cries ' A thousand types are gone
I care for nothing; all must go[42]

The larger theme in Tennyson's poem is that nature itself is an indifferent arbiter of life and death. Although written before Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859), these lines capture an emerging strain of religious doubt in nineteenth-century thought, and reverberate in the context of Europe in the late 1910s and early 20s. Such disturbing images of exposed bones can be seen elsewhere in Eliot's *The Waste Land*: 'In fainted moonlight, the grass is singing / Over the tumbled graves, about the chapel / There is the empty chapel only the wind's home . . . / Dry bones can harm no one.'[43] In this way, the echoes of Tennyson speak to Farrer's fear that humankind itself will perish.

While in Lanzhou, Farrer describes how he read European newspapers with a general anxiety and sense of helplessness – such a knowledge of war clearly informs his writing, a fact that is further made clear when we consider that he composed the books from his travel notes while serving as an intelligence officer in Europe in 1916. Later in *Rainbow Bridge*, Farrer describes the desolate and death-ridden landscape of Ypres: 'the muddle of raw mud, without a blade of grass or living green thing anywhere as far as the eye could stretch in every direction.' He continues by describing a horrific scene where the landscape is riddled with human, animal and mechanical remains:

> [there were] tattered tanks like stranded dead whales on a mud-flat, and bloated carcasses of beasts immobile and mountainous, whitened with lime; and grey broken trunks and clods like sandbags, that had long lost the horror of even suggesting humanity, except where the clodded slime just displayed the spiked

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[42] Alfred Lord Tennyson, 'In Memoriam', sec. 56, lns 1-4.
[43] T.S. Eliot, 'The Waste Land' [1922], in *The Waste Land and Other Poems*, Frank Kermode ed., (Hammersmith: Penguin Classics, 2003), pp. 53-76, lns. 386-90.

> bulb of a helmet that was not empty, or the soles of two boots peered out of a bank … The pleasant garden of civilisation! (*Rainbow*, p. 250)

Here, the traditional image of the garden – as a distinction of class and good breeding, of sustenance and cultivation – has been subverted: in this graveyard garden, the botanical is completely absent and instead we have the mechanical remains of tanks. Here, in the horrific context of the First World War, the notion of European 'civilisation' is impossible to sustain.

Such descriptions resonate with Farrer's other wartime writings, which similarly merge ideas of botanical growth with images of mortality. Although Farrer was declared unfit for service, he served as an intelligence officer in the War. During this time, he went to France and wrote his impressions, which were eventually, published in a book *The Void of War: Letters from Three Fronts* (1918). After travelling over the Somme battleground in 1916, Farrer observed the changes that an avenue underwent during the course of the war:

> Along the voluminous velvety roads one rolls under plumy avenues of trees. And then the road becomes less velvety, and the avenues by degrees less plumy, till at once they are only stark skeletons, gap-toothed and shell-shattered in their rows.[44]

This wasteland, which is absent of botanical life, echoes with images in modernist literature. Eliot's *The Waste Land* is the most obvious example, as the poem uses botanical images to suggest new life and a modern mythical configuration. In Farrer's writing, empty wasteland-like images are associated with frustration and infertility. In *Rainbow Bridge*, Farrer describes the much-anticipated arrival of spring, and his party's journey towards the mountains. In order to reach the mountains, they must first travel

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[44] Reginald Farrer, *The Void of War: Letters from Three Fronts* (London: Constable & Co., 1918), p. 131.

through a desert-like region. The desert travel is described as a long and painful, and the distances compound:

> we reached the end of the vale, threaded by a short little dull defile, and found ourselves then in a new vale, mostly of loess, duller even than the later stretches of the last … and then yet more still, away and away, fading into a dull grey distance an afternoon gone steely and filming. And even now it was still goodness knows how far: a feeling of frustrate crossness began to fill me. (*Rainbow*, p. 53)

After days of travel, Farrer finally reaches the city of Xining, yet the city defies his expectations:

> I had expected a city as beautiful as the home of dreams, nestling deep and picturesquely into the roots of enormous rugged snow mountains overshadowing all around …. And now here was nothing but the weariful monotony of yet another dull flat plain, with yet more corrugated dead dull hills meandering round the horizon; and ahead of us yet another dull flat grey city prone across the vast tedium of the prospect. And still so far away. (*Rainbow*, p. 56)

Tedium and monotony create an important delay of Farrer's desire to reach or attain something authentic – a theme that is prevalent in his writing.

In his study of belatedness in late nineteenth-century travel writing, Ali Behdad has shown how the condition of belatedness haunted European travellers in the Orient. Behdad describes belatedness as generating both a desire for knowledge and a 'melancholic discovery of its impossibility', creating travellers who are 'discursively diffracted and ideologically split.' Unable to shed their Orientalist baggage, such travellers create 'elliptic discourses, uncertain about their representations and melancholic about their inability to produce an alternative mode of writing about the desired Other.'[45] Such a reading is compelling in Farrer's case: not only does Farrer make

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[45] Ali Behdad, *Belated Travelers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution*, *Post-Contemporary Interventions* (London: Duke University Press, 1994), p. 15.

references to those who have travelled before him, but in other respects Farrer's text reveals tell-tale belated signs of self-reflexivity, uncertainty and melancholy.

In *On the Eaves of the World* he describes his disappointment with the mundane reality of China and the paltry gifts he receives from local magistrates:

> often did I sigh for the golden days of old, when the riches of the East were poured forth for the accredited traveller, and all he had to give in return was some cheap Geneva watch or gimcrack of a looking-glass. Now it all has changed: presents have ceased to be passed, and the rivers of champagne that apparently flowed for the early Russian travellers are dried up forever. (*Eaves*, p. 95)

Farrer's interest in material collection can be viewed in terms of his belatedness; in his search for authentic Oriental souvenirs, Farrer is continually frustrated. Of a bric-a-brac shop in Lanzhou, Farrer writes,

> What you see all around you crowded on the shelves is the strangest jackdaw-collection of odds and ends: the glittering brass of incense-burners, firepots, openwork chaufferettes for the hands: bronzes, lumbering and spurious, odds and ends of indifferent china, official necklaces and derelict official hat buttons of the dead Imperial days: terrible pictures on glass … European handbasins of tin, painted gaudily with pansies and roses: lampglobes to match: and other floatsam and jetsam of foreign introduction higgledy-piggledied up with wild brass devils down from Tibet, and bland Bodhisats and Madonnas. But nowhere anything of beauty or value: unless the owner, on the later day, mysteriously takes you into an inner room and there shows you a really good piece of bronze or a picture. (*Rainbow*, p. 20)

Here is another example of the rhetoric of the list, used to capture an exotic sense of sensory abundance. Similar to Kingdon-Ward's description of the people in Tatsienlu, Farrer's description of the shop conveys a sense of trying to catalogue and identify. Here is also Farrer's botanical connoisseurship at play. In Farrer's description, the mixing of cheap European imports has debased and devalued the 'real' Orient. The 'true' material of the Orient is obscured and hidden away from the traveller – everything else, like the 'ugly weeds' in his botanical descriptions, appear as cheap imitations. Farrer's reference

to the 'inner room' is a way to hold on to the dream that such an Orient actually exists, yet like Woolf's Chinese box, the centre is elusive.

Behdad examines souvenir collection in terms of the traveller's desire to fulfil a melancholy induced by the loss of an 'authentic' Orient. He writes that 'the belated Orientalist is a souvenir collector; he purchases many objects during his journey to remind himself later of his *past* experience of the Orient. The souvenir is therefore a nostalgic object, something whose presence can only testify to the loss of something experienced in an irretrievable past: the presence of what is absent.' Behdad goes on to describe souvenirs as metonymic symbols of dispossession: 'unable to possess the whole of the Orient, the fetishistic traveler derives pleasure from appropriating part of it.'[46] Farrer's botanical narrative and his desire to collect plants needs to be thought of in similar terms, as a nostalgic desire to retrieve a lost Orient, and as a frustration of not being able to possess all of it.

Behdad points out that in order to see something their predecessors have not, belated travellers try to scratch deeper below the surface, 'Confronting a symbolic veil'. He writes that

> Desire always lies where the subject is *not*, in a beyond that, once achieved, points only to another beyond in a chain of signifiers that can only lead in death. For this reason the desired Orient is essentially identified as death by the subject.[47]

Such a sense of futility can be seen in Farrer's writing, and similar to his desire to enter the 'inner-room' at the bric-a-brac shop, Farrer writes of his fascination with the 'Viceregal Palace', which he describes as 'an enormous place, huge open expanse behind

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[46] Behdad, *Belated Travelers*, p. 61.
[47] Behdad, *Belated Travelers*, p. 29.

expanse, living-courts for the family tucked away in lateral labyrinths' (*Rainbow*, p. 7). After living in Lanzhou for several months, Farrer is finally invited to the palace where he attends a dinner and witnesses an opera performance. Within such uncanny architecture, Farrer description of the performance has erotic dimensions:

> This was a feast … served by sirens. Not only did the busy attendants run diligently round with drink, and other come and go in a pitiless procession of foods, but the tables were particularly haunted by queer little damsels, proffering love and wine as they doddered round on tiny feet – a most unappetizing pack of small drabs, curiously infantile and pudding-faced, and like Eskimos, with brown bright eyes of baby rabbits and their front hair flopping on either side of their face. Not one of these dingy fledglings of Aphrodite seemed a day over fourteen, and their prattle had, I imagine, something of a child's soft charm, to the sophisticated, in these inappropriate circumstances. (*Rainbow*, p. 34)

These 'sirens' clearly fail to seduce Farrer. The young women, with their tiny bound feet, are aligned with a more 'primitive' aesthetic: they are likened to 'Eskimos'. The use of gastronomic imagery is interesting here – they are 'pudding-faced' and 'unappetizing'. This use of gastronomic language allows Farrer to relativise his own 'taste' -- to others these young women might be charming. Whatever the case, the desired Orient here is one that is sybaritic and 'tasteful'. Shortly after describing the 'queer little damsels,' Farrer describes a cross-dressing male opera performer who is a feast for the senses: his movements, costume and 'cultivated charm' are eroticized by Farrer's conspicuous language and close attention to detail:

> He was a slim thin-faced lad, painted and powdered to an almost uncanny degree of elfin moth-eyebrowed beauty: and he was a great actor. He had a square mobile mouth, made from emotion, and dark wild eyes, in which he did marvels of flashing love and fear and hate and *câlinerie*, till we were quite caught by the sinister haunt of his charm as he came and went in his many exquisite mincing female disguises … He circulated around the tables … as elaborate still in his slender grace, and the penetrating dart of his profound liquid gaze, as the perfected Japanese Geisha whose cultivated charm he so poignantly recalled in his willowy movement, and sweetly condescending inclinations, and trailing kimono of pale colours, and high-puffed coiffure. (*Rainbow*, p. 35-6)

Once again, the Orient is created by what it hides and conceals, in this case behind the 'mincing disguises' and the 'uncanny' use of makeup. This is Farrer's Oriental dream – the 'inner-room' that contains something rare and decadent.

Yet the act of watching is not entirely unidirectional: the performer's eyes are particularly well described -- the 'dark wild eyes' and the 'penetrating dart of his profound liquid gaze' reveal an Oriental subject that is capable of reversing the gaze of the Orientalist spectator. In one sense, this reversal of watching upsets the stability of the 'colonial' observer; that is, we know that the observer is in turn being objectified or assessed. However in another sense, the reversal here is not a true reversal; in can be viewed as a 'staged' reversal that in fact conforms to the Orientalist aesthetic of a mysterious and inscrutable East: the gaze is 'profound and liquid' rather than focused and discerning.

According to Behdad, belatedness can create nostalgia for a disappearing other, which he terms as 'a compulsive will to discover'. The discursive practices are therefore split – creating a schizoid discourse that 'simultaneously affirms and exposes the ideological discrepancies and political predicaments of colonial hegemony.'[48] However, Behdad is careful not to ascribe too much transgressive power to the travel text: it 'exposes' but does not subvert colonial hegemony. He argues, instead, that colonial power maintains its hegemony by 'utilizing effectively its voices of dissent and discontent.'[49] Or in another case, he writes that Orientalism achieves discursive power through 'the all-inclusiveness of its epistemological field and its ability to adapt and

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[48] Behdad, *Belated Travelers*, p. 14.
[49] Behdad, *Belated Travelers*, p.17.

incorporate heterogeneous elements.'[50] Once again, he writes: 'It is precisely in the context of these discontinuitous practices that one can account for the shifting and transformational nature of Orientalist discourse that *ensures* its cultural hegemony.'[51] In short, Behdad's theory of belatedness makes no account of actual transgressive or subversive elements in the travel text, or the possibility that such transgression can *actually* take place; instead, all 'discontinuous elements' are theorized as part of the master plan of imperialism.

Behdad's position here is clearly Foucaultian, and such a view has no way of accounting for the fugitive, displaced, or strained aspects of Farrer's writing. In 'Orientalism and Its Problems' Dennis Porter addresses the issue of discourse and counter- discourse in travel writing. By pointing to Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, Porter argues that Orientalist discourse theory has no way of accounting for the heterogeneity often encountered in travel writing. Lawrence's travel writing, according to Porter, challenges discourses of power: 'Because it follows no single model but shifts often within a single chapter from an historical and political text to autobiographical and epic, there arise textual dissonances that constitute a challenge to Western hegemonic thought.'[52] Porter pays particular attention to the contradictions in Lawrence's travelling identity, and his moments of vulnerability, self-doubt and sensitivity. Furthermore Lawrence's homosexuality, which is encoded in the text, needs be viewed as 'obviously

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[50] Behdad, *Belated Travelers*, p.13.
[51] Behdad, *Belated Travelers*, p.17.
[52] Dennis Porter, 'Orientalism and Its Problems', in Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, eds., *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), pp. 150—61 (p. 156).

deviant in relation to a Christian bourgeois mainstream that celebrated virtues of patriarchy and of family.'[53]

Porter's critique is focused on Said's Orientalist model; however, it is interesting that Said himself offers a similar argument against a totalizing theory of power and knowledge. Although Said's *Orientalism* was clearly influenced by Foucault, Said later expressed his concerns about the 'overtotalization' of Foucaultian theories of power and knowledge, writing that 'history does not get made without work, intention, resistance, effort, or conflict, and … none of these things is silently absorbable into micronetworks of power.'[54] Said's concern here is the possibility of counter-discourses, of colonial subjects writing against the grain of imperial power. However, it is important to consider the ways in which the same may be true of 'colonialist' writing. A close reading of Farrer's travel writing makes it clear that it is possible for a 'colonialist' writer to both rely upon and to trouble and subvert the very claims of imperial expansion and Western hegemonic thought.

In many ways, Farrer's parodic, self-conscious style of writing can be viewed as a subversive mockery and parody against Orientalist assumptions. Although Behdad refers to a select group of French writers, his theorizing makes generalizing claims. Such a framework is suggestive, but not entirely appropriate in historical context of China or in the case of Farrer. As I have already discussed in the previous chapters, travel in China often elicits a different kind of travel text, one that is inherently different from travel writing in other colonial geographies. In China, the traveller is often, rather

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[53] Porter, 'Orientalism and Its Problems', p.157.
[54] Edward Said, 'Traveling Theory', in Edward Said, Moustafa Bayoumi, Andrew Rubin, eds., *The Edward Said Reader* (London: Granta, 2001), pp. 195-217 (p. 215).

uncomfortably, on the receiving end of the gaze. For example, on a few occasions, Farrer is the object of scrutiny. In *On the Eaves of the World*, he describes entering a village, where curious spectators accost their party. After trying to hide for several hours, Farrer finally submits:

> At last, to give them full value for their trouble, we unfurled the big green tent in the central hall of our apartment, and there sat posed before the mob in the lines of a realistic group at Madame Tussaud's exhibition representing renowned travellers in their camp. The exhibition was a complete success; the crowds, if possible, redoubled, and we could certainly have taken quite a handsome sum at the doors. (*Eaves*, p. 123)

Farrer reverses the colonialist framework by representing himself as an exotic object. Here the 'travellers in their camp' are on display, posed like wax statues at Madame Tussaud's, but also, we might imagine, like exotic figures in an ethnographic installation in a museum. At another point in *Rainbow Bridge*, Farrer describes a similar situation at a Tibetan monastery: 'For all the rest of that day, and the morning of the next, passed in entertaining the conflow of holy people who came crowding to see this unique peep show of foreign Lords and foreign devices' (*Rainbow*, p. 116-7). The language here is ambivalent: in one sense, Farrer is inflating his own importance; however in another way, he is aware of his own foreign exoticism, much like a freak in a peepshow.

Further ambivalence can be seen in Farrer's description of the Viceroy of Lanzhou:

> And finally a railway restaurant-room like that of the other day, but larger: a solemn pause – and then in loomed the Viceroy . . . a great stout heavy man, with immense bullet-head and solid jowl, tightly bound in dull black satin, and looking the very image of a reformed dissenting burglar, buttoned up in his Sunday blacks for Chapel. . . I twittered inside my cloudy grandeurs, and gradually as he talked I felt him growing larger and larger upon me in every way, like a thing of a nightmare, until the Viceroy of Kansu came to remain in my mind as one of the biggest men I had confronted. (*Rainbow*, p. 8)

Clearly, the tone is arch: the description takes pleasure in making the comic comparison with a 'reformed dissenting burglar'. Furthermore, there is a mock-heroic element in the reversal of the expected colonialist narrative, and the Viceroy becoming 'a thing of a nightmare' functions perhaps as a parody of a gothic travel narrative. However, despite the humour, the sense of Farrer's intimidation and fear cannot be disavowed.

Literature and Modernist Travel Writing

Further challenges to Orientalist conceptions of colonialist discourse and travel writing appear when we consider the self-reflexive and literary quality of Farrer's writing. In his travel writing, Farrer draw from a range of literature, creating complex intertextual and parodic significations. At one point, he describes himself as the White Knight in Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* (1871): 'Like the White Knight, I drift, and like the White Knight I have a liability to tumble out of my dreamland over the pony's head if it puts its foot into a marmot's hole' (*Rainbow,* p. 181). Later, he discovers an underground river, and describes its 'muted roaring' as 'Hamlet's father's ghost' (*Rainbow,* p. 280). In yet another example he describes a string of camels 'nightmarishly advancing upon us in a processional vista as interminable as that of Banquo's descendants' (*Rainbow*, p. 51). Farrer also refers to writers of the early twentieth century. In the preface to *Rainbow Bridge* Farrer writes, 'Across the distress of the present I wonder if I shall be able to escape successfully into the sunshine of the past?' and then later in the book develops this idea of retrieving a purer, more innocent memory: 'I am strenuously re- living, in fact, the dead years, in order to win free for a while from the present; and, out of my own

memories and stored emotions, spinning a rainbow bridge, far-flung over black depths, towards the golden irrecoverably past' (*Rainbow*, p. 95). Farrer's use of this theme of memory draws the reader into a modern literary consciousness. The 'rainbow bridge' here may remind the reader of Forster's enigmatic 'only connect' statement at the beginning of *Howard's End* (1912), or perhaps evoke D.H. Lawrence's *Rainbow* (1915), while the invitation in the preface, 'Let us go, then, for a while out of the clamour of guns into the radiant stillness that fills the remote heart of Asia' is a reference to Eliot's *Prufrock* (1917). The auditory imagery here may also remind the reader of war poetry (such as Wilfred Owen's 'shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells'). At other times, Farrer is clearly influenced by Conrad's descriptive style: 'In the thunderous calm it seemed like an omen of doom, a crucial symptom of the Last Day, now brooding down upon us in breathless livid silence,' or more explicitly: 'Overhead the sky was now coming low on us in a baldachin of darkness, heavy and solid as the murderous bed-canopy in Conrad's tale' (*Eaves*, p. 203, 205).

Farrer's description of himself in *Rainbow Bridge* can be described as mock-heroic. Although he makes no direct reference to Cervantes, *Don Quixote* is a distant literary influence, as his travel narrative is highly subjective, episodic and parodic in nature. Farrer engages with the mock-heroic tradition by giving his travel companions farcical nicknames and describing them in broad and colourful terms. On the first page of *Rainbow Bridge* Farrer introduces his party as consisting of 'the ferocious and frightfulness of Mafu,' 'the google-eyed Go-go of the dropping lip and undauntable endurance' (*Rainbow*, p. 1). Another servant becomes known as Gomer, whereas the young Mongolian boy they later pick up becomes known as 'Wa-wa' or just 'the Wicked

One.' The 'new intelligent servant' originally known as Wongar, becomes 'Bongie' instead. Still another servant is called 'Black Buzzler'. The Tibetan woman and her children, with whom they share the same valley, are referred to in avian terms as 'Grandmamma Aoo and her brood,' while the young couple he befriends in Lanzhou become known as 'Mr. and Mrs. Post Office'.

While Farrer draws on some qualities of the traditional 'picaro' or rogue character in the mock-heroic tradition, his disregard for conventions and idiosyncratic self-characterization has a particular resonance with the modernist period; like Prufock's narrator, Farrer is awkward, alienated, neurotic, and over-educated. Often unabashedly out of his cultural depth, Farrer comes across as a kind of anti-hero – a kind of travelling identity that has a particular resonance in the context of the First World War. Unlike Kingdon-Ward, Farrer makes little effort to show himself as an expert traveller of the East. Early in *Rainbow Bridge,* he describes his inability to purchase souvenirs and antiques at a reasonable price, and relies upon his servants to negotiate prices for him:

> I am very bad, myself, at disguising appetence: so that after a few initial disasters, which had the effect of making Mafu growl like a bear, I always used to take him with me on my walks, following me at my heel, to preserve me from any impetuous imprudence. (*Rainbow,* p, 21)

The comic element of Farrer's travels is heightened by the fact that, similar to Fortune, Farrer pretends to be something that he is not. In order to build up his own prestige as foreign guest, and consequently acquire the necessary visas for further travel, Farrer needs to gain a 'more ostentatious footing'. He writes:

> I ransacked my memory, and ran down a mental list of the various Clubs and Learned Societies that I adorn. But nothing suited… At last it came upon me that I was a Justice of the Peace: to Mafu I tried to explain the rather misty majesty of a Great Unpaid, and he went away in apparent satisfaction. To return in triumph a few days later, with a brand-new visiting card of scarlet, a foot long by six inches

> wide, on which enormous black characters announced the 'Great Man Law-and-order, Lord High Keeper and the King's Peace. (*Rainbow*, p. 5)

With such an inflated title, Farrer introduces himself to the local Mandarin (whom he refers to as the Viceroy), and to another important official, General Wu.

Unlike his mistakes in the bric-a-brac shops souvenir hunting, Farrer's diplomatic blunders with the Viceroy have more severe consequences. Early in the narrative, Farrer writes to Viceroy regarding some servants who had apparently created inconveniences for Bill Purdom, who was in another town attempting to procure a travel visa. These servants, according to Farrer, were loaned to Purdom by the Viceroy, but ended up 'so misbehaving to the country people and innkeepers down the road … that Bill had sent them back to the city with a note explaining their misdeeds' (*Rainbow*, p. 29). Farrer sends a message to the General to confirm that Purdom's message had in fact been delivered because, according to Farrer, 'it was intolerable to me that they should so cheat justice'. Farrer's actions result in a furore when the Mandarin condemns the men to death. Farrer writes:

> I was speechless with horror when I learned what a storm I had unwillingly aroused. Quite apart from the iniquity of killing men for so small a crime, their death would certainly get all foreigners an evil name in the province, and destroy my own chances of getting on happily, as before, with the people. (*Rainbow*, p. 30)

Furthermore, Farrer speculates that the execution of the two soldiers could spark a larger crisis in Gansu: 'It was quite on the cards (on causes so small do great events hinge, as I fancy some capacious mind may have observed before) that an execution at my behest might prove to spark a general explosion that might shatter the Viceroy and me.' Farrer ends up frantically writing letters to the Mandarin begging him to spare the men's lives, and finally, the crisis is evaded. Farrer concludes, 'I vowed that never again would I play

a lone hand in the fearful game of Chinese diplomacy, with other people's life and death for the stakes' (*Rainbow*, p. 31).

Camping with the Divine Jane

Of all Farrer's references to English literature, those to Jane Austen are most prevalent. By Farrer's own account, he carried the entire works of Austen with him throughout his journeys in China. He writes:

> it is wonderful how simple life can become when resolutely resolved into its bare essentials. In my own case, I find it reduced itself to the materials of washing and the works of Jane Austen; of the two, at extreme need, it would be the washing materials that I should jettison. (*Eaves*, p. 16)

To a reader today, unfamiliar with Farrer's background, his references to Austen may be puzzling. Perhaps most oddly, Farrer often compares himself to Austen's characters. In some cases, such references are nothing more than parenthetical remarks. For example, Farrer writes, 'yet inquire where I would (like Mrs. Norris) I could neither make Cheteron out of Tien Tang, nor hear of any other Abbey in these parts bearing a name at all like it' (*Rainbow* 128). But in other cases, Farrer's intertextual references reveal a more intimate knowledge of Austen's works. In another instance, he writes: 'I issued orders accordingly, feeling as amazed as Fanny Price at Portsmouth, that here should I be, all alone in the heart of Asia, in sole responsibility for my flock, and issuing orders to it in a version of the Chinese tongue, which however incorrect, was not inadequate' (*Eaves* 248). Farrer's reference to Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park* (1814) is in many ways apt, as the traveller – like Fanny Price – finds himself away from home and in charge of a new domestic order. In another example, he states: 'Deep in a gully beneath a Dolomite

cliff I myself diverged, and there found such beautiful abundance of my Primal as drove me almost distracted, like Lydia Bennet' (*Rainbow* 207). This reference to Lydia Bennet, who of course is the sexually fixated younger sibling in *Pride and Prejudice* (1819), comically aligns Farrer's moment of botanical discovery with Lydia's rapture for a uniform. In another instance, Farrer actually quotes Austen's *Emma* (1816): 'In 'singing, dancing, exclaiming spirits' like Emma, I scrambled out of the ghyll, up over its buttress of cliff, on to the open moorland…' (*Rainbow* 186). The reference to chapter eighteen of *Emma* also aligns plant collecting with romance: the quotation describes Emma's bewilderment and excitement after making up with Mr. Knightley, and marks a major turning point in Emma's feelings.

However, Farrer's references to Austen convey other meanings, many of which are intended for a more exclusive audience. These references to Austen's characters – often as though they were real people – clearly play to a 'Janeite' readership. In her essay on Jane Austen's followers and fanatics, Claudia Johnson explains how during the early decades of the twentieth century, Jane Austen had a cult status within 'select' groups of English readers. Johnson writes:

> Far from regarding their interest in Austen as 'work,' Janeites flaunt it as the ecstasy of the elect: she was not merely their *dear* Jane, but their *divine* Jane, their *matchless* Jane, and they were her *cult*, her *sect*, her *little company (fit though few)*, her *tribe* of adorers who celebrate the *miracle* of her work in flamboyantly hyperbolic terms.[55]

Therefore, Johnson continues:

> Although their zeal is genuine, the self-parody implicit in these encomia tells us that we are in an insider's society of scholar-gentlemen at play. In much of the same way that trekkies, fans, and mass culture media enthusiasts of today are

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[55] Claudia Johnson, 'The Divine Miss Jane: Jane Austen, Janeites, and the Discipline of Novel Studies', *boundary 2* 23.3 (1996) 143-163 (p. 150).

> marginalized by dominant cultural institutions, Janeites constitute a reading community whose practices violate a range of protocols later instituted by professional academics when novel studies emerged – dogmas holding, for example, that you cannot talk about characters as if they were real people.[56]

Although Johnson does not mention Farrer in her examination of the Janeites, her description of their codes and practices aptly describes Farrer's writing and his enthusiasm for Austen. Outside of his botanical and travel writing, Farrer was an ardent supporter of Austen's fiction. In particular, his essay written in the *Quarterly Review* on the centennial anniversary of Jane Austen's death, 'Jane Austen, ob. July 18, 1817' (1917), attracted attention at the time and has made a lasting impression on Austen scholarship. Written in the context of the First World War, Farrer extols Austen's enduring appeal:

> In water-logged trench, in cold cave of the mountains, in sickness and in health, in dullness, tribulation and fatigue, an ever-increasing crowd of worshippers flies insatiably for comfort and company perennially refreshing, to Hartfield and Randalls, Longbourn, Northanger, Sotherton and Uppercross.[57]

Farrer's essay continues by describing each novel in chronological order, assessing and comparing their artistry, complexity, and relative aesthetic appeal. Throughout, Farrer praises Austen's genius, calling attention to her masterful characterization and subtle irony.

Farrer's essay remains as a classic in Austen criticism. It was reprinted in the Norton Critical Edition of *Emma* in 1972, and then more recently included in the collections *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage* (1995) and *Jane Austen's Emma: A Casebook* (2004). Walton Litz viewed Farrer's essay as an early expression of the

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[56] Johnson, 'The Divine Miss Jane', p. 151.
[57] Reginald Farrer, 'Jane Austen, ob. July 18, 1817', in Fiona Stafford ed., *Jane Austen's Emma: A Casebook* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp 57-81 (p. 58). Originally published in *The Quarterly Review* 228.452 (1917), 1-30.

'subversive' school of reading Austen, and an important influence on the later criticism of Harding and Mudrick.[58] Walton Litz also described three stages in Austen criticism, noting that Farrer's discussions of irony in Austen marks a break in the earlier nineteenth-century 'Shakespearean' interpretations of her works.[59] More recently, Alistair Duckworth goes so far as to write that Farrer's essay is 'perhaps the best single essay ever written on Jane Austen.'[60]

Farrer's enthusiasm for Austen clearly marked him out as a Janeite (Farrer described himself in a letter to the *Times* as 'not the least ardent worshipper of the Divine Jane'). The first appearance of the term 'Janeite' (with the slightly different spelling of 'Janite') was in a preface to an 1894 edition of *Pride and Prejudice* written by George Edward Bateman Saintsbury, who used the term to refer to Jane's devoted fans. However the idea of a 'Janeite' became more widely known when Rudyard Kipling published his story 'The Janeites' (1924) that describes a tightly knit group of war veterans who reminisce about their devotion to Jane Austen during the war. Given its picture of the trenches, its campy humour, it is altogether likely that Kipling's story was derived from Farrer's essay.

Another important link between Farrer and Kipling's story is the sexual politics at stake. Johnson reads a number of homosexual references in Kipling's story, and argues that the Janeite reading community, as articulated by Kipling, posed a challenge to the mainstream academic establishment. Janeite readers like the ones in Kipling's story,

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[58] A. Walton Litz, *Jane Austen: A Study of Her Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 39.
[59] A. Walton Litz, 'Recollecting Jane Austen', *Critical Inquiry* 1,3 (1975), 669-682 (p. 673).
[60] Alistair Duckworth, rev. of *Janeites: Austen's Disciples and Devotees*, by Deidre Lynch. *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 56,2 (2001), 271-276 (p. 272).

according to Johnson, 'ignore plot with its forward-moving momentums, its inevitabilities, its "maturity," and its closure, and dwell instead on atemporal aspects of narration, descriptive details, catchy phrases, and, especially, characterization'[61] Threatened by such 'abuses' of Austen, later critics such as Garod, Harding, and Leavis, tended to reinforce conventional heterosexual marriage plots as defining resolutions of Austen's fiction. Such critics, according to Johnson, 'generated a counter method of reading that value-coded the marriage plot as the preeminent significance-bearing structural or thematic element of her novels, and devalued Janeite discussions as gossip that promoted the silly sociability of the brethren rather than the production of moral earnestness.'[62]

It is difficult to say if an ardent Janeite such as Farrer would have been so willing to simply 'ignore the plot' or 'dwell on atemporal aspects of narration' in Austen's novels in the way that Johnson suggests. The development of plot, in Farrer's assessment, is an essential aspect of Austen's art:

> Thus it is that, while twelve readings of *Pride and Prejudice* give you twelve periods of pleasure repeated, as many readings of *Emma* give you that pleasure, not repeated only, but squared and squared again with each perusal, till at every fresh reading you feel anew that you never understood anything like the widening sum of delights. But, until you know the story, you are apt to find its movement dense and slow and obscure, difficult to follow, and not very obviously worth the following.[63]

Nevertheless, Johnson's effort to rehabilitate Janeite reading practices – rather than simply dismiss them as frivolous – offers a way of interpreting references to Austen in Farrer's travel writing. On a purely textual level, Farrer's references to Austen may be

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[61] Johnson, 'The Divine Miss Jane', p. 152.
[62] Johnson, 'The Divine Miss Jane', p. 157.
[63] Farrer, 'Jane Austen', p. 75.

simply an odd sense of humour and nothing more; however taken with what is known about Farrer's personal life, it is difficult to not read a queer subtext lurking beneath the surface.

Nicola Shulman discusses Farrer's sexual life in terms of his unrequited affections for his Oxford classmate, Aubrey Herbert.[64] Shulman also speculates on Farrer's feelings for his travel companion Bill Purdom, and suggests that Purdom did not accompany Farrer on his second journey in 1920 because he may have felt uncomfortable after reading the homosexual innuendos in Farrer's travel books.[65] It is clear from his writing that Farrer admired Purdom, as throughout his travels he often describes Purdom's ability to cope with difficult situations or communicate with guides or officials. The dedication on the first page is written in the form of poetry: "Still / To Bill / It is my will / This Book be dedicated."

Also conspicuous is the fact that Farrer invariably compares himself to Austen's female characters, as when, for example, he writes: 'My heart, like Fanny's (though in no other respect I hope), can never resist the sad influences of the word "last"' (*Rainbow*, p. 292). Farrer casts himself as a fey, even camp, heroine in his own plot. Although the term 'camp' came into common usage during the 1930s, according to the OED the first use of the term in this way was in 1909. Camp is defined as

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[64] Shulman, *A Rage for Rock Gardening*, p. 13. As the author of *Ben Kendim* (1925), and model for Sandy Arbuthnot in John Buchan's *Richard Hannay* novels, the story of Aubrey Herbert and the possible biographical and intertextual connections with Farrer are fascinating. According to Shulman, Farrer often wrote to Herbert, but seldom received replies and is rarely mentioned in Herbert's letters and other writings. It is also worth noting that Buchan sent Farrer to cover the war, and praised Farrer's writing as 'first-class'. These impressions were originally written to Buchan in the form of letters and later became *The Void of War* (1918).

[65] Shulman, *A Rage for Rock Gardening*, p. 103.

> Ostentatious, exaggerated, affected, theatrical; effeminate or homosexual; pertaining to or characteristic of homosexuals. So as *n.*, 'camp' behaviour, mannerisms, etc. (see quot. 1909); a man exhibiting such behaviour.

Farrer invites readers to picture him, as it were, in narratorial drag. Judith Butler has characterised such narrative practices in terms of subversive gender politics. According to Butler, gender is the effect of reiterated acting, one that produces the effect of a static or normal gender while obscuring the contradiction and instability of any single person's gender act. This effect produces what we can consider to be 'true gender', a narrative that is sustained by 'the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions is obscured by the credibility of those productions – and the punishments that attend not agreeing to believe in them.'[66] Butler proposes the practice of drag as a way to destabilize the exteriority/interiority binary, finally to poke fun at the notion that there is an 'original' gender, and to demonstrate playfully to the audience, through an exaggeration, that all gender is in fact scripted, rehearsed, and performed. In this way, the campy dimension to Farrer's writing upsets conventional norms of gender and sexuality and exposes the very performativity of gender roles.

In some places, Farrer appears to fulfil a domestic management role, which is traditionally aligned with femininity. Purdom often went ahead of the party, ensuring the road was safe or practicable, whereas Farrer would stay behind in a womanly fashion organizing the servants, controlling the accounts, hunting for souvenirs, or occasionally painting flowers. Farrer wrote of their makeshift base in Datung mountains:

> This was our installation for the summer: with boards slung on strings for bookshelves, and our goods and chattels unfolded on various tables, we could feel handsomely at home in the hills; and with feet put up in the evening, one pair on

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[66] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* [1990] (New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 140.

> each side of the stove, we could savour the warm delights of domesticity *á deux* after the hardships of the day. (*Rainbow*, p. 90)

Or in another example, 'It was very pleasant, after days of exploration in the wintry combes and glens, to sit in the evening over the stove in our snug little cabin, relaxed in the comfort of a Chinese quilted down, with the cold Alpine night outside' (*Rainbow*, p. 106).

'Camping', then, in both senses, with the complete works of Jane Austen, both keeping them for reading by the campfire, and engaging in provocative gender-bending by means of them, Farrer subverts conservative values of patriarchy and family. Farrer's queer identity also upsets masculine ideals of the conventional colonial traveller. During the First World War, when ideals of heroics and honour were running at a high pitch, Farrer's writing has a particular resonance. Far from the strong, silent and stoic ideal of the imperial male traveller, Farrer is loquacious, articulate and constantly ironic.

Even imperial claims to territorial possession and naming are ironised in Farrer's work. As in his gardening writing, Farrer is irreverent of conventional names. Throughout his travel writing, Farrer translates into English the names of most mountains, lakes, and even cities he encounters, playfully upsetting the conventions of mapping and naming. In *On the Eaves of the World* he writes:

> I have too often found my interest in Asiatic books of travel daunted by a plethora of geographical facts and uncouth irrelevant names that one can neither remember nor pronounce … 'Shortly after leaving Ping Pang Bo we arrived in Kwing Kwang Kwong' is a sentence that strikes no chord of sympathy in my breast . . . All these accumulations of meaningless jargon possess, in point and fact, a meaning and romance of their own; and a city that may be little to you as Hsing-an-fu or Feng-shang-Hsien takes on a wholly different colouring when you realise that the one is the City of the Peaceful West and the other is the Soaring Phoenix. Accordingly … I mean to forge myself the privilege of translating the place-names for you as a rule. (*Eaves* 19-20)

Farrer's habit of using literal English translations of Chinese place names is clearly intended to make his books more readable for a British audience, but it also disrupts the geographical certainty of the place itself, as the names Farrer uses fail to correspond with any map. Further difficulty arises from the fact that he refuses to use the Wade system of Romanization (eventually replaced by the now standard Chinese pinyin system). He writes: 'The Wade system is quite the finest bad-form joke that has been perpetuated on humanity … You have to remember that all the letters are put wrong; that *p* is *b* and *k* is *j*, and *j* itself, for some reason more than unusually inscrutable, is *r*' (*Eaves* 20). He therefore further muddies any sense of geographical certainty by changing the spelling of place names to what he views as more appropriate and pleasing forms. In another example, Farrer exposes the nationalistic tendency among British travellers to reduce the world into an extension of country society. Farrer relates how he does not

> follow the fashion so prevalent among explorers, of naming new peaks after personal acquaintance: by which Kerauno, for instance, would certainly appear as 'Mount Etherington-Hunnybun,' after my dear old friend, 'Mrs. Etherington-Hunnybun, of The Hunnybunneries, Hockley in the Hole. (*Rainbow*, p. 189)

The tone of parody is clear, as is the characteristic humour. He goes on to explain how he attaches his own names to mountains, as over time he had come to know them: 'Achthos the Omos, Axeinos the Inhospitable, and Thanatos the King' (*Rainbow*, p. 188). Plant names also occasionally take on idiosyncratic appellations: 'It is only proleptically that I forge the name Harebell Poppy . . . For indeed, to cherish or even to purchase, a plant called Meconopsis quintuplinervia is as impossible as to love a woman called Georgiana: mitigating substitutes inevitably must be invented' (*Rainbow*, p. 224).

There are clear echoes of Oscar Wilde here. The joke about 'the inability to love a woman with the name of Georgiana' is reminiscent of Wilde's Gwendolyn, who is unable

to love a man with the name of Jack in *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), whereas Farrer's use of the names 'Hunnybun' and 'Hockley in the Hole' are sexually suggestive, reminding us of Algernon's imaginary invalid friend from the countryside named 'Bunbury' (for those in the know, 'Bunbury' and 'going Bunburying' would be indications of a secretive homosexual identity). By evoking Wilde, the recognised master of the queer subtext, Farrer's travel writing transgresses acceptable borders of gender and sexuality while at the same time offering an ironic vision of the colonial landscape.

At this point, it is useful to return to Dennis Porter's discussion of Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, where he argues that Lawrence's representations of homosexuality, along with his stylistic heterogeneity, pose theoretical difficulties for Saidian Orientalist interpretations. Arguing against the familiar Orientalist theoretical line, Porter describes Lawrence's work in terms of its 'radical stylistic heterogeneity' and its 'ideological distanciation':

> It is a war story and a travel journal and the tale of a moral and political coming of age. Passages that reproduce a generalized Orientalist discourse alternate with those that recall the intensity and tedium of war, the confusions of sexual desire and spiritual yearning, and scenes of thrilling natural beauty.[67]

'Distanciation' is a term that derives from French, and suggests 'disconnection'. While there is a risk in exaggerating the ideologically disruptive power of Farrer's sexual politics, or his engagement with modernism, Farrer's 'queering' of the exploration narrative, and his parodic disruption of conventional exploration writing, can be read in terms of such ideological distanciation. Furthermore, Farrer's stylistic heterogeneity – alternating from botanical writing to travel journal to comedy – creates a dissonance,

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[67] Porter, 'Orientalism and Its Problems', p. 160.

challenging conventions of imperialist writing and laying bare hegemonic discourses of Orientalism.

Landscape, Empire, and Privilege: Out Flew "Northanger Abbey"

There are, however, less subversive aspects to Farrer's travel writing and his engagement with Austen. As recent postcolonial readings of Austen's novels have shown, there are a number of ways of reading Austen's work in light of its material, political, and imperial historical contexts. As with many of Austen's heroines, Farrer's class bias shines through in his travel writing. He writes all too easily about ordering servants, or complaining about their incompetence or laziness. In a particularly telling instance, Farrer sends his servant Mafu back over several miles to fetch his copy of *Emma,* and he then scolds the poor man (who we can imagine did not read Chinese, let alone English), when he returns with *Northanger Abbey*. In another case, Farrer describes himself reading Austen while travelling in a sedan chair through a remote and treacherous stretch of road. Refusing to leave the chair after repeated falls, Farrer expresses his annoyance when the carriers lose their footing: 'Crash went the chair again and again, and out flew "Northanger Abbey" into the mud' (*Eaves*, p. 16).

The possible complicity of Austen's novels with such high-handed travelling practices reveals a deeper entanglement between the culture of privilege, imperialism and high literature. Austen's fiction not only accompanies Farrer on his journeys, her works provide him with a way of viewing his elevated social and, by proxy, imperial status. Edward Said's discussion of Austen's *Mansfield Park* in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993)

is particularly relevant here, bringing into relation the role of 'domestic' fiction in creating and sustaining imperial 'peripheral' concerns. Said focuses on space and geography in *Mansfield Park*, and in particular considers the ways in which domestic territory is conceived in relation to the implied colonial location of Antigua. According to Said, Austen synchronizes domestic and international authority,

> making it plain that the values associated with such higher things as ordination, law, and propriety must be grounded firmly in actual rule over the possession of territory. She sees clearly that to hold and rule *Mansfield Park* is to hold and rule an imperial estate in close, not to say inevitable association with it. What assures the domestic tranquillity and attractive harmony of one is the productivity and regulated discipline of the other.[68]

Therefore, according to Said, Fanny's 'enlarged sense of home,' and her movement to Portsmouth can be viewed in relation to Sir Thomas's movement to and from the colonies.[69] If Said's reading of Austen's novels sheds light on the ways in which imperialism could be subtly inscribed within 'domestic' fiction, then Farrer's playful engagement with Austen's fiction emphasises the extent to which these 'domestic' texts could help to articulate 'peripheral' and 'imperial' concerns and geographies.

Following Said's lead, *The Postcolonial Jane Austen* (2000), is a more recent collection of essays that address similar problems of Empire and class in Austen's work. Rajeswari Sunder Rajan describes the ways in which Austen's texts are 'in the world' as a consequence of British colonialism and American global hegemony. She raises questions about the differently mediated ways in which Austen represents cultural capital in different contexts, and offers the view that much of Austen's work is animated by 'an

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[68] Edward Said, from 'Culture and Imperialism', in Edward Said, Moustafa Bayoumi, Andrew Rubin, eds., *The Edward Said Reader* (London: Granta, 2001), p. 356.
[69] Said, *Said Reader*, p. 357.

impossible nostalgia for an imagined pre-colonial.'[70] The essays in the collection provide a number of perspectives on the ways in which not only Austen's works but also the reception and institutionalization of her fiction, need to be looked at critically.

Farrer's idealizations of the landscapes he encounters, along with the view of himself as a cultured arbiter of taste, bears some relation to what Said calls 'domestic imperial' culture. Referring to Raymond Williams' *The Country and the City* (1973), Said reminds us of the assumptions of class inscribed in Austen's fiction: 'Austen's novels express an "attainable quality of life," in money and property acquired, moral discriminations made, the right choices put in place, the correct "improvements" implemented, the finely nuanced language affirmed and classified.'[71] Farrer's aesthetic and moral discriminations, as both a collector and an observer of local life, can be thought of in relation to Austen's heroines, who like Farrer, have a privileged position in terms of money and property. Indeed, Farrer's family estate in Yorkshire – the destination for his botanical prizes and the source of his wealth – cannot be separated, either materially or imaginatively, from his travel writing.

As a gardening writer, Farrer's audience included a class who owned and sought to improve their property. Farrer views the Chinese landscapes through the lens of tradition and privilege, as when he describes a monastery in Gansu as 'astonishingly like some big English country house, with wide-spaced windows, and drive running up to an especially ample portico' (*Rainbow*, 160), or in another example when he descends a mountain: 'Down and down I plunged; it was beautiful and fresh in dawning green,

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[70] Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, 'Austen in the World: Postcolonial Mappings', in You-me Park and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan eds., *The Postcolonial Jane Austen* (London: Routledge, 2000) pp. 3-27 (p. 5).
[71] Said, *Said Reader*, p. 352.

wonderfully English' (*Rainbow*, 135). Here, the ideal English landscape of country estates and green rolling hills – one that is incidentally empty of workers or labourers – is romanticized and mapped on to the landscape of China.

Farrer's portraits of local people are similarly described through the lens of elite culture. The result can be a detailed and colourful portrait, yet it can also result in a rather condescending denial of the subject's interiority. Consider his description of a Tibetan woman he encounters in the mountains of Gansu:

> Grandmamma Aoo really was the local noblesse. Like Sidonia, she was a lady of castles and lands, owning most of these Alps, with grazing rights and stinting rights and gaits, and court-leet and court-baron and all the glories that swelled Maria Bertram's heart to the point of turning her into Maria Rushworth. And in personal presentment, too, she was very like Sidonia in her outcast days – a charred little withered old witch of a woman, very small and bent and wrinkled, brilliant-eyed between the thin strings of ringleted elf-locks, like the strands of a poodle's mane, that fell on either side of her face from beneath her round cap, so dense with grease and eld that one could hardly tell if it were felt or leather. One ancient petticoat and bodice was the rest of her wear, with silver reliquary, rings of silver set with turquoise and coral in her ears, and down her bosom a swinging cascade of silver chains. On her bare legs, crusted with the mud of ages, she wore, this being a visit ceremony, an ample pair of leathern buskins like enormous Wellingtons. (*Rainbow*, 92-3)

The reference to Sidonia is from Benjamin Disraeli's *Coningsby* (1844), and the allusion to Maria Bertram is from *Mansfield Park* (1814). These references are meant to create a sense of comic bathos, which is a typical function of the mock-heroic mode (consider Pope's *Rape of the Lock* (1712) which celebrated a trifling social scene of teenage courtship in 'high' heroic language). In one sense, the portrait of Grandmamma Aoo, with all of its literary colours, complicates the usual, expected one-dimensional description of Otherness that one might find in other travel writing and ethnographic descriptions. The references to literary characters can be viewed as endowing Grandmamma Aoo with a kind of social sophistication and complexity. However in

another sense, this joke is at Grandmamma Aoo's expense. Farrer's descriptions of the 'castles and the lands' is obviously ironic, as is Grandmamma Aoo's status as 'local noblesse'. Furthermore, there is an undeniable snobbery in Farrer's obscure literary references that are clearly aimed at a readership that is aesthetically effete enough to understand them. In this sense, Farrer's class bias can also be thought of in relation to early twentieth-century 'high-modernism', and a prevalent anxiety among some writers of the period towards a 'vulgar' or philistine underclass of readers. In one of his letters home to Osbert Sitwell, Farrer wrote of his concern that Sitwell's recently published book, *Argonaut and Juggernaut*, would be a 'dreadful jingle' in the 'mouths of the vulgar'.[72] Farrer says more about 'people who never read anything'.

In the end, Farrer's travel writing and Austen's fiction need to be examined in intertextual and dialectal terms – indeed, as Farrer himself offered a way of reading Austen in his literary criticism, so might Austen's fiction provide us with a way of reading Farrer. Like Austen's heroines, Farrer's travelling identity is by no means transparent or two-dimensional. One must bear in mind that Farrer was well aware of irony, an idea that he develops in his essay on Austen. Farrer describes *Emma* as Austen's greatest achievement (in a typically hyperbolic Janeite fashion, he writes: 'A real appreciation of Emma is the final test of citizenship in [Austen's] kingdom.'[73], and the key to *Emma*, for Farrer, is comic irony:

> Emma herself, in fact, *is never to be taken seriously*. And it is only those who have not realised this who will be "put off" by her absurdities, her snobberies, her misdirected mischievous ingenuities. Emma is simply a figure of fun. To conciliate affection for a character, not because of its charms, but in defiance of its defects, is the loftiest aim of the comic spirit; Shakespeare achieved it with his

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[72] Qtd. in Sitwell, *Noble Essence*, p.21.
[73] Farrer, 'Jane Austen', p. 75.

> beloved Falstaff, and Molière with Celimène … [the author] must both run with the hare and hunt with the hounds, treat his creation at once objectively and subjectively, get inside it to inspire it with sympathy, and yet stay outside it to direct laughter on its comic aspects.[74]

Judging Farrer's travel writing by the precepts of his own literary criticism, we should pause to consider before passing judgment. As someone so adept at and familiar with reading Emma's snobberies and failings, we need to consider that Farrer could have been aware of his own; and as Austen so masterfully created moral ambivalences within her heroines, so might Farrer seek an ironic and comic distance between himself and his narrator. Farrer's travel writing, in fact, presents a multiplicity of competing and contradictory thematic and generic elements, and such heterogeneity creates problems for monolithic understandings of his work as either subversively 'queer' or ideologically conservative (as either Orientalist or classist, or both).

Conclusion: Reading the Death of the Author

In many ways Farrer's subjective, ironic style anticipates the later travel writing of British authors such as Peter Fleming, Osbert Sitwell, and Robert Byron. Yet Farrer is not only a transitional figure, but also one who actively sought out borderlands and transitional spaces for their very ambivalence. There was something about the borderlands of China, Tibet and Burma that was particularly defining and attractive for Farrer, as it was an area of the world he returned to, knowing full-well the dangers involved in travelling there. For a botanist, this abundant and ecologically diverse area was no doubt attractive in its own terms, but as a self-perceived cast-away of European

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[74] Farrer, 'Jane Austen', p. 76.

civilisation, Farrer, with his sense of exiled selfhood, may have found the region's geographical obscurity, its in-between status, especially appealing.

Roland Barthes' famous line from *Death of the Author* (1968), 'The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture,' is particularly apt when we consider that Farrer's writing – its intertextuality and its *readerly* quality – is heightened by the literal death of the author.[75] Farrer died alone in Burma in 1920, a year before the publication of *Rainbow Bridge* (the cause of his death is unknown, although Sitwell suggests diphtheria).[76] The author's death is made textual in the footnote at the end of the Preface to *Rainbow Bridge*: 'Mr. Reginald Farrer died far and away in the wilds of Upper Burmah, in the course of another adventurous journey, on October 16, 1920. In these circumstances it has been thought best to print his original Preface unaltered.' This footnote changes the meaning of the book, adding a dark ironic dimension; certainly, the Preface reads differently in light of Farrer's end:

> but now the irises are blooming again at the Halls of Heaven. And when the guns are broken and silent once more, the irises will still go on blooming year by year. But the Halls of Heaven are a long way hence!

The Halls of Heaven is a translation of Tang Tian, which is one of the areas where Farrer was collecting, but of course the meaning is ironic in light of the author's death. Such irony is further present when elsewhere in the book Farrer evokes botanical imagery in order to address the problem of human mortality:

> All the wars of the world, all the Caesars, have not the staying power of a Lily in a cottage border: man creates the storms in his teacup, and dies of them, but there remains a something standing outside, a something impregnable, as far beyond

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[75] Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author,' in Dennis Walder, ed., *Literature in the Modern World: Critical Essays and Documents* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 259 – 264 (p. 264).
[76] Sitwell, *Noble Essences*, p. 20.

> *reach of man's destructiveness as in man's own self. The immortality of marbles and of miseries is a vain, small thing compared to the immortality of a flower that blooms and is dead by dusk. (Rainbow, p. 226)*

Farrer describes finding flowers in highly sexualized terms – the moment of discovery is associated with 'rapture' and 'overflowing' emotions: new life, as opposed to death.

Descriptions of flowers, and the excitement of botanical discovery, can be viewed as both a kind of sublimation of sexual desire and as a symbolic celebration of authenticity. We can read the already quoted passage once again: 'Deep in a gully beneath a Dolomite cliff I myself diverged, and there found such beautiful abundance of my Primula as drove me almost distracted, like Lydia Bennet' (*Rainbow*, p. 207). This is, of course, the immature and sexually fixated younger sister in *Pride and Prejudice*, and the reference aligns the moment of botanical discovery with a kind of rapture or loss of control. In this sense, Farrer's search for the botanical beauty can be read as libido-driven. Consider the following passage where Farrer discovers the *Gentianna Farreri*:

> And its beauty! Nothing could I foretell of its temper and future history that day, as I stoop rapt in contemplation before the actual plant, the last and greatest event of my second season, and well worth the whole two years' expedition anyhow, merely to have seen it. A fine frail tuft like grass radiating some half a dozen fine flapping stems – that is G. Farreri, quite inconspicuous and obscure in all the high lawns of the Da-Tung … Until it flowers; and every day in early September brings a fresh crashing explosion of colour in the fold of the lawns. For each of those stems concludes in one enormous upturned trumpet … inside the tube and throat are white, but the mouth and the wide bold flanges are of so luminous and intense a light azure that one blossom of it will blaze out at you among the grass on the other side of the valley. (*Rainbow*, p. 283)

This passage is the emotional height of *Rainbow Bridge*, and can be understood in terms of love at first sight –similar to Woolf's botanical description in 'Kew Gardens' the language of desire is expressed in erotic botanical imagery. Furthermore, the sense of the transitory would appeal to the Imagist and Symbolic literary sensibility: the flower

fugitive and short-lived. Throughout Farrer's writing, the botanical is overdetermined: it stands in as a way to resolve problems of imperialism, problems of history, problems of 'China', issues of class, problems of gender and sexuality, and the utter fact of mortality. The sense of resolve, and the thrill of discovery, is short lived, and the moment of desire needs to be staged and restaged.

In his last letter to Sitwell, addressed from Nyitadi, Upper Burma, Farrer speaks freely: 'I hate lies and humbug, journalism, Christianity, domesticity, dulness [sic] and European civilisation in general, with a fury that, if I let it, makes me feel quite ill.'[77] In the face of such utter dissatisfaction with the West, there is a compulsion in Farrer's writing to repeat the moment of botanical discovery; yet such repetition reveals the elusive and ephemeral nature of Farrer's desire for authenticity. Farrer's letter reveals how he was driven by an intense desire to escape and keep searching:

> Far and far beyond post and railways, far beyond Ultima Thule, right away over on the far side of the uttermost edge of nowhere, I sit in a little bamboo shanty, open at every pore to the winds that blow, surrounded, far overhead, by inky black peaks like flames in a tempest, frozen suddenly. No letters, no papers, no news, nothing to remind me of the mad world I hate … It is extraordinarily incomparably, delicious and restorative … So that now I'm happy as the days are long, working hard among the plants, and camping on the high passes, full of snow and midges, incidentally with two immortal works in hand, to vary my employments – of which at least one, I am convinced, will defy all rivalry from our cousins in the way of unpleasantness.[78]

These words sent home to his cousin lay bare Farrer's desperation and expose his torn relationship with his family: the 'immortal works', one of which Farrer elsewhere referred to as 'the best English biography,' were either lost or destroyed. According to Shulman, Farrer's servants left his novels in his tent, but sent his diaries home to his

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[77] Qtd. in Sitwell, *Noble Essences*, p. 21.
[78] Sitwell, *Noble Essences*, p. 23.

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[77] Qtd. in Sitwell, *Noble Essences*, p. 21.
[78] Sitwell, *Noble Essences,* p. 23.

mother, 'who cut them up with scissors'.[79] The 'unpleasantness' of these journals may have simply consisted of more of his characteristic acerbic wit, or perhaps it more openly expressed his sexual identity. Such biographical details of Farrer's life reveal that he may have had other reasons to admire and identify so closely with Austen. In his literary criticism he describes Austen's relatively alienated position within her family: 'She was in it; but she was not really of it.'[80]

Farrer's writing, and the story of his life, would not have fallen on deaf ears. His botanical travel writing reveals the ways in which China was materially and imaginatively connected with the metropolis, addressing issues of 'natural' gender and identity, as well as questioning the status of European civilisation. Earlier in this chapter I discussed Virginia Woolf's story 'Kew Gardens', and I will conclude by briefly looking at a passage from another piece of modernist literature: Vita Sackville-West's *The Garden* (1946), a long poem that explores the personal and metaphorical significance of the changing seasons. Here, in the context of another World War, Sackville-West evokes Farrer's name, and appeals to the botanical as well as to a sense of China's age:

> Gardener, if you listen, listen well:
> Plant for your winter pleasure, when the months
> Dishearten; plant to find a fragile note
> Touched from the brittle violin of frost.
> *Viburnum fragrens*, patient in neglect,
> That Farrer sent from China;
> Patient, and quiet, till, the moment come
> When rime all hoar through mist beneath the sun
> Turn twigs to little antlers and the grass
> To Cinderella's slipper made of glass, --
> She breaks, that pale, that fragrant Guelder-rose
> As a court beauty lit at a Court-ball Sparkled with chandeliers, in muslin youth
> Filmy and delicate, yet old as China

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[79] Shulman, *A Rage for Rock Gardening*, p. 117.
[80] Farrer, 'Jane Austen', p. 59.

Mobled in roseate surprise
That in December hints at apple-blossom.

She shares that paradox of quality
Of blooms that dare the harsh extremity
Of Winter, -- a defiance, it may seem,
Challenge of a fragility extreme
In answer to the fiercest enemy.[81]

Sackville-West dwells on Farrer's botanical import, the *Viburnum fragrens,* which Farrer discovers and names in *Rainbow Bridge*. Yet the influence goes beyond the plant itself: the language used, this kind of focus and this kind of personification, resonates with Farrer's style of describing flowers, as does the way that Sackville-West transforms the gardening manual into poetic expression in the first lines.

It is also worth noting that elsewhere in *The Garden* Sackville-West evokes the history of British botanical exploration; it is perhaps the only place in English literature where the authors discussed in this thesis appear together in one place:

Oh these imagined woods in a clear treble
Pure as a boy's voice, purer than a woman's,
With coral deepening those high, light notes
Of white and pink and rose and palest yellow:
They are more lovely than known loveliness,
They are the consummation of a vision
Seen by rare travellers on Tibetan hills
-- Bitter escarpments cut by knives of wind,
Eaves of the world, the frightful lonely mountains, --
Or in Yunnan and Sikkim and Nepal
Or Andes ranges, over all this globe
Giant in travelled detail, dwarf on maps;
Forrest and Farrer, Fortune, and Kingdon-Ward,
Men that adventured in the lost old valleys,
Difficult, dangerous, or up the heights,
Tired and fevered, blistered, hungry, thin,
But drunk enough to set a house on fire
When the last moment of their worthless quest
Startled them with reward, a flash as sudden

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[81] Vita Sackville-West, *The Garden* (London: Michael Joseph, 1946), p. 41.

As the king-fisher's blue on English stream.[82]

The prominence of Farrer in Sackville-West's poetry reveals his importance and influence as a modernist writer. The 'eaves of the world' is of course a reference to Farrer's travel writing. At the end of the above passage there is also an echo of Pound's *Cathay*: 'The red and green kingfishers / flash between the orchids and clover'.[83] The poem continues by defending the botanical motivations of the travellers:

(They say, such travellers were suspect there
Where none would come for other quest than gold
Or trade, that other token form of gold.
Gold may mean different things to different men.
To one man, it could mean the Golden Bell,
Forsythia suspensa, hanging yellow
Along bare branches, such a natural gold
Paying no dividend, as in our cold
Dark February, alien golden bells
Deepen our pale young sunlight, gild our frost,
Since the lone raider rang his useless bells of gold.)[84]

One of the main themes of this dissertation has been a critique of colonialist discourse theory and its universal applicability to travel writing; Sackville-West clearly had a similar notion in writing the above passage. The reward for the many hardships that the travellers endured is ideal rather than material, and rather than 'implant' new civilising ideas on the colonial other, the source of inspiration and new growth in these works flows from East to West. Rather than triumphantly declaim the virtues of Empire, or praise the search for wealth and fortune in foreign lands, Sackville-West's poetry, along with Farrer's travel writing, offers a sense of grounding during a period of post-imperial decline.

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[82] Sackville-West, *The Garden*, pp. 27-8.
[83] See Ezra Pound's *Cathay Poems* (1917), 'Sennin Poem' by Kakuhaku, lns 1-2,
[84] Sackville-West, *The Garden*, p. 28.

From National Geographic to Ethnographic Surrealism: Joseph Rock's China



In the first part of this chapter, I will discuss Joseph Rock's early journalism, and in particular how his writing and photography inscribed and romanticised primitive discourses within the institutional framework of 'National Geographic Magazine'. In the second part, I will point to the disruptive and ideologically challenging nature of Rock's later ethnographic work. Here I will make connections between Rock's ethnography and botanical writing and what James Clifford has identified as 'ethnographic surrealism'. I will continue by exploring the connections between Rock's writing and the literary avant-garde of the period, paying particular attention to Ezra Pound's 'The Cantos', where Rock's ethnographic and botanical writings appear as important intertexts. I will conclude by discussing the significance of such cross-fertilisation between journalism, natural scientific writing, travel writing and modernist literature.

Joseph Rock (1884-1962) immigrated to the United States from his native Austria in 1905.[1] From 1907 to 1920, he lived in Hawaii where he became a self-taught specialist on Hawaiian flora. On the faculty of the College of Hawaii, Rock taught botany and published five books and numerous papers on the subject. Beginning around 1910, research was being conducted at the College of Hawaii on the active agents in chaulmoogra oil, which had historically been used to treat Hansen's disease. In the early

[1] Biographical information on Rock can be found in Alice M. Coats, *The Plant Hunters: Being a History of the Horticultural Pioneers, Their Guests and Their Discoveries from the Renaissance to the Twentieth Century* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970), Euan Hillhouse Methven Cox, *Plant-Hunting in China. A History of Botanical Exploration in China and the Tibetan Marches* (London: Collins, 1945), Michael Aris, Joseph Francis Charles Rock, Patrick R. Booz, and S. B. Sutton, *Lamas, Princes, and Brigands: Joseph Rock's Photographs of the Tibet Borderlands of China* (New York: China Institute in America, 1992).

1920s, Rock was sent to Indochina, Siam, and Burma by the American Department of Agriculture in search of the oily seeds of the East Indian chaulmoogra tree. His expedition was a success and resulted in the plantation of several thousand trees in Hawaii. In 1922 Rock went to China, and remained there, on and off, for the next twenty-seven years.

From a botanical point of view, Rock's contribution to the field was significant. He sent 80,000 plant specimens from China (most of them to America), and two were named after him. Rock also sent back 1600 birds and 60 mammals. Jeffrey Wagner describes Rock's botanical legacy: 'Many of Rock's exceptionally handsome, hardy floriferous forms still grace the public and private botanical collections of Scotland, Wales, southern England, northern Continental Europe, and America's Pacific Northwest.'[2] During his career, Rock worked for a number of institutions, agencies and gardening syndicates including the Arnold Arboretum at Harvard University, the Botanic Garden of the University of California, the Smithsonian Institution, and the National Geographic Society.

Throughout his botanical explorations, Rock took numerous photographs and studied the languages and cultures of China's minorities. Rock's photographs brought him popular acclaim when he published his articles for *National Geographic Magazine* between 1922 and 1935, and Rock soon became known as the magazine's 'man in China'. During the later stages of his career, Rock published exclusively on ethnography and linguistics. During the early 1930s Rock settled down near Lijiang, a town in Yunnan

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[2] Jeffrey Wagner, *The Botanical Legacy of Joseph Rock*', in Michael Aris, Patrick R. Booz, and S. B. Sutton, eds., *Lamas, Princes, and Brigands: Joseph Rock's Photographs of the Tibet Borderlands of China* (New York: China Institute in America, 1992), pp. 131-2 (p. 131).

province (now a UNESCO site and popular tourist destination), where he focused on ethnological and linguistic studies of the local inhabitants. He remained there for several years, focusing his work on the 'Na-Khi' people (modern spelling is Naxi[3]). Rock was, and to some extent still is, well known in this area of Yunnan. His presence was highly visible. In 1930, Edgar Snow travelled with Rock in Yunnan, and described Rock's extravagant expeditions:

> During the march, his tribal retainers divided into a vanguard and a rear guard. The advance party, led by a cook, an assistant cook, and a butler, would spot a sheltered place with a good view, unfold the table and the chairs on a leopard skin rug, and lay out clean linen cloth, silver and napkins. By the time we arrived our meal would be almost ready. At night it was several courses ending with tea and liqueurs.[4]

The house where Rock lived, in Yuhu village, still exists and it is said that many of his possessions are now local family heirlooms.

During the Second World War, much of Rock's botanical and ethnographic research was lost when a steamer carrying thousands of his botanical samples, along with his four-volume manuscript entitled 'The Religious Literature of the Na-Khi', was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine on its way from India to the United States. Nevertheless, Rock continued his work and by 1944 he had published six articles on Naxi society and culture, and had translated thousands of short Naxi pictographic poems into English. Rock returned to China after the war, and between 1945 and 1950 he was a research fellow at the Harvard Yenching Institute where he continued to publish his linguistic research. At this time, Rock also composed the first Naxi-English dictionary,

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[3] Neither Rock's spelling 'Na-khi' nor the official Chinese Mandarin romanization 'Naxi' is particularly intuitive for English speakers. The name is pronounced 'Na-she'. To remain consistent with current usage and scholarship, I will use the spelling 'Naxi'.

[4] Edgar Snow, *Journey to the Beginning* [1958] (New York: Vintage, 1972), p. 56.

which was eventually published posthumously in 1963.[5] In 1949, the political situation in China became unstable and Rock was forced to leave. He retired to Hawaii where he eventually became a Professor of Oriental Studies. Shortly before his death in 1962 the University of Hawaii awarded him an honorary Doctor of Science degree.

National Geographic, Tibet and the Primitive Exotic

During the 1920s and 30s Rock wrote nine articles for *National Geographic Magazine*. These articles played an important role in defining China and Tibet within the framework of the magazine and were instrumental in negotiating and translating cultural difference for mass markets during the twentieth century. Similar to Kingdon-Ward, Rock travelled to ethnically diverse areas of Southwest China. In Rock's writings, the various groups and people who inhabited these areas of Sichuan, Yunnan and Tibet would conform to larger, globally emerging ideas of exotic and primitive cultures. Tibet, in particular, had a resonance with most western audiences, and Rock's articles for *National Geographic Magazine* played a definitive role in popularising the region.

The first printed photographs in *National Geographic Magazine* were of Tibet. Several members of the National Geographic Society were initially opposed to these photographs in the magazine, and viewed such pictures as pandering to popular tastes; however, in 1905 when the photographs of the Tibetan capital of Lhasa were published, the magazine's membership dramatically increased. In their study of the cultural history

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[5] Joseph Francis Charles Rock, *A ¹na-²khi-English Encyclopedic Dictionary* (Roma: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1963).

of *National Geographic Magazine*, anthropologists Catherine Lutz and Jane Lou Collins write that

> [w]hile a number of the board members were shocked and angry, public response was overwhelmingly favorable. Society membership, which stood at 3,400 at the time the photographs of the 'forbidden city' were published, soared to 11,000 by the end of the year.[6]

National Geographic continued to feature articles on China and Tibet throughout the twentieth century, making the regions an important focus for western audiences.

Although Rock made trips into what is now officially known as the Autonomous Administrative Region of Tibet, most his travels took place well within what is now Chinese territory. Travelling in areas of Yunnan, Sichuan and Gansu provinces, Rock described a region that was new to most western audiences. In Rock's articles, the southwest regions of China are sealed off: an area in the extreme southwest of Sichuan is described as 'one of the least-known spots in the world'.[7] Descriptions of the geography continue to build a picture, taking the reader to the very edge of the 'known' world; he describes the Yangzi River as 'hidden among a maze of peaks and hemmed in by mighty walls.'[8] Rock pays close attention to exotic plant life and describes natural barriers, further contributing to this romantic view of a complicated, varied and undiscovered land:

> We passed through forests of oak, fir, spruce, and hemlock, interspersed with rhododendron and canebrake, snow covered the mossy carpet of the sloping

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[6] Catherine Lutz and Jane Lou Collins, *Reading National Geographic* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 27.
[7] Joseph Rock, 'The Land of the Yellow Lama', *National Geographic Magazine* April (1925) 447-91 (p. 448).
[8] Rock, 'The Land of the Yellow Lama', p. 453.

> hillsides. High above us the brown alpine meadows, bordered by black firs, were crowned by crags and rocky walls culminating in Mount Dyianaloko.[9]

He writes of 'uncanny' forests and magnificent scenery: 'Words cannot describe the grandeur of these sculptured mountains.' The language of isolation and exotic mystery is continually evoked as roads 'wander in great zigzags' and mountains are separated by 'deep chasms'.[10] At times, the natural environment is described in fantastic, otherworldly terms: 'Here, in July, was ice, and flowers bloomed in the snow.' At other times, it is an abundant prelapsarian paradise: 'Here, in remote, almost inaccessible valleys, I found countless wild animals still unafraid of men, peaceful as in Eden.'[11]

In Rock's descriptions of the regions there are clear echoes of Kingdon-Ward's travel writing. His article entitled 'the Great River Trenches of Asia' resonates with Kingdon-Ward's description of the region as the 'Land of Corrosions'. The theme of discovery appears throughout the articles; in a 1926 article, much in the style of Kingdon-Ward, Rock describes the undiscovered deep gorges where 'no white man had previously had a glimpse of many of the scenes here photographed.'[12] In a later article, there is a similar statement: 'no other white man, since time began, ever stood here and beheld these deep gorges of the Yellow River.'[13] Yet again, in 1931, one of Rock's articles

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[9] Rock, 'The Land of the Yellow Lama', p. 453.
[10] Rock, 'The Land of the Yellow Lama', pp. 458-59.
[11] Joseph Rock, 'Seeing the Mountain of Mystery', *National Geographic Magazine* February (1930), 132-185 (p. 132).
[12] Joseph Rock, 'Through the Great River Trenches of Asia', *National Geographic Magazine* August (1926), 133-76, (p. 155).
[13] Rock, 'Seeing the Mountain of Mystery', p. 155.

reads: 'We were now on unknown ground, never before trodden by the foot of a white man.'[14]

The attention to the 'white man' is perhaps not surprising given the magazine's readership. By the 1920s and 30s, *National Geographic* had a global distribution to most western English speaking countries. Viewed as educational, the magazine was often present in school libraries and classrooms, and had a large adolescent readership. By engaging with the rhetoric of isolation and wondrous discovery, these articles played on established literary lost-world motifs – ideas that might be popular with younger readers. A number of imperial novels and stories of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century characterised white men discovering lost civilisations that, despite modern innovations in transportation, remained hidden.

The idea of a lost world was necessarily modern because it is based on the idea that the world as *almost* discovered, mapped and understood. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) is perhaps the first of this genre, as it described a lost kingdom of riches in the depths of Africa. Playing on Haggard's success with the formula, Rudyard Kipling's story *The Man Who Would be King* (1888) describes a pair of British soldiers who end up ruling an isolated kingdom in Afghanistan. Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World* (1912) is another classic of the lost world genre, depicting the obsessive Professor Challenger and his discovery of prehistoric life in a remote area of South America. Edgar Rice Burroughs' *The Land That Time Forgot* (1918) developed Conan Doyle's lost world, describing an isolated island in the South Atlantic where dinosaurs

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[14] Joseph Rock, 'Konka Risumgongba, Holy Mountain of the Outlaws', *National Geographic Magazine* July (1931), 2-64 (p. 34).

still roamed. The film *King Kong* (1932) also played on the lost world idea to the full-extent.

Although each story has its own complexity and variations, such lost world narratives tended to rely on and strengthen the 'science' behind socially and environmentally determined ideas of evolution. It was not only dinosaurs or animals that were left behind by evolutionary processes, but human societies could be similarly regarded as less evolved – or tragically flawed – in such lost world stories. In Rock's articles, he often paints a picture of inevitable decline. For example, he describes the Naxi people as 'a dwindling tribe of Tibeto-Burman stock, many centuries ago … a powerful people'. The 'Nashi Kingdom' of Yunnan, Rock writes, is 'the cradle and rallying point of a gradually vanishing tribe.'[15] In another example, Rock writes: 'Far removed from the influence of northern and eastern Chinese civilisation, the Muoso have lived secluded, shut off from the rest of the world, and only coming into contact with other tribes inferior to themselves, with the possible exception of the Tibetans.'[16] Such a statement implies that the only reason the Mosuo people have been able to survive is because they did not fall prey to a larger and stronger predator. In this way, such a lost world narrative exploits social Darwinist logic, simplifying the complex development of human societies into a crude geographical and environmentally determined model. Although *National Geographic Magazine* had a global reach, the idea of viewing a primitive lost world has a particular meaning within the context of twentieth-century America.

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[15] Joseph Rock, 'Banishing the Devil of Disease among the Nashi of Yunnan Province', *National Geographic Magazine* November (1924), 473- 499 (p. 473).
[16] Rock, 'Banishing the Devil of Disease', p.473.

In many ways, the logic of the lost world that underlies Rock's articles supports the American ideals of a capitalist, democratic and cosmopolitan culture. Modern American nationalism relied on the idea that natural 'evolutionary' progress was achieved by the continual flow of people and goods. Running contrary to such notions of freely circulating commodities was the idea of stagnant cultures in decline – the lost world, therefore, functioned as a counterbalance to evolutionary thinking about modern capitalist society, which was viewed as open, competitive and racially diverse.

Within such a conceptual framework, Rock's lost world provided American readers with a way to consider and understand their own colonial/primitive past and capitalist/modern present. In Rock's articles, the landscape of China's western regions is often likened to America's own borderlands: 'After following a lateral ridge, we had a wonderful view of the deep Yangtze gorge, with its dome-shaped spurs, reminding one of the Grand Canyon of the Colorado.'[17] Or in another example he writes:

> Weird sandstone cliffs, castles, and wind-hewn rock towers, where eagles nested, rose about us, and fragrant junipers clung to every crack and ledge. It was not unlike certain Colorado scenery.[18]

Rock also draws parallels between China's minorities and Native Americans: 'The Guru people, tall and well-built men, fearless and open with countenance, resemble Apache Indians, with plaited hair hanging from each side of well-modelled heads.'[19] The 'well-modelled heads' might be a reference to the nineteenth-century 'science' of phrenology, but it could also be an expression of Rock's 'ethnic connoisseurship', as the aesthetic features of one indigenous group is considered against the other. His attention to these

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[17] Rock, 'The Land of the Yellow Lama', p. 456.
[18] Rock, 'Seeing the Mountain of Mystery', p.158.
[19] Rock, 'Konka Risumgongba, Holy Mountain of the Outlaws', p. 43.

'Apaches' evokes an image of 'pureblood' American 'noble savage' -- a highly regarded and aesthetically pleasing native identity. Rock continues to evoke the 'noble savage' idea in his description of the Gurus:

> The natives, proud and virile kinsmen of the Konkaling outlaws, walked about with an air of indolence and haughtiness … They were friendly but not subservient.[20]

The 'pure-blood' aesthetic quality of these people is often coupled with narratives of encroachment and decline. The same people who are often celebrated as being more pleasing to the Western eye are also described as rapidly disappearing.

The comparison between North American native people and China's minority tribes appears in other colonialist accounts of China's border regions. A common feature of such writing is often the perceived decline of China's minorities, in the face of an advancing Chinese race. Rock was not the only one to draw these comparisons. Kingdon-Ward would refer to his loyal guides as 'braves', and would often remark on the gradual encroachments of the Chinese settlers.[21] On the eastern frontier of China, in Taiwan (then Formosa), Canadian missionary George Mackay made similar comparisons to the 'vanishing' natives of North America, claiming that the 'Chinese in Formosa have great contempt for the aborigines, and treat them very much as the Americans have treated the Indian tribes, bartering with them, cheating them, and crowding them back into their mountain strongholds.'[22] British anthropologist Janet McGovern made similar observations of Taiwan's aboriginal population, also drawing from the 'vanishing Indian'

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[20] Rock, 'Konka Risumgongba, Holy Mountain of the Outlaws', p. 43.
[21] Frank Kingdon Ward, *The Land of the Blue Poppy* [1911] (London: Minerva Press, 1973), p.14.
[22] George Leslie Mackay, *From Far Formosa: The Island, Its People and Missions* (Toronto: F.H. Revell, 1896), p. 103.

logic; her study is a self-professed attempt to capture glimpses of these 'vanishing' people to 'stimulate interest, and perhaps encourage further investigation, before it is too late, into the tribal customs and habits of a little-known, and rapidly disappearing, people.'[23]

The 'vanishing native' idea, then, whether it described a European or a Chinese Han race that was advancing, would inscribe the inevitable 'natural' evolution of human races, however elegiacally. Brian Dippie has argued that in the context of nineteenth-century North American history, the 'vanishing American' myth represented

> a perfect fusion of the nostalgic with the progressive impulse . . . The point was no longer whether or not the native population had declined in the past but that its future decline was inevitable. The myth of the Vanishing American accounted for the Indians' future by denying them one, and stained the tissue of policy debate with fatalism.[24]

By the 1920s and 30s the frontier days were over and America could only view 'authentic Indians' on the movie screen or in Western 'historical' re-enactments. In mainstream society, Native people had become increasingly visible in a spectacular and popular sense, yet invisible in a real sense as more and more Native societies were relocated to reservations.

The persisting myth of the 'noble savage' would continue to relegate 'authentic' Native identity to the past well into the twentieth century. For example, in the classic nineteenth-century text with enduring popular appeal, James Fenimore Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans* (1826) portrayed the corrupt or 'fallen' Hurons against the idealised Mohicans. In one way, the division between good and bad native tribes reveals the

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[23] Janet B. Montgomery McGovern, *Among the Head-Hunters of Formosa* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1922), p.15.
[24] Brian W. Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1982), p.xii.

author's 'expertise' of being able to recognise and negotiate differences. In another sense, however, the split propagates an unsustainable 'noble savage' ideal – Cooper needs the corrupt and ignoble Magua to create the ideal and noble Chingachgook. The fundamental divide between corrupt and noble is also clearly defined on racial terms. The only stable relationship between whites and Indians is the relationship between Hawkeye, Chingachgook and Uncas — and each of these characters has pure blood. Magua, on the other hand, is one of Cooper's half-breeds — the central 'fallen' Indian. Magua is described by Hawkeye as a 'mongrel Mohawk' and represents the corruption of 'pure' Indian character.[25]

As I have already discussed elsewhere in this thesis, this splitting of others into good and bad tribes is a familiar colonialist topos that appears in numerous travel and exploration accounts from different periods in different colonial geographies. In Rock's articles, there is a persistent oscillation between the people and the surrounding ecology, between sublime admiration and repulsion, Oriental grandeur and squalor. Such dualisms can reveal a racial logic, and a strong preference for more 'aesthetically pleasing' racial groups. Rock's descriptions and photographs of young Naxi soldiers resemble 'noble savages', whereas other minority nomads appear primitive and unclean. Rock's writing continually shifts attention between the proud and fearless to the lowly and treacherous. Such observations and images cannot be taken at face value. Similar to the corrupted Hurons, these nomadic people are aligned with immoral and ferocious behaviour. During his meeting with the noble Gurus, for example, Rock remarks how 'One took heart to be free at last of cringing serfs.' The noble Gurus were 'stalwart tribesmen, every one of

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[25] James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans* [1826] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), p. 45.

whom had killed his man.'[26] The others are aligned with moral inconsistency, such as the 'pious robbers' who 'turn from pillage to prayer – and then back to pillage.'[27]

Rock's descriptions of people invariably favour the proud, colourful and pure over the lowly and mundane. Ideas of race are similarly informed by the perceived aesthetic quality of the other. As I have already remarked, Cooper's 'fallen' Indians are invariably of mixed blood. In Rock's photographs, the noble Naxi or guru people are often photographed in colour or in ways that captures their exotic and colourful costumes; by contrast, other nomadic people are often depicted in black and white. For example, the caption of a photograph of a nomad man reads, 'The son of Arik Jojorno, Sokwo Arik Nomad Chief, Reveals his Negroid Features'.[28] Here the mixing of racial features contributes to a negative aesthetic quality, reminiscent of Kingdon-Ward's identification of the 'ugly darker' races that he encountered.

The discourses of cleanliness and purity further support a colonialist logic of 'manifest destiny' and social evolution. Dirt, in this way, is aligned with childhood and infancy, essentially with people who do not know how to take care of themselves. In Rock's articles, the relative cleanliness or purity of a people provides an important means by which indigenous people are defined, classified, admired, or pushed to the margins. Crossing into an 'unexplored' area of western Sichuan, Rock describes a world that is impoverished and unclean:

> A miserable land it is, of poverty and incredible filth; a land cut off from all the modern world; a region which, for uncounted centuries, has had its own form of government, of religion and social customs; yet a region which knows no railway,

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[26] Rock, 'Konka Risumgongba, Holy Mountain of the Outlaws', p. 43.
[27] Rock, 'Konka Risumgongba, Holy Mountain of the Outlaws', p. 4.
[28] Rock, 'Seeing the Mountain of Mystery', p. 143.

> no motor car, no radio, or naught of all that science and invention have given the world since Marco Polo's day.[29]

The people who inhabit this area are continually aligned with uncleanness. Rock's lurid description of his encounter with a group of nomads reveals his repulsion towards the surrounding filth:

> Soon an old woman brought out some bowls from a pile of sheep manure, which served for fuel as well as a sideboard. She took some ground-up sheep dung in her hand and scoured the dirty bowls: then she polished them with a filthy rag which hung to her girdle and dragged on the filthier ground when she walked. With her dirt-encrusted hands she poured tea into these bowls and they were passed around. I set down these facts in order to show in what squalor these Tibetan nomads survive. A wooden box was now set before us. In it lay dirty lumps of yak butter, covered with old dung dust and other unwholesome things. From this box the fingers of many a nomad had dug before me, and I could see the grooves left in the unpalatable mass by their fingernails.[30]

In the above description, the dirt and animal excrement seem inescapable, and the old woman's act of cleaning dirt with more dirt is a mere mockery of domestic norms. Yet the lack of hygiene is made even more visceral as it infringes on bodily contamination. Rock describes how he is compelled to drink, despite the dirt and 'unwholesome things' that have made their way into the tea and into the butter: 'I shrank from either tea or food, but could not offend these simple people, whose impulses were hospitable; so I whistled up courage enough to raise the tea bowl to my lips for one tiny sip.'

Elsewhere, during a trip to Gansu province, Rock describes a group of lamas in terms of their pungent stench:

> The monks … reek of rancid butter and grease, and their skin is black from the accumulated filth of years … Their priestly garments of red Lhasa cloth are unwashable; and since few of them have more than one garment, the clothing is

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[29] Rock, 'Seeing the Mountain of Mystery', p. 132.
[30] Rock, 'Seeing the Mountain of Mystery', p. 152.

> saturated with odors so strong that it is difficult to expel the scent from the room after even a short visit by a group of Lamas.[31]

Here, the smell of the Lamas testifies to their stagnant culture. At the Labrang monastery in Gansu, Rock writes:

> The big hall is unclean. After prayers the lamas fed here, and the floor is thick with tea, rice gruel, and other food dropped there in years gone by and now trampled hard. About the padded strips of carpet on which the lamas sit, this ancient food is many inches thick.[32]

Such grotesque imagery reveals the disordered world in which the lamas live. Dirt and trampled food is not only associated with stagnancy, but also represents a disregard for ingrained western ideas of domesticity.

In *Purity and Danger*, Mary Douglas describes the social taboos associated with the unclean, arguing that the division between dirtiness and cleanliness is often culturally prescribed. 'Dirt is essentially disorder,' she states. 'There is no such thing as absolute dirt: it exists in the eye of the beholder.'[33] Douglas's study of cleanliness and purity challenges us to consider the relative nature of dirt tolerance:

> In some [cultures], menstrual blood is feared as a lethal danger; in others not at all. In some, death pollution is a daily preoccupation; in others not at all. In some, excreta is dangerous, in others it is only a joke. In India cooked food and saliva are pollution-prone, but Bushmen collect melon seeds in their mouths for later roasting and eating. Each culture has its own special risks and problems.[34]

Furthermore, under the threat of pollution, the individual can stand in symbolically for the social body: 'We cannot possibly interpret rituals concerning excreta, breast milk, saliva and the rest unless we are prepared to see in the body a symbol of society, and to

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[31] Joseph Rock, 'Life among the Lamas of Choni', *National Geographic Magazine* 56 (1928), 569-619 (pp. 572 - 576).
[32] Rock, "Seeing the Mountain of Mystery", p.146.
[33] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1966), p. 2.
[34] Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, p. 121.

see the powers and dangers credited to social structure reproduced on the human body.'[35]

She continues by explaining how

> Any structure of ideas is vulnerable at the margins. We should expect the orifices of the body to symbolise its specially vulnerable points. Matter issuing from them is marginal stuff of the most obvious kind. Spittle, blood, milk, urine, faeces or tears by simply issuing forth have traversed the boundary of the body. So also have bodily parings, skin, nail, hair clippings and sweat. The mistake is to treat all bodily margins in isolation from all other margins.[36]

Douglas concludes:

> A polluting person is always in the wrong. He has developed some wrong conclusion or simply crossed the line which should not have been crossed and this displacement unleashes danger for someone.[37]

Rock's descriptions of the filth in the nomad's tent, and his sip of rancid butter tea can be interpreted in terms of the larger body politics at stake. Not only does the lack of hygiene point to a lack of order or a lack of higher civilisation, the unclean functions as a direct threat. Rock's portrayals of Otherness – framed and structured through the institution of National Geographic, reveal that American and to some extent 'global' consciousness relied on hierarchies of race and conceptions of historical change.

Time and the Construction of Otherness

As I have already discussed in the chapter on Kingdon-Ward, native people were often regarded as lacking a 'modern' conception of time, and were therefore aligned with nature and excluded from global history. In *Time and the Other*, Fabian has discussed this

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[35] Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, p.115.
[36] Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, p. 121.
[37] Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, p. 113.

distinction of time and timelessness in depth, showing that time has played a central role in defining civilised and primitive identities in anthropological writing. According to Fabian, the identification of the other is a political act. Fabian writes that anthropology contributed to the

> intellectual justification of the colonial enterprise. It gave to politics and economics – both concerned with human Time – a firm belief in 'natural,' i.e. evolutionary, Time. It promoted a scheme in terms which not only past cultures, but all living societies were irrevocably placed on a temporal slope, a stream of Time – some upstream, others downstream.[38]

'Primitive,' according to Fabian is 'essentially a temporal concept, a category, not an object, of Western thought.'[39]

National Geographic Magazine often exploited this temporal division to full extent, aligning non-western societies with a pre-contact ideal of a timeless indigenous society. Lutz and Collins discuss the history of the magazine, and in particular how it shaped Anglo-American ideas of non-Western peoples and societies. In this study, Collins and Lutz pay particular attention to visual images, examining how they are structured to evoke certain responses and contain certain ideas of otherness. By taking a wide sample of *National Geographic* photographs of the non-Western world since the magazine's creation in 1888, they write, 'in nearly a third of all photos, the non-Westerner is presented against a background that gives no evidence of social context.' Drawing from work by MacFarlane, they contend, 'such images can stand in for people's imaginings of the 'natural man', evoking a nostalgia for an imagined condition of

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[38] Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1983), p.17.
[39] Fabian, *Time and the Other*, p.18.

humanity before the industrial revolution and environmental degradation broke the link between humans and nature.'[40]

Rock's portrayal of time in Southwest China conforms to familiar colonialist notions that 'native people' live outside the confines of history. Romantic ideas of isolation simplify the complex history of the region, and downplay the people's ability to improvise in new circumstances, and interact with other ethnic communities. At one point, Rock meets with a group of Lamas at Labrang, and finds that while they have acquired the technology to tell time, they are still unable or unwilling to use the clocks properly. Rock describes a meeting with a local Buddhist monk:

> His reception was a curiosity. From floor to ceiling, clocks and watches of every description and size were ticking away, each keeping its own time regardless of the actual hour. Clocks stuck at various intervals – some in unison, others in quick succession. An old-style Swiss cuckoo added its raucous squawks to the chronometric cacophony.[41]

The asynchronous clocks, each running in their own eccentric course, can be understood metaphorically for the lack of order in the society itself: the people are not only out of synch temporally, but culturally and historically. The image of asynchronous mechanical time can be viewed as what Fabian calls a temporal distancing device. This is not to question the relativity of time in any philosophical sense, but rather to emphasise that time is socially mediated in terms of standardisation and historical processes of mechanisation. According to Fabian, the Western clock epitomises such a distancing device: 'In most ethnographic studies of other time conceptions the difference between standardised clock time and other methods of measuring provides a puzzle to be

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[40] Lutz and Collins, *Reading National Geographic*, p. 110. See also Alan Macfarlane, *The Culture of Capitalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987).
[41] Rock, 'Seeing the Mountain of Mystery', p. 159.

resolved.'[42] The image of the asynchronous clocks therefore defines Fabian's notion of distancing, and in particular, his argument that such temporal distancing amounts to a 'denial of coevalness', which he defines as 'a persistent and systematic tendency to place the referent(s) of anthropology in a Time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse.'[43]

One must keep in mind that modern standardised clock time was a relatively new invention in Europe and America. It was not until the 1840s that Greenwich Mean Time was adopted in Great Britain, and then it was only primarily used for railroads and maritime travel. As E.P. Thomspon and others have shown, contested ideas of time during the late nineteenth century, and in particular the invention of 'factory owner's time', was formative in developing and maintaining a modern working class in Britain. A number of novels from the period, including Thomas Hardy's *Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), register such shifts in temporality and their effects on labour. The ability and willingness to tell time according to a clock, therefore, would be an essential requirement of a modern citizen in an advanced capitalistic society.

Such structured notions of time would have certainly had a resonance in America during the formative years of the 1920s and 30s, as would inverse portrayals of timelessness. In Rock's articles, people who do not follow the clock are described in terms of their childlike simplicity. After describing the room with many clocks, Rock goes on to recount his interview with the King of Muli. Here Rock describes the King's curiosity about current global events and about some pictures he had earlier acquired:

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[42] Fabian, *Time and the Other*, p.29.
[43] Fabian, *Time and the Other*, p.31.

> The full measure of his knowledge of the outside world was shown when he asked me to explain another colored print which his secretary brought in. It was a scene out of 'Puss in Boots,' in which a few donkeys fully dressed were walking erect as mourners behind a cat's coffin carried by four rabbits (Do not ask me how that juvenile work of art ever reached that remote nook of the world.) In all seriousness he asked me in what country that might be. I laughed and told him it was a picture out of a children's story book; whereupon he gravely nodded and began inquiring about airplanes![44]

Rock later meets with the Abbot of Labrang, a lamasery in Gansu, and he describes the Abbot as being completely ignorant of the outside world: 'his simplicity and child-like credulity were astounding.'[45] Such representations of the timelessness and childlike ignorance of non-western societies could function as just another way by which indigenous people could be distanced and placed in a subservient position. At the same time, such descriptions could offer middle-class America another way to reinforce its faith in its own 'evolved' civilisation.

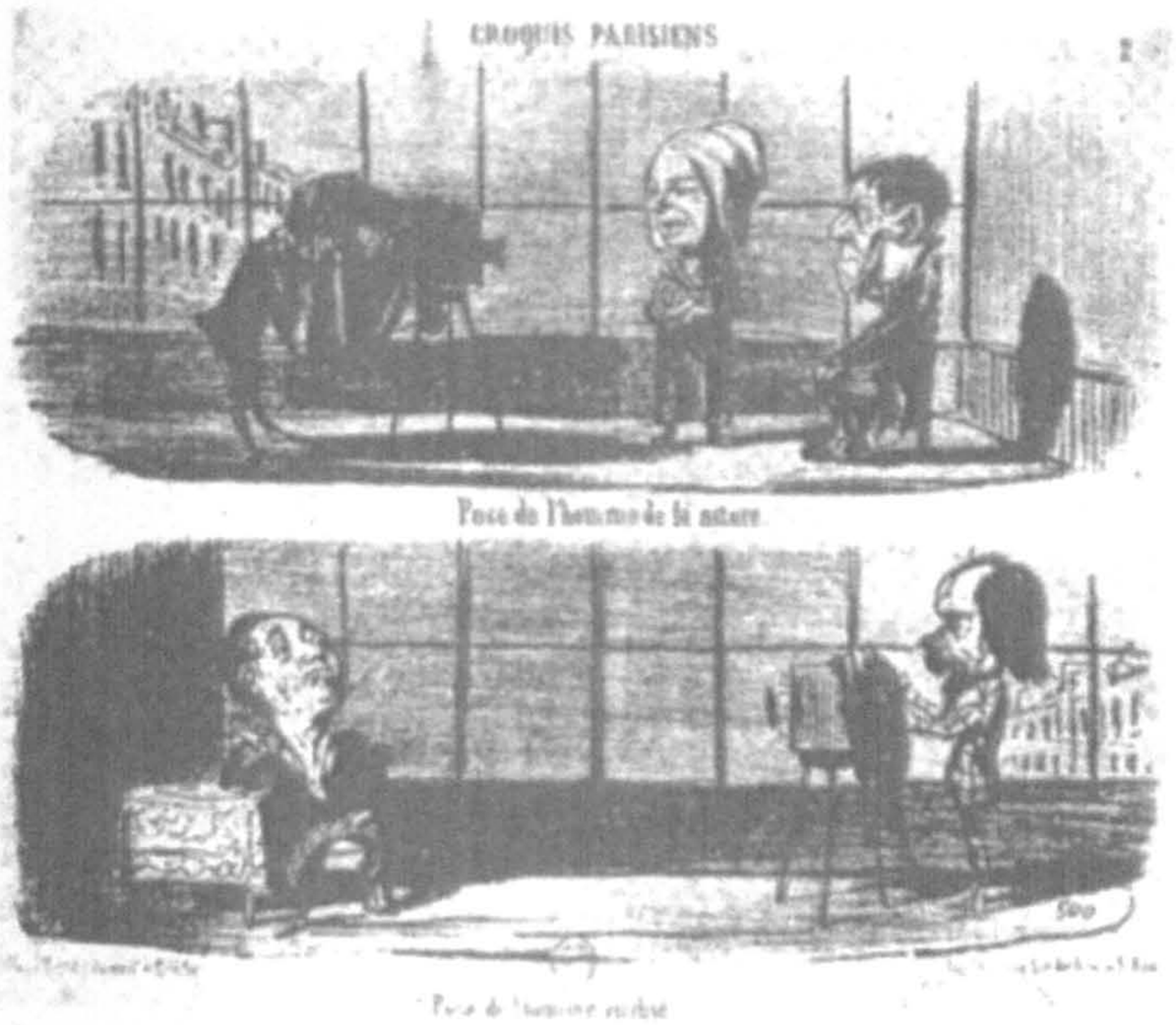
National Geographic and Joseph Rock's Photography

Photographs of native people in their 'natural' setting could offer 'proof' of such distinctions of civilised and primitive societies, while at the same time they could also provide a sense of distancing and disconnectedness. By creating an idealised 'bubble' that is geographically and temporally isolated, and therefore separated from history, the reader's responsibility or implication in the history of colonial contact is muted. Lutz and Collins write:

> An ideal world, free from suffering, does not require work to bring about change. Connectedness and responsibility are downplayed, as the world's peoples become

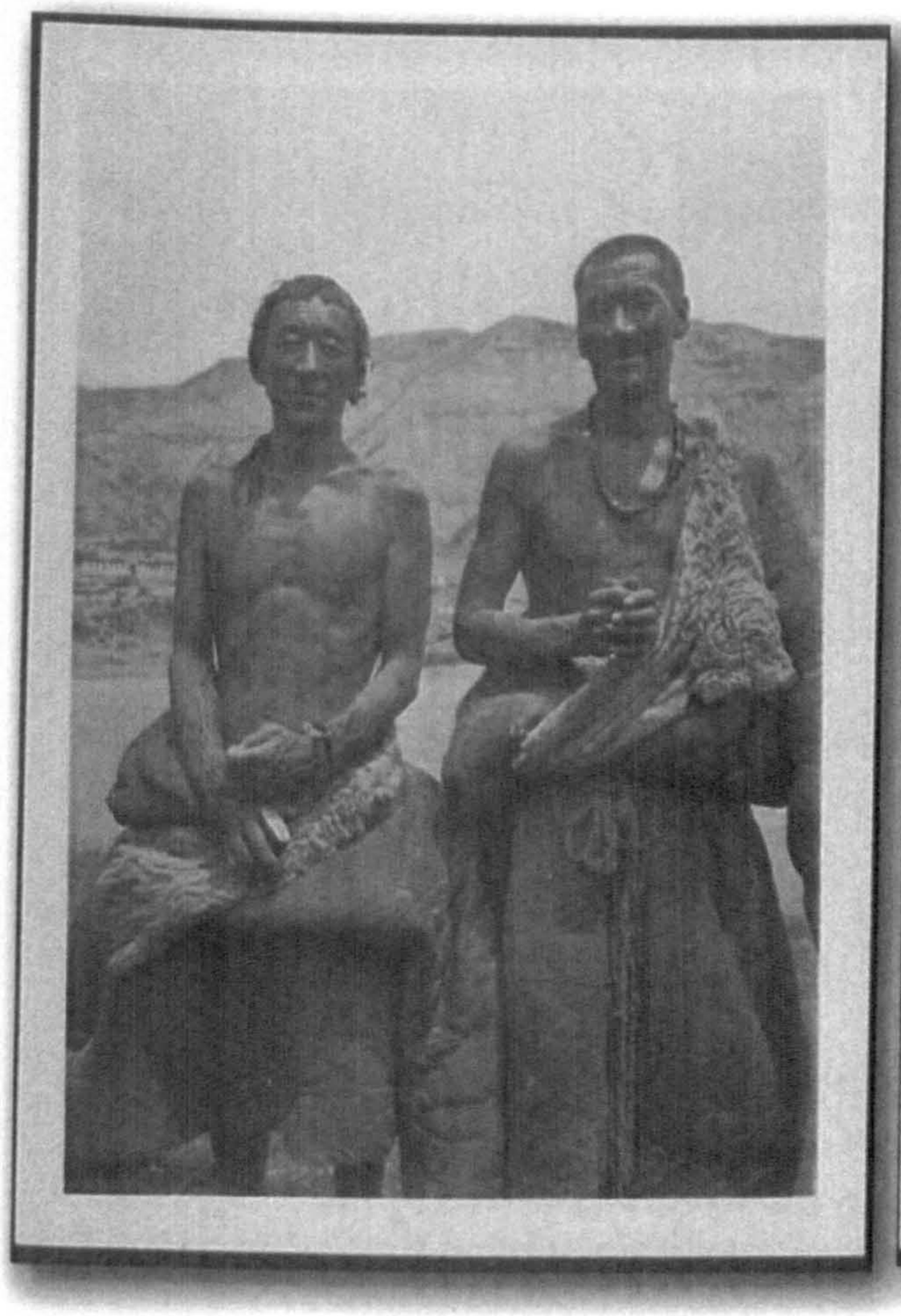
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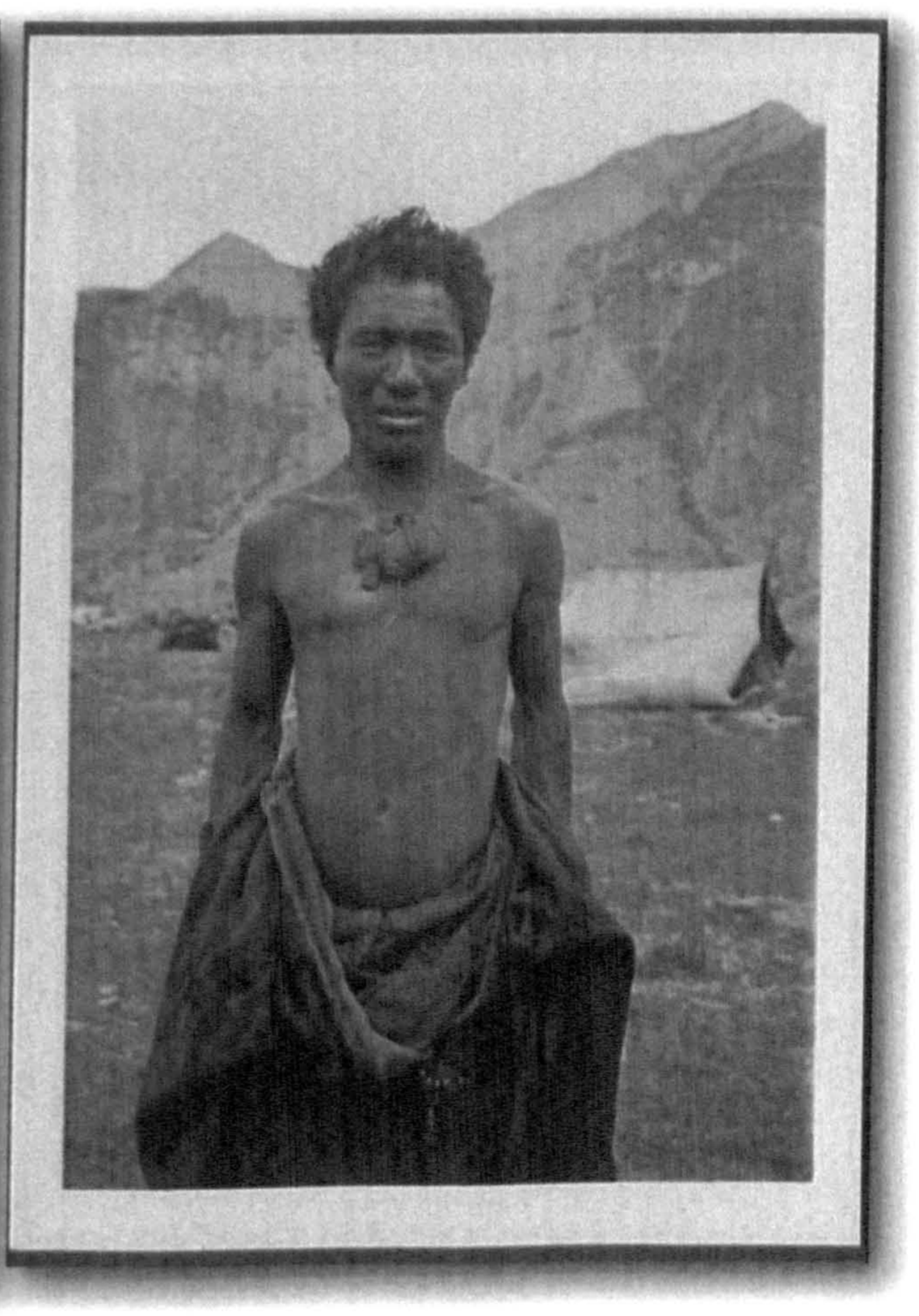
[44] Rock, 'Konka Risumgongba, Holy Mountain of the Outlaws', p. 13.
[45] Rock, 'Seeing the Mountain of Mystery', p. 146.



(*left*) A gaze toward the viewer, in *National Geographic*'s photographs, appears to represent the inaccessibility of the photographic subject. Historically, frontal portraits have been associated with low class status, as suggested by this 1853 Daumier print, 'Pose de l'homme de la nature' and 'Posede 'homme civilisé. From Lutz and Collins, *Reading National Geographic*, p. 135.

(*below*) Joseph Rock photographs of Tibetan nomads. A frontal portrait suggests as a lower social caste. The man on the bottom right displays scars from indigenous medical treatment.





> aesthetic objects to appreciate. The act of appreciating them lets the viewer see himself or herself as both humane … and as cultured.[46]

The subject of the photograph, therefore, becomes an object of aesthetic interest, which affects the ways in which the viewer may judge the relative civilisation of the people depicted.

'Primitive' people, in *National Geographic*, are often shown to be involved in rituals, which renders them as exciting and aesthetically pleasing objects. Lutz and Collins have observed that in 'nearly one-fifth of all the photographs with non-Westerners in them feature people engaged in or preparing for some kind of ritual.'[47] Similarly, exotic dress is another common feature that aligns the native with a disconnected and more 'beautiful' past:

> Exotic dress alone often stands for an entire alien life-style, locale, or mind-set … local costume suggests something about the social stability and timelessness of the people depicted.[48]

The use of colour enhances the exotic effect of ritual and dress. They write:

> The eye of *National Geographic*, like the eye of anthropology, looks for cultural difference. It is continually drawn to people in brightly colored, 'different' dress, engaged in initially strange-seeming rituals or inexplicable behavior. This exoticism involves the creation of an other who is strange but – at least as important – beautiful.[49]

Such beautiful and exotic spectacles discredit 'the significance of the foreign' even creating 'a sense of its fictiousness'.[50] Thus the exotic image demands attention, but

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[46] Lutz and Collins, *Reading National Geographic*, p.95.
[47] Lutz and Collins, *Reading National Geographic*, p.90.
[48] Lutz and Collins, *Reading National Geographic*, p.92.
[49] Lutz and Collins, *Reading National Geographic*, pp. 89-90.
[50] Lutz and Collins, *Reading National Geographic*, p. 90.

'offers an imagistic surface of the world as a strategy of containment against any depth of involvement with that world.'[51]

The idea of a viewer detached from any sense of responsibility can also be seen in Rock's portrait photographs. Many of Rock's subjects directly face the camera and are often smiling. Lutz and Collins comment on how this smiling subject is typical of twentieth-century *National Geographic* photographs. They remark that 'twenty percent of all pictures have at least one foreground figure looking at the camera, and almost one-third of all photos [of non-Western subjects] show one or more people smiling.'[52] This smile once again disavows the viewer of any responsibility by projecting the ideal of a happy life.

The portraits are of further interest as they often show the subject gazing directly at the camera. This return gaze can be interpreted in different ways. The gaze of the other back at the photographer can be viewed as a challenge in some ways, or as a reversal of what has been called the colonial gaze. However in another sense, looking directly into the camera can be viewed as reflecting a weaker social status. Lutz and Collins explain that in traditional European portraiture a well-bred person of importance would look away from the camera, implying that the subject has something more important to do or something more important to think about. They write: 'To face the camera is to permit close examination of the photographed subject, including scrutiny of the face and eyes, which in common-sense parlance is the seat of the soul – feelings, personality, or

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[51] Dana B. Polan, *Power and Paranoia: History, Narrative, and the American Cinema, 1940-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p.63. qtd. in Lutz and Collins, *Reading National Geographic*, p. 90.
[52] Lutz and Collins, *Reading National Geographic*, p. 96.

character.'[53] They remark that of all the photographs of non-western people, nine percent are portraits, making the case that in *National Geographic* 'the portrait allows for scrutiny of the person, the search for a depiction of character.'[54] Therefore, they conclude, the gaze into the camera reflects a power relation between the home viewer and the imperial subject:

> To a statistically significant degree, women look into the camera more than men, children and older people more often that other adults, those who appear poor more than those who appear wealthy, those whose skin is dark more than those who are bronze, those who are bronze more than those that are white, those in native dress more than those in Western garb, those without any tools more than those who are using machinery. Those who are culturally defined as weak – women, children, people of color, the poor, the tribal rather than the modern, those without technology – are more likely to face the camera, the more powerful to be looking elsewhere.[55]

Rock's images of primitivism in China and Tibet confirm many of the findings of Lutz and Collins. Many of the nomads are 'laid bare' or exposed in some way, inviting a kind of voyeuristic scrutiny of the subject's body. The image entitled, "The Living Buddha of Dzangar Monastary is Eighty-One Years Old" is centred on an elderly man with a young boy by his side. The caption reads,

> Seated before his Mongol tent, the Buddha is attended by two monks and a boy Buddha. He is garbed in red and yellow and wears a mitre on his head.[56]

This carefully composed image juxtaposes age; the old man and the boy look into the camera with blank expressions, inviting the idea that they hold some holy or sacred knowledge. They appear not as real people, but as characters in an exotic drama, perhaps symbolising the contrasting and infinite ideals of wisdom and innocence. The notion of

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[53] Lutz and Collins, *Reading National Geographic*, p. 199.
[54] Lutz and Collins, *Reading National Geographic*, p. 97.
[55] Lutz and Collins, *Reading National Geographic*, p. 199.
[56] Rock, 'Seeing the Mountain of Mystery', p.141.

longevity is also clearly at work here, almost to suggest that this eighty-one year old living Buddha could live for another eighty-one years. The 'mystical' quality of the photograph invites such imaginative speculation.

Rock's Later Work: Ezra Pound and Ethnographic Surrealism

While Rock's photographs and articles in *National Geographic Magazine* support Lutz and Collins' discussion of the ideological underpinnings of the magazine in the context of twentieth-century American culture, many of Rock's other writings and photographs need to be viewed in a different critical light. According to S.B. Sutton, Rock depended on the articles for financial support: 'Unfortunately, whereas exploring paid handsomely, his obscure scholarship paid nothing, and he had to draw on the proceeds of the former to support the latter.' Sutton goes on to describe how Rock's articles were transformed by the editors of National Geographic, 'translated from his tortured syntax into National Geographic-ese, eliminating a good deal of the scholarly content in the process.'[57] Rock's later ethnography can be read as a reaction to his earlier work, sharply contrasting his more popular journalistic writing.

Rock's most definitive scholarly work was his two-volume *The Ancient Na-Khi Kingdom of Southwest China* (1947). In this study, Rock describes the history of the Naxi

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[57] S.B. Sutton, 'Joseph Rock: Restless Spirit', in Michael Aris, Patrick R. Booz, and S. B. Sutton, eds., *Lamas, Princes, and Brigands: Joseph Rock's Photographs of the Tibet Borderlands of China.* (New York City: China Institute in America, 1992), pp. 22-27 (p. 25).

people of Southwest, emphasising their unique and independent status within China.[58] In terms of language, Rock made connections between Naxi and Tibetan, and similarly shows how Naxi spiritual beliefs had roots in ancient Tibetan pre-Buddhist Bön practices. As these religious practices no longer existed in Tibet in any 'pure form', Rock's study of the Naxi offered insights into the old Bön cult practices, as well as the development of northern Buddhism. Although his ethnographic and linguistic work occupies a highly specialised niche, Rock is regarded as the founder of Dongba studies and his writing on the Naxi is still referred to in anthropological work on China's Southwest.

Despite its scholarly influence, Rock's *The Ancient Na-Khi Kingdom* is no way accessible to a general reader, and a quick scan of the pages would surely deter any layperson. The Contents page lists topics such as 'Colophon and Notes to the Genealogical Records of Na-Khi Kings' or 'Family Chronicles of the Yung-Ning T'u-ssu'. The 'Notes on the Pronunciation of Na-Khi words' may be linguistically precise but is no less accessible: 'gh // voiced uvular (or pharyngeal) frictive, like Fr. R *grasseyé* or

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[58] The Naxi people are not currently recognised as an official minority group by Chinese government. Instead, despite significant linguistic and cultural differences, they are grouped with the Muoso. There are currently 286,000 Naxi living in the southwest of China, most of them in Yunnan province. The town of Lijiang is the Naxi cultural capital. Ethnically, the Naxi descend from Tibetan Qiang tribe. Today, the Naxi are particularly well known for their unique pictographic language, music and the matriarchal structure of their family organisation. Traditionally, the Naxi have used three written scripts: a pictographic language known as Dongba script, a phonetic language that more fully expresses the Naxi language, and official Mandarin Chinese. It is uncertain when the Dongba script was developed, but research has show that it became particularly well-used during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as the opium trade flourished and Yunnan became more prosperous and increasingly more connected with the rest of China. Technically, Dongba script does not meet all the criteria defining a writing system, and its use is limited to mostly religious purposes. The most famous Naxi text is the Dongba classic *Creation*, which Rock translated into English. More on the Naxi and Dongba script can be found in Anthony Jackson's *Na-khi Religion: An Analytical Appraisal of the Na-khi Ritual Texts* (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1979).

the Arabic *ghain*' or 'wua – special syllable, with prominence on "u" and value of "a" centralized.'[59] The multi-lingual nature of the work is also daunting – although *The Ancient Na-Khi Kingdom* is written in English, most people and place names are also written in Chinese, Naxi phonetic script or occasionally in Tibetan. A large part of the first volume is composed of Naxi pictographs, which are translated into both Chinese and English.

Rock's ethnographic work is rigorously documented, and the footnotes often occupy more space on the page than the main text. The two volumes of *The Ancient Na-Khi Kingdom* contains 256 plates, offering a range of visual material including ancient scroll inscriptions, photographs of landscapes, shrines, statues, ancestral portraits, temples, pagodas, and numerous photographs of Han Chinese, Naxi and other minority people. In his preface, Rock describes his book as the result of years of amassing primary material: 'I spent the major part of my savings collecting, first of all, the Chinese literature on West China and eastern Tibet, and second, all publications in European languages pertaining to this area' (*ANK* v. I, p. vii). This burgeoning collection, he continues, consisted of various topographies from all the eighteen provinces of China, a complete collection of rare local gazetteers published by Chinese authorities, transcriptions of important stelae, photographs of genealogical records of tribal chiefs, precious manuscripts, heirlooms dating back to the Tang and Sung dynasties, and over four thousand Naxi pictographic manuscripts.

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[59] Joseph Rock, *The Ancient Na-Khi Kingdom of Southwest China* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1947), p. x. Further references to this work will be abbreviated *ANK* with page references given parenthetically in the text.

Reviews of Rock's ethnological work were generally favourable, but often express dismay at the abundance of primary source material or the specialised, abstruse nature of the work. S.B. Sutton, a reviewer of Rock's Naxi dictionary clearly admired Rock's scholarship, but also confessed to the difficulty of reviewing such a work: 'I cannot testify to the accuracy of any of Rock's interpretations, translations, or phonetics except, perhaps, by analogy with his work in taxonomic botany which is highly regarded among professionals; clearly he was capable of exacting, thorough scholarship.'[60] Another review in the *Geographical Journal* similarly praises Rock's thorough scholarship, but then questions the book's organisation:

> One highly interesting and, possibly, ethnographically important paragraph on the moral customs of the tribe principally in question has mention in an extensive meticulous index under one head only, and … not where it will be most naturally sought.[61]

In his review of *The Ancient Na-Khi Kingdom,* George Sarton also admires Rock's painstaking work, but then states: 'The present volume does not contain much of direct interest to historians of science (except a few references to medical plants).' For Sarton, the value of Rock's work is in terms of its contribution to Sinology, a field that he feels unqualified to comment on: 'A critical discussion of the present volumes and an appraisal of Dr Rock's contribution to Chinese historiography is a task which must be left to Sinologists. '[62]

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[60] S.B. Sutton, 'Reviewed Work of "A Na-Khi-English Encyclopedic Dictionary" by Joseph F. Rock', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 33 (1973), 277-282 (p. 280).
[61] R.A.D.F, rev. of *The Ancient Na-Khi Kingdom of Southwest China* by Joseph F. Rock, *The Geographical Journal* 114, 1 (1949), 87-8 (p. 88).
[62] George Sarton, rev. of *A Na-Khi-English Encyclopedic Dictionary* by Joseph F. Rock, *Isis* 40, 1 (1949), 72-3 (p. 72).

The Sinologists, it appears, were not particularly taken with Rock's work. A review in the *Far Eastern Quarterly* is much less forgiving than other reviews. Here, Rock's lack of academic objectivity is at issue, and in particular, his pervasive slippage into travel writing:

> This does not mean, however, that the book can be read purely as a travel account. Anyone attempting to read it for pleasure will almost immediately become bogged down in long digressions, countless repetitions of details, and pedantic explanations of the same facts, among which the personal narrative is all but lost. Then again, the personal impressions will suddenly intrude most inappropriately in discussions of geographical features or historical records, in a way that will disconcert the specialist. The present reviewer must confess that if his own travels had not happened to have taken him to many of the places described by Dr. Rock, from Kunming to the great bend of the Yangtze beyond Likiang (Li-chiang), he would have had a great difficulty in getting very far into the first volume.

The reviewer then continues with a resounding criticism: 'The book seems to be a kind of catchall, as though it had been composed from random travel notes, bits of observation and careful research, hearsay, and translated material from Chinese and French, often not too well organized.'[63]

Today, Rock's work continues to elicit interest, bewilderment, and criticism. Michael Aris describes Rock's attempt to make links between Naxi spirituality and the Bön religion as 'muddled and unproven'.[64] Furthermore, according to Aris, although Rock had many boasts, 'he never included among these any real expertise in Tibetan manners, despite many years he spent on the borderlands; he seems always to have depended on translators and interpreters who knew Tibetan.' Aris continues to describe

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[63] Schuyler Cammann, rev. of *The Ancient Na-khi Kingdom of Southwest China* by Joseph F. Rock, *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 9, 4 (1950), 399-402 (p. 400).
[64] Michael Aris, 'The Tibetan Borderlands', in Michael Aris, Patrick R. Booz, and S. B. Sutton, eds., *Lamas, Princes, and Brigands: Joseph Rock's Photographs of the Tibet Borderlands of China* (New York City: China Institute in America, 1992), pp. 13-8, (p.18 note).

how Rock's articles were often 'overshadowed by constant claims to be the first, heavy value judgments, and a preoccupation with morbidity.' 'There seems to have been a perpetual tension,' Aris writes, 'between the need for scholarly recognition and popular acclaim, and his efforts were uneasily split between attaining both at the same time.'[65] Similar to other reviewers, Aris describes Rock's true talent in his identification and collection of plants, as well as his decipherment of Naxi pictographs, his photography, and his compilation of maps. Aris concludes: 'When we take into account his pioneering achievement in these areas, won in the face of endless encounters with bandits and warlords, it seems churlish to belittle the opportunities he lost in other areas.'[66]

While some readers may have disparaged Rock's disorganisation, lack of scholarly rigour, and subjective mingling of travel experiences with serious ethnographic observation, others clearly found inspiration in Rock's writings on the Naxi. Ezra Pound was an admirer of Rock's work, and the last sections of *The Cantos* contain numerous references to Rock and the Naxi people. The influence of Rock's work on *The Cantos* is well documented: It is said that while Pound was a patient at St. Elizabeth's mental asylum, and while he wrote the later sections of *The Cantos*, he had a copy of Rock's *The Ancient Na-khi Kingdom* as well as other ethnographic work on the Naxi. Pound is also said to have had some of Rock's Naxi pictographs on his walls.[67]

There are a number of reasons why Pound may have been so interested in Rock's writings. Although it is not the aim of this study to provide an in-depth analysis of Pound's poetic motivations or the importance of Rock's work to *The Cantos*, it is

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[65] Aris, 'The Tibetan Borderlands', p. 14.
[66] Aris, 'The Tibetan Borderlands', p. 15.
[67] See Carroll F. Terrell, 'The Na-Khi Documents I', *Paideuma*, 3 (1974) 91-122 (p. 94).

nevertheless important to consider some of the ways in which both Rock and Pound had similar aesthetic, stylistic, and linguistic interests. Rather than read Rock as one of many footnotes to Pound's poetry (as he has been most often discussed), we can consider both Rock and Pound as writing about China in a similarly disruptive and aesthetically challenging way. Modernism drew creative energy from the writings of exiled and eccentric figures such as Joseph Rock; at the same time, travel writers such as Rock drew from imaginative literature, as a way to work through problems of cross-cultural representation in the context of China.

Perhaps the most obvious parallel between Pound and Rock is on a purely visual level, as both of these writers were interested in the typographical nature of the Chinese language. In the preface to *The Ancient Na-Khi Kingdom* Rock describes his early interest in Chinese:

> My predilection for Chinese characters made me begin the study of the Chinese written language at the age of 15. It created a desire in me to explore the hinterland of China and to learn to know its history and geography first hand. It caused me to study the ancient Na-khi language, now no more in use, but preserved in the pictographic literature, which has at last given up its secrets … In the pages of this work, I describe the Na-khi region as it passed before my eyes: a wealth of scenic beauty, marvellous forest, flowers and friendly tribes. Those years of travel and the fellowship of the tribal people who accompanied me on my many journeys will remain forever among the happiest memories of my life. (*ANK* v. I, p. viii)

There is a sense of mystery and transience that is reminiscent of his earlier journalistic writing in this passage. The idyllic description, with its 'friendly tribes' and beautiful scenery might also remind us of Kingdon-Ward's descriptions of the region, betraying familiar tropes of Romantic abandon.

However, Rock's ethnographic work is clearly modernist in other ways, his multi-lingual writings in some ways resembling Dadaist poetry. Take, for example, the following passage:

> *San-pi-wai-lung Shan* 珊碧外龍山 is the famous Wen-pi Shan 文筆山, a triangular peak 15 li west of Li-chiang. It is the Sä-pbi zhěr nv-lv of the Na-khi. The mountain is well known to the Tibetans, who call it zhi-dag mug-po written gzhi-bdag-smug-po [in Na-khi Shi-zhi muan-bbu]; (in Tibetan classic of the mountain god Dra-lha] the mountain is called Jang-ri-mug-po [ljang-ri-smug-po {Tibetan Script here}], *i.e*, the purple mountain of Jang = Mo-so; another Na-khi name for it is Sä-bpi a-na Ngyu. (*ANK* v.1, p. 184-5)

Given the multiethnic nature of the region, such linguistic precision is justifiable; but in another way, Rock's descriptions might resemble the extreme end of modernist experimental writing, something akin to Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* (1939). There may also be a kind of ironic humour lurking beneath these opaque passages. Botanical descriptions make Rock's writing even more specialised and inscrutable to most readers:

> The trail ascends steeply – the hill-side being covered with magnolias, Michelias, *Castanopis Delavayi, Ketteleria Davidiana*, pines, Pyrus or wild pears, oaks, ect. – to a pass at 6,500 feet and descends to the village of Meng-ch'i-p'u 蒙七鋪. (*ANK* v. I, p. 18)

Rock's use of Chinese, Tibetan, Romanised script and the Latin botanical terms eliminate the possibility of inconsistency or error, yet there is also perhaps a sense of pleasure in using the Chinese characters and various orthographic obscurities for their typographical effect. Take, for example, the beginning of the first chapter:

> Yün-nan 雲南 (South of the clouds) is the second largest province of China and is situated in the extreme south-west of that vast country … In the north it borders on Ssi-ch'uan 四川 and His-k'ang 西康, in the west on His-tsang 西藏 (Tibet) and Mien-tien 緬甸 (Burma). (*ANK* v. I, p. 3)

These are familiar places that do not need to be clarified in order to provide geographical precision, but the characters are used nonetheless.

Pound was clearly attracted to the figure of the Sinologist/expatriate/exile, and in some ways Rock functions as another Fenollosa, who earlier influenced Pound. As I have already discussed in my chapter on Reginald Farrer, Pound's early interest in Fenollosa's writing on Chinese characters played an important part in his poetic expression and emerging ideas of imagism. Pound and other modernists looked to Chinese characters, along with poetry from the Far East (the Japanese haiku being particularly influential) in order to better express the visual, clean simplicity of a word or idea in a way that western alphabetic languages could not.

Pound's interest in Chinese shows how modernist writers and artists looked beyond Europe for new inspiration. Consider the following passage from canto 110 which resonates with a modernist poetic sensibility:

> 止 chih [3]
> and there is no *chih* and no root.
> Bunting and Upward neglected,
> all the registers blackened out,
> From time's wreckage shored,
> these fragments shored against ruin,
> and the sun 日 jih [4.5]
> new with the day.
> Mr Rock still hopes to climb at Mount Kinabalu
> His fragments sunk (20 years)
> 13,455 ft. facing Jesselton, Borneo.[68]

In *The Cantos*, the Chinese characters are arresting and disruptive, challenging conventional reading practices. The use of Chinese and other typographical experimentation is reminiscent of Pound and Wyndham Lewis's earlier 'vorticist' aesthetic theories, which found expression in their journal *Blast*. Although *Blast* was a

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[68] Ezra Pound, *The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (New York: New Directions Books, 1996), p. 801. Further references to this work will be abbreviated *Cantos* with page references and canto number (when not stated elsewhere) given parenthetically in the text.

relatively short-lived project, it was an important development in modernist expression. In the above passage, the character 止 (*zhi*) is used, which means 'stop' – signifying, perhaps, the poem's defamiliarising and arresting effects. Elsewhere in the canto, Pound uses the character 新 (*xin*) twice – meaning 'new', suggestively evoking the modernist mantra 'make it new'. The above use of 日 (*ri*), which means 'day' or 'sun', can also be interpreted as another modernist image; on the use of this character, Fred Moramarco writes: 'To counter destruction, man must renew himself each day, or begin anew each day.'[69]

Pound's interest in fragments here may have some connection with Rock's botanical samples and ethnographic materials that were lost in the Japanese submarine attack; perhaps the '20 years' suggests the amount of time that Rock had spent collecting his materials. But the fragments have a larger significance to modernist writing, as Pound evokes Eliot's view in the *Waste Land* that art needs to 'shore fragments' against the ruin of time. It is further significant that the last cantos are called 'The Drafts and Fragments'— drawing attention to the fugitive, transitory, and 'incomplete' nature of Pound's poetic vision. In *The Cantos* one finds not a steady progression of ideas but a constant and disruptive flow of particulars and half-formed images.

Pound's interest in Rock's work suggests an involvement between the discourses of ethnography, natural scientific exploration, China, and high art during the mid-twentieth century. In *The Predicament of Culture* (1988), Clifford provides a suggestive analysis of how ethnography and surrealism developed during the twentieth century in

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[69] Fred Moramarco, 'Concluding an Epic: The Drafts and Fragments of the Cantos'. *American Literature* 49, 3 (1977) 309-26 (p. 313).

'close proximity'.[70] He defines surrealism as 'an aesthetic that values fragments, curious collections, unexpected juxtapositions – that works to provoke the manifestation of extraordinary realities drawn from the domains of the erotic, the exotic, and the unconscious.' According to Clifford, this surrealist aesthetic was prevalent in twentieth-century ethnographic writing, as shifting global identities challenged the stable basis for ethnographic observation. Such observation, according to Clifford, could 'no longer presuppose continuous culture or traditions.' 'Everywhere,' Clifford continues, 'individuals improvise local performances from (re)collected pasts, drawing from foreign media, symbols, and languages.'[71]

In an increasing globalised cultural context, Clifford suggests that 'Reality is no longer a given, a natural, familiar environment.' Instead, he writes that '[t]he self, cut loose from its attachments, must discover meaning where it may – a predicament, evoked at its most nihilistic, that underlies both surrealism and modern ethnography.'[72] Rock's writing on the Naxi can be viewed in terms of such a 'predicament' as his reliance on travel writing reveals a self-conscious and subjective experience, rather than a detached and objective ordering of facts. The first chapter of *The Ancient Na-Khi Kingdom* begins more like a travel book than a work of ethnography:

> Although no one will ever use the old caravan route road to Ta-li except muleteers – and these for only a few years more – as a motor-road has been built to Ta-li and its extension to Li-chiang is almost completed, I have thought it wise to give this descriptions to the old caravan road as a matter of historic interest. (*ANK* v. I, p. 11)

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[70] James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (London: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 118.
[71] Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, p. 14.
[72] Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, p. 119.



(*above*) An unpublished photograph by Joseph Rock. Although the primary function of this image is ornithological, the people in the frame are carefully composed. The figure in the centre is particularly challenging.

(*left*) A page from Rock's *Ancient Nahki Kingdom*. The figures are Naxi pictographs, some of which reappear in Ezra Pound's *The Cantos*.

first character *ngai* has thus been used to indicate that the word is to be read *ssä*. This is, of course, only intelligible to those Na-khi who understand Chinese. These often write letters in the Na-khi language, but using Chinese characters to transcribe their sound complexes, the method employed being similar to that of transcribing these names.

This particular generation, Ts'u-dgyu Dgyu-dze, is strangely missing in all Na-khi manuscripts dealing with their ancestors, and nowhere does the name appear except in the genealogy, written in Chinese.

Fifth. — Chiao-hsien Pi-hsien 交蔑比蔑; Na-khi: Dgyu-dze Dzi-dze. In the manuscripts the name appears thus:



Kgyü (*dgyu*) is a donkey, *zä* a spirit, *dzi* a jackal, the third symbol again the winged spirit *zä*. In the spoken language a jackal is called *p'a*, but in the literary language it is called *dzi*. The symbol also stands for "man," or better, "people," that is, peasants not of the descent of Ts'o, which is "man" written with an elephant's head. In most cases the word *dzi* is employed for non-Na-khi people.

Chiao-hsien Pi-hsien married the celestial woman, K'uan-tu-mu-shu 寬都木書; Na-khi: K'wua-dtu-mbĕr-ssu. Her name is written in the books thus:



The first symbol *k'wua* is a hoof; *dtu* is the symbol for the numeral 1,000; *mbĕr* is a yak; and the last symbol is read *ssu* and represents a die.

Sixth. — Pi-hsien Ts'ao-hsien 比蔑草蔑; Na-khi: Dzi-dze Ts'o-dze. All these characters serve as phonetics only. Written in Na-khi thus:



The first part of the name is taken from the previous rubric giving the name of his father, the second half, his own name, is represented by *ts'o*, a conventional elephant's head which when thus written stands for Ts'o-dze Llü-ghügh, whom the Na-khi consider their foremost ancestor. On the top of the head is a *no-bu* (pearl), to indicate the ancestry of Ts'o-dze Llü-ghügh. He had a common origin with the *llü-mun* (serpent spirits), which carry a pearl on their heads — they had the same father, but different mothers.[1] The symbol is that of a *llü-mun* (serpent spirit). Note the headdress representing a *no-bu* (pearl).



[1] In a manuscript entitled *K'ö-ddu-gv-lĕr-mä* belonging to the *Ssu-gv* ceremony (propitiation of the serpents), we are told that the Llü-mun (Nāga) and the Na-khi had a common father, but that the mother of the Llü-mun was called K'ö-ddu-gv-ssu-mä and the mother of the Na-khi K'ö-ddu-gv-lĕr mä. The name of the father is not given.

What follows is a long description of the seventeen-stage journey, replete with geographical, ethnographic and botanical descriptions. The awareness of the modern technology of the motor road challenges traditional routes and a coherent sense of separate and identifiable cultural identities. Clifford writes: 'Intervening in an interconnected world, one is always, to varying degrees, "inauthentic": caught between cultures, implicated in others.'[73]

In *The Cantos*, Pound also appears to have been interested in travel themes, and the cultural complications that they can create. In canto 101, Pound does not explicitly refer to Rock, but he evokes Yunnan history and geography:

> Finding scarcely anyone save Monsieur de Rémusat
> who could understand him
> (junipers, south side) M. Tallyrand
> spruce and fir take the North
> Chalais, Aubeterre,
> snow-flakes at a hand's breadth, and rain.
> Trees line the banks, mostly willows. Kublai,
> Te Te of Ch'eng, called Timur, 1247, came hither
> Forest thru ice into emerald
> In 旦 Tan (dawn, that is)
> larix, corayana and berberis,
> after 2 stages A-tun-tzu
> a distance of one hundred *li*
> Pinus armadi,
> (*Cantos*, p. 743)

Carroll Terrell has identified references to Rock in this canto, drawing attention to the following passages in Rock's writing:[74]

> Junipers love southern, dry exposure where the snow melts quickly, while northern exposures are always occupied by spruces, firs and hemlocks, which like moisture. (*ANK* vol. I, p. 271)

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[73] Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, p. 11.

[74] See pages 106-9 in Carroll F. Terrell, 'The Na-Khi Documents I: The Landscape of Paradise', *Paideuma: A Journal Devoted to Ezra Pound Scholarship* 3 (1974), 91-122.

Snowflakes were as large as the palm of the hand. It rained from morning to night. (*ANK* vol. I, p. 281)

The tress along the bank are mostly willows. (*ANK* vol. II, pp. 298-9)

The vegetation here [A-tun-tzu] is composed mainly of junipers, larix, *Caragana jubata* . . . and berberis . . . . The trail descends at an easy grade leading first through forest of Abies, Larix, and Juniperus … this point is two stages from A-tun-tzu. (*ANK* vol. II, pp. 344-5)

Terrell's identification of specific passages from Rock reveals the extent to which Pound engaged with Rock's work; however, Terrell and other Pound critics fail to recognise the wider engagement with Rock and their shared ethnographic surrealist aesthetics. The passage from canto 101 continues with more Yunnan history and images of travel:

4 letters patent, 5 seals
after the 4th year of Yung-lo
12th May, 1406, and a gold belt
inlaid with flowers, pay for the troops holding
passes; rations, chair-coolies, horses.
(*Cantos*, p. 734)

William Cookson writes that this passage refers to the eighth generation Naxi king who received an Imperial reward for having urged the wild tribes to pay tribute to the Ming court in 1406.[75] This is an important historical detail, yet it misses an important point. Pound's *Cantos* like Rock's *Ancient Na-Khi Kingdom* uses travel 'inappropriately' to reveal a world in flux. More Chinese frontier travel images appear elsewhere in the canto:

you can enter it sideways only, TSO 笮 is here named
from the rope bridge, hemp rope? A reed rope? (*Cantos*, p. 745)

The character 笮 may be translated as 'cable'. However the radical at the top of the character indicates 'grass' or 'plant' which gives a sense of the word's etymology. It could be that the grass radical here prompts Pound to ask, 'hemp rope? A reed rope?' In

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[75] William Cookson, *A Guide to the Cantos of Ezra Pound* (London: Anvil Press Poetry, 2001), p. 240.

any case, Pound evokes the experience of travel in Yunnan by referring to the rope bridge.

It is of further interest that Pound was not simply interested in Chinese characters, but also their Romanised, phonetic equivalents – essentially, their linguistic nature. Throughout *The Cantos*, Romanised script is rendered alongside Chinese characters. By including Romanisation, language and meaning are shown to be mediated rather than fixed: the Arabic letters used to render Chinese sounds are artificial, invented by foreign linguists, and only of use to those who approach the language as outsiders. In Pound's poetry, Chinese is approached from the perspective of a foreign linguist. This interest in such linguistic metalanguage can be most strikingly seen in his rendering of Rock's phonetic script, which he invented for the Naxi language. Consider the following passage from canto 112:

Here from the beginning, we have been here
from the beginning
From her breath were the goddesses
^{2}La^{2}mu$\underline{n}$^{3}mi
If we did not perform ^{2}Ndaw ^{1}bpö
nothing is solid
without ^{2}Mùa$\underline{n}$ ^{1}bpö
no reality
Agility, that is from the juniper,
rice grows and the land is invisible
By the pomegranate water,
in the clear air
over Li Chiang
The firm voice amid pine wood,
many springs are at the foot of
Hsing Shan
By the temple pool, Lung Wang's
the clear discourse
as Jade stream
玉 Yü^{4}
河 Ho^{2}
Artemisia

Arundinaria
Winnowed in fate's tray
O neath
luna ☽
(*Cantos*, pp. 804-5)

Rock's ethnographic and linguistic work on the Naxi informs these lines. '^{2}La^{2}mun^{3}mi$^{2'}$ 'Ndaw ^{1}bpö', and '^{2}Mùan ^{1}bpö' are Naxi words rendered in the phonetic alphabet that Rock invented.[76] The Chinese characters are also accompanied by Romanisation (now outdated): Yü^{4} and Ho^{2} describe the correct pronunciation and tones for the Chinese words 'Jade' and 'River'. At the end of the passage, the symbols O and ☽ are from Naxi Dongba script and take linguistic representation to its extreme and most simplistic pictographic form.[77] The combined effect of such linguistic combinations creates a defamiliarising effect of sound and sight.

Notions of cultural fixedness are challenged throughout Pound's poetry and Rock's ethnography. *The Cantos* – with all of its Chinese linguistic, geographical, and historical references – can be read as an effort to unmoor the traditional foundations of western poetry and seek out new creative and imaginative energies; Rock's text similarly

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[76] ^{2}Mùan ^{1}bpö is a Naxi ceremony that can be translated as 'Worshipping Heaven' (See Rock *ANK* v.1, p.69).

[77] Daniel Perlman describes the meaning of these plants and symbols in Naxi society: 'Artermisia is a plant involved in the Na-Khi ceremony whose strong pungent odor is supposed to remove all impurities. Arundinaria is bamboo, also used in the ceremony, but here included for its music as well as its relation to the circular pictogram below it, the Na-khi sign for Fate that secondarily means a bamboo winnowing tray. "Neath luna" recalls "under Fortuna" (Canto 97), and Fortuna, or fate, is now the winnower – preserving the good, casting out the evil: fostering as well as destroying… the image of the luna is intriguing … Whatever it symbolic intention … it is certain that the source is an exactly similar pictogram – except for the tilted position – used in Na-Khi writing to represent the moon.' Daniel Perlman, 'The Blue-Eyed Eel: Dame Fortune in Pound's Later Cantos', *Agenda* 10, Winter (1971) 69-84 (p. 76).

pushes the reader out of the comfortable parameters of traditional European ethnography, and reveals a diversity of overlapping cultures.

According to Clifford, ethnographic surrealist work defamiliarises and treats 'evidence' as 'found' rather than factual. Work of an ethnographic surrealist, writes Clifford, borrows from the mechanisms of collage:

> Collage brings to the work (here the ethnographic text) elements that continually proclaim their foreignness to the context of presentation. These elements – like the newspaper clipping or a feather – are marked as real, as collected rather than invented by the artist-writer ... The cuts and sutures of the research process are left visible; there is no smoothing over or blending of the work's raw data into a homogeneous representation.[78]

Running contrary to the traditional ethnographic text that would seek to bring together elements into a coherent whole, surrealism suggests that 'beneath the veneer of the real [there is] the possibility of another more miraculous world based on radically different principles of classification and order.' In this context, according to Clifford, the ethnographic object can resemble a 'ready-made' similar to the work of Duchamp or the furnishings of an avant-garde studio.

Rock's use of Chinese characters and other minority languages ground his text in a locality, and through this linguistic complexity the text's status as 'western text about the East' becomes challenged. In this way, Rock's writing demonstrates what Clifford calls, 'possibility of another more miraculous world based on radically different principles of classification and order.' Rock's descriptions of mountains – which are numerous – illustrate this localised perspective:

PLATE 56. – MOUNT CHHANA-DORJE, THE HOLDER OF THE THUNDERBOLT OF THE GANGKAR-LING SYSTEM
貢噶嶺金剛手 (神) 山

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[78] Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, p. 146.

As seen from a ridge near Dra-go-tse, elevation 15,350 ft. Approximately 21,000 ft. in height.

There is no attempt to place an English name on the peak, as is often the convention in European exploration writing, and except for the elevation, there is no way for a western audience to translate this into western terms. Even the Chinese characters here do not have phonetic script, making it even more incomprehensible for most western readers.

Rather than follow traditional western generic distinctions or modes of classification, Rock organised his work in much more eclectic fashion. In many ways, *The Ancient Na-Khi Kingdom* resembles a Chinese historiography or botanical text. Joseph Needham has observed that in Chinese compendiums and encyclopaedias the distinctions between botany and other forms of history or science were not always as clearly drawn as they were in Europe. The sixth volume of Joseph Needham's classic study *Science and Civilisation in China* is dedicated to Chinese botany, and describes the various ways that plants were classified in China, going back several centuries. Most interesting, perhaps, is that the organisation of plants often merged with other types of natural history and literature. As in a Western tradition, there were numerous kinds of comprehensive lexicographic and encyclopaedic texts that also contained a wealth of botanical information. However there were also compendia unique to the Chinese tradition, such as imperial florilegia and pharmaceutical natural histories (Pén Tshao books being the most well-known). There were also botanical monographs that merged with poetic traditions, and often contain elements of legendary lore (for example, in 460 AD the Tai Khai-Chih in his *Chu Phu* gave poetical descriptions of a large number of genera and species of bamboo). Similar poetic/botanical works can be found on citrus

trees, tree- peonies, and chrysanthemums and orchids – such works have no exact counterparts in the Western world.

Fan-ti Fan has described the ways in which such Chinese botanical writings were the source of both keen interest and frustration for many late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century naturalists in China. Many early naturalists, accord to Fan, were intrigued by the illustrations of plants in Chinese books, but were ultimately unable to identify the plant, often complaining of the poor organisation of the books. However many such works were organised according to their poetic, rather than botanical, significance, while others, Fan notes, were compiled according to their culinary value.[79] Needham also points out that many Chinese plants were organised according to their linguistic or 'ideographic' significance. He discusses the ways in which botanical radicals signified different groups or families of plants. Needham writes:

> for it must be remembered that Chinese was an ideographic language, and therefore contains within itself many of the most ancient plant drawings, some of which fell by the wayside while others took their place in the developed language and script, even though progressive stylization, simplification and systematization might somewhat disguise them.[80]

Needham goes on to describe how Chinese dictionaries of origins, many of which were based on script, sound, or phrase, also contained information about the natural world and divisions among plants and animals.

Rock's ethnographic writing, with its linguistic complexity and unwillingness to conform to comfortable European categorical schemes can be read as an eccentric, hybrid

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[79] Fan, *British Naturalists in Qing China*, pp. 108-9.

[80] Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, vol. 6, *Biology and Biological Technology*, eds,, Joseph Needham, Nathan Sivin, and Gwei-Djen Lu (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. xxvii.

text – one that merges Chinese and European methods of identifying and classifying. Consider the following passage from *Na-khi Kingdom* where precise Latinate botanical and Chinese geographical information is 'inappropriately' positioned within a travel narrative:

> A short distance beyond, at a tiny temple, the trail ascends the red hills covered with oaks, pines, *Pinus Armandi*, *P. yünnanensis*, Alnus, *Castanopsis Delavayi*, rhododendrons, roses, Berberis, etc., up over limestone mountains, through oak forest, to a pass with a few houses called Ch'ou-shui-ching 臭水井 (Stinking water well). At this place many hold-ups and murders were committed by the bandit hordes of Chang Chieh-pa. He strung up his victims by the thumbs to the branches of high trees, and tied rocks to their feet; lighting a fire beneath he left them to their fate. It was always a dreaded pass for caravans. At the summit there are large groves of oaks (*Quercus Delavayi*); the elevation is 8,930 feet. (*ANK* v. I, p. 36-7)

This passage presents a wide range of information in a collage-like fashion: human history, botanical identification, and trail information are abruptly recorded without the expected transitions. In another passage, Rock presents a similar scene:

> Climbing between steep, wooded hills, formerly the hunting ground of the bandit chief Ch'ang Liang and his bands, who burned nearly all the villages in this region (fortunately he has been caught and executed, and the villages are gradually rebuilt), the ravine becomes narrower and filled with a wonderful forest of Alnus, Pyrus, Quercus, *Rhododendron Delavayi, Rho. Simsii, Rhod. Sccabrifolium, Rhod. Microphyton, Rhod. Coriaceum,* magnolias Cornus ect., until we emerge into a narrow pass at 7,900 feet and the little hamlet of Chü-li-p'u 苴力鋪, 70 li west of Chen-nan. Every house in this once prosperous village was in ashes (1928 – 1930) – the act of bandits. Women and children sat in the debris in despair. The trail continues up the narrowing ravine to the pass at 8,200 feet … (*ANK* v. I, p. 22)

Once again, the passage is jarring, as Rock juxtaposes the violent history of the region with the calculated language of geography and botanical identification.

The linguistic precision of Rock's writing also draws it away from any fixed monolithic cultural perspective: the region and people he describes are not one, but many, and their histories are overlapping and diverse. Throughout, Rock uses Chinese

characters and local Naxi or Tibetan names to indicate the proper ethnicity of either a region or a geographical feature. He writes:

> I have endeavored to give the Na-khi name for every place, mountain, valley, meadow or crag in the area occupied by the Na-khi tribe. In regions where they live together with the Chinese, Tibetans and other tribespeople, names of places, ect., are given as far as ascertainable, in those languages also. (*ANK* v. I, p. ix)

Maps of the region would typically have Chinese names for these places, and Rock's use of the different Tibetan and Naxi names challenges Sinocentric understandings of the region. By showing the local names, Rock reveals the diverse and contested histories and identities of the region.

Reflecting their shared interest in challenging assumptions of ethnographic or poetic 'wholeness', both Pound's and Rock's texts are 'disorganised' in some sense. The overall structure of *The Cantos* – its very incompleteness – demonstrates a break down of order. Consider the following passage:

> Yet to walk with Mozart, Agassiz and Linnaeus
> 'neath overhanging air under sun-beat
> Here take thy mind's space
> And to this garden, Marcella, ever seeking by petal, by leaf-vein
> out of dark, and toward half-light
>
> And over Li Chiang, the snow range is turquoise
> Rock's world that he saved for us from memory
> A thin trace in high air (*Cantos* 113, p. 806)

Frank Moramarco identifies Pound's interest in the microscopic as a modernist gesture:

like William Carlos Williams, Pound asks us to 'make a start out of particulars'. By observing the specificity of natural processes in the garden 'by petal, by leaf-vein', we move 'out of dark, and toward half-light'. Moramarco writes:

> The half-light is that of "Rock's world that he saved us for memory" – the *paradiso terrestre* of the Na-Khi, now but "thin trace in high air". In this world

> we find not a steady procession of intellectual abstractions and categories but a phalanx of particulars.[81]

Pound's references to Linnaeus evoke the history of natural scientific categorisation, a history that is programmatically undermined by Pound's poetry. In canto 115 Pound writes:

> The scientists are in terror
> and the European mind stops
>
> Mozart, Linnaeus, Sulmona (*Cantos*, p. 814)

The theme, once again, is stopping. The references to Linnaeus and Agassiz (another well-known European naturalist) are significant in the context of this study: as Foucault has influentially argued in *The Order of Things* (1966), the divisions and classifications made in natural scientific literature became definitive apparatuses of power in larger social discourses. Here, in the work of Pound and Rock, one sees an effort to 'stop,' to disorganise, and to utterly defamiliarise such systemic knowledge.

There are other references to Rock and the Naxi in *The Cantos*, but an examination of such references is clearly beyond the scope of this study. Similarly it must also be made clear that *The Cantos* is a particularly encyclopaedic text, with so many references to literature and history that it takes a separate book-length study to explain their significance. Rock is indeed one of many footnotes in Pound. Although I have argued that Rock's writings on the Naxi had a particular importance and resonance with Pound's poetic vision, this is perhaps a peripheral point. The aim of this study is not to change the way we read the *Cantos*, but rather to point out the curious and striking parallels between Rock's ethnography and Pound's poetry, and to show that their

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[81] Moramarco, 'Concluding an Epic', pp. 316-17.

similarities reveal something about changing disciplinary boundaries during the mid-twentieth century. 'Exiled' figures like Rock were important to modernism, and modernism was, I have hoped to show, equally important to Rock. Examining Rock's early work for *National Geographic* reveals the extent to which ethnography became popular and in some sense global during this period. Taken within the wider scope of this thesis, Rock's later work shows a long trajectory of travel writing during a one hundred year period: a change from stable, methodological observation to an uneasy, subjective style that is much more implicated in the culture it describes.

Rock's Ecological Vision

Another important perspective on the Pound/Rock connection is the question of ecology. In this thesis I have chosen writers who have a particular interest in the natural world, an interest not only in collecting and identifying plants, but also in celebrating nature's beauty and at times, even, considering alternative ways for humans to interact and live. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, such a perspective runs the risk of either romanticising 'nature' or aligning 'primitive' people with a more 'natural' or 'untouched' way of life. Nevertheless, although such ideas often appear as colonialist tropes, one must also accept that such ideas of nature can have merit and meaning beyond their relation to larger primitivism or colonialist discourses. Indeed, Rock's writing is very much about nature and the Naxi appreciation for the natural world: such themes cannot be overlooked nor should they be over-theorised into a model of knowledge and power.

As a botanist, Rock appreciated the Naxi love for the surrounding ecology. The Dongba religion – the belief system of the Naxi – is based on the relationship between nature and man. In Dongba mythology, 'Nature' and 'Man' are half-brothers, having different mothers. Rock relates how the Naxi villagers were prohibited from logging, and how even the cutting of tree branches and gathering of dry pine needles from the coniferous trees was not generally allowed (the gathering of pine needles was only allowed in July, when the forests were lush and green).

Throughout Rock celebrates the Naxi attitudes towards nature. Plates 93 and 130 of *The Ancient Na-khi Kingdom* compare the Lolos (another people of the Southwest) and the Naxi in terms of how they treat nature:

> Plate 130 – Pine Forest in the Ha-Ba District
> 哈巴森林
> Unlike the Lo-lo, the Na-khi are lovers of trees and disturb the forests as little as necessary. The trees are *Pinus yûnnanesis*.

> Plate 93 – The Pine Forest of Ghügh-T'o Wantonly Destroyed by the Lo-Lo Tribespeople. Lolo squatters set fire to this forest which burned for weeks, enshrouding the land in clouds of smoke. The Lo-los are the enemy of every tree, and whenever they settle they cause wanton destruction. Since the Lo-lo have been driven out some ten years ago, the forest is gradually coming back again.

Elsewhere Rock celebrates the environment around Lijiang:

> Words fail to describe the beauty of the scene. Here is Nature still undisturbed, here roam bears, deer, leopard, stags and pheasants, in the majestic forest and over meadows starred with myriads of flowers. (*ANK* vol. I, p. 223)

Although Pound is not generally regarded as an ecological writer, there are numerous organic images in *The Cantos*, many of which derive from Rock's writing. It must also be kept in mind that Pound wrote the last section of *The Cantos* later in his life, and it was not until 1969 that the 'Drafts and Fragments' cantos were finally published: by this time,

environmentalism in Europe and America began to form into a more coherent social movement. In the following passage from *The Cantos* European history is woven together with botanical, ecological and eastern spiritual themes:

> Bouffier,
> Elzéard has made the forest at Vergons
> under Kuanoon's eye there is oak-wood. Sengper
> ga-mu,
> To him we burn pine with white smoke,
> morning and evening.
> The hills are blue-green with juniper
> (*Cantos* 101, p. 745)

Elzéard Bouffier was a French farmer who planted 100,000 trees in a wilderness region of France during the early 1950s, while Kuanon is a Naxi goddess, and Sengper ga-mu is a Tibetan mountain god.[82] Here Pound develops the central theme of spirituality and nature: the Naxi and the Tibetan spiritual beliefs, and their use of plants in their rituals, suggest a world and an attachment to nature that has been lost to Europeans. Bouffier's tree planting in the French wilderness may be the exception – in typical Pound style, the inclusion of Bouffier along with the Tibetan and Naxi mythology offers a hybrid vision of eastern and western histories and mythologies.

Canto 101 ends with more Naxi themes and scenes, many of which come out of Rock's writing:

> With the sun and moon on her shoulders,
> the star-discs sewn on her coat
> at Li Chiang, the snow range,
> a wide meadow
> and the ^{2}dto-^{1}mba's face (exorcist's)
> muy simpático
> by the waters of the Stone Drum,
> the two aces
> Mint grows at the foot of the Snow Range,

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[82] Cookson, *A Guide to the Cantos of Ezra Pound*, pp. 240-1.

> the first moon is the tiger's
> Pheasant calls out of the bracken
> (*Cantos*, p. 746)

The image here of a woman with the sun and moon sewn on her shoulders is probably from a Joseph Rock photograph that was published in *National Geographic Magazine* where he also comments on the use of these images in Naxi women's ceremonial clothing.[83] The 'Stone Drum' is also from Rock's writing, as are the 'two aces', which refer to the leaders of two factions, and the '^{2}dto-^{1}mba' is a Naxi priest, or sorcerer. Also, again, Pound refers to 'Li Chiang' (Lijiang), which was Rock's home in China.[84] Here, as in the later cantos, Lijiang functions as a central pivot for Pound's poetics: tucked away beneath the 'Snow Range', Lijiang serves as a paradise for Pound – the evocation of mint, a wide meadow, and snow are bracing and cleansing. Consider the following caption from Rock's photographs of the region:

> Plate 84 Nda-za Gko, the Loveliest of Alpine Meadows
> Situated on a spur overlooking Pai-shui, an elevation of 10,700 feet. The mighty mass Shang-tzu-tou with its glacier which feeds the Pai-shui, overshadows the meadow. Forests of spruce (Picea likiangenesis) surround it. The author camped here for weeks translating Na-khi literature

Or the following descriptions of the view from Lijiang:

> The peaks of the Li-chiang snow range tower high above us, cold and wintery, wrapped in ice and snow … the region has numerous meadows, each isolated and surrounded by spruce and firs. (*ANK* vol. I, p. 228)

It has been argued that the closing cantos are increasingly organic in theme and structure: Moramarco writes: 'It is among the most "organic" of American poems, and its closest analogue is surely *Leaves of Grass.*'[85] The reference to Whitman here opens up another

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[83] Terrell, 'The Na-Khi Documents I', p. 117.
[84] Terrell, 'The Na-Khi Documents I', p. 118.
[85] Moramarco, 'Concluding an Epic', p. 326.

useful perspective of Pound's poetry within the context of the American poetic tradition. Yet Pound's ecological influences stretch further beyond America's borders, and his intense interest the Naxi way of life and love of nature demonstrates that the extreme and remote borders of China offered powerful inspiration for rethinking the human relationship with the natural world.

There is an uncanny closeness between Rock's ethnographic writing on the Naxi and Pound's poetry – a relationship that challenges the distinctions of metropolis and periphery, literature and travel writing, high and low culture. As I have shown elsewhere in this thesis, China was a potent site for modernist imaginings: it was a place that could offer an alternative way of perceiving, thinking, and classifying, while at the same time it could be a place that was enticingly disorienting and disruptive. By laying bare such complexities, China offered, for both Rock and Pound, a way to rethink literary and cultural origins; in Pound's later cantos, as in Rock's ethnography, there is a sense of disavowing western conventions of organisation – indeed, the multi-linguistic nature of these texts problematise their exclusively 'western' status. Rock the surrealist ethnographer and Pound the modernist poet are both fugitives of western civilisation, and it is in China that they find a way to ground their view of the human place in nature.

Conclusion: Footprints on the Periphery

In this concluding chapter, I will consider the way in which the travel writing examined in this thesis, as well as colonialist writing on China generally, has relevance in a contemporary global context. My argument in this concluding chapter will be that theories of classification, exotic aesthetics, and ways of perceiving cultural and ethnographic differences can 'travel' and find their way into unexpected geographical and cultural locations, and that a comparative approach can suggest new directions for reading travel writing on China.

In this thesis, I have examined four different travel writers, and while a comparison of their writings has been productive, it must be acknowledged that the linking concept of 'botanical travel' is not always stable or consistent. Fortune's interest in tea plants, for example, is a far cry from Rock's botanical interest in the southwest of China. In Fortune's case, procuring the best tea plants and seeds from China is a central driving force of his narrative, while for Rock, the botanical is more a background concern, although it might inform his ethnography and popular journalism. Despite their differences, however, I have shown that these writers also have a number of similar interests, and their writings offer similar views and perspectives on China. As plant collectors, they approached China with a similar interest in its 'unknown' and remote reaches, and such landscapes they describe are liminal, new, and culturally productive.

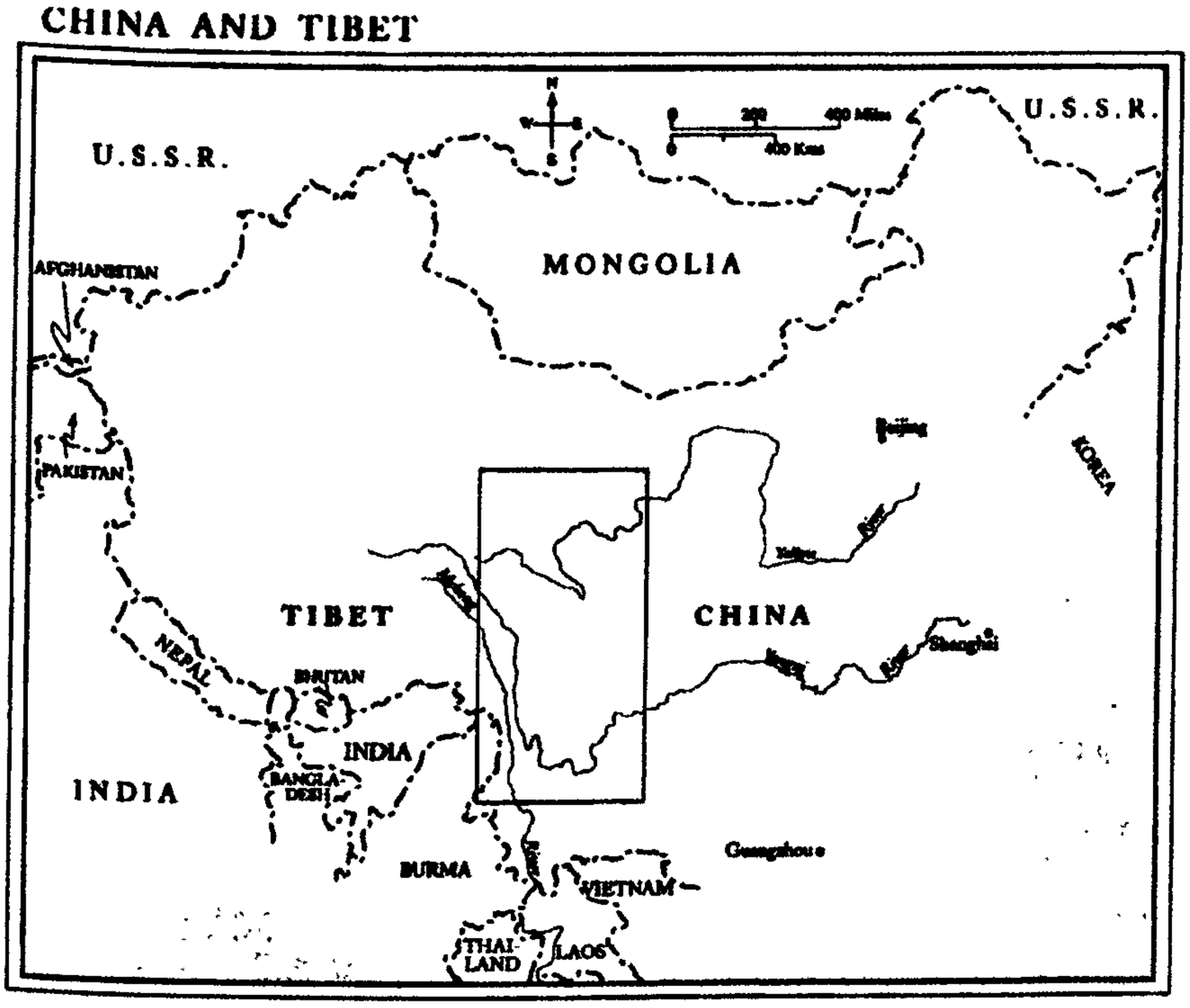
The idea of 'liminality' is indeed suggestive, and provides another way to conceptualize the relationship between these writers. In psychology, a liminal state is characterized by ambiguity, openness, and indeterminacy. In anthropology, the concept of liminality might be used to describe a rite of passage, or a movement in social status. In a more general sense, liminality can be understand as a period of transition where

normal limits to thought, self-understanding, and behaviour are relaxed; it is a situation that can lead to new perspectives. In the context of travel writing, we can think about such a concept in terms of a borderline presence between self and other. While in ecocritical terms, liminality might be understood as an investigation into the relationship between the human and the non-human worlds.

In different ways, the botanical journeys I have examined in this thesis express a sense of liminality. Robert Fortune's performance as a Chinese traveller displays a conspicuous slippage into the dangerous terrain of cultural relativism, demonstrating that even when Western imperialism in China was at a peak, more flexible ideas of identity and culture could be negotiated and tested. Frank Kingdon-Ward's explorations into the sublime reaches of Southwest China entailed the crossing of geographical borders, the testing of physical limits and capabilities, and his writing often registers a sense of inadequacy towards traditional ethnographic and aesthetic categories. In Reginald Farrer's writing, the 'no man's land' of Western China has particular meaning in the context of the First World War, but it also clearly appeals to the author's sense of alienation, exile, and indeterminate sexual and social identity. For Joseph Rock, the complex linguistic and social make-up of southwest China offered an opportunity to explore and finally to test the very limits of ethnographic writing.

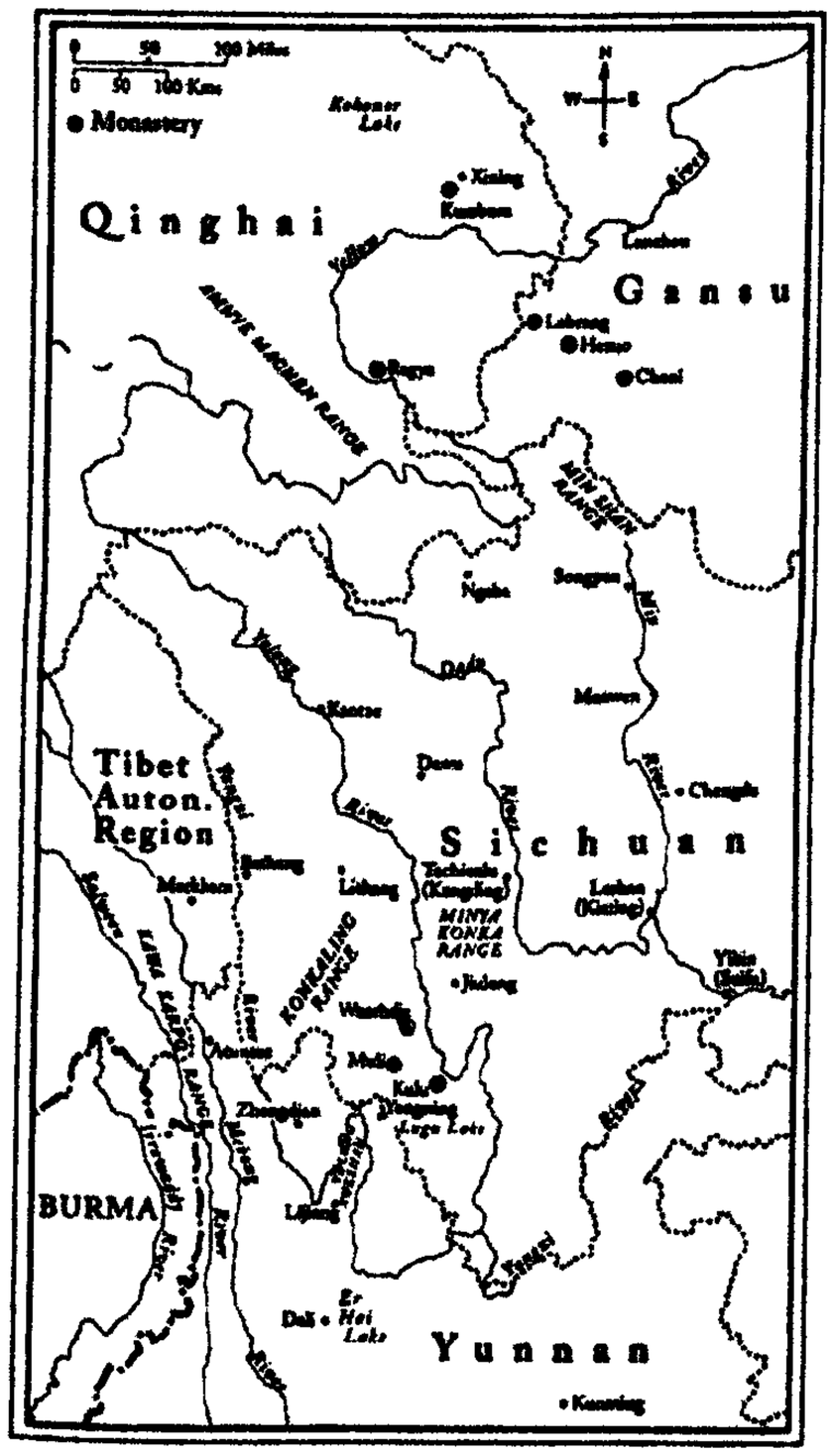
These ideas of liminality challenge us to rethink conventional interpretations of colonial discourse and imperialism in the context of China. Rather than merely reinforce discourses of otherness, these travels into the peripheries of China can be read as insights into a fluid relationship between the traveller and the landscape. Furthermore, by examining these travel writings this study has shown the ways in which the 'unexplored'

CHINA AND TIBET

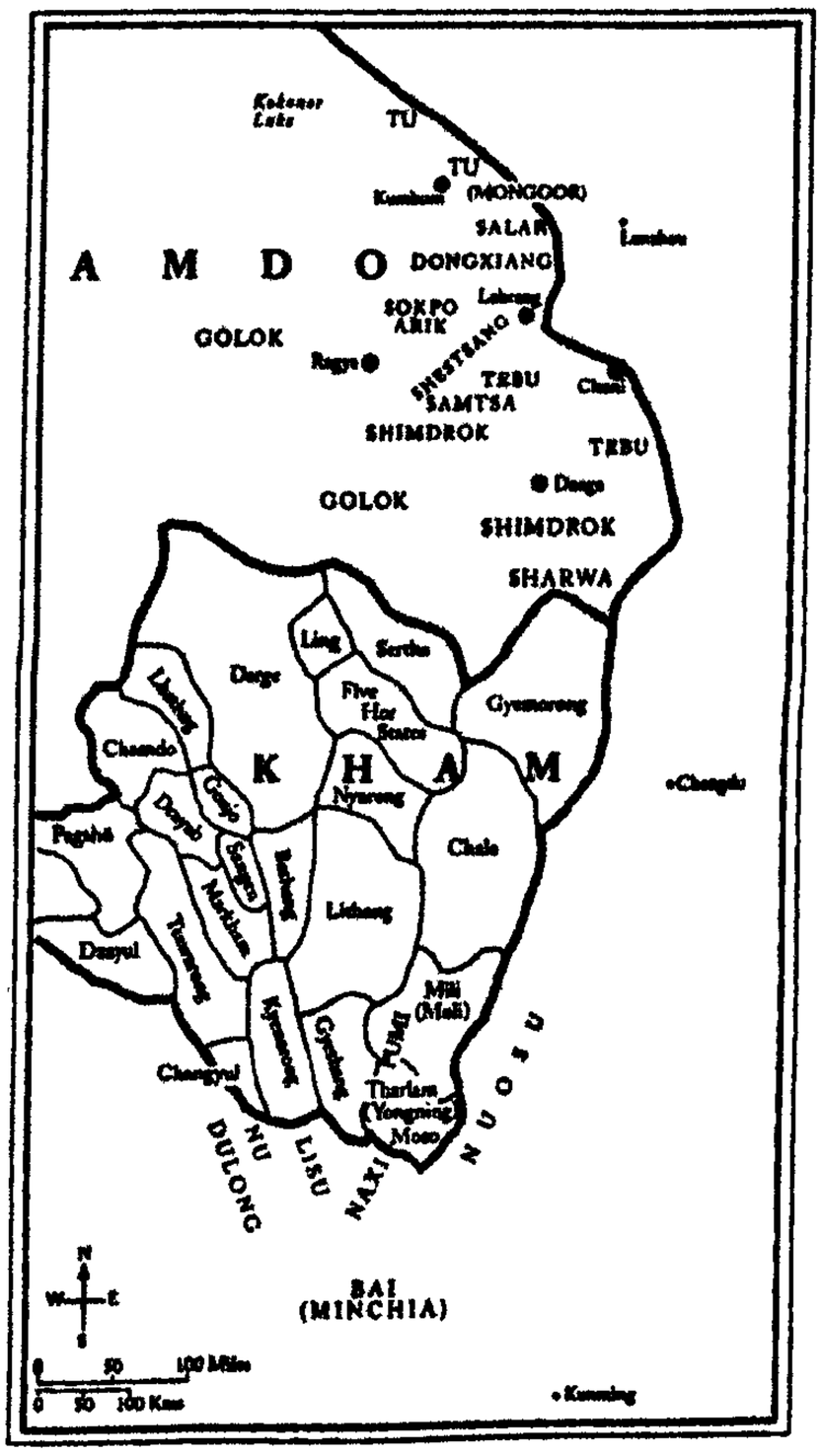


Maps of south central China, the region that was explored by Kingdon-Ward, Farrer, and Rock. The map on the bottom right depicts ethnic Tibetan sub-groups. From Michael Aris, *Lamas, Princes, and Brigands: Joseph Rock's Photographs of the Tibet Borderlands of China* (1992).

MODERN PROVINCES



PEOPLES AND PRINCIPALITIES



terrain of China could appeal to metropolitan cultural and social concerns. In a very literal way, the plants of China would find their ways into the homes and gardens of domestic audiences, but imaginatively as well, these travellers sent stories back that would enrich and appeal to readers.

In our contemporary context, these stories of plant hunting continue to capture the attention of readers in various cultural and social circumstances. In Britain in particular, there is certain nostalgia for the history of plant exploration. Recent publications have demonstrated an ongoing public interest in the writers I have discussed in this thesis. Richard Aitken's *Botanical Riches: Stories of Botanical Exploration* (2007) offers selections of botanical exploration writing along with vivid paintings and images from various botanical journeys around the world, including those of Kingdon-Ward. Jane Kilpatrick's *Gifts from the Gardens of China* (2007) is another recent book that focuses on the botanical exploration of China during the nineteenth century. These books are intended for general readers and contribute little to historical debates on China or studies in travel writing; however, they nevertheless demonstrate the ways in which the history of botanical exploration continues to have a place and function in contemporary culture.

Various websites have also recently been created, providing information on botanical exploration in China: plantexplorers.com is a helpful resource, which provides information about a number of botanists and their travels throughout the world including each of the writers I have discussed; the grandson of Frank Kingdon-Ward has created a website that provides detailed biographical information about his grandfather;[1] a blog entitled 'In the Footsteps of Joseph Rock' provides a fascinating look at a traveller's

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[1] http://www.geocities.com/tooleywatkins/fkwbiog1.html (June 30, 2008)

attempt to visit several places that Rock explored during the 1920s and 30s;[2] a similar travel re-enactment can be found on the *National Geographic Magazine* website, which describes a successful trip by a group of American explorers to find the source of the Tsangpo Gorge, a geographical location that apparently eluded Kingdon-Ward.[3]

In travelling culture today, the writers I have discussed continue to have an influence on popular conceptions of China. References to Kingdon-Ward and Joseph Rock appear in the Lonely Planet's *China* and *Southwest China* guidebooks. In the *Southwest China* guide, there is a small text box on Kingdon-Ward and a large text box on Joseph Rock, providing basic biographical information.[4] The guide also recommends 'anything by Joseph Rock' as necessary background reading, including *The Ancient Nahki Kingdom of Southwest China* and Rock's Naxi dictionary (rather puzzling considering the obscure nature of Rock's ethnographic writing).[5] Rock's former home, in the village of Yuhe, near Lijiang, is one of the places to visit, and no doubt attracts hundreds of visitors a year. The individualism and eccentricity of travellers such as Rock and Kingdon-Ward would certainly appeal to the *Lonely Planet* readership that seeks an authentic 'off the beaten path' experience. Any traveller to the region will know of Joseph Rock as the man who 'discovered' the area (and to a lesser extent Kingdon-Ward). Other references to Rock, Lijiang, and the Naxi appear in the travel writing of

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[2] http://drjosephrock.blogspot.com/ The same website provides a similar series of photographs, 'In the Footsteps of Kingdon-Ward' (June 30, 2008).
[3] 'Lost Waterfall Discovered in Remote Tibetan Gorge', http://www.nationalgeographic.com/events/releases/pr990111.html. June 30, 2008
[4] Damien Harper, et al., *China's Southwest*, (Hong Kong: Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd, 2007), p. 273.
[5] Harper, *China's Southwest*, p. 221.

Bruce Chatwin. Chatwin discusses the Naxi in his acclaimed *Songlines* (1987), and later wrote a short piece about Rock in the New York Times.[6]

However, the ways in which these travellers are enshrined in the history of travel extend beyond a Western cultural context. Just as significant, and no less interesting, are the ways in which these botanical journeys have been 'translated' into Chinese. Consider, for a moment, a small detail in Gao Xingjian's Nobel Prize winning novel *Soul Mountain* (1989), which suggests a larger involvement between Eastern and Western conceptions of China's frontier. As Gao's exiled protagonist wanders through the small towns of China's western provinces, he learns of a remote history: many years ago, a British botanist had passed through the same region collecting plants, and was one of the first foreigners to come to this wild and mysterious corner of China. Is this simply a small historical detail, or does such a reference, seemly insignificant to the novel as a whole, indicate a larger project of cultural translation? In Gao's novel, the border regions of China are hazy and dreamlike, continually aligned with the protagonist's irrational engagement with the unconscious. The borderlands, in *Soul Mountain*, are a mysterious zone of storytelling, sexuality, and death – themes that are all too often evoked in Western literature and travel writing on the East. Are such aesthetics and ideas of the periphery typically 'Chinese' or does Gao's novel in some ways appropriate or re-enact such Western exoticist aesthetics?

The question, perhaps, cannot be answered without a more thorough examination of Gao's fiction. At this point, however, it may suffice to remark that Gao studied French literature at university and wrote much of the novel while living in France. As numerous

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[6] Bruce Chatwin, 'In China, Rock's Kingdom', *The New York Times* March 16, 1986; cited June 30, 2008. Available from http://www.nytimes.com/ref/travel/sophisticated/16ST-CHATWIN.html.

studies have indicated, there is a strong European influence on his writing, so it is likely then, that his images of China's borderlands have, at least in some ways, been 'imported', and that his fiction suggests a connection between Western exoticism and Chinese frontier imaginings. As Gao's protagonist literally walks in the footsteps of an earlier European traveller, the author himself appears similarly to follow a foreign precedent. The footprints of the botanist on the periphery of Gao's novel offer another way to consider the liminality of these writers, as their stories cross yet another threshold. In a global context of modern China, there is an increasingly complex and developing relationship between 'Western' and more specifically 'Chinese' concepts and views. Therefore, questions of Orientalism, romanticism, exoticism, and nostalgia are no longer simply about the way the West imagines the East, but instead need to be viewed in more culturally dynamic and global terms.

Translating Colonialism in Historical Perspective

In this conclusion, I will suggest that China's relationship with its periphery regions can be understood as 'colonial' in some ways, and that there is a relationship between Chinese frontier imaginings and earlier Western colonialist writings. In discussing the 'import' of Western Orientalist and exotic aesthetics, however, one needs to carefully take into account a number of social and cultural forces that are specific to the context of China. Therefore, before examining some contemporary examples of exoticism and Orientalism in China today, it is necessary to provide some background on the formation of ethnic identities in modern China, and in particular to emphasise the ways in which

Western writing and thinking have historically made an impact on Chinese conceptions of race and nation.

The conventional view of Chinese civilisation is that it developed in isolation, over a lengthy unbroken history that spanned over several thousand years. In traditional histories of China, the country's internal consistency is simply taken for granted. The notion of a Chinese world order that spans outwards from the centre goes back to the nineteenth-century discipline of Sinology, but in the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries, such views of a sinocentric society continue to be accepted. John Fairbank's *The Chinese World Order* (1968) was a particularly influential text, which argued that through a process of 'sinicization' the Han culture came to dominate and transform various weaker ethnic groups. In more current scholarship, historians outside of China studies have followed such assumptions. For example, Eric Hobsbawm has described East Asian countries as 'ethnically almost or entirely homogeneous' or Jared Diamond has similarly stated that 'China has *been* Chinese, almost from the beginnings of its recorded history'.[7]

However, more recent studies have not only revealed the ethnic diversity within China, but have also shown that outside 'western' influences have, even from a very early stage, been crucial determinants in Chinese history.[8] In his study of Han Chinese nationalism, James Leibold has discussed the ways in which European and American writings had an influence on Chinese conceptions of ethnic and national identity during

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[7] Quoted in Leibold, *Reconfiguring Chinese Nationalism*, p. 2.

[8] Rupert Hodder has offered a particularly cogent description of the ways in which China drew from the 'Western heartland' from antiquity to the present. See Hodder, *In China's Image: Chinese Self-Perception in Western Thought* (New York: Macmillan Press, 2000).

the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. According to Leibold, this period was crucial in defining a stable and coherent sense of China:

> During a time when racial and moral hierarchy set the terms of the world order, Chinese identity was forged in conversation with both a 'superior' alien Other and an 'inferior' familiar Other. To put it another way, the Chinese may have been treated like dogs in the treaty ports of Shanghai and Canton, but on the Mongolian and Tibetan steppe, they came to see themselves as sages of modernity and revolutionary liberators.[9]

China's borderlands, therefore, played a central role in the creation of Han ideas of selfhood:

> The arrival of foreign imperialists on China's shores dramatically jolted the meaning of 'being Chinese' in late imperial and early Republican society and precipitated a new national project aimed at scrutinizing, redefining, and in some cases abandoning traditional cultural values in the search for a new, more robust identity.[10]

Not only was the motivation to look towards the frontier instigated by colonial contact, the tools used to understand and classify non-Han peoples were similarly imported. Leibold discusses the ways in which Han and non-Han peoples were historically distinguished, arguing that the rigid and often racially determined understanding of 'Han nationality' replaced older, more 'culturally dynamic' and 'situationally contingent' boundaries between Sinic and non-Sinic communities.[11]

Western racial thinking also had a profound influence on Chinese perceptions of self, as the idea of a 'Han race' did not appear until the turn of the century, when Chinese intellectuals and reformists such as Liang Qichao became influenced by Darwinism and racial theory. Leibold writes:

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[9] James Leibold, *Reconfiguring Chinese Nationalism: How the Qing Frontier and Its Indigenes Became Chinese* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 6.
[10] Leibold, *Reconfiguring Chinese Nationalism*, pp. 6-7. 1
[11] Leibold, *Reconfiguring Chinese Nationalism*, p. 9.

In the concentric and hierarchal model of premodern Chinese space, there was no 'minority': everyone, barbarian and Chinese alike, was assigned an appropriate place within the social order. It was distance from the center rather than size that determined one's place in the moral hierarchy. In the modern episteme of social Darwinism, however, states were recast as organisms; and population size became a key determinant of space, with the German notion of *Lebensraum* (living space) employed to justify the territorial imperative of what Liang Qichao termed the 'race-state' (*guosu*).[12]

As new scientific categories replaced older more fluid ideas of identity in pre-modern China, geographical and 'ethnographic' boundaries became contested sites of nationalist significance. In the effort to redefine the state, Chinese political elites were guided by social Darwinism, viewing the world as biologically based racial groups, fighting for limited resources. Leibold continues:

> Unlike the more speculative cosmologies of difference in imperial China, these new technologies of classification were supported by 'empirical' data supplied by modern 'scientific' disciplines: biology, sociology, history, geography, ethnology, archaeology and others. In the episteme of modern science, the heterodoxy of environmental *qi* (psycho-physical energies) gave way to the orthodoxy of consanguineous *xue* (blood) as the boundary between civility (*xia*) and barbarism (*yi*) hardened.[13]

During the early twentieth century, China's future role in the world was increasingly theorised in racial terms; Liang Qichao, for example, identified six racial types: the Miao, Han, Tibetans, Mongols, Xiongnus (Sino-Muslims), and Tungus (Manchus).

In the communist era, China's fifty-six minority groups were originally established as a Stalinist idea that would bring together the national body. Since the establishment of the PRC in 1949, the CCP's minority policy has been theoretically based on Marxist-Stalinist views of nation and nationality. Until about 1958, the CCP modelled its minority policy directly after that of the Soviet Union. According to Stalin, ethnic

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[12] Leibold, *Reconfiguring Chinese Nationalism*, p. 11.
[13] Leibold, *Reconfiguring Chinese Nationalism*, p. 30.

groups arise during the period of capitalism and integrate into each other during the evolution toward communism.

In his study of race in China, Frank Dikötter has commented on the ways in which racial ideas during the communist period were often articulated in relation to the West. Discussing Mao Zedong's writings, Dikötter states,

> [a]lthough there is nothing in Mao's writings which deals directly with the idea of race, it is clear that his sense of nationalism was based on strong racial consciousness and a sense of biological continuity. Like most politicians who grew to maturity in Republican China, he perceived the Chinese 'nation' (*minzu*) as a biologically distinct group: being Chinese was a matter of 'culture' as well as 'race'. As a student of Li Dazhao, it is also likely that he coalesced the nations of 'class' and 'race' into a vision of the struggle of the 'coloured people' against 'white imperialism' .... The race problem had become a class problem.[14]

The question of race is only one of many variables, and clearly not all Chinese intellectuals would have been influenced by Darwinist or other racial thought. Furthermore, as Dikötter himself remarks, there is no comfortable translation for the word 'race' in the Chinese language (the idea of *minzu* denotes both the idea of nation and people).

The point here is that Western and Chinese ideas began to merge in complex ways during the early twentieth century. During this period, the travel texts I have discussed circulated primarily within Western countries, but in a more contemporary context these travel writings have found their way into China. In their own limited ways, the texts under examination in this thesis have played a role in solidifying Chinese ideas of ethnicity and modern selfhood.

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[14] Frank Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1992), p. 192.

Shangri-La and 'Lost Horizon': Trouble in Paradise

The marketing and construction of Shangri-La provides a fascinating example of how both Western and Eastern exotic discourses merge in complex ways. According to the OED, the term 'Shangri-La' usually can refer to any kind of earthly paradise where people can retreat from modern civilisation. The term first appeared in James Hilton's novel *Lost Horizon* (1933) and was later adapted into a Hollywood film of the same name (Frank Capra, 1937). Despite the foreign appearance of the word, Hilton invented the name Shangri-La, and so the word does not have any meaning in any language.

In the context of China, the tourist industry has whole-heartedly appropriated the idea of Shangri-La. Not only is there a five-star hotel chain that has taken up the name, but the term has also come to designate a particular area of Yunnan province. In 2001, the Chinese government officially changed the name of the small town of Zhongdian to Shangri-La, or in Chinese *Xianggelila*. The town, tucked away in the northeast corner of Yunnan, near the border with the autonomous region of Tibet, sits at an elevation above 3000 meters, and is also known as Gyalthang to Tibetans. In the tourist information for Yunnan province, the entire area around Zhongdian has been designated as the Shangri-La region. Similar to many other tourist destinations in China, Shangri-La's draw card is its minority culture, which is often displayed in scintillating and colourful terms.

On the surface, such an appropriation of the name from Hilton's novel might appear as nothing more than a somewhat tacky ploy to attract tourism. There is, however, another more troubling side to this geographical claim. As the time of writing (May, 2008), protests have erupted in Tibet, and in the neighbouring provinces of Gansu, and

Sichuan. In the current political context, the idea of a utopia between Tibet and China allays more pressing issues: clearly, despite the marketing of the region as heaven on earth, there is trouble in paradise.

Given the current crisis between China and Tibet, the myth of Shangri-La can be viewed from a 'colonial' perspective. In some ways, Shangri-La can be understood as an Orientalist construction – an idealized utopia that reinforces binary ideas of a dominant, urban 'Han' traveller and a passive 'minority' other. In her study of the Miao (a term used to describe a number of minority groups in China's southern and south-western regions), anthropologist Louisa Schein has discussed how Chinese articulations of minority identity bear a striking resemblance to Western colonial accounts of primitive cultures during the imperial era. For Schein, Orientalism is not just a 'Western' phenomenon: 'Critiques of Western modes of Orientalising continue to risk eliding the practices and struggles that make up cultural/power asymmetries outside the West.'[15] Speaking of the current conceptualisation of the Miao within China, Schein and others have preferred to use terms such as 'sub-imperialism' and 'internal Orientalism' to describe multiple and overlapping histories and practices of Han exoticism. Schein points out that historically 'Chinese characterisations of the frontier . . . were akin to European portrayals of the African continent as primitive and close to nature.'[16] She defines this internal Orientalism as

> a set of practices that occur *within* China, and that, in this case, involved, not international tourism, but the fascination of more cosmopolitan-identified Chinese with 'exotic' minority cultures in an array of polychromatic and titillating forms. This intense fascination spawned encounters and images that were most

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[15] Louisa Schein, *Minority Rules: The Miao and the Feminine in China's Cultural Politics* (London: Duke University Press, 2000), p. 286.
[16] Schein, *Minority Rules* , p. 101.

> commonly structured by a class/gender asymmetry in which minorities were represented chiefly by rural women, while Han observers appeared characteristically as male urban sophisticates.[17]

Schein remarks how in a post-Communist Chinese context, China's increasing reliance on minorities for labour in metropolitan centres, along with its visible commodification of ethnicities on the global stage, makes the problem of internal Orientalism a very real issue:

> China, through the innumerable practices of its various cultural elites, is being assembled to assume a position alongside other parallel national entities, each with their own managed forms of diversity and each with their role to play in global capitalism. One of China's roles is to sell both its gendered labor and its cultural curiosities cheap on the world market. Conveniently, fostering cultural curiosities is, at the same time, just what appears to consolidate China's defense against the ferocious onslaught of Westernisation. Indigenous heritages, whether Han or otherwise, have a double life as inner essences that keep Chineseness intact *and* as increasingly desirable and lucrative commodities.[18]

The 'colonial' narrative of China's frontier, from this perspective, is one that depends on mutually enforcing essential identities, as notions of 'Chinese' identity rely on opposing ideas of 'minority' or 'ethnic' identity. By discussing the notion of inner-Orientalism, Schein not only sheds important light on the ideological underpinnings of Shangri-La but also comments on the ways in which such exoticism can function in relation to modern Chinese nationalism and contemporary culture.

In the case of Shangri-La, inner-Orientalism seems an apt term to describe the marketing and exoticising of the region. But, in some ways, this Chinese inner-Orientalism is not always an indigenous Chinese modality, but is an 'imported' way of seeing and displaying otherness. Much like the British botanist who preceded Gao's narrator, there is a Western presence – perhaps it is an echo or a footprint – in mainstream

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[17] Schein, *Minority Rules* , p. 101.
[18] Schein, *Minority Rules* , p. 286.

Chinese conceptions of Shangri-La. Such a Western aura that sometimes appears in Chinese ideas of the frontier creates a number of complications that challenge us to reconsider the politics of ethnic representation in China.

The myth of Shangri-La, which now functions primarily in a Chinese/Tibetan cultural context, is in fact originally built around a number of translated Western texts. Hilton's novel has been translated into Chinese and is widely available in bookstores throughout the country, as has at least one of Kingdon-Ward's travel books, *The Mystery Rivers of Tibet* (1923).[19] Peter Goullart's *Forgotten Kingdom* (1957) is another important travel book on the area, which has also been translated into Chinese.[20] *Forgotten Kingdom* describes Goullart's twelve years living in Lijiang, and the book is dedicated to Joseph Rock, whom Goullart describes as a fellow traveller and friend. Goullart was Russian, but the book was written in English. *Forgotten Kingdom* reinforces a number of fundamental ideas of the Shangri-La myth. In it Goullart describes the Naxi people in depth: his view of them is mostly sentimental, romantic, and reduplicates a number of stereotypes of the Naxi people and their traditions. The region is described as a timeless paradise, a magical place, and the Naxi are continually shown to have a coherent, continuous culture, threatened in the face of encroaching Chinese modernity. In Goullart's account, the Naxi's happy way of life is fleeting in the face of modern developments. A study of Goullart's book is beyond the scope of this study, but at this

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[19] The Chinese translation of *Lost Horizon* has been published by the China International Publishing Group: 本社, 迷失的视野 , 中国国际图书贸易公司图书进口中心, (Beijing, 2005). The Chinese translation of Kingdon-Ward's *The Mystery Rivers of Tibet* has been published by the People's Literature Publishing House: F. 金敦・沃德 著, 神秘的滇藏河流 : 横断山脉江河流域的人文与植被, (Beijing, 2002).

[20] The Chinese version of *Forgotten Kingdom* is published by Yunnan Publishing Group Corporation: 顾彼得, **被遗忘的王国**, 云南教育出版社, (Kunming, 2007).

point it is important to simply remark that his Orientalised, exotic view of the Naxi has a place in mainstream Chinese conceptions of the people and the region.

It is therefore important to interpret Shangri-La, and the history of travel writing that it draws upon, in a comparative context. *Lost Horizon* is a particularly important text, as it brings together defining tropes, stereotypes, and impressions of the area that were recorded in earlier travel writing. A close reading of Hilton's novel reveals that the author was influenced, at least partially, by some of the botanical writers I have discussed in this study. Although Hilton himself did not travel to China or Tibet, it is widely understood that the writings and photographs of Joseph Rock inspired him. The influence is made clear when, Hilton's narrator Matheson refers to 'mountains higher than Everest' in an unexplored range.[21] This detail is clearly from Joseph Rock's description of Mt. Minya Konka, which Rock described as 'when surveyed, might prove higher than Everest.'[22]

Apparently, Hilton had also read Kingdon-Ward. For example, Matheson describes how he tried to verify the myth of Shangri-La by going to a place called Tatsien-Fu: 'It's a weird place, a sort of world's-end market town, deuced difficult to get at, where the Chinese coolies from Yunnan transfer their loads of tea to the Tibetans.'[23] This, of course, is directly from Kingdon-Ward's description of Tachienlu (modern day Kanding, which I have discussed in the third chapter of this study).

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[21] James Hilton, *Lost Horizon* [1933] (London: Macmillan, 1979). p 228.
[22] In his *National Geographic Magazine* article 'Seeing the Mountain of Mystery' (see p. 134), Rock suggests that Mt. Minya Konka might be taller than Everest, and he later went on to attempt a measurement of the mountain's elevation. His findings indicated that the mountain was indeed higher than Everest, and he quickly wired the National Geographic Society with the news. Thankfully, for Rock's sake, the Society did not publish these findings until his measurements could later be confirmed. It turned out that Rock's measurements were off by over one thousand meters. At 7556m Mt. Minya Konka is, in fact, the world's forty- first tallest peak.
[23] Hilton, *Lost Horizon*, p. 228.

However, the significance of these connections with *Lost Horizon* goes beyond textual details. Hilton's novel, and the travel writing it draws upon, provides a way of seeing the region and viewing the traveller's relationship to the surrounding geography. Some critics have examined the myth of Shangri-La, and *Lost Horizon*, in terms of Western understandings of Tibet.[24] There are obvious reasons why this is so, as the descriptions of geography are continually aligned with Tibet. Indeed, at the beginning of the novel, the hijacked passengers find themselves high on the Tibetan plateau,

> the loftiest and least hospitable part of the earth's surface … two miles high even in its lowest valleys, a vast, uninhabited, and largely unexplored region of wind-swept upland.[25]

Conway, the British multi-lingual Oriental expert, is the protagonist of the novel, and after speaking to the dying pilot in 'an unfamiliar dialect of Chinese', he explains to the other passengers that they are, in fact, in Tibet, and that there is a mountainous valley called Shangri-La where they might receive food and shelter. He adds, '*La* is Tibetan for mountain pass.'[26]

However, once the travellers reach the mythical valley, the geographical and cultural location of Shangri-La becomes less certain. The travellers encounter lamas who look Chinese, and who speak Mandarin and English rather than Tibetan. Upon arriving in Shangri-La, Conway remarks that 'the atmosphere, in fact, was Chinese rather than specifically Tibetan.'[27] The guests eat Chinese food, and the manners of the hosts also appear to follow Chinese forms of etiquette. The manners of the lamas are described as

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[24] For example, Peter Bishop, *The Myth of Shangri-La : Tibet, Travel Writing and the Western Creation of Sacred Landscape* (London: Athlone, 1989).
[25] Hilton, *Lost Horizon*, p. 49.
[26] Hilton, *Lost Horizon*, p. 53.
[27] Hilton, *Lost Horizon*, p. 70.

'super-refined' and polite.[28] Throughout, Conway shows sensitivity to 'Oriental rituals' such as saving face and 'polite pretence' – characteristics that would normally be associated with Chinese rather than Tibetan culture.

Shangri-La is not a mere idealisation of Tibetan culture, but it is instead a kind of hybrid colony. The inhabitants of the monastery are all foreigners – mostly Chinese or Europeans. We eventually discover that a missionary named Perrault, who travelled to the region from Luxembourg, founded Shangri-La. Interestingly, he was a botanist of sorts: 'he found gold deposits along the valley, but they did not tempt him; he was more deeply interested in local plants and herbs'. After several years, Perrault's mission developed into a non-conformist monastery that was devoted to learning and cultivation. The longevity of Perrault is ascribed to the tangiest berry, 'to which were ascribed medicinal properties, but which was chiefly popular because its effects were those of a mild narcotic. Perrault, in fact, became somewhat of an addict.'[29] Through drug-taking and deep-breathing exercises, Perrault defies death. From this perspective, Tibet is a place where foreigners retire and contemplate. The land and the happy people in the valley are described as passive and static, and living in harmony with the monks on the mountain. Later in the novel, on an excursion in the surrounding valley, Conway observes the local people and describes their mixed racial features:

> The inhabitants seemed to him a very successful blend of Chinese and Tibetan; they were cleaner and handsomer than the average of either race, and seemed to have suffered little from the inevitable inbreeding of such a small society. They smiled and laughed as they passed the chaired strangers … they were good-humored and mildly inquisitive, courteous and carefree, busy at innumerable jobs but not in any apparent hurry over them.[30]

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[28] Hilton, *Lost Horizon*, p. 72.
[29] Hilton, *Lost Horizon*, p. 135.
[30] Hilton, *Lost Horizon*, p. 107.

'super-refined' and polite.[28] Throughout, Conway shows sensitivity to 'Oriental rituals' such as saving face and 'polite pretence' – characteristics that would normally be associated with Chinese rather than Tibetan culture.

Shangri-La is not a mere idealisation of Tibetan culture, but it is instead a kind of hybrid colony. The inhabitants of the monastery are all foreigners – mostly Chinese or Europeans. We eventually discover that a missionary named Perrault, who travelled to the region from Luxembourg, founded Shangri-La. Interestingly, he was a botanist of sorts: 'he found gold deposits along the valley, but they did not tempt him; he was more deeply interested in local plants and herbs'. After several years, Perrault's mission developed into a non-conformist monastery that was devoted to learning and cultivation. The longevity of Perrault is ascribed to the tangiest berry, 'to which were ascribed medicinal properties, but which was chiefly popular because its effects were those of a mild narcotic. Perrault, in fact, became somewhat of an addict.'[29] Through drug-taking and deep-breathing exercises, Perrault defies death. From this perspective, Tibet is a place where foreigners retire and contemplate. The land and the happy people in the valley are described as passive and static, and living in harmony with the monks on the mountain. Later in the novel, on an excursion in the surrounding valley, Conway observes the local people and describes their mixed racial features:

> The inhabitants seemed to him a very successful blend of Chinese and Tibetan; they were cleaner and handsomer than the average of either race, and seemed to have suffered little from the inevitable inbreeding of such a small society. They smiled and laughed as they passed the chaired strangers … they were good-humored and mildly inquisitive, courteous and carefree, busy at innumerable jobs but not in any apparent hurry over them.[30]

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[28] Hilton, *Lost Horizon*, p. 72.
[29] Hilton, *Lost Horizon*, p. 135.
[30] Hilton, *Lost Horizon*, p. 107.

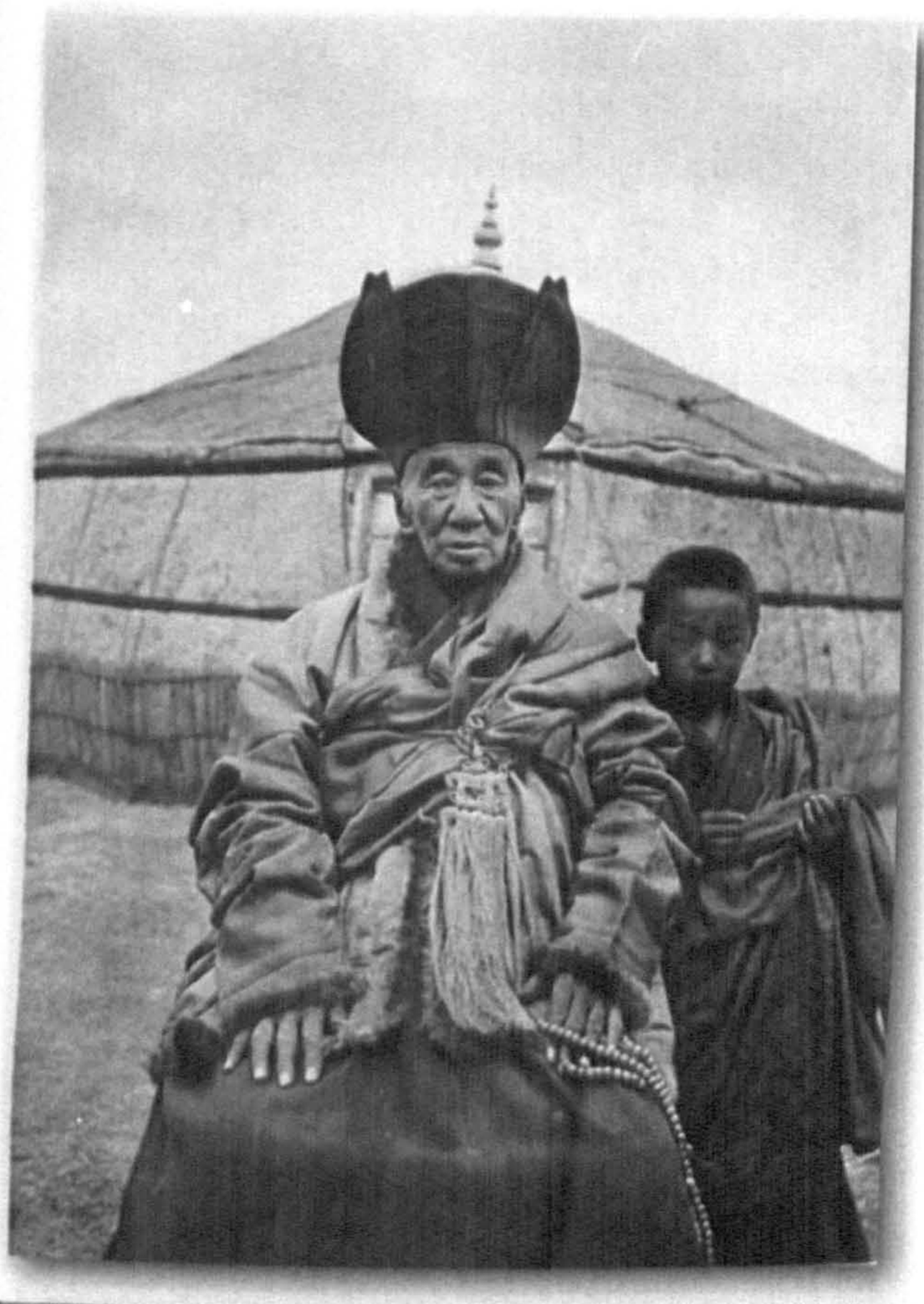
The inhabitants of the monastery, on the other hand, appear to be racially pure. Such descriptions of the racial make-up of the region resonate with Rock's and Kingdon-Ward's ethnographic interests in both pure and hybrid racial identities. The larger binary distinctions between Tibetan and Chinese are also similar to the distinctions made in much earlier travel writing, especially in Kingdon-Ward.

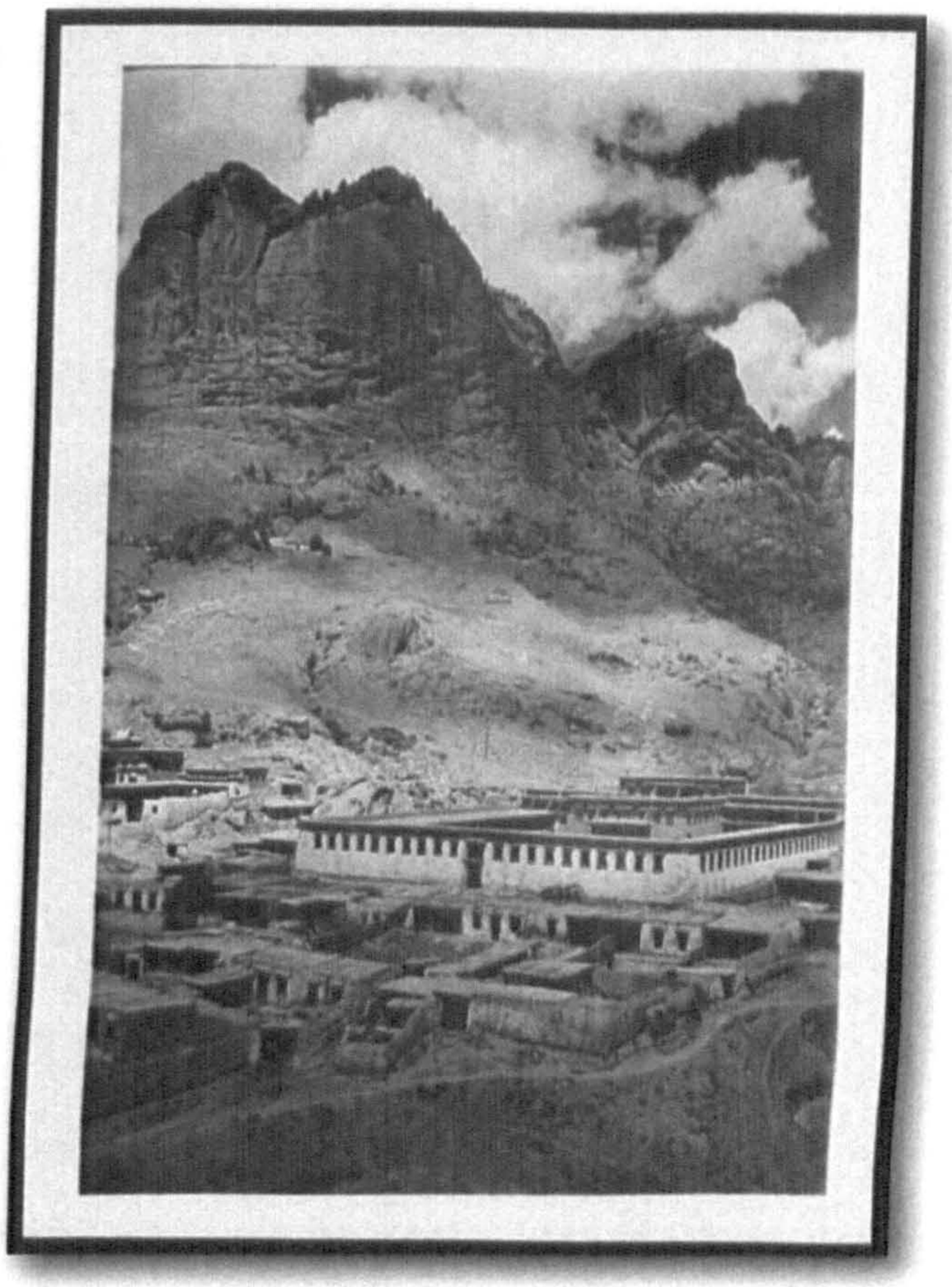
Hilton's descriptions of the lamasery also resonate with Rock's descriptions of Tibetan monasteries, if only in the sense that the ideal lamasery of Shangri-La is everything that Rock's descriptions are not. Shangri-La is modern and clean – Hilton pays particular attention to the modern plumbing. Conway observes: 'The bath, for instance, in which he had recently luxuriated, had been of a delicate green porcelain, a product, according to the inscription, of Akron, Ohio'.[31] This is clearly not the same kind of monastery described in Rock's articles: in fact, it is the exact opposite. Shangri-La is hygienic, refined and worldly rather than corrupted, dirty, and isolated. Here the discourse of cleanliness is inverted, yet the binary remains intact.

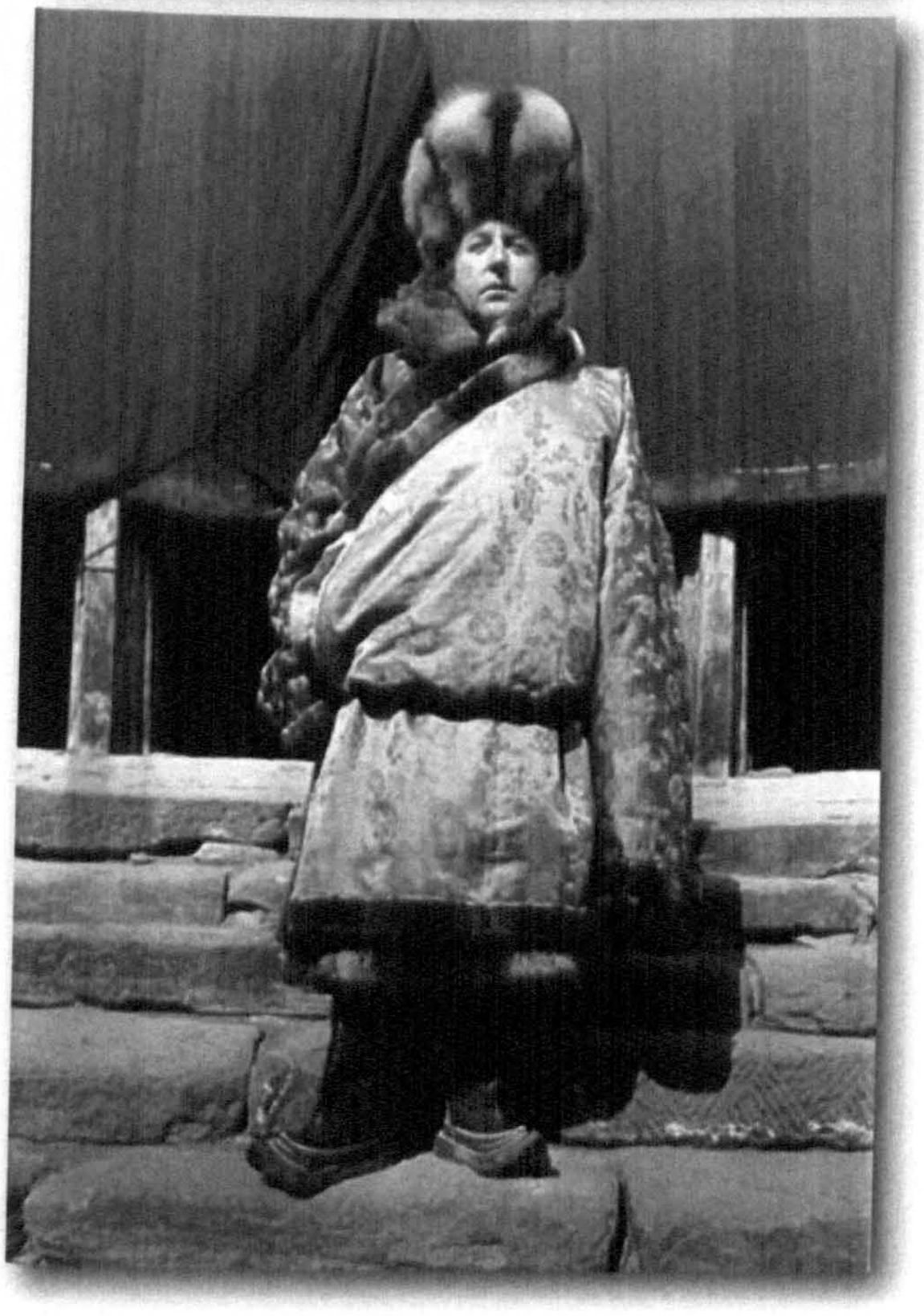
The monastery is also described as having a 'lofty and spacious library', 'containing a multitude of books so retiringly housed in bays and alcoves that the whole atmosphere was more of wisdom than of learning, of good manners rather than seriousness.' Conway is astonished to find 'the world's best literature' as well as 'a great deal of abstruse and curious stuff he could not appraise.'[32] The monastery also houses musical instruments and many of the lamas are skilled musicians. All of this sharply contrasts Rock's descriptions of Buddhist monasteries as utterly parochial and insular.

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[31] Hilton, *Lost Horizon*, p. 69.
[32] Hilton, *Lost Horizon*, p. 94.







Photographs of Tibet and China by Joseph Rock published in *National Geographic.* Rock's articles and photographs are said to have inspired James Hilton's *Lost Horizon* (1933). The image on the left is of Rock in Tibetan costume.

Perhaps most significantly, Shangri-La relies on the idea of leaving *it all behind* – a theme that runs through the travel writing I have discussed in this thesis. The idea of a traveller longing to stay in an exotic and isolated location is present in much travel writing from around the world, but in the context of Tibet it has a particular poignancy. As I have already discussed in the previous chapters, such ideas of reckless abandon, and devoting a lifetime to the region, are also present in Kingdon-Ward and Farrer's writing.

In the context of China today, the idea of Shangri-La has its own unique meanings, as many Chinese people could be unaware of the connections with Hilton's novel. Indeed, in the marketing of the term, the usage of the Shangri-La is diverse and can convey an array of possible meanings, many of which are particular to the Chinese tourist industry. However, it is important to examine Shangri-La as a cultural mythology that has a traceable textual history. It is significant, for example, that in Hilton's novel, Shangri-La is a place where both 'civilised' Chinese and Western foreigners can escape modern society.

It is useful, at this point, to consider how Shangri-La is not only an Orientalist idea (as it imagines an aesthetically pleasing and more primitive other), but also Occidentalist in nature (as it provides a space for enacting imagined ideas of 'Western' leisure). The notion of Occidentalism is itself a slippery concept that needs some elaboration. In her study on Occidentalism, Xiaomei Chen has discussed the complex relationship between Occidentalism and Orientalism in the context of China. Rather than view Occidentalism as a mere mimicking of the West, Chen posits that Occidentalism is

> a discursive practice that, by constructing its Western Other, has allowed the Orient to participate actively and with indigenous creativity in the process of self-appropriation, even after being appropriated and constructed by Western Others. As a result of constantly revising and manipulating imposed Western theories and

> practices, the Chinese Orient has produced a new discourse, marked by a particular combination of the Western construction of China with the Chinese construction of the West, with both of these components interacting and interpreting each other.[33]

In other words, Orientalism and Occidentalism are mutually reinforcing concepts.

Schein's notion of inner-Orientalism, therefore, needs to be carefully nuanced to include the complex Occidentalist dynamic to China's exoticism of its minority cultures. By travelling to the periphery area of Shangri-La, an urban Chinese traveller might view the landscape and the people through a kind of Orientalist lens, while at the same time, such a traveller might also aspire towards a kind of leisure and wealth that is stereotypically aligned with the West. Therefore, the Occidentalist nature of ethno-tourism, and culturally hybrid constructions such as Shangri-La, reveal that for many, the idea of being 'Western' (European or American) is paradoxically part of the attraction to the other 'Western' periphery.

A similar complexity can be found by browsing the magazine racks of Chinese bookstores, where the popularity of various National Geographic-type magazines is immediately apparent (perhaps more tellingly, *National Geographic Magazine* is seemingly always stocked in any Starbucks in China). For instance, there is the real *National Geographic Magazine* that is translated into Chinese, but there are also a number of spin-off imitations that have no apparent affiliation with the American publication such as *Chinese National Geographic* and *Tibetan National Geographic*. The titles of the magazines are displayed in the familiar yellow banner, and the pages and photos are presented in the same familiar glossy format of *National Geographic*

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[33] Xiaomei Chen, *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 2.

Magazine, with a strong emphasis on the visual and the photographic. China's ethnic minorities are common topics in such magazines. It is striking, for example, how a recent article on the Naxi of Southwest China, published in *Chinese National Geographic*, bears striking similarities to Rock's earlier journalism, which often displayed an aesthetic other, often closely connected to ritual performance or mysterious cultural practices. These magazines are not particularly expensive, but the advertisements for camera equipment and SUV vehicles are clearly aimed at a more aspiring, wealthy, urban readership. In this way, similar to the idea of Shangri-La, which has been constructed out of both Chinese and Western exotic aesthetics, such magazines have both Occidentalist and Orientalist appeal.

Such aspirations to be 'Western' and their correlation with ideas of imagining ethnicity in China, point to a complex social economic picture. Consider, for example, the vast changes in human geography that the country has witnessed in the past few decades. David Harvey describes the impact of migration on China's cities:

> Currently there are 114 million migrant workers but the government predicts the number will rise to 300 million by 2020 and eventually to 500 million. Shanghai alone has 3 million migrant workers; by comparison, the entire Irish migration to America from 1820 to 1930 is thought to have involved perhaps 4.5 million people. This labor force is vulnerable to super-exploitation and puts downwards pressure on the wages of urban residents. But urbanization is hard to stop and the rate of urbanization stands at something like 15 per cent.[34]

Chinese society is on the move, and so the idea of stable, coherent, and in some sense 'traditional' ethnic categories is perhaps understandable enough. Furthermore, China's divides are increasingly becoming more complex as indicators of wealth or cosmopolitan identity surpass any visible ethnic identity.

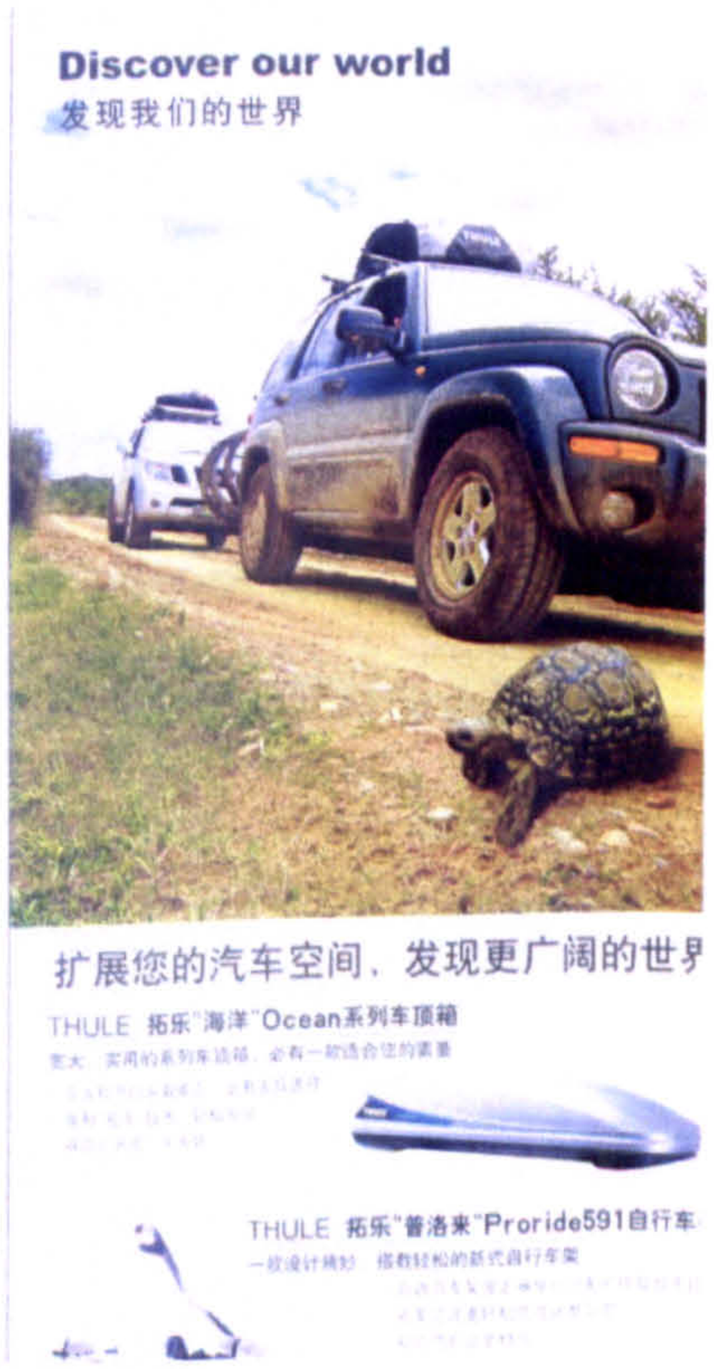
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[34] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 127.





(*above*) A white water rafting advertisement in Guangxi. The image clearly illustrates how minority regions are often associated with feminine qualities. Photograph by author.
(*above right*) A Dai women with child from *Chinese National Geographic Magazine*.
(*right*) An advertisement for roof racks in *Chinese National Geographic Magazine*. The use of English may offer some occidentalist appeal.



Being 'Western' is therefore closely related with being 'urban,' being 'modern,' or in some cases, perhaps, being 'global' (which is often articulated in terms of American branding and ideals). Here we might heed the words of Aijaz Ahmad who reminds us that Orientalism is not simply about cultures and nations representing each other, but also about class relations.[35] Or in David Harvey's terms, we might consider how China's post-Mao years have seen a neoliberal turn. The privatisation of economic structures along with the neoliberal faith in market forces has, according to Harvey, led to the troubling, and rapidly increasing disparity of wealth in China.

Indeed, for any observer, it is plain to see that capital does not flow easily from one part of China to another. Describing the apparent unfairness that underlies the rural/urban divide, Harvey describes how people living in communes in the rural areas of China lost social rights, while at the same time urban populations gained property rights. He writes: 'the urban / rural differential in real incomes is now, according to some estimates, greater than in any other country in the world.' In statistical terms, he states that '[u]rban incomes that averaged just $80 per year in 1985 soared to over $1000 in 2004, while rural incomes rose from around $50 to around $300 in the same period.'[36]

Therefore, while ideas of a colourful, more aesthetic, 'happy' ethnic other might serve a 'colonialist' function, they also clearly address other pressing issues of economic disparity, as the 'Chinese National Geographic' view of self addresses very real concerns of economic imbalance. Such views of a more primitive other might imply a teleology and a conviction that things are getting better in China, that things are 'evolving' in some sense. Furthermore, as Lutz and Collins discuss in the context of the American

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[35] See Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Natures, Literatures* (London: Verso, 1992).
[36] Harvey, *Neoliberalism*, p. 126-7.

magazine's circulation, colourful images of primitive happiness disavow responsibility, and allow the reader to be both 'humane' and 'cultured'.[37] Although there are forms of discrimination and privilege based on one's visible ethnic identity, as Schein suggests, the issue of class and the distribution of wealth in China is perhaps a more pressing concern that can more adequately explain simultaneously 'rural' and 'ethnic' ideals such Shangri-La and Chinese National Geographic.

There are still other considerations that need to be taken into account when discussing the complex connections between ideas such as inner-Orientalism, Shangri-La, and the legacy of Western travel writing. While an aesthetic, ethnically coherent other might address concerns of wealth and inequality, the desire for a simple and traditional way of life might also speak to certain environmental anxieties. Ideas of 'ethnic' travel in China are very closely related to ideas of 'nature' travel. Some of the world's largest and most polluted cities are in China, and so it is only understandable that the paradisiacal idea of Shangri-La would be attractive for many people who recognise the environmental cost of China's economic growth. It is further interesting to consider how ideas of 'being environmental' are also associated with Occidentalist ideals. The idea of nature tourism in China is itself a concept that borrows from both Eastern and Western sources. Robert Weller discusses 'nature tourism' in terms of a complex combination of local and global forces:

> The many influences on Taiwanese and Chinese nature tourism include the qi-based power of certain objects (like some stones or trees), old patterns of pilgrimage, imperial Chinese traditions of landscape painting and poetry, the post-Enlightenment opposition of nature and culture, the American wilderness movement, anti-urban pastoralisms (variously realized though the Chinese practice of sending youth down to the countryside and the Taiwanese Youth

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[37] Lutz and Collins, *Reading National Geographic*, p.95.

> Corps), and so on. All of this combines into a complex and creative array of different nature tourism patterns.[38]

As with discussing Orientalism and Occidentalism, a discussion of environmentalism in China needs to be thought of in comparative terms. As much as one might desire a simple division, questions of the environment and those of ethnicity and Orientalism cannot be easily disentangled. In Hilton's novel, Shangri-La is a largely self-sufficient community, and can in this way be read as an environmental ideal. Certainly in its Chinese modern conception, the idea is often connected with outdoor activity and green tourism. There may be difficulties with such eco-topic notions, as they tend to privilege pristine and sublime ideals, and avoid more troubling and complex aspects of urban pollution, vehicle emissions, and increasing consumption. Yet there are signs that an environmental consciousness in building in China, and popular mythologies such as Shangri-La and magazines such as *National Geographic Magazine* might have productive roles to play in the national ecological consciousness.

Viewing China from the Ground Level

In this concluding chapter, I have suggested ways in which the travel writing examined in this thesis has found its way into contemporary Chinese culture. This is, admittedly, a perspective that requires a more thorough analysis and can only be partially justified within the scope of this dissertation. However, by bringing the discussion of Orientalism into a contemporary Chinese context, I have hoped to offer a different way of reading

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[38] Robert Weller, *Discovering Nature: Globalization and Environmental Culture in China and Taiwan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 100.

these texts, and suggest new theoretical directions for travel writing studies. By reading these travel writers in this non-Western context, we can see that studies of imperialism and colonialism need to take into account global and economic realities of the twenty-first century. In an age when national and cultural boundaries are becoming increasingly permeable and texts are becoming increasingly translated and marketed as global commodities, we need to consider how imperialism and cultural hegemony function outside of the paradigms of European or American imperialism.

In the final assessment, however, travel writing can only say so much, and can only provide limited insights into the larger problems of imperialism and Orientalism. In fact, the writings I have discussed offer many smaller and less easily theorized details. Trained to classify and identify, and with their eyes fixed firmly on the landscape (or in some cases, the ground in front of them), the botanists I have discussed leave us with images and ideas that would go unnoticed by others, and taken together as a study, they suggest a unique and often extraordinary way of viewing the country and its particulars.

The future in China will no doubt be one of further hybridity and of overlapping global and local forces. There will no doubt be plenty of space for theoretical accounts of how discourses of colonialism, Orientalism, or Occidentalism converge and overlap, but perhaps just as important are accounts from the ground level, and from a more microscopic perspective. Indeed, there is still a need for good travel writing, as the world is rife with China experts, many of whom do not speak the language, do not live in China, and fail to see what is emerging (or perhaps even growing) on the ground. Despite the importance of reading and interpreting these larger trends, perhaps our best and most

informed views come from the very details, rather than the theoretical frameworks that can hold them together.

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