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CHINA THROUGH THE EYES OF EARLY AMERICAN WOMEN AND MEN

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of English

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

William C. Corley

August 1999

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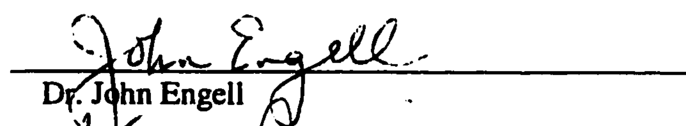

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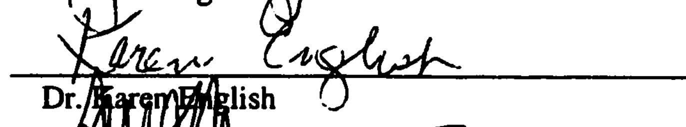

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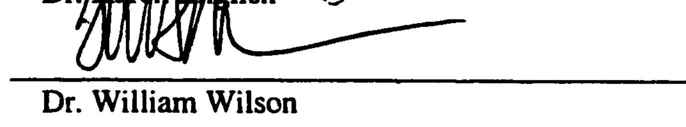

Dr. William Wilson

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ABSTRACT

CHINA THROUGH THE EYES OF EARLY AMERICAN WOMEN AND MEN

by William C. Corley

Early nineteenth-century published accounts of travelers to China helped form the expectations of the American public in reading later accounts of China. Observations made by these authors live on in American politics, literature, and economic policies of the last 150 years. A gendered divide in early American accounts of China between empathy and detachment, between the assumption of universal humanity and the assumption of cultural or racial superiority, has also exerted a formative influence on the development of Asian-American literature.

This thesis surveys early American accounts of China that have a long publishing history and that span a large range of human endeavors: political, economic, religious, and intellectual. The accounts are divided between men and women, upper-class and plebeian, and include accounts by Amasa Delano, David Abeel, Samuel Shaw, Henrietta Shuck, Eliza Jane Bridgman, and Bayard Taylor.

Acknowledgements

In any venture of discovery, be it geographic, cultural, or literary, a traveler invariably becomes indebted to those who have served as informants and guides along the way. In my case, I am fortunate enough to have also been befriended. My first thanks belong to Chengfong Jou, whose friendship and concern for my intellectual development sparked my first interest in the culture and literature of his people. To Alan C.Y. Tang I owe the camaraderie and excitement of a shared journey. For my first and sustained encounter with modern China, I am continually grateful to Zhang Yi, and I hope some day to return the favor. My perseverance as a scholar would never have been possible were it not for the kindness and example of Arthur Quinn, my mentor during my undergraduate education at Berkeley. John Engell, the most generous teacher I have ever known, served as the advisor for this thesis, and his enthusiasm and example of careful scholarship will remain with me as an inspiration. Finally, for her shared commitment and willingness to go wherever our travels may lead, I give my warmest thanks and devotion to my wife, Amy.

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Preface

As noted by John Burt Foster in his survey of China and the Chinese in American literature, "personal contact and firsthand impressions" are of great importance "in the interpretation of cultures" (603). Travel narratives have been popular among readers even before the great age of discovery in the West, and people who have no opportunity for personal experience rely on them in their interpretation of cultures. The travel literature associated with China has as its fountainhead one of the greatest travel narratives of all time: Marco Polo's Travels. And, as Jonathan Spence describes Polo's account, travel literature from the beginning has been "evasive and problematic" (*Great Continent* 1). How does the act of translation and narration falsify experience and foreign situations? Can readers trust the accuracy of a given account in making their own interpretation of culture? In order to safeguard their own opinions, readers of travel narratives have always needed discernment and vigilance. In the spirit of a fellow-traveler, I offer this survey of early American accounts of China by men and women as a resource to others seeking an accurate understanding of subsequent representations of China and the Chinese in American literature. Since I believe that the accounts in this survey have contributed directly or indirectly to all American representations of China, including those written by Americans of Chinese descent, a careful analysis of them individually and as a whole is both timely and necessary.

In all of the narratives in this survey, there exist two realities: that which each author experienced as revelatory and attempted to pass on to readers, and that which each

author could only recognize through preexistent literary tropes and cultural biases which determined his or her investigative and interpretive techniques. While I believe that all of these authors engaged in significant literary license as they crafted their narratives, including acknowledged and unacknowledged cribbing of material, they also proclaimed an intention of honesty that I have no reason to doubt. These authors believed what they wrote. That they were often wrong in their cultural or interpersonal observations tells us more about the history of East-West relations than the individual reliability of the authors.

Indeed, this study is, in large part, a reflection on the biases and societal influences which have guided American interpretations of China since the late eighteenth century. The flow of American perceptions of China has changed but little since our initial impressions 200 years ago, despite the accumulation of sociological and historical materials that could better inform us. Popular images of China are still mired in the bloody swamps of the Taiping rebellion and the smoking dens of British opium. American travel literature about China still follows either an idealized or a disillusioned mode. More tellingly, a gendered divide in our perceptions of China has widened and begun to exert a formative influence on the development of Asian-American literature about China and Asian-America. I hope to prove in this study that American observations of China in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries tell us as much, and sometimes more, about domestic situations as about China. The authors discussed in this survey observe that which they were accustomed to observing. Small wonder that standards of cleanliness and business practices should be among the most prominent

features of early descriptions of China by Puritan and Yankee Americans.

If I were to visit the home of a friend and upon my return describe to my wife the great number of books in his home, my wife could make two observations. First, my friend may indeed have a great number of books in his home; but second, I must be obsessed with books since I failed to mention the beautiful stained glass window which my friend has prominently displayed in his living room. From this illustration, I draw two general rules that could also be argued through the medium of literary theory. The observations made in American accounts of China reflect the assumptions and values which Americans brought to China. Also, the different ways in which men and women are raised and trained in a given society affect both their ability to observe and the values which inform their personal narratives. This latter point can be strengthened by reference to historical contingencies, such as the segregation of women, which will be an important aspect of the analysis to follow.

The American observers of China in this survey inherited some assumptions from their British colonial overlords, but in the revolutionary ferment of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the Americans were relatively free initially of British imperial sensibilities such as those rightly decried in studies of Orientalism. In this respect, American travelers to China were aided by a complex of attitudes and cultural similarities described by George Danton as reflective of "a characteristic rapprochement not found elsewhere" in relations between China and the West (11). Among these cultural similarities, Danton lists the natural democracy of the Chinese people, the lack of a caste system in China and America resulting in a shared egalitarian ideal, and "the somewhat

touching faith of both peoples in education as a panacea, not merely for social but for moral ill" (15). These similarities allowed for intuitive understanding between Americans and Chinese, particularly when the individuals on both sides of the exchange represented the intellectual classes of their respective societies. Nonetheless, the great majority of cultural contacts between Americans and Chinese in the period of this survey were offensive to both Americans and Chinese: drunken sailors have earned their bad reputation in ports around the world and the limited vocabulary of the pidgin English used almost exclusively in communication with foreigners before the Opium War could make any Chinese appear uneducated and dull, much less the Chinese day laborers and merchants who relied upon it.

The narratives in this survey are carefully chosen not merely for their relative influence (i.e. publishing history, eminence of authors, influence on later writers) but also because they span a large range of human interest and endeavor: political, economic, religious, and intellectual. They are also divided between men and women, upper class and plebeian. I do this to gain as heterogeneous a picture of American sensibilities as possible. In addition to reflecting upon the preexistent pictures of Chinese reality upon which these authors elaborated, I hope to suggest ways in which the real experience of the authors was distinct from their expectations. China did change many of these authors. Those who were honest, sincere, and empathetic attempted to do justice to their experiences and their acquaintances in China. To the degree that revelatory expressions made by these authors were explicable and replicable by later writers and readers, they represent a significant source of insight for cultural observers interested in the

relationship between China and the United States.

But my analytical concern, ultimately, is with the actual persons involved–the faith I have in the existence of authors and the subjects they allude to in these personal narratives. In evaluating their narratives, I will draw upon my own experiences in China, my relationships with Chinese people, and my years of literary, philosophical, historical, sociological, and missiological research on China. In reference to his own book on China, China and The United States, John King Fairbank argues that personal experience abroad is a necessary aspect when scholarship crosses cultural boundaries:

> Research in libraries and observation in the field are both indispensable in the study of another society, but I believe the latter has a special value in the case of China. . . . [T]he ways of an alien land have to be experienced to be understood or even believed. (425)

I enter this project with several set ideas about Americans and Chinese. My ideas have been formed through ten years of deeply satisfying relationships with Chinese scholars and students in the United States, Hong Kong, and the People's Republic of China. Six years of leading American college students on lingua cultural exchange programs to the PRC have made me an informed interpreter of people's experiences. Countless times I have comforted or challenged students and friends with their own observations, reflecting on their cultural expectations and interpretations and comparing them to insights gleaned from the intellectual gifts of culturally distinct friends or scholarly works. With great allowances for historical distance, I approach the authors in this study in much the same way, taking their observations at face value as indicators of

their experience and feelings but also as reflective of their own cultural biases and expectations.

This evaluative survey is significant because the authors discussed were responsible, in part, for the nascent American literary culture that would take China and the East for its imaginative playground. The tropes formalized by these early published accounts contributed to the expectations of American readers about subsequent accounts of China. They defined the allowable horizon of meaning for others in expressing and describing China. In this watershed, we can identify principal streams and varying tributaries that stand apart–a literary divide that continues to the present day. Since the observations in these books have lived on in political, economic, literary, and military policies of the last 150 years, they are worthy of careful analysis. These works have been scarcely studied in any context and never, to my knowledge, in relation to one another.

In the modern academy, moral criticism has largely given way to the authority of specialization and obscurantism. I am not ashamed of my commitment to justice and honesty or my belief that they should be the goals of literary scholarship. When readers disagree with my judgments of individual writers, I hope our differences will be marked by the charity and goodwill of shared humanity as well as by the acknowledgment that we have as much at stake in this discussion as did Americans and Chinese of the past.

June 15, 1999

Madison, Wisconsin

Historical Notes on Contacts Between Chinese and Americans

American ties with China extend as far back as the early 1700's. The first rapprochement between these culturally and geographically distant people occurred not through intellectual or political exchange but through the sharing of a common daily pleasure: tea. Goldstein notes, "As early as 1721, tea had come into general use in New England. By 1781, a traveler noted that most Americans drank the beverage at least twice a day" (17). According to Goldstein, British customs records kept between 1750 and 1774 reveal that Pennsylvania alone imported 40,000 pounds of tea per year (17). By 1800, the East India Company, still an important supplier for North America, was purchasing over 23 million pounds of China tea annually (Spence *Search* 122). Although colonial trade was regulated by the Navigation Acts of 1651, which mandated a triangular trade through London, smugglers and other adventurers, including Anglophone North Americans, circumvented legal restrictions to establish other ties with China.[1]

Philadelphia merchants had traded with the Chinese since as early as 1682, and the material wealth that the China trade had brought the colonists contributed to an intellectual climate sympathetic to Chinese ideas (Goldstein 13-17). In Philadelphia, the intellectual and social capital of the Colonies, both Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, in their role as presidents of the American Philosophical Society (APS), held forth about "useful knowledge" that could be had from intercourse with China. Under

[1] Goldstein notes that Dutch colonies in the West Indies were the most common intermediaries in this lucrative trade (19).

their and subsequent leadership, the APS "actively promoted the introduction of techniques of Chinese sericulture, animal husbandry, and agriculture" (Goldstein 16). The cultivation of Chinese rice, the importation of genuine Chinese porcelain and European imitations, and the growing tea trade fueled these intellectual trends by providing a large portion of the American population with Chinese artifacts.

North American knowledge of China was not limited to Quaker merchants in Philadelphia. French settlers brought with them their fascination with *chinoiserie* and, in some cases, their experiences of mainland China. French Jesuits made the first recorded connection between an oddly shaped root growing in the Ohio River valley and the long-fabled Chinese herb ginseng. Prior to the French and Indian War of 1755, France engaged in a lucrative trade of American ginseng with China (Goldstein 22). Beginning in the 1750's, American colonials began to use ginseng in their triangular trade, reaching a high point in 1770 with 74,000 pounds of American ginseng reaching London for resale in China. Except for American ginseng and Dutch fur, most of the foreign trade in Canton was conducted using silver specie. In the eighteenth century, the balance of trade heavily favored the Chinese, and 90% of the incoming cargo on foreign trade vessels was silver bullion (Hsu 150). The tension created in China's trade partners by this outflow of silver led eventually to opium smuggling, primarily by the British, as an alternative barter.

Colonial resistance to British regulation of the tea trade also manifested itself in three unsuccessful attempts sponsored by Benjamin Franklin and William Allen, one of the Colonies' wealthiest merchants, to discover a Northwest Passage to China. Opening a

Northwest Passage would have made it extremely difficult for the British to tax or regulate trade between the Americas and Asia. In 1751, 1753 and 1754, expeditions sponsored in the colonies traveled up the Hudson Bay in search of direct access to China's markets (Goldstein 23). Colonial participation in this ultimately fruitless venture was outlawed by British legislation granting monopolies to royal expeditions. The American dream of access to Chinese markets wholly unmediated by Great Britain would have to wait until the Far East became the Far West and San Francisco became the leading port in the American trade with China.

Tea was but one area of common ground between China and the emergent United States: armed conflicts with Great Britain over issues of foreign trade became another. The United States fought two wars with Great Britain in the 60 years prior to the Opium War of 1839 - 1842 between China and Britain. During the War of 1812, the hostilities between the United States and Britain actually extended to Canton where the British attacked an American ship at harbor there, exciting an immediate response of the Chinese authorities who threatened to bar the British from the port if they did not leave their "domestic" disputes over the seas. Despite the hopes of the agitated Chinese, this would not be the last time British cannons were discharged in Canton.

Before the Opium War, most Westerners in China were limited to dockside business zones in Canton (Guangzhou)[2] and a few ceded islands. Their contacts with the

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[2] In general, I use the Wade-Giles romanization for Chinese personal and place names, despite the present day ascendance of Pinyin romanization. Most of the historical materials I use were written when the Wade-Giles system was widely accepted. Where place names or historical figures may be familiar to readers, I include the Pinyin version in parentheses.

Chinese were limited to business transactions with literate merchants, government officials, and day laborers. Therefore, Americans in China before the Opium War could only observe a socially and geographically limited segment of Chinese society. Likewise, Chinese impressions of Americans were initially limited to merchants and sailors. American missionaries like David Abeel were further hampered by Imperial edicts against permanent residence and the employment of Chinese nationals as language tutors (Hsu 151). Western women were strictly proscribed from the Chinese mainland on the pain of death, according to the logic that foreign merchants were unlikely to consider China their home if their wives were not permitted to accompany them.

All of this changed after England forced concessions from China in retaliation for its attempt to destroy the opium trade. The Treaty of Nanking (Nanjing) gave British citizens rights of residence in 5 new ports in China and removed the restrictions on the residency of women. Missionaries, along with merchants, were granted rights of permanent residence and limited intercourse with Chinese intellectuals. The British also gained the island of Hong Kong as a possession in perpetuity, and it became an important staging ground for American merchants and missionaries. American citizens benefited from the concessions won by the British when Caleb Cushing negotiated the first treaty between China and the United States at Wanghsia in 1844.

Cushing's treaty differed from the British treaty in several important ways. While the Treaty of Nanking negotiated by the British did not mention the opium trade other than to fix the amount of reparations for opium destroyed by Chinese in the war, the Treaty of Wanghsia explicitly forbade American merchants from importing opium. The

American treaty was also unlike the British one in that it made provisions for American citizens to employ Chinese citizens as language teachers and allowed Americans to buy Chinese books. American missionaries particularly benefited from these provisions, and the provisions suggested that the new rights of residency might be accompanied by a greater understanding of the Chinese.

As China became more accessible to Americans by faster travel routes and the opening of Treaty Ports in 1843, the opportunities for casual observers and reports increased. Meanwhile, significant changes in the domestic conditions of the United States transformed the nature of American contacts with China. When the first transcontinental railway was completed in 1869, China became dramatically closer to American markets. The East became West, and San Francisco quickly displaced Boston and New York as the leader in the China trade. Previously the trade routes were physically and ideologically mediated by the British Empire, and this sea change radically transformed the opinions and policies of American citizens towards China. Direct access to China through California also meant that images of China began to be filtered through the Chinese already present in the United States, uneducated common workers often living amidst degrading conditions in Pacific coast Chinatowns. By 1880, Chinese laborers who had immigrated to build railroads and work in played-out gold fields composed one-twelfth of California's population (Fairbank 294). Direct access to China fostered an attitude among American politicians and religious leaders that the United States had a special relationship with China, an attitude that was eventually formalized in the Open Door Policy crafted by John Hay at the turn of the twentieth century.

In addition to changes in the American approach to China, mid-nineteenth-century American travelers now came upon a China laid waste by civil and international wars, with the *literati* in flight. After the Opium War, the Qing dynasty of China began to crumble as it was increasingly challenged with internal rebellions and Western imperialism. The Taiping Rebellion, "the most deadly and protracted rebellion in Chinese history," began in the 1840's when a peasant from the area around Canton became convinced that he was the younger brother of Jesus (Spence *Search* 170). Hong Xiuquan's appropriation of Christian creeds led to a popular association between his rebellion and the westernization of China. From 1850 to 1864, Hong gained control over nearly one-third of China's land mass. In addition to the Taiping Rebellion, two other rebellions further undermined Chinese social stability and the viability of the Qing government in the years following the war with Great Britain. Travelers to China would no longer discover a tranquil land governed by a strong imperial bureaucracy, complacent in its isolation from the West. The image of Chinese imperial splendor was permanently lost, and later observers intoxicated by the ascension of the West even began to question if China's grandeur ever had a basis in reality.

Charles Brockden Brown and the Example of China

Interest in China, particularly its highly developed internal trade system, burgeoned after American independence allowed for direct trade between the two countries. Charles Brockden Brown comments in his 1809 Address to The Congress that "the state of China must read us important lessons." He continues:

> [A] number of civilized men, equal to all the rest of mankind together, are brought into one compact mass of contiguous provinces traversed by roads, canals, and rivers, and blended into one system of convenient and unrestricted intercourse [.] . . . I dwell thus upon China . . . because North America is destined to afford a similar example of internal wealth and population in the coming age. (qtd. in Clark 281)

Brown's comments came at the end of a long argument opposing Thomas Jefferson's disastrous attempt through the Embargo Act of 1807 to maintain neutrality in a war between England and France. While it may superficially appear that China's example would support an isolationist viewpoint, Brown presses his point by asserting that China is best thought of as an ancient civilization, like Rome, which had succeeded in unifying warring tribes into a prosperous *Pax Sina*. This allows him to discuss trade within China as an example of what might occur between America and Europe. Initially, at least, the United States should join its civilized partners in free trade.

Brown continues by observing similarities between North America and China exclusive of the current American trade with Europe: "Our actual territory has about the

same area. It lies in the same beneficent climates. It is equally compact . . . occupied by one language; one people; one mode of general government; one system of salutary laws" (281). In time, the American Civilization would rival or exceed the Celestial Empire. The United States would then be able to look with indifference on European squabbles. But that time had not yet come. By citing China as an example of future American affluence and self-satisfaction, Brown argued that premature attempts to force the undeveloped country into economic isolation would derail a rosy future. His comparisons also added an element of grandeur to the young republic's future course.

Brown was a product of the Quaker mercantile sensibilities that dominated his home city of Philadelphia, and his heady optimism gives clear reference to the opinion of many Americans that China was a glorious civilization. But China was not only a source of inspiration; it was proving to be a source of great wealth, and for the less idealistic majority of citizens in the United States, this would become a more important motivation for understanding and visiting China.

First Accounts: Samuel Shaw and the *Empress of China*

In February of 1784, ten months after the cessation of hostilities in the American Revolutionary War, Major Samuel Shaw boarded the *Empress of China* on the first commercial voyage between the United States and China. Shaw, a moderately successful officer in the American Revolutionary Army, later became the first American Consul to China, but this initial voyage was solely dedicated to profit. When histories of the Revolutionary period discuss the Boston Tea Party in 1773, they usually emphasize patriotic American resistance to extortionary taxation, leaving aside the particular item of taxation. While the Colonies would not have gone to war over access to Chinese tea, this imported pleasure was the pretext for many colonial protests. With the war over, Americans were eager to reap the benefits of their independence. Shaw's mission was to establish strong trade links and a distinct American identity at the Chinese port of Canton, then the only site of authorized trade with the Chinese empire. Shaw made three voyages to China, and his observations of China and the Chinese, along with his personal journal of the voyages, were published posthumously in 1847. Although Shaw had died fifty-three years earlier, the excitement afforded by the advantageous treaty between China and the United States negotiated by Caleb Cushing in 1844 led publishers to solicit Shaw's nephew to share the journals and to commission a life of the author from the eminent patriot and literary figure, Josiah Quincy.

The Journals of Major Samuel Shaw describe Chinese conditions at the end of the eighteenth century. Shaw was a learned man, and though he had no literary pretensions,

his journals contain quotations from poetry and philosophy, in Latin and English. He carefully acknowledges the limitations on his information-gathering and qualifies most of his judgments about the Chinese, but he also does not shrink from criticizing practices he considered inefficient or unjust:

> In a country where the jealousy of the government confines all intercourse between its subjects and the foreigners who visit it to very narrow limits, in the suburbs of a single city, the opportunities of gaining information respecting its constitution, or the manners and customs generally of its inhabitants, can neither be frequent nor extensive. (167)

Shaw thus discards the possibility of "an accurate judgment" upon the nature and practices of the Chinese people and dismisses missionary accounts that claimed more authority as "enveloped in mystery" and "marvellous [sic]" (168). Since he never claims to have learned the Chinese language (an accomplishment that would have been incredible for a man of Shaw's background), we can probably trust that Shaw accurately judged his own limited ability to observe the Chinese people. His narrative, therefore, focuses on the commercial and political world of the expatriate community quartered in Canton and a few incidents of note that brought him into contact with Chinese officialdom.

At times, Shaw addresses the common misconceptions of Chinese behavior propagated by earlier British accounts, "The knavery of the Chinese, particularly those of the trading class, has become proverbial. There is, however, no general rule without exceptions [.] . . . [T]he merchants of the co-hoang are as respectable a set of men as are

commonly found in other parts of the world" (183). From an observer as judicious as Shaw, this practically constitutes an endorsement, but he balances this charitable assessment with later descriptions of corruption by the government officials who regulated the Co-hoang merchants.

The Chinese initially had difficulties distinguishing between citizens of the United States and Great Britain. The common language and appearance of these two peoples made them indistinguishable to the Chinese mandarins. In China, Shaw made strenuous efforts to establish an American identity independent of the British, with whom he experienced surprisingly few prickly moments given the recent Revolution. American and British differences would become more apparent to the Chinese as British imperialism and the attitude of superiority gained through their India experiences played a larger role in Britain's China policies. For the present, Shaw had to be content with the official Chinese designation of "The New People"(183).[3]

Many of Shaw's observations are made with future negotiations in mind: "The Chinese traders are in their manners open and free. They have a great command of their own temper, and watch narrowly that of others" (199). His view of the Chinese government, despite the "generally received idea of the excellence of the Chinese government," is largely negative (354). At one point he observes: "The laws may be good, but its police [enforcement] is extremely defective" (354). Although Shaw is

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[3] When Caleb Cushing negotiated the Treaty of Wanghsia 50 years later, he more accurately transliterated "United States" into "Ho Chung Kuo," or many-state country. "America" became "A-mei le-kea," beautiful and chivalrous principle of order (Danton 107-8).

clearly not enamored of China, his journals are mild in their censures. His chief interest in China seems to have been the economic advancement of the United States. To this end, his observations are specific and pertinent.

Upon returning to Canton a second time, Shaw simply notes that "there can be nothing to remark, in a second voyage, respecting a people whose manners and customs may be considered as the laws of the ancient Medes and Persians, which altered not" (227). As in his first journey, Shaw mostly chronicles relations within the expatriate community, except when he pursues questions of how better to profit from China in the future, such as his patriotic delight at the American success in bartering ginseng for tea rather than paying for their cargo in silver specie like other foreigners (231-3). On the whole, Shaw exhibits minimal curiosity about the Chinese people and culture. Thus, his American readers were introduced only to a land of mercantile opportunity peopled largely by European competitors.

"Without Wounding the Feelings of Any Good Man:" Amasa Delano in China

Despite Shaw's primacy as an observer, his account was not the first to reach the American reading public. The illustrious maritime adventurer Amasa Delano journeyed to China when Shaw returned in 1789 as the first American consul to China. Delano's account of the journey is included in his Narrative of Voyages and Travels published in 1817, thirty years before Shaw's journals. Delano's ruminations on China are only a fragment of his rich and varied narrative, but they are worth examining in detail as the first published account of China by an American citizen.

Born in Duxbury, Massachusetts, just south of Boston, Delano was the archetype of the adventurous, resourceful Yankee trader; throughout his life, he engaged in numerous maritime exploits, including three circumnavigations of the globe. A Narrative of Voyage and Travels was published near the end of his life and represents the fruits and reflections of a life replete with adventures. Although only two editions were published in the nineteenth century (1817 and 1818), Delano's account was widely read and frequently cited by writers and historians; Herman Melville adapted one of its sections in his long tale "Benito Cereno." Delano's comments on the people and customs of China, though brief, are extremely complimentary.

Delano's ethos provides a striking contrast to that of his shipmate, the punctilious Major Shaw. In his preface, Delano explains the purposes for writing down his adventures. While his practical side had been satisfied as to the journal's value by the prospect that seamen on future voyages, at least, would benefit from his observations,

Delano confesses that "I also desired to employ and amuse my mind in this work, and to spend, in a rational and profitable manner, a number of months which might otherwise have been left a prey to melancholy and painful meditations" (16). Delano indulges in no romantic illusion concerning life at sea: "I esteem it an occasion of peculiar gratitude to Providence when a man, depressed in his spirits, can fall upon a mode of beguiling his sadness which is . . . reasonable and useful in regards to his community" (16). Amasa Delano was a man of the sea who early in his career traveled the world not as a privileged officer but as a common sailor. Unlike Shaw, Delano evinces great curiosity about the various lands and peoples that he encounters, and he expresses a desire for community that is largely motivated by his extreme loneliness at sea. As a result, Delano gives us a more sympathetic, more personal account of China than does Shaw.

Delano's comparative statements always assume an essential similarity with his subject, a shared sense of humanity. Exemplars and blackguards can be observed and named as such according to a universal standard, regardless of nationality. Delano lavishes his narrative with details, revealing in his observations the principles and occupations that animated him. Delano includes an account of how the *Massachusetts* (the ship which bore him and Shaw to China) was built, her exact dimensions, and the names of all those associated with her, including shipwrights, merchants, sailing hands, and mates. No favors or kindnesses are left out of his accounting, nor is any information omitted about trade winds or trade practices in the provinces he visits. Delano's apology for being "at times too minute in giving details in this narrative," appeals to "the cause of morality and humanity" in motivating men to treat their companions with kindness and

respect (20). Through his exactitude, Delano intends to give each man his due. In life and in his narrative, Delano treats all men, regardless of race or station, with kindness and respect.

In a rare criticism, Delano observes that Major Shaw's commercial interests during the voyage made him appear like "a common speculating merchant," competing with honest men who had not the benefits of an official post to aid them in their commerce (38). Delano concludes his negative assessment of Shaw by stating that, "I have made up my mind on the subject, that the persons who made the regulations for consuls did not know or care much about them" (38). This sentence in particular seems to come from an old man rather petulantly asserting the rights of the common man. Nonetheless, he and Shaw got along well for the duration of their journey to Canton.

Upon arrival in Canton, the *Massachusetts* was sold, leaving Delano and his compatriots with no ready means of returning home. Limited like Shaw in language ability, Delano made no deep or searching analysis during this visit to China. Instead Delano secured passage on an English frigate and adventured for many years before returning to China in 1793 and 1807 to make more detailed observations. In his journal entries from the 1807 visit, he claims to "have often conversed with several Chinese, who were considered as men of information and credit," and his subsequent accounting is much more detailed than those recorded by Shaw or during Delano's previous visits (531).

Delano's explanation for the social and geographical restrictions placed on foreigners in China suggests that he did indeed draw his information from Chinese

sources:

> When the Europeans first visited this country, they were received by the Chinese with great kindness and hospitality, granting them every indulgence in the pursuits of commerce, which was reasonable. They at first had full liberty to go where they pleased; but the strangers soon began to abuse this indulgence, and conduct themselves in such a manner, by taking liberties with their women, and other gross improprieties which a Chinese can never overlook, that the government were [sic] obliged to curtail their liberties and confine them to the port of Canton only. (530-1)

Delano relates this fairy-tale-like version of the first encounter between Europeans and Chinese with complete seriousness. The Chinese were almost unbelievably good: "*great* kindness," "*every* indulgence," "*full* liberty [emphasis added]." The Europeans, suitable to serve as villains since they were not Americans, were "strangers" who "abus[ed] indulgence," took "liberties," and committed "*gross* improprieties [emphasis added]." This explanation presents Chinese society in terms completely explicable to a morally conservative sailor from New England, and moreover, puts the Chinese government in the best possible light as both generous and diligent in the protection of its people.

By thus dwelling on the kindness and morality of the Chinese as hosts rather than simply as trading partners, Delano sounds a note of identification that marks most of his observations throughout Voyages and Travels. One striking moment of such cultural identification occurs when Delano later allows that his knowledge of Chinese courtship customs resulted from his friendship with Conseequa, a hong merchant: "[B]oth the

father and son were very intimate with, and friendly to me" (533).

Delano respects the high material culture of China and the refinement of its educated class; he even disparages earlier accounts of female infanticide among the Chinese, "I have frequently conversed with very respectable Chinese merchants on the subject [of female infanticide], who seemed to revolt at the idea, and denied it altogether" (540). Undoubtedly there were many Chinese who were revolted by the idea of female infanticide, but its prevalence in China for most of its history can hardly be denied.[4] Delano's confidence on this point, in the face of numerous conflicting reports, emphasizes how sympathetic an auditor he was for Chinese acquaintances. Like the Chinese officials who first welcomed Europeans so warmly, Delano charitably wished to believe the best self-representations made by his friends. Delano ends his description of China with the following encomium:

> China in modern times has been found to be foremost in the arts and sciences and in agriculture. It is one of the best regulated governments in the world. The laws are just, and are maintained with such strict impartiality, that the guilty seldom escape punishment, or the injured fail to obtain prompt justice. (531)

Delano's enthusiasm is expressed through hyperbole, again in terms attractive to Americans enamored of their newly won freedom, especially with respect to "strict

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[4] Female infanticide in China has been thoroughly documented by domestic Chinese sources for centuries. Its resurgence under the Communist policy of one-child families has had the sad effect of undoing one of the most laudable reforms of the early Communist era (Spence, *Search* 96, 178, 185, 622, and 714).

impartiality" and "prompt justice." But Delano also criticizes the Chinese: "There is one law of China, which will be condemned by the people of countries where there is more freedom," which is that no distinctions are made between premeditated and accidental manslaughter (532). Capital punishment was the only sentence possible. Delano's general, if tempered, admiration for the Chinese system of justice is probably best explained by referring to the rough and ready system of naval justice under an authoritarian captain. His description of Chinese views on imprisonment reflects the American sensibilities that would later bring Alexis de Tocqueville to study American prisons: "Imprisonment is considered by them [the Chinese] as an impolitic measure; for, say they, men are only made more wicked by confinement, and those that are free, have to work to maintain those that are in prison" (532).

Delano evinced considerable curiosity about the segregation of Chinese women and relied heavily on Dutch accounts of the Macartney embassy to Beijing for his information about differences between northern and southern Chinese. The principal difference that he notes is "the freedom of the [northern] women." In southern China, Delano asserts that a "wife is never permitted after marriage to see any man except her husband" (532). In northern China, Delano has been informed that the Chinese are "much more sociable, and not so particular respecting their women being seen by the men" (536). The space Delano allots to speculations about the behavior and status of Chinese women is not surprising when one considers the depth of a sailor's longing for domestic scenes and female companionship. These Chinese customs must have also seemed remarkable to a man accustomed to the comparatively liberal behavior of

American women.

Delano's closing remarks that China "is the first for greatness, riches, and grandeur, of any country ever known," make his the most positive of all early American accounts of China (542). The prevailing attitude of Delano's account is that of a good-hearted adventurer who has given his best description of the matters at hand, an account colored by his bluff confidence in the essential similarity of all peoples and his desire to present "a uniform respect and attachment to all the good and generous qualities of *our* nature [emphasis Delano's]" (19). "*Our* nature," Delano emphasizes, signaling his allegiance to all peoples as part of one human family—a sentiment not unlike the assertion in the Declaration of Independence that all men are created equal. Delano meant his account to be useful for others who might travel, and so he addressed his readers as persons able to judge the merit of his judgments. Delano's narrative often acknowledges that others will either corroborate or rebut his observations by their own travels. In light of this future assessment, Delano labors to make himself both charitable and clear.

David Abeel: The First American Missionary to China

Trade between China and the United States grew rapidly in the early nineteenth century, and privately circulated personal journals supplemented the views of China presented by Delano in his 1817 Narrative. Increased awareness of China began to excite an entrepreneurial spirit not only among merchants and sailors but also among church leaders and religious youth. In 1829, the first two American missionaries to China set sail from New York. Elijah Bridgman was commissioned by the American Board of Christian Foreign Mission to minister among the Chinese in Canton. To this end, he set himself the primary task of studying the Chinese language. His sailing companion and partner, David Abeel, was commissioned as a minister among American seamen in Canton. As such, he did not spend time in language study during his first residence in China. After a two-year residence, Abeel returned to the United States to recruit more missionaries and to prepare himself for work among the Chinese directly. In 1839, he returned to China as a missionary to the Chinese in the port of Amoy.

Since Abeel's are the earliest accounts of an American missionary in China, his observations and judgments, in print and in person, were influential in the recruitment and focus of future missionaries to China. By the time that Abeel's Journal of a Residence in China was published in 1834, there was a large reading audience of men and women interested in missions who were ready to receive his opinions and observations. Three successive editions were followed by a posthumous edition in 1848 that included a life of the author.

Although Abeel recognized that there were "heathen enough at home," he was moved to leave his growing church in New York by the promise of free passage on a merchant ship (32). Subject to ill health for most of his short life, Abeel dedicated most of his energies to the advancement of missions in China. His Journal of a Residence in China covers the period of Abeel's first residence in China from 1831 to 1832. Most of his remarks are of a general nature, as Abeel did not at that time speak or read the Chinese language. He notes that this lack of linguistic knowledge "accounts for the dearth of that kind of intelligence which is found in most other missionary journals" (105). His severest criticisms concern the conduct of missions by other sects and the "highly offensive" behavior of drunken sailors (108). Indeed, Abeel's description of his journey to China consists of a reversed narrative of missionary failures, reflecting on the peril of his own venture and the flawed methods of those who went before. Abeel uses the introduction of a new location in each successive stage of his journey to reflect upon the missionary means used to reach the native populations. In some cases, he criticizes the means; where the efforts of Catholic missionaries had greatest effect, Abeel instead bemoans the ends:

> To the mind of one, who feels an interest in the conversion of the world, it is a painful circumstance, that the only spot under European control, in the whole empire of China, should exhibit to the heathen the most gross and absurd notions of that holy religion [Catholicism], whose name they attach to their worse than Pagan abominations. (68-9)

While establishing Abeel's strong conviction about the superiority of the Dutch Reformed

sect and how he plans to conduct his mission, these passages also establish the dominant tone of the journals: critical and unrelenting, focused on the prospects for mission work to the exclusion of any other information or perspective on the societies observed.

Abeel's impressions of the Chinese during his first visit are summed up by the following quotation: "Energy of mind and body is a characteristic of the nation. They are extremely inquisitive,–patient in research,–fond of literature,–free from the shackles of caste,–and comparatively but little wedded to their system of religion" (143). That this last point should also be his most repeated motif is not surprising. What is surprising, considering the nature of the observation, is that he hoped for greater fidelity from converts to his own creed. While Abeel's comparisons sometimes lessen the sense of cultural distance between Chinese and American, such as his identification of the Chinese practice of foot binding as equivalent to Western "laws of fashion" (86), he clearly meant his writings to inspire missionary zeal in his readers for "the most important empire upon earth . . . so filled with real wretchedness" (141). Abeel's basis for persuasion lies in an appeal to the reader's feelings of obligation and superiority, for "the conversion of China, with all the blessings attendant upon Christianity, becomes an object of worldly philanthropy, as well as of Christian benevolence" (142).

Abeel's first residence in China is marked not only by his evident conviction in the superiority of his beliefs and practices, but also by his disregard for the legal and social restrictions placed on foreigners by the Chinese. Terming the restrictions on travel by foreigners within China "barbarous prohibitions," Abeel charters a boat in spite of the "jealous, exclusive policy of the government," and is smuggled into Canton like a sack of

opium (92). In fact, Abeel records breaking many Chinese laws that restrict intercourse between Chinese and foreigners. Although he bases this disregard on the superiority of his religion, Abeel's practice of extraterritoriality[5] a decade before British guns secured this right for foreigners seems to stem primarily from his own willfulness. At this point, Abeel did not speak Chinese and could not take advantage of the opportunities for evangelism that lawlessness afforded him. After one illegal venture, he comments, "Here again we have had repeated opportunities of intercourse with the natives, and had we known the language, might have turned it to the best account" (111). As it was, Abeel turned his adventuring only to his own account by indulging his curiosity about forbidden regions of China and traveling in manners and at times convenient to himself.

Abeel expresses distaste for the physical appearance of the Chinese people (103). Thus his attraction to China stems from no love of the Chinese people but rather from the religious imperative to convert. In some doctrinaire moments, he discusses Chinese culture and religious practice, but his criticisms should not be termed racist since sailors, Catholics, and other foreigners receive equally scathing criticisms for their immoral or irreligious practices. Abeel's censure of the Chinese is best seen as one example of his overall hatred for the general immorality of the world.

Abeel is able to see nobility in the Chinese, but limits such nobility to Chinese Protestant converts, of whom there were less than a dozen in the 1830's. Upon meeting Leang Afa, one of the first Protestant converts, Abeel expresses joy "at the sight of one,

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[5] Extraterritoriality describes the system in which foreigners who commit crimes in China are not subject to Chinese laws but may only be tried by consuls of their own nation or that of a friendly Western power.

in whom appeared so distinctly the image of the Savior" (116). Since Abeel earlier describes how "unnaturally distended" Chinese features appeared to him, this description of Leang Afa's similitude to Jesus must be read as a spiritual one. Indeed, the basis of all of Abeel's perceptions seems primarily religious. His view of Chinese music offers another example of his conflicted attraction to China. He hated Chinese music and traditional instruments: "Such sounds, they pretend, are more grateful to their ears than the finest strains of European harmony" (126). Whatever his mission among the Chinese, enjoyment of their social customs and popular culture was not a vital element to its success. Indeed, it might well impede the conversionary impulse. In this respect, Abeel's ethos contrasts sharply with Delano's, for Abeel can find little in Chinese culture or behavior that excites a genial response.

While some of Abeel's narrative is labored and didactic, his prose contains moments of descriptive lyricism which reveal complexity in his thought and powers of observation. Abeel's description of streets near the foreign compound in Canton is striking both in its immediacy and in its synecdochic possibilities:

> It requires a degree of courage and perseverance to thread the mazes of some of these alleys, and emerge into air and space. Elbows and angles, of almost every name, formed by the blind corners of buildings, oppose the progress of the adventurer, and if he dare proceed, perplex him with their multiplicity. (77)

In this rare moment, Abeel reveals the "courage and perseverance" that underlies his attempts to understand Chinese "multiplicity." His trepidation regarding Chinese cultural

space and his recognition of its complexity suggest that there is more to Abeel's reductive religious judgments than mere fanaticism. His confrontation with a culturally foreign people in a land far from his home whose language he did not understand and whose customs he could not comprehend must have dismayed him at times. Not surprisingly, the vehemence with which he expresses his religious conviction increases in proportion to the discomforting foreignness he felt in his surroundings.

Abeel's early impressions were tempered when he returned to China after drumming up missionary interest and support in the United States. The Memoirs of David Abeel (1848), compiled and narrated by his nephew, G.R. Williamson, contains numerous journal entries from his later residences in China when he was fluent in the Chinese language and able to travel more extensively in the country. Abeel met more educated Chinese during his second residence. One Chinese scholar with whom Abeel had many conversations during this period went on to become the head of the Peking College, later Peking University (Spence *Search* 206). Abeel's new command of the language opened up areas of Chinese culture and learning for observation. Unlike their Catholic predecessors in China who primarily interacted with *literati*, Protestant missionaries generally emphasized service and popular expressions of religion. The Protestant missionaries more naturally associated with Chinese of merchant or laborer class background who would not challenge their sense of cultural superiority and its basis in revelatory religious knowledge. However, after the Opium War, all Westerners in China enjoyed a substantial improvement in their social standings *vis à vis* the Chinese. Abeel's awareness of the change made a deep impact on his impressions of the Chinese

people. After a visit by the newly appointed prefect in Amoy, Abeel commented on the urbanity of Chinese officials, an observation he had not previously been able to make:

> He is a fine-looking man, of courtly manners, and expresses the greatest kindness of feeling. If I had never lived in China before the new order of things, I should probably not be so much struck with the astonishing change in the conduct of the mandarins. Their present condescension and suavity were quite equaled formerly by their disdainful pride. (239)

Nonetheless, Abeel's improved social status and the right of residency in Amoy that he enjoyed by right of British military success did not change his overall approach to his mission in China: "The opening of so many large cities to commerce and foreign intercourse–the appointment of consuls . . . the regulation of trade by a fixed and published tariff . . . are points gained, which will promote the interests of the missionary quite as much as that of the merchants" (232-4). He no longer suffered himself to be smuggled into forbidden zones. He instead counted on his increased status to force his way into interior cities where visits by foreigners were still forbidden.

Abeel recounts "[d]ays and weeks fraught with cheering opportunities for preaching the Gospel" during his time in Amoy (238). Although he now spoke Chinese and had many opportunities to preach, Abeel saw few results from his efforts. As he grew more closely acquainted with the Chinese people, Abeel returned to an observation made during his first residency in China, now with a less happy interpretation. He writes, "It is to be regretted, however, that the Chinese never contradict you. It is evidently the result of indifference to religious subjects. . . . Say what you please against their

superstitions, they are never offended" (238). In his second residence as in his first, Abeel made little progress in his missionary aim. In the face of this failure, he contented himself with making a rallying call for more missionaries to carry on the work after him. In describing "the various and complicated miseries existing in China," Abeel sounds his most influential note (133), a note that focuses more on his goals as a missionary than on the actual miseries of which he speaks.

Henrietta Shuck: The First American Female Missionary to China

Beginning in 1802 with the Boston Cent Society, an association of women who made regular donations to missions, women rapidly became an integral part of the Baptist missionary movement. Of the 187 Baptist missionary societies known to have existed in 1817, 110 were composed solely of women (McBeth 81). By 1834, donations through women's organizations formed a considerable portion of the budget in American missions boards, and women from the Presbyterian, Baptist, and Dutch Reformed denominations began to discuss founding an interdenominational female missionary society (Miller 121). It was to such women that David Abeel, after his first residence in China, made appeals for support. Abeel was convinced that female missionaries were vital because of the strict sexual segregation that kept Chinese women from having contact with male missionaries. When Abeel traveled throughout America, he encouraged men and women alike to commit themselves to service in China. Among those who responded to his pleas for missionary partners was Henrietta Hall.

After moving to Richmond in 1835 with her father, the Reverend Addison Hall, Miss Henrietta Hall entered a seminary where she met her future husband, Reverend J. Lewis Shuck. They were married on September 8, 1835, after a brief courtship, and fourteen days later, less than a month from her eighteenth birthday, Henrietta Hall Shuck embarked on a boat for China. There she would spend the next ten years of her life as an equal in the missionary work conducted by her husband and the other members of the foreign missionary community. They arrived in China in September of 1836 and

remained in Macau until 1842, forbidden to enter the mainland of China by the Imperial edict against the residency of foreign women. After the English victory in the Opium War, the Shucks relocated to Hong Kong where Henrietta followed her vocation as a schoolteacher for 26 Chinese boys and girls. She mastered the spoken Chinese language and made considerable progress in the written language.[6] As she was among the first foreign women to establish residency in China, Henrietta Shuck had many opportunities to meet with Chinese women of varying social backgrounds in their homes. These women were extremely curious about the foreigners who had long had relations with their husbands, brothers, and sons, and Henrietta had ample opportunity to acquaint herself with Chinese familial structures and traditions. She was barely 28 years of age when she died, leaving behind four children and a remarkable journal intended for publication and use in the Sunday schools of America.

Shuck's Scenes in China; or, Sketches of the Country, Religion, and Customs, of the Chinese was finally published in 1852, seven years after her death. Although she had written it "for the special perusal of young friends and acquaintances in Virginia," the American Baptist Publication Society notes in its advertisement for the book that Shuck's writings "will prove acceptable not only in our Sunday schools, for which it is particularly adapted, but to readers in general" (3-4). The Society's optimism, though misplaced, was understandable. Following Caleb Cushing's negotiation of the Treaty of Wanghsia between China and the United States in 1844, there was an explosion of interest in China, both as a source of material wealth and as a place of imaginative splendor. Scenes in

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[6] Biographical information taken from *The Chinese Repository*, January 1845.

China saw just two editions, but an edited memoir of Mrs. Shuck's letters and personal journals was more popular, appearing in four editions during a twelve year span from 1846 to 1858.[7]

In Scenes in China, Shuck writes with an engaging lack of pretension, freely quoting from Chinese sources and using countless domestic comparisons to make her topic more accessible to a general readership in America. At times, she makes asides to women in her intended audience that emphasize her sympathies with the Chinese. "The Chinese," she states in a chapter entitled "Dress," "are never subjected to the inconveniences of a change of the fashion" (169). Unlike Abeel, Shuck seems to have made genuine friendships among the Chinese. Her perspective throughout Scenes in China emphasizes domestic and familiar scenes which were, to her thinking, common to all humanity. Her assumptions regarding the similarities between Americans and the Chinese seem remarkably like Delano's. In both cases, domestic affections and concerns become the basis of universal similarities.

Even when she visits an opium den, Shuck gives her attention to a young man "probably twenty years old, clad in rags, and no doubt smoking up his last cent, preferring to go supperless, or prowl as a beggar, rather than forego the privilege of wallowing in worse than brutal stupidity" (150). While her conclusion is clear in its judgment, Shuck points out the pathos of the young man as one who needs mothering, "clad in rags" and bound to go "supperless." Before leaving the shop, she draws to mind the addicts'

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[7] Jeremiah Bell Jeter compiled A Memoir of Mrs. Henrietta Shuck within a year of her death. It was published in 1846, 1849, 1850, and 1858.

families "starving at home," another evocation of sympathy for Chinese women and children (151). By comparing Western traders who sold opium in China to an American "rumseller" justifying his trade with the argument "if *he* don't supply the poison, some one else will," Shuck links the commonly exoticized theme of opium dealing and consumption with women's temperance efforts in the United States, particularly among Native Americans (151). She concludes the episode tersely: "The trade is doubtless one of the most enormous national sins known upon the earth" (151).

Shuck also demonstrates a keen sense of humor. Protestant writers such as Abeel commonly denounced Catholic religious practices as pagan and idolatrous. Shuck follows this course in her description of Chinese religious practices:

> The Roman Catholic missionaries to China have been repeatedly puzzled at the striking similarity of the ceremonies of Budhism [sic] to those of their own system. The Budhist [sic] priests practice celibacy, observe fastings and prayers for the dead, have holy water, and rosaries of beads, which like the Catholics they count with prayers. They also worship relics, and lead a monastic life similar to that of the Franciscans. (32-3)

Having made this aside, Shuck moves on to describe Taoism. By claiming to describe the "puzzlement" of Catholics in the face of these "striking" similarities, Shuck wryly makes her point, more subtly and humorously than her parochial male protestant colleagues. The Catholics are, in the perspective of the author and implied reader, quite pagan themselves, but they are blind to it. Shuck does not make this thrust directly, trusting instead to the perceptiveness of her readers to connect her remarks with this common

trope of Protestant discourse.

Shuck uses her humor elsewhere to poke fun at European and American self-importance. After noting that the Chinese consider all foreign embassies to be tribute bearers expressing their reverent submission to the imperial throne, Shuck relates that "[t]he people of this 'great, pure dynasty' call all foreigners, indiscriminately, 'outside barbarians' and 'fan kwe,' *foreign devils*, the confident assertion of the editor of Peter Parley to the contrary notwithstanding" (115). So balanced is Shuck's perspective in this passage that her humor cuts both ways. Both the Chinese and the foreigners have ridiculous impressions of themselves and each other. But Shuck saves her final thrust for an American target, the Boston publisher S.G. Goodrich, whose pseudonym, Peter Parley, was associated with moralizing children's literature. Parley was a fitting butt for this joke which concludes a chapter on blasphemy because of his rejection of religious didacticism in his tales for children (Hart 290). Baptist Sunday school mothers would enjoy this joke on many levels.

In another chapter, Shuck includes an English translation of a seventeenth-century Chinese scholar's retelling of the life of Christ. Her use of Chinese materials in this instance gives her readers a unique opportunity to see the message of the missionaries as it was received by the Chinese people. She includes a description of the Chinese illustrations, "one of which represents our Savior as a little boy having on a Chinese hat and dress" (116). The account describes "Yay-soo" as he serves his mother "with the utmost filial reverence" (118). Shuck interrupts the flow of the Chinese account at one point to observe that the Chinese scholar must have adapted his story from a Catholic

source because Mary, the mother of Jesus, is portrayed as the Queen of Heaven. By pointing out how the Chinese adapter attributed Mary's role in the celestial realm to her son's filial piety, Shuck once again parallels Catholic practices with Chinese traditions.

Perhaps Shuck's most daring comparisons lie in the area of theology. Beginning with the caveat that it would be an error to consider Chinese doctrines superior to Christian doctrines, she asserts that to say "there is *nothing at all* good in the religious codes of heathen philosophers, is also far from being correct [original emphasis]" (55). The rest of the chapter presents quotations from a variety of Chinese philosophers and religious sages without judgmental commentary, allowing the reader to "form his own opinions relative to Chinese theology" (56). In her chapter on "Aphorisms," she presents Chinese proverbs along with equivalent expressions from Christian scriptures. In her comparative treatment of China's religions as complementary to Western traditions, Shuck follows the lead of Leibniz and Voltaire, the continental tradition of introducing Chinese traditions as corroborating evidence in domestic arguments about social practices. While Shuck does not advocate relativism, her carefully worded apologia–"*nothing at all good*"–tacitly exposes the bombast of male writers like David Abeel, who overstate their contempt for Chinese beliefs in part because they fail to consider them empathetically in the light of religious aspirations common to humanity. Shuck's reluctance to condemn Chinese practices outright can be fruitfully compared with Delano's, although Shuck bases her opinions on more detailed observations.

Though Shuck later affirms that Chinese theology fails to provide both "accurate descriptions of the wickedness of the human heart," and "the true road to godliness, to the

Saviour" (60), her book is a sympathetic view of Chinese religious insights. She spends pages establishing the compatibility of Chinese and Christian beliefs and sayings, but only a few lines defending the uniqueness of the missionary's creed. Such treatment might be taken by some readers as undermining the missionary impulse in her avowed Sunday school audience. By refusing to participate in the absolute condemnation of Chinese religions dominant in Protestant writings and teaching, Shuck runs the danger of being accused of what Emily Dickinson calls "the starkest Madness–/'Tis the majority/ In this, as All, prevail–/Assent–and you are sane–/Demur–and you're straightway dangerous–/and handled with a Chain–" (209). Though written some ten years after the publication of Scenes, Dickinson's warning is an apt description of what could befall a woman of her era who steps beyond the pale of accepted beliefs.

In the seven years between Henrietta Shuck's death and the publication of Scenes in China, several longer and more authoritative compendiums of Chinese life were published in the United States, including the first edition of S. Wells Williams' The Middle Kingdom.[8] But their narratives and compendiums failed to express a sense of empathetic knowing, of affection for the object of their labors that would make them acceptable for use in Sunday schools and in women's missionary societies. However, since women were the primary financial underwriters for the missionary enterprise, they

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[8] Williams, S. Wells. The Middle Kingdom: A Survey of the Geography, Government, Literature, Social Life, Arts, and History, of the Chinese Empire and Its Inhabitants. Rev. Ed. 2 vols. New York: John Wiley, 1847. The first major scholarly work by an American on China, Williams massive tome was a standard reference for nearly 100 years.

needed to be given reasons for their generosity. In time, they began to supply the ranks of missionaries with their own members and to solicit more detailed accounts of Chinese social situations. In this context, Shuck's choice to avoid critical religious rhetoric in favor of descriptions which evoke compassion seems less iconoclastic. Shuck emphasizes her commonsensical identification with the Chinese, as well as her honesty about some of the seemingly odd behavior she observes. In a critical departure from the thrust of male missionary narratives, Shuck presents the suffering of Chinese women as the principal cause for missionary work among the Chinese instead of appealing to her audience's sense of cultural and religious superiority.

When Scenes In China was read in Sunday schools, the women who listened were challenged to imagine themselves in China working for the liberation and advancement of Chinese women. Shuck begins her chapter on "Female Degradation" by stating that "Females of America are but little aware of the sad condition in which their sisters of China are immersed" (163). If they were, they would hurry to ensure that "Christianity triumphs in this cruel land" (168). When she concludes the chapter by asserting that Christianity "secures her [Chinese women] against the encroachments of the stronger sex," Shuck employs the rhetoric of women's liberation that would soon be formalized in the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention and that was already familiar to her audience (168). Like Mrs. Shuck, the church women among her readers had found ways to assert their competence and equality with men through the lay ministry of the church and were eager to continue their struggle on other fronts. The chapter on female degradation contains many other items of note to American women: the subjection of Chinese women is

accomplished by denying them education and choice in marriage, and, in the overwhelming majority of the cases of infanticide, life itself. The women of China, as Shuck describes them, lay prostrate in subjection awaiting Christian deliverance.[9]

As Abeel had hoped, female missionaries in China were able to meet with and befriend Chinese women who were kept strictly segregated by their fathers or husbands. Henrietta Shuck was among the first to return with detailed descriptions of the plight of women in China. Shuck's detailed descriptions of foot binding, a practice "supposed by some . . . designed for the sole purpose of rendering women more easily confined to their own home, and kept under the constant subjection of men," precedes her chapter on "Female Degradation" (160). Shuck maintains her close identification with Chinese women in the beginning of the chapter by focusing on the suffering of children:

> The effect of the compressing process is so exceedingly severe and painful, that children will frequently endeavor to relieve themselves by tearing off the bandages. This however does not afford them even temporary relief as the sudden returning of the blood into the foot is of itself torture. (161-2)

However, by the end of the chapter, she retreats to a clinical description of the physical results of foot binding given by an English surgeon who dissected the feet of a Chinese cadaver in order to make a report to the Royal Asiatic Society in London. The cold language of the description–"the great toe . . . is bent with peculiar abruptness upwards and backwards, whilst the remaining toes are doubled in beneath the sole"–expresses only

[9] While this perspective seems progressive in a nineteenth-century context, such an emphasis on suffering and degradation can also be seen as condescending and inherently racist.

detached interest and none of the horror present in Shuck's description of foot binding (162). By contrasting her earlier descriptions of a frantic child with the detached account of a scientist, Shuck compactly expresses why female missionaries in particular are necessary for the salvation of China and why female accounts differ from those of their male counterparts, men like Abeel who saw foot binding merely as the Chinese equivalent of American laws of fashion. In place of belittling accounts of missionary strategy and thinly veiled dislike for Chinese features and practices, Shuck presents people and situations designed to draw on the sympathies of her readers. Whereas Abeel may have intended his writing to buttress a superior attitude that might motivate young men to action, Shuck emphasizes scenes of familial tenderness and neglect which would motivate women to give both their money and themselves to deliver their downtrodden sisters in China.

Eliza Jane Bridgman: The Path Divides

Henrietta Shuck's compendium of Chinese customs and material culture appeared in response to male accounts published in the middle of the nineteenth century which contained tendentious descriptions of China rife with social, religious, and economic judgments. American missionary and mercantile interest supplied a ready audience for guidebooks to the customs and conditions of China, and the increasing number of long-term American residents in China led to a broader basis of observation and authority. Men charged with administrative or executive responsibilities in missionary and mercantile endeavors began to publish detailed accounts of their experiences in China. Following Henrietta Shuck's short but influential career in China, the number of women serving as missionaries in China slowly but surely increased. These women also began to publish their experiences.

Women felt they possessed a different viewpoint on Chinese society, a viewpoint that was affirmed by some of their male interpreters. Several women wrote independent accounts of China alongside those written by their husbands. Concerning factual matters, women often adapted materials written by their husbands or other men. But by far the most distinctive element of their writings had to do with the status of women in China. Their work to better the condition of their Chinese counterparts grew out of a domestic agenda of greater latitude for the social and political expressions of women in America. Eliza Jane Bridgman's Daughters of China, or Sketches of Domestic Life in the Celestial Empire, published in 1853 and 1855, followed Mrs. Shuck's episodic account of Chinese

daily life with a particular focus on the plight of women. Bridgman's husband, Elijah, entered China with David Abeel in 1829 and maintained a continuous residence in China. He was the publisher of The Chinese Repository, a bimonthly journal of Chinese events and expatriate observations that served the foreign community of Canton. Mr. Bridgman, a noted linguist and collaborator in the translation of the New Testament into Chinese, often included the complete texts of foreign treaties and government proclamations in The Chinese Repository. Eliza went to China as a missionary in December of 1844, and shortly after her arrival, she married Elijah Bridgman. Mrs. Bridgman attributes her motivation for writing her book to "friends and patrons of Female education in China" (IX). Like Shuck, Mrs. Bridgman emphasizes material of Chinese origin, including an entire chapter from the hand of one of her Chinese pupils about the progress of Mrs. Bridgman's school for Chinese girls.

Bridgman begins her narrative with an enigmatic quotation about the subservience of women and the efficacy of the Gospel in righting this wrong–but the statement is not qualified by any designation of the country where this is the case:

> Woman is sitting in darkness, without love to shelter her head, or hope to illumine her solitude, because the heaven-born instincts kindling in her nature the germs of holy affections, which God implanted in her womanly bosom, having been stifled by social necessities, now burn sullenly to waste. (page v)

The "holy affections" and "social necessities" could refer to either Chinese or American characteristics. While it later becomes clear that Bridgman is referring to the "solitude"

of Chinese women who are sequestered by their fathers and husbands, the description of potential "sullenly [burning] to waste" could also refer to the social and religious potential of American women. Later, Mrs. Bridgman makes clear both her friendly connections among Chinese women and the social intention of her work among them:

> [W]hen the Chinese lady is favored with an exchange of sympathies with one of her own sex from another country, there is light in her eye and joy in her heart; it is not the flash of a bright and highly cultivated intellect,–for alas! she is not considered worth the pains, time and money, of being taught to read; but the women of China have souls. (29-30)

Mrs. Bridgman's "exchange of sympathies" sets her account apart from detached and judgmental accounts of China penned by male missionaries, merchants, and diplomats. Bridgman emphasizes human aspirations that would have been familiar to female readers in the United States. So strong is Bridgman's identification with the Chinese scene that she expresses herself frankly even when her dominant emotions are fear and shame. In reference to Bridgman's description of an attack by Chinese villagers during a Sunday boat expedition, Spence states that "[n]o Westerner had written about China like this before" (*Great Continent* 109). During the pleasure cruise, Bridgman's boat encountered a group of hostile villagers who began to pelt her boat and crew with large stones, "At this crisis two boatmen rushed into the little cabin wounded, it was fearful–it seemed as if death was very near; the stones grew large and heavy" (62-3). Through the courage of their Chinese boatmen, the Bridgmans were able to escape after half on hour of pelting, "We soon reached the Macao passage . . . with grateful hearts to our Heavenly Father for

his protection in a time of such imminent peril. Our boat was almost a wreck" (64). Bridgman's openness to Chinese impressions allows her readers to view the Chinese as capable of exciting the same emotions in them as any Westerner could. Her frank admiration of the Chinese boatmen and her expressions of panic and fear in response to the belligerent villagers reveal a greater acknowledgment of equality between Americans and Chinese than even Henrietta Shuck expresses in her writing.

Bridgman's Daughters of China; or Sketches of Domestic Life surpasses the mode dominant in earlier writings which limited China to a scene of exoticism, mercantile industry, or missionary endeavor. Bridgman presents a greater range of human experience in her writing than even Shuck and Delano because of her greater acquaintance with the Chinese and her willingness to appear in a posture other than that of the benevolent or uninvolved foreigner. Even her relations with children under her care are presented with warmth and intimacy. When Dr. Bridgman's health required a short furlough in the United States, Mrs. Bridgman was forced to say goodbye to the students under her care. One farewell was a particular source of grief:

> Among the little flock, there was one who was unto us as a daughter, and we were to her as parents. . . . I took her alone, and explained to her young mind the cause of our separation. She spoke not a word of reply, but her heart was full, and tears and sobs told me the struggle of the child's affection. We wept together. (222)

By characterizing her connection with this student as "parents" and "daughter," Mrs. Bridgman provides the necessary context for her tearful departure from an 11-year-old

girl. Yet even more intimate in tone is her conclusion: "We wept *together*." Her students were not merely objects of missionary benevolence; they were kin, equals with whom she could commiserate in the pain of parting. This level of connection sets her account apart from the judgmental accounts of men and appeals to a desire in her readers for scenes of human empathy.

Following Bridgman's account, an increasing divide can be noted between male and female accounts of China. Women, with their access to the domestic life of Chinese women and their commitment to their own and Chinese women's social advancement, tended to write accounts of greater sympathy to the Chinese people. Men, following the critical approach present in both Abeel's and Shaw's accounts, tended to focus more on the economic and political conditions of the Chinese, and this led to greater detachment as Chinese conditions declined under the pressure of foreign encroachments and domestic insurrections.[10]

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[10] John and Helen Nevius are by far the most published missionary couple following the Bridgmans. Helen Sanford Coan Nevius contributed Our Life in China, published in 1869, with four editions through 1891. Her husband, J.L. Nevius, wrote a large compendium of Chinese customs with extensive commentary on the practice of missions among the Chinese entitled China and the Chinese. His book had seven editions between 1868 and 1901.

"So Much Annoyance and Disgust:" Bayard Taylor in China

Changes in American conditions also contributed to the judgmental tendencies of male writers and the benevolent intentions of female writers. American political and economic power, though soon to be blunted in the carnage of the Civil War, caused an immense increase in foreign trade, and Americans were beginning to assume a leading role in the China trade. Travel between China and the United States grew common enough that journalists like Bayard Taylor could journey to China with little purpose beyond literary tourism. Despite the differences between male and female accounts of China noted to this point, these accounts retained a common ground in a material and emotional commitment to China as a worthy field of human endeavor. Bayard Taylor was the first author to visit China as a tourist with no stake in the welfare of China or the future of trade between it and the United States.

Born in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, but primarily associated with New York in his adult life, Bayard Taylor rose quickly to literary fame through a careful cultivation of his friends and early successes. Although desirous of a reputation as a poet, Taylor was best known for his travel writings. He is the first of the American commentators on China to have considered himself a literary man. Before traveling to China, he had written about the Chinese in California when working on a travel narrative Eldorado (1850). His impression of the Chinese at that time was uniformly negative. This prejudice does not seem to have been significantly lessened by his time in China. Bayard Taylor's travel narrative A Visit to India, China and Japan in the Year 1853 went through

eighteen editions between 1855 and 1899, making it by far the most popular of any of the works in this survey.

Taylor traveled through China in 1853 while waiting to join Commodore Perry's mission to Japan. The Taiping Rebellion was raging at the time and even threatened Shanghai while Taylor was there, but he did not take this national upheaval into direct consideration in his judgment of the country's sanitary and physical conditions. While Europeans in China were not endangered by the fighting, over 600 cities were laid waste during the Taiping Rebellion (Hsu 221). Taylor mostly interacted with lower class Chinese and was hindered in making acquaintances by the fact that he did not speak their language. This did not prevent him from forming strong opinions about China and the Chinese which he relates in this description of a walk through Shanghai:

> [T]he stupid faces of the populace are turned towards you with an expression of good will, and there is no hindrance whatever to your studies of the peculiarities of Chinese character and habits. I was soon quite satisfied with the extent of my observations. Superficial as they were, I found nothing in the subject sufficient to tempt me into a further endurance of the disgusting annoyances of a Chinese city. (321-2)

Taylor's overwhelming impression seems to be revulsion at the physical, moral, and cultural features of Chinese life, "Their dull faces, without expression, unless a coarse glimmering of sensuality may be called such . . . filled me with an unconquerable aversion" (285). The care and frequency with which Taylor documents his disgust suggest that either the strength of his revulsion was overstated due to an affectation of

refinement or that he was extremely morbid.

Although Taylor's observations can in part be attributed to his virulent racism, this does not fully explain the complete reversal his observations represent when compared to the earlier views I have discussed. The humiliation of China in the Opium War and the steady decline of her government through armed insurrection had broken forever the image of China as a resplendent empire of beneficence and self-sufficiency. Taylor's published experiences in China were among the first to follow the Opium War, and they are a sad indicator that cultural attitudes often result from geopolitical realities. Rights of extraterritoriality, special trade concessions, and permanent residence in designated port cities began to infect Americans visiting China with a feeling of superiority that had been largely absent in those who had reported on China before the Opium War. Taylor's imperialist attitude underlies many of his observations, and may in part be the result of the Anglophilia that has infected poseur scholars throughout American history. Like the British, Taylor approached China after an Indian experience, and the way in which Taylor describes his impressions of India suggests much about Britain's accomplishments that Taylor wished Americans would emulate:

> We Americans need not envy England the possession of India; for, if we were not a people obstinately opposed to the acquisition of new territory–if we were not utterly blind to "manifest destiny," and regardless of the hints which "Geography" is constantly throwing out to us–we might possess ourselves of Cuba and Mexico, and thus outrival her. (73)

In the later editions of A Visit to India, China and Japan, Taylor's remarks must have

seemed prophetic as war with Spain over the territories mentioned seemed inevitable.

Taylor's emphasis on physiognomy and physical descriptions does not rise above the lowest form of human contacts. Taylor complains that the Chinese have "a total want of that elegant symmetry which distinguishes the Caucasian and Shemitic [sic] races. . . . There is no sense of what we understand by Art–Grace, Harmony, Proportion–in the Chinese nature, and therefore we look in vain for any physical expression of it" (336). In Taylor's work, we do not find the thread of identification between observer and observed, the sense of likeness so apparent in the accounts of Amasa Delano, Henrietta Shuck, and Eliza Jane Bridgman. Taylor's privileged position as a literary tourist freed him from most of the institutional obligations to edify and inform that constrained earlier accounts.

For several weeks, Taylor came in close contact with Japanese sailors who took passage with him on the same ship. Perhaps because of the forced intimacy of shipboard life, Taylor developed a more positive impression of the Japanese, whom he considered a race distinct from the Chinese: "The features of these Japanese were much better than the corresponding class of Chinese" (290). The Japanese also had more power and territorial integrity in their homeland. By accompanying the Perry mission to Japan, Taylor was able to observe Japanese gentry and *literati* in their domestic aspect of affluence and power. Naturally, he was impressed by a race so industrious, disciplined, and distinct as once the Chinese had appeared to Western visitors.

Unlike Delano, Taylor does not write to those who may one day come to test his observations against their own experiences. Instead, he writes as one who is infatuated by the proto-Romantic idea of the writer as a self-styled genius: "I have seen no article of

Chinese workmanship which could positively be called beautiful, unless it was fashioned after a European model. . . . [T]hey are utterly destitute of original taste" (330). Taylor affects only scorn for men of different opinions and spends a great deal of effort in establishing himself as an idealized arbiter of taste. At times, his exaggerated self-image expresses itself so clearly in his writing that a modern reader can only cringe at his arrogance. When walking through a small village outside of Shanghai, Taylor takes refuge from a curious crowd of children and beggars by climbing up a pagoda. Looking down at the "animated manscape" now at his feet, Taylor assumes the pose at first of a benevolent god and then of a king:

> Seeing a crowd of beggars standing together in dejected attitudes, I cast a handful of cash into the air, in such wise that the coins would fall plump among them . . . several other miraculous showers followed, but a desire to see the beggars scramble, betrayed us [Taylor and a companion] at last. We were greeted with loud cries, and arms thrown greedily aloft, beckoning for more. I cast among them upwards of twenty handfuls, and by thus expending the munificent sum of forty cents, enjoyed the feelings of a monarch, who scatters golden largesse. (352-53)

Taylor's "desire to see the beggars scramble" betrays more than his relative position within the text; it reveals the voyeuristic heart of a man whose kingly ideal of largesse extends only to "the munificent sum of forty cents."

Race proved to be an insuperable barrier for Taylor's perceptions of China. In sum, Taylor confesses that he prefers Macao to any other place in China "because it is

less Chinese. It has a history which attaches it to the history of *our* race; it has human associations with which we can sympathize" (476). It is apparent throughout Taylor's narrative that he cannot sympathize after the manner of his American predecessors in China. Despite his judgmental aloofness throughout the narrative, Taylor ends his description of life in Canton by relating his intention to learn about at least one Chinese practice "by personal experience:" opium smoking (492). He obtains an invitation to the home of a Chinese addict where he smokes himself into a pleasant stupor along with several Chinese addicts. After smoking nine pipes of opium, Taylor's "spirits then became joyously excited, with a constant disposition to laugh; brilliant colors floated before my eyes, but in a confused and cloudy way. . . . Had the physical excitement been greater, they would have taken form and substance" (494). At last, Taylor relates an experience which establishes common ground between himself and at least one segment of Chinese society.

Critical Survey and Remarks

At the beginning of his 1952 survey, China and the Chinese in American Literature, 1850-1950,[11] John Burt Foster makes this intriguing assertion:

> Fundamentally the ideas which the American people have of China and the Chinese seem to stem from the era of the clipper ship trade . . . . No matter how relations between the two countries have seesawed in the century since diplomatic relations were established with China in 1844, the basic American conceptions of China and the Chinese people seem to remain rooted in the memories of those days when Americans first went to China and brought back evidences of its wealth to the struggling young republic. (2)

A few years earlier, Alice Tisdale Hobart, in her essay "China: A Frontier in American Literature," insists that the early accounts, including those of missionaries, were "the raw material of literature," and "a part of America's heritage." After making such claims, it is surprising that neither Foster nor Hobart expends any energy describing these accounts in detail, or specifying what kind of heritage they provided. After asserting the importance of these materials in literary representations of China, both move on to later works of imaginative fiction. Subsequent literary studies of American images of China and the Chinese have either accepted the claims of Foster and Hobart without examining their evidence or have disregarded these early accounts entirely.

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[11] Foster's widely quoted study remains a 600+ page dissertation published only by UMI. Its relative obscurity aptly illustrates the current status of literary studies on China and the Chinese in American literature.

Although biases against the inclusion of travel, autobiographical, and missionary accounts in studies of literature during the period in which Hobart and Foster wrote may partially explain their oversight, the persistence of this neglect during a period of renewed interest in China and its representations in American literature is inexplicable. Historian Jonathan Spence touches upon a few American writers in his breezy survey of 600 years of Western accounts of China. Colin MacKerras examines S. Wells Williams' The Middle Kingdom (1847) in his sociological survey of Western images of China. Yet no works focused on American impressions of China examine the content of early American writings as they relate to literary studies, and there has been no explanation of what "raw material" they provided for the much examined later writers of imaginative fiction about China such as Pearl Buck or Amy Tan.

Jonathan Spence's survey of Western literature that represents China, from Marco Polo to the present age, appeared in November 1998. The Chan's Great Continent provides a wide-ranging introduction to dozens of Westerners writing about China and the Chinese. Spence calls his literary survey a collection of "sightings" a nautical term that denotes brief glimpses of a moving target, or the rangefinding discharge of a cannon in combat. In styling his survey thus, Spence avoids the necessity of a conclusion. His is merely a faithful gathering of scattered materials about which few general remarks can be made.

In his conclusion, Spence uses Italo Calvino's description of Marco Polo's interaction with the Khan to explain how the listeners of travel narratives demand and shape the emerging story:

> The ear . . . hears both what it wants and what it is expecting. . . . The curious readiness of Westerners for things Chinese was there from the beginning, and it has remained primed, over the centuries, by an unending stream of offerings. Precisely why this should be so remains, to me, a mystery. But the story we have traced seems to prove that China needs no reason to fasten itself into Western minds. (241)

In so concluding, Spence refuses to provide an explanation for his life's work and his own fascination with China, leaving the reader free to choose from among broad ranges of motivations. At best, we may postulate that individual responses to China were the result of individual conditions. To Spence, the reductive presence of a "reason" for Western interest in China would have perverted the diversity of materials from which he drew. By refusing to use comparatively his own vast knowledge of China's history, literature, and self-representations, Spence avoids judging his subjects on the basis of accuracy.

Spence creates space for readers to consider universal values by discussing writers who had a variety of motivations and by discreetly refusing to be doctrinaire in choosing among them. Perhaps, according to Spence's unspoken argument, the West is no more fascinated with China than it is with itself, or Africa, or Siberia, or Polynesia. Western representations of China may be no more distinctive than representations of any "other." This approach explains exoticism or orientalism as little more than a displacement of cultural material, since the description of the exotic relies upon established domestic tastes, regardless of how repressed this knowledge may be. Sexual taboos are only the most obvious example of this principle: the erotic allure of "foreign" sexual practices

depends upon the existence of universal sexual desires. Spence's conclusion suggests that the degree to which the authors included in his survey acknowledge their similarity with readers and subjects may be a means by which we can classify the individual narratives. Whereas Spence's survey is a victim of its scope, the particular focus of this survey allows more discerning judgments to be made about its constituent parts. In comparing travelers from the same land within a relatively short, though tumultuous, period of history, I hope to come to more specific conclusions.

Early accounts like those of Delano and Shaw portrayed the China they saw as peopled primarily by merchants and scholarly government officials. It is not surprising that China should be portrayed as predominantly of the same class as its observers because Delano and Shaw only had intercourse with these specific classes of Chinese society. Furthermore, Shaw's interest in China was limited to trade and politics because his motive for traveling and trading among the Chinese lay in domestic American concerns. Delano, while far more interested in the daily life of the Chinese whom he met, had few opportunities to explore Chinese life deeply. Yet Delano's relative freedom from an overarching mission based in American interests allowed him to make his observations of China without the judgmental element present in Shaw's narrative.

Trade, while an important first step, was not the only early wellspring of American interest in China. Missionary involvement in China began early, and China quickly assumed an important status in American foreign missions. The accounts of Abeel and Shuck reveal a division similar to the one between Shaw and Delano. Abeel's observations of China remained rooted in his domestically set agenda of evangelism. All

of his acquaintances and interests are described as bending towards this goal. Shuck, on the other hand, focuses on the similarities which connect her with Chinese women and children and avoids disparaging the culture in which her relationships progressed. Subsequent missionary accounts by Eliza Jane Bridgman further illustrate ways in which American women could imagine connections between themselves and Chinese women and children. The personal narrative approach which presents domestic American comparisons for Chinese characteristics, and the assumption of compatibility inherent in such comparisons, seems to have been primarily the domain of women writers. However, the example of Amasa Delano's narrative, which exhibits many of the same assumptions present in later narratives by women, suggests that gender alone does not determine the choice of narrative perspective.

The different classes of Chinese encountered by American observers also affected the degree of sympathy expressed in their narratives. Taylor, for instance, always seems to interact with peasants, who do not compare favorably to the merchants or noblewomen encountered by Delano or Shuck. Taylor may have also been affected by domestic racialist theories that spread in the mid-nineteenth century to justify the institution of race-based slavery in the United States and certain strains of imperialism elsewhere. Kwame Anthony Appiah argues that American racialism developed in this way:

> [M]ost educated Victorians by the mid-century [believed] that we could divide human beings into a small number of groups, called "races," in such a way that all the members of these races shared certain fundamental, biologically heritable, moral and intellectual characteristics with each other

> that they did not share with members of any other race. . . . By the end of the nineteenth century most Western scientists (indeed, most educated Westerners) believed that racialism was correct and theorists sought to explain many characteristics–including, for example, literary "genius," intelligence, and honesty–by supposing that they were inherited along with (or were in fact part of) a person's racial essence. (276)

Thus while earlier accounts of China may have differed in their assessment of the Chinese because of varying perspectives and goals, Taylor was the first American to write with what appears to be the assurance of complete racial inferiority in the Chinese. As a result, his narrative is the first American account which would have discouraged others from traveling to China or viewing the Chinese as anything other than a degraded people whom Americans should avoid.

The differing roles and responsibilities of American men and women in China also contributed to differences in narrative perspective. Though many men dedicated themselves to the study of the Chinese language, none of the male writers in this survey had as great a command of the language as the women. Henrietta Shuck and Eliza Jane Bridgman both had a better grasp of Chinese than Shaw, Delano, Abeel, and Taylor. At the same time, neither of these women held executive positions in either missionary or mercantile endeavors. Their freedom in this regard allowed them to approach the Chinese without evaluating their conformity or resistance to American expectations. Language ability and freedom to attend to persons rather than policies enabled Shuck and Bridgman to develop both closer relationships with Chinese people and a means of

communicating their heightened sense of connection.

Gendered differences in narrative perspective existed alongside the particular manner in which the economic, religious, and political agendas of the writers affected their sensitivities and priorities in describing China. Most of these accounts were shaped by the domestic concerns which impelled their authors to travel to China. Taylor's commitment to American superiority, Abeel's assurance of his creed's superiority, Shaw's commitment to America's economic preeminence, Shuck and Bridgman's focus on women's liberation—all reveal as much about life in the United States as in China, and the presence of these informing agendas suggests that these observers are as much unified by their country of origin as they are divided by other factors.

While I have argued that some differences in narrative perspective can be attributed to social and historical factors specific to China and the United States, other studies of travel literature suggest that gender plays a formative role in the perspective of a personal narrative. Catherine Barnes Stevenson observes this of men and women in her analysis of Victorian travel accounts of Africa:

> Men . . . write formal, distilled autobiographies in which the primary concern is an objective evaluation of the significance of the whole life (or journey). Women, in contrast, produce more private, fragmented, episodic autobiographies (often in the form of a diary or series of letters) which impose no overarching design on their lives or travels. Women tend to record, to surrender to experience; men to judge, to schematize experience. (9-10)

In the case of Chinese accounts, historical contingency heightened this tendency, as

women had more opportunities for personal contact through their roles as schoolteachers and evangelists in the home, while men took responsibility for affairs of state, commerce, and sectarian religion that required a critical stance to insure the prudent use of resources. Susan Morgan, in her "Introduction to Victorian Women's Travel Writings About Southeast Asia," makes similar observations about a later group of writers in a geographically related region: "The consistent pattern in the [woman's] writings is to insist upon familiarity in strangeness, identity in difference" (192-3). "The human normalcy" of foreign practices that Morgan refers to is vividly expressed in the accounts of China by several American women in the first half of the nineteenth century (197). Of course, exceptions to this rule exist. Mrs. Dwight H. Williams' A Year in China participates in the worst jingoisms of Taylor, and Amasa Delano identified with the Chinese people far more strongly than men who came after him.[12] As the Chinese social and political conditions worsened, it became more difficult for travelers from the United States to empathize with the Chinese social situation. As a result, personal accounts became more the domain of writers who were not repulsed by suffering. As Stevenson notes, women travel writers tend to "surrender to experience," and whether their surrender is due to historical contingency or biology, the fact remains that the women authors in this survey were, for the most part, more personal and empathetic in their narratives than the men.

The gendered divide between empathy and detachment, between the assumption

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[12] Mrs. Williams was the wife of an influential businessman and her account was published in 1864.

of universal humanity and the assumption (tacit or otherwise) of cultural or racial superiority, formed the varying strands of literary heritage that became in Alice Tisdale Hobart's phrasing, "the raw material of literature." Foster ends his survey of China and the Chinese in American literature in the following way: "The most obvious conclusion to be drawn about American literature concerning China and the Chinese is that very little of it is first-rate" (594). Foster bases his judgment on grounds of both the aesthetic insufficiencies and affective intentions of the works he surveyed. If a portion of the criteria for "first-rate" literature is defined as dialogic responsiveness, the presence of the other, and humanist compassion in the mind of the author for his or her characters,[13] then it is no wonder that literature following the example of Bayard Taylor should be deemed second-rate. But what this criteria also suggests is that later accounts of China which draw on narratives like Shuck and Bridgman's will have a greater likelihood of being judged worthwhile.

From this perspective, the immense popularity of Pearl Buck's novels, many of which are praised by Foster, and the twentieth-century dominance of female perspectives in fictional accounts of China are both explicable and, perhaps, inevitable. When Pearl Buck entitled her first fictional piece "A Chinese Woman Speaks," she did not inaugurate a new period in American representations of China; she merely built on the foundation laid by the personal narratives of women like Eliza Jane Bridgman, who both represented Chinese women to American readers and included entire chapters from their pen. While

[13] Here I draw on the definition of literature suggested by Mikhail Bakhtin's theories of the novel.

Buck, as the daughter of missionaries, may well have seen herself as an inheritor of this tradition, one of the largest unacknowledged debts in contemporary American fictional and autobiographical representations of China may be Asian-American writers' reliance on this distinctly American literary heritage. From Amy Tan to Maxine Hong Kingston, Jen Gish to Sigrid Nunez, Bette Bao Lord to Jung Chang, an emphasis on the degradation of women in Chinese settings and an empathetic identification with China as it suffers under Western or Japanese imperialism have become the hallmark of an "authentic" Chinese narrative. It may also be possible to discern from this gendered divide in narrative approach a chilling effect on the reception of male Asian-American writers attempting to produce fictional accounts of male experiences. While writers like Frank Chin, Gus Lee, and David Henry Hwang have succeeded in bringing their works to print, they are far outnumbered in the field of Asian-American literature by women authors.

It is difficult to assess the impact of the dominance of female perspectives in popular literature about China and Chinese, but identifying this trend and its roots may free scholars in other fields to consider how gendered views of China have affected American policies and opinions. The dominance of female and domestic images and metaphors in popular justifications for American policies such as the Open Door Policy in the early twentieth century and the distribution of Lend/Lease aid during World War II suggest that even if the trends identified in this survey had no direct influence on the formation of policy, they were of tremendous indirect use in establishing the legitimacy of policies in the eyes of the American public. American economic imperialism seemed less brutal when China was likened to a neighbor's home in which friends should have

free access. Later, when our neighbor needed bombs and machine guns, we were encouraged to "lend" them like eggs or milk. Even today, the "rape" of Nanking and the fabulous success of Madame Chiang Kai Shek in enlisting American sympathies during World War II can draw strong reactions from many Americans. While many of these images and metaphors do not differ greatly from the propaganda used to placate or enrage Americans in connection to other countries, their success in relation to China may be attributable to expectations created by the dominance of female perspectives in literature about China.

While gender, social conditions, and historical contingency were all influential in the formation and reception of the accounts considered in this survey, I return in the end to the individual characters of the authors which, I believe, reflect a wide range of human literary and moral responses. The virtues of empathy and sincerity can never be wholly explained by external influences, nor can vices of parochialism and disdain be solely the result of circumstance. Ultimately, an author's perspective is a moral choice reflecting an inner conviction about either the fellowship or the otherness inherent in the human condition. On this basis, we may also choose which authors to praise and which to condemn.

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