

Introduction

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China to the Western traveler has always been characterized by excess. There is too much of China to travel to, to experience, to comprehend, to describe, and certainly too much of it to subdue or convert. To Archibald Little, traveling through “the illimitable western mountains” of China towards Tibet at the end of the nineteenth century, the apparently endless prospect of mountains beyond mountains was both sublime and disheartening; it was a landscape which seemed to have no beginning and no end.¹ The title he gave to the account of his travels, *Mount Omi and Beyond*, moves from a specific location into a helpless — and romantic — gesture of what we might call ulteriority. How could the individual relate to something so huge, especially the individual who was a stranger? Christopher Isherwood, re-reading his own account of his travels in China in the 1930s, felt that he cut a rather ludicrous figure — “Little Me in China.”² Peter Fleming, more suavely, turned his own inadequacy into a gambit in the “Warning to the Reader” that prefaces his *One’s Company: A Journey to China*.

The recorded history of Chinese civilization covers a period of four thousand years. The population of China is estimated at 450 millions. China is larger than Europe.

The author of this book is twenty-six years old. He has spent, altogether, about seven months in China. He does not speak Chinese.³

Everything about China was immense: its area, its population, its variety, the problems and opportunities it seemed to contain. Even its degradations were outsize. And the magnificent recession of Chinese history stretched back through the millennia in a way that made Europeans,

and Americans, seem mere newcomers, encouraging them — and this becomes an important theme in Western travel writing — to think of themselves by contrast as specialists in modernity. Meanwhile if China was hard to grasp in the scope of its geography and history, the intricacy of its culture and language, there was also an inner dimension to Chinese ulteriority, the secret life of the mind and feelings of Chinese people, so often baffling, unfathomable, or simply closed to the outside observer. “People *may* describe with success the soul of a people,” wrote Elizabeth Kemp, “provided it is sufficiently near the surface, but the foreigner who has known and loved China for a lifetime would be the first to repudiate the possibility of doing this in the case of China.”⁴

For the foreigner there was always more of China than could be traveled, sketched, subjugated, dealt or traded with, inventoried, lectured or marveled at; China was a *mise-en-abîme*. And in the 1840s, though it was on the point of coming for the first time at least partially under the protocols of Western control, the country was also in the process of becoming more confusing. Chinese history is punctuated by periods of fragmentation and turmoil whose significant form emerges only in retrospect, if at all. The hundred years covered by this volume, from the time of the first Opium War to the foundation of the People’s Republic in 1949, were a period in which profound and painful changes overtook China in every sphere of life, and Western foreigners traveling the country were witness to these changes as well as, in some cases, playing a part in them. The Chinese Empire collapsed in 1911. Whether the People’s Republic has inaugurated a permanent change in the pattern of Chinese history, it is (as Zhou Enlai is reported to have said of the effects of the French Revolution) too soon to say.

But if China represented a daunting challenge, for the Western traveler and still more for the travel writer, there was no shortage of men and women eager to take it up, and the century

that followed the 1840s was not only the high period of European imperialism, but also of a cultural self-confidence that characterizes most of the travelers whose journeyings are discussed here. The spread across the globe of the influence, control and rule of Western nations seemed proof of the success of their cultures as well as of their armed forces and economic practices. The West was richer and more powerful than China, its progress more advanced, and to many it was in possession of a religious truth which had not yet been vouchsafed to the benighted Chinese. Even when it is accompanied by disclaimers of expertise, this confidence is a feature of most Western travelers in this period, though we can watch it becoming unsettled in some of the twentieth-century writers discussed here.

Bertrand Russell, for example, writing in the aftermath of the disastrous Great War in Europe, found in China “a way of life which, if it could be adopted by all the world, would make all the world happy.”⁵ But though he was anxious to dissociate himself from Western assumptions of superiority, he had no hesitation in describing what he saw in China, and his own reactions to what he saw, and proceeding inductively from these observations — as in this description of the contrast between the Chinese part of town and the foreign quarters in the Treaty Ports.

Often one passes through a gate, suddenly, from one to the other; after the cheerful disordered beauty of the old town, Europe’s ugly cleanliness and Sunday-go-to-meeting decency make a strange complex impression, half-love and half-hate. In the European town one finds safety, spaciousness and hygiene; in the Chinese town, romance, overcrowding and disease. In spite of my affection for China, these transitions always made me realize that I am a European; for me, the Chinese manner of life would not mean happiness. But after making all necessary deductions for the poverty and the

disease, I am inclined to think that Chinese life brings more happiness to the Chinese than English life does to us. At any rate this seemed to me to be true for the men; for the women I do not think it would be true.⁶

This short passage is “travel writing” of a high order, and though it is not typical it does display a number of the tropes, the rhetorical moves, which we will find in many other observers of China — the moralized landscape; the binary opposition of East and West, here inscribed in the topography of the treaty port, but also in the contrast between European modernity and Chinese “romance;” a reflection on the writer’s own cultural identity and loyalties, his enjoyment of the Chinese scene accompanied by a poignant sense of his permanent foreignness; the move to ethnographic and historical generalization; a modest uncertainty about his interpretation of what he sees; finally (and this is something almost all our travelers remark on) attention to the gender politics of Chinese life.

Perceptions of China

Western perceptions of China change as China changes, but they are also refashioned, of course, according to the West’s needs, preoccupations, and sense of itself.⁷ Intellectuals of the Enlightenment era had found much to admire in China, which they knew as an ancient and dignified civilization, even though a despotic one. The Jesuits, before their withdrawal from the country in the 1770s, had reported the richness of Chinese intellectual and aesthetic life. Chinese gardens, tea, porcelain, and design, were to play a major role in the shaping of European taste, and the Chinese language was exciting to linguists and philosophers. To a Europe emerging from a period of debilitating wars of religion, the secularism of Chinese society was something to be envied. The delicacy of Chinese artifacts, a Confucian emphasis on tradition and the family, and

the apparent stability of the Chinese state, also recommended themselves. But as the eighteenth century ended, Europeans were taking a more practical interest in the country, an interest that most frequently expressed itself in a trope of “opening.” The Chinese empire might think of itself as self-sufficient (the Qing state had no Ministry of Foreign Affairs),⁸ and there were many restraints and prohibitions limiting foreigners’ movements and activities, but it was clear to many in the West that China needed to open itself, or be opened, to the manifest benefits of international “free trade” and of Christian missionary activity.

Lord Macartney observed the Chinese carefully in the course of his unsuccessful embassy to the Qianlong emperor in 1793. Macartney, who had been sent by the East India Company acting in agreement with the government of George III, admired the “wonderful ability and unparalleled success” of the government of the Chinese empire, but he expected it to collapse in his lifetime.⁹ Pressures from outside were building. European merchants in Macau and Guangzhou chafed under restrictions on their activities. The English demand for tea from China was being paid for by the supply of opium from India, by the East India Company and other European and American traders, and aggressive trafficking in opium led to conflict with the Qing state. Our period begins with the first Opium War, which led to the establishment of the colony of Hong Kong on Chinese territory, and in the next hundred years other conflicts in the interest of the “China trade” would leave the map of China dotted with extraterritorial treaty ports, on coasts and rivers, open for foreign residence and mercantile activities. As the Qing government weakened further, the Western powers and Japan established and managed spheres of influence and interest in China, a process reaching a kind of culmination in the wholesale invasion of the Japanese in the 1930s.¹⁰

If China was to be opened to trade with the foreigners, it also received the attentions of their religion. Robert Morrison, the first British Protestant missionary, arrived in Guangzhou in 1807, and there were more than thirty Protestant missionary groupings in China by 1865. Missionary work, as well as trading and diplomatic activity, was one of the major reasons for Western travelers to come to China, and to recount their journeys, before the advent of the professional travel writer. Many of the leading sinologists were missionaries, who left some of the most sympathetic and sensitive accounts of the country and its people; but missionaries could also be arrogant, racist and bigoted.

As the foreigners constructed an image of China — ancient, traditional, beautiful, ingenious, disciplined, spiritual and full of wisdom, or old-fashioned, hidebound, quaint, devious, cruel, superstitious and lacking in energy — the Chinese and their government had to get used to a foreign presence within their borders and beyond their absolute control, at a time of increasing domestic instability and unrest. Foreigners were perceived, correctly, as one of the most destabilizing and dangerous factors in the situation. But at the same time, while China tried spasmodically to reform and modernize itself, foreigners were also seen as the bearers of the technology and ideas that might be adapted to bring a saving modernity to China itself. These are the conditions in which Victorian travelers visited China and reported on it. With the collapse of the Qing and the emergence of the Republic, twentieth-century China began to be seen as a participant, however awkward, in a global modernity, its turmoils and hopes being played out in the grip of the same forces that were shaping the destinies of Russia, Spain and India.

Land and customs are the staples of the travel writer's account. Here we have the topography of China, from the bustling coastal cities to the mountains of the West. Male travelers are supposed to pay more attention to political and economic factors, female travelers to

social and domestic life, but if this is a rule we will meet plenty of exceptions to it. Further, in observing how the Chinese live, these travelers are drawn to report what is distinctive and different. Canals were arguably a far more vital feature of Chinese life than foot-binding, but travel writers show much more interest in foot-binding than in Chinese canals. A canal was just a canal, whether in Suzhou or Solihull. But foot-binding was unknown in Western societies: exotic and grotesque, it was a practice which seemed to say something important about the Chinese, and about familiar themes of China travel writing such as cruelty, tradition, sexuality, and the position of women.

Much criticism of recent decades has been concerned to trace the inextricability of the more disinterested Western academic or literary writing about the Orient, including travel writing, from discourse that more manifestly served Western political and economic interests. When China or Chinese life is represented as insufficient, backward, misguided, in need of correction or improvement, one way to see this is as a justification — whether deliberate or unconscious, before or after the fact — for Western interference in China. There are plenty of examples of this in the writers discussed here. But there are also many instances of admiration and wonder and learning, enjoyment of Chinese places and ways and things. These must be seen in the context of history, but should not be vulgarly dismissed as merely an inventory for Western seizure of Chinese assets. Nor should all criticism of China be discounted as denigratory and serving a hegemonic agenda. As Nicholas Clifford points out in his essay here, foreign travelers' criticisms of aspects of Chinese life were often the same as those leveled by Chinese reformers themselves.

“Upon arriving in a new place,” says Michel Butor, “I will need to begin learning to read once more. The gestures will not be the same: other manners, other laws, other traffic rules.”¹¹

Travel is a kind of research. But all travel is also a form of self-discovery, a mode of perceiving the self. Even a tourist in the most insulated resort has left behind the familiar world, to experience things for a while in a different modality, while the traveler with open eyes and ears can see and hear other places and people, and can experience being seen and heard, in ways that can both clarify and alter subjectivity. All travel writers about China, in recording an impression of the country, have also portrayed themselves, whether as the briefest sketch or in a full-blown self-portrait for which China is simply the background. We can only become aware of ourselves in relation to others beyond ourselves, and for these writers this is the other meaning of China's ulteriority.

Theoretical Approaches and Areas of Interest

The second half of the nineteenth century was an age of Western imperial expansion — in China, largely a non-colonial imperialism — and of the development of tourism, and by the end of the century guidebook-clutching globetrotters were beginning to share the roads and waterways with the missionaries and traders, and with professional travel writers. An increased consciousness of cultural heterogeneity, which was itself partly a consequence of the experience of travel, led, it has been argued, to a greater self-consciousness and introspection in twentieth-century travel writing.¹² By the mid-century, with which this volume ends, Evelyn Waugh was complaining that, in the wake of the Second World War and “in a world of displaced persons,” travel itself had become impossible.¹³ Certainly both the experience of journeying, and writing about journeys, had changed profoundly in nature over a century of travels.

Travel writing received a new academic attention in the 1980s, as a mode of writing that foregrounds attempts to find the terms for or come to terms with different cultures and natures.¹⁴

The study of travel literature developed its own vocabulary, often adapted from other disciplines. Attracting mostly scholars from literary and cultural studies, history (including art history and the history of science), anthropology, geography, sociology, and area studies, studies in travel writing have become a fruitful site for cross-disciplinary interaction and approaches.

Its hybrid, “androgynous” qualities,¹⁵ which place travel writing between the literary and the factual, also account for the variety of critical approaches used over the last two decades. Mary Campbell sees the beginning of the critical discourse of travel writing in Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, and the epistemological shift it initiated in studies of culture(s). Borrowing Michel Foucault’s concept of “discourse” for an understanding of the problem of Western imperial domination over the East, Said’s questioning of “what we know and how we know it” and “who ‘we’ are” introduced a new epistemological paradigm into all disciplines.¹⁶ His application of sophisticated hermeneutic tools (hitherto used to approach high literary texts) to non-poetic and non-fictional texts — and indeed his refusal to separate off literary and academic from diplomatic and political discourse and action — not only opened up the field of literary studies to a seemingly infinite supply of new and socially relevant texts, but also gave rise to a methodology that still informs the study of travel writing today.

One field of interest asks “literary” questions about form, genre and tradition, (narrative) voice and modality, and fictionality. Formal matters here include the enquiry into the nature and function of stereotyping, the question of etymologies, aesthetics, authorship and subjectivity, autobiography, the truth value in narrative writing, the rhetorical nature of “fact,” the issue of “identification in the reading process, inter-cultural ‘translation,’ ” and the use and function of metaphor and other figures.¹⁷

Another field of enquiry focuses on the “factual” and discursive side of the travel text. Influenced by history, women’s studies, colonial discourse analysis and postcolonial theory, modes of enquiry have included issues of nationalism and imperialism and the male and female traveler’s stance towards them, the (fe)male gaze, imperial eyes, contact zones, transculturation, and questions of sex and gender in the travel text. Ethnographers and anthropologists have illuminated particular lines of argument or suggested particular methodologies for the study of travel writing, as have, more recently, psychoanalytical models of alterity, which have in turn been taken up by postcolonial social and cultural theorists.¹⁸

Another recent move has been the development of postmodern theories of space and mobility which are now replacing what Campbell calls “the polemics and models produced by an academic collectivity concerned mostly with locatable cultures, bounded nations, and the imperial past.”¹⁹ In the postmodern age, questions put to travel writing are likely to be framed in terms of concepts such as exile, displacement, nomadism, globalization, diaspora, inexpressibility, elusiveness, and otherness.

No doubt the study of travel writing will continue to be a site for multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary methodologies, which illuminate and learn from one another.

Issues of Representation

The essays in this volume find a common interest in matters of representation. There are basic questions which any reader of the travel text must ask — about the material selected by the traveler for description, her point of view and ideological assumptions, and the degree of realism, detail, and credibility the travelogue offers. Beyond these questions, a larger and more theoretical field of enquiries opens up. At this more abstract level, we might consider the ways the world of

China in the nineteenth and early twentieth century is re-imagined through various representations, how journeys from familiarity to otherness can be described, and the connection between travel and writing explored. In their collection of essays, James Duncan and Derek Gregory speak of the multiple sites at which travel writing takes place, and they point to the spatial nature of representation.²⁰ Notebooks, diaries, journals, letters, and logs are just a few of the textual manifestations which are combined, revised and edited for publication, thus turning the final travel text into a series of different spatialities entering into its own construction.

If the pen is constantly in motion, as is the author, in producing various mental and physical versions of what will later become his travelogue, the various media with which the traveler records his impressions are also important, as Duncan and Gregory suggest. Interdisciplinary studies have long moved beyond a neat distribution of media into compartments, and the scholar of travel writing may make use not only of journals, letters and published writings (formerly assigned to literary scholars and historians), but also of sketches and paintings (the art historian's domain), postcards, photographs, and films (previously reserved for historians of photography and the moving image), maps and geographical charts (geography's domain), and various non-fictional descriptions of peoples and cultures (the ethnographer's field). Attending to what Duncan and Gregory call the "physicality of representation" implies reading the travel text across different forms and analyzing their different valences and silences.²¹

Another point related to representation is the act of translation. Travel writing moves in a liminal space between knowledge of the self and the encounter with and understanding of the other. Translation, literally meaning being transported from one place to another, entails both losses and gains, but most importantly it is never value-neutral or innocent. In fact, travel writing

is, as Michael Hanne argues, “always concerned in one way or another, with the *construction* of an Other.”²² Travel accounts often adopt an extreme method of translation by either, in an imperialist gesture, domesticating and thus reducing the foreign to fit into a framework that reproduces that of the self, or, in an opposite anti-imperialist gesture, exoticizing the Other so as to make it distant and simply alien from the observing self. We expect from travel writing a truthfulness that we do not expect from, for example, the novel, but the lines between fact and fiction, embellishment and reality, and the nature of rhetoric, are constantly negotiated in the travelogue.²³ The more time we spend in the space-in-between of the travel text, the more authorities, approaches and assumptions are questioned rather than confirmed.

Introduction to the Essays

If China is too big a subject for traveler or writer to cover, the same is true of travel writing about China from the 1840s to the 1940s. This is not an encyclopedia, but a collection of essays on a selection of topics and writers; gaps and omissions are inevitable, but so is a lively diversity of subjects and approaches. The essays here discuss a variety of sites or genres within the travel account; they introduce different media and analyze how unfamiliar experience takes form in writing and images. While this collection discusses a representative variety of travel texts about China, it also introduces many of the historical traveler types Mary Campbell lists: “colonial masters, pilgrims, explorers, ambassadors, ambivalent wives, roving soldiers, ecstatic cross-dressers, conquistadores, missionaries, merchants, escaped slaves, idle students of the gentry and aristocracy, ‘adventurers,’ and alienated modern artists.”²⁴

With John Francis Davis — sinologist, an East India Company employee in Canton, and later a member of Lord Amherst’s failed diplomatic mission to Peking in 1816 — we encounter a

traveler who moves between his fascination with the country and his British loyalties. Tamara Wagner's essay discusses Davis's book *Sketches in China* (1841) in light of its paradoxical struggle on the one hand to fabricate the self-portrait of a curious post-Romantic traveler mesmerized by China's otherness, and, on the other, to embed this idealistic celebration of the foreign country's "lost" civilization within an intrinsically imperialist discourse of superiority, which is visible in shrewd observations about the country's military and commercial values. Travel writing as a genre becomes not only appropriated, but defined differently through such ruptures in the representation, and further through a deliberate distancing from earlier, Romantic, accounts.

Elizabeth Chang's essay discusses another important type of China traveler, the missionary. Her essay suggests, like Wagner's, that the Western intercourse with China depended on presuppositions about the inextricability of Chinese economic and political practice from more aesthetic concerns. While it shows how the Reverend William Medhurst's travel narrative, *A Glance at the Interior of China: Obtained through a Journey in the Silk and Green Tea Districts* (1850), engages with the commercial possibilities of two significant import products, Chang's essay also reads his text in the context of a larger general process of visual conversion that was progressively opening China to Victorian eyes. With the successes of the First Opium War, British travelers and writers were increasingly able to penetrate and revise the closed visual system that had defined British notions of a Chinese way of seeing. Medhurst's narrative, in its printed text as well as its engraved illustrations, offers both a duplication of this alternative Chinese visual aesthetic and an intimation of its eventual undoing.

"Imperialism," argues Q. S. Tong, "is by definition necessarily 'traveling,' given its innate desires to extend its domains of control and to expand its spheres of influence, primarily,

though not exclusively, for economic interest and trading privileges.” His example of James Bruce, the Eighth Earl of Elgin, who traveled to China twice in the 1850s, suggests that diplomatic missions to China are metonymic of a collective imperial movement, driven and defined by the need to materialize the British Empire’s vision of itself — a project Elgin was not completely at ease with. Tong demonstrates how Elgin’s accounts of his missions to China are characterized by the only seemingly paradoxical co-existence of liberal ideas and imperialist duties, a mixture of motives characteristic of England itself in much of the nineteenth century.

A central concern in this collection — the question of representation — recurs in Tom Prasch’s essay on John Thomson’s China photography. While the Scottish photographer Thomson expresses, in his notes and commentaries, a fundamental faith in the straightforward representational character of photography as a medium, his practices belie such simple realism. Prasch suggests that Thomson brings into the field his own Victorian conceptions about race, class and civilization, which, in turn, affect the pictures he takes, from the choices he makes in picking “characteristic scenes and types” to the compositional strategies he employs in posing his chosen subject. Social-scientific preconceptions and artistic conventions come together to create images of the Chinese people as Thomson, and his Victorian audience, expected them to be.

The focus of Ross Forman’s essay is not on a particular journey or group, but on one of the great themes of all travel. He discovers in Chinese food, and in the way it has been consumed, enjoyed and appreciated, refused and vilified, compared, misunderstood, and imitated by foreigners (and sometimes adapted to their taste), a whole history of cultural interaction with its own language, oral, visceral, and ritualistic. All travelers’ tales are about food. In travel writing the strangeness of its food was a code for China’s alterity, but a Chinese banquet also

proved often a test for the visitor, the most inward of all encounters with China's material culture.

Julia Kuehn combines the enquiry into recent critical approaches to the travel genre — including the feminist and the (post-)colonial paradigms — with consideration of the process of approaching, describing and understanding otherness. Focusing on the Chinese travel accounts of a number of female travelers at the turn of the century, which include the British travelers Isabella Bird, Constance Cumming, and Alicia Little, and the Australian novelist Mary Gaunt, this essay understands the Westerner's encounter with Chinese institutions, city and landscapes as a potential site for an active hermeneutical process which results in a “fusion of horizons,” in which the observer and observed ideally meet in an inter-subjective space where subject and object positions are eradicated in favor of dialogue.

Alicia Little (Mrs. Archibald Little) is one of the best-known of the China travelers. Arriving in China with her husband in 1886, she was to produce three novels and five travel books about the country. She was also a social activist, robustly determined to alleviate the suffering she saw about her in China, and she played a leading role in the early phases of the anti-footbinding movement. Susan Schoenbauer Thurin's essay considers in particular this aspect of Little's travels and writing. Alert as we have become to the “othering” process of the traveler, as well as to the pitfalls of sentimentalism, cultural superiority, and condescension, both Chinese and Western readers seem unsure how to respond to the humanitarianism of Little's activities and her representation of China's poor and disadvantaged. Thurin's essay sets itself the historical task of recovering the contemporary meaning of Little's altruism, which seems to fascinate and embarrass us in equal measure.

If Thurin's essay is structured by Little's ideological framework centering on charity, Susan Morgan's discussion of Isabella Bird Bishop uses another common rhetorical and ideological frame for the discussion of China at the time: the magical notion of the "China trade." Bird is the other famous female traveler in China, and Morgan shows how her travelogue *The Yangtze Valley and Beyond* (1899) employs a rhetoric that clearly invokes the book's informational agenda. The opening of China to the West put a premium on knowledge about the vast country. Bird's travelogue and her collection of images, *Chinese Pictures: Notes on Photographs Made in China* (1900), suggested to the British public that China was not unfathomable, but, indeed, manageable; "a quality," writes Morgan, "which speaks both to its economic promise for British merchants and investors and to its appropriate international position as dependent 'on the statesmanship and influence of Great Britain.' "

With the twentieth century, and the increased momentum of those political changes that revolutionized Chinese lives, the themes of Victorian travel assume new shapes. In the new century — an age in which, as Thomas Mann remarked, the destiny of man presented its meanings in political terms — travelers often seemed disposed to view China as a political problem, or puzzle, or cause. Elaine Ho's essay concentrates on the Pearl River as an axis between colonial Hong Kong and a mainland fermenting momentous change. Governor Lugard of Hong Kong, the scholarly orientalist Charles Eliot, and those globetrotting Fabian observers Beatrice and Sidney Webb, all created different kinds of knowledge of Chinese people and their lives in the early years of the new century. Each brought with them a professional agenda that equipped them to see China in a particular way, but Ho's essay also shows what they were not able to see, the China which these travelers' imperialist and orientalist optic rendered invisible.

Nicholas Clifford writes about the American traveler Harry Franck, whose books about China belong to the 1920s. Franck was not a missionary, sinologist, diplomat, political analyst, or practitioner of beautiful writing, but he turned his remarkably independent-minded gaze on everyday life, and offered what he claimed was an account of the authentic China, a “truthful impression” animated by a vivid sense of place. His work raises for Clifford the question of the truth of any traveler’s report; Franck’s travel books are entirely truthful, Clifford concludes, but we need to consider just what they are truthful about.

By the end of the 1930s we are in what Paul Fussell called “the decadent stage” of the “between-the-wars travel book.”²⁵ China under Japanese attack elicits a war book, and W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood’s *Journey to a War*, discussed here by Hugh Haughton, is a highly self-conscious, internally dialogic document. Haughton shows how it picks its way past the wandering rocks of propaganda on the one hand and romantic Orientalism on the other, to try to make out, in wartorn China, the truth of the present (“And maps can really point to places/ Where life is evil now”) and the shape of the future. The wars of aggression and ideology that were convulsing China would soon break again over Europe; for Auden and Isherwood, and for the poet and teacher William Empson, one reason for travel was the need to see one’s own culture and predicament more clearly.

Meanwhile, the challenge of foreign experience was always also a challenge for the writer. The American journalist and political activist Agnes Smedley, whose path crossed briefly with that of Auden and Isherwood in 1938, was a fierce partisan of the Chinese revolution, and felt that her own background in poverty and struggle enabled her to identify strongly with the soldiers of the Red Army. In the last essay here, Douglas Kerr examines the tension, even contradiction, between the often declared motive of Smedley’s China reporting, which was to tell

the unvarnished truth about the Chinese people and what they were undergoing, and the carefully crafted rhetorical and narrative tropes she employed to tell their story.

The themes of the Victorian travelers to China — aesthetic, missionary, political, ethnographic, critical, comparative — frequently emerge again in the twentieth-century accounts, in a different idiom; so do many of the questions they raise. And in a similar way, the reader of these essays will encounter topics, approaches, and ideas that lead back, or point forward, to the work of other writers in this volume. Travel and reading are strangely analogous activities. If the traveler needs, as Butor says, to begin learning to read once more, the reader too may hope to learn new understandings of travel, from others who have passed along the way. Reading, like traveling, has its own ulteriority, but neither need be a solitary experience.

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- ¹ Archibald John Little, *Mount Omi and Beyond* (London: Heinemann, 1901), 103.
- ² W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood, *Journey to a War* [1939], rev. ed. (London: Faber, 1973), 8.
- ³ Peter Fleming, *One's Company: A Journey to China* (London: Cape, 1934), i.
- ⁴ E. G. Kemp, *The Face of China* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1909), vii.
- ⁵ Bertrand Russell, *The Problem of China* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1922), 17.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, 74–5.
- ⁷ See Colin Mackerras, *Western Images of China* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1989).
- ⁸ Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 1999), 117.
- ⁹ George Earl Macartney, *An Embassy to China: Lord Macartney's Journal 1793–1794*, ed. J. L. Cranmer-Byng (London: Longmans, 1962), 238. Macartney died in 1806 and the last Manchu emperor abdicated in 1912.
- ¹⁰ At the time of the Japanese surrender in 1946 there were 1.25 million Japanese troops in China and a further 900,000 in Manchuria, and over 1.75 million Japanese civilians in the country. See Spence, 460.
- ¹¹ Michel Butor, “Travel and Writing,” *Temperamental Journeys: Essays on the Modern Literature of Travel*, ed. Michael Kowalewski (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 60.
- ¹² Helen Carr, “Modernism and travel (1880–1940),” in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, eds. Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 70–86; quotation 73.
- ¹³ Evelyn Waugh, “Preface” in *When the Going was Good* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1947), ix–xii; quotation xi.
- ¹⁴ See James Duncan and Derek Gregory, “Introduction,” in *Writes of Passage: Reading Travel Writing*, eds. James Duncan and Derek Gregory (London: Routledge, 1999), 1–13.
- ¹⁵ Michael Kowalewski, “Introduction: The Modern Literature of Travel,” in *Temperamental Journeys: Essays on the Modern Literature of Travel*, ed. Michael Kowalewski (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 1–16; quotation 8. See also Peter Hulme, “Travel writing has four near neighbours, in generic terms: the novel (literature), ethnography (anthropology), the document (history), and reportage (sociology).” Peter Hulme, “Introduction,” in *Studies in Travel Writing* 1 (1997): 1–8; quotation 5. Peter Bishop, too, points to the hybrid nature of the travel genre, which is regularly “conceived to be either a poor cousin of scientific observation, or else to fall short of the

creativity of 'pure' fiction." Peter Bishop, *The Myth of Shangri-La: Tibet, Travel Writing and the Western Creation of Sacred Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 3.

¹⁶ Mary Baine Campbell, "Travel Writing and Its Theory," in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, eds. Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 261–78; quotation 265.

¹⁷ See, for this paragraph, Campbell, 266 and 263. Campbell also gives examples of these formal approaches to travel literature.

¹⁸ See Campbell, 271–3, who names James Clifford, George Marcus and Clifford Geertz (with his concept of "thick description") as major influences from anthropology. Campbell also shows how models of otherness, beginning with Frantz Fanon's psychology of alterity and ending with Jacques Lacan's model of object relations, have been taken up by postcolonial critics like Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha, who feature prominently in travel writing theory.

¹⁹ Campbell, 262. See the following critical studies, which show this shift in emphasis to the postmodern paradigm: Caren Kaplan, *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourse of Displacement* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996) and Alison Russell, *Crossing Boundaries: Postmodern Travel Literature* (New York: Palgrave, 2000). See also Kristi Siegel's "Introduction: Travel Writing and Travel Theory" for an overview of recent developments in travel writing studies, in *Issues in Travel Writing: Empire, Spectacle, and Displacement*, ed. Kristi Siegel (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 1–9.

²⁰ Duncan and Gregory, 3.

²¹ Duncan and Gregory, 3.

²² Michael Hanne, "Introduction," in *Literature and Travel*, ed. Michael Hanne, Rodopi Perspectives on Modern Literature Series 11 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993), 3–7, quotation 5, emphasis added.

²³ See Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs, "Introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1–13; 6. See also Zweder Von Martels, "Introduction: The Eye and the Mind's Eye," in *Travel Fact and Travel Fiction: Studies on Fiction, Literary Tradition, Scholarly Discovery and Observation in Travel Writing*, ed. Zweder Von Martels (Leiden: Brill, 1994), xi–xviii, particularly xvii.

²⁴ Campbell, 261.

²⁵ Paul Fussell, *Abroad* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 219–20.