

Missionary life writing: constructing a self – denied.

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Declaration

This thesis contains no material that has been extracted in whole or in part from a thesis that I have submitted towards the award of any other degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

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Abbreviations

BMS	Baptist Missionary Society
CIM	China Inland Mission
CMS	Church Missionary Society
LMS	London Missionary Society

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Abstract

This research investigates the writing of British-dominion missionaries working in China during the period 1860 to 1920 – a period of great intensity for mission activity, and prolonged turbulence and humiliation for the Chinese Empire. The Protestant missionary enterprise was referred to as a “writing machine” for its production of literature in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, relying upon regular accounts from missionaries for publication, designed to inform, inspire and perpetuate mission funding. In the wake of Edward Said’s foundational work *Orientalism* (1978), scholars have sought to investigate the relationship between the textual activity of missionaries, and the formation of thought and attitude in shaping imperial ideology. This project however differs. Departing from a specific focus on empire, here attention is drawn to narratives of self-construction. A central concern has been how missionary texts construct the author as an agent within the missionary process. On the one hand, missionary work is the supreme self-effacement, a call to sacrifice the self in the service of others. The missionary enterprise on the other hand, was contingent upon missionaries’ life writing for success. The self-effacement of the missionary subsumed within the sacrificial act runs counter to the self-promoting concepts of the mission enterprise. This study investigates dissonant elements that result from such a paradox and examines ways in which missionary writing constructs the authorial persona as it responds to the challenges of missionary work. While this project sits within mission and life writing studies, it draws upon historical and literary analysis to investigate the complex ways in which vocationally-called individuals negotiate narratives of self under alienating circumstances.

Introduction

Missionary life writing: constructing a self – denied.

If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself,
and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.

Luke 9:23

In this way we are called to deny self, and to do it daily, if we would be CHRIST'S disciples indeed. "I don't like this," or, "I do like that," must not be allowed; the only question must daily be, What would JESUS like? And His mind and will, once ascertained, must unhesitatingly be carried out (113).

May GOD work in us, and we work out in daily life, not self-assertion but self-denial — not ease and honour seeking and right-maintaining, but right-abandoning and cross-taking — and this for the glory of His own holy Name, and for the better forwarding of His interests, whether among His own people or among the unsaved! (116).

James Hudson Taylor
A Ribband of Blue (1899)

In *A Ribband of Blue* James Hudson Taylor, the founder of the China Inland Mission, crystallises the principle by which all missionaries are called to live with his response to the command in Luke 9:23 to "deny self". In taking up the cross and abandoning self, missionary lives are clearly supposed to be subordinate to the collective cause. And yet the irony remains: life writing, a genre designed to present the individual, constitutes much of mission literature. How then, in a profession so encouraging of, and with a ready readership so conducive to the recording of one's own life, can the command to deny self be reconciled, least of all understood? By way of close analysis of an array of missionary texts, this thesis seeks to explore elusive tensions within what has been termed, the "narrative straightjacket" of missionary life writing (Craig 88).

In pursuing how the self is brokered, this thesis necessarily becomes interdisciplinary in its influences and application. It brings together existing understandings of missionary literature, life writing, and the historical conditions of nineteenth-century China to say something new about their construction of selfhood. Through archival research, textual

analysis, and by placing life writing in context, this study draws together various threads of missionary experience – missionary methods, cultural encounter, identification, gendered experience, captivity and death – to offer key insights into how and why missionaries narrate their lives. Concentrated analysis of missionary writing in these areas creates valuable connections beyond how missionaries narrate their lives, and how the self is understood. This thesis also provides innovative and enriched understandings of the study of missions – mission history, mission community, and mission evangelism – contributing to debates, both past and present, on the role of missionaries in China.

The momentum with which the Evangelical missionary crusade advanced and multiplied during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is equalled in scale and consequence by the body of published literature this movement generated, and the archival legacy left in its wake. Official publications, periodicals, translations and tracts designed to inform readers of mission activities abroad, recruit new members, or spread the gospel to “heathen” lands, coalesce with private diaries, memoirs, letters, histories and ethnographies to constitute the vast compendia of missionary endeavour in the imperial era. Such rich archival deposits have long been mined by researchers for their political and religious content, supporting ideological arguments that extol or denounce missionary agency in world history. Yet studies to date have largely overlooked how missionaries saw themselves – their duty and standing in relation to their “perishing” targets. Indeed, the wealth of individual-life writing produced by missionaries as a whole remains largely untapped as a genre to be studied in its own right.

The study of missionary archives has long been situated within the province of missiology, an approach which employs such disciplines as theology, history or anthropology in reviewing the place of Western missions in world events. More recently, however, postcolonial theory and colonial discourse studies, which examine the role of language in empire, have turned their attention to missionary writing. In the wake of Edward Said’s foundational work *Orientalism*, scholars have sought to investigate the relationship between the textual activity of missionaries, and the formation of thought and attitude in shaping imperial ideology. This project however differs in emphasis. Departing from a specific focus on empire, it pays attention to narratives of self-construction. Missionary life-writing is examined for degrees of conviction and ambiguity within the texts, and subtleties of inscription that characterise the “called” identity.

Despite critical debate as to whether nineteenth-century mission was the “handmaiden” of empire (Bruner 428), both entities share a mutually constituted relationship in terms of Western cultural interaction with the people of foreign lands. Among Protestants, the British provided the largest missionary force of the nineteenth century and most worked within the geographical context of a burgeoning British Empire. However, missions and empire were never strictly coterminous, with missionaries always active beyond imperial bounds. Nonetheless, studies of Christian mission and British imperialism have tended to concentrate on regions within the formal Empire. As a result, China, a dynastic empire until the twentieth century and never a possession of another – despite Britain’s formidable influence, diplomatic privileges, territorial concessions, and monopoly on trade – has largely been omitted from scholarly discourse on empire. Yet the most significant texts written about China for a Western public were produced by missionaries. In effect the evangelical enterprise held a literary monopoly over information. Through translations of classical Chinese texts into English, and Western and biblical texts into Chinese, missionaries exercised the power of cultural and (in the translation of treaties) even political representation, between East and West. Given this mediating power, and the pivotal role missionaries played in the history of nineteenth-century China, their cross-cultural activities necessarily place them within the broader studies of British imperialism. For this reason, this project concentrates on texts produced by evangelical missionaries from British-realm nations serving in China during the high imperial era: 1860-1920.

Integral to the message of evangelical Christianity were the virtues of a Christian home and family-life – an iconographic image that British missionaries sought to model for their Chinese hosts. Standing in contrast to the celibacy of Catholic missionaries, the Protestant family, and what Patricia Grimshaw terms, their “ideal gender arrangements” (270), were central to Protestant missionary engagement and textual identity. As a consequence, for this thesis, an ability to explore the key self-representative features of gender and family provides a chief rationale for the life-writing study of Protestant, rather than Catholic missionaries. In addition, despite having served in China since the sixteenth century, Catholic missionary numbers were fewer than their Protestant counterparts by the nineteenth century. While creditable scholarship has been done on the writing of Catholic missionaries in recent years – most notably that by Anthony E. Clark¹ – most Catholics came from Continental Europe, rendering English-language sources less accessible. By comparison, the literary apparatus that accompanied nineteenth-century Protestant endeavour and the ubiquity

of writing that it produced, offers valuable insights into the domestic and familial relationships that informed missionary self-representation.

Evangelical Protestant missionary writing is characteristically distinct for its consciousness of self-transformation. The significant feature of an evangelical narrative-of-self is the centrality of a conversion experience. In their proselytising, evangelical missionaries sought conversions to Christianity from individual communicants through evidence of a life turning-point – a personal testimony of change that differed from Catholic missionary methods which placed emphasis on building Christian families (Lutz xii). The evangelical prerequisite for being saved by being “born again” was an especially significant concept that was foundational to Christian selfhood. It is this concept of salvation that altered how missionaries understood the purpose of their lives – and deaths.

While the definition of evangelicalism is not straightforward, beset as it has been by a divergence of understandings and complexities since its acknowledged presence in the 1730s; in this thesis I, like David Bebbington, read nineteenth-century evangelical culture as broadly as possible, to account for the degree of ecumenism displayed during the nineteenth century between Protestant denominations for the sake of world evangelism. The common thread that distinguishes evangelicals is famously set out by Bebbington in what he calls the “quadrilateral of priorities that is the basis of Evangelicalism”. They are: “conversionism, the belief that lives need to be changed; activism, the expression of the gospel in effort; biblicism, a particular regard for the Bible; and what may be called crucicentrism, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross” (3).

Characteristically distinct from other mission fields, China posed unique obstacles to evangelical endeavours that obliged missions to rethink their methods of evangelism. In due course two distinct strands of evangelism emerged, both heavily reliant on the printing press for success. Using the Chinese-language press as their vehicle and blending Christianity with the virtues of Western science and technology, “liberal” missionaries such as Timothy Richard targeted the all-controlling scholar class, believing educated Chinese converts would make more effective proselytisers than foreigners. By contrast the grassroots method of evangelisation advocated by James Hudson Taylor saw the Gospel dispersed to all within reach as quickly as possible. Alwyn Austin maintains that in his early mission Taylor would “scatter a thousand gospels” by literally throwing them above the heads of a crowd believing “some seed would fall on fertile ground” (*Millions* 2-4). To understand the context in which

these missionaries worked and the complexity with which they employed their methods, chapter one sets out an historical overview of the events that shaped nineteenth-century China.

A belief that the printing press was crucial to the conversion of China's "perishing millions" is underscored by historian Norman Etherington when he refers to mission societies as "writing machines". Yet much of their output was designed to spiritually arouse and "loosen the purse strings" of the home readership (37). Further to the theory that "missionaries succeed on the success of their own publicity" (Craig ix), a large proportion of texts generated were autobiographical in nature, manifesting within annual reports, circular letters, pamphlets, periodicals, magazines, or books. Mission publicity supplemented their output with hagiographies and fictional off-shoots including heroic adventures of missionary-explorers, thus rivalling Victorian popular-press narratives while at the same time propagating the cult of missionary celebrity (Johnston, "Celebrity" 21).

Perhaps the most textually celebrated missionary of the nineteenth century, aside from David Livingstone, was James Hudson Taylor. Scores of biographical works venerate Taylor's exemplary service, while his own textual output across his lifespan was extraordinarily prodigious. As the founder of the China Inland Mission, the largest mission society in the world, he is considered one of the most influential missionaries in history. A consummate publicist, Hudson Taylor adhered to a basic (and modern day) principle: "Only sell success". In the context of his monthly journal *China's Millions*, setbacks to progress were omitted to assure British supporters of the mission's positive inroads into China (Austin *Millions* 25-6). Yet Taylor's distinctive "faith missionaries", those who adopted Chinese dress and living conditions while having no guaranteed salary save their reliance on God's providence, faced constant adversity. These idealistically profound people lived their lives at immanent risk in remote locales bereft of support, and were duty-bound to chronicle their existence. Just how they could write of themselves with true self-reflexive clarity when given such prescriptive boundaries begs address.

Formulaic recipes for the writing of missionary lives, however, are not exclusive to the China Inland Mission nor to the nineteenth century. Terrence L. Craig makes the point that the life writing of all mission societies regardless of era, was largely homogenous. As the author of *The Missionary Lives: A Study of Canadian Missionary Biography and Autobiography*, Craig's 1997 book is the first large-scale examination of missionary

biographical literature. He emphasises the form's tense relationship with contemporary critical discourse, contending that this literature is self-protectively archaic in form, inimical to the experimental undercurrents of Modernism, and as such, has remained invisible to literary critics. He maintains that a reassuring fixedness gives this writing its power and appeal to a traditional readership: tensions in the text he declares, in the postmodern, fractured or doubting sense, do not exist. Curiously however, he contradicts himself by suggesting other tensions do exist – within papered-over cracks – but adds that by the final edit, much conflicting evidence would have been destroyed (89-105). Craig's despair of missionary literature in terms of its critical accessibility, thus, became an early catalyst for this project.

Aims and methods

This research investigates the writing of British-dominion missionaries working in China during the period 1860 to 1920 – bracketing the years following the second Opium War and those extending beyond the fall of the Qing Dynasty – a prolonged period of turbulence and humiliation for the Chinese nation. This sixty-year span represents the period of greatest intensity for mission activity in China and its demarcation heeds a call for the literary study of missionaries to be historically and contextually located. Anna Johnston contends that the generalising tendency of imperial discourse obscures the complexities of each location, given that “different cultures changed missionary practice” (*Writing* 30, 35). This study considers the broader cultural dynamic that attended missionary activity in China, and it seeks to avoid what Carey and Festa suggest is the trap of some postcolonial scholars: “writing to the theory, rather than to the history or to the text” (24). Placing missionary life writing within its historical and cultural context necessarily takes into consideration the theological underpinnings that are integral to the formulation of missionary identity – a bedrock consideration that has been largely absent from the scholarship of recent decades. In addition to eliding theological motivations, contemporary scholarship has tended to conflate missionary endeavour with empire. While postcolonial critics creditably expose the coercive exercise of power inherent to the spread of empire, they routinely deem missionaries complicit in the “civilising” intentions of the imperial project. The purpose of this study however is different. It does not seek evidence of colonial collusion. It brings texts together in different ways, approaching them with a more open intention to elicit something new about the self that writes the texts. Since China was never under British imperial possession, its independence complicates the simple materialist narrative. By taking into consideration both

the missionary's Christian belief, and imperialist agency, and how they work together, this project contributes to a more nuanced understanding of mission studies. An additional aim has been to provide an analysis of missionary texts that is both respectful of the texts, while still retaining an analytical distance from the more emotive and rhetorical elements inherent to missionary writing.

This inquiry began as personal quest, a genealogical exploration of missionary archives for family documents that burgeoned into a deeper investigation of the writing of missionaries in China. My early interest in missionary lives started with family-lore stories of "Uncle Charlie", my father's uncle, a CIM missionary who went to China in 1903, grew a red-haired pigtail, wore Chinese clothing, and ran a mission at Chowkiakow for more than thirty years.² Charles Freeman Davies wrote *In the Hands of Brigands* in 1926, a booklet narrating his recent capture and ransom-ordeal by Chinese warlords. Having read this booklet many times, I was taken with its unique quality: its distinctive language and style. This was a rendering of a story of true-life suspense – a published text that I now classify under the generic term "missionary narrative". Expanding my genealogical search, I became acquainted with another branch of missionary ancestors, most notably Samuel Lavington Hart, a missionary educator with the London Missionary Society (LMS) who founded the Anglo-Chinese College in Tientsin. From Hart's writing, and photographs of his European clothing and style of living, it was clear that his method of evangelism was far removed from that of Charles – a vision of inconsistency that raised questions as to the complexities of their endeavour. These two styles of evangelism, represented by two styles of dress, or what I term "grassroots" and "imperial" methods of identification, complicate fixed constructions of the missionary, and simple generalisations in the discussion of missionary methods.

A search of the archives of the London Missionary Society and the China Inland Mission in London's School of Oriental and African Studies in 2011, provided initial groundwork for this thesis. Here I examined an array of manuscript material: official and personal correspondence, diaries, letter-books and personal miscellanea, finding within them many valuable sources of the inscribed self. A further search of the Church Mission Society archives at Birmingham University enriched my source-collection, as did access to microfilmed archival material at the National Library in Canberra, and the Australian Catholic University Library in Brisbane. Much of this thesis however, has concentrated on published books – the life writing of missionaries, including autobiographies, memoirs, travel and ethnographic texts – most of which have been available through libraries or Internet Archive

collections. Through close reading of these China-specific texts I have sought to identify tensions within the prescribed orthodoxy of missionary life writing, thereby contributing to an underdeveloped space in the discourse on missionary literature.

A central concern of this study has been how missionary texts construct the author as an agent within the missionary process. On the one hand, missionary work is supposed to be the supreme self-effacement, a call to sacrifice the self in the service of others. The missionary enterprise, on the other hand, was contingent upon missionaries' life writing for success. The promulgated self-effacement of the missionary subsumed within the sacrificial act runs counter to the self-promoting concepts of the mission enterprise. Such overarching contradiction between the missionary's experience of inner calling, at odds with the material outer demands of mission work, creates a nebulous source of tension within the writing. This study therefore, investigates dissonant elements that result from such a paradox; and it examines ways in which missionary writing constructs the authorial persona as it responds to suffering, dislocation and the general challenges of missionary work.

Because the field of missionary study converges upon a number of academic disciplines – missiology, colonial discourse, anthropology, history, cultural and literary studies – this project is necessarily interdisciplinary in its influences and execution. Yet while this project draws from various disciplines, its explicit focus is upon missionary literature, life writing, and the cultural milieu of Qing China. This trifocal lens is brought together to investigate the complex ways in which vocationally-called individuals negotiate narratives around themselves under alienating circumstances. As a discourse on the self, Susan Green suggests the term “life writing” extends the field of literature to cover “what used to be thought of as autobiography or biography”, blurring “traditional generic borders” as it expresses “different ways of inscribing the self in literature” (50). Indeed, the range of texts drawn upon here – from the contemplative to the informative – despite some generic imprecision, *are* inherently autobiographical, particularly when measured against Walter Pater's view that “all our knowledge and perceptions of anything are autobiography”. Pater argues that our writing manifests as a web exposing “that strange, perpetual weaving and unweaving of ourselves” (qtd. in Saunders 31). Yet, as part of a broad intertextual and hybrid form, missionary writing cannot be limited to one critical lens. This study, therefore, is less concerned with the question of a missionary's true or essential selfhood, than with factors that temper, model, restrict or permit their efforts at self-representation. The task is to explore the

elements – religious, cultural and historical – that impinge upon, or give license to, the *creation* of a self in missionary writing.

Positioning the Research

The most widely accepted tradition of study concerning Western mission until the 1960s was missiology. A “missiological perspective” assumes thoughtful agency on the part of missions and is inherently sympathetic to the Christian cause (Fischer 4). This perspective proliferated after, most notably, Robert Southey’s article in the *Quarterly Review* February 1809 where he offered a defence for Baptist Missions in India. Critics suggest this outlook owes its longevity to British evangelical hegemony and unquestioned cultural assumptions (Fischer 5). As colonies began to assert their independence, the decades between the 1960s to the 1990s witnessed a tidal undertow to secular or “worldly” scholarship – most notably postcolonial criticism. Literary critics, in their criticism of Western powers, assumed that missionary activity was inherent to the apparatus of imperialism.

Edward Said’s 1978 publication *Orientalism* set foundational terms for the literary criticism of empire among postcolonial scholars in subsequent decades. This ground-breaking study was concerned principally, with deconstructing discourses and analysing institutions which had produced “the Orient” as an object of Western knowledge. By the 1990s Said’s work had come to represent a broader rejection of the power-political relationships between imperial metropolises and their colonies. Yet despite its overarching emphasis on larger political forces, *Orientalism* had, nonetheless, deemed Christian mission societies integral to the mechanisms of empire that had openly abetted “the expansion of Europe” (100). Ensuing postcolonial scholars similarly assumed missionary complicity with the imperial enterprise by employing a missionary trope in their critique, however reference to mission work was often in passing – addressed broadly and without specificity. Homi Bhabha, in particular, made reference to missionaries in *The Location of Culture* in 1994, but again the missionary appears in abstract or fictional terms, positioned symbolically to illustrate ways in which colonised peoples have resisted the power of the coloniser. In this way, and in line with earlier concepts introduced by Franz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), the orientalist paradigm broadened to include the colonised themselves – their views, psychological states, and their perpetuation or complicity with their own colonisation.

Yet while the historiography of postcolonial criticism through the latter decades of the twentieth century secularised the study of mission away from that of spiritual motivation, to one of imperial collaboration, the alignment of mission with theories of empire proved limiting for scholarship in non-colonial sites. As China was not a British colony, it sits uncomfortably within Said's framework for Orientalism – defined as “a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient” (3). Such a blanket theory of Western domination fails to account for the historical and cultural nuances of China's unique relations with the West, and has, according to Victorian literary scholar, Shanyn Fiske, contributed to “the relative neglect of China in Victorian studies” (222). The term “informal empire”, often used to describe Sino-British relations of the nineteenth century, has proven difficult for theorists to define. Elizabeth Chang suggests however, that England's relationship with China was more one of “epistemological engagement rather than systematic control” (9). Norman Girardot, in his 2002 study of the eminent missionary-sinologist James Legge, insists that one comprehensive theory can never be grafted upon all Eastern nations. He deems it essential that scholars distinguish between different geo-cultural types of Orientalism: “sinological, Indological, Islamic, Semantic, and so on” (14).

As modern China forges an ever-formidable presence in world affairs, scholars increasingly reflect a need to confront the unproductive binaries that previously defined the nation's literary, cultural and ideological exchange with the West. Fiske suggests the study of Victorian-era Sino-British relations obliges us to challenge “stereotypes and ineffectual categories that persist in limiting current relations” while offering “the possibility of rediscovering productive models of ideological exchange and cross-cultural dialog” (223). One recent scholar to have found both Said's theory and postcolonial criticism to be “like square pegs in the round hole of Chinese materials”, is Ming Dong Gu (51). In *Sinologism: An Alternative to Orientalism and Postcolonialism* (2013), Gu posits a new theory of knowledge production, centred upon China, but developed through “bilateral construction by both Chinese and Westerners” (6). Sinologism, he suggests, is an implicit system of perceptions, conceptions and evaluations first produced by the West to make sense of the Chinese civilisation, but later absorbed at both a conscious and unconscious level by Chinese scholars themselves. This type of colonisation and self-colonisation in Western epistemology and methodology is responsible for what Gu argues, becomes the “inner logic” driving each of two opposing tendencies in scholarship: the idealisation, patronisation, and exaggeration of the value of all things Chinese; and/or the criticism, dismissal and devaluation of Chinese

materials. Such contradiction signals that Sinologism is not always a form of cultural domination, as is the tendency of Orientalism, but an inconsistent way of determining the complexities of China. Where Orientalism highlights the difference between the Orient and the Occident, Sinologism serves to integrate China into the Western world system through economics, trade, lifestyle and religion. In the case of missionaries, he suggests there is “an implicit understanding that the Chinese can be proselytized, whereas the Muslims cannot”, resulting in large numbers of Christian conversions in China, but only colonial conquests in the Middle East (111). In addition, while Gu’s paradigm is based on the “cultural unconscious” that often produces “alienated knowledge” (8) of China, his ultimate, and as he admits, “rather utopian” objective (221), is to generate a theory of self-conscious reflection – not ideological criticism – that contributes to the “depoliticizing and de-ideologizing” of China-West scholarship (65).

As a summation of the development of East-West theories of knowledge production since the 1970s, it seems Sinologism does share common ground with Orientalism and postcolonialism, despite certain differences, and its geographical specificity does have implications for the study of China missions. However as stated previously, although this study is richly informed by postcolonial insights, its objective is different. Instead of a focus on empire, this thesis concentrates on narratives of self-construction. Additionally, it seeks to avoid “writing to [postcolonial] theory” in order to consider broader contextual, historical, and literary dynamics that yield a more nuanced representation of the self in missionary writing.

Some critics less focussed on general theorising of empire than on individual texts consider David Livingstone’s 1857 book *Missionary Travels and Researches* an archetypal representation of missionary thought and attitude. Patrick Brantlinger in *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (1988) reads Livingstone’s book for its literary tropes, considering it a hero’s quest romance and foundational to the myth of the Dark Continent. Describing him as the myth’s “saintly bestower of light”, Brantlinger believes the book cemented Livingstone’s fame as a national hero. It also impressed upon a home readership the great need for British missionaries to rescue the African from “darkness” – to be Christianised and civilised. In this way, Brantlinger contends that Livingstone’s writing exerted incalculable influence on British culture and the course of modern history (180).

Further still, from an anthropological perspective but having marked interdisciplinary consequence, is Jean and John Comaroff's *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa* (1991). Confined geographically to the Tswana tribes of South Africa, this mammoth study avoids the "missionary imperialist" statement to explore a more nuanced theory of mutual interdependence between missionaries and locals. Taking an alternative and more determinate cultural studies perspective, Susan Thorne's *Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture in 19th Century England* (1999) contends that the textual output of missionaries shaped national consciousness, where "the imaginative relationship to the empire encouraged by missions contributed ... to some of the central developments of British social history in this period" including developments in class consciousness, gender and racial thinking (7).

Continuing Thorne's reflections upon British homeland culture, Anna Johnston argues in *Missionary Writing and Empire 1800-1860* (2003), missionaries from the working class found in mission work a way of raising their standing and moral authority in society. With her emphasis on literary critique, Johnston approaches missionary writing as a distinct genre, and investigates ways in which imperial policy was influenced by missionary publishing.

In a similar vein but expanding upon Johnston's attention to missionary literature, Benjamin Louis Fischer in his dissertation "*Opium Pushing and Bible Smuggling*": *Religion and the Cultural Politics of British Imperialist Ambition in China* (2008) takes into consideration evangelical theological reflection and motivation. Adapting Benedict Anderson's "imagined communities" and Thomas Richard's "imperial archive" he theorises what he calls an "Evangelical Archive". Through the "print-capitalism" of distinctive discourse and vernacular, this body of literature unified a spiritual community across classes, both at home and in the missions abroad. Fischer chooses to call the personal reflections of missionaries "provocations" (102), to capture something of their tone and purpose, as influenced by Johnston who brands them "propagandist in nature" (6). By casting specific emphasis on missionary literature from China, and seeking to bridge the two traditions of scholarship on mission and empire – missiological and worldly – Fischer's work thus holds particular relevance for this project.

This review is a basic outline of the scholarship that informs this thesis and is by no means exhaustive. The review of literature will expand later for the specifics of each chapter.

Thesis Outline

This thesis is arranged accretively and thematically, with the first three chapters providing contextual positioning for the final three chapters of analysis. Chapter one presents the historical environment into which nineteenth-century missionaries made their advance upon China. Western Evangelicals made their presence felt at a time when the Qing Empire was collapsing under the weight of many crises: both internal, from rebellion and natural disasters; to external, from foreign manipulation. The Opium Wars and a succession of unequal treaties imposed by Western nations forced open China's hitherto restricted inland regions to merchants and missionaries. Despite misgivings as to the use of force, missionaries discerned the providential hand of God as missionary numbers multiplied into the twentieth century. But in an ancient civilisation of literary scholars, the printing press would become the chief means of Christian infiltration.

The second chapter positions evangelical publishing in its historical matrix: from the revolution of the use of the press in the sixteenth-century Reformation, to the nineteenth-century Rival Movement and mission evangelism. A distinctive "evangelical canon" of texts evolved from a core group of time-honoured texts that gradually broadened to include new genres. By the nineteenth century they rivalled populist-press publications through mass-market circulation strategies. The expanding canon unified evangelical group culture to become a "textual community" – an invisible church of textually integrated communicants across time and geographical space. Missionary writing came to represent Christian presence throughout the world. They could transport readers to exciting lands through stories of adventure while still reflecting the rhetoric of evangelicalism.

Chapter three presents an overview of the scholarship on missionary representation, and explores how missionaries navigated the field of heroic image-making to write of themselves and their work, while paying deference to the rules of modesty. The archetypal personae produced by the mission press were largely based on gendered and family ideals, and in keeping with class-conscious social and political developments; but equally, the missionary figure could be aligned with patriotic and imperialistic impulses, evolving to admit multiple constructions of heroism. Missionary literature influenced British societal behaviour, and gave shape to tropes of empire. Yet, through their private correspondence, missionaries could assert different identities to those prescribed. Their construction of selfhood in writing was informed by an evangelical worldview – a life lived through a narrative of conversion;

one that was called, but set-apart as a stranger from worldliness, and one also lived as a providential text. Yet for many, writing the foreignness of China produced another self, one constructed through the Other.

In chapter four I study the writing of six notable missionaries, dividing them loosely into two groups premised upon their outer-image or style of dress, designating dress a key signifier of their missional approach. One group: Griffith John, John Macgowan and Timothy Richard, remained Western in appearance; the other: James Hudson Taylor, James Gilmour and Samuel Pollard, dressed in Chinese clothing. I look at why dress matters in the study of missionary lives, what relationship it had to identity, and how it impacted efforts towards identification with, or demarcation from, the material-social; linguistic; political-economic; and religious-educational realms of their Chinese hosts. I explore complexities between the two divisions, and how they nuance prescribed means of identification, reflecting cultural ambivalence in the missionaries' writing.

Chapter five explores the complexity of self-representation for women in missionary culture, where the text becomes an ambivalent space between competing discourses of gender, culture and authority, and a space where self-assertion and self-denial work in tension to fashion a missionary persona. I argue that in writing of her adventures in Tibet, Canadian-born Dr Susie Rijnhart, pioneered a model of womanly heroism through tropes of decorum, sensibility and the ideals of domesticity. I compare her writing with that of another Tibetan pioneer missionary, Annie Royle Taylor, investigating how subjectivity is constructed within these women's texts, the contrasts and commonalities of their experiences, the discursive pressures upon their writing and how their representations contest or comply with prevailing nineteenth-century discourses of gender and imperialism.

Chapter six is an examination of missionary writing in the face of death. Part one considers Archibald Glover's epic journey across Shanxi, held captive, together with his family, during the Boxer uprising of 1900. Written as romance narrative, the book combines a distinctive evangelical "call to seriousness" with spiritual autobiography, martyrology, and the intrigue of a captivity narrative. I explore how Glover's narrative strategies betray tension between the textual duties he must perform as a missionary historian and biographer; and meeting the generic expectations of his audience; and I examine core influences upon his thinking: the significance of an evangelical "good death" and his millennialist eschatology of world events. Part two looks at the last letters written by missionaries facing imminent death

at the hands of Boxer rebels and how their parting testaments reflect the self as it faces mortality. Steeped in crucicentric understandings of life, death and resurrection, the missionary vocation had been in training for martyrdom since ancient times through the literature of early martyrs and the cultivation a particular kind of self in death – the “suffering self”. I explore whether, in the relative immediacy with which these letters are written, idealised values are conflicted or perpetuated, and also discuss what I term the “threshold self” – the martyr approaching death before a new, heavenly-life.

¹ See for instance: *China's Saints: Catholic Martyrdom During the Qing (1644-1911)*. (2011).

² For the sake of uniformity of recognition throughout this thesis, I have continued with the same spellings of Chinese words that were common among nineteenth-century missionaries – for instance “Peking” instead of the current spelling in pinyin “Beijing”.

Chapter 1

The Missionary Awakening and the Fall of the Qing Empire

The memory of China's "century of humiliation" has long resonated in the nation's consciousness. As Robert Bickers points out, the tortuous struggles of the nineteenth century are embedded in its self-articulation and "patriotic education". They now feed the sense of unique national worth that has become modern China's very purpose and powerhouse (*Scramble* 21). Yet foreign intervention in China was not the sole reason for the Empire's demise. By the 1800s China's ancient imperial system had also begun to collapse from within. Weakened by a century of internal revolt and natural disasters, predatory encroachment from the West merely accelerated the decline of a two-thousand-year-old dynastic edifice. The Qing Empire collapsed in 1912, at a time when the multi-national grapple for China had reached its peak. Replaced by a republic, it entered a new and complex century of ever evolving politics where foreign aspirations would gradually dissolve. Affixed to the coat-tails of Western incursion had been the nineteenth-century Great Awakening, where China's immense population had become a powerful magnet for Christian evangelisation. The section below explores the contrasting yet connected worlds of the Qing Empire in its death-throes and the missionary enterprise that felt driven to convert its people.

"A conjunction of crises": from Empire to Republic

If China's *Dictionary of National Humiliation*¹ catalogues the litany of injustices suffered at the hands of foreign imperialists during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it fails to elaborate on the foreign nature of its last imperial dynasty. Invasion from the north in the seventeenth century subjected the Han Chinese to two and a half centuries under a Manchurian ruling class, where a form of cultural apartheid banned intermarriage, and where compulsory acts of subservience were imposed upon the Chinese: Mandarin was decreed the nation's sole language and most notably, men were forced to wear a "queue", the shaved-temple Manchu pigtail, as a distinctive sign of subjugation. The Manchu did however, adapt their rule to extol Confucian virtues, in particular the principle that "the ruler rules by virtue of his moral goodness" (Fairbank & Goldman 147). The ultra-conservative Qing of the nineteenth century followed classical Confucian teachings and believed in the universal supremacy of their Emperor, who was the Son of Heaven. According to pioneer China-

historian, John Fairbank, Qing belief in the preeminence of their civilisation allowed for no other world view. While some historiography of the Empire's demise differs, Fairbank discusses the century in terms of China-West binaries, a situation where "two civilizations stood embattled" (*Ch'ing* 2). This too would have been the view of the missionaries. Fairbank describes the mid-nineteenth-century Western worldview as one that believed "in the nation state, the rule of law, the benefits of individual rights, Christianity and scientific technology, and the use of warfare in the service of progress" (2). This worldview, he argues, clashed diametrically with an ancient agrarian bureaucracy, where classically defined traditions restricted change and where filial duty dominated self-interest. He further suggests, that the cultural gulf between nineteenth-century Western thought and values and that of the Qing ruling class matched in disparity the gap between the Chinese masses and their rulers during the revolutionary era in the twentieth century (1-2).

Regardless of the way China's history is interpreted, its nineteenth-century narrative reads as a tale of unremitting tragedy for its people. Analytic accounts often chart the decline of the Qing Empire from the time of the first Opium War in 1839 when the heavy hand of British self-interest determined by force China's foreign trade relations for the best part of the following century. Yet waves of anarchy had arisen from within the nation much earlier through pockets of insurrection waged by covert societies. From 1796 the White Lotus Society had maintained an eight-year insurgency in the northwest attempting to restore the former Ming dynasty (Chesneau et al. 38). These early struggles against the established order heralded the great wave of popular rebellions that occurred in the mid-nineteenth century (49). Compounding the situation, China's population had prospered and enlarged under its first two Manchurian emperors, but by the nineteenth century an ever-accelerating population weighed heavily on agricultural production. Extremities of drought, flood, famine and pestilence starved the people while bureaucratic greed and civil ineptitude further impoverished the Qing's "Mandate from Heaven" (47-49).

Deteriorating social conditions alone, however, did not bring about the decline of the Qing Empire. Historians suggest they merely contributed to a "conjunction of crises" – the result of two alien civilisations embattled (Chesneau et al. 57). Confucian philosophy was intolerant of change outside of the traditional social order and remained unreceptive to foreign political concepts. Domestically China's comparative self-sufficiency negated the importance of foreign trade while merchants, considered at the bottom of the social scale, were distrusted by the governing scholar-class (Fairbank *Ch'ing* 2-6). Conversely Western nations at the time

of the Industrial Revolution actively sought economic expansion but their efforts were frustrated by China's strictly controlled trade policy. Aside from the "Thirteen Factories", one small reserve in Canton where foreigners were permitted to trade solely with the Cohong, a group of officially authorised firms, no other ports were open to the West. "Diplomatic" missions by Lord Macartney in 1793 and Lord Amherst in 1817, designed to relax the rigid trade constraints, collapsed over a protocol impasse – British refusal to kowtow before the Emperor, the Qing Son of Heaven, of whom there was no equal. The breach of courtesy, and shared inability to countenance ascendancy in the other, would impinge upon foreign relations for several decades (Bickers *Scramble* 18-33).

Finally, however, the foreign relations deadlock would be forced to a head through insidious means. The West sought to balance their unequal trade with China. Where China's tea, porcelain and silk were in great demand, in return Western goods were of little interest. Continuous tender of silver for payment placed Western nations in an economic bind; opium was its only counter-trade. From 1820 opium smuggling expanded exponentially along the South China coast, until its import swathed tracts of the population in addiction and pushed China's trade balance to deficit. The standard of living for many fell, leaving business and public works in disarray. Opium traffic redoubled after Britain terminated the East India Company's monopoly on trade to the Far East in 1834 (Fairbank & Goldman 199). The new China Trade Bill of 1833, and the free trade opportunity that followed, rapidly increased illegal imports until China, in 1839, finally took a hard line. Dumping twenty thousand crates of opium into the sea, imposing heavy penalties including death for importation or consumption of the drug, and closing Canton to all foreign trade, was met with retaliatory action. With the swift sinking of several Chinese war junks, the First Opium War had begun. The Qing were quickly driven into submission (Austin *Millions* 49).

From here China's grand narrative becomes one of humiliating defeat and painful adjustment to the dictates and standards of European culture. The first of a succession of unequal treaties was imposed on China in 1842 – the Treaty of Nanjing. Five "treaty ports" were opened to Western trade, Britain demanded an indemnity of twenty-one million silver dollars, and was ceded the island of Hong Kong. Foreigners were granted extraterritoriality, confirming their sole accountability to homeland consulates, with impunity from Chinese legal jurisdiction. In time, as demands escalated, a score of foreign enclaves stretched from coastal cities to deep inland, but not before additional outbreaks of war had further humbled the Qing and irrevocably transformed the dynamics between China and the West. (Chesneaux

et al. 64-80). The list of humiliations is long: the First and Second Opium Wars (1839-42, 1857-60), the Sino-French and Sino-Japanese Wars (1884-5, 1894-5), and the Boxer Rebellion and War (1900-01), where eight foreign powers invaded north China, and where Russia subsequently occupied Manchuria sparking a war with Japan in 1905 (Bickers *Scramble* 17). The century's bloody combination of internal rebellion, shifting allegiances and foreign manipulation together spelled the end of the Empire. By 1912 China's imperial system was over, yet the uprising of nationalism that brought about a republic failed to achieve its ideal in the following decades. Civil chaos would ensue in its place as China was held to ransom by ruthless warlords (Varg 99).

For China, decisive adjustments to European ways had begun following the Opium Wars, when the belief in self-sufficiency and an assurance of its Middle Kingdom eminence in the world required re-examination. The intellectual tenets of the West had been known to China since the arrival of the Jesuits in the sixteenth century, but it wasn't until its nineteenth-century brush with Western military supremacy, that it conceded the need to adopt modern science and technology (Chesneaux et al.74). Under a policy of "self-strengthening", designed to beat the "barbarians" at their own game, China set out to study the West (205). Changes to the traditional education system emphasised the importance of science and mathematics. By 1912, China had sufficiently emulated Western mechanisation and industrialisation to now possess a rail system, steamships, telegraph communication, mining and manufacturing industries. But the Western political ideology that underpinned these advances had *not* been adopted. Deeply ensconced in Confucian orthodoxy the Qing considered modification to their belief system anathema (201-41). With feudal power concentrated in the hands of a privileged minority, China's self-strengthening strategy against the West failed (Bickers *Scramble* 321-2). All the while predatory nations had continued to converge on "the sick man of Asia" (18) ruthlessly vying for bigger slices of the territorial "melon" (17).²

The Missionary Incursion and Literary Conversion

Set conspicuously amid the imperialists' spoils was the ever-present and, in some cases, apologetic Christian missionary. A great "awakening" of evangelicalism occurred at the end of the eighteenth century – a time when European knowledge of the wider world and new trading opportunities had increased enormously (Stanley *Bible* 58-9). Yet despite the dual concurrence of renewed consciousness, the missionary movement had little interest in the

expansion of imperial power. Missions instead accommodated and shaped their priorities around imperial imperatives, moved as they were to spread the Gospel to the “perishing heathen” before the pre-millennial imminence of Christ (61, 76). Despite having criticised the morality of the Opium Wars, they did find the treaty outcomes favourable to the expansion of mission operations. By discerning the providential hand of God at work in specific historical events – in situations where good might come from evil – the Christian world could rationalise and subsequently justify the use of force. At last the path had been opened into an empire that had proven resistant to European penetration (106-10). But by the 1920s, amid a surging nationalistic tide influenced in-part by missionary education and inculcation to Western notions of freedom and prosperity, the protection and privilege afforded the missionary by the unequal treaties had become counter-productive if not embarrassing. Sensitive to accusations missions were living off the fat of Western military conquest, Christian missionary societies prepared resolutions expressing a willingness to surrender extraterritorial rights. But by 1931 the war against Japan intervened. Not until 1943, a complete century after treaties commenced, were they finally abolished. The underlying problem however had not been addressed. A powerful agenda had already been set for the anti-religious programme of the Cultural Revolution in 1949. China’s long-standing anti-foreign resentment could no longer countenance Christianity’s unashamed entanglement with Western cultural and political values (144-5).

Yet foreigner-suspicion had long preceded Protestant Christianity’s entrance to China with the arrival of its first missionary, Robert Morrison, in 1807. At a time when the Qing Empire had begun to suffer some erosion from rebellious groups such as the Buddhist-influenced White Lotus Sect, any teaching considered heterodox to Confucian cultural norms and likely to foster social unrest, was forbidden (Cohen *China* 28). Morrison, from the London Missionary Society, would find himself subjected to the same extreme limitations imposed upon Catholic missionaries in the early eighteenth century, where the propagation of Christianity in any form was punished severely (Fairbank *Christianity* 10). Christianity had been officially proscribed as heterodox in 1724 and remained until 1844, when edicts of toleration were enforced by treaty. The ruling elite however received the new dictates with a degree of contempt. Distrust for foreign religion had long been entrenched, provoked a century before Morrison’s arrival when the Jesuit policy of cultural-accommodation established by Matteo Ricci in the sixteenth century, was reversed by Papal decree. Christian converts’ participation in Chinese folk rituals and ceremonial offerings had been banned, thus

defying the Emperor's cultural authority and thereby threatening the maintenance of order and control (11). Therefore, with China essentially closed to missionaries, Morrison sought more inventive and circuitous methods to spread the Gospel to China's vast population.

The restrictions imposed on foreigners by this ancient civilisation of literary scholars inspired the early missionaries to tailor a unique approach to the Chinese – evangelisation through literary means. In time the printing press would become the expansionist-machine for Christian infiltration into China, yet in some ways it was also its greatest impediment (Barnett 146). Unable to preach but having some knowledge of the Chinese language, Morrison became an interpreter for the East India Company and later served on two British Government missions to China, thus securing his residence and a measure of respect in Canton, but more importantly, laying the early foundation for his mission successors (Latourette 212). With the aid of William Milne in 1813 and Walter Henry Medhurst in 1817, Morrison initiated what would become an extensive mission press network, with facilities across five Southeast Asian ports strategically not under the control of the Chinese government. He further established an Anglo-Chinese College in Malacca to educate expatriate Chinese communities, with the aim of indirect evangelism into China. Cautiously they launched an inoffensive programme of translations, tracts, and secular educational material (Fairbank *Christianity* 11-12). By tapping into an established field of Chinese interest – geography and history – the missionaries endeavoured to earn the respect of Chinese scholars while nurturing a measure of receptiveness to the religion and heritage of their culture. Tactically astute as this may have been, however, rather than encourage receptivity to Western culture, the missionaries were inadvertently painting a picture so alien to China's own civilisation – its political concepts, cultural values and educational systems – as to pose a threat to the traditional Confucian order. Ultimately and ironically, these early literary efforts frustrated evangelical objectives by underscoring for the Chinese literati a long-held distrust for Western practices (Barnett 146-149).

As a surge of evangelical zeal swept the Christian West, the pressing objective for missions in the years before the opening of the treaty ports became surmounting the inland stymie to the distribution of gospel literature. Confined as they were to the fringes of the mainland, missions pursued two avenues of approach: missionary-merchant cooperative endeavour to negotiate openings for Christianity and commerce (133); and clandestine evangelism through Chinese converts (Cook 40). The latter came to be exemplified by China's "first Protestant evangelist" Liang Fa, an early convert baptised by William Milne in

1816, and a skilled woodblock cutter involved in the printing of the Chinese Bible in 1823. Defying imperial edicts against Christianity, Liang travelled extensively in Guangdong Province regularly distributing Christian tracts while targeting, in particular, candidates for the three-yearly civil service literary exams. Despite achieving some success in winning converts and co-workers, this literary mission would repeatedly see Chinese workers arrested, severely punished or executed for their ministry. Thus began a long tradition of diplomatic intervention on behalf of Chinese Christians through the interpretive efforts of key missionaries such as Morrison – a situation that would only subside following the Opium War. Missionaries would then find themselves in the impossible position where they owed their extra-territorial autonomy in China to Britain’s morally unconscionable trade-dictates (40-42).

The other means of expanding evangelical frontiers would prove equally questionable – merging commercial possibilities with the spread of the Gospel. The missionary most famous for his adventurous spirit, rare talents and unique personality, the Prussian-born Karl Gutzlaff, won some notoriety in pursuit of his evangelical goals. Known as Charles Gutzlaff because of his close affiliation with the British community in China, he appeared to be gifted with an uncommon ability for foreign languages. Able to speak several dialects with a high degree of proficiency, Gutzlaff, like Morrison, served with the British East India Company and later the British government as an interpreter (Barnett 134). Unlike Morrison however, he accompanied several mercantile trade-seeking expeditions along the Chinese coast in the 1830s, seemingly turning a blind eye to nefarious trade while distributing Bibles from the decks of opium vessels. A prolific writer of both English and Chinese manuscripts, his *Journal of Three Voyages along the Coast of China* published in 1834, records his justification for the use of opium clippers as among “the means, which the Lord our God appoints in his word and by his providence.” (125). Criticised by fellow missionaries for recklessly sullyng both the Christian message and the reputation of all missionaries; and judged by the Chinese to have confirmed one of their key arguments against Christianity – that its teachers vend opium – Gutzlaff nonetheless believed his Bible smuggling to be a triumph. Indeed, he would win fame and admiration from missionary supporters in Europe and America, boasting that “alone and single-handed he had reached and affected thirty million Chinese” (Fischer 269). Yet in all probability, thousands had simply taken away the scriptures. Evidently, in the 1830s Chinese-mainland converts numbered less than twenty, and

of those, most had come to Christianity through Morrison's intrepid inland-evangelist Liang Fa (270).

While the conversion of China to Christianity through literary means proved a slow process, Protestant pamphlets could meet with the most spirited acceptance from extremists predisposed to sectarian beliefs and religious zealotry. Chinese sectarian conversion worked both for and against missionary endeavour, accommodating the Word yet distorting the message (Fairbank *Christianity* 12). In 1836, outside the Canton examination hall, a twenty-three-year-old student, Hong Xiuquan, received the tract *Good Words to Admonish the Age*, written by Liang Fa. Hong would eventually fail the imperial examinations five times, the significance of which meant he had failed his family and community, whose status and security relied on his success. By 1847 a disaffected Hong pursued the vision of civil reformation offered through Liang's Christian tract (Bickers *Scramble* 135). As the foreign presence in the treaty ports expanded following the Opium War, Hong's Taiping (Great Peace) Rebellion against Manchurian rule swept through China – a bloody revolt of quasi-Christian fanaticism that would last fourteen years and result in the death of twenty million (136). Coming close to overthrowing the Qing, the rebellion excited Western nations to speculate on the dawn of a Christian government in China, but local missionaries were placed in a moral quandary (Stanley *Bible* 107). Many missionaries were heartened by Hong's striking rate of "conversion" success, and supported what they considered "a moral revolution", yet his idiosyncrasy and distorted interpretation left many others worried (Bickers *Scramble* 141). Believing that he was the brother of Jesus, Hong's "Kingdom of Heaven" – the captured city of Nanjing – was ultimately overthrown in 1864 under a revitalised Qing, aided by British and French forces allied to them through a new round of concessions following the Second Opium War (1857-60) (199-200). Crucially, and in light of the deluge of anti-Christian counter-literature circulated by the literati in the 1860s, the legacy of the rebellion would prove a lingering impediment for missionaries. Their work among the Chinese, quite logically, remained identified with the Taipings, further inflaming antagonism directed towards them by the educated classes (Cohen 44-5).

For the missionaries, the damaging associations of the Opium War, Anglo-French invasions and the Taiping revolt during this period had to be rationalised against the evangelistic potential of the Tienstin Treaty – the gateway to the Chinese interior for preachers. The granting of foreign property-rights and renewed freedoms that multiplied the (hitherto inconsequential) missionary presence of eighty in 1858, forty-fold over the

following half-century, provoked an aggressive counter campaign in anti-Christian pamphlet production. The most infamous of these was the *Bixie jishi* (“a record of facts to ward off heterodoxy”), first published in 1861 and considered by the Chinese authorities themselves so shocking in content that it was banned in three provinces (45). Primarily directed towards Catholics, it contained stories and illustrations of priests worshipping a grunting pig (a heterographic pun on the Jesuit translation of “God” and “Catholic”), using sorcery, indulging in salacious sexual practices, aborting the fetuses of pregnant women, gouging out the eyes of converts and more, all meticulously sourced as incontestable fact. Late-century Protestant missionary Henry Blodget described the literature as: “filled with the most loathsome obscenity and the grossest misrepresentations and falsehoods. Nothing could be more calculated to foment disturbances in the minds of the ignorant people” (qtd. in Clark 6). Anti-Christian propaganda of this type circulated widely, sparking repeated anti-missionary disturbances into the next century. China historian, Paul A. Cohen, insists that missionaries were “the most prominent source of Sino-foreign friction in the Chinese interior” and as a consequence, their significance in the demise of the Qing Empire should not be underestimated (*China* 273).

Grassroots Diffusion versus Liberalised Concentration

The literary onslaught against the “foreign devils” and their religion stirred regular violence towards one intrepid organisation in particular, as it defiantly pressed the Gospel message inland. James Hudson Taylor was the driving force behind the provocatively self-styled China “Inland” Mission, founded in 1865, a unique and often controversial organisation that would grow into the largest missionary force in China, eventually introducing a Protestant presence into all eighteen provinces (Bickers, *Scramble* 238).³ Taylor’s vision was to evangelise “the whole interior of China” (238), a land he believed to be enveloped in darkness with “a million a month ... dying without God”. This would be a “faith mission”, free from the complications of homeland-administration and mission-board infrastructure (Austin, *Millions* 80). Fundamental and unswerving, the organisation would be totally reliant upon God’s providence. These non-denominational missionaries would have no guaranteed salary, were not to take up collections, and were to wear Chinese dress and adapt to native living conditions in order that they might establish self-propagating communities of local converts (Neill 333-4). In Kenneth Scott Latourette’s words, Taylor’s “was a faith that thrived on adversity.” (389). His difficulties were many: constant difficulties with Chinese

authorities; the death of his wife in 1870; his own frequent ill health; and fellow mission-societies' criticism of his "superficial" methods; but the success and devotion of his recruits, drawn as they were from many nations, was unequaled in modern Christian history (Neill 336). Undeterred by anti-missionary attacks, Taylor's response to outbreaks of violence was to recruit more missionaries. The decade following the 1891 riots saw over a thousand new Protestant missionaries flood into China (Fischer 22). Nevertheless, Christian societies suffered devastating losses in 1900 during the proto-nationalist Boxer Rebellion, when the Dowager Empress Cixi ordered the killing of all foreigners. Even though the CIM suffered more heavily than any other society (fifty-eight CIM missionaries and twenty-one children were killed), unlike the others, Taylor refused to claim or accept compensation, as a demonstration of "the meekness and gentleness of Christ." (Neill 339-40). His methods subsequently earned him the respect of both the British and Chinese governments. In the years following the Boxer uprising China would display surprising openness to the Christian message (341).

Hudson Taylor's grassroots method of evangelisation contrasted with the equally expansive yet more liberalised methods of missionaries such as Timothy Richard, causing some division within Protestant churches.⁴ Where the CIM task was "diffusion", to preach the Gospel to all who would listen as quickly as possible, the alternate method advocated by Richard was "concentration", directed at the powerful, all-controlling scholar class. Educated Chinese converts, Richard believed, would make more effective proselytisers than would foreigners (336). Richard's programme would coalesce with China's self-strengthening movement, using the Chinese-language press as its vehicle, and placing special emphasis on preaching the virtues of Western science and technology. His social-gospel prescription developed from personal experience – his witness of the devastating famine which struck northern China in 1876-77. National salvation, he maintained, could only be achieved through scientific and economic enlightenment (*Stanley Bible* 138). As he set out to blend the Christian message with secular knowledge, he also endeavoured to broaden his understanding of the East by studying the Chinese classics, as translated by James Legge. Like Legge before him, Richard focussed on education and sinology, establishing Westernised mission schools, colleges and universities, while promoting an understanding of Chinese culture within the Western world (Kong 23-7).

Richard's methods however met with initial criticism from the Protestant community, including his own Baptist Mission Society that regarded his approach as unsound. That

“Protestantism was threatened with secularisation” became the fundamentalists’ fear (Latourette 618). Nonetheless, the majority of missions would undergo a transformation towards liberalism by the early twentieth century, in keeping with the changed political situation following the Boxer uprising. Taking advantage of the opportunity “to help mold the new culture” (619), societies expanded their activities by institutionalising educational and medical work. Missionary “specialists” were increasingly required – teachers, nurses and physicians – not only theologically trained people (Hirono 80). Latourette suggests, “by 1911 less than half the total missionary staff was engaged in direct fundamentalist work, and the proportion would have still been smaller had not the great majority of the members of the China Inland Mission ... been in that type of activity.” (619). In contrast to the mainstream missions, the CIM as a rule devoted themselves to simply preaching the Gospel. Founded as a “special agency” for “simple hearted labourers” “full of faith and the Holy Ghost”, the CIM was largely unconcerned by recruits’ class or qualifications. Indeed, Taylor frequently redirected the university trained, the ordained and medically qualified, to other societies where their gifts could be put to better use (Austin *Millions* 91-2). Where Richard was charged with creating “Christianised Confucianism”, aimed at elite and literate males, Taylor would spread his message to the peasant classes, both male and female, through the “wordless book” – four pieces of differently coloured cloth sewn together, with each colour representing a basic Christian concept (442). Thus, Protestant evangelism sought to save Chinese souls through two distinct approaches. But it was the Gospel of Western “civilisation” that would effect the greatest influence on the life of China.

As the twentieth century dawned and rising nationalism ushered in a republic, Western missionaries hoped that Christianity would be viewed as China’s path to regeneration, but by the 1920s, chaos once again ensued and set the agenda for a greater part of the century. The early years were characterised by a swell in Christian school baptisms as students formed “the Christian movement in China” hoping to utilise Western ideas of social consciousness for the rebirth of their nation. But few were interested in personal salvation and inner development (Neill 341). Before long however, China was held to ransom by contending warlords, and missionaries were subject to rekindled anti-foreign feeling. By 1927 five-eighths of the missionary population had been withdrawn from the interior, until the Kuomintang, under its self-proclaimed Christian leader Chiang Kai Shek, emerged the strongest power, providing them a short period of respite (465). By 1937 the Japanese invasion brought more destruction, occupying and pervading all Chinese life until 1945. In October 1949 Mao Zedong would

proclaim the People's Republic of China and missionaries' autonomy would be largely restricted. By 1953 a policy of missionary withdrawal was almost complete. A century and a half of Protestant evangelical endeavour would then be pushed underground into the twenty-first century.

China's national story during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries reads as a tragic tale for its people, one which can be described quite legitimately as humiliation. Invading forces have long targeted China for its abundant resources and vast territories but none, apart from the Manchus, have called China their own. The Qing Empire collapsed under the weight of many crises: from internal rebellion and natural disasters, to greed and ineptitude; from opium addiction and foreign incursions, to myopic self-sufficiency. China's turbulence was protracted. But interwoven through the calamity Western Evangelicals made their presence felt, moved as they were to save the heathen millions and impart their Western knowledge for what they believed was the good of the nation. Missionary approaches were either fundamental blitzes, or liberalised conversions from the top down, but all relied on the printing press as indispensable for dispersing the Gospel to China.

¹ Bickers makes the comment: "The *Dictionary of National Humiliation* is no slim volume: it is one and a half inches thick" (*Scramble* 17).

² Rudolf Wagner writes that China's master narrative still maintains that during the late Qing "Great Britain, Russia, France, Japan, Germany" and the "United States" had intended to "cut up China 'like a watermelon' as they had done with Africa" but that "this was prevented by Chinese resistance motivated by an awakening patriotism and nationalism" (n. pag.).

³ See Chapter Four for Taylor's biography.

⁴ See Chapter Four for Richard's biography.

Chapter 2

Missionary Publishing and Life Writing

The Foundations

Christians have long possessed a critical affiliation with texts. Together with the Jews, Christians from early times were identified by the term “the people of the book” for stressing the importance of written revelation to their faith in God (Jeffrey xii). And since the invention of the printing press, evangelical Christians in particular, have embraced the term with earnest enterprise. The Bible, the foundational text for all Christian faith, reveals the gospel or “the good news” (from the Greek *euangelion*) proclaiming God to be no less than the living “Word”. The Prologue to John’s Gospel in the New Testament opens with: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and God was the Word ... All things were made by Him ... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us”. In her study of evangelical publishing, *The Word in the World* (2004), Candy Gunther Brown explains that the scriptural Word embodied divine power in communication with the world; the Word stood alone as dynamic revelation from God. *Sola scriptura* became a core precept of Protestant evangelical identity from the time of Luther’s sixteenth century break from the Catholic Church. Under the breakaway doctrine the Word itself held irrevocable authority, delivering an assurance of salvation by God-given grace alone, not through good works or adherence to rituals, but through having faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Word spoke directly to evangelicals, negating grounds for priestly interpretation and ecclesiastical tradition. To them the Word affirmed that even lay Christians were members of a priesthood – an egalitarian order that included all believers (2-3).

Ironically, despite the repudiation of priestly powers and the perceived “plain” transparency of the Bible, the Protestant Reformation produced a groundswell of religious leaders and a deluge of print material that explained in simple terms to ordinary people “what the Bible plainly meant” (Nord 2-3). Evidently, the reformed doctrine was not that simple and could hardly remain uncontested; its application in practice yielded tensions, and these tensions in time cultivated an evangelical predilection for the printed word. Autonomous lay interpretation of the Bible without priestly mediation exposed Protestantism to the risk of schismatic self-destruction – a predicament that was only averted in part by printing

supplementary preached material to perform the clerical task of relating Scripture to everyday life (Gunther Brown 3). However, printing the Bible text itself produced its own tensions – concerns of literalism, while at the same time concerns there should be no interpolation between the Word and the reader. In accordance with the doctrine of *sola scriptura*: “No prefaces, no explanatory notes, no tendentious interpretations of doctrine and no accompanying sermons were to be allowed to mediate the naked word of God” (Howsam 121). Correspondingly, the translation of the Bible into vernacular language for the easy grasp of ordinary readers required considerable interpretive vigilance to guard against textual corruption and erroneous belief. By 1830 the King James Bible alone had been printed with an estimated 24,000 textual variations – such was the responsibility to render the Word in its purest form to the world (Gunther Brown 3-4). By the twentieth-century, as I explore in chapter four, the task of capturing transparency-of-meaning in scripture translations posed unique difficulties for missionaries such as Sam Pollard among the Miao community in China.

Sixteenth-century Protestant reformers not only accentuated the textual basis of Christianity, they educated the masses to the virtues of Bible reading and extolled the miraculous new invention of printing – considered a providential tool for inculcating “true” religion. Printing hundreds of thousands of sermons and treatises, Martin Luther was the most prolific devotee of the early press. He proclaimed printing to be “God’s highest and extremest act of grace, whereby the business of the Gospel is driven forward” (qtd in Eisenstein 165). Believing printing to be God’s weapon to end priestly control of knowledge, and “push back the evil forces” of ignorance, English reformer John Foxe, wrote in *The Book of Martyrs* in 1563: “The Lord began to work for his Church, not with sword and target to subdue His exulted adversary, but with printing, writing and reading” (167). Seventeenth-century minister Richard Baxter, a prolific writer of “plain”, easily understood texts ideal for evangelical literacy, believed reading to be God’s way to education and “the conveyance of his grace” (Nord 9). Baxter set a proto-standard for evangelical literature distinguished by “simplicity, yet depth; emotion, yet reason; cheapness, yet permanence”. His books *The Saints’ Everlasting Rest* (1650) and *A Call to the Unconverted* (1658), coalesced symbiotically with John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678) and *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666) as classic Christian texts that would be “thumbed for a hundred years” (102). These texts were reprinted and thumbed for centuries. They were translated into multiple languages together with newer, similarly-styled publications and circulated widely throughout the world

during the great “coming of age” of religious mass publishing and mission evangelism: the nineteenth century (9-10).

From the revolution of the use of the press in the sixteenth-century Reformation to the nineteenth-century Revival Movement, with repeated publication a core group of texts evolved into a distinctive “evangelical canon” (Gunther Brown 80). However, unlike the biblical canon – which nineteenth-century evangelicals considered closed and incontestably sacrosanct – the evangelical canon was open, accommodating, and proved to be “functionally sacred” (8). Membership of the canon was contingent upon a text’s usefulness to the Christian journey and its fortification of the biblical Word. The literature’s measure of sacredness depended upon how “texts moved their readers forward along a pilgrimage from the present world toward that which is to come” (80). The canon was not limited to one genre but crisscrossed all categories, from doctrinal and devotional texts to hymnals, histories, memoirs and eventually even fiction. By developing as a fluid entity, the canon could adapt to reflect evolving literary sensibilities, from the cultured to the vernacular; and manifest in many forms, from books to tracts and periodicals. The genre mattered little to a text’s acceptance in the canon, but its content, or its ability to relate the Word to the world of lived experience determined its usefulness (7). Trends of genre in the print market could shift over time but time-honoured “steady sellers” patterned adherence-to-the-Word as the overriding paradigm within which newer releases could accede to the canon, while still offering relevance to a changing world (M. Brown 68).

Evangelical texts upheld the great narratives of the Bible as interpretive frameworks through which to iterate metaphors for Christian living. Gunther Brown uses the Bible’s pilgrimage metaphor made famous by John Bunyan, as an example that resonated with migrant colonising communities of the nineteenth century who readily identified their worldly travels with a sacred, otherworldly journey toward heaven (8-9). In his dissertation, *Opium Pushing and Bible Smuggling* (2008), Benjamin Louis Fischer employs the term “archive” as an alternative to “canon” to accommodate the “interlocking personal stories intended to confirm and elaborate the central focus of Evangelism: the Gospel metanarrative” (130). The evangelical observation of the Gospel, he argues, “included both a grand narrative about the redemption of the world” – which could be summarised as: Creation, Sin, Exile and Restoration – “and smaller narratives in which individuals could play a role in the larger story” (130). They venerated the Bible as sacred, a divinely-authored, universal narrative through which the Holy Spirit activated meaning, and saw their own mortal narratives as

small replications of the divine plot (Gunther Brown 8). Fischer shows how pioneer missionary Robert Milne, in his *Retrospect of the First Ten Years of the Protestant Mission to China* (1820), drew on the time-honoured model of evangelical writing where personal accounts of endeavour found meaning within a Gospel framework. In order to connect a nascent Chinese evangelical community with evangelicals at home, Milne positioned China within a story-structure of worldwide redemption. He recorded the progress of the Gospel among indigenous people by reflecting upon instances where Christianity had exerted a firm presence, and he shaped anecdotes of personal ministry to display the trials and triumphs of Christ's ministry (131). Milne believed that the written word, consistent with sacred scripture, could perform powerful work for God's Kingdom, and believed his textual output to be as much a part of his mission-vocation as was preaching and teaching (133).

The intensification of religious publishing during the nineteenth century did, however, hold inherent tensions for those concerned to keep a strict separation between the sacred and the secular in print, while still maintaining effective presence within the world. The Bible stood as the sovereign core of evangelical publishing and together with time-honoured genres of Christian writing – sermons, hymnody, treatises, and tracts – had for centuries constituted a canon of commanding classical works. Any attempted outreach into the nineteenth-century secular world through the addition of newer genres designed to appeal to a wider readership, stood to compromise the evangelical archive's hitherto meticulous preservation of scriptural purity. Debate ensued over the appropriateness of popular genres to effect spiritual regeneration (as opposed to secular contamination) from among evangelical leaders ever-vigilant to remain "*in the world*" without becoming "*of the world*" (John 17:15–17). Yet Christ's mandate to "go *into all the world*, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Matthew 28), had presupposed interaction between the sacred and secular, with the possibility of extending an influence which might sanctify the profane for divine use (Gunther Brown 6). Consequently, over the course of the century, new genres would be considered appropriate if they emphasized and illustrated key biblical precepts, serving to reinforce, not replace, the traditional word of the Bible. In this way evangelicals made a calculated decision to compete with the secular world by appealing to popular reading tastes and adopting the strategies and technologies of the mass market.

The Culture – the Community

The nineteenth-century media revolution transformed and unified evangelical group culture through their expanding literary canon. Despite differences of emphasis within the subgroups of evangelical thinking there was, nevertheless, a basic uniformity to the shared values and views of evangelical theology. Gunther Brown labels this uniformity of identity a “textual community” (9), a term referring to both a group of distinctive practices, and to the assumptions that inform and give them significance. Through the medium of print the community created and sustained its Christian identity, forming an interconnecting web of relationships between authors, publishers, texts and readers (10). The notion of a “textual community” corresponds with the “interpretive community” first proposed by Stanley Fish in which he theorises the readings of a text to be culturally constructed. Fish argued that members of the cultural collective share a set of interpretive strategies prior to reading that determine the shape of what is read. He believed members were as much products of their interpretive community, as were the meanings the group enabled them to produce (14). The meanings that emerged from evangelical print culture were “at the moving intersection of what Paul Ricoeur terms the ‘world of the text’ and the ‘world of the reader’” (qtd. in Gunther Brown 11). Interpretive and expressive options for readers, writers and publishers were in part determined by established conventions embedded in the evangelical canon. The textual community, long steeped in the ways of writing and receiving evangelical texts, perpetuated and consequently stabilised narrative structures, and yet in the stabilising process set the ground rules for further experimentation. This practice of perpetual restoration and regeneration of the canon was what Ricoeur referred to as “a dialectical process of textual ‘sedimentation’ and ‘innovation’” (11). Thus, the canon steadily expanded in usefulness to an increasingly diverse readership at the same time as it consolidated the rules and conventions of old.

Notionally, a textual community provided an alternative to viewing the church as the heart of the local community and helped nurture unique group identity. Through their texts evangelicals could conceive of themselves in communion with the church-universal, a fellowship embracing Christians of all eras, countries and denominations (12). The correspondence columns of periodicals for example strengthened evangelical unity by providing a forum in which to debate (and abate) doctrinal differences. They acted as a source of encouragement, confirmation and conviction, and were a connecting-conduit for geographically dispersed evangelicals (168-9). The conceptual unity created and sustained

through evangelical literature extended beyond transatlantic boundaries to missionaries and converts abroad. Thus, this “invisible church” (79) of textually integrated communicants could transcend both time and space. Members shared an identifiable adherence to what William Wilberforce labelled “peculiar doctrines of the Gospel”, a set of codes which he argued became “the grand distinction between nominal and real Christians” (1835: 245-6). Such life-emphasis on Scripture was plainly manifest in the distinctive parlance and behaviour that set evangelicals apart from early nineteenth-century society in England – despite the same distinguishing proprieties of conduct and expression influencing, and eventually becoming, characteristic traits of the later Victorian era. Evangelical distinctiveness-of-life was, as Ian Bradley argued in *The Call to Seriousness* (1976), a reaction against the “worldliness and complacency” of eighteenth-century England and the “vague, undemanding concept of Christianity” preached in the Established Church (19).

Maintaining a spiritual communion of the faithful through text was, in its abstract sense, perhaps more important to evangelical community consciousness than parish life, particularly in light of the ultimate goal – future fellowship in the Kingdom of Heaven. By way of extension to the idea of a textual community, Benjamin Fischer adapts Benedict Anderson’s concept of the “imagined communities” of nations to theorise an imagined spiritual community, devoid of barriers between classes, and working in “deep horizontal comradeship” (79). In the evangelical worldview, anyone who believed in the resurrection and imminent reign of Christ could be accepted into the “community of saints” (80). As in Anderson’s imagined community of a nation, which was necessarily “imagined as *limited* because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations” (Anderson 7), the future community of heaven would also be limited to those having heard and accepted “the good news of free salvation” (Fischer 80). With eschatology forming much of the evangelical worldview, a focus on the millennial reign of Christ gave urgency to the goal of world evangelisation. The need to spread the Gospel message among all nations on earth before the second coming of Christ thus achieved remarkable consensus as denominations set aside divisions and religious polity (transient though this might have been), to work in unprecedented agreement towards the almighty task of world mission (80). Although in the British homeland, as Fischer points out, communion across class and denomination in practice, remained largely in the sphere of the imagined. He suggests, at home, upper-class acts of service to the working-class might be considered “conscious stretches across real

divides” (81). Hence, the spiritual bond of shared beliefs expressed through writing, became vital to a “community that must otherwise remain almost entirely an abstraction” (82). In the same way that Anderson attributed the growth of nationalism to the unifying vernaculars of print-capitalism, evangelicals generated their distinctive print publications, replete with scriptural idioms and doctrinal “buzzwords”, connecting “thousands of people” united “against a ‘worldly’ Other” and yet who “would never meet”, into a cohesive Christian network of the imagination (83).

Given the degree to which the eighteenth-century evangelical subculture maintained an air of conscious separation from mainstream society, it seems remarkable that its influence should come to dominate and reflect the opinions, conduct, and socio-political economies of middle-class life in the late nineteenth century. Whether or not individuals themselves subscribed to evangelical beliefs, they could not help but feel its effect (Fyfe 22). Evangelical attitudes to money and individual self-development inflected government thinking in matters of politics, social and educational reform. With a predilection for civil-activism to accomplish their objectives, evangelicals were renowned for their formation of societies and organised-campaigns – the most famous of which was to bring an end to slavery; but also, to ameliorate the working conditions in factories; to crusade against intemperance and child labour; and to canvass bylaws to keep the Sabbath holy. Such resolute commitment to their cause was famously satirised in the literature of Charles Dickens through the “righteous do-gooder” characters of Mrs Jellyby and Mrs Pardiggle (Fyfe 22). From an evangelical perspective, cultural influence was a matter of moral stewardship, and as a result, many late-century social welfare movements would be modelled upon their organisational examples. Furthermore, and given the explicit connection between scriptural text and the message of salvation, they championed Sunday Schools as a key means of teaching literacy and evangelizing the children of the working classes (23). The need to bring spiritually deprived Britons to the knowledge of Christ was only matched in intensity by the need to bring Christianity to heathen parts of the world – through missions, through Bibles, and through a multitudinous supply of Christian literature.

Considering the determined yet distinctly coordinated extent to which they operated, the normalisation of evangelical values in nineteenth-century Britain could be considered, as Fischer argues, a “hegemonic project” (70). Using Gramsci’s notion of social transformation, or what he describes as the “‘unity of theory and practice,’ when individuals become ‘conscious of being a part of a hegemonic force’”, Fischer contends “a steady shift was

effected in British ‘common sense’” (70). This shift he argues, happened when nominal Christians, or parish members of, what Gramsci calls “superficial explicit” and “inherited” forms of religious identification, began to see themselves in conscious agreement with the practices and values of evangelic belief (qtd. in Fischer 69). Gramsci believes this awareness occurs through the merging of “two theoretical consciousnesses: one that is implicit in his activity and that really unites him with all his fellow [group members] in the practical transformation of the world and a superficial, ‘explicit’ one that he has inherited from the past” (69). But Gramsci adds that common sense is not static, it is subject to changes in “philosophical opinions which have entered into common usage”, and is easily convinced by theories explained persuasively (70). In their indefatigable way, evangelicals explained a Gospel that was available to all, proving themselves adept at spreading their universal vision while securing awareness, and arousing new membership. A significant feature of this hegemonic assault was the generation and dissemination of literature, and how evangelicals maintained a sense of symbolic unity through their literary archive, while at the same time “rallying around their Gospel-focused literature for their dismantling of rationalist hegemony” (71).

Print Evangelism and the World

The kind of literature that shaped this ideological revolution – the kind which by the end of the nineteenth century collectively formed the “archive” or “canon” – came to include many genres, but it was missionary writing in all of its forms that best represented the universal vision for Christian presence throughout the world. Susan Thorne suggests that the British public’s engagement with missionary intelligence from foreign fields formed a “mutually constitutive dynamic” where these texts “helped to shape social relations and political identities every bit as much as social relations and political identities influenced the reading of missionary texts” (14). The transnational character of the archive, Isabel Hofmeyer believes, “allowed people to think, read, and write *as if* they were addressing a vast international Protestant public” (“Inventing” 43); and the form she judged most effective for reciprocal engagement was “the most classic nineteenth-century evangelical genre, namely, the tract” (21).

The Tract

The concise simplicity of a narrative tract worked as an effective tool for evangelism on many levels. It was the tract's ability to cross cultures, gender, age and time that made them so highly effective for both the homeland and foreign mission fields. Readers' attention could be engaged rapidly through eye-catching covers, sensational titles, woodcut-illustrations and compelling narratives; and their concision, often in the form of a single sheet of paper or small pamphlet, rendered them memorable, impressing on "the heart" like no other genre as a neat distillation of Christian truth (Strubenrauch 565). The Religious Tract Society's (RTS) nineteenth-century market strategy of short, entertaining narratives was calculated "to catch at very uninformed minds" as a counter-strategy to the way they might "fall asleep over" a "plain didactic essay", or the "dry theological treatises" reminiscent of the kind produced in the eighteenth-century by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) (565, 573). By adding an inventive twist to a gospel metaphor, the storyline of the RTS tract could be targeted to come "home to the man's bosom who sees himself described" (573). Indeed, celebrated preacher and prolific writer Charles Spurgeon sermonised the value of perceptive consumer psychology. In his book of lectures, *The soul-winner: or How to lead sinners to the Saviour* (1895), he counselled open-air preachers: "When preaching and private talk are not available, you *have a tract ready* ... Some tracts would not convert a beetle; there is not enough in them to interest a fly. Get good striking tracts, or none at all ... a telling, touching gospel tract may often be the seed of eternal life" (Spurgeon 176).

The tract form has long been attributed with remarkable powers of human ensnarement. Conversion stories abound where tracts have been chanced-upon in obscure places "cast aside in hedges, in holes in the wall, in coal grates, or left in pockets of laundry" where their extraordinary power transfixes the sinner, compels them to read, and precipitates a life-transforming experience (Hofmeyer "Inventing" 21). The tract appears to have been invested with a supernatural authority through which it initiates powerful conversions, triggering a chain-reaction of significant developments across centuries. One such account of consequential effect reads:

[T]he seventeenth-century Puritan, Richard Baxter...encounters a tract, *The Bruised Reed* (1630), by Richard Sibbes, which influences him to write a devotional classic, *The Saints' Everlasting Rest* (1650). This book in turn converts Philip Doddridge, who writes *Rise and Progress of the Religion of the Soul* (1745). William Wilberforce encounters this last text, is converted by it, and is moved to write his celebrated *Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians* (1797),

which in turn influences Leigh Richmond, who authors *The Dairyman's Daughter* (1811), a successful tract subsequently translated into more than fifty languages. (qtd. in Hofmeyer "Inventing" 22)

It was the tract's ability to be translated into multiple languages for distribution among the unsaved masses in foreign fields that established its reputation as the ideal missionary instrument for arousing and sustaining belief. Evangelical textual theory was premised on the emotional resonance of texts for readers, and a text's ability to affect a powerful conversion experience. James Hudson Taylor was famously converted after reading a tract in his father's study, and would himself distribute tens of thousands of tracts in his "blitz-conversion" of China (Austin 3).

One text that proved tremendously versatile for missionary purposes with seemingly endless potential for translation across languages, race and culture, while meeting with positive response in multiple target nations, was John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Distributed in abridged form as a tract throughout Britain and beyond since the 1820s, it was both the quintessential text of dissent (and therefore dear to the heart of nonconformist missionaries), and held significance for persecuted converts abroad (Hofmeyer "Inventing" 24). However, while it was imagined by homeland nonconformists to be a "universal" story, Isabel Hofmeyer argues that its appeal may not have come from universally consistent understandings of the text (which may have been quite contradictory), but rather, a shared understanding of the text as a type of charmed object. Highlighting the first translation of the text in Africa as her example, she claims nonconformist notions of "inspired textual agency" converged with local perceptions of texts as "containing talismanic or charm-like powers". Yet within this inspired realm she suggests these differing agendas could, nonetheless, be pursued while still in the end conforming to the same objectives (27).

For Protestants holding the Reformed view of Christian texts as divinely ordained and hence universally both equivalent and transparent, mission translation activity was imperative. Yet for translations to be truly effective across cultures a second theory apart from transparency, was necessary. Many writers held the belief that Christian texts were dynamic, and this conviction "conferred agency on texts to capture those they encountered" (Hofmeyer *Bunyan* 20). Such belief in the "quasi-magical" power of texts could be matched by indigenous understandings of documents as "fetishes" or protective objects whose correct use could compel events both in this world and the next (39). In this way, despite the misreading

of textual empowerment between mission and convert, there could be at least a semblance of shared objectives.

The belief that texts could span languages and cultures and bring about an equivalent form of belief and consciousness in foreign recipients was driven and sustained by an imperative of world evangelisation; yet in reality, hermeneutical transference proved more complicated. The translation of standard texts was vital for ongoing mission support. These texts served as points of affinity for a home audience unfamiliar with the indistinct locations of foreign missions, and they satisfied those who willingly absorbed the illusion that everyone in their transnationally imagined-community “read the ‘same’ texts and believed the ‘same’ ideas” (Hofmeyer *Bunyan* 32). But how well the intended meaning transferred to mission recipients could depend on the type of message being conveyed. The Chinese had long been accustomed to tracts written by Confucian scholars promoting moral values in society. Christian literature directed towards self-examination consequently had some resonance among literate people – as did texts specifically targeted towards a Confucian frame of reference. Other texts originally developed for the British home context, however, could prove totally inappropriate in translation. A popular tract translated by the London Missionary Society entitled “The Anxious Inquirer” had the chapter headings: “Deep Concern for One’s Salvation is Reasonable and Necessary”; “The Importance of Retaining and Deepening Religious Impressions”; “Mistakes into which the Anxious Enquirer may Fall”; and “Discouragements”, detailing topics such as “cold indifference” and “the low state of religion among those professing it” – all heavily pietistic themes which hardly persuaded mass conversions (Covell 93-96).

Despite high distribution figures, how much of the Christian message actually reached the target audience remains uncertain. To the literate Chinese community, the “cumbrous” aesthetics of translated text could prove off-putting, if not objectionable. On the other hand, Chinese who could not read, would implore missionaries for texts – either for talismanic use, or to sell the paper to shopkeepers for wrapping goods (Ghosh 172). The Protestant commitment to guard against textual corruption and erroneous belief by adhering as much as possible to the Biblical Word had implications for Christian translations in general, where a tendency to closely follow English phraseology and expression could result in unwieldy interpretations. The missionary Robert Henry Cobbold wrote: “Chinese turned into English sounds generally very poor stuff to us, and so does English turned into Chinese sound very

poor to them” (qtd. in Reinders 78). As a fluent speaker of Chinese, the Catholic missionary Marchini, considered Protestant tracts “unintelligible jargon, which no one could read without laughing”. He spoke of complaints from learned Chinese, offended that their “‘sublime idiom’ should be so wantonly caricatured” (Marshall 18). Despite accounts from missionaries who were keen to impress home organisations with their high tract circulation, figures were not enough to confirm a willing readership. Whether it was the dissonance of translated language, or the high rate of illiteracy among the classes targeted for evangelisation, evidence showed that the message of salvation was often put to other uses. There were reports of gospel tracts used for everything from wall paper to toilet paper; as wrapping for medicines and tobacco; or made into Chinese slippers and children’s kites from pages glued together (18-22). The missionary emphasis on “getting the word out” as rapidly and comprehensively as possible came with the acceptance of a degree of wastefulness (Reinders 78). Yet such was their faith in the supreme power of the Word that early missionaries such as Robert Morrison, who were banned from setting foot in China, threw chests of Gospels into the sea to be washed ashore, while Karl Gutzlaff sent native colporteurs into the provinces to distribute tens of thousands of tracts. After all, “what the missionaries were chiefly anxious to diffuse was a knowledge of Jesus Christ” (Fay 89, 96).

Missionary Narratives

While the Religious Tract Society was a significant force in British evangelical operations – publishing huge quantities of material for both domestic and overseas missionary societies¹ – their tracts were intended for the unconverted. To the *already* converted of Britain there was a need for similar reading matter: publications that would connect the faithful with the wider world, showing how the gospel story of redemption was unfolding in their time. British Christians of the early nineteenth century were becoming increasingly conscious of world affairs; and they were particularly attentive to the spread of the gospel within and beyond the bounds of empire. For evangelicals, there was an intense focus on how the peoples of other nations might respond to the gospel. When the first missionaries to China, Robert Morrison and William Milne, reported their work to the London Missionary Society, their stories, once filtered through evangelical journals to the Christian public, awakened a sympathy for China and produced a vision of the mission for readers. Applying the distinctive evangelical style and rhetoric of religious tracts, their report-writing also employed the same “model of testimony” described by Fischer as: “telling about God’s redemptive work in the

world, while overlaying that story with particular details of the missionary's own encounters with fascinating new peoples" (120). These reports not only served to shape early British understandings of China, they contributed to a growing archive of evangelical texts, as they united an imagined community of spiritual communicants from nations across the world.

Modern critics of missionary literature point to a general need to maintain funding as the core reason for missionaries' exceptionally prolific output of writing. For mission societies and the wider evangelical public to maintain their financial support of mission operatives abroad, there had to be some accountability. Missionaries were required to lodge written reports of their activities and keep a diary or journal as a source of information, not only for their reports, but for correspondence with churches or the many individual supporters they might accrue. As a result: "the missionary at work was characterised by authorship as much as by daring deeds in foreign climes" (Johnson *Writing* 3). Many of their report-manuscripts were edited for use in periodical publications such as the *Evangelical Magazine* or the *Missionary Magazine* (in the case of the LMS), or *China's Millions* (the CIM), so mission societies could provide a selective snapshot of a mission's progress to subscribers, and thus provide assurance that contributions were used effectively (Fischer 129). Consequently, in these periodical publications, as Johnston states: "there is always an emphasis on positive evangelical achievements (*Writing* 7). Jeffrey Cox adds:

If the reports were not inspiring or upbeat, they were edited and rewritten by the staff to make them so. Accounts of failure, depression, disillusionment, failed marriages, addiction to spirits, doctrinal squabbles, and the general bureaucratic competition for resources that led to hard feelings in every missionary society are not to be found (116).

In terms of propaganda, the China Inland Mission's "tool", *China's Millions*, took mission periodicals to another level. Under the direction of founder (and consummate publicist), James Hudson Taylor, the *Millions* would adhere to a basic – and modern day – principle: "Only sell success" (Austin 25-26). CIM historian A.J. Broomhall writes that, as editor, Taylor would not permit the magazine to become "a mere house-journal of news and anecdote". He insisted every edition "must have a cutting edge" and it "must report to donors, inform and incite to action" (6:162). Taylor would personally rewrite reports to have them fit his charter; setbacks to progress were omitted to assure supporters of the mission's positive inroads into China (Austin 26). In compiling his history of the mission, Alwyn Austin found it is less problematic to define what *China's Millions* "does not say, rather than what it does". He writes: "There is no landscape, no reference to natural resources or business prospects,

nothing about other foreign residents, almost nothing about Chinese or international politics. There is no personal information on the missionaries' class, education, and background, their church affiliation, nationality, or any 'family secret' that might cause friction" (*Millions* 26). Place names are also avoided to hide the location of workers. The secrecy extends to use of a language-code, a sign system understood by the mission network only, serving as an "internal dialogue" through which workers could speak to one another from afar: "[T]he word 'excitement' for example was code for a riot, and 'danger' for murder, as in 'God has been blessing us with an excitement'" (26). As an historian, Austin despairs at the opacity, or what he calls the "allegory" of these texts "where the 'real world' drops away and pilgrims wander a timeless landscape that ... could be the Middle Ages, could be *Pilgrim's Progress*?" (27). But despite the oblique information and other-worldly elements that made up the *Million's* intelligence-reports, missionary letters could be far more direct.

Letters written by missionaries, however, reveal a marked dissemblance between those for public circulation and those for private purview. As with reports gauged to perpetuate financial support, missionaries' more public correspondence with home parishes tended to be selectively weighted towards positive information. They included: "concise statements of achievements in linguistic or evangelistic pursuits, innovations in reaching the heathen, and updates on health or the physical and financial needs of the mission" (Fischer 123). Such a detailed show of efficiency anticipated criticism from mission antagonists who might question their effectiveness in the field. As I detail in chapter four, missionaries were ever-wary of the gibes of armchair analysts in Britain – detractors such as Canon Isaac Taylor, who publicly maligned their methods, motivations and evangelistic-capacity in popular newspapers. But despite the constraints of public correspondence that obliged them to render idealised accounts of mission life, private correspondence (often written concurrently with public) to family, friends or mission leaders, could be frank, impassioned or soul-searching. As I illustrate in chapter six, letter writing was not only an accepted administrative responsibility, it was also an emotional necessity to stem the geographical isolation and cultural alienation that missionaries suffered. It was also a life-line to familiar culture, and a vehicle for social interaction with a closely-identifying epistolic community.

As a pioneering missionary to China, William Milne was acutely conscious of the responsibility he had to his homeland community when writing letters. Aware of the significance that his words would hold among the evangelical community he tabled a list of questions to guide his actions when writing. The list was published in his *Memoirs* in 1824:

QUERIES TO BE PROPOSED BY A MISSIONARY TO HIMSELF,
WHEN WRITING MISSIONARY LETTERS.

- 1st. Do I keep fully within actual facts? – or strong probabilities?
- 2nd. Do I so write, as will be apt to lead the public to expect more than can be realized.
- 3rd. Do I write, in regard to style, terms, and address, becoming my age, talents, and period of service?
- 4th. Do I write any thing which if made public, would cause future self reproach; or become an obstacle to me among the people among whom I labor?
- 5th. Do I attribute too much to myself?
- 6th. Do I give cause of offence to my brethren – by round about insinuations – by intentional neglect – or by positive accusations? (160)

Such introspective rule-making exposes the degree of ambivalence that accompanied the task of writing home. Evidently for Milne, his vocational trailblazing could induce temptations-of-the-soul when it came to transmitting news to others: the urge to embellish, imply or self-aggrandise; or a tendency to mislead, or cause offence to fellow workers. His dilemma was: How to keep within the bounds of truth while meeting the expectations of a highly engaged audience? The task required discipline and self-surveillance, and a list to question the conscience. Such a sense of restraint was “one of the hallmarks of true Evangelical seriousness” (Bradley 28).

Letters and periodical reports have formed the main source material for mission scholars of recent decades seeking to understand the influence of mission on British culture and empire, but missionary writing was comprised of many more sub-genres. Benjamin Fischer argues for an expansion of the scope of research to include what he calls “provocations”,² or book-length missionary narratives, to complicate findings based on accounts with largely positive (and therefore misleading) emphasis. He suggests these texts “aimed to provoke readers in a different manner and appealed to their Gospel-mindedness – their Evangelical worldview – rather than to a bandwagon impulse to join a winning cause” (129). Suggestions that evangelicals would be de-motivated by negative reports from the fields, he argues, doesn’t take into account the expectation of resistance that meets a message calling for sinners to repent.³ Fischer contends that contrary to recent scholars’ findings, reports of negative response to the gospel – as can be found in the pages of book-length

provocations – would only confirm “the Evangelical view that causes them to despair of it”, and thus become a reason for greater attention (130).

Missionary narrative publications in the early nineteenth century came to be recognised as a distinct genre, although one that was ill-defined. The *Christian Observer* in 1836 finally wrote of “missionary narratives” as a new, and “if well-written a most interesting and instructive, species of composition” (qtd. in Fischer 294). Yet twenty-one years before, the *Evangelical Magazine* had been slow to recommend any publication that might approximate the novel, cautioning against these books because: “they create so ravenous an appetite, that they will send our young people to the circulating library for trash poisonous to the soul” (qtd. in Fischer 96). The growing popularity of novels prompted evangelical elders to voice concern over their “pernicious influence”, yet missionary narratives would soon emerge as their Christian rival. By 1834 the *Christian Observer* had softened its stance against reviewing popular texts – so long as they were not secular:

We do not, however, think that those who cannot find entertainment in argument should be deprived of a reasonable share of lighter matter; and there is always one resource in particular, which all classes of persons, the superficial as well as the most meditative, may in common avail themselves of – namely, interesting and useful narrative, especially religious biography – and we are therefore always happy to intersperse both our reviews and other papers with a large portion of this unexceptionable nutriment” (qtd. in Fischer 96).

The evangelical archive sets itself apart from other literature through a uniqueness of form and style that reflects the rhetoric of evangelicalism. This “discourse of distinctiveness” permeated the personal reflections of missionaries, prompting the form’s acknowledgement as a genre of its own in the *Christian Observer* in 1836. Here their writings were named collectively: “proceedings of missionaries” (101). Inconsistently labelled since then “missionary: narratives, literature, writing, journals or texts” and even more broadly, “travel writing”, the grouping nonetheless “conforms to an identifiable set of generic regulations” (Johnston 7). As Jeffrey Cox comments: “Missionaries were far from being the only people writing about foreign lands in the early nineteenth century, but they had more access to a popular readership than other authors”. He points out that they added “a new sub-genre to missionary literature in the form of religious ethnography”. These ethnographies, “sometimes cast in the form of histories, provided a fundamental source of basic information about other parts of the world” (117). Travel writing, according to Fischer, “fails as a misnomer for missionaries’ works because the authors were typically resident for decades in the regions

about which they wrote ... and usually ... expected to die in their chosen location of exile” (102). Yet, for a home readership, missionaries’ lives in exciting lands were interesting, and their writing could transport readers’ imaginations to experience a world they may never visit. Unlike travel writers, missionaries “provided the added benefits of spiritual authority – thereby assumed better vision and attention to moments of real import – along with religious instruction” (100). Their writing also “provided assumed honesty regarding these moments of what Mary Louise Pratt has called – first contact” (100). In short, to homeland readers, missionary writing “told true stories of real people, their subject matter concerned the telling abroad of what they held to be the one overarching true story, the Gospel” (62). By the late nineteenth century missionary publications increasingly rivalled populist texts, in genre, style, and price. As I discuss in chapter three, and again in chapter five, David Livingstone’s book *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (1857), initiated a new paradigm in missionary writing – the romance and adventure genre.

Missionary Autobiography: Evangelical Narrative

Critics are divided in their efforts to locate a generic site for evangelical life writing. Some theorists place evangelical lives within antiquity – within the literature of communal tradition where lives are testaments to religious orthodoxy; yet others recognise them as innovations of the “modern form” – as literary examples of individual self-expression. Rodger Payne in his book *The Self and the Sacred* argues that the autobiographical writing of early evangelicals was decidedly modernist in form. He identifies how the term “autobiography” came into Western cultural currency at a time largely contemporaneous with the emergence of evangelicalism, while suggesting the term was coined in response to the cultural needs of an age increasingly aware of individual consciousness, together with an emergent appreciation for subjective inflection in literature (16). Having disengaged from the corporate, ritualised strictures of medieval Christian life, Protestantism had reframed ecclesiastical traditions in such a way that by the seventeenth-century, Pietists were placing emphasis on “personal and affective experience” as the answer to Christian life (7). Yet in its ramifications the Reformation had heralded paradigmatic change beyond mere shifts in theological doctrine alone. In the following centuries revolutionary shifts in intellectual, scientific and political thinking added complexity to the array of choices over which humans were now authorised to exercise their “free moral agency” (7). For Protestants confronted by uncertainties-of-change in eighteenth century culture – exemplified most unsettlingly in the rise of the autonomous

“self” – the discourse of conversion would prove a powerful, yet essentially stabilising form of address. Using the “sin, grace, and salvation” vocabulary of Christian tradition, evangelicals were able to refashion their conceptual boundaries to produce a new discursive form, a language which bowed to traditions of humility, yet one where it was possible to embrace and make sacred the concept of an autonomous self (8).

The concept of self as Payne suggests, was a distinctly Western invention and a hallmark of early-modern culture. It was the manifestation of a new and pervading consciousness, a phenomenon presenting in essence as narrative, both in form and expression. Conversion as a concept, while not new to Christianity, had by the nineteenth century evolved through “ruptures” in biblio-historical narratives predicated on “turns” toward righteousness, to emerge as the quintessential method through which the experiencing self could convey something specifically personal in spiritual autobiography. In Foucauldian terms, the re-articulation of conversion took place not only through conventional “discursive sites” of authority – the pulpit, sermon or religious tract – its delivery was universally democratised to include all converts. Yet while the conversion event itself conferred authority, if not compulsion, to speak or write of the experience, it was only articulation of the event through the language or the “text” of conversion which gave meaning and definition to the experience. Antithetical tensions between the self and the experience of conversion, and conversion and its interpretation, gave rise to evangelical narratives of the spirit; narratives in effect, that produced the experience to which they gave form. Through these autobiographical accounts evangelicals propagated, and by the same token, substantiated, a discursive site of vernacular literature. The new discourse provided a way of grasping an indeterminate phenomenon by naming, interpreting, and giving meaning to its tensions and dissonant elements through a form of dialectical negotiation (8-11). If, as Foucault argued, “discourses are practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” then through their narratives evangelicals were constructing the reality in which they existed (*Archaeology* 49). The discourse of conversion according to Payne had become an intrinsic “part of the linguistic process that constituted both self and experience by naming and ascribing meaning to the disruptions and discontinuities that faced evangelicals in the modern era” (11).

Like Rodger Payne, Bruce Hindmarsh draws attention to the connection between the evangelical conversion narrative and modern autobiographical identity. He reiterates his motif that conversion narratives “appeared on the trailing edge of Christendom and the leading edge

of modernity” (32) providing both a source of individual identity and a way to examine one’s own life. He argues against criticism that labels these accounts vestiges of medieval hagiography – as anachronistic relics out of keeping with enlightened times – and refutes the notion that evangelical writing was mostly biographical. Instead, Hindmarsh insists that this genre was primarily autobiographical, and moreover, was quite popular, written freely by both genders across a diversity of backgrounds which was, he maintains, reason enough to place the narratives firmly in the modern age (347). Yet he qualifies this designation of modernity, concluding that while evangelicalism had, on the one hand, engaged with the growing individualism of the age, it had on the other, achieved its identity through classical means: that of gospel-centred fellowship. Thus understood, the genre remains in one sense “modern”; in another, decidedly “not modern”. Yet despite his equivocation, the conceptual unity of a “communion of saints spanning the ages” readily evokes the literary patterns, stock stories and phrasing of medieval biography; a literature which effectively effaced all personality from the individual. Hindmarsh concedes that while the evangelical narrative did follow a biblical pattern – “creation, fall, redemption, new creation” – the form merely provided scaffolding for a deeply personal narrative space (346). Yet this was a narrative identity far removed from egocentrism, the self-made identity of modern secularism. This was an identity shaped by a gospel message and was, therefore, he argues, “an important alternative version of Enlightenment individuality” (344).

The mediated self of evangelical narrative draws its distinctiveness from what David Bebbington describes as evangelicalism’s “conversionist” characteristics (2-10). Tracing a chronology of the development of the conversion narrative Hindmarsh determines that by the late eighteenth-century, conversion had come to represent not merely a juncture in one’s life, but further, it was the interpretative latch to the entirety of one’s life from beginning to end (322). The type of spiritual autobiography that persisted into the nineteenth century took the charism of conversion to new levels of elaboration, where the most transcendent moments of life, including experiences of sanctification, the call to mission or ministry, and in biographies, the apogee of a “good” death, would be narrated in the pattern of conversion – “as an agony of travail and relief” (226). Rendering these experiences public was for evangelicals, in a sense, being “born again and again” (229). Thus, conversion was not only admittance to Christianity, it was also the Christian journey in everlasting progress and remained therefore the core of evangelical identity. The narration of conversion followed increasingly established conventions as print publication and “proclamation” became a

widespread matter of course (228). As a literary genre the conversion narrative developed ever more depth and variety of elaboration; emerging from the ingenuous lay-narratives of “white hot” spontaneous experience (130), to evolve into narratives of creative literary-employment and self-interpretation (323). Charting the development of the genre from the mid-seventeenth century Hindmarsh determined that by the nineteenth-century missionary-enterprise, evangelical writers were indeed no longer “feeling their way”, they were confidently “writing within a tradition” (226).

In what was an increasingly modern social arena of rapid news and commodities-traffic, this narrative tradition was consciously shaping public belief. Transatlantic clusters of religious “excitement” during the early eighteenth-century were linked through letter writing, periodicals and itinerancy (62). American preacher Jonathan Edwards advocated wide-spread periodical circulation of revivals: “It has been found by experience that the tidings of remarkable effects of the power and grace of God in any place, tend greatly to awaken and engage the minds of persons in other places.... [A]n History should be published once a month, or once a fortnight of the progress of it” (qtd. in Snead 93). The published journals of George Whitefield and John Wesley did much to direct the course of eighteenth-century revival. Not only did these journals impart conversion and establish a common language of experience among readers, they consecrated the public personas of two leaders, and carefully shaped a public identity for the evangelical movement. Hindmarsh identifies with Jürgen Habermas when observing that these narratives contributed to the distinctive “audience-oriented subjectivity” of the bourgeois public sphere – an emergent space where “private people come together as a public” (80). The public space occupied by what was an inward or private experience for evangelicals grew exponentially out of the publication of their autobiographical material.

What had previously been diarised as confessional or transformative personal history had now become not only public, but institutional. The shaping of religious self-identity through narrative was contingent upon that identity being nurtured within a communal tradition of witness, both oral and written. For children raised in the ways of the evangelical community the “grammar of conversion” had been absorbed long before it had been experienced, perpetuating an intergenerational tradition reaching back to the Restoration (287). These children came to anticipate their own conversion as a spiritual rite of passage; a psycho-spiritual phenomenon which they too would be called upon to render narratable. As

Geoffrey Galt Harpham points out: “Lives that at some point issue in autobiography are typically lives lived in anticipation of that fact, lived in consciousness of their own narratability.” (42). Yet if the evangelical youth of the nineteenth century remained alert to embodied narrative, the tradition which had cultivated their coming-of-age-through-narrative had originated long before from seventeenth-century antecedents. As a necessary qualification for membership of the early dissenting church, candidates were required to deliver oral testimony of a “Saving work of Grace upon their Hearts” (Keach qtd. in Hindmarsh 287). This was more than a directive to maintain vigilance and introspection for signs of grace, akin to the account-keeping of a spiritual diary; church membership now required public proclamation – spoken autobiographical witness delivered in such a way as to receive the consent and approval of the congregation. This “no narrative, no admittance” (289) policy however, possessed inherent tensions, not least of which was its demand to deliver a narrative that was at once both personal and public. In Rodger Payne’s assessment, introducing the “oral relation” displaced conversion from the personal domain, for it “now involved the convert, the auditors, and, by extension, the entire community in the construction of a new discursive reality” (23). He supports Patricia Caldwell in rendering conversion a “literary judgment” – the synthesis of a discursive climate in which church candidates created themselves by means of a narrative structure designed to be listened to, judged, and accepted (sometimes rejected) as a “‘living stone’ for the temple” (23). Thus, it was the language of the wider “interpretive community” which corroborated the individual’s otherwise ineffable experience, thereby, in a very genuine sense, creating the experience itself.

As a narrative genre, therefore, conversion possesses distinct conventions; identifiable characteristics that, like any cultural performance, speak of time-wrought tradition. Despite their ubiquity as written texts these narratives could be best understood as speech events or “*epos*”, which in terms of Northrop Frye’s theory, work as the genre’s unique “radical of presentation” (248) between narrator and audience. Such events were coordinated, pre-prepared occasions, a literal and figurative journey bound by time and space, where performances were enacted in a symbolically designated arena, under the gaze of a participatory audience. Payne points out how physical movement featured as a metaphor for conversion by highlighting the narrator’s ritual movement through the narrative, in parallel to the temporal process of “separation, transformation and reaggregation” back into the society of others. He marks the the geography of a spiritual quest, as one of meander often from place to place, church to church, and rally to rally (46); and sketches the spatial positioning of

revival meetings, where the seating (the addressee's territory) would be set apart from the ritualised space of the altar, the zone where transformation could be found at "altar call", followed thereafter by euphoric reinstatement to the seats (or the symbolic fold); and notes the narrative setting of the liminal space of conversion – whether alone in a room, in a field, on a road, or in the woods (77). As Donatella Pallotti observes: "the sense of the conversion narrative and the forms, manners and concrete circumstances of its delivery are inseparable" (75). As a genre the tradition consistently appends each narrative to another in kind, and by exhibiting this pattern in their narratives individuals were actively perpetuating a model. Of this mimetic culture Hindmarsh says: "It was within these meetings that you would hear the testimonies and sing the hymns. Here you would begin to learn the story and ask yourself, Could my life be like that in any way? How might I 'enact' or experience that sort of autobiography?" (345). Yet despite the impulse to emulate as a way to discover religious identity, as a narrative genre it could still afford room for personality and uniqueness of story.

The inherited language and patterns of the church community and its leaders shaped oral and written narratives, but conformity to the frame was not rigid. Thomas Jackson writes in *The Lives of Early Methodist Preachers* that Wesley requested of his "fellow-helpers to the truth" a "written account of his early life, including the time and circumstances of his conversion, and the manner in which he was led to preach the Gospel" (xii-xiii). In this way he directed the plot of their narratives, many of which he published in the *Arminian Magazine*. As Hindmarsh observes, in their unembellished way these autobiographies appear to be "a conversion narrative followed by the curriculum vitae or itinerary of an evangelist" as if "two genres have been thus stitched together, and the seam left showing" (228). The plot steers through "the crisis of a guilty conscience and its relief under faith in the promises of God" followed by "the second crisis of spiritual vocation and the decision to forsake all to preach the gospel" (229). Yet despite the uniformity of the Methodist preachers' narratives, (shaped in part under Wesley's editorial control), the autobiographies of John Newton, William Cowper, and Thomas Scott, interpreted the model creatively through the details of past experience. Hindmarsh classifies their personal interpretations respectively "typological, intellectual, and psychological" (286), quoting Karl Weintraub's observation that "the individual will always find room for his idiosyncrasies in the interstitial spaces of the basic components of his model" (264). Logically some form of modelling is inescapable in autobiography since identity – the perception of one's uniqueness – is inevitably understood in terms of the other.

Discovering uniqueness of self through the conventions of spiritual narrative was particularly meaningful for the Methodist women whose writing appeared in the *Arminian Magazine*. In his web article “Disciplining the Self” Andrew Winckles identifies how women appropriated available genres to convey their own experience within the broader cultural frame, overcoming anxieties about publication to find themselves empowered – *called* no less – to testify. Whether it was through conversion narratives, diary extracts, or letters not necessarily intended for print, writing for women he suggests, was a form of spiritual discipline; an educative exercise where “incorporating scripture passages, hymns, prayers, and sermon notes” served as a process of “subjectivation” and a means to actualise experience. Through Wesleyan “means of grace” – systematic disciplines performed externally such as: prayer, fasting, scripture reading and communion – these women were able to engender spiritual experiences internally. These experiences, in turn, were inscribed and thus crystallised-into-being, generating further the means for women’s Christian subjectivity. Winckles suggests their writing “participates in a sort of feedback loop of experience, print, orality, and publicity that is both caused by and causes the development of the spiritual subject”.

This chapter has taken the ideology of missionary writing back to its roots to explore the evolution of thought and practice that constituted mission evangelism. From the sixteenth-century Reformation and the innovation of the printing-press, to the nineteenth-century Rival Movement and mission evangelism, the evolution of an “evangelical canon” of texts unified evangelical group culture to see itself as a “textual community”. This church of the imagination spanned time and geographical space in a spiritual bond of shared belief conveyed through a common vernacular and interpretive frame. Narratives followed a biblical pattern that formed a scaffold for a personal narrative space. The narration of self was given license through the experience of conversion – the interpretive key to the entirety of evangelical life from beginning to end. To the textual communicants of the nineteenth century, missionary writing came to represent Christian presence throughout the world, and through their correspondence and publications they built a distinct genre that excited and called to action.

¹ According to Aileen Fyfe, by 1850 the RTS had issued over 450 million copies of 5,300 different publications. 19 million of these had been in the previous year alone. (35).

² From *provocare*, to call forth action. (Fischer 145).

³ See an explanation of moderate Calvinism's theory of the "total depravity" of man in chapter four notes.

Chapter 3

Missionary Persona

[T]he function of the persona – the mask worn by actors in the theatre of the ancient world – was to obscure the individuality of the actor in favour of the universality of the character represented. Even in ordinary usage, a “persona” is something that someone constructs and projects, while a character is something we “show”.

Guy Dammann, *Times Literary Supplement* (29 October 2010):17

In his published series of lectures *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History* (1841), Thomas Carlyle declared that: “The History of the world is but the Biography of great men.” (34). Given that the lives of “great men” were considered nodal points of influence in world history by nineteenth-century theorists, and given that the lives of missionaries were considered heroic by the Victorian public, it could well be argued in the same vein that: “The History of missions is but the Biography of great missionaries.” While the heroic biography form had always been a means to enshrine remarkable Christians – saints in particular – the missionary publishing enterprise of the nineteenth century went further, commandeering the heroic form (modified to fit a gospel framework) as a strategy to promote and substantiate the evangelistic cause. How the heroic missionary was constructed in texts varied according to the field of mission and the period in which they worked – from the early-century pious martyr, to the mid-century Christian soldier, to the high-imperial explorer-adventurer. Their biographic treatment nonetheless casts a hagiographic aura over the Christian worker-abroad that fixed an archetypal-range for mission literature. Nineteenth-century fascination with the missionary, supported by what Terrence Craig refers to as, “the mythic infrastructure of the archetypal caricature” (134), was crucial for attracting new candidates, garnering support, and raising funds for the mission enterprise. The archetypal persona also predisposed readers to a fascination with missionaries’ own writing – letters to home churches, memoirs, ethnographic and travel texts – indeed, any writing that could present a personalised face to mission work. But unlike the eulogising nature of biography, missionary *autobiography* had to avoid egocentrism.

This chapter presents an overview of the scholarship on missionary representation, and explores how missionaries navigated the field of heroic image-making to write of themselves

and their work, while paying deference to the rules of modesty. While the shaping of religious self-identity in previous centuries had moved from private diarisation, to communal publication, to institutionalised narratives patterned on conversion; by the nineteenth century, missionary identity had been packaged for popular consumption. As this chapter shows, the archetypal personae produced by the mission press were largely based on gendered and family ideals, but equally, the missionary figure could be aligned with patriotic and imperialistic impulses. Nonetheless, missionaries, through their private correspondence, could assert different identities to those prescribed. For most, the construction of selfhood in writing was informed by an evangelical worldview – a life lived through a narrative of conversion; one that was called, but set-apart as a stranger from worldliness, and one also lived as a providential text. Yet, for many, writing the foreignness of China produced another self, one set in relief to, and thereby constructed through, the Other.

Dramatis personae

From saints to adventurers: the press and a century of archetypes

Modern critics of mission and missionary writing have focussed on the rhetorical discourses that appealed to Victorian readers and consolidated the public image of the missionary. But the missionary image of the nineteenth century was never a monolithic rendering; representations in print evolved across the century to admit multiple constructions of heroism. By the twentieth century, the missionary had been represented by what Craig calls: “a generational revolution of archetypes” (24) – a progression of images that ranged from the passive yet saintly hero of late eighteenth-century literature, to the spirited protagonist of Christian action a century later. Missionary persona evolved in keeping with the rigidly gendered and class-conscious, social and political developments of the period. But as critics have argued, missionary literature itself proved a powerful force for change – garnering enough popularity across the century to influence British societal behaviour, and indeed, give shape to the trends (and tropes) of empire. The appeal of missionary endeavour broadened readership beyond the early niche-audience of evangelicals (those who, in 1808, were famously ridiculed in the *Edinburgh Review* by Whig clergyman, Sydney Smith, for their support of a “little detachment of maniacs”),¹ to later attract a more diverse audience, of mainstream-religious and secular readers (Cox 79).

Conscious of their publications' authoritative appeal to British readers, mission societies were careful to orchestrate the public profiles of their missionaries to ensure the consistency of projected ideals. Anna Johnston's comprehensive study, *Missionary Writing and Empire, 1800-1860* (2003), concentrates on tropes of missionary representation in the first half of the nineteenth century. She argues that the publications of mission were the product of "a well-oiled and efficient production machine" under the editorial control of evangelical publishers, and concludes that they were fundamentally propagandist (6). The writing of this period, Johnston maintains, is generically regulated and uniformly authored by predominately male missionaries. And she adds that there is always an emphasis on positive achievements. Lacklustre successes or outright failures are "rarely mentioned" so as to protect homeland confidence in the enterprise, while ensuring on-going financial support. Within such a prescribed framework, it follows then that she should comment: "Missionary figures are almost exclusively heroic, long-suffering, and do not experience religious doubts, debilitating diseases, or personal crises" (7). Indeed, the missionary figure in the period of Johnston's study quite correctly matched such a blueprint. Yet as this thesis demonstrates, despite the editorial management that remained an integral feature of the enterprise, by the second half of the century the missionary image had diversified in printed publications, as mission-fields expanded and world-events complicated mission operations.

Yet further to the long-suffering hero figure who was characteristic of the literary constructions of early-century missionaries, in "British Missionary Publishing, Missionary Celebrity, and Empire" (2005), Johnston writes of the rising cult of celebrity missionaries. She attributes the phenomenon to the marketing effectiveness of the mission-press, determined to re-educate the public away from the "corrosive material" of cheap secular literature, offering in its place spiritually edifying tales of righteous endeavour on the mission fields. Johnston examines some of the strategies employed in constructing a marketable missionary image and the effectiveness of mission propaganda. She demonstrates how a growing readership was primed to recognise the likes of David Livingstone and John Williams as "godly mechanics" (36). By emphasising how they had risen from modest beginnings and hard-working childhoods to be inspired to self-improvement through education, these proto-hero-adventurers were cast by the mission press as prime models of lower-class success. Both achieved celebrity status, not just within evangelical circles but beyond, to achieve national and international fame.

As the most celebrated hero of his era, David Livingstone represented a “radical discursive shift” in the public construction of the missionary. Mary Angela Schwer, in her dissertation *Religious and Imperialist Discourse in Nineteenth-Century British Popular Missionary Literature* (1996), traces the development of missionary narratives across the century, noting how Livingstone’s self-representation in his 1857 publication, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa*, rejected the unidimensional passivity of earlier missionary images, to favour a more confident persona of Christian action and scientific discovery (26). But as Schwer argues: the shift from “feminized victim of Divine Providence or local hostilities” to the “strong, active and richly masculine” hero of the mid-century – an image that bestowed upon Livingstone unequalled popularity, together with “humanitarian authority” over not only those to whom he ministered, but also the homeland public – was “in fact, a construction” (1, 228). She demonstrates this fashioning process through a comparison of his private correspondence and published texts.² She also explains how the mid-century imperial rhetoric of Charles Kingsley and Thomas Hughes that was branded “Muscular Christianity”, became manifest in Livingstone: “The hero [they] were trying to create appeared before the British public in the flesh, and published a best-seller ... about his adventures” (22).³ This fusion of imperial and religious discourse in the form of Livingstone, she suggests, led to the popular acceptance of England’s civilizing mission. Furthermore, Schwer believes the “perishing heathen” literature of early missionary discourse had impressed upon the collective evangelical conscience a moral obligation to save native souls. This sense of guilt she argues, foreshadows Rudyard Kipling’s poetic justification of the spread of empire by the end of the century: “All that had to happen later in the century to transform this Christian guilt into the White Man’s Burden was to transform the Christian guilt into British guilt.” (23).

The positioning of David Livingstone as pivotal to a discursive shift in public constructions of the missionary, and as a symbolic conduit between religion and empire, is further nuanced by Justin Livingstone (Justin)⁴ in his book *Livingstone’s ‘Lives’: A Metabiography of a Victorian Icon* (2014). Exploring the extensive literature on Livingstone he looks at the multiplicity of biographical constructions of him, each an identity fitted to the interest-position of the biographer, and each a historiographical product of the period in which it was written. From an icon of the advancement of Christianity, commerce and civilisation; to a slave-abolitionist and adventurer; a Scotsman in the cause of nationalist ideals; a moral hero of imperialism; and a symbol for postcolonial blame: Livingstone became “a suite of heroes

of multiple identities produced out of a plurality of ... cultures” (71). But the most relevant chapter for the purpose of this thesis, “Styling the Self”, looks at his autobiographical writing in *Missionary Travels* and his self-styled persona. Similar to Schwer, Justin details the discrepancies between the published and unpublished texts to highlight self-representation, and points out Livingstone’s resistance to the process of editing, despite having broken with evangelical convention to publish with John Murray, a specialist in travel, not missionary literature.⁵ By drawing on the generic diversity of travel, and applying a literary-style attesting to authenticity, Justin maintains, Livingstone created for himself a “polymathic identity”, one which demonstrated his capacity in many fields. In addition, Justin employs Erving Goffman’s concept of “impression management” to explore the “performance” of his identity in response to marketplace pressures. He argues that Livingstone acted as a self-censor by removing anti-colonial material prior to publication, thus increasing the later imperialist impact of the book, but he maintains “it was originally conceived as a more ambivalent document than it finally became” (58).

With the representation of the missionary hero undergoing a discursive turn at the publication of Livingstone’s *Travels* by the populist press, a new class of reader emerged in the marketplace, one in need of a new kind of text. A growth in lower-class literacy in the latter decades of the century fostered the production of popular, low-cost publishing formats that featured short, exciting tales with eye-catching illustrations. In his chapter “Popular Imperial Adventure Fiction and the Discourse of Missionary Texts” Gareth Griffiths discusses how the appropriation of the adventure genre by missionary publishing became a means to win over the new readership from the secular press, bringing them back to Christianity. Working in direct competition, the evangelical press recast the missionary to fit the same hunter/adventurer image made popular in boy’s adventure tales, matching secular formats and prices, and flooding the marketplace with a genre that was already saturated with the tropes of empire. He maintains however, this accommodation to market-demands placed the missionary’s textual identity in the uneasy space of conflict. Here Griffiths draws attention to the discursive and ideological contradiction between on the one hand, assertive, all-conquering hunter/adventurer rhetoric, and on the other, the modest and compassionate discourse of Christian charity. Yet as he qualifies: the heroic label could apply equally to accounts of Christian martyrdom, such as a missionary’s refusal to take up arms against hostile natives. Either portrayal however sustained the popularity of a genre that helped sponsor the missionary-hero myth. Textual stereotypes of the high imperial-era continued

well into the twentieth century, despite an ever-increasing gap between missionary-practice and the ideology of empire.

Missionary masculinity

The heroic representation of missionary idols that captured a public's imagination and inspired the mobilisation of young men and women into missionary service, was a particularly gendered discursive field. In his book *Borrowed Gods and Foreign Bodies* (2004), Eric Reinders draws attention to the masculinist qualities to be found in missionary thinking. He attributes these values to the prevailing culture of Victorian manliness "which associated physical strength with spiritual strength, vigorous activity with religious certainty, and masculinity with Protestantism" (57). This was the same type of Muscular Christianity associated with the writing of Kingsley and Hughes and personified in the archetype of David Livingstone by the 1850s. But Anna Johnston traces a particular notion of masculinity to the evangelical revival of the late eighteenth century, a campaign that was both paralleled, and sustained by a newly emerging business sector. Mission societies were founded by philanthropic men-of-commerce moved by a Christian conscience. Protestant influence had imbued the British nation with a self-assured Christian rhetoric, a language that would become readily associated with men in cultural authority (*Writing* 40). In Catherine Hall's words: Christian belief "provided a vocabulary of right – the right to know and to speak that knowledge, with the moral power that was attached to the speaking of God's word." ("Stories" 241). But this language of authority would not only be linked to manliness through its divinely-imbued strength, as Norman Vance contends: more broadly and in a secular sense it "embraced all that was best and most vigorous in man" (although at times uneasily), through "notions of moral and physical prowess" (1-2). However, like Kingsley, Vance dislikes the "muscular" term for its overtly athletic connotations. In his study of "Christian manliness" – *The Sinews of the Spirit* (1985) – he believes this perception trivializes the "vigorous, socially aware" intentions of Kingsley and Hughes' writing. Nonetheless, Vance maintains that to represent "the whole armour of God", moral and physical manliness required a complementary code of conduct; it was here that "the knight of medieval chivalry and the gentleman of earlier times ... fused in the popular imagination" and "pass[ed] into the preaching of attractively manly Christianity." (17). Most important to the image of the missionary however, and after refining numerous shades of meaning, Muscular Christianity

he argues, represents a militant Christianity that commanded urgent moral and spiritual action (3).

In keeping with muscular metaphors, missionary texts routinely invoked a call-to-action through the use of military terminology, thus expanding the missionary image to that of Christian soldier, while connoting a link between patriotism and religion (and by extension, imperialism). By way of military example Esme Cleall cites excerpts from *Chronicle* publications of the 1870s exhorting Christian warriors to “‘endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ’ and ‘to go forth as in olden times with sword and battle-axe and spear’ to win the ‘battle’ against heathenism through ‘the capacities of our manhood’” (“Masculinities” 241). In a similar manner Esther Breitenbach observes how the Crimean war gave rise to comparisons between soldiers of the cross and soldiers of the realm, quoting the *Home and Foreign Missionary Record* of 1855:

Doubtless we have missionaries as heroic in their lives, as those patriotic men are that hold the trenches before Sebastopol, and who are as willing to die in Christ’s behalf, on some foreign coast, and at some of Christianity’s outposts, as any of our brave soldiers or sailors are to die in their country’s cause. (110)

Such homilies on missionary heroism allied to the heroes of national warfare and imperial conquest, emerged from popular perceptions of Britain as a modern Israel. In her article “Soldiers of Christ” (2000), Judith Rowbotham argues that Britain was popularly imagined as a nation divinely anointed – as evinced by its imperial possessions – and thus was a nation under mandate from God to evangelise the heathen.⁶ Where evangelism might be described in military terms, increasingly secular warfare would be described using religious rhetoric. The correlation between Christianity and patriotism led to a blurring of the distinction between heroism and martyrdom. Where the sacrifice of missionaries such as Bishop Hannington in Uganda would be deemed heroic, a perception of the British army as a Christian force opened the way for patriot-deaths such as General Gordon’s to be labelled martyrdom. As Christian soldiers, missionaries could wear both a hero’s crown and a martyr’s halo. Thus, in widening Christianity’s associative-sphere, mission propaganda pitted missionaries in metaphorical warfare against the forces of evil while at the same time endowing them with the finest qualities of British civilization (85).

The confluence of two otherwise hostile discourses, Christianity and militarism, had its unlikely genesis in mid-century world events, matched by a simultaneous surge in

biographical publishing. Investigating this improbable union, Olive Anderson in her study “The Growth of Christian Militarism”, departs from the muscular influences of Kingsley and Hughes, to focus on evangelical programs to convert, what she calls, “that sink of iniquity, the British army”, to Christian living (49). Prior to the Indian and Crimean Wars of the 1850s the soldier figure was as Schwer says, a “foul-mouthed, hard-drinking, womanizing and violent opponent to all Christian values” – hardly an image with which missionaries would care to be associated (25). Indeed, missionaries such as Griffith John, vehemently *disassociated* themselves from what they believed were the corrupting and exploitative behaviours of Western merchants and military personnel, stating: “[T]he unchristian conduct of many of the foreign residents and visitors, have formed one main hindrance to the progress of Christ's Kingdom. When I think seriously of these, I am only astonished that we have any success to record” (qtd. in R.W.Thompson 288). But as Anderson demonstrates, press reports of the mid-century wars produced a dramatic change in public perception through idealised notions of what British troops were fighting for; while a mounting collection of necrology garnered public sentiment for the suffering of “our brave men” (1). Most significantly, the hagiographical biography of *Captain Hedley Vickers* (1855) by Catherine Marsh, demonstrated that a professional soldier could be devout without becoming less of a soldier. In a concerted effort to lift moral standards, evangelical Victorians convinced the military *could* and *should* be Christianised, organised Bible Societies and prayer groups for soldiers and sailors, while missionaries targeted troops in operational zones.⁷ From their efforts to, in Anderson’s words, “canonize in print those who might pass muster as soldier-saints” (47), the image of courageous Christian soldiers “dying with pious utterances upon their lips” (Schwer 25) became an acceptable figure in the pantheon of British heroes. It would seem, as Schwer concludes, war and its literary aftermath could present “a view of Christian masculinity which complemented the feminized passivity of [early-century] accounts of missionary martyrdoms” (25). Yet, martyrdom for missionaries in China would reach new levels of meaning by 1900, when men, women and children became victims of the Boxer Rebellion.

Notwithstanding the multiple imbrications of Victorian masculinity, the romance of the missionary quest and the singularity of the heroic image in imperial texts could seriously misrepresent the full diversity of experience, and the countless variations of personality, that rightly comprised the missionary corpus. As Terence L. Craig suggests, public fascination with missionary adventure-hero narratives cast a public eye on missionaries in-general – which inevitably extended interest to the other extreme, to “the sometimes colourless,

plodding, non-confrontational missionary.” (23). Presenting a more nuanced portrait, Craig positions the missionary as a figure of inspiration – both to British society and notionally to a heathen audience. He emphasises the missionary strength of character, labelling it courageous, disciplined, and sufficiently robust in faith and determination to willingly step aside from the comforts of home-society to be consigned to the immanent dangers of some of the world’s most remote locations (25). He determines missionaries to be moral campaigners, not political activists. However, I will argue that such a premise could never remain fixed in the day-to-day reality of mission-field life, where remaining politically neutral could often be impossible. Craig does concede that even though a missionary’s tendency was to conservatism, they did not always follow the expectations of their home organisations. Tensions could arise when missionaries believed home churches had strayed from their foundations to accommodate twentieth century liberalism. He claims: working as far off representatives of their church (at least the way the church was at the time they were recruited) missionaries’ tenets of belief remained steadfast. When new ordinances emanating from doctrinal changes in the central church could not be reconciled with their teaching in the field, some missionaries, in defiance of their organisations, would be moved to disconnect or transfer church affiliation (26). Nonetheless, tensions could arise equally for the opposite reason – when organisations refused to countenance a missionary’s more liberalised methods of evangelism, such as Timothy Richard’s sympathetic identification with Chinese religion; or the more radical lifestyle-identification of James Gilmour.

Family values

The missionary was to *change* the world by example through the *unchanging* principles that were represented in the Christian home. Craig recognises how, as life-examples, missionaries stood for all that was right about “home”, both the loving Christian family home and the wider Christian community home where members’ beliefs were nurtured. Home was both the source and celebration of all Christian values – physical and spiritual well-being, safety, serenity, instruction and reassurance – a regenerative spring from which children could succeed their elders in mission service (29). He suggests that the ideological principle of sharing a common motive is demonstrated in missionary texts as a social recipe on display – “a desired Universal Christian Utopia” (89). By patterning the hallmarks of a stable society, missionaries through their writing showed their lives to be less significant than the common cause. The missionary’s life was to be modelled on one great

“proto-life” and the missionary home was to be a living advertisement for an alternative to greed, selfishness and corruption (89). Put on show to impress potential converts, “family life was an iconographic constant in the missionary pattern, and the pattern could not easily be altered.” (30).

Esme Cleall draws on the Foreign Secretary of the LMS, Ralph Wardlaw Thompson’s, idealised 1874 sketch of the missionary family to illustrate its embodied ideology and powerful imagery in missionary discourse:

No one has done so much for their [indigenous converts’] temporal well-being as the missionary and his family. In his house building, garden cultivation, domestic arrangements, and simply and cleanly habits of life; in the attachment of each member of the family to the others, and their purity of speech and honesty of conduct, the missionary family is undoubtedly the greatest civilizing agency in the country (*Discourses* 31-2).

The centrality of home and family with its gendered domestic roles, shared belonging and mutual bonds, was a key anchor point for missionary identity. Cleall believes the civilising connotations signified in the Christian Home were “not only a construct of missionary propaganda but an ideology that infiltrated their material, imaginative and spiritual worlds” (59). Pivotal to the ideology of the Home was the state of matrimony. Missionary marriages were lionised in sentimental literature as the ideal of companionable gender relations and were considered emotionally practical for people pledged to a lifetime away from home (32). Nineteenth-century texts suggest many marriages were done in haste and arranged through institutions – almost as part of the kitting-out process for mission life. In fact, becoming a missionary often provided an opportunity for men in a poor financial state *to* marry (Craig 30). Standing in contrast to the celibacy of Catholic missionaries, Protestant family life reconstituted British community life abroad. Erik Sidenvall demonstrates how, together with their children, a husband and wife were to become tangible witnesses to the blessings of the Christian Home and Western propriety – something they anticipated would be coveted by the indigenous population. He argues, missionary men’s lives can be understood through a prism of “male self-making”, not in the nineteenth-century capitalist sense, but through conformity to contemporary patterns of social advance and self-reform, and through the respectability of (bourgeois) Christian marriage (159). Through this pattern the male missionary could see himself as a patriarch: “the *pater familias* in his own household and, as a consequence of this, within the community of native converts” (134-5).

That missionary life could be a road to male self-making depends upon how the nineteenth-century ideal of manhood is understood. In a departure from strictly muscular interpretations Sidenvall describes the notion of the “self-made man” as “the middle-class dream”, but maintains it stood for more than the ideology of financial success. He claims it was more about securing independence and respectability and was characterised by a disciplined code of conduct: “of temperance, diligence and thrift” – the type of life-recipe prescribed to the homeland poor by Evangelical moralists (11). In this regard Terence L. Craig suggests missionary life assumed a parallel hierarchy with the middle-class. He believes the working classes were elevated to the middle-class when they became missionaries – at least in the newfound status it afforded them. As well as having gained respect as figures of authority, their new vocation provided an opportunity to publish a record of their life – something thought improbable in their former lives. And along with the means to publish, they were also given the encouragement of a ready readership, who were by this time convinced of the integrity of church publications (85-6).

Not only was the missionary family intended to have a didactic function by way of object-lesson to potential converts, its depiction in writing performed an important role in publications designed for a homeland readership. Cleall illustrates how missionary identity was validated through idealised depictions of the missionary family. She suggests these representations served to highlight to the home audience appropriate family conduct in the face of corrupting influences and represented a comforting reproduction of British domesticity overseas. In their published writing, missionaries’ “self-conscious construction of ‘self’ as a role model” fostered the idyllic image of the missionary family as an emblematic constant (32). Missionaries’ authority would thus be validated in the minds of British home supporters who considered their far-flung brethren reassuring agents of shared values. Despite these textual impressions of fixity, however, maintaining stable domesticity in unpredictable environments, where family demographics could be modified abruptly through high mortality rates (and readjusted through high birth rates), the reality proved inordinately difficult (33-4). Of the six missionaries I focus on in chapter four, almost all suffered the loss of their first wife and one or more children, seriously disrupting the constancy of the family tableau abroad, and often critically undermining the running of their missions.

The complexities of life on the mission field and the accepted priority of evangelical work over spousal and family needs could also fragment an exemplary family image through physical separation. Children’s educational needs often required family members’ return

home, sometimes for years, to live less than ideal lives separated from fathers, and often also mothers. Such ruptures to stability required rationalisation in mission literature. The trope of domestic constancy would thus be redirected to demonstrate missionaries' selfless commitment to God's work through the trope of sacrifice (Craig 30). Yet Emily Manktelow probes beyond the heroic-sacrifice-borne-of-educational-need construction in her study *Missionary Families* (2013), to argue that it was parental anxiety over both the presence *and* absence of their children that shaped the reality of mission living. She maintains "fears over 'contamination' through contact with indigenous peoples were at the root of policies of separation". And she suggests that it was the "moral, spiritual and material prosperity of their children that often elicited the most prejudiced responses from missionary parents" (163). Indeed, my study of missionary lives in China attests to the fact that most would repatriate their children "home" for education by a certain age – a decision that many would describe as the "greatest trial", but for Griffith John there was a two-fold reason for his parental stress. Determined his children would not be steeped in what he feared was a morally contagious environment, John wrote to his home community from Shanghai in 1861, defending his decision to send his five-year-old son to England:

You seem all of you to be greatly surprised at our sending him so young. We are sometimes astonished at ourselves, and I doubt whether we shall ever be equal to another such trial. I am still convinced it was the best course that we could take in the circumstances. It is impossible to bring up children, especially boys, as they should be brought up in China. Some of the most ungodly young men in China are missionaries' children. To appreciate this remark, experience is absolutely necessary (R. W. Thompson 155).

Far from projecting an exemplary family image from the mission-field, John's conviction of the dangers to youth in China did not change: he would not see his son again for ten years. A second son and daughter were also sent to England for education. Writing to his son's guardian again in his teenage years regarding his future, John reiterated: "You have no idea of the temptations of life out here to any young man. Almost every one goes to the devil, and do what you may you cannot prevent the onward rush" (156). It seems the true litmus test for "self as role model" to either a local or homeland audience rested with missionaries' reaction to their children in "contaminating" contexts. As Manktelow suggests: "Perhaps the biggest fracture in the missionary experience – between evangelical universalism on the one hand, and missionary racism on the other – was often ... the need to segregate their offspring from the local people" (131).⁸

Missionary Femininity

Despite the image-fractures that family life might bring, it would seem the sacrificial model of male identity in missionary texts could share certain qualities with the female missionary model – qualities characterised by “patient endurance” (Tosh 202). Even so, discourses in mission literature carried didactic overtones designed to instil social conformity, a practice inherently resistant to any crossover in conventional gender-image. Depictions of “enduring patience” in missionary men could resemble the distinctive “sticking to her post” heroics Judith Rowbotham identifies as emblematic of female missionary persona (99). Although, as she conjectures, in gendered terms “masculine self-sacrifice/heroism was a rarer and more sudden quality, generally seen as being inspired by times of crisis” while “feminine self-sacrifice/heroism was presumed to be a part of daily domestic living” (88). Nonetheless, as Cleall suggests, tensions between conflicting depictions of passive forbearance and bold adventuring in male missionary-imagery are resolved when viewed through a prism of male pre-eminence in matters of spiritual authority (“Masculinities” 239). The gendering of roles in periodical publications positioned women’s ministry as subordinate. Excluded from ordination, women were considered attendant “angels” to conversions, which could only be legitimated through male baptism. The role of preaching was an exclusively male domain that exuded authority and constructed areas of “manly” control (Rowbotham 97). Additional impressions of patient but manly authority could be discerned from textual representations of missionaries in professional spheres: in mediation work between indigenous people and imperial governments; in educational fields; and in the healing-work of missionary doctors. Medical authority in particular was readily associated with masculinity, despite the growing emergence of “lady doctors” in the mission fields towards the end of the nineteenth century (Cleall 240). Yet, as will be seen in chapter five, it was the role of medical doctor that gave license to Susie Rijnhart’s personal and cultural authority in Tibet – so long as that role was framed within a conventional rhetoric of womanly nurture and feminine propriety.

In 1968 when historian John K. Fairbank called the missionary the “invisible man of American history” it would appear, Dana Robert suggests, “the missionary woman was not even considered worth mentioning” (59). Certainly, until the 1970s, historiographical and biographical accounts of the evangelical enterprise centred primarily on the actions of male missionaries. Although women had been involved in missionary work from the outset and had actually outnumbered men in many mission fields by the end of the nineteenth century, their

presence nonetheless, had been “little recorded, little regarded, and little known” (Murray 254). After researching the first half of the century, Valentine Cunningham concluded: “*missionary* was a male noun; it denoted a male actor, male action, male spheres of service” (89). Yet despite the overt emphasis on masculine achievement that standardised narratives of heroism, martyrdom and the makings of muscular Christianity, narratives of missionary women began to garner attention as the modern women’s movement of the late nineteenth century gained momentum. Originally only dispatched to foreign fields as wives of missionaries, it was only after the 1860s, when societies began to employ single women in their own right, that their roles gained some textual presence (Johnston, *Writing* 44).⁹

How missionary women were represented reflected the profoundly gendered nature of British cultural identity in the nineteenth century that provided sanctioned exemplars of Christian womanhood to a homeland readership. The ideological division of separate spheres that placed men in the public sphere of work, and women in the private sphere of home, was central to the nature of companionate marriage and genteel relations considered fundamental to civilisation (Cleall *Discourses* 27). Missionary women were not merely charged with the moral and domestic stewardship of their families, they were offered as female paragons – as role-models to both British and indigenous women alike. Missionary women became ostensibly, the embodiment of empire itself. As both physical and metaphorical “mothers of the nation” these women not only symbolised for Britain the maternal nurture of Britannia’s imperial civilisation, they were the self-sacrificing mother-models of married domesticity at home and abroad, and in the case of single women, the educational “mothers” to “heathen” girls (Johnston, *Writing* 51; Midgley 357).

The evocation of maternal imagery to represent women missionaries was an all-purpose encapsulation of the evangelical view of women as nurturers by nature. Sheltered in the private realm away from the corruptions of the worldly sphere to which men must be exposed daily, women’s “superior” moral character remained sacrosanct as they fulfilled their maternal and wifely obligations, making the home a spiritual safe-haven for the Christian family (Thorne 95). Yet the evangelical ideal of gendered spheres as a blueprint for civilised society, assumed a degree of irony when considered against the gendered zones of separation missionaries deemed oppressive in heathen cultures. The Indian *zenana* was a vexed site of frustration for male missionaries restricted from proselytising in women-only compounds (Johnston 70-72). A belief that women possessed innate spirituality made high caste *zenana*

women chief targets of conversion, for their influence “as wives and mothers, on the next generation would alone be sufficient argument for endeavouring to rescue and to raise them.” (Thorne 95). The *zenana* functioned as the operational hub of family life, and the only way to penetrate its confines with the gospel of heathen-reform would be through the agency of women themselves. The unpaid work of missionary wives had established early avenues of female evangelisation through *zenana* visitation for the purposes of education and conversion; but by the second half of the century it was clear the domestic responsibilities of the missionary wife and mother left her insufficient time to devote to the scale of the *zenana* task. “The paid professional labor of single women was the only adequate means by which the massive job the missionaries faced could be tackled” (97).

The changing face of the missionary movement, from a male dominated profession at the beginning of the nineteenth century to a vocation dominated by women at its end, required some renegotiation of female textual representation. The professional “lady missionary” of the late nineteenth century was constructed as a sanctioned occupation for single women. At a time when images of the New Woman were caricatured and publicly scorned, the professional lady missionary working in-league with male counterparts risked disparagement for “progressiveness” if not for her depiction as a noble, selfless, yet reassuringly conventional, female (Rowbotham 102). Convention demanded a clear difference between the depiction of “lay” female work and the “authoritative” work of male missionaries. Initially, the image of the lady missionary would correspond with that of female church workers in Britain – traditionally depicted working amongst women and children. In this way the lady missionary working in the field remained a feminine role model for British ladies in their daily labours, one that did not challenge the primacy of male missionaries. Filtered through conventional discourse, missionary periodicals championed the “peculiar qualities which enrich woman’s nature, its wealth of tenderness, warm enthusiasm, and delicate tact”, while judiciously deflecting anxieties about lady missionaries in physical danger, to instead record ladies’ accounts of the appalling lives of their heathen sisters (96-7). Yet despite these innocuous depictions, editors could not screen the fact that the work undertaken by lady missionaries could involve genuine physical risk, an increasing reality that forced a subtle expansion of the imagery applied to their efforts.

A growing awareness of the hazards faced by professional women missionaries abroad came from the networks of communication and publicity established by Christian women for a female constituency. While hardly consonant with the Victorian women’s movement,

missionary hagiography nonetheless had to adopt new imagery to accommodate the changing rhetoric used to depict the deeds of independent women. As Rowbotham suggests, the new breed of missionary women were no longer mere “workers” for Christ, an alternate discourse mimicking the male military model had them “enlisting as ‘soldiers’ in the army of the King of Kings, engaged in front-line duty.” Yet the implication was “they were infantry, not officers”, and subject to “orders from a higher ... masculine authority” (98). Single women were lauded as heroic by simply venturing to live in primitive conditions. The possibility of contracting a fatal illness could be accepted in the line of duty, but military imagery in terms of affray, or death at the hands of barbarous attack, was curbed in the interests of feminine acceptability. Masculine commentary in mission periodicals inferred that women’s weapons were their feminine attributes (including attractiveness), their fairness of face and fairness of speech, their self-less wisdom and gentle demeanour. A woman’s combat-strategy was to teach by virtuous example not to preach by hell-fire sermonising. Thus, the title of “martyr” with its connotations of violent death remained exclusive to male heroism, an honour not considered appropriate for women (98-100).

Yet, despite concerted opposition from mission societies, lady missionaries’ determination to seek out challenges saw them reject the constraints of established mission stations and expand *zenana* missions further away from India – to China and other parts of Asia (99). Placing themselves in situations of heightened danger raised public debate as to whether women’s self-sacrifice in the name of Christ could be considered in the same terms as male martyrdom (100). It would take the horrific slaughter of lady missionaries in China’s Hwa Sang in 1895 followed by the brutal killings of the Boxer Rebellion five years later to stifle the debate. The impassioned outpouring of publicity and the raft of biographical works that followed consecrated these women’s deaths as true martyrdoms – on an equal footing with men (102). The women were lauded as hugely significant adjuncts to the conversion of China and as powerful national exemplars to both sexes. British hagiography nonetheless infused a distinct air of Victorian femininity into the women’s heroism that suggested they had modified their “‘natural’ feminine instincts for dependence” in undertaking missionary work, and in doing so their “selflessness justified but did not camouflage their competence.” (103).

Regardless of whether lady missionaries were deemed heroic by the British public, or eulogised as martyrs by the missionary press, how the women perceived themselves, at least initially, might best be discerned from their letters of application to mission societies.

Potential female candidates addressed the societies' requirements in a manner distinct to their gender by employing what Rhonda Semple calls a language of home and family life. This "language of their upbringing" served to communicate the kind of proficiencies that might translate to mission work (44). Mission society requirements themselves were "an expression of wider secular trends in the second half of the nineteenth century, which saw middle-class women moving into professional employment in roles shaped by notions of ladylike respectability and domestic responsibility" (13). But as Jane Haggis suggests, this language, that by implication served to confirm candidates' identities as true ladies and aspiring professionals, was also the language of service and faith (184). In terms of negotiating their independence, Victorian women could aspire to the mission fields by following what Haggis terms a "path of convention" (173), using language that subordinated feminine desire into Christian servitude. Here the "aspiring self" was "selflessly" offered. In 1894 Elizabeth German expressed a longing "to give myself altogether to religious work" (181). By using language such as "obeying" the "command" of her "Master" she drew on conventional evangelical discourse to not only convey her submissive-self, but conversely, as a means to realise her self-ambition – the liberation of heathen sisters from ignorance (184). Thus, her offer held a two-fold emancipation: freedom from the limited life choices available to Victorian women in order to labour for God as a professional missionary, and freedom for indigenous women from the grip of "darkness". This double objective, however, had to measure up to the equally coupled yet conflicting expectations of the women's committees. A successful candidate would be one recommended by a sub-committee as "strong willed" but ready to "fully surrender" to the Lord. A committee would be keen to establish that "rough work" would not affect "appearance and manners". The ideal lady missionary needed "a forceful determination" but one nonetheless that could "be combined with gentle softness" (186).

Yet to maintain the delicate balance of appropriately gendered-behaviour between the self-abnegation and the self-assertiveness necessary to fulfil a missionary calling, for many, gave rise to an inner sense of conflict (Gill 177). Although these women perceived their ambitious energy as divinely sanctioned and empowered, they consciously wrestled with the Christian doctrine (and feminine norm) of self-denial in which they had been steeped from early childhood. There was for instance an expectation, indeed hagiographic portrayals of missionary women emphasised the fact, that a candidate would never consider answering the call to work abroad until they had met all conceivable obligations at home (176-7).

Traditionally these family obligations involved the domestic care of infant or aging relatives, yet such was society's assumption of the subordinate role of single women, as Rosemary Seton suggests, the impression given was that women were merely on loan to the missionary cause "until such time as family need required their return" (38). The deep-seated conflict experienced by some young women over proprieties of gender is captured in Fanny Woodman's diary following a Keswick holiness meeting in 1888: "I have had a wave of ambition sweeping over me ... I think I have been wanting to convert half the world, forgetting it's none of my work at all ... I feel inclined to say, 'Oh, that I were a man' for the minute, only the Master did not wish it, that is very clear". But several years later she had resolved to become a missionary. She vindicated her actions through scriptural epiphany, deciding it was not self-determination, it was as the Apostle Paul had said in Galatians 2:20, "not I but Christ" (qtd. in Gill 178).

In the face of Victorian convention's restrictive challenges to women, it was, nonetheless, the language of convention that was the key to women's vocation. The necessity for candidates to self-examine their motives in written applications could on the one hand, as in Fanny Woodman's example, give cause for self-uncertainty, yet on the other could confirm identity and Christian conviction. Haggis points out the duality of the apologetic conclusion to Agnes Simmons' application, suggesting "the offer for work allows self but *only* to offer that self" (184). Agnes writes: "It seems very strange to write so much about myself but I suppose it is necessary ... Forgive this long letter full of 'self'". Yet the dilemma of *self*-consciousness of personal ambition as distinct from a consciousness of God's will, remained for Lucy Bounsell a lingering demur even after initial acceptance as a missionary: "I *dread* thrusting myself into work to which He does not call me ... my desire for the work is in no way altered but my sense of its importance, and of my responsibility to God, make me anxious not to act according to inclination merely" (184). Despite their apprehension however, Haggis and Holmes suggest candidates' written presentation of credentials to committees could be read as constructing the self, or more significantly, activating the self. Yet here the self has already been understood as part of a greater whole – "of God, family, society" (176), and the evangelical collective that forms the mission institution. The archive of applicant's letters coalesce through the institutional "we" of an active sense of mission. The "we" is both constitutive of, and constitutes from, "the 'I' of conventional Victorian womanhood." (171). As it was for eighteenth-century Methodist women, individually and collectively the act of

writing generated for these women new opportunities of selfhood, inspiring notions of professional female vocation and newfound Christian purpose.

Testimonies of strangerhood and the narrative of conversion

A principle feature of narrated identity common to those called to “take up their cross” in the service of Christ’s work is the consciousness of self-transformation – embodying a new life following a spiritual turning point. In a departure from gendered notions of identity and yet expanding upon perceptions of the missionary self as understood within the evangelical collective, Jeffrey Swanson identifies a complex narrative theme in the life testimonies of missionaries that he refers to as “strangerhood” (15). Although he based his study on late twentieth-century missionaries in Ecuador, he discerned from their rhetoric a distinct estrangement from the modern era and a strong identification with the heroic adventure of nineteenth-century missionary-explorers. These modern-day missionaries narrated their identities through stylised stories that patterned testimonies of old – from the conversion narrative, to the classic “call” from God to be “set apart” from the “things of this world” and thereafter “go forth into the world” to take the Gospel to the unsaved. Swanson drew on Erving Goffman’s concept of a “moral career” to argue that the sense of “strangerhood” or “set-apartness”, and the “calling” received from God, act as “rhetorical keys” to the formation of a missionary self (5, 15). Goffman’s definition of a moral career involves “mortification” (16) and transformation of the other potential self, where a person’s life story is then reconstructed into an explanation of how they became what they are. Through their narratives, Swanson’s missionaries symbolically “mortified” their early existence and redefined their life as a self-conscious “life-as-testimony” (15). Former experiences were configured as foreshadowing-events used by God to bring them to a spiritual turning point – conversion followed by “the call”. Thereafter they embraced a vocation lived for God through an other-worldly sense of identity – strangerhood – a Christ-like consciousness and an interpretive framework for subsequent life events. Swanson maintains however, that missionary strangerhood can be understood as more than mortification and transformation of a former self: it was also missionaries’ symbolic mimicking of Christ; it was a signifier of the evangelical requisite for Christian identity (to be spiritually set apart); and at the national level, it was an expression of the moral set-apartness of Western Christian and cultural influence throughout the world (21). The missionary self-perception of strangerhood is epitomised in E. T. Cassel’s 1902 hymn:

I am a stranger here, within a foreign land;
My home is far away, upon a golden strand;
Ambassador to be of realms beyond the sea,
I'm here on business for my King. (The King's Business)

In narrative terms nineteenth-century evangelical culture provided master templates that still resonate in the testimonies of contemporary missionaries, binding their sense of individual identity to an earthly evangelical collective, while concomitantly securing membership in a timeless, transcendent community. Like those of the nineteenth century, Swanson's modern-day missionary-testimonies centred on the personal experience of conversion, employing rhetorical imagery that separated "a former life in the flesh from a new life in the spirit" (45). The ability to deliver an effective personal testimony of the transforming power of God in one's life is paramount to the missionary profession – both as spiritual edification for the family of believers, and as charismatic confrontation for the unsaved. The dramatic story of the sinner saved by grace typically begins with some sort of tension identified in the self – a self described in its "natural" state as "defiled, faulty, sinful, weak, mortal or unhappy" (45). God is regarded with uncertainty which metaphorically pulls the self apart – a spiritual longing for God at odds with the flesh, which withstands and fears God. The narrative rises to a crisis point only to be resolved when the sinner repents, surrenders, accepts Christ and is saved. The conversion turning point is followed by elaboration of a life changed and made whole, now in the service of others (the call to missionary service) and aided by spirit-filled "victory" over temptations of the old sinful self (46).

Yet the demand for an effective testimony premised on a dramatic watershed moment can pose a narrative challenge for those who grew up in evangelical households. As Swanson suggests: "Despite their use of the symbolic language of conversion, most of these people were never 'the vilest offender saved by grace,' but rather, children who absorbed the interpretive framework of Christianity with their mother's milk" (48). Having typically undergone conversion experiences at a young age – often "led to the Lord" by a parent (52) – rather than telling stories of profound behavioural change, their testimonies combined the symbolically meaningful moment of accepting Christ, with a retelling of identity that consolidated membership within the collective. They were distinguished by "the way they talk about themselves" (48) through a narrative genre rooted in seventeenth century Puritanism. Speaking religious truths with resounding conviction, their autobiographical narratives would

be reframed, with the pattern and purpose of human events attributed to God's master plan (48).

A prime example of this kind of conversion testimony comes from the missionary James Hudson Taylor who was born into an evangelical family in 1832. In *A Retrospect* he wrote of his conversion at the age of fifteen when idly passing time alone in his father's library. Here he was "led to take up" a gospel tract and was "struck" with its resonance, whereby:

[L]ight was flashed into my soul by the HOLY SPIRIT, That there was nothing in the world to be done but to fall down on one's knees, and accepting this SAVIOUR and His salvation, to praise Him for evermore (5).

In the prelude to this turning point he had been influenced by "persons holding sceptical and infidel views" and had decided "the best I could do was to take my fill of this world". All the while however he had felt fearful of the "doom which, if my parents were right and the Bible true, awaited the impenitent" (3). The narrative pattern of ambivalence followed by joyful conversion, is supernaturally enhanced and endorsed as God's plan when he later discovers that his mother, away in another town, and his sister away elsewhere, separately and without each other's knowledge, had both resolved to pray intensely for his conversion that day. Some months later, after a "time of consecration", he beseeches God for "some self-denying service" and "a deep consciousness that I was no longer my own took possession of me, which has never been effaced". It is then he receives his missionary call: "the impression was wrought into my soul that it was in China the LORD wanted me" (7-8).

The evangelical self: life as text

The conversion narrative was a key event in the formation of evangelical identity. Bruce Hindmarsh contends however, that evangelical autobiographers did not "essentialize the self" for they were not seeking to author their own stories but to discern, sometimes opaquely, "the story that God was authoring and for which their lives were the text" (346). While evangelical self-identity owed much to the rise of the individual, it contrasted sharply with the secular autonomy of Enlightenment individuality. There was no place for false selves – for the ego imagined by Luther as "curved in upon itself" (Hindmarsh 345). In this realm, identity could be considered *constructed* as in a modern autobiography, but also *bestowed* as it was in pre-modern, medieval hagiography. Balanced on the cusp of modernity and "a fading Christian hegemony" (346) the evangelical sense of self embodied both individuation

and community. To be “born again” into a family of evangelical brothers and sisters provided a space where one’s narrative could be shaped by a gospel message. Hearing testimonies and singing hymns, the evangelical community held up possibilities for enacting, experiencing and narrating life in a distinctive way. But as Hindmarsh suggests, unlike the secular “escalator of progress”, the pattern that structured many of these narratives was one of “suffering, humiliation and redemption” (345). Northrop Frye argues that this pattern influenced much of Western literature – the bible story. He suggests: “The pattern of original prosperity, descent into humiliation, and return is the overall structure of the biblical story” and smaller stories within, “such as the parable of the prodigal son” (qtd. in Hindmarsh 345). For many evangelical missionaries, documenting their lives on the foreign field was an exercise in identity-formation through narrative, where their lives became the text in a story of God’s design.

Imperialism, missionaries and encountering the Other

The missionary-vision was defined through imperialist language as a “conquering” of the world in the name of Christianity. Employing both positive and negative descriptors, local people were heathen and barbaric, but had potential for improvement through Christianisation and civilization. Representing their targets as unfamiliar and strange, or the Other, needed to be balanced by also representing them as people in need, to provoke pity and engagement in their readers. As will be shown in chapter four missionary writing characteristically wavers between depictions of racial and cultural difference to a message of universal humanity negating-all-difference. This kind of ambiguity was typical of the missionary gaze – a discourse that assumes many of the orientalisng binaries of postcolonial theory, with its imperial implications of disproportionate power and assumptions of supremacy; but also, one that invokes identification and potential for redemption.

Historically China was not subject to direct British imperial domination, a situation that technically negates it from postcolonial theory’s dynamics between coloniser and colonised. And yet missionary discourse was undeniably inflected by the discourses of colonial thinking. Jennifer Cooper maintains that as participants in an assertive culture secure in its own political, economic and social hegemony, missionaries quite naturally carried “ideological baggage” by virtue of being British evangelicals (55). Working under the normalising agenda of Western ideology and yet from evangelical motivation, theirs was a

“colonization of consciousness”, a desire to impose a “particular way of seeing things” albeit through a biblical lens (Comaroff 4).

While my understanding of missionary observations of China has been richly informed by the celebrated works of the postcolonial canon – the foundational work of Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, Homi Bhabha and others – in the context of this study, their work becomes somewhat less relevant to China missionaries for the historical reasons already outlined. Instead, I find the work of Pratt, Mikaelsson and Reinders more pertinent to the representation of the Chinese – particularly in the context of missionary writing. However, my synopsis of some of the canon below, provides an introduction to understanding how missionaries represented themselves and others.

Missionary texts display a strong discursive tendency to impressions of difference, and indeed, theorists place difference at the heart of the colonial relationship. Frantz Fanon perceived this difference in terms of extreme binary divisions, a world that was “Manichean”, constituted by violence and “inhabited by two different species” (40-1). His concept of stark divisions was later modified by a generation of poststructuralist theorists to reflect more nuanced, less rigid oppositions. Derrida referred to a “play of difference” in language where meaning slides along a continuum, is always “in process”, not strictly stable in binary form, and where sense can only be determined “relationally” within a code of signifiers (S. Hall “Spectacle” 216). Similarly, Homi Bhabha discussed the importance of “*productive ambivalence*” in the colonial stereotype that made possible continually changing representations of a supposedly fixed Other (67). Mutability of meaning, however, did not render relations of difference equal and unencumbered. Derrida argued further that binary oppositions can rarely be neutral, he stressed that one pole is inevitably inflected by power and seeks to fortify its privileged position (S. Hall “Spectacle” 235). Consequently, in the colonial relationship the “coloniser” is assumed superior, and hence justified in the use of disciplinary rule, conversely the “colonised” is assumed inferior and is subjugated to the rule. The asymmetry of the paradigm is famously set out in Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) where he describes nineteenth-century Western representations of the East as the product of a set of oppositional and imbalanced power relations, a relational dynamic where the West never loses the “relative upper hand” (7). Eric Reinders interprets this assignment of meaning through relational codes of language more succinctly: “Colonising cultures constructed their images of the colonised in ways which confirmed their right to conquer and possess” (218).

Constructing the Other

Mary Louise Pratt argues that the seemingly benign “manners and customs descriptions” written by missionaries and travel writers about other cultures had a reductive and normalising effect emblematic of Western ideology (121). By way of explanation she draws on Catherine Belsey’s concise observation: “the task of ideology is to present the position of the subject as fixed and unchangeable, an element in a given system of differences which is human nature and the world of human experience, and to show possible action as an endless repetition of ‘normal’ familiar action” (121). By codifying cultural difference according to Western systems of classification, colonial discourses attempted to normalise and fix the Other “in a timeless present” (120). This process of establishing and setting the behaviours of Other societies and offsetting them against the prevailing behaviours of colonising cultures mediated the “shock of contact”, but also worked to define (and in unsettling situations that threatened ideology, stabilise) the societies of the Selves (121). Consequently, writing and describing other cultures reinforced ascendancy in the writer’s mind through stereotyping the Other and normalising a Self/Other dichotomy. Again, Reinders is more forthright in stating: “the ‘construction of the Other’ has been a catch phrase for self-serving” (218).

While difference was taken for granted in missionary discourse as workers duly recorded the multitude of sights (and sites) before them, their descriptions were not only constructing the Otherness of what they found, by inverse logic they were also imagining the Self as a point of reference, the Self as it diverged from, contrasted with, and perhaps even reflected the Other. It has been the axiom of many theorists, that a gaze toward the Other is effectively a gaze toward a mirror. Before exploring how missionaries constructed their identities through descriptions of the Other it might be useful to consider more closely the concept of the Other, and how the Other correlates with the Self. As Zhang Longxi explains:

Indeed, we do not have to go very far to seek the Other. The need to ascertain what makes up our own being, to define our very identity and the features of the world in which we live, that is, the need to have any knowledge of ourselves and our culture, has always to be gratified by an act of differentiation. (113)

The principle that the Self is interrelated with the Other takes its logic from the knowledge “that nothing can be determined by or in itself except by being differentiated from what it is not, or as Spinoza puts it ‘determination is negation’” (113). But in post-colonial

theory the Other is embedded in a psychoanalytic analysis of the formation of subjectivity. On the basis of Lacan's theory, self-realisation is reached in view of that from which the self differs – the image of the Other – taking into consideration what it is not, or more precisely what it lacks. Identity is constructed in a way analogous to language in as much as the assignment of meaning takes place within relations of similarity and difference between the words of a language code (Galani-Moutafi 205).

Missionaries' interpretations of otherness disclose key comparative moments in the process of discerning themselves. Lisbeth Mikaelsson draws attention to inter-textual elements in missionary writing that construct Self and Other, arguing identity components issue through an array of semiotic practices derived from Bible texts. Life experience replicates, and is rendered through, biblical narrative; indeed the Word itself speaks directly to the missionary as a guiding agent. Biblical metaphors are applied liberally to all aspects of missionary writing, from the master narrative of evangelism to smaller stories of everyday life. The Apostle Paul's vision of the pleading Macedonian in Acts 16:9 "Come over to Macedonia to help us" is frequently cited to justify the missionary's master narrative. The parable of the Good Samaritan and Jesus' healing of the suffering provide templates for day to day accounts. The Other personified is a non-Christian heathen, worshipping the false gods of a decadent society filled with wretchedness and evil. Horrifying, dramatic or sentimental tales often involve the heathen-priest-Other in Old Testament style contests with the missionary – in the curing of sickness or the destruction of idols, the rival Other generally loses. The missionary-self is thus rendered a liberator and authority of the truth (88-99).

The Inscrutable Other

The most targeted compilation of East-West cultural difference as it was perceived by nineteenth-century Protestant missionaries is found in Eric Reinders *Borrowed Gods and Foreign Bodies* (2004). His work addresses missionaries' textual representations of the Other in relation to Chinese religion and culture and thus holds particular relevance for this study. He draws attention to distinctly "Victorian" notes of arrogance and condescension found in these texts that serve to counter the idealised and uncritical images of hagiography. Yet while focussed on negative images, Reinders disavows accusations of missionaries as agents of imperial ambition. He suggests that, for missionaries the incomprehensibility of Chinese religions formed a fundamental justification for the creation of an Other-image with which to contrast their Self-image. Missionaries as new arrivals, unable to speak the language and

having little understanding of the intricacies of Chinese reasoning, made assumptions about Chinese religion based upon “what they saw of the Chinese people, and what they saw was bodies” (39). With no understanding of what is being said, the body becomes the sole method of communication. The Other’s body movements, gesticulations, eye and facial expressions are surveyed closely for meaningful clues. Body postures of mime are necessarily repeated, making them appear pronounced and idiosyncratic; inevitably they are interpreted as peculiar, assigned metaphorical meaning, and judged as stereotypical (40). By exploring the logic of these value-laden stereotypes, Reinders provides an insight into Victorian ideology and the Protestant mind.

Although Reinders points to a pervasive tendency among missionaries to make blanket generalizations that homogenise millions of people under the phrase “the Chinese mind” (13), he does concede that long-term missionaries were less inclined towards “essentializing generalizations than the newly arrived” (214). Indeed, from the premise of his book Reinders could be accused of representing missionaries in the same manner – as an “undifferentiated mass” devoid of individual complexity (20). But clearly uniformity was not the case, and as he points out: “No culture is unanimous. Under scrutiny monolithic narratives of ethnicity or nationhood fragment into multiple voices, and the single answer reveals itself as an ideological construct” (13). Likewise, it must be said there never was a monolithic missionary community in China either; divergent denominational and generational ways of thinking proliferated between the early nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, Reinders stresses the popularity of the “first impressions” (214) genre of missionary reportage, and his study seeks to explore the extent to which Victorian cultural-conditioning influenced narratives catering to the home readership.

Despite the popularity of the first impressions writing-style among British readers, one missionary famous for his long-term impressions of the “inscrutable” Chinese and “extremely influential in molding popular Victorian attitudes to China” (62), was John Macgowan. John was an LMS missionary in Amoy for over fifty years, a prolific author and an unapologetic enthusiast for bonds between mission and empire. He begins his book *Sidelights on Chinese Life* in 1907, with a stereotypical observation of the unfathomable “Chinese mind”:

THE Chinaman's mind is a profound and inexplicable puzzle that many have vainly endeavoured to solve. He is a mystery not simply to the foreigner, who has been trained to more open methods of thought, but also to his own countrymen, who are frequently heard to express their astonishment at some exhibition of character, that has never occurred to them during the whole of their oblique life. (1)

He goes on to offer a subjectively-weighted contradistinction between the “instincts and aims” of the Eastern Self and those of the Western Other:

Any one who has ever studied the Chinese character must have come to the conclusion that the instincts and aims of the people of the Chinese Empire are distinctly the reverse of those that exist in the minds of the men of the West. An Englishman, for example, prides himself upon being straightforward and of saying exactly what he believes. A Chinaman would never dream of taking that position, simply because it is one that he does not understand, and consequently he could never carry out. A straight line is something that his mind recoils from ... he prefers an oblique and winding path by which in a more roundabout manner he hopes to attain his end. (2)

Assured of its own superiority, the culture of the West had long been measured against its Orientalist “knowledge” of the East. The pervasive view of China was of stagnation, of a civilisation whose glory belonged to centuries past. It was blinkered and obdurate in its complacency, ignorant of the Western world’s progress, and in dire need of Occidental modernisation and enlightenment. In view of its isolationist policies China was likened to a “stagnate pool” but taking the metaphor further, it needed only to be stirred “to be convinced how foul it is” (Reinders 42). The chain of metaphorical association linked China’s inactivity to a form of rot where “filth and misery appear everywhere to be concomitants to heathenism” (42). Its torpidity could be readily conflated with a “diseased state”, a metaphor that held powerful connotations for missionaries in light of the very real health problems they suffered in China (42). For Victorians, there was a semantic link between illness and immorality that pervaded current literature and was directed towards the reform of homeland slums. Fear of air-borne contagion mingled with the contagion of “prostitution, venereal disease, criminality, and sewerage” (43). A solution to the “foul air of slums” as Michel Foucault explained in *Discipline and Punish*, was exposure to the bourgeois gaze. The “dangerous” classes could be transformed under a form of surveillance. The concept characterised an emerging method of subjectification, where the sense of being watched would be internalised into self-regulation under the “purifying” authority of the bourgeoisie (43). “On the one hand there would be surveillance by *policing*; on the other, the inculcation of *politeness*” and wholesome Christian morality (Stallybrass and White 273). The solution to China’s heathen decay Rev. Arthur Henderson Smith believed, was “Character and Conscience” (396). “The springs of character must be reached, and purified, conscience must be practically enthroned” (403). This could only come from the “moulding force of... *Christian Civilization*” (404).

Reinders makes a long list of metaphoric binaries in missionary writing where by implication, positive qualities become a kind of Christian self-image as opposed to the Other. Within a framework of Victorian mind/body dualism and heavily informed by the Bible, missionaries construed Chinese as distinctly inferior in strength of mind, and obsessive about the body. Early Anglophone writings consistently presented Chinese as “mindless” through an array of metaphors that related to weakness or lack of awareness and acuity: “diseased, atrophied, feeble, blind, mentally deficient, in a stupor, drugged, sleeping, dead, childlike, and as animals” (41). The corollary of course implied that the writers were “mindful” and therefore: “healthy, dynamic, strong”, clear-sighted, mentally whole, alert, sober, and so forth (61). Yet while Victorians considered themselves of rational mind, they also assigned moral meaning to the body, considering appearance a reasonable indicator of character. Reinders suggests: “It was thus easy for missionaries to move from bound foot to bound mind, from long hair to effeminacy, from dirty bodies to sinful souls” (40). Rev. John Macgowan’s anthropological observations of the inexplicable workings of the “yellow brain” are reduced to a blunt interpretation of physiognomies in *Men and Manners of Modern China* (1912):

The oblique methods by which the yellow brain works are the things that puzzle the Occidental ... At first sight the Chinese is very unattractive. His skin is of yellow hue and his voice is harsh and unmusical. Judged by a Western standard, there is not a feature in his face that could ever by the widest charity be called beautiful. His cheekbones stand out staring and protuberant. His nose is as flat as though his far-off progenitor had had it bruised in some pugilistic encounter, and had transmitted it maimed and battered to his posterity. His lips are thick and his mouth wide and open, a veritable sepulchre for the huge mouthfuls of rice that he daily shovels into it with his chopsticks. His eyes, too, which are always black, are narrow and almond-shaped, and the eyeballs, instead of being large and full-orbed, dance and twinkle inside the narrow slits, as though they were playing hide-and-seek with the world. In addition to all this there is often a dull and soulless look about the great mass of the people that gives one the impression of an utter lack of fancy or imagination. (313-14)

By way of counterbalance to the Other’s perceived oblique and soulless character, Protestant character was considered both physically and morally upright, and strongly associated with the Gospel, its propagation and interpretation. The ability to reason was associated with the ability to articulate in plain language, thus the need to translate the Bible in the vernacular was imperative, and signified a repudiation of the Catholic use of unintelligible Latin and ritualised worship. A firmly entrenched anti-Catholic legacy led Protestant missionaries to equate Chinese religious practices with Romish ritual, condemning the chanting of mantras as spiritually meaningless, and displays of deep obeisance as idolatry (Reinders 20). Transposing their endless bouts with Rome onto Chinese religion highlighted

Protestants' utter aversion to bodily prostration. The habit of the Chinese (and Catholic) Other to bow or kowtow, yielded accusations of idolatry, obsequiousness, mindless ritual, and theatricality (acting with its inherent falsity was similarly shunned by Evangelicals) (103). Ritualists were viewed as effeminate and given to sensual desires (59). By contrast "Victorian and Edwardian missionary culture encouraged an aesthetic of sincerity and plainness, in opposition to the facade which they believed characterized Roman Catholicism, heathen religion and foreign cultures in general" (5). Protestant postural rigidity, with no more than a bend of the knee or bow of the head as a mark of respect, signified both their religious and cultural distinction. Lord Macartney's refusal to kowtow to the Chinese Emperor in 1793 had remained a powerful demonstration of the British mindset. Patently, Britain as a nation at the peak of its colonising prowess, had long assumed the symbolic stance of "victor not vanquished" (127-9). The characteristic Victorian tableau of stylised stoicism and upright dignity was associated with masculinity and directness. It was a whole attitude of Self, of unemotional self-control and stiff upper lip – a complete *habitus* of thought and behaviour (211). Rev. R. Nelson exemplified this differentiated attitude in his 1877 speech: "A healthy, courageous, manly Christianity, gently yet firmly manifesting its conscious elevation and superiority to the heathenism it meets" (qtd. in Reinders 129).

The unintelligible Other

Early life in China for many missionaries could be a cultural shock that presented Otherness in forms so disparate as to be considered outright barriers to Christianity. With intercultural communication integral to the missionary purpose, language knowledge was an imperative that could prove exceedingly difficult – an obstacle set by Satan no less. For Victorian writers, Chinese culture was "topsy-turvy" (71). Whether in the way clothes were worn, food was served, or in the rituals of courtesy, all behaviour appeared to be inverted or performed in reverse. But it was Chinese language, both written and spoken, that epitomised back-to-front Otherness from the West: "The people seem to do everything upside down. When they write they begin at the wrong end of the paper, and when they read a book they begin at the end and read backwards" (71). The frustration of studying the language and its "hopeless variety" of dialects, as well as the difficulty of producing unambiguous literary translations, contributed to a larger pattern of attributing "meaninglessness" and incomprehensibility to Chinese voices (in addition to religion, ritual, theatre and music). The indecipherability of what to some would be dismissed as mere "noise" was likened to the

biblical story of the tower of Babel, inferring that the unintelligible state of the language was divine punishment for sinful pride (75). When it came to obstacles to communication, it seems, for any failure of the Self to “make sense of the Other”, the Self could transpose that failure to say, “the Other makes no sense”, thus affirming the ascendancy of the Self through a simple shift of perspective.

To the “reasoned sense” of the Western missionary whose entire mission enterprise hinged on an ability to spread the Word, the difficulty of communication magnified the perceived “unreasoned nonsense” of the Chinese Other. In a society of inverted norms and linguistic vagaries there was a pressing need to ensure semantic accuracy in the Gospel message; a need to fix the precise meaning of words in translation, lest inadvertent connotations dangerously pervert Scripture into frightful heresies. Chinese lacked equivalent words for many key religious terms, implying a lack of any such thought, and further, a deficit in national consciousness. How to appropriately express the word “God” had been a translation concern that dated back to sixteenth century Jesuits (75-6). Yet in reverse, overly literal translations rendered Chinese speech akin to baby-talk. A lack of equivalent articles for the words “the” and “a” in Chinese, when translated word for word, could produce comical English: “What for you come to China?” (77). Many Westerners who struggled to communicate, particularly those in the treaty ports, had the alternative to speak Pidgin English – the language of trade – which was often recorded in texts as a source of amusement. This “defective” language remained “the stuff of ridicule and stereotype, cause for laughter but with a darker aspect, since what is perceived as ‘vile gibberish’ may be associated with (popularly imagined) backward, uncivilized, or even subhuman peoples.” (82). In *Men and Manners of Modern China* (1912), missionary John Macgowan mimics the Pidgin English of a tailor as an example of the exasperation felt at the “dogged and determined manner in which they insist upon having their own way.” The tailor’s parodied language serves to highlight the impertinence of a mere simple-minded nation as to disregard its Western betters. He explains that a lady engaged a tailor, giving precise instructions as to how she wanted him to make a dress. He returned a few days later:

“Why, tailor,” she exclaims, “you have changed the pattern. What is the meaning of this?” “Oh!” exclaims the Celestial in pidgin English, “I makee changee more better. I number one piecee good tailor; my too muchee savey (know), you no savey, dress more pletty, can do so fashion.” *The supreme cheek of this tailor in setting up his opinion as superior to the lady’s is but in keeping with the general attitude of his countrymen throughout the empire.* (317 emphasis added)

The negative stereotyping by missionary writers of Chinese life and customs, whether conscious or unconscious, was nonetheless criticised in some quarters as the cause of much “misconception”. Archibald Little, a British businessman, writer, and long-term resident of China paid tribute to missionaries as the chief authorities on the “intimate life of the people” and as writers of “the cleverest studies of Chinese character”, but argued that their inherent biases were motivated by self-preservation:

The missionary ... has to learn the language as one of his chief duties, but he is also tempted to shew the need of his existence by proving that the Chinese are so utterly bad that without his teaching their reform is hopeless. Hence an unconquerable tendency in all missionary books on China and the Chinese to represent the country and people in its worst light and to ignore the many points in their civilisation in which they can shew Christian nations an example to be followed ... How would our Western Civilisation appear in print if all its shadows were darkened and its lights omitted by the brush of the painter? (295-6)

Not only did the stereotyping of the Chinese and their culture reinforce Western ascendancy in the minds of some missionary writers, as Little points out, it was a way to bolster the missionary’s worth as the purveyor of order and enlightenment to a disordered world.

This chapter has considered the ways in which the missionary figure has been epitomised in writing, and it has examined the scholarship on missionary representation of the nineteenth century. Missionary archetypes ranged from the early-century passive yet pious martyr, to the mid-century Christian soldier, to the high-imperial adventurer-explorer, giving shape to tropes of empire, while influencing British societal-behaviour. Mission societies orchestrated the public profiles of their workers abroad, constructing a marketable missionary image as the trends of publishing expanded across the century. The heroic representation of missionaries was a gendered discursive site; one that placed emphasis on family ideals, as it aligned with the class-conscious social and political developments of Britain. So too, in the wake of the Crimean War and David Livingstone’s explorations, missionaries could be aligned with patriotic and imperialist impulses. Yet aside from these image constructs, missionaries in their private correspondence wrote of themselves and their work in different ways; constructing selfhood through an evangelical worldview, they patterned their lives on a narrative of conversion. They were called to mission work, but remained set apart from worldliness, forming their identities through narratives in which their lives became a text in a story of God’s design. For many however, the foreignness of China produced another self, one that

codified cultural difference through Western standards, thus casting the self as a foil to the Eastern Other.

¹ In writing of Mrs Jellyby in *Bleak House* Charles Dickens satirised the mission work of evangelicals as “telescopic philanthropy” (24).

² One famous example, the lion-hunt incident from which he emerged a heroic leader in the book, is offset by a letter to his family in which there is no pretence of bravery, admitting his unwillingness to participate in the hunt, and his abject fear of powerful, exotic animals (Schwer 207-8).

³ Kingsley’s book *Westward Ho!* (1855) and Hughes’ *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* (1857) conditioned thoughts of empire in generations of boys. Kingsley preferred the term “Christian manliness” to “muscular Christianity” which had originated as a disparaging label by a reviewer (210).

⁴ I use the name “Justin” here to avoid confusion between the two Livingstones.

⁵ Livingstone wrote to John Murray on the 31st May 1857 warning: “I think I may declare to you that you will not find me cantankerous or unreasonable or difficult to deal with in any other matter but I must positively resist any attempts to tamper with or emasculate this book”. He was adamant in his determination to avoid effeminacy, wishing to project a style that was “forcible” and “popular”. In a letter the previous day he had lambasted recent editorial alterations as “namby pambyism” (26-7). Schwer reveals that he was demanding when it came to illustrations. The depiction of lions he complained “were so poorly executed as to inspire the laughter of everyone who had ever really seen one” (172).

⁶ Leaving no ambiguity as to their “military” mandate, the report of proceedings from the 1922 National Christian Conference was provocatively named: *The Christian Occupation of China* (1922).

⁷ Griffith John conducted church services aboard gunboats in Hankow and opened “The Sailors’ Rest” meeting house in his foreign compound. Jeanette John, his second wife, had previously worked with foreign sailors in Shanghai.

⁸ In addition to fears of moral contagion, Sam Pollard’s evangelical universalism was seriously shaken when the Nosu boy who had been living with his family for several months was rumoured to have leprosy: “Bright little English children playing about with a leper and sharing his food! ... It is wonderfully pathetic and inspiring to read the story of St. Francis and the leper. These two are dead long ago. Bring the story up to date and let it live in your home, and what about the beauty of the incident then?” (*Miao* 78).

⁹ By 1875 there was still “considerable anxiety” over single women. Griffith John replied to LMS Directors who had asked his opinion: “I should say emphatically, never send unmarried women to a mission constituted exclusively of unmarried men; to do so would be the most effectual means of bringing the whole Mission into disgrace in the eyes of the Chinese ... Our wives will be able to do a great deal more for the work than young ladies could. I confess to a deep scepticism in regard to the whole scheme of employing ‘English female missionaries’ in China ... I feel sure that you are going to waste a good deal of money and introduce elements of discord into missions.” (qtd. in R.W. Thompson 313-14).



Map 1 Area and Population of the Chinese Empire

Charles Beresford: *The Break-up of China* (1899)

Chapter 4

Cultural Ambivalence: The Dilemma of Identification

PART I

In taking Christianity to China, whether knowingly or not, Western missionaries were taking with them the Western culture with which Christianity had for so long been entwined. Most missionaries attributed the technological and material advancement of their culture to the enlightened superiority of their religion, although for many engaged in the foreign field, evidencing the fruits of God's cultural blessing was subordinate to the task of spreading the gospel and saving souls. Others, however, saw it within their mandate to win China both to Christ *and* Western ways. Such a grandiose imposition of a foreign ideology upon Chinese culture first required acceptance from the people; acceptance, however, required missionaries to accommodate themselves and their message *to* Chinese culture. But as Fischer insists: "Evangelicals had no doubt ... that the Chinese cultural system was depraved" (217).¹ The biggest hurdle for missionaries then, was how they should regard Chinese culture. As their writing reveals, missionaries struggled in their endeavour to render Christianity accessible to the people, and their efforts to connect evangelistic ideals with missionary practice produced ambivalence. Tensions could arise between attempted accommodation to local ways, and the risk of censure from colleagues, or the loss of homeland support. Not all missionary methods were the same however. Different approaches were taken by different organisations, and there were differences again between individuals. Some missionaries were tolerant of Chinese cultural practices but remained culturally distinct themselves. Others were hard-line, insisting their converts renounce traditional practices while they themselves adopted Chinese dress and lifestyle. With such inconsistency of approach, evidently there would be no easy answer to the missionary dilemma: What level of identification with Chinese culture still remained faithful to the Christian message? Second to this: What implications were there for the Christian self in this kind of identification?

Placing emphasis on missionary identification practices, this chapter explores Chinese culture through the writing of six notable missionaries – all pioneers in their respective fields of mission, with all having spent the greater part of their lives in China. They served during a prolonged period of turbulence and humiliation for the Chinese nation – from the mid-nineteenth century to the second decade of the twentieth century – a period spanning the Taiping Rebellion to the fall of the Qing Dynasty. These six have been chosen because, as

missionaries of renown, they amply fit Craig's description: "They knew they were interesting people, engaged in often fascinating and challenging work, and as such could present a personalised face to mission work" (56). All were prolific writers, whose publications had earned them some measure of influence – if not celebrity – in their lifetime. Part one of this chapter provides both an explanation of identification as a biblical directive in the missionising task, and the relevance of dress to mission strategy. The six missionaries are divided into two groups premised on their outer-image or style of dress, with dress designated a key signifier of their missional approach. The first group, those I label "imperial" missionaries: Griffith John, John Macgowan and Timothy Richard, chose to remain Western in appearance. The second group, the "grassroots" missionaries: James Hudson Taylor, James Gilmour and Samuel Pollard, chose to wear Chinese clothing. Part one concludes with a biography of each missionary. These biographies provide a composite backdrop to each individual's life and legacy, while serving as a reference point from which to inform a more rounded understanding of later discussion. Part two discusses the material, social and linguistic spheres of Chinese culture, and the degree to which the two groups were prepared to attune their Western foreignness to the culture of their hosts. Part three looks at missionary efforts towards identification with, or demarcation from, the political and economic; and the religious and educational realms of the Chinese people. The chapter explores the complexities between the two divisions, and how they nuance prescribed means of identification, while reflecting the ambivalences of cross-cultural encounter in the missionaries' writing.

"All things to all men"

The principle of identification has been one of the central tenets of the missionary enterprise since the first century. At this time the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "To the Jews I became like a Jew ... To those under law I became like one under the law ... To the weak I became weak ... I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some" (1 Cor. 9.20-22). But by the nineteenth century the precise definition of identification, and the degree of practical adaptation to the cultural practices of a foreign people differed considerably from that of the first century. As Jonathon Bonk in his study *The Theory and Practice of Missionary Identification 1860-1920* recognises, "missionary perceptions of themselves, of their culture and civilization, of their task, and of their peculiar objectives vary not only from era to era and from country to country but from missionary to missionary" (3). The ideal of becoming "all things to all men" for missionaries to China in the

nineteenth century, was a dictum hedged with qualifications. While too literal an identification with the tenets of a heathen culture could never be fully countenanced by any Christian, such sympathetic adaptation as *was* practised by missionaries nonetheless reflected – to greater and lesser degrees – the pre-eminence of Western “Christian” civilisation in a bid to evoke admiration and emulation. Bonk concludes that despite achieving closer connections with Chinese people than any other Western group of merchants, explorers or officials: “There can be little doubt that Protestant missionary identification was severely truncated by the powerful press and pull of its own Eurocentrism, and by their self-conscious awareness that they were the embodiment of European superiority in all spheres of human endeavour” (vi).

The “Christian” West came to dominate the nineteenth-century world ideologically, politically and economically. The Western missionary understood the bounty and enlightenment of their own civilisation to have been bestowed by a beneficent God upon his people. It followed therefore, that the gospel would not only provide the panacea for heathendom’s many ills, it would also set in motion an inevitable process towards civilisational prosperity. In the spirit of becoming “all things to all men” the missionary was willing to share the secret of this prosperity, thus performing an overarching act of benevolent identification with the people. In his study of the identification methods of the London Missionary Society, Bonk determines that in “their material accoutrements – housing, clothing and equipment – missionaries remained distinctly and consciously foreign and rich” (262). For these missionaries, to abandon their Western style of life would not only be “suicidal” in diminishing their health, most crucially it would compromise the credibility of their religious message – “missionary social and material superiority constituted ‘exhibit A’ in the evidence for Christianity” (263). Yet although Bonk found that missionaries attempted an “imperfect level of identification” at this “material-social sphere” (the most visually connotative sphere), the findings from his three additional spheres of assessment – “linguistic”, “political-economic” and “religious-educational” – were varied. His conclusions ranged from “sympathetic and wholehearted” identification in the linguistic sphere (262); to “having steadfastly identified with what they regarded as the ‘best interests’ of China” in political and economic affairs (135); and finally, in religious and educational fields missionaries made both themselves and their message “little more than the religious expression of their society’s dominant values and aspirations” (265).

While Jonathon Bonk's insightful investigation into the theory and practice of Protestant missions provides a valuable picture of the ethos and policies that guided late nineteenth and early twentieth-century modes of cultural identification, its sweep is broad, based on records from the London Missionary Society but typified to represent "mission agencies generally" (v). It must not therefore be assumed that all efforts toward identification were uniform among the wider missionary cohort. Indeed, the China Inland Mission took the ideal of sympathetic adaptation more literally than any other mission, adopting the dress and living habits of the people under direction from Hudson Taylor who exhorted them to:

aim ... to become among the Chinese that which Christ was among the Jews ... accessible, sympathetic, not a preacher merely, but helpful also to the people, in as many ways as possible. [Your] life should be as visible and like their own as [you] can make it, that it may touch and influence theirs at all points, as far as may be. (*Records Shanghai 1890* 152)

Despite the methods adopted by individual societies and irrespective of altruistic intentions, Western missionaries travelled to China for the express purpose of inducing change. How this "massive human experiment" to convert the Chinese to Christianity was to be executed, according to Kathleen Lodwick, "defies generalization", since missionaries' experiences differed widely in relation to geographic location, the individual's preparation, skillset, adaptability and fortitude (*Christianity* xx-xix). In addition, the unidirectional expectation of change at the heart of such an enormous enterprise found itself destabilised by a host of "unintended consequences" that could never have been imagined, nor instinctively sought at the outset (xix). Change did occur, but not exclusively for the Chinese. In seeking to preach the Christian message and thereby change the society to which they had committed their service, missionaries found that China had also spoken its message to them. For many, a new appreciation for Chinese culture and wisdom found expression in the transfer of Eastern traditions to the West through correspondence and publications – increasingly conscious as they were, of their unique (yet often ambivalent) role as double-agents for inter-cultural understanding on a global stage. In a 1919 article entitled "Conversion of the Missionary", Baptist missionary Earl H. Cressy wrote about the paradoxical turn of events in the experience of many missionaries to China:

He had gone out to change the East, and was returning, himself a changed man ... The conversion of the missionary by the Far East results in his being not only a missionary but an internationalist, an intermediary between the two great civilizations that inherit the Earth ... bringing to [the people of the West] something of his new breadth of

vision, and helping them to a larger appreciation of the greatness and worth of the civilizations of the Far East. (553)

By the early twentieth century, missionaries' contributions to their home countries by way of informed knowledge of China's social, political, religious and philosophical systems, ushered a new generation of progressive missionaries.² Conversant with, and more sensitively attuned to Eastern thinking, the new cohort were less inclined to say they were going to China to "preach" than to say they were going to "teach". Interestingly however, as Lodwick observes: "[N]one ever said they were going to China to learn." (xix). For as much as the missionary enterprise contributed to the modernisation of China through the introduction of Westernised education and social ideology, "scientific" medicine and industrialised technology, the specific target for change – the conversion of the Chinese nation to Christianity – had failed. The air of cultural superiority and presumption of the inevitability of change accompanying the nineteenth-century missionary to China, subsided for many as their exposure to an Oriental civilisation increased. Missionaries had to readjust their thinking to integrate Chinese traditions into their discernment of God's objectives on earth.

Dressing the message – two ways

In his historical narrative *China's Millions*, Alvyn Austin considers it one of the curiosities of Chinese mission that in the twenty-first century, we can glance at a group photograph of nineteenth-century missionaries "and guess each person's theology just from the clothes they were wearing" (1). The example he uses – an image of hundreds of men and women at the Shanghai Missionary Conference of 1890 wearing an assortment of Western suits and corseted dresses, interspersed with other missionaries wearing the distinctive caps, gowns and pigtailed of the Chinese people – illustrates the two strands of evangelisation practised in the late century. The suited Westerners, considered "liberals" for their adoption of social gospel methods and campaigns to modernise China,³ commonly resided in the foreign enclaves of port cities. The native dressers, or "conservatives", practised grassroots evangelism; living simply among the townspeople of the inland and itinerating to remote regions; they were unwilling to compromise their evangelical theology or deviate from their primary mission – the saving of souls (in preference to the forming of institutions).

If considered a brand-symbol or a theological uniform for mission, the choice of one or the other form of apparel spoke much about missionary identity. While there were

variations in approaches to mission-work among sending societies,⁴ clothing-style for many missionaries, was left to the individual's own discernment irrespective of denominational alliance. Other missionaries complied with society regulations such as the requirement to "wear native dress" stipulated in the *Principles and Practice of the China Inland Mission* (2). Others still disobeyed guidelines altogether or compromised, wearing hybrid ensembles of Chinese and Western apparel. But in its permeation of cultural boundaries it was clear that, as Austin says: "The question of native dress was not trifling, judging from the controversies and compromises it engendered." (*Millions* 2). Among foreign-clad Westerners residing in treaty ports, the wearing of native clothes was thought "demeaning"; they believed "the Chinese would 'lose respect' if foreigners 'descended' to their level" (2). For these missionaries, the masquerade of Westerners in Chinese garb subverted imperial sensibilities. Those who wore native dress would refute charges of eccentricity and disguise, and instead, extol the benefits of inconspicuous travel, the removal of barriers to communication, and the positive influence toward "piety and earnestness" afforded by localised appearance (Broomhall 4:356). For these missionaries, their embrace of cultural relativism – at least in respect to attire – was a strategy to minimise the distraction of Western foreignness and open doors to the gospel message.

While the two strands of mission were never mutually exclusive – for instance, a change of "uniform" was not unheard of if a port missionary journeyed inland or conversely, an inlander spent time in the metropolis, so too missional approaches would often overlap, with grassroots evangelists founding schools and hospitals – but the distinction between the two signified by dress provides a visual frame of reference through which to understand the terms of debate. Of the six missionaries outlined below, three could be classified as having "imperial" sympathies, and three as "grassroots" operatives. In the former category I group Griffith John, John Macgowan and Timothy Richard; and in the latter, James Hudson Taylor, James Gilmour and Samuel Pollard.

Griffith John

One of the most significant figures of British missionary endeavour in nineteenth-century China, was Welsh-born Congregationalist, Dr Griffith John. As a pioneering evangelist to central China, his contribution to missionary practice over a career spanning fifty-seven years was enormously influential in the dissemination of Christianity, and



Figure 1 Griffith John

furthering homeland understandings of life in the East. His legacy included the establishment of churches, schools and hospitals – some of which are now major research centres – and a host of English and Chinese publications in the form of articles, books, tracts and Bible translations. Described as an “optimist”, if not “audacious in his defiance of difficult situations”, John’s single-minded determination to effect change according to biographer Noel Gibbard, “could not” however, “hide an imperialistic spirit” (100).

Born in Swansea in 1831, Griffith John became famous in Wales as the “boy preacher”. Diminutive in stature but magnetic in personality, he was described as “a strangely winning and affectionate little creature, overflowing with kindness and sociableness, and ... beyond comparison the most popular preacher in Welsh we ever heard” (R.W. Thompson 22). He trained for the ministry at Brecon College before joining the London Missionary Society, and in 1855, sailed for Shanghai with his new wife Margaret. After six months solid dedication to what he described as the “colossus” of Chinese language study he was able to preach while distributing tracts on street corners in Shanghai (51). Taking advantage of the cessation of the Second Opium War in 1860 and newly-afforded travel rights for foreigners, John took the gospel to the inland province of Hubei in 1861. There he established churches in the cities of Wuchang and Hanyang while making his permanent base in Hankou. Ever eager to push the frontiers of mission, his pioneering journeys farther inland were often fraught with danger – itinerating across thousands of miles of rugged terrain, negotiating the rapids and gorges of the river Yangtze, at times suffering the enmity of hostile crowds. Ultimately, however, crowds would gather in great numbers to hear him preach. John became a powerful and eloquent speaker, fluent in both spoken and written Chinese. He converted,

trained and mentored scores of Chinese evangelists to further the work of his mission. In addition to establishing an array of medical and educational institutions, John personally funded the construction of a Theological College in Hankou in 1902.

Griffith John was a prolific writer. Ralph Wardlaw Thompson found his copious letters “great in giving information and explanation” when drawing on them, along with hundreds of pages of manuscripts, to compose the 1906 biography *Griffith John: The Story of Fifty Years in China* (vii). John’s literary bent extended to Chinese-language publications, producing books, pamphlets and tracts on doctrinal and moral teaching, extending to scientific and children’s texts, and in 1882, producing a “sort of novel” – the first of its kind by a missionary – “specially adapted to the Chinese” (335). From 1875 he presided over the Central China Tract Society, and by 1904 was circulating two and half million copies of numerous publications (more than half of which had been written by himself). His most significant contribution to Chinese literature was an Easy Wenli translation of the New Testament, and a corresponding version in Mandarin vernacular approximating the spoken language of the people, together with various books from the Old Testament. (Sparham 107-8). Much of John’s writing in English was devoted to social and political causes – persuading or petitioning help for the mission, or speaking out against moral injustices. Despite his British patriotism he was vehemently outspoken against his country’s opium-trade and its exploitation of the Chinese, proclaiming “nothing that is morally wrong can be politically right” (Gibbard 98).

Griffith John’s impassioned vision to win China to Christianity drove him to work tirelessly throughout his career. Such conviction according to Noel Gibbard made him prone on occasion to exaggeration and sensationalism in reports, while his involvement in political issues in league with the British Consulate threatened, at times, to compromise his position as a missionary. On such occasions he “was asserting his authority, not only as a missionary but also as a representative of England” – an ideological conflation of religion and flag that seemed implicit in his 1864 declaration to critics: “I am an Englishman and a messenger of Jesus” (93-4).

But despite Griffith John’s avowed optimism and the promise of his mission, life in China placed a heavy toll on his family. Four of his seven children died from disease, the remaining three were sent to live in Wales for their health and education. Arriving home on their first furlough after fifteen years in China, Griffith and Margaret were not recognised by

their children – their oldest son had not seen them for nearly ten years. Margaret John, who had been unwell for some time in China, became seriously ill on their return voyage and died as the ship sailed into Singapore harbour. The following year in 1874, John married widowed American missionary Jeannette Jenkins, and together continued the work of the Hankou mission. By 1885 Jeannette too, developed peritonitis and died. John's long years on the mission field without reprieve (returning to Britain twice only before his forced retirement) and the burden of responsibility he felt towards his home supporters and fellow missionaries, together with the enormity of the work in China, resulted in periods of acute depression and mental breakdown. In 1905 he was widely feted by the missionary fraternity and beyond for completing fifty years' dedicated service, but by 1908, he suffered a severe stroke while preaching in Siokan. A series of strokes followed and by 1911 he was taken back to Britain where he died in a London nursing home in 1912 (Clemmow 63-75).

At his jubilee celebration in 1905 Griffith John made this pronouncement on optimism:

Some seem to imagine I am an optimist because life has been easy and I have never known trial or sorrow. But I tell you I am an optimist because of what I see – the changes that have taken place these fifty years. Sorrow! loss! I have known the bitterest – wife, children – I have gone through it all. Disappointments, dangers – many! But I am an optimist in spite of it all. (R.W. Thompson 534-5)

John Macgowan

It appears incongruous that for a missionary who wrote so much about China, John Macgowan, should be so seldom mentioned in the standard works of the missionary movement. A veteran of fifty years with the London Missionary Society, residing for most of that time in the port city of Amoy, Macgowan never achieved the renown of his contemporaries, Griffith John or Hudson Taylor, despite the popularity of his many books – most particularly a series of cultural works in which he sought “for the benefit of English readers”, to decipher “the inner life of the Chinese” (*Manners* 7, 9).⁵ Yet one explanation for Macgowan's biographical obscurity may lie in a reluctance on the part of the missionary enterprise to enshrine what W.K. Cheng terms, his “impenitently Anglophilic” sentiments (80). As a British author attuned to popular perceptions of the East, Macgowan duly furnished his audience with a taxonomy of Chinese life that convincingly reduced the nation's characteristics to stereotype. Conversely, his writing spoke with stirring eloquence to readers' notions of Empire – of glorious advances and noble enterprise, of civilisational superiority,

and of a Divine mandate to transform and convert Others (ostensibly from their own culture).



Figure 2 John Macgowan

For Macgowan, the union between Mission and Empire was central to the Western presence in China – a view best encapsulated in the title of his 1913 reminiscence: *How England Saved China*. And yet, despite his obvious ethnocentrism, Macgowan’s contribution to missionary endeavour was solid. In addition to cultural and historical texts Macgowan worked on translations, wrote language manuals, and devised Romanised writing systems to improve Chinese literacy. He also worked to eliminate footbinding and infanticide.

Macgowan arrived in China at the height of the Taiping Rebellion and the Second Opium War, a period that held renewed potential for the opening of China to the dual concerns of Christian expansion and British trade. Thus, he found himself positioned at the forefront of a wave of missionary and mercantile endeavour that expanded exponentially over the following decades. Like many of his early colleagues he sought to share his acquired knowledge of Chinese language and culture with those at home, but for Macgowan the differences emphasised, and always confirmed British superiority. He seemed untroubled by the moral quandary reflected in the writing of other missionaries who conceded “they could not exist in China without foreign force, but ... could not progress if they identified with it” (Hayford 160).

Born in Belfast in 1835, Macgowan studied at the English Presbyterian College, London before joining the London Missionary Society. Following his ordination in 1859 he sailed for China with his wife Sarah and four LMS colleagues, arriving in Shanghai in March 1860. Macgowan’s affinity for language and literature emerged two years later when he became the editor of *Zhongwai zazhi* (Shanghai Miscellany), “a monthly publication of news, religion, science and literature” (Cheng 97). He also published an “elementary” attempt at cultural mediation in 1862 – *A Collection of Phrases in the Shanghai Dialect* – to assist missionaries, foreign travellers and new residents to “gain an acquaintance” with China (Preface). In 1863 he moved to the island city of Amoy where he lived for the rest of his career. Here he broadened his trans-literacy endeavour with the publication of *A Manual of*

the Amoy Colloquial in 1869, and the prodigious, *English and Chinese Dictionary of the Amoy Dialect* in 1883.

In the typical pattern of nineteenth-century missionary life, Macgowan would suffer the loss of his first wife Sarah within four years of their arrival in China. One year after moving to Amoy Sarah's health declined, forcing a return to England. Evidently the journey proved too strenuous and she died at sea, three weeks from home. Macgowan returned to China in 1866, marrying again three years later to American teacher Jennie Peet, whose recent arrival necessitated his refund of her passage to the American Missionary Board. Over the next three decades the Macgowan family grew to a total of thirteen children – requiring the aid of four servants during their three furloughs to England (Eames).

Macgowan was astute in his role as cultural informant, producing a series of publications from the late 1880s that catered to the Western hunger for information, while lending credence to the moral urgency to Christianise China. His writing exudes a reverence for history, which he used as a matrix for explaining cultural practices and racial character. In 1897 he wrote: *A History of China: From the Earliest Days Down to the Present*;⁶ and in 1889 the history of his own mission: *Christ or Confucius, Which? Or, the Story of the Amoy Missions*. Much of Macgowan's later work⁷ is written in the style of traveller-observer – an (eye) witness for the Lord – or as Angela Zito suggests: “He places his own consciousness as the motivating but absent center of the work; his presence infuses the text like overheard heavy breathing as he labors to describe” (8). Characteristically expressive, he employs an assortment of stylistic devices and imagery to engage the reader vicariously – often extending to full-blown, romantic, flights of fancy in his effort to stir response. For example, *Beside the Bamboo* (1914), written in retirement, begins with a recreation of his voyage to China: “I am going to take you in imagination a very long journey to the far-off land of China, that we may see with our eyes the strange people that live there” (9). These “strange people” Zito observes, caused him to speculate “endlessly upon what ‘they’ think and imagine” (8). She adds: “He was fascinated by Chinese bodies: what they wore, how they looked, moved, and suffered. And he was equally committed to describing the extraordinary effect the physical presence of missionaries had upon the natives” (11).

Macgowan's most productive period of writing coincided with the missionary movement's democratisation of salvation to include more than just the soul, but the welfare of the whole person, or the advent of the “social gospel”. It was the custom of women's footbinding that most incensed him about the Chinese civilisation. “Many a savage tribe has

shown barbaric ingenuity in the methods they have devised to disfigure and maim the human body, but it has been reserved for the Chinese people, with their great intelligence and civilization, to carry out such a system of mutilation as the world has never known in the long history of the past” (*England* 19). Moved by his wife’s distress, and failure to prevent, a mother from binding the feet of a screaming child, Macgowan called together, in his words, “the first assembly of women that had ever taken place in the long history of the past” – some sixty Chinese Christians – to “discuss” the first anti-footbinding society. Out of this “revolutionary conduct” nine women signed a pledge to eradicate the practice in their homes, despite the repercussions for their daughters’ marriage prospects (47-8). He described his excitement at the meeting’s end in rapturous terms across three paragraphs, including details of the sun’s radiance, and of hearing heavenly music. And he seemed profoundly aware of his own place in history as he contemplated “this epoch-making gathering that was going to change the destinies of all the future women of China” (67). Thus, Macgowan’s establishment of the “Heavenly Foot Society” in 1874 became the prototype for future campaigns. However, it took another twenty years before the anti-footbinding movement finally gained some traction under the auspices of Mrs Archibald Little, the wife of a British shipping magnate. Her “Natural Feet Society” – signalling a departure from the religious connotations of “Heaven” and the small group of Christian working-class women for which it was targeted – gained recognition on a national scale with the result that the Empress Dowager issued an edict against footbinding in 1902 (Qi 52-5).

The Republican Revolution of 1911 gave hope to the missionary community that China might finally have been won for Christ. With Sun Yat-sen, a Chinese Christian as revolutionary leader, Macgowan had reason to believe “China, to-day, through some of England's sons and daughters, has entered upon a new era that is going to set her high amongst the nations of the world” (*England* 316). His retirement to England in 1910, following his wife Jennie’s death in 1902, was his impetus to publish *How England Saved China*, as a campaign against Britain’s scaling down of missionary work in China. At the same time, he used this patriotic publication to celebrate China’s new “Christian” regime as a vindication of the fifty-years of work he had just completed. The jubilation of the Revolution however, would ultimately fail. Macgowan continued to work for the London Missionary Society until his death in London in 1922 at the age of eighty-seven.

Timothy Richard

Timothy Richard was one of the most influential Western figures in China during the late Qing Dynasty. He was a missionary with expansive vision, a strategist, and a skilled communicator who came to advise the Imperial Court on issues of national reform, and yet his approach to evangelism would provoke much controversy among the mission fraternity. Richard's theological understanding of God's Kingdom experienced a marked change during his early career that would reshape his view of the missionary task, and extend his focus beyond the fixed objective of "saving the heathen from the sufferings of hell", to include saving them "from the hell of suffering in this world" (Richard, *Forty-five* 197). Richard's chief concern, as he states in his autobiography *Forty-five years in China* (1916), was the "uplift" of the nation, to be "liberated from the bonds of ignorance and harmful custom...to receive the light of education – scientific, industrial, religious – [so that] it might become one of the most powerful nations on earth" (7). His approach to the Christianisation of China was one of accommodation, of sensitivity to the nation's philosophies and cultures and "assimilating all that is good" in his espousal of educational reform (qtd. in Bohr 77). The publication and translation of literature would be his principal instrument of influence.



Figure 3 Timothy Richard

Both Timothy Richard and James Hudson Taylor have been described as "prototypes" of China missions and "master image makers" of Imperial China through their respective literatures, but their missiological methods were as distinct as their individual personas (Pfister 184). Since the 1950s their strategies have been juxtaposed between the labels "conservative" (Taylor) and "liberal" (Richard), with more recent studies revising the dichotomy to "minimalist", denoting Taylor's concern to present the saving gospel unadorned, without excessive attention paid to cultural context; and "maximalist" to denote Richard's recognition of the broader implications of gospel dissemination within an ancient civilisation (186, 208).

The transformation of Richard's understanding and practice of mission beyond traditional methods was shaped by his formative revival experience in Wales and his efforts to increase evangelistic effectiveness. Born into a Baptist farming family in Carmarthenshire, Wales in 1845, he was inspired during the Welsh Revival of 1858-60 to become a foreign missionary. He left teaching to enter Haverfordwest Theological College in 1865, was accepted by the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) in 1869, and arrived in Chefoo in 1870 to begin work as an evangelist (*Forty-five* 19-31). During his early years he was engaged in itinerate street-preaching and tract distribution, but he found the people's indifference, if not hostility, to the gospel dispiriting. The death of his colleague from typhus in 1874 left him the sole representative of the BMS in China (32). Dissatisfied with the established method of evangelisation but, like Hudson Taylor, keen to take the gospel to the unreached interior, Richard moved in 1875 to the walled inland-city of Ching-chou-fu, a leading religious centre and hub of business, education and government administration (76). It was here that again like Taylor, he adopted Chinese clothing, shaved his head and wore an artificial queue in order that he might appear less foreign, and it was here that he employed a new set of mission strategies (80).

Diverging from core street-preaching methods Richard refocussed his efforts upon "leaders of thought", while broadening the scope of mission to include humanitarian work. The devastation of the north China famine of 1876-1879 and the nation's inability to provide systematic aid galvanised Richard into action.⁸ Working with Qing officials he devised and administered an international relief plan that would set a standard for subsequent humanitarian efforts for the next half century. The famine would have had a marked impact on the course of his missionary career. His conception of salvation widened to embrace not only the soul's entrée to the Kingdom of Heaven, but further still, "the salvation of nations" through education and reform. This, he believed, was a means to establish the Kingdom of God on earth (Bohr 78). To this end, Richard developed a strategy of "seeking the worthy" – the devout followers of China's religions – convinced that they would be predisposed to accept the gospel (*Forty-five* 48).⁹ Additionally, he focused attention on the Chinese elite, seeking to build relationships with the politically powerful. His intent was to foster an understanding of the modern world among scholars, promoting the hypothesis of "human progress through science" and how "Western civilization's real strength came through possessing Judeo-Christian theological underpinnings" (Johnson 52).

Richard realised that for Christianity to be acceptable to the Chinese it had to be presented from within the culture, or more precisely, given a “Chinese face”. He studied the literature of Chinese religions and held discussions with the leaders of reforming sects to determine points of contact upon which Christianity might be compared. He concluded that “the best way to make Christianity indigenous was to adopt Chinese methods of propagation” (Stanley 182). The most effective propagation would be achieved by indigenous workers from financially independent, self-governing Chinese churches.¹⁰

Richard married Edinburgh-born Mary Martin of the United Presbyterian Mission in Chefoo in 1878, and they settled in Taiyuan, Shanxi. Together they wrote and translated both Christian and secular literature into Chinese, established orphanages and schools, and trained Chinese evangelists. Richard gave lectures on Western science to scholar-officials, demonstrating how “it deals with the laws of God” (*Forty-five* 123), and disseminated his “self-strengthening” vision widely through the Chinese press, making recommendations to ameliorate the nation’s internal decline by grafting Western technology onto Confucian institutions (Bohr 77).

Not all shared Richard’s vision for China however. In 1885, after fifteen years in China, Timothy and Mary took their four daughters to England on furlough, placing the two oldest in boarding school. Richard met with the mission committee proposing “an inter-mission scheme to establish a high-class missionary college in every Chinese provincial capital, in order to bring about the ‘national conversion of China’” (Stanley 189). His ecumenical scheme caused unease among some members who were concerned the word “national” revealed his intention to create an established church in China.¹¹ The BMS rejected the scheme as financially unfeasible. Bitterly disappointed, he resigned his post as secretary and treasurer of the Shanxi mission (189). New missionaries to Shanxi during his furlough had heard accounts of his unorthodox methods and felt moved to write to the home committee censuring his approach as “devaluing evangelicalism, individual conversion, and work among the poor”. New arrival, Herbert Dixon, suggested his message was “a conglomerate wherein Science, Heathenism, Roman Catholicism, and Christianity are bundled up into a new ‘Gospel for Nations’” (190-91). Richard describes their “mood” in his autobiography: “Th[e] acknowledgment of any good in the native religion was considered rank heresy in the opinion of some of my young colleagues” (205). Indeed in 1881 Hudson Taylor, whom Richard had long admired, ordered his CIM missionaries to sever relations with Richard over his

conditionalism (Austin, *Millions* 272).¹² Unwilling to submit to the dictates of junior missionaries upon his return to the province in 1886, Richard and Mary moved to Tianjin where he resigned from the BMS, eventually becoming General Secretary of the Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge among Chinese (SDK) in Shanghai (*Forty-five* 205, 217).

No longer pressured to conform to traditional missiology, the final quarter-century of Richard's career was, as biographer Eunice Johnson observes, "the most fruitful and influential period of his life" (48). The SDK, as the "chief interpreter and conveyor of current events" during the 1890s and into the early 1900s, provided the necessary platform from which to disseminate his vision (81). The Society enabled him to exert a powerful influence on the thought and politics of educated Chinese through a host of publications. Japan's victory over China in the First Sino-Japanese War in 1894-1895 shocked the young Emperor who reacted by planning a series of sweeping reforms to China's state and social systems. Having read his writings, the Emperor invited Richard to be his advisor in the (failed) Hundred Days of Reform (June 12- September 20, 1898).¹³ It seems however, any hope Richard had of guiding China had been dashed by 1900 when Boxer insurgents killed hundreds of missionaries and thousands of Chinese Christians. Yet at its end, the Chinese government invited Richard to mediate an indemnity settlement with Britain. Here he would realise his long-cherished dream, as he convinced the British government to use indemnity funds to establish Shanxi University. As Bohr notes: "For the next ten years, Richard served as the university's chancellor, developing a Western curriculum that he hoped would dispel Chinese ignorance of the West." (78).

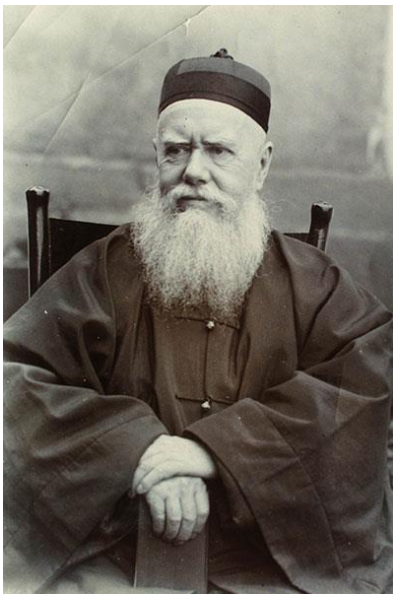
Despite the controversy that Richard's accommodationist approach engendered among some evangelical missionaries, his forty-five-year endeavour to "uplift" China, through innovative and sensitive means earned him the respect of both the East and the West. In 1903 China conferred upon him the rank of Mandarin of the Highest Grade, ennobling his ancestors for three generations, and later awarded him the Order of the Double Dragon. From the West, he received two honorary doctorates from American universities, and a third from the University of Wales in recognition of his efforts on behalf of education in China (Johnson 162-4). Richard's prescient evangelistic strategy is often referred to as a "top-down" approach, for its similarity to the practices of sixteenth century Jesuit Matteo Ricci, but Andrew Kaiser would argue he simply had a "pragmatic interest in methods that worked" ("Encountering" 301). Richard is also referred to as a pioneer of the "social gospel" but again,

in light of the fundamentalist-modernist theological debates of the twentieth century, Kaiser cautions against reading Richard's "good works" – his social and economic concerns for China – as a negation of his evangelical commitment to conversion (310-11). Richard did, however, set the tone for missions after the turn of the century, where medical, social and educational endeavour formed more than half of Protestant enterprise (Latourette 619).

In 1903, the year China awarded him the title of Mandarin, Richard's wife Mary died from cancer. He continued his translation and publication work, becoming the Secretary of the International Red Cross in 1904, and attending the Lucerne Peace Conference in 1905 where he proposed a scheme for world federation. In 1914 he married his second wife, Dr Ethel Tribe, a medical missionary of twenty years' experience. They retired to England in 1916 where he died following surgery in 1919 (Johnson 163-4).

James Hudson Taylor

More has been written about James Hudson Taylor than any other missionary of the nineteenth century with the exception of David Livingstone. For a "small, quiet and unassuming" man his legacy to world-mission was of mammoth design (Austin, *Millions* 81).



A quarter-century after his death mission historian Kenneth Scott Latourette wrote: "Hudson Taylor was, if measured by the movement which he called into being, one of the greatest missionaries of all time, and was certainly, judged by the results of his efforts, one of the four or five most influential foreigners who came to China in the nineteenth century for any purpose, religious or secular." (382). He succeeded in launching the largest missionary organization in the world during an era of momentous upheaval in China, and he did so according to his reminiscences, on the basis of a beach-side vision, ten pounds and a prayer for willing workers (xxii).

Figure 4 James Hudson Taylor

Taylor was born to Methodist parents in Barnsley, Yorkshire in 1832 and experienced a Wesleyan-style conversion at the age of seventeen that led him to missionary service. Like Livingstone he was greatly influenced by the spirited enthusiasm of missionary Karl Gutzlaff, whose itinerations and (exaggerated) reports of mass conversion awakened Western interest in

China. Taylor's calling came at a time when the Taiping rebellion appeared (erroneously) to hold promise as a people's movement toward Christianity. He prepared himself with the study of medicine and Chinese language and sailed for Shanghai in 1853 under the auspices of the Chinese Evangelization Society. Like Gutzlaff, he shaved his head, grew a pigtail and wore Chinese dress "not to deceive them" as he said, "but merely to avoid the astonishment that foreign clothes always produce" (qtd. in Broomhall 2:148). Within four years he had resigned from the CES, who had failed to honour his meagre stipend, and continued as an independent missionary, trusting in God's faithfulness to supply his needs and that of a hospital in Ningpo. He married Maria Dyer, the daughter of an LMS missionary in 1858, shortly after the outbreak of the Second Opium War. But by 1860, just as the Treaties of Tientsin opened inland China to foreign traders and missionaries, the Taylors returned to England, both in poor health.

For the next five years Taylor's "recuperation" was geared towards a return to China and a continuation of his work. He completed his medical degree, was ordained, completed a translation of the Bible into Ningbo dialect, and published the book *China, its Spiritual Need and Claims* as an incitement to the churches of Britain to rise to their mission responsibility. This "manifesto" made him an "overnight celebrity", selling three thousand copies in three weeks with eight more editions published before 1900 (Austin 80). Increasingly he became convinced that God was directing him to start his own mission society. His Brighton Beach vision of millions dying lent greater spiritual urgency to his cause, and he established the China Inland Mission. By May 1866, Hudson, Maria and their children sailed for China accompanied by a party of sixteen missionaries. Their objective was to evangelise the "unreached" interior of China, placing trust in God to supply their needs. Spiritual welfare was paramount with the establishment of schools and hospitals of secondary importance. Missionaries were not guaranteed salaries and the Mission would never solicit money nor would it accrue debt. Unlike other societies, the CIM located its headquarters in China not Britain, with all workers expected to adopt Chinese dress and achieve a "remarkably high standard" of language proficiency. (McKay 120). Their close identification with local people would ultimately develop self-propagating Christian communities.

Taylor's radical approach to the evangelism of China drew criticism from veteran missionaries and mainstream societies. Yet hoping for recruitment on a broad scale, the CIM was established as a non-sectarian organization with candidates "accepted without restriction as to denomination, provided there was soundness in the faith in all fundamental truths"

(Hoste 52). Unlike other societies, all women, married or single, were missionaries in their own right and by the 1880s they represented more than half of the CIM workforce. With few exceptions all missionaries, both male and female had to be single to join the CIM, and there was a two-year probationary ban on marriages. Seeking to utilize the untapped potential of British churches, early appeals were made for recruits with “little formal education” (Kane 76). Taylor believed China’s need was for evangelists, not scholars, as they would be most effective in reaching the lower classes. But with the administrative responsibilities of an ever-expanding organization, recruitment tours through Europe, Britain, Australia and America, and the monthly publication of *China’s Millions* as part of his routine schedule, Taylor continued to place enormous demands upon himself. Consequently, his expectations of others could be equally demanding as he maintained his “tight ship” amid accusations of autocracy (Kane 76).

Hudson Taylor continued his grueling schedule despite his frequent poor health and bouts of depression. His vision for China had also taken a toll on his family life. Having lost four of their eight children before the age of ten, his wife Maria died in 1870 at the age of thirty-three. Hudson returned to England in 1871 suffering both a mental and physical collapse, but by the end of the year had married CIM missionary, Jennie Faulding. Their marriage would last until her death in Switzerland in 1904, aged sixty. The following year Taylor, described by Austin as, “now a tiny aged elf with wild white hair and a long white beard”¹⁴ made his last trip to China where he died peacefully in the presence of his daughter-in-law and biographer, Geraldine (Guinness) Taylor (458). Taylor’s fifty-one-year legacy was to have produced the largest missionary organisation in China (G. Doyle 121).¹⁵

James Gilmour

For over twenty years James Gilmour laboured single-handedly to convert the nomadic people of Mongolia to Christianity. Yet despite the hardship and loneliness of living in a remote and challenging field he would never, in any gratifying sense, witness the fruits of his endeavour. In a career that produced a total of two converts,¹⁶ it was Gilmour’s spirited perseverance in the face of indifference, rather than his *proselytic* success, that won him the

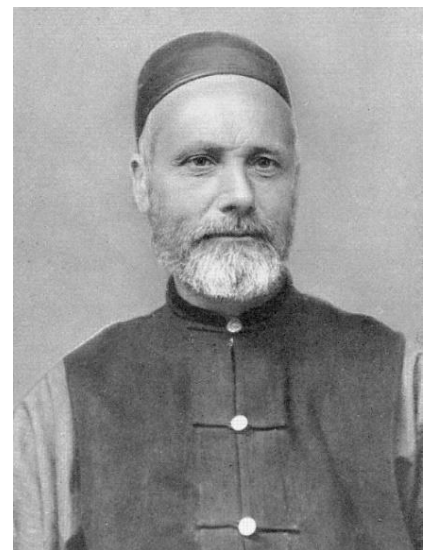


Figure 5 James Gilmour

admiration of Western supporters. And it was his astute observations of Mongolian society – the lifestyle and customs of an unknown people vividly depicted in his book *Among the Mongols* in 1882 – that engaged the imagination of the Victorian public, while at the same time establishing him as a pioneer in the field of anthropology. To the Mongolians he was an enigmatic healer, admired for his dedication to the health of a nomadic people. Living in a tent, learning the language, and dispensing treatment and medicine for no apparent gain seemed inexplicable to these people, and yet his service was keenly sought. But in what was ostensibly a Lamaist nation, with its own ritual and observance of intricate religious custom, Gilmour had to admit his effort to deliver the message of “Christ and His salvation” was, simply “consider[ed] a superfluity” (qtd. in Lodwick, *Legacy* 34).

Like David Livingstone, Gilmour was a Scottish-born Protestant who served with the London Missionary Society during Christianity’s century of zealous expansion to the most remote regions of the world. And like Livingstone, Gilmour’s name became legendary, amassing a huge following and inspiring future missionaries through his writing, despite both having failed to produce converts in their lifetime. Gilmour seemed to fill a need following Livingstone’s death in Africa in 1873, reinstalling the “exotically located missionary” ideal in the Victorian imagination (36). Similar to his African predecessor he would be referred to as “Our Gilmour” – a term of respect conferred by Mongolians but appropriated by the British in their literature as a claim of mutual patronage (Gilmour and Lovett 25). Gilmour’s interest and appreciation for the Mongols is evident from his considerable body of writing – not only from his diaries, letters and reports which form the basis of Richard Lovett’s publications: *James Gilmour of Mongolia: His Diaries, Letters, and Reports* (1892); *More about the Mongols* (1893); and *James Gilmour and his Boys* (1894); but also his regular contributions to periodicals in the form of articles and stories for children. His own book *Among the Mongols* would be published in six languages, reprinted continuously every decade to the present time, and considered by Oriental scholar C.R. Bawden “still one of the best books ever written about Mongolia” (1985:1).

Born in Cathkin in 1843 he studied classical languages at Glasgow University before training at Glasgow Theological Hall, Cheshunt College and Highgate, London, in readiness for mission work. In 1870 the LMS commissioned Gilmour to reopen the Mongolian Mission pioneered in 1817 but closed by the Russian Emperor in 1841. Twelve days after his ordination he sailed for China, arriving in Peking to hear of the massacre of thirteen French nationals in Tientsin. Under threat of a plot to exterminate all foreigners in North China, he

set out for the plains of Mongolia before his pathway was blocked. There he shared the tent of a lama¹⁷ and began to learn Mongolian the only practicable way – by cultural immersion. Gilmour’s biographer records: “So far as we know, he is the only missionary in China connected with the London Missionary Society who adopted *in toto* not only the native dress, but practically the native food, and, so far as a Christian man could, native habits of life” (Gilmour and Lovett 211).

Notwithstanding Gilmour’s unsparing effort to comply with LMS instructions to establish “closer intercourse with them...to accomplish the great purpose of evangelising them”, the directorate had failed to adequately understand the logistical complexity of the field (Bryson 29). Itinerating across Mongolia during the summer months, Gilmour would return to Peking in the harsh winter months to work with his China colleagues and, since he was not a doctor, observe medical cases at the Peking hospital. The comparative ease with which converts could be made in China however, left Gilmour disturbed as to the feasibility of evangelising the scattered inhabitants of Mongolia. He questioned the wisdom of continuing the mission when in one day he could “speak to as many Chinese as he was seeing each week in Mongolia” (Lodwick, *God* 154). Despite repeated requests for guidance from London and mixed advice from his Peking colleagues, he was left to devise his own strategies. The uncertainty of his position and the difficulties he experienced from the beginning with both Russian and Chinese authorities, his language deficiency and intense loneliness, left him subject to bouts of severe depression. His petitions for an assistant – a doctor in particular – would never be realised, other than a very brief connection with Drs Roberts and Smith. A diary entry one month into his first journey in 1870 gives a glimpse of the despair that would plague his career:

I felt drawn towards suicide. I take this opportunity of declaring strongly that on all occasions two missionaries should go together. I was not of this opinion a few weeks ago, but I had no idea how weak an individual I am. My eyes have filled with tears frequently these last few days in spite of myself, and I do not wonder in the least that Grant's brother shot himself.¹⁸ *Oh! the intense loneliness of Christ's life*, not a single one understood Him! (Gilmour and Lovett 61).

Gilmour initiated an unusual, albeit successful, measure to stem the loneliness of his calling. While boarding with his former college friend Samuel Meech in Peking, he was struck by a portrait of Meech’s sister-in-law, Emily Prankard. Although they had never met, he wrote to Emily in London asking for her hand in marriage. She agreed, and travelled to China, where they married five days after her arrival in 1874 (Lodwick, *Legacy* 34-5). The

Gilmours were happily married for eleven years, dividing their life between long sojourns on the windswept plains of Mongolia and the Peking mission compound. But in 1884 Emily fell ill and died. Unable to care for his children alone, he sent his two eldest sons to Britain to be educated, while baby Alec was cared for by his aunt, Mrs Meech. Alec too, became ill and died, aged three (36).

Gilmour's life following the death of his wife and child, and painful separation from his sons in England, would become increasingly afflicted. He devoted most of the following years to his solitary work in Mongolia, becoming increasingly disturbed that "they regarded as utterly absurd the idea of any of them giving up Buddhism and becoming Christian" (qtd. in Lodwick *Legacy* 35). Although considered a good-humoured individual, he was forthright in his convictions, often differing from the opinions of his fellow workers in issues of policy and missionary conduct – a situation exacerbated by living in the close quarters of the Peking compound. One letter he wrote to the Board in 1880 outlining mission disharmony, was fifty pages long.¹⁹ By 1889 his letters showed signs of mental breakdown. Emaciated and ill, he was called home to England to recuperate. Reunited with his young sons and amid the fellowship of friends, his health was restored, but the burden of responsibility he felt for Mongolia lured him back less than eight months later (35).

The tone of despair that had plagued Gilmour for some years – encapsulated in the signature "Yours, dried up and feeling dumb" – brightened during the last year of his life (Gilmour and Lovett 293). In 1890 he would finally receive the work companion for whom he had so long requested. With the arrival of Dr Parker to share the burden of his work, Gilmour was able for the first time in years, to attend and chair, the annual mission meeting in Tientsin in May 1891. During his stay, however, he contracted typhus, further weakening his damaged heart, and to the dismay of the missionary fraternity in attendance, died at the age of forty-eight (Lodwick, *Legacy* 35).

Samuel Pollard

Born in Cornwall in 1864, Samuel Pollard is remembered for his work among the Miao communities of southwestern China. Unlike many contemporaries who were troubled by their mission's ponderous rate of success, Pollard presided over a massive number of conversions in the course of his career. He is best remembered for developing a written script for the Miao community whose language traditionally had no written form. For an ethnic minority, historically subjugated to the Han Chinese, Pollard's script established educational foundations for an impoverished people, and thus provided means to resist cultural erasure.



Figure 6 Samuel Pollard

Pollard's parents were both Bible Christian preachers who placed particular emphasis on bringing Christian teaching to the poor and disadvantaged. Established as a branch of Methodism, the Bible Christians had formed a missionary society in 1821 "for the purpose of sending missionaries into the dark and destitute parts of the United Kingdom and other countries" (Pritchard 185). Pollard had begun a career with the Civil Service when a London conference-address by James Hudson Taylor in 1885, influenced him to become a missionary. By 1887 Pollard and school-friend Frank Dymond, set sail for China. (Grist 9-11). Arriving in Shanghai they dressed in Chinese clothing, attached a Chinese queue, and began to learn the language at the China Inland Mission training school at Ganking (15-16).

The two men departed for Yunnan Province after only six month's training, travelling fifteen hundred miles up the Yangtze River. This first journey inland was hazardous, setting a precedent for future escapades, when the boat capsized in the rapids. Having lost most of their luggage, three months of overland travel later, the pair reached their destination of Chaotung (23-7). Spurred by this early experience, Pollard kept a detailed diary of his travels for the next twenty-eight years until his death. Much of the diary was published posthumously in the book *Eyes of the Earth* in 1954. His ethnographic studies of terrain, people and customs; and his vivid descriptions of moving, humorous, and often dangerous experiences among the Miao were published in his books: *Tight Corners in China* (1910); *The Story of the Miao* (1919); and *In Unknown China* (1921).

Pollard's missionary life followed a two-part trajectory. In 1891 he married Emmie Hainge, a missionary nurse whom he had met during his training. They settled in Chaotung and Stone Gateway (Shimenkan) and had four sons (Grist 216). The first part of his career followed the pattern of most China missionaries: daily evangelism and the slow growth of a Christian community; and offering medical aid – most often for attempted opium suicides. Pollard's early evangelistic work was conducted in open air services, announced by the banging of a gong or the blowing of a cornet – a tactic he dispensed with when crowds began to gather in the hundreds – sometimes thousands (Grist 71). The extraordinary growth of his mission began in 1904 when a group from the A Hmao ethnic group (the Big Flowery Miao) came to see him, asking to be told about Jesus. They had “heard rumours that the white men had a ‘book’ for them” (Tapp). As many as a thousand poverty-stricken Miao arrived each day during subsequent months, having crossed snow-capped mountains on foot, each carrying a bag of oatmeal for food. Such unprecedented solicitation of the Word from so many determined the second part of his missionary life: responding to the needs of the Miao. In the space of a few years he had established a mission in the mountain village of Stone Gateway, including a church, school and medical clinic, together with an orphanage, leprosarium, and a training facility for local evangelists (Diamond 146). Richard Hibbert suggests that it was Pollard's “empowering transfer of responsibility to Miao Christians from very early in the process of evangelization” that ensured the mission's continual propagation. And it was this “discerning response to the receptivity of the people” that led to rapid multiplication of schools and chapels in outlying villages (194). Pollard's mission soon became a parish of “vast dimensions” (Grist 280).

In order to learn the Gospel, first the Miao required an ability to read, and a *form* of writing in which it could be read. The “Pollard Script” was the product of much trial and error in attempting to develop a system of writing that would indicate the differing voice tones inherent to the Miao language. Pollard's solution came from an adaptation of the syllabics developed by a Methodist missionary to North American Indians, together with Pitman's shorthand. He used his script to translate much of the New Testament before he died, and it has remained in use for over ninety years, despite governmental attempts to have it superseded (Yan 210).

Pollard itinerated across thousands of miles of mountainous terrain in South Western China maintaining pastoral oversight of the region, preaching, practising basic medicine and dentistry, and arguing the cause of justice for Miao Christians from officials and feudal

landlords. In twenty-seven years of work he built hospitals, schools and over one hundred churches. Yet most of his converts were Miao, not Han Chinese, who feared missionaries were inciting full-scale insurrection among subjugated minorities. In the aftermath of the Boxer Uprising when foreigner-suspicion was still strong, Pollard was attacked and beaten close to death by a group of Chinese (Pollard *Eyes* 114-117). Despite this one assault, most hostility encountered in his career, he could defuse with sensitive discussion. By 1915, after nursing his colleague William Hudspeth through the onset of typhoid, Pollard too succumbed to the epidemic and died, aged fifty-one.

Samuel Pollard's legacy continues today, with his humanitarian and educational work among the Miao formally recognised in 1985 by Hu Jintao, the former Chairman of the Peoples Republic. His desecrated grave was restored in 1995 and has now become a national shrine (Becker 30). The main building of the Hopkins-Nanjing University was named in his honour in 2007 (Rienzi).

PART II

The second part of this chapter directs attention to what the missionaries wrote in defence of their missional approach to identification with the Chinese. This section concentrates on matters of everyday lifestyle – the standard of living adopted, the level of social integration attempted, and the missionaries' efforts towards receptive communication with their target people. Their writing reveals the complexities of negotiating criticism of their methods – both from the East and West, both secular and Christian – and the inherent difficulties of effecting measures towards identification, whether those prescribed or those of their own volition.

Imperial insulation: identification by proxy

As a signifier of missional method, dress can be broadened to include the lifestyle practices of missionaries in the field – the social customs, food, housing and material possessions that visibly convey a missionary's degree of adaptation to Chinese life. In an era where the Christian values and respectability of Victorian ideology were strongly reflected in the material and social dimensions of everyday Western life, it seems inevitable perhaps, that missionaries' efforts toward identification with, (or demarcation from), the material and social realms of their Chinese hosts should attract considerable scrutiny, and at times outright censure, from nineteenth-century missionary observers. Likewise, it seems inevitable that it

should be the material and social aspects of their vocational identification that evinced the greatest ambivalence among missionary workers themselves. Yet from the contention it engendered, clearly a wholesale approach to missionary identification would never reach consensus.

Despite their missional approach, whether imperial or grassroots, missionaries were frequently forced to defend their stance against the printed harangues of influential critics. Nowhere perhaps was there a more incendiary critique of missionary lifestyle than the two articles penned by Canon Isaac Taylor in 1888: “The Great Missionary Failure” and “Missionary Finance”. Writing from his Church of England diocese of York, Taylor took aim at the “comfortable” standard of living enjoyed by Western missionaries, attributing their lack of conversion-success to their refusal to renounce Western affluence. Not one to mince words, he branded the English Protestant missionary “unheroic” – but even more scathing – he judged them against the “ideal” of “absolute self-devotion”: the Roman Catholic missionary. Reinforcing this claim, he discusses General Gordon’s observations in China:²⁰

[He] found the Protestant missionaries with comfortable salaries of £300 a year, preferring to stay on the coast, where English comforts and English society could be had, while the Roman priests left Europe never to return, living in the interior with the natives as the natives lived, without wife, or child, or salary, or comforts, or society. Hence these priests succeed as they deserve to succeed, while the professional Protestant missionary fails. True missionary work is necessarily heroic work, and heroic work can only be done by heroes. Men not cast in the heroic mould are only costly cumbrances. (“Failure” 499)

Canon Taylor’s diagnosis of missionary methods as “altogether wrong” targeted the material and social disparity between cultures as the main barrier to conversion-success (498). Conversion efforts he implied, should be towards Christianity, not to European culture, the cause of so many “bad quality” initiates (492). He declared: “European missionaries fail because they attempt to make Asiatics or Africans into middle-class English Philistines, which they never will be” (495). British missionaries he maintained, would never succeed, unless like Moravians, they were prepared “to become natives, to live among the natives exactly as the natives live, simply exhibiting a nobler life and higher aims” (496). Broadening the epitome of heroic mission beyond Catholics and Moravians, so too Taylor lauded Salvationists, who “adopt the outward life of Asiatics, and abjure European dress, European food and European customs” (496). It stood to reason he added, that “an English missionary in a black coat”, partaking of the food and customs of his own culture, stood about the same chance of converting an Asiatic peasant as would the reverse (496). He asked: “Would a

Chinaman with his pigtail, feeding on snails, birds' nests and lizards, have any chance of converting English ploughboys to Buddhism?" (496). The time had come Taylor insisted, for missionaries to "cease to be sahibs, and become the brothers of the people", "converting, not by argument, but by exhibiting in practice that absolute self-renunciation which is the only language the natives can understand" (495; 498). If, he declared, "St. James ... had provided himself with a shady bungalow, a punkah, a pony carriage, and a wife, he would not have changed the history of the world" (497). Modern missionaries, he repeated, "must give up all European comforts and European society, and cast in their lot with the natives ... striving to make converts, not by the help of Paley's *Evidences*, but by the great renunciation" (499).

As might be expected, missionaries on the frontlines were defensively attuned to such prescriptive theorising from afar. Postulations on missionary methods in the field, lacklustre conversion rates, and opinions on where modern missionaries were going wrong were rarely appreciated, and often met with prickly ripostes. Griffith John, after a district-itineration where he shared flea-infested lodgings with opium addicts and squealing pigs, "commend[ed] Barley Town to Canon Taylor's thoughtful consideration". Taking sardonic aim at the Canon's recommendations he suggested that this would be "the very place" for him to begin his own missionary life "should he feel inclined", for he need do no more than "adopt the habits of the inhabitants of Barley Town in order to have realised in himself his ideal missionary". With saintly satire he added: "Mr. Sparham and myself often felt on this journey that the blessing of Canon Taylor was resting upon us" (R.W. Thompson 414).

While Canon Taylor directed his offensive towards coastal-dwelling missionaries, or those I have described as having "imperial" sensibilities, his own words exude the kind of imperialist condescension implicit in Victorian theories of racial hierarchy. The conflation of two hierarchical systems – an anthropological ranking of races on a scale between those "higher" and "lower"; and the charting of religions along a line of civilizational-progress – filtered through the rhetoric of missions, producing what Jeffery Cox refers to as "double vision", a style "in which other cultures and other religions are simultaneously defamed and praised" (177). Canon Taylor shocked the audience of the Wolverhampton Church Congress in 1887 when he praised the admirable qualities of Islam "as a missionary religion" that was "more successful than Christianity" (*Times* 8 Oct 1887, 7). He went further to suggest certain parts of the world would benefit from the spread of Islam which, "though quite unfitted for the higher races ... [is] eminently a civilizing and elevating religion for barbarous tribes" for

whom “Christianity is too spiritual, too lofty”. The “Christian ideal”, he argued, was simply “unintelligible to savages” (7).²¹

However impervious the Canon may have been to his own chauvinist assumptions, his critique of the affluence of missionary lifestyle was designed to court controversy among mission societies, missionaries and their supporters alike. In China, the LMS and the CMS were ostensibly the most “imperial” in lifestyle among the British contingent, living as Europeans among Europeans, manifesting little interest in identifying with local custom, but employing an assortment of Chinese staff to assist the running of their European-style homes and mission operations. LMS missionaries, John Macgowan and Griffith John, lived unapologetically comfortable lives in spacious two-storey residences built in the British concessions of Amoy and Hankow respectively – well apart from their Chinese congregations. Macgowan reveals in his book *Pictures of Southern China*, that “with very few exceptions”, foreigners like himself reside across the harbour from Amoy on the island of Kulangsu, “crossing over in the morning and returning in the afternoons”:

The beauty of the natural scenery of this island is very much enhanced by the residences of the foreigners that are scattered over it in every direction. As a rule these are spacious and handsome buildings, and surrounded by trees and gardens, where flowers of many kinds thrive with the greatest luxuriance and scent the air with their fragrance ... [T]he excellent roads that abound throughout ... are a result of a considerable outlay by the foreign community (148).

Comfortably sequestered on “this beautiful island” (153) away from the “anything but prepossessing” streets of Amoy where people are “inured by ages of experience to live in the midst of odours that would breed a pestilence in England” (163), Macgowan remained blessedly ensconced in his Western identity. He proudly listed the social and recreational pastimes enjoyed by his compatriot ladies and gentlemen – the clubs, the institutions, the tennis, the cricket – “a powerful witness to the strong feeling that exists in every heart for the homeland, and which the long distance from it only tends to deepen and accentuate” (150). For one so convinced of his social distinctiveness and cultural superiority perhaps it is understandable that he should say elsewhere: “There is one very offensive feature about the Chinese ... that has always been a serious hindrance to the immediate reception of the Gospel in any place ... and that is the deep-rooted scorn and contempt they have for the foreigner” (*Amoy* 41).

Similar to the Amoy Mission, in Hankow where LMS property holdings were substantial, missionaries enjoyed a disproportionate material and social advantage over their

Chinese hosts. Major Henry Knollys in his travels through China was genuinely impressed by the outstanding British residences in Hankow, writing:

Really on first arrival ... how one's heart rises with pleasure at the sight – in juxtaposition with that obscene monster the native city – of our pretty little English concession with the charm of its soft turf, its neat gravel road, its park-like avenue, and its splendid houses! ...[each] facing the river, each with its handsome columns, porticos, and verandahs, each semi-embosomed in the shade of its own beautiful trees ... and each sufficiently comfortable with furniture which has been imported from England 11,000 miles distant. (147)

But like Canon Taylor, Knollys was a strident critic of Protestant missions, one who notably disparaged missionary-recruits as career-aspirants and seekers of class elevation: “Poverty stricken and without prospects at home, out here they are provided ... with an assured and liberal income ... The missionary now lives in a condition of affluence which would be unknown to him elsewhere ... [and] assumes a social status to which his birth and breeding have by no means entitled him” (205-7).

Ever sensitive to the caustic gibes of armchair analysts, Griffith John, when on furlough, delivered a sermon to an English audience refuting accusations of self-serving social-advancement among missionaries while defying accusers to experience the work for themselves:

One of our ministers made the remark not long since, that he did not know more than one who had not bettered himself by becoming a Missionary. I wish I could take him and many like-minded with him to China (in spirit, at least, for I doubt whether they would care to go in any other form), and let them see the Missionaries in the midst of their work. They would soon be convinced, I think, that most of them were there, not because they look upon the Missionary work as a bread-and-butter enterprise, but because they can say from the depth of their hearts ... “Necessity is laid upon me, and woe be unto me if I preach not the Gospel.” (*Hope* 18)

The LMS argument against a too-literal identification with the everyday life of the Chinese had to do with the nature of the missionary task. Unlike the tribes of Africa and the South Seas, the Chinese people were considered superior on the scale of advancement. Any need to civilise what was already a time-honoured and in many respects, admirable, civilisation was displaced by the need to evangelise. Preaching the gospel message was the way to engage a literate and philosophical nation, but emulating the local way of life would serve little purpose, and indeed would be dangerous for Europeans. In her address to the 1890 Shanghai missionary conference, Mrs Arthur H. Smith advocated “scrupulous attention to Chinese politeness” as the middle ground for winning confidence and conciliation. “The gulf

between the races” she argued, could not be bridged by literal identification, for she knew “no missionary who tried to live down to the level of his church members who did not early and fatally impair his own health” (*Records* 258-9).²² The maintenance of missionary health, both mental and physical, was the principal defence used against adoption of the Chinese lifestyle. In response to those who “wax sarcastic” over expenditure, Foreign Secretary Ralph Wardlaw Thompson stated the LMS position plainly:

[T]here is no virtue in wilful martyrdom. A well-built and roomy house is not luxury, but the wisest and best economy for the health of a European in the tropics; and taste and comfort in the furnishing and decoration of rooms have a very real, if only an indirect, value as a means of rest and refreshment to the spirit jaded by labour, or worn by anxiety and opposition. (195)

For Griffith John, the purchase of land and construction of houses in the newly formed British concession on the outskirts of Hankow was a necessity that could not have come soon enough. John and his colleague Robert Wilson pioneered the Hankow mission in 1861, where they lodged for the first few years “in cramped and uncomfortable quarters in the midst of [the]crowded city” (195). During this time Wilson and two of John’s children died from dysentery. This early immersion in Chinese living convinced John that insanitary conditions were the “most dangerous to us as foreigners in such a climate as this” (193). In keeping with contemporary opinion that held European races inherently susceptible to the dangers of tropical heat and the lethal effects of urban miasma, John deemed it imperative by the 1890s, that he build a retreat in the mountains at Kuling for missionary health and recuperation. His seasoned-experience in the trials of missionary life left him with little tolerance for homeland cries for “cheap missions”. “The cheapest mission” he declared, “is the mission which can keep its missionaries in life longest”. The way to prolong life was to ensure they were “properly fed and housed” (*Voice* 214).

While the preservation of health in China was a pressing concern that limited the degree of material and social identification practised by missionaries, many were convinced the gulf between the Chinese temperament and their own to be so broad and deep it could never be bridged. Nineteenth-century missionary literature was peppered with theories about the Chinese character. Comparisons between Chinese and Occidental dispositions were recurring tropes, often presented as humorous analogy that barely concealed the totalising racism beneath. Both John Macgowan and American missionary, Arthur Henderson Smith, devoted chapters of their books to essentialising the differences between the races.²³ According to Smith, literal identification with Chinese existence was anatomically

inconceivable. He insisted: “Chinese indifference to what we mean by comfort is exhibited as much in their houses as in their dress” (164). His chapter entitled “The Absence of Nerves” describes the Chinese constitution as insensitive to pain, noise, and degrees of irritability and discomfort that the Anglo-Saxon race would find intolerable (111-17).²⁴ Using sleep as the common physiological marker to demarcate cultural (racial) difference, with all meaning referenced against Occidental pre-eminence, Smith cultivates what Lydia Liu describes as a “powerful grammar of truth” to essentialise “the Chinese” (56). He writes:

With a brick for a pillow, he can lie down on his bed of stalks, or mud bricks or rattan, and sleep the sleep of the just ... The “infant crying in the night” may continue to cry for all he cares, for it does not disturb him ... In some regions, the entire population seem to fall asleep, as by a common instinct (like that of the hibernating bear) during the first two hours of summer afternoons ... position in sleep is of no sort of consequence. It would be easy to raise in China, an army of a million men – nay of ten millions – tested by competitive examination, as to their capacity to go to sleep across three wheelbarrows, with head downwards, like a spider, their mouths wide open and a fly inside! (114)

The difference between the two cultures was so broad, Smith implies, as to emanate from the cellular level. But his attempt at humour through droll metaphors such as “hibernating bear” and “spider” reflects more, according to Liu, than racial contempt. She suggests it indicates the master/servant dynamic, or the class-based relationship between Western foreigners and their native servants (57). Indeed, both Smith and Macgowan frequently refer to their personal anecdotes of frustration with hired-help, and each are narrated as validation of established discourses on national character. Their presentation style, Lui asserts, harnesses “discursive power that reduces the object of its description to a less than human animal through rhetorical and figurative uses of language” (57).

Here too, Macgowan uses sleep as a universal gauge to emphasise dissimilarity between what he would have us believe were two scientific species – one “human”, the other “Chinese”:

He curls himself up ... in a space where no human being but himself could live an hour, and he sleeps a dreamless sleep the livelong night in a fetid atmosphere that would give an Occidental typhoid, from which he would perhaps never recover. Whatever the social condition of the Chinaman may be, whether merchant, or coolie, or artisan, one becomes conscious that behind those harsh and unaesthetic features there is a strength of physique and a latent power of endurance that seems to make him independent of climate, and impervious to microbes, germs, bacteria, and all the other scientific scourges that seem to exist for the destruction of all human life excepting the Chinese. (*Sidelights* 112)

With such elemental difference perceived to exist between the cultures, material and social identification between missionaries and the local populace in a strictly literal sense – at least among the designate “imperial” faction – was not to be seriously entertained.²⁵ But as Jonathon Bonk determined from his assessment of Missionary Conference reports between 1860 and 1910, it was clear that material and social identification *was* important to mission-field operatives as a sound proselytic principle, however, the “ideal of becoming all things to all men” was not to be accomplished “by Western missionaries themselves, but vicariously – by native agents” (41).

The rationale for material and social isolation (or insulation) from the local populace among the larger port-dwelling missions was linked to missionaries’ self-identification as outsiders, whose “work is temporary” and whose “position is exceptional”. Once Christianity had become localised their founding-father duties would “come to an end”. Their task was an interim one, “to be phased out of existence once the native church had been judged (by missionaries) fit for independence” (38). The strategic and economic objective of mission polity was to found native churches that were self-supporting, self-funding and self-propagating. Yet the air of patronage and condescension that attended those from a “higher Christian civilisation” (38) in their superintendence of native agents running native churches, was deeply engrained. The relationship remained that of superior/inferior or master/servant on most mission fields well into the twentieth century. As evinced from the Conference reports, it seems a considerable proportion of missionaries were satisfied an effective level of evangelism could be had through Christian (Western) stewardship, without excessive need to enter sympathetically into the lives of indigenous people at the material and social level (39).

To the “imperial” disposed missionary, executive leadership was a natural state of affairs, and a certain disparity in social conditions was entirely fitting. *Native* agents were urged to identify fully with the material standards and social customs of *native* brethren. There was little point in having Western missionaries lower their living standard to meet that of the Chinese when part of the Christianising task was “to raise them up” (40). A Western standard of civilisation was, after all, an inevitable by-product of Christianity – however this was yet to come, it was not to be realised before due time. Commendable though it may have been for indigenous people to identify with missionaries (to a point), for a native agent to aspire to a social standing approaching that of the missionary was downright suspect – a recipe for corruption no less. Among questions posed at the London Conference in 1888 was

one concerning higher-order qualifications and whether native teachers should be encouraged by “enlarged privileges and powers?” (J. Johnston 368). Such a suggestion was met with pious warnings of “very great temptations” and of creating a “spirit of covetousness” (380). There would be a “general tendency” according to Rev. Baldwin, “to adopt Western habits, to grow away from their own people, to demand higher salaries ... and to become unduly exalted” (qtd. in J. Johnston 426-7).

Evidently missionaries could see no contradiction between how they might capitalise on their own “exceptional” educational advantage and what educated natives should do with theirs. They appeared oblivious to their curious double standard – decrying what was considered virtue in the Western missionary, as vice in the native worker, while calling on them in “the spirit of Christian self-denial” to “prefer that no difference in status be made between themselves” (375). Rev. G. Owen from Peking made a case against English education for native agents by raising a free-market dilemma. He counselled that the only way to keep those educated in English away from the lucrative enticement of mercantile employment would be to raise their salary – thus creating caste among native evangelists – a divisive situation where the English speaker would “get three times the pay of a man who only knew Chinese” (380). With minimal local expenses, workers in this position were known to have been “laying up money ever since” (Bonk 42). Even more unsettling for mission societies was the Secretary of the CMS, William Gray’s, pre-emptive imitation of native intentions: “You must give us as large salaries as the European Missionaries get; at all events you must give us two-thirds of what European Missionaries get”.²⁶ Faced with the potential for such venal demands he asks rhetorically: “How are we to deal with them...?” The answer: “Let us strike that system down; let us encourage them to go to their own native Churches ... with regard to privileges and salaries ... let the native Churches settle it for themselves” (qtd. in J. Johnston 383). Their defensive deflection of the salary-predicament, ostensibly to preserve economic difference, could always be, as Bonk points out, “hidden behind a thin camouflage of concern about native selfishness or worldly mindedness” (*Money* 54).

It seems the ideal of becoming all things to all men remained a spectator event for some missionaries; the Western missionary was there to convert society, not to identify with it – at least not in the literal sense. Identification *was* part of their mission to China, but it was identification at another level: theirs was a paternalistic identification. To detach oneself from family, friends and homeland comforts, and willingly relocate to the Orient during a time of marked political turbulence – risking hostility, illness, and possible death – for the express

purpose of enlightening the Chinese to the advantages of Christianity, Western medicine and education, was, to the imperial missionary, an overarching act of beneficent identification. And yet, to remain effective benefactors to the people required longevity. Despite their critics, the LMS and the CMS deemed the maintenance of (a Western standard of) health and material well-being essential to prolonged missionary-superintendence of native churches. Western missionaries, it was argued, need not emulate local lifestyle when the most effective results on the field could be realised through the efforts of native evangelists – identifying fully (materially and socially) with their own brethren. For native workers to do otherwise – to identify with the missionary and his civilisation – was problematic. They might be tempted by the love of mammon; they risked becoming “unduly exulted”; but perhaps most disconcertingly, they posed a threat to missionary governance. To “imperial” missionaries, seemingly unperturbed by questions of double standard, maintaining the material and social divide seemed the most prudent course of action for effective mission management.

Grassroots ambivalence: identification and isolation

It would be fair to say that most representatives of the LMS in the nineteenth century subscribed to evangelisation methods inherently shaped by imperial values – values that underscored their role as Christian benefactors and preserved their sense of cultural distinction. However, there was one missionary among the LMS in China at this time who did go against the tide of co-worker opinion to attempt – as a strategic course of action – to identify materially and socially with the Chinese people he was attempting to convert. James Gilmour’s biographer records:

He is the only missionary in China connected with the London Missionary Society who adopted *in toto* not only the native dress, but practically the native food, and, so far as a Christian man could, native habits of life. His average expense for food ... was *threepence a day*. This rate of expenditure was, of course, possible only because he adopted vegetarianism. (Gilmour & Lovett 211)

Far from reinforcing segregated living-standards for effective mission management, Gilmour’s approach to evangelism was based on social equality, exemplified by his own efforts to live in close sympathy with the people. Assigned to the isolated plains of Eastern Mongolia, Gilmour formed the view that it was a mistake for missionaries to live as foreigners on the field, both from an economic perspective and in the hope of proselytic influence. Writing to homeland officials, his conviction was clear:

It is the foreign element in our lives that runs away with the money. The foreign houses, foreign clothes, foreign food, are ruinous. In selecting missionaries, physique able to stand native houses, clothes, and food, should be as much a *sine qua non* as health to bear the native climate. (213)

Gilmour's plainspoken, yet decisive views on missionary assimilation – views that extended to matters of policy and missionary conduct – only served to provoke the ire of colleagues in Peking and Tientsin. His model of committed grassroots-identification with the local populace was unsettling for the more conservative imperial cohort for whom in-principle agreement, according to Gilmour's biographer Richard Lovett, "would have involved, perhaps, following his example" (211). Gilmour's personal asceticism would be eulogised as "a noble example of absolute devotion to duty" (6) and equated with "Christlike self-denial" (204), but this worthy extolment in death belied the tension he engendered in life. It seems his LMS contemporaries viewed missionaries who "cross the bridge" as eccentric, and they were "treated with a mixture of awe and suspicion" (Bonk 79).²⁷

Certainly, Gilmour's adaptation to Chinese life appeared comprehensive. A reviewer in the *Spectator* in 1883 (April 28) described him as "a lama", "in all things, except lying, stealing, and prurient talk" (549).²⁸ He dressed in the clothes of a humble labourer, declaring: "As long as you have a change of clothing, you are in their eyes a well-to-do man, in easy circumstances" (qtd. in Bryson 134). He felt it his "duty to become a vegetarian" for he was "eager to acquire the influence ... [such asceticism] would give me" among Mongolian Buddhists. In doing so he adopted the "true Chinese style, which forbids eggs, leeks and carrots, etc." (Gilmour & Lovett 189). Ever mindful of the financial constraints under which missionaries were required to work, Gilmour personally funded much of his early itineration, and often journeyed on foot; thus establishing himself as the quintessence of "cheap mission".²⁹ His willingness to, in Chinese terms, "eat bitterness" by travelling stoically with no cart or animal, found him on occasion, as he reported, "turned out of ... respectable inns ... because I came as a tramp!" (182; 240). When not housed in Chinese inns or Mongol tents, Gilmour would rent rooms in border towns as a base for district preaching. In Ta Cheng Tzu he secured two rooms for a year "situated at the inner end of a little trading court ... in one corner there was a pigsty. When first I saw it I almost refused to occupy it; but really there is no help for it" (207).

Although Gilmour adopted an austere lifestyle to more closely identify with his target people, it was a wholly self-imposed measure, unconcerned with exhorting similar

expectations from others. He was however, decidedly forthright in challenging his missionary brethren's collective conscience when it came to tobacco and alcohol, insisting abstinence be a condition of church membership, and charging his own kind with dereliction of Christian-duty. In a paper published in the *Chinese Recorder* in 1888 he set out his treatise against this "sin":

[D]o not tobacco and whisky take the bread out of men's mouths and the clothes off their backs? And if so, has not every smoker and drinker a part in this sin? ... Good earnest Christian men smoke and drink. Evangelists and pastors owned of God in the salvation of souls smoke and see no harm in it. The reason is they have never seen how the thing works, and don't know the harm it does. (165)

Gilmour's pronounced stand in this matter drew firm opposition from his compatriots, who questioned the soundness of his judgment. His efforts to present a united front among missionaries to their Eastern recipients, was frustrated by the missionaries' unwillingness to proscribe what many themselves enjoyed. His frustration was compounded when a crucial opportunity to win souls for Christ was thwarted, from perceived hypocrisy. Gilmour writes of the time when a deputation of "serious-minded" sect members (*vegetarian ascetics who disavowed* opium, whisky, and tobacco) came to enquire about Christianity (201). To his embarrassment they asked him to refute a slander:

The slander was to the effect that in a chapel in Peking, the preacher would, when he finished preaching, get down off the platform and have a smoke! I had to admit that this was no slander, but a true statement. I had a good deal to say in explanation of it; but, alas! the men came no more. (211)

Despite Gilmour's rigorous endeavour to perfect sympathetic identification with the people, his methods were not uniformly appreciated. Such a bold departure from LMS convention was regarded with hostility by his colleagues because it carried tacit criticism of their way of life. Glaring comparisons drawn between their imperial standard of comfort and Gilmour's "all things" devotion to the missionary call inevitably stirred unease among the LMS fraternity, who reacted defensively to what they perceived to be moral intimidation. He was called to justify his methods to home authorities in response to the "marked divergence of view" among the North China Mission (212). As Gilmour's repeated petitions to London for an assistant were widely known, his colleagues sought to base their "remonstrances" with him upon a "conviction that entire isolation, such as he had to endure throughout his Mongolian career, must tell adversely upon his temperament" (213). In short, by exploiting his extreme

loneliness and vulnerability, his opponents could infer he was mentally unstable, and thus demonstrate a case in point against grassroots missionary methods.³⁰

In response to the suggestion that “perhaps he was putting a more severe strain upon his health than the efficient discharge of his difficult duty demanded” he was quick to assure home officials that his lifestyle in Mongolia, contrary to reports, was as healthy and as conducive to longevity as that of his co-workers in Peking (212). He refuted any need for foreign comforts stating resolutely: “In past days I have suffered extreme discomfort by attempting to live in foreign dress in native houses” (213). Crucially, and in light of missionary opposition, he reminded the Board that he lived by faith; he felt “called to go through all this sort of thing” and felt “perfectly secure in God’s hands”; he was merely “following His lead” (212). Gilmour’s singular, and oft-repeated request for an assistant, a medical colleague in particular, was not met.³¹ Instead, he was sent to England for “rest”. Interestingly, the signs of depression attributed to his Spartan lifestyle had lifted before reaching England – seemingly from the companionship of fellow travellers.³²

Despite their disapproval of Gilmour’s ascetic lifestyle with its implicit criticism of imperial comfort, his unexpected death from typhus in 1891 drew heartfelt tributes in the *Chinese Recorder* from LMS colleagues, who wrote reverentially of a life of selfless dedication. They were at pains, nonetheless, to vindicate their stance against the kind of missionary identification that Canon Taylor had proclaimed “heroic”, suggesting that Gilmour too, had finally realised this folly before he died. Reverend Owen wrote of how:

After his return [to Mongolia] he gave up his vegetarianism and slightly modified his manner of living in other respects to the great benefit of his health ... had his life been spared, I don’t think he would have again practised the old austerities and self-denial. I never saw him looking better or stronger than he did a fortnight before he died. (326)

Faith, pigtails and lost nerve

Where James Gilmour’s missionary methods proved a source of discomfort to his more imperially insulated compatriots in the LMS, James Hudson Taylor’s approach to mission proved a source of mirth and derision for the wider foreign community residing on China’s coast. The arrival of the first party of missionaries to form the China Inland Mission in 1866 – the “pigtail mission” – was ridiculed by Shanghai papers who dubbed Taylor “either a fool or a knave” for his zealous ambition and unconventional methods (Broomhall 4:226).³³ Not only was he mocked for outfitting the group in Chinese attire, he was castigated for the

“injustice and cruelty” of taking young women inland to evangelise Chinese women and girls (227).³⁴ It was a bold initiative to take recruits with “no luggage, no language, no words” to China’s unevangelised interior – one that he knew would draw criticism from the start (Austin 2). But Taylor was not deterred; this was the model of a “faith mission”; reliant on God for protection, provision and success; determined to win the confidence of the Chinese people.³⁵

Where Gilmour’s adopted lifestyle as a grassroots missionary in the LMS was self-imposed, Hudson Taylor as founder of the CIM made close material and social identification with the Chinese a condition of mission entry. Anyone departing from the Mission’s principles “will thereby *ipso facto* remove themselves from the Mission” (Broomhall 4:359). Recruits were warned against turning to the hospitality of the foreign circle in port cities as “an escape from the adopted life inland” (359). Such stringent renunciation of their former social standards did prove too much of an adjustment for a few who in time, succumbed to the pressure of Western conformity. But it was Taylor’s earlier residence in Shanghai in 1854 that convinced him of where missions were going wrong. As one latter-day critic, George Woodcock, wrote in his favour:

His missionary colleagues dressed and behaved like European clergymen. They belonged, visibly, to the same world as the merchants and the administrators and the soldiers whom the Chinese collectively classed ‘red-haired foreign devils’. The first step was obviously to get out of devildom by looking and behaving as much like a Chinese as possible and thus approaching one’s potential converts on their own terms. (105)

Taylor set out his convictions in a letter to new applicants in 1867:

We have to deal with a people whose prejudices in favour of their own customs and habits are the growth of centuries and millenniums ... the foreign dress and carriage of missionaries – to a certain extent affected by some of their converts and pupils – the foreign appearance of the chapels, and indeed, the foreign air given to everything connected with religion, have very largely hindered the rapid dissemination of the truth among the Chinese. (Broomhall 4:355-56)

Relating their task to that of Jesus “who washed His disciples’ feet” Taylor urged those who seek to join the mission to model an example, not one premised upon “denationalization”, but on “Christianization”. Mindful of prevailing criticism of grassroots mission he included practical consideration for “health and efficiency”:

[L]et us in everything un sinful become Chinese, that by all things we may save some. Let us adopt their costume, acquire their language, study to imitate their habits, and approximate to their diet as far as health and constitution will allow. Let us live in their houses, making no unnecessary alterations in external appearance, and only so

far modifying internal arrangements as attention to health and efficiency for work absolutely require. (356)

From his previous experience in China Taylor knew that adoption of Chinese dress was essential for more than winning local confidence, it also offered protection from (justifiable) prejudice against foreigners:

In (Chinese dress) the foreigner, though recognized as such, escapes the mobbing and crowding to which, in many places, his own costume would subject him; and in preaching, while his dress attracts less notice, his words attract more. (358)

But for all of the emphasis on faith, in time Taylor found some of the party had “lost their nerve” and reverted to Western dress (Austin, *Millions* 18). Still not fluent in Chinese and feeling insecure, Lewis Nicol, led a minor revolt when he stated, contrary to Taylor’s reasoning, that foreign clothes gave him “protection and respect” (278). At the risk of jeopardising the mission, Nicol disregarded the agreement under which the mission had rented his house: “that, though foreigners, those who were to reside there had adopted the Chinese dress” (255). A riot ensued; an evangelist was flogged; and missionaries were forced to flee by boat – a harsh vindication of Taylor’s policy to conform and quietly settle among the people.

Dressing the part

Whether a missionary chose to wear Western or Chinese attire, the “dress” issue remained a contentious subject for missions at least until the early decades of the twentieth century, when social reform opened the way to deregulation of Chinese dress codes. With the centuries-old dictates of Manchurian rule finally dispelled by the reforms of an emerging Republic, missionaries who had sought to convey sympathetic identification with the Chinese through adoption of local dress found their attunement-efforts increasingly diffused by the growing propensity among Chinese to adopt Western attire. By 1911, the Chinese queue – the shaven-head male pigtail that had symbolised Chinese subservience to Manchurian conquerors for over three centuries – had been denounced. The severed queue now became a symbol of revolution as millions of Chinese cut them off en masse. Alwyn Austin imagines the relief of grassroots missionaries as they join the millions in ridding themselves of the least agreeable element of their Chinese identification. He adds: “The streets, we are told, were filled with piles of braided pigtails hacked off at the base” (“Fashion”).³⁶

Missionaries who had grown a queue during the nineteenth century demonstrated a remarkable commitment to “all things” identification with the Chinese. The look was such a radical departure from the cultural norms of Western identity that it drew ostracism from fellow nationals for having “outraged their dignity” (Mackey 88). Such an extreme gesture also crossed the bounds of Reformation doctrine that held forms of disguise inherently suspect, allied to the deceits of visual illusion, theatre and ritual, and evocative of idolatry and heathenism.³⁷ Yet for Hudson Taylor and his vision, the urgency to press the gospel message inland (unimpeded by the raucous distraction his Western appearance attracted), far outweighed doctrinal traditions and threats of social condemnation. During his first visit to China in 1855, after seven less-than-inspiring preaching excursions beyond the coast, he concluded he must minimise his foreignness and seek to identify more closely with the people. He wrote to his sister Amelia: “On Thursday last at 11 P.M. I resigned my locks to the barber, dyed my hair a good black, and in the morning had a proper *queue* plaited in with my own, and a quantity of heavy silk to lengthen it out according to Chinese custom” (Taylor & Taylor 319). But such a decisive transition was not a simple resolve, nor was it a comfortable procedure for a Victorian gentleman. He complained:

It is a very sore thing to have one’s head shaved for the first time, especially if the skin is irritable with prickly heat. And I can assure you that the subsequent application of hair-dye for five or six hours ... does not do much to soothe the irritation. But when it comes to combing out the remaining hair which has been allowed to grow longer than usual, the climax is reached! But there are no gains without pains, and certainly if suffering for a thing makes it dearer, I shall regard my *queue* when I attain one with no small amount of pride and affection. (319)³⁸

To one called to the mission fields, suffering on any level, big or small, was to give glory to God. And in the narrative of heroic mission, whether called to suffer the discomfort of head-shaving, or the pain of death, a missionary had to be willing to “take up his cross”, deny-self, and fulfil his missionary vocation. Yet no matter how serious his determination may have been, like many who came after him, Taylor could not help but document the details of his outlandish transformation for a home audience. Still unconvinced of the practicality of Chinese clothing, he begins by comparing the difficulty-of-removal of Chinese foot and leg-ware with that of the West:

When you proceed to your toilet, you no longer wonder that many Chinese in the employ of Europeans wear foreign shoes and stockings as soon as they can get them. For native socks are made of calico and of course are not elastic ... and average toes decidedly object to be squeezed out of shape, nor do one’s heels appreciate their low position in perfectly flat-soled shoes. (319)

Shedding his Western persona to seek closer identification with his Chinese hosts offered amusing imagery when it came to clothing:

Next come the breeches – but oh, what unheard-of garments! Mine are two feet too wide for me round the waist, which amplitude is laid in a fold in front, and kept in place by a strong girdle. The legs are short, not coming much below the knee, and wide in proportion with the waist-measurement. Tucked into the long, white socks, they have a bloomer-like fulness capable, as Dr Parker remarked, of storing a fortnight's provisions! (319)

The change from Western to Chinese clothing, for a missionary, was a surrender of ties to the bourgeois respectability that clothing and bodily presentation in the Victorian era sought to convey. Victorian clothing reflected the values of stability and sobriety; divested of frivolity and fuss, they were designed to be inconspicuous and inoffensive; these were the garments of work and progress. Middle class men of the nineteenth century “opted for the more sedate quasi-uniformity of suits”. The tailored suit reflected a new masculinity, one that was “filled with ambition and courage ... less concerned with style than action” (Mackey 2). But despite its low-key practicality in England, the Victorian costume in China “stuck out like a sore thumb” (Reinders 188). Biographer, John Pollock, records Taylor's standard daywear before adopting local dress as: “a double-breasted frock coat exactly like that of every other respectable European professional man ... complete with slits, pleats and buttons back and front which Saville Row had imposed upon the world” (47). In terms of body shape, “British and Chinese men were contrasted by the visible ‘fork’ of the legs in British men, due to their wearing of trousers” (Mackey 188). By comparison with the loose-fitting garments worn by Chinese men and women, the “scandalously tight”, shape-revealing clothes worn by British men and women were (somewhat ironically for conservative missionaries) cause for cultural offense on numerous occasions (189).

Taylor's adoption of Chinese clothing was a considered response to the incongruity of his situation. Missionaries wanted to draw crowds, but not for the reasons that they *did* attract them. The heroic narrative of the missionary as communicator-of-light to the transfixed heathen, was far from reality. Eric Reinders refers to the missionary as “an object of spectacle” for the degree of fascination they elicited when addressing crowds. Yet it was the curiosity value of “their visibly foreign bodies” that provided the real entertainment (175-6). Taylor had pondered the feasibility of adopting local dress for some time, but it was his address to a crowd one day that helped him commit. Pollock describes one man who stood captivated beside Taylor as he preached: “He was that dream of an open-air speaker – the

patently smitten soul to whom questions may be put, the whole audience profiting from hearing him drawn step by step towards spoken conviction of the truth” (47). Taylor addressed him personally and he replied:

“What you say is doubtless very true. But honourable Foreign Teacher ... I have been pondering all the while you have been preaching. But the subject is no clearer to my mind. The honourable garment you are wearing ... What can be the meaning of those buttons in *the middle of the honourable back?*” (47)

With the sermon now forgotten and the crowd chanting for an answer, Taylor took off his coat and saw those three “useless” buttons. For him, their mere ornamental worth, summed up the “waste and annoyance of western dress in an oriental setting” (48).

For Taylor, the adoption of Chinese dress served more than the purpose of sympathetic identification, it was a grassroots strategy to minimise the spectacle of foreignness so as to influence the people with the gospel message. Like Taylor, Griffith John would attract “hundreds of anxious spectators” on his preaching tours (R.W. Thompson 99). But for him, becoming an object of spectacle was not an undue burden, nor a safety concern, neither was it a reason to adopt local dress, rather, the attention seems to have suited his imperial strategy as an indication of respect. After seventeen years in China he informed a homeland audience: “A missionary is safer in China, and will in-variably command more respect, by being himself in dress and manners” (*Hope* 9). And again, ten years later he wrote:

With a good knowledge of the language, and a fair share of common sense, a man can go almost anywhere in China, and preach in the streets and the temples. And I would add that the adoption of the native dress is by no means essential to either efficiency or safety. I have never adopted the native dress, and that for the simple reason that I look upon it, as a hindrance rather than otherwise. (*Claims* 30)

For all of John’s decided optimism that looks did not matter, he did admit nonetheless, that as foreigners arriving for the first time in a town, their appearance distracted attention away from their message: “I believe every man, woman, and child came out to have a look at us. They were greatly astonished to hear their own language spoken by foreigners. They were far too much excited, and intent upon gazing on our strange features and examining our still stranger-looking clothes, to understand much of our preaching” (R.W. Thompson 99). But these preliminary distractions he could relegate as mere reconnaissance for future work: “They will be better prepared for the next who may visit them” (99).

If being called “foreign devils” meant nothing “on the lips of the common people” however, it took on greater significance when uttered by the educated class (88). In 1859, at

the height of the Taiping Rebellion, John took a trip to Kiang-yin, the venue for China's annual examinations, to engage with some of the 3,000 students expected to attend. He writes: "After speaking for a length of time to a large number of literati, one of them became very much excited. His face coloured up, and his whole frame began to assume a threatening attitude" (98). The situation became volatile as the crowd began to cry out that John "was not a foreigner, but a long-haired rebel in disguise".³⁹ Accused of being a Taiping insurgent, he was quick to identify with the pre-eminence of the British flag:

I told them that I was an Englishman, which word, uttered with considerable emphasis, and I may say national pride, made some of them turn pale. There is magic power in this word. *Ego Romanus sum* never carried with it a greater moral force or a more profound meaning than "I am an Englishman" does at the present moment in China. (98-9)

John's air of confidence in his "imperial" mission strategy was exemplified not only in his adherence to Western dress – a powerful symbol of cultural identity (and rejection of local lifestyle); but also, in his nationalism – his assurance of, and pride in imperial-political might. John, however, was not technically an Englishman, nor was English his first language.⁴⁰ Like Timothy Richard, he was Welsh-born and identified as such, except to the Chinese, where he became an Englishman – placing himself in relation to the "construction of British identity dependent on imperial possession" (Marten 163). Fond of the use of military and imperial language in his mission strategy ("possessing" and "conquering"), it was clear John had been well imbued with imperial modes of thought. The imperial mission made it possible for Scottish and Welsh missionaries "to belong to a larger, more compelling and authoritative narrative" as they saw fit (163).

While John's recourse to his "English" identity was both a protection-measure and a command for respect, his altercation with the literati evidently broadened the possibility of yet again, a different identity. He continued:

One of the most excited, however, snatched my cap and examined it very minutely. Whilst my travelling companion, on account of his light hair, light eyes, and a somewhat ruddy countenance, is set down at the first glance for a *barbarian* of the first stamp, and, for aught I know, never imagined to be anything beside; I, on the contrary, on account of the opposite qualities, am sometimes suspected of being a *true-born* though degraded *Celestial*. (R.W. Thompson 99)

Here John touches on the topic of "passing" for Chinese. Many stories were written by missionaries and adventurers of their travels (and travails) through areas technically forbidden to Westerners, dressed in disguise. Horticulturist Robert Fortune boasted that he "made a

pretty good Chinaman”, believing “no one took the slightest notice”. And Matteo Ricci wrote home in 1585: “I have become a Chinaman” (qtd. in Reinders 200). But for missionaries such as Taylor, “the disguise was always there to be unmasked, at least at the moment which defined their entire purpose in masking themselves: preaching” (201). Taylor’s conversion to Chinese clothing proved successful enough to afford him relative freedom from curiosity, and acceptance as an “honoured guest” when preaching (Pollock 50). He admitted that no longer in Western clothes, “one is not so much respected at first sight”, but “a little medical work soon puts that all right” (Taylor & Taylor 320). But the missionary community in Shanghai were incensed by his surrender of superior Western practices. British consul Sir Walter Medhurst wrote: “Disguise, although so universally and successfully employed by Romanists, must be regarded as objectionable” (Pollock 51).⁴¹ Any comparison with Catholic clergy was bound to make Protestants uneasy, steeped as the notion was in allusion to ritual and deception. Taylor, subsequently disturbed by latent misgivings over disguise, soon stopped dyeing his hair – but the queue remained.

The efforts of grassroots missionaries towards sympathetic identification with the Chinese were routinely criticised by the press or the European community. British businessman Alexander Michie suggested: “Missionaries often try, sincerely enough, to live down to their people; but to wear the clothes of the poor and eat their food may be nearer to formal condescension than to true sympathy” (38). Western journalist, A. H. Savage Landor, argued that adopting Chinese dress in order to remove obstacles to communication, had the reverse effect, from the hilarity it produced in Chinese people (Figure 7). Chinese clothing demanded a distinctive posture and body language from the wearer that could not be easily mimicked by the Westerner. Landor writes of an influx of inland missionaries to Shanghai:

It almost made one's heart bleed to see the number of overgrown, round-backed, anaemic, long-toothed, weak-chinned men and women masquerading in Chinese clothes up and down the Bund ... The majority of ... the stronger sex seem to possess fair or red hair, which they match ... by a long, fat pigtail of a bright golden or glowing auburn tinge... which hangs (from a seam in the cap, instead of from the scalp, as it should do according to the laws of nature) down the back to the heels over their silk disguise. This fancy-dress costume is now very largely adopted by British and American missionaries, for we are told that, in assimilating themselves to the natives (to whom nothing could be more unlike), the missionaries gain much influence over the latter. Personally, I have noticed only undisguised merriment among the Chinese as the disguised foreigners went by. (244)



Figure 7 - Caption reads: *MISSIONARIES IN CHINESE ATTIRE - NOTICE CHINAMEN LAUGHING. (Landor, China and the Allies 247)*

Chinese dress would remain a deeply divisive issue, one that was fraught with cultural sensitivities. Beginning with the sixteenth century Jesuit, Matteo Ricci, who endeavoured to influence Chinese society from the top down by choosing to wear the saffron robes of a Buddhist priest, the subject of dress was found to be more than a simple matter. When he realised that priests were detested by the Chinese gentry, he changed into the robes of a court scholar. As Alwyn Austin writes: “In a hierarchical society like China where every button, every peacock feather, every ripple of silk – the symbolism of every colour – denoted one’s status, how did one choose the correct costume?” (*Millions* 121). Sinologist, W. Gilbert Walshe, wrote a social etiquette guide for new missionaries to China where he listed the many mistakes made by adopting a mismatch of apparel that was at best, disconcerting, and at worst, offensive, to Chinese sensibilities. “Though willing to doff their own distinctive costume, and even go so far as to grow the “pig-tail” – the badge of Manchu conquest – they are not always prepared to resign the ornamental moustache, though such a decoration is utterly incompatible with their youthful appearance” (18).⁴² Austin also comments on the “experimental” nature of some missionaries who wore: “silk gown or cotton; Chinese gown and Western pith helmet and shoes (“top and bottom” as it was called); gown, felt boots and umbrella, but no pigtail; pigtails, real or false, black or blond” (121). Hudson Taylor initially chose to wear the silk gown and satin shoes of a scholar, but later, along with his “pigtail tribe” of missionaries, he wore the humble costume of a poor teacher.

Among the designated “imperial” missionaries whom I have categorised as wearers of Western clothing in China, Timothy Richard remains the exception. Richard didn’t strictly wear Western clothing all of the time. He did wear Chinese dress when living inland, but in his later roles living in port cities, he returned to Western dress. By this time, it was precisely his authority *as* a Westerner that supported his vision for China’s reform. As Johnson points out: “There was no longer any need for ‘camouflage’” (13). Nonetheless, when required, Richard would don formal Chinese gowns and “wear his Imperial Order of the Double Dragon emblazoned on his chest” (*Millions* 121). John Macgowan remained in Western clothing for all of his fifty-year career. Writing with routine condescension throughout his many publications, Macgowan would judge “the blue cotton cloth” worn by the “common people” as “distressingly dull”, and “from a Western standpoint ... anything but satisfactory” (*Sidelights* 305). His self-appointed role as Western informant and cultural commentator, ensured this “Western standpoint” on Eastern attire was delivered with the same supercilious detachment that he ascribed to most avenues of Chinese culture. More befitting his position however, Macgowan did appear in a photograph (Figure 8) dressed in a silk and satin vice-regal gown, gifted to him by the churches of Amoy upon his retirement.



Figure 8 - Caption reads:

*The central figure is the author of this book, dressed in the Viceroy’s official robes, presented to him by the Amoy churches as a memento of his fifty years’ service amongst them. They were formally presented to him by the representatives of the churches who form the rest of the group. (Macgowan, *Beside the Bamboo* 177)*

Perhaps the most accommodating of all missionaries was Samuel Pollard, a grassroots missionary who divided his time between the Han Chinese, the Miao and the Nosu people. Pollard chose to dress in the costume of those he was among (Figure 9), conscious of the fierce rivalries among each group. On his first trip to Nosuland he chose to wear his Western suit:

On the wall sat a couple of Nosu with their long felt capes on, and as they caught sight of me they burst into laughter. My black English suit was a never-ending source of amusement to the tribes-people. They had never seen a human being so dressed before. The nearest approach to such a dressed being was the black bear, which is very common among these hills ... One hunter told me one day that had he suddenly come across me in the woods he would unhesitatingly have shot me for a bear ... It was something to my advantage that my appearance always provoked hearty laughter. (*Unknown* 86)



Figure 9 - Some of the first Miao Scouts. Rev. Sam Pollard in the centre playing the pipes. (Source: Pollard, S. *The Story of the Miao*, 33)

Linguistic identification

From the degree of application that missionaries applied, it is clear they understood the learning of language to be the most important way to enter sympathetically into the lives of their target people. The ability to communicate coherently would be requisite to understanding local culture, and fundamental to missional witness. While there were marked

differences between imperial and grassroots identification-practices in the material and social spheres of everyday living, linguistic identification – an ability to speak Chinese – was non-negotiable. All proponents of mission, regardless of method, recognised language study as imperative to the task. Sending societies were of one accord in the expectation that missionaries would achieve a sound working knowledge of the vernacular before any serious gospel-engagement could begin – the reality of which, for young and zealous recruits, often proved exceedingly tedious.

Despite broad consensus as to the need to identify linguistically with the Chinese, some missionaries it seems, lacked either the aptitude or the will to achieve sufficient verbal competence to be effective in the field. Failure to attain a degree of proficiency within the early years could result in termination from their Society. For those who did become proficient communicators however (with some achieving eminence in sinology), their success had only come from long and dedicated application. In the words of Rev. Shaw at the 1860 Conference on Missions, they possessed a readiness to “indulge a little feeling of self-sacrifice”; they engaged with the people and were “willing to become ‘a fool for Christ’s sake’” (30). Language mastery was a never-ending process, but Shaw counselled that the most productive learners were those who forfeited pride and were prepared “to make blunders” (30). By way of consolation to initiates, Rev. Shaw supposed that even St. Paul, in spite of his success as a preacher, would have spoken Greek with “something of an uncouthness, and of a foreign accent” (31).

The Chinese language was depicted by missionaries as an obstacle. Arriving in China in 1855, Griffith John wrote with youthful confidence about the language: “I don’t expect to find much difficulty in acquiring it. This time in six months I hope to be able to preach in it”. Nine months later he had to concede: “The language is a colossus. It is decidedly difficult to acquire ... no European has hitherto completely mastered it” (R.W. Thompson 51). Nevertheless, John was not to be defeated, and in true Christian-warrior style he proclaimed this obstruction to the dissemination of divine truth, a mere challenge to be relished: “I like to study it very much; it is no tiresome work to me. Its difficulty only intensifies my desire to grapple with it and finally to lay it prostrate at my feet”. Buoyed by the rhetoric of imperial might, this muscular evangelical declared: “The conquering of this language is worth a long and manly struggle” (51).

For a man labelled by his biographer a “born preacher” (56), John’s motivation to master the very means by which he could achieve his vocational objective was powerful. True to his word, he was preaching in Chinese by the end of his first year in keeping with his theory that: “The first year should be given almost entirely to the acquisition of the language; the future progress of a missionary depends very materially on the foundation which he lays the first year” (93). By following this principle of concentrated study, the LMS missionaries under John’s jurisdiction proved themselves remarkably proficient in Chinese. Novice missionaries were subjected to three exams in their first three years based on their translation, writing and speaking skills. Yet, although the ability to read and speak was a priority, the ability to write Chinese according to John, was “by no means essential”. Indeed, he considered Chinese literary composition “to be beyond our reach” to such an extent that he stated he had “never seen a production by a foreigner which ... did not excite the ridicule of an ordinary native scholar” (qtd. in Bonk 27). Conscious that the Chinese were “not only a reading, but also a thinking, people” steeped in the philosophical traditions of classic Confucian literature, he urged missionaries to acquire “a thorough knowledge of the books” lest their illiteracy bring contempt upon the doctrines of the gospel (26). In the same vein, John’s own extensive output of Chinese-language publications across his lifetime (bible translations, books, tracts) was largely made possible through the mediation of “pundits” (local language assistants) in his employ (Bonk 27).

The difficulty of learning the language for people who were called to preach the “Word”, could represent for some, an existential crisis. To witness one’s faith went to the heart of a missionary’s purpose. If the linguistic chasm could not be bridged, the missionary’s very identity was stymied. When American Missionary Walter M. Lowrie arrived in China he was “sickened by sights of idolatry” and “overflowing with the desire to testify” but with no language, “Alas! ... your mouth is closed, your tongue is tied” (448). This early stage of frustrated inarticulation was experienced by all missionaries, to greater and lesser degrees. When written about years later in reminiscence, those who had made “a soft landing ... among already established missionaries” and commenced language study, could couch their early efforts at language-acquisition in humorous anecdotes around mistakes or misunderstandings, and generally show themselves “struggling, with good humour and open-hearted tolerance, to understand unnecessarily complicated language” (Craig 74). But the more immediate impressions recorded in diaries or letters-home could betray anxieties of identity that reduced their predicament to a modern Babel. The biblical story of the Tower of

Babel represented linguistic difference as punishment, predisposing some to view learning difficulties as “demonic opposition to their very mission in life” (Reinders 86). Writing to his father in 1898, Archibald Glover is convinced the language and its challenges are nothing less than impediments of diabolical design:

One of the strange effects of Chinese upon me is to make me overwhelmingly sleepy as a listener. It is a sore trial to me at the services. The strain of attempting to follow the speaker through a long and quickly spoken address is too much for me, and, ere long, I find myself tumbling over. I believe Satan has more to do with it than might be imagined. In fact the language was made by Satan, doubtless, for it is one of the greatest stumbling blocks to the gospel. (2000: 265)⁴³

Early frustrations with Babel-confusion extended missionary-prejudice to view Chinese as more than demonic utterance: as a form of communication, they found it defective; its acquisition was stultifying and bewildering; in total, the language served as a metaphor for the inscrutability of the culture. Walter Lowrie expresses his dispirited response to learning Chinese:

[T]he study of a hard, dry language has a disheartening effect on your zeal and ardor as a missionary. It is not easy to study out declensions, and cases, and tenses, and conjugations, and particles, and to wade through dull tomes of heathen learning, nonsensical speculations, and unintelligible metaphysics, and at the same time keep up the freshness and simplicity of spirit and the earnestness, that are necessary in speaking face to face with an unconverted man. (449)

Missionaries would find the road to sympathetic identification with the Chinese people (in the linguistic sphere at least) blockaded further by conceptual problems. Beyond everyday transactions over the material necessities of life, a missionary had to present ideas and abstractions that were foreign to Eastern culture without being misconstrued. In his paper “Obstacles to Missionary Success”, E. G. Carlson observes: “Finding the words and figures of speech that would enable the missionary to communicate concepts that had no close Chinese equivalent, was a tremendous problem” (18). As evangelical Christians were characteristically doctrinaire in their convictions, they held the semantic precision of their message dear. Without clear equivalents for religious terms, translation proved a major problem for fear of inciting inadvertent connotations, or latent heresies. Lowrie despaired: “You are dealing with a heathen language, and it has few terms to express Christian ideas. What word will you use to speak of God?” (449). From the sixteenth-century Jesuits to the nineteenth-century Protestants, debate had raged over the most appropriate translation for Christianity’s key signifier “God”. Consensus was never reached between Catholic or Protestant-preferred terms, nor was it reached between Americans and British, who preferred their own distinct

translations. But semantic equivalence carried more than practical consideration for missionaries, whose misgivings went deeper still, to problems of national consciousness, or whether the Chinese race were capable of conceiving Christian spirituality at all. As Eric Reinders comments: “The lack of a word in a language implied the lack of any such thought, and the impossibility of such a thought in the minds of those who had been shaped by that language” (76). With Chinese considered a language without “God”, some missionaries despaired of the plausibility of their efforts ever bearing fruit.

Notwithstanding conceptual misgivings, if the cultural gulf between the Westerner and the Chinese was to be spanned, it required some serious application by missionaries. The arrival in 1885 of the illustrious Cambridge Seven, the first of Hudson Taylor’s university-graduate missionaries into the CIM, put an end to any notion there might be a shortcut to language acquisition. Three of the seven (all celebrated scholars and athletes), Charlie Studd and the Polhill Turner brothers, thought to circumvent laborious language study by having “given themselves to prayer” in “the Biblical way of acquiring a foreign language”. Their prayers for supernatural tongues however, were not answered, and after six months in China they “saw their mistake, knuckled down to study and in time became fluent” (Broomhall 6:375). “How many and subtle are the devises of Satan”, Hudson Taylor warned, “to keep the Chinese ignorant of the gospel” (375). After the graduates’ Pentecostal experiment, with its “misguided expectations”, Taylor recognised a need to regulate CIM language requirements. The following year he opened formal CIM language schools (Kaiser, *Rushing* 49). “If I could put the Chinese language into your brains by one wave of the hand I would not do it” he would say to new missionaries (Broomhall 6:375). Dedicated hard work, he believed, was the only way to achieve the necessary proficiency to identify with, and hope to convert, the Chinese people.

One of the early graduates of the CIM school in Anqing was Samuel Pollard, a Methodist missionary, who, like James Gilmour in Mongolia, found language-immersion his only recourse when an ethnic group requested he teach them about “Ie-su”.⁴⁴ Pollard had proven himself adept in the acquisition of Chinese, having excelled under the tutelage of principal Frederick W. Baller in both the language and literature of the host country.⁴⁵ But his linguistic skill was put to the test in 1904 when “without a moment’s warning ... four strangers walked into our courtyard at Chaotong” carrying “bags of oatmeal over their shoulders” (Pollard and Dymond 29-30). Having heard something about Jesus they wanted to know more, imploring Pollard to teach them to read. These “scouts” as Pollard called them,

were Hua Miao, impoverished subsistence farmers from the southwestern mountains who had been bound in ancient serfdom to powerful Nosu landlords. As vassal subjects the Miao were also held in contempt among Han Chinese. The Han, who held suzerainty over the region, ranked the Miao the lowest in China's ethnic hierarchy. They saw themselves as a people dispossessed and defenceless, sustained only by folklore. Their oral tales spoke of a time when "the Miao emerges victorious"; tales conferring hope "that the meek might indeed inherit the earth" (Diamond 145). To these downtrodden people Christianity offered the prospect of empowerment.

After seventeen years of mission work that "had gathered in only a few Chinese and Nosu" the following months would fill Pollard with both expectation and trepidation. The scouts stayed several days until their oatmeal supply was almost consumed. He preached to them in simple Chinese and began teaching them to read from Chinese Gospels. More "scouts" arrived the following week seeking "instruction", speaking of the thousands in the hills who were anxious "to see the missionary and to hear about Ie-su". These words struck at the heart of Pollard's calling. To harvest a multitude for Christ was the cherished dream of every missionary – a dream so rare in eventuation he found it hard to believe. "Do you blame us if we hesitated a little about believing the story of the thousands?" (Pollard and Dymond 32-3). But each day brought more: "Some days they came in tens and twenties! ... Then there came a hundred! ... At last ... a thousand of these mountain men came in one day!" Housing the multitude in both the school house, and his home, he wrote in retrospect: "I wonder how we managed to get through those days ... They came to stay, to eat and drink and sleep in my house. Once we counted six hundred people staying the night with us" (71).

The extraordinary inundation of Christian candidates not only strained the bounds of mission accommodation, it posed an instructional challenge of a magnitude he had never contemplated:

It was a pathetic sight to see these poor, ignorant, dirty men, who had never before handled a book or a pen, sitting down trying to master Mark's Gospel in Chinese.... Slowly and laboriously and with great awkwardness they would read word by word ... until the strange sounds and still stranger ideographs of the Chinese language became a little familiar to them.... The students read their books aloud, shouting out the words in imitation of the Chinese method of study.... There was no quietness in our home in those days. I have known them start reading at five o'clock in the morning, and the last one finish his shouting at two o'clock the next morning. (73)

Accepting by now that there were thousands more waiting in the hills, Pollard admitted he had been taken off guard:

The great demand these crowds made was for books. Something giving them an account of Jesus was what they wanted. We were caught napping. We had never imagined a revival coming in this way, and so were quite unprepared with suitable books. No one among us knew the Miao language, and at first all teaching had to be done in Chinese. (72)

Pollard's task was how to best identify with the Miao linguistically in order to convey to them the precise tenets of Christianity – and teach them to read. With their limited ability in spoken Chinese his priority was to learn the language of the Miao. Thus commenced the meticulous process of reciprocal learning via broken Chinese: “The Lord help us!” he recalled, “Here goes! Now then Mr. Chang, you understand Chinese, listen, and when I tell you anything, you turn round and tell it to the others. Ready?” (qtd. in Grist 182). By listening to the translation, within weeks he was able to give short addresses to the tribesmen in their own language, and with the help of a Chinese assistant he could write simple bible stories for them using basic Chinese characters. But as always, the problem of communicating concepts that the language had no words for – words such as “prayer” and “sin” – made the process arduous and frustrating. He wrote in his diary: “Last night I tried to tell the Miao how *Keh-mi* (Christ) came down and died for us, and how wicked men put Him to death. ‘Yes,’ they said at once, ‘the wicked Chinese killed Jesus’. Everything bad they think must come from the Chinese” (184).

Pollard's challenges went further than language acquisition and conceptual correspondence with the Miao. He had to find a way to address their illiteracy with expedience and efficiency. To teach the expectant thousands about Jesus required the written word and it had to be accessible, but the Miao language had no written form. Pollard experimented with an indigenous script similar to one invented by a Methodist missionary among North American Indians, but he found this method incomplete. Although Miao was a monosyllabic language, it was also a tonal language. He could devise a simple phonetic system of writing, but as he explained: “In reducing such a language to writing, it was as if one needed a musical score all the time” (Pollard and Dymond 174). The answer to the problem of conveying inflection was solved by adapting Pitman's shorthand to vowels and consonants to denote vocal tones. Through this system, he managed to translate much of the New Testament into the Miao vernacular before his death in 1915. Ten years after the arrival

of the “scouts” to Pollard’s mission, there were an estimated ten thousand Miao Christians (Pollard, *Eyes* 164).

In terms of linguistic identification, Pollard’s script went beyond the spread of religion, to provide the basis of an education system among illiterate tribes. Norma Diamond comments: “From their position at the bottom of the social ladder ... the Miao became the carriers of modern education even to the Han Chinese (149). Through its uniqueness the script became tied to Miao ethnic identity, thus enabling the means to resist Chinese cultural assimilation. Pollard’s linguistic inventiveness had begun a process of cultural empowerment (religious, social, economic and political) that aligned empathetically with Miao aspirations. In its far-sightedness, his identification with the community through language could, therefore, be considered unreservedly “all things”. The Pollard Script is still in use within the region today, having survived several attempts at its removal since the Cultural Revolution (Michaud 157).

PART III

This section shifts the focus from accommodation to issues of everyday living, to consider missionary identification at the broader-societal level of politics, the economy, religion and education. The missionaries’ writing exposes the assurances and ambivalences of identification with what was considered in the best interests of the people, and the missionaries’ terms of tenure in China. Tensions occur between the beneficence of missionary objectives at the individual level, and those which best serve the nation; and between adherence to organisational-directives, and their efforts toward identification with the people’s needs.

Political and economic identification

As emissaries of the politically and economically ascendant West, missionaries often felt themselves duty-bound to exercise their God-given influence in the political and economic concerns of Chinese lives. In matters of social injustice and oppression, the missionary was morally obliged to align with, and defend the exploited.⁴⁶ And yet, to do so in the tenuous, anti-foreign atmosphere of nineteenth-century China, was to risk considerable “trouble, loss of influence, and injurious collision with the people” according to the *General*

Instructions of the LMS. Indeed, involvement in political or commercial matters of any sort was in direct contravention of directives issued to each new missionary:

Do not allow yourself to be mixed up in native politics. Do not in any way accept civil office. Advise, suggest; and by advice you may help the people greatly. But do no more. (Frere 92)

Encourage industry and lawful commerce in your people, but do not become personally involved in trading transactions; and have nothing to do with land. Great trouble, loss of influence, and injurious collision with the people, will almost certainly result from neglect of this warning. While helping the natives by suggestions, keep your own hands perfectly free. (92)

Contrary to Paul's apostolic directive to enter sympathetically into the lives of the people by becoming "all things", here missionaries were given clear instructions to avoid active identification. But despite the home-office injunction to maintain a hands-off policy in matters political and commercial, in the everyday reality of mission-field life, neutrality was impossible. Extraordinary circumstances and turbulent times led some missionaries to take assertive action. Such conscious defiance of mission directives in (what they considered was) sympathetic identification with the people, exposes strong puckers of tension between their competing obligations. There was a sense of being implicated, doubly, whether they took action or remained inactive – as evidenced by marked ambivalence in their writing and through a need to defend their stance to readers. Jonathon Bonk points to the irony of the situation, "since, urged to identify in the material-social sphere, they usually failed to do so; urged not to identify in the political-economic sphere, they were unable to prevent themselves from doing so" (98).

Missionaries regarded their presence in China to be of providential design – an appointment of significance towards the spiritual and moral elevation of the nation. As instruments of a Divine plan, they were not to be deterred in their objectives, no matter how mysterious God's tactics may appear. The doors to China had been opened by Western force for commercial profit, but, viewed through the lens of faith, it was the means to a greater end. LMS Foreign Secretary R.W. Thompson wrote in the *Missionary Chronicle* in 1881 that he could "see the hand of the Lord" in "opening the world to western influences" simultaneously with the "awakening of the Church to a realisation of the duty of spreading the Gospel". He believed, "the eagerness of the West to profit by commerce with ... the East has forced open doors through which the missionary of peace and love has entered". Thompson neglects to mention the fact that gunboats and lopsided treaties had forced open those doors to China,

although euphemistically he adds: “Political necessities have removed the barriers to religious work” (784).

The Opium War Treaties written in 1842 and between 1858 and 1860, provided the foot-in-the-door for missionaries, traders, and diplomats intent upon China’s prohibited inland. The extraordinary privileges granted to missionaries following the Sino-French Treaty in 1860 exceeded entitlements acquired through earlier “unequal treaties”. It seems French priest, Louis-Charles Delamarre, capitalised on his position as diplomatic translator by surreptitiously inserting into the Chinese version of the accord rights in excess of those granted missionaries in the French text (Tiedemann 299).⁴⁷ Accordingly, once ratified, Protestant missionaries insisted upon the same privileges as their Catholic rivals (302). Missionaries and traders were now able to travel anywhere in the Chinese Empire and rent or purchase property beyond treaty ports. The extra-territorial freedoms granted to foreign citizens included: diplomatic immunity from Chinese law (answerable only to the laws of their own nation); and most crucially for missionaries, the right to propagate their religion freely under the protection of Chinese authorities, with converts guaranteed the right to practice Christianity without fear of punishment. And yet, despite the questionable means behind the “providence” that ensured Westerners “huge benefits and no obligations” (Sneller 21); and notwithstanding the moral ambivalence engendered over an opium trade that was forced upon China; missionaries applauded as “the inexorable juggernaut of providence – in the guise of western troops and gunboats – worked its remorseless will upon the rulers of China” (Bonk 122). The Opium War Treaties were the answer to many prayers because “as a result of the commercially inspired political conflict ... China was more ‘open’ to the Gospel than ever before” (123).

As agents of God’s vision for China, active missionary identification in political and economic matters was, by definition, necessarily linked to Western interests – in the paternalistic belief that the imposition of Western will upon China was in the “best interests” of the people (124). Nonetheless, for missionaries eager to persuade, freedoms gained by heavy-handed treaties came at the cost of Chinese respect. Missionaries and other foreign residents of port cities had long been classed one and the same – operatives for western imperialism – with no distinction made between religious, mercantile and political agendas. Unsurprisingly, the nature of relations between missionaries and Chinese-officialdom was strained – the reasons, Griffith John had cause to reflect upon in a letter to the *North China Herald* in 1891:

It must be admitted that the foreigners have forced themselves upon the Chinese. We are here, not because they have invited us to come or wish us to remain. We have, it is true, our treaty rights; but every one of them has been obtained at the point of the bayonet. Our presence ... our autocratic settlements, our extra-territorial jurisdiction – all these things are now, and have been from the beginning, an abomination to the Chinese Government. (*Anti-Foreign Riots* 188)

John's frank admission of the true state of play did not, however, deter him from insisting upon his treaty entitlements while exercising his right of access to officialdom on behalf of missionaries and converts. Any negligence of duty on the part of Chinese officials, would be duly reported to British consular authorities, further straining missionary and Chinese-government relations. As missionaries living an "imperial" lifestyle in the foreign concessions, secure in the knowledge of their treaty-protection, Griffith and Jeanette John's association with European gunboat crews (conducting on-board church services and opening "The Sailors' Rest" meeting house on their compound) would have further reinforced in Chinese minds the homogeneity of missionaries, merchants and imperial-military representation (R.W. Thompson 317). One Chinese intellectual accused missionaries and their converts of being a law unto themselves "allowed to gad about the country ... because the Consuls are far away and the Chinese have no jurisdiction over them" (*Anti-Foreign Riots* 110). He found it insulting to see unintelligible Christian publications "being thrust upon the people with all the arrogant and aggressive pretentiousness of the missionaries on the one hand, and by the threat of gunboats ... on the other (107).

From the missionary standpoint however, it was the Qing government that was the root cause of China's problems – through blinkered unwillingness to learn from other nations, and fear of losing command to foreign enterprise and religion. The Chinese gentry, John maintained, were responsible for fomenting mob violence against foreigners through their "poisonous literature", often "with the knowledge, connivance, and active co-operation" of officials (189-190). John publicly called for "Foreign Powers in Peking to bring pressure to bear on the Central Government" to punish the perpetrators of anti-foreign literature (212). If satisfaction could not be had through appeals to officials in cases of violence against missionaries, then gunboats would become the alternative. John stated it plainly: "We owe our preservation to the presence of the foreign gunboats.... We are still dependent upon this foreign force" (184).

While missionaries failed to identify with China's political status-quo, not all abused their privileges or took unprincipled advantage of their position. However, all shared what John Shepherd terms, "the halo of power" that came from association with foreign powers; a prestige that earned them the enmity of a broad spectrum of Chinese society, whose positions in established power structures were placed under threat (121). Having said that, for groups marginal to established power structures, such as the Miao, the same prestige offered leverage against hegemony. To the subjugated Miao community, Sam Pollard and his religion represented a source of elevation and power to be tapped.

Although grassroots missionaries enjoyed the same degree of privilege accorded their imperial colleagues, their practice of cultural camouflage through local dress and lifestyle made them less inclined to demand entitlements or make official complaints. Like the LMS, the CIM set out specific guidelines for "Relations to Governments" in their *Principles and Practice*:

While availing himself of any privileges offered by his own or the Chinese government, he must make no demand for help or protection, though in emergencies he may need to ask for it as a favour. Appeals to Consuls or to Chinese officials to procure the punishment of offenders, or to demand the vindication of real or supposed rights, or indemnification for losses, are to be avoided. (4)

As CIM founder, James Hudson Taylor abided by these Principles and set the mission standard through his fifty-one-year career: avoiding political involvement; maintaining a low profile in his day-to-day campaign for souls; and abiding by local law in deference to, and in identification with, local communities. His refusal to ask for, or to receive reparations, went as far as refusing indemnities for the fifty-eight missionaries and twenty-one children killed in the Boxer Uprising. Deeming China a money-oriented nation, Taylor felt this no-claim gesture would be recognised as a strong witness to Christ, as distinct from the motives of secular powers. He wrote: "It (is) imperative that we should dissociate ourselves as missionaries as far as possible from government action" (qtd. in Broomhall 7: 469). Alywn Austin sums this up: "As usual, the CIM bucked the imperialist rhetoric of the time, affirming Hudson Taylor's dictum that faith in God was better than a revolver" (*Millions* 425). There was, however, one notable exception to Taylor's "no demand" policy made early in his career, when he was moved to write to the British consul, incensed by the conduct of a mandarin who had refused protection to a group of missionaries and their Chinese colleague. In a long and detailed letter, he points out specific treaty violations before adding in hot indignation:

I would fain hope that you may see it right to vindicate the honour of our country, and our rights under the treaty of Tientsin, by requiring such a proclamation to be put out, as shall cause our persons and our passports to be respected, and shall give the natives confidence in rendering us their legitimate services. (Broomhall 4: 282)

Quick to point out that this rash demand for redress was out of character, CIM historian A.J. Broomhall wrote: “By the standards he later set himself, it was the immature letter of a harassed man with no precedents from working under the new treaty conditions”. In his defense of Taylor, he added, that with experience and further conditioning to fraught circumstances, “[t]he vindication of national and religious rights ceased to concern him” (4: 282). But although Taylor would eventually change his mind about enforcing his treaty rights, and, as Austin points out, “however pious his rhetoric” at a later date, he had been “determined to enter ‘Inland China’” (*Millions* 118). Taylor’s provocative naming of the “Inland Mission” (long before legal right-of-residence inland), had in effect, announced his intention; British heavy-handedness had expedited it.

The notion that missionaries identified with western political and economic aims as a means to the betterment of China is an accurate assessment of the missionary enterprise in general, however not all Western aims were given blanket endorsement. Missionaries almost unanimously opposed the Western trade in opium – an addiction that had infiltrated every level of Chinese society such that by 1900 there were an estimated 40 million Chinese consumers. This meant that for every Chinese convert there were fifteen addicted to opium (Fairbank and Goldman 234). The recurrent indictment that the British government had foisted such an affliction upon the nation through self-serving greed formed the basis of regular missionary tirades in the press. By association, missionaries and their religion were held in contempt. Griffith John challenged British churches “to bring every possible pressure to bear upon the Government” to holt the trade. He stated: “As a people the Chinese cannot distinguish between England and Christianity, and consequently the acts of the British Government are supposed to be the expression of Christian morality” (qtd. in Bonk 133).

Another instance where Western aims were not supported by missionaries was in their sympathy with the Taiping Rebellion. This Rebellion against the Manchu Dynasty was waged between 1850 and 1864 and resulted in the death of an estimated twenty million Chinese. Its leader Hung Hsiu-ch’uan had been taught by Protestant missionaries and espoused a form of Christian ideology – Christian enough, that is, to cause excitement among the missionary community, and for Joseph Edkins to hail it “The Christian Insurrection” (Edkins 268-88).⁴⁸ The rebels had captured Nanjing in 1853 and made it their capital. From their successes, it

appeared for a time that the Qing Dynasty might be overthrown – a prospect that offered promise for missionaries, whose freedoms (at that time) were still heavily curtailed. Eager to enter into dialogue with the rebels, Griffith John and his LMS brethren, Edkins, Macgowan and Hall, sought an interview with the leader in 1860, and were pleased by the friendly reception given. They came away suitably impressed having found common ground on some tenets of faith, while feeling confident that although the group were misguided, “we have reasonable grounds to hope that their errors will gradually be corrected” (R.W. Thompson 134). Reporting to LMS directors John wrote with optimism:

It is most sincerely to be hoped that the laws of neutrality will not be violated, nor any hostile act on our part be allowed to chill the friendly feeling that they now undoubtedly entertain (133) ... They seem to be anxious for intercourse with foreigners, and desirous to promote the interests of trade (135) ... I see in them a new element an element which Christianity alone could infuse (138) ... They deserve the sympathy and prayer of British Christians, which, I trust, will not be withheld. (140)

Evidently, John failed to see any conflict in calling for British neutrality towards the rebels, when he himself had contravened LMS *General Instructions* that specifically called for political neutrality among missionaries. Nevertheless, hopes for non-intervention on the part of British forces were dashed, once it was determined the insurgents disrupted trade. As Ernest Hughes said: it was “to their profit to maintain the Manchus in power” (22). To John’s bitter disappointment, under the command of British General “Chinese” Gordon, the rebels would finally be defeated. To the Chinese government, the unmistakable sympathy given the Taipings by missionaries was considered nothing less than a subversive act against the Empire; one that furthered a legacy of soured relations with Chinese gentry, but also drew criticism from Western nationals. Alexander Michie wrote: “So far, therefore, from contending that the Protestant propaganda is non-political, it were nearer the truth to affirm that missionary work is political through and through” (14). He went further to say: By “subverting the existing polity of the empire under cover of the protection accorded them ... they have prostituted their Christian principles” (15).

Religious and educational identification

Although the principle of becoming “all things to all men” would apply to most spheres of missionary endeavour, there was one field of Chinese culture for which literal identification could never apply. Western missionaries travelled to China for the purpose of

inducing change –specifically, religious change. Steps towards cultural acclimatisation for the purpose of identifying with local people could be taken so far, but missionaries of an exclusive faith such as Christianity, were not in the business of identifying with local religion. On the contrary, religious identification was to come from the Chinese. To CMS missionary, the Reverend Wolfe of Foochow, there was no question that the Christian religion was “absolute and exclusive truth” (qtd. in Carlson 72). And in the subjective idealism of missionary thinking, whether the Chinese realised it or not, they were in dire need of the knowledge of Christ, through which they could be saved. It seems that in the same paternalistic way that missionaries identified with the “best interests” of China in political and economic matters, so too in the case of religion, missionaries identified with what they perceived to be China’s “supreme need” – the invigorative force of Christianity (John, *Claims* 22). Meeting that need however, required reshaping the ancient (and to missionary thinking, self-satisfied) mindset of the people to accept the new – a task that could only be met through Western education.

The sole purpose of the missionary enterprise was to spread the gospel among the world’s unenlightened people. Hudson Taylor’s vision of millions in China perishing daily, doomed to the miseries of hell without knowledge of the gospel, expresses the imagination and spirit of an age that compelled evangelicals to the mission fields. Missionaries were driven by an urgency to save souls, and their strategy was simple: proclaim the message and distribute literature. Even as missionary methods diversified during the century to include education and medicine, missions would stress that their principal focus remained that of preaching. Yet for all of the energy and zeal of the missionary response to the challenge, there was an unwillingness to accept Christianity. Griffith John blamed the Chinese “exclusive spirit” and indifference to anything new. He wanted to “humble their foolish pride” with the gospel and “remove the national contempt for everything that is not of China”. He believed the gospel would prepare “their minds to receive right impressions” and open “their eyes to see that the ancients were fallible men, that the future of the world is to be more glorious than its past, and that China has much to learn” (*Claims* 23). Evidently, there was more to the evangelisation of backwards-looking individuals than simple proclamation and distribution, but in attempting to reverse their direction, John was also adamant that they “cannot advance in the path of true progress without a complete change in the religious life of the nation” (25). Thus, progress meant Christianisation, and the “right impressions” of the future that China must prepare to receive, were those of Western propensity.

That John could see no incongruity in blaming the “exclusive spirit” of the Chinese for obstructing the “exclusive truth” of the Christian religion, reflects the nineteenth-century air of assertion that accompanied evangelical mission – an uncompromising determination that saw them later accused of “religious imperialism”.⁴⁹ John found the Chinese veneration for antiquity that had kept the nation in a “state of torpid hibernation” frustrating to amend, and their contempt for everything foreign – astounding (14). He contended: “Notwithstanding our obvious superiority in many respects, they call us barbarians, ... [and] the fact that the gospel is introduced into their country from foreign lands is ... all-sufficient reason for rejecting it, without inquiring for a moment into the intrinsic merits or demerits of its nature (15). Yet despite John’s ethnocentric bewilderment, he wished to make it clear that missionaries had come to China, not to develop “the resources of the country, not for the advancement of commerce, not for the mere promotion of civilization; but to do battle with the powers of darkness, to save men from sin, and conquer China for Christ” (*Records* 1877: 32). The Christian conquest of China however, demanded a radical incursion into the national mindset through all available means, since, in John’s estimation: “The absence of religious life and moral earnestness is a distinguishing characteristic of the nation” (*Claims* 51). He did, nonetheless, concede that “the Chinese have gods many, and temples many”, but dismissed them as “devoid of the true spirit of worship”, and as such, he believed “their religion is [but] a commercial transaction” (19).

The rhetoric of conquest and absolutism that accompanied much of the nineteenth-century missionary enterprise was captured by Alexander Michie, who declared the missionary “attitude towards Chinese ethics, philosophy, and religion is that of war to the knife. In order to build the Christian Church they require the site to be cleared” (*Missionaries* 36). Missionaries of the mid-century in particular, buoyed by their new-found treaty-rights, were unapologetic in their extirpative aims and methods. Reverend Wolfe wrote in 1870, that as Christianity “openly avows its determination to expel by moral force every rival system from the altars of the nation, it naturally at first seems strange and presumptuous in its claims to this people” (qtd. in Carlson 72). But in order to infuse the nation with “vital” religion and save the Chinese from their depraved state,⁵⁰ first the Chinese required what Reverend Baldwin called: “a soul-penetrating sense of sinfulness” (qtd. in Carlson 71). The fact that many Chinese “did not feel ‘totally depraved’ or in need of ransom lest they perish” remained one of the greatest frustrations to the task of Christian conquest (71).

Missionaries' identification with what they believed was China's "supreme need" – the uplifting force of Christianity – demanded root-and-branch reform of the nation's religious practices, specifically, the ubiquity of customs they considered "idolatrous, evil, and superstitious" (73). From the degree of life transformation demanded of converts, it is not surprising conversion rates were low. Converts were to abandon all forms of idolatry, including participation in festivals, processions and other rituals bearing religious symbolism – everyday-life restrictions that proved to estrange the convert from many aspects of Chinese society. In a culture so heavily defined by filial piety, perhaps the most contentious of demands involved the convert's expected disconnection from traditional ancestral rites, even as far as destroying ancestral tablets. To renounce one's ancestral duties, was an immensely difficult step that was bound to ostracise converts from relatives and friends, and incite reproach from society at large. Some would-be Christians simply could not take this significant step. But for those who did, many were the cries of "victory!" in the writing of missionaries as they recounted stories of idols burnt ceremoniously, or tablets destroyed, before a crowd of guarded villagers.⁵¹ Just how far the ancestral cult could be tolerated by Christian churches was a topic of heated debate at missionary conferences. Griffith John made it clear to delegates in 1877 that LMS missions in Central China under his jurisdiction would broker no compromise:

As to ancestral worship, it is unquestionably the *real* religion of the Chinese. We are sometimes blamed by men who know very little about its nature because we proscribe the observance of it. But we have no alternative, this worship of deceased ancestors is a subtle phase of idolatry and as such cannot be tolerated in the Christian Church ... Firecrackers we have *none*; candles we have *none*; incense we have *none*; gongs and cymbals we have *none*; ancestral worship we have *none*. All these, and such things as these, we look upon as heathenish. (*Records* 1877: 398)

John's blanket intolerance for many of the traditional practices of the Chinese was a view widely commended among conference delegates; particularly objectionable were those customs involving obeisance to the dead. To British Protestants, culturally disposed to present with "stiff upper lip" stoicism, conveyed through rigid ("with knee to man unbent")⁵² body posture – all forms of Chinese obeisance seemed distastefully primitive and obsequious (Reinders 113).⁵³ Bodily prostration, candles and incense, were also associated with Catholicism – a regular theme for Protestant polemics.⁵⁴ Yet there were some who called for open-mindedness. At the 1890 Shanghai Conference, a paper was read on behalf of American missionary W.A.P. Martin, entitled "The Worship of Ancestors – A Plea for Toleration". Martin argued for moderation in the condemnation of Chinese rites, and for converts to be

offered practical substitutions where there might be questionable elements within practices. Most controversially, he refuted the notion that prostration before ancestors constituted idolatry:

The posture is always of kneeling, alternating with prostrations...but it does not in itself form and act of idolatry, because the same posture is employed to show respect to the living. Children fall on their knees and face before their parents; subjects before their sovereign; officials of every rank before those above them; and common people before their magistrates. Beggars in the street assume that attitude in asking alms. (*Records* 1890: 626)

However, Martin's argument that physical prostration did not necessarily constitute religious idolatry because it paralleled civil acts of courtesy, raised strong objections from a number of speakers, who condemned all forms of obeisance and rejected his conciliatory position. Gilbert Reid and Timothy Richard were the only delegates who defended Martin's view. Richard pointed out that: "The real question is not toleration of what is idolatrous, but toleration of such rites in ancestral reverence as are not idolatrous"(658). Martin's comment on prostration, that: "as a mode of salutation, it merits our contempt as a fit expression of the abject condition of most oriental nations", identified with the distain felt by his Western audience for the "grovelling superstition" of the East, but then he added: "but it is not sinful" (626). Continuing his support for Martin, Richard reminded the delegates that: "however different the rites in China may be from the rites of the West ... *that* is no reason for condemning them". On the question of prostration, he felt such servile behaviour was "a matter of national taste and association" but it was "certainly more sanctioned in Scripture than our Western customs" (658). Western sensibilities notwithstanding, it seems the delegates could not, or would not, make a distinction between physical acts of obeisance and religious idolatry. Hudson Taylor closed the proceedings by suggesting that all who "wish to raise an indignant protest" against Martin's view should rise. "Almost the whole audience did so." (659).

Evidently, missionaries had little tolerance for China's "*real* religion", the deeply enshrined respect for ancestors that took its roots from Confucian philosophy. Timothy Richard's forbearance in matters of traditional rites however, was an indication of the liberalised thinking that evolved into his trademark method. In his autobiography *Forty-Five Years in China* (1916), Richard reminisced on early experiences:

During my first year in China a missionary friend came to me in great triumph, bearing in his hand the ancestral tablet of one of his native Christians. He told me that as the man had become a Christian he was going to burn the tablet. I remarked, "When

he burns his tablet, I suppose you will at the same time burn your parents photographs?” This was a new thought to him. The ancestral tablet was never burned. (146)

While Richard remained a voice of moderation in missionary debates over evangelisation methods, it was his accommodationist-approach to Chinese religion that would expose him to charges of heresy from traditionalist colleagues.⁵⁵ Most sending societies expected missionaries to acquire a knowledge of the tenets of Chinese religion, with some like Richard (James Legge, Joseph Edkins) becoming leading authorities in the works of Buddhism and Taoism. But in the main, exposure to these beliefs did not foster an appreciation for their precepts. Alexander Michie attributed missionary disregard for Chinese religion to the British “imperious spirit, impatient of opposition and delay” (38):

[T]hose who have studied [these religions] necessarily approach them with foregone conclusions which detract from the value of their deductions. At one particular station there are fifteen missionaries of different denominations, not more than two of whom have taken any trouble to acquaint themselves with Buddhism. Yet the business of their lives is to supplant, among other things, that religion! Indifference to the opinions of others and disrespect for their institutions are somewhat characteristic of the race from which Protestant missionaries mostly come. (37)

Although unashamedly imperious when it came to his style of evangelism, Griffith John had, patently, taken the trouble to acquaint himself with the religions of China but spoke of them as “effete” (*Voice* 140). Equating Christianity with masculinity he argued: “There is no power in the religious systems of the country to develop a holy character, a true manhood”. Of the three main religions he said: “Buddhism and Tauism [sic] can make the people superstitious, but not religious. The tendency of Confucianism has been to dry up the religious sentiment in the Chinese mind, and to leave it the most unspiritual thing imaginable” (*Claims* 23-4). On the other hand, and distinctly counter to John’s condemnation, Timothy Richard developed such an interest in China’s religions that he published *The New Testament of Higher Buddhism* (1910), a comparative translation in which he described the theology of Mahayana Buddhism as, “Christian in everything almost but its nomenclature.” (27). Early in his career Richard had conceived of a more profitable method of evangelising than the proclamation-and-distribution style in which he had been trained – one which he felt would better connect the gospel message with a Chinese audience. Like some others at the time, he was convinced the Chinese church must be self-supporting, and thought itinerant evangelism was best left to Chinese Christians. But he also realised the importance of studying local beliefs in his effort to find points of contact upon which Christian faith could be grafted.

Christianity, Richard knew to be the “highest truth”, but he also knew it would have to “commend itself to the conscience of the Chinese” through accommodation to local interpretations (*Forty-five* 90, 107). It was clear to him that bible teachings directed in early times towards the Jews, would need radical reinterpretation to be made acceptable to an Asian culture. It was through these methods of integration and indigenisation that he sought to establish a Chinese-Christian faith, one that could be understood within a universal, rather than western ethos.

Richard’s approach to the mission field was unconventional for the time. He abstained from the confrontational methods prevalent among his contemporaries, and like Gilmour of Mongolia, actively sought members of the more contemplative religious sects with whom to engage.⁵⁶ His strategy of “seeking the worthy” as written in Matthew 10:11, targeted two groups: “the devout teachers of the different religions (especially the leaders of the reforming sects), and the highly educated scholar-officials who formed the imperial civil service.” (Stanley 182). While mutually incompatible, these educated and powerful groups were nonetheless influential to China’s religious culture. Richard’s early study of the Confucian classics, as well as popular religious texts, gave him a useful “vocabulary of religious terms that was intelligible to the Chinese”. With the help of this lexicon he would prepare a catechism in Chinese, “avoiding foreign names” and appealing to conscience rather than “an authority the Chinese did not recognize” (*Forty-five* 86). Richard’s biographer, W.E. Soothill, compared his method to that of sixteenth century Jesuit, Matteo Ricci, who attempted to “clothe Christian ideas in Chinese dress” (76). But it was Richard’s sympathetic biography of Ricci that aroused suspicion as to his purported “Romish” tendencies. His publications acknowledging “truth” in other religions likewise, drew accusations of syncretism. Richard’s effort to find common ground between local religion and Christianity, and his focus on the worthy, caused Hudson Taylor to remark: “Richard is driving a good theory to death. He refuses to preach to the masses, is for circulation of moral and theistic tracts not containing the name or work of Christ, to prepare the way, as he thinks, for the Gospel.” (qtd. in Broomhall 6: 291).

The split between traditional missionary methods and Richard’s liberal-accommodation methods grew more distinct as the twentieth century dawned. By the mid-1880s Richard’s theological vision had broadened beyond individual salvation. He submitted “a scheme to bring about the national conversion of China” to the Baptist Missionary Committee,

suggesting to them new educational and evangelistic methods (*Forty-five* 198). First-hand involvement in the devastation of the North China Famine during the 1870s convinced him that salvation was not confined to the soul, it applied also to the physical body. He believed Christianity was more than the preached Word, that it should be lived out through compassionate action. Thus, through sensitive negotiation with officials, enabling the administration of large-scale relief-work, Richard pioneered China's social gospel movement. China historian, G. Wright Doyle, writes: "Timothy Richard emerged from the harrowing experiences of the famine with one word etched upon his mind: "Education!" (17). His new focus reflected a strategic shift to modernise China. He wanted to dispel the official ignorance exacerbating natural disasters by urging the introduction of Western science into the education system; he wanted to impart a knowledge of the progressiveness of Western civilisation through Christian and secular publishing; and he wanted mission societies to unite in the establishment of "high-class" missionary colleges in each provincial capital, in the hope of influencing Chinese leaders to accept Christianity (*Forty-five* 198).

While Richard's effort towards identification with Chinese religion was unusually empathetic, his focus on education as a means to "uplift" the nation and create "the Kingdom of God on earth" (*Forty-five* 166), was, to him, identifying with China's best interests. For Richard and the many "social gospel" missionaries who came after him in the early twentieth century, the building of medical and educational institutions, and the introduction of democratic, scientific and technological reforms, were strategic channels towards a Christianised China. For traditional missionaries however, such schemes were "diversionary" – detours from the main objective of evangelism (Hyatt 179). Apart from preaching and literature-distribution, most missionaries provided some form of medical care and primary education to locals, both as a simple expression of God's love, and an opportunity to share the gospel. Hudson Taylor however, thought it an error to prioritise education: "If we get the idea that people are going to be converted by some educational *process*, instead of by a regenerative *re-creation*, it will be a profound mistake ... let all our auxiliaries be auxiliaries – means of bringing Christ and the soul into contact" (qtd. in Kaiser, *Rushing* 25). But while schools were not neglected, at best, their purpose was "to teach converts how to read the Bible, and to prepare young men for church ministry and girls to serve as their wives and helpers" (G. Doyle 17). For the LMS, education did not receive major emphasis until the turn of the century. Secretary Thompson admitted: "[T]he instruction given would scarcely have

satisfied the most rudimentary ideas of education in Western lands”, adding: “All Western knowledge was at a discount, and teaching had to be on Chinese lines” (205).

If missionaries were unimpressed by what the Chinese considered education, then the Chinese considered Western education irrelevant. Perhaps the biggest foil to missionary educational efforts was the fact that the Chinese possessed an ancient education system of their own – one of which they were proud. Griffith John emphasised: “Education is everything in China, and religion nothing” (*Claims* 20). He could understand the disdain felt by esteemed scholars at the offer of a Western education: “The Chinese have always been teachers ... and they regard our conduct in assuming the position of teachers to them as nothing less than brazen-faced impudence” (13-14). By the 1880s the LMS began to pay more attention to education as an adjunct to evangelism. The Chinese model adopted previously, was now considered a fundamental weakness in their work. Thompson felt the only way to overcome Chinese feelings of superiority and leave them open to “higher truths”, would be through Western education: “[U]ntil Western knowledge of the simplest kind can be introduced into the Chinese mind, that proud exclusiveness so strangely and closely associated with a blind ignorance will not be broken down” (qtd. in Bonk 201).

It would take Japan’s victory over China in the Sino Japanese War (1894-95), before the Imperial Government would show an interest in Western education. The Western subjects of “philosophy, mathematics, mechanics; engineering, international law and history, naval and military tactics, torpedoes, and marine artillery” were included in the annual examinations (205). By the fall of the Qing Empire in 1912, China’s thirst for Western knowledge could not be satisfied. John Macgowan, in his 1913 book *How England Saved China*, wrote elatedly of the prospect of a modernised China under Christian leadership, a governance that would “set her high amongst the nations of the world”. Triumphantly, he attributed credit for China’s political revolution to the influence of missionaries – his own kind, “England’s sons and daughters”, serving with China’s best interests in mind. He added: “She herself is conscious of what the missionary has done for her, for one of the leaders of the Revolution declared in one of his speeches that ‘the first steps in the great movement that has revolutionized China were taken when Morrison, the first missionary, landed at Canton in 1807’” (316). But while Macgowan was confident that Christianity would be the path to China’s regeneration, the demand for Western education proved more compelling. Over the next three decades, as contending warlords held China to ransom, missionaries were increasingly forced to withdraw

to their homelands. By mid-century as Mao proclaimed the new People's Republic, their withdrawal was almost complete.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the cultural identification practices of six missionaries, all of whom varied in their adherence to the biblical directive to become “all things to all men”. Their variance offers valuable insights into the self-representation of two missionary types: “imperial” and “grassroots” – as signified by their clothing choice. Following Jonathon Bonk's comprehensive study of LMS identification practices, this chapter has broadened the scope to include missionaries from a range of missions including the LMS, CIM, BMS and the Bible Christian (Methodist) Church. A biography of each missionary established them as pioneers in their particular fields of mission and provided an understanding of the lifestyle that they adopted, their life experiences, and how they all achieved notoriety through their publications. How far the missionaries were prepared to show sympathetic identification with the people depended upon how faithful their actions remained to the Christian message.

Part two explored the material, social and linguistic spheres of Chinese culture and the degree to which each group enculturated themselves to Chinese living. Imperial missionaries like John Macgowan and Griffith John chose to remain within their own cultural identity, living comfortably foreign lives in Western style houses, while their LMS colleague James Gilmour, adopted a life of austerity, housed in a tent on the plains of Mongolia. Gilmour's self-denying lifestyle proved a source of intimidation to imperial missionaries who argued their Western standard of health and well-being was essential to prolonged superintendence of native churches. Macgowan unapologetically aligned himself with England as he patronised and racialized Chinese difference, while John argued there could be no such thing as “cheap mission”. Theirs was a paternalistic identification, an overarching act of benevolence – what Bonk called an “imperfect” lifestyle identification, one that was criticised by some in Britain as “unheroic”. Yet, grassroots missionaries like Gilmour, Taylor and Pollard in the self-denying act (to the Western mind) of cultural adaptation, were at risk of corrupting their own identities as Christian missionaries. Grassroots missionaries faced ridicule for “masquerading” as Chinese, both from their own nationals, and the locals who found their attempts at “passing” for Chinese humorous. They could also be accused of condescension in their efforts to accommodate or “live down” to the Chinese people when their own children were sent to England for education. In their efforts to either identify, or resist identification,

these missionaries, through their writing, exposed what R. Scott Lamascus calls: “the Double Agent position” where “they oscillate between two positions, but are always insecure in both” (20).

Learning the language of the people, as Bonk describes, was an effort of “wholehearted” identification for these missionaries, since their very purpose depended upon an ability to communicate God’s Word. Yet the difficulty of learning the language was depicted as an obstacle. For John it was something to be “conquered”, but for others it was a source of anxiety, a modern Babel, and a crisis of self. Such an impediment to their calling would lead some to write that it was the language of Satan. The difficulty of conveying biblical meaning without adequate words struck at the core of a missionary’s vocation, destabilising their ability to narrativize the self. Samuel Pollard’s development of a written script for the Miao language, empowered the people to resist subjugation, yet he could not control how they interpreted his message. With the semantic precision of the Word held dear in the evangelical tradition, missionaries’ published translations ran the risk of initiating sectarian movements.

Despite the biblical directive to become “all things to all men”, this did not apply to political and economic matters. Part three shows how missionaries were instructed to avoid active political and commercial involvement, but in their everyday lives remaining neutral was impossible. Missionaries owed their residency in China to their own nation’s commercial and political interests and the use of force that gave them inequitable treaty rights. The moral ambivalence attached to this coercion could be reconciled in their writing as God’s providence – a rationalisation that challenged the perception of the missionary’s ethical self. Exercising Western power and insisting on treaty entitlements caused enmity with the Chinese government, and missionaries’ support of the Taiping Rebellion was considered an act of sedition. Yet while they identified with Western political and economic aims as being (what they considered) in the “best interests” of China, they unanimously opposed Britain’s trade in opium. This was the “double-bind” that missionaries found themselves in, where they had to “limit the self, compartmentalize their lives ... in order to achieve the engagement with the present world which is so crucial to their worldview” (Lamascus 20).

One sphere of Chinese culture for which missionaries could never identify was Chinese religion. The exclusivity of Christianity was one of the fundamentals of their faith; it was their foundation for a consistent self. They were not in China to identify with an Eastern

religion; identification was to come from the Chinese. Converts were to abandon traditional practices deemed by missionaries as idolatry; they were to cease paying homage to their ancestors and performing acts of obeisance – thus alienating the convert from society. But to the missionary, a knowledge of Christ was in the “best interests” of the people. Timothy Richard, however, was a voice that challenged the core of Christian selfhood, complicating the very means through which missionaries constructed the ideal self.

¹ The evangelical understanding of human nature without Christ (and by extension, nations without Christ) was an inevitable fall into idolatry and depravity. For an explanation of “total depravity” see endnote 50.

² Lodwick posits two significant contributions of the China mission “that would transform Christianity in the West in the late twentieth century: Protestant ecumenism and the feminization of Christianity, which some see as a movement equal in importance to that of the Reformation” (xix). Christianity’s feminization is attributed to the numbers of Western women who went to China as missionaries – outnumbering men three to one by the twentieth century - and the increased voice given to women in supporting-churches and mission committees at home. The work of missionary women also changed the lives of Chinese women through education, medical care and campaigns against footbinding.

³ The social gospel was a more diffused method of evangelisation through humanitarian work and the establishment of hospitals and schools. It was believed that modernisation through Westernised education in science, medicine, technology and agriculture would lead to the moral and intellectual improvement of the nation.

⁴ In outlining the broad shifts in missionary outlook from the 19th into the 20th centuries, David Maxwell points out that “there was never a single monolithic missionary movement. Missionaries were as diverse as their national origins, social background and theologies.” (266).

⁵ Other than cursory mention of Macgowan in assorted mission scholarship, I concur with W.K. Cheng who comments that he “is not aware of any independent study of Macgowan” (97).

⁶ A second edition was published in 1906 under the title *The Imperial History of China: Being a History of the Empire as Compiled by the Chinese Historians*.

⁷ Also published in 1897 was *Pictures of Southern China*; followed in 1907 by *Sidelights on Chinese Life*; and in 1909 *Lights and Shadows of Chinese Life* which was revised and enlarged in 1912 as *Men and Manners of Modern China*. In 1910 he published a translation of *Chinese Folk-Lore Tales*, and *How England Saved China* in 1913. The pamphlet *The Way to Win the Whole World for Christ The Old Way, the Only Way* was published in 1924, two years after his death.

⁸ P. Richard Bohr describes the famine as China’s most catastrophic on record” claiming “up to 13 million lives” (75).

⁹ This conviction developed from reading Edward Irving’s sermon published in the 1860s “Missionaries After the Apostolic School” based on Matthew 10:11: “And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence.” William E. Soothill, in his biography of Richard, notes that he mailed a copy of the sermon to “every missionary in the Far East” (77).

¹⁰ John L Nevius refined these ideas into his *Methods of Mission Work* in 1886. This formed the basis for the Three-Self Movement that began in the early twentieth century (Stanley 182).

¹¹ Similar to the Church of England “with its consequent disabilities for Nonconformists” (Richard 198). Having a close association with national institutions, the Church of England held the reins of power, according to David Bebbington, and was “notorious for its abuses” of Nonconformists. They were subject to

civil and social discrimination in areas such as: births, deaths and marriages, which would not be legally recognised unless celebrated in the Church of England. In addition, Anglicans only were allowed to enter universities. Nonconformist conviction held “that it was wrong to impose ceremonies and creeds on the individual conscience” (10, 11).

¹² Conditionalism is a concept that does not see Hell as a place of eternal punishment, rather, a place where conscious existence of the unsaved is ended forever (See Austin, *Millions* 189, 272, 337). Taylor’s decree resulted in the resignation of the entire first generation of the CIM in Shanxi with several joining the BMS. The split divided the formerly cooperative missions into territories, with the CIM now relegated to the south and the BMS to the north of Taiyuan (272).

¹³ The plan was short-lived as the Empress Dowager Cixi, fearing a loss of personal power, engineered a coup, placing the emperor under house-arrest (until his death in 1908), and usurping control as regent.

¹⁴ G. Wright Doyle describes Taylor more respectfully at this age, calling him: “the Venerable Preacher’ with his long white beard, sparkling eyes, loving face, and undiminished zeal and spiritual vitality” (115).

¹⁵ The CIM had grown from four mission stations and twenty-four workers in 1866, to three hundred and sixty-four stations, and one thousand three hundred and sixty-eight workers, at its peak in 1934 (Overseas Missionary Fellowship).

¹⁶ Kathleen Lodwick among others, refer to Gilmour as “the missionary who made no converts”, possibly because Boyinto, his first convert after fourteen year’s work in Mongolia, was baptised by Rev. W. P. Sprague, of the American Mission at Kalgan (*Legacy* 36). However, in 1886 at the end of an eight-month itineration, Gilmour recorded in his diary that he had “preached to 24,000 people, treated 7,500 patients, distributed 10,000 books and tracts...and out of all this there are only two men who have openly confessed Christ” (Gilmour and Lovett 206). Lodwick suggests these were Chinese converts (*God* 148).

¹⁷ The Mongolian name for a Buddhist priest.

¹⁸ Grant was a Scottish trader living in Kiachta, on the southern frontier of Siberia.

¹⁹ John Dudgeon and Joseph Edkins believed Gilmour should give up the Mongol Mission. Lodwick writes: “Matters were complicated by Edkins’s mental instability, which included public harangues to Gilmour to repent” (*Legacy* 35).

²⁰ British general, Charles George “Chinese Gordon” became a national hero for his exploits in China during the Taiping Rebellion. A devout Christian, he was revered by many as a martyred warrior-saint following his death in 1885 defending Khartoum against Sudanese rebels.

²¹ *The Times* account was interposed with audience-reaction in parenthesis: “(Sensation)” and “(‘Oh, oh’)”. The press-controversy Taylor prompted following his conference address continued well into 1890s. See: Thomas Prash “Which God for Africa” 51-57. All three of the Canon’s controversial articles were later published in the booklet *The Great Missionary Failure* in 1889 by the National Publishing Company, Toronto.

²² American missionary Arthur Henderson Smith wrote a number of influential books on China, most notably *Chinese Characteristics* in 1897, a best-selling publication throughout the early twentieth century that offered a highly stereotypical interpretation of the Chinese for Western readers.

²³ Lydia H. Liu considers Smith’s style of presentation (and writers like him) to be characterised less by flawed ethnographic theory, or a lack of sufficient reflexivity to eliminate ethnocentrism, than it demonstrated intellectual commitment to the 19th century theory of national character – an imagined soul or spirit shared by all members of a nation (53). In *Chinese Characteristics* Smith offers a theoretical definition of Chinese character based on a taxonomy of (principally derisive) chapter headings. These include: face, economy, industry, politeness, a disregard for time, a disregard for accuracy, a talent for misunderstanding, a talent for indirection, flexible inflexibility, intellectual turbidity, an absence of nerves, contempt for foreigners, an absence of public spirit, conservatism, indifference to comfort and convenience, physical vitality, patience and perseverance, contentment and cheerfulness, filial piety, benevolence, an absence of sympathy, social typhoons, mutual responsibility and respect for the law, mutual suspicion, an absence of sincerity, polytheism-pantheism-atheism.

²⁴ Set out along the same lines as Smith's *Characteristics*, Macgowan's chapter "The Adaptability and Tenacity of Purpose of the Chinese" in *Sidelights on Chinese Life* begins with the sub-headings: "Can live and thrive in any climate - Absence of nerves - Bear pain heroically" (112).

²⁵ Timothy Richard is an exception here. Although I have designated Richard an "imperialist" for ease of classification, this is premised on the general tenor of a fifty-year career that culminated in his role as advisor to the Chinese government. His sympathies lay with empire in so far as he was a lifelong advocate for China's modernisation through Western-style systems of education and democracy. During his early career in the province of Shanxi however, Richard did adopt local dress, food and housing in order to consciously identify with the Chinese at a material and social level. His strategy of "seeking the worthy" nonetheless, tended towards closer identification with societal elite.

²⁶ The economic and material resources of missionaries, according to Bonk, "were immense by local standards". Missionaries "commanded salaries from thirty to fifty times greater than those of their Christian Chinese counterparts" (*Money* 54). Notwithstanding, Griffith John described the Chinese as a "money-loving people [whose] principal divinity is the god of riches". Their one aim "is the acquisition of pelf" (*Call* 32).

²⁷ Jonathan Bonk speculates that Gilmour's colleagues may have recognised in him the same (unattainably) devout qualities as did Sydney Smith of social reformer Mrs Elizabeth Fry: "She is very unpopular with the clergy: examples of living, active virtue disturb our repose, and give birth to distressing comparisons: we long to burn her alive" ("All Things" 91-2; original quote: p 85 of *Sydney Smith* by George W. E. Russell. London: MacMillan & Co., 1905).

²⁸ Gilmour had much to say about Buddhist lamas in *Among the Mongols*. He conceded that Buddhism had "many excellent doctrines that characterise it as a theory" but was scathing about "the intense worldliness, the unblushing wickedness, the thievish dishonesty, and the envy and strife that characterise ... almost the whole tribe of lamas" (152-3).

²⁹ Gilmour caused alarm when he informed the Peking committee that he would be content to live on the same wage as their Chinese lay-workers – provided the LMS educated his children (Lodwick "God" 71).

³⁰ One of his chief antagonists was veteran missionary and philologist Joseph Edkins – himself showing signs of mental instability, which included "public harangues to Gilmour to repent" (Lodwick "Legacy" 35).

³¹ His desperation was apparent in a letter to the LMS Foreign Secretary R.W. Thompson in April 1888: "I shall do my best to hold on here single-handed, but I earnestly hope that I am not to be alone much longer. Something must be done. There is a limit to human endurance" (qtd. in Lodwick "God" 73). In his half-year report, he wrote: "I must have company. I find I cannot stand this much longer" (73).

³² Gilmour reported to Thompson that he was "totally recovered by the time he reached Southampton waters – no one realized it was the want of like-minded companionship that caused his mental collapse, and the many opportunities for conversation afforded on the ship had solved his problem". (Lodwick "God" 74).

³³ Ridicule also came from the missionary community. As one veteran missionary admitted twenty-five years later "We gave him no warm welcome ... I for one feel ashamed of my attitude towards Mr Taylor in those early days" (Broomhall 4:226).

³⁴ Taylor believed these women could gain access to female-only quarters where males were prohibited. A typical criticism levelled at the CIM throughout its tenure came from A.H. Savage-Landor who claimed it was a "criminal error" to send "to dangerous and lonely places in the interior of China, without protection or assistance, young, inexperienced girls, who have a most imperfect knowledge of the country, the language, and the customs and manners of the natives" (246).

³⁵ The "faith principles" of the CIM included: no guaranteed salary; faith in God to supply all needs; no debt; and no solicitation of funds or missionaries (Austin 18).

³⁶ American missionary Samuel Woodbridge wrote of the mass queue-cutting in 1911: "Millions of queues were cut off and piled up. In some cases they were sold, and it is reported that the hairdressers of Paris made large sums of money out of Chinese hair" (107).

³⁷ CIM missionary, Archibald Glover, anathematised acting and theatre in a moralising letter to homeland parishioners in 1896: “Acting is essentially a product of heathenism, and here in China is immediately connected with temple worship. And the theatre is as heathenish and idolatrous in Christian England as it is out here. In a heathen country you see the root of many things that go for culture in a Christian country” (2000: 235).

³⁸ Preparing to concoct a dye on a hot day, Taylor loosened the stopper on a bottle of ammonia which blew out, spurting into his face and temporarily blinding him. He was left burnt, bandaged and in pain for days (Pollock 48-9).

³⁹ Taipings, or “long-haired rebels”, were pseudo-Christian dissidents who refused to shave their foreheads and wear a queue. They waged a campaign to overthrow the Manchurian gentry from 1850 to 1864, which resulted in the death of an estimated twenty million Chinese.

⁴⁰ Timothy Richard was said to have spoken Chinese more fluently than English.

⁴¹ Despite Medhurst’s objection to disguise, his father, the missionary Walter H. Medhurst, published *A glance at the interior of China* in 1845, as a story of his travel inland in disguise.

⁴² Such was the reverence for old age in China, that young men were not permitted to grow moustaches until after the age of forty-five, and beards until after the age of sixty (Tom 10).

⁴³ Glover’s censorious view of the Chinese as “devil worshippers” is discussed in Chapter six.

⁴⁴ Pronounced “Yea-soo”, the Chinese name for Jesus (Pollard 1919: 31).

⁴⁵ *Baller’s Mandarin Primer* became the standard language course for most China missions (Kaiser, *Rushing* 49). Pollard left the language school in 1887 after 8 month’s tuition having proven the “most gifted of a little band of resolute students” (Grist 16). A decade later, he assisted Baller in the preparation of a Chinese Classical dictionary (108). Australian journalist George Morrison, who stayed at the Chaotong Mission in 1894, wrote of Pollard: “His knowledge of Chinese is exceptional; he is the best Chinese scholar in Western China, and is examiner in Chinese for the distant branches of the Inland Mission” (121).

⁴⁶ Exploitation could come from the West as readily as it could the East.

⁴⁷ Delamarre shrewdly added a final clause to the Chinese Treaty translation: “It is, in addition, permitted to French missionaries to rent and purchase land in all the Provinces, and to erect buildings thereon at pleasure”. With no French speakers among Chinese officials the discrepancy between the two versions was not discovered until 1869. Decried by one latter-day Chinese Catholic priest as a “fraudulent act”, the property-disputes and general distrust of Christian messengers spawned by the deceit held lasting ramifications for all missionaries (Tiedemann 300).

⁴⁸ Hung believed himself to be the son of God and younger brother of Jesus, destined to reform China. In 1851 he proclaimed his dynasty to be the “Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace” (Taiping Tianguo). He assumed the title “Heavenly King”.

⁴⁹ Clifford Manshardt describes religious imperialism as: “the attitude of mind which says that that which I believe should be believed by everyone else; and which is willing to undergo hardships and make sacrifices for the extension of that belief” (526).

⁵⁰ Drawing on Calvinist roots, the theory of the “total depravity” of man holds that every person is enslaved to sin since the advent of Adam and Eve’s original sin. One of the seven articles of faith in the credal statement of the CIM is: “The fall of man, his consequent moral depravity and his need of regeneration” (Austin 313).

⁵¹ Sam Pollard rejoiced at what he believed was God’s pleasure when the burning of “a ton of idols” from a temple broke a drought: “Thank God for this great victory! ... The idols were burned at 2 p.m. and at 5 p.m. it began to rain and continued all night and part of the next day... [Despite the rain] the fire burned for 24 hours” (Pollard 57).

⁵² From the poem, “The Private of the Buffs”, written by Sir Francis Hastings Doyle about Private Moyses, a British soldier who was beheaded for refusing to kowtow before a Chinese commander following his capture in 1860. His upright defiance and principled behaviour was epitomised as the masculine ethos of the Englishman – as opposed to the “feminized” Chinese – the “weak-willed and weak-kneed other” (Hevia 66-7).

⁵³ Notably, the British diplomatic missions to China by Lord Macartney in 1793 and Lord Amherst in 1817, collapsed over a protocol impasse – the British refusal to kowtow before the Emperor. Reinders writes: “Macartney had refused to bend down any lower than he would to King George (one knee to the ground, head bowed)” (124).

⁵⁴ Lord Macartney wrote: “The paraphernalia of religion displayed here – the alters, images, tabernacles, censers, lamps, candles and candlesticks – with the sanctimonious deportment of the priests and the solemnity used in the celebration of their mysteries, have no small resemblance to the holy mummeries of the Romish Church” (qtd. in Reinders 126).

⁵⁵ Richard’s unorthodox methods and sympathetic assessment of other religions caused alarm among some colleagues. Oxford University Professor and former missionary James Legge however, “found no evidence of theological error” (Johnson 120).

⁵⁶ Like Gilmour, Richard identifies “vegetarians” (often used as a pejorative term by contemporaries) as the “most devout and sincerest people in the land,” with one convert worth twenty from other classes. In his book *Calendar of the Gods in China* (1906), written as a missionary’s guide to religious schedules, he instructs: “[I]n addition to their vegetarianism a large number of them have secretly imbibed much of the mystic teaching of Christianity which the bigoted persecuting Confucianists would not tolerate. The Christian truth brought to China by the Mahayana Buddhism, by Nestorians and by early Catholics is found deeply imbibed in their secret teaching. It only needs the sympathetic spiritual eye to see it under a heathen garb” (viii).

Chapter 5

Adventures in Tibet



Figure 10 Dr. Susie Carson Rijnhart

PART I

Publishing was essential to the missionary enterprise and by the late nineteenth century stories of missionary lives in foreign lands were in high demand. This chapter shifts the focus from missionary approaches, to explore missionary writing within the generic forms of the popular press, and in particular, the difficulty of self-representation for women in missionary culture.

Conflicted heroics, sacrifice, decorum and subjectivity in Susie Rijnhart's missionary writing

Published in 1901, *With the Tibetans in Tent and Temple* is a story of adventure that gripped the imagination of early twentieth century readers with its “thrilling and tragic” content (Rev. *Christian Guardian* 14). Susie Carson Rijnhart's missionary account of four years lived on the border of Tibet and her ill-fated journey to reach the “forbidden city” of Lhasa, amply indulged the expectations of a home readership ever more enthralled by tales of heroism in remote and mysterious lands. Yet this book was also deeply moving, a tale of immense loss conveyed as willing sacrifice. Its message of grief turned to triumph, served as inspiration to Christian readers and generated substantial mission support. As a female

medical doctor and missionary in the late nineteenth century her story was assured a unique place in the literature of the time, and as an ethnographer of Tibetan customs and beliefs her text both exercised and commanded authority, dispelling, as she says “with confidence”, the cultural “false impressions” spread by “great” but transient travellers (1). Rijnhart engaged the cultural curiosity of a Victorian imagination as she articulated the nineteenth-century project of Christian mission.

Yet exercising authority was, for a woman writer of the time, a complex process, one that was “circumscribed by conflicting discursive pressures” (Mills 107), and one impeded by trying to find appropriate means of expression. Rijnhart wrote of her experiences during a culturally dynamic period when missionary literature as a genre commingled with other discursive categories of travel, exploration and adventure, an affiliation that broadened and reinforced common themes of the high-imperial era. As Sherry Doyle points out in her dissertation “Knotted Threads”, the adventure format provided a stage for missionary narratives, a simple shape “that allowed the tensions and the capacity for resistance that underlay their cultural encounters with Native Others to be externalized” (290). The plot structure was linear, it “conveyed the missionary and reader forward in time generating suspense”, set in a hostile landscape, depicting a “drama of opposition between a central heroic individual and natives” (290). But the imperial adventure story was decidedly masculine. Few women represented their missionary experience within the framework of heroic adventure; indeed few wrote the kind of stand-alone autobiographical narrative epitomised by that of David Livingstone. Persuaded as she says, by friends to publish her narrative, Rijnhart negotiates her textual identity cautiously, adhering to available forms of feminine self-representation while at the same time positioning her narrative within the masculine heroic tradition.

In this section I will look at the ways in which Rijnhart sought to present a narrative model of respectable female heroism. In doing so, I explore the complexity of self-representation for women in missionary culture, where the text becomes an ambivalent space between competing discourses of gender, culture and authority, and a space where self-assertion and self-denial work in tension to fashion a missionary persona. I argue that Rijnhart pioneered a model of womanly heroism through tropes of decorum, sensibility and the ideals of domesticity. In the following section I will compare her writing with that of another Tibetan pioneer missionary, Annie Royle Taylor. First however, I will present some of the

background to Rijnhart's story and discuss her textual approach, before outlining her narrative and how she strived to present it.

The text, the story and the missionary

Appraisal of *With the Tibetans* has varied: whether it was hailed a story of intrepid exploration; acclaimed an exemplar of missionary faith and sacrifice; or admonished in some quarters as a tale of foolhardy impulse; the story's pathos could hardly go unnoticed by reviewers. Widely lauded for its restrained yet affective eloquence, the story garnered human-interest appeal beyond its missionary aims. Rijnhart recounted her remarkable story after returning to her Canadian homeland in 1899. The book's four hundred pages describe missionary life in what was, during the nineteenth century, arguably the Western world's most inaccessible and thus mystically conceived of regions.

With the Tibetans' dramatic intrigue rests upon Rijnhart's fateful journey to the forbidden capital of Lhasa and her solitary return. More than half of its pages are devoted to a heroic quest - a physical, spiritual and emotional test of endurance that would take the life of her baby; have her husband disappear - presumed killed; see her robbed; abandoned by native guides; and forced to traverse hundreds of miles of rugged country during a Tibetan winter to seek safety, all the while in native disguise and at the mercy of, in her words: "truly wicked" Tibetan guides. These chapters expose the emotional complexities of Rijnhart's narrative-task as she negotiates fear and desperation, sharing her doubts and grief with the reader, before presenting herself more forcefully to confront treachery, drawing on guile and fortitude to survive.

Rijnhart's short but remarkable life began with a conventional Christian upbringing in Canada, yet it was a life bestowed with uncommon educational privilege for a woman of her time. By the age of twenty, she had become the first female student in Canada to graduate with honours in medicine. Her "great desire to enter the foreign mission field" (Robson, 114) was realised in 1894 when she met, and shortly after married, Petrus Rijnhart, an enigmatic Dutchman and enthusiast for Tibetan mission. The newlyweds set out for Tibet a few weeks later to work as independent missionaries, their only means of support: a single congregation of the Disciples of Christ.

Whether their zeal to penetrate the “Great Closed Land” (113) as pioneer evangelists could be supposed romantically-influenced is debateable, but it seems clear the purpose of Susie Rijnhart’s book is in part, at least, an apologia for their actions. The Rijnhart’s quest was criticised by mission societies as unrealistic if not reckless for working outside of established missionary networks (Austin 175). Plainly sensitive to this criticism she devotes the last five pages of *With the Tibetans* to justifying their entry into Tibet, answering her own rhetorically posed criticisms with scripture and metaphor: “Christ does not tell his disciples to wait, but to go” (175). Yet to Rijnhart the book’s purpose was more than justification, it was also a tribute to her husband and child. She likens their “glorious martyrdom” to the early apostles: “being dead they have never ceased to speak” (394).

Narrative, style and discourse

Recounting her story from the safety of her Canadian homeland, Rijnhart is able to position and wield interpretive control over events through an array of rhetorical styles. In the manner of women’s travel narratives she devotes the first part of her story to her journey across China in 1894 with her husband Petrus, and their establishment of a home on the border of Tibet. In doing so, she allows her femininity to be reconstituted through her travel encounters, stressing her status as a white woman in a strange land, presenting herself at times as an object of local curiosity, a pioneer, and a purveyor of Western knowledge, customs and tradition, as she attempts to order and contain the irregularity of what she sees. She adopts what Mary Louise Pratt identifies as the “scientific and sentimental” approach to travel in the unknown (58). Establishing ethnographic authority: she sets the cultural and geographic scene describing food, manners, laws and customs, interspersed with lyrical sketches of scenery; establishing drama: she reconstructs survival, rebellion, robbery, mystery and death.

The decision to make the journey into the “Sealed Land” in 1898 with a goal to eventually enter Lhasa, was the beginning of her narrative nightmare – beset as it was with all manner of obstacles. By way of pretext to her litany of trials, Rijnhart establishes the moral heroism of their quest with the rationale: “someone would have to be the first to undertake the journey, to meet the difficulties to preach the first sermon and perhaps never return to tell the tale – who knew?” (193). The following chapters would see them travel through driving rain, hail and blizzard-snow, ascend mountainous terrain, suffer altitude sickness and ford rushing streams on horseback; all the while camping in tents, ever watchful for brigands. To heighten complications, by this time they had a ten-month-old baby. Three months into their journey

baby Charles died without warning. The narrative's pace is paused as she records the pathos of being forced to bury him in a medical box in the wilderness: "To-day we started with broken hearts, leaving the body of our precious one behind in regions of eternal snow" (252).

The narrative accelerates with suspense as Rijnhart prepares readers for the text's defining moment. The trial of Charles' death is soon compounded when robbers attacked the group and their guides deserted. With one lame horse, few supplies and no shelter, their lives were now in serious jeopardy. Trepidation intensifies as she describes how Petrus sets out to enlist help from a nomad camp across a river, leaving her with his revolver. Abruptly the turning-point is reached; Rijnhart ends the chapter with the disconcerting words: "[H]e followed a little path around the rocks that obstructed our way the day before, until out of sight, and *I never saw him again*" (311).

The shock ending to this chapter is punctuated by the grief she shares in the following chapter, "Lost and Alone". Here the text emerges as a space of confession – a space where doubts and fears are confided to the reader, where she must face her abandonment, where she wrestles with her faith, and where her motif of darkness and light becomes unstable. She was "alone with God" – a comfort she admitted was but "a faith amidst a darkness so thick and black that I could not enjoy the sunshine" (315-16). Well aware of the deaths of earlier travellers to the area at the hands of hostile tribes, she surmised her husband's fate to be the same. As her despair mounted, she confessed a wish to join him in death. "Why! I can never get away from here safely, anyway", she writes. In her wretchedness she adds, "I may as well be killed first as last, and so I will go where my precious husband has gone" (318). With fatal resignation, she writes of how she rose to follow Petrus's footsteps around the rocks. But reason commanded her thoughts. Remembering her commitment to evangelise Tibet she stepped back, resolving to honour her husband's sacrifice and continue their work. As she closes the chapter it seems she closes a space of inner heartache: "Leaving the place where my baby was buried ... where I had lost my husband, stand out prominently as the two events in my life that have called forth the greatest effort, accompanied by sorrow too deep for expression" (324).

Gender and genre

From this space of confession where she confides her internal drama, the next chapter, "Wicked Tibetan Guides", becomes an external drama of adventure around her exodus from Tibet. In their *Anthology of Women's Travel Writing*, Foster and Mills argue that casting

women as “adventure heroes” presents a challenge to the genre’s rejection of the “home environment” and “the values associated with domesticity” (252). They suggest the Christian values the adventurer fights to impose on the “natives” are the more “‘muscular’ kind which interpreted privation and the overcoming of pain ... a thoroughly masculine endeavour” (253). Similarly, Judith Rowbotham points to how the discourse of heroism was “profoundly gendered”. She claims that the narratives of heroic missionary women, in particular, were more constrained than those of men, and were depicted in “ways related to more passive endurance of unpleasantness or hardship” (85). While Rijnhart’s decision to travel to Tibet had been courageous, her domestic values to this point of the story had been preserved by the countervailing presence of her husband. Now alone, her journey to China over the next two months through frozen terrain, with no shelter and little food, necessarily disordered gender-spheres. She was thrust beyond “passive endurance” and into the “masculine endeavour” of day-to-day survival.

For Rijnhart, the task of finding an acceptable means of expression to narrate such a perilous journey required a complex use of available forms. Sean Gill points out that maintaining a delicate balance of appropriately gendered-behaviour between the “self-abnegation and the self-assertiveness” necessary to fulfil a missionary calling, produced narrative difficulties for women (177). For many missionary women, to be narrating their lives in print at all, implied a claim of self-importance that proved troubling for those long accustomed to cultivating a selfless persona (Spacks 114). In writing her narrative, Rijnhart had to avoid what John and Jean Comaroff term: the “assertively personalised epic form” common to masculine “spiritual warfare” texts. This form, they suggest, displayed “a pervasive belief in the author’s passage itself as emblematic and hence worthy of record” (172-73). It is when Rijnhart writes of her sustained ordeal with the Tibetan guides she engaged to escort her to a lamasery, that she displays the most temerity – but also the most trepidation. Yet here, in the spirit of decorum, she must modulate her agency. Casting the guides as the epitome of transgressive evil, she draws on what Sara Mills calls, the “feminine discourse of fear” (150) – common to women’s travel writing – to emphasise the guides’ unconscionable affront to her femininity and white Christian virtue. Declaring: “I have never seen any other Tibetans or Chinese who approached them in wickedness of every description” (322) and “Not for one instant did they escape my surveillance” (332), she alludes to sexual and mortal danger through typically veiled Victorian women’s discourse. It was this state of impending menace that provided justification for her heroic narrative stance.

Going native, civility and identity

Months of traversing rugged mountain ranges, menaced by robbers, with no shelter and little food complicated Rijnhart's effort to narrate appropriately gendered behaviour. But it was her re-entry into civilisation at the China Inland Mission at Kangding, that represented stability, a place where Christian civilisation countervailed against the perceived disorder of heathen depravity. She positioned a warming domestic scene in the final chapter that permitted the reader to believe that the taint of heathen culture could not preclude Christian refinement, and that her identity had not been transformed in any way by immersion in the culture of the Other. Penniless and ragged, with frost-bitten feet and sun-blackened skin she was mistaken for a Tibetan beggar. Invited into the mission home she becomes acutely aware of her abhorrent state and protests she is "too dirty to go into such a clean room" (388). Given "tea in a dainty cup and some cookies" she asks herself: "Was I really once more in a Christian home, surrounded by kind friends and comforts? Highlighting the overlap between mission and empire as emblems of civility, she admits the first question she could think of at the supper table after four years in the Orient was: "Is Queen Victoria still alive?" (389). In this way she assured her readers she had returned to the bosom of Christian civilisation with her core values seemingly unchanged.

To the Western reader, Rijnhart's re-entry into civilisation signified the reaffirmation of a missionary identity that had been roundly threatened by the possibility of "going native" in her desperate bid to survive. Fast argues that by working independently, stepping beyond the security of more conventional mission work to pioneer the liminal space on the edge of the western world, she had engaged the dangerous possibility of hybridisation, where Christian and cultural values could be profoundly altered (231). In his study of captivity narratives, Gary Ebersole points to the fear and fascination that attended Western readers' understanding of the "white Indian" – a European who had seemingly "crossed over" to embrace the life of the native Other. He suggests that most representations of going native "were used to reinforce existing cultural categories and conceptual systems of exclusion" (193). These representations were heavily influenced by religious and ideological values relating to race, class, gender and power relations, and informed a Western understanding of self, Other and the notion human existence itself (193). Narratives of captivity during the era of European expansion, he suggests, haunted the Western imagination with existential anxieties: "Could one lose one's identity? ... Was the self sovereign and stable, or subject to fragmentation and dissolution from external factors? ... Could a person really go native and

thereby revert to a state of savagery ...?” (190). Rijnhart’s emplotment of a return to civility as the resolution to her narrative reassured readers of the enduring stability and indisputable superiority of their culture.

Rijnhart’s narrative excites readers’ fears of the extreme Other, and in so doing, she places the story within the genre of heroic adventure, yet the first half of her book could be more readily considered a travel text. As a missionary, Rijnhart’s method of evangelism relied upon an empathetic interface with the Tibetan people through the adoption of their dress and lifestyle. In this sense her native identification becomes benign, remaining ideologically underscored by Western (Christian) benevolence and conveyed in those terms to an interested home audience. This reading is similarly expressed by Sara Mills in her study on women’s travel writing. Mills reclaims the term “going native” from its negative connotation – that which relegated a woman’s integration into a foreign culture at the expense of her own, contentiously: “letting the side down”. She proposes a more positive inference that recognises a woman’s affiliation with a foreign culture while being simultaneously aligned with imperial discourse. Moreover, she suggests that women writers demanded recognition of the importance of cultural interaction with native people, viewing them not in the male Orientalist sense as representatives of their race, but as individuals (98). As a missionary, and ostensibly a writer of travels, Rijnhart quite naturally bore witness to the importance of cultural interaction, and despite traces of cultural superiority, had a theological interest in the conversion of individuals.

Notwithstanding Rijnhart’s empathetic, yet culturally-guarded, early identification with Tibetans, the disappearance of her husband left her little choice but to breach the bounds of her cultural threshold to survive. In so doing she “faced the disintegration” that crossing cultural frontiers threatens (Fast 231). The realisation that she was alone tested her Christian identity as she confessed to readers of having contemplating suicide. In her ensuing struggle for survival she admits to conduct unbecoming of her gender, faith and cultural background – evincing a public testimony of her trials in the tradition of evangelical convention. Similarly, as Ebersole suggests, in the style of captivity narratives: the woman “can only become a model of virtue-in-distress by first publicly rehearsing the sordid details of the improper sexual advances made to her and then displaying her resourcefulness in preserving her purity” (232).

Rijnhart's demeanour begins to change after making contact with a nomad camp. Adopting masculine bravado, she establishes a façade of impenetrability when asked if she was afraid to be alone:

[For an] answer I showed them my revolver, explaining that I could easily fire six shots from it before a native could fire one from his gun, and that each bullet could go through three men; whereupon they remarked to each other that no one had better try to harm me, as I could wound eighteen men before I could be touched. (317-18)

Forced to defend herself from the nefarious designs¹ of her guides she states: “[M]y soul revolts when I think of the suggestions ... made to me” but “they found out I was to be treated with respect, and that I would [be] ... ready with my revolver to resist any impudence”. She adds: “I reiterated what I had already said, that if anything approached me during the night, I would fire” (333). Granted, a Victorian audience might have excused her, even applauded her, for defending her virtue thus, but significantly still, through these actions she stood to lose her identity; a willingness to shoot meant her Christian values were at stake. Once again, her writing exposes her audience to how close she came to “crossing the line”, a line of demarcation that separated the symbolic values of the civilised from those of the uncivilised. Her narrative return from the brink of going native in-the-extreme in the wilds of Tibet, to the comforting civility of the Mission house, “reaffirmed the centre” for her readers that she had come perilously close to losing (Fast 231).

Dress and disguise

The importance of propriety in Victorian life placed a great emphasis on the relationship between morality and appropriateness of appearance that further complicated the notion of going native in Rijnhart's story. In an era where dress standards were considered crucial markers of rank and refinement, and further, outward expressions of inner character – a “cloaking of the soul” no less – the “heathen” connotations of wearing native dress became a contentious issue in missionary writing.² As chapter four demonstrates, some believed the wearing of native dress would demean Western missionaries, or act as a sign of weakness in the eyes of their targets. Others believed it a sound strategy for creating common ground between cultures, enabling discreet travel, winning confidence in the people and eliminating distractions away from the gospel message. However, missionary discussions over the effectiveness of this strategy could be marked with ambivalence. Some inverted the notion that dress mirrored the soul, to suggest “heathen” dress might actually corrupt the soul;³ and others worried that, rather than endear them to their targets, wearing native dress could be

deemed suspicious or prove culturally offensive.⁴ Donning “unwieldy” native attire for the first time, Rijnhart recounts the awkwardness of her attempt at cultural assimilation, and emphasises the importance she attaches to etiquette, through an innocent transgression. She reveals that “to my consternation, I had discovered I had appeared in public with one of the under garments outside and dressed in a manner which shocked Chinese ideas of propriety” (13). Her Western identity, so intrinsically shaped by notions of civilised ascendancy and social finesse, was unsettled by this breach of decorum, but it was the necessary postponement or relocation of that identity, at least visually, that caused ambivalence. Through Rijnhart’s text, this shifted identity accounted for tensions in the narrative that both asserted and questioned her cultural authority.

However ambivalent she may have felt about wearing native attire in the early stages of her Oriental mission – when it was adopted as a gesture of openness and transparency for evangelism – it was Rijnhart’s ability to affect a convincing disguise after her husband’s death that became a necessary subterfuge for survival. As both writer and protagonist of her heroic quest, Rijnhart adopts the role of “shapeshifter”, adding tension and intrigue to the narrative as she manages to bluff subordinate characters. She frames scenes of trepidation with reminders that she would be killed if discovered a foreigner, before narrating how, camouflaged under a large hat and fur collar in the dark, she found herself dismissed by Tibetan mercenaries as an inconsequential Chinese man. Conversant with the Sining dialect she writes of how she passed as a Chinese woman in front of suspicious Tibetans when addressed by a Chinese merchant. The merchant, however, whom she positions in the text as a “mentor” character, instantly recognises her as a *peiling* (a foreigner) but as fellow “strangers in a strange land”, does not give her disguise away (343). Rijnhart was keen to convey the degree to which she had affected her disguise. Towards the end of her epic journey, she had achieved such a convincing measure of cultural integration that she now “attracted very little attention even in the crowded, narrow streets ... no one suspected that I was other than a Tibetan” (387). In this way the irony of finally being “‘accepted’ as a Tibetan just as she is about to re-enter civilisation gives drama and energy to her symbolic re-entry” (Doyle 368). The drama is accentuated further when missionary James Moyes is “dumbfounded to hear the voice of an Englishwoman come from such a Tibetanized person” (388).

The degree to which Rijnhart had gone native by the end of her journey can be measured against the first half of her story. In her early residence in Tankar, Rijnhart maintained a modulated identity that deferred to local culture through dress and lifestyle yet

remained essentially Western through bearing and speech. American missionary John L. Nevius who was unconvinced of the efficacy of wearing native attire, pointed out that the Chinese can “recognize the missionary as a foreigner whatever costume he adopts” (341). Sinologist W. Gilbert Walshe, went further to say, not only do Westerners have a “distinctly ‘foreign’ head” and complexion, but in the case of women, their “large and ungainly feet” and the way they “rush about with long loose strides” marks them as decidedly “alien” in appearance (182-83). He goes so far as to suggest that foreign ladies were simply wearing “fancy dress”, such were the inconsistencies with which they adopted Chinese apparel; generally scorning headgear altogether, they were quite content to “appear bareheaded in winter” (181). Interested in how she was perceived by others, Rijnhart includes in her text verbatim excerpts from other travellers she encountered while living on the Tibetan border. Swedish explorer, Sven Hedin describes her standing in a doorway as, “a bareheaded young lady wearing spectacles and dressed after the Chinese fashion.” (160). His description makes it clear she was *not* Chinese, yet for the sake of her mission she had “claimed the authority that native dress offered” (Fast 199). Rijnhart’s initial *choice* to wear native dress as a means of cultural connection, later became a *necessity* for survival.

Meaning-making

With a desire to return to Tibet, Rijnhart needed to make meaning out of her tremendous loss. By reframing her husband’s death as martyrdom to the cause of God’s great work, she could demonstrate as grieving wife and mother, why his life must not be in vain, why indeed she had to continue his work. She also used her relationship with her husband to establish her own respectability as a model Christian wife. She accords him equal status as a medical missionary, praising his surgical skills, despite his lack of formal qualifications; she singles him out as the one who ventures out to treat wounded Muslim-aggressors during the bloody Rebellion of 1895 despite it being a combined effort. She describes Petrus in the eyes of Tibetans as the “Great White Teacher”, and writes at length of her gratitude for her husband’s protective impulses: “Oh! how I thanked my husband for his thoughtful care in giving me that protective revolver, for it was the only instrument to keep in control the abusive and insulting tendencies of those men” (333). But it seems her hagiography of him may well have been a counter strategy to deflect scandal. Born in Holland, Petrus “had joined the Salvation Army and was sent to Toronto in 1886 to suppress charges of sexual assault on a number of women” (Austin “Only Connect” 305). The extent to which Rijnhart was aware of

her husband's reputation is unclear since she made no mention of it, but given how far knowledge of the scandal had spread it seems unlikely that she was ignorant of the charges.

Medicine and domesticity

More than any other, it was Rijnhart's role as a medical professional that licensed her personal and cultural authority. Here she could emulate Christ's mission of healing and stand with her husband as the embodiment of "rational" Western medicine performing "miracles of healing" (71). The conventional view about women's nurturing role justified her competency as it was framed within a rhetoric of service and self-sacrifice. But despite her comfort with the language of science, the arrival of her baby son left her bereft of expression. In deference to the sexual implications of pregnancy and childbirth she was forced to create an alternative idiom – euphemistically including his birth in a description of sunshine and flowers. Her medical expertise was thereby sublimated to respectable standards of feminine propriety.

Rijnhart modelled her respectability by emphasising her cultural roles of wife and mother, her domestic responsibilities, and through a declared sympathy for the plight of her "heathen" sisters. Much of her early writing in *With the Tibetans* is interwoven with the domestic arrangements of their home on the Tibetan border, detailing furniture arrangements and food-preparation as she casts a superior eye over the domestic arrangements of locals in their "vermin"-filled abodes (40). Demonstrating her domestic proficiency offered homeland readers reassuring evidence of her feminine-orthodoxy thus mitigating "her intimidating level of medical training and education" (Doyle 306). Cultivating a garden, establishing a home and nurturing a family, presented stabilising imageries of Christian civilisation replicated (and implanted) in a far-off land – a bulwark against the unsettling flux of later itineration. Using her authority as a new mother to compare child-rearing methods with Tibetan mothers, she laments: "They are not loved and cuddled the way children are in the homeland" (167).

Purity, whiteness and womanhood

Rijnhart exhibits marked ambivalence when describing Tibetan womanhood. She wavers between depictions of their degradation and licentious morality urgently in need of mission intervention, to warmer portrayals of commonality and sisterhood, where their "heatheness" has definite possibilities for redemption. Convinced of Christianity's civilising agency she writes: "My heart sometimes overflows as I think of the love and tenderness of these dark-faced women, and wish ... to bring them out of the condition in which they live

into the liberty which the gospel brings” (203). She informs readers that the Tibetan domestic system “needs purifying” (142), a purity that she implies is both moral and physical when referenced to her own cultured white womanhood: “The women were so filthy that close contact with them inside the tents was as usual nauseating to me, so I spent as much time as possible outside, where they congregated round me and evinced the deepest interest in the white baby” (179). Yet she speaks warmly of her cook, co-opting Ani’s perspective as the Other through direct speech to fortify her argument: “What a pity it is that poor women in our land are not respected as in yours; here they are not expected by parents or any one else to lead what you call moral lives” (141-42).

Yet, representing the women as victims of a degrading social system admits no possibility that they might freely *choose* their lives. Interestingly, three contemporary female writers on Tibet give quite different perspectives to that of Rijnhart. Annie Marston applauds what she calls “the equality of the sexes” in Tibet unlike in China and India, writing: “There is no female degradation or seclusion, but a woman may take her place in the crowd in the open air, or with the men in the house” (105). Annie Taylor writes of women’s inheritance rights and of her friendship with a woman chieftain (206). And further, Isabella Bird Bishop writes of the Tibetan practice of polyandry, the custom where a woman has more than one husband. She speaks of how they “sneer at the dullness and monotony of European monogamous life! A woman said to me, ‘If I have only one husband, and he died, I should be a widow; if I have two or three I am never a widow!’” (94-95).⁵ Perhaps in deference to the sensibilities of conservative readers easily shocked at such unseemly female independence, Rijnhart chooses to make little mention of polyandry, except to suggest some men “rent” their wives to other men. She does, however, cite a sad incident of polygamy that resulted in suicide to stress the victimhood of women in a degrading social system (142). As a champion of Western enlightenment for the emancipation of native women, Rijnhart offers no comment on societal constraints and exclusions that ordered the lives of women in her home country.

Epilogue

Steering a narrative course through the turbulence of her life in Tibet, Rijnhart sought to maintain a refined cultural sensibility through careful rhetorical and interpretive control while demonstrating her dedication to the cause of transforming lives. Yet her focus on changing others permits little indication of how she, herself, might have been changed by her exposure to a “heathen” culture. Fellow doctor, Retta Kilborn, offered a dramatic assessment

of her friend's transformation when she said Rijnhart had changed from "a bright dark-haired girl into a quiet, white-haired woman, by her heart-breaking experiences in Tibet" (Robson 159). By way of postscript to her life, Rijnhart did return to the Tibetan border in 1903 after the book's publication. Together with Dr Albert Sheldon and his wife Flora she established a mission, making plans for a school and a hospital, before marrying James Moyes the first white man to greet her after her tragic ordeal. She returned to Canada in 1907 suffering tuberculosis and there gave birth to a baby boy – dying three weeks later.

In writing *With the Tibetans* Rijnhart had to produce a cohesive text that could perform a complex array of ideological functions. Amid a narrative replete with physical hardships, trials and suspense-filled encounters – the thematic ingredients commonly associated with masculinity and heroic adventure – she was obliged to chart her role as a female missionary, educate, inspire and generate mission support. Thus, the text became for Rijnhart a space of ambivalence, a space in which she strived to present a narrative model of respectable, womanly heroism and authority. To this end, she sought to counterbalance the volatile and threatening forces of life beyond civilised boundaries with womanly tropes that modelled decorum, sensibility and the ideals of domesticity. Her text lays claim to the privilege of self-assertion and yet distances itself – abnegating to its Christian purpose.

PART II

Annie Royle Taylor: “God’s little woman” in Tibet

The heroism of Rijnhart’s pioneering mission is rivalled in temerity by her textual trailblazing – a feat best appreciated when compared with the writing of another pioneer missionary, Rijnhart’s contemporary, Annie Royle Taylor. Like Rijnhart, Taylor had followed her missionary calling to the remote frontier of Tibet and had attempted the perilous journey to Lhasa five years earlier. Drawing near, but ultimately failing in her attempt to reach the forbidden city by just three days, she was credited nonetheless, with being the first European to penetrate the Tibetan interior for over half a century. Like Rijnhart, her journey involved immense hardship and danger and similarly, her heroism was widely acclaimed in contemporary media reports. John C. Lambert compared her bravery to that of the martyred British warrior General C.G. Gordon in *The Romance of Missionary Heroism* (1907) – a



Figure 11 Annie Royle Taylor

popular text of the high imperial era that indulged the appetite-for-adventure so keenly craved by an early twentieth century audience. Yet Taylor’s own written accounts of her journey were, in the words of her biographer William Carey, “disappointing and unimpressive”, mere summaries that were “far from satisfying” (16). It was Carey’s frustration with Taylor’s modest book *Pioneering in Tibet* in 1895 that inspired his publication of her diary five years later. Her diary, together with a lengthy introduction explaining the background to her life and travels, Carey felt, more successfully conveyed her remarkable adventure, her faith and determination, and most crucially for mission publicity, her heroic persona.

Despite their very different literary approaches to the recording of events and their dissimilar family backgrounds, biographers have endeavoured to forge a link between Rijnhart and Taylor. In Carey’s book *Travel and Adventure in Tibet* (1900)⁶ he suggested it was Taylor’s journey that “fired the imagination” of the Rijnharts, and led them, five years

later, to make the same attempt” (145). Similarly, Isabel Suart Robson connected the two women sequentially in her book *Two Lady Missionaries in Tibet* (1909) placing them in what could be argued was a successive pact in which the Rijnharts, “inspired by [Taylor’s] example and eager to complete the task she had been compelled to relinquish, crossed the border from China into the ‘Great Closed Land’” (113). Notably however, apart from two inconsequential references to Taylor in her book, there is little in Rijnhart’s writing to suggest any such accord between them. Certainly more reference is made to the achievements and observations of other travellers to the region, most notably the men, despite the number of women who had previously documented their travels in Outer Tibet. Understandably however, for the critical aim of winning Tibet to Christianity, homogenizing individual attempts of evangelism together as part of a unified strategy in the grand narrative of Tibetan salvation, irrespective of national and denominational differences, made marketable sense in terms of mission historiography and its assumed links to empire. The biographical tendency to connect Taylor and Rijnhart in mission continuity might also be attributed to the boldness of their individual endeavours, and the wealth of simple yet gripping narrative features (robbery, suspense, physical hardship, native hostility, death and mystery) that their stories had in common. In this section, I will examine how subjectivity is constructed within these women’s texts, the contrasts and commonalities of their experiences, the discursive pressures upon their writing and how their representations contest or comply with prevailing nineteenth-century discourses of gender and imperialism.

Born in Cheshire England in 1855, the second child in a large and affluent family, Taylor described herself in her “Retrospect” as a “most troublesome child” (*Pioneering* v), a phrase some might have considered a fitting maxim for the rest of her life. Unlike Susie Rijnhart, whose Methodist values and scholastic aptitude had been nurtured from early childhood under the guidance of a school-inspector father, Annie Taylor, a delicate child suffering heart disease and not expected to live to adulthood, was “not to be troubled with study”. Consequently as she reflected, “I did much as I liked” (v). At the age of thirteen she had a conversion experience at a Congregational chapel and dedicated her life to Christianity. She gave up the idle entertainments of society life – dancing, theatre, riding on the Sabbath – and began visiting the poor and working in Sunday schools, all to the displeasure of her parents. Dorothy Middleton who discusses Taylor at some length in her book *Victorian Lady Travellers*, sums up her behaviour: “She had been a wilful, spoilt child; she became an enthusiastic Evangelical; in neither state was she easy to live with, being one of those people

who never do things by halves” (108). It was an address on the work of pioneer missionary to Africa, Robert Moffat, given by his son, that determined Taylor’s vocation.⁷ The decision to become a missionary intensified the disharmony between Taylor and her father; he deemed her “selfish”, refused to pay medical training fees, and stopped her allowance (*Pioneering* vi). Not to be derailed, she sold her jewellery to fund her nursing training, and like Petrus Rijnhart, set sail for Shanghai in 1884 as a recruit for the China Inland Mission.

Annie Taylor’s single-minded perseverance to follow her missionary calling led to a lifetime of commitment to the Tibetan people. After several years of working in regions of China, the Tibetan frontier and India, she made the extraordinarily bold decision to penetrate into the forbidden land in 1892, her objective, Lhasa. She set out with her Tibetan servant, Pontso, and a small native retinue, on a journey of immense hardship and danger that claimed the lives of two of her three hired men, and saw her horses die from exposure. Seven and a half months into her journey, suffering ambush, robbery and betrayal, Taylor was arrested by Tibetan authorities, put on trial for her life, and forced to return to China having completed a journey of thirteen hundred miles. Returning to England “more dead than alive”, (Carey 142) Taylor, together with her Christian convert Pontso, received wide acclaim from both church and secular circles. She spoke of her experiences at church meetings across the country and delivered an address to the Royal Scottish Geographical Society on the people, customs, flora and fauna of Tibet, despite her regretted “lack of scientific knowledge” (*Pioneering* 37).

Buoyed by public enthusiasm, Taylor appealed for volunteers and formed the “Tibetan Pioneer Band”, her own independent mission founded on the “faith” principles of the China Inland Mission.⁸ She returned to the border region of Sikkim in 1894 with nine male missionary recruits.⁹ Within a year however, the mission had disbanded in “regrettable circumstances”, a controversy carefully mediated by Carey who writes obliquely that there were “incompatible elements in their mutual relations which ought to have been foreseen” (143). Taylor’s ‘Band’ had renounced their allegiance to her, a situation Isabel Robson coded diplomatically as, “Mr. Cecil Polhill-Turner, of the China Inland Mission, was asked to relieve her of the responsibilities of leadership, thus leaving her free for the particular work to which she felt herself called” (88). Taking advantage of a British trade treaty with Tibet, Taylor and Pontso established a shop at the border trading post of Yatung in 1895, where she incorporated a medical dispensary and mission meeting-house. Again, she appealed for volunteers, this time specifically requesting single women as missionaries having learnt from her “incompatible” experience with men. Over the next decade, she worked with a series of

women at Yatung, diverging for a time in 1904 to serve as a nurse in Captain Younghusband's military expedition to Lhasa to, in Middleton's words, "rationalize once and for all British relations with Tibet" (127). Younghusband's heavy-handed mission left her disillusioned and depressively ill; shocked at the carnage¹⁰ and ensuing intensity of Tibetan hostility to foreigners, she despaired at the possibility of ever evangelising Tibet. Taylor's family became concerned for her state of physical and mental health, and in 1907 her sister travelled to Tibet to bring her back to Britain. Deemed unable to care for herself, she was institutionalised until her death in 1922.¹¹

The lure of Tibet: writing the enigma

Taylor's biographers in the early twentieth century knew that the most effective way to present such a dedicated response to God's calling was to couch her narrative in a rhetoric of romance and self-sacrifice; this was a story of remarkable endurance in answer to a higher cause. Romance was a theme readily associated with the ancient mysticism of Tibet, yet the kind of romantic vision that missionaries and their supporters cultivated was far from the "romance of Shangri-la". In his chapter on missionary images of Tibet, John Bray concludes that, "Romance lay not in the original culture of Tibet but rather in the heroic nature of the missionary struggle in an exotic environment" (22). To writers of mission, Tibet was far from a utopia of tranquillity and ancient wisdom, on the contrary, it was a "citadel of evil", a dark "land of false prayer" (28); the task of infiltrating this fortress required heroic qualities, the kind that attracted their own spirit of romance. William Carey, in his biographical introduction to Taylor's diary expands the use of military metaphor – strongly resonant with the triumphs of Empire – to depict Tibet as a garrison under siege from all sides, where dedicated "Soldiers of Christ" like Taylor, "working independently of one another, but directed by a common aim" share "the not distant hope of scaling [its] impenetrable walls" (127). He makes much of the simple naivety, or in Christian terms, blind faith, of Taylor's undertaking and the fact that she was a "lone woman" who breached the "impregnable Gibraltar" of Christian mission that Tibet exemplified (127-8). Further, he stresses the point that out of all of the travellers up to his time of writing, only two besides Taylor had travelled alone – that is, without "a fellow countryman to share with him the risks and toils of the journey" (130). He finds it amusing to contrast her meagre outfit of "ten horses, two tents and food for two months" with the "princely equipage" of Captain Bower under the patronage of the viceroy of India; the Cossack-and-camel caravans of William Rockhill; and the battle

contingencies of St. George Littledale, whose logistical planning rivalled the feats of Hannibal. By means of closer comparison he adds, “Even the Rijnharts took with them two year’s provisions” (132-133). In framing Taylor’s narrative, Carey’s alignment both patronises and romanticises “a busy little gypsy” oblivious to the complexities of (manly) expedition, but with a “high relish” for the evangelical quest, heroically “riding and roughing it on her romantic journey” (137).

The hazards of travel in Tibet exceeded those of almost any other region of the nineteenth-century world. The seeming inaccessibility of a largely uncharted wilderness terrain, purported to have the highest mountain passes and most extreme temperatures in the world, further complicated by a political injunction against all foreigners since the beginning of the century, made exploration of Tibet an undertaking for the most intrepid of adventurers only – or the most foolish. Various European explorers had tried to discover more about this mysterious and forbidden land during the late nineteenth century but none, until the Younghusband expedition in 1904, had gained entry to its capital Lhasa. Few women travellers had ventured beyond the region of Little Tibet, a border territory accessible through British protectorates to the south and west. Yet despite their unpreparedness for the degree of hardship encountered, most of these women relished the physical and psychological freedom from civilised constraints that came from pioneering the frontier-scape of Tibet. Traversing the “thoroughly severe” Zoji La pass on horseback at an elevation of eleven and half thousand feet, Isabella Bird Bishop found the air “exhilarating”, and wrote of her “daily-increasing energy and vitality” (25, 30). Displaying extraordinary determination and a willingness to test the limits of her endurance, Teresa Littledale “protested vigorously” when her party was forced to retreat from the Tibetan interior after she had become seriously ill (Hopkirk 109). Despite the dangers, Tibet offered female travellers a tantalising step into the unknown, an escape from the strictures of Victorian culture, and an opportunity for intense personal growth. Of course, it must be noted that these women were members of the upper or middle classes and clearly had the means to travel, or in the case of missionaries, resolute faith in God’s providence.¹²

With few written accounts of Tibet available to precondition the responses of nineteenth-century travellers, the possibilities for “exploration” in all of its senses – geographical, cultural, self-developmental and textual – were unbounded. The shroud of mystery surrounding Tibet could be dispelled or intensified according to how experiences were recreated. Shirley Foster in her analysis of the writing of nineteenth-century women

travellers, *Across New Worlds*, suggests that without established literary templates for the Tibetan experience, the potential for women's innovation was prime, with fewer constraints levied on their modes of writing (152). Indeed, a lack of textual precedent meant Susie Rijnhart could pioneer her model of womanly adventure with relative impunity. Women could, of course, adopt the colonialist style of writing, "which assumes the superiority of the traveller's cultural and moral values" (Sharp 203). However, as Foster maintains, even though women travellers were not exempt from an air of imperial superciliousness, their accounts suggest an openness to new experience, and a willingness to grasp and convey it positively in ways that tempered prejudice (152-3). Certainly the accounts of missionary women like Rijnhart and Taylor who had physically resided in Tibet, speaking the language, wearing the clothing and imbibing the culture, could impart a more embodied experience than that of the transient traveller and their detached style of sightseeing or "passive voyeurism" (Sharp 206). With their insider-expertise, missionary women could adopt an "anthropological mode of writing" (203), detailing the rich contours of daily life in deference to local knowledge, and thus imbue their texts with palpable realism and the kind of authoritative conviction that found Rijnhart "differing from great travellers" and correcting their "false impressions" (1). This type of mediated intelligence – albeit, in the case of missionaries, ostensibly to promote the redemptive potential of their targets – was largely in contrast to the colonialist mode of writing that could be seen to "impose an English sensibility upon that of the locals" (203).

By comparison with the mediatory style, *Tibet the Mysterious* (1906) written by Sir Thomas Holditch,¹³ had all the hallmarks of imperial patriarchy "taking possession of what [it] sees in a voyeuristic gaze" (Sharp 203). Expressly written as a survey of Tibetan exploration rather than as a travel book, Holditch unapologetically speculates on the country's potential from the standpoint of British territorial expansion. Wholly dismissive of the "mystic fascination which has somehow or other exercised so familiar an influence on European minds", he scoffs at the "quaint inconsequence" of religious ceremonies which come "perilously close to the realm of pantomime" (300), while smugly discounting Tibetan officials as "functionaries with unpronounceable names" (49) whose resistance towards the British was merely "pigheaded determination to ignore the inevitable" (300). Brimming with the confidence and speculative imagination of a modern property developer, Holditch envisages:

those good times when the last relics of savage barbarism [will have gone] and we shall have a branch of the Assam railway, and a spacious hotel for sightseers and

sportsmen at the falls. This prospect is not more visionary than twenty-five years ago was that of a modern hotel at the Victoria Falls of Zambesi. (219)

Regardless of the style of writing chosen, few women travellers were particularly motivated by the prospect of public acclaim and notoriety. By venturing into the unknown, whether consciously or not, they had demonstrated their right and capacity to do what men had always done – confront challenges and assert their individuality – while still maintaining the conformities of female virtue. Foster makes the point that all of the women to some extent found travel a release, a freedom from the drudgery of a prescribed existence and an opportunity to experience spiritual and intellectual self-enrichment; this was a chance to enjoy a rare sense of autonomy without the need for male sanction. Yet she maintains that by “choosing and expanding the channels of their lives” adventurous women were not necessarily mounting a radical challenge to a dominant ideology (8). Sensitive to the impression that a woman on tour might be deemed self-indulgent and impulsive, most sought to validate their journeys with the respectability of a “purpose”, particularly one in keeping with Victorian ideals of womanhood. The dutiful wife supporting her husband’s endeavours was, of course, irreproachable; the woman on a curative journey to restore health was also above suspicion. Other fitting purposes able to deflect the insinuation of self-indulgence were those with an “idealistic zeal” (10), exemplified by the missionary work of Taylor and Rijnhart, but in a similar vein, so too were any philanthropic undertakings indicative of the civilising influence of women. Where Isabella Bird Bishop’s travels began as restoratives for chronic illness, her later journeys to India and Outer Tibet in 1889 were to establish hospitals for women and children in support of missionary work (Chubback 311). The validity of her “purpose” however is called into question by Cicely Havelly in *This Grand Beyond*, who suggests her declared thrill of adventure and passion for exploration signals “an unabashed pleasure in an entirely selfish achievement” (29).

The Victorian obsession with improvement, be that of the self or others, gave sanction to a woman’s professed motivation to travel for the purpose of ethnographic study. Many women worked hard to collect cultural and scientific information, amassing statistics, artefacts and pages of drawings for the edification of Western minds. In this respect however, little credence was given to women’s contributions; their step beyond the private domain and into the public sphere of academic enlightenment was problematic.¹⁴ Sir Thomas Holditch, in his 1906 chronicle of the exploration of Tibet, mentioned that Rijnhart had written “an interesting account of her travels”, but ultimately dismissed its educative worth, concluding:

“Expeditions of this nature, however, do not throw much new light on the geography of Tibet” (206).¹⁵ Further disregarded was “Miss Taylor” who was mentioned only once in parenthesis, for having visited the region of Jyekimdo (189), a mere token acknowledgement despite her residence in Tibet and its surrounds for twenty-three years. Inbal Livne observes that today Taylor is “best remembered as an anecdotal incident in the many biographies of the men who fought in the Younghusband Expedition to Tibet in 1904” (43). Yet Taylor’s cultural knowledge, like Rijnhart’s, was keenly sought at speaking engagements upon her return to the West. She delivered an account of her experiences to the Royal Geographical Society in Edinburgh and Glasgow,¹⁶ and supplied and wrote informatively on a substantial ethnographic collection of Tibetan artefacts for the National Museums of Scotland (43).

Taylor and Rijnhart were keen to stress that their motivation for travel into Tibet was to open the way for Christianity. Pre-empting assumptions that she may have followed some romantic fantasy, Rijnhart declares, “Let it be clearly understood that the purpose of our journey was purely missionary; it was not a mere adventure or expedition prompted by curiosity or desire for discovery” (195). Yet her engagement with existing scholarship on Tibet, correcting cultural “false impressions” and disputing geographical claims, would suggest otherwise. With such little documented knowledge on Tibet, those who went there felt compelled to write about it, and those who wanted to go there would have to depend on those accounts. On her return to England in 1893 Taylor complained in an interview of the total inaccuracy of existing maps of Tibet.¹⁷ In their role as missionaries, Rijnhart and Taylor were part of a vanguard of discovery that was essential to the continually developing “text” of Tibet. At a time when anthropology was only just emerging as a discipline, missionaries and other travellers had an opportunity to contribute to an evolving epistemic space. As Patrick Harries points out, “missionaries contributed some of the earliest works of anthropology” dating back to the sixteenth century. He quotes Edwin Smith, a missionary anthropologist, who said in the 1920s: “Social anthropology might almost be claimed as a missionary science ... because the material upon which it is built has so largely been gathered by them” (238).

As missionaries to Tibet, Taylor and Rijnhart were uniquely positioned to add to the imperial knowledge-generating apparatus that had influenced their own journeys, and as such, they showed a willingness to write themselves into the history of Tibet. Producing literature was an acknowledged extension of missionary practice, but so too was its consumption, since reading what had already been written about a mission territory was essential to their

vocational preparation. Indeed, textual practices became integral to a missionary's self-representation. Rijnhart admitted that "[i]n common with all other missionaries and travellers interested in Tibet, we had thought, read, and dreamed much about Lhasa even before we reached the border" (193). By thoroughly steeping themselves in the subject, they were participating in a textual economy that had formulated the schema for Tibet. Laurie Hovell McMillan points out that "travel accounts influence later travel accounts" and more specifically, "travel texts on Tibet are enabled by an 'intertext' on Tibet" (50). Writers, "'write' Tibet", influenced by a multitude of discourses, writing styles and constraints upon their expression, "and in so doing mobilize existing knowledge on that place" (50).

Throughout her book, Rijnhart refers to accounts from other travellers, positioning herself in the context of their journeys, noting commonalities of experience, meeting the same identities en route, and sometimes challenging the claims they made. From the writing of French Lazarist missionaries, Huc and Gabet, to Russian and American explorers, Prejavalski and Rockhill, she demonstrates an in-depth scholarship, and a desire to legitimately "enter the discussion". Rijnhart displays uncharacteristic excitement when describing two notable visitors to her borderland home: Swedish explorer Sven Hedin, and British Captain, M. S. Wellby. By including in her text excerpts from these explorers' (separately published) impressions of their meeting. By including their descriptions of her – as a "kind-hearted wife" (Wellby 153)¹⁸ and "the personification of hospitality and amiability" (Hedin 160)¹⁹ – she could indirectly (and modestly) convey an appropriately feminine form of self-representation.

Despite their cultural expertise, for Taylor and Rijnhart to be remembered in terms of the romance of mission and not as authorities on Tibet, points to the difficulty women had being taken seriously when asserting knowledge beyond the womanly realm. Independent travel for women required they take on the masculinised qualities of strength, initiative and decisive action, while still preserving the more demure virtues of womanhood. This type of gendered ambiguity filtered into their writing and explains why so many women travellers emphasised their femininity, despite engaging in adventurous activities. Their writing was subject to the constraints of two literary conventions: first, the established imperialist discourses of travel writing, characterised by (masculine) objective reportage styles and othering practises that conferred lesser or anomalous status upon a country and its inhabitants; and second, the conventions predicated upon their gender, symbolised by matters of the private sphere, sentiment, emotion, and gentility (Foster 18).

The plurality of voices in both Taylor and Rijnhart's writing reveals the ambivalence of being a woman within a male sphere of activity. That there should be differences in style between Taylor's diary and her published compilation of papers is self-evident, but there are also marked variations in narrative voice between sections of Rijnhart's book. As Karen Bennett found in her study of Mary Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa*, her writing was a "patchwork of discourses" that shifted to meet the needs of her intended audience. She states:

When ... there is a narratee present, as is the case of all other-centred discourses from the private letter to the scientific paper, the authorial voice becomes even more self-conscious and constructed, and progressively more removed from any pre-linguistic 'self' that might be said to exist (109).

Bennett isolated the various narrative styles in Kingsley's writing, distinguishing them on the basis of the "presence of a persona to whom the narrator addresses herself [or himself, according to narrative voice] and who conditions many of the linguistic choices made" (109). Diaries might be considered the most "unaware" of textual styles, but could still be divided into two types: the on-the-spot jottings that capture thoughts and impressions as they occur; or the end-of-day type of reflection composed at leisure. The former we could assume to be simple notations through which the narrator would display little detectable contrivance-of-self. The latter, although still subjective and unelaborate, with the benefit of some reflection, is no longer innocent. The text becomes aware of itself and that it will be read (if only by the writer); correspondingly, the narrator adopts a self-conscious stance, ordering and structuring sentences with some intent (110-11).

It seems Taylor's diary contained both types of writing. In his introduction Carey makes a comparison between the "far from satisfying" summaries of Taylor's story published in *Pioneering in Tibet* with "fresh, original impressions pencilled down on the spot" adding, "[h]owever crude and imperfect the form in which these are preserved, they are always immensely more interesting" (16-17). Transcribing her weather-beaten diary with the aid of a magnifying glass, Carey admits he "pruned away" "odds and ends ... and redundant expressions" together with "slips of grammar, and crude forms of expression" ("obviously a duty to set right"), but insists "no sentence has been touched that could be left, and practically the story as it is now published is the story as it was pencilled down"²⁰ (168). We cannot know the extent to which Taylor's narrative persona has been complicated by this editing, but the same could be said of Rijnhart's book and the "invaluable assistance" rendered by Prof. Charles T. Paul in the preparation of her manuscript (2). Yet despite these editorial filters both

women consciously documented facts and impressions sufficient to the needs of multiple audiences.²¹

Taylor and Rijnhart's most self-conscious constructions of authorial voice emerge when they enter the imperial project of knowledge-creation, using what Bennett describes as the voice of the "Scientist" or "Lecturer" (121). Caught in the tension between gendered literary conventions, both women adopt the feminine strategy of apology to begin their texts. Taylor demonstrates her modesty as she addresses the Scottish Geographical Society by regretting her scientific shortcomings, but claims nonetheless, in light of the paucity of knowledge about Tibet, "a short relation of my experiences, and a statement of facts ... will not be uninteresting" (32). Rijnhart prefaces her text with the stock propriety that her "work does not aim at literary finish" and "is sent forth in response to requests" before more positively asserting her writing credentials: "My close contact with the people during four years has enabled me to speak with confidence on these points, even when I have found myself differing from great travellers" (1). In general, each of them write with the degree of restraint befitting medical missionary women, with Rijnhart punctuating the more descriptive and storied sections of her book with "as many data concerning the customs, beliefs and social conditions of the Tibetans as space would allow" (1). Here her authorial voice shifts to assume the role of a lecturer in response to an educated audience, as she expounds on the etymology of the Tibetan language, or discusses the latitudinal position of various mountain ranges. Taylor too, despite her shortfall in education, exemplifies what Bennett terms as someone "deliberately speaking the language of her interlocutors" as she constructs her "sage" persona before the Royal Society (121).²² Adopting a formal impersonality and a learned vocabulary, she positions herself as an authority in the field:

Should I be asked my opinion as to what is of most importance to Tibetan travellers, I should emphasise the necessity of the Tibetan language being mastered by all intending explorers; one is so peculiarly liable to be misled and deceived by Eastern interpreters. (50)

Such self-assertiveness in a woman propounding beyond her relegated sphere however, ran the risk of ridicule, or at best, she might see the accuracy of her statements questioned. For women to be taken seriously in a predominantly male intellectual arena, they were obliged to construct credibility by adopting a masculine voice. Analysing the reception of nineteenth-century women's travel writing, Sara Mills investigates reasons why "women, in conventional wisdom, are judged to be deceitful" (111). Women's testimony in court-room

situations for example, was characterised by “powerless language” (111), due in part to their relatively powerless social positions, but it was a style of speech nonetheless, that left them unlikely to be believed. Likewise, culturally, to write “like a woman” or more specifically, to use elements of feminine discourse (particularly in travel writing), they might run the risk of having a text deemed “exaggerated” (112). The inclusion of fiction and elements of fantasy in traveller’s tales prior to the eighteenth century had already subjected the genre as a whole to a legacy of suspicion. And yet, for women to “draw on the discourses of imperialism and adopt an adventure hero narrator figure” (112), this too could be supposed an embellishment, through the dissonance created in the text with other womanly discourses of passiveness and dependence. Caught in this credibility double-bind, in an effort to counter accusations of falsehood, many women would adopt a “documentary ‘objective’ style” of writing and include “maps, photographs and even testimonials” to bolster the authenticity of their texts (112). While Taylor and Rijnhart’s texts were clearly written “within an atmosphere of an assumption of exaggeration” (Mills 112) borne out by the presence of these characteristics, the fact that they were missionary women, and thus, were pledged to a code of Christian honesty, carried its own form of integrity for a reading audience.

Writing their journeys under the aegis of Christian mission did of course validate the women’s presence in Tibet, and justified placing the narrator of their texts in a position of power. However, the authority vested in them as moral protagonists could be undermined by the way anomalies in their narration were received, and whether their actions fit in with conventional notions of what women could do. Dorothy Middleton’s 1965 assessment of Taylor’s venture was clearly informed by stereotypical observations of women’s believability and conventionality. Like William Carey, she emphasised Taylor’s “unsophisticated” demeanour, claiming she was a dupe to the deceptions of fame and adding: “She put her name to a book which gave a dramatic and by no means accurate account of her adventures” (124).²³ She further destabilises Taylor’s credibility by depicting her as a feisty eccentric during the time she operated her trading post in Yatung. Middleton notes that Taylor had a long-running feud with the only other English resident in the outpost – Captain Parr, the Commissioner of Customs. She claims Taylor accused him of drowning his illegitimate children in her well – which Middleton judges, “surely a flight of fancy” (127).²⁴ The decision to recruit and command her own all-male contingent of missionaries was an unconventional display of independence that Middleton considered hubristic, if not impetuous, commenting that such an “ill-provided” mission proved “beyond Annie’s capacity” (124). She adds, “With

a touch of arrogance she insisted on calling her group the ‘Tibetan Pioneer Band’”, a discourtesy she felt denigrated the efforts of Catholic and Moravian missions on the Tibetan border.²⁵ However, Middleton endeavours to restore Taylor’s strong and unseemly individualism back to an appropriate association with feminine discourse, (and upbraid Pontso’s cultural impertinence) by incorporating details of an interview she had given to *The Queen Magazine* on a visit to England:

The fragility of her build recalled Mrs. Bird Bishop, and the interviewer admired her hair, cut ‘at the nape of the neck’ to save her ‘the impossible duty of hairdressing without conveying any suggestion of masculinity’. Pontso was with her, and seems to have been if anything a little above himself. Annie interpreted his remarks about the inferiority in beauty of Englishwomen to Tibetans; and no Tibetan woman would allow herself to be so hustled in the crowd as Pontso had seen happening to the English ladies when he went to the Mansion House to gaze at a royal wedding. In Pontso’s opinion, a mission from Tibet to England to teach the English courtesy was as much needed as any English mission could be in Tibet. (124)

Apart from questions of credibility and convention, there is a sense that the writing and behaviour of a Victorian woman abroad could be read as subversive through her representation of authentic experience. Mills argues that the “factual” status of travel writing had the capacity to strongly influence women readers, particularly where women were presented as assertively, independent individuals, as opposed to the passively orthodox characters of fiction. Any attempt to re-write existing narratives of what constituted womanhood, contravened, and had the ability to alter, key cultural constructions of femininity. She points out that “representing a ‘life’ which is considered to subvert the norms draws into question the ‘naturalness’ of those ‘norms’, and each time the text is read the norms are destabilised” (119).

However, texts with a subversive capacity could in turn be destabilised, not only through critical reception that questioned their veracity, but further, where the woman writer herself was considered “eccentric” and her experiences could not be broadly related to other women. Mills labels French traveller Alexandra David-Neel’s 1927 book *My Journey to Lhasa* “a classic ‘eccentric’ Victorian woman’s travel text” because “the narrator is a strong, determined figure who battles against extremes of hardship, rarely losing face or making reference to ‘feminine’ concerns” (125). David-Neel was a prolific writer and scholar of Eastern religion who travelled on foot to Lhasa in 1924 disguised as a Tibetan peasant. The release of *My Journey* caused a sensation in 1927, entralling readers with its audacious

adventure, yet attracting scepticism from critics who claimed it stretched the bounds of credibility by delving into supernatural realms. David-Neel's discussion of transcendent practices such as levitation, and the self-heating phenomenon of "thumo", departed from the "reality" of European empiricism to indulge in the "irrational" arts of Oriental mysticism (132). Thus, she had breached the conventions of "factual" writing, and cast the truth of her text into doubt. And yet despite a travel text's claim to truth, women themselves, who were simply labelled by critics with the term "eccentric", "adventuress" or "globe-trotteress", were effectively marginalised along with their work to the status of bizarre and abnormal (118).

Taylor is frequently labelled "eccentric" and a "lone wolf" by biographers and critics because of her individualistic, "strong-willed" behaviour; a description that was not given to married mother, Rijnhart²⁶ (and perhaps, the reason why Rijnhart distanced herself from Taylor). Although both women were driven by the same motivation to evangelise Tibet, sharing similar trials and experiences in their travels, with both returning to establish medical posts in Outer-Tibet, one had fulfilled the normative function of true womanhood – becoming a wife and mother – the other had not. Rijnhart's carefully crafted text was published for the purpose of attracting interest in missionary activity in Tibet, but it was also a touching memorial to her husband and child, and despite her statement to the contrary, contained literary qualities that captivated both readers and critics alike. The book stood alone as a testament to womanly heroism and sacrifice borne of the loss of her family and the ordeal of survival on her own; and it was accompanied by appropriately gendered tropes that confirmed her orthodoxy as a nineteenth-century woman. Taylor, on the other hand, had demonstrated her single-minded drive from the start. Content to live in relative solitude without European companionship, she had circumvented gender-barriers to achieve her ambition. Taylor was not deterred even after, as archival records show, her petition to the board of the CIM for a Tibetan mission was rejected because it was considered "not wise for a woman to be responsible for work in Tibet" (qtd. in Livne 56). From defying her father's edicts, to her self-determined trek to Lhasa, to leading a group of missionary men, Taylor felt no imperative for male headship to achieve her goal "to march through the closed land and claim it for God" (Carey 134). Yet such determination was an affront to gendered norms, and as such, proved disquieting enough to invite ridicule.

Taylor's public persona was that of either, heroic missionary pioneer, or zealous eccentric given over to the people of Tibet. To some she was an ambiguous mix of "middle-class Victorian woman when in Tibet; an eccentric missionary who 'went native' when back

in Britain” (Livne 43). As Foster remarks, “The eccentric lady traveller, like the old maid and the scribbling bluestocking, took her place in society’s collection of caricatures” (6). But their representation was one of unnaturalness, it was alien to the feminine norm, and considered “the inevitable result of failing to fulfill woman’s maternal function”. To a British audience: “The eccentric spinster ... signified the perils of not being incorporated into a family” (Nelson 133).²⁷ Notwithstanding her courage and passion in answer to God’s calling, Taylor’s disconcerting independence it seems, made her fair prey to criticism and attempts at derisive containment.

In all likelihood Taylor had no intention of writing a book, but her compilation, *Pioneering in Tibet*, served to promote her missionary cause. Joanna Trollope sums up some of her critics by saying she was “a disappointing chronicler of marvels” who left an “unrewarding” and “dull account” for posterity (193). With this kind of textual criticism, there is a sense that her diary, in its unadorned state, would not have been taken seriously had she published it herself. Dorothy Middleton extols William Carey for incorporating it into “his own book” and “doing posterity a service in putting on record the authentic account of Annie’s lone and valiant attempt at storming Lhasa” (126).²⁸ The diary, it seems could only become a worthy entity under patriarchal control. By commandeering its publication, Carey illustrates what Foster describes as “gender-based dismissal”, “masked as patronising admiration” (6). In his long, one hundred and sixty-nine-page introduction, Carey provides the requisite male-voice of narration for geographical, historical and cultural facts, while at the same time setting a dramatic landscape for Taylor’s entrance. Under his superintendence, her daring undertaking is placed within suitably feminine limitations; he accentuates her physical frailty to call her “plucky and resourceful” yet “[t]here is something whimsical in the thought of this weak woman leading in her tiny expedition to accomplish so great an object” (135). Carey draws attention to her appropriately modest diary, with its unassuming directness and absence of embellishment, and yet implicitly, his “manly” perspicuity detects undercurrents of feminine fear: “but how much more that is not mentioned can yet plainly be read in the quivering of the lines and the frequent sunny expressions of hope and trust!” (15-16).²⁹ To Carey this “unsophisticated pilgrim” is also a source of condescending humour (13). He finds her mission “quaintly pathetic in its simplicity and ... richly amusing in its unpreparedness”; and with mock frustration he relegates her to her rightful sphere, claiming she was “provokingly oblivious of the claims of science, and constrained only when something went wrong with the cooking to notice the boiling-point” (14). In the same vein, her fortitude at

surviving twenty nights without shelter in sub-zero temperatures receives Carey's comment: "what a comical little bundle it must have been for the merry stars to wink at!" (15). Subsumed within his masterful control, her diary thus becomes an adjunct to his own orchestration of the romance of Tibet. Capitalising on the country's forbidden fascination, he conditions the audience as to how this "frail" but "plucky" little woman's adventure *should* be read. Once appropriately gendered, it becomes "the heroism of faith" (16)

The complexity of self-representation for women in missionary culture exposes the competing discourses that impinge upon their writing. Rijnhart drew on the Livingstone model to frame her story of suspense and tragedy, carefully navigating through the masculine genre of heroic adventure to pioneer an acceptable model of womanly heroism through the tropes of decorum and domesticity. Taylor's diary and its contents were usurped and interpretively channelled through Carey's "manly" perspicuity, dismissing her agency through "patronising admiration" and indicating how her story should be read. Having side-stepped gender-barriers to both follow her calling, and form her own mission of male recruits, Taylor's competent self-sufficiency subverted norms – an imbalance Cary had to readdress. Yet, although both women were relegated to their rightful sphere in the self-denying work of their calling, their authority as vanguards of discovery, and their contribution to the knowledge-generating apparatus of empire, gave them license to write themselves into the history of Tibet.

¹ Again, she alludes to sexual advances, adding: "he only treated me as if I were a Tibetan woman, not knowing that women in our land are in a widely different position from those in Tibet" (333).

² See Chapter 4, Part II for more discussion on dress.

³ For example, celebrated American missionary Lottie Moon, who had herself worn Chinese clothing, wrote an essay in 1881 entitled "Advantages and Disadvantages of Wearing the Native Dress in Missionary Work" in which she warned "a man begins by wearing Chinese clothes, eating Chinese food, and adopting other Chinese customs"; the next step might be that he "may lose, by the constant habit of conformity, the power of prompt, manly protest against evil." She goes further to caution mothers that wearing Chinese attire might seduce and corrupt their children (qtd. in Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility* 137-38).

⁴ Sinologist W. Gilbert Walshe wrote *Ways that are Dark* in 1890 as a social etiquette guide for new missionaries to China. He argued that the wearing of native dress could be received with suspicion by Chinese as to missionaries' intentions. He also wrote of the mistakes many made by adopting a mismatch of apparel that was at best, disconcerting, and at worst, offensive, to Chinese sensibilities. A disregard for the markers of age and class would see older women wearing the clothing and colour-schemes of teenage girls, see wealthy and peasant-class clothing combined distastefully, or Chinese clothing paired strangely with Western hairstyles, stockings and shoes (proving to accentuate "large and ungainly feet"). Their distinctively foreign complexions and facial features, made Western women appear incongruous and decidedly "alien" (177,181-82).

⁵ Bishop adds: “The word ‘widow’ is with them a term of reproach, and is applied abusively to animals and men” (95).

⁶ Carey’s book was also published as *Adventures in Tibet: Including the Diary of Miss Annie R. Taylor’s Remarkable Journey from Tau-Chau to Ta-Chien-Lu Through the Heart of the “Forbidden Land.”* in 1901; not to be confused with *Adventures in Tibet* by Swedish explorer Sven A. Hedin in 1904.

⁷ Taylor’s determination must have been strong since she writes of Moffat Jnr: “[H]e seemed to think that women were more of a hindrance than a help to Missionary work in Africa”, and she adds, “for the only time in my life, [I was] sorry that I was a girl” (v).

⁸ “The Mission is supported entirely by the freewill offerings of the Lord’s people. The needs of the work are laid before God in prayer, no personal solicitations or collections being authorized” (Taylor, A. *Pioneering* 77).

⁹ Taylor appealed for men only. Interestingly she did not believe women would cope with the harsh conditions however, she did accept the wife and child of one missionary.

¹⁰ For a mission ostensibly to settle the border dispute between Sikkim and Tibet, the force of several thousand British soldiers was excessive. Armed with only antiquated weapons, several hundred Tibetans were machine-gunned to death at Guru in May 1904 (Livne 68).

¹¹ Inbal Livne, in her chapter “The Many Purposes of Missionary Work: Annie Royle Taylor as Missionary, Travel Writer, Collector and Empire Builder” records her death at Otto House, Fulham, from “heart disease and insanity” (68).

¹² The Rijnharts were funded by a congregation of the Disciples of Christ. While Taylor was originally attached to the China Inland Mission, her foray into Tibet was self-funded – aware that the CIM would not sanction a solitary woman undertaking such a hazardous journey. See *China’s Millions* magazine, December 1893:

“Miss Taylor, who works at her own expense, set out on this journey at her own risk, and she only wrote the day before she set out to apprise us of her intention, saying she knew we could not take responsibility of encouraging so perilous an enterprise. But, feeling assured she was called of God to attempt it, she was going, trusting in him.”

Her “Tibetan Pioneer Band” and subsequent mission trading post was “supported by the freewill offerings of the Lord’s people” (See note 4).

¹³ Thomas Holditch was later to become President of the Royal Geographical Society.

¹⁴ After more than twenty years exploring every continent in the world and publishing her travels, Isabella Bird Bishop, became the first woman to be elected a Fellow of the London Royal Geographical Society in 1892. During the years 1892 to 1893, twenty-two women were elected to the Society, however, in the face of heated opposition female membership ceased after 1893, and a ban remained in place until 1913 (Middleton 14).

¹⁵ Despite this snub, by 1911 Rijnhart had become a cited authority on Tibet after *With the Tibetans* had been included in the bibliography of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Doyle, G. 373).

¹⁶ Her paper “My Experiences in Tibet” was published in the *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 10.1 (1894): 1-8. It was later published in her book *Pioneering in Tibet* in 1895.

¹⁷ See “An Englishwoman in Tibet” *The Sheffield Daily Telegraph* July 10, 1893. 2.

¹⁸ Quoted from: *Through Unknown Tibet* (262).

¹⁹ Quoted from: *Through Asia* Vol. 2 (1173).

²⁰ Lurie Millar, in her book *On Top of the World* speculates: “Could she, after living eight years in Asia at a very primitive level of society, make observations and self-revealing comments Mr Carey might not have deemed seemly for a Victorian lady? There is no way to know.” (64).

²¹ Taylor clearly kept a diary for more than her own private (or spiritual) reflection as she was acutely aware that Tibet was “so little known and information so scarce” that she must keep a record of “facts”. This ethnographic detail was used in the presentation and publication of papers for both Christian and secular audiences (*Pioneering* 37). Rijnhart’s book too, although written after the fact, mixes sizeable sections of educative (objective) content with subjective narrative, to have adequately supported her many “press and platform accounts” (1). She credits her husband’s diary, “such portions ... as I was able to preserve”, as a crucial source of geographical notes (2). However, there is a sense that “the diary of the journey” was a joint, and profoundly important, project. She incorporates extracts from it in her book, allowing it to ‘speak’ for her after the death of her son, singling it out together with her husband’s bible, in a list of ‘bare necessities’ they chose to take with them when it was clear they must proceed on foot after their guides had abandoned them (300).

²² As Bennett points out, the discourse of the Victorian sage best exemplifies the patriarchal, imperialist perceptions of the era – as explained by John Holloway (1965).

²³ Taylor’s book *Pioneering in Tibet* was published for the purpose of generating interest in Tibet, but in particular, to promote her independent venture, The Tibetan Pioneer Mission. It was a compilation of papers, reprinted newspaper articles and letter extracts – both her own, and those of her (later) assistants in Yatung, Miss Foster and Miss Ferguson. Of the newspaper articles, only one, “Some Facts about Tibet”, had not been written by Taylor herself, and appears to contain the “exaggerated accounts” that Carey speaks about. The article claims that she was the “first European to enter Tibet proper”, an error that he wished to reduce to “its true proportions” – she was the first for sixty-four years (Carey 129).

²⁴ In his book *Bayonets to Lhasa: The British Invasion of Tibet*, Peter Fleming states, as a highly-paid employee of the Chinese Government, Parr’s reputation was suspect; he was never wholly trusted by either the Chinese or the British and “the wisdom of allowing him to transmit and receive cypher messages to and from Peking over the British telegraph-line came to be questioned” (94). According to Patrick French in his biography *Younghusband: The Last Great Imperial Adventurer*, Colonel Younghusband described Parr as “a terrible talker and rather a low class kind of man” (184).

²⁵ Presumably, it was hoped her mission would eventually pioneer the inner Tibetan region.

²⁶ See for example: Fleming, *Bayonets to Lhasa* (95); Lucas, *Waziristan To Tibet* (ch.12); Trollope, *Britannia's Daughters* (194); Patrick French describes her as an “invincible missionary”, a “significant obstacle”, and includes Capt. Parr’s label of “intolerable nuisance” in *Younghusband* (205); Alex McKay uses the term “eccentric” as well as “hostile elderly Englishwoman” and “clearly awkward company” in *Tibet and the British Raj* (32,92); Alwyn Austin calls her a “lone wolf” in *Chinas Millions* (383); and so too, Ruth A. Tucker in “Unbecoming Ladies”.

²⁷ Another woman labelled “eccentric” was Mary Ann Aldersey, the first woman missionary to serve in China after the opening of the treaty ports. She founded a school at Ningbo in 1843, and like Taylor was self-funded and never married.

²⁸ Carey was on a “holiday jaunt” into Outer-Tibet from India, when he met Taylor at Yatung in 1899. She subsequently helped him obtain information to write his own “monograph of Tibet”. It was then he “ventured to ask ... whether I might have a look at the diary” (165,167).

²⁹ Shirley Foster wryly suggests Carey seems to forget that the awkwardness of writing ‘en route’ might account for some quivering. (7).

Chapter 6

The Threshold Self: Missionary Writing in the Face of Death

PART I

“Reads like a Romance”: The captive self in *A Thousand Miles of Miracle*.

As the previous chapter demonstrates, missionary literature is filled with journeys of adversity and tales of deliverance. From the perils and persecutions met by early-church apostles to the trials and adventures of nineteenth and early twentieth century missions to the East, missionary annals have long captured reader-attention with gripping tales of epic journeys – narrative exemplars of Christian suffering and triumph in response to God’s command. While the guiding motif of hardship was common to missionary



Figure 12 Rev. Archibald E. Glover

journeys from the earliest of times, by the nineteenth century, the methods of conveying these ordeals as the miraculous workings of God had changed. With the rise of adventure fiction came, too, the rise of missionary literature in the popular imagination. The romance of heroism and adventure was consistent with the language of missionary stories and both became discernible products of the Victorian zeitgeist. Given the violence committed against Christians during China’s Boxer uprising in 1900, it comes as no surprise that the event should stimulate a flood of survivor accounts. One of the most enduring missionary publications of the twentieth century was Archibald Glover’s account of his family’s harrowing journey across Shanxi – first as fugitives and then as prisoners – in *A Thousand Miles of Miracle in China*.¹

Such a remarkable tale of endurance needed to be told, but its telling had to serve a variety of purposes. The narrative strategies Glover employs betray tension between the textual duties he must perform as missionary, historian and biographer; and meeting the intellectual assumptions and generic expectations of his audience. As such, the book has a

plurality of elements at play, combining a distinctive evangelical “call to seriousness” with spiritual autobiography, martyrology, and the intrigue of a captivity narrative – a work with a serious message, but one he well-knew had to entertain as well as instruct. In this, the first part of the chapter on “Missionary Writing in the Face of Death”, I examine some of the core influences upon Glover’s thinking, in particular the significance of an Evangelical “good death” and his millennialist eschatology of world events, before considering how they are reflected in the narrative of his ordeal. I also assess the contradictory demands under which Glover must narrate his story, specifically, how he negotiates popular conventions of life writing, and the conflict between enlightened self-possession and missionary self-negation. Part two of the chapter will examine a collection of last letters written by missionaries facing imminent death. Together with Glover’s book, these letters extend the Protestant martyrology of the sixteenth century. But first I will outline the story and the context in which it is set, before looking at the captivity genre.

The Boxers, the missionary, the story

The turn of the 20th century in China was marked by a period of unbridled chaos that left the Western world shocked at news reports of brutalities inflicted upon Chinese Christians and Western missionaries at the hands of Boxer Rebels. The Boxers were a secret society of rural militants that emerged in Shandong in 1898, growing rapidly in strength as they spread across drought-stricken provinces of Northern China up to 1900. The Boxers represented rural Chinese resentment toward increasing Western enterprise and missionary activity that posed a threat to traditional village life. Wielding swords and trained in martial arts they were said to be “magically powered” through spirit possession, and thus impervious to methods of retaliation.² Their regime was waged under the slogan “Exterminate the Foreigners” and by June of 1900 imperial troops intensified the foreign purge following an edict from the Empress Dowager declaring a state of war with all foreign powers. The Boxers destroyed railroads and telegraph lines as symbols of Western imperialism, churches were burned, and diplomats, missionaries and Chinese foreign-collaborators were massacred.

Archibald Glover was an Oxford graduate and a Church of England priest who had received what he states was a “clear call” to the mission field in 1894 (ix). He was serving at the China Inland Mission at Lu’an in June of 1900 when news of Imperial support for the Boxer movement reached the province. Amid escalating intimidation, Glover with his pregnant wife Flora, two infants, and Miss Gates, a single missionary, fled by mule litter on

what would turn into a ten-week journey of, as he puts it, “daily dying” (360). Along the way they encountered hostile mobs who robbed them of their belongings, leaving them all but naked, to exist for days without food and water in the hottest summer for thirty years. The group endured verbal and physical assault from townsfolk and officials, facing imminent execution on several occasions, only to be saved by hairbreadth reprieve. Surviving weeks as fugitives, they were captured and imprisoned for a time with a group of fellow missionaries, themselves suffering horrendous wounds. Six of their combined party would die before reaching the safety of Hankow. Four days after their arrival Flora gave birth to a baby girl who survived for only ten days. Flora died eight weeks later.

Textual collective and style

Glover’s book makes for compelling reading and sobering contemplation. Compelling, in that it carries the reader through a journey of sustained suspense – from the “nervous strain” of impending death at the hands of merciless officials, to last minute “miracles” of reprieve. Sobering, for the remarkable feat of endurance and faith that carried his family through one of the most brutal foreign purges in modern history.³ In writing his book, Glover was conscious that he was making a “contribution to the literature of that phenomenal and epoch-making crisis in the history of China” (ix), but he was also aware that he was contributing to the literature of Christian history. As a survivor of religious persecution he had a duty to testify to, as he says, the “high privilege of knowing in measure” the “fellowship of the sufferings” of Christ (13). There was also a tacit obligation to preserve the memory of his fellow martyrs, thus perpetuating time-honoured traditions of Christian hagiography, for he was firm in his conviction that this was, “a testimony entrusted to me by God for his glory” (ix). To this end, Glover’s personal narrative participates in a textual collective that co-writes the Boxer chapter in missionary history, mutually substantiating accounts with intertextual reference, while collectively consecrating the sacrifice of those who were slain.⁴

Published in five languages, *A Thousand Miles of Miracle* had passed through twenty-three editions by mid-century, becoming a classic best-seller in the ledgers of missionary publishing. Yet amid the thriving market for book publishing at the turn of the twentieth century, this was not only a text directed at Christians. The late Victorian and Edwardian reading public accustomed to tales of Empire, was hungry for eye-witness accounts of the exotic Far East – for stories of “their own” implanted in an alien culture: the Westerner in

peril and the Westerner triumphant. Missionary tales-of-adversity possessed key ingredients for ready revenue. Appraisals from both Christian and secular publications, equally glorify, and commodify the narrative, commending it to readers as not only “breathlessly exciting” and it “Reads like romance” but further, as “the greatest help”, “next to the Bible” (i-ii).

While Glover professes his narrative to be “nothing more than a plain, unvarnished recital of simple facts in their sequence” (ix), as a testimony of persecution and an instrument of “calculated” instruction it reflects much more (vii).⁵ The text becomes both a romance and a spiritual pilgrimage, conforming to a blend of generic and discursive expectations that shape conditions for heightened subjectivity (in both the protagonist and reader), paradoxically, through acts of subjective surrender to the will of God. Glover’s journey is both geographical and psychological; a metaphorical “journey of the soul” endured across a literal “one thousand miles” of territory. To the home audience this missionary crusader was setting before them exotic images, bizarre customs and inconceivable encounters that amply fuelled the marvels of romance, as much as the narration lived up to imaginative ideals of the quest. And yet by the same token for the home audience, this missionary tale sobered the mind and wrenched the emotions. The reader was compelled to contemplate the “course of His servants ‘suffering’” and imagine by proxy the experience they “were called to pass through”, for it was, as Glover insists, “the will of God” as written in Second Timothy, that such an ordeal be “‘fully known’” for the “strengthening of ‘all who will to live godly in Christ Jesus’”(x).

In writing *A Thousand Miles of Miracle* Glover was not merely telling a personal story, he was furthering an array of mission objectives that worked to disseminate, and perpetuate, Christian knowledge in the world. His book also provided grist and conviction to the wider interpretive community of evangelicals through the bond of shared beliefs, vernaculars and doctrinal axioms.⁶ To this community the text was dynamic, it demonstrated faith, and in distinctive evangelical style, it demanded a response. In this sense Glover sets up a reciprocal exchange, personally addressing the “Dear reader” at intervals, drawing them closer to admit, “I cannot convey” adequately, the inconceivability of a situation or the magnitude of his dread, or relief, while challenging that same reader’s heart and commitment with probes such as the one following his wife’s death: “Who would not wish to possess the secret of the Lord as this devoted servant of Jesus Christ possessed it?...[S]uffer one word as I bid you farewell. Do you possess this secret?” (329, 372).

Captivity genre: fitting the formula

A combination of narrative elements in the text and an interconnection of themes come together to form a story line of romance, one that is defined less by what transpires than by where events lead. The sub-title to the book: *A Personal Record of God's Delivering Power from the Hands of the Imperial Boxers of Shan-Si*, signals a subjective account of a period of persecution. In order to be able to convey this account adequately to readers (perhaps even to make sense of his own experience) Glover had to make effective use of available genres. Bringing the narrative looseness of the romance form to bear on the story harnesses a sense of order from multivalent parts, and attunes the message more closely to the reading tastes of the audience.

Of the sub-generic formulae that combine to form a story line of romance, it was the experience of captivity that held perhaps the broadest appeal for Western readers. The British nation had been steeped in the literary traditions of an expansionist ideology since the sixteenth century and was well attuned to the ethnographic motifs and discourses surrounding Oriental captivity. Writers employed a standard set of themes and rhetorical strategies that portrayed oriental cultures as mysterious and exotic while at the same time depicting “the world outside the modern British Isles as permeated with subjugation, tyranny, debasement and transgression” (Snader 4). Inversely, the Western (modern) individual subject to abjection by an alien society, was capable of mastering the irrationality of the experience through ethnographic theory, or “the modern intellectual schema of science” (10), a hierarchical discourse organised by means of a stock repertoire of cultural binaries. Western readers’ affinity for the genre therefore, developed out of early inurement to captivity narratives that spoke to a sense of national supremacy and cultural triumph.

Yet affinity for a genre grounded in nationalism and played out as the Western self pitted against an alien other, needed to accommodate multiple and ambiguous relationships among British captives and foreign captors. One variation of the captivity genre’s central strategies was the discourse of providence. An interpretive frame that conceived relationships between the Divine, nations, individuals and the volatility of events, offered Glover a useful vehicle for projecting spiritual impulses to an early twentieth century readership. By expressing a wealth of personal knowledge gained through an experience of subjugation, he reinforces the genre’s dramatic narrative structure – that of trial, suffering and redemption – and in so doing, frames his experience as an exemplum of Christian life. Captivity among the

heathen in this sense corresponds with captivity to worldliness and sin. The message is: reliance on the world for solutions fails, while reliance on God's providence brings deliverance. However, narration of captivity to a domestic audience exposes a fundamental tension that stems from the abject humiliation of the experience. One of the central tenets of romance and captivity genres is the expectation of heroisms of action, yet the heroism of a captive is always in some way ambiguous.

To the progressive Western reader, captivity experiences could threaten to subvert the spirit of self-possession that many texts presupposed as foundational to an enlightened culture. Captivity by an alien nation was a violation of assumed cultural hierarchies that demanded redress. Implicit to the remedy lurks potential for the debased captive to transform into an aggressive nationalist hero. Tension could result, however, when readers' expectations of heroic resistance were complicated by narrators' descriptions of passivity under abject conditions – especially when the narrator was male. Here, Glover's exploitation of a popular genre to convey his autobiography appears incongruous with his vocation. The required language of heroic self-possession contravenes the self-effacing ethos of the missionary. Here Glover is obliged to deviate from form. His endeavour to fit the narrative to captivity's generic conventions strains the bounds of heroic resistance, in as much as personal agency, for the missionary, must be displaced to providence. This transference then becomes the solution to his narrative's cloaking-in-form. Heroism is given over to God – the force that always sides with Christian captives against pagan captors. In this sense, by virtue of his special connection to God he can, by proxy, triumph heroically. As an individual and a Christian missionary, the reader is reminded that Glover's non-resistance in the conscious imitation of Christ is admissible, if not obligatory, since resistance for the sake of redressing cultural imbalance matters less than resistance against forces of evil. Glover's ultimate victory celebrates his party's "capacity not only to endure whatever an alien culture could impose, but also to turn such impositions to advantage" (Snader 63).

Richard Snader, in his research into Barbary narratives, points out that one of the fundamental strategies of the captivity genre is to transform a captivity scenario into the "basis for a heroism of resistance and reversal". He adds, "The heroism of captivity often takes shape through sharp reversals of the basic situation of detention in an alien land" (63). Using the biblical imagery of parting the waters, Glover offers one of several "miraculous" reversals of fortune. In this instance he taps into one of captivity's unsettling motifs of passive

abjection, the running of the gauntlet, to present in sharp relief the impenetrable wonder of providential resistance:

They sent on two of their number to warn the people, at the last place of any size that we should pass, of our approach, and to incite them to fall on us at a given signal, which signal was to be the raising of the bludgeon at the “present.” My heart quailed at the scene before us as we approached. A mob of several thousands had assembled to meet us, and it seemed incredible that we could run the gauntlet of the long street unscathed. Never shall I forget the feeling of momentary terror when, as we entered the gate, I saw the soldiers suddenly bring their bludgeons to the “present.” What happened? The sense of terror gave place to that of perfect peace as the word came almost audibly to me, “Fear not; for no man shall set on thee to hurt thee”; and then of awe and wonder as I saw the tumultuous crowd fall back on either side, and like the waters of old “stand upon an heap.” The same mysterious hush we had known before was upon them as we slowly traversed the narrow path between; and to the unconcealed amazement of the disgusted soldiery, not a soul broke bounds, or gave heed to the summons to fall on us. (234)

Glover takes pride in the effect that the inexplicable turn of fate had on their captors, and in the same biblical overtones adds, they were “marvelling in themselves at the things their eyes had seen”. Elevated as exceptional, and perhaps magical, in the eyes of their escort he says, “This was the last attempt the[y] ... made to hurt us” (234).

Another reversal of fortune turned to advantage in the eyes of captors depicts agency on the part of the captives by way of strategic plan – albeit contingent upon their special connection to God. China was in the midst of a severe drought that threatened famine and “foreign devils” were thought to be the blame as their prayers were to stop the rain. Officials in the town of Lan-Chen Cheo decreed the group were to be put to death the following day:

[R]ealizing as we did that the assigned cause of their rage against us was the long continued drought, we were moved ... to make a united cry to God to ...[send] rain enough to satisfy the need of these poor sufferers ... Accordingly, kneeling up upon the k’ang, we poured out our hearts before Him in Chinese, that the gaolers might know exactly what we were doing, and what we were asking ... How long we continued in prayer, I cannot tell. I only know that scarcely had we risen from our knees, when the windows of heaven were opened, and down upon the howling mob swept the sudden fury of a torrential flood of waters. In a few seconds the street was empty, and not a sound was to be heard but the swish of the rushing rain ... The effect upon our gaolers appeared in more ways than one. Something akin to awe took the place of their hard incredulity. (252-3)

Despite Glover’s reliance on providence as an interpretive frame to negotiate the ambiguities of heroism and the fundamental tension between passivity and action in the

captivity experience, it is the issue of gender and gendered codes of conduct that becomes the most ambivalent element of the narrative. The prevailing culture of Victorian manliness that gave rise to the term Muscular Christianity represented, in essence, a masculinity based on moral and physical vigour complemented by a chivalric code of conduct. For Glover the issue of gender, and the difficulty of its narration to a home readership accustomed to popular imperial constructions of masculinity, exposes the degree of tension between cultural and Christian expectations. He writes:

At last two of them big, stalwart young fellows flung their weapons down in their fury, and setting themselves immediately before my wife and Miss Gates threatened to strip them if we did not give the information they wanted. Their answer to our silence was once again to seize their pole-axes and advance towards the weak, defenceless women. If ever I felt ashamed bitterly, contemptuously ashamed of my sex, it was then. They advanced a few steps and retreated, then advanced again. The strange hesitancy was upon them still... The two rushed simultaneously upon the women, and seizing them at the throat tore each their upper garment from them. Miss Gates still retained a light gauze vest, but my beloved wife was left naked to the waist. (150-1)

Under the terms of Victorian masculine, chivalrous convention, the reading audience would be justified in an expectation of some measure of physical retaliation in response to such a flagrant violation of the codes of women's dignity. Glover summonses reader response when he asks:

But who can measure the burning indignation of my heart's crying sorrow at the sight of them, under the cold-gleaming moon, stripped to the chilling night air?

But then he confounds the reader with a rebuke akin to a slap with a feather:

As the men faced us again with the garments in their hand, I looked at them and said: "You are human beings, it is true; but you have not the feelings of your kind" about as stinging a reproach as one could well address to a Chinaman's ears; containing, too, a righteous, pertinent and legitimate rebuke. I am bound to say that I was not prepared for the effect it produced. To my amazement the word went home like an arrow to the mark. Sullenly they took the garments, first one and then the other, and flung them back to their respective owners (151).

The need to qualify his rebuke with "as stinging a reproach as one could well address to a Chinaman's ears" betrays the tension he feels addressing such a threat to Western masculinity. He too is amazed at the effect his action (and on this occasion not an obvious action of God) has produced. But as a basis for heroism it underwhelms and dissatisfies.

The constraints under which Glover, the missionary, is obliged to narrate his story challenge a straightforward reading of the captivity genre as a basis for heroic resistance and

restoration of cultural hierarchies. Framing narratives within popular genres anticipates popular models of selfhood. Glover's story conforms, in part, to the generic conventions of captivity, but there are ways in which it deviates. That deviation is central to the paradox that lies at the heart of this thesis – exploring what kind of self a missionary can be in life writing. Scholarship on the writing of missionary lives suggests its appeal to a traditional readership comes from a reassuring fixedness, reflecting its message of timeless truth. Tensions in these texts, they say, have been smoothed over by the final edit (Craig 93). Yet Glover's complex play with the pre-existing expectations of a literary genre exposes ambivalence. The model of heroically resisting, enlightened British manhood is one he must withdraw from or negotiate carefully. And this he does through deference to providence. As God's envoy he is able to triumph heroically.

Last Days

Although Glover's book was not writing in the *face* of death, but reconstructing the atmosphere of impending death for readers, his letters home prior to his journey-ordeal, do suggest he was writing in the face of impending apocalypse. He writes as a man beset by "last days" prophesy – whose letters betray the affliction he feels as he apprehends the full weight of his task to evangelise China. Crucial to his conviction was a pre-millennial eschatology of world events that kept him vigilant for signs confirming biblical revelation.

The late Victorian and Edwardian period saw a broadening of theological and secular thinking in Western civilisation. Amid the growing array of intellectual and spiritual movements and ever-expanding relativist, pluralist and liberalist views on Christianity, Glover maintained a narrowly defined evangelical conviction that took its form from early to mid-nineteenth-century revivalism; a model where "the things of this world" were shunned in favour of faithful preparation for the next. Crucial to his conviction was the Bible's total inerrancy. In the same vein, his missionary zeal was informed by a pre-millennial eschatology of world events.⁷ Driven by urgency to convert the heathen masses before the Second Coming of Christ, Glover employed what mission scholar Michael Marten labels, "confrontational methods", to communicate the gospel message (148). He sought to challenge the pagan rituals of ancestor and idol worship directly, with Gospel proclamations on the workings of Satan and the consequences of sin, seeking to proselytise the light of the Word without need for recourse to the more diffused social-gospel methods of education and medicine (148).⁸ Even though Glover was ostensibly a "grassroots" missionary who had grown a Chinese queue and

dressed in native clothing to foster acceptance by the people, he brokered no compromise when it came to the “idolatrous” festivals, processions, and other cultural rituals that were part of everyday Chinese life.⁹ Converts were expected to break with such forms of symbolism since the style of fundamental evangelism he espoused professed a certainty that “only through a clear rejection of past beliefs ... was there to be any hope of redemption from sin” (Marten 148).¹⁰ Glover’s stringent rules by which to govern the behaviour of Chinese converts uphold the all-pervading “call to seriousness” reminiscent of the impact that evangelicalism had on Britons culturally in the early nineteenth century.¹¹

The seriousness with which Glover undertook his mission to accomplish hard-line conversion of the masses could be seen from the beginning of his mission to China. The fundamental conviction that there was a narrow road to true salvation prompted a lengthy treatise on spiritual vigilance in a cyclostyled letter to his home audience one month after his arrival. He describes his reaction to the Chinese-language teacher he had engaged, who wished to be excused from teaching one day to celebrate the boat festival:

He is a baptised member of the Honan church here. I was distressed at his expression of such a wish, and found enough Chinese — for God wonderfully helped me — to tell him that he had done with the old life for ever, and that henceforth he was only free to serve Christ. He said it was a holiday, and a friend of his had invited him to dinner. I asked him if his friend was a believer in the true God, and he said ‘No.’ I said, ‘Then he is a Mo-kuei-tih-ren, a devil man, and you are a Je-su-tih-ren, a Jesus man, and what will he think of you if you are found making holiday with the rest of the devil-worshippers?’ Then he said ‘I will not go’ and we knelt down together and prayed to sanctify Christ in our hearts. (Glover 2000: 236)

His solemn moralising extends to admonition of the wider mission movement and its seeming concern with appearance and records:

This is an illustration of the laxity prevailing among the native converts. They need such careful shepherding. My deep conviction is that the missionary activity of today is wrong at the root of it, for my eyes see that it is at the expense of spiritual life and power. We are concerned with making a fair show in the flesh and getting numbers, both among workers who shall come out to the field, and among converts who shall form church membership. (236)

Further to his castigation of idolatrous festivities, he extends his censure to sermonise homeland readers against the evils of British theatre:

Acting is essentially a product of heathenism, and here in China is immediately connected with temple worship. And the theatre is as heathenish and idolatrous in Christian England as it is out here. In a heathen country you see the root of many things that go for culture in a Christian country. (236)¹²

The heaviness of Glover's burden to obey God's command *sans exception* pervades not only his book, but is a constant thread throughout his letters, which betray the affliction he feels often at its rawest. In a letter to his mother in February 1897 he reads like a man tormented, and one for whom apocalypse is imminent:

His coming is very near now. The Word of God connects it with "the end of these times of the Gentiles" during which Jerusalem is trodden under foot. So "these times" have drawn to an end now. The fall of Turkey is imminent, as we know, and with her fall "these times" actually end. So let us be sober and watch unto prayer, that we may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless, found in Him.' (199)

In his burden to remain ever-vigilant to the Word, Glover exposes his agonised struggle with self-denial in a letter to his father in 1897. Writing en route to take up his position at the Lu-an mission, he sets out what becomes the first of several diatribes on the self (his self). The letter swings from innocuous commentary on the wilful temper of his two year old boy; to questioning one's tendency to think "more highly of himself than he ought to think?"; to full-scale self-flagellation; followed by a written rationalisation of "death unto self" (which he equates with conversion and having given over to Christ's death, or the "death unto sin") and a subsequent (sober) awareness of death (sin) hidden in all places:

Oh dear Pater, this accursed self-life! I know myself to be all corruption before Him. Since I have been in China, God has been uncovering the hidden things of darkness — the awful depths of iniquity in my fallen nature — teaching me to know myself. Or I see myself like Lazarus in his grave, not in death merely, but in the *corruption* of death. I was asking myself on Easter eve, 'what corresponds in the believer's *experience* to the truth of the truth of the grave, to the burial of Christ?' It has a distinctive truth of its own. He died, was buried and rose again. What is it? The truth of the death, and the truth of the resurrection I am familiar with, but what is the truth of the burial? I see it now to be like this: after I have yielded myself over to His death — the 'death unto sin' — I am left to learn all the hideous corruption of the natural man, according to the experience of Romans 7; the picture of the believer who has entered into death with Christ, entering the further experience of his own inbred corruption, the effect of death not seen or known till it has taken place. The deep groan from the heart, Oh wretched man! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death, the flesh, the self-life in its corrupt workings; followed by the experience then of resurrection, life and liberty in the power of the Spirit of the risen Jesus. (255)

Quoting from Romans 7, Glover expresses the dissonance of his state: as one redeemed, yet wracked by self-loathing in the knowledge of his sinful nature. He understands himself to be in an interim state of "burial" where he must fully realise his innate depravity. "Deliverance"

from this conflicted state, he believes, will only come upon Christ's return, or sooner, at his own death. In this way he articulates his all-pervading burden to remain vigilant against the corruptions of self-life "until the day of the Lord come" (1919: 94). The turbulence of his introspection can be surmised when, aware that missionary letters are cyclostyled for parish reading, Glover appeals to his father in a post-script: "Don't please print any of this letter" (2000: 257).

The Good Death

Even though death features strongly for Glover as a metaphor for sin and his perpetual struggle with self-denial, among evangelicalism's other counter-intuitive interpretations, death also features as an advantage. In the evangelical context, death is a re-birth – a receiving of one's reward, and in the case of those who died in the Boxer Rebellion: exchanging the martyr's cross for the victor's crown.

Mortality and immortality were subjects with which Glover was well acquainted. Encounters with death and dying were commonplace on the foreign mission field and missionaries were practised in methods of its articulation. Their accounts not only detailed the physical aspects of the death experience, but also, and most crucially to their calling, testified to the emotional and spiritual condition of the departed. Indeed death, and preparation for death, was a major focus of missionary life, pledged as they were to thwart the "eternal death" of heathenism and expound the doctrine of "eternal *life after death*" in Christianity. Death loomed inescapably large across China during the Boxer uprising, impelling Glover and his family on a thousand miles of what he termed "daily dying", and levying him with a tacit burden to bear witness to the death, dying and near-death experiences of those about him. Rendering these experiences meaningful and authentic to the expectations of a reading audience ever-anxious to glimpse beyond the temporal world, was a literary skill that relied upon the recognised conventions of an Evangelical "good death".

Victorian society had a heavy investment in the customs and management of dying. With Christianity playing a pivotal role in the traditions of family life, preparation for the hour of death held monumental importance for a departing soul's transition to eternity. The Evangelical revival of the early nineteenth century produced a host of literature in the form of sermons, manuals, tracts, magazines, and even works of fiction that modelled and instructed in the business of dying. Devotional diligence throughout life held primary emphasis, and

included the discipline of daily prayer and spiritual examination in preparation, and expectation, that death could come at any time. Evangelical literature provided reassurance to the infirmed and their families that serenity and peace could be found in the life to follow, and counselled the importance of patience, repentance and triumph over fear in the final passage of earthly suffering. Lingering on the threshold of a new existence invested the dying with supposed supernatural insight into the future, and most importantly for Evangelicals, bodily cessation was the soul's portal to either heaven or hell. With one's eternal destiny at stake there could be justifiable concern on the part of both the living and the dying that death be met in an exemplary manner. Last words assumed particular importance, indicating to others proof of salvation and providing evidence of the soul's concordance with God. Final utterances could also be viewed as Divine communiqués imparted to affect the lives of those in attendance. In the wake of Romanticism, displays of intense emotion and sentimental piety at Victorian bedsides followed by inscriptions of impassioned sensibility in diaries and letters, was considered appropriate, if not requisite behaviour, in its expression of familial love and grief for the dying. Sentimentalism also demonstrated the intensity of one's faith in God. Evangelical texts modelled the role of observer and participant in what was singularly the most definitive scene in a Christian life.¹³

While Evangelical literature devoted to holy dying exercised a comprehensive influence upon British deathbed behaviour and belief into the early twentieth century, the Evangelical art of dying as a genre was not unique in its inception. Nineteenth-century schooling in the art of dying had been informed by four centuries of *Ars moriendi* literature. This form of meditative literature originated from an early fifteenth century work by French scholar Jean de Gerson, who had set forth a guide on the rules of deathbed behaviour for both the dying, and their witnesses, together with prayers for reassurance and remedies to counter deathbed temptations (O'Conner 21). The *Ars moriendi* tradition was made famous in England by the Anglican Bishop of Down, Jeremy Taylor, whose publication *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Dying* (1651) remained one of the most prominent post-Reformation works on preparation for a good death across ensuing centuries. The focus of *Ars moriendi* literature up until the Evangelical Revival of the 1740s had been instructional in style and directed towards life after death, but during the eighteenth century, a more concentrated emphasis was placed on the narrative experience of death. Bruce Hindmarsh refers to this finer emphasis on pious death in the case of Methodists in particular, as the consummation of evangelical conversion (255). He notes John Wesley's decision to publish deathbed accounts in the

Arminian Magazine in the 1780s for their “spiritual impact”, and how they were increasingly depicted as “happy deaths”, or the culmination of converted and sanctified lives in triumph over a former eschatological threat (256).

The depiction of deathbed scenes in the *Arminian Magazine* up to the time of Wesley’s death in 1791 became increasingly standardised, laying down something of a formula to be later popularised in nineteenth-century deathbed tableaux. Richard J. Bell argues that Wesley’s publications were a study in genre formation, where accounts were selected on the basis of their instructional value, through examples of pious living and holy dying, and to foster conversion and reinforce a sense of community among Methodists. Early *Arminian* publications provided a narrative template from which authors would replicate themes, imagery and symbolic elements, and in turn, as Bell speculates, lead readers to internalise scenes and ultimately enact them at their own deaths (216). He suggests, “Wesley was able to co-opt dying patients and their families as actors in timeless dramas retold each month for an audience of thousands” (222). Bell tables five successive temptations likely to befall a person before death that were necessary to overcome. First, the necessity to resist and conquer encroachment from the devil and the temptation to lose faith. Second, the thwarting of despair brought on by physical suffering and spiritual struggles with satanic enticement. Third, a necessity to renounce impatience to die after submission to its inevitability - the need to petition God for strength and compliance to abide by His will. Fourth, the need to search one’s soul for sin and repent, despite assurance of salvation. And finally, renunciation of earthly ties to demonstrate all-surpassing devotion to the Lord. Writing these temptations into deathbed narratives injected melodrama and suspense before the final rapture of triumphant faith (221).

Having witnessed many deaths, and having written, edited and influenced the literature of dying, Wesley’s own death was a textbook performance of the good Christian death. He demonstrated his spiritual readiness to depart to the next world, exclaiming his assurance of salvation and triumph over death through Scripture, hymns, praise and inspirational aphorisms uttered at intervals across his final days. He left the world with the lingering dictum, “The best of all is, God is with us.” (Telford 350). John Telford completes the perfect transition with, “A heavenly smile lingered on his face” (351).

In her study of the obituary notices of Nonconformist denominations between 1830 and 1880, Mary Riso found a marked transformation over time in their overall content.

However, the last words of the dying she found to be remarkably consistent. As in the *Ars moriendi* tradition of previous centuries, there was a consistent focus on the life to come. In addition: “They spoke of acceptance of death and a readiness to depart, a sense of completion, separation from this world and longing for the next, intimate relationship with Jesus, spiritual battle, a new home in heaven with loved ones and experiences of suffering and patience.” (251).

If death in Victorian Britain is to be characterised by a single model, then according to Pat Jalland it should be the Evangelical “good death” – such was the pervasiveness of its influence upon the age (8). Michael Wheeler discusses how the language of consolation based on Christian hope in the face of bereavement was shared to some degree by both theologians and creative writers. He re-examines theological questions concerned with “the four last things” – death, judgement, heaven and hell – and how they are reflected in Victorian literature (3). The deathbed scene had so glorified the act of dying that its influence could be felt in the writing of Dickens and Tennyson, although for Dickens the hope of “heaven is associated with peace and with rest” (222). Philippe Ariès’ study of nineteenth-century death presents a more generic version of religious dying, suggesting it was transformed by Romanticism to depict death as a thing of beauty. As a divergence from the Evangelical “good death”, the “beautiful death” nonetheless played a vital role in the shaping of Victorian fiction – exemplified best in the writings of the Bronte sisters whose family succumbed to tuberculosis.

Despite the romanticised notion of an edifying Christian death, in reality death rarely fitted the literary ideal, especially in the case of sudden or incoherent death. Accounts recorded in diaries and letters routinely reveal the utterance of colourless or mundane last words. The ability to articulate anything at all is often not possible. Pat Jalland suggests aspirations for the Evangelical ideal limited opportunities to represent the truth of death. “In practice, the good Evangelical death required a rare combination of good luck, convenient illness, and pious character, and was achieved more often in Evangelical tracts than in family life.” (38).

Writing Death

Writing a story of religious persecution at the hands of the Imperial Boxers also required Glover to give an account of the deaths, or “martyrdoms”, his party incurred. With

the loss of six of their group including two children, he had an implicit obligation to meet the expectations of Victorian readers long-versed in the protocols of dying. Through the orchestration of sentiment and the conveyance of last words, Glover could offer “good” deaths for his readers’ edification, and by testifying to the spiritual condition of the departed through Scripture, he could provide reassurance of their soul’s safe transition heavenward.

Part-way through their captive journey the Glover family were imprisoned with a group of fellow missionaries, all of whom had suffered injuries at the hands of Boxer mobs. With two of the group already dead from the severity of their wounds, and with all weakened by dysentery, it was not long before others would die. Despite their abject condition, the deaths of Mrs Cooper and Miss Huston were conveyed by Glover as exemplary models of piety in submission to the will of God. In his prelude to her death he writes of Mrs Cooper: there was “never a groan or even a sigh”. When spoken to, there was “only the lighting up of a gentle smile, and a word of thanksgiving to God for His love” (340).¹⁴ By foregrounding the woman’s death with meek sentimentalism Glover abstracts the death from the reality of shocking injuries to focus attention on spiritual strength, but he also offers protective consolation to readers. As a “gentle” martyr she remains heroic: “On the third day ... Mrs E. J. Cooper was called to exchange the martyr’s cross for the victor’s crown. In the same beautiful patience that had signaled the whole period of her sufferings, she lay with nothing specially to indicate that the end was at hand”. In the dutiful pattern of death-bed recording Glover notes the time: “about two o’clock she became faint, entreating for ‘Air, air!’”. And finally, the reader shares her blessed release: “[A]s we were standing together in silent prayer, she uttered with a clear strong emphasis the words, ‘Rest, rest, rest!’ and with one gentle sigh was gone” (352).

Miss Huston’s death is similarly palliated to a peaceful transition, but one mediated by Glover’s prayerful request, with the reader’s focus directed to God’s grace. Having no opportunity to register meaningful last words, he records her earlier request for prayer (despite a broken jaw) to demonstrate the intensity of her faith: “Oh, Mr. Glover, will you pray for me? I feel so strangely ill”. His prayer “besought the Lord to strengthen her to the journey’s end, for His own glory”. Yet in his role as both intercessor and interpreter, he must explain: The prayer “was answered in a fuller, deeper sense than we had prayed it”. She had been strengthened “not in the outward but in the inner man” and to journey’s end: “not of an earthly goal but of a heavenly” (355). In the pattern of *Ars moriendi* Glover’s narration makes

note of her restless soul, when a few hours later he “re-bandaged the huge gaping wound in her left arm”. He then steers readers away from her temporal state to write: “she appeared distraught and somewhat excited in manner. Comfortable words, however, from the Word of God’s grace revived and soothed her troubled spirit”.¹⁵ By evening she lay “evidently unconscious, breathing stertorously. Seeing that the end could not be delayed, we commended her spirit into the hand of the Lord Jesus; and about the time of the going down of the sun, without word or struggle she finished her course” (355). As aide to her transition to eternity, Glover could write with conviction: “another of the martyrs of Jesus passed to heaven’s perfect peace”.

It was the death of his wife Flora that granted Glover full license to showcase the definitive evangelical “good death”. Heavily invested as he was, in the enshrinement of Flora “as *the last of the ‘noble army’ of 1900* to pass from the cross to the crown” (370), her deathbed narrative is detailed across four pages. Five more pages are given to her funeral; her signed “Covenant with God”; and her last letter to her parents, followed by a didactic analysis of its contents as an exemplar of Christian devotion. In this section Glover is clearly addressing an interpretive community of fellow evangelicals, attuned to the (profusion of) scriptural quotations that speak for him. The narrative reads as an evangelical manual for death, beginning with “the true sayings of God” he had pinned to her wall, upon which “her soul was stayed and by them strengthened to endure, in the weariness of utter weakness, the sharpness of protracted pain, or the onslaught of the more dreadful and more dreaded Tempter” (366). Dutifully he records her words in direct speech, noting the time they were uttered as the hours go by. Yet his blow-by-blow description consists mostly of scriptural passages and hymnal-refrains.¹⁶ According to the pattern of Wesley’s publications, Flora’s last day “was marked by much spiritual conflict. At intervals she would exclaim ‘Is not the Lord of life standing in the midst?’ ‘Help, help! O Lord, help me!’” (386). But the “Word of God ... whispered in her ear ... recovered her to instant peace and joy” (366). Finally, as confirmed by her serene countenance, the reader receives the obligatory reassurance of Flora’s heavenly transition. This death, Glover made sure, had been met in an exemplary manner:

About 3.45 a.m. (October 25) ... My beloved was lying in apparent unconsciousness, her left hand under her cheek in the accustomed attitude of sleep, and evidently free from pain. Taking her right hand, I gently breathed a few comfortable scriptures into her ear; but she gave no sign that she had heard. So, seeing that the moments were but few now, I knelt to commend her spirit into the hand of the Lord Jesus; and as I

ceased, with no other movement than of one deeper breath, at 4 a.m. she was “with Christ”. (369)

If Glover made effective use of the evangelical “good death” to narrate the death of adult missionaries, then it was the influence of fiction that he chose to pattern the death of a child. He draws on the romanticised image of the “beautiful death” of Victorian children when describing the death of seven-year-old Jessie Saunders – the first of their party to die en route. Jessie’s death however, had been preceded by her baby sister, Isabel, two days before the two parties had combined. Here there are many parallels to the death of Dickens’ character “Little Nell” in *The Old Curiosity Shop*. Like Dickens, Glover gives no description of Jessie’s passing and no deathbed final words or wishes, instead he idealises her as a sleeping angel. Nell lives and dies as Purity, Piety and Innocence personified, juxtaposed against the evils of an industrialising Britain, and like Jessie, had embarked on a long and aimless journey with her grandfather, a journey punctuated by fear and hunger. Dickens’ sublimation of the body of Nell suggests that the trials of earthly life have been superseded in death and that she has returned serene and joyful to her life in heaven:

She was dead. No sleep so beautiful and calm, so free from trace of pain, so fair to look upon. She seemed a creature fresh from the hand of God, and waiting for the breath of life; not one who had lived and suffered death ... Where were the traces of her early cares, her sufferings, and fatigues? All gone. Sorrow was dead indeed in her, but peace and perfect happiness were born; imaged in her tranquil beauty and profound repose. (524)

In the same manner Glover sentimentalises the seraphic beauty of “Little Jessie” in death, and like Dickens, begins by exclaiming, “Jessie was dead!”:

There in the roadway opposite the door, whither (according to the superstitious custom of the people) the landlord had had the dying child carried out, lay darling little Jessie on a rush mat. The moon fell upon her upturned face, revealing its lovely features in all the calm of placid sleep, amid a tangled wealth of golden ringlets. With one arm out, she looked as though she had just thrown herself down in utter weariness, and was now at rest in a most sweet and tranquil slumber. Beautiful indeed it was to see; but oh, the pathos of it! Set in an aureole of golden hair, the pale sweet face of the child-martyr looked, in the moon's soft light, as the face of an angel; for the scarce cold clay, though wearing still the impress of her stern discipline of sorrow, was luminously fair, as if reflecting the very radiance of the glory into which her spirit had even now entered. Beside her, supported by Miss Gates, sat the stricken mother, in calm resignation to the will of Him who was calling her for His Name’s sake to part with her eldest, as but a little while since He had asked her youngest. (345)

At a time when child mortality was still high in Britain, Glover draws from what was, in terms of reader-reaction, the most evocative child-death narrative of the nineteenth century:

the fictional death of Nell Trent. In this way the aesthetic symbolism of Jessie's death speaks to a readership beyond the evangelical community, to all those affected by the tragic loss of innocence that she represents. Both Nell and Jessie are products of sentimentality, a generic staple of Victorian publishing; but as Margo Masur points out: "Sentimentality, like sensationalism, abstracts the concept of death to whatever response it wants us, its audience, to feel" (20). Jessie's death-description as a sleeping angel, memorialises the purity of her existence in a corrupt world. The reader reacts to the pathos of such beauty destroyed. She is a symbol of Christian virtue amid the depravity of heathen vice: "the superstitious custom of the people"; and she is a child-martyr in God's "noble army". With no last words to impart, Glover positions a description of her character in an earlier page, noting she had "the suffering patience and self-forgetfulness of maturer years". He adds: "I remember particularly little Jessie's concern for her mother, as at night she would beg her to change places with her on the hard earth floor, because she was 'sure her own bed was the more comfortable!'" (337). Through sublimation, Glover can control how readers perceive the promise of heaven – Jessie's tranquil new home. But her idealised corpse softens the reality of her death. Jessie's father, Alexander Saunders, wrote an unvarnished account of her death in *A God of Deliverances* in 1901. Far from beautiful, Jessie's face was "pinched and wan" and her body had been "reduced to skeleton" from dysentery. He had to sit "all night long by the side of the body to keep the dogs away" (80-1). Glover himself had earlier described both Jessie and Mrs Cooper's arms: "from the shoulder to the elbow, [there] were gangrened sores, alive with maggots" (334). It seems for Glover, the child-martyr's symbolic capital lay not with the true abjection of the death scene, but in the abstract, sentimentalised-spectacle of its "beauty".

Writing the spectacle of death and recording the last words of fellow missionaries within the greater saga of the Boxer uprising Glover believed, was a duty: "entrusted to me by God for his glory" (ix). But in his role as God's scribe he had to impart the experience of death in accordance with God's plan for *life after* death, and render it meaningful to the expectations of a reading audience. This he did through the model of the "good death": recording the business of Christian dying while shaping the soul's passage to eternity; providing spiritual reassurance as he enshrined new martyrs in God's army; while immortalising "little Jessie" with sentiment and symbolism through the "beautiful death" of romance. Overall, *A Thousand Miles of Miracle* tells the story of a journey-ordeal; of persecution and captivity; and of the narrator's survival but at the cost of others. In this way the book takes on the theme of martyrdom within the matrix of romance – with reference to

those missionaries killed in the Boxer Rebellion. The second part of the chapter examines a collection of last letters of missionaries facing imminent death. Both Glover's book, and the last letters, extend the Protestant martyrology first produced in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* of the sixteenth century, and convey the Boxer uprising as the next major period of Protestant martyrdom in history.

PART II

Last Letters: Martyred Missionaries of the Boxer Rebellion

In the summer of 1900 as China was shaken by currents of civil and international unrest, missionaries in the Northern provinces became increasingly conscious of their vulnerability to encroaching Boxers. By the time imperial troops had entered the foreign purge the chance to flee Shanxi had disappeared.¹⁷ Powerless to remain at their stations, small groups of missionaries fled to caves in the mountains where they hid for weeks as condemned criminals under the spectre of impending death. Alert to signs of imminent discovery, some of these fugitives “succeeded in writing and secreting a last message to their loved ones at home” (M. Broomhall *Letters* 10). These farewell messages remained more than the treasured final words of a dearly-departed to friends and family, to the missionary fraternity they became “priceless” relics for “the whole Church of God” in their witness to unswerving conviction in the face of death (10). The last vestige of communication left to the world by these missionaries, together with accounts from some who escaped, form the substance of Marshall Broomhall’s publication, *Last Letters & Further Records of Martyred Missionaries of the China Inland Mission* (1901).

Broomhall’s compilation of *Last Letters* was published less than twelve months after his initial book *Martyred Missionaries of the China Inland Mission: With a Record of the Perils & Sufferings of Some Who Escaped* in January 1901. The first book displayed a collection of memorial notices, newspaper articles, letters of sympathy and survivor accounts hastily amassed and printed within a few months of the cessation of Boxer hostilities. The second book contained more detailed intelligence as to the cause, scale and consequence of events, additional survivor accounts, and crucially for this study, the last letters written by seven martyred missionaries of the China Inland Mission. The final messages of an additional four English Baptist missionaries were published in 1904 by Robert Forsyth in *The China Martyrs of 1900*; and five American Oberlin missionaries in 1903 by E.H. Edwards in *Fire and Sword in Shansi*. Collectively, these publications become not only an authoritative register for eye-witness accounts of the Boxer uprising in Shanxi, they also provide a valuable cache of material for enquiry into the written-self facing its own mortality.

The content of these letters is essentially very similar – predictably so perhaps, written as they were in extremis under the shadow of impending capture. Some of the letters are merely short and vital messages secreted before imminent execution. Others are written in diarised form over a period of weeks as the missionaries hid in the mountains, or remained helplessly confined to their stations. They furnish the reader with background to their current circumstances together with the details of hourly existence – from the banalities of food, sleep and weather, to cathartic outpourings of mental and emotional strain. The longer letters afforded space for pensive speculation and expressions of hope or despair, while the language used oscillates from fear and regret, to resolution, composure and even anticipation.

As foreign fugitives, proscribed by imperial decree and hunted by the militia, the missionaries were dependent upon trusted locals for snippets of outside news – news of Western gunboats off China; the proximity of soldiers or Boxer-vigilantes; the possibility of protection by local magistrates, or the chance of imperial counter-decree. Of critical importance to them was news of, or more crucially, news from, fellow missionaries. Their letters speculate on the fate of others, with those known to have died, hailed as martyrs – tacitly acknowledging that they too, will be given the same title in death. Indeed, their letters are published within an editorial matrix of martyrdom that seals them as sacred, while sanctifying their contribution to a shared heritage of public witness. To the missionary, martyrdom is Christian purpose and identity fulfilled.

Writing in the face of death for the persecuted missionaries of the Boxer era carried responsibility. Believing that their entrapment lay at the heart of a confrontation of major consequence to both Christian and world history, compounded the missionaries' obligation to leave a record of their last moments. As missionaries they held a prophetic understanding of world history and their place within it – as agents for the fulfilment of the kingdom of God. Should their covert messages survive the uprising – entrusted as they were into the hands of courageous converts, concealed in caves or buried in the hills – the Shanxi missionaries would have been sure of their teleological worth. Communiques to the living from the departed-in-Christ were meant to be more than precious keepsakes to comfort loved ones. By their very nature as testaments to persecution, they participated in the culture-making aspects of Christian identity. These words, fervently recorded before discovery, contributed to the inscription of a “memory” of suffering first manifest in the literature of early Christianity. The formation of memory that gave meaning to the term “martyr”, had accrued from a seemingly unbroken line of commemorative interpretation. This interpretation reinscribed the sacrificial

dynamics of Christian culture for the believing community of the early twentieth century and beyond. As Elizabeth Castelli argues, the formation of a collective memory of suffering is foundational to Christian culture, and the ideological inheritance embedded in the concept of martyrdom comes from “centuries of repetition and reinscription” (4, 33).¹⁸ While the last letters of the Shanxi missionaries contain the kind of intimate communication one would expect from a final farewell to loved ones, they also bear the mantle of public witness, engaging in the rhetoric of martyrdom “in the ongoing generation and generativity of collective memory” (69).

This second part of the chapter examines the ways in which missionaries register their parting testaments to the world, and how these sentiments reflect the self as it faces mortality. Steeped in crucicentric understandings of life, death and resurrection, the missionary vocation had in a sense, been in training for martyrdom since ancient times. Through an internalisation of the literature of early martyrs, their models of speech and behaviour and the ideal principles they exemplified, would-be martyrs were able to cultivate a particular kind of self in death – namely a “suffering self” (Kelley 729). In the following, I explore how, or whether, in the relative immediacy with which the missionaries’ last letters were written, these idealised values were conflicted or perpetuated. In addition, I examine the patterns and themes that emerge, and consider how these characteristics influence the conception of self conveyed. Before examining the missionaries’ letters however, first it would be valuable to look at how the concept of martyrdom and the power it holds for the Christian community has been interpreted since antiquity. Second, it is important to understand the significance of epistolary to the missionaries of the early twentieth century – how written correspondence functions as a textual performance of the self, and how the notion of a last letter shatters the mutuality of its conventions. Finally, and before examining the letters, I will outline the circumstances in which the letters came to be written.

Martyrdom and Identity

The concept of a “noble death” in Western thinking can be traced to its roots in Stoic and Judaic tradition. Hellenistic philosophy considered suicide a deed of honour when the integrity of one’s life was impeded, while for Maccabean Jews, death met in resistance to compulsory violation of ancestral law demonstrated to the Jewish nation one’s constancy to God.¹⁹ Early Christian martyrdom was modelled on Maccabean fidelity to God, but God in a

universal sense, not a deity attached solely to one nation. Further to Jewish precedent, the New Testament's explication of the propitiatory death and suffering of Jesus provided both a definitive model, and an interpretive framework for later reconstructions of martyrdom.²⁰ The term "martyr" taken from the Greek, meaning to witness or testify, had by the second century come to be associated with sacrifice. To suffer martyrdom was an assertion of faith that worked to fortify believers, subvert oppressors and convert the infidel. The martyr made the ultimate testimony for Christ through the spilling of their blood.

Scholarship on the interpretation of martyrdom ranges from debates on the historicity of events, to martyrdom's discursive ambit and its permeation of Christian memory and identity. In her book *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (2004) Elizabeth Castelli examines the origins of Christianity's own understanding of martyrdom. Avowedly unconcerned with reconstructing historical reality, she reveals how the constructed memory of episodes of martyrdom, reiterated, and perpetually reinscribed in later narratives, forms the ideological bedrock of Christian memory. In this way martyrdom became integral to Christian identity. Castelli focusses on the autobiographical accounts of three, second-to-third-century Christians (Ignatius of Antioch, Perpetua and Pionius) in their preparation for martyrdom, engaging with, and complicating, Foucault's genealogical analysis of personal writing. She suggests that the self-portraiture in which these martyrs were engaged blurs, but at the same time augments, Foucault's notion that self-writing of the period moved "straightforwardly from public (exteriorized) to private (interiorized) forms of writing" (6). Claiming that these writers undertook to leave "a written remainder" or "a public memory text" for the ongoing community, she suggests this process also served as a form of self-crafting (6). In short, as martyrs-in-the-making they produced a public self ready-made for remembrance. In addition, Castelli examines how from its earliest examples, the collective memory of martyrdom was crafted from available opinion, practices and expressive styles of classic civilisation.

Carole Straw in "'A Very Special Death': Christian Martyrdom in its Classical Context" also draws attention to the cultural context from which the Christian definition of martyrdom was formed. She argues that as participants in Greco-Roman culture early Christian martyrs were obliged to appeal to the same classical values of "honor, courage" and the "glory" of a good death as means to "defeat the pagans on their own terms" (40). She suggests the rhetorical strategy employed by Augustine and other Christian apologists established "one-upmanship" arguments, displaying an identity with their adversaries' values

through cultural mimesis, while at the same time transcending them (40). The Roman gladiator died with glory, unconquered by the fear of death; but by reshaping the meaning of heroic behaviour, the Christian martyr conquered death itself.

Like Castelli, Daniel Boyarin and Judith Perkins view martyrdom as a discourse. Not an “entity” nor merely a violent event that happened, martyrdom is a language that changes and develops as it creates, inverts and subverts the meaning of violence. By redefining the semantic implications of persecution binaries – dominance and passivity; triumph and defeat; living and dying – martyrdom destabilises imperial authority, providing a language of, and a means for, resistance to those similarly oppressed. Boyarin describes the discourse as “a practice of dying for God and of talking about it” (*Dying* 94) through circulating and “recirculating motifs, themes, religious ideas” (“Martyrdom” 617). The business of creating a martyr-narrative required language and perspective. Boyarin muses: “For the ‘Romans,’ it didn’t matter much whether the lions were eating a robber or a bishop, and it probably didn’t make much of a difference to the lions, either, but the robber’s friends and the bishop’s friends told different stories about those leonine meals. It is in these stories that martyrdom, as opposed to execution, or dinner, can be found.” (*Dying* 94-5).

Classical antiquity again holds the key to Christian self-definition according to Judith Perkins, through the construction of “self as sufferer”. She locates the origins of the “triumph” of the Christian institution within an early “discursive struggle” between contending modes of “self-apprehension” (3, 12). Drawing from a number of locations in the early Roman Empire and examining a range of narratives from martyrdom to romance, she traces the evolution of a subject preoccupied with pain and suffering. These texts’ rejection of Greco-Roman modes of existence that privilege practices of self-mastery – or the mind’s dominion over the body – and their re-presentation of the “human self as a body in pain” (2), worked to provide Christians with a self-definition that became crucial to the identity and growth of the Church: Christians became a *community* of sufferers. Their affliction was embraced and transformed into a source of transcendent power. Thus suffering became the basis of an intimate relationship with the divine.

The Reformation of the sixteenth century, viewed through a Protestant historical imagination of martyrdom, was the greatest period of witness for Christ since the early church. Suffering, in much Christian interpretation, was seen within the context of the last days, and as Paul Middleton argued in *Radical Martyrdom and Cosmic Conflict in Early*

Christianity, martyrs conceived of themselves as foot soldiers in a cosmic contest between God and the emissaries of Satan. They viewed their death as a “potent weapon in bringing about victory” (6). Yet the countdown to apocalypse experienced a degree of modification during the sixteenth-century Reformation when the cosmic struggle of old, came to be reinterpreted as a struggle between truth and falsehood. The transmutation of meaning was born of schisms of faith within the Christian Church, a doctrinal battle between Catholics and Protestants, intensified by the printing press and the publication of John Foxe’s martyrology, *Acts and Monuments* or Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*. Foxe’s polemical account of the sufferings of English Protestants under the reign of Catholic Queen Mary went through four editions during his lifetime (1563, 1570, 1576 and 1583), and by the nineteenth century had undergone multiple expansions or abridgements, as it was appropriated by editors to suit the political, national or doctrinal agenda of each era. William Haller argued in *The Elect Nation: The Meaning and Relevance of Foxe's Book of Martyrs* (1963) that Foxe’s own editions harnessed religion for a nationalist cause, celebrating England as a new Israel elected by God to restore the “true” faith.²¹ Whether or not Foxe intentionally depicted England as God’s “elect” nation, is open to debate, but David Loades comments that “as long as Elizabeth lived, the *Acts and Monuments* belonged in the armoury of the Establishment” creating a sense of “shared national experience” in its “demonization of the papacy” (4, 5). He adds that “its vivid and gruesome stories entered into the public imagination, combining the appeal of the horrific with a gratifying moral and religious message” (4).

The evangelical revival of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries saw a resurgence of interest in Foxe’s martyrology with numerous editions produced in the century up to 1877. The nineteenth-century editions have, however, been the subject of criticism for their influence upon subsequent scholarship. These “distorted Victorian editions” as Thomas Freeman refers to them, progressively corrupted the original text through “bowdlerizations, omissions, and even extensive rewriting” (23) as they attempted to stem the rise of Catholicism and Tractarianism in the first half of the century. John King, in his study of the literary aspects of Foxe’s book describes Stephen Cattley’s 1837 edition as “mangled” in so much as it tarnishes the artfulness of the narratives it contains (13). King suggests, in its original form the book was designed to supersede medieval hagiographies as articles of Christian faith, by replacing the miracles of saints with the witness of martyrdom. Regardless of whether death occurred or not, testifying to faith at the *risk* of death qualified as Foxean martyrdom. The sufferings of Foxe’s martyrs are horrific, and their testimonies of faith

unswerving, but their accounts vary widely in literary form. King lists them as: “anecdotes, autobiographical memoirs, legal examinations, sermons, ballads, beast fables, letters, tales, and romanticized adventure narratives” (15). In addition, Foxe constructs memorable death scenes by adapting *Ars moriendi* traditions to Protestant concerns, and by emphasising the faith-testimonies of laypeople.

Despite the distortion of Foxe’s original text however, and the “propagation of an increasingly narrow Protestant piety”, any persecution of the “true” church held resonance for Evangelicals of the Victorian era, particularly as their missionary endeavours expanded. (Haller 251). A significant strategy in religious politics was to promote one’s legitimacy as an heir to the martyrs, a defender of the truths for which they died. The events of the Boxer Uprising in China in 1900 were viewed as the next major period in history when Protestants were martyred en masse (despite there being just as many Catholics killed). As an indication of how significant the Boxer era is to the extension of Protestant martyrology, Archibald Glover begins *A Thousand Miles of Miracle* with a quote from an official address at the unveiling of a Memorial Tablet in Shanghai in 1902 that points out, from between 1661 to 1893 there had been 130 Protestant missionaries martyred in all parts of the world. Yet in the year between 1900 and 1901, 136 Protestant missionaries and 53 children (189) were martyred in China alone. Out of 88 mission workers in the province of Shanxi in June 1900, 47 had been killed.

The esteem with which the Protestant Evangelical community held Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs* and its symbolic resonance within Victorian missionary circles, can be seen in the flood of hagiographic literature published directly after the Boxer Uprising. Roger Thompson has made a study of the Taiyuan massacre, the most notorious, and in its premeditated callousness, the most defining incidence of martyrdom in the Boxer period, where forty-five missionaries, including their children, were beheaded in the courtyard of governor Yuxian’s compound. Thompson conducts a particularly forensic analysis of narrative sources and finds parallels between the writing of the Taiyuan story (see Appendix),²² and passages in the *Book of Martyrs*. His argument questions the credibility of published, Chinese-Christian, eye-witness accounts which document individual deaths in graphic detail months after the event. Such “preternatural specificity of detail” (68) included the missionaries’ countenance; their last words; the means of execution – whether proficient or prolonged; and the audience’s reaction. His scepticism implies there was a proclivity among Chinese Christians to emphasise hagiographical events through a familiar narrative structure.²³ Thompson also

points out the number of post-Boxer publications that specifically align themselves with the *Book of Martyrs*, such as Luella Miner's *China's Book of Martyrs* (1903) which begins:

A new "Book of Martyrs" at the beginning of the twentieth century – how inappropriate it seems! ... We have read with a sickening horror, yet with a glowing inspiration, the tales of faith and heroism; and have rejoiced in the thought that these things are records of a bygone age, that we live in a time when men have ceased to persecute the prophets, and stone those who preach against their corruptions. (67)²⁴

Breaching the Epistolary Pact

Letter writing was a staple requirement for mission life. Maintaining correspondence within the mission-society itself, both at home and among co-workers in China, was an accepted administrative responsibility designed to keep the home secretariat and neighbouring field operatives furnished with local intelligence – part of which would often find its way into mission journal publications for broad circulation. Private correspondence with family and friends however, was an emotional necessity to palliate the strain of global separation. Yet for missionaries at the turn of the twentieth century the notion of "private correspondence" had elastic margins that would readily expand to include circulation within the Christian community from whence they came.²⁵ No matter how public the perception of private correspondence might be, the missionary could find solace in letters – writing exercises where images could be projected, and where thoughts could be tabled without need for conclusion. Reaching out to home recipients through words on paper could help breach the divide, stem the isolation and edify the soul, just as much as the activity sought to make present that which was absent. Letters had the power to remove the distraction of the body away from the speaker, enabling a more intense, cerebral connection with the receiver. To the missionary stationed in central China, the letter was a life-line to familiar culture and a vehicle for social interaction with a closely-identifying epistolic community.

Liz Stanley discusses three analytical properties that characterise epistolary. First, letters are "dialogical", at least in the case of mutual correspondence where communication unfolds through turn-taking and reciprocity (albeit spatially and temporally interrupted between the writing and the reading). Second, they are "perspectival", they are not fixed but accommodate to the particular time, situation, and addressee. The writer might also adopt a voice, rhetorical tone, or even a persona such as playfulness or formality. And third, they are "emergent", their properties are not "occasioned, structured or their content filled by researcher-determined concerns", rather, they have their own compulsions, conventions, and

ethics which may change with the maturation of time (202-3). Stanley also views epistolary as a paradoxical form:

[T]he 'real' message of letters is not quite what is written; letters 'stand for' the writer, but only in their absence; the writer is not the 'actual person' but an epistolary version or emanation of them; what they write about is not the world as it is but that which is represented; and the moment of writing is conveyed to the reader but only after it has gone by. (214)

The reciprocal exchange established in letter writing according to Michel Foucault, exposes the writer and the recipient to a form of mutual scrutiny. It also serves as a form of self construction through the necessary generation of "a narrative of the self" ("Self Writing" 217). He suggests: "To write is thus to 'show oneself,' to project oneself into view, to make one's own face appear in the other's presence. And by this it should be understood that the letter is both a gaze that one focuses on the addressee (through the missive he receives, he feels looked at) and a way of offering oneself to his gaze by what one tells him about oneself" (216).

Yet despite the presumption of a response that accompanies most letter writing endeavours, each letter is, nonetheless, a one-way movement subject to receipt by a reader. Its entry into a dialogical exchange is a situation "made tolerable by conventions" (Ong 418). Where face-to-face communication is performed as a dance of give-and-take involving a series of tentative guess-and-reaction mood adjustments, letter writing does not afford such direct interplay. The writer must construct an alternative relationship with the reader that casts the reader in a virtual dimension. The writer must pretend the reader is present while writing, but unlike an oral conversation, cannot adjust to their mood and must therefore "confect a mood that he is likely to be in or can assume when the letter comes" (418). The reader in turn must adopt the mood fictionalised for them in order to attune to the writer's imagination.

With such subtlety of consensus at stake in the conventions of epistolary, the writer of a "last letter" seems to contravene the very essence of the epistolary contract. The breach of the rules of engagement that attend a final letter is profoundly shocking to the reader as it brings to a resounding halt all further communication. Its very finality invests it with dramatic significance beyond all previous writing, not least of all because knowledge of the writer's fate beyond the act of writing cannot be disassociated from the reading experience. The writer's creation of a virtual (textual) dimension in which to converse activates the reader's faculties to recreate the world presented, thus bridging the here and now of the writer with the

here and now of the reader, to converge in a time-neutral precinct. Psychologically invested to this degree, the reader can feel acutely involved in the events enmeshing the writer at the time of writing, sensing the elements of danger and anxiety that accompany them, while tragically, remaining powerless to take action.

While last letters can be understood as an epistolary sub-genre characterised by distinct thematic features, it is the gravity of their symbolic resonance, more than any other aspect that classifies them as unique. The assumption that underlies the institution of last words, as Karl Guthke points out, is that “what a person says in the expectation of imminent death is to be considered infinitely more weighty than virtually anything that was said before this moment of truth” (20). Last words were an important part of public executions for centuries, generating a vast array of publications from tracts, to chapbooks, and even folksongs that reported the dying speeches of the executed – whether royalty, criminals or clergy. A fascination with the end, and the immense popularity of what Guthke calls “the gruesome charm of the genre” even spawned parodic publications that mockingly sketched the “Dying Words of the Bank of Ireland” or “Queen Ann’s Guinea” (20). But despite the public fascination with the last *words* spoken before death, the authenticity of these words could be questionable when recorded by others in print. On the other hand, last *letters* written before death remain tangible proofs of authenticity, commemorative relics inscribed by soon-to-die writers, leaving traces of bodily existence through their handwriting.

Anthony Ross discusses how letters, as material artefacts, “brought two things to ‘presence’ simultaneously, symbols (words) and substrate (the paper they were written on)”; and in the confluence, the “material object carried with it something of the auratic presence of the author” (66). Writing to his daughter before his execution, Sir Thomas More’s unfinished letter written with charcoal on a piece of cloth, reflects the extremity of his prison situation, and the very humanness of his resolve to leave behind a symbolic presence.²⁶ No matter by what medium – ink, charcoal, graphite or blood – handwriting (as opposed to typescript) is a “product” with what Ross labels as “affective resonance” (62). Handwriting has long been connected with one’s identity and personality. Legally our signature is considered an attestation of identity – our proxy for bodily absence, our utterance in lieu of speech. Handwriting is also popularly believed to express personality – our quirks or conformities of character are said to be decipherable from its style. And through this connection with the body, and perceived window to identity and character, a handwritten letter is therefore considered a more intimate communication than interaction through the processed uniformity

(impersonality) of typewritten text. The subtle interplay of qualities that produce “resonance” are captured in biographer Edmund Morris’s words: “Script’s primary power is to convey the cursive flow of human thought, from brain to hand to pen to ink to eye – every waver, every loop, every character trembling with expression. Type has no comparable warmth” (qtd. in Ross 63).

In their handwritten state letters can transmit semiotic clues as to the writer’s circumstances and state of mind. As Liz Stanley observes, not only do they “involve a performance of self by the writer”, but also, “they are clearly a form in flight”, containing “mistakes, crossings out” and “intimations of things there is no time or space to include” (212-13). Along with characteristic forms of punctuation, turns of phrase and forms of address, letters may appear fragmented by interruptions, with their legibility and intelligibility subject to time constraints and the ebb and flow of the writer’s feeling. However, letters are not simply means for conveying signs; their materiality makes them gifts in their own right. Anthony Ross employs Walter Benjamin’s notion of “aura” to illustrate the symbolic resonance attached to some letters. Some, by virtue of their origin, properties, attachment to institutions, people or happenings, accrue enough cultural significance to become revered. To be in the “presence” of this type of letter, whilst aware of its historical or cultural import “is to feel its aura shining upon you” (64). Letters of this kind can elicit an emotional response as might the realisation that, for instance, a luminary poet such as John Keats “had this piece of paper when it was a blank sheet, their hand touched it, their breath swarmed all over it, and they made something immortal out of nothing” (Motion qtd. in Ross; 65). “The auratic object...has an essential otherness, an alterity which confronts us and commands attention, invested with ‘the ability to look at us in return’” (Benjamin qtd. in Ross; 65). A haloed letter can invoke, question and affirm “our reverence for the people, things and traditions it represents” (65).

What constitutes such a commanding presence in some letters has much to do with the concentrated commitment that went into its writing. By the modern-day standards of instant communication, a handwritten letter seems increasingly, perhaps even quaintly, old-fashioned. The effort required to tap on a mouse or keypad to compose a letter, aided by the ability to delete, shuffle and import words or paragraphs, before “posting” them across cyberspace – all without having left the comfort of one’s chair, bed, or bus-seat – hardly compares with the labour and skill required to dip a pen in ink, plan and execute permanent words on paper, blot, seal and address an envelope, before “catching” the afternoon post. For

Albert Borgmann, the “art” of handwriting is a mind-focussing exercise: words committed “laboriously to paper” are “a guide to concentration and responsibility” (105). Without the electronic ability to delete words at will, there is a need to think concertedly before writing; one must “collect one’s thoughts and world, and ... gather them into a succinct account” (105). Indeed, for some, writing on paper is a form of refuge, a contemplative retreat from the stresses of life. Borgmann laments technology’s tendency to displace the “focal things and practices” that centre and enlighten us, giving insight into what is meaningful in life (122). Focal things belong to the world of the pre-modern, simple things that require patience, skill, and engagement: “a wilderness in hiking; a horse in grooming, training, and riding; a rod in fishing” (121). Epistolary in the nineteenth century was quintessentially a focal practice in which one could experience the centring power of material communication, affirm relationships and foster community, as it commanded a presence in people’s lives.

As the ultimate communicative exercise, epistolary in anticipation of death narrowed the focal aperture and sharpened the writer’s perception to convey to readers their final and most profound thoughts. Writing in the knowledge of one’s imminent mortality distilled life’s imperatives: distractions fell away; egoistic posturing served no purpose; and above all, an urgent honesty prevailed. Death’s inevitability engendered a need to leave the world with a lasting impression of one’s lived existence – an inscribed trace of the self offered as testament and farewell, expressing love, sadness or regret, tendering advice or consolation, making requests or stressing ideals.

The stark finality of these letters imbued them with dramatic intensity, but despite their disconcerting correlation, not all last letters were alike. The cause of the letters’ finality and the purpose for which they were written determined their classification, their exceptionality and most notably their legacy. The feelings expressed, and the motives for a suicide note are vastly different from the last letters of people about to be executed. Commenting on the death of Virginia Woolf, Sylvie Crinquand suggests the “only meaning to be found in suicide [is] that life has become unbearable”. Having chosen his or her own death the writer “is offering apologies for an upsetting act”. Above all the note is “meant to assuage the guilt induced in those who failed to prevent the suicide” (4). The ethical issues raised by suicide notes differ from for instance, the honourable or heroic attributions given to the last letters penned by soldiers before battle, or the questions of culpability or contrition that surround a prisoner’s last farewell. The reason for the writer’s demise and how they coped with the “rhetoric of closure” mattered as to how letters were remembered (3). The final

letters of resistance fighters sentenced to death for a patriotic cause differ in tone (often pride), purpose (righteous justification), and commemoration (reverence and vindication), from those of the persecuted Jewish *Shoah*. Death letters written amidst genocidal extermination exude a tone of helplessness. Zvi Bachrach, in his collation of last letters written by victims of the Holocaust, determines that they were not written “for the purpose of historical coverage, but out of personal pain, concern and grief” (9). Through commemoration they have become deterrent examples for a future “yearning for a sane and humane world” (65).

The last letters of religious martyrs refusing to apostatise their faith form yet again another category within this typology. Persecuted early Christians such as the Apostle Paul and later, Ignatius of Antioch, wrote last letters before martyrdom that had exhortative emphases. Their purpose was to instruct, their tone was commanding and their commemorative legacy formed the cornerstone of Christian culture-making through reiteration and reinscription – the perpetuation practices that generated martyrological memory.²⁷ Nikki Shepardson in her study of rhetoric, argues that martyrdom was premised on a communal paradigm, pointing out that martyrs often “specifically stated that the purpose of their letters (including accounts of their interrogations and imprisonment) was for the ‘edification’ and ‘consolation’ of their brethren” (112). Early Church Fathers such as Origen, Tertullian and Eusebius further developed these epistolic appeals to Christian kinship, employing a rhetoric built around “the importance of sacrifice, the centrality of suffering, and the rewards to be gained by remaining firm” in faith, to shape an “interpretation of martyrdom and persecution as part of God's larger plan for his chosen ones” (16, 17). The power of the martyr was fashioned through an inversion of meaning and authority. Through steadfast endurance “weak” martyrs became “champions” (also variously described as “soldiers” or “athletes of God”) bringing humiliation and dishonour upon their pagan persecutors; the victim became the victor (17).

The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century saw a resurgence of religious persecution that generated a new collection of martyr’s last letters – letters that reflected the division of Christendom and the shape of righteousness according to the particular needs of the movement that had claimed the martyr. The main focus for Protestant letter writers was that they “confessed and suffered willingly for the cause of God” (57). In their manuscript collections martyrologists such as Foxe in England, and Crespin in France, were focussed less, on an individual’s moment of death (as was common in Catholic hagiography) than they

were on the martyr's spoken or written confession of the "proper" faith. Their martyrs frequently urged family and friends to publicise their letters, "to give word of" or "to make public" their statement of faith (58). Like the martyrs of early Christianity, Reformist letter-writers and martyrology-authors emphasised the importance of community. Tapping into the collective memory of the past set the present martyrs on the same continuum, establishing both a rhetorical link and legitimacy for the Protestant cause. The sharing of the experience of martyrdom tied persecution and suffering to a communal identity in which the individual embodied the ideology of Reform (27).

Last Letters: the circumstances

The desperate situation in which the missionaries of northern China found themselves during the summer of 1900 was the corollary of years of national ferment, which was itself, symptomatic of an empire in imminent decline. A complex contingency of natural disasters, economic impoverishment, and foreign encroachment upon the sovereignty of a once-powerful nation had bred resentment and civil unrest among the people. Escalating discontent fuelled by the pangs of deprivation, led to vigilantism, in turn giving rise to the radical martial-arts movement the "Righteous and Harmonious Fists" (labelled "the Boxers" by the Western press) who pledged to rid the country of foreign influence. From its anarchistic roots in the province of Shandong to its official sanction as a legitimate militia by the Governor of Shanxi, the Boxer movement's xenophobic crusade had gathered extraordinary momentum by the time the Empress Dowager issued a decree, in June 1900, declaring a state of war with all foreign powers. In a previous decree in January, she had demanded the extermination of "secret societies" – which included Christian organisations – and encouraged the Boxer's "distinctive invulnerability rituals and anti-Christian focus" by declaring support for "legitimate self-defense societies" (Austin *Millions* 401). Anti-Christian violence intensified as the movement saw a "period of spectacular spread and growth". Numbering in the thousands by June, they streamed across Northern provinces to converge on the capital Beijing (Esherick 271). The Boxers cut a swathe of destruction through the city, burning churches and foreign residences, compelling diplomats, administrators, missionaries and Chinese Christians to seek refuge within the Legation Quarter. A joint force of Boxers and Imperial soldiers placed the Legations under siege for fifty-five days – an encounter popularised by film and text and remaining, arguably, the principal event that dominates

Western understandings of the Boxer era. The stronghold was famously broken by an international military alliance on the 14th August.

Despite the international attention given to the Chinese capital, little news had filtered out of the provinces to the Western world. Missionaries in the province of Shanxi would ultimately suffer the greatest number of fatalities, but to the outside world their plight was unknown. For the missionaries themselves, their only source of information was rumour. With telegraph lines destroyed and postal services closed, all communication had collapsed. Consequently, as Alwyn Austin points out, despite “an overwhelming sense of danger” missionaries continued much of their work “right up to the end – while Beijing was in flames” (*Millions* 402). Though they were oblivious to wider happenings, word of trouble was rife, proving serious cause for concern. Even so, the Shanxi missionaries harboured a fundamental belief that through their Christian witness over the past twenty years, their work among women and children, and their medical clinics and opium refuges, they had garnered positive acceptance in the province. Minor persecutions were common but “there had *never* been a major riot” (402). Writing of the American missionary experience, Nat Brandt suggests not only did their isolation leave them ignorant of the severity of the looming threat, they believed the “underlying cause of the Boxer propaganda was the drought” (148) and the superstitious notion that “foreign devils” were to blame. The missionaries also assumed the brunt of Chinese anger was directed towards Catholic missionaries for displays of power and wealth: their land holdings were extensive, and their exercise of extraterritorial legal privilege afforded them unequal protection from prosecution.²⁸

Missionaries soon realised the gravity of their predicament however, once war had been declared and appeals to local officials for protection were refused. In a letter dated July 2, American missionary Louise Partridge reports how the Boxer movement “has swept over the country like a flood carrying all before it” (qtd.in Cohen, *Keys* 327). Under the auspices of Shanxi’s new governor, Yuxian,²⁹ indoctrination teams were afforded free reign to recruit local villagers (boys in particular) to be trained as “spirit soldiers” (Austin *Millions* 396). In his study of the Boxers, *History in Three Keys* (1997), Paul Cohen details the psycho-physical transformation of the soldier-trainees performing drills in public spaces and demonstrating to bystanders an apparent imperviousness to all injury. Local witnesses associated their sword-wielding rituals and hypnotic incantations with supernatural powers and spirit possession (98-118). By June 1900, with growing numbers of recruits, the rising sense of fervour sweeping China’s provinces was inescapable. Rowena Bird from the American Oberlin Mission

expresses the critical risk now posed for missionaries when she writes on June 25 – a few weeks before her death:

These are most trying times – famine threatens the people with starvation – the dry, hot weather makes all ill, and the Boxers are threatening the destruction of the country by robbing and killing missionaries and Christians ... The country is full of the wildest rumors and threats. The people have nothing to do but talk and they talk of killing the foreigners and Christians and we feel that the end may not be far off for any of us ... things grow worse and worse and if the rains hold off it is hard to say what violence may not ensue. We know God could send relief thru rain if He thot best, and we know all our interests are in His hands (qtd. in Cohen 79-80).

The month of July was the apogee of China's great exodus as consuls advised their nationals to head to the coast or leave the country by whichever route possible. But for Shanxi missionaries under the proscription of hard-line Governor Yuxian, the choice was limited. An attempt to flee was as deadly as it was to stay, since the government's ruse of expelling foreigners ostensibly "for their protection" was merely to drive them into the hands of hostile mobs waiting outside city walls. Strategically, "the Boxers bore the guilt of massacring them" (A.H. Broomhall 7:350). Some were fortunate to receive an escort through hostile regions at the behest of compassionate officials, but others were forced to take their chances, leaving under the cover of darkness for isolated regions in the mountains, often with the aid of loyal converts who placed themselves at great risk.³⁰ For many there was a consciousness that their journey re-enacted a drama of biblical significance. Inevitably robbed of their belongings, "destitute, wounded, cursed and pelted with stones like pariah dogs they stumbled, often barefoot and half naked, without covering from the sun, on and on for hundreds of miles" (7:355). Here the parallel is often made with Hebrews 11:37-38:

They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented (Of whom the world was not worthy) they wandered in deserts, and *in* mountains, and *in* dens and caves of the earth.³¹

With missions dotted all over Shanxi Province, groups one by one were forced to flee as the ripple effect of persecution fanned out from the capital Taiyuan. Some in the more isolated regions reported feeling "quite safe" into the second week of July, oblivious to the brutal murder of scores (by that time) of their colleagues in neighbouring towns.³² But in the capital, the tension of danger was constant from June 27 when the Schofield Memorial Hospital – the showpiece of central China – was burnt to the ground. For the next twelve days forty-five foreign men, women and children were held under "protection" in secure compounds. Dr Millar Wilson smuggled a letter to Rev Dreyer in Pingyang: "It's all fog, but I

think old chap, that we are on the edge of a volcano, and I fear Taiyuan is the inner edge. I'd rather be where you are." (A.H. Broomhall 7:377). On July 9 they were marched to the governor's courtyard and beheaded. As news of the Taiyuan massacre filtered to the wider province and the purge of foreigners redoubled, compassionate officials could no longer shield missionaries. The cocoon of serenity was broken on July 12 in the south-western town of Daning (Great Peace), when English sisters Edith and May Nathan and Australian, Mary Heaysman, received news of the murder of their colleagues Emily Whitchurch and Edith Searell in Xiaoyi one month earlier. The women fled to the hills, living in a farmhouse before taking refuge in derelict temples and caves. "After long and anxious hiding they were at last caught, and on 13th August were put to death" (Edwards 90).

The Nathan sisters' accounts of their final weeks were published in Marshall Broomhall's *Last Letters* together with those of five others. Duncan Kay and his wife and child left the town of Quwu under the cover of darkness on July 6 hoping to hide in the mountains until the danger passed. Their forty-mile journey was fraught with considerable danger, sheltering where they could for nearly two months before being murdered by a band of Boxers on September 15. They were survived by three children who were at school in Chefoo. On July 21 William and Helen Peat and their two children, with Edith Dobson and Georgina Hurn, fled Xixian for the mountains where they hid in a cave for twenty days before being captured, and returned to the city. "Regarded as the off-scouring of the earth; they were refused protection" by a magistrate "and sent in the usual squalor from city to city". After "weeks of weary wandering and imprisonment" they were attacked by Boxers and "put to death on August 30" (A.H. Broomhall 7:403).³³ Excerpts from the last letter written by Dr Arnold Lovitt who was one of the forty-five killed in the Taiyuan massacre, were also published in *Last Letters*. Written after escaping the hospital fire that claimed the life of mission colleague, Edith Coombs, he details the grim situation that he and his fellow missionaries find themselves in. Addressed to "Dear Friend", and left "in the hands of a trusty native to give to the first foreigner who might come along", Dr Edwards writes in *Fire and Sword* that he received it in Beijing twelve months later (66). Concerning the Taiyuan massacre, he adds:

"It was known that other letters were written by the missionaries, and entrusted to the care of one of Mr. Farthing's helpers for safe keeping. Fearing for his own life, he handed them over to a money shop which had done business for the Missions, and eventually they fell into the hands of the officials, who, evidently fearing they would contain incriminating evidence against themselves, unfortunately burned them" (66).

Further letters to have been recovered and published posthumously in the first few years following the Boxer uprising reproduce the seemingly ubiquitous scenes of desperation in which Shanxi missionaries found themselves. On July 29 after receiving news of the burning of the hospital in nearby Taiyuan, Rev. H Dixon and seven other missionaries from Xinxian fled to the mountains where they lived in a cave for four weeks until they were found by soldiers, returned to the town, and imprisoned. On August 9 they were told they would be escorted to the coast, but once driven to the city gates, they were “dragged from their carts and brutally murdered”. Diaries and letters of their weeks in the mountains were later recovered from where they had been buried in the hills (Edwards 98). So too, Australian missionary David Barratt wrote of his decision to flee to the hills of Liangma on July 6. He subsequently died “in consequence of his suffering and privation” (95). Two groups who remained at their stations until it was too late to leave were the American Oberlin missionaries at Taigu and Fenzhou. The first group of six missionaries, including Rowena Bird and Louise Partridge, were attacked and beheaded by a mob of three hundred Boxers at the instigation of Governor Yuxian on July 31. “The heads of them all were sent in a basket to Taiyuan to the Governor”, whereupon Yuxian would report for commendation to the Empress his personal head-tally of fifty-one (Forsythe 69). The second group of ten, including the heavily pregnant Elizabeth Atwater, Charles and Eva Price, and three children, remained at their isolated Fenzhou station under the protection of a sympathetic prefect until August 15. Upon the prefect’s death they were ordered to leave for the coast where, once again, the ruse was to have them ambushed a few miles into the journey. Soldiers “despatched them with their swords and bayonets, then stripped them of their clothing, and left their bodies by the roadside” (72).

Crossing the Bar: the threshold of the self

Few historical texts seem as personal and compelling to read as last letters, but their collation and publication serve to further a mission agenda. The three books in which these letters were published made their editorial purpose clear – they were to “be used of God, to provoke us all to faith” (M. Broomhall *Letters* 10). And the modes of provocation upon which the books relied were pathos, and qualities of heroic dedication – “the same meek forgiveness, the same unalterable constancy” that would be “of a piece” written in a page “added to the Book of Martyrs” (Edwards 9). But if we divest them of their emotional and homiletic

properties, we can appreciate these documents for much more. As first-hand evidence of events as they happened, they are exceptional for their historical significance, but as records written in the solemn lucidity of final days, hours or moments of life, they represent the missionaries' ultimate conversation with the self. How these final messages to the world reveal their very human articulations of selfhood can be explored through the language, themes, convictions and apprehensions of confronting one's own demise.

At first inspection the Shanxi letter-collections communicate a sense of duty – a duty to inform and offer reasons for the situation at hand, a duty to console family and friends, and a duty to inspire others by example. Thrust as they were into a state of hypervigilance, not knowing what an hour or a day might bring, letter writing seemed to offer the missionaries a centring force, a focal practice to steady anxiety, and a vocational norm to ground their purpose. Yet the threads of Christian duty common to all the letters, whether in brief last-minute messages or daily instalments over weeks, were also constituent parts of the self. Beyond duty, this time of trial documents the liminal self in formation – the self conceived of and projected in writing, the self poised on the threshold of annihilation – but also on the threshold of becoming.

In a letter to his mother on July 25, Scottish born William Peat fulfils the role of dutiful missionary reporting the situation in which his small party find themselves. Although he writes of the difficulty of managing suspense, he maintains a degree of restraint when conveying alarming news to his audience (represented by “Dear Mamma”). His composure is buoyed by delivering facts, practical decisions, and an assurance of comfort from God's Word. It is in his second paragraph however, that the rhetoric of martyrdom comes to the fore, using the language of contemplation and glory, self-abjuration and responsibility – words of inspiration, albeit in the form of indecision. Here he permits himself to speculate upon the merits of being “spared” for the sake of China, or being “taken”, which for their “own benefit” would be “very far better”.³⁴ His ambivalence over the choice is thankfully, not his to decide, but then he tenders an ambiguous preference: the “hope ... that God is going to deliver us”. “Deliverance” is a nebulous term, commonly used in these letters, but one indicative of the ambivalence of self-portrayal in last writing. Used here, “deliver” can be interpreted in the temporal sense as rescue from Boxer enemies, yet in the biblical, New Testament sense, it aligns with salvation and redemption – deliverance from evil (death) into everlasting life beyond death. Approaching the threshold of life (death into life) involves constructing a self built on a set of contradictory logics. Christianity holds both the

development of the individual self, and the diminishment of the self crucial to preparation for death. Forced to incorporate the two, William Peat's letter like those of all the writers, quite logically bears currents of indeterminacy:

MY DEAR MAMMA,

After a long time of anxious suspense, not knowing what a day might bring forth, we were at last obliged (four days ago) to flee to these mountains, where we are in hiding in "caves of the earth". We escaped none too soon, for the day after we left 300 Boxers arrived at Sih-cheo and burnt down our dear home, very angry indeed that we had escaped their clutches ... it is said that they will search the hills for us in order to kill us. We have just heard of the murder of the Youngs, McConnells and child, Misses Burton and King, and native servant ... We were told to-day that we ourselves and the three Ta-ning ladies are the only foreigners still alive in the Province ...

The question arises in our minds, Are we to be saved a remnant for the glory of God in the Province or are we to be taken to join our glorified brothers and sisters who have gone on before? Which to choose we have difficulty in deciding. When we think of our own benefit we would like to go to be with Christ, which is very far better; but when we think of the need of workers in China and the weak native Church, we would fain be spared for longer service among our dearly loved people. But it is good that the decision is out of our hands, and in the will of our loving Father in Heaven who doeth all things well. Yet, one does hope and believe that God is going to deliver us out of the hands of our enemies ...

It will be soon six weeks since we had any news from the outside world. We know not what country or countries are fighting with China. Of course it's all for good to all who love the Lord, and what a glorious fruitage there will be in the future Church in China! ...

Shan-si [is] at present governed by the wicked Governor Yü-hsien. The suspense is very difficult to bear, and yet the Lord is very good, and His Word is very comforting and suited to our times of need. Now I must close this brief note, as we must prepare to move. In event of our being discovered I will have this buried where it can be found by the natives and sent to you. With warmest love "till He come" Your own loving son,

WILLIE. (M. Broomhall *Letters* 29-31)

Two days later, on July 27, Peat leaves one last message. With "choice" no longer for deliberation, he embraces the "suffering self" of martyrdom wholeheartedly and commiserates with those he leaves behind, for where he is going is "very far better"; before adding the definitive martyr's quote "We rejoice that we are made partakers of the sufferings of Christ" taken from 1 Peter 4:13 – and featured as an epigraph in Broomhall's Last Letters.

MY DEAR MAMMA, UNCLE SANDEMAN, AND ALL DEAR FRIENDS,
The soldiers are just on us, and I have only time to say "Good-bye" to you all. We shall soon be with Christ, which is very far better for us. We can only now be sorry for

you who are left behind and our dear native Christians. Good-bye! At longest it is only “till He come”. We rejoice that we are made partakers of the sufferings of Christ, that when His glory shall be revealed we may “rejoice also with exceeding joy”. With our warmest, dearest love. Your loving son and nephew, etc.,

W. G. PEAT. (31).

As William Peat shows, the period of deliberation preceding the finale of earthly life becomes a formative space – the missionary in the act of martyr identity-formation – and in its state of instability the newly forming self is given to expression. The chief source of expression to which missionaries turn is the Bible. Georgina Hurn uses biblical metaphor to explain their situation in her last letter on July 25, likening their ordeal to an Abrahamic pilgrimage and a dream:

The last few days we feel we have been like Abram, who went out not knowing whither he went; also like pilgrims and strangers, with no certain place of abode. I cannot tell you how I feel these days, it seems as if one were in a dream out of which one almost dreads to come (32).

Georgina’s expression of persecuted wandering through biblical analogy creates an identifiable connection with, and for, her audience. In this way she participates in the three-way dialogue that the missionaries conduct in their last letters. Not only do they converse directly with their audience – “I cannot tell you how I feel, it seems as if one were in a dream” and “You will not blame me for feeling like this”; rhetorical questions are directed to the self – “what are we against this great multitude?” and “What will be the end?”; but most importantly, they petition God, the arbiter of the self and the glue that binds all three conversants – “Why not now deliver us?” and “How long oh Lord, how long?”. Ever mindful of this tripartite engagement, the missionaries’ letters oscillate (sometimes erratically) between introspection, despair and uncertainty, hope and exhortation, praise and resolution. The letters also reveal a discernible pattern of consolation for loved ones, asking them not to see their death as a wasted life, and urgent requests to repent and meet them in heaven. Some mention their fears, at times betraying obvious panic, wondering how they will be killed, and if it will be like that of their friends, “hacked at with knives, I suppose” or “I don’t want to die, and such a death”. But they *always* add, as if to rally again and remind themselves of their audience, that God is keeping them in “perfect peace”. Before closing, their equivocation ceases as martyrdom looms and the earthly self anticipates transformation. Here they are quick to assure “We are ready” and counsel that “death is the gate of life”.

Paul Cohen devotes a chapter of his book *History in Three Keys* to experiential understandings of the Boxer Uprising (as opposed to historical or mythical interpretations) through a focus on the death and horror that encompassed the nation. His emphasis, more particularly, was on death-anxiety. Where death in most societies is attended by rituals to ease the transition across life's final divide, the experience of death in China in 1900 was largely "raw death, unadorned by ritual of any kind". Cohen posits death, more than any other experience, as "highly individual" with "the fear and apprehension surrounding it ... key to the formation of biographical consciousness". Death's unique properties "tend to pull people away from history and society, toward an intense concern with their own personal destinies" (176).

Amid the oscillation of emotion that attends the letter collections, death-anxiety features as a conspicuous undercurrent that derails the writer's attempts at composure. Long steeped in the maxim of "be not afraid" the soon-to-be martyr betrays the threshold-self through emanations of uncapped fear, often through physical manifestations that belie declarations of being kept in "perfect peace". Eva Price describes the emotional anxiety of waiting for almost certain death:

Nights are continual hours of anxious suspense, starting at every sound, and imagining an unruly mob surrounding us and taking our lives ... If we are to be murdered, one can but pray that it may come quickly and end our terrible suspense. Our friends at home will have suspense, but not such as ours, when the heart refuses to act properly, and knees and legs shake in spite of all efforts to be brave and quiet, trusting alone in God. We do trust in Him. That is our witness. No matter what comes, we are trusting Him, believing firmly that all this tumult and alarm and real danger, rumours of wars and terrible evil, are only working out His infinite purpose for good to come to China. Each day we live we feel it a deeper truth that man proposes and God disposes. If we die, we die in peace ... We leave it as a testimony to all who are wavering, who doubt, who deny—the grace of God *is* sufficient. Lovingly to all.

EVA. (Edwards 291-3)

Fellow American Louise Partridge dispels sentimental notions as she describes facing death in a letter of June 19:

If you want to know how folks feel facing death, don't read Robert Hardy's Seven Days' [sic] or that story in one of the late Independents. Ask some one whose [sic] been there ... It has impressed me strongly that I ought to write some messages to my family and special friends, but I just can't, my courage isn't equal to it. I can only keep up by following my accustomed regular routine ... I am ready & not afraid. That's all I can say. (Cohen 206)

One month later she writes of the news of the Taiyuan massacre:

There seems a little lull in our affairs; we have nothing to do now but to wait for death, or deliverance which seems impossible except by a miracle ... Excuse all mistakes – we are all more or less stunned and stupid. It is a trying two weeks we've passed ... It has almost broken my heart to write this letter. We talk much, but think as little as possible, and this made me think. Those dear people, they were so good and sweet and dear, and had done so much for China. I can't believe it yet. My heart almost murmurs. I can trust for myself and hope to be kept brave through it, though I don't know. I get awfully irritable under this close confinement. But why they must all be taken, I can't understand. Well, they are past all doubts and questionings now. (Edwards 295-301)

Irish born missionary Elizabeth Atwater, wrote to her brothers and sisters ten days before her death. Seemingly resolved to the inevitability of suffering pain, her period of restless deliberation has passed. She exhorts those she leaves behind to eschew temporal life for the life to come. In this way she advances a worthy martyr-self aligned with the collective narrative of old, while ensuring as “the one who lies in China” she will not be forgotten, thus “contributing to [her] own memorializing” (Castelli 70).

I have tried to gather the courage to write ... [about the massacre at Taiyuan where her stepdaughters had been beheaded]. We have tried to get away to the hills, but the plans do not work ... Dear ones, I long for a sight of your dear faces, but I fear we shall not meet on earth. I have loved you so much, and know you will not forget the one who lies in China ... I am preparing for the end very quietly and calmly. The Lord is wonderfully near, and He will not fail me. I was very restless and excited while there seemed a chance of life, but God has taken away that feeling, and now I just pray for grace to meet the terrible end bravely. The pain will soon be over, and oh! the sweetness of the welcome above ... I do not regret coming to China, but I am sorry I have done so little. My little unborn baby will go with me ... Dear ones live near to God and live less closely to earth. (Forsythe 72)

Twenty-three-year-old Australian missionary, David Barratt, gives free reign to poetry and metaphor to hearten and reassure himself, and others, in his last letter on July 6. He has just begun a routine letter to his associate, Dr Julian Hewett, when he is given news of the impending murder of the Taiyuan missionaries: “We studied some of the half-hundred ‘fear-nots’ of God this a.m., and had a blessed time indeed ... The people (missionaries) are all in one place, and may be killed any day, by order of her awful majesty ‘The Lord reigneth.’” The tone of the letter changes to one of hypervigilance, characterised by an erratic stream-of-consciousness that swings from circumstantial information, to proposed plans, to his physical response (predictably tempered by peace): “The news nearly made me faint, though His peace filled, and still does fill, my soul”. The interspersal of poetry and biblical verse, together with

what has now become a motif of biblical “fear nots” throughout, serves to buoy his courage and quell what is, after all, quite perceptible “fear”:

Realizing that Lu-ch’eng is no place for another foreigner, while on my knees (I think) Liang-ma was suggested to my mind as a place of refuge ... we can only trust in God, and do all as He gives wisdom, to ‘escape for thy life.’ I am quite peaceful in soul, though I feel awfully in body; felt like fainting a bit, since body not strong, truly fragile clay, soon smashed!

The credible possibility that he may soon be “in the glory” elicits the contemporary sea-faring verse by Tennyson “Crossing the Bar” to symbolise transition across the treacherous ocean-bar-of-death in trust to God’s piloting, to realise eternal safety on the other side.

So we are praying about it now quietly, and if God still points that way, this vigil with God will be all along the road. The old ship sinks, and the lifeboat must be put out, as our Father shows ... Ah, only our blessed Lord knows! All we have is His, and so we fear not ... ‘Fear not them which kill.’ He says, ‘Are ye not of much more value than many sparrows?’ ‘Peace, perfect peace,’ brother, and all at Lu-ch’eng. We may meet in the glory in a few hours or days. A nearer way than to go to Lu-ch’eng ... Now a sleep, no dinner, a quiet time with God, then ‘twilight and evening bell, and after that the dark’ (moonlight), and I know there will be ‘no moaning of the bar, when I put out to sea,’ because ‘Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee.’ (Glover 27-30)

Blood also features as a motif in these last letters. Amid the persecution and death of Christians during the Boxer regime, blood, spilled in the name of martyrdom, held a powerful symbolism that stretched back to the early Church. Tertullian’s famous dictum that the “blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church” is often alluded to in the missionaries’ final messages. As a life force, blood has a potency that strikes at the very conception of self, and to the Church it is considered a germinant for member growth. The notion that the very life-being of the Christian – their blood – becomes part of the landscape after death gives the martyr-self agency. Their blood sacrifice in China is generative of a far greater Church to come. Here Georgina Hurn refers to the blood “foundation” of the Church, and William Peat, to its “glorious fruitage”:

We know that after this time of trial China will be a very different land. Truly the foundation of the Church has been laid by blood; we know not at present how many lives have been laid down, either of foreigners or natives; what these rulers and governors will have to answer for, one cannot say (M. Broomhall *Letters* 33).

We know not what country or countries are fighting with China. Of course it’s all for good to all who love the Lord, and what a glorious fruitage there will be in the future Church in China! (30)

By focussing on the deaths of missionaries during the Boxer uprising, this chapter has shown how they extended the Protestant martyrology of the sixteenth century – first produced in Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs* – deeming it the next major period of martyrdom in Protestant history. With death looming inescapably large for Glover and his group of missionaries as they journeyed on their one-thousand-mile ordeal, he was obliged to both reconstruct the atmosphere of impending death for readers, and narrate the actual deaths around him. In doing so, he drew upon the generic conventions of captivity to frame his narrative. Yet the constraints under which he must write as a missionary, challenge a straightforward reading of the genre as a basis for heroic resistance, exposing his ambivalence to popular models of selfhood. The model of enlightened British manhood, he must withdraw from – or negotiate carefully. This he does through deference to God. As God’s agent he is able to triumph heroically.

The last letters of missionaries facing immanent death and Glover’s accounts of the deaths of fellow missionaries form the most significant representation of the self in evangelical life – that which I term the “threshold self”. In his role as God’s scribe Glover had to render death meaningful to the expectations of a reading audience. This he did through the model of a “good death” in accordance with God’s plan for *life after death*. The last letters of missionaries before death break the epistolary pact, never to be reciprocated, they remain testaments of faith linked to the collective memory of the martyrs of old. These letters represent the ultimate conversation with the self – but also with God and their reader. The liminal state before death for these missionaries is a self in formation – the self on the threshold of becoming.

¹ All references will be based on the 1919 edition, except when quoting letters published in the 2000 edition.

² Calling themselves the guild of the “Righteous United Fists”, it was the term Fists according to Glover, that “(improperly) gave rise to the notorious term ‘Boxers’” (15).

³ Historian Robert Bickers in *The Boxers, China, and the World* describes the Boxer Rebellion as a “wholly modern episode” in world history, pairing it with the Sepoy Mutiny in India as the two most appreciably violent incidences of Asian resistance to European imperialism in the long nineteenth century (xii). The Boxer regime-of-terror, initiated by the Righteous Harmony Society (or Righteous United Fists), had been waged under the slogan “Exterminate the Foreigners” since 1899. Imperial troops intensified the foreign purge following an edict from the Empress Dowager in June 1900 declaring a state of war with all foreign powers. Overall, in under two years to 1901, the uprising had resulted in a widely estimated 100,000 to 150,000 fatalities, including a possible 30,000 Chinese Christians and 270 foreign nationals – mostly missionaries (for estimates see for instance: Daniel H. Bays).

⁴ Glover makes reference to a number of his contemporaries’ publications made in the three years following the Boxer Uprising such as: Arthur H. Smith’s *China in Convulsion*; E H. Edwards’ *Fire and Sword in*

Shansi; Alexander R. Saunders' *A God of Deliverances*; Charles H. S. Green's *In Deaths Off*; as well as Marshall Broomhall's *Martyred Missionaries of the China Inland Mission*.

⁵ In the Foreword to the eleventh edition ninety-one-year-old Rev. Richard Glover, Archibald's father, writes of the joy of seeing his children as "instruments in the Saviours hand" and of "leading others ... by 'turning them', as this personal testimony is calculated to do" (vii).

⁶ Stanley Fish argued that members of the cultural collective share a set of interpretive strategies prior to reading that determine the shape of what is read. He believed members were as much products of their interpretive community, as were the meanings the group enabled them to produce (14). See discussion in Chapter Two.

⁷ David Bebbington refers to pre-millenarianism as largely an outlook of pessimism. As students of prophecy they looked for signs in world events to confirm the end times (*Evangelicalism* 102-104).

⁸ See Chapter 1 for discussion on the social-gospel or humanitarian, methods that characterised missionary endeavour towards the end of the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries (schools and hospitals). Prior to this time mission work had largely involved evangelism.

⁹ Issues of missionary identification, cultural brokerage etc., are discussed in Chapter four.

¹⁰ In his research on Scottish missions to Palestine, Michael Marten makes the point that conversion from one religion to another, as in the case of Jews, would result in ostracisation from family and community. He suggests that "missionaries were also arguing, in effect, for self-ostracisation, in the form of a rejection of a former way of life" (148).

¹¹ Ian Bradley, in his book *The Call to Seriousness*, describes this "perpetual call to seriousness" as having a "sense of personal responsibility" in one's relationship to Christ. It was manifestly a call to be set apart from the world (18). See discussion in Chapter Two.

¹² It seems Glover was determined to eschew any distractions from one's preparation for eternity. His grandson Murray, commenting on letters written home on his voyage to China in 1896, show how he "comes over as a total kill-joy; upbraiding passengers for their high spirits; putting a complete damper on conversation at meals; and either not going ashore at all when their ship puts in at a port, or, if he does, going for a solitary contemplative walk away from all worldly sights and sounds" (Glover 2000, 198).

¹³ For a comprehensive explication of the customs and significance of an Evangelical "good death", see chapter one of Pat Jalland's *Death in The Victorian Family* (1996) and Mary Riso's *The Narrative of the Good Death: The Evangelical Deathbed in Victorian England* (2016). For an outline of holy dying in the tradition of Wesleyan Methodism see Richard J. Bell's "Our people die well": Deathbed scenes in John Wesley's *Arminian* magazine" (2005).

¹⁴ Glover had earlier described the women's condition when the two groups were united thus:

In the corner, to the left ... lay dear Mrs. Cooper on a shake-down of straw, her torn 'san-tsi' revealing gangrened sun-wounds about the breasts, and with ulcerous sores where the cruel 'kia-tsi' [mule-saddle] had galled her limbs. Added to this were the pains of dysentery. Opposite her ... was stretched Miss Huston, with broken jaw, a gaping scalp wound that laid bare the brain, flesh wounds in either forearm deep to the bone, and her whole body a mass of contusions the work of the Boxers. (333-4)

¹⁵ Unsurprisingly Glover deflected attention from the brutality of Miss Huston's injuries, although he did mention they were sustained when "a heavy springless cart had been deliberately driven over her body to break the spine". In deference to Victorian sensibilities he could only allude to other "indignities" (335). In *China and the Allies* however, A. H. Savage-Landor gives a graphic account of the party's ordeal, with Miss Huston having been "outraged by five men and left for dead", while her friend Miss Rice, "had a stick forced up her body, but survived several days" (262).

¹⁶ With the book's publication four years after Flora's death the precision with which Glover can recall "her words" seems implausible, serving to confirm the didactic purpose of his narrative.

¹⁷ See “Last Letters: the circumstances” in this chapter for background to the Qing declaration of war with foreign nations and the recognition of the Boxers as a legitimate militia against foreign invasion.

¹⁸ Castelli employs Maurice Halbwachs’s theory of collective memory, in particular, his focus on religious communities and how memory operates “as an ideological ground for the present” (12).

¹⁹ The second book of Maccabees (6:7-7:42) details a period of Jewish persecution during the period of 180-161 BCE where Jewish resistance to enforced codes of living in line with Greek culture resulted in their death.

²⁰ For a comprehensive explication of Noble Death from pagan to Hebrew and New Testament interpretations see: David Seeley’s *The Noble Death: Graeco-Roman Martyrology and Paul’s Concept of Salvation* (1990). Seeley posits the five components of Noble Death as: “(1) obedience, (2) the overcoming of physical vulnerability, (3) a military setting, (4) vicariousness, or the quality of being beneficial for others, and (5) sacrificial metaphors” (13).

²¹ Scholars have since discredited Haller’s theory that apocalyptic historians invested England with “elect” status in the eyes of God. See for instance Katherine Firth *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain, 1530-1645*.

²² The most widely repeated account of the massacre was made by Protestant witness, Yong Zheng, in the *North China Herald*, 3 April 1901. It was submitted by English Baptist missionary Dr. Creasy Smith who vouched for Yong’s credibility. His testimony is repeated in Arthur H. Smith, *China in Convulsion* (614–15). See Appendix.

²³ Anthony E. Clarke counters Roger Thompson’s “Herculean efforts to controvert Christian testimonies” by suggesting he “appears to have not had access to the volumes of oral testimonies taken by Catholic authorities”. He adds: “Scholars who study the Taiyuan incident inevitably detect an impulse by Christians to render their accounts in formulaically hagiographical terms. Christians have a long history of preserving the memory of martyrs in martyrologies” and these scholars’ “commitment to historical objectivity ... sometimes goes too far” (137).

²⁴ The original quote appears in Miner (13). Roger Thompson notes that Miner also quotes from what appears to be one of the “vulgarized nineteenth-century versions” of the *Book of Martyrs* in her endeavour to persuade readers that China’s bloodbath was a repeat of sixteenth-century England (67). Other examples of texts written within a few years of the Uprising that reflect the influence of the *Book of Martyrs* are: Robert Forsyth’s *The China Martyrs of 1900: A Complete Roll of the Christian Heroes Martyred in China in 1900 with Narratives of Survivors* (1904); and E. H. Edwards’s *Fire and Sword in Shansi: The Story of the Martyrdom of Foreigners and Chinese Christians* (1903).

²⁵ Aware of the communal currency of missionary correspondence, Archibald Glover adds a post script when writing to his father in 1897 expressly asking that this letter – a particularly soul-searching missive – should not be copied by his sister Ellen for cyclostyling. “I appreciate much the intention and ... care and pain and labour over the work ... but I think it is far better *not to print* ... I don’t think it is a likely way of doing the intended good” (2000; 257).

²⁶ Deprived of pen and paper More’s resourceful use of a surrogate medium for conveying his final sentiments, underscores his compulsion to leave an embodied trace, despite the degree of clandestine effort involved in keeping it from his captors. He sent this symbol of affection to his daughter Margaret Roper on the 5th July 1535, the day before his execution, together with the hair shirt he had worn for many years (Huddleston).

²⁷ Elizabeth Castelli refers to the history text *The Martyrs of Palestine* written by Eusebius which invokes the apostolic exhortation from Romans 12:13 “*communicate in the commemoration of the saints*” as a command to solidify martyrological memory. He maintains that this memory must be upheld, not through representative images, but through the “imperishable monument” of words (104).

²⁸ Most Protestant publications in the immediate years after 1900 cite Roman Catholic methods as the principal inflammatory cause of the uprising. Robert Forsyth for example holds Catholics “responsible for creating an antagonism which amounts almost to a passion of hatred amongst rulers and people alike” (7). C.H.S

Green was emphatic in holding “their despotic exercise of priestly power” solely responsible for the Boxer movement (qtd. in Glover 9).

²⁹ Commonly referred to as the “Chinese Nero” or “the butcher of Shanxi”, Yuxian has been cast as Empress Cixi’s “henchman” and unofficial patron of the Boxer campaign by traditional scholars such as A.J. Broomhall in *It is not Death to Die!* (1989).

³⁰ Thousands of foreign-collaborators were killed during the uprising; so too, Chinese Christians who refused to recant their faith when confronted by Boxers were systematically tortured to death.

³¹ In *China Martyrs* Robert Forsythe states: “the child of Mr. and Mrs. Forsberg was, indeed, torn asunder by the violence of the mob” (79-80); G. Peat writes in his last letter to his mother: “we were at last obliged (four days ago) to flee to these mountains where we are hiding in caves of the earth” (M. Broomhall *Letters* 29); A memorial to Alfred Woodroffe published in Marshall Broomhall’s *Martyred*, likens the last few weeks of his life hiding in the mountains to Hebrews 11 (54).

³² May Nathan and Mary Heaysman write of the peacefulness of their environment at Daning on July 8; so too, George McConnell at Hejin and John and Alice Young from Jixian report “things are tolerably quiet”. Within days their situation had changed and the latter group (a total of 7) were ambushed and killed as they made for the Yellow River (M. Broomhall *Martyred* 113-14).

³³ The circumstances surrounding most missionaries’ deaths are similarly recorded in publications such as: M. Broomhall *Martyred*; M. Broomhall *Last Letters*; Forsythe; Edwards; and A.H Broomhall book 7.

³⁴ The eschatological ideology of martyrdom is based on the Apostle Paul’s counter-intuitive statement in a prison letter: “For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.” (Philippians 1:21). He goes on to say: “But if I go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me. So what shall I choose? I do not know. I am torn between the two. I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better indeed” (1:22-23).

Conclusion

Oh that I could but feel that I am not my own, and that I am thoroughly consecrated to God. How difficult it is to get rid of selfishness. The drunkard may set aside his drunkenness, the blasphemer his blasphemy, his curses and oaths, but it is almost impossible to destroy self and live, to be and not to be at the same time. Self clings to us wherever we go; we find it with us in all our engagements, however sacred they may be. This is the great demon that continually seeks the mastery over us, the old Adam that perpetually speaks within us and driving us from God and goodness. Oh, could I but feel as Paul felt when he said, "To me to live is Christ".

Griffith John (qtd. in Thompson *Fifty* 31)

This thesis began by asking: How is the self constructed in life writing when the self is denied? Missionary life writing holds this conundrum at its core. My aim in this study has been to examine the writing of nine leading players in the China-theatre of nineteenth-century mission to flesh out the kinds of selves they represent. Writing within an atmosphere of communal expectation yet constrained by the bounds of Christian conscience, these missionaries negotiated avenues of permissible expression to further their evangelistic cause. Yet writing their impressions of new and, to a Western world, often incomprehensible experiences in the Orient, was a complex task that demanded of them some degree of authorial persona, embedded within some kind of acceptable framework, to make these experiences meaningful for an expectant home audience. For people so driven by their calling to work as God's agents to the heathen world yet constrained by the command to abnegate themselves to the cause, their writing can become a space of dissonance. Drawing on the certainties of evangelical belief however, often together with the norms of Western culture, *did* allow missionaries acceptable avenues for the written self – as did the generic forms of the popular press.

In taking a broad view of missionary writing to focus on missionary approaches and their measures towards cultural identification, chapter four offered insights into the self-construction of two missionary types – those I have called "imperial", signified by their Western style of dress; and "grassroots", those who chose to adopt Chinese clothing. As pioneers in their particular fields of mission the six missionaries featured represent a demographic that is not only interesting, but one that is particularly relevant to the aims of this thesis because of the variety of cultural elements they have allowed me to explore. In addition, these men were all prolific writers whose publications had earned them both respect

and notoriety. With a focus on this representative group, I have followed mission scholar Jonathan Bonk's assessment of missionary identification methods in four key areas: the material and social sphere; linguistic; political and economic; and the religious and educational spheres of life. Bonk however suggested his findings, based on the LMS, could be typified to represent "mission agencies generally". As this study has shown, not all missionary methods were the same, and not all efforts towards identification were uniform. At the heart of missionary approaches lay the dilemma: What level of identification with Chinese culture still remained faithful to the Christian message? And by extension: What implications were there for the Christian self in this kind of identification?

No matter what approach was taken, missionaries received criticism for their methods both from the East and West, both from secular and Christian quarters. In the material and social sphere – the lifestyle practices, social customs, food, housing and material possessions that visibly convey a missionary's degree of accommodation to Chinese life – Bonk determines that missionaries attempted an "imperfect level of identification" (262). Broadly speaking this study could say the same, however, the three grassroots missionaries, James Gilmour, James Hudson Taylor, and Samuel Pollard identified more closely with the Chinese in their everyday lifestyle than their imperially designated colleagues. Wearing the clothes of local people, adopting their food and housing, their approach was designed to be unobtrusive, but raised fears that, by identifying too closely with the Chinese, their own identities as Christian missionaries would be threatened. Their devotion to making grassroot-connections fostered a degree of unease among the imperial-cohort who read their behaviour as moral intimidation, or implied criticism of their comfortable living-standard. In comparison to grassroots missionaries, and in line with Bonk's generalised study, the imperial missionaries Griffith John, John Macgowan and Timothy Richard, in their housing, clothing and equipment, remained consciously "foreign and rich" (262). In this way they aligned with the self of the British Christian in the face of Chinese difference, exposing the impossibility of the biblical ideal of becoming all things to all people. Their role was to convert society, not identify with it (at least not in a literal sense). To do so could seriously jeopardise their health, longevity, and superintendence of native churches. Living in the foreign compounds of port cities, theirs was a paternalistic identification, which they were able to narrate as an overarching act of beneficence by which they would enlighten the Chinese to Christianity, and administer the running of local Christian communities.

All missionaries recognised the need to learn the language of their target people and both groups applied themselves in the spirit of “sympathetic and wholehearted” identification with the Chinese (Bonk 262). The Chinese language was depicted by missionaries as an obstacle. Success only came from long and dedicated application where those prepared to forfeit pride and make mistakes made progress. Apart from three university-graduate grassroots missionaries who sought to circumvent the process (unsuccessfully) through prayers for supernatural tongues, the standard of language acquisition remained high, with most of the six representatives eventually translating the Bible into local vernaculars. For some however, the anxiety of inarticulation reduced their predicament to a modern Babel – an existential crisis that struck at the heart of those called to spread the Word. It also challenged one of the key demands of missionary life – to articulate clearly the experience of the conversion of others. For this reason, impediments to learning led some to believe the language was of diabolical design – the language of Satan no less. So too, the lack of a word to convey a Christian concept, made the learning, teaching and translating process arduous and frustrating, since “every ‘universal’ from the term for God on down, entered an existing network of meanings that differed for every language” (Dunch 324). This semantic indeterminacy further fragmented the missionaries’ capacity to construct coherent narratives of self. There was a danger of spawning local sectarian religious movements because “missionaries could not control the interpretation of the scriptures once they had been translated and published” (324). Samuel Pollard, searching for a way to address illiteracy among the Miao people, devised a phonetic script that formed the basis of an education system. One thing he could not control however, was how they came to believe “the wicked Chinese killed Jesus” (Grist 184). Yet by adding value to a regional dialect through an ability to write it down Pollard enabled the subjugated Miao to resist cultural assimilation to the “national ‘common speech’” of China (Dunch 325).

Contrary to Paul’s apostolic directive to become “all things to all men” by sympathetically entering into the lives of the people, missionaries were given clear instructions to avoid active identification when it came to China’s political and commercial concerns. But in the everyday reality of mission-field life they were often unable to remain neutral. Although the doors to China had been opened by Western force for commercial profit, missionaries could view their disproportionate treaty rights as a providential means-to-a-greater-end. Yet freedoms gained by heavy-handed treaties came at the cost of Chinese respect. Missionaries living an imperial lifestyle in foreign concessions among Western

merchants, diplomats and military personnel were classed one and the same – as operatives for Western imperialism – a designation that challenged the narrative of life-denying sacrifice that missionaries sought to sustain. Griffith John’s exercise of his Western “halo of power” – insisting on treaty entitlements, and calling for the perpetrators of anti-foreign literature to be punished – earned him the enmity of the Chinese government. So too, his support for the Taiping Rebellion was considered a subversive act against the Empire (and equally subversive toward his own government’s trade interests). Grassroots missionaries with their practice of cultural camouflage were less inclined to make official complaints, however, by naming the “Inland Mission” long before right-of-residence inland, James Hudson Taylor provoked the ire of Chinese officials. At the regional level, Samuel Pollard brokered the economic conditions and civil rights of the Miao people against their Nosu landlords. Yet while missionaries did identify with Western political and economic aims that they considered in the “best interests” of China (Bonk 135), not all Western aims were given blanket endorsement. Almost unanimously they opposed the “self-serving greed” of the British government’s trade in opium. This double position complicated their capacity to tell a particular story of self. The kind of self that aligned God’s blessings upon the West, with the credibility of their message, was placed in moral dilemma.

When considering the question of missionary approaches and the dilemma of “all things” identification, there was one field of Chinese culture for which identification could never apply – Chinese religion. Christianity was an exclusive faith and missionaries were not there to identify with another. Indeed, Christian faith was the source through which the missionary was able to ground a coherent self – and this was the self into which they were to draw the Chinese. Religious identification was to come from the Chinese. They were in dire need of the knowledge of Christ whether they knew it or not. Just as missionaries identified with the “best interests” of China in political and economic matters, so too, they identified with what they believed was China’s supreme need – Christianity. Using the rhetoric of conquest and absolutism, converts were to abandon all forms of idolatry - most contentiously, ancestral rites and acts of obeisance. However, Timothy Richard would be a voice of moderation. His accommodationist approach to traditional practices included an appreciation for Eastern religion in an effort to find common ground for evangelism, yet others saw this as a threat to the primacy of the Christian self. Similar to James Gilmour, he followed a strategy of “seeking the worthy”, the devout leaders of contemplative sects, and to them he “clothe[d] Christian ideas in Chinese dress” (Soothill 76). The danger was: were these still Christian

ideas? Many saw Richard's strategy as syncretism – a heretical notion that made vulnerable the “inclusive exclusivism of their brand of faith” (Fischer 155). Yet perhaps more than most, Richard believed the way to uplift China was through a new mindset inculcated through Western education. Jon Bonk's finding that LMS religious and educational identification was “little more than the religious expression of their society's dominant values and aspirations” (265), could be said to be true for imperial missionaries. But the grassroots missionaries in this study, whose methods were largely focussed on evangelism as they lived among the villages of inland China, were decidedly more nuanced.

Publishing was the life-blood of the missionary enterprise and missionaries' lives in the foreign field were the source of much homeland fascination. As chapters five and six have shown, gripping tales of danger and suspense, of triumph and tragedy, and of epic journeys in a hostile land needed to be told to further the enterprise. How to convey these tales to advance the cause of mission and yet abjure from the impulse to self-aggrandise was the writer's explicit task. Drawing on the mid-century model of David Livingstone, Susie Rijnhart would represent her experiences in Tibet through the framework – albeit generically male – of heroic adventure; steering a guarded course of narration through the hostile forces of life beyond civilisation, to present a model of womanly heroism. Rijnhart traversed a narrative space of ambivalence, conscious of the ideological roles she must perform as a missionary, a doctor, and a grieving wife and mother, while at the same time educating and inspiring a supporting audience. In this way she pioneered an intrepid narrative persona, while mitigating its audacity through suitably gendered ideals of gentility and domesticity. Her text claimed license to self-assertion and authority, and yet it abnegated to God's design.

So too, Archibald Glover would draw on the popular discourse of the quest romance, and the captivity genre, to convey his story of persecution during the Boxer uprising. Yet couching narratives within popular genres sets up reader-expectations for popular models of selfhood. This for Glover becomes a source of ambivalence, one that lies at the heart of the denied-self in writing. His story does conform in part to the conventions of captivity, but then in other ways it digresses. The conventions of heroic resistance and self-possessed British manhood are at odds with the self-effacing ethos of the missionary. Glover's answer to the problem lies in captivity's strategic discourse of providence. Here the experience of subjugation – of trial, suffering and redemption – like the conversion story of old, becomes an exemplification of Christian life. Personal agency in resistance and the reversal of fortune is

displaced to providence. In this way Glover constructs a persona that can triumph heroically – he is God’s ambassador.

Where Rijnhart and Glover chose popular genres to frame the stories of their respective ordeals, constructing within them narrative personae that fell within acceptably self-denying bounds, Annie Taylor’s unpretentious inscriptions according to William Carey, required masterful control. Under the direction of Carey, Taylor’s diary was harnessed and interpreted to indicate to readers how her story should be read. Having circumvented gender-barriers to follow her calling, proving herself single-minded and persevering, content to live in relative solitude, and feeling no imperative for male headship, Carey felt it his duty to readdress the imbalance. Relegating her to her rightful sphere she becomes a “frail” but “plucky” little woman. Taylor’s self-sufficiency and resourcefulness subverted norms and incurred the ridicule of other critics who labelled her “selfish” and “eccentric”, labels not given to married mother Rijnhart. Taylor redeems herself however, when she constructs a “sage” persona (as does Rijnhart) positioning herself as an authority in the field of Tibetan cultural and geographical knowledge – albeit prefaced with self-deprecating propriety.

The ultimate missionary construction of the self in writing is made in the near contemplation of death. Chapter six examined the spectre of death that haunted missionaries in the volatile environment of the Boxer uprising and laid bare what is the most crucial rendering of self in evangelical life – that which I term the “threshold self”. From Glover’s accounts of the deaths of fellow missionaries, to the last letters of those facing imminent death, this was a moment of significance captured in writing for both the readers and those who wrote. As Bruce Hindmarsh contends: this was “the consummation of conversion” (255). He adds that if conversion was “a response to the eschatological threat it represented, then it should come as no surprise that the final coda to the evangelical conversion narrative was often an account of how the convert was finally enabled to vanquish death by the grace of God” (256). As Glover reveals, death as a metaphor had counter-intuitive interpretations. To the evangelical, death could mean sin, but alternatively, death was a re-birth, a deliverance from sin. The missionary calling pledged to put an end to the “eternal death” of heathenism and preach the “eternal *life after death*” of conversion. In constructing himself as God’s scribe, Glover models his writing on the recognised conventions of an evangelical “good death” and in a sense become mid-wife to the soul’s re-birth into a new, heavenly life. These missionary victims of the Boxer regime were exchanging the martyr’s cross for the victor’s crown – death was a triumph and reward.

For the missionaries whose letters became their last vestige of communication left to the world, there was a consciousness of both existing on the threshold of death (before life), and the sense that they were reinscribing their ideological inheritance of martyrdom. These letters were salient reminders that the pact of epistolical mutuality was broken; they were not to be reciprocated. Instead they were to be public testaments of faith for the edification and consolation of their brethren. They tapped into the collective memory of martyrs-past, and for Protestants, they established a rhetorical link and legitimacy for the ideology of Reform. These letters tied persecution and suffering to a communal identity. Written in the final days or hours of earthly life, the liminality of their state betrays apprehension and indeterminacy, yet also the language of contemplation. They participate in a three-way conversation: with the self, the audience, and with God. The letters represent the threshold-self in formation – the self poised on the threshold of extinction, but also on the threshold of becoming.

My primary objective in this thesis is to proffer new understandings of missionary selfhood, but there are several other ways in which this body of knowledge makes an original contribution to mission studies. First, this dissertation explores missionaries to China. To date, most of the scholarship on British-dominion missionaries to have received in-depth historiographical analysis, has focussed on territories within the bounds of the British empire – most notably India and Africa. Consequently, the perspective offered from China is not only unusual, it is greatly over-looked, and given its immense scale as a missionary field, it is both necessary, and valuable. By addressing the shortfall, this research should prove useful in reminding scholars of missionaries and imperialism of the importance of China. It will also help them reflect upon the extent to which conclusions that are often made on the basis of the British Empire, are more broadly “Orientalising”. Second, this thesis includes useful information and analysis of individual missionaries and their contributions to missionary literature that have, hitherto, been little explored. Third, by analysing missionary life writing as a genre, the thesis makes a unique contribution to the pioneering research of Anna Johnston. By choosing a different approach, it addresses an analytical gap that is common to secular criticism. This work takes into consideration much more than the missionaries’ imperialist agency, it also includes their evangelical theology and culture, while showing how these elements work together to form a more nuanced understanding of missions and missionary writing.

Missionaries write their lives within many constraints and are very aware of their audience. The quote from Griffith John's letter to a mentor at the beginning of this section depicts the turmoil of the missionary-self. This self is the dissenting Christian that Sidonie Smith calls "an ethical subject located in the space of paradox" (112). But while the missionary must always be a self-regulator, this thesis has offered new insights into how the denied-self can be understood. It also offers a richer understanding of how missionaries lived and narrated their lives in the turbulent context of nineteenth and early twentieth-century China. The missionaries in this study had much to say to their "interpretive community" of homeland evangelicals. It was interesting, captivating, and often emotionally charged. Inside that narrative setting they placed themselves and plotted a careful course, where the self was given agency within the mandate of a Heavenly commission, but it was a self always at risk of falling apart in the tension between self-construction and self-denial. Drawing on popular generic forms provides a framework in which to construct and narrativize the self under God's direction. Through a close reading of these generic texts this thesis offers key insights into how gender, domesticity, family and death was understood in evangelical Victorian culture. Focussing on a number of pioneering missionaries, this thesis contributes to a more informed understanding of how China missions operated, and how missionaries sought to understand themselves within these operations. This thesis also explores the implications for the self of the ways in which missionaries were prepared to integrate to, or demarcate from, the lifestyle and language, the political, economic, religious and educational realms of the Chinese nation. Whether by manuscript or published text, the missionary contributed to the "writing machine" of nineteenth-century missions, while expanding the evangelical textual heritage that had begun with the Reformation.

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Appendix

An account of the Taiyuan massacre by Yong Zheng published in Arthur H. Smith, *China in Convulsion*, 1901, pages 614-15. This account was taken from "The Martyrdom at T'aiyuanfu on the 9th of July, 1900. By an Eye-witness," *North China Herald*, 3 April 1901.

The first to be led forth was Mr. Farthing (English Baptist). His wife clung to him, but he gently put her aside, and going in front of the soldiers knelt down without saying a word, and his head was struck off by one blow of the executioner's knife. He was quickly followed by Mr. Hoddle, and Mr. Beynon, Drs. Lovitt and Wilson, each of whom was beheaded by one blow of the executioner. Then the Governor, Yü Hsien, grew impatient and told his body-guard, all of whom carried heavy swords with long handles, to help kill the others. Mr. Stokes, Mr. Simpson, and Mr. Whitehouse were next killed, the last by one blow only, the other two by several.

When the men were finished the ladies were taken. Mrs. Farthing had hold of the hands of her children who clung to her, but the soldiers parted them, and with one blow beheaded their mother. The executioner beheaded all the children and did it skillfully, needing only one blow, but the soldiers were clumsy, and some of the ladies suffered several cuts before death. Mrs Lovitt was wearing her spectacles and held the hand of her little boy, even when she was killed. She spoke to the people, saying 'We all came to China to bring you the good news of the salvation by Jesus Christ; we have done you no harm, only good, why do you treat us so?' A soldier took off her spectacles before beheading her, which needed two blows.

When the Protestants had been killed, the Roman Catholics were led forward. The Bishop, an old man with a long white beard, asked the Governor why he was doing this wicked deed. I did not hear the Governor give him any answer, but he drew his sword and cut the Bishop across the face one heavy stroke; blood poured down his white beard, and he was beheaded.

The priests and nuns quickly followed him in death. Then Mr. Pigott and his party were led from the district jail which is close by. He was still hand-cuffed, and so was Mr. Robinson. He preached to the people till the very last, when he was beheaded with one blow. Mr. Robinson suffered death very calmly. Mrs. Pigott held the hand of her son, even when she was beheaded, and he was killed immediately after her. The ladies and two girls were also quickly killed.

On that day forty-five foreigners were beheaded in all, thirty-three Protestants and twelve Roman Catholics. A number of native Christians were killed also. The bodies of all were left where they fell till the next morning, as it was evening before the work was finished. During the night they had been stripped of their clothing, rings, and watches. The next day they were removed to a place inside the great south gate, except some of the heads, which were placed in cages on the gates of the city wall. All were surprised at the firmness and quietness of the foreigners, none of whom except two or three of the children cried, or made any noise.