Chinese Rhetoric: China in British Periodical Literature, 1811–1842

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By

Tsz Ting Yan

A thesis submitted to the Department of English Studies
of Durham University
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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Abstract

This study has two purposes: first, by collecting and examining a body of China-related periodical writings previously unexplored as an assorted whole, it aims to recover the literary presence of China in the British periodical space in the early decades of the nineteenth century when a mass reading public developed. Second, and more important, this study aims to explore the role China plays in this body of literature by focusing on the domestic relevance of the invocation of China to the immediate concerns of the British society. Positing that cross-cultural writing answers not only to the dynamic of national relations but also to specific moments in domestic and private history, this study offers a contextualised reading of Britain's 'Chinese' writings against the multifaceted ethos of the time, from the political activism of the Regency period to the social advocacy of the early Victorian age. This study, in other words, does not seek to dilate on the image or reception of China in Britain, nor does it look at British representation of China as the product of cultural hegemony or imperial design; rather, it enquires into the way China is written into Britain's political, social, and cultural consciousness through popular literature, and argues for the usefulness in understanding British engagement with China, or 'the other', as a means to discover, express, criticise, and rectify the self. In identifying such a use of China as 'Chinese rhetoric', this study ultimately calls attention to an 'instrumental' aspect of British orientalism that hinges on an autocritical and self-reflexive interest, an interest that renders China, or more generally the Orient, a pliant agency of literary expression.

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Illustrations

Declaration

I declare that this thesis represents my own work, except where due acknowledgement is made, and that it has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to this University or to any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualifications.

Parts of this work have been, or will be, published in the following:

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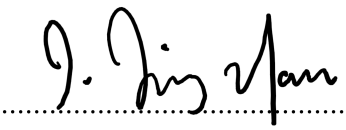
Signed 

Tsz Ting Yan

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INTRODUCTION

This study is about China and not about China. I venture to start with such a strange statement because, for one thing, a study pledging to deal with 'China in British Periodical Literature' most certainly invites expectation on the very question of *what* China is in this body of text: whether it conforms to or deviates from reality, whether it is imagined and invented, or whether it describes a British attitude towards China. However, this study is not about China in any obvious sense; rather, it is the premise of this study to take for granted the representative, or constructed, nature of China when exploring it as a 'rhetoric', and to avoid over-emphasising the too-often totalised notion of attitude in understanding the East in Western representation. For another, the idea that an act of writing China can be at once about China and not about China helps put into perspective the proposition of this study, that there exists a body of literature — and a substantial one in terms of its reach — in which the invocation of China serves not as an end per se but as a means to observe, express, and engage with that which has nothing to do with China. When I say that this study is about China and not about China, therefore, I mean to refer to both the purpose and method of this study — for my object of interest is not China but the role China plays as a vehicle of self-expression, self-reflection, and self-critique in British periodical literature, and I approach it, accordingly, from an instrumentalist perspective, focusing on its heuristic relevance to the way British authors read Britain, and on a set of works that writes China into its vision of the self.

I do not pretend that such a perspective has a claim to originality. Did not Byron, in 1813, tell Thomas Moore to 'stick to the East' because it was 'the only poetical policy'?[1] There is a sense of the strategic imperative in Byron's words, and by 'strategic' I refer not only to the use of the Orient as a poetic commodity that caters for the taste of what Byron called an 'orientalising public' but also the literary decision that settles on the Orient as a viable means of self-expression. Contemporary studies, in fact, have already shown us how much British literary orientalism is deeply embedded in self-concern, although the colonial or postcolonial perspective of some of these works has cast the focus of our enquiries on different lines. When John Barrell relates Thomas De Quincey's fear of the 'infections' from the East to his childhood trauma, or when Nigel Leask thinks of the Oriental engagement of Byron, Shelley, and De Quincey as an embodiment of the 'anxieties of empire', they are seeing the trope of the Orient — or the 'rhetoric' of the Orient, as far as the inward and intrapersonal front of the term is considered — as reflective of the instability of the self within an imperialist culture.[2] So does Saree Makdisi, when he looks at the Romantic Orient as a site of anti-modern otherness or as the surrogate target of social and political radicalism.[3] More recently Andrew Warren has brought to our attention the 'secret affiliation' between the writing of the Orient and Romantic solipsism, and from his work we acquire a heightened, and a more explicit, sense of the inseverable bond between Oriental experience and the existential self in Romantic literature.[4] Indeed, if we define the inward-turning, introspective, and reclusive nature of Romantic writing to be the

[1] Byron's letter to Thomas Moore, 29 August 1813; *Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. by Leslie A. Marchand, 13 vols (London: Murray, 1973–82), III, p. 101.
[2] John Barrell, *The Infection of Thomas De Quincy: A Psychopathology of Imperialism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991); Nigel Leask, *British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
[3] Saree Makdisi, *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Saree Makdisi, *William Blake and the Impossible History of the 1790s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).
[4] Andrew Warren, *The Orient and the Young Romantics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 8.

paradigmatic mode of Romanticism, we shall see that it is no easy task to understand Romantic orientalism without reckoning its self-referentiality. But even if we turn to the Age of Reason, we are liable to see no less of the self-reflexive and self-critical bent of British Oriental engagement: Robert Markley sees it as a consciously 'European' response to the challenge posed by a Sinocentric economic order in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and David Porter, Eugenia Zuroski-Jenkins, Srinivas Aravamudan, Eun Kyung Min, and Chi-ming Yang have, likewise, shown us how the Orient forms an integral part of the invention of English modernity by focusing on the role it plays in Western material culture, literary history, and performative arts in the early modern period.[5] It almost needs no hypothesising that, while British orientalism takes as many forms and shapes as there are changes from era to era, it is essentially, and phenomenally, a self-centred process of 'making use' and 'making relevant' — a process of finding what the other means for the self. There is nothing new, therefore, in thinking that the Orient exists in British literature as an agent of thought and expression, although such an agency is often understood in colonial and postcolonial terms. What makes this study different is that it seeks to emphasise the intrinsic functionality of British orientalism by dealing with an untypical Orient, China, and in a period when its literary presence is seldom thought of as a constituent of an ongoing process of British self-exploration and critique.

China can be a difficult Orient to deal with, partly because it is a rare existence in canonical British literature of the nineteenth century, and partly because of the paradoxical

[5] Robert Markley, *The Far East and the English Imagination, 1600–1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); David Porter, *Ideographia: The Chinese Cipher in Early Modern Europe* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001); David Porter, *The Chinese Taste in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Eugenia Zuroski-Jenkins, *A Taste for China: English Subjectivity and the Prehistory of Orientalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Srinivas Aravamudan, *Enlightenment Orientalism: Resisting the Rise of the Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Eun Kyung Min, *China and the Writing of English Literary Modernity, 1690–1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Chi-ming Yang, *Performing China: Virtue, Commerce, and Orientalism in Eighteenth-Century England, 1660–1760* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011).

nature of its presence in British domestic lives. Byron, Southey, Shelley, and others had ventured into an epic Turkey, Persia, Arabia, and India, but China seems to be outside the scope of their Romantic imagination. Coleridge had made a masterpiece out of Xanadu in 'Kubla Khan', but rather than China proper, he was musing on the land of the Tartary as Chaucer did. Along the spectrum with sublime 'imagination' at one end and slight 'fancy' at the other, China seems always to cling to the slight side, furnishing light forms of literature and appearing in predominantly miniaturised and commodified shapes. Keenly aware of the literary absence of China as a geographic reality in Romantic literature, Peter Kitson, in his major study on Sino-British cultural exchange in the Romantic period, calls it a 'forgetting or evasion': a 'refusal to engage with contemporary China' but through a chinoiserie lens.[6] According to Kitson, Romantic authors like Robert Southey, Charles Lamb, and Leigh Hunt could not have been ignorant about China and Sinology, and that makes their persistence in 'viewing the country through the prism of a heavily aestheticized chinoiserie' (180) a puzzle of no small interest. We cannot, of course, dismiss the fact that China's remoteness has a part to play here, nor can we overestimate the confidence writers could have about writing a place as underexplored as China; however, Kitson's observation remains significant and germane.[7] One could, as Kitson speculates, understand such an

[6] Peter Kitson, *Forging Romantic China: Sino-British Cultural Exchange, 1760-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 10; p. 181.

[7] Charles Lamb, for instance, had perceived the distance between Canton and London as something that 'strains the imagination'; see Lamb's letter to Manning, 5 December 1806; *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. by Edwin W. Marrs, 3 vols (Ithaca, NY, 1975–78), II, p. 244. As regards the seeming reluctance of Romantic writers to engage with a 'real' China, we may also take into consideration the fact that centuries of Jesuit casuistry had suspended no small measure of trust in Western narratives on China, and that the first-hand knowledge writers could acquire from their various China connections was, as they should have known, limited to the trade port of Canton, never reaching the better part of the vast empire. It is worth noting, too, that the problem of authenticity seemed always to hover around British minds when it comes to Oriental texts in translation. The authorship of *Haoqiu Zhuan*, for instance, had been questioned for some time after Thomas Percy published an English translation of it from a Portuguese excerpt, and Percy himself was not entirely certain about the authenticity of the work as a Chinese novel. When the authenticity of the work itself was by and large confirmed by 1810, not a few readers had qualms about how much the translation had been faithful to the original. For this episode of Percy and *Haoqiu Zhuan*, see Chen Shouyi, 'Thomas Percy and His Chinese Studies', in *The Vision of China in the English Literature of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. by Adrian Hsia (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1998), pp. 301–24.

evasion in terms of what Porter calls an 'instrumental amnesia' — 'the intentional occlusion of a previously visible and viable alternative'[8] — in which case the 'primal scene' of the humiliation Britain suffered in the Macartney embassy seemed the most recent stimulus; but it is equally possible that it is underlaid by 'a simple anxiety about how to deal with the subject whose presence is everywhere, in theater designs, in landscape gardens, and on the very porcelain from which they drink their tea'.[9]

Such a 'presence' is precisely what made China, or the idea of China, special in British cultural history. Elizabeth Chang has coined the term 'familiar exotic' to describe the paradoxical presence of China as a kind of 'everyday foreignness' in nineteenth-century Britain, and we have come to know the very basis of such a development through the works of Markley, Porter, Zuroski-Jenkins, Yang, and Min on the economic, intellectual, literary, and socio-cultural influence China had over Europe, and especially Britain, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[10] First entering into English consciousness through commodity trade, China was once the symbol of a kind of 'socioeconomic sublime' and 'cultural legitimacy' that both charmed and challenged a nascent West about to develop into maturer forms.[11] On one hand, such symbolic exemplariness and threat, reified in the form of everyday commodities, turned China into a familiar figure not only in the discourse of English fashion and morality but also in the idea of personal taste and judgment; on the other hand, the commercial and religious opportunities brought about by trade led to the discovery, or rediscovery, of the East that eventually prompted Enlightenment thinkers to remap traditional ideologies against a global grid, wherein China, with its immense antiquity,

[8] David Porter, 'Sinicizing Early Modernity: The Imperatives of Historical Cosmopolitanism', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 43 (2010), 229–306 (p. 303). See also Porter's illustration of the idea in 'Thomas Percy's Sinology and the Origins of English Romanticism', *The Chinese Taste*, pp. 154–183.
[9] Kitson, p. 181.
[10] Elizabeth Hope Chang, *Britain's Chinese Eye: Literature, Empire, and Aesthetics in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2010), p. 6.
[11] Markley, p. 110; Porter, *Ideographia*, p. 241.

became a focal point in such momentous discussions as the ecclesiastical controversy over biblical chronology, the debate about the origin of language, and the quarrel of the ancients and the moderns.[12] It was during the early modern period that the implication of China's economic ascendency and its role as an object of consumption extended epistemologically into different terms of self-understanding. As Zuroski-Jenkins nicely puts it, China, in this period, was 'a part of the organization of modern English subjectivity': a figure that was 'part of the very experience of being English', as Britain asserted its global relevance as a cosmopolitan nation by writing China into its self-representation.[13]

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the conjunct trope of China and chinoiserie had been a 'plastic' figure visionarily employed to reflect upon the self not only in cultural terms but also in social and political terms, mediating between, for instance, cosmopolitan variety and order on one level, aesthetic and ethical virtue and vice on another level, and anarchic aristocracy and social improvement on yet another. The form it assumed was various and diverse, at times an ideal and at others an anomaly, at times grounded and at others concocted, but what underpinned its requisition was always the very desire of British subjects to find meanings for themselves from an 'other' so close and yet so remote, an 'otherness' that seemed to reside in the very notion of 'selfhood' itself, potentially capable of being fully understood but perpetually evading our grasp. To write China into English selfhood through a trope, then, is not quite the same as writing about China or reading China through a trope, although there are ways in which the two acts overlap and interact with each other. What I propose is that, instead of thinking about nineteenth-century

[12] On fashion and morality, see Yang; on taste and judgement, see Zuroski-Jenkins; for a discussion about relationship between the discovery of Asian religions and Western orientalism, see Urs App, *The Birth of Orientalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); for the controversy over biblical chronology and the debate about the origin of language, see Porter, *Ideographia*, pp. 39–49 and J. J. Clarke, *Oriental Enlightenment: The Encounter Between Asian and Western Thought* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 43–50; for the role China played in the heated quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns, see Min, pp. 15–46.

[13] Zuroski-Jenkins, pp. 5–7. See also the first and second chapters of her book.

literary engagement with China as an evasion or a sort of amnesia, we may well consider it as a persistent attempt to make meanings from the trope of China and chinoiserie within the traditional paradigm of conceptualising, appropriating, and instrumentalising China — a mechanism of self-exploration that was carried through from the early modern period to an era when the 'plasticity' of the China trope became, unfortunately, more obscured than it was in former times.

One difficulty in reading nineteenth-century orientalism — or 'sinologism', to borrow the term from Ming Dong Gu [14] — as sharing an essential similarity with Enlightenment orientalism is that its existence, and our historical inquiry of it, are often overshadowed by the expansive notions of nationalism, imperialism, and imperialistic culture. Our observation of a more 'rigidified' image of the Orient coincides with that of the rise of British nationalism and imperialism in the post-Napoleonic age, and although we may account for nineteenth-century resistance to the Orient from multiple perspectives — Zuroski-Jenkins, for instance, considers it a resistance not to 'the Oriental' but to 'eighteenth-century Englishness' [15] — the correlation does indeed reflect a causal relationship, however simplistic and restricted it might be. Explicitly or implicitly, scholars working on early modern orientalism have distinguished between the kind of orientalism they focus on and the one that prevailed in the nineteenth century, and such caution is taken not only because there was a difference in the way British subjects perceived the Orient as Britain acquired imperial power but also because, textually speaking, once the 'plasticity' of the Oriental trope is lost it becomes more difficult for us to separate the use of the Orient from imperialistic denigration and stereotyping, and much more so to advance the idea that the Orient remains an agent or a rhetoric intrinsically flexible in its forms and meanings.

[14] Ming Don Gu, *Sinologism: An Alternative to Orientalism and Postcolonialism* (London; New York: Routledge, 2013).
[15] Zuroski-Jenkins, p. 14.

Theocratically, however, the way the Orient was perceived and the extent to which its image was hardened by imperialistic impulse does not preclude the possibility and usefulness of looking at it as an agent of literary expression with diverse tropological dimensions. Porter, in his second book on China, has warned us of the danger of 'reading too much of the Victorian era's imperial triumphalism' back into the early modern period, and my question is whether such prudence may not be exercised in the context of the early nineteenth century and, in fact, the Victorian era as well.[16] Scholars like Makdisi, after all, have shown us how one may read British Oriental engagement as 'a form of opposition to the culture of modernization — including but not limited to imperialism'.[17] If we recall Kitson's reflection about the enigmatic distance between Romantic writers' knowledge of China and the way they engaged with it, we are prompted to contemplate the extent to which such a conscious 'play' may not have more to tell us about the performativity and instrumentality of the figure of China. It is, I maintain, as viable and constructive to look at China in nineteenth-century literature as a pliant rhetoric of self-expression as to consider its representation as an embodiment of imperialistic culture, for even though orientalism and imperialism, and indeed all historical developments, are inextricably linked, literature is made up also of moments that are highly personal, moments that need to be recovered for a better understanding of what it means for writers to write China in the nineteenth century.

In formulating a perspective for this study, then, a clear orientation is to move away from the postcolonial focus of Said's seminal *Orientalism*, and especially his consideration of Western imagination of the East as a fundamentally imperialistic relationship. Such a moving away does not mean that I contest Said's argument of the constructedness of an essentialist, and predominately inferior, image of the Orient in the nineteenth century, or

[16] Porter, *The Chinese Taste*, p. 6.
[17] Makdisi, *Romantic Imperialism*, p. 9.

that Said's orientalism does not constitute a kind, and a major kind, of orientalism that characterised Oriental discourse in the period; it means only that I do not seek to conduct an 'image study' of the Orient, and that the vantage point I depart from and what I want to show are essentially different from Said's. On the theoretical polemics of Said's notion, both confirmation and refutation abound; I should say no more than to refer readers to the excellent collection of Alexander Lyon Macfie and the penetrating commentary of Daniel Martin Varisco.[18] In the empirical vein, specific case studies often show European writings of the Orient as more pluralistic than Said takes them to be: Lisa Lowe, for instance, in her study on French and British orientalisms, has argued for a conception of orientalism as 'heterogeneous and contradictory', and Robert Lemon has posited the Oriental writings of Habsburg authors as 'subversive, anti-imperialist exoticism'.[19] In so far as China is my object of study, a sceptical perspective seems particularly useful, for China has always been considered a rather problematic Orient in this regard. While Bernard Faure and Colin Mackerras have shown us how Said's critique is applicable to China, Hans Hägerdal and Norman Girardot have argued that the case of China represented a different orientalism than the one Said proposed.[20] Kitson, moreover, has convincingly demonstrated the way in which the 'strong transcultural and hybrid elements' in Romantic Sinology put Saidian orientalism, and especially the binary between a colonial self and a colonising other, in question.[21] China, after all, was not a colonised subject, and the British imperial force was extended to it only in an economic way by dint of the notion of free trade. The 'complexities

[18] Alexander Lyon Macfie, *Orientalism: A Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2000); Daniel Martin Varisco, *Reading Orientalism: Said and the Unsaid* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007).
[19] Lisa Lowe, *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 5; Robert Lemon, *Imperial Messages: Orientalism as Self-Critique in the Habsburg* Fin De Siècle (Columbia, S.C.: Camden House, 2011), p. 1.
[20] Bernard Faure, *The Rhetoric of Immediacy: A Cultural Critique of Chan/Zen Buddhism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991); Colin Mackerras, *Western Images of China* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Hans Hägerdal, 'The Orientalism Debate and the Chinese Wall: An Essay on Said and Sinology', *Itinerario*, 21 (1997), 19–40; Norman Girardot, *The Victorian Translation of China: James Legge's Oriental Pilgrimage* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 2002).
[21] Kitson, p. 17.

and multipolarity' (16) of Sino-British exchange Kitson talks about are particularly important for this study, which deals with a roughly similar, though considerably narrower, time frame as Kitson's work. But while Kitson's scholarship explores the nexus of Sinology, my study is closely focused on British literary engagement with China — on what Kitson identifies as the site where the presence of a 'real' China is evaded or forgotten. What I seek to show is that the 'fancying' of China in British literature is almost always associated with a self-reflexive and autocritical end, with which the fluid concepts of selfhood and otherness are brought to bear in different contexts and operate in different ways.

Although not a study on orientalism per se, this thesis holds as its premise that the teleological centres of orientalism and Oriental writings are pluralistic and individualistic. Any writing, in fact, is an organic product that flows and fluctuates not only with the historical current of the age but also with such microstructural elements as the ethos of a literary clique and personal style and idiosyncrasy. 'Each individual text', as Jürgen Osterhammel argues, 'emerges from a field of experience and intention, perception and imagination, seeing and hearing, convention and innovation'.[22] If, as Said assumes, 'no production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author's involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances', it follows that the writing of the Orient, as human praxis, reflects and refracts not only the historical moment of empire but also the wider scope of political, economic, social, and individual systems and their changes in the specific temporal point of reference.[23] One purpose of this study is to recover the microstructure — if only just a part or parts of it — that underlies the writing of China in the early to mid-nineteenth century. Such an approach, which involves both the contextualisation and the close-reading of texts, is particularly desirable when my focus is

[22] Jürgen Osterhammel, *Unfabling the East: The Enlightenment's Encounter with Asia*, trans. by Robert Savage (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), p. 16.
[23] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 11.

on China — fictional or fictionalised China — in literature, where its invocation is meant to produce not knowledge but an undisguisedly imaginative space for reflection and contemplation. In thinking about the writing of China as an agent of expression in specific contexts, my study tends to see literary orientalism as the manifestation of a rhetorical mode, or a conscious or unconscious rhetorical process, that embodies what Warren calls the 'solipsistic' vision — in its egocentric sense — of Romantic and Victorian writers. Such a vision, of course, may serve as a critique of earlier versions of orientalism in as much as all attempts to engage with the Orient are a response to the genealogy of Oriental engagement, but my central concern is that such a vision, generated by all sorts of stimuli from political, economic, social to cultural and personal particularities, means to tell us almost nothing about the Orient but everything about the self in its various forms and manifestations.

In focusing on the functional rather than the hegemonic meaning of cross-cultural writing, then, this study tends towards a historicist or historical materialist approach rather than a postcolonial one, and in terms of my view of Said's orientalism I tend to agree with J. J. Clarke's comment that Said's 'association of orientalism with colonizing power can represent only one part of the story'.[24] After all, the imperial context was just one aspect of the hermeneutical life-worlds each author experienced. In several ways, however, this study may be seen as joining the postcolonial discussion by corroborating and at the same time nuancing or even calling into question aspects of Saidian orientalism. The first is the constructedness of the Orient. One important argument of Said is that the West 'creates' its own Orient — that the Orient is represented and orientalised — as an *alter ego* of the identity the West forms for itself. In as much as this study concerns itself with imaginative literature, it is only natural that the Orient I deal with is constructed, fabricated, forged — and oftentimes deliberately so in order that its fictionality either suggests or enacts the purpose

[24] Clarke, p. 26.

of the writer. An instrumentalist perspective rests on the simple fact that one does not have to 'know' the Orient in its actualities to engage with it in any meaningful way, especially imaginatively. Another, and a more significant aspect, is that, in seeing the Orient as an apparatus or an agent of domestic expression and criticism, this study indirectly shows how nineteenth-century writers engaged in 'a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient'.[25] It is especially true when writers based their imagination on received ideas of China, so that they were themselves the 'uninitiated Western reader' influenced by 'Orientalist codifications', which imposed on them a 'limited vocabulary and imagery' (60) of the Orient. It is only reasonable to say that most of the works I examine in this study operate within an orientalist discourse, and that some of them may contribute, if only unconsciously, to the imperial discourse. That said, in seeing the Orient as an apparatus, I also subsume it under the broad category of heuristic literary agents, so that they share with other agents like landscape and history the same status as a channel through which to approach interiority. The Orient, moreover, is a more flexible and polyvalent figure than 'a sort of surrogate and even underground self' (3) of the West — an instrumentalist perspective allows us to see that the Orient, as a trope, is at one and the same time the other, the self, and what is in-between the two, especially given the very fluidity of what a 'self' and an 'other' mean within a stratified society. If we consider, metaphorically, the writing of the Orient as a process of 'rewriting' the East into the West, that is, a process resembling translation and adaptation, we are in the position to see the relevance of 'the ethnocentric violence that is inherent in every translation process', as Lawrence Venuti notes, to literary orientalism of the nineteenth century.[26] What Venuti's theory implies is that, whether it was the West writing the East or the East writing the West, the process of re-representation

[25] Said, p. 3.
[26] Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 17.

inevitably imposes its 'ethnocentric violence' on that which is being represented. While such mutual exploitation does not render Said's orientalism fallacious, it does prompt us to reconsider the notions of 'hegemony' and 'dominance' in the Western writing of the Orient, especially when such an engagement with the East, as this study endeavours to show, often effects a substantially more critical censure on the West than on the East itself.

One last word in relation to Saidian orientalism has to be spoken. With the influence of Said's works in the study of literature, comparative literature, and cross-cultural studies in general, East-West relations, and especially the subjugation of the East in the global arena, has become a subject of considerable interest and the foundation of much scholarship on literary history. As texts are largely the only available source of study, Western attitudes towards the East have to be concluded from the nature of Western textual representation of the East, and such attitudes are often confused with those towards imperialism, a confusion particularly difficult to tell apart in the nineteenth century when the growth of empire coincides with the rising animosity — textually inferred — towards the East. To see the Orient as a heuristic instrument or a vehicle of expression requires us to distinguish, at least as a kind of working methodology, between an author's representation of the East, his or her attitude towards the East, and his or her stance on imperialism. For the latter two, Marilyn Butler and Saree Makdisi have convincingly argued for discrete treatment: Romantic writers held a range of positions on their idea of the Orient, which did not necessarily correspond to whether they criticised or promoted empire.[27] The difference between representation and attitude is more difficult to mark off in so far as textual representation is the only means we can draw upon, and the discrepancy between them can only be proved or surmised when contradictions become obvious. If, however, we assume

[27] Marilyn Butler, 'Orientalism', in *The Romantic Period*, ed. by David Pirie (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994), pp. 395–447; Makdisi, *William Blake*, pp. 205–14; see also chapters five and six of Makdisi's *Romantic Imperialism*.

the representation of things to be a utilitarian means to an end, it is easier to accept that the way an author represents something may not always be evidence of his or her attitude towards the object under representation. This is precisely the conception that I have in mind when conducting this study, and it leads naturally to my focus on purpose and meaning through contextualisation. I treat my sources of analysis, therefore, not as a testimony of attitudes but as a creation whose existence can be reasoned out. Where possible, I shall point out the contradiction between an author's representation of China and his attitude towards it, but my objective in doing so is not to conclude on an author's attitude towards China but to argue, as secondary evidence, that the form of representation in question serves a higher purpose than can be imprudently mistaken as an attempt to describe, read, or understand China. As we shall see, nineteenth-century writers were preoccupied with all sorts of questions that capacitate an imaginative China to the office of agency, when China itself, or the question of what China is, is the least of their concerns.

In short, in exploring British literary engagement with China in the post-Napoleonic era of changes in the nineteenth century, this study aims to bring China back to its literary role, to recover its position as a literary organ that was first a figure of rhetoric before it assumes any significance as a form of Oriental discourse. The chapters that follow are devoted to contextualising such a literary existence of China, in order that its life, or 'career', as a Western construct can be more clearly and faithfully reclaimed. To this end, the periodical press is my primary site of investigation, not only because it is where the presence of China was most prominent but also because, and most importantly because, it is both 'a remarkable record of contemporary thoughts' that 'reflect the current situation' and an 'inescapable ideological and subliminal environment of the modern world'.[28] For indeed the

[28] *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals, 1824–1900*, ed. by Walter E. Houghton and others, 5 vols (London: University of Toronto Press; Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966–89), I, p. xv; Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolff, *The Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and Soundings* (Leicester: Leicester University

intellectual and literary public sphere of the Enlightenment coffee house was reincarnated in the periodical space in the nineteenth century; it is a 'center of criticism', as Habermas reflects, where private individuals gathered as a public to articulate their shared experience and put the state in touch with the needs of society.[29] What Raymond Williams calls the 'structure of feeling', understood either as a socially shared emotional experience or an alternative to dominant culture, finds its best expression in the periodical press. Such a realm where the private and the public intermesh, where literature enters into dialogue with current affairs, and where, in the context of a globalising world, the local and the global conjugate, is naturally an ideal site in which to explore the role of the Orient in light of its relevance to the native and the domestic.

While the ephemerality of periodical writings is well recognised, they have, in the past decades, received the attention they deserve as a mass medium that both reflects and constitutes the society in which they were situated. Some of the texts this study examines had never reached beyond the time and space accorded to them in their periodical crib; others had their life perpetuated in book form, read and re-read through the ages. Ephemeral or enduring, what is important is that they were created for the periodical — for a specific readership of a specific literary medium at a specific time, and must be understood within such a context. When I talk about contextualisation, therefore, one of the points of reference I seek to identify is the periodical context — a nexus of paratextuality, intertextuality, and interdiscursivity. What I must clarify is that, while I firmly believe that a thorough investigation into the fictional and non-fictional 'Oriental discourse' of each periodical in question would offer valuable insights not only to the study of orientalism but also to the study of the periodical press, I have made reference to a work's periodical context only in

Press, 1982), pp. xiv–xv; both quoted in Lyn Pykett, 'Reading the Periodical Press: Text and Context', in *Investigating Victorian Journalism*, ed. by Laurel Brake (London: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 3–18 (pp. 6–7).

[29] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. by Thomas Bürger (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), p. 176; p. 32.

so far as it is critical to the interpretation of the work apropos of the role China plays in it. The periodicals, in other words, are an 'adjunct' to my literary investigation rather than my object of study.[30] A periodical-specific approach, such as the one Mark Parker adopts in his *Literary Magazines and British Romanticism*, remains an avenue I deem worthwhile to explore in depth for an understanding of East-West exchange and interrelation, not least the role the Orient plays in a highly particularised setting of a periodical with its evolving editorial orientation, if not for periodical study per se.

Rather than the periodicals, therefore, this study is organised around 'uses', or aspects of instrumentality: the various ways in which China is identified as serving a particular function in the domestic context, as a medium through which to express, contemplate, and criticise the self. While the term 'self' is often understood, broadly and sometimes loosely, as an 'English self' conceptually oppositional to an 'Oriental other' in studies on or about British orientalism, I consider it a more multifaceted and pliable notion of identity capable of being nuanced and graduated. The 'self', as we shall see, can be perceived in individual, social, and national terms, upon which the self/other binary, often but not always metaphorised into a kind of English/Orient contrariety, is defined by the position one takes within the concentric circle of identity that widens from the personal to the collective. To speak of Britain's literary engagement with China as a form of self-critique and self-reflection, therefore, is also to look at the different ways British writers form and resist identification with what may be called their 'self' — in its various manifestations against the contexts of politics, literature, society, and even war — through the writing of the 'other', or what I called in the title of this study the 'Chinese rhetoric'.

[30] I borrow the term from Mark Parker, *Literary Magazines and British Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 2.

My first chapter, 'China Politicised: The Use of China in Regency Satires', looks at the political dimension of such an engagement with China. Tracing the trajectory along which China was 'domesticated' into a subversive political tool from the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century, this chapter explores the interplay between domestic politics and Oriental critique in the Regency period, with a focus on the intertextual lineage between the satires of Leigh Hunt, George Cruikshank, Thomas Moore, and William Hone in their usage of China as a politico-satiric diction of dissent and opposition. My second chapter, 'Making a Self of China: The Anxieties of Romantic Egotists', turns from the public sphere of politics to the private realm of individual sentiment and self-awareness, and reads China as a trope for the diverse sources of anxieties that preyed on the literary selves — as against the literary 'others' that a writer struggled to identify with or resist — of Thomas De Quincey, Charles Lamb, and Edward Bulwer-Lytton. In the third chapter, 'To See a Britain in a China Cup: "Things Chinese" and British Society', I direct my attention to the way China became an embodied metaphor for the social and cultural fissures that divided early Victorian society and explores how, in the works of Thomas Hood, Mark Lemon, and Douglas Jerrold, the idea of China constitutes a way of seeing British society in its increasingly capitalistic and modernistic outlook. My fourth and final chapter, 'In War with a Pantomimic China: Writing the First Opium War', brings our discussion back once again to politics and the nation, but in the broader context of war — the first war between Britain and China, at which juncture the force of fancy that had for centuries associated itself with the writing of China had to come to terms with the realities of war and of China as a proper nation. As a fitting coda to this study, I argue in this chapter that the peculiar mode of British literary engagement with China in the previous decades culminated to produce a special kind of wartime writing in the period, one that blends guilt with pride, sympathy with irony, and serious reflection with sportive lightness. This study, in the final analysis, asserts the

necessity of understanding orientalism in its instrumentalist and performative mode, and argues for a rethinking of the role China plays in British literature as an adaptable agent of expressions and thoughts.

It is not without telling significance that my chapters, while not squarely designed to be chronological, do indeed light upon an orderly temporal sequence that may be seen as indicative of the existence of a time-bound mode of writing China. In this regard, each of the four chapters that follows covers roughly a time period of a decade, spanning from the 1810s to the 1840s. Such a distinct and, in a sense, serendipitous division is almost corroborative to the instrumentalist perspective this study adopts, for it is precisely this temporal specificity that testifies to the way a patterned and connected mode of Oriental writing catered to the changing ethos, concerns, interests, and, in general, needs of the society. It may be said, therefore, that the structure of this study reflects not only the rubric of an instrumental art but also the literary policy that was shared by a community of writers — mostly well-known at the time — in their writing of the Orient at a specific moment of history. Yet another way of looking at the structural implication of the present study is that each chapter reflects the prevalent, or conjunct, preoccupation of British literary writers — especially periodical writers who were most sensitive to the imperatives of the literary marketplace — in the early decades of the nineteenth century, which was, as history tells us, marked by a succession of intellectual upheavals and spiritual crises: the political turmoil under the regency and reign of George IV, the middle-class triumph over enfranchisement, the rise of Chartism and social consciousness, and the approach of the Victorian age of high imperialism. To say that China, or the Orient, serves as a means to shed light on the true character of the British nation and society in all these transformations is tantamount to considering domesticity as the crucial force behind cross-cultural literary engagement. After all, as Adam Smith creatively imagined, a Chinese earthquake that caused the destruction

of a hundred million faraway people would occasion less disturbance to an Englishman than the 'paltry misfortune' of his losing one little finger.[31] The writing of the 'other' is always the writing of the 'self', and what I am trying to reclaim is the primal state of such a literary relationship, the existence of which is regulated first by purpose and motivation before any solicitation of means and methods moulds it into a thousand shapes.

This mentioning of 'shapes' carries us, lastly, to a consideration of the generic complexity that attends the works we are about to look at. In one sense, these works constitute a set of literary types that is generically rich and diverse, encompassing not only poetry and prose but also such sub-classes as ode, ballad, epigram, tale, letter, essay, lyric, narrative, satire, and autobiography. But while the theoretical arbitrariness of literary taxonomy does not prevent us from assigning a class or classes to individual works, it must be acknowledged that, even with their formal diversity in mind, the criss-crossing of literary types these works exhibit seems to defy the possibility of thinking about them as operating under any conventional generic model. It is difficult to tell, for instance, whether the writings of De Quincey, Lamb, and Bulwer-Lytton should be considered fiction or autobiography, tale or essay, satire or confessional literature; likewise the distinction between essay, fiction, epistle, and commentary is equally blurred in the works of Hood, Lemon, and Jerrold, the generic characteristics of which can be further complicated, as in Lemon's case, by the blending of dramatic and advertisement forms into essay writing. It is, perhaps, when we subsume them under the untypical category of periodical writings that their diversity may be understood as a kind of literary experiment made possible in the miscellaneous periodical space, or the 'physical' space of popular culture, where authors walk the fine line between convention and invention on the one hand, and between high and

[31] See Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. by Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 157–58.

low, serious and light, poetic and performative literatures on the other. It is as periodical writings that these works as a whole demonstrate the dynamism of genres to be a complement to new ways of reading and new modes of enquiry, and to a new mechanism of writing in a temporally, spatially, and even topically confined space of intersubjectivity.

The writing of the Orient, which, to some, constitutes a peripheral genre by theme, may be considered a part of this mechanism, whereby thoughts and expressions are channeled most vigorously through the play and interplay between selfhood and otherness, or, as in the case of China, between familiar otherness and foreign selfhood. As we shall see, the close ties between this body of 'Chinese' writings and the interrelated modes of metafiction, satire, and humour could have positioned it more toward a generic category that tends to be self-consciously functional and marginal than any other classes. It remains for us, however, to recall Jacques Derrida's famous remark, that 'there is no genreless text […] yet such participation never amounts to belonging'.[32] What the generic diversity and integrativeness of this literature suggest may be that, within the matrix of generic possibilities, one may in fact locate a cultural artefact at different points of reference and yet remain heedful of the way it interacts with each and every node, from which it culminates into a unified body of work. What if generic integrativeness, or 'non-belonging', is itself a defining feature of a genre? By treating all these writings about China as one, this study has in effect looked upon this body of literature as a discrete generic class, one that, albeit not self-sustaining, is capable of being analysed and condensed into the consistency of agency. While it is beyond the scope of this study to determine the generic status of the collection of works it examines, it does seek to call attention to the way these works possess certain shared characteristics that could have formed them into one family — not only the

[32] Jacques Derrida, 'The Law of Genre', trans. by Avital Ronnell, *Critical Inquiry*, 7 (1980), 55–81 (p. 65).

obvious use of the topos of China but also their generic integrativeness and experimentalism, and, as I shall presently show, their instrumental and autocritical reflexivity.

CHAPTER ONE

China Politicised:
The Use of China in Regency Satires

1.1 Introduction

Near the sea front of Brighton, not far off from the crowded shopping area of the city and still closer to its famous narrow lanes, the Royal Pavilion, with its sustained exotic splendour, stands proudly as one of the star attractions of the United Kingdom. Built during the Regency period (1811–1820) when George IV, then Prince Regent, was head of state, this fantastical palace testifies to the ambitious experiment of the Regent to integrate Western and Eastern decorative arts on the one hand and to the much-censured fashion of Regency excess, extravagance, and decadence on the other. Tourists visiting the Royal Pavilion enter the erstwhile royal residence through two halls and a long gallery furnished all through with hybrid-styled decorations and Chinese lanterns, figurines, and jars; as they proceed, they are struck by the thirty-feet 'dragon chandelier' in the Banqueting Room, and all the other fusional lamps, paintings, columns, carpets, wallpapers, and so forth, from the Saloon, the Music Room, to the King's Apartments. All this while, our modern pilgrims of the past may marvel at the boldness, imaginativeness, and stylishness of the Regent, but at the end of their tour, they shall find a collection of prints bearing witness to an opposite sentiment. These are prints of resentment and anger, of contempt and punitiveness; these are satiric caricatures of the Regent, drawn feeble, debauched, ridiculous, and laughable, which tell us precisely what the sumptuous Royal Pavilion could mean for those who lived under his rule.

One peculiar form in which the Regent was depicted in these caricatures is a Chinese guise: the Regent was portrayed as a Chinese, wearing a Mandarin outfit with a pointed hat, sometimes relishing in his luxury, sometimes inflicted with fits and pains (see, for instance, Figure 1). How did such a Chinese subterfuge come about? What had China to do with the ethos of political radicalism in the Regency period? What role did China play as a vehicle of political expression in Regency satires? These are the questions the present chapter explores. As we shall see in what follows, this caricatural model of a Sinicised Regent was the product of a concatenation of reformist and anti-establishment attempts rather than a one-time invention; it was a rhetoric developed over time, separately and at the same time collectively, by those who sought change and betterment for their own country.

Regency Satires: A Prehistory

Before we trace the trajectory of the use of China in Regency satires, it is worth taking a retrospective look at the invocation of China in earlier British political literature in order that the singularity and evolution of its way of 'politicising' the Chinese other may be foregrounded. In the eighteenth century, a pseudo-Chinese viewpoint was often contrived to engage readers as a distant observer of local political mores, or to offer an alternative worldview for comparison. This tradition can be dated back to Horace Walpole's *A Letter From Xo Ho, a Chinese Philosopher at London, to His Friend Lien Chi at Peking* (1757), in which the author employs a Chinese perspective to fulminate against the political factionalism that led to the cruel execution of Admiral Byng. We may even date such a use of Chineseness further back to Daniel Defoe's *The Consolidator: or, Memoirs of Sundry Transactions from the World in the Moon* (1705), if the Chinese, to whom the Lunarians imparted their technology, can be understood as the earthly heir of the Lunarians, whose

Figure 1 William Heath, *The Bill Thrown Out* (November 1820)

mapmaking of European political flaws is analogous to the later attempts of Walpole and Oliver Goldsmith in employing a Chinese observer to reflect upon British politics. Although more properly a social satire, Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World; or, Letters from a Chinese Philosopher Residing in London to his Friends in the East* (1762), along with imitations such as Charles Johnston's *The Pilgrim: or, A Picture of Life in a Series of Letters, Written mostly from London by a Chinese Philosopher, to His Friend at Quang-Tong* (1775), contains subtle criticisms that are no less political than those that elsewhere might be considered forthright.[1] In a similar vein, pseudo-Chinese translations such as John Scott's 'Li-Po; or, The Good Governor' (1782) and *The Oriental Chronicles of the Times: being the Translation of a Chinese Manuscript* (1785), allegedly written by Confucius the Sage, invite comparison by evoking political and ideological possibilities. In eighteenth-century political literature, a 'Chinese rhetoric' is a rhetoric of comparative politics; whether or not this literature reflects the British assertation of what Porter calls the 'cultural legitimacy' of China in this period, it attests to the efforts of British writers to articulate their political visions through a relative framework, in which China is one parallel site of observation and comparison.[2]

What came to be the turning point in the way China is used in British political literature was the Macartney embassy (1792–1794), which marked the first real entrance of China into the stage of British politics. Sanctioned by King George III, the Macartney embassy was the first diplomatic mission Britain sent to China, but it was also the first diplomatic failure Britain suffered in its relation with China. The embassy departed England

[1] Goldsmith's Chinese letters were first published in serial in John Newbery's *Public Ledger* from January 1760 to August 1761. This series of letters was reprinted in 1762 as *The Citizen of the World; or, Letters from a Chinese Philosopher Residing in London to his Friends in the East*, henceforth most widely known as *The Citizen of the World*. For a discussion of Goldsmith's work and his sources, see, for example, Martha Pike Conant, *The Oriental Tale in England in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1967), pp. 188–199.
[2] Porter, *Ideographia*, p. 241.

in 1792, with a view to negotiating better trade terms and establishing formal diplomatic relations between the two countries.[3] It returned home in 1794 with heaps of courteous gifts offered by the Chinese emperor, but Macartney's chief demands — the opening up of trade beyond port Canton and the establishment of a British ambassador at the court of Peking — were rejected. While the contretemps between the Chinese court and the embassy over the kowtow ceremony, to which historians attach great importance, was not as widely bandied about among the British public as it would be with the failure of the Amherst embassy two decades later, China's repulse alone had left an indelible mark upon British minds of its arrogance, dogmatism, and narrow-mindedness.[4] For historians, the Macartney embassy represents a significant moment of the 'collision' between two civilisations, or an 'encounter' between two 'imperial formations […] each with universalistic pretensions'.[5] For political critics and especially radical satirists of the 1790s, however, what the Macartney embassy represented was rather a political stimulus to square the government's diplomatic impotency with its administrative weakness. With the social upheaval that came with the outbreak of the French war, food shortages, and economic depression in the 1790s, the meaning of the Macartney embassy became hopelessly entangled with the ethos of dissent that overwhelmed Britain. A moment of change in Anglo-Chinese relations had transformed the shape China could take as a vehicle of political expression, but the critical interest of the dissident writers remained intensely domestic, before and after the Macartney embassy.

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[3] For the Macartney embassy, see Aubrey Singer, *The Lion and the Dragon: the Story of the First British Embassy to the Court of the Emperor Qianlong in Peking, 1792–1794* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1992); Alain Peyrefitte, *The Collision of Two Civilisations: the British Expedition to China in 1792–1794*, trans. by Jon Rothschild (London: Harvill, 1993); *Ritual and Diplomacy: the Macartney Mission to China 1792–1794*, ed. by R. A. Bickers (London: British Association for Chinese Studies, 1993); James L. Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995).

[4] The Chinese rite required the ambassadors to bow, by prostration, nine times to the Chinese emperor. A number of negotiations were made before Macartney succeeded in conducting the ceremony in an English manner. For a succinct and analytical account of the kowtow issue Macartney encountered, see Ulrike Hillemann, *Asian Empire and British Knowledge: China and the Networks of British Imperial Expansion* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 37–45.

[5] Peyrefitte; Hevia, p. 25.

A sketch of a series of satires written by John Wolcot (1738–1819) before and after the Macartney embassy will suffice to illustrate my point. Better known as Peter Pindar, Wolcot was a prolific and highly popular satirist — so prolific and popular that the British court was said to have offered him a long pension in exchange for his silence.[6] His works, famously opportunistic, manoeuvred almost every exploitable topic and affair that could put the King and his Tory ministry to shame. In 1792, soon after the departure of the Macartney embassy, Pindar published two satires, *A Pair of Lyric Epistles to Lord Macartney and his Ship* and *Odes to Kien Long, the Present Emperor of China*, which, the author remarks waggishly, he has wished to present to the Chinese emperor Kien Long.[7] In *A Pair of Lyric Epistles* Pindar pictures the embassy as a threat to China: he relates the British troop review at Bagshot Heath, which the Duke of Richmond — 'ambitious of a name, / is ever angling to catch Martial Fame' (5) — conducted to silence opposition, and imagines that Kien Long, receiving this piece of intelligence, would be wary of the invasion portended by the embassy. He exposes the 'strong money-itch' (16) of the British court and the mercenary intention of the embassy, and, almost prophetically, imagines that the displeased emperor would send Macartney back home. Making the Chinese emperor a potential addressee, Pindar thus mocks the militant leaning and rapacious thirst of the British court by identifying China not with the exploiter but with the exploited. In *Odes to Kien Long* Pindar goes further to strike up a friendship with the Chinese emperor, suggesting a '*literary commerce*' between 'the

[6] For the allegation about Wolcot's pension, see Robert L. Vales, *Peter Pindar (John Wolcot)* (New York: Twayne, 1973), pp. 19–20. The rumour was also mentioned in a review of Pindar's *A Most Solemn and Important Epistle to the Emperor of China*, published in 1817; see *The Critical Review*, May 1817, pp. 478–82, (p. 480).

[7] The remark was made in his preface, 'To the Reader', in *A Pair of Lyric Epistles*. See [John Wolcot] Peter Pindar, 'To the Reader', *A Pair of Lyric Epistles to Lord Macartney and his Ship* (London: H. D. Symonds, 1792). The Macartney embassy embarked for China in September 1792. The first review of Pindar's *A Pair of Lyric Epistles* appeared in October, in which the reviewer mentions that *Odes to Kien Long* has also been published. See *Monthly Review*, October 1792, p. 214.

Great Kien Long, and the no less celebrated Peter Pindar'.[8] By praising Kien Long as the 'Prince of Poets, noble Bard' (5), Pindar ridicules the vulgarity of European Kings, in particular the British one; he attacks George III for doing what the Chinese benevolent potentate would not do, and invites Kien Long to visit England in order to learn how to be avaricious. In a *modus operandi* of solidarity, that is to say, the satirist engages the Chinese emperor not only as a compeer and a listener but also as an observer and a potential critic of the British monarch; it is in this sense that Pindar's fictional correspondence with Kien Long before the Macartney embassy is evocative of the Enlightenment rhetoric of a 'positive' orientalism hinging on recognition and universalism. In Pindar's own words, it is a search for virtues far and wide: 'why *abroad* for virtues must you roam? / Because I cannot find them […] *at Home*'.[9]

With the return of the Macartney embassy in 1794, Pindar produced another set of 'China' satires in *Pindariana* (1794–95), in which the functional relationship between China, the satirist, and the satirised is fundamentally changed. Congeniality ceases to be a binding force between any two parties, nor does East-West disparity cast the British monarch in a loathsome light; rather, the projection of Chinese autarchy now serves to put the impotence and wimpishness of the court into relief, whose undue submission to Eastern influence disgraces the country. Decrying Eastern hauteur in 'Ode to the Lion Ship of War', Pindar remonstrates with the 'Eastern Despots' who 'in their lofty station, / Expect the censer of rich adulation', and, on that ground, chastises the British court for initiating such a '*monkey* trip' as the Macartney embassy to a place where 'BRITONS, dog-like, learnt to crawl and

[8] [John Wolcot] Peter Pindar, *Odes to Kien Long, the Present Emperor of China; with The Quakers, a Tale; To a Fly, Drowned in a Bowl of Punch; Ode to Macmanus, Townsend, and Jealous, the Thief-Takers, &c.* (London: H. D. Symonds, 1792), p. 3.
[9] [John Wolcot] Peter Pindar, *Ode Upon Ode; or Peep at St. James's; or New-Year's Day; or What You Will* (London: G. Kearsley, 1787), p. 69.

bow'.[10] With China vilified into an 'eastern despot' and Britain victimised as a downtrodden dog, the rhetoric of Pindar's satire is no longer comparative but interrogative — 'Tell me, who plann'd this silly expedition? / That brain was surely in a mad condition' (228) — assigning liability to those who caused the country to suffer humiliation. The Chinese emperor Kien Long, likewise, no longer serves as the pretended subject of eulogy but of parody. In 'A Panegyric on Tea, by Kien Long', Pindar offers a naughty 'translation' of a translation of a poem by Kien Long, originally rendered from Chinese into French by Père Amiot, and then from French into English in the celebrated *A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (1773) by William Chambers, the architectural advisor of George III and a founding member of the Royal Academy.[11] Intentionally mischievous, Pindar in his 'translation' turns Chambers's genteel prose rendition into a comical, trifling, and crude poem:

> Get an old Kettle, if you please,
> For such a thing is found with ease,
> That has three legs — and therefore shows
> Its ancient services; — then fill
> With water; and, what's best, the rill,
> The lucid rill, from melted snows. […]
> Then drink it, and 'twill drive, d'ye see,

[10] [John Wolcot] Peter Pindar, *Pindariana; or Peter's Portfolio* (London: T. Spilsbury and Son, 1794–95), p. 226; p. 225.
[11] Chambers's *A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* was first published in 1772. The translation of Kien Long's poem appears not in the scholarly *Dissertation* but in the more playful *An Explanatory Discourse by Tan Chet-Qua, of Quang-Chew-Fu*, which was annexed to the *Dissertation* in 1773, where Chambers poses as Tan Chet-Qua, a real Chinese artist living in London from 1769 to 1772, to proffer his explanation of the *Dissertation* from a Chinese perspective. See William Chambers, *A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening; to which is Annexed, An Explanatory Discourse by Tan Chet-Qua, of Quang-Chew-Fu* (London: W. Griffin, 1773).

> All the blue devils from your head.[12]
>
> — Peter Pindar

> In gratifying at once the sight, the smell and the taste, nothing exceeds these three things [plum-blossom, fingered citron, and pine nut]: and if, at the same time, you put, upon a gentle fire, and old pot, with three legs, grown black and battered with length of service, after having first filled it with the limpid water of melted snow; [….] you may feel, you may taste, but it is impossible to describe the sweet tranquility which a liquor, thus prepared, procures.[13]
>
> — William Chambers

Pindar's poem, replete with either monosyllabic or disyllabic lexicons and constructed in colloquial and sometimes nonsensical sentences, means to implicate a simple-minded, ill-educated, and unpoetical poet. Passing his comedified versification off as a 'translation' of the Chinese imperial poem, Pindar besmirches the name he had once given to Kien Long — 'Prince of Poets, noble Bard' — and projects the new-found 'despot' as a foolish, uncultured, and flaunty emperor with poetic pretension. Apparently, Pindar has made a game of Kien Long, but more to his purpose he has held William Chambers and his sinophilistic *Dissertation* up to ridicule, at a most expedient time when the Macartney embassy had brought no glory but shame from China back to England.[14] Deploying the same fabricated Kien-Long style, Pindar turns his attack on other King's men in 'Ode to

[12] [Wolcot] Pindar, *Pindariana*, p. 25.
[13] Chambers, *A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening*, p. 120.
[14] William Mason also scoffed at Chambers's taste in *An Heroic Epistle, in Answer to Sir William Chambers* (1772). The satire is included in *The Beauties of English Poetry* (1804) edited by Wolcot. Vales believes that Mason's *Heroic Epistle* 'shows a decided influence upon the satirist [Wolcot]'; see Vales, pp. 18–19.

Coffee: in the Manner of Kien Long': Warren Hastings, the Governor-General of Bengal accused of corruption, and Joseph Banks, the King's scientific adviser and the president of the Royal Society, whose suspicious qualification Pindar persistently pillories.[15]

This series of satires by Peter Pindar bears witness to a change not only in Anglo-Chinese relations but also in the way China was used as a political weapon. Significantly, his works demonstrate the utilitarianistic nature of political satire — 'however much mimesis or representation is involved, the generic end is rhetorical […] nothing is done without a purpose', to borrow the expression of Ronald Paulson in his brilliant study of the fictions of satire.[16] Political satirists are uncompromisingly target-oriented, and in a repressive libel regime of stringent state censorship they took to achieve their rhetorical end with as much imaginative exertion as writers of fiction could wield. Pindar's works show us how the invocation of China is one such rhetoric; valorised or vilified, it can be made useful in effecting a radical critique towards the British political self, and even within the paradigm of Eastern despotism it is not axiomatic that the stigmatisation of the Oriental other is necessarily charged with self-righteous complacency. What motivates its use is a peculiar kind of opportunism — an urge to be responsive to state events that are of public interest, and that, as in the case of Macartney's failure, are capable of being dramatised and dilated to elicit a brand of radical nationalism that marginalises the establishment for the signs of weakness it exhibits.

This kind of opportunism, in fact, characterised the radical movement of the 1790s through to the Regency period, and the Macartney embassy was but the first of the many stimuli that tugged China into the British political arena of dissension and stabilisation. As far as the legacy of the embassy is concerned, one may further consider the extent to which

[15] [Wolcot] Pindar, *Pindariana*, p. 27–28. Joseph Banks and Thomas Paine, in particular, are the frequent targets of Wolcot; see Vales, pp. 59–67; pp. 89–103.
[16] Ronald Paulson, *The Fictions of Satire* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), p. 3–4.

the radical ethos of the 1790s — and the conservative effort to counter it — had shaped the sensation a diplomatic episode such as the Macartney embassy could provoke. We will not go into detail on this point, but it is telling enough that the very first narrative of the embassy, *A Narrative of the British Embassy to China* (1795), was published by the reformist John Debrett, and it was followed by the appearance of *An Historical, Geographical and Philosophical View of the Chinese Empire* (1795), written by the radical William Winterbotham in jail (for preaching sedition).[17] Just as Thomas Mathias's *Imperial Epistle from Kien Long* (1795) was a Tory repulse to Peter Pindar's *Odes*, so too the hugely influential *Travels in China* (1804) of John Barrow was arguably an attempt to counter these earlier radical narratives of monarchal infirmity by, as Laurence Williams puts it, 'a series of rhetorical and satirical inversions, in which criticisms originally directed at British elites […] are displaced onto the Chinese themselves'.[18] As the radical ethos of the 1790s was carried over to the Regency period, this same spirit of opportunism and utilitarianism would continue to permeate the use of China in radical discourse. What was different is that, with a notoriously extravagant, chinoiserie-loving Prince Regent coming to power, reformists had found a new target and a new way to fling mud at the monarch — to draw a portrait of the new ruler *as* a Chinese.

[17] For John Debrett, see Wil Verhoeven, *Gilbert Imlay: Citizen of the World* (New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 96; for Winterbotham's trails, see James Epstein, 'Sermons of Sedition: The Trials of William Winterbotham', in *Political Trials in an Age of Revolutions: Britain and the North Atlantic, 1793–1848*, ed. by Michael T. Davis, Emma Macleod, and Gordon Pentland (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 109–35.

[18] Laurence Williams, 'British Government under the Qianlong Emperor's Gaze: Satire, Imperialism, and the Macartney Embassy to China, 1792–1804', *Lumen: Selected Proceedings from the Canadian Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 32 (2013), 85–107 (p. 105). Williams's article offers an excellent overview of satires inspired by the Macartney embassy.

I have been emphasising the functional role China played in British radical discourse because this instrumentalist perspective — to distinguish it from imperialist and postcolonial ones — is particularly important when we come to deal with Regency satires, in which China is engaged, at least superficially, in a predominantly negative manner. What is intriguing about Regency satires is that, in criticising the monarch and the government, satirists took to identifying their objects of critique with the 'other', and such a tactic of othering often invites more attention to its orientalist implication than what is, in fact, more obvious: that the true enemy of the satirists is their political self *vis-à-vis* the established political order. In the Regency period, which started in 1811 when George Prince of Wales was made Prince Regent to rule in the place of his incapacitated father, this enemy was the Prince Regent, whom the liberal Whigs regarded as a betrayer. Even at the beginning of his reign, the Regent was subject to frequent attacks; it all came about because of his professed allegiance to the Whigs as a prince, and his betrayal of them as a regent.[19] For the Whig supporters, long resentful of the Tory administration, the Prince of Wales was looked upon as their last hope for parliamentary reform and religious liberty. Their dreams seemed so close to being realised when the supposedly liberal prince assumed power in 1811. He could have reconstituted the ministry right away or, if not, in early 1812 upon the death of Spencer Perceval, the Tory Prime Minister. To the great disappointment of the liberals, the Regent, after a good deal of shuffling, ended up retaining his father's Tory ministry and appointed Lord Liverpool to succeed Perceval. The rage of the Whigs was beyond measure. Satire, both verbal and visual, became one of the channels of their wrath and last-ditch petition.

[19] For what happened before and after the Prince of Wales took office as Regent, see John W. Derry, *The Regency Crisis and the Whigs, 1788–9* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963); Christopher Hibbert, *George IV, Regent and King, 1811–1830* (London: Allen Lane, 1973). For a life of George IV, see E. A. Smith, *George IV* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

The sole aim of the liberal satirists was to attack the Regent from all possible directions, from his political treachery to his vanity, his extravagance, his debauchery, and even to his obesity, his gout, and his taste. It was under this circumstance that China and its attendant Chineseness came to be used as a satirical device to stigmatise the Regent and his chosen government by writers committed or sympathetic to the Whig causes.

One obvious motivation behind the invocation of China in this act of defiance was the Regent's enthusiasm for the exotic East, manifested in his enduring partiality for chinoiserie. Even as a prince, George had shown himself to be a sort of 'Orientalphile'. When he was granted residence in Carlton House in 1783, he delegated William Chambers and then Henry Holland to refurbish the House, adding new wings and, most famously, a 'Chinese Drawing Room' to the royal residence.[20] Then came the epitome of the Regent's taste — the Royal Pavilion at Brighton, the elaborate chinoiserie palace we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Formerly the Marine Pavilion, the Royal Pavilion acquired its chinoiserie interior as early as 1802 when George initiated an extension project; in 1815 he appointed John Nash to remodel the Marine Pavilion into the Royal Pavilion, and concomitant with the transformation was a new, and more ornate, chinoiserie interior, designed by Frederick Crace and Robert Jones.[21] Lesser in scale were the Chinese bridge and pagoda (soon burnt down by fireworks) erected in St. James's Park in 1814, the Chinese Fishing Temple and Chinese junk built at Virginia Water in the 1820s, and the Chinese Luncheon Room, the Yellow Drawing Room, the Chinese-style reception rooms, and so forth, designed for the Buckingham Palace in 1820 when the Regent ascended the throne.

[20] For Carlton House, see Nigel Arch, Thom Richardson, and A. V. B. Norman, *Carlton House: The Past Glories of George IV's Palace* (London: The Queen's Gallery, 1991), p. 11. For the Chinese Drawing Room in particular, see Geoffrey de Bellaigue, 'The Furnishings of the Chinese Drawing Room, Carlton House', *Burlington Magazine*, 109 (September 1967), 518–28.
[21] See Jessica Rutherford, *The Royal Pavilion: The Palace of King George IV* (Brighton: Royal Pavilion, Art Gallery and Museums, 1995), pp. 4–5.

That the Regent's private taste should become a catalyst for public repugnance was due, partly, to the fact that it exhibited the improvident character of the King-to-be and his court. Almost all of the Regent's 'orientalising' projects incurred huge debts, bound to be repaid by public money. The redecoration of the Royal Pavilion alone drew more than one hundred and fifty thousand pounds from the Treasury in the seven years between 1814 to 1819, discounting what it ran up before its final completion in 1823.[22] Profligacy and a love of luxury, fashion, and indolence thus marked the quality of the distracted head of state, who, as Lady Shelley says, 'never thinks of anything but building. He never speaks of business; nor even gives a thought to the state of the country'.[23] While art historians like John Steegman have given the Regent his due for having 'actually directed and formed Taste for the first time since the reign of Charles I', and Greg Thomas has shown his appreciation of the Royal Pavilion as 'a spectacle of intelligent, creative internationalism', those living under the rule of the pleasure-seeking Regent could hardly appreciate what he had achieved at the expense of the well-being of the nation and the people.[24] Rather than achievements, anti-Regent satirists saw in his taste an unforgivable waste; rather than a form of art, anti-Regent satirists thought of his exotic enterprise as a grotesque, gaudy, and traitorous undertaking.

It was 'traitorous' not only because such extravagance robbed the public purse but also because such exoticism was symbolic of a kind of non-Englishness — as well as a kind of debauched, aristocratic 'archaic Englishness' — unwarranted and uncalled for at the time. On the one hand, a passion for foreignness, which was tantamount to a voluntary handover of national pride, represented the Regent's insensibility to, or even defiance of, his royal

[22] Hibbert, p. 125.
[23] *The Diary of Frances Lady Shelley*, ed. by Richard Edgcumbe (London: J. Murray, 1912), p. 146.
[24] John Steegman, *The Rule of Taste: From George I to George IV* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1968), p. 111; Greg M. Thomas, 'Chinoiserie and Intercultural Dialogue at Brighton Pavilion', in *Qing Encounters: Artistic Exchanges between China and the West*, ed. by Petra ten-Doesschate Chu and Ning Ding (Los Angeles, California: Getty Research Institute, 2015), pp. 233–47 (p. 233).

identity. Such a penchant was all the more unseasonable at a time when the Napoleonic Wars had produced a surge of nationalistic sentiment throughout Europe, and when the failure of the Macartney embassy had rendered China an unlikely friend to Britain. On the other hand, the Regent's passion for chinoiserie in particular fueled radical zeal because it signified the obsoletism of his regime: cosmopolitan chinoiserie, a luxury exclusive to the elite class, was itself a symbol of aristocratic value, the very dogma that the liberalising society sought to eradicate. Already in the mid-eighteenth century, as Zuroski-Jenkins shows us, 'the privileging of internal difference and "order in variety" [of cosmopolitanism] is giving way to the orientalist model of mutually exclusive entities whose interaction manifests as pollution, corruption, and infection'.[25] If China, in its proper signification of a state, remained an ambivalent orientalist Orient in this period, chinoiserie did indeed serve as what Makdisi describes as 'a surrogate target for radical critique, an imaginary space on which to project all the supposed faults of the old regime' such as aristocratic tyranny, luxury, and idleness.[26] The hybrid aesthetic exercise of the Regent inevitably stood for the archaic cosmopolitan and aristocratic order that went against the nationalistic and liberal tides of the time. In the Regency period — a period of political upheaval so enormous that only Liverpool's ministerial reform in the 1820s and the Great Reform Act of 1832 could bring alleviation — all these ideas of national and domestic liberation conflated under the mighty pen of opposition satirists: the dissolution of the Regent, the corruption of the Tory ministry, the aristocratic vice of the social order, the anti-nationalistic implication of hybrid aesthetics, and the foreignness and perversity of China and Chineseness became one homogenised entity. In their Sinicising of the Regent, that is to say, satirists are bringing to play a representation of the British sovereign that is at one and the same time metonymic

[25] Zuroski-Jenkins, p. 159.
[26] Makdisi, *William Blake*, p. 206.

and metaphoric: metonymic in the sense that Chineseness is reckoned as a constitutive feature of the Regent's personal life and a fingerprint of his private character, and metaphoric because it represents a grafting of symbolisms, both relational and associative, of China and chinoiserie onto an object of critique.

In what follows we will look at the satires of Leigh Hunt, arguably the 'maker' of the theme of a Chinese Regent, and a series of thematically related works by Regency satirists that started with the immensely popular squib of Thomas Moore. In tracing this succession of attacks, one feature to note is that Regency satirists, in their warfare against the Regent and his Tory government, took to loading their bullets in popular avenues of mass communication. Periodicals, including magazines and newspapers, were utilised as an ideal channel to engage the public and to popularise their censures; interacting with other means of propaganda like broadsides and pamphlets, they formed the battle front upon which warriors fight individually to execute a collective political attack. The *Examiner* of Leigh Hunt was one of the most notable radical periodicals of the time, widely read by the populace and by Hunt's radical comrades, not least because of the 'martyrdom' he suffered in being charged and eventually jailed for seditious libel. The *Morning Chronicle*, in which Thomas Moore contributed most of his playful, poetic, and caustic squibs, was another vanguard of radical political reform. Up until the passing of the Six Acts in 1819, the periodicals remained a driving force of radical movement, and the periodical satires of Hunt and Moore had been influential both in their imaginative construct and political function. The popular nature of periodical satires dictates that satirists were not only prone to intrigue readers but also to be quick to respond to topical issues. Talking about his 'long-course of anti-Tory warfare', Moore noted that it had given rise to some satiric 'trifles' innately limited in their length of life, their themes being 'the passing modes, whims, and scandal of

the day'.[27] Political satires tend to lose their referentiality through time, and Moore's squibs, as well as those by other anti-Regent satirists, are all the more susceptible because their warfare was essentially guerrilla in nature — opportunistic, codified, hit-and-run. Moore's 'Parody of a Celebrated Letter' (March 1812), for instance, derives meaning from being a parallel text of the Regent's letter to the Duke of York, divulged in February 1812; 'The Insurrection of the Papers' (April 1812) is an instant response to the Regent's unsanctioned appointment of Colonel McMahon as the Keeper of the Privy Purse in March 1812; and his 'Fum and Hum, the Two Birds of Royalty' (February 1816), which we shall discuss in due course, pokes fun at the Regent on the occasion of his visit to the Brighton pavilion in early 1816, when the Amherst embassy was about to depart for China. 'Every newspaper I read starts a crowd of whimsical thoughts and jokes,' Moore later said, 'which, till I *lay* some of them with my pen, haunt and tease me as the little devils did St. Anthony'.[28] News, in other words, constitutes the imaginative space of the satirists and the hermeneutical grid upon which readers could make sense of their satiric design. In our attempt to understand the use of China in Regency satires, therefore, we must not lose sight of the fact that such a use, at least in its incipient form, was prompted by an urge on the part of reformist satirists to capitalise on current affairs — a way not only to secure popularity but also to make satiric allusions instantly interpretable.

This is also to say that, by using China against a context in which its rhetorical significance can be immediately grasped, satirists were constructing a kind of 'Aesopian language' that is highly communicative but hardly censorable. In as much as the burgeoning of the radical press was attended by tighter state control and legal repression, it is understandable that the adoption of a Chinese camouflage, like other fictional, parabolic,

[27] Thomas Moore, *The Poetical Works of Thomas Moore, Collected by Himself*, 10 vols (London: Longman, 1840–41), IX (1841), p. iv; p. v.
[28] Thomas Moore's diary, 19 March 1826; *Memoirs, Journals, and Correspondence of Thomas Moore*, ed. by John Russell, 8 vols (London: Longman, 1854), V, p. 53.

and historical pretensions, served also to protect writers from censorial scrutiny. Political censorship in the Regency period was often in the form of post-publication prosecution for seditious libel, which 'was so loose in its definition that any criticism of the monarch or government could be considered seditious'.[29] Given its looseness in definition and the significance attached to the 'provocation' a publication caused to the public in its adjudication, it is certain that an Oriental disguise, which veils a target with an Eastern mask and deflects a political critique onto an Eastern land, was a useful tool for the circumvention of legal risk.[30] But while one may consider censorship as a restraint upon literature, one beneficial effect of it, as Lev Loseff suggests, is the creation of a literarily refined 'Aesopian language', through which authors interact with their readers by contriving 'screens' and 'markers' — the devices of concealment and the signals of revelation.[31] China, in our case, is the screen, and while it serves to conceal, obscure, and convolute meanings, it also enriches a satire by putting creative cultural borrowing in place and inspiring curiosity when readers fathom the markers that make a foreign world relevant to domestic politics. In one sense, therefore, while this chapter is explicitly purposed to explore the use of China in Regency satires, it is also exploring how literature and politics interacted in the Regency period, when literary writers made an imaginative turn in their political vociferations by traversing the boundaries between Chineseness and Britishness, textual and allegorical representation, and cultural and political transgression.

[29] Barbara White, 'Britain: 1688-1880', in *Censorship: A World Encyclopedia*, ed. by Derek Jones (New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 309–13 (p. 310).
[30] William Blackstone, in his *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765–69), made it clear that the sole consideration of the libel law (in a criminal prosecution) at that time was whether the publication in question tended to 'create animosities, and to disturb the public peace'. See William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1765-69), IV, p. 150.
[31] Lev Loseff, *On the Beneficence of Censorship: Aesopian Language in Modern Russian Literature*, trans. by Jane Bobko (Munich: Otto Sagner, 1984). For Loseff's discussion about 'screen' and 'marker', see pp. 50–52.

1.2 The Making of a Prototype: Leigh Hunt's Chinese Princes and His Reformist Reading of China

'Leigh Hunt,' says the reviewer of the *Monthly Repository*, 'is a veteran in politics: he served long, with little pay and many hard knocks, in the people's cause'.[32] Few writers in the early nineteenth century were unacquainted with Leigh Hunt (1784–1859) and his political involvement. While Hunt's political services had for a long time been overshadowed by his own literary influence as the leader of the 'Cockney School' of poetry, recent scholars like Nicholas Roe, Michael Eberle-Sinatra, and Jeffrey Cox have resuscitated an important aspect of the author's life and revitalised our knowledge of it by exploring the inextricable link between Hunt's political and literary career.[33] A fervid political veteran, Hunt campaigned strenuously for parliamentary reform and Catholic emancipation, wielding his pen as his sword and turning the press into his battlefield. When Hunt founded the *Examiner* with his brother John in 1808, he had vouched that his paper would be 'extremely furious in politics'; when he founded a second periodical, the *Reflector*, in 1810, he had made politics among the 'first cares' of his paper, which, like the *Examiner*, was 'most anxious for Reform'.[34] His scathing and vigorous attacks on the Prince Regent culminated in his indictment for seditious libel in 1812 and his imprisonment from 1813 to 1815.[35] Many of his contemporaries looked upon him not only as a leading journalist and

[32] 'The Indicator and the Companion', *Monthly Repository*, February 1834, pp. 101–03 (p. 101).
[33] See Nicholas Roe, *Fiery Heart: The First Life of Leigh Hunt* (London: Pimlico, 2005); *Leigh Hunt: Life, Poetics, Politics*, ed. by Nicholas Roe (London: Routledge, 2003); Michael Eberle-Sinatra, *Leigh Hunt and the London Literary Scene: A Reception History of His Major Works, 1805–1828* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Jeffrey N. Cox, *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School: Keats, Shelley, Hunt, and their Circle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
[34] Leigh Hunt, 'Prospectus', *Examiner*, 3 January 1808, pp. 6–8 (p. 6); Leigh Hunt, 'Prospectus', *Reflector*, 1810, pp. iii–ix (p. iv). The Prospectus of the *Reflector* was dated April 1810, but the projected publication date of the first issue was in December 1810. See Kenneth E. Kendall, *Leigh Hunt's Reflector* (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 2015), p. 21.
[35] For Hunt's trial, imprisonment, and, more generally, his life, see for example Edmund Blunden, *Leigh Hunt: A Biography* (London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1930); Roe, *Fiery Heart*; Anthony Holden, *The Wit in the Dungeon: A Life of Leigh Hunt* (London: Little, Brown, 2005).

literary man but also a political martyr and, in fact, a hero. Hunt's political writings formed a significant part of his life both as a political veteran and a literary writer, and their influence was wide and profound.

This section looks into the role China plays in Hunt's political writings and the way his use of China spearheaded an entire series of satires and caricatures that brings the same apparatus of subterfuge to bear on the Regent and his government. It may be useful to point out in the first place that, while critical commentary is a mode of expression Hunt frequently attends to, his political writings take a variety of forms, the potency of which is derived not only from the insight of his opinions but also from his imaginative, figurative, rhetorical, and poetic bent of writing and essaying. Even his indictably libellous passage in 'The Prince on St. Patrick's Day', which the Chief Justice Ellenborough described as 'a foul, atrocious, and malignant libel' and which eventually sent him to jail, is arguably a parody of the fulsome verses of the *Morning Post* in praise of the Prince, and might well be considered a literary mimicry targeted at the Tory paper alone had the case been judged independently from Hunt's repeated vitriol directed at the sovereign.[36] The Chinese tales that we are about to discuss are imaginative writings of Hunt's that take the form of a parable; they answer to particular political moments, and take meanings from specific contexts that are familiar to their immediate readers, commoners and radicals alike.

Hunt's Chinese Princes in The Reflector *and* The Examiner

'The True Enjoyment of Splendour: A Chinese Apologue' is the first of Hunt's satires that resort to a Chinese camouflage, and also the very first in the Regency period that dresses

[36] For a very interesting discussion about the defence Henry Brougham made during Hunt's trial, see Charles Mahoney, 'Regency Literature? Regency Libel', in *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 61 (2012), 103–15.

the Prince Regent as a Chinese — and, in fact, any Oriental — monarch. Published in October 1811 in the third issue of the *Reflector*, this short political parable relates an anecdote about a Chinese prince, Prince Quo, whose heedlessness of his own responsibility as the ruler of the state is chided by a civilian bonze.[37] Centring his narrative upon a day when Prince Quo parades the streets of Pekin 'in all the lustre of his rank', Hunt pictures an arrogant, conceited, and by no means agreeable Chinese prince in a satirical language thinly veiled by humour: 'his pigtail was proportionate to his merits, for it hung down to the ground and kissed the dust', 'his nails, which were each an inch long […] might have taught the barbarians of the West to look with just scorn on their many-writing machines', and, 'being exceedingly corpulent, […] he proceeded at no undignified pace', while his servants, holding an umbrella, an ivory fan, and bags of opium and Chinese snacks and medicines for their master, order the people to 'vanish from before the illustrious Quo' as they proceed (196). Just when the corpulent prince in his extravagant outfit slowly makes his way with eyes half shut to the people around him, a curious bonze catches his attention: he keeps bowing to the ground, every time exclaiming 'thanks to my lord for his jewels' (196). Overcome by curiosity, Prince Quo asks his admirer why he should thank him for something he has not done. It is then that the bonze, succeeded with his disguise, manages to 'instruct' the prince of the 'true enjoyment of splendour': 'The great Quo […] has taken infinite labour to acquire his magnificence, he takes still greater pains to preserve it, and all the while, I, who am lying under a shed, enjoy it for nothing' (197). The moral of the story, in Hunt's contrived Eastern language, is that

[37] [Leigh Hunt], 'The True Enjoyment of Splendour: A Chinese Apologue', *Reflector*, October 1811, pp. 195–97. The tale was reprinted in Reginald Brimley Johnson's *Essays of Leigh Hunt* in 1891. The third issue of the *Reflector* came off the press on 25 October 1811; see Kendall, p. 27.

> He that gaineth much possession hath need of the wrists of Hong and the seriousness of Shan-Fee, since palaces are not built with a teaspoon, nor are to be kept by one who runneth after butterflies. But above all, it is necessary that he who carrieth a great burden whether of gold or silver, should hold his head as lowly as is necessary, lest in lifting it on high he bring his treasure to nought, and lose with the spectators the glory of true gravity, which is meekness. (195)

The splendour that the prince is able to enjoy comes from the infinite labour of his ancestors, and it requires effort to preserve it. A prince could not have kept a country alive without being meek to his people, and it is the genuine thankfulness of the people to a sovereign that constitutes the 'true' enjoyment of splendour. A hundred years later, as Hunt remarks at the end of his tale, the Chinese bonze is raised to the rank of a Colao, when Emperor Whang hears this story and is inspired to diminish one half of his household expenditure.[38]

If read without regard for the political context familiar to the readers of the *Reflector*, Hunt's apologue might have passed over as an ordinary pseudo-oriental parable; as a *Reflector* story, however, its satirical undertone is too obvious to miss. Surely the touch of humour that lurks at every corner of Hunt's narrative suggests an innuendo braced by pseudo-orientalness, but what is more significant is that the intertextual play of Hunt's apologue stands out so prominently that a reader leafing through the third issue of the *Reflector* cannot but relish in the author's subterfuge. 'The True Enjoyment of Splendour' is plainly a fictional reiteration, or an imaginative echo, of the lead article of the third issue

[38] 'Ko-lao', or 'Colao' in Jesuit narratives, means 'Elders of the Cabinet'. In George Staunton's *A Complete View of the Chinese Empire*, it is referred to as 'the Premier of the empire' and 'Prime Minister'. See George Thomas Staunton, *A Complete View of the Chinese Empire: Exhibited in a Geographical Description of that Country, A Dissertation on its Antiquity, and a Genuine and Copious Account of Earl Macartney's Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China* (London: C. Cawthorn, 1798), p. 288; p. 347.

of the *Reflector*, 'On the Present and Future Character of the Prince Regent'.[39] In this leading commentary, Hunt criticises the Prince's 'love of shew' (11) as revealed in his military reviews at Wimbledon Common and the ensuing fete he gave at Carlton House in June 1811. While Hunt shows grudging tolerance towards the Prince's procrastination in reforming the ministry when he had just taken power, he is exceedingly distressed by the extravagance, ostentation, and vanity that the Prince exhibits in these public actions. He admonishes the Prince for the repeated delay of the Wimbledon review regardless of the need of the Anglo-Portuguese army in the war against Napoleon, simply because 'the day was to be fine, the troops to put on their finest aspect, the chieftains to blaze out before the ladies in their most gallant embroidery' (11). He censures the profligacy of the Prince evinced in his costly and excessive Carlton House Fete, giving special mention to the coat he prepared for the occasion: 'so covered with gold embroidery' that 'scarce a finger's breadth of the cloth ground was to be seen in the whole circumference', which, as Hunt remarks tongue-in-cheek, is 'in excellent harmony with the other splendours of the Fete' (11). 'The True Enjoyment of Splendour' is written precisely to ridicule this love of show. As the double of the Prince Regent, the Chinese Prince Quo has not only 'precious stones that covered him from head to foot' but is also wearing a bonnet 'in which a peacock's feather […] was surmounted by a sapphire of at least the size of a pigeon's egg' — apparently a travesty of the Regent's heraldic badge, 'the Prince of Wales's Feathers', which consists of three ostrich feathers surmounted by a coronet adorned with precious stones.[40] Compared to his commentary in 'The Present and Future Character of the Prince Regent', Hunt's Chinese apologue is more personal in its invective, heaping scorn upon the corpulence, debilitation, debauchery, egotism, and narcissism of the Regent. The censure,

[39] [Leigh Hunt], 'On the Present and Future Character of the Prince Regent', *Reflector*, July 1811, pp. 1–13.
[40] [Hunt], 'The True Enjoyment of Splendour', p. 196.

however, is made on the Chinese prince, and the identification between the Chinese and the English princes is implicated not in the text but in the paratext. It is in this sense that a Chinese camouflage provides Hunt with a 'screen' — a device that allows the author to speak what cannot be spoken while shielding him from any allegation of slander.

Previously I have mentioned that the comparison between the Prince Regent and a Chinese potentate in Regency satires is both a metonymic and metaphoric analogy; this dual nature manifests itself as early as in Hunt's trailblazing work. In 1811, the Carlton House Fete inevitably invited such a making of a Chinese effigy not only because of the famous Chinese Drawing Room the Regent ordered to furnish his residence three years earlier; but the erection of Chinese temporary rooms in the Carlton House gardens expressly for the Fete in 1811 was also a positive inducement for the satirist to draw a picture of the Regent's self-Sinicisation.[41] What this royal passion for the East means for the British subjects is two-faceted: for one, it is a cost to be borne not for the country but for the monarch's luxury and indulgence. 'It is said that this entertainment will cost £120,000,' said Percy Shelley, exasperated at the exorbitant cost of the Carlton House Fete, 'nor will it be the last bauble which the nation must buy to amuse this overgrown bantling of Regency'.[42] This censure against the Regent's profligacy and waywardness would continue to inform later satires of Oriental impersonation. On an ideational level, a partiality for the exotic East entails what may be called a denial of selfhood in that it is a preference for the foreign over the domestic, and for the irrelevant over the important; what the Regent's chinoiserie passion reflects is his obliviousness to his own identity as a member of the British royalty and a sovereign whose love, attention, and interest must need be with his own country. 'Who shall tell the Prince, plainly and at once, that he is wrong to give way to frivolous partialities and tastes,

[41] For the Chinese temporary rooms, see 'The Prince Regent's Fete', *Morning Post*, 14 June 1811, p. 3.
[42] *Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelly*, ed. by Roger Ingpen (London: Pitman and Sons, 1912), pp. 99–100; quoted in Hibbert, pp. 5–6.

unseasonable to the times, and inconsistent with English character?' Hunt cries in 'The Present and Future Character of the Prince Regent'.[43] To draw a parallel between the Prince Regent and a Chinese Prince, therefore, is also to play up the Regent's political and cultural displacement; China, in this sense, is a symbol of non-Englishness, the metaphorical capacity of which is heightened by the nationalistic fervour occasioned by the French war and, in the wake of Macartney's mission, the patriotic repulsion against a country who had held Britain in contempt. 'The True Enjoyment of Splendour' is precisely a satire that trades on royal identification; the comparability between the Prince Regent and Prince Quo effectually ambiguates a national difference that is putatively immanent and politically essential.

This, then, is Leigh Hunt's rhetoric of othering — a strategic option framed by the Regent's conspicuous deviation and self-distancing from the right course of kingship, and an opportunistic exploitation of the satiric possibility of court news and occurrences in a periodical space in which the literary and the political interlace. As we have seen, such a rhetoric hinges partly on an understanding of the Regent's wilful association with the East, hence his self-othering, and partly on the perceived incompatibility between the East and the West, or the other and the self. We may say, therefore, that while it can be understood as a caricatural dilation of the Regent's own alienating image as an inconstant king, it also takes meaning from a symbolic grafting of alienating vices — of aristocratic decadence, vanity, and shallowness that China and chinoiserie represent — onto the Regent. One intrigue, however, is that in identifying the Regent with an imperious Chinese prince, Hunt does not refrain from sympathising with the subjugated Chinese mass and has in fact made a shadow satirist of the Chinese bonze. The reference to the magnanimous Emperor Whang, who reigns a hundred years later, also narrows Hunt's target down to the Regent alone.

[43] [Hunt], 'On the Present and Future Character of the Prince Regent', p. 13.

Apparently, then, it is not national animosity that underlies Hunt's use of China in his satire; if he has seen cross-cultural assimilation as a kind of threatening miscegenation, it is because this hybridisation encapsulates what has already been there, namely the Regent's perfidy and falsity. Within the paradigm of domestic radicalism, the 'Oriental enemy', as Gerard Cohen-Vrignaud puts it, 'was not "Oriental" peoples in general but rather a mode of governance'.[44] If, by caricaturing the Regent as a Chinese, Hunt has made China an embodiment of political values oppositional to British ideals, we must always be mindful of the fact that this politicisation of China does not deny him from identifying with the Chinese subjects jeopardised by the same political dystopia. Such a tendency, as we shall presently see, is even more manifest in Hunt's later 'China' satires.

On 3 January 1813, Hunt published another Chinese tale, this time as the lead article of the 'Political Examiner' in his radical *Examiner*.[45] The time, for Hunt, was an uneasy one; it was one month after he and his brother John were convicted of seditious libel for writing 'The Prince on St. Patirck's Day', but the sentencing would not come until the following month, on 3 February 1813.[46] If 'The True Enjoyment of Splendour' blames the Prince for what may be pardonably called a youthful indiscretion of wastefulness and vanity, this *Examiner* tale of 1813 is a stormy protest against an incorrigibly and irredeemably dishonest, repressive, and decadent Prince. The story starts with the sudden and mysterious disappearance of an island called Hing, located on the north eastern coast of China. No one knows why such a large and beautiful island could have vanished in a trice, but one night a group of fishermen rescued a man, and the truth was recovered; for the man happened to be the last survivor who witnessed the loss of the island. As the tale unfolds, we come to know

[44] Gerard Cohen-Vrignaud, *Radical Orientalism: Rights, Reform, and Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 5.
[45] [Leigh Hunt], *Examiner*, 3 January 1813, pp. 1–3. For the attribution of Hunt's authorship, see Edmund Blunden, *Leigh Hunt's 'Examiner' Examined* (London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1928), p. 31; Luther A. Brewer, *My Leigh Hunt Library Collected and Described* (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Privately Printed, 1932), p. 47.
[46] Roe, *Fiery Heart*, p. 356.

that Hing vanished not because of any natural disaster as formerly assumed but because of the misconduct of its ruler, a Prince Chin-Hum, who listened only to his henchmen and forbade any opposite opinions to be voiced.[47] Prince Chin-Hum, as can be expected, is a clone of the Regent: 'corpulent', 'with a scandalous profusion of false hair', and, most important, he is a prince who, despite his promise to untie the hands of the poor people, 'hits their messengers a huge thump on the face, and then tells them […] that he has not a hand at liberty'[48] — an obvious rebuke over the Regent's betrayal of the Whigs not long ago. The Wimbledon reviews and the Carlton House Fete are again alluded to, but in a much more pungent and disparaging tone Hunt accuses the Prince of turning the troops into 'jugglers and tumblers' and converting his dinner table into a 'toyshop' (3). For all its similarity to the earlier tale, the principal outcry of Hunt this time has to do with the Regent's despotic suppression of truth and opinion. On this Chinese island, Hunt says, 'to speak the truth, and warn the Prince against his follies, was a scandalous thing, not to be endured'; one cannot even doubt it when the Prince and his ministry declare that 'a strip of tea-paper' is of equal weight to 'a lump of gold' (2). Interestingly, Hunt gives himself and his brother an appearance in the tale:

> Two of my friends, who ventured to lift up the voice of truth, were brought before the Judge LAN, who was of a mighty presence, and who publicly declared that speaking the truth was not only atrocious, but a thousand times worse than breaking the sacred Commandments of Tien. (3)

[47] While 'Chin' obviously refers to 'China' or 'Chinese', Hunt likely borrowed 'Hum' from 'Fum Hoam', a name that first appeared in Johan Nieuhof's *An Embassy from the East-India Company of the United Provinces* (1669) and was later adapted by Thomas Simon Gueulette in *Chinese Tales; or, the Wonderful Adventures of the Mandarin Fum-Hoam* (1725) and, later, by Oliver Goldsmith in *The Citizen of the World* (1762). It is also noteworthy that, as the imaginary Hing is not a part of China proper but its inhabitants are unmistakably of the Chinese race, Prince Chin-Hum is a Chinese prince but not a prince of the Chinese empire — a prince of confused and overlapping identities, like the Prince Regent in Hunt's satirical portrayal.

[48] [Hunt], *Examiner*, 3 January 1813, p. 2.

It may not have surprised Britons to see what Judge LAN did in the island of Hing, but as long as Judge Ellenborough ('Lan', apparently, is taken from the second syllable of his name) did the same thing in adjudicating 'The Prince on St. Patrick's Day' as an 'atrocious' libel, it is a matter that a civilised Britain should not countenance. Truths, Hunt contended, are all that he divulged, and his Chinese tale reverberates with the resentment he had been expressing in the *Examiner* ever since his trial: that 'every thing is libel which is not licensed by Government', that 'these are hard truths', but truths nonetheless.[49] With a fictional Oriental narrative, Hunt is able to picture not only the form of political repression that besets Hing and Britain but also the consequence — a realised one for Hing and a potential one for Britain — of political repression: no one dares to interfere with the folly and remissness of Prince Chin-Hum, and he eventually engaged in a 'fatal diversion' — the 'boring [of] a hole by degrees through the heart and body of it [the country]' — that caused the entire island to be swallowed by a tsunami.[50] The moral of the story Hunt articulates unambiguously: 'It is much better to be told of the truth and continue above-board, than to have the rats eating away our timbers, and find ourselves drowned at last' (3).

Hunt's tale of Prince Chin-Hum is clearly a product of an angry mind, a protest against legal injustice, and an outlet for the indignation he felt for himself and his brother after their trial. A sequel to Chin-Hum did not appear until after his two years of imprisonment. During this time, the allies' victory over Napoleon in 1814 had detracted no small extent of the public's resentment, and the Regent enjoyed a period of relative peace from both international and domestic disturbance. In 1814 he held a grandiose 'National Jubilee' at St. James Park in celebration of the victory and the House of Hanover's centenary,

[49] Mahoney, p. 105; fn. 9.
[50] [Hunt], *Examiner*, 3 January 1813, p. 3.

upon which occasion a seven-storey Chinese pagoda and a Chinese bridge were erected. The project of extending the Marine Pavilion into the Royal Pavilion commenced immediately afterwards in 1815. It was the return of Napoleon in 1815 that prompted Hunt to continue his story of Prince Chin-Hum in the 'Account of the Remarkable Rise and Downfall of the Late Great Kan of Tartary', published on 15 January 1816 in the *Examiner*. In the tale, Nah-Po-Lee-Hon (Napoleon) is the 'Tartar Kan' who invaded the island Hing (as it transpires, the submersion of Hing is 'an ocular illusion contrived by providence to bring the said persons [the Prince and his companions] to their senses').[51] Here Hunt laments that the war with Nah-Po-Lee-Hon has diverted the people's attention from their political needs — 'the necessity for liberty's assistance had gone by […] it's [sic] voice was no more regarded than it used to be at first' (18). He persists, however, in reminding the public of the unreliability of the court and the illusion of victory, satirising the Regent (Prince Chin-Hum, now renamed Prince Jee-Auge [George]) for his self-deceptive confidence, Lord Castlereagh (Mandarin Kah-Stlee-Ra) for his ridiculous posture for war, and Lord Liverpool (Mandarin Geng-King-Song, after Lord Liverpool's surname, Jenkinson) for thinking himself an army of men (19). William Cobbett had complained that Leigh Hunt had had 'his hostile passions cooled' after his imprisonment; the tale of the 'Late Great Kan of Tartary' shows us that, if the zealot Hunt had indeed been less radical than he was, his retreat had in part to do with the changing climate of public opinion after the Napoleonic wars.[52]

In contextualising these Chinese tales of Hunt's, what I am trying to show is that they cannot be understood without being read against the background of domestic politics: they were not intended to be read as Chinese stories, nor were they actually read by readers

[51] [Leigh Hunt], 'Account of the Remarkable Rise and Downfall of the Late Great Kan of Tartary', *Examiner*, 15 January 1816, pp. 17–20 (p. 17). The tale was attributed to Hunt immediately after its publication, in Charles Phillips, *An Historical Character of Napoleon* (London: W. Hone, 1816).
[52] William Cobbett, 'On John Bull's Press', *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, 19 August 1815, pp. 194–208 (p. 196).

of the *Reflector* and the *Examiner* as anything other than a coded political protest against a British regime in dire need of reform. In all these works, China is invoked as a Britain in disguise; their satirical charge and critical subtext are enwrapped not only by a simplistic costuming of a sovereign in Chinese dress but also by a transposition of the political order of an ailing society onto a land far removed, where its institutional ridiculousness, duly dilated, can be freely criticised and objectively perceived. What complicates this transposition is that the two polities are, in effect, homologised to the extent that a censure against the one is spontaneously carried through to the other, and that the process of identification entails perforce a reciprocality that subverts both the political self and the political other without a clear divide between the anchor and the anchored. While we may look at such an invocation of China as a means to graft the post-Macartney perception of Chinese despotism, egotism, illiberality, and even barbarity onto the hated British monarch, we are also bound to consider the other facet that comes with this rhetoric of othering: that the Chinese people are victimised as much as the Chinese monarch is vilified, and in identifying the Prince Regent with Prince Quo and Prince Chin-Hum the satirist is also identifying himself, and the British commoners at large, with the Chinese crowd driven out from the street in Pekin and the poor citizens who sank with the island of Hing. The fact that Hunt has created his own doppelgangers in these stories — the Chinese bonze who tries to enlighten the prince and the two Hing islanders who are convicted of libel — is telling enough of the liberality and, on the other hand, targetedness, of his East-West analogy. After all, the metaphoric similarity that exists between Regency Britain and an autocratic China is founded upon the metonymic intimacy that first binds China and the Prince Regent together — the 'orientalising' mode of Regency satire, that is to say, is essentially a dynamic translation of what is indeed a strangely unpatriotic undertaking of the British regent, namely his self-orientalisation.

Leigh Hunt's repeated and persistent costuming of the Regent and his ministry in Chinese dress ushered in a particular fashion for the same form of travesty over the Regency period: satirists like Thomas Moore, George Cruikshank, and William Hone, as we shall see in the next section, appealed to the same use of China in their lampoons of the Regent and his government, and the cult remained rampant through to the 1820s. Not only did Hunt's scheme of hybridisation anticipate later satires in Oriental guise; some of his caricatural designs also found resonance in works that make no Oriental pretension, and were, in one sense, naturalised into the prevalent mode of satirical representation of the Regent. Hunt's mischievous substitution of the Regent's ostrich feathers on his heraldic badge with peacock feathers — a peacock-feathered court hat being the symbol of distinguished Chinese mandarin — had, for instance, acquired a pictorial illustration in Hone's and Cruikshank's famous pamphlet *The Political House That Jack Built* (1819), and, later, *The Man in the Moon* (1820), in which the Regent is ridiculously caricatured as an overweight battler wearing a cocked hat surmounted with three peacock feathers (see Figures 2 and 3). Tracing this line of development back to Leigh Hunt means to root out the political connotation China implicitly carries in these works — for it was with Leigh Hunt that the notion of China was first politicised as a reformist rhetoric in the Regency period. We shall shortly come to discuss the manoeuvres of Moore, Cruikshank, Hone, and other satirists; before that, however, we shall stay a while longer with Hunt, to see how China and China politicised as a reformist rhetoric can take different meanings in the works of the same writer.

Hunt's Reformist Reading of China

This subsection starts with Hunt's review of the Drury Lane Theatre and ends with his essay on tea-drinking, both of which are susceptible to be read, and have often been read, for their

Figure 2 George Cruikshank, illustration for *The Political House That Jack Built* (1819)

Figure 3 George Cruikshank, illustration for *The Man in the Moon* (1820)

orientalist bent and imperialist tendency in treating the subject of China. Given Hunt's political sensitivity and the political charging of China and 'things Chinese' during the Regency period, it is indeed difficult not to read into Hunt's writings about chinoiserie, China, and the Chinese a sense of resistance to the usurping power of foreignness that belies his nationalistic and reformist impulses. What I propose, however, is to reconsider his writings from an instrumentalist perspective by focusing on the functional role China plays in these works. It is by considering his reading of China as a reformist's reading, I argue, that we may find consistency in his acts of writing China at different stages of his political and literary career, from when he 'renounced overt political designs' after his imprisonment to the time when 'the "connection between politics and all other subjects" finally disappeared' after the Great Reform Act.[53]

Published in the *Examiner* in 1817, Hunt's review of the redecoration of the Drury Lane Theatre no doubt demonstrates the author's abhorrence of chinoiserie identified as a threat to national identity. Establishing that he approves of a new décor that 'maintains the old reputation' of the Theatre, Hunt proceeds to 'protest vehemently against' the new look of the Grand Saloon, restyled in chinoiserie.[54] Defining the style as categorically Chinese, he takes the chinoiserie décor of the Salon as a manifestation of a taste that is one of the 'stupid and disgusting' (570) aspects of the Chinese people. 'Nothing can be more puerile or tasteless', Hunt says in his anonymous review, than these 'mummeries and monstrosities' (570). There is no mistaking that the author perceives the chinoiserie décor as an aesthetic catastrophe, but what is at stake here is how this catastrophe relates to Britain. The answer, for him, is that a Theatre Royal decorated in Chinese style stands for national shame:

[53] Kevin Gilmartin, *Print Politics: The Press and Radical Opposition in Early Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 196.
[54] [Leigh Hunt], 'Drury-Lane', *Examiner*, 7 September 1817, pp. 570–71 (p. 570).

> It is really humiliating to the national taste. If the PRINCE REGENT or the loungers put up with the compliment, we cannot imagine any other human being within the civilized pale who would admire it, except indeed the Chinese themselves, who hustled us out of doors the other day. (571)

The problem, then, is both an aesthetic one and a political one: to import Chinese 'mummeries and monstrosities' into the Theatre Royal, an emblem of national culture, is to blemish the country and stain its taste; to take after the taste of a country 'who hustled us out of doors the other day' (here Hunt refers to the Amherst embassy, which embarked for China in 1816 and returned, in 1817, without even achieving an audience with the Chinese emperor) is a political folly and an insult to national pride. Unsurprisingly, the Prince Regent is made a party of interest in the case; in fact, Hunt considers it likely that the Prince is a reason behind the design. In an evidently cautious and self-mocking manner he says:

> What is the meaning? Some libellous fellows say that it is a complimentary imitation of the Prince Regent, who it is averred, has whole rooms full of such lumber in his palaces, and holds Phidias exceedingly cheap and illegitimate. (571)

In the words of 'some libellous fellows', of whom Hunt was one, the Saloon is considered an extension and a perpetuation of the Regent's unwarranted partiality for what is foreign and irreverent. An emphatic distinction is made between Hellenism and exoticism, the former held by the Regent as 'cheap and illegitimate', while in Hunt's opinion and in the opinions of the British people as Hunt should think, the description ought to have been applied to the latter, which by extent is much farther removed from the accepted 'legitimate'

narrative of Britain's cultural ascendency. Taking after the Regent's preference, the Royal Theatre has made 'a set of huge tyger busts' 'substitutes for Grecian sculpture' — an idea that, Hunt says, only 'Fum Hoams' could contrive (571). 'Fum Hoams', of course, stands for 'the Chinese', the name being popularised first by Thomas-Simon Gueullette's *Chinese Tales; or, the Wonderful Adventures of the Mandarin Fum-Hoam* (1725) and then by Oliver Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World* (1762).[55] In 1817, however, the name alludes more immediately to Thomas Moore's highly popular squib on the Regent, 'Fum and Hum, the Two Birds of Royalty', published in 1816, just one year before Hunt's review. We shall shortly come back to Moore's work; suffice it here to say that, by the time Hunt brings 'Fum Hoams' into play, the term cannot have failed to evoke a satirical subtext targeted squarely at the Prince Regent and his ministry about their alienation from the British people. Just as the Chinese style of the Royal Pavilion has inspired Moore to poke fun at a regent who is capable of being mistaken as a Chinese by a Chinese, so too the redecoration of the Drury Lane Theatre calls to Hunt's mind the Britishness that Britain lost under the rule of a regent whose heart lies elsewhere than in his country and with his people. While Hunt's inimical review is fronted by a reluctance to acquiesce in what may be called cultural homogenisation, his hostility is undoubtedly motivated by a keen sense of political and nationalistic sentiment.

Reading Hunt's writings about China, Peter Kitson finds in them a 'strategic evasion of the subject of Romantic Sinology' — a persistence in viewing China 'through the prism of a heavily aestheticized chinoiserie', despite the substantial body of work about China that

[55] 'Fum Hoam', as I have mentioned in note 47, was first mentioned in Johan Nieuhof's *Embassy* (1669) as the name of the Chinese bird of royalty (the Dutch original was published in 1665). For the passage that introduces 'Fum Hoam' in Nieuhoff's work, see Johan Nieuhoff, *An Embassy from the East-India Company of the United Provinces, to the Grand Tartar Cham, Emperor of China*, trans. by John Ogilby (London: 1673), p. 414. 'Fum Hoam' first became a recognisably Chinese name not of a bird but of a person when Thomas Simon Gueullette used it in *Aventures Merveilleuses du Mandarin Fum Hoam, Contes Chinois* (1723). Gueullette's work was translated into English, as *Chinese Tales; or, the Wonderful Adventures of the Mandarin Fum-Hoam* in 1725. Three translations of the work were advertised in 1725: one by Robert Samber (published by instalment in *Parker's London News*), one by Mr. Macky, and one by Thomas Stackhouse.

Hunt was well aware of.[56] While we may, for now, leave the question open as to whether Hunt has fixated as heavily on a chinoiserie lens, a speculation may be made on why Hunt has little interest in treating China in a serious way. The reason, I suggest, is that Hunt, in these works, has not found the need to discourse about China beyond the parameter of a utilitarian or instrumentalist paradigm — his mission as a writer is to serve, in political, social, and cultural terms, the people of Britain. What Hunt takes up to this end, as we have seen, is the metonymic significance of China or Chineseness as a constitutive part of his object of obloquy, a part that stands antithetical to his notion of national integrality. This instrumentalist tendency informs not only his reading of chinoiserie but also his reading of China and the Chinese per se. In his 'Domestic News from China', published in the *Companion* in April 1828, Hunt reviews the *Canton Register*, one of the first English newspapers printed in China, with a focus less on the publication than on the character of the Chinese and their government. 'Our little-eyed friends,' he says,

> are a people naturally intelligent, humane, and fanciful, who, by reason of an excess of veneration paid to their fathers and forefathers, have been kept for an extraordinary period of time in a state of profound submission to their "paternal government;" and the consequence has been, that their gentleness has been converted into effeminacy, their intelligence into cunning and trickery, and the whole popular mind rendered stationary for centuries. It is impossible not to be sensible of the miniature scale upon which everything proceeds in their novels. They take little sups of wine, little cups of tea; have little feet and eyes; write little poems, and get on in the world by dint of very

[56] Kitson, p. 178; p. 181.

> little tricks. One cannot but fancy them writing with crow-quills, and speaking at the tip of their voice.[57]

If Hunt has, as Kitson argues, tended to 'deny the impact of any serious account [of China] by sliding once again into the register of chinoiserie and remorselessly miniaturizing, feminizing, and patronizing the Chinese', he does so because he seeks to picture the Chinese as the victims of institutional violence and of civic submission.[58] Their 'littleness' is a result of their succumbing to patriarchal rules — a force that, as the case of China demonstrates, is capable of eradicating a nation's intelligence, humaneness, and progress. When Hunt raises the Chinese notion of filial duty, 'which the government has taken so much advantage', he is furthering the idea that 'necessity and public opinion must, upon the whole, combine to render the principle of filiality a convenience rather than an abuse'.[59] With the same line of thought, the news that he cites from the *Canton Register* serves to exhibit 'the opportunities taken by government to turn the national feeling to its own purposes' (215). Hunt's reading of the paper, in other words, is a reformist's reading; his review is an expression of his political conviction, and whether the subject be the despotic China, the miniature Chinese, or the *Canton Register*, that subject is meant to be a lesson to the readers, whose 'greatness' today is not unconditionally immune to the force that had converted the once 'great' China into its present 'littleness'. If Hunt's 'unwillingness to transfer his reading of the paper to his larger understanding of China […] borders on the pathological', his compulsiveness is fueled by his inability to unhook China from what it could mean to Britain.[60] The 'virus' is Hunt's intense patriotism — a form of nationalism that champions individual liberty instead of unquestioning obedience.

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[57] [Leigh Hunt], 'Domestic News from China', *The Companion*, April 1828, pp. 213–17 (p. 214).
[58] Kitson, pp. 179–80.
[59] [Hunt], 'Domestic News from China', p. 214; p. 215.
[60] Kitson, p. 180.

I have been emphasising that Hunt's writings about China, the Chinese, and chinoiserie are informed by his political consciousness and his perception of the jeopardy that the Regent's Tory government brought to Britain. It is in this sense that the concept of China plays a functional role in Hunt's writings: what China is from a sinological perspective, what the Chinese are from an anthropological perspective, or whether chinoiserie is as foreign a style as it is presented to be, is not the concern, nor does it matter whether Hunt did indeed think as badly of China as his anonymous writings in the *Examiner*, the *Reflector*, and the *Companion* showed him to do. We know little about Hunt's feeling towards China in private life; however, we can be certain of his love for a Chinese novel, *Yu Jiao Li*, which was translated into French by Abel-Rémusat in 1826 and from that into English in 1827 as *Iu-Kiao-Li: or, The Two Fair Cousins*. Hunt had probably read the book when it was first published (by Hunt and Clark Co.), and he recommended it to Thomas Carlyle some time before 1836, at which time Carlyle introduced the book to John Sterling.[61] In 1853 he again lent the book to Southwood Smith. In his letter to Smith, Hunt speaks of his adoration for the novel:

> […] lastly, my beloved Chinese novel, Iu-Kiao-Li; a work of genius, as well as curious for its national manners, and exhibiting in passages the most exquisite refinement of heart. The notes marked T. C, are by Carlyle, to whom I lent it once, and who read it with delight.[62]

The copy of *Iu-Kiao-Li* referred to in this letter, with Hunt's and Carlyle's annotations, is kept in the British Library today. On the last page Hunt jotted down that his 'third regular

[61] Carlyle's letter to John Sterling, 11 September 1836; *The Carlyle Letters Online*, ed. by Brent E. Kinser (Duke University Press, 2007–2016) <https://carlyleletters.dukeupress.edu>.
[62] Hunt's letter to Southwood Smith, 23 March 1853; *The Correspondence of Leigh Hunt*, ed. by Thornton Leigh Hunt, 2 vols (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1862), II, p. 162.

reading' of the book was on 18 September 1837, and his 'fourth reading' on 21 Feb 1853, six years before his death.[63] The marginalia of Hunt reveals a genuine appreciation: it is 'All true' that the book, as Abel-Rémusat says in his translator's preface, is 'a fable simple and well conceived, an easy and agreeable development, characters skillfully introduced and duly sustained to the termination'; 'I should like more' of the Chinese verses; 'these people really seem to do justice to the beauties of nature'; and, coming across a character called 'examiner Li', Hunt cries with excitement: 'Myself! By title & name'.[64] In a letter to Isaac Latimer, Hunt speaks of the Chinese as a 'much misunderstood people' and admits that he has 'read not a few' books about China.[65] It is clear that Hunt did not, in his private reading and communication, show signs of repugnance against the Chinese, nor did he find in the Chinese novel 'the miniature scale upon which everything proceeds' as he had said in 'Domestic News' as a periodical writer. The meaning behind all this is obvious: Hunt had taken a different approach in writing China into public discourse than he would possibly have done against a context in which an adaptive, or even prejudicial, representation of China is less expedient and pertinent to public interest.

Coincidental or not, after the Great Reform Act of 1832, by which political power was finally shifted from the aristocrats to the middle class, Hunt seemed to show a more moderate and sympathetic understanding of China, the Chinese, and even chinoiserie in his writings. In 'A Year of Honey-Moons' (1833), a fiction about the life of a newly-wed couple, Hunt's female protagonist Harriet regrets that 'people do not think well enough of the Chinese'; both she and her husband Charles have read *Iu-Kiao-Li*, and have alluded to its

[63] M. A. Remusat, *Iu-Kiao-Li: or, the Two Fair Cousins*, 2 vols (London: Hunt & Clarke, 1827) [with MS. Notes by Leigh Hunt and Thomas Carlyle], II, p. 290.
[64] The writer has perused the copy of Hunt's *Iu-Kiao-Li* at the British Library, but a very unfortunate incident has wiped my records of it. These instances of Hunt's annotations are cited from H. J. Jackson, *Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 132–34.
[65] Hunt's letter to Issac Latimer, 8 July 1857; *Leigh Hunt Online: The Letters*. The University of Iowa Libraries <http://www.lib.uiowa.edu/sc/leighhunt>.

poetry in their breakfast conversation.[66] China is here used in association with the tranquillity and docility of married life, with Harriet's tenderness and caring nature, and with the perspicacity of an educated, poetic couple. It has moved, from Carlton House and the Royal Pavilion, to an ordinary household, over a homely breakfast table. Likewise, Hunt's 'The Subject of Breakfast Continued – Tea-Drinking' (1834) moves China away from a politicised territory back to a quotidian world. The essay may be considered a recapitulation and a reassessment of Hunt's own idea about China, the Chinese, and chinoiserie; it shows the same tendency to a more equitable mode of thinking, although Hunt's argument is, as I shall presently show, often misunderstood. The false impression comes from Hunt's initiating of the discussion by the 'petty', 'infantine', 'winking-eyed', and 'minute' word *tea*, which, he says, 'resembles the idea one has (*perhaps a very mistaken one*) [my emphasis] of that extraordinary people',

> of whom Europeans know little or nothing, except that they sell us this preparation, bow back again our ambassadors, have a language consisting only of a few hundred words, gave us *China*-ware and the strange pictures on our tea-cups, made a certain progress in civilization long before we did, mysteriously stopped at it and would go no further […] as individuals, their ceremonies, their trifling edicts, their jealousy of foreigners, and their tea-cup representations of themselves (which are the only ones popularly known) impress us irresistibly with a fancy, that they are a people all toddling, little-eyed, little-footed, little-bearded, little-minded, quaint, over-weening, pig-tailed, bald-headed, cone-capped or pagoda-hatted, having childish houses

[66] [Leigh Hunt] Charles Dalton, 'A Year of Honey-Moons', *Court Magazine and Belle Assemblee*, April 1833, pp. 174–79 (p. 177).

> and temples with bells at every corner and story, and shuffling about in blue landscapes, over "nine-inch bridges," with little mysteries of bell hung whips in their hands […][67]

This disparaging and almost abusive passage, much quoted by scholars, is certainly susceptible to a Sinophobic, or even racist, interpretation. Peter Kitson describes it as a return to 'the familiar worn-out stereotypes' and 'a virtual stream of chinoiserie consciousness, one long quasi-Joycean sentence, bordering upon racial hatred', and Elizabeth Chang sees Hunt as having linked 'defects in the tea-cup's artistic composition directly to the epistemological defects of the Chinese people'.[68] But Hunt's intention, as a matter of fact, is to reject such stereotyping and linkage. Immediately following his description of the 'perhaps-a-very-mistaken' idea about the Chinese, he says:

> Such are the Chinese of the tea-cups and the grocers' windows, and partly of their own novels too […] However, it must be owned, that from these novels one gradually acquires a notion that there is a great deal more good sense and even good poetry among them, than one had fancied from the accounts of embassies and the autobiographical paintings on the China-ware; and this is the most probable supposition. An ancient and great nation, as civilized as they, is not likely to be so much behind-hand with us in the art of living, as our self-complacency leads us to imagine. If their contempt of us amounts to the barbarous, perhaps there is a greater share of barbarism than we suspect, in our scorn of them.[69]

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[67] [Leigh Hunt], 'The Subject of Breakfast Continued — Tea-Drinking', *Leigh Hunt's London Journal*, 9 July 1834, pp. 113–14 (p. 113).
[68] Kitson, p. 180; Chang, p. 83.
[69] [Hunt], 'The Subject of Breakfast Continued — Tea-Drinking', p. 113.

The last line, in particular, is the gist of Hunt's rebuttal; suggesting self-reflection and self-critique, it repudiates the bigotry entailed in a 'chinoiserised' vision of China, and amounts almost to a confession on Hunt's part to the scorn he has hitherto poured on the 'barbarous' country. A china cup no longer reminds Hunt of the Regent, or later George IV, whose reign had ended with his death in 1830; rather, it returns to its role as a touchstone of taste and culturedness as it did in the eighteenth century, setting apart the 'poverty-stricken brain' of a 'simpleton' who sees a teacup as a teacup from the enlightened mind of the 'right tea-drinker' who relishes in the recollections of 'the whole Chinese nation with all its history' and, perhaps more important for Hunt, of Ariosto's story of Angelica and Medoro and of Chaucer's story of Cambuscan, both of which Hunt had retold in a modernised language (114). Hunt's list of what is contained in a china cup is remarkably long: from Marco Polo to Voltaire, Gueulette, Goldsmith, Johnson, Pope, Lady Wortley Montague, the *Tatler* and *Spectator*, Horace Walpole, and, 'in short, a thousand other memories, grave and gay, poetical and prosaical' (114). The connotation of China, the Chinese, and chinoiserie has substantially and fundamentally changed; rather than a humiliation to national taste, they now signify culturedness, refinement, and literary enlightenment. The change, as I have suggested, is one from a politicised appropriation of the concept of China to an intellectual appraisal of the literary history embodied in the concept of China, and one that reflects the distinct frames of reference Hunt imposes upon his writings as a political veteran and a literary man. In a different political context, it seems, Hunt was willing to 'depoliticise' China — and this I believe is what Hunt would have loved to do earlier, before the people of Britain had to wait decades to witness the founding moment of British democracy and liberty.

In this section about Leigh Hunt's 'China' satires and essays, I have endeavoured to show in a largely chronological way the role China plays as a vehicle of political expression in Hunt's periodical writings. In doing so I make a distinction between how a writer writes about China and how he may have thought about China — a distinction that is useful not only in highlighting the instrumentality of China and all that it entails in Hunt's writings but also in foregrounding the focus of our discussion to follow. I do not mean, however, that such a distinction can be made invariably and in definite terms; truth is, for 'China' to work as a functioning vehicle, writers tend to operate with the popular reception of China in their times, which also forms a part, or even the whole, of a writer's view about China. Hunt, in my opinion, had his own notion of objectivity in this regard: there is no erring in thinking that China is seclusive and haughty, considering the repeated failures of Britain's diplomatic missions; there is also no erring in thinking that China is 'little', considering that the Chinese are, in fact, lighter in build, that their eyes are comparatively smaller than Europeans, that Chinese women have bound feet, and that China has shown itself to the West through its little cups and teapots. But Hunt was, obviously, also conscious of his overplaying of these negative attributes of China as a means of satirising and moralising, at the expense of the more favourable and winning qualities of China that he was acquainted with or had a liking for. The most important implication of the distinction I make in Hunt's case is that a particular mode of using and representing China must be understood in its relevant context, in relation to the purpose of its existence — and this is also the principle that guides this research throughout. To continue with our exploration of such a context in the Regency period, we should go back to 1816, when the Prince Regent moved from London to Brighton, amid the preparation of Britain's second embassy to China.

1.3 The Mandarins at Brighton: Thomas Moore's Birds of Royalty, and Other Regency Satires

Leigh Hunt, as we have seen, had instigated a form of radical political satire that exploits the distanciating capacity of Chineseness for his reformist campaign. While Hunt was the first to dress the Prince Regent in a deviant Chinese apparel, it was not until 1816 that the motif of a Chinese Regent gained popularity in verbal and visual satires. The year was marked by two events that tied the sovereign and China together: the Regent's dispatch of the Amherst embassy, Britain's second diplomatic mission to China, in early 1816, and his retreat from Carlton House to the Royal Pavilion at Brighton, then under remodelling, at about the same time. Passionately devoted to the orientalisation project of the Pavilion, the Regent had been busy galloping to and fro between London and Brighton ever since late 1815. As much time of the head of state was spent in his pleasure palace, the court was also held increasingly frequently at Brighton. It was in the Royal Pavilion — imaginably inside one of its grand chinoiserie rooms — that a Privy Council was held, on 30 December 1815, to discuss Amherst's embassy to China before the envoy set off in February 1816.[70] The coincidence, as can be expected, excited the imagination of satirists and caricaturists, and Thomas Moore, the Irish poet, was the first to turn this interesting affair to good advantage.

Thomas Moore was, and still is, better known as the poet of the *Irish Melodies* than a political satirist. To some, in fact, it would be a surprise to know that the tender and sentimental author of 'The Last Rose of Summer', 'The Meeting of the Waters', and 'The Harp that Once Through Tara's Halls' could have mounted such scurrilous attacks on the sovereign. But, as Leigh Hunt beautifully says, Moore is, like a bee, 'A maker of sweets,

[70] See 'Brighton, Dec. 30', *Morning Post*, 1 January 1816, p. 3.

busy, sparkling, and singing, / Yet armed with an exquisite point too for stinging'.[71] If his 'singing' penetrates deep into the heart of the people, his 'stinging' also pierces deep into the heart of his enemy. While the most biting of Moore's satires were aimed at the Prince Regent, he had experimented with political writings as early as 1808 with the Juvenalian satires *Corruption and Intolerance* (1808) and *The Sceptic* (1809), which attack the government of George III. He was one of the Whig supporters who resented the rule of the old King and heaped high hopes on his apparent heir, the Prince of Wales. Moore's first book, *Odes of Anacreon* (1800), was dedicated to the Prince, and when the Prince was made Regent in 1811, Moore delighted in his celebratory Carlton House Fete — unlike Hunt and Shelley who thought it extortionate — and recalled happily that the Prince spoke to him 'with the cordial familiarity of an old acquaintance'.[72] It was, in part, for this early sense of attachment that Moore was all the more chagrined when the Regent eventually abandoned his old Whig friends, dashing any hopes for reform and, most important for the Irish poet, Catholic emancipation.[73] Resolved to revolt, Moore took up newspaper squibs, and turned to the Horatian style — a 'lighter form of weapon' that is, as Moore says, 'not only more easy to wield, but, from its very lightness, perhaps, more sure to reach its mark'[74] — to appeal to a wider public. Sometime around late 1811 he attempted a '*wickedly* political' poem for Leigh Hunt's *Reflector*, and in March 1812 came his immensely successful squib,

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[71] [Leigh Hunt] Harry Brown, 'Harry Brown to His Cousin Thomas Brown, Jun.: Letter I', *Examiner*, 30 June 1816, pp. 409–10 (p. 409). 'Thomas Brown, Jun.' is the nom de plume of Thomas Moore in his *Intercepted Letters; or, the Two-penny Post Bag* (1813). Hunt here takes on the name Harry Brown and calls Moore his 'cousin'. In July 1816 Hunt writes that 'Moore expressed great enjoyment at sight of them [these letters]'. See Jane Moore, 'Thomas Moore, Anacreon and the Romantic Tradition', in *Romantic Textualities: Literature and Print Culture, 1780-1840*, 21 (Winter 2013), 30–52 (p. 44).

[72] Moore's letter to his mother, 21 June 1811; Russell, *Memoirs, Journals, and Correspondence of Thomas Moore*, I, p. 255.

[73] Yet another disappointment of Moore was that, with his Whig patron Lord Moira losing influence, his hope of advancing financially through the help of Moira was crushed. That said, Catholic emancipation was, as Jeffrey Vail argues, 'the political goal more important to Moore than any other (he would call the eventual achievement of emancipation in 1829 "the dream of [his] life since childhood")'. See Jeffery Vail, 'Anacreon Moore and the Prince of Pleasure: George IV as Satiric Inspiration', in *Thomas Moore and Romantic Inspiration: Poetry, Music, and Politics*, ed. by Sarah McCleave and Brian Caraher (London; New York: Routledge, 2018), pp. 169–84 (p. 169).

[74] Moore, *Poetical Works*, III (1841), p. vi.

'Parody of a Celebrated Letter', published in Hunt's *Examiner* and later reprinted by George Cruikshank, alongside his caricature, in June 1812.[75] From that time onwards Moore's 'long course of anti-Tory warfare' truly began.[76] Throughout the Regency period, Moore's newspaper squibs were widely reprinted, illustrated, and imitated. His satires, unique in their imaginative vision and their delicate balance between emotional intensity and cutting playfulness, were an inspiration to many of his fellow satirists, and had produced and popularised not a few common nicknames of the Prince Regent, including 'Fum' and 'Hum'.

'Fum and Hum, the Two Birds of Royalty' was published in the Whig newspaper *Morning Chronicle* on 8 February 1816, the same day that Amherst's embassy departed England for China abroad H.M.S. Alceste.[77] Making opportunistic use of the embassy and the Regent's residency at Brighton, the satire describes a state visit of a Chinese bird of royalty, Fum, to a British bird of royalty, Hum, at the Royal Pavilion at Brighton. In the short address to the editor that precedes the poem, Moore reveals the 'inspiration' behind his satire:

> In order to explain the following verses, it is necessary to refer your readers to a late florid description of the R—g—t's Pavilion at Brighton, in the

[75] The '*wickedly* political' poem: *The Letters of Thomas Moore*, ed. by Wilfred S. Dowden, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), I, p. 158. Kendall conjectures that the poem Moore refers to in his letter to Hunt may be 'The Patriot's Almanac', published in the third issue of the *Reflector*, despite the fact that 'it does not now seem "wickedly political"' (See Kendall, p. 27); one cannot, however, rule out the possibility that Moore's work was not published.
'Parody of a Celebrated Letter': While Moore had intended the 'Parody' for James Perry's *Morning Chronicle*, Perry, for fear of prosecution, agreed only to print several copies for private circulation. In the end it was the fearless Hunt who published the 'Parody' in his *Examiner* on 8 March 1812. The 'Parody' was titled 'Letter from —— to ——' when first published in the *Examiner* on 8 March 1812 (pp. 157–58). It was later revised to 'Parody of a Celebrated Letter' in Moore's *Intercepted Letters; or, the Two-penny Post-Bag* (1813). For the story of the publication of the 'Parody' and a brief account of the squib, see Jeffery Vail, *The Literary Relationship of Lord Byron & Thomas Moore* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), pp. 49–51.
[76] Moore, *Poetical Works*, IX (1841), p. iv.
[77] Henry Ellis, *Journal of the Proceedings of the Late Embassy to China* (London: printed for John Murray, 1817), p. 1.

apartments of which, we are told, 'FUM, *the Chinese bird of Royalty*' forms a principal ornament'.[78]

The 'florid description' Moore refers to is the 'Description of the Pavilion in its Present Improved and Magnificent State', published in the ultra-Tory *Morning Post* on 10 January 1816.[79] The article was reprinted in the *Morning Chronicle* on 11 January 1816, with a brief note that styles it as a 'luxuriant' description from 'a Ministerial Paper'.[80] Complementing 'luxuriant' with 'florid', Moore joins in the ridicule and posits his verses as a rejoinder of the ministerial 'Description' — hence also joining in Hunt's 'noble warfare' against the court (which Moore had long wished to contribute to), for, if we will recall, Hunt's 'The Prince on St. Patrick's Day' was also a sally at the *Morning Post*.[81] I have mentioned earlier that 'Fum Hoam' appeared in eighteenth-century literature, most notably in Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World*, as a person, despite its original signification of the Chinese bird of royalty; Moore's pairing of 'Fum' and 'Hum' is clearly a variation of the name furnished with the more immediate allusion to Hunt's 'Chin-Hum', and in reviving the bird motif Moore has also brought to play the satirical fertility of 'the Prince of Wales's Feathers', which he had made fun of in an earlier squib, 'Anacreontic: To a Plumassier' (*Morning Chronicle*, 16 March 1812).[82] Having established that the squib is about the Royal Pavilion, Moore proceeds with his satire, the plot of which is driven by Fum's Chinese 'gaze'.

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[78] [Thomas Moore] Mum., 'Fum and Hum, the Two Birds of Royalty', *Morning Chronicle*, 8 February 1816, p. 3. The word 'R—g—t's' is edited out in subsequent reprints of the squib.
[79] 'Description of the Pavilion in its Present Improved and Magnificent State', *Morning Post*, 10 January 1816, p. 3.
[80] 'The Regent's Pavilion at Brighton', *Morning Chronicle*, 11 January 1816, p. 4.
[81] In a letter dated August 1812, Moore explicitly told Hunt of his interest in contributing to his 'noble warfare': 'I hope next year, when I have got over a work I am about, to help you with a few shafts of ridicule in the noble warfare you are engaged in, since I find that you have thought some of them not unworthy [of] your notice'. Next year, however, Hunt was already in jail, and Moore was among his visitors at the Surrey County Gaol. See Leigh Hunt, *The Autobiography of Leigh Hunt, with Reminiscences of Friends and Contemporaries*, 2 vols (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1850), II, p. 308.
[82] In 'Anacreontic: To a Plumassier', Moore suggests that the plumes of the Prince are those of a pea-hen, a cuckoo, and an owl, which represent, as Jane Moore proposes, Lady Hertford, the Regent's mistress, Lord

More precisely, Moore's satire is driven by scenes at the royal palace, observed and responded to by Fum: from what Fum feels when it alights at the Royal Pavilion to what it sees inside the palace, and from the inquest of Fum to the speech it hears in the royal bedroom. What makes Fum's observation and feeling interesting — and useful — is the very fact that nothing in the Royal Pavilion seems strange in its eyes. Being 'near akin' and 'congenial' in taste with Hum, the Chinese royal bird cannot but find that 'China-shop' or 'Grand China Warehouse at Brighton' a place of homey familiarity:

> So congenial their tastes, that when FUM first did light on
> The floor of that Grand China Warehouse at Brighton,
> The lanterns and dragons and things round the dome
> Were so like what he left, "'gad," — says FUM — "I'm at home."[83]

Fum's impression of the Pavilion raises a scornful laughter not only because it snipes at the tawdriness and vulgarity of the British royal taste but also because it underscores the foreignness of the Regent, in whose abode a Chinese could feel 'at home'. Fum's 'congenial' gaze, at once comical, ironical, and estranging, thus serves as an expedient by which both the British palace and its royal and ministerial dwellers are displaced into a chimerical hybrid existence. When Fum, in the next scene, catches sight of Bishop Legge and the Prince Regent, it recognises them not as a bishop and a prince but as a bonze and a Chinese idol:

> And when, turning, he saw Bishop L—GGE, "Zooks! it is,"
> Quoth the Bird, all delight — "that's a Bonze, by his phiz!

Herford, her husband, and Spencer Percevel, the Prime Minister. See *The Satires of Thomas Moore*, ed. by Jane Moore (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2003), p. 64.

[83] [Moore] Mum., 'Fum and Hum', p.3 (lines 12–15). As the entire verse is printed on the same page of the *Morning Chronicle*, further references to this squib will be given in the text, identified by lines.

"And the jolly old Idol he kneels to so low,

"Can be none but our round-about Godhead, fat Fo."

It happen'd just then, this prelatical Prig

Was imploring the P——E to dispense with his wig,

When the Bird, soaring high o'er the Buck Bishop's head,

Some Tobit-like marks of his patronage shed,

Which so dimm'd the poor Dandy's idolatrous eye,

That, while FUM cried "Oh Fo!", blusing HUM cried "Oh Fy!" (16–25)

Edward Legge was elevated to the Bishop of Oxford in 1816. Alluding to a promise the Regent made to Legge in the past — that he would dispense with Legge's episcopal wig when he made him a Bishop[84] — Moore imagines the new Bishop of Oxford now kneeling to the Regent, imploring him to fulfil his old promise. By turning the Bishop into a bonze and the Regent into a fat, jolly, old 'Fo', which, as Moore wilily remarks, is 'the Great Idol of the Chinese', the satirist not only teases the Regent's obesity and incapacitation and the Bishop's apostate worship of power and prestige but also, and most importantly also, censures the corruption, rapacity, and religious sacrilege of the court. Fum's 'misperception', in other words, is a layered camouflage — it is something to be laughed at, and, at the same time, something that laughs at what is intended to be taunted.

This mixture of farcicality and irony, and, as we shall see more clearly, of the satirist and the satirised, forms the core rhetoric of Moore's satire. As he moves on to a night when 'these birds of a feather' talk about 'state matters together' (26–27), the way Fum quizzes Hum borders on the malicious:

[84] Moore had inserted a note at the end of the poem: 'It is well known that the Beau Bishop of O—f—d has claimed from the R—g—t an old promise, that, when he made him a Bishop, he would dispense with his canonical Wig'.

"I say, HUM," quoth FUM — FUM, of course, spoke Chinese;

But, bless you! That's nothing; at Brighton one sees

Foreign lingos and Bishops *translated* with ease. —

"I say, HUM, how goes it with Royalty now?

"Is it up? — is it prime? — is it spooney, or — how?

(The Bird had just taken a Flashman's Degree

Under B–RR–M—E, Y–RM—TH, and young Tiger ‡ L——) (28–34)

The intrigue here is that Fum, who 'spoke Chinese', is in fact speaking the language of the Regent. 'Up', 'prime', and 'spooney' were boxing slangs of the time, and the Regent was a well-known patron of the sport.[85] In 'Epistle from Tom Cribb to Big Ben' (1815), Moore had already made use of pugilistic terminologies to ridicule the Regent, and here again the same means is employed for the same purpose.[86] The mockery is plain: Fum is speaking in a foreign language that is 'translated with ease' at Brighton, a language as foreign as the language of the Regent and his merry-men — Lord Barrymore, Lord Yarmouth, and 'Tiger' George Alexander Lee, whom Moore scathingly describes as 'flashmen'.[87] Fum, in other words, represents the 'otherness' that estranges the Regent and his court from their royal identification, but its impish aping of the Regent also hints at a sort of contempt that identifies it not as a supporter but as a challenger of the Brighton court. When Fum, towards

[85] Moore, *Satires of Thomas Moore*, p. 118; p. 458. It may be noted that the three pugilistic words, 'up', 'prime', and 'spooney', are italicised in the *Fudge Family* version of the poem.
[86] [Thomas Moore], 'Epistle from Tom Cribb to Big Ben, Concerning Some Foul Play in a Late Transaction', *Morning Chronicle*, 31 August 1815, p. 3.
[87] Here Moore is playing on the pun: 'flashman', in the sense of a sporting man, refers to the Regent's love of boxing, but it also refers to the licentiousness of the Regent and his court in its denotation of a fancy-man, or a pimp. It is noteworthy that 'Tiger' Lee, a singer, the son of a pugilist, and Barrymore's protégé, was well known to have been the middleman between Barrymore and any female his patron wanted a liaison with. For the relationship between George Alexander Lee and Lord Barrymore, see John Richardson, *Recollections, Political, Literary, Dramatic, and Miscellaneous, of the Last Half-Century*, 2 vols (London: C. Mitchell, 1856), I, 129–34.

the end of the satire, overhears Castlereagh's 'speech upon Europe's repose' in the Regent's bedroom, its recognition of him as a Mandarin and 'the Confusius of prose' is likewise comically spiteful:

> From the bed-room was heard, where that long Mandarin,
> C—STL——GH, (whom FUM calls the *Confusius* of prose,)
> Was rehearsing a Speech upon Europe's repose
> To the deep double-bass of the fat Idol's nose! —
> *Nota Bene* — His Lordship and L—V—RP—L come,
> In collateral lines, from the old Mother HUM,
> C—STL——GH the HUM-BUG, L—V—RP—L the HUM-DRUM. (36–42)

Moore's note on 'Confusius' — 'Aliter, Confucius' — reminds us that the misspelling is conscious: a play of words to reproduce the sound of 'confuse us', which drives at the illusion of peace the Regent and his ministry claimed they had achieved. The Regent's 'double-bass' evokes an earlier squib of Moore, 'The Insurrection of the Papers', which makes sport of the sedative effect and senselessness of the speech of Castlereagh: 'Last night I toss'd and turn'd in bed, / But could not sleep — at length I said / "I'll think of Viscount C—STL——GH, / "And of his speeches — that's the way."'[88] In the end, whether it was the 'Hum' Regent, the 'Hum-bug' Castlereagh, or the 'Hum-drum' Liverpool, the court at Brighton is but 'birds of a feather' — birds that, like Fum, are 'birds of prey', 'crackling and ravenous creatures' that are 'half way 'twixt the goose and the vulture' (7–9).

[88] [Thomas Moore] O., 'The Insurrection of the Papers; A Dream', *Morning Chronicle*, 23 April 1812, p. 3.

We have thus seen that Moore's satire operates on multiple levels, coordinating and correlating with the dual role of the Chinese royal visitor. On the one hand, the congeniality between Fum and Hum adumbrates a tactic of alienation, by which the Chinese bird is identified with the satirised: Fum and Hum, as their rhyming names suggest, are 'near akin', almost indistinguishable from one another. The feeling of familiarity Fum has for the Brighton pavilion is, therefore, a manifestation of the dispositional correspondence that exists between the Western despot and its Eastern equivalent, which are equally oppressive, violent, feather-brained, and greedy, as the metaphor of the 'crackling and ravenous' 'birds of prey' suggests. In travestying the Bishop of Oxford as a bonze and the Regent as a Chinese idol, Moore conjures up a picture reeking of Eastern paganism and imposture and sets his objects of critique against Western standards of orthodoxy and legitimacy. When Fum begins to speak in the 'flash language' of the Regent, his easy assimilation into the Hum court further suggests how susceptible Britain is to a well-nigh Oriental rule, known for its sexual plenitude and deviance. It is in this sense that Moore's satire is rooted, in modern terms, in identity politics, in which otherness works as a destabilising and marginalising force that distantiates the peripheral from the centre, which, in our case, is the self-orientalising Prince Regent and the uncompromisingly 'British' British public.

On the other hand, the observations, questions, and comments Fum makes are highly suggestive of a mischievous, sarcastic, and even venomous intent that casts him along the lines of the satirist. Fum's feeling 'at home', his preposterous misunderstandings, and his imitation of the Regent point so consistently to the possibility of a double reading that their attitudinal ambivalence is unlikely to be incidental. The ironical undertone of his responses is further highlighted by the fact that he has come to Brighton to 'accost' (2) Hum and that he is the one to impishly shed faeces on the contemptuous Bishop of Oxford (22–25). Fum's misperception and acculturation, from this perspective, are affected foolery and malevolent

parodies; rather than identifying with the satirised, he is in fact the spitting image of the satirist, seizing every chance to make a game of the court at Brighton. If we consider how Moore has called himself, or the satirist-narrator of this squib, 'Mum', we are further tempted to understand the satirist and the satirised as belonging to the same species: the '-um' species of the 'crackling and ravenous' 'birds of prey', though their foodstuffs are of different nature. It is in this sense that Moore's satire restores the Oriental other back to its traditional role as a critical observer, whose otherness empowers him to act out a presumably non-partisan consciousness rather than subjects him to the censoriousness due for the Regent. What this convoluted duality of identity demonstrates is significantly the fluidity of the concept of otherness in Regency political satires; whereas the Sinicising of the Regent and his ministry effectuates a performative 'disfigurement' of the establishment that hinges ostensibly on a pejorative view of China and Chineseness, the very 'disfiguration' that comes to pass could have been mobilised by a Chinese who, like the British, looks upon the present state of British politics as freakish and laughable.

The influence of Moore's 'Fum and Hum' is readily demonstrated by the fact that 'Hum', and to a lesser extent 'Fum', had since become the sobriquets of the Prince Regent, later George IV. William Hone alludes to the Regent as 'Hum' in his *Sinecurist's Creed* (1817), one of the satires that have him charged for blasphemous and seditious libel.[89] Shelley makes the same allusion in *Oedipus Tyrannus; or, Swellfoot the Tyrant* (1820), a satirical drama on the divorce of the Regent, then newly crowned King, and his wife Caroline of Brunswick.[90] C. F. Lawler calls George IV 'King Hum' in *Peter Pindar's*

[89] [William Hone] Authority, *The Sinecurist's Creed, or Belief; As the Same can or may be Sung or Said Throughout the Kingdom* (London: R. Carlile, 1817), p. 7. For more about Hone's trial, see Marcus Wood, *Radical Satire and Print Culture 1970–1822* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 96–154.
[90] [Percy Bysshe Shelley], *Oedipus Tyrannus; or, Swellfoot the Tyrant: A Tragedy* (London: J. Johnson, 1820), pp. 19–20.

Ghost!! (1821).[91] Byron, in Canto XI (1823) of *Don Juan*, explicitly makes reference to Moore's ploy in 'Fum and Hum': 'And where is "Fum" the Fourth, our "royal bird"?'.[92] Moore's fertility of thought is certainly a proof of his imaginative and poetic prowess, but it is also a result of his opportunistic foraging for creative possibilities amid his perilous journey of political defiance. The trial of Hunt in 1812 had erected no small a warning sign for his fellow satirists. Moore, aware of the danger he was exposed to, had always been heedful; strict anonymity was one of the stipulations he made to James Perry, the editor of *Morning Chronicle*, when they came to a formal agreement of cooperation in late 1812.[93] An evident intention to shield himself from sensitive censorial eyes underpins his implicit, facetious, and, as we have seen, convoluted lampoonery, and it is this deliberate abstruseness that, in part, forces open the vast imaginative scope of his satirical works.

Over the long course of the reformists' 'warfare' against the Prince Regent, Moore's 'Fum and Hum' serves as a paradigmatic example, and also model, of the way the Regent's exoticism is translated into the orientalising rhetoric of Regency satires. One month after the publication of 'Fum and Hum', in March 1816, George Cruikshank brought out his famous broadside caricature, *The Court at Brighton à la Chinese!!* (see Figure 4), which powerfully visualises the transmutation of the British court inside the chinoiserie palace. In this caricature, Cruikshank pictures a scene in the Pavilion, where a council is supposedly being held: under the dragon-and-pagoda lantern of the banquet room, the Prince Regent — obese, gouty, and costumed in Chinese apparel — is sitting sloppily on a divan with an Oriental pipe in hand, passing out to the 'Mandarin' Amherst a document, on which is

[91] [C. F. Lawler] Peter Pindar, *Peter Pindar's Ghost!!; or, Poetic Epistles from the Other World: Addressed to S---y, King Hum, The Q--n, A certain Archbishop, Derry Down Triangle, The doctor, Lord L--l, Old Bags, and The Great Captain* (London: John Fairburn, 1821).
[92] *Lord Byron: The Major Works*, ed. by Jerome J. McGann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 740.
[93] See Perry's letter to Moore, 4 December 1812; Russell, *Memoirs, Journals, and Correspondence of Thomas Moore*, VIII, p. 127–28.

Figure 4 George Cruikshank, *The Court at Brighton à la Chinese!!!* (March 1816)

written 'Instructions for L[d] Amherst to get fresh Patterns of Chinese deformities to finish the decorations of ye Pavillion [sic]'.[94] Cruikshank's work alludes not only to Moore's but also to Hunt's libel: while the sluggish orientalised Regent and the bowing Mandarin Amherst in the Royal Pavilion evoke Moore's cumbrous joss and kneeling bonze, the 'British Adonis' etched on the statue on the right behind the Regent makes reference to Hunt's 'Fat Adonis of Fifty' in 'The Prince on St. Patrick's Day'. As a visual satire, Cruikshank's caricature graphically plays up the old motif of their verbal attacks to highlight the alienation of the Regent: the Regent's aberrancy is exteriorised as the anomalous architectural features of the newly remodeled Pavilion, and interiorised as a luxuriant,

[94] It may be noted that other members of the Regent's cabinet are also Sinicised: behind the Regent and right next to his mistress (Lady Hertford), Lord Chamberlain (Marquess of Hertford) is in oriental costume; Lord Eldon and Lord Ellenborough on the left wear Chinese hats above their judge's wigs; and the Marquis of Sligo and Sir Benjamin Bloomfield on the right also wears Chinese gowns and Chinese hats.

frivolous, and unprincipled court manner, not least in relation to the Regent's suspected abuse of power in sending an embassy to China for his personal petty benefit.

In 1817, John Wolcot, that is, Peter Pindar, joined in the vogue 'To scourge a Monarch of the EAST, / For mocking Monarchs of the WEST, / A Lord of BRITAIN, and advent'rous Knight', as he says in the title poem of *A Most Solemn and Important Epistle to the Emperor of China*, the very last satire of the now old satirist. Capitalising too on the topicality of the Royal Pavilion, Wolcot teases the Regent's predilection for Chinese monstrosities and, riding with the tide of satirical cross-dressing, pokes fun at John Nash, the architect of the Pavilion, of his climbing up the ladder as a mandarin ('That Man of merit, Master Nash, / […] Who, for his Oriental style, / Has gain'd his Prince's gracious smile, / Had swell'd from Carlton-House a Mandarin!').[95] In John Agg's three-volume novel, *The Pavilion; or, A Month in Brighton*, also published in 1817, we find Moore's 'Fum and Hum' sneaking again into the narrative when Lady Evergreen errs in calling 'the elegant Fum' a 'Chinese Bomb' and a 'most beautiful monster'.[96] Upon Sir Charles Placid's correction, she says:

> What a palpable misnomer; how could I so vilely miscall the beautiful creature. What an inexpressible sweetness of countenance! Don't you think it admirably like the Prince?[97]

Implicit in Lady Evergreen's misunderstanding is the idea that the Regent, like Fum, is a monster and a bomb — the latter also suggestive of the explosion of public anger triggered

[95] John Wolcot, *A Most Solemn and Important Epistle to the Emperor of China; on His Uncourtly and Impolitic Behaviour to the Sublime Ambassadors of Great Britain* (London: Walker and Edwards, 1817), p. 7; p. 8.
[96] [John Agg] Humphrey Hedgehog, *The Pavilion; or, A Month in Brighton*, 3 vols (London: John Johnston, 1817), I, p. 47.
[97] [Agg] Hedgehog, p. 48.

by the Regent's outrageous and wasteful renovation of the Brighton pavilion. All this while periodicals remained an active channel of radical discourse in Oriental guise: in 'The Pavilion of Gwel-pee; or, the Dead Weight' (*Bell's Life*, 1822), for instance, 'Fum, the Brighton Hermit' discloses a manuscript kept by his family, which documents how the emperor Gwel-pee, 'the fourth of his race', having listened to the advices of his counsellors Wee-ling-ton (Duke of Wellington), the 'Hawk' (Earl of Liverpool), and Cung-ning (George Canning), upsets the two 'magic levers' — 'Public Debt' and 'Public Property' — that support his Pavilion.[98] With the 'dead weight' unhinged, the emperor finally crashes himself and his ministers to death — a story that, although explicitly alluding to Moore's satire, reminds us vividly of Hunt's tale of the Hing island.

The most popular descendent of the line has to be William Hone's 'The Joss and his Folly' (1820), illustrated by Cruikshank. Borrowing from Moore his sally at the Regent as a 'fat Fo' and the Royal Pavilion as a 'China shop', Hone ridicules the Regent — the Joss — who loses himself in the pavilion and becomes, like his favorite palace, an Eastern monstrosity:

> The outside — huge teapots,
>
> all drill'd round with holes, […]
>
> The inside — all tea-things,
>
> and dragons, and bells, […]
>
> But the *grand* Curiosity
>
> 's not to be seen —
>
> The owner himself —

[98] Fum, 'The Pavilion of Gwel-pee; or, the Dead Weight', *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 8 December 1822, p. 325.

An old fat MANDARIN; […]

And sits, in his CHINA SHOP,

Like a large Joss;

His mannikins round him,

In tea-tray array,

His pea-hens beside him,

To make him seem gay.[99]

Illustrating Hone's verse, Cruikshank designs a fat joss sitting on a teapot and under a lantern held by a dragon (as in *The Court at Brighton à la Chinese!!*), which is supported by two 'Fums' on the sides (see Figure 5). Below the illustration is a quote from Moore's 'Fum and Hum': 'I say, HUM, how fares it with Royalty now? / Is it *up*? — is it *prime*? — is it *spooney*, or how?' Hone's comparison between the exterior of the Pavilion and a teapot is rendered into a pavilion-within-a-teapot trope (or a 'teapot'-within-a-teapot trope) in Cruikshank's caricature, and his comparison between a teapot and the Regent himself ('his title of "Teapot" / shall last to extinction') is visualised as the Regent becomes a part of the lid of the teapot.[100] Cruikshank's architectonics are impressive: the lantern, the dragon, the 'Fums', the teapot, and the Regent are coalesced into one unified whole, which articulates not only the inseparability of the Joss (the Regent) and his Folly (the Pavilion) but also the inter-connectedness between Moore's and Hone's analogies. Robert Seymour's caricature *The Great Joss and His Playthings* (see Figure 6), published in 1829, one year before the Regent's death, testifies to the permanence of Moore's, Hone's, and Cruikshank's spiteful

[99] [William Hone], *The Queen's Matrimonial Ladder, a National Tap, with Fourteen Step Scenes; and Illustrations in Verse, with Eighteen Other Cuts* (London: William Hone, 1820), p. 19.
[100] In another illustration of 'The Joss and his Folly', Cruikshank actually transforms the Regent into a teapot: his head and his pointed Chinese hat becomes the lid, his arms the handle and the sprout, and his legs the stand. See [Hone], *The Queen's Matrimonial Ladder*, p. 21.

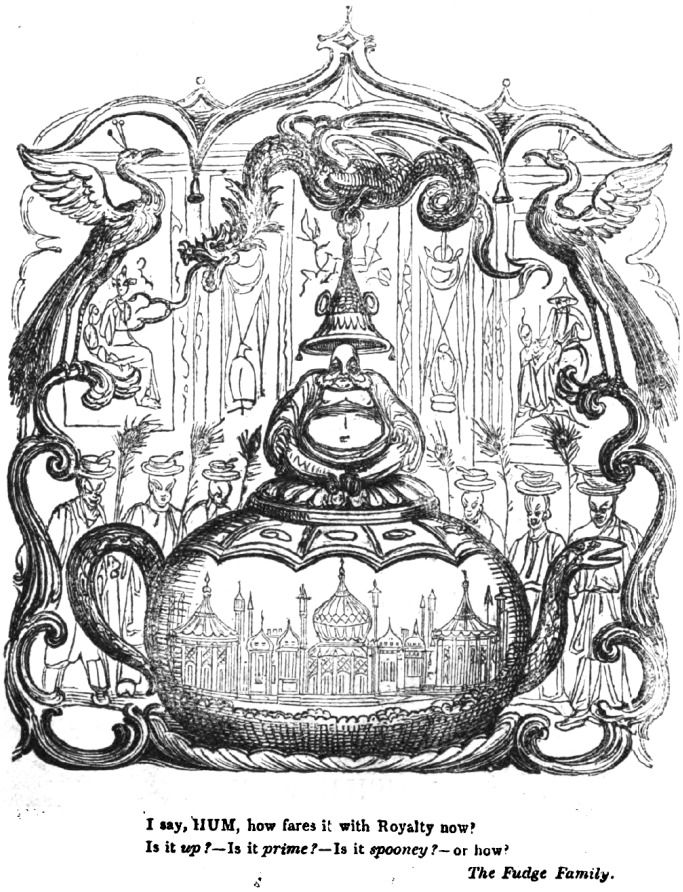

Figure 5 George Cruikshank, illustration for 'The Joss and his Folly' (1820)

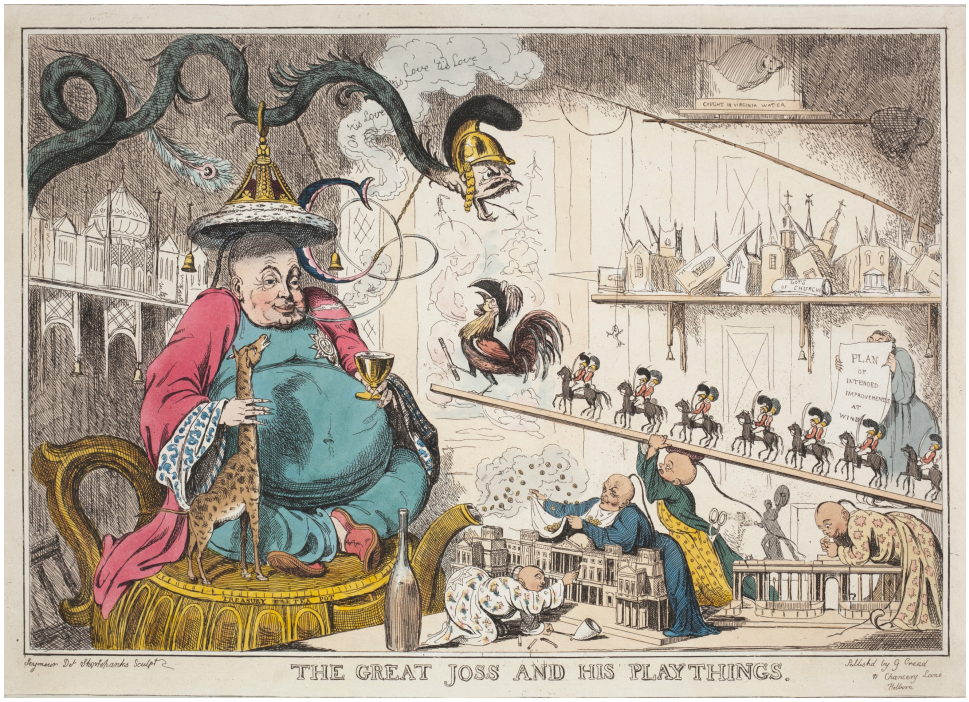

Figure 6 Robert Seymour, *The Great Joss and His Playthings* (c. February 1829)

joke — the Regent (the obese joss) is again sitting on a teapot (a 'treasury tea pot') and under the dragon-lantern of the Pavilion (a snake-lantern with the face of Wellington in Seymour's imagination), surrounded by little men in Chinese dress, one building the Buckingham House, another (possibly John Nash) collecting coins coming from the teapot, and yet another working on the gate at Hyde Park Corner. What this genealogy represents is an epoch of dissent and resistance, in which reformist writers and artists sought every means to make themselves heard, all the time strengthening and enriching each other by means of literary and artistic borrowing, adaptation, and transformation. It is such a kind of collective assailment, which culminates in the mutual influence between literary men and artists, that characterises anti-establishment satires of the Regency period and makes China a common political rhetoric.

The Regency period ended in 1820 with the Prince Regent ascending to the throne as George IV under the shadow of the bloody Peterloo Massacre in August 1819. Anti-government sentiment was at its peak, and to curb political radicalism the parliament passed the Six Acts in December 1819, which, among other measures to suppress the call for reform, subjected the radical press to heavy stamp tax and raised the sentence of seditious libel to a transportation of fourteen years. While radicalism in periodicals dampened, caricatures, which were almost immune to prosecution, remained active. The satirical prototype of a Sinicised Regent and a Sinicised ministry handed down from Leigh Hunt to Thomas Moore, George Cruikshank, William Hone, and others continued to serve reformist caricaturists in their vociferation; Theodore Lane's *Moments of Pain* (1820) and *Horrida Bella: Pains and Penalties versus Truth and Justice* (1820), William Heath's *The Bill Thrown Out* (1820), and 'The Gallant-ee Show' (1822) in *The Magic Lantern* are all examples that demonstrate the vigour of a China 'domesticated' into a political agency of disobedience. Parallel to the maturation of the Sinicising tactic was the more general orientalising turn, by which the

King is depicted, for instance, as a Persian Shah in Hone's *Kouli Khan; or, the Progress of Error* (1820), a Turkish Sultan in Hudibras's *Sultan Sham, and His Seven Wives* (1820), and an Indian Mogul in *The Queen and the Mogul* (1820).[101] With the suicide of Castlereagh in 1822 and the subsequent ministerial reformation of what is known as 'Liberal Toryism', the radical campaign that swamped the Regency period subsided at long last. An age of reform was to follow, and China, as a trope, had found its place elsewhere, assuming new roles in new contexts.

In this chapter I have traced the trajectory of the 'Chinese rhetoric' in the radical discourse of Regency Britain. In mapping this history through a contextualised reading of radical satires, what I endeavor to reconstruct is, to borrow the words of Edward Rosenheim, the historical '"moment" of satiric recognition'[102] — the moment in which the satirist's art is made sense of against a historically situated satiric norm, and that in which readers descry the satiric truth behind the false fronts that, in most cases, can be unriddled only by tacit knowledge and are therefore liable to lose referentiality when they outlive their temporal perimeter. To the extent that radical satire is opportunistic, utilitarianistic, and deictic in nature, such a historicist approach is not only tenable but also ineluctable. Returning to this 'moment' allows us to reappraise the relevance and implication of cross-culturality in the satiric genre, and the complication therewith: the intrinsic negativity of satires, whether political, social, moral, or literary, is necessarily conducive to an 'other' — a target whom satirists must distantiate — which may, in a cross-cultural context, take its heterotypic quality from and pass its own on to the 'other', as the two are juxtaposed, compared, and even homogenised. This hybridity, or ambiguity, justifies a more pluralistic interpretation as to what the 'other' means, and what role it plays, in any critical discourse of the self; and

[101] See Cohen-Vrignaud for a discussion about the Orient in Romantic radical satires.
[102] Edward W. Rosenheim, *Swift and the Satirist's Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 180.

it also obliges us, in a more general sense, to rethink the relation and interaction between the East and the West in different forms of literature.

CHAPTER TWO

Making a Self of China: The Anxieties of Romantic Egotists

2.1 Introduction

The early nineteenth century may be considered a high point of British orientalism in two distinct but related ways: first, the inception of Regency brought with it a fashion for hybrid aesthetics, through which the East became a visible component of British lives. As the Oriental style was elevated by that most powerful populariser — the Prince Regent — to become a mark of gentility courted by a new urban middle class, the royal taste became increasingly universal a model of public taste, which found expression not only in public arenas but also in sites of domesticity. Second, Britain's success in the Indian wars and the growth of empire in Europe at large engendered, or at least coincided with, a literary trend for Oriental poems, so much so that 'Oriental romance', as Tim Fulford puts it, 'became *the* single most popular Romantic form'.[1] Almost all celebrated poets of the period had ventured into the land of the Orient: after Robert Southey's Arabian and Hindu epics, *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801) and *The Curse of Kehama* (1810), Byron explored the Oriental theme in *Childe Harold II* (1812) and produced a succession of Eastern tales from 1813 to 1816, all of which heralded later attempts of Oriental versification, most notably Thomas Moore's

[1] Tim Fulford, 'Poetry, Peripheries and Empire', in *The Cambridge Companion to British Romantic Poetry*, ed. by James Chandler and Maureen N. McLane (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 178–94 (p. 186).

Lalla Rookh (1817) and Percy Shelley's *Alastor* (1815) and *The Revolt of Islam* (1818).[2] The 'fragment' of Coleridge's dream vision of Xanadu, 'Kubla Khan' (1816), was published at about the same time at Byron's encouragement, although it was completed much earlier in 1797. This dual trend of orientalising — one in the social realm and another in the literary sphere, which oftentimes overlapped and influenced each other ('stick to the East', as Byron had said, 'the public are orientalising')[3] — constituted a special milieu in which literary writers of the early nineteenth century lived and worked. These writers, most of them of the middle or upper-middle class either in family background, education, or social status, were not only a part of an orientalising society, but were also writing within an orientalising community for an orientalising society.

It may be said that, for literary writers of the early nineteenth century, the Orient was an ambiguous 'other' — an other so inextricable from the self that it seemed not so much an other but the self per se. Such a statement, however, needs qualifying; for what is the 'self' when we come to think of it as a reflective consciousness uncoverable in literature? Marilyn Butler has considered Romantic poems on the East as, for the most part, 'lightly allegorized, defamiliarized versions of the British state'.[4] Such a translation of the British state into Eastern empires registers an understanding of the self in collective terms: the self as a polity, as a nation, as a culture. On the other hand, the self — especially a literary self in the characteristically inward-turning, self-reflexive Romantic literature — also designates, and indeed most directly designates, an individual perception of existence against a wider field of otherness. When Andrew Warren talks of Romantic orientalism as a 'symptom of solitude and, more precisely, of solipsism', he is treating the Romantic self as a largely

[2] For a history of orientalist poetry in the Romantic period, see, for instance, Butler, pp. 395–447; Fulford, pp. 178–94.
[3] Marchand, *Byron's Letters and Journals*, III, p. 101.
[4] Bulter, p. 399.

individuated and introspective ego of affectivity.[5] These two senses of the self represent two different paths of understanding the Orient and its 'workings' in literature, and it is to the latter that this chapter is directed.

In this chapter, then, I am turning from the macro public sphere of political criticism to the micro private sphere of personal expression. Rather than the anxieties of empire, state, or nation, the 'anxieties' I refer to in the title of this chapter are of an existential nature: those that concern the lived experience of individual writers against the context of an immediate society in which they situated themselves. With such a focus, Warren's idea that the Young Romantics' treatment of the Orient is 'itself a critique of the Orientalism practiced by the eighteenth century and the First Generation Romantics' (3) can be broadly reinterpreted as an anxiety of self-representation — including what Harold Bloom calls 'the anxiety of influence'[6] — at one historical time; the writing of the Orient, that is to say, is always a self-conscious, time-specific response to some kinds of literal or metaphorical orientalising, either at present or in the past, or the present as a continuation of the past. It follows that the orientalising trend of both the social and literary worlds in the early nineteenth century has to be recognised as a significant locus through which we may grasp the ways writers wrote the other into their self, and their self into the other: the blurrings and bufferings of selfhood manifested as a response to the all-round presence of familiar otherness. To engage with the Orient, in this sense, is also to engage in a hermeneutic reading of one's self from within and outside of the boundary of the self — a notional boundary that enables a fluid conception of otherness to come into play.

I say fluid because, as we shall see, what the 'other' is, and how the Orient — in our case China — might serve as a trope of it, is always protean and has to be understood in

[5] Warren, p. 3.
[6] Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

relation to a particular frame of reference that is often more personal than we have assumed it to be. In what follows we shall look at the works of Thomas De Quincey, Charles Lamb, and Edward Bulwer-Lytton, all of whom, coincidentally or not, had been thought of by their contemporaries as an egotist.[7] All writers, of course, are egotistical in some ways, but these writers were perhaps more entitled to this label than others because their 'frank egotistical method' — to borrow Alfred Ainger's remark on Lamb[8] — had accorded to their works a keen sense of self-centredness that constituted their writerly idiosyncrasy. Such egotism, if we were to use the word, is manifested most noticeably in the autobiographical elements they tended so consistently to bring into their works: De Quincey's Opium-Eater, Lamb's Elia, and Bulwer-Lytton's Chinese dandy Fi-Ho-Ti were all fictional personas of their creators. To speak of their egotism as a 'method' at once highlights the performativeness of their apparently self-indulgent quasi-autobiographical works and the process of self-scrutiny, self-representation, and self-creation that is intrinsic to such a performance. How China serves in this process — how a sort of Chinese otherness becomes a rhetoric of self-expression — is the question this chapter explores.

2.2 Thomas De Quincey's Oriental-Phobia and the Anxiety of Self-Representation

It is a famous story that Samuel Taylor Coleridge created 'Kubla Khan' from a dream, 'in a sort of Reverie brought on by two grains of Opium'.[9] In his drugged unconscious he

[7] See, for instance, 'Thomas De Quincey', *Athenæum*, 17 December 1859, pp. 814–15 (p. 814); [Charles Lamb] Phil-Elia, 'A Character of the Late Elia', *London Magazine*, January 1823, pp. 19–21 (p. 20); and, on Bulwer-Lytton, 'Thackeray', *Home and Foreign Review*, April 1864, pp. 476–511 (p. 476).
[8] See Alfred Ainger's 'Introduction' in *The Essays of Elia*, ed. by Alfred Ainger (New York: John B. Alden, 1885), p. 13.
[9] This quote is from Coleridge's short note at the end of the British Library holograph. See Jack Stillinger, *Coleridge and Textual Instability: The Multiple Versions of the Major Poems* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 74.

wrought an alien world of the East: ‘In Xanadu did Kubla Khan / A stately pleasure-dome decree: / Where Alph, the sacred river, ran / Through caverns measureless to man / Down to a sunless sea’ (1–5).[10] As if descending from heights far above into the realm of mortals, the poet exchanges his impassive objectivity in the first stanza for the lyrical subjectivity of the cathartic second; reaching the ‘deep romantic chasm’ (12) where the ‘sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice’ (36) is flung up, the dreamer, increasingly self-conscious in his dreamy unconscious, begins to indulge in emotive metaphorising — of an earth ‘breathing’ in ‘fast thick pants’, of fragments vaulting ‘like rebounding hail, / Or chaffy grain’, of rocks ‘dancing’ (18–23) — until, in the third stanza, he can no longer withhold an ‘I’: ‘Could I revive within me’ (42), ‘a vision once I saw’ (38). Crucially it is the moment when all the fantasy, otherness, mystery, and violence of the poem are internalised to become a part of the poet, when this vision of the other is made the grail of the self, and, as Coleridge describes in his preface, when it becomes a manifestation of his ‘psychological curiosity’.[11] But while the vision he longs to revive — ‘It was an Abyssinian maid, / And on her dulcimer she played, / Singing of Mount Abora’ (39–41) — vibrates in resonance with the heightened exoticness of the opening lines and whispers a desire for what does not belong, the real craving of the poet is to become, like Kubla Khan who feeds on the otherly and transcendental ‘honey-dew’ and ‘milk of Paradise’ (53–54), the creator of that alien wonder: ‘That with music loud and long, / I would build that dome in air, / That sunny dome! those caves of ice!’ (45–47). Reenacting in ‘Kubla Khan’ his struggle in resurrecting his lost dream vision of Xanadu, Coleridge had made his Eastern poem an expression of his self: a self that hankers after a state of narcotised transcendence, a self that indulges in extreme

[10] My citations of ‘Kubla Khan’ are based on Stillinger, pp. 186–88. Further references are given in the text, identified by lines.
[11] Coleridge’s preface to ‘Kubla Khan’; see Stillinger, pp. 185–186 (p. 185).

poetic alterity, a self that covets a world culturally and ethnically anomalous — a self, in short, that seeks and wills to be the other.

Five years after the publication of 'Kubla Khan', Thomas De Quincey, in his magnum opus 'Confessions of an English Opium-Eater', offered an entirely different vision of an opium-induced Oriental dream. Avowing that dreams are 'the immediate and proximate cause of my acutest suffering', the Opium-Eater renders his dream vision rather as a psychological torment, a manifestation of the 'pains of opium':

> I seemed every night to descend, not metaphorically, but literally to descend, into chasms and sunless abysses, depths below depths, from which it seemed hopeless that I could ever re-ascend.[12]

Engaging Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan' in dialogue, De Quincey asserts his own experience as an essentially un-romantic, un-transcendental, and un-idealistic state of ruination: it is not the 'romantic chasm', nor the 'sunless sea' down the measureless caverns, that he descends; it is 'chasms and sunless abysses' that he 'literally', and 'not metaphorically', falls into. While De Quincey, to borrow the words of Robert Morrison, 'presents himself as Coleridge's twin' in identifying himself as a scholar, an opium-eater, and a dreamer en masse, his oriental dreams are as subversive as they are emulative of Coleridge's sublime vision of Xanadu.[13] The dreams of De Quincey are well-nigh an inverted vision of Coleridge's: there are no 'caves of ice' but 'tropical heat'; there is not a Kubla Khan nor a

[12] [Thomas De Quincey], 'Confessions of an English Opium-Eater', *London Magazine*, October 1821, pp. 353–79 (p. 372; p. 373). The 'Confessions' was first published in the *London Magazine* in two instalments: the first in September 1821, and the second in October 1821. My citations of De Quincey's 'Confessions' are from these first publications. Henceforth I shall distinguish the two instalments by 'I' and 'II' for convenience's sake. Readers may refer to the following: 'I': *London Magazine*, September 1821, pp. 293–312; 'II': *London Magazine*, October 1821, pp. 353–79.

[13] Robert Morrison, 'Opium-Eaters and Magazine Wars: De Quincey and Coleridge in 1821', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 30 (1997), 27–40 (p. 28).

singing damsel but a hotchpotch of monkeys, paraquets, cockatoos, ibises, crocodiles; there is no pleasure-dome but pagodas, stone coffins, pyramids, Chinese houses; there is no Alph, the sacred river, but Nile, with its mud.[14] For the worst of De Quincey, his Oriental dreams are not the 'vision once I saw' that Coleridge craves to revive, but repeated, unremitting tortures that provoke 'a sense of eternity and infinity that drove me into an oppression as of madness' (II, 376). If the 'Confessions', as Nigel Leask has argued, is 'a materialist "assassination" of Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*', the Oriental dreams that De Quincey admits were 'composed slowly, and by separate efforts of thought, at wide intervals of time' are justifiably a visionary and prosaic assassination of Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan'.[15]

What, then, is the role of the Oriental other in De Quincey's 'Confessions', ostracised and rejected as it seems to be, rather than embraced or espoused as in 'Kubla Khan'? What, in fact, is the 'other' in De Quincey's 'Confessions'? To what extent is it fused, or confused, with other forms of otherness external and internal to the self? To what extent is it fused, or confused, with the self? What, in the end, can we know about the confessing self of the Opium-Eater, to whom the other is as insufferably as it is indispensably an element of self-expression? These are the questions that frame the following discussion. In opening this discussion with Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan' and De Quincey's allusive critique of it in the 'Confessions', what I seek to lay down is that Romantic engagement with the Oriental other does not only describe an imagining of relationship that concerns the West and the East, or the self and the other understood in collective terms, but also an imagining of relationship that concerns an immediate literary and reading society in which the process of identification and othering is at work both

[14] [De Quincey], 'Confessions', II, p. 375.
[15] Leask, p. 171; Thomas De Quincey, *Literary Reminiscences*, 2 vols (Boston: Ticknor, Reed, and Fields, 1851), I, p. 114. De Quincey's description is applied not only to his Oriental dreams but also his opium dreams in general.

interpersonally and intertextually, and intrapersonally and intratextually.[16] Even the audacious poet of 'Kubla Khan' is keenly aware that what is to him a 'deep delight' (44) may produce in his audience a 'holy dread' (52).[17] To speak of 'Kubla Khan' as a 'psychological curiosity' is not only to reveal the cognitive significance of an Orient-inflected vision but also to indemnify the poet against the allegation of alterity, and the claim of transcendence — of his vision being 'given' as 'all the images rose up […] without any sensation or consciousness of effort'[18] — is, likewise, a claim both of elevation and of subsidence. In assuming affinity with the other, that is to say, Coleridge is also distantiating his self from it; his apprehension is as much about a self unfamiliarised by otherness as it is about the legitimacy of an already unfamiliarised Coleridge in a familiar literary establishment. The anxiety that troubles a cross-cultural text is always about boundary crossing, but this boundary is, before everything else, a domestic border that encroaches upon literary decision. In De Quincey's 'Confessions', this boundary takes multifarious shapes, and one of them gets down to a substructure of self-identity that hinges firmly upon the other as a defining agent of what the Opium-Eater is against a mass reading public in a modernising society.

It is essential to recognise, in the first place, the complicated relationship between the self and the other in the 'Confessions', construed as De Quincey's — the confessing 'English' opium-eater's — purported resistance to his perfidious addiction to the Eastern drug and the horrifying rebound of the East in his unconscious in the form of dreams. The fundamental issue is the conundrum that structures such a relationship, one that involves the ingestion of the other, the helpless submission to what he has ingested, and the threat, or

[16] I take these pairs of words, 'interpersonal' and 'intertextual', and 'intrapersonal' and 'intrapersonal', from Andrew Warren's discussion of Wordsworth's 'Dream of the Arab' — the manuscript of which, to digress a little, De Quincey had evidently read before its publication in 1851. See Warren, p. 18.
[17] See Michael O'Neill, *Romanticism and the Self-Conscious Poem* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 88–89.
[18] Stillinger, p. 185.

fear, of being ingested in turn by the other. Describing this latter fear as 'the fear of an unending and interlinked chain of infections from the East, which threatened to enter his system and to overthrow it, leaving him visibly and permanently "compromised" and orientalised', John Barrell in his seminal work *The Infection of Thomas De Quincey* interprets De Quincey's opium-eating as a form of 'inoculation': 'taking something of the East into himself, and projecting whatever he could not acknowledge as his out into a farther East, an East *beyond* the East'.[19] In the 'Confessions', such a projection is manifested in the hierarchy De Quincey establishes for his Oriental-phobia: 'the wild, barbarous, and capricious superstitions of Africa' is less affecting than 'the mere antiquity of Asiatic things', and 'Southern Asia […] the seat of awful images and associations' is less horrifying than China, where there is a 'barrier of utter abhorrence and want of sympathy placed between us by feelings deeper than I can analyse'.[20] The problem of De Quincey's inoculation, as Barrell argues, is that 'to be inoculated *against* the disease is at the same time to be inoculated *with* it'[21] — taking in the other to protect oneself is also to expose oneself to its potential rebounding influence, and it is such a dangerous inoculation, which with failure reinforces rather than cures an infection, that creates a '*hybrid* identity' (18) in De Quincey. Significantly, therefore, what Barrell has identified through the metaphor of inoculation is the ironical interpenetration between the self and the other that characterises De Quincey's Oriental-phobia. A confessing English opium-eater is, at least professedly, a self-reproaching Englishman adulterated by the recognisably Oriental habit of opium 'eating', and to be horrified by the Orient is also to be horrified by the immutable existence, and his own abiding subsistence, of the East as a part of his unconscious self. De Quincey's anxiety

[19] Barrell, p. 15; p. 16.
[20] [De Quincey], 'Confessions', II, p. 375.
[21] Barrell, p. 16.

over such a form of subliminal miscegenation is best encapsulated in 'The English Mail-Coach' in which he relates his dream of a crocodile-coachman:

> The dreamer finds housed within himself — occupying, as it were, some separate chamber in his brain — holding, perhaps, from that station a secret and detestable commerce with his own heart — some horrid alien nature. What if it were his own nature repeated, — still, if the duality were distinctly perceptible, even *that* — even this mere numerical double of his own consciousness — might be a curse too mighty to be sustained. But how, if the alien nature contradicts his own, fights with it, perplexes, and confounds it? How, again, if not one alien nature, but two, but three, but four, but five, are introduced within what once he thought the inviolable sanctuary of himself?[22]

Getting down to the dream state of the unconscious, the Opium-Eater discovers the terrifying hybridisation and pluralisation of his self — terrifying not only because it is 'alien' but also because it may be 'his own nature repeated', and not only because it may be 'his own nature repeated' but also because it may, in numbers inestimable, 'contradict', 'fight with', 'perplex', and 'confound' his nature. What is most terrifying, however, is that, whether it be a 'double' of his consciousness or an infiltrator, this alien nature is one that is already 'housed within himself' — one that must be acknowledged as existing in his self, that must be seen as constitutive of his self, and that, in short, *is* his self. The other, that is to say, is part and parcel of the Opium-Eater's self-identity; and such a relationship between

[22] [Thomas De Quincey], 'The English Mail-Coach, or the Glory of Motion', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, October 1849, pp. 485–500 (p. 496).

the self and the other, parsed as the origin of a phobic reaction, has much to say about De Quincey's anxiety as a writer and a man of his time.

What has been meticulously discussed, in relation to this liquefaction of the self/other and East/West dyads, is the relevance of British imperialism, which in De Quincey's time was at its ascendency. Barrell, before others, has read De Quincey's relation with the East as akin to 'that of an imperial power with its colonial "dependencies"'.[23] Nigel Leask, taking up the thread, elucidates De Quincey's anxiety as an instance of the larger Romantic anxieties of empire. In the context of the material history of imperialism, Leask understands De Quincey's 'racial corollaries' as his dread of 'losing that fragile distinction of "Englishness" which marked him off from oriental opium-eaters', and his frightful oriental dreams — a token of his 'fear of coming round full circle, of discovering the Other in the Same' — bespeak his recognition of the political reality that conquest is 'the prelude to revenge and degeneracy […] as well as to fearful, even bestial miscegenations'.[24] For Barry Milligan, however, 'the radical instability of the self' in De Quincey arises from the fact that the self and the other, and by implication Britain and the East, 'never were separate'.[25] Arguing that De Quincey 'envisions the Orient as the origin of all Western cultures and religions' (61), Milligan sees De Quincey's Oriental dreams as a revelation of the way Britons 'have always already been assimilated and dominated by the very peoples and regions they wish to assimilate and dominate' (67). What lies at the heart of De Quincey's anxiety is thus the 'implicit hierarchy' (61) that ambiguates the overpowering and the overpowered, the coloniser and the colonised. Building upon but also moving away from these readings of De Quincey as an imperialistic hybrid, I seek in what follows to call attention to how the self/other dialectic in De Quincey's 'Confessions' bears not only upon

[23] Barrell, p. 18.
[24] Leask, p. 225; p. 228.
[25] Barry Milligan, *Pleasures and Pains: Opium and the Orient in 19th-Century British Culture* (Charlottesville; London: University of Virginia Press, 1995), p. 46; p. 48.

East/West relations but also upon a relation between De Quincey and his immediate society that is in constant danger of dissolution. My approach, in particular, is concerned with reading the 'Confessions' as essentially a literary artefact of self-representation — from which we shall see that what he fears, and what he represents himself as fearing, is, ironically, what defines him as an individual in a mass society.

I shall start by saying that the 'Confessions' belongs generically to what Madame De Staël called 'narratives of self made by oneself', a self-conscious expression of self-analysis and self-critique that, qualified by an apologetic assertion of deviance, communicates in a specific confessor/listener setting a transgressive individuality against the normative, the authoritative, or the prevalent.[26] Virginia Woolf once remarked of the 'Confessions' that 'one has been told only what De Quincey wished us to know'; reading De Quincey's 'Confessions' as a deliberate confession, that is to say, requires us to query the representational nature of what the confessor pictures as his transgressive self and the distinction that marks out who, as the surrogate of normativity, the confessor is confessing to.[27] This query immediately leads us to consider the identity of the 'reader/s' De Quincey addresses more than seventy times in the 'Confessions'. Here the publication history of the 'Confessions' is pertinent: it was originally intended for the *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, of which both De Quincey and Coleridge were regular contributors, and was eventually published in the *London Magazine*, the chief and conscious rival of *Blackwood's*, in 1821, soon after De Quincey fell out with William Blackwood.[28] Being archfoes, the *London* shared with *Blackwood's* a determinately middle-class readership — a class that, as Francis Jeffrey described, was 'as well educated and as high-minded' as the higher classes

[26] Quoted in Robert Folkenlik, 'Introduction: The Institution of Autobiography', in *The Culture of Autobiography: Constructions of Self-Representation*, ed. by Robert Folkenlik (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), pp. 1–20 (p. 8).
[27] Virginia Woolf, *Selected Essays*, ed. by David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 60.
[28] See Morrison, 'Opium-Eaters and Magazine Wars', for a succinct account of this history.

whilst 'their sensibility is greater', a class 'most touched with the emotions that belong to their own condition' but was 'extremely apt to affect the taste, and to counterfeit even that absurd disdain of their superiors, of which they are themselves the objects'.[29] The 'reader/s' whom De Quincey, then a writer of minor standing, sought to impress was precisely this specific group of middle-class periodical readers who sought to distinguish themselves from the lower working class and to find their worth in the higher society. While Jon Klancher sees it as a largely ideological undertaking that magazines like *Blackwood's* and *London* strived to 'reshape the very contours and self-definitions of the readerships they addressed', the force of market is equally if not more powerfully a motivation for magazines to gratify readers with a sort of familiarity that incites a sense of belonging and, at the same time, to titillate them with a sort of difference that serves both to amaze and inspire.[30] 'The world of literary magazines,' as Mark Parker says, 'is a kind of arena, where what is often at stake, for both reader and contributor, is one's image'.[31] What I seek to read in De Quincey's work is precisely this image — an egotistic image that both identifies him with and differentiates him from his 'reader/s'.

It is almost like stating the obvious to say that the quasi-autobiographical 'Confessions' of De Quincey reflects a middle-class self-awareness that *was*, indeed, De Quincey's, or more exactly a part of De Quincey's. Born into a mercantile middle-class household of aristocratic pretension, De Quincey was chiefly raised up as a typical bourgeois — by his widowed mother who was herself from a military family with two brothers serving in the East India Company in Bengal, and who, in the words of Frances Wilson, 'was a snob': she added 'the aristocratic *De*' in the family name, refrained from

[29] Francis Jeffrey, review of *Tales*, by George Crabbe, *Edinburgh Review*, November 1812, pp. 277–305 (p. 280; p. 281).
[30] Jon P. Klancher, *The Making of English Reading Audience, 1790–1832* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), p. 40.
[31] Parker, p. 20.

conversing with servants, luxuriated in redecorating her various residences, liked to parade her children in the latest style of fashion, and, as was customary for the middle class to do, aspired to send her children to boarding schools.[32] Though the family was not 'emphatically *rich*', De Quincey says, his childhood was surrounded, at least outwardly, by 'circumstances of luxury or aristocratic elegance'.[33] The mother's aspiration to gentility seemed to have left a permanent mark on the son; De Quincey retained 'the aristocratic *De*' when even his mother had abandoned it, 'as if,' as Barrell says, 'to reassure himself that, though apparently a hack writer, permanently on the run from his creditors, he was a member of some *noblesse de plume*'.[34] It seemed, too, that De Quincey, like a typical bourgeois, had an evident 'fear of the working class', whom he called 'Jacobins' on several occasions and had a compulsion to keep them under constant 'surveillance' (3). All these are reflected in the 'Confessions': the very first thing that readers are told of the Opium-eater as a social being is that he is acquainted with 'one small class of English society […] distinguished for talents, or of eminent station', and the next thing is that he is himself 'distinguished for my classical attainment', having been taught by various masters of whom he identifies only two, an Etonian and an Oxonian.[35] Though he has 'various patrician friends', De Quincey reminds his readers, he is not a man of 'rank and high blood' (I, 310). Like his readers, he is a middling person who loves theatre and music, who has a decent library, who reads newspapers, magazines, and books, and is immensely interested in the economic treatises of Ricardo. When he jokes about the pride of the families of bishops, he is depending on his readers' tacit understanding of what 'uphill work' these families have to do 'to make known

[32] Frances Wilson, *Guilty Thing: A Life of Thomas De Quincey* (London; New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), p. 48. For De Quincey's life, see also Robert Morrison, *The English Opium Eater: A Biography of Thomas De Quincey* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2009).
[33] *The Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey*, ed. by David Masson, 14 vols (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1889–90), I, p. 30.
[34] Barrell, p. 4.
[35] [De Quincey], 'Confessions', I, p. 294; p. 295.

their pretensions' (I, 299); when he questions whether the opium-eating Turks are capable of feeling the pleasures approaching to the intellectual ones 'of an Englishmen' (II, 359), what he designates, by 'Englishmen', is also the learned, well-to-do, theatre-going class. In the 'Confessions', that is to say, De Quincey has represented his self as a decidedly middle-class self; a self that is bonded to the general conditions, dispositions, and life-modes of his readers.

But the 'Confessions' also shows De Quincey to be ridden by a deep sense of anxiety to tell himself apart from the class of which he was so conscious a member. This urge to distinct himself from the aggregates — to present himself as an 'other' to his kind — is almost emblematic of his ambivalent attitude towards his mother, whom he both revered and feared, both loved and resented. De Quincey was, in fact, so much a romantic egotist that he never seemed comfortable to settle in any one class conventionally defined. The full title of the 'Confessions' encapsulates the efforts he exerted to delimit himself from a multiplicity of social and cultural bodies: 'Confessions of an English Opium-Eater: Being an Extract from the Life of a Scholar', in which the three identities — 'English', 'opium-eater', and 'scholar' — are equally discriminating. Much has been said about the 'English' that qualifies and, in a sense, protects the self against the Oriental otherness of 'opium-eater'; what I want to add is that De Quincey, by calling himself an 'English opium-eater', is also exploiting the very strength of the otherness that distinguishes him from the numerous middle-class 'English laudanum-drinkers'. One reviewer of the 'Confessions' had indeed observed De Quincey's expedient in dramatising his habit:

> It is somewhat strange that he should have chosen to designate himself as an Opium-*eater*. From all that appears in the narrative, we have not been able to discover that he ever ate a grain of opium in his life. Had he called

himself an English laudanum-drinker, the title of the volume might have been less attractive, but it would have corresponded to the fact.[36]

Despite his rightful assumption of exceptionality, De Quincey's choice to orientalise himself by the designation of 'opium-eater' is both to captivate readers, by the effect of alienation it produces apropos of its Oriental connection and, accordingly, recreational connotation, and to make his case, and himself, even more special than he could claim. But the Opium-Eater is most distinctive in that he is nuanced by the rarity of 'scholar'. What is special about the scholar Opium-Eater is not only that he is endowed with an elevated intellectual power or that he is more learned than his average readers, as De Quincey is at pains to show; he is most special because, while he relishes the 'intellectual pleasure' opium offers him in the fashionable activity of theatre-going, he also relishes the pleasure of discovering the '*terræ incognitæ*' (the unexplored land) of the working class, which, as it 'occasionally struggled with my love of the Opera', is a pleasure no less intense than the one he gets from his posh entertainment.[37] Whereas 'most [people] are apt to show their interest in the concerns of the poor, chiefly by sympathy, expressed in some shape or other, with their distresses and sorrows,' says the Opium-Eater, 'I, at that time, was disposed to express my interest by sympathising with their pleasures' (II, 360). Hence it is that the Opium-Eater is accustomed to wander to places where the poor, released from a week of labour, congregate on a Saturday night — to observe them, to eavesdrop on their conversation, and even to join 'their parties' and 'gave my opinion upon the matter in discussion' (II, 360). The scholar Opium-Eater, in other words, is not like any middle class person; he is one who sides with the poor, one who is 'familiar with their wishes, their

[36] Review of *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, by Thomas De Quincey, *Eclectic Review*, April 1823, pp. 366–71 (p. 366).
[37] [De Quincey], 'Confessions', II, p. 359; p. 360.

difficulties, and their opinions' (II, 360), and one who, by virtue of this unusual condescension, finds that 'the poor are more philosophic than the rich' (II, 360) — a conclusion that almost identifies him with the working class, for 'the Opium-eater boasteth himself to be a philosopher' (I, 295). The Opium-Eater, in the final analysis, belongs not to the upper class, not to the lower class, and not to the middle class; he is not a thorough 'English' man, nor is he a real 'opium-eater', nor is he, being beset by the 'intellectual torpor' opium inflicts upon him, a proper 'scholar'. If there is one thing that can define him, it is that he is the 'other' to every categorisation he can use to define his self.

De Quincey's negation of identities foregrounds my central argument: that the Opium-Eater's Oriental dreams, spawned by his 'unimaginable horror' of the East, are part and parcel of his highly individualised, 'solitarised', and singularised notion of self-identity. It is crucial to note that dreams, for De Quincey, are a manifestation of the self; dreams are private, personal, and, most important of all, inimitable. 'If a man "whose talk is of oxen," should become an Opium-eater,' he says, 'the probability is, that (if he is not too dull to dream at all) — he will dream about oxen' (II, 295). One's mind dictates one's dreams; the dreams of the scholar Opium-Eater, that is to say, belong not to anybody else, and not even to those who indulge in opium to an extent comparable to him — what he implies, as Alethea Hayter reckons, is that 'it is something so rare that it should no more tempt one to imitate him than one is tempted to imitate a lion-tamer or a funambulist'.[38] Returning to the exact 'oxen' metaphor in 'Suspiria De Profundis', the sequel to 'Confessions', De Quincey explicates his idea about dreaming and its relation to the internal affection of the mind:

> He whose talk is of oxen, will probably dream of oxen; and the condition of human life, which yokes so vast a majority to a daily experience

[38] Alethea Hayter, *Opium and the Romantic Imagination* (London: Faber, 1968), p. 107.

> incompatible with much elevation of thought, oftentimes neutralizes the tone of grandeur in the reproductive faculty of dreaming, even for those whose minds are populous with solemn imagery.[39]

Dreams, therefore, are not about the 'imagery' one is surrounded with, but about thoughts and the mind, the consummation of which remains a desideratum to 'so vast a majority'. That is why he deems it necessary to prefix a lengthy explanation of his perception of the East in the 'Confessions' before he presents a narrative of his Oriental dreams — 'All this, and much more than I can say, or have time to say, the reader must enter into before he can comprehend the unimaginable horror which these dreams of Oriental imagery, and mythological tortures, impressed upon me'. [40] His misgivings about this lack of understanding between himself and his readers are also what he perceives as the discrepancy that exists between his mind and the general middle-class minds, despite the similar 'imagery' that surround and preoccupy them. Here I am bringing attention to another facet of Milligan's 'inseparability' between the self and the other — that the Orient, the East, or China has always been a part of the lives of the British middle class ever since they acquired the means to indulge, especially through the agent of chinoiserie, in the exoticism that was hitherto an aristocratic, elitist privilege. We are reminded of the fashionable and aristocratic Belinda in Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* and the high society Lien-Chi encountered in Goldsmith's *Chinese Letters*, and the way chinoiserie and Eastern imagery became omnipresent in middle-class households as a symbol of wealth and prosperity at the turn of the century. When De Quincey jokingly says that 'everybody has an Indian uncle' in allusion to his own uncle in Bengal, he is confident that his readers will grasp his humour

[39] [Thomas De Quincey], 'Suspiria De Profundis: Being a Sequel to the Confessions of an English Opium-Eater', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, March 1845, pp. 269–73 (p. 269).
[40] [De Quincey], 'Confessions', II, p. 375.

in rendering a generality hyperbolically universal.[41] To be horrified by the Orient and to be troubled by Oriental phantasms, therefore, are tantamount to declaring himself an iconoclast in opposition to the ubiquitous Orientalness embodied in the nascent middle-classness and bourgeois subjectivity. That his Oriental dreams are a furtive revival of that quotidian 'imagery' of the East is readily observable in his narrative:

> The cursed crocodile became to me the object of more horror than almost all the rest. I was compelled to live with him; and (as was always the case almost in my dreams) for centuries. I escaped sometimes, and found myself in Chinese houses, with cane tables, &c. All the feet of the tables, sophas, &c., soon became instinct with life: the abominable head of the crocodile, and his leering eyes, looked out at me, multiplied into a thousand repetitions: and I stood loathing and fascinated.[42]

These are monsters from quotidian objects 'instinct with life'; they are the incarnation of what Leigh Hunt called the 'mummeries and monstrosities' of oriental furniture, décor, and accessory that inundate a lifestyle, an otherness that an ordinary bourgeois lives with while the Opium-Eater is 'compelled to live with'.[43] The Oriental nightmares of the Opium-Eater are nothing less than a psychological struggle against such a widespread, class-specific 'miscegenation' that he is himself subject to, and the medal of a subversive frame of mind that characterises his individual self as a superconscious rebel against class norms. These horrifying dreams of the other, in other words, betoken his own 'alienness' in refusing to be homogenised into 'so vast a majority'. For what makes the Opium-Eater different from the

[41] [Thomas De Quincey], 'Dinner Real and Reputed', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, December 1839, pp. 815–31 (p. 820).
[42] [De Quincey], 'Confessions', II, p. 376.
[43] [Hunt], 'Drury-Lane', p. 570.

vast majority of his class is not that he lives in a different way but that he thinks in a different way — he abhors what is a symbol of privilege, comfort, and prosperity, while others admire it. In the end, it is his 'alien nature' that defines him, and in twofold: he is the other because he has ingested and made himself a part of all sorts of otherness irreconcilable with the self, and he is the other because he fears it, revolts against it, and seeks to find a place for his self against the many selves that are already a part of the other.

It must add to our understanding about De Quincey's anxiety of self-identification to consider that his xenophobia is also, at least as it is presented to be, a form of anthropophobia. The Opium-Eater has made it clear that what he fears about the East, and in particular Southern Asia and China, is its sheer immensity, which de-individualises a man and nullifies his sense of modern existence:

> The mere antiquity of Asiatic things, of their institutions, histories, modes of faith, &c., is so impressive, that to me the vast age of the race and name overpowers the sense of youth in the individual. A young Chinese seems to me an antediluvian man renewed. Even Englishmen, though not bred in any knowledge of such institutions, cannot but shudder at the mystic sublimity of castes that have flowed apart, and refused to mix, through such immemorial tracts of time […] southern Asia is, and has been for thousands of years, the part of the earth most swarming with human life, the great *officina gentium* [workshop of peoples]. Man is a weed in those regions.[44]

[44] [De Quincey], 'Confessions', II, p. 375.

What is fearful is not the East per se but the diminution and even obliteration of individuality amid 'the great *officina gentium*' with its overpowering antiquity and human cluster. His Oriental dreams are likewise an embodiment of this fear of being de-humanised, de-individualised, and de-temporalised:

> I was stared at, hooted at, grinned at, chattered at, by monkeys, by parroquets, by cockatoos. I ran into pagodas, and was fixed for centuries at the summit or in secret rooms: I was the idol; I was the priest; I was worshipped; I was sacrificed. […] I was buried for a thousand years in stone coffins, with mummies and sphynxes, in narrow chambers at the heart of eternal pyramids. I was kissed, with cancerous kisses, by crocodiles; and laid, confounded with all unutterable slimy things, amongst reeds and Nilotic mud. (II, 376)

These dreams, populated by Eastern beasts, Eastern corpses, and Eastern gods, are clearly a fantasised version of 'the tyranny of the human face' (II, 375) — 'faces imploring, wrathful, despairing, surged upwards by thousands, by myriads, by generations, by centuries' (II, 375) — that plagues his dreams years after his youthful London life, when he roamed about the 'sphynx's riddles of streets' in what he calls the '*terræ incognitæ*', when 'crowds become an oppression' but 'the remedies I sought were to force myself into society' (II, 361). In Barrell's theory, it is the return of what he had tried to inoculate against, and whether it was his Oriental dreams or other of his opium dreams, 'the dreams were dreams of the terrors of "mass society"' [45] — not only the proletariat society Barrell has in mind but also the middle-class society De Quincey reluctantly acquiesced in and, in fact, the society of an

[45] Barrell, p. 4.

industrialised age at large. It is, perhaps, for such an anthropophobic tendency, which may be a cause or an effect of his egotism, that he gloried in being repelled and rejected: 'I have a perfect craze for being despised. I doted on it; and considered contempt a sort of luxury that I was in continual fear of losing'.[46] His 'alien nature', in this sense, is what he took pride in; to be the other, and at the same time to resist it, was the contradiction that defines him as a person, and this contradiction is not without its echo in a modern man's fight against an organised, stratified, and increasingly globalised society.

What I am suggesting, in the final analysis, is that De Quincey's Oriental-phobia is, whether consciously or unconsciously, a willed, autonomous, or even narcissistic act of recalcitrance — an obsession no less relentless than his opium addiction. Talking about De Quincey's interminable use of opium despite the torment it caused him, Milligan suggests that it could be explained as 'a form of masochistic repetition compulsion'[47] — this, I think, is a felicitous description not only in relation to his repeated failures in overcoming the Eastern drug but also to his enduring animosity towards the East, and, in broader terms, to his ceaseless struggle to survive and prevail in his encounters with the society. His anxiety to delineate himself from a class continuously expanding and increasingly influential could only get more tumultuous and unappeasable, his terror of mass society could only displace him from what he aspired to be in an age of urbanisation and growth, and even his Oriental-phobia was a kind of self-torture in a globalising society where the presence of the Orient became increasingly pervasive. Pleasures and pains, in De Quincey's case, are a problematic binary; and in fact the controversies that arose upon the publication of the 'Confessions' had much to do with the Opium-Eater's accusably half-hearted effort to make real the claim that his confession is 'an appeal to the prudence and conscience of the yet unconfirmed

[46] Masson, *Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey*, I, p. 59.
[47] Milligan, p. 68.

opium-eater'.[48] The pleasures of opium he introduces in abundance, and with an intention of myth-busting: it is a medicine of magical therapeutic efficiency, 'a panacea […] for all human woes' (II, 355); it does not intoxicate, but instead 'introduces […] the most exquisite order, legislation, and harmony' in the mental faculties (II, 356); it does not serve to produce inactivity and torpor, but 'always, and in the highest degree […] excite and stimulate the system' (II, 358). All these pleasures are disconcertingly countered only by the highly personal pains of intellectual paralysis and bad dreams, the latter being, he says, the causes of his 'acutest suffering' (II, 372). Many readers, rather than being deterred, were tempted to experiment with opium, 'for the sake of experiencing the sensations that had been described', as Southey said of De Quincey's book.[49] Admitting 'an overbalance on the side of the *pleasures* of opium', De Quincey promised his *London* readers a third part of the 'Confessions' as a remedy, but the promise, whether by choice or by circumstance, was never fulfilled.[50] De Quincey's attitude towards the pleasures and pains of opium seems to be, at best, ambivalent, and this ambivalence, as we are now ready to suggest, arises from the fact that opium, like all 'others', is a part of his self-definition. It was almost impossible for him to not derive pleasures from it, especially after the publication of the 'Confessions' — for who could be *the* Opium-Eater, if not De Quincey? Maybe it was an imperative that he had to look at himself, and to let others look at him, in the same way as he looked at the cursed crocodile in his dreams: 'I stood loathing and fascinated'.

[48] [De Quincey], 'Confessions', II, p. 378.
[49] Quoted in Hayter, p. 106.
[50] The promise was made in De Quincey's letter to the editor of the *London Magazine*, dated 27 November 1821, in 'The Lion's Head', *London Magazine*, December 1821, pp. 583–86 (pp. 584–86).

2.3 Charles Lamb's Self-Satirical Confessions

In the *London Magazine* for October 1821, just six pages after the Opium-Eater's dream narrative, is an essay by Elia, the nom de plume of Charles Lamb (1775–1834), titled 'Witches, and Other Night-Fears'. In the essay Elia relates his childhood night-fears of supernatural beings, and, at the close of it, he makes a 'confession' of his defunct dream faculty that seems to engage De Quincey's 'Confessions' and Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan' in dialogue:

> My night-fancies have long ceased to be afflictive. I confess an occasional night-mare; but I do not, as in early youth, keep a stud of them. Fiendish faces, with the extinguished taper, will come and look at me; but I know them for mockeries, even while I cannot elude their presence, and I fight and grapple with them. For the credit of my imagination, I am almost ashamed to say how tame and prosaic my dreams are grown. They are never romantic, — seldom even rural. […] The poverty of my dreams mortifies me. There is C —, at his will can conjure up icy domes, and pleasure-houses for Kubla Khan, and Abyssianian maids, and songs of Abara, and caverns, […] when I cannot muster a fiddle.[51]

Unlike De Quincey, the adult Elia is not plagued by his nightmares; even in his unconscious he knows the other-worldly beings 'for mockeries' and, so rationalising their existence, is able to combat them in his dreams, and to make a joke of his 'stud' of 'night-mares' when

[51] [Charles Lamb] Elia, 'Witches, and Other Night-Fears', *London Magazine*, October 1821, pp. 384–87 (p. 387).

awake. Unlike Coleridge, Elia is a 'prosaic', unromantic dreamer; his dream world is barren of the exoticness that underpins Coleridge's poetic imagination, and even when he was inspired to dream a strange dream of marine spectra, he would, eventually, be brought back 'safe and inglorious' by the Thames to the British inland (387). This 'poverty' of his dreams, as Elia says self-deprecatingly, obliges him to 'subside into my proper element of prose' when he feels 'that idle vein [of poetic ambition] returning upon me' (387). Forming a matrix of binary opposites between imagination and rationality, childhood and adulthood, poeticness and prosaicness, and otherness and familiarity, Lamb has positioned himself, or his persona Elia, as a rational, realistic, and worldly essayist distinct from the authors of the traumatic 'Confessions' and the wild 'Kubla Khan'. Returning to the themes of dream and literary creation in a later essay, 'Sanity of True Genius', Lamb emphasises the importance of 'dominating' and 'taming' the dreamy other through 'waking judgment': while for the little wits 'their phantoms are lawless; their visions night-mares', the great wits 'subjugate[s] them to the law of her [nature's] consistency', and 'to the wildest dreams gives the sobrieties of every day occurrences'.[52] 'Let the most romantic of us,' Elia says at the close of the essay, 'that has been entertained all night with the spectacle of some wild and magnificent vision, recombine it in the morning, and try it by his waking judgment' (520). The bending of lawlessness into order and sense through sober and rational reflection — which by nature is also the domestication of the other into the familiar with 'purpose' and 'motive' (520) — seems to be the Romantic ideal of Lamb. Hence it is that, while in the 'Witches' Lamb has shown what David Higgins calls a 'passive and regretful' 'move from the exotic to the familiar', it is not without a mutinous spirit that he has, at the same time, whispered an 'alternative aesthetic' — to borrow the words of Simon Hull in his discussion of De

[52] The essay, which aims to falsify Dryden's idea that great wits is allied to madness, was among the 'Popular Fallacies' series published in *New Monthly*. It was given the title 'Sanity of True Genius' when collected in the *The Last Essays of Elia*. [Charles Lamb] Elia, 'Popular Fallacies', *New Monthly Magazine*, January 1826, pp. 519–20 (pp. 519–20).

Quincey's and Lamb's dream cities — of 'a cleaner, purer and altogether more stable vision' of Romantic authorship by de-elevating the exotic down to the plane of the familiar, the local, and the mundane.[53]

In this section I seek to read Charles Lamb's 'Old China' and 'A Dissertation Upon Roast Pig' for the way they translate the other into domestic reality, and to argue that they express a sort of self-scrutiny that, at its heart, addresses the anxieties of Elia the Londoner in the face of progress and prosperity. My attention is specifically drawn to how China, consistently associated with forms of excess, obsession, and fanaticism in Lamb's essays, almost always betokens a state of self-doubt and self-denial that is ultimately the embodiment of a sceptical mind towards the comfort of modern life. Karen Fang, exploring the relationship between the notion of China and Lamb's magazine writings, situates Lamb's engagement with a commodified East in the context of imperialism and argues for Lamb's identification of his periodical authorship with the imperial interest of the metropolitan *London*.[54] David Higgins, on the other hand, has argued that Lamb's imperialism is at best ambivalent, and that his works rather articulate the division and debasement of a civilised English self struggling in a world where the local and the global are inseparable.[55] While it is not the purpose of this study to probe into the nature of Lamb's imperialism, Higgins's view that Lamb's writings 'tend to undermine distinction between the familiar and the exotic even as they are apparently emphasised' (135) serves as a valuable vantage point for us to explore the role the 'other' plays in his works. Indeed Lamb's life reflects so much of what Higgins calls 'a self that is already riven by otherness'

[53] David Higgins, 'Imagining the Exotic: De Quincey and Lamb in the *London Magazine*', *Romanticism*, 17 (2011), 288–98 (p. 297); Simon Hull, *Charles Lamb, Elia and the London Magazine: Metropolitan Muse* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2010), p. 76.
[54] Karen Fang, *Romantic Writing and the Empire of Signs: Periodical Culture and Post-Napoleonic Authorship* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010), pp. 31–65.
[55] David Higgins, *Romantic Englishness: Local, National and Global Selves, 1780–1850* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 130–161.

(135) that the dialectic relationship between the self and the other, in its broadest sense, must be recognised as formative to or even constitutive of his literary imagination. While his clerical work in the East India Company dictated that he must, however involuntarily, acknowledge Eastern otherness as his normality, his stuttering and the 'hereditary taint of insanity' that haunted him throughout his life (Lamb was confined in a madhouse for six weeks in the winter of 1795 to 1796; later that year, in September 1796, his sister Mary stabbed his mother to death in a fit of madness) are likewise the otherness of a self that he had to perennially cope with, and that reduced him to the 'other' against a more natural self.[56] It may have been an awareness of his own otherness that predisposed Lamb to an interest in anomalies and peripheries, which is manifest even before he matured into the ironical, half-pensive-half-humorous, and sometimes playfully cruel Elia. We may recall Pensilis who is forsaken by the world because he had been gibbeted, and Crito who reasons that physical ugliness is not a mirror of a person's nature; we may recall, too, the Great Eater Edax who is impaired by an inordinate appetite, and the Great Drinker who falls into the Tartarus of alcohol and tobacco.[57] Just as Edax enjoins his readers to '*reflect*, that an original peculiarity of constitution is no crime', so too all these personas of Lamb co-act a critical character that asserts the coexistence of the other and the self as not only possible but also permissible.[58] It is no surprise that Lamb often analogises the 'other' with things and persons both fearful and lovable: tobacco is the 'Witch, Hyæna, Mermaid, Devil, / Ethiop wench, and Blackamoor, / Monkey, Ape, and twenty more, / Friendly Trait'ress, loving Foe', and

[56] Thomas Noon Talfourd, 'Personal Reminiscences of Lamb, Coleridge, Southey, Wordsworth, and Their Early Friend and Publisher, Joseph Cottle', in *The Complete Works of Charles Lamb*, ed. by Thomas Noon Talfourd, pp. xxi–xxxii (p. xxvi).
[57] See [Charles Lamb] Pensilis, 'On the Inconveniences Resulting from Being Hanged', *Reflector*, July 1811, pp. 381–88; [Charles Lamb] Crito, 'On the Danger of Confounding Moral with Personal Deformity', *Reflector*, July 1811, pp. 424–29; [Charles Lamb] Edax, 'Edax on Appetite', *Reflector*, March 1812, pp. 391–97 and [Charles Lamb] Hospita, 'Hospita on the Immoderate Indulgence of the Pleasures of the Palate', *Reflector*, March 1812, pp. 397–99; [Charles Lamb], 'Confessions of a Drunkard', *Philanthropist*, 1813, pp. 48–54.
[58] [Lamb] Edax, 'Edax on Appetite', p. 397.

although Louisa Martin — the child-friend of Lamb whom he nicknamed 'Monkey' — is sometimes 'a staring Ape', 'a Negro flat — a Pagod squat, / Cast in a Chinese mold', Lamb misses 'my Ape' nonetheless, who had grown up a lady 'Upon the ruins of the Ape, / My ancient play-fellow'.[59]

When Elia proclaims his 'almost feminine partiality for old china' in 'Old China', it is also with a sense of self-conscious otherness that he identifies the monstrous aesthetic of a domesticated foreign commodity with his estranged, though in a sense improved, self.[60] What underpins Elia's understanding of his 'partiality' is a paradoxical process of affirmation through negation:

> I HAVE an almost feminine partiality for old china. When I go to see any great house, I inquire for the china closet, and next for the picture gallery. I cannot defend the order of preference, but by saying, that we have all some taste or other, of too ancient a date to admit of our remembering distinctly that it was an acquired one. […] I had no repugnance then — why should I now have? — to those little, lawless, azure-tinctured grotesques, that under the notion of men and women, float about, uncircumscribed by any element, in that world before perspective — a china tea-cup. (269–70)

Here is a union in antinomy, a partiality consciously flawed but affirmatively a partiality because it is so. Elia is well aware of the eccentricity of his predilection: he has perceived the need to 'defend' his preference for china over art, and is sensible to the aesthetic heresy a perspectiveless china-world represents — lawless, grotesque, a '*speciosa miracula*'

[59] Charles Lamb, 'A Farewell to Tobacco', *Reflector*, March 1812, pp. 387–91 (p. 390); [Charles Lamb], 'The Ape', *London Magazine*, October 1820, pp. 402–03 (pp. 402–03).
[60] [Charles Lamb] Elia, 'Old China', *London Magazine*, March 1823, pp. 269–72 (p. 269).

(dazzling miracle, as Horace said of Homer's *Odyssey*) where people are figured 'up in the air […] yet on *terra firma* still', with 'horses, tree, pagodas, dancing the hays', and with 'a cow and rabbit couchant, and co-extensive […] through the lucid atmosphere of fine Cathay' (270). He cannot adequately explain his weakness for this alien, foreign, and aesthetically illegitimate world except by evasively dismissing it as 'acquired', leaving an uncharted blank on the wide berth between 'partiality' and 'repugnance'. We are reminded of Addison's Mrs. Tradewell, Gay's Laura, and Hawkesworth's Lady Brittle, who either sunk or was on the verge of sinking into madness for Chinese porcelain.[61] Elia's partiality for old china, in other words, is defined as a stubborn strand of feminine irrationality within his constitutionally masculine rationalism — a kind of otherness within a self that is chronic, compulsive, and innately unstable.

Significantly, it is this innate instability of Elia's partiality that suggests his lack of confidence in his professedly unapologetic pragmatism. In 'Old China', Elia has associated the motif of china with personal progress and household comfort: looking at the '*speciosa miracula*' upon a set of extraordinary old blue china he recently purchased, Elia 'could not help remarking, how favourable circumstances had been to us of late years, that we could afford to please the eye sometimes with trifles of this sort'.[62] This indulgence turns out to be the catalyst of the contretemps between Elia and Bridget, his cousin and housekeeper. Unlike Elia, Bridget prefers the 'good old times […] when we were not quite so rich' but 'a

[61] Joseph Addison's essay for *The Lover* (No. 10, Thursday, 18 March 1714), in *The Works of the Right Honourable Joseph Addison*, ed. by Richard Hurd, 6 vols (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1854), IV, pp. 332–34; John Gay's 'To a Lady on Her Passion for Old China' (1725), in *John Gay: Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Vinton A. Dearing, 2 vols (London: Clarendon, 1974), pp. 292–294; John Hawkesworth's essay for *The Adventurer* (No. 109, Thursday, 20 November 1753), in *The Adventurer, by J. Hawkesworth*, ed. by A. Chalmers, 3 vols (London: printed for F. C. and J. Rivington, and others, 1817), III, pp. 103–110. For an interesting discussion about the relationship between china and female insanity, see Vanessa Alayrac-Fielding, 'Frailty, Thy Name is China': Women, Chinoiserie and the Threat of Low Culture in Eighteenth-Century England, *Women's History Review*, 18 (2009), 659–68. It is worth noting that Porter has studied the gendering of chinoiserie in England both from a transcultural and domestic perspective; see Porter, *The Chinese Taste*, pp. 57–91. The book-length study of Zuroski-Jenkins, too, provides a useful vantage point from which to look at chinoiserie as culturally, socially, and politically functional.

[62] [Lamb] Elia, 'Old China', p. 270.

great deal happier' (270). Recalling the folio for which Elia scrimped to own, the cheap prints he bought, their walks on holidays, their wedging themselves into the one-shilling theatre gallery, and the days when strawberries and peas were a treat, Bridget argues for the 'pleasure in being a poor man', the only state in which they could 'make much of ourselves' (272). Elia's vindication — that 'we must ride, where we formerly walked; live better, and lie softer' (272) — and his subsequent spur on Bridget to return to his old china certainly attest to a kind of self-assuring pragmatism in Elia, but to see Elia as 'wholly at ease with luxuries' is tantamount to ignoring the inner struggle that his own analysis of his partiality reveals.[63]

What problematises Elia's seeming self-assurance is the very self-doubt that he has already laid down: the unstable, wobbly quality of his indefensible 'partiality' for the foreign, 'lawless', and 'grotesque' symbol of wealth and prosperity, juxtaposed against Bridget's natural and secured preference for the localised and familiar past. Rather than a dissension, Elia's response to Bridget — what Higgins observes to be a 'notably ambivalent' response[64] — is manifestly an elegiac and passive counter-discourse, hamstrung by his distrust of his own self: 'Competence to age is supplemental youth; a sorry supplement indeed, but I fear the best that is to be had'.[65] Elia's regrets are that the 'good old days' Bridget speaks of 'are dreams, my cousin, now' (272) — they could never be young again to do what they did in the past, nor could they bury their wealth to buy back days bygone. Here, as always, Bridget represents the idealistic, sinless, and inviolable side of Elia's double consciousness: 'where we have differed upon moral points; upon something proper to be done, or let alone; whatever heat of opposition, or steadiness of conviction, I set out with, I am sure always, in the long run, to be brought over to her way of thinking', as Elia

[63] Fang, p. 41.
[64] Higgins, *Romantic Englishness*, p. 158.
[65] [Lamb] Elia, 'Old China', p. 272.

says in 'Mackery End, in Hertfordshire'.[66] To end his argument, and the essay at large, by returning to his old china is to snatch himself away from 'dreams' back to reality — a reality as preposterous as the china-world he is looking at, in which a 'half-Madona-ish chit of a lady' is shaded by an umbrella 'big enough for a bed-tester' (272), but, sadly, 'the best that is to be had', however foreign, deviant, and 'othering' it is to him.

The self-doubt that characterises Elia's 'confession' of his gratuitous partiality is therefore laced with a distinctive note of self-pity and self-mockery. Construing the visually anomalistic imagery of 'fine Cathay' as the paradoxical other that defines an individual and a household in material terms, Elia reflects upon the equally deformed and transgressive values of the society that he has to acquiesce in while knowing his complaisance to be an endless struggle. The exotic other, in its commodified form, becomes a metaphor of displacement; the estrangement that Elia's involuntary partiality inflicts upon his rational self mirrors the alienation that his unconfident materialistic consumerism imposes upon his otherwise temperate and balanced nature. Situated within the larger polemics between excess and moderation and materialism and spiritualism, the analogy between these two kinds of alienating otherness renders the incongruous coexistence between all those binary opposites — the exotic and the domestic, the unfamiliar and the familiar, the material and the non-material, and the other and the self — as not only a congeniality of Elia but also a symptom of modern life. What the alien, perspectiveless china-world contains, in the end, is Elia's scepticism towards the mode of life and its attendant values that he satirically claims he is embracing — those that prevail in the society which he lives in and identifies with as a Londoner.

I would like to suggest that Elia's well-known infatuation with roast pig is fundamentally and representationally the same as his irrational 'partiality' for old china, and

[66] [Charles Lamb] Elia, 'Mackery End, in Hertfordshire', *London Magazine*, July 1821, pp. 28–30 (p. 29).

that ‘A Dissertation Upon Roast Pig’, like ‘Old China’, demands to be read as a self-satirical confessional monologue that hinges upon the destabilising hybridisation of the self and the other. More specifically, I would like to argue that the metafictional pseudo-Chinese tale of Lamb, which chronicles the discovery of roast pig, foregrounds the allegorical compass of Elia’s histrionic panegyric on roast pig by ligaturing modern epicureanism with the ancient — and paganistic — gourmandism of the Chinese. Surely the humorous, and patently ridiculous, Chinese tale of Lamb is susceptible to what Peter Kitson calls an ‘orientalized version of China’, and this ostensibly deprecating narrative of Chinese barbarity has been one of the grounds that leads Fang to associate the fictional prehistoric chaos in China with the potential wreckage of the opium trade.[67] As Higgins has pointed out, however, Lamb’s attitude towards China is more ambivalent than such a reading suggests, and in calling attention to how the essay in its entirety problematises the ‘othering of […] the Chinese as foolish addicts’, Higgins has underscored the importance of understanding Lamb’s engagement with the Other in ‘A Dissertation’ as an integral part of the essay as a unified whole.[68] Indeed Lamb’s Chinese tale, which is presented as a tale of origin, shares with any aetiological myth the narratological focus of irreversible transformation or metamorphosis that relates the past to the present, and needs to be seen, therefore, as an essential prelude to the modern man’s disquisition of his own gastronomic obsession. What I intend to show is that Elia has pictured himself as the modern descendent of the gourmandised antediluvian Chinese, and that this identification with the other is instrumental in enacting his critique of the self and the modern world.

It must first be observed that the Chinese tale of origin Elia relates is a story of mania. In Elia’s chronicle, which he says is recorded in a Chinese manuscript, this mania started

[67] Kitson, p. 169; Fang, p. 62.
[68] Higgins, *Romantic Englishness*, p. 160.

with the discovery of the divine taste of roast pig by an 'antediluvian' Chinese boy called Bo-bo, who, having accidently burnt down a cottage full of new-farrowed pigs, savoured the world's first taste of '*crackling*' as he fumbled about the remnants and tried to cool his scorched fingers by applying them to his mouth.[69] From Bo-bo the mania was spread to Ho-ti his father, who, having tasted the food in the same inadvertent manner as his son, began to set his house on fire as often as his piglets farrowed. It was then spread to the judge and jury in Pekin as they tried Bo-bo and Ho-ti for flouting the religious taboo of 'improving the good meat God had sent them' (246) and were similarly scorched by the 'evidence'. The mania eventually reached each and every person, at which point 'there was nothing to be seen but fires in every direction […] until it was feared that the very science of architecture would in no long time be lost to the world' (246). Lamb's story, in short, is a narrative of an epidemic fever of gourmandism — a mass mania for roast pig developed from the mania of an individual, a craving that makes humanity willing to sacrifice religion and civilisation. As Allsop's recollection reveals, this is also where the vision and imagination of Lamb lies, over and above the inspiration he took from Thomas Manning.[70] Bo-bo's discovery of roast pig, as Monsman acutely observes, 'precipitates a threatening breakup of cultural patterns, a dissolution of rational behaviour, a loss of sanity'.[71] But while Monsman considers the ending of the tale, where a sage appeared to affirm that the flesh of animal 'might be cooked' and 'the rude form a gridiron' was invented, represents a restoration of order, it is, really, the beginning of another story of mania — that of Elia's — which tells of the perpetuation

[69] [Charles Lamb] Elia, 'A Dissertation Upon Roast Pig', *London Magazine*, September 1822, pp. 245–48 (p. 245).
[70] Thomas Allsop, *Letters, Conversations, and Recollections of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, 2 vols (London: Edward Moxon, 1836), I, pp. 212–15. As Manning's version of the story goes, roast pig was discovered when an infant, left alone by its mother, escaped an accidental fire and found in its burnt house a pig. Finding the burnt pig very savoury, the infant took the food to his mother, who appreciated it much. She rebuilt the house, put a pig into it, and was about to set fire to it — when an old man suggested that a pile of wood would do as well. The next pig was killed before it was roasted. Thus ends Manning's story, which, clearly, is no story of a mania, let alone an epidemic one.
[71] Gerald Monsman, *Confessions of a Prosaic Dreamer: Charles Lamb Art of Autobiography* (Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, 1984), p. 75.

of the irrationality, insanity, and disorder that had consumed the ancients in the pre-deluge age.[72]

For indeed the pathogen of Elia's almost psychopathic love of roast pig has to be recovered from the story of the Chinese mania, and especially from the case of Bo-bo, the 'patient zero'. Just as the ancient Chinese denied their religiosity and civility for gastronomic desires, so too Elia, in displaying his savage cruelty and sadism in his rhapsodic effusion over the slow death of a humanised suckling, exchanges his guilt for pleasure and his humanity for barbarism. The thrust of both the ancient and modern gusto lies in the gratification roast pig offers for their palate, which, in Lamb's vision, is acutely sexual and procreative. As Lamb's aetiology unveils, the genesis of roast pig is also the genesis of a kind of gastro-sexual sensuality: the very first reaction roast pig excites in Bo-bo was the 'premonitory moistening' of his 'nether lip' (245), which culminates in the 'tickling pleasure, which he experienced in his lower regions' (245) that renders him completely senseless to external stimulus and left him only with the ability to babble with his 'barbarous ejaculations' (246).[73] In the form of double entendre, Lamb draws a parallel between the lure of roast pig — the forbidden food — and the temptation of one of the most primitive forms of human excitement, and it is this raw because savage, and mortal because risqué, 'food orgasm' that predetermines Elia's partiality for roast pig, which, unlike the 'too transcendent' pineapple, does not 'woundeth and excoriateth the lips that approach her' or 'biteth' 'like lovers' kisses' (247). The mania for roast pig is, like sensual liberation, unitive and procreative; what Bo-bo the ancient epicure feels at the world's first taste of the '*princeps obsoniorum*' (246) is not only akin to but also ancestral to the gastronomic infatuation that possesses Elia the modern epicure. David Perkins talks of a 'sensual,

[72] [Lamb] Elia, 'A Dissertation', p. 245.
[73] It is suggested that 'nether lip' appears in Shakespeare's *Othello* as the symbol of groin. See Frankie Rubinstein, *A Dictionary of Shakespeare's Sexual Puns and Their Significance* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), p. 170.

obsessive, and cruel pleasure, aligned with sexual lasciviousness' in Elia's eulogium; it manifests itself in the Chinese tale as a form of proto-union between food and sex, which begets a genetically defined appetite that is maniacal, compulsive, and incorrigible.[74]

It is thus that the Chinese tale of Lamb is not only a prehistory of the art of cookery but also a prehistory of Elia's egotistic gourmandism — and what sabotages Elia's apparently confident epicureanism is precisely this unhinged, paganistically Chinese origin of excess and lasciviousness. Analogising Bo-bo and Ho-ti's partaking of the forbidden food with Adam and Eve's sin in Eden, Lamb has fabricated a Chinese version of the biblical Fall, which renders Elia's claim of descent as an assertation of his own anomaly, hybridity, and possible paganism. It stands to reason that the Fall is foremost a state of apostasy from God into sin and guilt, which Elia shares with his gourmandising first parents; less obvious is that the Fall is also the very narrative that isolates the paganistic Eastern antiquities, especially China, from what the Judeo-Christian tradition reckons to be universal history. Ever since the discovery of China's antiquity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, China had become a heretic challenge to biblical chronology and the universality it claimed; the knowledge that China had preserved a continuous record of its history that predated the supposed date of the Genesis flood and that contradicted 'the metanarrative of fall and corruption in most European universal histories' had led to innumerable efforts to resystemise the dating of biblical events and to reinterpret the scripture.[75] Lamb's contrivance of the pre-deluge Chinese Fall, and his attribution of it to a Chinese manuscript that records human activities in 'the first seventy thousand ages', evidently engages his essay in dialogue with the Chinese pagan error and the destabilising force it had exerted on Christianity and European self-knowledge.[76] In as much as Enlightenment thinkers like

[74] David Perkins, *Romanticism and Animal Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 129.
[75] Min, p. 20. See her chapter, 'China between the Ancients and the Moderns' (pp. 15–46), for the role China played in the heated quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns in the Enlightenment period.
[76] [Lamb] Elia, 'A Dissertation', p. 245.

Francis Bacon, John Webb, and Gottfried Leibniz had gone so far as to speculate that Chinese, rather than Hebrew, was the Adamic language, Elia's invention of this untrustable history also emulates the scepticism and distrust moderners have towards the all too credulous ancients of the sinophilic age.[77] Allusively, therefore, Lamb's Chinese tale is a repartee to Thomas Manning's passion for the 'Independent Tartary', which Lamb thought was misguided by 'the poet's *invention*'.[78] By tracing his mania back to antediluvian China, Lamb has revealed himself to be a confirmed pagan and a traitor to his own rational sensibilities; Elia's China-originated obsession with roast pig, like his 'acquired' partiality for old china, is a token of the irreconcilable otherness that has sneaked, perhaps irrevocably, into the self.

Apparently, then, the Chinese tale of origin that opens into Elia's frenetic encomium on roast pig also opens into a state of self-denial and negation. Lamb, we know, was in his own person a gourmet; food and the art of eating are a theme in many of his letters and works.[79] Lamb's pleasure in food, however, was often more ambivalent than he postured it to be — as Perkins observes, Lamb's 'utterances about food ranged accordingly from expressions of comfort and pleasure at the satisfaction of needs to satire of human material dependence, selfishness, and animality'.[80] 'A Dissertation' is precisely a concoction of such an expression of indulgence and censure. While Elia has shown himself to be wallowing in the luxury of the '*princeps obsoniorum*', the sadistic tendency of his relishing the way a

[77] For a history about the discovery of China and the controversy it engendered, see, for example, Porter, *Ideographia*, pp. 39–49; Clarke, pp. 43–50.
[78] Lamb's letter to Thomas Manning, 19 Feb 1803; Marrs, *Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, II, p. 95. Felicity James has discussed the relationship between Manning and Lamb's 'Roast Pig'. See Felicity James, 'Thomas Manning, Charles Lamb, and Oriental Encounters', *Poetica: An International Journal of Linguistic-Literary Studies*, 76 (2011), 21–35.
[79] On Lamb's writings about food, see, Fred V. Randel, *The World of Elia: Charles Lamb's Essayistic Romanticism* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1975), pp. 113–37; D. C. Saxena, 'The Autobiographical Content of Lamb's Letters: Romancer of the City Streets; Conoisseur of Food and Fellowship,' *Charles Lamb Bulletin*, n.s., 41 (January 1983), 16–21; n.s., 42 (April 1983), 36–42; J. R. Watson, 'Lamb and Food', *Charles Lamb Bulletin*, n.s., 54 (April 1986), 160–75.
[80] Perkins, p. 122.

'young', 'tender', and 'guiltless' suckling 'twirleth round the string' and 'wept out his pretty eyes — radiant jellies — shooting stars —', and the callous disregard of life he flaunts in supposing that the victim is 'content to die' in that 'fair sepulchre' of his 'grateful stomach', are undercut by the explicit analogy he makes between a young pig and a human child throughout the essay, as for instance in his adaptation of Coleridge's 'Epitaph on an Infant'.[81] The idea of roast pig, in fact, so forcibly evokes Swift's recommendation of 'buying the Children alive, and dressing them hot from the Knife, as we do *roasting Pigs*' in *A Modest Proposal* that the ironic undertone of the essay can hardly be overlooked.[82] Perkins, reading 'A Dissertation' against the context of the animal rights movement of the early nineteenth century, considers the essay 'a positive contribution to the campaign against cruelty to animals' that 'falls into the genre of Romantic confession'.[83] This, I think, is the closest to the social imagining and critical awareness 'A Dissertation' raises, given Lamb's private tenderness for animals and his attachment to his late brother John's active involvement in the animal rights campaign, and, perhaps most important, the fact that 'Roast Pig' was published two months after the world's first parliamentary legislation for animal protection, the Cruel Treatment of Cattle Act, was passed in the British parliament in July 1822.[84] Reading 'A Dissertation' as an opposition 'against Romantic ideals of pure diet', however, Denise Gigante sees Lamb's 'masochistic fascination with the arts of carving, cookery, and culinary animal tortures' as a manifestation of his self-asserted 'low urban

[81] [Lamb] Elia, 'A Dissertation', p. 247.
[82] Jonathan Swift, *A Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Poor People from being a Burthen to their Parents, or the Country, and for Making them Beneficial to the Publick* (Dublin: printed by S. Harding, 1729), p. 8.
[83] Perkins, p. 129; p. 127. See his chapter, 'The Slaughterhouse and the Kitchen: Charles Lamb's "Dissertation Upon Roast Pig"' (pp. 116–129), for the argument he advances.
[84] It is of passing interest to note that 'Roast Pig', together with 'A Bachelor's Complaint of the Behaviour of Married People' published in the same issue of the *London Magazine* in September 1822, makes a rejoinder to the domestic intelligence *London* reported a month earlier in August concerning the passing of the Cruel Treatment of Cattle Act and the Marriage Act Amendment. See 'Abstract of Foreign and Domestic Occurrences', *London Magazine*, August 1822, pp. 187–92 (p. 192).

taste' that qualifies his low urban aesthetic.[85] Certainly, the divergence between Perkins's and Gigante's interpretation of what 'A Dissertation' means has to do with the complicated rhetorical form Lamb mobilises in rendering Elia's gourmandism as an oscillation between intemperance and guilt and confidence and shamefulness, but it has also to do with the almost habitual elusiveness that seems intrinsic to Lamb not only as a writer but also as a man. Like 'Old China', 'A Dissertation' reveals the critical and cynical view Lamb holds towards the world he both finds himself in and is estranged from, but it also expresses his willing though reluctant submission to reality, as in the way he partook in the merry supper the next day after 'the day of horrors', and the way he lived with the 'accursed damned desk, trade, commerce, business' in the Indian House.[86] Such a kind of evasive submission is keenly felt in the penultimate passage of 'A Dissertation': the 'decision' that the St. Omer's debate arrived at, over the justifiability of whipping a pig to death because it 'superadded a pleasure upon the palate of a man more intense, than any possible suffering we can conceive in the animal', remains perpetually 'forgotten'.[87] The struggle between utilitarian and altruist ethics, and between materialist and idealist views of life, may be a real one for Lamb; but even if he, as Elia, has compliantly shown himself to be a modern Bo-bo, he is, at least, a pagan, a fool, and a maniac who is conscious and wary of his own heterodoxy, folly, and insanity.

This paradoxical mixture of complaisance and criticism, repression and liberation, blasphemy and piety, and pragmatism and transcendentalism brings us back to where we begin: the coexistence of the other and the self, which characterises Lamb's life as much as

[85] Denise Gigante, *Taste: A Literary History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 90; p. 110. See her chapter, 'Lamb's Low-Urban Taste' (pp. 89–116), for the argument she advances.
[86] 'The day of horrors' refers to the day when Mary, Lamb's sister, stabbed their mother to death in a fit of madness. See Lamb's letter to Samuel Coleridge, 3 October 1796; Marrs, *Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, I, p. 48. 'The accused damned desk', etc. is from Lamb's letter to Matilda Betham, 1815; Marrs, *Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, III, p. 200.
[87] [Lamb] Elia, 'A Dissertation', p. 248.

it does his writings. In 'Old China' and 'A Dissertation', China serves as the trope for a kind of indulgence that qualifies modernity as what may be called 'the best of times' and 'the worst of times'; the material progress old china signifies and the gastronomic excess old China originates are both enabling and delimiting in a world marching towards a new order. Improvement, in the form of fine living and good food, is desirable and, in a sense, essential, but whether it does not at the same time foreignise and alienate a man and a society from what it was and what it should be, Lamb remains sceptical. Through China, Lamb emphasises the possible misplacement of the self that comes inevitably with the immoderation of modern life; his epicureanistic obsession with roast pig and his materialistic partiality for old china are all the 'other' that, in its inflated shape, portends the degeneration of the self for the chaotic irrationality it implicates. The distrust of Lamb towards Chineseness, therefore, is his distrust towards the ability of the self in resisting the estranging force of progress and modernisation; what China represents is the modern man's weakness for what is and should be foreign, anomalous, and extrinsic to them.

2.4 Edward Bulwer-Lytton and the Pains of Reputation

I devote the last section of this chapter to Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1803–1873), a last-generation Romantic, or what Cronin calls a 'Romantic Victorian'.[88] Today, Bulwer may have been known only as the friend who changed the ending of Dickens's *Great Expectations*, or the interesting nineteenth-century author who had left us not only the wise adage of 'the pen is mightier than the sword' but also the supposedly worst-of-all-time opening of a novel, 'It was a dark and stormy night'; but Bulwer was not as little known in

[88] Richard Cronin, *Romantic Victorians: English Literature, 1824–1840* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002).

his time, and was in fact immensely popular.[89] Dealing with Edward Bulwer-Lytton is really to deal with a writer who delights in, and is at the same time greatly disturbed by, the remarkable public success he achieved. My interest rests with one particular tale of this proud but agonised writer — 'Fi-Ho-Ti; or the Pleasures of Reputation', in which Bulwer, putting on a Chinese false face, meditates on the pains of reputation he suffered, questions the worthiness of his pursuit of usefulness, and petitions for the injustice done to him by the society. It is immediately apparent that despite its fictional form, Bulwer's tale is as biographical, ironical, and self-expressive as the essays of De Quincey and Lamb, and that he too has hinged his argument on the trope of cultural displacement and hybridity. The way Bulwer takes meaning from the figure of China, however, is materially different from his foregoers, and it is most interesting that his imaginative mapping of the symbolic relevance of China to his own society can be found in his comments on the one influential Romantic coterie to which Lamb and De Quincey belonged — the Lake School and the Cockney School of writers, whom Bulwer generally admired save for one foible:

> Though differing much from each other in character and in direction of intellect, they agreed in this — they all so far rejected the urbanizing tendencies of a great metropolis, that they moved in as small a circle as if they had lived in a country town. In their publications they quote and praise, quarrel and make it up with each other, as if, like the Chinese, they confined the map of the civilised world to their celestial empire, and inscribed on the space left outside of the circle, 'Corners of earth inhabited by barbarians'.[90]

[89] For the life of Edward Bulwer-Lytton, see, for example, Leslie Mitchell, *Bulwer Lytton: The Rise and Fall of a Victorian Man of Letters* (London: Hambledon and London, 2003).
[90] Edward Bulwer-Lytton, review of *Final Memorials of Charles Lamb*, by Sergeant Talfourd, and *Charles Lamb; a Memoir*, by Barry Cornwall, *Quarterly Review*, January 1867, pp. 1–29 (p. 2).

Drawing upon China as a metaphor of cliquey exclusiveness, Bulwer reveals what he regrets about the otherwise venerable Wordsworth circle: the restrictive, and almost discriminative, nature of their literary friendship, which culminated in 'the dictations of a critical clique' upon the literary judgement of the public. As we shall see, Bulwer's animadversion — as well as his 'Chinese' rhetoric — is a common one for the always embittered writer; rather than a reproach targeted specifically at the Wordsworth coterie, it belongs to the long course of 'revolutionary' struggle that he waged against the British literary establishment at large, and is, in fact, a reiteration of the sense of frustration and indignation that had long plagued his mind. In what follows, we will look at the struggle Bulwer faced and sought to combat as a leading literary figure of his time, and the way China came to be the lexicon of his critique, criticism, and parody in his literary warfare.

Born into an aristocratic family, Bulwer was raised to be ambitious, competitive, and somewhat vainglorious. 'Distinguish yourself'[91] — what his mother asked of him before his marriage seemed to be the guiding principle of his life, and he sought not only to succeed in public life, as his mother stipulated, but also to fight for literary honours. His first publication, *Ismael: an Oriental Tale*, was brought out in 1820 when he was 17; an Oriental romance in an unambiguously Byronic vein, the work was deemed by Charles Wallington as one that 'presages in maturer years of more elevated titles to distinction', and by its own author as a 'passport' to 'the best company' and his 'first literary society'.[92] Already at this age Bulwer had called himself a 'timid competitor for public reputation'; and indeed Bulwer, at least in his time, was as successful as he was ambitious. He would become the author of two dozen bestselling novels, virtually the only rival to his close friend

[91] Bulwer's letter to Rosina Wheeler, 6 September 1826; *Letters of the Late Edward Bulwer, Lord Lytton, To His Wife*, ed. by Louisa Devey (New York: G. W. Dillingham, 1889), p. 64.
[92] Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *Ismael; an Oriental Tale: with Other Poems* (London: printed for J. Hatchard and Son, 1820), p. v; Robert Bulwer-Lytton, *The Life, Letters and Literary Remains of Edward Bulwer, Lord Lytton*, 2 vols (London: Kegan Paul, 1883), I, p. 142.

Dickens in terms of popularity — 'everything he wrote sold as though it were bread displayed to a hungry crowd', as Edmund Gosse noted, looking back in 1919.[93] He would attain not only national but also international fame, his works enthusiastically read beyond the seas, especially in Germany.[94] He would also obtain the political power he quested alongside literary success: a Member of Parliament for most of his life, a contributor to the passage of the Great Reform Bill in 1832 and the reduction of the taxes on knowledge in 1836, the Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1858, and Baron Lytton of Knebworth in 1866, seven years before his death.[95]

Today, the plummet of Bulwer into obscurity is one of the themes that fuels scholarly discussion on the author. Attempts to look back on his days picture a writer who, despite his immense popularity, was diurnally plagued by a feeling of injustice ensued from his constant denigration by the press and the critical circle at home. The rancour is expressed even in the preface of his own work:

> I have never received to this day a single word of encouragement from any of those writers who were considered at one time the dispensers of reputation. Long after my name was not quite unknown in every other country where English literature is received, the great quarterly journals of my own disdained to recognise my existence.[96]

[93] Edmund Gosse, *Some Diversions of a Man of Letters* (London: William Heinemann, 1919), p. 128; quoted in Andrew Brown, 'Bulwer's Reputation', in *The Subverting Vision of Bulwer Lytton: Bicentenary Reflections*, ed. by Allan Conrad Christensen (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), pp. 29–37 (p. 30).
[94] For a brief account of Bulwer's fame in Germany, see Richard A. Zipser, *Edward Bulwer-Lytton and Germany* (Berne: Herbert Lang, 1974), pp. 11–31.
[95] For Bulwer's political career, see Charles W. Snyder, *Liberty and Morality: A Political Biography of Edward Bulwer-Lytton* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995).
[96] Edward Bulwer-Lytton, 'Preface to the Edition of 1835', *Pelham; or, The Adventures of a Gentleman* (Leipzig: Bernard Tauchnitz, 1842), p. x.

For many, the feud between the author and his critics is attributable to the forbidding manner of Bulwer. Andrew Brown, for instance, believes that 'had he [Bulwer] been less arrogant in his own pronouncements of his artistic worth and intellectual standing he would surely have attracted less critical opprobrium', and Mulvey-Roberts maintains that 'his arrogantly rigid and sometimes intractable manner […] combined with the foppish mannerisms of the dandy, was likely to have unsettled his opponents'.[97] That Bulwer was phenomenally arrogant is out of the question — one only has to read into the pride of the author as a 17-year-old to imagine his temperament when he did achieve the power and reputation he desired. His personality apart, it is clear that Bulwer's animosity towards his enemies, and them to him, had much to do with his complicated identity both as a politician and a writer — he was obliged to guard the literary reputation that buttressed his political stature, while 'his political career,' as his son Robert fretfully said, 'raised up enemies to him in his literary capacity'.[98] This difficult position might also have dictated Bulwer's extreme sensitiveness to criticism, which even his son found the need to justify: 'if my father's sensitiveness to criticism was a weakness, no one was stronger in the self-reliance that rises superior to it' (282). It was, indeed, self-reliance that Bulwer fell back on. All through the years he exerted himself to rebuke the injustice done to him, not only in his own publications — the prefaces of his novels, his poems, and, most noteworthy, a pamphlet called *A Word to the Public* — but also through the tool his enemies deployed: periodical writing. It was for this sense of indignation that he took up the editorship of Colburn's *New Monthly Magazine* in November 1831, soon after he was elected Member of Parliament for St. Ives in the same year.

We must come to grasp with Bulwer's engagement with the *New Monthly* in order to understand the significance of 'Fi-Ho-Ti; or the Pleasures of Reputation' as a fictional

[97] Brown, p. 34; Marie Mulvey-Roberts, 'Fame, Notoriety and Madness: Edward Bulwer-Lytton Paying the Price of Greatness', *Critical Survey*, 13 (2001), 115–34 (p. 118).
[98] Bulwer-Lytton, *Life, Letters and Literary Remains*, II, p. 273.

epilogue that marks the end of Bulwer's editorial and writing connection with the *New Monthly* — as well as the periodical reform he preached throughout his term of office — in August 1833.[99] A regular contributor of the magazine since April 1830, Bulwer was invited to succeed Thomas Campbell, and to replace the ad-interim editor Samuel Carter Hall, as the chief editor of the *New Monthly* in 1831. It happened that, in July that year, *Fraser's Magazine* published a defamatory article on Bulwer, which, as Bulwer described, 'is virulent and abusive to excess, and a tissue of impudent falsehoods from beginning to end'.[100] The incident prompted him to envisage what he could do with Colburn's offer:

> … if I take the editorship of the *N. M.*, I shall be able, I hope, by-and-by, to set a tone (upon literary subjects, at least, and about literary men) that may gradually wean the public taste from all relish for these disgusting personalities, which are a disgrace to literature, and all concerned in it.[101]

With an intention to reform the faults of the press, Bulwer took up the editorship, determined to bring the *New Monthly* to enter upon 'a wide and vacant field of criticism' and to create for his readers and contributors 'a space free, at least, from individual jealousies or individual interests'.[102] Many of Bulwer's essays published during his term were part of this campaign: 'Upon the Spirit of True Criticism', for instance, urges critics to 'keep the

[99] Bulwer practically ceased writing for the *New Monthly Magazine* after August 1833. It was only in September 1845 that he published an essay, 'Confessions and Observations of a Water-Patient', in the magazine.
[100] Bulwer-Lytton, *Life, Letters and Literary Remains*, II, p. 291. The *Fraser's* article in question is 'Autobiography of Edward Lytton Bulwer, Esq.', which reviews an essay on Bulwer published earlier in the *New Monthly* ('Living Literary Characters, No. V.: Edward Lytton Bulwer'), and, with not a few personal attacks on Bulwer and even his mother-in-law, asserts that the essay is 'Bulwer's own — that it is an autobiography'. See 'Autobiography of Edward Lytton Bulwer, Esq.', *Fraser's Magazine*, July 1831, pp. 713–19 (p. 719).
[101] Bulwer-Lytton, *Life, Letters and Literary Remains*, II, pp. 291–92.
[102] Edward Bulwer-Lytton, 'Address to the Public', *New Monthly Magazine*, November 1831, pp. 393–94 (p. 394).

intellectual sight clear from envy, and malice, and personal dislikes'; 'To Our Friends, On Preserving the Anonymous in Periodicals' bays for 'publicity to the anonymous' to counteract the irresponsibility of anonymous reviewers; and 'On the Difference Between Authors and the Impression Conveyed of Them by Their Works' advocates a way of reading that connects a literary work with the mind instead of the personal life of its author.[103] It was in one of this series of reformative essays, 'Proposals for a Literary Union', that China first appeared in Bulwer's work as a trope of the failings of the English literary circle:

> There are two great failings in literary men as a body: the one is their jealousies of each other — the other their want of sympathy with the active objects of the mass of the people. They live too much in their narrow circle — they map out the world like the Chinese — their moral China forms the circle of their own little territory, inscribed in square — and the rest of the universe is banished to the four petty corners left unenclosed.[104]

The literary union Bulwer proposed to establish, accordingly, would be one that gives sufficient tie of fellowship to remove these faults — these 'Chinese' streaks of an English society that hampered literary development. It was, therefore, no small disappointment for Bulwer to find himself beleaguered in such an insular 'China' when, in 1833, he was forced to resign his editorship as a result of the discontent of his colleagues — in particular the sub-editor Samuel Carter Hall — about his reorientation of the magazine. 'Jealousy kept

[103] Edward Bulwer-Lytton, 'Upon the Spirit of True Criticism', *New Monthly Magazine*, April 1832, pp. 353–57 (p. 357); Edward Bulwer-Lytton, 'To Our Friends, On Preserving the Anonymous in Periodicals', *New Monthly Magazine*, November 1832, pp. 385–89 (p. 387); Edward Bulwer-Lytton, 'On the Difference Between Authors and the Impression Conveyed of Them by Their Works', *New Monthly Magazine*, November 1832, pp. 401–08.
[104] Edward Bulwer-Lytton, 'Proposals for a Literary Union', *New Monthly Magazine*, November 1832, pp. 418–21 (pp. 419–20).

back those who should have assisted me in an endeavour to raise the Periodical Literature of the time,' Bulwer later reflected.[105] 'It was,' he said, 'my greatest literary mistake to attempt it' (167). The last issue of the *New Monthly* under his superintendence was published in August 1833, in which is contained his last tale for the *New Monthly*, 'Fi-Ho-Ti; or the Pleasures of Reputation'.

On the surface of it, 'Fi-Ho-Ti' is a pseudo-Chinese tale of the periodical marketplace that builds upon the immediate topicality of China in the summer of 1833. That year, the royal charter of the East India Company was due to expire, and there was expectation that the Company's monopoly over China trade would be abolished. As the opening of free trade and competition meant for the public an increased volume of import and a reduction in price of the much sought-after Chinese commodities, the issue had received widespread media coverage for months even before the Parliament meeting was held in July. Bulwer himself was a part of this debate in the House of Commons, having been elected Member of Parliament for St. Ives in Huntingdonshire in April 1831, and for Lincoln in December 1832. In July 1833, the Charter Act was passed, which, with the EIC trade monopoly with China indeed abolished, augured a new, and considerably closer, relation between China and Britain. Bulwer's Chinese tale, published a month after the parliamentary debate, most certainly rides on this renewed interest in China against the prevision of commercial and consumerist possibility. Read under such a context, one may find in Bulwer's tale a clever concoction of two images of China that appeal to different — potentially feminine and masculine — tastes: one, a contemporary and commodified image of comfort and opulence evoked by the 'luxurious cushions', 'delicious tea', and 'the finest little porcelain-cups' of the 'Chin-Epicurean' Fi-ho-ti, and another, an ancient and

[105] Edward Bulwer-Lytton, 'Memorandum', attached to a bundle of letters from Henry Colburn, quoted in Houghton and others, *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals*, III, p. 167.

ideological image of deep-rooted philosophy and stoicism evoked by the 'long beard' and 'long nails' of the dogmatic and pedantic Mandarin uncle of Fi-ho-ti.[106] Interestingly, Bulwer's tale, viewed from this perspective of the commodification of literature, offers an unconventionally decadent and, in a sense, almost modernistic dialectics: in giving up his hedonistic innocence to follow the footsteps of his uncle, the once contented, cheerful, and kindly Fi-ho-ti nonetheless earns what is most unexpected of a man forswearing indulgence for intelligence and usefulness: the pains of reputation. Through a circular dialectics, then, Bulwer argues implicitly for the judiciousness in pursuing material pleasures; his proselytism ultimately returns to the hedonistic ideal symbolised by a commodified China, and such a moral is not without relevance to the exciting prospect the society had for the new possibility China represented. Reckoning that 'the first object of a novelist is to interest his reader', Bulwer clearly knew how his Chinese tale could benefit from the topical interest China held at the precise moment of its publication. But, like his *Siamese Twins* (1831), a decidedly mordant socio-political satire that capitalises on the sensation the arrival of the real Siamese twins caused in England, 'Fi-Ho-Ti' is hardly a trifling periodical confection.[107] What lies beneath a superficially market-driven form of expression is a highly self-reflective, self-constructive, and critical discourse on the literary mores of the time, and especially those that oppressed Bulwer at the time when he walked out of the *New Monthly* in frustration.

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[106] [Edward Bulwer-Lytton] Mitio, 'Fi-Ho-Ti; or the Pleasures of Reputation: a Chinese Tale', *New Monthly Magazine*, August 1833, pp. 417–22 (p. 417).

[107] Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *Miscellaneous Prose Works*, 3 vols (London: Richard Bentley, 1868), III, pp. 365–66; Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *The Siamese Twins: A Satirical Tale of the Times* (London: Henry Colburn & Richard Bentley, 1831). The Siamese twins, Chang and Eng, were conjoined at the chest by a piece of cartilage. They were discovered by Robert Hunter, a British merchant, who later teamed with the American sea captain Abel Coffin to exhibit the twin brothers to the world. The twins visited London in November 1829, and immediately caused a sensation all over Britain. For the life of the Siamese twins, see, for example, Kay Hunter, *Duet for a Lifetime: The Story of the Original Siamese Twins* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1964).

Indeed it is almost impossible to overlook the autofictional nature of Bulwer's Chinese tale, which not only communicates a strong sense of self-pity and indignation that chimes with the feeling of Bulwer at the termination of his editorship but also exhibits the urgent desire of the ousted editor to exoneratively portray his life as a misunderstood, misrepresented, and mistreated one. Like Bulwer, Fi-ho-ti was born into a highly respected family and showed signs of talent at an early age. Like the young Bulwer at Cambridge, Fi-ho-ti led a dandyish and hedonistic life, which was a cause of admonition for his family. Just as Bulwer was exhorted by his mother to distinguish himself, so too Fi-ho-ti, formerly a youth of no ambition, was dragooned by his Mandarin uncle to pursue excellence and success. So convinced, Fi-ho-ti 'resolved to distinguish himself' and, having surrendered himself to study, turns out to be a highly successful writer, '*the* author of his day':

> Delighted by the novelty of literary applause, our young student more than ever resigned himself to literary pursuits. He wrote again, and again succeeded; — all the world declared that Fi-ho-ti had established his reputation.[108]

What happens next is that Fi-ho-ti, rather than earning the 'Pleasures of Reputation', ends up paying a bitter price for being reputed. Following his rise to fame is a series of 'misfortunes' that make up the core plot of the story: his uncle and his old friends abandon him out of jealousy, his new friends use and betray him, the papers denigrate him, and his lovers and students are false to him. Calling into question the utilitarian theory of Jeremy Bentham (of whom Bulwer was once a follower), who held that the 'pleasures of reputation, or good-repute' is a sanction antithetical to the 'pains of bad reputation, or ill-repute',

[108] [Bulwer-Lytton] Mitio, 'Fi-Ho-Ti', p. 418.

Bulwer pictures the success of Fi-ho-ti as an ironic tragedy and reveals how human corruptedness could render the Benthamite 'best action' into the worst choice.[109] In the end, Fi-ho-ti, 'being himself misinterpreted, calumniated, and traduced; and feeling that none loved him but through vanity, that he stood alone with the enemies in the world', loses his kind heart and philanthropic views — his pursuit of good-repute turns out to be a punishment not only for himself but also for society.[110] Modelling the tragic protagonist upon himself, Bulwer not only exposes the tortures he endured and throws doubt on his own naïve idealism but also envisions how a writer otherwise serviceable to the world could, in a defective society, be reduced to a cynic misanthrope and a wasted existence. Fi-ho-ti, in other words, is both the surrogate and the nightmare of Bulwer; in portraying the life of his Chinese double he is also articulating the fear and anxiety he felt for his abused life at the centre of a malevolent, parochial, and prejudiced society — a near-Chinese society that banishes the universe to the corners of its own map.

It needs hardly be said that such a portrayal of Fi-ho-ti's life is, in effect, a rebuke to those who made his misery inevitable, and that Bulwer, while lamenting his own suffering through this Chinese mirror, is ultimately channelling his castigation against the literary circle that was immediate to him. In Fi-ho-ti's China as in Bulwer's Britain, what tyrannises the reputed author is a literary world of bias, unfeelingness, and narrow-mindedness — a world where men of letters, 'all too much engrossed with themselves to dream of affection for another', 'had no talk — no thought — no feeling — except that which expressed love for their own books, and hatred for the books of their contemporaries' (419). This, obviously, is what Bulwer had said in a subdued tone in his earlier critical essays about the British literary community, and it is by dint of fictionalisation and Sinicisation that he finds a much

[109] This idea of Jeremy Bentham is detailed in his *Theory of Legislation*, first published in French in 1802 by his student.
[110] [Bulwer-Lytton] Mitio, 'Fi-Ho-Ti', p. 421.

more unencumbered space for such an acerbic and almost rude expression of opinion. Fi-ho-ti, whose literary friends 'told him he was a wonderful genius […] [and] abused him anonymously every week in the Pekin Gazettes' (419), testifies on behalf of his creator the dark and ugly truth that surrounds what is believed to be a noble, elitist, and decent community. Well dramatised, the plague of Fi-ho-ti invites an empathetic understanding of the tribulation and dudgeon the victim of such abuses feels:

> all that he saw of the effects of his reputation was in the abuse he received in the Pekin journals; he there read, every week and every month, that he was but a very poor sort of creature. One journal called him a fool, another a wretch; a third seriously deposed that he was hump-backed; a fourth that he had not a shilling in the world. […] Other journals, indeed, did not so much abuse as misrepresent him. […] "Alas!" thought Fi-ho-ti, "am I to be deemed a culprit all my life, in order that I may be acquitted after death? Is there no justice for me until I am past the power of malice?" (419–20)

It is this kind of irresponsible criticism and personal attack, which Bulwer was perennially subject to, that brings about the tragedy of Fi-ho-ti, whose agony calls for a reflection upon the degeneracy of a literary establishment not so much Chinese as British. 'Fi-Ho-Ti; or The Pleasures of Reputation' is, in this sense, a fictional expression of the journalistic reform that Bulwer sought to fight for both as a writer and an editor, and an organic part of the unified motif that ran recurrently on the pages of the *New Monthly* for two years. As Bulwer said in his preface to *The Student*, a collection of his *New Monthly* writings from 1830 to 1833, his tales 'partake as much of the nature of the essay as the Essays themselves — availing themselves of a dramatic shape, the more earnestly and the less tediously to

inculcate truths'.[111] Availing itself of a dramatic shape, the tale of Fi-ho-ti is one of those essayistic fictions or fictional essays that intends to communicate an argument — one that, in its case, is assisted by the sympathy and compassion that readers develop for the dramatic victim.

To all appearances, Bulwer wrote the tale of Fi-ho-ti in haste. He had constructed, as he identifies in the subtitle, 'a Chinese tale'; he had explicitly created a Chinese protagonist, but in one place he negligently described Fi-ho-ti as coming from a Japanese family, and in another he failed to situate his Chinese literati within the most basic Chinese scholarly system of the imperial exam. All these 'mistakes' Bulwer corrected two years later, when 'Fi-Ho-Ti; or the Pleasures of Reputation' was reprinted in *The Student* (1835).[112] While a slapdash confusion as such reminds us of the abstractness, ambiguity, and generality that underlie Western identification of the East, it is also markedly demonstrative of the immediacy and relevance of Bulwer's Chinese tale to the abrupt break-off between Bulwer and the *New Monthly*. Under Bulwer's closing editorial emplacement, 'Fi-Ho-Ti; or the Pleasures of Reputation' channels a fictionalised argument inextricable from the administered opinion of the magazine in which it is housed; it forms a part of the periodical campaign of its embittered author, only that his target, this time, extends to include the *New Monthly* circle that has, not long ago, abandoned him.

Contextualising Bulwer's Chinese tale against its periodical and authorial background, we come to see how China offers a conceptual grid upon which the local and the self are refracted, analogised, and evaluated. In displacing his predicament, resentment, and criticism onto an imaginative China, Bulwer reveals the agitation he feels for having to wrangle in a world like China and hoists a warning flag to the literary world against the

[111] Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *The Student*, 2 vols (London: Saunders and Otley: 1835), I, pp. ix–x.
[112] Bulwer-Lytton, *The Student*, II, pp. 15–34.

corroding habit that is bound to turn it into a China. Bulwer's rhetoric, in other words, predicates on the disruptive and destabilising power of the other over the self, but, like De Quincey and Lamb, Bulwer too cannot have conceived his self as separated from this unsettling world of the other. Not only is he inseparable; he, as is his Chinese persona, has actually become the other: 'he was known in after-life for the sourness of his temper and the bitterness of his satire'.[113] Bulwer's solution to such a 'miscegenation', in part, is victimisation: 'Was this deterioration of the kindlier elements of his nature a misfortune? Perhaps it might be so; it was the effect of his REPUTATION!' (422) In imagining himself a Chinese victim in this Chinese world, Bulwer is at once giving vent to his feeling of indignation and searching for his own way of survival. That way, it seems, remained helplessly passive at the time when 'Fi-Ho-Ti' was first published; but by 1835, when 'Fi-Ho-Ti' appeared again in *The Student*, Bulwer had apparently thought of another way out. In reprinting 'Fi-Ho-Ti', Bulwer had changed the ending of his tragic protagonist:

> On the accession of a new Emperor, Fi-ho-ti was commanded to ask any favour that he desire. […] "Son of heaven, and lord of a myriad of years," said the favourite, "suffer then thy servant to retire into one of the monasteries of Kai-fon-gu, and — *to change his name!*"[114]

The last hope of peace that was left to Fi-ho-ti, Bulwer says, 'was to escape from his — REPUTATION!' (34). Six years later Bulwer abandoned politics and exiled himself abroad, and it was not until a decade later that he returned to the arena. To make a self of the other

[113] [Bulwer-Lytton] Mitio, 'Fi-Ho-Ti', p. 422.
[114] Bulwer-Lytton, *The Student*, II, p. 34.

is also to unmake it — this, as we have seen, is the call and the clash that constitute the Chinese tale of Bulwer.

In fact, all the writers we have discussed in this chapter had, in their own ways, 'made a self of the other'. De Quincey and Lamb, of course, did not make an explicit portrait of themselves as a Chinese or an Orient, but both the Opium-Eater and Elia have orientalised themselves — they have both 'taken in the other' through different ways of obsessive consumption — despite the qualms they show about their own orientalising. Drawing on the tropological relevance of China or the Orient to various forms of otherness that dwell within or among them, these writers have not only exposed their own alienation to view but also reflected upon the way they face up to all kinds of alienation that beset them. Writing China, then, may be seen as their responses to all sorts of relationship — with things and works and people — that have already crowded China and all tropes of China in their lives. But in 'making a self of the other', these writers are also trying to 'unmake' their selves out of the other; the otherness that they find to be within or surrounding them is not only subject to scrutiny but is also something to be soothed, rectified, or even expelled. Writing China, in this sense, is always the writing of a struggle — a struggle both from within the self and outside of it, a struggle to make sense of themselves and of the society. A Chinese rhetoric, for these writers, is a means both of self-exploration and of finding their place, their worth, and their way of life in a society that seems at once familiar and foreign to them. All this struggle, perhaps, comes down to the simple fact that a self does not exist without the other, in whatever ways they are defined — the self is always accompanied by it, always threatened by it, and always depend on it in its being.

CHAPTER THREE

To see a Britain in a China Cup: 'Things Chinese' and British Society

3.1 Introduction

In *Britain's Chinese Eye*, Elizabeth Chang has coined the term 'familiar exotic' to describe the very peculiar place China had in the visual and aesthetic culture of nineteenth-century Britain: 'no other sovereign nation in the geographical imaginary was held at once to stand apart from Western history and yet, at the same time, to penetrate its domestic and commercial spaces as much as China'.[1] Indeed, it was almost a paradoxical relationship that, while China was very much a remote, obscure, and abstracted existence for most British before the first war between the two countries broke out, China had penetrated the lives of most British through the ubiquity of 'things Chinese' — tea, porcelain, furniture, decoration, architecture, gardening, and so on — in spaces as public as parks and theatres and as private as one's home. As Southey has remarked, 'plates and tea-saucers have made us better acquainted with the Chinese than we are with any other distant people', the bond between the British and the Chinese was one of a most exceptional and uncommon nature, at once superficial and intimate, loose and firm, imaginary and concrete, and trivial and significant.[2] In the previous chapters we have concerned ourselves less with the implication of such a

[1] Chang, p. 6.
[2] [Robert Southey] Don Manuel Alvarez Espriella, *Letters from England*, ed. by Carol Bolton, 2 vols (London; New York: Routledge, 2016), II, p. 207. Southey's *Letters from England* was first published in 1807.

relationship on the literary figuration of China as a form of self-expression, though the way China acquired its semiotic character from its connection with consumption and trade is readily visible along the way. What I want to consider here is the intersectionality, and indeed inseparability, of China and British society in terms of this material dimension of lived experience: that China, in its artefactual form, had long settled in Britain as a 'familiar exotic' or a 'foreign domestic' on all levels of life, and had by dint of its societal integration into its host culture constituted a part of Britain's social history. It is the purpose of this chapter to explore how China as a notional cross-cultural product was made a site of imagination on which writers reflected upon domestic social phenomenon, norms, and problems, and how these reflections addressed the anxieties of a new age as the Victorian era unfolded.

Chinese or Chinese-styled commodity, or what I have been referring to as 'chinoiserie' in general, began to flow into Britain in the mid-seventeenth century as the East India Company expanded its trade to Asia.[3] Chinoiserie imports were at first exclusive to the noble class, with Queen Mary being the most notable chinoiserie enthusiast of her time. The fashion streamed out from the aristocratic stratum to the gentry over time and, with British manufacturers finally acquiring the technique to produce Chinese-style porcelain domestically, reached the newly rich middle class in the mid-eighteenth century. By the late eighteenth century, almost every respected home was furnished, slightly or heavily, with some sort of chinoiserie. Ever since it landed in Britain, chinoiserie had been valued for its exoticness or foreignness, and to some extent its uselessness as a symbolic trophy of status and wealth. In Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World*, a lady of distinction satisfies herself that her Chinese porcelain collection is 'of no use in the world', and it

[3] For a history of chinoiserie, see, for example, Hugh Honour, *Chinoiserie: The Vision of Cathay* (London: John Murray, 1961) and Dawn Jacobsen, *Chinoiserie* (London: Phaidon, 1993).

matters not to her what authentic Chineseness her Chinese visitor Lien Chi Altangi exemplifies as long as she is charmed by the '*somethingness*' in his appearance, the 'outlandish cut of his face' and the 'exotic breadth of his forehead'.[4] Such, as David Porter argues, was the appeal of chinoiserie in the eighteenth century: 'an aesthetic of the ineluctably foreign, a glamorization of the unknown and unknowable for its own sake'.[5] Such, on the other hand, was also the perversion of chinoiserie: it represents the excessive, unthinking, philistine, and predominantly feminine desire 'to luxuriate in a flow of unmeaning Eastern signs' (134) that writers such as Goldsmith found cause to ridicule. Nuancing Porter's definition of chinoiserie as an 'aesthetics of illegitimacy', Zuroski-Jenkins shows us how chinoiserie, and the 'difference' it represents, was in this period assimilated into the Enlightenment idea of cosmopolitan order and how, in its fluctuating signification of depravity and virtue, it came to designate 'a good and a bad way of imaginatively engaging the material world', the civilising effect of which ultimately rests with individual taste and judgement.[6] It may be said, therefore, that while chinoiserie had always been perceived as distinctly foreign to an English self, what its foreignness meant and was potent to figure was versatile and eclectic. It was at the turn of the nineteenth century, with the twin development of nationalism and capitalism incited by the Anglo-French wars and the Industrial Revolution, that the foreignness of chinoiserie was subject to a less variable but increasingly reductive process of visual and historical abstraction, which consequently rendered chinoiserie and the figures of China a familiar symbol of national alienation and aristocratic degeneracy. An exotic luxury domesticated into everyday life and reconfigured under evolving political, economic, and social narratives, chinoiserie was not only an objectified icon of otherness but also a means of subjective

[4] Oliver Goldsmith, *Citizen of the World; or, Letters from a Chinese Philosopher Residing in London to His Friends in the East* (London: Folio Society, 1969), p. 57.
[5] Porter, *Ideographia*, p. 134.
[6] Zuroski-Jenkins, p. 90.

expression of selfhood; the history of chinoiserie in Britain, and especially the literary history of chinoiserie in Britain, was practically a history of Britain's continuous evaluation of itself in relation to what a 'familiar exotic' stands for and acts upon in a progressing society.

That chinoiserie should serve so enduringly as a site of English self-reflection was obviously a result of the abiding appetite of the society towards this emblem of luxurious exotic consumption despite literary censure and pasquinade. One may suppose that, as the Victorian period approached, the intensity of nationalistic and anti-elitist sentiments would constrict the vitality of such passion, but the fact was that chinoiserie continued to flourish and inundate British homes as the size of the middling order increased. It was the time when the middle class was solidifying both economically and politically: the Reform Act of 1832 enfranchised the new middle class with property, the Charter Act of 1833 granted the middling merchants opportunities to partake in the lucrative Eastern trade, and the Poor Law of 1834 enacted their Benthamite philosophy of treating the problem of poverty in the most cost-effective way of the workhouse system. The arrival of a new privileged caste in the society was accompanied by an extension of the capitalistic set-up of the luxury goods sector, and chinoiserie, which had for centuries been a symbol of class privilege, became all the more a defining possession of a respectable household. In *Sketches by Boz* (1833–1836), Charles Dickens holds up the aristocratic pretension of the middling class to ridicule: 'The wish of persons in the humbler classes of life, to ape the manners and customs of those whom fortune has placed above them, is often the subject of remark, and not unfrequently of complaint'.[7] Indeed, what characterised the literary and social discourse of Britain in the 1830s was a rising consciousness of the structural change of the society and the class

[7] Charles Dickens, *Sketches by Boz: Illustrative of Every-day Life and Every-day People* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1906), p. 71.

relations that both divided and correlated the British subjects in an uneasy collective identity. That, in part, accounts for the proliferation of satirical comedies in the period, wherein middle-class writers like Dickens scrutinised their own social position and attitude through humour and, in a comedic manner, acquainted their predominantly middle-class readers with the farcical side of the society in its stratification. Gary Dyer has observed that in the 1820s and 1830s satire became 'more comic and less apt to offend' as its 'satirical, reformative impulse' was 'diluted by a comic awareness that both the satirist and the satirized are human and fallible'.[8] That it was so has a large part to do with the changing nature of the challenge the British society faced in the period — as the liberating effect of political reforms was compensated for by the transformation of political tyranny into class tyranny — but it had also to do with the fact that satirists were now levelling charges against a social order to which they unambiguously belonged. Both Dickens and the authors we are about to look at had wielded the comic form to torch the faults of such a 'social self' and to render their own social visions; and this light form of dialectics was not without its heuristic power, it being an embodiment of the concerns and anxieties writers felt towards themselves as they explored and grappled with the changing dynamics of social order and realities.

As we shall see, it was the whirlpool of socio-economic disorientation that comic writers sought to throw into relief by toying with the idea of chinoiserie or Chinese commodities in their satiric comedies. The various figures of China, in their works, represent in diverse ways a form of alienation and identity dislocation that resonates with the sense of malaise they felt over the deep fracture between what they considered the centre and the periphery within a progressing and triumphalist society. Just as comedy, as Roger Henkle notes, is 'a particularly appropriate mode for rendering modern life, which it is

[8] Gary Dyer, *British Satire and the Politics of Style, 1789–1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 144; p. 140.

relatively common to look upon as absurd or emotionally unsatisfying', so too the comic absurdity and emotional disconnectedness inherent in the domestic ubiquity of things Chinese make the 'familiar exotic' a particularly appropriate metaphor of a modernity characteristically devoid of interior harmony and spiritual, as against material, awareness.[9] Such a rhetoric is all the more meaningful when we consider how these works, in making a theme out of commodities, are themselves a commodity of the increasingly commercialised marketplace of periodical literature. For indeed in invoking China and things Chinese these writers were capitalising not only on the familiarity of domestic readers with what they possessed or desired to possess but also on the growing topicality of China and the 'China question', and their relevance to domestic issues of interest, in both public and private discourses. There are moments of inter-topical convergence that need to be recovered: the post-Reform-Act libertarian underpinning of Thomas Hood's poems on china, the Chartist ethos that strongly identified with popular culture around the time Mark Lemon drew his caricature of the willow-pattern plate, and the redacted references to the opium trade and the theatrical crisis of the 1830s in Douglas Jerrold's essay. It was by implicitly endorsing and utilising the consumable nature of their writings that these magazine writers conveyed a sense of the pervasiveness of social inequality, cultural deprivation, and ideological fissure that came with the capitalistic logic of commodity consumption in the early Victorian period. What I want to stress further is that these writers, in using the familiar chinoiserie or things Chinese as a vehicle of social reflection and criticism, had also premised their rhetoric upon the inseparability between China and Britain, and by extension the indivisibility between otherness and selfhood, that might not be so immediately felt in the great Victorian age of imperialism, aggressive nationalism, and exploitative capitalism. We shall see how their

[9] Roger B. Henkle, *Comedy and Culture, England 1820–1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 58.

writings, in their own ways, create a hybrid realm of domesticity that blurs identity and boundary, and how, in so doing, they open up possibilities for self-reflection and self-rediscovery that are essential to the making and functioning of modernity.

3.2 China and Class Consciousness: Thomas Hood's Broken China

'We never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves,' says John Berger in *Ways of Seeing*.[10] The way we see and find meaning in an object always tells us something about who we are and how we respond to what we see in the specific temporal and spatial locality in which we find ourselves; the act of seeing, in Berger's theory, is therefore not only an intrinsically but also an extrinsically conditioned process of perception and judgement. The way Thomas Hood (1799–1845) 'sees' china, too, reveals as much about his own aspirations and limitations as that of the world around him. Even in 'Fancies on a Tea-cup' (1826), an immature, pale, and somewhat ungainly imitation of Charles Lamb's 'Old China', Hood has shown himself to be quite a different viewer of china than his predecessor: focusing on *lives* rather than on *things*, what captures his imagination is less the perspectiveless quality of a china teacup than the humans that live in it — the children, the women, the lovers, the elderlies, the solitary scholars, and, in short, the *beings* and their ways of being in a teacup that are never much of a concern for the urbane consumers who luxuriate in them.[11] The playthings of the Chinese 'urchin', moreover, remind him of those 'purchased at our own Mr. Dunnett's' at Cheapside and 'sold by the stray natives about our streets', and the Chinese women with their 'invisible feet'

[10] John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London : British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin, 2008), p. 9.
[11] Thomas Hood, 'Fancies on a Tea-cup', in *Whims and Oddities, in Prose and Verse* (London: Lupton Relfe, 1826), pp. 78–80.

make him think of the 'drudges' and 'laborious offices' that the fair sex is often tasked with (79). It may be said that a china teacup had never before been read as 'humanly' as Hood did, although in the early years of his career he was yet able to strike a balance between Elia's impish humour and his own worldview and brand of talent. As the well-known humanitarian poet matured, he would stand on firmer ground as a writer whose thoughts are with the oppressed classes and whose Romantic affinities build up into a unique Hoodian expression of social consciousness that is more characteristically Victorian. His reading of china also evolves along the way, no longer appearing as middle-class 'fancies' but the organ of the voice of the underprivileged.

It was, of course, Hood's late-year works such as 'The Song of the Shirt', 'The Bridge of Sighs', or 'The Lay of the Labourer' that most powerfully epitomised his dedication to the humanitarian cause, but his concern for the lower class was already commanding in the 1830s when the society experienced a radical change in the reorganisation of class power. While the Reform Act of 1832 passed down a share of aristocratic power to the moneyed middle class, the lower class remained tenuous both politically and economically. For E. P. Thompson, the Reform Act actually marked the beginning of an antagonistic and isolating working-class consciousness: 'a consciousness of the identity of the interests of the working class, or "productive classes", *as against* those of other classes', formed as a consequence of 'the response to working-class strength of the middle class' as the latter became the beneficiary of political and legal favoritism.[12] This feeling of political injustice, added to by the aggravation of the overall living and working conditions of the working class brought about by urban migration, the decline in wages, the attack of cholera, to name a few, made the 1830s and 40s a tumultuous time of social

[12] E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), p. 807.

discontent and class conflict.[13] Hood, so often beleaguered by financial difficulties and almost always plagued by ill health, was naturally sentimental, sympathetic, and commiserative of the hardship of those oppressed by the trial of life. His constant interest in themes like grotesquerie, deformity, morbidity, dismemberment, and brokenness, before they are turned into ingredients of Hoodian comedy, was foremost an externalisation of his own anxiety, estrangement, isolation, and self-division as a struggling writer and editor always on the verge of poverty and, in fact, death. 'No gentleman alive,' as Hood said, 'has written so much comic and spitten so much blood'.[14] If Hood cared about the poor more than others did, that was because he was more in the position to empathise with them and to picture their situation as they saw it themselves; his empathy was deeply rooted in his personal experience, which, in part, made his humanitarian expression particularly acute, powerful, and emotionally stimulating.

And yet, precisely because Hood was always struggling to make ends meet, he was also anxious to cater for the taste and interest of a reading public that was increasingly capitalistic in outlook. It is this tendency to popularisation that prompts Henkle to read Hood's poems as 'a register of the commodification of objects and expressions in the consumer society, and of the reorganizing of lower-middle-class desire'.[15] For Henkle, Hood's 'commodification of the poetic sign system' is manifest in his comicality, his domesticity, his demotic language scheme, and his adaptation of social material — a 'denaturing' of 'individual subjectivity' that is both compromising and constitutive of a changing cultural market (302). This, truly, is what cannot be overlooked in our reading of Hood's works; his orientation towards the periodical market, and especially in the market

[13] See Andrew August, *The British Working Class, 1832–1940* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2007).
[14] Hood's letter to the editor of *Athenæum*; see Walter Jerrold, *Thomas Hood: His Life and Times* (New York: J. Lane, 1909), p. 411.
[15] Roger B. Henkle, 'Comedy as Commodity: Thomas Hood's Poetry of Class Desire', *Victorian Poetry*, 26 (1988), 301–18 (p. 302).

of family magazines and literary gift annuals, not only rendered the ease and diversion of domestic reading a concern of priority but also bound his works to a readership substantially consumerist in constitution. In Henkle's opinion Hood's poems 'mount a certain measure of resistance' (317) against the capitalist consumer economy in that they register 'the sensation of *being* consumed' (316) and 'the threat to the representation of subjectivity' (318); Sara Lodge, partly disputing this idea, believes that subjectivity and commerce are not necessarily at odds, and that 'the centrality of material commerce and exchange to Hood's conception of all writing is […] individually liberating, and socially democratic'.[16] What characterises Hood's poetry, I think, is precisely this contentious ambivalence; a mature Hoodian poem is often a strange mixture of amusement and poignancy, humour and sympathy, and commerciality and reformative appeal. Clearly, Hood's works operate within a bourgeois system of production, but in catering to a consumerist taste, they have shown themselves to be not only palatable but also nourishing. Hood's poems on china, too, both conform to and resist the economic and social order, or disorder, that had become acutely perceptible at the start of the Victorian age; they are commodities that seek to look at a commodity against the backdrop of a society newly liberated, and perhaps also newly enslaved because it was liberated.

What is special about Hood's finessing of the chinoiserie motif is that, rather than hinging his edification on the representation of the object itself, he foregrounds the significance of perspective, and especially class perspective, in the act of seeing and meaning making. 'The Broken Dish', first published in 1832, exemplifies the way Hood plays with such a seeing of a commodity that takes meaning from a role-specific frame of reference. The theme Hood takes up is by no means new, and easily falls within the rubric

[16] Sara Lodge, *Thomas Hood and Nineteenth-Century Poetry: Work, Play and Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 25.

of Romantic meditation: like Coleridge's 'Monody on a Tea-kettle' (1790), 'The Broken Dish' is a playful lamentation of 'griefs domestic' in a serio-comic style, and even with its comicality the poem evokes Keats's 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' (1820), sharing its form as an ekphrasis of a foreign domestic ware, a private expression of sensibility towards a storied object, and a meditation on loss and mortality. 'The Broken Dish' is, in this sense, very much a pastiche of Romantic models refurbished with the motif of chinoiserie and its attendant connotation of affluence:

WHAT's life but full of care and doubt,
    With all its fine humanities,
With parasols we walk about,
    Long pigtails and such vanities.

We plant pomegranate trees and things,
    And go in garden sporting,
With toys and fans of peacock's wings,
    To painted ladies courting.

We gather flowers of every hue,
    And fish in boats for fishes,
Build summer-houses painted blue, —
    But life's as frail as dishes.

Walking about their groves of trees,
    Blue bridges and blue rivers,

How little thought them two Chinese,

They'd both be smash'd to shivers![17]

A symbol of the 'vanities' of 'fine humanities', china is so fragile an article that its frailty objectifies the unsustainability and ephemerality of any forms of existence contained within its luxuriousness. Here the illusion of vanity is embodied in the virtual reality of the blue-and-white china world which 'we' enter into, and in which the 'we' and 'they' become distinct only upon the disillusioning breakage. Apparently in 'The Broken Dish' a foreignising rhetoric is at work, whereby the ostentatious 'we' the poet identifies with is Sinicised to enact an implicit critique on materialistic vanity against the ultimate re-naturalisation of the self achieved in material brokenness. The poet, it would seem, is regressing into the pathos of Romantic self-reflection, being autocritically aware of his fractured selfhood symbolised by the integration of his self into the world of the other. Such a sense of cultural and identity dislocation, however, has a deeper if not totally different implication when we situate 'The Broken Dish' back in its original context — not as an individual poem but as a part of Hood's 'Domestic Didactics'.

Although sometimes presented as a self-contained poem in collections, 'The Broken Dish' has a paratextual frame.[18] It was first published in the *Comic Annual* as one of the poems collectively titled 'Domestic Didactics', headed by an introduction that explains the fictional origin of the poems under collection. In this fictional preamble, the poems in question were written by John Humphreys, 'an old servant' of the Umphavilles, a family of twelve; it was upon his death that Mr. Umphavilles, his master, discovered the poetic

[17] Hood's 'The Broken Dish', as we shall shortly see, was one of the poems collected under the title 'Domestic Didactics'. [Thomas Hood] An Old Servant, 'Domestic Didactics', *Comic Annual*, 1832, pp. 109–18 (pp. 112–13).

[18] The prose introduction of Hood is omitted in collections such as *The Comic Poems of Thomas Hood* (1867), *The Poetical Works of Thomas Hood* (1874), and, more recently, *Delphi Complete Poetical Works of Thomas Hood* (2016).

inclination of his servant and sought to publish the manuscript of the servant-poet.[19] Significantly, Hood's introduction underscores the predicament John faced in his attempt to preserve his individuality amid the pressure of duties, distractions, and, above all, misunderstandings on the part of his master; he was continually suspected of being drunk, of shirking, of disobedience, and of being 'willfully unfortunate in his breakage' (111) when he was, in fact, immersed in poetic thoughts, a truth that Mr. Umphavilles found out only after John's demise. This history requires us to re-read 'The Broken Dish' from the perspective of the sorry servant-poet. 'What's life but full of care and doubt, / With all its fine humanities' is, rather than a self-reflexive mediation, the plaint of a domestic in constant trepidation; the world that the poet enters as 'we' is not his world, but the world of those 'fine humanities' he partakes in and contributes to as a part of the family in lower order, a world as different to his as the C/china world of 'them two Chinese'. Obviously then, the rupture between 'we' and 'they' upon the breakage of the china dish does not delineate the cognitive recovery of the poet's self-identity more than in terms of the actual disintegration of domestic harmony at the moment when a master is most foreign to his servant. The frailty of china, in other words, is both a metaphor and a threatening reality — a metaphor of the fragility of high life, and a reality for humble beings like John, whose responsibility is to maintain it. Titling John's manuscript 'Domestic Didactics', Hood playfully reveals the pedagogic function of the poem: it is, outwardly, a warning to servants against negligence, but it is also a didactic reminder to masters like the twelve Umphavilles, behind whose vanity are people in lower station, spending a lifetime preserving their fine china world.

In giving a poetical voice to a servant presumably uneducated, Hood pictures a domestic form of class hierarchy that can be most intimately felt by his family readers,

[19] [Hood] An Old Servant, 'Domestic Didactics', p. 119.

alluding to the possibility that lowness in social position is no signature of intellectual and spiritual deprivation. It is clear that Hood in making this stance was riding upon the heated debate on the March of Intellect, and more closely and immediately upon the controversy Southey occasioned when he published John Jones's *Attempts in Verse* alongside his own *An Introductory Essay on the Lives and Works of Our Uneducated Poets* in 1831. John Jones was, as the title page of *Attempts in Verse* makes clear, 'An Old Servant', a butler (to the Bruere family) who had solicited the patronage of Southey.[20] Despite his sympathy and good intention, Southey has made his introductory essay a source of irritation, to John Clare the peasant poet for instance, with the low estimation he holds for poets of the humble class, his condescending tone in seeing his help as an act of charity, and his acute class consciousness in describing these poets as 'uneducated' — which Carlyle condemned as an aristocratically inclined concept in 'Corn-Law Rhymes'.[21] Southey's essay also prompted the *New Monthly Magazine* to publish 'A Letter to Doctor Southey', which cites the merits of Ebenezer Elliott to contest Southey's idea that laboring-class poetry is recommendable only for the happiness they offer to and the civilising effects they produce in their authors.[22] It was followed by 'A New Batch of Uneducated Poets', a satirical work that, although not singly targeted at Southey's essay, takes issue with the poet laurate's conceitedness in seeing applications from fledging authors as 'the plague of my life'.[23] Hood's 'Domestic Didactics', obviously, was yet another rejoinder to Southey's objectionable view; mimicking Southey,

[20] See Robert Southey, *Attempts in Verse, by John Jones, an Old Servant: with Some Account of the Writer, Written by Himself: and An Introductory Essay on the Lives and Works of Our Uneducated Poets* (London: John Murray, 1831).
[21] For John Clare, see Mark Storey, *John Clare: the Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 216; Johanne Clare, *John Clare and the Bounds of Circumstance* (Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), pp. 68–69. For Carlyle's challenge, see Michael Scrivener, 'Laboring-Class Poetry in the Romantic Era', in *A Companion to Romantic Poetry*, ed. by Charles Mahoney (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 234–50 (pp. 239–40).
[22] 'A Letter to Doctor Southey, &c. &c. Poet Laureate, Respecting a Remarkable Poem by a Mechanic', *New Monthly Magazine*, April 1831, pp. 289–95.
[23] 'A New Batch of Uneducated Poets', *New Monthly Magazine*, September 1831, pp. 218–26; Southey, *Attempts in Verse*, p. 6.

Hood gives John an introductory essay, but rather than stressing the 'humility', 'good character', and contentment of 'my humble applicant', Hood brings attention to the struggle of his servant-poet, picturing his distraction ('It must have been provoking, when seeking for a simile, to be sent in search of a salt-cellar; or when hunting for a rhyme, to have to look for a missing tea-spoon'), his rush ('John always wrote in too great a hurry to put dates'), and the conflicts he was dragged into with his master.[24] Congenial and personable, Hood's playful imitation addresses what is amiss in Southey's supercilious essay. Certainly, therefore, Hood in 'Domestic Didactics' is appropriating what is 'already in the public domain, already in the realm of "consumption"', but its parodic purpose renders such a commodification secondary to the social function it performs.[25] Its comicality, in fact, verges on the satiric; it requires, after all, only a little empathic imagination for the well-to-do and the 'educated' to understand the lives of those they look upon as the other.

In 'The Broken Dish' this imagination is enabled by the use of china as a class symbol — a commodity that draws a line between those who desire it and those who dread it, those who own it and those who preserve it, within the same realm of domesticity. While chinoiserie, characteristically frail, delicate, and costly, was featured in not a few Enlightenment and Romantic poems as an aristocratic distinction, Hood is ingenious in his use of it as a mirror metaphor of hardship and subjugation, reversing the customary association of it with those higher up on the social ladder to those struggling from below, and hence redefining the received subject-object relationship that somewhat delimits its figurative potential. When Hood again returns to the theme of chinoiserie in 'The China-mender', published in 1833 in *Forget Me Not*, the trope of china acquires an even more

[24] [Hood] An Old Servant, 'Domestic Didactics', p. 110; p. 111. It is worth noting that Hood mentioned Southey in the preface of the *Comic Annual* for 1832, emphatically saying that 'the article called "Domestic Didactics," is by no means intended as a quiz on the Attempts at Rhyme by an Old Servant of Dr. Southey'. See Thomas Hood, 'Preface', *Comic Annual*, 1832, pp. viii–x (p. ix). The word 'Rhyme' (as against 'Verse') and the phrase 'an Old Servant of Dr. Southey' strongly suggest an ironic interpretation, however.
[25] Henkle, 'Thomas Hood's Poetry of Class Desire', p. 307.

subtle status-consecrating and class-demarcating meaning. Here again we hear the neglected voice of the servant, but, unlike John the servant-poet, Mary speaks in the 'low' language of the cockney, reporting to a china-mender the urgency of her request for service because her mistress is a china fanatic:

> And if ever a woman was fond of a Chiny to a passion
> It's my mistress, and all sorts of it, whether new or old fashion.
> Her brother's a sea-captain, and brings her home shiploads —
> Such bonzes, and such dragons, and nasty, squatting things like toads;
> And great nidnoddin mandarins, with palsies in the head:
> I declare I've often dreamt of them, and had nightmares in my bed.
> But the frightfuller they are — lawk! she loves them all the better;
> She'd have Old Nick himself made of Chiny if they'd let her.
> Lawk-a-mercy! break her Chiny, and it's breaking her very heart;
> If I touch'd it, she would very soon say, "Mary, we must part." […]
> Well! there's stupid Mr. Lambert, with his two great coat flaps,
> Must go and sit down on the Dresden shepherdesses' laps,
> As if there was no such things as rosewood chairs in the room;
> I couldn't have made a greater sweep with the handle of the broom.
> Mercy on us! how my mistress began to rave and tear!
> Well! after all, there's nothing like good ironstone ware for wear.[26]

[26] Thomas Hood, 'The China-mender', *Forget Me Not; A Christmas, New Year's, and Birthday Present*, 1833, pp. 337–41 (pp. 337–38).

Hood, again, is re-making an old story; Mary's mistress is an overt replica of those well born, china-loving ladies of Gay, Hawkesworth, and Addison and Steele, stereotypically more passionate about china than everything else. But while china had been so prevailingly associated with a kind of distinctly feminine sensibilities, no writers before Hood had directed attention to those females to which china is a source of foreboding. What makes 'The China-mender' unique is precisely the juxtaposition between the mistress's china-mania and her maid's china-phobia — what fascinates the mistress is the nightmare of the maid. Not only is Mary scared of those frightful china figures from overseas, but she is also apprehensive about what they could mean to her when spoiled: the possibility of losing her job ('Mary, we must part'), of extra work ('sweep with the handle of the broom'), and of chastisement ('politeness, you know, is nothing, when there's Chiny in the case') (337). Instead of chinaware, Mary prefers the more durable ironstone ware; instead of figures of Chinese bonzes, dragons, toads, and mandarins, she prefers the 'pea-green poll parrot' and the 'shepherd with a crook after a lamb with two gilt horns' on her grandmother's shelf (339). In Mary's psychological flux, the alienness she feels about her mistress's foreign china is insolubly mixed with her class identity — her consciousness of duty and liability as a maidservant, and her aesthetic preference as a country girl. China, in this sense, separates the mistress and the maid not only in material terms but also in psychological and social terms; it denotes the disparity between two forms of class culture and character that manifest themselves as tastes and emotions, and that overlap with such distinctions between the foreign and the local, and the urban and the rural, in its metaphorical extension.

But it is also through china that the unity, reciprocity, and symbiosis between the two classes become apparent in the domestic space that is familiar to all. In 'The Broken Dish', china embodies the imaginative possibility of John's acculturation into the familial enclave of his masters, and in 'The China-mender' such a commingling is more explicitly

rendered by Mary's assimilation of the otherness that defines the universe of her mistress into her self. Despite her phobia, all Mary wishes is to preserve the integrity of a world foreign to her, for this world is also that of her own:

> I'll be bound in any money, if I had a guinea to give,
> He won't sit down again on Chiny the longest day he has to live. […]
> To be sure it is a sight that might draw tears from dogs and cats;
> Here's this pretty little pagoda, now, has lost four of its cocked hats;
> Be particular with the pagoda: and then here's this pretty bowl —
> The Chinese Prince is making love to nothing because of this hole;
> And here's another Chinese man, with a face just like a doll —
> Do stick his pigtail on again, and just mend his parasol. (340)

Mary, in the end, shows herself to be a sympathiser of the Chiny monsters, sharing with her mistress the same soreness that the sight of the broken china engenders. The china-mender, ergo, does not just mend china; he is a savior for the two women of disparate status and taste, to whom china, paradoxically, means differently and the same. The trope of china as a domestic class symbol does not just demarcate the boundary between selfhood and otherness in a household; rather it destabilises it, and in doing so highlights the inseparability and mutual dependence of the one upon the other. The disunity that china signifies is, ultimately, a disunity within unity; in a domestic space, otherness — of the mistress to the maid, of the maid to the mistress, and of china to the British home — is necessarily interfused with selfhood to such an extent that any bifurcations become meaningless and even disruptive to the domestic harmony already in place, a harmony echoed by the cosiness and serenity of Hood's light and jocular style of verses.

'My domestic habits are very domestic indeed; like Charity I begin at home, and end there'.[27] Thomas Hood, as he himself asserted, was an intensely domestic writer — he was, he told Dickens, the 'homer' and the 'homest' as can be thought of, given over to the interest, mood, and sentiment of hearthside domesticity.[28] William Empson, somewhat flustered by the many 'trivial and undirected' productions of 'a man like Hood, who wrote with energy when he was roused', attributes such a proclivity for the petite to his engagement with the Christmas Annuals, 'something which could be shown to all the daughters of the house, which all the daughters of the house could see […] was very whimsical and clever'.[29] Empson, obviously, sees in Hood's annuallism a regretful departure from the truly poetical, sincere, and meaningful; but to think of Hood's venture into the familial reading space as altogether delimiting is to pass over the 'domestic didactics' his works are apt to produce in the privacy of the home. For, as we have seen, it was through domestic staging that the supposedly centripetal force of proximity generates its centrifugal pull; there is no better place to understand a society, both the centre and the periphery of it, than through the microcosm of a home. In both 'The Broken Dish' and 'The China-mender', Hood brings the tripartite relationship between china, masters, and servants to bear on his attempt to resuscitate the voice of those shadowy figures that are at once removed from and constitutive of what is commonly perceived as a household. China, in these works, is a hybrid metaphor; Hood does not break any convention in using it as a symbol of wealth, comfort, vanity, and feminine susceptibility, but he does show a different concern, as a man of the new age, in using it as a symbol of class and power that embraces, and at the same time challenges, the binary of selfhood and otherness reflected from a domestic commodity

[27] Hood's letter to Philip de Franck, 20 August 1838; *The Letters of Thomas Hood*, ed. by Peter F. Morgan (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), p. 378.
[28] See Alvin Whitley and Thomas Hood, 'Hood and Dickens: Some New Letters', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 14 (1951), 385–413 (p. 393).
[29] William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961), 134–35.

oxymoronically foreign. On one hand, china is domestic power objectified, foreign to the subjects of this power not only in appearance but also in essence; on the other, china embodies the presence and performance of the obscure beings whose place in a household remains problematically extrinsic. What is the 'other', in the end, is perpetually elusive; what comes as absolute is the domestic unity that must attend division, the familial — and social — oneness that is the cornerstone of a family and of a society. Hood's comical poems on C/china is, in this sense, a play on the fluid concepts of the self and the other, enacted in a domestic, and thus accessible and penetrable, setting; his critique, as well as his charity, does indeed begin and end at home, but the social realities he holds up to view through the lens of china are meant to stimulate reflections beyond the confine of a home.

3.3 Making (Non)Sense of China: Mark Lemon's Willow-Pattern Tale

There was a famous anecdote about the publication of Hood's now immortal 'The Song of the Shirt' in the *Punch* magazine: Mark Lemon (1809–1870), the founder and editor of *Punch*, was looking over a heap of letters one morning, when he opened an envelope enclosing a poem, entitled 'The Song of the Shirt' and signed by 'Tom Hood'. The poem, Hood said, had been rejected by several papers already, and if it was not deemed suitable for *Punch*, he would like Lemon to 'tear it up, and put it in the waste-paper-basket; for I am sick at the sight of it'.[30] At the weekly meeting of *Punch*, most staff took a stand against the poem, thinking it too poignant for a comical magazine; it was Lemon who, overcoming all objections, brought it out to the public in the Christmas of 1843. As it turned out, 'The Song

[30] William Powell Frith, *John Leech: His Life and Work*, 2 vols (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1891), II, p. 184. See also Joseph Hatton, 'The True Story of "Punch": Chapter IV', *London Society*, October 1875, pp. 341–51 (p. 346); and M. H. Spielmann, *The History of "Punch"* (London: Cassell, 1895), p. 332.

of the Shirt' was one of the most successful publications of *Punch*; not only had it tripled the sale of then new magazine, but it also caused a sweeping sensation across the country, awakening, to borrow the words of the *Lancet*, 'the conscience of the nation […] to the degrading industrial slavery existing in its wealthiest cities'.[31]

Today, 'The Song of the Shirt' is remembered as one of the most, if not the most, influential social poems of the Victorian period, but the way it was inspired and powered by the collective efforts of writers to fight for social justice is not so readily received. Apart from *The Times* which first reported and kept speaking for the case of the widowed seamstress Mrs. Biddell (who pawned the shirts she sewed to feed her starving infants and was, for this reason, sued by her employer Mr. Moses of the slop shop), the role of *Punch* in garnering sympathies for the seamstress cannot be overlooked. *Punch* was conceived by Mark Lemon and Henry Mayhew in 1841 as 'a defender of the poor and the oppressed' and 'a radical scourge of all authority'.[32] Even before Hood's 'Song' came out, *Punch* had made several protests against the inhumanity of Mr. Moses. In 'Famine and Fashion!', *Punch* — Lemon, to be exact, according to Arthur Adrian[33] — rails against Moses and his class, describing them as 'money-spinning knaves' and their slops 'blood-stained'; in 'Moses and Co.', it attacks customers who buy clothes sewn by 'Hunger's haggard fingers' and 'begemm'd by some poor widow's tear'; and in a playful review of the imaginary *The Pride of London*, it criticises the slopsellers, 'who've ground down the bones of the poor for their bread'.[34] It may be said that, given *Punch*'s reformative character, what sets Hood's 'Song' at variance with the *Punch* style is the benevolent softness of the former and the belligerent

[31] 'Sweated Industries and Sanitation', *Lancet*, 19 December 1908, pp. 1826–27 (p. 1826).
[32] Frank E. Huggett, *Victorian England as Seen by Punch* (London: Book Club Associates, 1978), p. 7.
[33] Arthur A. Adrian, *Mark Lemon: First Editor of* Punch (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 52–53.
[34] 'Famine and Fashion!', *Punch*, November 1843, p. 203; 'Moses and Co.', *Punch*, November 1843, p. 203; 'Punch's Review of Books', *Punch*, December 1843, p. 249. For more about Hood's 'Song of the Shirt' and *Punch*'s responses to the case of Mr. Biddell, see Lynn Mae Alexander, *Women, Work, and Representation: Needlewomen in Victorian Art and Literature* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003), pp. 51–55.

harshness of the latter — that Hood, with his sensational verse, seeks to stir up sympathy and love for the poor, while *Punch* with its stinging satire and lampoon is disposed to condemning the rich and the powerful. When Mark Lemon himself put on stage *The Sempstress: A Drama in Two Acts* in 1844, it was also with the intention to incriminate avarice and moral corruption, rather than to stoke up class struggle, that he made a melodrama out of a Moses vilified into an actual criminal. What Lemon and his *Punch* considered to be the crux of social campaign, apparently, was ideological rectification — of the excess of capitalism and its cognates, and of ideologies that governed the age and its people of the time despite their degenerating influence.

It need hardly be said that social critique assumes a variety of forms and incorporates a variety of focuses, although popular writers in the early Victorian period were wont to place their social expressions within certain intertextual, interdiscursive, and intersemiotic parameters. The image of the seamstress was one such framework liberal artists worked on as if collectively towards a panacea for social ills, at a time when the Chartist movement — the first mass movement of the working classes in Britain — was most active since its emergence in the mid-1830s.[35] Mark Lemon was a Chartist sympathiser, but like Douglas Jerrold he opposed the extremism of Feargus O'Connor in seeing the use of violence as a means to social reform.[36] As a dramatist of a comic disposition, Lemon was, like Hood, one whose humour rendered equanimous and even facile a subtly critical stance, and whose seriousness, not least concerning the social dimension of his works, was often overshadowed by the lightness of the weapon he wielded. One would agree, however, that

[35] Hood's 'Song of the Shirt' was set to music by J. H. Tully in 1844, and painted by Richard Redgrave as *The Sempstress* in 1844. See notes in 'Thomas Hood', *Victorian Literature: An Anthology,* ed. by Victor Shea and William Whitla (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), p. 216. For a brief history of the emergence of Chartism, see August, pp. 75–78.

[36] Mark Lemon and John Leech joined the constables recruit in April 1848 when the Chartists held their large Kennington Common demonstration. Leech, recalling their toilsome duty on that day, said: 'It was only my loyalty and extreme love of peace and order that made me stand it'. See Frith, I, p. 238.

it is often in jest that the ridiculousness of reality becomes observably ridiculous. One of Lemon's jokes, which plays with the motif of china like Hood did, raises a laugh precisely because of the thread of truth that underpins its hyperbole:

> A lady, proud of her rank and title, once compared the three classes of people, nobility, gentry, and commonalty, to china, delf, and crockery. A few minutes elapsed, when one of the company expressed a wish to see the lady's little girl, who, it was mentioned, was in the nursery. "John," said she to the footman, "tell the maid to bring the little dear." The footman, wishing to expose his mistress's ridiculous pride, cried, loud enough to be heard by every one, — "Crockery! bring down little China."[37]

Almost Hoodish in its point of view and playful analogy, Lemon's joke makes a farce of upper-class pretension and social prejudice from the angle of subordinate domestics and hinges its satirical premise upon the metonymic association between classes and commodities and the materialist vision it connotes. Jesting about the 'bringing down' of 'China' by 'Crockery' is not itself a social outcry, but the conception and reception of it clearly depend upon a recognition of the social mores, and the many criticisms of it, that render chinoiserie a common and competent rhetorical topos of social critique. Lemon's 'A True History of the Celebrated Wedgewood [sic] Hieroglyph, Commonly Called the Willow Pattern', published in 1838 in *Bentley's Miscellany*, is also a jocular, sport-making work of no purported social provocation; and yet it finds its social moorings in the theme of chinoiserie as a charged symbol of capitalistic decadence, and in its very attempt to make

[37] Mark Lemon, *The Jest Book* (London: Macmillan, 1864), p. 189.

sense — or to make nonsense — of such a queer cross-breed as what was known as the 'willow-pattern' china.[38]

To note that Lemon's 'True History' was published in the then one-year-old *Bentley's Miscellany* must have called to our mind the close friendship between Dickens and Lemon, and the editorial orientation of the magazine in its infancy. Dickens, or 'Boz' the editor of *Bentley's*, was serialising his own 'Oliver Twist' in the magazine from 1837 to 1839, after which he quit as editor after a row with the owner. Despite their well-known intimacy, it was very likely that when Dickens accepted Lemon's work in 1838, they were yet to know each other better than as editor and contributor. Their existing correspondence points to 1843, two years after Lemon founded *Punch*, that they became intimate friends, possibly through the introduction of Douglas Jerrold; since then Lemon had been Dickens' 'my Lemon, round and fat' and his 'surpassingly sensible and trustworthy' stage partner.[39] Evidently, Dickens found in Lemon a congenial spirit for humour and wit: 'we have,' as he told Bulwer-Lytton, 'a sort of reputation for farce-acting (Lemon and I) which induces people to make up their minds beforehand, to be made to roar'.[40] *Mr. Nightingale's Diary*, the afterpiece of Bulwer's charity play *Not So Bad As We Seem*, was a farce co-written and

[38] 'Wedgwood' was sometimes spelled with an 'e' in the middle in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Even today, we sometimes find antique porcelain bearing the marks of 'Wedgewood' (with an 'e'). It is now generally believed that 'Wedgewood' porcelains were not made by the Wedgwoods; Llewellynn Jewitt conjectured that they were instead the productions by William Smith and other manufacturers of Stockton. In 1848 Wedgwood applied to the court and obtained an injunction restraining Smith and others from using the name of 'Wedgewood' or 'Wedgwood'. See Llewellynn Jewitt, *The Wedgwoods: Being a Life of Josiah Wedgwood* (London: Virtue Brothers and Co., 1865), pp. 384–86.

[39] Dickens invited Lemon to join his family holiday at Brighton in February 1849. In his letter was a poem entitled 'New Song': 'Oh my Lemon, round and fat, / Oh my bright, my right, my tight 'un, / Think a little what you're at — Don't stay at home, but come to Brighton!' The poem is renamed 'Lines Addressed to Mark Lemon' in later reprints. See *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. by Graham Storey and K. J. Fielding, 12 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), V (1847–1849), p. 496. Lemon starred opposite Dickens in several plays, such as Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour* (1845) and Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor* (1848). See *The Oxford Companion to Charles Dickens: Anniversary Edition*, ed. by Paul Schlicke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 334. For a list of the plays Lemon and Dickens performed, see *The Unpublished Letters of Charles Dickens to Mark Lemon*, ed. by Walter Dexter (London: Halton & Truscott Smith, 1927), pp. 60–62.

[40] Dickens's letter to Edward Bulwer-Lytton, 23 March 1851; quoted in Schlicke, *Oxford Companion to Charles Dickens*, p. 334.

co-acted by Dickens and Lemon. With such kindred minds, it was not surprising that the essay of Lemon in 1838 could have caught the eyes of Dickens, who as 'Boz' had rendered humour and comedy his chief mode of social representation and critique in the *Sketches* and the *Pickwick Papers*, and whose magazine aspired to accommodate contributions that, 'although exhibiting comic faculty, would also deal with the shadows of human life, and sound the deep wells of the heart'.[41]

Dickens's *Oliver Twist* sounds the deep wells of the *Bentley's* readers' hearts with, as Mirella Billi puts it, 'everything [that] originates in the "respectable" family, the middle-class home, and the society of which it is the centre'; Lemon's 'True History', with its farcical exegesis on a commodity ubiquitous in middle-class households, also invites reflection upon the kind of domestic curiosity, and indeed anomaly, that requires re-thinking and re-imagination.[42] Such a middling domestic emplacement is, besides, furnished by a spattering of theatrical elements in Lemon's essay, which Dickens must have deemed creditable an experimental originality, and might even have inspired Dickens's anthropomorphic treatment of a willow-pattern plate in his 1852 essay 'A Plated Article'.[43] Quasi-stage play direction such as the following not only amuses and engages readerly participation but also foregrounds the social phenomenon that is the focus, and premise, of the essay:

[41] 'Prologue', *Bentley's Miscellany*, January 1837, pp. 2–6 (p. 4).
[42] Mirella Billi, 'Dickens as Sensation Novelist', in *Dickens: The Craft of Fiction and the Challenges of Reading*, ed. by Rossana Bonadei, and others (Milan: Unicopli, 2000), pp. 176–84; quoted in Andrew D. Radford, *Victorian Sensation Fiction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 20.
[43] [Charles Dickens], 'A Plated Article', *Household Words*, April 1852, pp. 117–21.

> [Gentle reader, ring the bell, and desire John to bring you a "*willow pattern plate.*" John has obeyed you, and, with your permission, we will now proceed.][44]

Assuming the existence of a John — like Southey's John Jones and Hood's John Humphreys — in every one of his readers' homes, and constantly reminding his readers to 'see *plate*' without finding it necessary to give the plate in question a visual illustration, Lemon calls to attention the almost definite 'twin presence' of a servant and a willow-pattern plate in a respectable household and takes on trust that his readers know well enough the significance of both these 'possessions' to appreciate his humour. For not only is the keeping of domestic servants a dividing line between the working classes and those of a higher social scale and 'a guide to status *within* the ranks of the socially superior', but the keeping of willow-pattern china also translates the progress of a household into tangible and visible terms.[45] In its jest and nonsense, Lemon's essay embeds a concrete social dimension that takes meaning from a collage of familiar social symbols, which, in turn, form the paradigm within which his work is located, read, and understood.

What, then, is the willow pattern, or 'the celebrated Wedgewood hieroglyph' as Lemon calls it? Here we have an interesting analogy Thomas Hood made between the face of Charles Lamb and Chinese ware, as against willow-pattern ones:

> […] it was no common face — none of those *willow-pattern* ones, which Nature turns out by thousands at her potteries; — but more like a chance

[44] Mark Lemon, 'A True History of the Celebrated Wedgewood Hieroglyph, Commonly Called the Willow Pattern', *Bentley's Miscellany*, January 1838, pp. 61–65 (p.62).
[45] Pamela Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1986), pp. 17–31 (p. 18).

> specimen of the Chinese ware, one to the set — unique, antique, quaint. No one who had once seen it, could pretend not to know it again.[46]

Victorian writers were well aware of the imitativeness and duplicativeness of the willow-pattern ware, a mass-produced and mass-circulated English imitation of Chinese porcelain; for some, like Southey, it represents the deterioration of English taste and a self-renunciation of accomplishment: 'the English copy the hair-lined eyebrows of the Chinese, their unnatural trees and distorted scenery, as faithfully as if they were equally ignorant of perspective themselves'.[47] In the nineteenth century, the willow pattern was the single most popular decorative design found on English blue-and-white china — a repetitive, formulaic chinoiserie pattern consisting essentially of a willow tree, a zigzagging fence, some buildings, three figures on a bridge, and two birds (see Figure 7). The pattern, rather than a replica of any one Chinese model, was an English invention of imagined Chineseness based on earlier imports; originated at Stoke-upon-Trent, the design was attributed to Thomas Minton, one of the Staffordshire potteries, and was later acquired and popularised by companies like Spode and Wedgwood at the turn of the nineteenth century.[48] As is well known, Wedgwood was the largest of Staffordshire manufacturers; it was, besides, the favourite of the Victorian high and middling society, its founder Josiah Wedgwood having earned the honour to style himself 'Potter to Her Majesty' and his creamware the 'Queen's Ware' (Wedgwood's creamware was invented out of his experiments to produce earthenware as white as Chinese porcelain). As Elizabeth Fay observes, 'by the time Jane Austen reported shopping with her gentry brother and his wife for a Wedgwood design that

[46] Thomas Hood, 'Literary Reminiscences: No. IV', *Hood's Own: or, Laughter from Year to Year* (London: A. H. Baily, 1838), p. 551.
[47] [Southey] Espriella, *Letters from England*, p. 207.
[48] For a history of the willow pattern, see, for example, Alison Syme, *Willow* (London: Reaktion Books, 2014); John R. Haddad, 'Imagined Journeys to Distant Cathay: Constructing China with Ceramics, 1780–1920', *Winterthur Portfolio*, 41 (2007), 53–80.

Figure 7 Willow-pattern plates
(Photos taken by the author at Spode Museum, Stoke-on-Trent, and Culzean Castle, Scotland)

would signal taste […] and status' in 1813, '"Wedgwood" had become a cultural signifier'.[49] Unlike Chinese imports, Wedgwood and, more generally, Staffordshire china were mass produced and came as a cheaper alternative for the burgeoning middle class; with technological advancement, chinoiserie wares that had hitherto furnished the fireplace and dining table of elite families now entered the general comfortable households. It was against this context that willow-pattern china stood as a potent metaphor for the rise of mass consumerism in the Victorian period in connection with the progress of industrialisation and modernisation. In calling the willow pattern 'Wedgewood Hieroglyph', Lemon brings home not only the inscrutability of this English-made mishmash of anglicised Chinese motifs but also the inscrutability of the popularity of this hybrid commodity among the moneyed caste. The compound 'Wedgewood Hieroglyph' is itself a hybrid, and almost an oxymoron — the 'Hieroglyph', a group of ancient Oriental pictographic symbols that was the legacy of primitive civilisation, of 'Wedgewood', a modern Occidental enterprise representative of affluence, progress, and prosperity.

We are here reminded of the Romanic Orient, as that of Byron's and Shelley's, imagined as a site where the East and the West, and antiquity and modernity, converge, and where its otherness, perceived as 'pre- or anti-modern' as Makdisi puts it, enacts the writers' critique of modernisation.[50] It may be said that Lemon's reading of a willow-pattern plate is a comical reimagining of such convergence in an Orient miniaturised, commodified, and, by nature and use, domesticated into the English self. For, in attempting to make sense of the 'Wedgewood Hieroglyph', Lemon seeks to understand it as a cipher that encodes not the mystery of China but that of Britain, and as a mirror not of the remote Chinese antiquity but of the familiar British modernity. In Lemon's imagination, the willow pattern projects

[49] Elizabeth A. Fay, *Fashioning Faces: The Portraitive Mode in British Romanticism* (London: University Press of New England, 2010), p. 102.
[50] Makdisi, *Romantic Imperialism*, p. 10.

a world that could exist at the present time and space — a real estate asset of precious character, botanical variety, and transparent purchase history that is no less competitive than any Victorian residence on sale. Setting out his narrative of the willow pattern in the form of property advertisement, Lemon ingeniously 'corporealises' the two-dimensional and abstracted representation of ancient China on the plate into a tradable and acquirable contemporary abode. 'THIS SINGULARLY ELIGIBLE PROPERTY', Lemon writes,

which was for a lengthened period
THE ADMIRED ABODE OF CHOU-CHU, vendor of areca-nuts and betel,
Stands on the margin of that
LOVELY LAKE, — THE SLO-FLO,
Which, from its waters, colourless and pale as the
LOTUS
which floats upon them, might be called
A GALAXY, OR MILKY-WAY;
A particular desideratum in this land of tea.
The residence itself is of an extraordinary character,
being TWO STORIES HIGH, with a
PORTICO
of lofty pretensions, the ascent to which is by a flight of steps
of the most curious ZIG-ZAG construction.[51]

Translocating a visually obscure and diminutive China into a definite, though fictitious, locality ('Cards to view, &c.'), Lemon's advertisement exhibits and invites a kind of

[51] Lemon, 'A True History', p.62.

psychological criss-crossing between ancient China and modern England that transgresses temporal and spatial distance. It is a distinctly Chinese terrain, with all its foreignness and strangeness, that is for the Victorian homebuyers 'an opportunity *never* to be met with' (63). But this humour in reifying and commercialising the willow-pattern domicile forms also the critical language of Lemon. All through Lemon's blazoning of the willow pattern in its substantialised form, the trumpeting tone of the advertiser is waggishly countered by an overplaying of preposterousness and an implicit disavowal of his puff: the bow-window that overhangs the lake, for instance, is 'admirably situated for FISHING, BATHING, OR SUICIDE' (62); the 'BETULA, or BIRCH', 'whose usefulness needs no commendation' because it is in close proximity to the nursery, is, as could be understood, for flogging, either the children or their nurses (63); and the 'PRUSSIAN-BLUE COMPLEXION' of the abode is valuable because, 'by a moderate admixture of gamboge, it might be made a second YUEU-MIN-YUEU' (63). What Lemon tries to do in this comical piece of advertisement is to make sense of the willow pattern in a nonsensical way; in attempting to create meaning for the design, he has, in practice, underscored its meaninglessness, absurdity, surreality, and laughability. At the end of the advertisement Lemon describes the residence as an 'Elysium', which, he says, is 'as undying as that of the STAFFORDSHIRE POTTERIES', both of them being graced with the treasured 'WILLOW!!!' (63). Lemon's sarcasm is most potent when we consider how a willow signals Ophelia's drowning in *Hamlet*, and how Desdemona in *Othello* sings of a willow before she is murdered.[52] What a willow-pattern ware represents is never a heaven on earth, nor can its symbolic mournfulness sit harmoniously in a happy Victorian household; the glory it offers is at best a make-believe, and at worst a laughable ideal.

[52] For the symbolic meaning of willow, see Michael Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 244–45.

It should become apparent that Lemon has no intention to trace his 'True History' of the willow pattern back to Chinese antiquity, and that his 'decipherment' of the 'Wedgewood Hieroglyph' is purposefully and ironically based on nonsense rather sense. Interestingly, his way of making (non)sense of the willow pattern hinges precisely on its hybrid nature as an English-Chinese artefact. At the beginning of his 'True History', Lemon explains how, in the reign of Emperor Fo, the great philosopher Fum brought into vogue 'the doctrine of metempsychosis' in the Celestial Empire, according to which many a Chinese 'looked forward with joyous anticipation to the time when he should "Soar the air, or swim the deep, / Or o'er the sephalica creep"'.[53] Metempsychosis after death was so much longed for in China that the people became delusional as to their state of existence: when Sing-sing, for instance, fell from the roof and 'becoming impaled on the point of his tail', he 'conceived himself a humming-bird, and would not be quieted' (61); and when Ti-di was embarrassed to death on one occasion, he believed himself to have been transformed into a cockatoo. Lemon's 'Fumism', obviously, is nothing like the Chinese Buddhist idea of samsara, or the cycle of 'reborning'; rather it evokes the rich legacy of Pythagoras's metempsychosis in English literature, most famously in Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*:

> Ah, Phythagoras' *metempsychosis*, were that true,
> This soul should fly from me and I be change'd
> Unto some brutish beast […][54]

[53] Lemon, 'A True History', p.61.
[54] Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, ed. by John D. Jump (London & New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 111. It is of passing interest to note that Lemon used the idea of metempsychosis also in his fairy story, *Tinykin's Transformations*, in which Tinykin was transformed into an ouzel, a fish, a deer, and a mole.

That being said, Lemon's 'Fumism' is not Pythagoras's metempsychosis either; rather, it is a comicalised, or caricaturised, version of it that plays with the ideas of illusion, fantasy, and chimera. Significantly, such a way of 'making absurd' is almost a rejoinder to the frequent use of the idea of metempsychosis in Romantic Oriental epics — as in Shelley's *Revolt of Islam* and Southey's *Thalaba the Destroyer* and *The Curse of Kehama* — and in satirising 'Fumism' Lemon has also defied the decades of interest in the East, rendering the fad for the Orient, and especially the fad for chinoiserie as the theme of his essay dictates, an archaic and ridiculous relic of the past.

Such is Lemon's persistent rhetoric: to make nonsense of his subject by portraying it as a silly hybrid, and to emphasise its illegitimate hybridity by absurdifying and comedifying. The 'true' history of the willow pattern, accordingly, is likewise a cultural hybrid that means not to be 'true' but to call its own hybridity into question. The plot of the story, in precis, is this: Si-so, the beautiful daughter of the wealthy merchant Chou-chu, fell in love with Ting-a-ting, a minstrel. The father, having discovered their affair, decided to marry Si-so off to the richest of her suitors. On her wedding day, Ting-a-ting appeared, and the lovers killed themselves in the presence of Chou-chu, the bridegroom, the bridegroom's father, and the guests. Upon death, Ting-a-ting and Si-so — both of them 'Fumists' — transmigrated into two doves; hence the two doves on the willow pattern plate, and the three figures on the bridge, as 'Chou-chu fled in consternation, followed by the bridegroom and his father' from his singularly eligible abode upon the lovely lake of Slo-flo.[55] It is readily recognisable that, in contriving this 'True History', Lemon has drawn inspiration from within the English dramatic tradition: Si-so and Ting-a-ting are clearly modeled after Hermia and Lysander in the first part of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a pair deeply in love but forced to separate by Egeus, Hermia's father, who demanded his daughter to marry

[55] Lemon, 'A True History', p.65.

Demetrius — 'The course of true love never did run smooth,' (64) as Lemon quotes emphatically in 'True History'. What sets the Chinese lovers apart from Hermia and Lysander is that, while Hermia and Lysander planned to elope, Si-so and Ting-a-ting took their lives and ended up becoming the Chinese 'star-cross'd lovers', Romeo and Juliet. Also explicitly in 'True History', Lemon refers to Ting-a-ting as the 'celestial Leander' as he glides across Slo-flo, and Si-so the other 'Hero' as she daily watches him pass, hence sublating his story into the paradigms both of the Greek myth of Hero and Leander and Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*.[56] It would seem, then, that Lemon, in piecing together English sources to fabricate his Chinese tale, has ambiguated East-West difference and bound the two cultures closer to each other; but in so admixing Chinese and English elements what he plays up is in fact the incongruity between the two, which is where his humour, as well as his tacit critique, rests. In Lemon's Sinicised version, for instance, is a scene resembling what is colloquially known as 'the balcony scene' in *Romeo and Juliet*, where Si-so by the window of her chamber 'conversed' with Ting-a-ting from below:

> Something was thrown from above to somebody below. Smack! Smack! — somebody was kissing the something. It was a bunch of green-tea sprigs thrown down by Si-so, to show that she was awake. A slight rustling against the wall assured Chou-chu that *above* was receiving a reply from *below*. It was the branch of an ice-plant drawn up by a thread, by which Si-so learned that her lover was very cold. The reply was a capsicum, implying that

[56] The story of Hero and Leander was often alluded to in Shakespeare's works as well, such as in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In *As You Like It*, Shakespeare alluded to Marlowe as 'the dead shepherd' and quoted a line of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*; see Robert Sawyer, 'Shakespeare and Marlowe: Re-Writing the Relationship', *Critical Survey*, 21 (2009), 41–58 (p. 42).

> extremes meet, for Si-so was very hot with apprehension, for she fancied that she heard the shuffling of her father's slippers.[57]

Such a conversation by means of green tea, ice-plant, and capsicum, the symbolic meanings of which are too bizarre — too 'Oriental' and 'hieroglyphic' — to be graspable, de-romanticises what is perhaps the most romantic scene in British theatre and renders its recontextualisation into a Chinese form ridiculous and absurd. The same comic effect is sustained through to the death scene, where Si-so 'rushed towards her lover, who, kneeling, transfixed her with his tail, and "buried a dagger in his own heart"' (65) — a scene that, while distinctly evocative of Juliet's stabbing herself to death with Romeo's dagger, is nonetheless comicalised and absurdified by Ting-a-ting's 'transfixing' of Si-so with his Chinese pigtail. By making nonsense of the willow pattern and its 'true' history, Lemon underscores not only the cultural incommensurability between Britain and China but also the challenge its hybridity poses to rationality and aesthetics. A willow-pattern plate, ultimately, reflects its own ridiculousness and the ridiculousness of those who desire it and possess it; just as a willow-pattern plate is laughable, so too are the many nascent bourgeois who make a treasure out of such an English-made Chinese commodity.

It may be said that Lemon's 'True History' of the willow pattern is most creative in that the essay is itself an enactment of the alloyed, unreliable hybridity of the commodity it writes about, and that, as such, it turns the act of reading into an act of consumption that corresponds to the social and economic order it reflects and critiques. Like the Chinese 'CE-RA-NA-DE' (that is, 'serenade') Ting-a-ting sang to Si-So, Lemon's 'True History' is an English 'original' professing to be a 'translation' — a lie pretending to be true, like the ersatz willow-pattern plate that, rather than signifying class prestige, is but an emblem of

[57] Lemon, 'A True History', p.64.

the derisible middle-class pretension and pomposity.[58] It is in this sense that Lemon's 'True History' operates within the parameters of comical satire, which, in its jest and nonsense, is essentially critical and self-reflexive. Interestingly, despite its apparent nonsensicality, Lemon's 'True History' had indeed become the blueprint of what would for decades be taken as the true history of the willow pattern — an adaptation of his story, titled 'The Story of the Common Willow-Pattern Plate', was published in the *Family Friend* in 1849, and with the scores of scholarly footnotes the anonymous author attached to it, the story had for a time become a trusted account of the origin of the popular commodity. Lemon himself was obviously surprised by the fortune his 'nonsense' received; in reply to a series of notices about the willow pattern in *Notes and Queries* in 1867, he clarified thus:

> Some thirty years ago I wrote a piece of non-sense, and called it "A True History of the celebrated Wedgewood Hieroglyph, commonly called the Willow Pattern." It appeared in *Bentley's Magazine* at the time Mr. Charles

[58] Ting-a-ting's serenade reads thus:

CE-RA-NA-DE

(*Original.*)

" O-re ye-wi-te Slo-flo
Ic om-to mi Si-so
Sha min-ye ni-tin-ga le-s-ong-in ye-gro-fe
Op-in ye-lat-ti-ce
He-re me-o Tha-tis
I-fu-ra wa-kei-f no-twa-ken mi-lofe."

(*Translation.*)

" O'er the white Slo-flo,
I come to my Si-so,
Shaming the nightingale's song in the grove.
Open the lattice,
Hear me — oh! that is,
If you're awake: if not, waken, my love." (64)

Lemon's joke, obviously, is that the 'original' is really a translation of the 'translation' — an imitation of the sounds of the English version, which is the bona fide original.

> Dickens was the editor. I presume this is the story to which your contributors allude, and which possibly was reprinted in the *Family Friend*.[59]

The extent of the false belief alone has amply demonstrated Lemon's artistry and the influence his work effected, and it is unfortunate that Lemon's 'True History' has not received the scholarly attention it deserves, owing largely, I believe, to its professed absurdity. Patricia O'Hara, for instance, dismisses it as a 'wildly farcical' work that 'broadly burlesques the Chinese', and opens her '"cultural biography" of the willow pattern legend' instead with the story of the *Family Friend*.[60] Considering the recognition the latter story earned as the authentic version of the willow pattern legend, O'Hara's choice is, of course, justifiable; but to pass over Lemon's 'True History' is to leave out a particularly interesting specimen of cross-cultural literature that arises out of a highly domestic concern and against a specific social and literary context. It is by understanding chinoiserie as a social symbol and recognising its role in Victorian literature that we can fully appreciate the subtlety of Lemon's 'nonsense' as a social critique — a critique on the unnatural growth of the capitalistic and materialistic values in the Victorian society, camouflaged with a burlesque of the Orient, which the English, and especially the mushrooming middle class, adores for all its nonsensicality and ridiculousness.

[59] Mark Lemon, reply to 'The Willow Pattern', *Notes and Queries*, 8 June 1867, p. 461.
[60] Patricia O'Hara, '"The Willow Pattern That We Knew": the Victorian Literature of Blue Willow', *Victorian Studies*, 36 (1993), 421–42.

3.4 Trading Shakespeare with China: Douglas Jerrold's Cultural Satire

In the remainder of this chapter we consider Douglas Jerrold (1803–1857) and his engagement with China in 'Shakspeare [sic] in China', an essay first published in the *New Monthly* in 1837 and which has, since 1842, appeared in abridged form.[61] A popular dramatist, journalist, essayist, and fiction writer, Douglas Jerrold was an important literary figure of his day; his overcrowded funeral in 1857, the scene which Michael Slater picks out to open his biography, exemplifies what Richard Fulton remarks about the author's eminence: 'he knew personally every writer of influence in England at midcentury; certainly every writer, with or without influence, knew him'.[62] In the previous section I have mentioned in passing that Lemon came to be acquainted with Dickens through Jerrold's introduction, but Lemon and Jerrold were often talked of together not because of Dickens but because of *Punch*. A major and crucial *Punch* figure, Jerrold was, in Spielmann's words, the man 'who forced on *Punch* that admixture of Radicalism with his Whiggery', and 'the man to whom, more than to anyone else, the paper owed the enormous political influence it once enjoyed, and to whom it is indebted for much of the literary reputation it still retains'.[63] All through his life Jerrold was a radical liberal, more radical if not more liberal than Hood and Lemon added together; he was a dissenter against all forms of political and social injustice, whether it be the Corn Laws and game laws which he considered acts of starving the already starved, or the tax system that excluded tax on properties, or slavery, or class

[61] 'Shakespeare', the spelling we use today, was often spelled without the 'e' in the middle in the early 19th century. In 'Shakspeare in China' Jerrold mentions this spelling issue in the letter of Ching, a Chinese: 'Shak, or Shake, Speare or Spear; for there have been great tumults among the barbarians about the *e*'. The essay was first published in the *New Monthly Magazine* as 'Shakspeare in China', and its title remains the same when it was reprinted in *Cakes and Ale* (1842), edited by Jerrold himself, and *The Works of Douglas Jerrold* (1864), edited by his son Blanchard Jerrold. The title was changed to 'Shakespeare in China' in *The Essays of Douglas Jerrold*, edited by his grandson Walter Jerrold.
[62] Michael Slater, *Douglas Jerrold: 1803–1857* (London: Duckworth, 2002), pp. 1–5; Richard D. Fulton, 'Douglas Jerrold', in *British Short-Fiction Writers, 1800–1880*, ed. by John R. Greenfield (Detroit: Gale Research, 1996), pp. 167–80 (p. 169).
[63] Spielmann, p. 287; p. 284.

privilege, or capital punishment, or war.[64] In his means, too, Jerrold was given to the more rabid and uncompromising; his policy was one of 'stinging the rich into charity and justice' (355), and if his radicalism was honourable in the eyes of Spielmann, it was also tainted by the defects of oversimplicity: 'to him hypocrisy was the blackest of the vices, and kindness the sum of all the virtues. It mattered little that that kindness misplaced might bring a train of evils in its place'.[65] It is no surprise that Jerrold, with such extreme passion and purpose, was sometimes taken less as an artist and more as a preacher. What his critics said of him, albeit disparaging in one respect, is useful for our understanding of his works as a form of socio-political literature that, while not lacking in cultural consciousness, is produced to serve a cause: 'the moralist, the satirist, prevails in Mr. Jerrold over the artist. His creations are in most cases but vehicles for some feeling or opinion'.[66]

Indeed, when Jerrold tells a story, his characters and settings are prone to suffer from a kind of artificiality and formulaic dryness that undergirds the concrete and transparent end of his act of creation; but when he fires his satirical salvos at the condemnable, and for which he is released from the constraints of literary paradigms, that is when his sparks of creativity are ignited and his expression becomes more fecund and versatile. Reading Jerrold's short stories, Fulton has observed that his 'admirable protagonists — when he included admirable protagonists — are almost invariably of the working class, and those people who serve as symbols of corruption are generally the rich or the politically powerful. His rich are almost always misers […] [and] any working-class person who made lots of money inevitably became obsessed with riches and lived out his life as a solitary miser, hoarding his gold, cheating the rich and the poor alike, and coming to a bleak end'.[67] Such

[64] See, for example, Alan Fischler, 'Douglas Jerrold', in *British Reform Writers, 1789–1832*, ed. by Gary Kelly and Edd Applegate (Detroit: Gale Research, 1996), pp. 169–76.
[65] Spielmann, p. 287.
[66] 'Douglas Jerrold', *National Magazine*, January 1857, pp. 177–81 (p. 180).
[67] Fulton, p. 172.

a formula, naturally, has to be altered when Jerrold is being ironical, as in 'Nothing but Rags!', a satirical pseudo-Chinese tale he published in *Athenaeum* in 1832. The plot, in brief, is this: the protagonist Psu-fi, born from a family of virtue and wealth, was reduced to the most abject poverty after his father was cheated of all his riches; to support his parent he 'hardened the soft hand of ease' to become a porter in the city.[68] One day after duty, Psu-fi met an ugly old woman, who gave him a box and told him that the spirit inside would labour for him night and day — only that he should pay it '*nothing but rags*'. With the help of this labouring spirit, Psu-fi became rich again and restored his family's fortunes; but as Psu-fi was gentle in nature, 'it often smote him that for such costly gifts all he returned to the spirit was *rags*' (441). So Psu-fi, instead of rags, presented the spirit with a beautiful cloth of woven gold, and from that hour the spirit fled. Much regretted, Psu-fi at his deathbed ordered his son, Fo-fo, that should the spirit return he must pay for its labour '*nothing but rags*'. After Psu-fi passed away, the spirit returned, and Fo-fo, obeying his father's order, became the richest mandarin in China with the help of the spirit. At the close of the story, Jerrold writes:

> He never suffered the spirit to be idle. It built bridges, temples, streets, cut rivers, dug mines, travelled for luxuries to all corners of the earth, was a slave, a sweating slave; whilst Fo-fo, gorged with wealth, remembered his father's injunctions, and gave to the spirit, to the toiling wretched servant of his will — *nothing but rags*. Has not the Chinese mandarin left many descendants? (442)

[68] Doulgas Jerrold, 'Nothing but Rags!', *Athenæum*, 7 July 1832, pp. 441–42 (p. 441).

So ends this rather peculiar story, the moral of which is sufficiently obvious to a Christian well versed in the biblical parable of the rich man and Lazarus, as well as Bunyan's commentary on it, in *Pilgrim's Progress*. The rags are riches in the next world, while riches are nothing but rags there. To say that the Chinese mandarin has left many descendants is to ridicule the apostasy of those who build their wealth from the labourers they exploit, the group of people who, in 1832, benefited the most from the Reform Bill just passed. In wielding the tool of satire, Jerrold breaks free from his schematic characterisation: rather than a downright miser, Psu-fi is a kind-hearted rich man, whose genuine inability to reward the labouring spirit without breaking their pact ironically reiterates the very excuse modern misers seize on to vindicate their miserliness. The same tone of satirical cynicism would appear again in Jerrold's *Punch's Letters to His Son* (1843), in which Mr. Punch beats the drum for humbug and hypocrisy as the best manner of life in the modern world. It is precisely because 'the moralist, the satirist prevails in Mr. Jerrold' that Jerrold's moral and satire constitute the richest and the most precious ore of his art, although such an anchor, sometimes, does render his works highly topical, ephemeral, and confounding if not impenetrable.

'Shakspeare in China', one of Jerold's most creative satires, is just such a kind of work whose referentiality must be recovered before we can fully appreciate its purpose and significance. First published in June 1837 in the *New Monthly Magazine*, then edited by the great jester Theodore Hook, 'Shakspeare in China' is foremost a comical and generically integrative essay that fuses political commentary with social and cultural critique, and one that extends the essay form into the realm of journalism and fiction. Here Jerrold's imagination is founded on the idea of exchange, apropos of the then unstable and tensional Sino-British trade. As the monopoly of the East India Company was broken in 1833, British merchants began to trade freely and individually with China, only to realise, before long,

that not only was the legal trade of commodities difficult to carry out without the corporate advantage of EIC, but the illegal smuggling of opium — which the British government had long used to balance the trade deficit — was also difficult to operate in ways out of line with the established mechanism.[69] The Superintendent of Trade at Canton was supposed to smooth the way for the British traders, but its first appointee, Lord Napier, failed even to establish direct communication with the Chinese Viceroy, and ended up exchanging gunfire with China. Voices that demanded the dispatch of an expeditionary force to China were already heard in 1834. By 1836 the clamour for ministerial action reached home, with two pamphlets catching the attention of the British public: *The Present Position and Prospects of the British Trade with China* by James Matheson, and *Letter to the Right Honourable Viscount Palmerston, on British Relations with China* by Hugh Hamilton Lindsay, both of which, to borrow the words of *Athenæum*, 'are all for war, or for such manifestation of spirit and resolution as usually ends in war'.[70] The press in general disapproved of such warmongering; the *Athenæum*, for instance, was certain of the cost-ineffectiveness of a war, and the *Monthly Magazine* reproached Matheson and Lindsay for their erroneous claims about China's disrespectful attitude and the current status of the opium trade.[71] With no alternative proposal, the solution, it seemed, was either war or status quo. It was against this background that Jerrold proffered his ingenious recommendation to Lord Palmerston, the Foreign Secretary, in 'Shakspeare in China', suggesting that the China question could be solved by a cultural conquest in lieu of a military one on the strength of Shakespeare:

[69] For this part of history, see, for example, Brian Inglis, *The Opium War* (London: Hooder and Stoughton, 1976); Michael Greenberg, *British Trade and the Opening of China 1800–42* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951). We will look closer to the Opium War in the next chapter.
[70] 'Our Library Table', *Athenæum*, 16 April 1836, p. 272.
[71] See, for instance, 'The Chinese Government versus Opium', *Monthly Magazine*, June 1836, pp. 538–41. As we shall see in the next chapter, P. P. Thoms, an anti-war campaigner, had also published several works in the *Monthly Magazine*.

> England cannot […] refuse to aid in the dissemination of Shakspearanity in any corner of the world, but at the present interesting crisis, more particularly in the empire of China. The urgency of the case calls for immediate cooperation on the part of Great Britain, and we put it zealously but deferentially to Lord Palmerston to consider, and that instantly, the most effectual means. […] the time is now arrived to show our claims on the assistance of the Foreign Secretary, for the instant shipment of actors to the Celestial Empire.[72]

The prospect, Jerrold explains, is that 'in a few years the whole Celestial Empire will, in the fulness of its knowledge, bow to the majesty of the poet' (233). The core idea of Jerrold's proposal is that the trading of Shakespeare could take the place of the illicit opium trade to equilibrate trade balance; the Bard, as Jerrold says, is one 'which they [the Chinese] will "hail as a boon," and which we shall part with as drug' (235). What underlies Jerrold's analogy, obviously, is the similarity between Shakespeare and opium — both of them potent, both of them addictive, both of them stimulating — as must be the belief of Jerrold, a member of the Mulberry Club.[73] And yet, what serves as the grounds for such a proposal — and what comes as Jerrold's chief satirical thrust — is, rather than the popularity of Shakespeare, the uselessness of the Bard in England, and more generally the inutility of the national dramatic arts in a country favouring foreignness over domesticity and prizing economic success over cultural nourishment.

Perhaps because he was the son of a struggling actor and a provincial theatre manager who met with little success, and perhaps also because he was himself a playwright

[72] Douglas Jerrold, 'Shakspeare in China', *New Monthly Magazine*, June 1837, pp. 233–39 (pp. 233–35).
[73] The Mulberry Club, named after the mulberry tree allegedly planted by Shakespeare at his house, was a club for Shakespeare admirers. Jerrold joined the club about the end of 1824. See Blanchard Jerrold, *The Life and Remains of Douglas Jerrold* (London: W. Kent, 1859), p. 312–18.

who hardly made ends meet, Jerrold was very much concerned about the livelihood and welfare of the theatre people and the declining state of the English stage. Jerrold's deep indignation over the way Britain treats her own artists finds expression in 'Shakspeare in China':

> At no point of time could we spare so many actors for exportation; the pain of the sacrifice being somewhat alleviated by an indifference on the part of the town whether they ever returned again. Yes; it is but too evident that we have arrived at that enviable state of high civilization when mere passion, and mere human character, as shown in the theatre, are deemed the remnants of a gross and ignorant age, and shunned by the genteel accordingly. […] Caring little about them ourselves, we are in the happiest vein to be liberal by shipping them to the Chinese.[74]

The 1830s was, in a sense, a disastrous decade for national theatres. Many in the literary and theatrical circles resented the management of Alfred Bunn, who took over both Covent Garden and Drury Lane in 1833, and who, as the *Court Magazine* censured, 'changed the national theatre into an Opera House […] [which] was neither flesh, fish, nor fowl, neither English, French, nor Italian, but a heterogenous compound of all three'.[75] It came as an even harder blow for the culturati that Bunn was succeeded by D. W. Osbaldiston, who leased Covent Garden in 1835. Readers of the *New Monthly* were no stranger to Osbaldiston as one 'possessed by the single desire to make money on any terms' by 'converting the golden lines of Shaskpeare [sic] into the current coin of the realm' and one equally inclined to 'seek

[74] Jerrold, 'Shakspeare in China', p. 234.
[75] 'On the Mismanagement of the National Theatres', *Court Magazine*, January 1837, pp. 68–72 (p. 71).

the barren shore of vulgar taste'; the magazine was most offended by one week of performance in early December 1836, in which 'Shakspeare is succeeded by a zoological show'.[76] Under Osbaldiston's management, actors were discharged at will and sometimes left unpaid; criticising Osbaldiston by name, *The Satirist* relates how he refused to pay actors their salary for a two-night performance and urges him to show honour as the lessee of Covent Garden.[77] All this was taken up by Jerrold, who, with tongue in cheek, speaks of 1837 as the golden time for 'the exportation of our surplus actors', when the British national theatres are filled up by 'jumping negro', 'talking comedy', and 'exotics of a rare and delicate flavour', when British actors are treated with disdain, and when the manager of Covent Garden held such passionate devotion to the Bard as to 'betray him into an agreeable confusion of dates' and 'play a bit of him between an opera and a dance'.[78] To propose to trade Shakespeare with China and to declare it beneficial to Britain is a joke, but it is, for Jerrold, a joke indignantly, exasperatedly, and bitterly told. The crisis Bunn and Osbaldiston brought about reflected not only the decline of the national theatres but also, in a subtler sense, the decline of national taste and national arts — which was a curse to British actors, British dramatists, and the British culture as a whole.

Few readers after 1837 would be aware of the topical relevance of 'Shakspeare in China' to this episode of British theatrical history because the entire part about 'the inutility of Shakspeare in England' was edited out when the essay was collected into *Cakes and Ale* in 1842. Ever since, the essay has been presented to readers in its revised form — a form that, with hindsight, weakens its satirical thrust. The reason for such a revision is plausibly that, at the height of resentment, the great actor William Macready took over Covent Garden

[76] 'The Drama', *New Monthly Magazine*, December 1836, pp. 515–16 (p. 515). The 'zoological show' the writer alludes to was *Thalaba the Destroyer*, in which was exhibited 'horses, bulls, a camel, carriages, and other stage monstrosities'. See 'The Play-Goer', *London Dispatch and People's Political and Social Reformer*, 4 December 1836, p. 6.
[77] 'Covent-Garden', *The Satirist*, 1 May 1836, p. 142.
[78] Jerrold, 'Shakspeare in China', p. 234.

from Osbaldiston in late 1837 and brought with him a revival of Shakespearean plays. The circumstance in 1842, it seemed, had wrested away the basis upon which Jerrold's satire could be unsceptically comprehended. The fact that the essay was originally intended to be a satire, however, remains significant for our understanding of what is left in its present form, and serves to remind us that, comical and far-fetched as it appears to be, it was written not purely for amusement but with a purpose.

It is important to call attention to Jerrold's satirical conception because the centrepiece of the essay — a commentary on Shakespeare and Falstaff written by a Chinese, which Jerrold presents to his readers as an evidence of China's interest in the Bard and, ergo, the feasibility of his proposal — is, despite its comical form, a most serious petition that calls for his readers to reflect upon the oddity of the socio-cultural norms and standards that govern their lives. As Jerrold's narrative goes, this most intriguing piece of Chinese curiosity was discovered by the narrator's friend Peregrine 'at an auction of curiosities from the East' (235). There Peregrine bid for a picture very much out of character with the occasion:

> As it was a scene from Shakspeare there were of course no opposing bidders, and he became the owner of what proved to be an exquisite evidence of Chinese art and imitation; in brief, no other than a copy, faithfully drawn, and most brilliantly coloured, by an artist at Canton, of the Boydell picture of Falstaff in the buck-basket, and the Merry Wives. (235)

It was in this picture of Falstaff, in-between the picture and the frame, that Peregrine found a letter from Ching, a mandarin, to Ting, a painter; in which is contained an essay on Shakespeare and Falstaff, which, as it later transpired, 'has been printed by its author in at

least one of the Canton journals' (235). Shakespeare, that is to say, is already known in China; so valuable is the letter as a historical record that 'the picture […] proved in itself to be of little value compared to the essay found' (235). It is not difficult to observe Jerrold's meaningful design in such a setting: he is presenting to his readers what they desire and deem valuable — an exquisite specimen of Oriental curiosity — but one that is contained within the Shakespeare that they despise, and one that could never have been discovered if Shakespeare remains unrecognised and unbought. Rather than the comical Chinese letter, what is really comical is that the author of 'Shakspeare in China' has had to entice his readers into thinking about Shakespeare by fabricating a Chinese letter about Shakespeare — that Shakespeare could only survive as a kind of commodity, and in the form of a ridiculous, orientalised entertainment.

As a kind of 'evidence' on China's appreciation of the Bard, Ching's commentary is characteristically amusing in that it is at once highly informative and misinformative, at once reasonable and absurd, and at once imprudent and thoughtful. He speaks of Shakespeare as a saint, 'Forlstoff' as the son of Shakespeare, and the English theatre as a temple in which the British pay worship — a misunderstanding of a foreigner when literally perceived, but a perceptive metaphor when figuratively interpreted.[79] His reasoning is not deprived of logic, but his logic is fundamentally problematic: he concludes, from Shakespeare's nickname the 'swan of Haveone' (i.e. Swan of Avon, a tribute by Ben Jonson) and the building of the 'Swan Theatre', that the British believe their saint to have been 'hatched in an egg on the bank of a river'; and, judging from the little historical record left of Shakespeare's wife, and that Shakespeare gave her nothing but his 'second-best bed' in

[79] Here Jerrold makes fun of 'bardolatory' (a term coined by George Bernard Shaw), which refers to the excessive adulation of Shakespeare, including the veneration of him as 'divine'. Although bardolatory was a phenomenon in both the 18th and 19th centuries, the Victorian period was 'the most visible phase of the intertwined Shakespearean and Biblical afterlives which have long and varied histories'. See *Shakespeare, the Bible, and the Form of the Book: Contested Scriptures*, ed. by Travis DeCook and Alan Galey (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 12.

his will, Ching deduces that she was 'an idle person, given to great sleep and sloth'.[80] The Chinese critic is able to chronicle the life of Shakespeare, but is liberal in his use of unsubstantiated facts, sometimes with a figment of his own imagination: that, for instance, Shakespeare was 'forced to fly to London' from home 'for having stolen an antelope' (236) (referring to the myth that the Bard was prosecuted for the poaching of a deer); or that Shakespeare 'held the horses of the rich barbarians who came to worship at a temple on the bank of the river' (237) (referring to the story of him holding horses for gentlemen patrons of the London theatres), and it was because 'he learned to make shoes for the horses' (237) that the British formed the habit of nailing shoes at the threshold of their houses and barns.

It is clear that no English readers could fail to see the ridiculousness of Ching's account of Shakespeare, an account grounded in false facts, fancies, and to some extent disrespect. But what comes as even more ridiculous is that this peculiarly Chinese account of the Bard is precisely the British way of discoursing about Shakespeare, which Jerrold regards with contempt. In praise of Ching's prowess, Jerrold says:

> Our Mandarin has herein displayed very popular abilities for the difficult task of a commentator, no one who has read many volumes of Shakspearian commentaries will, we believe, deny. It is observable that in many instances he makes his facts; a custom of particular advantage to the indulgence of the most peculiar opinions and conclusions. We have read some writers who, deprived of this privilege, would really have nothing to write upon. The pleasure of making a giant, great as it possibly may be, cannot be comparable to the delight of killing him, our own handiwork. (238)

[80] Jerrold, 'Shakspeare in China', p. 236.

It may be said, therefore, that Ching's essay is a parody of the popular fact-making Shakespearean commentaries — the fabrication of history, the exploitation of ill-founded reports, the forced association of unrelated observations, the mythologisation of a giant — all of which, instead of invigorating the Bard, is killing him. Jerrold abhors such distortions and the fact that they are made simply to beguile readers with 'the most peculiar opinions and conclusions'. Ching's opinion on Falstaff is precisely this kind of ornate, play-to-the-gallery manoeuvre:

> For the habits of Forlstoff, if they were not quite as virtuous as those of Fo, it was, perhaps, the fault of his times; for we have his own words to prove that they were once those of the best barbarians. He swore but few oaths — gambled but once a day —paid his debts four times — and took recreation only when he cared for it. He loved sack — a liquor that has puzzled the heads of the learned — without eggs, and was extraordinarily temperate in bread. (239)

If such a view looks like an exaggeration of the prevailing mode of Shakespearian commentary at Jerrold's time, we only have to compare it with the view of William Maginn on Falstaff to find the striking similarity between them. In the first of his influential 'Shakspeare Papers', published in *Bentley's Miscellany* just one month before Jerrold's 'Shakspeare in China' in the rivalling *New Monthly*, Maginn commented:

> Of his being a thief and a glutton I shall say a few words anon; but where does he cheat the weak or prey upon the poor, — where terrify the timorous or insult the defenceless, — where is he obsequious, where malignant, —

> where is he supercilious and haughty with common men, — where does he think his interest of importance to the Duke of Lancaster? [81]

Maginn, in his 'Shakspeare Papers', asks his readers to put Falstaff 'back to the actual era in which his date is fixed, and judge him by the manners of that time' (anticipating Ching's idea of 'the fault of his times'), and concludes that Falstaff's behaviour is not incompatible with gentility, that Falstaff is not a thief, and that Falstaff is not a glutton. The similarity between Ching's ludicrous commentary and Maginn's essay, in both their language and substance, suggests that Jerrold found in such discourses a larger store of humour than truth, and an extraordinary — almost foreign — vision that is more properly appreciated as a joke. However much Ching's commentary on Falstaff seems to be a parody of Maginn's — and however much Jerrold might have disliked what his grandson called 'that irresponsible man of many talents', who allegedly was in debt to Jerrold for six years[82] — it is presented not as a lampoon of one individual but of many: 'We put it to the impartial reader whether Ching, in the above estimate of the character of Falstaff, has not entitled himself to take rank with many Shakspearian commentators'.[83]

A Chinese may be pardoned for misrepresenting Shakespeare, but the same could not be said of the people indebted to their national poet. In identifying the foreign, ignorant, and misguided Chinese 'bardolator' with the English critics, Jerrold makes his renouncement and gives us to understand that, if readers were to deem the Chinese Shakespearean commentary absurd and imbecilic, there is no better sign of the need to

[81] William Maginn, 'Shakspeare Papers. — No. I. Sir John Falstaff', *Bentley's Miscellany*, May 1837, pp. 494–508 (p. 500). Maginn's papers were first collected by Shelton Mackenzie into *The Shakespeare Papers of the Late William Maginn* in 1856, published in New York, and from the editor's preface we could see how much attention Maginn's papers had received both in England and abroad. Bentley published his papers in London later, in 1859, as *Shakspeare Papers: Pictures Grave and Gay*, and in 1860, as *Shakspeare Papers*.
[82] Walter Jerrold, *Douglas Jerrold: Dramatist and Wit*, 2 vols (London; New York; Toronto: Hodder and Stoughton, 1914), I, p. 132.
[83] Jerrold, 'Shakspeare in China', p. 239.

rectify the direction upon which the literary, cultural, and theatrical cult in England is heading. For indeed Jerrold has made it clear that the Chinese misunderstanding arises from the fault of his own countrymen — Ching is believed to have gathered his views from 'some enlightened but obscure supercargo' (235), and his commentary is said to be 'a correct translation' of 'an agent of Dr. Morrison' (233), whose literal translation of *yimu* (foreign commander) into 'barbarian eyes' had become one of the main causes of Sino-British tension.[84] Interestingly, Jerrold also contrives that this agent of Dr. Morrison has 'successfully rendered "The Hygeist" into the most classical Chinese, and has thereby given an extraordinary fillip to our shipping trade'.[85] *The Hygeist* was a journal of James Morison, the vendor of what were called 'Universal Pills', a cure-all widely advertised in England in the 1830s and 1840s, and is remembered today largely because of Thomas Carlyle's essay, 'Morrison's [sic] Pill', in *Past and Present* (1843): 'Brothers, I am sorry I have got no Morrison's [sic] Pill for curing the maladies of Society'.[86] Jerrold's jest, naturally, is a play on the names of Morrison and Morison, and may also have been a play on the affinity between medicine and opium, but the allusion to Morison's pills gestures toward a deeper reading: that Shakespeare may be a cure for Sino-British conflict — that the Chinese misreading may be a corrective to the British mutilation of her own society — that culture, after all, is the universal pill of a nation.

We have, in this chapter, looked at how 'things Chinese' serves to inspire and channel critical reflections that literary writers had in response to the changes of social structure and mores that characterised the 1830s — a period when political reform created a sense of class consciousness that was to last for another decade, when the rise of a massive

[84] For a discussion about the history of the translation of 'barbarian eyes', see, for example, Lydia H. Liu, *The Clash of Empires: The Invention of China in Modern World Making* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 42–49.
[85] Jerrold, 'Shakspeare in China', p. 233.
[86] William H. Helfand, *Drugs and Pharmacy in Prints* (American Institute of the History of Pharmacy, 1967), p. 24; Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1843), p. 29.

middle class celebrated its own social and cultural dominance, and when the pitfalls of urbanisation and modernisation became increasingly apparent in a polarised, commercialised, and deculturated society. 'Things Chinese', as a vehicle of social expression, does not stand 'pure' as things foreign, strange, and far away but finds its symbolic relevance in its domestic integrativeness and social penetrability; it is as a hybrid, as a commodity that blurs the distinction between selfhood and otherness, that 'things Chinese' enacts a questioning, an interrogation, and a re-thinking of what the self is in a society that seemed to have lost, at least as our writers reckoned, itself. But while such a sense of trepidation about the loss of self-identity seems to suggest a nationalistic or ethnocentric fear of miscegenation, or what John Barrell describes as the 'infection' of the East, what is truly fearful is a kind of disrupted apoptosis that, despite its contribution to the growth cycle, ends in self-devouring and degradation. Thomas Hood, in 'Summer — A Winter Eclogue', laments the way tea trade has turned summer into winter, the countryside into a brick-red city, and Britain into China ('Many times I have believed myself to be dwelling in Canton, and that my name was Hum'); and yet it is not for the 'tea tray' itself, but for the people's greediness in purloining domestic rural resources (Camberwell tea-leaves) for the production of counterfeit Chinese tea, that caused the country to change shape.[87] 'Such a misfortune was never before read in a tea-cup!' (52), Hood says. Indeed, while British writers had been reading the fortune of Britain in a Chinese teacup since the last century, never was the commodity a more potent symbol of class division, capitalist excess, and spiritual decay than at a time when the society was in its fastest phase of economic development and socio-cultural changes. Being a part of this change, and especially being intermediate to the true beneficiaries and victims of such a social and cultural remodeling, literary writers were naturally exposed to the contrariety of realities the

[87] [Thomas Hood], 'Summer — A Winter Eclogue', *Comic Annual*, 1834, pp. 44–55 (p. 51).

society faced, and felt in its ridiculousness their own share of challenge. It comes as no surprise that all the writers we discuss in this chapter were, in one way or another, associated with that most influential and radical comic magazine *Punch*. Perhaps what William Thackeray said of English humorists best summarises the relationship between comic writers and their social consciousness: 'A literary man of the humoristic turn is pretty sure to be of a philanthropic nature, to have a great sensibility, to be easily moved to pain or pleasure, keenly to appreciate the varieties of temper of people round about him, and sympathise in their laughter, love, amusement, tears. […] I am sure, at any rate, that the best humour is that which contains most humanity, that which is flavoured throughout with tenderness and kindness'.[88]

[88] William Makepeace Thackeray, *The English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century, and Charity and Humour*, ed. by Edgar F. Harden (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), p. 196.

CHAPTER FOUR

In War with a Pantomimic China: Writing the First Opium War

4.1 Introduction

> The quizzical was thy distinctive attribute, my Chinaman; and dear wast thou to every titillated fibre of our midriffs as the purest embodied figure of fun. All this is at an end, or soon will be so. We shall see the Chinese simply as they are: habit will blunt our perception of their oddities, which will seem, too, less odd when viewed in connexion with their causes — in the concrete, and not in the abstract — in their systematic consistency, and not as fragmentary expressions torn from their context.
>
> Walter Keating Kelly,
>
> 'Chit-chat on China and the Tea-things' (1843)[1]

In this last chapter I consider the writing of China during the First Opium War (1840–1842), the first war ever fought between Britain and China, and the one war that marked the end of China's millennia-old isolationist policy toward the West. A defining moment in Anglo-Chinese relations, the Opium War was not only a war of army but also a war of idea and revelation; it brought to light the incompatible views of the two imperial formations over

[1] Walter Keating Kelly, 'Chit-chat on China and the Tea-things', *Monthly Magazine*, January 1843, pp. 33–39 (pp. 33–34).

sovereignty and international order, exposed the inevitable clash of civilisations that attended Britain's economic expansion, and, perhaps most crucially for the British public, turned China from an abstraction into a concrete reality. As Walter Kelly remarked in 1843, China had always been 'a land wrapped in a delicious appetizing mystery, where Fancy might revel to her heart's delight, secure from the importunities of Truth' (33), and the Opium War was the final stroke that razed to the ground this 'last asylum' of fancy and imagination hitherto 'impervious to our matter-of-fact generation' (33). In the previous chapters we have seen how such force of fancy operates to harness the symbolic power of China and mould it into a vehicle of critique and reflection. As war approached, China was no longer a pure metaphor but a real object of knowledge and attention. How, then, did writers reconcile the force of fancy with what was beginning to supersede it, the force of fact and reality, in their writing of China? What does it mean when they write China into a fusion of fancy and fact, at the critical time of war and bloodshed? These are the questions I seek to explore in this chapter. In thinking about the relationship between China, literature, and the war, what I hope to show is that the unique place China held in the British imagination produced a special kind of wartime writing that, operating within the literary cult of 'sporting' with China, reflects a special kind of war sentiment experienced by the British writers amid the Anglo-Chinese war.

I shall not enter into meticulous details about the Opium War but will sketch its cause and development in such a way that the domestic responses to it can be understood.[2] The trade friction between Britain and China, in this regard, can be traced back to 1833

[2] For those who look for a detailed history of the First Opium War, see, for instance, Inglis; Greenberg; Peter Ward Fay, *The Opium War, 1840–1842: Barbarians in the Celestial Empire in the Early Part of the Nineteenth Century and the War by which They Forced Her Gates Ajar* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975); Glenn Melancon, *Britain's China Policy and the Opium Crisis*: *Balancing Drugs, Violence and National Honour, 1833–1840* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003); Harry G. Gelber, *Opium, Soldiers and Evangelicals: England's 1840–42 War with China and its Aftermath* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Song-Chuen Chen, *Merchants of War Peace: British Knowledge of China in the Making of the Opium War* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2017).

when the trade monopoly of the East India Company with China was revoked under the notion of free trade. What happened afterwards we have mentioned *en passant* in the previous chapter: British merchants found their way to China, and soon grew discontented about the restrictions China imposed upon them, such as the single-port system and the Hong system. The Napier incident in 1834 was the catalyst for the first drum for war; when Lord Napier, the newly appointed Superintendent of Trade, tried to enter Canton without a passport, he was rejected by the Chinese authorities and was forced to move to Macau, where he died prematurely of illness. The incident prompted the British merchants in Canton to lobby for war at London, with a view to making major changes to the Chinese trade system. They called attention to the ill treatment British merchants received in Canton — citing the correspondences between the Chinese viceroy and the British merchants as evidence — and pleaded with the British government for military intervention to defend Britain's national honour against Chinese insolence. It was at this time that the translation of *yi*, a character repeatedly used in Chinese official documents to refer to foreigners, became an issue of national importance and debate; the warlike party charged that the word meant 'barbarians', while the anti-war party maintained that it meant, simply, 'foreigners'.[3] With the intelligence they gathered in China, the Canton merchants also vouched for the ease of winning — Lindsay in his open letter to Palmerston estimated that a single digit of frigates, corvettes, steamers, and a few thousand troops would suffice to secure victory.[4] National honour and cost-effectiveness — these two would become the primary war rhetoric of the British government when it waged war on China in 1839, as a result of China's confiscation of loads of opium on British trade ships.

[3] Lydia Liu and Song-Chuen Chen have both made a comprehensive and informative study of the translation of *yi* and *yimu*. See Liu, pp. 34–69; Chen, pp. 82–102.
[4] In 1834 Lindsay asked Palmerston for only 'one line-of-battle ship, two large frigates, six corvettes, and three or four armed steamers, having on board a land force of about six hundred men', and in June 1840 what the British government dispatched was, indeed, a mere 'sixteen ships of war, four armed steamers, one troopship, and twenty-seven transports (small boats), with 4,000 troops'. See Chen, pp. 114–5.

The first Anglo-Chinese War was known as the Opium War precisely because of the role opium played in the clash. Opium was prohibited in China as early as in the second decade of the eighteenth century, but the volume of opium trade continued to rise over the years, with a dramatic increase in the 1830s. Enforcement of the Chinese imperial edicts against opium smuggling was toughened in 1838, and in 1839 anti-opium campaigns in China reached their height as Lin Zexu received from the Chinese emperor the special appointment of Imperial Commissioner to exterminate the opium trade. Armed conflicts eventually occurred in late 1839. All this time the Canton merchants had been discussing the issue with Melbourne, the Prime Minister, and Palmerston, the Foreign Secretary. Soon after the first battle was fought in Hong Kong, the Melbourne cabinet decided to wage war. The decision, however, was kept from the Parliament and the public until the summer of 1840. When the decision was made known to all, the Tories tabled a discussion on the issue in the House of Commons on 7 April 1840, and after three days of debate the Whig government survived a motion of no confidence by a margin of only nine votes. Narrow or not, the Whig government had won, and the British expeditionary force was officially dispatched to China in June 1840.

It was thus that the Opium War was often considered an economic war. Underlying the war were, of course, issues about the clash of civilisations, the difference in British and Chinese political and legal systems, the British colonial expansion, the 'inner war' between Chinese officials, and so forth, but the most prominent driver behind the war was recognised, then and now, to be the economic motive on the part of Britain.[5] That such an interest was manifest in the form of opium, a deleterious drug, was the chief reason behind public

[5] James M. Polachek describes the internal power struggle between two clans of Chinese officials during the period as the 'inner' Opium War. When I refer to the 'inner' Opium War in this chapter, however, I mean the inner war fought within Britain — the war between the Whigs and the Tories, and between the ruling government and its dissidents. For Polachek's idea, see James M. Polachek, *The Inner Opium War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1992).

contention. For people of a religious moral order, in particular, such an act of aggression was hardly justifiable; Algernon Thelwall, for instance, published *Iniquities of the Opium Trade with China* forthwith, calling the opium trade 'a traffic which brought the greatest dishonor upon the British flag', and William Jay made his plea by denouncing the war as 'trophies gained, not from the Chinese soldiers, or from a field of battle, but from the harmless and peaceable inhabitants and tradesmen of a city doomed to destruction by our men of war'.[6] The *Spectator*, a paper of no particular religious or political affiliations, spoke likewise of the war as 'sheer butchery', and asked whether it was 'a sign of morality to do all this in order that a poisonous drug may be smuggled into the markets of China'.[7] The moral pitfall at stake was well recognised by the warlike clan. James Matheson, early in 1839, had written to John Abel Smith and William Jardine asking them 'to secure the services of some leading newspaper to advocate the cause'.[8] Lindsay, who campaigned for war in 1836 with his open letter to Palmerston, now turned to pamphlet the public with *Is the War with China a Just One?* in 1840. Rather than making his lobbying an appeal for help of the embittered merchants, he now addressed the question of the opium trade, denying it as smuggling but a trade openly sanctioned by the British government and the Chinese officials alike. Opium, he argued, was less injurious to health and morals than gin, and as the Chinese had violated international laws, the British were in the right to avenge the insults they had long suffered from Chinese hands. These were also the arguments of the government, under the leadership of the pro-war Whigs.

It must be understood that the controversy over the Opium War was not only about the dilemma between economics and morality but also about party struggle and survival.

[6] A. S. Thelwall, *Iniquities of the Opium Trade with China* (London: Wm. H. Allen, 1839), p. 2; William Jay, 'National Honor: A Plea for War', *Advocate of Peace*, September 1842, pp. 225–30; quoted in Chen, p. 130.
[7] 'Progress of the Opium War', *Spectator*, 29 October 1842, pp. 1043–44 (p. 1043; p. 1044).
[8] Matheson to Smith, 6 May 1839 (enclosing Matheson to Jardine, 1 May), James Matheson Private Letter Books, vol. 4, JM; quoted in Fay, *The Opium War,* p. 191.

Although the Whigs were the ruling party, they were not in the majority and were under constant attacks from the Tories over issues such as fiscal mismanagement and the Far East trade question.[9] Ireland was in a state of revolt in the late 1830s, and in England the Chartist movement was at its height. While the Opium War, for the Whigs, was a means to secure their ruling position, it was also for the dissident factions a means to thwart and combat their governance. Already in 1835 anti-war campaign was imbued with political colouring: it was with a Tory spirit that Terence O'Ruark, for instance, called Napier an 'impudent Whig, who, in Whig-like fashion thought to bully these Easterns, and in the most approved fashion of *liberality* to go into *their* country, and treat their laws and customs with most lordly contempt'.[10] The Tories apart, it may be said that those who were engaged in social movements — and hence siding with the oppressed — generally mobilised against the war. George Thompson, an anti-slavery activist, toured around the northern cities disseminating anti-war messages, condemning the opium trade as 'widely and fatally injurious'.[11] The Chartists, too, were in general war protestors; *The Charter*, speaking on behalf of the working classes, declared that China was

> destined to destruction by the horrors of civilised warfare for refusing to be poisoned by opium. We doubt the morality of this, and we tell these journals who prate about National Honour that the working classes of this country will no longer lend themselves to a system of commerce which is supported by such means.[12]

[9] For the power struggle between the Whigs and the Tories at that time, see Melancon and Chen.
[10] Terence O'Ruark, 'Passages from the Diary of Terence O'Ruark', *Dublin University Magazine*, March 1835, pp. 312–19 (p. 318).
[11] George Thompson, *Report of a Public Meeting and Lecture at Darlington on China and the Opium Question* (Durham: J. H. Veitch, 1840), p. 6; quoted in Chen, p. 130.
[12] *The Charter*, 12 January 1840, p. 8; quoted in Shijie Guan, 'Chartism and the First Opium War', *History Workshop Journal*, 24 (1987), 17–31 (p. 19).

The Northern Star ridiculed 'Opium Elliot' (Charles Elliot was the Chief Superintendent of Trade in China and the plenipotentiary during the Opium War) and the reformed government as the tools of shopkeepers, and lamented that 'we now act literally on the maxim of a matron to her son, going, for the first time to school — "Never fight, but with those whom you know you can beat"'.[13] An interesting illustration in *Cleave's Penny Gazette* pictures Elliot as a 'buccaneer' holding 'yon chopstick' in ransom and declaring that his gang fought not for national honour but money (see Figure 8).[14] For most in the anti-war clan, the Opium War was a kind of bullying, and those who thought themselves bullied by the same hegemony found natural rapport with China. Chen Song-Chuan has observed that, from 1840 to 1843, descriptions of the Opium War as 'unjust', an object of 'guilt', a 'shame', 'a national sin', and a 'shame on the honour of England' were by no means thin on the ground, although 'history remembers little of the war protests'.[15] That the voices of dissension had such a richness could not be done away with the political and social climate of the time, and while it seemed to identify the pro-war and anti-war division with a sort of simplistic pro-China and anti-China attitude, the question was in fact a much subtler and more complicated one.

I have elaborated on the public responses to the Opium War to show how the China question, commingled with issues of foreign trade, party politics, and social unrest, was a highly politicised issue raised at a highly politicised moment. Writing China, or the Opium War, at such a moment was also to engage in a politicised act, but we are liable to observe how literary writers sought to approach the China question from an entirely different way than other practitioners in the society. Earlier I have spoken of the force of fancy that

[13] *Northern Star*, 18 January 1840, p. 4; *Northern Star*, 4 April 1840, p. 4; quoted in Melancon, pp. 118–19.
[14] *Cleave's Penny Gazette*, 23 October 1841, p. 1.
[15] Chen, p. 132; p. 126.

Figure 8 'Buccaneerism in China', *Cleave's Penny Gazette* (1841)

(The caption reads:
ELLIOT… Life or money, yon chopstick. Deliver up Six Million of Dollars or we'll plunder Canton and then set it in blazes. Dy'e think we fight for National Honour? Not we. We fight for Money, at home or abroad. So fork out y'r Syccee with a salam, my flowery Celestial.')

lingered with the idea of China in the realm of literature; it is my purpose to explore how literary writers approached the realities of war — both the 'outer' and the 'inner' wars — with this power of fancy that had, for generations, attended their imagination of the quizzical China. As we shall see, what is central to their writing of China during the war period is the idea that there is more about the China question than can be approached from a politicised perspective; invoking China as an ineradicable part of British domestic life and memories, as a site of imagination that bridges the past and the present, or as a literal nation that is home to another human race, these writings call attention to the way the Opium War embodies a dimension of living experience that is not the subject of politicians, economists, and even moralists and yet concerns the people of a nation who, in one way or another, have grown intimate with that remote country that is now turned a foe. The *Punch* writer Albert Smith, in a short essay published in the *Mirror*, made his perspective on the issue clear:

> We are not about to enter into a political controversy […] We are not going to bring forward any statistics of tea, rhubarb, and opium; neither can we give the reader any information upon the state of the workhouses, or names of the board of guardians in various parishes pertaining to the Canton, Macao, or Chusan unions; but we do not see why we should not say *our* few words upon the Chinese Question, which seems so troublesome to answer, the more so as we are an ardent admirer of the refreshing beverage […] in addition that we adore little feet and ivory cravings, and that we especially lean to the old blue-pattern plates and dishes.[16]

[16] Albert Smith, 'The War with China (Our Own Notions of It)', *Mirror*, March 1841, pp. 181–83 (p. 181).

These opening lines of Smith's essay, meaningfully titled 'The War with China (Our Own Notion of It)', not only give a gist of the complexity of the Chinese question — as if one is not entitled to say a few words upon it without some possessions of statistics and information — but also what Smith thinks entitle him and all British in general to such a discourse — that China means something to them personally, if only through domestic trivia and subjective preference. This, then, is a highly individualised, domestic, and microscopic perspective, gleaned from a rich literary tradition of fancying about China in abstraction. We shall see how such a perspective, in different manifestations, characterises the wartime writings of Thomas Hood, Alfred Crowquill, and Thomas Sealy, and how it frames a discourse about the Chinese war that is uniquely literary in its vantage point.

We shall also see the prevalence of humour in their works, which, uncommon as it is as an element of wartime writing, cements the legacy of Romantic and pre-Romantic China to the Victorian era and constitutes a unique mode of self-reflection within the wider context of the 'outer' and 'inner' Opium War. Smith, in his essay, recalls his impression upon China through literature, chinoiserie, and stage performance, and expresses the surprise and amusement he finds in a war with China:

> When we first heard there was a prospect of a war with China, we regarded it as a rumour of extreme eccentricity — a piece of exquisite humour, replete with droll actions and engagements. […] We were a long time bringing ourselves to think that the Chinese were a nation of men and women; in fact, human beings, who thought, moved, and acted in a manner similar to ourselves. We much more readily inclined to the opinion that they were a race of supernaturally animated ornaments, who wore inverted basins for head-dresses, and kept odd-shaped dragons and monsters, all claws and

> crockery, for their domestic animals. We pictured to ourselves their abodes, made of porcelain painted all sorts of colours, and thatched with rice paper. […] In their stage encounters, one English sailor generally fought twelve at once, all of whom he finally put to flight, having cut off their pigtails, or whirled them round by these appendages, like horizontal bandalores, until they were choked. And is it true, we asked ourselves, that the Government is seriously thinking of going to war with these grotesque beings? (182)

For the British public in general, centuries of connecting with China through the mere means of ornaments and decorations had invested in their imagination of China and the Chinese a kind of comic quality inseparable from the minutiae of everyday life. China hardly formed a normative 'nation', and the Chinese were but a peculiar 'race of supernaturally animated ornaments', crowding a home and a stage in old Britain. In Smith's essay as in the writings we are about to discuss, to make fun of China — which can come close to ridicule — is not only to dilate upon Chinese peculiarities as a source of imagination but also to hark back to a tradition of seeing China through its embodiment in the form of chinoiserie and entertainment. In the previous chapters we have seen an abundance of this kind of fun-making, but it could assume a significantly different meaning in times of war. Smith's essay gives us to understand how an enduring tradition of miniaturising, absurdifying, and metaphorising China may now come to assist in drawing an entirely different picture of the war:

> Why, we should have thought that one small cannon-ball would have crashed through twenty of them at once, splintering and smashing them in all directions. It appeared perfectly cowardly in our nation to think for an

> instant of attacking in reality a set of poor scaramouches, who resided in inverted tea-cups on a large scale, lived on paper-shavings and fried silkworms, and whose most inspiring war-music was comprised in a band of copper stewpans and instruments formed by bits of tendons stretching over inflated bladders. […] Why it is that the whole empire has not, long before this, been blown entirely to atoms by our guns, we are at a loss to conceive. British humanity must be the only obstacle to such a performance. But if they are still insolent, we counsel instant and unmitigated annihilation of the whole of them; for what would all our former glories avail us, in the page of history, if we were finally jockeyed by a tribe of nodding mandarins, crockery-haking savages, painters of rice paper, and manufacturers of chopsticks and feather fans? (183)

Resorting to the fanciful imagination of the Chinese as a race of teacup people, Smith puts forward an idea that, for all its apparent facetiousness, strongly echoes the argument of the anti-war campaigners — that there is no national honour at all in waging war on a country as frail and weak as China, and that to talk of national glory and easy victory together is but a self-defeating argument. But while there is a sense of guilt associated with Smith's sympathetic portrayal of Chinese feebleness, there is, at the same time, a sense of pride, and even of condemnation, underlying such a reductive and comic imagining of China both as a powerless victim and a grotesque, 'insolent' 'scaramouch'. Smith, in the final analysis, refrains from politicising his notion of the Chinese war by falling in for the rhetoric of either side, but remains reflexive and critical towards the war by looking at it from an alternative — literary — perspective. Politically neutral and artistically imaginative — such is the shared character of the wartime writings we are about to look at, and while it cannot be done

away with the apolitical orientation of the literary periodicals in which these works appeared, it reflects more acutely the ideological complexity over the issue of war within the British society at that time and the clash between fancy and reality occasioned by the Anglo-Chinese war. As we explore the different ways literary writers approached the Chinese question during the war period, we must be aware of the way imagination comes to terms with the fact of war amidst the heat of political controversy and moral entanglement. In articulating their respective notions of the Opium War, these writers not only tender a way to think about China as it transits from a fanciful to a substantial form but also a way to think about their own country as it rises to its height of national power and influence.

4.2 The Bull in a China Shop: Thomas Hood on the Chinese War

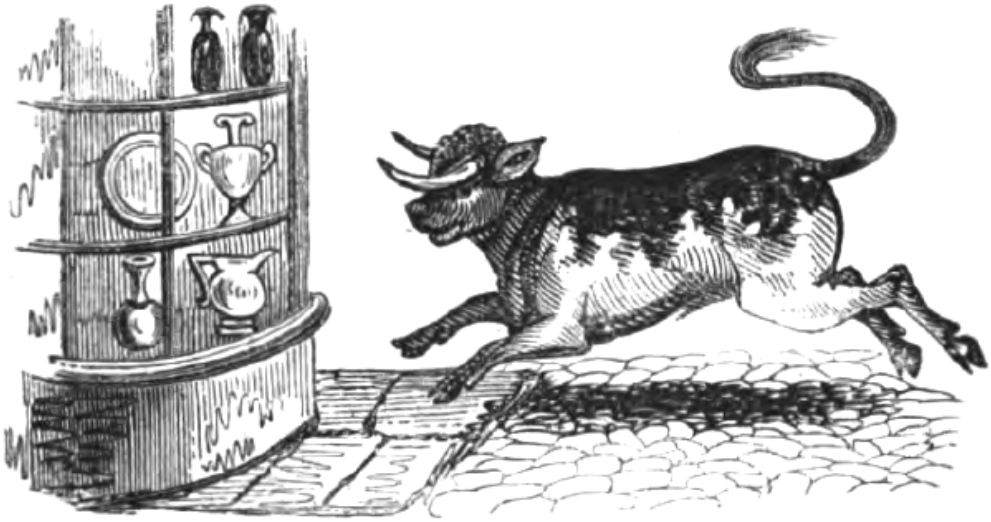
If China was, as Walter Kelly suggested, 'the purest embodied figure of fun', it manifests its whimsical quality most lavishly in the works of Thomas Hood after the fashion of a pun. In the previous chapter we have seen Hood 'fancying' about China through china in 'Fancies on a Tea-cup', and about china through the fractured images of China in 'The Broken Dish' and 'The China-mender'. China or china, what the word embodies is the imaginative possibility of an amusing geo-cultural transposition; there is the foreign contained in the domestic, and the domestic contained in the foreign. Centuries of commodity trade had made China, as china and other 'things Chinese', an almost ubiquitous presence in British life, but in no time was a feeling of geo-cultural displacement more overwhelming than in the mid-1830s when free trade with China commenced. Without the monopolising hand of the East India Company, trade became more lucrative for individual merchants; but without the ruling authority of 'John Company', trade barriers also became insurmountable. In

‘Summer — a Winter Eclogue’, published in 1834, Hood broached a domestic problem brought about by the changing condition of tea trade, now brisker and thornier than ever; Sylvanus, gravely disturbed by the sprawl of tea trade into Camberwell, which prompted fraudsters to pluck off tree leaves in the countryside to ‘make sham Hyson and mock Souchong’, was almost mystified into a spatial illusion:

> Oh Civis, thou hast no notion of the tea-trade that hath been carried on in these parts. Many times I have believed myself to be dwelling in Canton, and that my name was Hum. Thrice I have caught myself marvelling at the huge feet of Mrs. S., and have groped behind my nape for the national pigtail.[17]

Well aware that counterfeit tea is not the solution to the insatiable demand for Chinese tea in Britain, Hood concludes the essay with a visual pun that echoes Sylvanus’s comic vision of translocation: ‘For China Direct’ (Figure 9), his own drawing of a bull making a dart to a china closet. Interestingly, Hood’s drawing seems almost a prophecy: John Bull, in a few years’ time, would indeed clash with China, in what is now known as the Opium War. At this point, what had hitherto been a source of fancying and fun-making — of the coupling of China and china, of the integration between the foreign into the domestic, and of finding a China in Britain — assumes a new layer of significance: the writing of China, even in jest and humour, can hardly be divorced from the context of a war and, in particular, the question of what a war with China meant for Britain and the British.

[17] [Hood], ‘Summer — A Winter Eclogue’, p. 51.



" FOR CHINA DIRECT."

Figure 9 Thomas Hood, 'For China Direct' (1834)

Hood's 'The War with China' was published in the *New Monthly Magazine* in September 1840, three months after the British expeditionary force officially arrived in China. At that time the Opium War had become a full-fledged political issue; the Whig government had narrowly survived a vote of no confidence, and the anti-war Tories continued to use the war as a weapon against the ruling Whigs. The press, as could be expected, was the battleground for political struggle, and the papers were filled with what Albert Smith said, 'statistics of tea, rhubarb, and opium', 'information upon the state of the workhouses', and 'names of the board of guardians in various parishes pertaining to the Canton, Macao or Chusan unions'.[18] Like many literary writers, Hood 'loved neither Whigs

[18] Smith, p. 181.

nor Tories'; politics was no concern of his, and 'The War with China' was no dogmatic exposition of any political beliefs but a fictional essay on the war, as befits the literary and apolitical orientation of both the *New Monthly* and himself.[19] Reluctant to subscribe to either side of the political wrangle, Hood has his dramatis personae voicing scepticism towards both parties: it is true that 'we have no right to go to war to force a noxious article down the throats of our fellow-creatures' as the Whigs did, but even the Tories' argument — that the Chinese 'would have more money to lay out on our Birmingham and Manchester manufactures' — seems no more than 'a mercantile interest plated over with morality'.[20] The issue over the 'Barbarian Eye' is a 'needless resentment', but it is not without intrigue that the opium trade is opposed to 'only in 1840' (123). Such political detachment, certainly, fences Hood against the crudity of political labelling, but what undergirds his neutrality, as I endeavour to show presently, is the conviction that the real question lies elsewhere. In 'The War with China', Hood shows how a knotty national issue can be translated into a simple domestic language, and this micro familial perspective is precisely the blind spot of the political discourse that inundates the society.

What I have called a micro familial perspective is one that focuses microcosmically on the family as a site from which to look at China and the Chinese war. 'The War with China', despite its apparently journalistic title, is an anecdotal narrative of a family conversation that takes place in a household — a domestic setting that makes room for a casual, spontaneous, and nonpartisan expression of ideas. Contrary to the affected media discourse fueled by party views, Hood's household dialogue never seeks to be methodically anchored and complete; the conversation can go from the opium trade with China to Robinson Crusoe, from Crusoe to the Chinese, from the Chinese to china, and from china

[19] William Michael Rossetti, 'Prefatory Notice', *The Poetical Works of Thomas Hood*, ed. by William Michael Rossetti (London: Moxon, 1871), p. xxix.
[20] Thomas Hood, 'The War with China', *New Monthly Magazine*, September 1840, pp. 122–26 (p. 123).

to a bull in the neighborhood, and an account of what caused the Chinese War can be cut short by a pun on 'chop'. A family chit-chat like this is easy to the point of being irrelevant and trivial, but it is truthful and artless precisely for its unpremeditated nature. More significantly, Hood's domestic setting does not only bring homely candour into play but also encapsulates the archetypal British experience of China in domestic life. Right at the beginning of 'The War with China', Hood has pictured the human connection that draws this family close to China:

> "I CAN'T understand it," said my uncle, throwing down on the table the pamphlet he had been reading, and looking up over the fireplace, at the great picture of Canton, painted by his elder brother, when he was mate of an East Indiaman. My aunt was seated beside my uncle, with her cotton-box, playing at working; and cousin Tom was working at playing, in a corner. As for my father and myself, we had dropped in as usual after a walk, to take our tea, which through an old connexion with Cathay, was certain to be firstrate at the cottage. "Why on earth," continued my uncle, "why on earth we should go to war about the Opium business quite passes my comprehension." (122)

We are here reminded of De Quincey's remark about the penetrability of the East Indian trade: 'Reader! I, as well as Pliny, had an uncle, an East Indian uncle; doubtless you have such an uncle; everybody has an Indian uncle'.[21] By the time the Opium War broke out, it was simply ordinary for a British household to be connected with China in one way or

[21] Thomas De Quincey, 'The Casuistry of Roman Meals', in Masson, *Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey*, VII (1890), p. 22. The essay was first published in the *Blackwood's* for December 1839, under the title 'Dinner: Real and Reputed'.

another. In Hood's fictional household, such a connection is manifested in the picture of Canton, in the first-rate tea, and in china — the aunt's friend 'keeps the great Staffordshire warehouse at Smithfield Bars'[22] — all of which describe a kind of human relationship that builds an individual into a social being and a family into a community. Interestingly, these connections are all that we know about Hood's household; we are not told of the age, appearance, or profession — details that usually define a character in fiction — of the speakers, nor can we identify them by name in lieu of relationship terms and pronouns. Defining a British household by its connection with China through such domestic trivia as decoration, beverage, and crockery, and through such micro elements as human relation and memory, Hood foregrounds a fact significantly ignored in the public discourses about the Opium War: that Anglo-Chinese relation describes not only a relation on the national level but also a relation on the household level, on which China is not merely a national concept but a nexus between humans, things, and time-spaces.

Pinning the issue down to such a domestic frame of reference, China is no longer a country dispassionately remote and foreign, but one whose existence signifies a relevance to the self. This microcosmic perspective is particularly compelling when China, and china, are considered in relation to history and memory:

> "It is a sad job, this war, and I am sorry for it," said my father, with a serious shake of his head. "I have always had a sneaking kindness for the Chinese, as an intelligent and ingenious people. We have outrun them in the race of civilization, but no doubt there was a time when comparatively they were refined and we were the barbarians."

[22] Hood, 'The War with China', p. 125.

> "It is impossible to doubt it," said my uncle with great animation. "To say nothing of their invention of gunpowder, and their discovery of the mariner's compass, look at their earthenware. For my own part, I am particularly fond of old china. It is, I may say, quite a passion — inherited perhaps from my grandmother, with serval closets full of the antique oriental porcelain. She used to say it was a genteel taste." (124)

C/china, in the imagination of Hood and his dramatis personae, is a time capsule; it embodies a history that reflects 'our' history, and it stands for a past that has now become memories. We recall Charles Lamb's partiality for old china, a taste 'of too ancient a date to admit of our remembering distinctly that it was acquired one'; when Crispus reflects upon the Opium War in the *Fraser's Magazine* after the manner of Elia, he also relates C/china to the 'grandmother's taste for odd quiddits', which the present generation is not to be blamed for having acquired:

> If thou art blessed with a grandmother, whose tenacious memory has rigidly preserved all the circumstances attendant on the birth of that Prince of infinite jest the Regent, I take it for granted that in some mysterious chamber there exists a still more mysterious door, to which tradition has assigned the name of the China-closet. […] All these are small matters, peradventure, to us; but thy relative sets great store by them, for to her they speak from the grave of dead-and-gone sympathies — they are as the clay-cold remains of a departed race — they recall the merry tales of her old gossips over the sober four o'clock meal, preparatory to a visit to the theatre; and now the

> very rivets which hold their old sides together seem as links in a chain of affections, which without them were shattered in pieces.[23]

China, to the Victorians, is a link that connects the present with the past, both historically and hereditarily. In Hood's 'The War with China', the uncle is particularly conscious of this very passion that he inherits from his grandmother, and can hardly resist the temptation of speculating, like Hood did in 'Fancies on a Tea-cup' two decades earlier, 'from the images, on Cathay'. Here he compares the Chinese drinking-vessels with Britain's 'horse-buckets'; he praises 'the superior fancy of the Chinese' in relinquishing perspective and proportion, whereas the British would leave nothing to the imagination because 'all must be fact with him — no fiction'.[24] From old china he gathers that the Chinese 'are literary and musical', that 'they are of affectionate and domestic habits', and, 'above all, that they are eminently unwarlike', because 'I do not recollect ever seeing an armed figure, weapons, or any illusion to war, and its attributes, in any of their enamels' (125). To speculate on China from china, or to judge from china the character of China, is a naïve and simplistic way of assessment — as naïve and simplistic as to judge of a national issue from a familial perspective — but this recourse to sensibility, feeling, imagination, and instinct is exactly what the public, in times of war, feels the want of. The family talk in 'The War with China' is no elevated oration about the war, but it shows, nonetheless, a human way of thinking and discoursing about it.

It is this human capacity of associating finer feelings with imagination, and of developing empathetic rapport to a sort of 'teacup people' through a recognition of its domestic role, that makes china and China an inseparable whole in 'The War with China'.

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[23] [Lamb] Elia, 'Old China', p. 269; Crispus, 'Old China', *Fraser's Magazine*, December 1840, pp. 666–68 (p. 666).
[24] Hood, 'The War with China', pp. 124–25.

When Hood returns to his joke of the bull in a china shop at the end of the essay, what is contained in the allegory is not only the fun of punning and metaphor but also an attitude towards Britain, China, and the war. For Hood, the Opium War came about simply because a 'mad bull' hurt itself in a china shop:

> The mad Bull stood staring at the crockery, quiet enough; when unluckily with a switch of his tail, he brought down on his back a whole row of pipkins that hung over head […] he gave a stamp and a bellow that made the whole shop shake again, and down rattled a great jug on his hind quarters. Well, round turns the Bull, quite savage, with another loud bellow, as much as to say, 'I should like to know who did that?' when what should he see by bad luck but a china figure of a Mandarin […] the more the Bull stamped and bellowed, the more the Mandarin grinned and nodded his head, till at long and at last, the Bull got so aggravated, that sticking his tail upright […] he made but one rush at the china Mandarin, and smashed him all into shivers. (126)

The war, then, is both a comedy and a tragedy; while the bull, like a pantomime harlequin, suffers from his own folly and oversight, the china Mandarin can hardly avoid the destructive ending of being smashed into pieces. Mixing this kind of fancy over china with the war with China does not render Hood's sarcasm less bitter or his scruple less sincere; rather, in making a comedy out of the war on the British side — and a tragedy on the C/china side — Hood shows himself to be more than ordinarily chagrined by the inanity of his nation and apologetic to the eggshell C/china. Imagination, in this sense, is the tool of Hood's anti-

war rhetoric, and it is in the realm of imagination that he brings to view a more humanistic perspective from which to look at the war.

In two later works, 'News from China' and its sequel, 'More News from China', Hood turns his attention to what actually happened — at least as it appeared to be — in the Opium War and what it could mean for the British society. Published as the leaders of the *New Monthly* in November and December 1842, these two pieces comprise a set of pseudo-correspondences between Mrs. Jemima Budge, her brother Mr. Abel Dottin, and her son Augustus. As a literary genre, the familiar letter is most notably a form that is poised between the private and public modes; while it allows for the expression of private thoughts and, as Bakhtin notes, a 'private sense of self', epistolary writers are conscious of the public nature of their epistolary exchange and almost always intend it for a wider audience than the one their letters address.[25] Such a literary form, naturally, can serve a significant function in laying out private views and perspectives that call for a more emotive understanding in times of war. Douglas Jerrold, for one, has commented on the Opium War in his Punch's letter; writing as Mr. Punch, Jerrold advises his son against being a soldier, describing the victory of Britain in the Chinese war as a delusive glory:

> Will you be a solider? — Well, I will presume you are a Field-Marshal. A war breaks out: a wicked, unjust war. It may be thought necessary (such a case occurred about a century ago, and may occur again) to cut the throats of a few thousands of Chinese; for no other reason than that the celestial Emperor hath, with his "vermilion pencil," written an edict against the swallowing of British opium. Well you are ordered for the Chinese waters,

[25] M. M. Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 84–258 (p. 143).

> to blow up, burn, slay, sink […] My dear boy, military glory is not what it used to be. Once people thought it a jewel — a solid ruby. But philosophy has touched what seemed a gem, and has proved it to be only a bubble, blown from blood.[26]

Jerrold's comment on the cruelty of war is powerful not only because of the emotional intensity he evokes with the imagery of throat-cutting and opium-swallowing and his almost poetic use of explosive alliteration ('bubble, blown from blood'), but also because his view, though grounded upon the unexceptional anti-war litany of justice and morality, is enveloped with the warmth of fatherly love and parental intimacy. In familiar letters, the relationship or affinity between correspondents is often instrumental in its performative efficaciousness. In Hood's letter between a mother, an uncle, and a son, one may expect tenderness, devotion, and solicitude — but Hood has penned his wartime letters in quite an unexpected way.

It is not that Mrs. Budge is not a devoted mother; quite the contrary, she had sold all her beautiful old china and her long annuities to finance her son's enlistment in the British expedition to China, believing that her son Augustus, a 'shining character' as she has always called him, would be made 'a colonel, a general, or a plenipotentiary' out of the war.[27] She has waited two years before she finally receives Augustus's 'news from China', and cannot hold back from writing to her brother, Mr. Dottin, to prove that his poor opinion of her son was wrong. For in Augustus's letter it is shown that he has been doing exceptionally well in China: their British gun-brig exterminate a whole troop of mandarin boats and the floating houses near the shore — so that some 'little Chineses' who 'got knocked overboard, poor

[26] [Douglas Jerrold] Mr. Punch, 'Punch's Letter to His Son: Letter IV. — On the Choice of a Profession', *Punch*, 1842, pp. 67–68 (pp. 67–68).
[27] [Thomas Hood], 'News from China', *New Monthly Magazine*, November 1842, pp. 281–89 (p. 282).

things, like fun' were 'all floating about with their life-preservers, and screaming like sea-gulls' (285) — and Augustus himself had also fired his shot and was commended by his chief:

> I determined to have a shy at the pigtails, so I had a gun run out forward, and took aim at a Joss-house, and fired it off with my own hand, — bang! whiz! and away flew the ball howling through the air. Where it went or what mischief it did I have no notion; but after watching a minute the captain sings out,
>
> "Who laid that gun?"
>
> "I did, sir," was my reply.
>
> "Mr. Budge," says he, "you will be a shining character." (286)

The mother is overjoyed to have her prediction and her success in 'cultivating genius' (282) confirmed by the captain. In his second letter Augustus recounts his 'prodigies of pluck' in a land battle at Kow-Tan, having a 'bloody sword in one hand' and 'a Chinese pigtail in the other'; 'the slaughter was prodigious', Augustus says, and with this victory the war would be over.[28] He ends this letter with a last remark — that, as the peace treaty has been signed, his promotion is booked but he will need new shirts and at least fifty pounds to keep up his rank when he is received at the Chinese court — for which Mrs. Budge resorts to her brother, who had given her thirty pounds two years earlier, for help:

> So far, then, the Chinese war was a blessing, and all has turned out for the best; for dear Gus has attained to martial glory, quite unusual at his age, and

[28] [Thomas Hood], 'More News from China', *New Monthly Magazine*, December 1842, pp. 424–31 (p. 427).

> if a parent may predict, will some day be made a peer of, like Wellington, and hand himself down to posterity with his family arms. […] In which case you can be no loser, but will enjoy the satisfaction of putting forward a shining branch that will greatly add to our family lustre. (424)

So goes the two sets of letters, from Mrs. Budge to Mr. Dottin, enclosing Augustus's 'news from China'.

It does not take much to see that Mrs. Budge is the opposite of Jerrold's Mr. Punch — she delights in the military glory her son wins, and is insensitive to his ruthless nature and brutal tendency. But what is unexpected in Hood's 'News from China' is that there is, in fact, no news from China; and if Mrs. Budge has been as unfeeling as her son in seeing the Chinese war as a 'blessing', she pays her dues, eventually, when it transpires that she had in fact been treated by her son as unfeelingly as they both did to the Chinese. The machination of the immoral youth Augustus is discovered by his Uncle Abel, who has always thought his sister too indulgent, his nephew too extravagant and slothful, and his undated, unaddressed letters from China a display of too many 'flashes of Fancy'.[29] As it transpires, the entire adventure of Augustus in China is a lie — Mr. Abel Dottin happened to travel to London for business, and when he went to Drury Lane to watch a play, 'lo and behold whom should I see about three rows off in the pit, whom but dear Gus himself!'[30] As Mr. Dottin tried to catch him, he was thumped in the nose by Augustus's friend and lost both of them; Mr. Dottin then recalled the address of a coffee shop at Drury Lane which Augustus asked his mother to send the money and shirts to, and at last found him out. 'So the long and the short is he made a full Confession whereby it apears insted of goin abroad

[29] [Hood], 'News from China', p. 289.
[30] [Hood], 'More News from China', p. 430.

he was never out of London at least not further then Hide Park Corner to a Chinese Exhibition' (431). From the beginning to the end of the Chinese war, Augustus had been in London, drinking and smoking out of the money his mother scrimped for his Chinese expedition; after an absence of two years, he writes back to Mrs. Budge only to exact more money and nice clothes. The callousness and cruelty he shows towards the Chinese in his letters 'from China' rebound on the one who allows and encourages his acts of iniquity upon the other; the want of morality in war, in the end, strikes home. Hood's 'News from China', in this sense, is a parable; the penetrating insight of Hood is that morality sees no national boundary, and that conscience, once lost, is never discriminating. The neglect of moral culture, however much it seems to inflict damage only on the 'other', will at last jeopardise the self as much as it does the 'other'. The didactics of Hood, again, are 'domestic didactics'; it is when the nation is telescoped into a family unit — when a macro-national conflict is seen through a micro-familial lens — that one is made to recognise how aggression and violence in a national war cannot be thought of as purely a matter of the nation.

In 'The Lay of the Labourer', Hood has reminded the ruling class that 'moral heroism' is what 'every true Englishman should exult', whether it was 'at a National Victory' or at home.[31] 'The Lay of the Labourer' is an appeal of Hood on behalf of a young labourer, Gifford White, charged with incendiarism and sentenced to transportation for life in 1844. Hood sympathises with the eighteen-year-old because he understands — 'I am of the working class myself' (424). Empathy and morality always go hand in hand. To *feel* for the 'other' is the tenet that underlies the most celebrated social poems of Hood — 'The Song of the Shirt' (1843), 'The Bridge of Sighs' (1844), and 'The Lay of the Labourer' (1844) — and, as we have seen, it is also the tenet that underlies Hood's prose works on the Chinese

[31] Thomas Hood, 'The Lay of the Labourer', *Hood's Magazine and Comic Miscellany*, November 1844, pp. 417–30 (p. 429).

war, which were, perhaps not coincidentally, written at about the same time as his epitomic poems. In his 'Epigram on the Chinese Treaty', published in January 1843 in the *New Monthly*, one senses a tinge of sarcasm in his paean:

> OUR wars are ended — foreign battles cease, —
> Great Britain owns an universal peace;
> And Queen Victoria triumphs over all,
> Still "*Mistress of herself though China fall*!"[32]

Alluding to Pope's epistle 'To a Lady', the second poem of his *Moral Essays, in Four Epistles*, Hood brings the context of Pope's now notorious satire on women to bear on his epigram and, evoking the pun between China and china, shows the negligibility of the triumph in his eyes, an indifference enhanced by the use of the inflated and ironic word, 'universal'. For a humanitarian writer like Hood, there is no war with China that is not, at the same time, a domestic war — for it is always in our treatment of the 'other' that we find the true face of our self.

4.3 The Real State of the Case: Alfred Crowquill's Chinese Witnesses

In using the epistolary form, Jerrold and Hood have each approached the question of war through a kind of interiority — through the expression, or performance, of consciousness and subjectivity that seeks not to be argumentative but to be evocative of personal feelings, emotion, and self-reflection. As wartime writings, these letters invite readers to move into

[32] Thomas Hood, 'Epigram on the Chinese Treaty', *New Monthly Magazine*, January 1843, p. 110.

the subjective realm of private thoughts that equipoise public narratives of the war, to judge on their own the validity of alternative perspectives, and to form their own opinions about what the war could mean to themselves. The epistolary form, in this sense, is a mode of rhetoric, and in adopting it both Jerrold and Hood have made the voices of Englishmen heard in their roles as members of a family and, by extension, of a society and a state. Yet another writer who put to use the epistolary form in writing the Opium War was Alfred Crowquill; but while Crowquill's wartime letters serve likewise as a disclosure of observations and thoughts from and in the private sphere, they are special in the voices they contain — the Chinese voices.

'Alfred Crowquill' was better known to the late Victorians and to us as the *nom de plume* of Alfred Henry Forrester (1804–1872), author and illustrator of popular magazines like *Bentley's* and *Punch*. Before 1848, however, the pseudonym designates more of a mystery than an alias, for it was not used exclusively by Alfred but also by his older brother Charles Robert Forrester (1803–1850), with which the brothers engaged in a sort of 'Siamese twin collaboration which the readers of *Bentley* puzzled their heads over'.[33] It was true that when they collaborated it was often Charles who wielded the pen and Alfred who wielded the pencil, but their contributions were not always severable, and 'Alfred Crowquill' may come into service even when, in the rare instance, the Forrester brothers worked separately.[34] The offspring of a family of stockbrokers, both Alfred and Charles worked at the notary office of the Royal Exchange, but while Charles remained in the legal industry until his premature death in 1850, Alfred resigned to devote himself entirely to art and

[33] George Somes Layard, 'Three Minor Graphic Humourists', *Magazine of Art*, January 1896, pp. 393–99 (p. 396).
[34] Apart from 'Alfred Crowquill', Charles Forrester also wrote under his old pseudonym 'Hal Willis, Student-at-law', with Alfred illustrating his works. Charles retired from literary labours in 1848.

literature as early as 1839.[35] Alfred or Charles, 'Alfred Crowquill' was a master of fun, and an avowed admirer of Thomas Hood. In his first notable work, *Absurdities: In Prose and Verse* (1827), Crowquill pays tribute to that celebrated humorist:

To Thomas Hood, Esq., Author of Whims and Oddities.

Wits may now lay aside their pens,
Their sallies bring no good;
'Till thou art *dead* they cannot hope
To — urn a lively hood![36]

It is not known whether Hood and the Forrester brothers were acquainted, but the coincidence was that 'lively hood' had become the famous deathbed pun of Hood.[37] It could have been such a congenial spirit for punning and fun-making that underlays Crowquill's interest in C/china, and indeed his 'China' was published at about the same time as Hood's 'The War with China', predating the latter by just a few months.

Much of Crowquill's design in 'China' is encapsulated in the full title of his work:

CHINA.
THE REAL STATE OF THE CASE
FREELY TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL CHINESE,

[35] For more about the Forrester brothers, see 'Charles Robert Forrester', *Gentleman's Magazine*, May 1850, pp. 545–46; 'Alfred Crowquill', *Illustrated Review*, June 1872, pp. 737–42; 'Memoir of Alfred Crowquill', *Bentley's Miscellany*, January 1846, pp. 99–100; Layard, pp. 395–97.
[36] [Alfred Forrester and Charles Forrester] Alfred Crowquill, *Absurdities: In Prose and Verse* (London: Thomas Hurst, 1827), p. 78.
[37] Hood's reputed last line was said to be: 'My dear, I fear you'll lose your lively Hood'. Sara Lodge argues that this deathbed pun may have been falsely attributed to Hood. See Lodge, pp. 141–42.

AND ILLUSTRATED BY ALFRED CROWQUILL WITH FOUR REAL CHINA PLATES.

'The Real State of the Case', being the most expositive part of Crowquill's titling, deserves careful reading. On one level, the emphasis on the 'real' state of the war adumbrates a critical dimension of the work — its emphatic 'realness' suggests the presence of 'unreal' accounts, the verity of which is questionable precisely because they are in want of what Crowquill is endeavouring to provide: the solicitation of sources 'from the original Chinese'. Crowquill's Chinese letters, in this sense, are a redress for the deficiency in perspective that dampens the view of the society. On another level, Crowquill's use of the expression calls up the notarial background of the Forrester brothers; in its legal rather than colloquial sense, the phrase is closely connected to the production of testimony by witnesses in court. Bentham, in his *Rationale of Judicial Evidence, Specially Applied to English Practice* (1827), uses the phrase as a standard description of witness reports, upon which 'veracity', 'mendacity', 'verity', and 'falsehood' are defined by their respective conformability to 'the real state of the case', either by will or deed.[38] Invoking 'the real state of the case' in this legal context, Crowquill implies his 'China' to be a kind of testimony: the three letters he presents, 'originally written' by the Chinese to their family and friends, serve as a source of evidence that attests to the development of the war at different stages. It is in this sense that Crowquill's use of the epistolary form, apart from its obvious recourse to the self-criticality of the genre of pseudo-Oriental letter prevalent in the eighteenth century, also emphasises the function of epistles common in nineteenth-century sensational novels — the use of letters and diaries 'as empirical or legal evidence' that is also the 'restorative hermeneutic

[38] See the second section of the eleventh chapter in Bentham's *Rationale of Judicial Evidence*. Jeremy Bentham, *Rationale of Judicial Evidence, Specially Applied to English Practice*, 5 vols (London: Hunt and Clarke, 1827), I, pp. 191–196.

evidence for fictional worlds under threat from social and sexual transgression'.[39] What sets Crowquill's letters apart from these discovered documents of secrecy and suspense is that they address the threat not of the fictional world but of the real world, and not so much from social and sexual transgression as from political transgression. Either in its colloquial or legal sense, Crowquill's playful polysemous title suggests an uncommon intent of the humorist in producing wartime epistles: to fill up a discursive vacuum of the war through the restorative capacity of his 'Chinese' letters.

What characterises Crowquill's humour, however, is that his titling also asserts a keen sense of metafictional consciousness, which not only brings the 'real state of the case' back to the realm of fancying but also relates it to the moot issue of translation in the (anti-)war campaign. It is readily observable that Crowquill's claim to realness is necessarily problematised by his own humour; his punning on 'China' and 'plates' in 'four real C/hina plates' is doomed to render the use of the word 'real' illusory. Drawn in the shape of dining plates, Crowquill's 'plates' refer both to the flat dish and his printed illustrations; they are 'real' plates in the latter sense but by no means 'real' in the former sense. His 'China', similarly, are both china and China; they are 'china plates' and 'China plates', which admit of multiple interpretations: a china dish, a picture of the dish, a china dish from China, or a picture of or about China. The delusional 'realness' of his 'C/china plates' cautions against the reliability of the 'real' state of case accounted for by his letters, which, as Crowquill warns, is 'freely translated', indicative of the possible falsity or fictionality of the whole or a part of them. This play on translation is particularly meaningful in Crowquill's design because his 'China' alludes to — and one may even say adapts from — the work of Peter Perring Thoms, a sinologist or 'China expert', and a fervent anti-war campaigner.[40] We shall

[39] Kym Brindle, *Epistolary Encounters in Neo-Victorian Fiction: Diaries and Letters* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 24.
[40] Peter Perring Thoms worked as a printer for the East India Company and assisted in the printing of Robert Morrison's *Dictionary of the Chinese Language*. He went to China in 1814, and published two translations,

come back shortly to the intertextual relationship between Crowquill's letters and Thoms's translation of a Chinese fiction; here it is important to note how the concept of translation was core to Thoms's war protest. As early as 1835 when the first drum for war resounded in London, Thoms had engaged himself in the media campaign against it; his article, a confutation of Matheson's and Lindsay's pro-war pamphlets, was published in the *Monthly Magazine* in 1836. His object in taking up his pen, as he makes clear in his article, 'has been to remove those erroneous impressions which a *slight knowledge of the Chinese language* is sure to produce, that those who are called to legislate may see the subject fairly before them, and that so momentous a question as the continuance of the Chinese trade may have *that calm, unbiased deliberation* that shall tend to put the matters in dispute on a permanent footing'.[41] Relying upon his knowledge of the Chinese language, Thoms thus argues forcefully for the warlike party's misleading propaganda based on specious translation; the rendition of *yi* into 'barbarian', which the warlike party dilated on as a national insult, is to Thoms highly contestable, for it is but one of the possible translations of a word that means 'southern people, or foreigners' in general, and 'the Chinese do not attach to it an offensive meaning' (401). The word *kung*, likewise, was translated as 'tributary', but could also mean in Chinese 'to offer up to', 'to bestow on in consequence of merit', and 'to give to' according to the Imperial Dictionary and the Chinese classics Chow-le (404). Other renderings of the pro-war camp which were presented as evidence of Chinese insolence and which, Thoms reckons, are 'mere oriental verbiage' (406) are also put to challenge. For Thoms, the problem of translation played a material role in Sino-British conflicts, and he held on to this view, which he elaborated in 'China: Its Early History, Literature, and Language; Mis-

The Affectionate Pair, or the History of Sung-kin and *Chinese Courtship*, respectively in 1820 and 1824. He returned to London in 1826 and opened a printing house there. See, for instance, Chen, p. 142; Patricia Sieber, 'Universal Brotherhood Revisisted: Peter Perring Thoms (1790–1855), Artisan Practices, and the Genesis of a Chinacentric Sinology', *Representations*, 130 (2015), 28–59.

[41] P. P. Thoms, review of *The Present Position and Prospects of Our Trade with China*, by James Matheson, *Monthly Magazine*, May 1836, pp. 401–14 (p. 406).

translation of Chinese Official Documents; Causes of the Present War' (1840), even after the war became a reality.[42] He would continue his efforts to prevent a British war with China as the shadow of the Second Opium War loomed large, during which time he produced *The Emperor of China V. The Queen of England* (1853), a refutation of the documents submitted by the British Hong Kong government to the court of Britain. It could have been for Thoms's anti-war attitude that he was lauded in the generally unwarlike pro-Chartist circle as 'the best Chinese scholar England has yet produced'.[43] It may be said that, among the handful of 'China experts' residing in London at that time, Thoms was the most adamant in his pacifist stance and the most active in his war protest; and what he insisted upon had always been that the waging of the Opium War could hardly be justified on the basis of what was partial and untrue, on the concoction of evidence that was but 'freely translated from the original Chinese'.

It is thus that Crowquill's 'China', which may seem puzzling as to its claim both to realness and fictionality, falls most neatly under the category of satire: whilst a testimonial of the real state of the case is what the British public needs at such a critical time, fiction is all that they could draw on in their attempts to understand, argue, and discourse about the war. Operating within the tradition of pseudo-Oriental letters, Crowquill's fictional correspondences are, like Walpole's *A Letter from Xo Ho* and Goldsmith's *Chinese Letters*, a satirical mechanism of self-critique and self-rediscovery; working under the paradigm of nineteenth-century utilitarianism, however, Crowquill's meta-fictional use of the epistolary form is also a means to parody the fiction-like evidence available in the public sphere and to supply it with such-like evidence that nonetheless provides a counter perspective about the war. The three Chinese letters Crowquill presents in 'China' are written by Yuh Fung,

[42] P. P. Thoms, 'China: Its Early History, Literature, and Language; Mis-translation of Chinese Official Documents; Causes of the Present War', *Westminster Review*, September 1840, pp. 261–87.
[43] *Reynold's Newspaper*, 26 May 1850; quoted in Sieber, p. 28.

Chin-san, and Lew-yew-tsae, all of the them characters of *The Affectionate Pair, or the History of Sung-Kin*, a Chinese story translated into English by Peter Perring Thoms in 1820.[44] Thoms's work was by no means popular among common readers, but it was well known in literary circles, and was much noted for the light it shed upon 'the manners of the humble classes in China'.[45] Thoms, in his preface, had stated his intention in translating the work:

> The History of Sung-kin is founded on an occurrence in low life, and though it does not embrace any important subject, yet, to those who wish to gain information concerning Chinese customs and manners, may be considered (in the translator's estimation) an interesting Tale, as it lays open the religious notions of one of the most prevailing sects in China; and shews, notwithstanding what has appeared to the contrary in Europe, that the Chinese are not destitute of the finer feelings of benevolence, sympathy, and love.[46]

In adapting Thoms's work, Crowquill translocates these people of 'low life' into his fictional word of letter-writing and turns them into something akin to war witnesses and commentators. Yuh Fung, who in *The Affectionate Pair* is the descendent of generations of government officials, thus speaks in Crowquill's 'China' of the indignation he feels over

[44] The story, *Songjinlang Tuanyuan Po Zhanli*, was from *Jingu Qiguan* ('Remarkable Stories New and Old'), a renowned anthology of Chinese short fiction published in the late Ming dynasty.
[45] Review of *The Affectionate Pair, or the History of Sung-kin: a Tale, translated from the Chinese*, by P. P. Thoms, *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Miscellany*, June 1822, pp. 565–72 (p. 566). Another review of the work can be found in *Quarterly Review*, October 1827, pp. 496–511. A brief introduction to the work appeared in *Fraser's Magazine* in May 1835, but Crowquill obviously knew more about the work than the brevity of *Fraser's* could impart. It is worthy of note that Harriet Martineau also alluded to *The Affectionate Pair* in her 'The English in China' (1832). Goethe's *Chinesisch-deutsche Jahres- und Tageszeiten* was famously inspired by Thoms's later work, *Chinese Courtship*, a translation of another Chinese fiction.
[46] P. P. Thoms, *The Affectionate Pair: or, The History of Sung-kin* (London: Black, Kingsbury, Parbury, and Allen, 1820), pp. iii–iv.

Britain's accusation of the officers in power for facilitating the 'illicit trade' of opium; Chin-san, a miserly coffin-maker in *The Affectionate Pair*, comments on the irrationality of the British in deposing the East India Company from a commercial perspective; and Lew-yew-tsae, a lighterman in *The Affectionate Pair*, is employed by Crowquill to make observations on the sea battle between the British and the Chinese troops.[47] Not only has Crowquill borrowed from Thoms's translation his characters; the religious custom and the poetry of the Chinese are also recontextualised within the war scenario. The custom of paper offerings, for instance, which Yuh Fung and Lew-yew-tsae performed in *The Affectionate Pair* to pray for an offspring, becomes a symbol of death in Crowquill's letters — 'the courageous spirits of hundreds of our beloved citizens have flitted away in the volumes of rolling smoke […] Reams of paper have been consumed in offerings to the departed heroes' (482).[48] In another instance a couplet in the translation, which describes the ruin of the protagonist, is used, with a slight variation, to lament the defeat of China in a recent battle:

> Thus, alas! "the bloom of the flower perishes in the falling shower, and the grass nipped by the hoar-frost loses its verdant hue!" (483)[49]

The same action and couplet assume a new significance in a new context; as wartime expressions, they portray the trepidation and distress of the Chinese, either in anticipation of calamity or beset with uncertainty. In the new context of war, characters have a new role to play and customs and literature have a new purpose to serve; as tools of critique, they

[47] [Alfred Forrester and Charles Forrester] Alfred Crowquill, 'China: The Real State of the Case', *Bentley's Miscellany*, May 1840, pp. 479–83.
[48] Appending the last sentence is a footnote, quoted almost verbatim from *The Affectionate Pair*. See Thoms, *The Affectionate Pair*, pp. 9–10.
[49] The original in *The Affectionate Pair* reads: 'The falling showers fade the blooming flower, and the grass by hoar frost is nipt of its verdant hue'. See Thoms, *The Affectionate Pair*, p. 34.

now embody the satirical vision of the English author, veiled as the hitherto unheard voices of the Chinese at war.

It must not be assumed, however, that Crowquill, in being satirical towards the English, has taken up a partial position towards the Chinese. Even Thoms, with his anti-war sentiment, was no Sinophile in this order; he agrees with Matheson that 'the Chinese are a very different class of persons from Europeans, and that they are conceited and imbecile, certainly no very amiable traits in their national character', only that such flaws in national character do not hamper him from judging that 'justice is not done to the Chinese'.[50] Crowquill's Chinese witnesses, too, are not very amiable human beings; they are imagined to carry dispositional flaws and weaknesses that were commonly believed to be 'Chinese'. These kinds of 'Chinese' traits, intertwined with Crowquill's satirical criticisms on the English, constitute not only the humour of 'China' but also the verisimilar Chinese perspective Crowquill seeks to produce. In the letter of Yuh-Fung to his wife, Crowquill's criticism on the fallacy of the British vindication of aggression is fused not only with the letter writer's feeling of indignation but also with his sense of unquestioning fidelity to the Chinese bureaucratic code:

> They loudly declare that they were led into this awful crime against the well-being of the subjects of the Celestial Empire at the instigation, and by the facilities offered to the illegal traffic by the officers in power. Miserable Barbarians! to endeavour to palliate their own misdemeanours by casting reflections upon the integrity of our officials; who, if they *did* sometimes wink, was it not occasioned by the somniferous merchandize these barbarians brought into port? […] It appears to my simple mind, too,

[50] Thoms, Review of 'The Present Position and Prospects of Our Trade with China', p. 401.

> perfectly correct that they should *squeeze* the Barbarians: nay, morally just that they should levy contributions on them as a fine for their wickedness![51]

And in the letter of Chin-san to his friend Sung-kin, in which the letter writer relates Commissioner Lin's seizure of opium and the first skirmish of the war, Crowquill's attempt to recall the illegitimacy of the opium trade in China is mixed with Chin-san's sense of ultra-loyalty to the Chinese government, expressed in a kind of comical language that Thoms designated as 'oriental verbiage':

> Know SUNG-KIN, our Father, the Emperor, whose actions are the offspring of good counsel and farseeing wisdom, has commanded the seizure of the whole of the pernicious drug contained in the vessels of the offending Barbarians […] The Commissioner LIN, bearing the bright lantern of the Emperor's power in his hand, manfully wrestles with the rebellious spirit, sending forth proclamation upon proclamation, and writing after writing, twice as long as Elliott's, and yet the shallow man will not hear reason; proving the truth of the saying, that it is as difficult to convince a fool as it is to fill sieve with water. (481)

With the same kind of national pride that was commonly taken by the British to be Chinese conceitedness, Lew-yew-tase describes the causality of the Chinese troops and their desperate retreat not only with a sense of grief but also with a conviction of their spirit of bravery. It is by mixing these traits of the Chinese — these 'no very amiable traits in their national character' — with his own idea about the war that Crowquill pens his English satire

[51] [Forrester] Crowquill, 'China', p. 480.

from a Chinese perspective, which serves both as a source of fun and a means to reflect upon the war by standing in the shoes of the Chinese.

As far as Crowquill's Chinese pretence goes, his humour and satire are built not only upon the notion of Chinese understanding but also that of Chinese misunderstanding. As Chin-san, for instance, talks about the origin of the war, his confusion about the status of the East India Company effects a caustic commentary on the role of the British government in the opium trade:

> Trade, too, is at a stand-still, and the merchants complain in a small voice; for if the Barbarians should make war instead of tea, they know there is no longer any chance of their making money. Where is that great King EAST-INDIA-COMPANY, whose words flowed from the fountain of truth, and whose gold and silver were never weighed even by the doubtful, such implicit faith did they place in his honour and integrity! There were no troubles during his reign; but alas! the Barbarians have deposed him; — yes, the fools have sawed away the prop of their house, and the roof falls in and crushes them. (481–82)

Regardless of its comicality, Chin-san's mistaking of the 'East-India-Company' as the King of Britain suggests the inextricable relationship between the Company and the Empire — the King and the Queen — and insinuates the collusion between the state and the merchants in the Opium War. In the least, it reiterates the embarrassing dilemma Britain encountered as a consequence of the Company's 'deposition', a recrimination not unlike the one made by Terence O'Ruark from an English perspective:

> We had the security of the East India Company for their [the tea's] genuineness; and in point of fact, we drank excellent tea, and were satisfied, while the state collected three millions of money annually in tea duties from the Company, without any risk or expense whatever. But all this was much too plain and simple for those eminent philosophers the Whigs. A particularly crack-brained set among them, who happen to be outrageously insane upon the subject of free trade, would have it, that the best way was to abandon all the advantages which the East India Company's character and experience had obtained, and to throw open the privilege of dealing with these peculiarly touchy, and difficultly managed Chinese, to every one who chose to take a ship to their coasts.[52]

With Crowquill's provision of the Chinese view, it becomes clear that the Opium War is beneficial neither to the English nor to the Chinese. The case is summarised metaphorically at the end of Yuh Fung's letter: 'Now, can anything be a greater proof of folly than for men to kick who have not a leg to stand on? — ridiculous!'[53] This idea about the folly of the war is given special emphasis by the two 'C/china plates' Crowquill penciled: one plate depicts a monster kicking a Chinaman from behind with one of his wooden legs, and with only one leg left it seems to be about to fall over on its back (see Figure 10). The other pictures a Chinaman surrounded by teapots and boxes of gunpowder, and with an angry and rather determined expression, and presumably holding the trigger in his hand, ready to set off an explosion at the expense of the teapots and himself (see Figure 11). As pictorial illustrations, these two plates evoke the looming danger of economic havoc and anticipate the result of

[52] O'Ruark, p. 318.
[53] [Forrester] Crowquill, 'China', p. 480.

Figure 10

Figure 11

Figure 12

Figure 13

Figures 10 to 13 Alfred Crowquill, ‘China’ (1840)

the war as a zero-sum game; together with the remaining two plates, which picture a bulldog biting the pigtail of a Chinaman (see Figure 12) and an opium fiend with a Pinocchio nose encasing a Chinaman in a horn-like vessel (see Figure 13), Crowquill's illustrations summarise what he considers to be the 'real state of the case' in the Chinese war — that all the kicking, biting, encasing, and even China's suicidal retaliation, are nothing short of a joke that makes both parties look silly, and are meaningless except when read as fiction. It is also the case that the striking visual novelty of the illustrations attracts attention in such a way that, amidst the fun, they bring readers into an inspection and renewed understanding of the political debate.

We may thus see that Crowquill, in writing about the Opium War from a Chinese perspective, does not seek to project a miserable China pining for sympathy or an impeccable China entitled to justice; rather, he writes his Chinese perspective by imagining China with her imperfections and flaws, and asks if such a perspective does not make the real state of the case still more evident. The metafictional mode Crowquill adopts points to the fundamental conception of his work: it does not matter whether his Chinese letters are sufficiently Chinese, or whether he has represented China in her true figure; what matters, instead, is whether Britain is conscious of her own action, and whether a certain figment of imagination is not the one thing she needs to reappraise the war with China. It is this kind of self-understanding and self-reflection that Crowquill brought forth with his pseudo-Chinese epistles, the fictionality of which constitutes in itself a rhetoric of critique.

4.4 Broad Grins from China: Thomas Sealy's Wartime Tales

It is often the case that the people of a warring nation are most inquisitive about the war their nation is fighting, and that wartime writings, fictional or non-fictional, have their themes pivoted upon the ongoing war. In the previous sections we have seen Hood and Crowquill, working with the language of domesticity and the interiority of the epistolary form, explore the nature of a controversial war and turn their humour into a medium of deeper thoughts, interpretation, and opinion that places the war in a different critical paradigm. During this time, another humorist, Thomas Sealy (1811–1848), sailed with the war tide in a different vessel. None of the five Chinese tales he published in *Bentley's Miscellany* thematises the present war, nor do they wield the commentative function conventional to pseudo-Oriental narratives. As wartime writings, they serve first and foremost as a kind of 'relaxation' from the 'grave Chinese matter', as the *Literary Gazette* puts it, that overburdened the public — to decompress the strain of wartime altercation with something that 'saves a world of […] tiresome reading, to the common relief of all the parties concerned'.[54] And yet, it is in such works of unalloyed diversion that we are reminded of how a war with China had changed not only the shape of 'China in fiction' but also what the society desired in it — and for this Sealy has supplied his imagination, not only to 'unbend' the minds of his readers with Chinese comicality but also to satisfy them with Chinese factuality.

Had Thomas Sealy lived longer than thirty-seven years, he might have left the literary world a larger legacy than *The Porcelain Tower*, *The Little Old Man of the Wood*, *Merelina*, some translations of Petrarch and other Italian classics, the now obscured *Great*

[54] Review of *The Porcelain Tower: or, Nine Stories of China*, by T. T. T., *Literary Gazette*, 4 September 1841, p. 571; Review of *The Porcelain Tower: or, Nine Stories of China*, by T. T. T., *Athenæum*, 25 September 1841, pp. 743–46 (p. 744).

Western Advertiser and *Sealy's Western Miscellany*, and the scattered, and sometimes anonymous, articles in *Bentley's Miscellany, Ainsworth's Magazine*, and *Mirror*.[55] His Chinese tales, published from March to August 1841 in *Bentley's*, were the most famous of his works, and *The Porcelain Tower* (1841) in which they were collected ran through several editions well into years after his death.[56] Prefacing the collection, Sealy explains the motivation behind his writing of these Chinese stories:

> Recent events have directed towards the Chinese a degree of inquiry, which, however strange it may appear that we should have been wanting in attention to the politest of all people, they had never before excited among the dwellers in the West. […] the startling fact of a war breaking out, — a war which might probably involve the ruin and death of some thousands of our own countrymen, and of some hundreds of thousands of our brethren in the East, and still more the rise in the price of tea, — excited a sudden and general anxiety to know something of the character and resources of the four hundred millions whom we had sent our two cock-boats and a walnut-shell to conquer.[57]

[55] For the life of Thomas Henry Sealy, see John Goding, *A History of Cheltenham from the Earliest Period to the Present Time* (Cheltenham: Alfred Harper, 1853), pp. 310–12. Two memoirs were published in 1848 upon the death of Sealy. See 'Mr. T. H. Sealy', *Gentleman's Magazine*, November 1848, pp. 547–48; 'Chinese Legend: Letters from Sam-Sing to Weep-weep', *Bentley's Miscellany*, August 1848, pp. 185–92 (pp. 185–87). A reminiscence of Sealy by John Eagles (Vive Valeque), the English artist and author, with a commendation of his verse, can be found in 'Once Upon A Time', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, June 1855, pp. 685–701 (pp. 693–94).

[56] The five Chinese tales Sealy wrote for *Bentley's* were collected into *The Porcelain Tower; or, Nine Stories of China*, published by Bentley in September 1841, with the addition of four more unpublished Chinese tales. The book was reprinted and retitled *Chinese Legends; or, The Porcelain Tower* in 1848, with the addition of a memoir of the author. It was again reprinted and retitled *Broad Grins from China* in 1852, which is the last edition of the work as far as I can trace.

[57] [Thomas Sealy] T. T. T., 'Preface', *The Porcelain Tower; or, Nine Stories of China* (London: Bentley's, 1841), pp. ix–x.

Here is a curious passage embodying a no less curious state of mind: a mixture of arrogance, conscience, inquisitiveness, and derisiveness. We are shown the pride of an Englishman, buttressed by a sense of haughty distain towards 'the politest of all people' conquerable by 'two cock-boats and a walnut-shell'; but we are also shown the mockery therein, where the sacrifice of 'our own countrymen' and the much more enormous sacrifice of 'our brethren in the East' for nothing more than the 'still more' rise in tea price seems almost a farce in itself. Amid self-glorification and self-ridicule, moreover, is a spirit of inquiry the war enkindled — that 'sudden and general anxiety to know something of the character and resources' of the Chinese, which had never been so alive among the public than at that critical time of war. It was a time, Sealy says, when 'authentic works, giving detailed accounts of the country and its peculiar people, have lately been poured in upon us until the booksellers' houses are almost converted into China shops' (p. x), and so while the author has the intention to 'assume credit of the entire fabrication', he 'deemed it politic […] to acknowledge our obligations to the Celestial writers' (p. xi). Sealy's joke, though working in the forms of hyperbole and imposture, reflects the changing nature of Oriental desire in the period: the erstwhile interest in china was gradually replaced by an interest in China per se, and not even a work of entertainment could be absolved of the failing of downright fictionality. It is with such an awareness of the bandwagon of 'China shops' that Sealy renders his Chinese comedies a hybrid product — a product of frivolous and fanciful imagination grounded, nonetheless, in knowledge and facts.

At first glance Sealy's tales seem to answer to the quondam currency of 'china shops' rather than the new fad for 'China shops'. 'The Porcelain Bath' and 'Hyson and Bohea' evidently bring the chinoiserie cult to bear on readers to whom china and tea are exotically familiar and diurnal; 'Ho-Fi of the Yellow Girdle' and 'Fashion in Feet' reiterate the age-long curiosity of the West on the Chinese imperial hierarchy and the custom of foot-binding,

which had intrigued Europeans like Juan González de Mendoza and Matteo Ricci since the sixteenth century; and 'Kublai Khan, or, The Siege of Kinsai' evokes centuries of imaginative construal upon the Mongol emperor, from Marco Polo to Samuel Puchas and, of course, to Samuel Taylor Coleridge.[58] One of Sealy's comic devices, indeed, is the invocation of 'old China' in European imagination, and the subsequent subversion of it in a jester's way. All these stories make fun of the object of interest that captured the attention of Europeans since the Renaissance, and Sealy is especially keen on playing with the works of his more immediate precedents in the Romantic age. 'Kublai Khan, or, The Siege of Kinsai' is, though not an imitation of Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan', an unmistakable offshoot of it: it is 'a sort of psychological curiosity', as Sealy explains in his introduction to the poem in *The Porcelain Tower*, 'no other than a poetical dream of the well-known Klang, the warrior bard' of China.[59] In Sealy's comic poem, Coleridge's romantic Khan who 'on honey-dew hath fed, / And drunk the milk of Paradise' is no more; instead it is a Khan who, being captured and starved by a Chinese empress, 'went to the chamber to find the bone: / But when he came there / The table was bare, / And so the poor Khan had none'.[60] The fearsome and intimidating lord of Xanadu — 'Beware! Beware! / His flashing eyes, his floating hair!' — is now facelifted with a new inviting look, almost like a circus clown: 'his two little hard red eyes, / And a thick long beard, so yellow and grand, / Which gave him a look very fierce and wise' (194). The comicality of Sealy's work rests not only on the nursery-rhyme-like quality of his verse and the pantomiming of the Khan but also on the

[58] [Thomas Sealy], T. T. T., 'The Porcelain Bath: A Legend of the Celestial Empire', *Bentley's Miscellany*, June 1841, pp. 610–21; [Thomas Sealy], T. T. T., 'Hyson and Bohea: A Tale of the Tea-Pot', *Bentley's Miscellany*, April 1841, pp. 382–89; [Thomas Sealy], 'Ho-Fi of the Yellow Girdle', *Bentley's Miscellany*, March 1841, pp. 305–18; [Thomas Sealy], T. T. T., 'Fashion in Feet; or, The Tale of the Beautiful To-To', *Bentley's Miscellany*, July 1841, pp. 68–74; [Thomas Sealy], T. T. T., 'Kublai Khan, or, The Siege of Kinsai', *Bentley's Miscellany*, August 1841, pp. 186–97.
[59] [Sealy] T. T. T., *The Porcelain Tower*, p. 45. Sealy's introduction is not included in the periodical version.
[60] My citation of Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan' is based on Stillinger, pp. 186–88. My citation of Sealy's 'Kublai Khan, or, The Siege or Kinsai' is based on its periodical version. See [Sealy] T. T. T., 'Kublai Khan, p. 192.

easy changeover from sophistication to absurdity against the context of Coleridge's poetic romanticism. By evoking Romantic sincerity and inwardness, Sealy asserts his own frivolity and declares his works as a kind of shallow buffoonery that seeks simply to raise a laugh, which, nonetheless, was precisely what the society needed at a time when it was haunted by the 'grave Chinese matter'.

It is thus that, however much Sealy has concerned himself with the bandwagon of 'China shops', he is in no way evasive of the chicanery he pulls in his fictitious tales and is eager to make his duplicity a joke of its own. His 'Kublai Khan' is most clearly not a work by any Chinese warrior, nor is it difficult for readers to recognise that 'Ho-Fi of the Yellow Girdle' is but the Bluebeard story dressed in Chinese mantle. His self-exposure is plainest when he attributes the gems of English literature to China, as in 'The Porcelain Bath' when the protagonist Si-Long recalls the verse of the Chinese poet Sing-Song:

> His heart was low, — and as he looked at the gold fish, and thought of his false lady, he repeated to himself the words of the celebrated poet, Sing-Song, which have been so well translated by Gray:
>
> "Not all that tempts our wandering eyes,
> And heedless hearts is lawful prize;
> Not all that glisters, gold."[61]

Attributing Gray's 'Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat' (1742) to Sing-Song and making Gray a translator is a sparkling manoeuvre, not least because the cat, in Gray's ode, was

[61] [Sealy] T. T. T., 'The Porcelain Bath', p. 616. The original lines in Gray's 'Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat' read: 'Not all that tempts your wandering eyes / And heedless hearts is lawful prize; / Nor all that glisters gold'. See *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt, M. H. Abrams, and others, 8th edn, 2 vols (New York; London: W. W. Norton, 2006), I, p. 2866.

drowned as she fell into a china tub, 'Where China's gayest art had dyed'. In a similar manner, Sealy in 'Hyson and Bohea' plays with the verse of Thomas Campbell and Byron as he presents to readers 'The Tea-Tree' — 'the great national poem of the Chinese' — by the great Chinese poet Tee-to-tum, the penultimate verses of which read:

> Ne'er had the fond pair known that state divine,
> "Where transport and security entwine;"
> But since kind death hath tied them in one tether,
> Their namesake leaves full oft are brought together,
> In equal chests (with India-paper linings),
> In transports, with security, to Twining's.[62]

The play is on 'where transport and security entwine', a line in Campbell's *Gertrude of Wyoming*: 'O Love! in such a wilderness as this, / Where transport and security entwine, / Here is the empire of thy perfect bliss, / And here thou art a god indeed divine'.[63] The play is also on Byron, who, quoting Campbell in *Don Juan*, and commenting that his 'transport and security' is 'a phrase of some obscurity', interpreted the line as a sexual metaphor — 'The very thing which every body feels, / As all have found on trial, or may find, / That no one likes to be disturb'd at meals / Or love. — I won't say more about "entwined" / Or "transport", as we knew all that before, / But beg "Security" will bolt the door' (Canto I: 89).[64] It is in Byron's explicit interpretation that Sealy uses the phrase to describe how, although Hyson and Bohea died without being married, their union was consummated in death, and their names had become the namesakes of the two types of tea leaves most

[62] [Sealy] T. T. T., 'Hyson and Bohea', p. 389.
[63] Thomas Campbell, *Gertrude of Wyoming; A Pennsylvanian Tale* (London: T. Bensley, 1809), p. 47.
[64] McGann, *Lord Byron: The Major Works*, p. 400.

abundantly imported into Britain. Exploiting the double entendre, Sealy's humour culminates in the last two lines when 'transport' and 'security' revert to their literal senses as a description of trade, and when 'Twining's', the tea company, is made a slant rhyme with 'entwine'. The joke rests on the juxtaposition between poetic sublimity and economic pragmatism; it also rests on the fact that the ballad, being professedly a translation of a Chinese poem, is so immersed in the 'translator's' visibility that it flies in the face of itself and pronounces its own falsity.

In other instances Sealy emphasises the fictitious nature of his works by inflation and over-elaboration, often with reference to the received idea of Chinese peculiarities. There is, sometimes, little difference between a joke and a jeer, and in Sealy's case a hilarious portraiture of a Chinese is almost always a droll caricature. The Chinese notion of beauty, for one, is a source of no small amusement, and Sealy's portrayal of So-Sli, the far-famed beauty in 'Ho-Fi of the Yellow Girdle', reflects just this weirdness of Chinese taste ballooned up into near monstrosity: 'her foot was no longer than her finger', 'her eyes were smaller than the kernels of the almond', 'her hair was like a cobweb of the black spiders of Chen-si', and 'her lips were as two large pink caterpillars which the cooks of Pecheli have prepared for the banquet of the Son of Heaven'.[65] The Chinese culinary culture is likewise made fun of as an extraordinary, barbaric, and almost impossible art: the queen in 'The Porcelain Bath' has a liking for 'dishes of woodcock's brains, the pupils of cat's eyes, snail's horns, and mouse-foot jelly', and the tea leaves Ho-Fi offers his wife are manured with 'silk-worms and doves' marrow' and watered 'daily with roe's tears and cinnamon juice'.[66] But if there is one thing that most lucidly delineates a Chinaman in the eyes of the Victorians, it is the pigtail, which all Chinese men were required by law to wear since the mid-seventeenth

[65] [Sealy], 'Ho-Fi of the Yellow Girdle', p. 305.
[66] [Sealy] T. T. T., 'The Porcelain Bath', p. 618; [Sealy], 'Ho-Fi of the Yellow Girdle', p. 309.

century when the Manchurian conquered China and established the Qing dynasty. This unique feature of the Chinese provides Sealy with ample opportunities to showcase his fertile imagination upon the various uses of such an apparently useless and laughable hairstyle. In 'The Porcelain Bath', Nu-Moun uses 'the bow of his pig-tail' to wipe the crystals of his spectacles; in 'Hyson and Bohea' the protagonist is strapped to a tree 'by his long queue'.[67] In 'Fashion in Feet' the Chinese minister 'choked himself by swallowing his pig-tail', and in 'Ho-Fi of the Yellow Girdle' it is mentioned that a certain Ni-Ni had hanged himself up by his pigtail.[68] Sealy's imagination reminds us not only of the Chinese pantomime popular in the eighteenth century but also of Lemon's 'A True History of the Celebrated Wedgewood Hieroglyph', in which Ting-a-ting 'transfixed' Si-so with his pigtail, and Sing-sing was 'impaled on the point of his tail' when he fell from the roof.[69] It is highly probable that Sealy takes the inspiration from Lemon, for he alludes to 'A True History' in 'Ho-Fi of the Yellow Girdle', that 'Ting-a-ting's voice was too gentle'.[70] Sealy, however, does not fall short of Lemon in creativity and, indeed, cheekiness; the pigtails of Sealy's Chinamen are not only practically useful but also emotionally indicative. When Nu-Moun is agitated, 'his pig-tail grew exceedingly uneasy, waving in gentle undulations, and occasionally coiling round his shoulders', and when he finally relaxes, 'his queue grew calmer'.[71] The pigtail of Ho-Fi, too, would 'stood out horizontally and stiffly behind', '"with the effect of fear"'.[72] The Chinese pigtail, in other words, is 'biologicalised' into a motile body part — much like the tail of animals, especially dogs — that communicates the emotional state of its bearer — a derogatory fancy that nonetheless enlivens the animal analogy the word 'pigtail' itself suggests. In the comical world of Sealy, the pigtail is a prop

[67] [Sealy] T. T. T., 'The Porcelain Bath', p. 611; [Sealy] T. T. T., 'Hyson and Bohea', p. 385.
[68] [Sealy] T. T. T., 'Fashion in Feet', p. 74; [Sealy], 'Ho-Fi of the Yellow Girdle', p. 308.
[69] Lemon, 'A True History', p. 65; p. 61.
[70] [Sealy], 'Ho-Fi of the Yellow Girdle', p. 306.
[71] [Sealy] T. T. T., 'The Porcelain Bath', p. 613; 614.
[72] [Sealy], 'Ho-Fi- of the Yellow Girdle', p. 310.

used in surprising ways, and it is in the realm of fiction that its humorous potential is exploited and received.

It would seem, then, that Sealy's comedies, unapologetically fictitious as they are, have little to do with the myriad 'authentic works' that poured in upon the society. That, however, is not the case. Much as Sealy's tales are wildly and frivolously imaginative, many of his jokes are grounded in occurrences and observations that are supposedly real and reliable. Even his wry joke on the Chinese pigtail, in one instance, has a source to trace back to; describing the humiliating defeats of the Khan's troops by the Chinese empress and her lady regiment, Sealy writes:

> Daily were prisoners brought into the city,
>
> Tied by their pig-tails together in pairs;
>
> The handsome ones won on the Empress's pity,
>
> The plain ones were hung in the crescents and squares.
>
> She offered rewards for the heads of the lords,
>
> And the commoners, too, of the Tartar hordes.
>
> And her soldiers oft brought them by twos and by twos,
>
> Slung over their shoulders thus tied by their queues;
>
> Or, sometimes a lady with little remorse,
>
> Arranged them in pairs o'er the neck of her horse.[73]

It is not by pure imagination that Sealy pictures a group of Tartar captives tied by their pigtails, and even more callously, of their chopped heads tied likewise, slung over the victors' shoulders and over the neck of the victors' horse. In *The Porcelain Tower*, he reveals that

[73] [Sealy] T. T. T., 'Kublai Khan', p. 189–90.

the idea comes from the narrative of Richard Glasspoole, an officer of the East India Company captured by the Ladrone pirates on the south coast of China in 1809. 'On one occasion, when the pirate captain had offered a reward for each head of a Chinese,' Sealy notes, 'he mentions having seen a Ladrone with his sword drawn and dripping with blood, engaged in pursuit of a villager, whilst the heads of two whom he had just slaughtered were suspended on either side his neck, their pigtails being knotted together'.[74] From this Sealy dilates and embroiders with the interesting conception of a horse's neck, not least with a female rider — the visual potential of which is adeptly developed by his illustrator John Leech, who with a frontal perspective depicts the woman warrior like a centaur, with the cluster of heads making up her voluminous skirt as if supported by a crinoline (see Figure 14). In 'Kublai Khan, or, The Siege of Kinsai' alone, Sealy has acknowledged his reference to William Alexander's *Picturesque Representations of the Dress and Manners of the Chinese* (1805), John Francis Davis's *The Chinese: A General Description of the Empire of China and Its Inhabitants* (1836), and G. Tradescant Lay's *The Chinese As They Are: Their Moral, Social, and Literary Character* (1841), all of them works of cultural and historical significance. The story itself, too, is based on *The Travels of Marco Polo* — the account being that, when Kublai Khan invaded the royal city of Kin-Sai, the king made his escape and left the charge of the city to his queen, who eventually surrendered.[75] Sealy's tale is an adaptation of this story, which he had likely believed to be true; what marks his creative territory is that, rather than going along with a surrendering queen, Sealy has reimagined

[74] [Sealy] T. T. T., *The Porcelain Tower*, p. 293. Glasspoole's narrative was first published in Wilkinson's *Travels to China* (date unknown). It was reprinted in several periodicals, and was appended to the *History of The Pirates Who Infested the China Sea, from 1807 to 1810* (1831), translated by Charles Fried Neumann.
[75] Marco Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo, a Venetian, in the Thirteenth Century*, trans. by William Marsden (London: Cox and Baylis, 1818), pp. 474–81. The same episode was adapted into a play, *The Conquest of China, by the Tartars*, by Elkanah Settle in 1676, an account of which is given in the first chapter of Yang's *Performing China*. See Yang, pp.32–74.

Figure 14 John Leech, illustration for ‘Kublai Khan’ (1841)

her to be a gallant Chinese empress, who defeated the Tartar troops and captured the Khan — the man who, eventually, won her heart.[76]

All of Sealy’s tales share this similarity, that underneath the histrionic and frenzied narrative are laid strands of facts that serve either as sources of inspiration or information.

[76] In the Introduction of ‘Kublai Khan, or, The Siege of Kinsai’, Sealy writes: ‘It is true that the royal city, Kinsai, was beset by the troops of the Khan, and that the Emperor fled, leaving the defence of the place to his Empress: it is true that she defended it with great valour: but history makes no mention, upon this occasion, of any regiment of ladies; though at an earlier period in the Chinese annals the Emperors Shih-hoo and Yang-te had troops of beautiful ladies as their body-guards. It can scarcely be necessary to observe that the adventure of the Khan, as related in the second and third cantos, is altogether fictitious’. See [Sealy] T. T. T., *The Porcelain Tower*, pp. 45–46.

Sometimes, these are veritable facts; 'Ho-Fi of the Yellow Girdle', for instance, takes from Davis's description of the 'yellow girdle' in *The Chinese* — that the recipients of the honorific rank of the yellow girdle are allowed a lucrative allowance when they marry and when their wives die[77] — to provide a motive for the protagonist's killing of his wives, and by that means also 'perfect' the Bluebeard story, in which the reason why Bluebeard committed the murders remains obscure. Sometimes, the 'facts' Sealy draws on are fictional, despite their authenticity; 'The Porcelain Bath', for instance, is partly based on a Chinese legend about the god of the furnaces related in Davis's *The Chinese*, and partly adapted from the Chinese novel *Haoqiu Zhuan*, translated into English firstly by Thomas Percy in 1761, and then by Davis in 1829.[78] Rendered comically, the chaste, principled, and devoted heroine of *Haoqiu Zhuan* is transformed into the coquettish, selfish, and capricious Tou-Këen, who abandoned her lover Si-Long and married the Chinese emperor. With this preamble Sealy combines the legend, keeping the primary events intact — a porcelain craftsman threw himself into the furnace and magically perfected the porcelain ordered by the sovereign — only that it was the empress Tou-Këen, instead of the emperor, who ordered the impossible porcelain bath to be produced, and that the sacrifice of the craftsman is transformed into a revenge as Si-Long, with the help of his guardian joss, 'stewed' his faithless lover alive in the porcelain bath in which he was himself 'roasted'. At yet other times Sealy's stories seem to be based merely on widespread and old-world beliefs; 'Fashion in Feet' simulates the idea of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century missionaries that the custom of foot-binding in China originates from the patriarchal mentality that women must

[77] [Sealy], 'Ho-Fi of the Yellow Girdle', p. 305.
[78] Published in 1761, Thomas Percy's *Hau Kiou Choaan, or The Pleasing History* was the first full-length translation of a Chinese novel into English. In 1829 John Francis Davis made another attempt of translation, which resulted in *The Fortunate Union, A Romance*. Sealy adapts from one of the episodes of *Haoqiu Zhuan*, in which the heroine was obliged to live in the same house with the hero, who, being poisoned, was taken critically ill. It is interesting to note that, while the Chinese heroine erected a screen in the middle of the hall to separate herself from the hero according to the Chinese standard of propriety, Sealy's heroine Tou Këen expanded 'several screens' to set her apart from Si-Long when he was in his deathbed, and immediately ordered them to be removed when she heard that Si-Long was handsome, and was recovering.

be kept inside their boudoir to guarantee their chastity. Likely with reference to W. H. Medhurst's Chinese chronology, which identifies the reign of Min Te from A. D. 934 as the time when the custom of foot-binding was introduced, Sealy imagines that Emperor Min Te, discovering the affair between his beloved empress To-To and his minister Hum, 'sent for a cook and cleaver, and had these offending members [of his wife] chopped six inches shorter', whereupon 'it is confidently stated that To-To never more walked in her sleep'.[79] In all these stories Sealy has sewed a risible outfit for the China he knows of, and renders the characters and happenings inanely laughable — so much so that, in the final analysis, the fact that they are grounded in 'facts' seems almost a part of the humour.

Fact or fiction, the question does not seem an ethical one for Sealy; as a humorist he takes the liberty to fictionalise fact and factualise fiction, never asking his readers to take him completely seriously. Sealy's humorous tales, which sit within the decades-old cult of sporting with China, resemble many of the writings we have seen in the previous chapters: they are verbal caricatures, dramatic hyperboles, and open lies translated into witticisms. Assimilating the forms of humour that relate themselves to China in the past decades, Sealy positions his stories within a literary genealogy that has engaged China in its comical capacity; but in so doing he also highlights the mutation that characterises his endeavour in writing China. For Sealy is, indeed, writing China; the interest is in China itself — an interest triggered by an *interest* connected not only with trade but also with the war. Sealy's tales, which are a fusion of jokes, ridicules, fictions, and facts, address precisely the need and sentiment of a public stirred up by war: some overwhelmed by the desire to taunt and to conquest, some by the simple wish to extract themselves from serious thoughts and the

[79] W. H. Medhurst, *China: Its State and Prospect, with Especial Reference to the Spread of the Gospel: Containing the Antiquity, Extent, Population, Civilization, Literature, and Religion of the Chinese* (London: John Snow, 1838), p. 573; [Sealy] T. T. T., 'Fashion in Feet', pp. 73–74. Medhurst's work was repeatedly cited in *The Porcelain Tower*.

tiresome political wrangling over rights and wrongs, but all, with one accord, possessed by an urge to know something of that faraway country now in war with their own.

This regeneration of public interest in knowing something about China is most perceptible in Sealy's endeavour to base his imagination upon authentic accounts — an endeavour that echoes the proliferation of 'China shops', the growing number of 'China series' in periodicals, and, most important, the arrival of 'China exhibitions'. In 1842, towards the end of the Opium War, the British would be able to 'look' at China by visiting 'The Chinese Collection' of Nathan Dunn at Hyde Park, where Chinese lives are displayed with life-size figures performing all sorts of activities. As the curator of the collection said, it is something that 'teaches by *things* rather than words': 'The images are visible and tangible, and, therefore, cannot be easily misunderstood'.[80] In 1848 the Chinese junk Keying, manned by Chinese sailors, was exhibited at Blackwall, and in 1851 China was again on display in the Great Exhibition. Sealy's stories, in retrospect, belonged to the near-extinct species of pseudo-Chinese works that carry and adapt to the classical gene of lying, hoaxing, and fun-making; so were Hood's and Crowquill's 'fancying' about China an obsolete form of contemplating, imagining, and writing China. It was about time that visual reality should dispute and remould the imaginative space offered by China-related literature. A new era, which looks for the 'real' China, was approaching.

[80] Nathan Dunn and William B. Langdon, *Ten Thousand Chinese Things: A Descriptive Catalogue of the Chinese Collection* (London, 1842), p. viii.

CONCLUSION

In Dickens's *Little Dorrit*, serialised in *Household Words* from 1855 to 1857, a middle-aged Arthur Clennam returned to England after twenty years of residence in China. At home, he reintroduced himself to society; one of the old acquaintances he sought to renew was Flora Casby, his ex-fiancée, the very woman for whom he was sent away to the distant land, and who was now a widow. Throughout the years Arthur had dismissed her 'from any association with his Present or Future', but he had kept 'the old fancy of the Past unchanged, in its old sacred place'.[1] But who could have imagined that this 'old fancy' of Arthur would be razed to the ground when he met Flora again, when he realised that the elapse of time had irrevocably changed the way he could look at her? It was true that Flora had grown old and broad, but, as Arthur reflected, 'that was not much' (155). What was 'much' was that Flora, who once 'seemed enchanting in all she said and thought', now looked 'diffuse and silly' in Arthur's eyes (155). Flora might have talked of China in the same way then as now, but the same words uttered two decades later could no longer enchant a man who had raised himself in that part of the world:

> "[…] oh do tell me something about the Chinese ladies whether their eyes are really so long and narrow always putting me in mind of mother-of-pearl fish at cards and do they really wear tails down their back and plaited too or is it only the men, and when they pull their hair so very tight off their foreheads don't they hurt themselves, and why do they stick little bells all

[1] Charles Dickens, *Little Dorrit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 155.

over their bridges and temples and hats and things or don't they really do it!" (157)

Arthur had known China earlier than the general British public, but by 1855 no readers of Dickens could fail to feel what Arthur felt when he heard the 'diffuse and silly' Flora prattling on about China as if she was trapped in another age.[2] By 1855, the British had experienced China through the Opium War, the many treaty-port narratives that ensued, the Chinese Collection, and the Great Exhibition; that fanciful old China, whom one construed from ornaments and pantomimes and tales, had become, more irrevocably than ever, the 'old fancy of the Past'.[3] In one sense Flora, with her Chinese jabber, is the very figure that epitomises youthful ignorance and passion, a past that Arthur has lost and could never recapture; in another sense Flora, naïve, ridiculous, and stagnant, *is* old China itself, while Arthur has matured and progressed. Just as Arthur is 'done with' (58) his business in China, so too his romance with Flora has to reach its finale. In Dickens's rhetoric, the distance between Arthur and Flora is also the distance between two ages and two civilisations, encapsulated by the China metaphor; as the old fancy of the Past gives way to the Present and the Future, a new page is turned, and there is no longer any question of going back.

We are reminded of Dickens's famous essay, 'The Great Exhibition and the Little One', published earlier in 1851 upon the opening of the Great Exhibition. Chinese stagnancy, in Dickens's imagination, is a kind of frozen timelessness: 'As the Past was, so the Present is, and so the Future shall be'.[4] To compare the 'Great' Exhibition (of Britain) with the 'Little' Exhibition (of China) is, he said, 'the comparison between Stoppage and Progress, between the exclusive principle and all other principles, between the good old times and the

[2] In Dickens's story, Arthur stayed in China from circa 1805 to 1825.
[3] Dunn and Langdon, p. viii.
[4] [Charles Dickens], 'The Great Exhibition and the Little One', *Household Words*, July 1851, pp. 356–60 (p. 358).

bad new times, between perfect Toryism and imperfect advancement' (360). For Dickens, China is not just China but a trope that translates the question of modernisation into a choice between self-contented immobility in the past and the toilsome, imperfect, and yet fulfilling locomotion of the present into the future, and in as much as time does not stand still like it is in China, progress is not only inevitable but also irresistible. Overshadowing Dickens's metaphorical preference for progress over stoppage is China's defeat in the Opium War — that China's self-gratifying immobility and littleness came, nonetheless, at the expense of being outrun, edged off, and humiliated. For others, like the essayist of *Sharpe's London Journal*, China is a mirror to the self in a diametrically opposite way; imagining the Chinese figures 'smiling with an air of raillery' at him and all the 'movement which surrounds him' in the Crystal Palace, all he could feel was embarrassment.[5] 'On which side were the barbarians?' he reflected, 'are the Chinese so primitive, so uncivilized, as to think of war, to employ their talents in discovering the best manner of killing one another, to waste their time in preparing arms like the savage hordes of the earliest time? They have something better to do […] How these people must pity us, if they ever think of us!' (254). By remaining stationed on its 'immovable basis', China is immune from the 'fever' that 'gnaws us'; its immobility, littleness, and weakness only punctuate Europe's failure to 'prosper in peace' (254). It is a hard fact that the Opium War had put an end to any fancy over China — it had put China onto a stage, or into a case, to be viewed 'in the concrete, and not in the abstract', to borrow Walter Kelly's words[6] — but whether it was the old China Britain imagined it to be, or the 'real' China Britain experienced through war and world fair, the very act of writing China remains a heuristic means by which British writers engage themselves in the exploration, exposition, and expression of a self perpetually struggling to

[5] 'A Journey Round the World in the Crystal Palace', *Sharpe's London Journal*, July 1851, pp. 250–56 (p. 254).
[6] Kelly, p. 34.

be defined against moments of change. Such a 'making use' of China, as I have said in the Introduction of this study, is not a single-stage process but an ongoing one; it had taken shape as early as when China was looked up to by European nations as an economic and sociopolitical ideal to the time when its cultural legitimacy came into question, and had persisted, as I hope this study has shown, to the nineteenth century when China became an object of laughter and contempt, and, at last, a real, though feeble, national foe. It is by looking at China in British literature from such a perspective that we are reminded of the consistency — rather than the volatility, as a focus on attitudinal change would suggest — that characterises British literary engagement with China, the nature of which, as I have argued, is essentially solipsistic, inward-looking, and self-enclosed.

To put it in another way, this study has considered Britain's self-oriented literary engagement with China as describing a kind of literary relationship that is by nature unilateral. By 'unilateral' I do not mean that it is arbitrary and unresponsive to the dynamics of Anglo-Chinese exchange in a cross-cultural sense, or that such an engagement is simply non-reciprocal and asymmetrical; it means, rather, that neither the production, operation, reception, nor interpretation of it can be understood beyond the bounds of the domestic, that it takes meaning and makes meaning of the China trope from within the self and for the self, and on which basis alone can its 'Chinese rhetoric' be perceived as instrumental to a process of thoughts that cater for the needs of the domestic society. In the nineteenth century, a 'Chinese rhetoric' is easily, though not exclusively, a rhetoric of othering; the self is analysed, assessed, criticised, and censured through its affinity with the Chinese other, and it is by foregrounding the similitude or comparability between China and this perverse part of the self — be it understood politically, socially, culturally, or spiritually — that writers displace their object of reflection or critique from the realm of identification onto the plane of differentiation and alienation. The Chinese other, in other words, is the very agent that

estranges the self from the self — an agent that distantiates a part of the self from its integrality so that one is allowed to rediscover it, confront it, or reconcile oneself to it. While China, in such an operation, functions as an isolator that bifurcates a self hitherto imagined to be intact into a divided entity, it is also possible to think of such an operation — of comparing, analogising, and eventually identifying a part of the self with China — as a process of assimilation, by which the Chinese other is integrated into the notion of a self, however unfamiliar it might be. A Sinicised self, in the early nineteenth century, could hardly be construed as retaining any of its civilising connotation in the early modern period, but even if it could only signify a sickened chunk of the self — as, for instance, the political feebleness of the monarch, the disoriented values of the society, the degeneration of cultural and literary taste, the depletion of spiritual strength, and even the woeful fancy of the past — it is the self, nonetheless, which one is given, connected to, and conscious of being. Goethe had famously said in his *West-East Divan* that 'who knows himself and others well / No longer may ignore: / Occident and Orient dwell / Separately no more'.[7] Goethe's cosmopolitanism might not be in tune with what his British contemporaries took to be a viable attitude towards modernity, but the very inseparability between the East and the West seems to be the understructure of all those disparate ideologies that underwrote the modern age: cosmopolitanism, humanitarianism, nationalism, imperialism, colonialism, globalisation, to name but the most prominent. It is, perhaps, from an instrumentalist perspective that we are most bound to find the congruity and commensurability between a cosmopolitan ideal, as that of Goethe's and of early modern Britain's, and that of the nationalist and imperialistic Britain in the nineteenth century, for to 'make use' of an Oriental other is but one of the many rhetorical ploys that allow one to observe one's self in

[7] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *West-East Divan*, trans. by Martin Bidney (New York: State University of New York Press, 2010), p. 167.

a better light. Both the East and the West, in this sense, could be made a means of exploration: 'Twixt two worlds I love the way / Back and forth a man may sway; / So between the East and West / Moving to and fro's the best', as Goethe wrote, following that famous verse which is now immortalised as a part of the Hafis-Goethe Memorial at Weimar.

I have closed this study with the First Opium War and started the present conclusion with one of Dickens's novels, *Little Dorrit*, published a little over a decade afterwards. A lot had happened to the British literary landscape during this decade. Raymond Williams, in *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence*, has identified the 1840s as the decisive point at which the English novel took on a new realist turn, one that centred upon the meaning of community, upon what is knowable and unknowable.[8] It would be interesting to ask what became of China in British literature in this decade and after, whether the instrumentalist perspective this study adopts remains germane to this new mode of literary response to social change, and whether the fundamental transformation of Sino-British relationship has created new roles for China to play in the long course of British self-exploration, not only in a macro national terms but also in a micro familial terms. From what we have seen in *Little Dorrit* we might boldly hypothesise that China continues to play a part in the construction, or reconstruction, of British selfhood in its specific moments of uncertainty and doubt as a self-reflexive trope, but in a substantially different way as its figurative meaning becomes more literally connected with China as a body of knowledge — that the distance between Arthur and Flora rests upon the explicit discrepancy between their knowledge about China, from which is extended the tropological structure that underlies such a discordance, namely the binaries between fancy and reality, the past and the present, and stoppage and progress. How the formation of a new system of knowledge about China after the First Opium War — as reflected, for instance, in the institutionalisation

[8] Raymond Williams, *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1970).

of ‘Chinese Studies’ at King’s College London, Oxford University, and Cambridge University since the 1840s[9] — coincides with what Williams considers to be the rise of a new and major generation of literary mode in Britain, as well as how China is connected to the lived experience and ‘knowable communities’ of writers in the mid- to late nineteenth century, is no less an intriguing topic to explore. I have said at the end of my final chapter that ‘a new era, which looks for the ‘real’ China, was approaching’, and I must add here that the present study has not ventured into this era not only because there has to be a limit to its scope and scale but also because, and more significantly because, we are expected to find new bases of relation, new forms of engagement, and maybe new perspectives to qualify our discussion. What is certain is that, as writers find themselves in a wholly new relationship with China, the meanings they invest in the very notion of China must diverge from those in the past decades and centuries; and yet I should think that they will remain pedigreed, in one way or another, to their immediate and distant ancestors.

This study might have opened up other avenues of exploration besides an extension of scope. It is, in fact, when I consider the possibility of orienting this study in different ways that I feel obliged to confess that the present study, in the end, raises more questions than it could have answered. One of these questions has to do with the relationship between China and humour. Why, we may ask, was China so comical, so apt to raise a laugh, so ‘light’ in its use as a figure of imagination? The close association between China and humour is evident and, in this study, we have had an initial elucidation of it in connection

[9] A Chinese professorship was established at King’s College London in 1847, followed by another at Oxford in 1867, and yet another at Cambridge in 1888. In fact, as early as 1837 University College London had already tried to launch a Chinese programme, but the course existed only for a short span of five years (i.e. one term for the inaugural professor, Samuel Kidd) before it was aborted. Uganda Kwan has conducted a book-length study on the institutionalisation of Chinese Studies in the United Kingdom; see Uganda Sze-pui Kwan, *Yi zhe yu xue zhe: xiang gang yu da ying di guo zhong wen zhi shi jian gou* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2017). The title of the book may be translated, literally, as *Interpreters and Scholars: Hong Kong and the Construction of Chinese Knowledge in Great Britain*; I am not aware that an English translation is available for the book, but those interested may find relevant information in her published essays.

to China's commodified and pantomimic presence in British lives, but a solid theoretical framework is needed for us to understand the nature of humour and its bearing on British culture in specific contexts before we can approach the question in a more substantial way. A related issue is how much the case of China can tell us about the wider implication of the difference between 'imagination' and 'fancy', and, on this basis, how much the differences between China and other Orients, as well as other forms of otherness, in literary representation reflect the kernel of the notions of genius and creativity. Is distance, for instance, an impediment to a supposedly higher form of imaginative activity, or is it a lack of confidence in 'knowing' the other that has constrained the act of creation? What, then, is the boundary of imagination? Asking these questions is tantamount to asking what position China could have held in the British definition of literature and poetics and its methods of literary criticism. On the other hand, we may well turn from the idea of literature as an art to the idea of literature as a commodity, and ask whether China, itself a highly commodified imagery, has not become a consumable in an increasingly mercantile literary marketplace, and whether its use is not, at the same time, a form of resistance to the commodification of literature in the nineteenth century. This also leads us to consider the rise of the mass reading public in the Victorian era, when the 'common reader' Richard Altick talks of was enlarged from the middle class down to the working class; and it may interest us to inquire into the way China, as a class symbol, changes shape in the context of social development, and how such changes interact with the changing dynamics of Anglo-Chinese relations in the long nineteenth century.[10] Possibilities of inquiry, indeed, are too numerous and wide to be enumerated, and all I can hope is that this study, although limited in scope and design, may contribute a share to the understanding of the literary life of China in Britain, not so much

[10] Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800–1900* (Columbus: Ohio State University, 1998).

as a foreign ‘other’ but as a familiar figure of the ‘self’. This vantage point, I think, will continue to inform my research in the future, and I would hope that its implication does not only tell us something about history but also bear upon the world we are living in.

The world was hit hard by the Covid pandemic when I was mid-way through this research. Now, as I am writing these words, we are still struggling to survive such an unprecedented challenge. It is a challenge not only to our health, our economy, and our state system; it is also a challenge to our sense of belonging to a world connected ever so closely together, a challenge to our confidence of the necessity and merit of globalisation, and a challenge to the headway we have made in seeing the world as one world. For indeed, at no time in history have we seen the boundaries between countries and regions so clear cut; all of a sudden, the process of globalisation and all forms of integration seem to have halted and even reversed. Everything becomes disconnected; every nation, every region, every household, every man is, or has been, an island. It is, perhaps, at this strange time that we are most keenly conscious of how we can define our ‘self’ and the ‘other’, and how these definitions are in constant flux until, in the end, we seem always to find an other in a self, and a self in an other. No one can tell what the world will become after we have got through this pandemic — maybe we will re-territorialise as if nothing had happened, maybe we will begin to take a protectionist turn against the old model, or maybe, in its extremity, we will have to adapt to a strictly multipolarised world. In times of uncertainty, we may all have to prepare ourselves for the worst, but even in separation, we will remember that all nations and, indeed, all human beings are inseparable in a subtle way. In whatever modes of operation, the world was, and is, and will be, connected, if we only take a close look at it.

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