Title of Paper: **What the traveller saw: fact, fiction and the gendered text in fin de siècle China travel narratives**

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Section: Articles

Date of Publication: April, 2018

Issue: 6.1

Abstract: This study examines a number of travel narratives from nineteenth and early twentieth century male and female writers, offering direct sources to demonstrate that writers were both obliged and even willing to create gendered texts as responses to their travel experiences. This paper postulates that the Victorian woman traveller, in writing of her experiences was constrained by patriarchal codes to present herself as powerless despite, and in contradiction to, the sense of empire and racial superiority which she carried with her as the coloniser’s prerogative. Conversely, her male counterpart was free to indulge in a discourse of his choice be that factual and scientific or the heroic adventure of ‘boys’ own fiction.

Keywords: Gender, travel, nineteenth century, narrative, discourse, post-colonial theory, auto-biography.

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In 1835, Sarah Lee published *Stories of Strange Lands and Fragments from the Notes of a Traveller*, asserting in her introduction that she has struggled ‘to repress an exuberance of observation and circumstance’ and to ‘avoid egotism.’ She has, furthermore, ‘scratched out’ and ‘turned and twisted’ sentences ‘to avoid this provoking monosyllable,’\(^i\) (106, 107) that is, the personal pronoun. Why did Lee circumscribe her work in this way? The answer lies in the gender of the writer. This paper postulates that the Victorian woman traveller, in writing of her experiences was constrained by patriarchal codes to present herself as powerless despite, and in contradiction to, the sense of empire and racial superiority which she carried with her as the coloniser’s prerogative.

Female travellers in the nineteenth century were less numerous than men but by no means rare nor were they, in themselves, rarities as Sara Mills points out, (42), although both male and female critics have tended to present such women as exceptional in a negative sense - eccentric even freakish.\(^i\)\(^i\) As is well known, women in general colluded in their subaltern status by failing to challenge the patriarchal establishment which, in turn, was convenient for most males. ‘In attempting to theorise or describe patriarchy’\(^iii\) (16), and in agreement with Foucault, Mills proposes a rejection of the ‘master/slave view of power. She sees the concept of all men being against all women as part of an untenable conspiracy theory, considering it a mistake to overstate the case or to imply that women were incapable of accruing a certain power, albeit on a game board delineated by men.

As is well known, exceptional men unfashionably encouraged daughters or wives in terms of their education, publishing, and general support for the woman’s cause - Alicia Little (see below) is perhaps a lesser known such daughter. For most women a room of their own was not on the agenda. Nonetheless, while yet accepting their assigned role as angel of the house, some expressed individuality, though circumscribed, by writing. This despite possible opprobrium and, more often than not, while juggling the domestic role at the same time.

Economic factors were not a salient consideration for the women travellers of this sample, and they seemingly encroach on the male sphere by writing non-fiction. Examination of a selection of their texts sheds light on their atypical contributions to the literary scene.

Whilst viewed as a member of a powerful group by the subjected, the actual place held by the ‘western’ woman in her own society was one of powerlessness which informed and constructed her perceptions both temporally and spatially of her travels, and of those whom she encountered on them. As Richard Phillips confirms (92):

> Victorian girls and women were explicitly confined to geographies of domesticity and enclosure, material space in which their life paths were fixed, and metaphorical space in which their gender was fixed . . . Ruskin, in particular, insisted that girls be confined to the home, both materially and metaphorically. In his view, they should be denied access to books
and magazines that might transport them away from the home . . . ‘if, by its excitement [romance], it renders the ordinary course of life uninteresting, and increases the morbid thirst for useless acquaintance [my italics] with scenes in which [she] shall never be called upon to act’ (Ruskin, 1865:163).

The desire to travel becomes ‘morbid’ when experienced by woman for her impotence makes such activity pointless; Ruskin sums up the beliefs of most of his generation. It is not easy to view such specious argument as anything other than a lurking terror that once unleashed from their metaphorical bonds, women might be as capable as men. Ruskin’s personal anxieties are here laid bare for the discerning analyst.

Interestingly, concerning literature written by women and aimed at girls, Phillips finds that many girls never read the moralistic pap intended for them but preferred boys’ adventure stories (though he warns against generalising that which cannot be proved). These were exactly the materials from which Ruskin would protect females. Phillips cites the important exception of the novelist Bessie Marchant in the early twentieth century who wrote over 150 adventure novels for girls and was one of the first to situate the action of many of them far from home such as the Philippines, Uruguay and Tasmania.

As for the typical female writer of adult works, Showalter asserts (21):

The novelists publicly proclaimed, and sincerely believed, their antifeminism, by working in the home, by preaching submission and self-sacrifice, and by denouncing female self-assertiveness, they worked to atone for their own will to write . . . [which] required a genuine transcendence of female identity.\(^v\)

This was no less true for the female travel writer. One of the (many) obstacles which she had to overcome was the general prejudice of critics and readers against women’s work. Showalter reminds us that women novelists frequently used male pseudonyms and critics tried to guess whether a novel of dubious authorship had actually been written by a woman, drawing out specious evidence of the feminine, for it was unthinkable that a woman could write in other than what was perceived to be a demonstrably female fashion.\(^vi\) (58, 59). The author suggests that such \textit{noms de plume} were not necessary for female travel writers because their work was noticeably, (properly) ‘feminine,’ i.e. non assertive, and did not challenge established codes.

The Victorian woman faced both the prejudices of society and her own inculcated self-image of relativity, femininity and propriety. The very fact that she was deemed frail and weak created an ambivalence difficult to overcome in her representations of experiences abroad. If courage in facing the daunting or perilous was expressed without qualification to belittle such fortitude in some way, she risked denunciation as unfeminine, ‘de-sexed’. The veracity of her tale would be called into question and she would be ridiculed for having the temerity to suggest that a woman could have taken part in such a preposterous adventure.
Conversely, if she tended ‘towards the discourses of femininity’ she would be attacked as trivial.\textsuperscript{vii} (Showalter, 118) which essentially put her in a ‘no win’ situation. Prevailing mores thus forced women to trivialise their autobiographies from the very title by using such terms as ‘Reminiscences . . .’ and ‘Recollections . . .’ having the purpose of ‘implying something casual, easy, unstructured, resembling family stories at the fireside.’\textsuperscript{viii} (Sanders, 6). The travel narratives upon which this study focuses fall into this category.

As Sanders points out ‘Victorian women had still to prove that they had minds, and that the reading public might want to know about them.’\textsuperscript{ix} (47). As late as 1917 when the Rev. Samuel Couling published his ‘magnum opus,’ the \textit{Encyclopaedia Sinica},\textsuperscript{x} he saw fit to mention only one female writer but 14 males under ‘A’, though Mrs Alicia Little gets a brief mention under ‘Anti-footbinding’ (despite the fact that it was she who founded the foreign anti-footbinding league in 1895). Under the ‘B’ entries 34 males are described while Isabella (Bird) Bishop receives two scant sentences from which we learn that she ‘wrote many books about her journeys’ and ‘spent about a year and a half in China.’ We are then misinformed that she died in England. In fact she died in Edinburgh where she had lived most of the time whilst at home since 1860.\textsuperscript{xi}

Under ‘L’ a further 13 European men are mentioned and Archibald Little receives a respectable note of his life and achievements, the final point being made that his wife published two books on his behalf after his demise. In fact Alicia Little’s own contribution to writings on China is substantial. She wrote at least four books on China and one translation of a Chinese legend. Before she married Archibald at the rather advanced age of 40, she was already a writer of repute in England. One particularly popular book being \textit{Mother Darling}, (1885), a novel which addressed the law on custody of children. She had also served on various philanthropic committees. Born in Madeira in 1845 and educated by her own father,\textsuperscript{xii} (Hoe, 225-227), Alicia nonetheless felt her sphere to be the feminine and explains:

\begin{quote}
It is this China . . . with here an anecdote and there a descriptive touch, which I hope to make the English reader see . . . in the following pages, which are not stored with facts and columns of statistics. People who want more detailed information about China, I would refer to Sir John Davis’s always pleasant pages; or to my husband’s \textit{Through the Yangtse Gorges}, (sic) containing the result of years of observation . . .\textsuperscript{xiii}(4).
\end{quote}
Promising anecdotes, descriptions, and no unpleasant facts or statistics, this book will be suitably trivial, it seems; the serious reader is directed to Mr Little’s work.

The men who wrote of their experiences in China were normally diplomats, merchants (like Archibald Little), men of independent means or funded by learned societies, missionaries both Protestant and Catholic and sometimes in the medical profession. Conversely the women were typically wives though sometimes unmarried missionaries, and less frequently, women of means who had the unusual desire to travel to strange places. One such traveller was Isabella Bishop nee Bird who did so before her marriage at the age of 50 (to a doctor ten years her junior) and again from 1889, after her
husband's early death, until the age of 70. Another was Mary Gaunt (see below).

Female writers frequently adopted the expedient of writing in journal or letter form, both fully acceptable as ladies’ ‘jottings.’ Isabella Bird Bishop wrote constantly to her beloved and more conventionally minded sister, Henrietta (Hennie). She had every intention of publishing but expunged all the more personal information when editing the letters, on her return to England. This leads us to a point which should be clarified: when is autobiography not autobiography? Can travel narratives be counted as such? If the narrative can be seen as ‘self-writing,’ to borrow Sanders’, term and is presented as a record of the experiences of the writer over a certain period, in what way is that not autobiography? Also noting that women frequently used the letter form, Pratt confirms ‘the form that had become canonical and authoritative in the bourgeois era, [was] the autobiographical narrative.’

Clearly, autobiography and travel writing may be coterminous and Pratt’s designation encompasses both. ‘Autobiographical narrative’, then, could be an apt term for the texts to be examined below.

To write other than in the prescribed feminine style would be to flout the laws of nature and God himself. Given that the travel guide had not yet emerged as a genre, writing style was typically confined to the quasi-scientific - a mode often adopted by male writers - or personal narrative accounts, a mixture of both, or epistolary form, often adopted by women. Of over 80 volumes of nineteenth century travel writings on China by men examined, the author did not encounter a single instance of the latter form. This is significant and bears out hypotheses on both women's autobiography and travel writings presented by such leading researchers as Mary Louise Pratt, Valerie Sanders and Sara Mills. In contrast with the tone of feminine discourse, ‘the capitalist vanguardists scripted themselves into a wholly male, heroic world. The genderedness of its construction becomes clear when one examines writings by women travelers (sic) of the same period . . .’

Society could accept a woman's writings so long as they did not overstep imaginary boundaries of the feminine, contemporaneously understood by all. By this means, she was able to avoid general opprobrium but also, perhaps more importantly, maintain the sense of femininity and propriety which she, no less than her menfolk, found an essential component of the female psyche.

Isabella Bird had spent time living in the rocky mountains amongst the wildest of men yet she preserved her own sense of propriety and considered herself a civilising influence as did the men who greatly missed her when she left. Plagued by a chronic spinal disease and what we would probably now consider acute depression, Isabella Bird first began travelling in earnest in 1873 at the age of 40 at the suggestion of an enlightened doctor who thought it would do her good. Only when she was travelling did she feel alive and free from the depression which seemed permanently to hang over her in England. Needless to say, she eschewed the popular resorts of Europe. One does not need a degree in psychology to guess why she felt so happy away from home despite the many privations this entailed. When she died in 1904, she had been moving from one nursing home to another in Edinburgh, presumably in pursuit of the chimera she had followed in her travels for much of her adult life.
As indicated by Couling’s apparent assumption that very few female writers were worthy of a slot in his encyclopaedia, the general feeling was that they were not to be taken seriously, so that the disparaging remarks which women needed to make about their work were a vital aspect of their gaining an audience of either sex. Female writers who wanted to be taken seriously had to steer a thorny path between real experience and that which could be both accepted and believed by publishers and readers back home. As shown above, Alicia Little is careful to claim no knowledge of such ‘masculine’ areas as statistics and to assert from the outset that she will offer only anecdotes and ‘a descriptive touch.’ She defers to her husband and Davis when it comes to ‘serious issues’ such as ‘facts and columns of statistics.’ Is her work to be a fiction then, a product entirely of the imagination? Obviously not, but her own observations must be presented disparagingly, modestly, lest she be seen as challenging male authority regarding the kind of quasi-scientific material with which men legitimise their travel experiences. The very title *Intimate China* is evocative of a confidential chat over a cup of tea and this is exactly the impression which Alicia Little and others like her were customarily required to convey. Note her first chapter:

**PRELUDE.**
**FIRST IMPRESSIONS.**

Arriving in Shanghai. - My first Tea-season. - Inside a Chinese City. - Shanghai Gardens. - In the Romantic East at last!

1. ARRIVING IN SHANGHAI

It was in the merry month of May, 1887, that I first landed in China; . . .

Compare this to Archibald’s:

**GLEANINGS FROM FIFTY YEARS**
**IN CHINA**

Part 1: Trade and Politics

**WESTERN CHINA: ITS PRODUCTS AND TRADE**

Western China is no longer the from which, until quite recently, rare travellers alone lifted the veil at long intervals, . . . (Archibald Little, 1)

Alicia speaks directly to the reader, situating us immediately in time and space with the assurance that she will lead us through this experience, and the clichéd, alliterative ‘merry month of May’ confirms that this experience will be fairly light-hearted, not intellectually challenging and will address issues which are of interest to us
both, starting with gardens; the city; tea and not forgetting that this is the ‘Romantic’ orient so there may be a dash of spice here and there.

The contrast with Archibald’s opening could not be sharper. ‘I’ am not there at all; this is the discourse of fact, of science. What is to follow will be authoritative. The reader may rely on this information, quote it, act upon it. This information has been gleaned over fifty years so the writer knows what he is talking about - of course, it must be a ‘he’ - no woman would make such an opening statement. China used to be an unreadable mystery but after fifty years’ experience it is no longer closed from our understanding. Yes, Archibald can ‘read’ and circumscribe the orient; he has cracked the nut and China is now an open book. Furthermore, these gleanings are not for mere woman for on the same page he quotes Juvenal but provides no translation. Message: this book is for élite men; it is serious, scientific and intellectually challenging. The writer assumes that, like him, you, the reader are highly educated and will appreciate his little joke in Latin. Of course, few women could read Latin. Archibald’s book is pompous and stiff with upper lip; Alicia’s is human and warm with sympathy - despite the regrettable lapses into discourses of alterity, which we are not surprised to note, given the time of writing.

In Intimate China, Alicia Little makes fairly frequent reference to her husband, just as one expects in a journal or letter about one’s doings. Contrastively, Archibald makes no mention of his wife although she accompanied him on his travels. In Alicia’s book, when locals are troublesome or rude, it is Mr Little who must deal with them. When they peer through the slats in the roof of a village hut to examine this strange couple, Archibald ‘undressed comfortably by candlelight, [despite the audience] and then, as so often . . .’ his wife had to undress in the dark, ‘Certainly, a man has great advantages in travelling,’ (60,61), she remarks, somewhat wistfully. Next night they are beset by villagers outside the shuttered windows of their inn at Lichuan. Mr Little, who spoke and wrote Chinese, explained to the crowd that they were welcome to inspect his room and visit him at any time but ‘they knew themselves it was not proper to look into women’s apartments.’ (63). All was to no avail so Archibald next complained to the landlord, who declared himself powerless. ‘Once they broke the shutters open, and my husband really frightened them, rushing out and asking who was trying to steal our things, and saying he would have the thieves arrested and taken to the yamen.’ This kept the curious villagers quiet for only a time. The concern to protect his wife from unwelcome attention is, of course part of the chivalry to be expected from a decent Victorian male.

Next night Alicia Little had to pretend to be a man in order to be admitted to an inn which did not have a separate room for women. In simple inns, everyone slept in the same room on large platforms with fire underneath, known as kangs. In those days, a woman could not sleep in the same room with the men. ‘Would a stricter moralist have thought it necessary to repudiate the falsehood, and explain?’ (65), Alicia worries. She too feels she should not sleep in the same room with [strange] men but as it is late and they are tired she maintains the fiction, for they had already been turned away from the first inn as it had no women’s quarters. The women of the house peer at this odd pair as though their secret was perhaps discovered but, after all, it turns out to be merely curiosity at their bizarre appearance. In her long fur coat and riding in a sedan, Alicia is taken for
a mandarin despite her feminine hair for she has tell-tale feet! No woman of such consequence could possibly have ‘large feet.’ Next day both the cook and Archibald fall sick, and so on. Each day is documented with its sights and events large or small. No such events are reported by Archibald in his writings; we would know nothing of the practical aspects of their journey across China if it were not for his wife.

The obverse to Mr Little’s command of the situation is found in Mrs Little's apparent helplessness. Whatever discomforts or inconveniences the male traveller endured were magnified for women. The need to undress in the dark is the closest Mrs Little can come to hinting at other more private problems: how did she manage to relieve herself under constant scrutiny as she was? This is a fascinating subject which she cannot possibly address without impropriety. Apart from the problems of bodily functions common to both sexes, women had the added difficulty of dealing with menstruation - not a simple matter even now with modern aids, when travelling in out-of-the-way places where there are no toilets and no running water. These issues constitute, along with sex and childbirth, a palpable silence in Victorian texts and can only be alluded to obliquely.

Such lacunae must be filled by the reader’s imagination. Today, most of us probably have personal experiences and, furthermore, will not have been embarrassed to ask who has the shovel before walking with it towards a distant rock or sand dune in the desert, or to a clump of trees in more fertile terrain. However, in an age when propriety governed every act and ladies were not supposed to have had bodily functions, dealing with the latter must have been one of the worst traumas of being on the road and, furthermore, one could not learn how it was done, in private, from books. The Victorian woman was also constrained by long dresses with petticoats, non-functional shoes, stays, and was expected to ride side-saddle when not in a sedan chair. In fact, some did take to riding astride and to Chinese dress (see below), but not within sight of censorious western eyes. How much more determined the woman traveller had to be than her male counterpart who was not constantly expected to behave with suitable decorum. What was the payoff? Was there one, indeed? Only if one was travelling with western male companions. Kate Millett asserts:

Chivalrous behavior (sic) represents - a sporting kind of reparation to allow the subordinate female certain means of saving face. While a palliative to the injustice of woman's social position, chivalry is also a technique for disguising it. One must acknowledge that the chivalrous stance is a game the master group plays in elevating its subject to pedestal level. (37).

Isabella Bishop (1831-1904) is unusual in her opening remarks in that she does not make attempts to demonstrate that she will not stray into those purlieus reserved for male writers. On the contrary, she assures the reader that she was no mere visitor but spent eighteen months travelling up the YangTze (sic) and other parts of China. Not to be compared with Archibald Little’s 50 years, this is nevertheless a considerable time to devote to the task in hand and her opening is authoritative enough:
THE YANGTZE VALLEY

CHAPTER 1.

GEOGRAPHICAL AND INTRODUCTORY

She points out that few people ‘are fully acquainted with the magnitude and resources of the great basin . . .’.xxxix (1). Her second paragraph demonstrates thorough research of authoritative (male) works and she shows no diffidence in listing facts and statistics:

Geographically The Yangtze Valley, or drainage area, may be taken as extending from the 90th to the 122nd meridian of east longitude . . . Its population, one of the most peaceable and industrious on earth, at from 17,000,000 to 180,000,000.xxx (1).

Bishop’s work is going to be serious, not merely a woman's gossip devoted to matters supposedly of interest to women. She also seems not to have suffered from the problem of failing to be accepted where women’s quarters were not provided. After a damp and uncomfortable days travelling she stopped at an unfinished inn at Hsai-shan-po (sic) with only two rooms, one of which was occupied by the innkeeper and his family:

The partitions are lath and plaster, the walls beginning a foot from the ground and ending two feet from the roof, allowing the entrance of some light, much draught, many hens, a few young pigs, and great clouds of smoke.xxxi (239).

Isabella does not comment on the animal companions sharing her accommodation but informs that the family was ‘well-behaved,’ presumably meaning that they did not intrude on her in the way the Littles experienced. If she suffered from inappropriate attention, she does not say so. In fact, she conveys a considerable understanding of the Chinese view of ‘foreign devils’;

Their eyes, [the westerners’] their complexions, their ways of sitting and carrying their hands are repulsive, and the belief, sometimes piteous, that they are ‘child eaters,’ and use the eyes and hearts of children in medicine, is now spread universally. Then they have come, if not, as many believe, as spies and political agents, to teach a foreign and Western religion, which is to subvert Chinese nationality, to wreck the venerated social order introduced by Confucius, to destroy the reverence and purity of domestic life and the loyalty to ancestors, and to introduce abominable customs.xxxii (258).

Setting apart the child-eating which is part of other misconceptions regarding the
Eucharist, and the accusation of spying, it seems the Chinese had the Westerners pretty well figured out for is not the purpose laid out above exactly the colonisers’ agenda? Miss Bishop is not surprised at the resistance and hostility she observes nor the anti-missionary riots in Sze Chuan (sic) in 1895 in which, she adds, many missionaries owed their lives to the mandarins, despite allegations that some of them were responsible for anti-foreign outbreaks. In mitigation, she defends their difficult position:

Much complicated by the presence within their jurisdictions of aliens whose aims are obnoxious to the majority of the people, and who are slowly creating, under the protection of treaties, societies with views at variance with established custom. \textsuperscript{xxxiii} (258).

This recognition of the intrusive nature of Westerners and their culture is evidence of an unusually perceptive and open mind which demonstrates considerable and unusual sensitivity to Chinese attitudes. Mary Gaunt (below) shares a similar attitude. This is a tendency more noticeable among some female writers for most of the male visitors are openly ethnocentric, holding it self-evident that China needs civilising through Western culture and religion whilst others, though sympathetic with regard to social problems they observe, still manifest a strong sense of the superiority of the culture and customs of the metropole.

Isabella Bishop comes closest to recognising the right of the Chinese to their own culture and beliefs whilst not representing these as somehow inferior to her own. She is full of praise for the many mandarins whose kindness was reported to her and which was “far in excess of any claims which could be made, and which went to the verge of a prudent regard for official position.” \textsuperscript{xxxiv} (258).

She was delighted to ride astride when on horseback or discard her constricting western garments when away from the censure of western eyes:

As a set-off against the miseries of foot-binding is the extreme comfort of a Chinese woman's dress in all classes, no corsets or waist-bands, or constraints of any kind, and possibly the full development of the figure which it allows mitigates or obviates the evils which we should think would result from altering its position on the lower limbs. So comfortable is Chinese costume and such freedom does it give, that since I wore it in Manchuria and on this journey, I have not been able to take kindly to European dress . . . . All Chinese women wear trousers, but they show very little, often not at all, below the neat petticoat, with its plain back and front and full kilted sides. \textsuperscript{xxxv} (242).

Isabella Bishop travelled up the Yang Tze River then overland to Burma in 1894 in the party of George Morrison, the Australian writer and correspondent for the \textit{Times} newspaper. She also travelled in Tibet and China without western companions, quite a courageous act in her times since westerners of any gender were not always welcome. Yet, having made some remarks upon the method of binding girls’ feet and some of the
harmful effects she has observed she goes on: ‘Then again the weak feminine nature desires to secure the admiration which in poetry, prose, and common speech is bestowed on the “golden lilies”,’ (241). True, she is referring directly to women with tiny feet but we must note that she does not speak of ‘their’ nature i.e. that of Chinese women, but ‘the weak feminine nature’ as a part of all female nature. This, disappointingly, demonstrates the fact that she shared the prevailing assumption of a common humanity/failing in women in general, that is - the desire to be admired, but also asserts that women are weak. This is one of the more obvious ways in which a woman traveller subordinated herself to the strength/power of males.

Alicia Little bows to codes of alterity by showing directly her need and appreciation for her husband’s help and support. Isabella Bishop achieves the same by exposition of her powerlessness when attacked and asserting the weakness of women shortly afterwards. Yet surely she is disingenuous for her account is of firm self-discipline and resolve. An incident at Liang-shan (sic) had taught her that she could well lose her life, for townspeople, led by literati, had attacked her and her attendants. Finding refuge in a shed at an inn, she had barred the door and just when it seemed that her besiegers would break through she was saved by soldiers sent by the local mandarin to quell the mob. Throughout this harrowing ordeal she kept her head, feigning calm while inwardly terrified:

I recognised many cries of Yang kwei-tze (foreign devil) and ‘Child-eater!’ (sic) swelling into a roar; the narrow street became almost impassable; my chair was struck repeatedly with sticks/ mud and unsavoury missiles were thrown with excellent aim; a well-dressed man, bolder or more cowardly than the rest, hit me a smart whack across my chest, which left a weal; others from behind hit me across the shoulders; the howling was infernal: it was an angry Chinese mob. There/ was nothing for it but to sit up stolidly, and not to appear hurt, frightened, or annoyed, though I was all three. (219, 220).

One of her ‘runners’ has the presence of mind to dive into an inn doorway which the innkeeper tries to close but, luckily, the sedan chair was already blocking the door so that Isabella was able to get out on the courtyard side. She finds herself shoved into a dark shed. To cries of ‘Beat her!’ ‘Kill her!’ ‘Burn her!’ she explored the den and trod out the fire which the mob managed to start by dropping lighted matches through a chink onto some straw. Then:

I sat down on something in front of the door with my revolver, intending to fire at the men's legs if they got in, tried the bars every now and then, [the door was secured with bars] looked through the chinks, felt the position serious . . . (220).

That the situation is ‘serious’ is something of an understatement as is Isabella’s admission of fear, for she does not display any of the alleged weakness of her sex. On the contrary, she prepares to shoot if the men should get in. We notice no obvious difference
in behaviour here from that which might be expected of a man with a weapon to hand. The language is simple and direct showing that this woman kept control of herself and, furthermore, was ready to fight back if the need arose yet, at the same time, the reader senses no bravado. That she is saved, very properly, by the arrival of the soldiers means that she is not forced to take violent action, though we sense that she would have if necessary.

Next day all is calm in the village with no hint of the previous day’s riot and Bishop leaves unmolested but with a nasty surprise under her skirt:

After the disturbance at Liang-shan (sic) I took my revolver, which I had previously carried in the well of my chair, ‘into common wear,’ putting it into a very pacific looking cotton bag, and attached it to my belt under this capacious garment [loose Chinese dress], hoping devoutly that its six ball cartridges might always repose peacefully in their chambers. It is most unwise to let firearms be seen in Chinese travelling.\textsuperscript{xxxix} (242).

Bishop’s bullets somehow become transformed into something non-threatening, feminised and safe under a woman’s skirt; this potentially deadly weapon has lost all menace.

In the Rocky Mountains, many years before, Bishop had lived alone amongst lawless male settlers who habitually wore guns and frequently settled scores with a bullet, so she was no stranger to weapons or to uncouth behaviour. In China, however, the weapon must not be shown and, in any event, resides where she cannot get it out without serious impropriety.

Isabella Bishop’s assurance of feminine weakness and vulnerability was seemingly sufficient to throw readers off the track regarding her actual character for the book was highly acclaimed and no untoward questions regarding her femininity arose, that we have record of. Yet, who would not be powerless as a foreigner alone against a large angry mob whilst being bumped about in a sedan chair as the bearers run with it on dirt roads? Foreigners of both sexes were murdered in similar incidents, as Bishop was aware. The only difference was that men were required by convention to comport themselves heroically and to feign a genuine lack of fear while women were required to do the opposite. Bishop conforms to contemporary expectations, yet there are cojones under that skirt, nevertheless.

Isabella Bishop sensibly decided that if she behaved like a distressed damsel in a melodrama as required of western woman, she would be done for. Furthermore, she was possessed of that natural courage which may fall to man or woman or not, equally. Had a western male been present she would have had to show her fear; as she was alone she did not need to thus demean herself to bolster the tender male ego. She was free to do what seemed right and natural, that is to appear unalarmed, not to behave like a victim. The villagers could have despatched this short, fat, middle-aged woman very quickly had not their reticence in attacking a foreigner held their passions slightly in check long
enough for her to reach relative safety. Any action on her part might well have pushed them to extremity, while appearing calm provided no fuel for their fury to peak. Isabella fought by inaction but she presents that inaction as female weakness rather than as the defiance and stoicism which it was in reality. The sensibilities of publisher and reader were not offended and she was able to maintain the feminine stance mandatory if her story was to be credited and she remain untainted by accusations of impropriety or gender outrage.

It is not difficult to surmise that a male would have recounted the same incident differently. The gun would become the weapon of destruction which it is and he, the hero would be ready for trouble, ready to shoot, defend himself, even kill - just as Miss Bishop evidently was, though she cannot say so.

The account above may be compared with a ‘boys own’ version of events in which A. Henry Savage Landor takes four pages just to give his credentials and to indulge in what has the appearance of blatant name-dropping. He begins:

**IN THE FORBIDDEN LAND**

**CHAPTER 1**

On leaving London, I intended to proceed via Germany to Russia, traverse Russian Turkestan, Bokhara and Chinese Turkestan, and from there enter Tibet.\(^{(1)}\)

The title instantly conveys and impression of a strange and exotic land of adventure and this is exactly how the text reads. Landor’s patrons are ‘the Marquis of Salisbury, the British Museum of Natural History, etc., I was carrying scientific instruments for the Royal Geographical Society, and I had a British and two Chinese passports.’\(^{(1)}\) The Russian Embassy in London and British Embassy in St Petersburg had arranged for him to travel on the military railway and provided all necessary documentation and waivers of duties. He carries explosives, a Mannlicher rifle with 1000 cartridges, 500 cartridges for his revolver, hunting knives, skinning implements, wire traps for capturing small mammals, butterfly nets, bottles for preserving reptiles in alcohol, insect killing bottles, instruments for astronomical observation and surveying, a sextant, hypsometrical apparatus with thermometers, two aneroids, photographic equipment with plates and developing - and the list goes on.\(^{(1)}\) All of these provided by the British Museum of Natural History. His provisions came from the Bovril Company. ‘All of my loads would have to be transported on the backs of coolies,’\(^{(1)}\) - each pack to weigh fifty pounds. Needless to say no woman traveller set out similarly sponsored and none could boast such eminent patronage. The nameless, faceless local men become beasts of burden, with no more consideration for their welfare than was typically accorded to pack animals.

Landor’s is to be a very serious expedition in search of scientific knowledge so one might expect a dry account of sample collection and descriptions of terrain, but this
is not the case. Landor casts himself as the intrepid white hunter in wild fairy-tale lands of bizarre, even brutal customs. On the second occasion when the party are attacked by dacoits approaching at ‘breakneck speed,’ Landor, unlike all but two of his men who are ‘terror-stricken’ and ‘paralysed with fright,’ advances towards the galloping band with his camera in one hand and his rifle in the other.

Landor’s camera seemingly embodies a force and agency of its own and the rifle, too ‘is shouldered’ apparently without Landor’s help. What is the purpose of the passive tense? Is it to contrast with the vigorous action of the heroic ‘I?’

After a while, however, seeing how well I had these supposed terrific rangers under control, they were at last able to translate. xlvi (153).

As Landor recounts the adventure, only the fearless white man can quell the natives whilst his entourage are immobilised by terror, apart that is, from Mansing and Chander Sing who, though unafraid, appear to play no role in subduing the would-be robbers. Landor unashamedly presents himself as the warrior hero who calmly outfaces death in a testimony which could scarcely be more self-congratulatory. The discourse of objectivity, science, and observation is completely subsumed by the fictional mode. Landor places himself under no discoursal constraints whatever, displaying ‘an exuberance of observation and circumstance’ in which his egotism seems to equal or surpass the wishful thinking of the adventure novel genre. xlvii His ‘bearer’ leaves Mansing to look after the baggage and arrives apparently whilst the subjection ritual is in progress, ‘with the Martini-Henry.’ It is to be hoped the gun-toting bearer was less vulnerable than did the remaining defenceless porters, who were unarmed.

In further death-defying, ‘cliff-hanger’ mode, Chapters 27, 28 and 29 tell of Landor’s capture, torture and imminent execution by a Tibetan potentate. Despite the fact that Landor is firmly bound and the torture is more mental than otherwise, he outfaces his tormentors who somehow dare not finally complete the deed and chop off his head,
utilising techniques common to fiction gradually to build up suspense. Indeed, the division into chapters is quite unnecessary but merely serves to keep the reader, supposedly, on the edge of his or her seat. In the case of this story, the technique feels tediously inappropriate; since this is a travel narrative written by the participant himself, we know he will finally come through unscathed, otherwise who is doing the writing? Again, the courageous white man with his stiff upper lip is able to escape the very jaws of death simply by refusing to show fear; in fact, he laughs in the faces of his foe.

The hapless Mansing, ‘my coolie,’ arriving during the proceedings bruised and battered from repeated falls from his bare-back pony is handled as roughly as Landor who, blindfolded, fears him dead.

I was left in this terrible suspense for over a quarter of an hour, when at last they removed the cloth from over my head, and I beheld my coolie lying before me, bound to the log and almost unconscious, but, thank God, still alive.\textsuperscript{xlviii} (259).

One might substitute ‘my faithful dog’ or ‘my horse’ for ‘Mansing’ for though he receives strong praise for his bravery, at no time in the discourse does Landor allow the reader to forget that Mansing and the few others mentioned by name are in an entirely inferior or subaltern position to himself. This is not the relativity of employer and employee but the alterity of white man and other races; the white man of courage, strength, integrity, invincibility and the other races who are usually predictably presented in negative binary contrast. We note that even with the upper hand and Landor defenceless and bound, the Pombo dares not take the life of this magical, superior being. Is a boys’ own adventure less credible? How might Mansing and his compatriots have described these life-threatening events?

When Landor is compared with Isabella Bishop and Alicia Little, the discourse of feminine vulnerability, partly a reality and partly a necessity demonstrates both the women’s self image and that required of her by society. The interesting similarity between Bishop’s behaviour under attack and that of Landor lies in their both remaining outwardly calm and presenting a fearless exterior, but in the re-telling of the respective incidents lies a chasm of difference. Bishop states the facts as she experienced them without embellishment of any kind and at no point does her discourse stray into the realms of adventure, much less heroism. Landor, on the other hand, uses the discourse of fiction to create himself as great white hero.

Ironically, while the modern reader is struck by Bishop’s fortitude, Landor’s hyperbole elicits only disbelief and irritation. When the mob is finally dissuaded from tearing Isabella Bishop to pieces, it is due to good fortune that the local Mandarin finally sends his soldiery to intervene. When Landor is threatened by an angry mob calling for his ritual punishment and execution, he escapes this fate because of his supposed inherent superiority, casting himself in the mould of the immortal warrior hero, a role impossible for a woman of Bishop’s time to emulate.
Utilising the friendly epistolary form, eschewed by male writers, Constance F Gordon Cumming writes to an unnamed, probably non-existent friend. Published in 1886, her journey actually took place in 1878 and 1879. The chapter summary includes topics familiar in feminine discourse: the beauty of the city (Shanghai), Christmas Day and church service, a walk in the city and so on. Her first letter is addressed while she is still on board the ship which took her to Hong Kong, arriving on Christmas Eve 1878. She writes: ‘You will wonder when you receive this letter posted in Hong-Kong, where I hope to arrive to-morrow!’xlii (1). She has come from Japan where she was ‘nearly frozen, living in paper houses, without fires . . . So I have fled southward with the swallows . . .’xli The Japanese home is implicitly compared with that of the metropole ‘without fires’ – obviously sensible people have fires and homes are not made of paper; incredulity at this ridiculous state of affairs is invited without being stated.

We are not likely to find anything too exciting in the chapters which follow. Cumming’s ‘letters’ are descriptive of her daily life and travels. She includes footnotes of basic statistical figures from time to time but is particularly interested in describing physical features such as sunsets, mountains and beautiful lakes. Carrying an introductory letter from no less a personage than Sir Harry Parkesliiassured her of a welcome with some of Hong Kong's most prestigious foreign residents. On Christmas Day she writes:

We arrived here in time to find Mrs Snowden waiting to welcome me to cosy five o'clock tea in the pretty English drawing-room. In short, everything is so pleasant that already I have begun to feel myself quite at home in this British Isle of Hong-Kong. Now it is time to dress for dinner . . .lii (8).

This is the typical discourse of colonial occupation. The Snowdens, in common with all the other foreign residents, have set out to make their home as much like England as possible, even ‘dressing’ for dinner, a middle and upper class habit. We should bear in mind that Hong Kong is excessively hot and humid during the long warm months and it is difficult to imagine more unsuitable garments than the mode required for Europeans. No wonder Constance Cumming feels at home; only the Chinese ‘coolies’ and servants remind her she is in Hong Kong.lii

There follow ten pages of detailed description of a terrible conflagration to which she is witness and the devastated area which she visits next day. She and her companions had watched the scene unfold before them:

There was one moment of gorgeous scenic effect when the flames caught a great timber-merchant’s yard, wherein was stored a vast accumulation of seasoned wood and firewood which of course became a sheet of fire glowing at white heat. You can imagine with what breathless excitement we watched the deadly hard-fought battle betwixt fire and water, in which fire seemed to be getting entirely the best of it.liv (14).

The magnificent houses of the wealthy also came under threat and the womenfolk,
we are told, spent the night packing valuables in an attempt to save them. She herself has little to pack and her hostess collected very little as it would be impossible ‘to get coolies to carry our goods,’ probably they were dealing with their own flaming homes. The unlucky timber merchant has lost his livelihood but the western observers are excited at the devastating effect of the fire. Of course, Cumming and her friends escaped completely unscathed. Reprehensibly, to the modern reader at least, she makes the most of this catastrophe, relishing every spark like a firework display.

Mrs Thomas Francis Hughes gives the impression that she would rather not have left home at all, for she departs dutifully accompanying her husband in 1874 in trepidation but in great sorrow at leaving all that she knows. She opens:

Leaving home for the first time, with the prospect of a lengthened absence, is a sad and terrible undertaking; and when your destination lies at the other side of the globe, thousands of miles removed from those whose love and sweet companionship had hitherto been the very light of your existence, parting seems to be a sorrow almost too great, too bitter, to be borne. Duty, however, which makes the path of life smooth to some, for others often necessitates the sacrifice of their most cherished feelings; and it was the fate of the writer and her husband to be obliged to tear themselves away from the homes and relations they loved, and commit themselves to a residence of several years in China . . . (1,2).

And much more of the same. This lady evidently left under protest but where the husband went the wife needs must follow. This recalcitrant traveller confirms that the proper place for a wife is at her husband’s side, duty and sacrifice her lot. For a woman there is no place like home:

The time at length arrived for which I had so often yearned, and I was again amongst my friends AT HOME. Some of the bright hopes which had cheered me on parting from those I held most dear were not to be realised, and words of loving welcome, which had often been whispered to me in my dreams when far away, could never now be addressed to me . . . it was with feelings of sincere gratitude that we found ourselves once more in the old country, amongst our own people, and saved from all the perils which beset us in our wanderings beyond the seas. (313,314).

One surmises that Mrs Hughes saw all beyond the English Channel as regions where ‘there be dragons.’ That so much space is devoted to her rather tedious laments points to the expected literary tastes of her anticipated readers. Perhaps the maudlin tone drew a tear from the reader who imagined herself in Mrs Hughes’ place.

Mary Gaunt left with no such trepidation, having developed a fascination for China as a little girl visiting her Grandmother. She had been allowed to look at, but not touch, ‘various curios brought home by my grandfather from China in the old days when he was a sailor in the Honourable East India Company’s service.’ Her opening is what
we may designate feminine in her simple and direct explanation of what led her to an interest in China: pretty and dainty artworks including fans, lacquer boxes and mother-of-pearl counters - not the kinds of items a little Australian boy might yet appreciate.

When contrasted against the introductions of male writers, the difference in modality signalling masculinity, authoritativeness, self-assertion, self-assurance is noticeably absent. Gaunt's title itself deserves note: why a ‘woman’ in China unless gender is an issue? Her relative, Doctor George Morrison calls his book *An Australian in China* (1892); nationality is at the forefront since most accounts were by British or American men. ‘A Woman’ instantly signals a ‘feminine’ discourse.

Gaunt's fascination with China carried through to adulthood:

Like the pretty things, so out of my reach it seemed that I did not even add it to the list of places I intended to visit when I grew up, for even then my great desire was to travel all over the world; I was born with the wander fever in my blood, but unfortunately with small means of satisfying it. As I grew older I used to read every travel book I could get hold of . . .

Still on page two, she explains what finally led her, an Australian woman living in London by writing, to realise her dream. ‘The unkind Fates have seen to it that I live alone . . .’ she confides, and one day it occurs to her to visit a male friend in Brighton. In the carriage the difference between she and British women becomes immediately obvious. She notices a porter coming along the platform with hot water bottles and kindly draws the attention of the other women in her carriage to this comfort on such a cold morning. Her spontaneous thoughtfulness meets with a frigid reception. Well snubbed she retires to the other side of the carriage until half way through the journey she spies a train of camels and elephants marching along the Sussex lanes. Such an extraordinary phenomenon prompts her to cry out: ‘Oh, look! Look! Camels and elephants!’ The shock to her two frosty companions was profound:

Those two ladies were a credit to the English nation. They bore themselves with the utmost propriety. . . they never even raised their eyes from their papers. . . . Then I regret to state that I lay back and laughed till I cried, and whenever I felt a little better the sight of those two studious women solemnly reading their papers set me off again.

Though Gaunt does not display that assertiveness which we note in the males, she is less anxious about those particularly British boundaries of propriety which she oversteps on the train. This independence of spirit has long been associated with Australians and Gaunt certainly displays it here. The journey proved a momentous one for musing on the camels and elephants led her to think of faraway lands and so it occurred to her to try to visit and write about China. One of her brothers had married a sister of George Morrison, the *Times* correspondent and when she next saw him, Morrison encouraged her with the plan. Thus, she set out from Charing Cross station on
Gaunt’s account is unmistakably feminine in tone but demonstrates a rather stronger sense of the injustice of women’s position than do other women writers. As the only Australian of the sample it would be unwise to draw conclusions from this but, nevertheless, a certain difference is detectable. Not merely conscious of “propriety” and the cultural norms which put her at a disadvantage to men, Gaunt expresses a certain indignation that life should be so for in China both her own inferior status and that of her Chinese counterparts is firmly impressed upon her. In Little’s and Bird’s accounts of the added difficulties for women travellers there is a sense that whilst often inconvenient, it is only natural that women be treated differently, not that attitudes ought to change. Miss Gaunt, perhaps because of her Australian nationality, is less diffident. Describing the pain of little girls and her own horror and revulsion at the mutilating of their feet she notes:

There was paint on their cheeks to hide their piteous whiteness, and their faces were drawn with that haunting look which long-continued pain gives. . . They were simply little girls suffering the usual agonies that custom has ordained a woman/ shall suffer before she is considered a meet plaything and slave for a man. A woman who would be of any standing at all must so suffer . . . their faces . . . haunted me the livelong night, and I felt that I who stood by and suffered this thing was guilty of a wicked wrong to my fellows.\textsuperscript{lxv} (170,171).

That a woman will become a ‘plaything and slave’ hints at a secret, sexual purpose of bound feet, tantalising the reader with Gaunt’s possible perception of the truth. She spoke no Chinese and those who translated for her, especially the men, could never give voice to information on this taboo subject but did Mary Gaunt guess?

One suspects that at least a part of her indignation is related to a sense of sisterhood with women in general who suffer to attract males, for the stays worn by western women actually caused more physical illness, even contributing to death, than did the broken feet of Chinese women.\textsuperscript{lxii} (Adams, 66-101). As for her feelings of guilt, of course, no foreigner could intervene to help these children for this was not some cruelty practised on a few individuals but a cultural institution. Even the Manchu rulers themselves who had never permitted their women nor those of their retainers to bind, had proved incapable of outlawing the custom.\textsuperscript{lxiii}

Mary Gaunt encountered another problem while travelling in which the intervention of a male was positively demanded and she did not have the requisite minder. This entirely gender specific incident occurred at Pao Ting Fu, (sic) the capital of Chihli (sic) which she tells us was three hours from Peking by rail. For some reason, her belongings were stored in three different places and one part disappeared with the ongoing train because it had taken so long to discover the two other parts. She was to stay with a missionary, Doctor Lewis and he was assured that the remainder would be recovered and brought back next day. Unfortunately, Gaunt had not realised that her lack of status as a woman would cause problems next day when she arrived to collect. ‘Your
luggage is here,’ she was informed by an official. ‘Thank Heaven,’ she replied, expecting to be taken to it but that would have been too simple. ‘You . . . must – send – your – husband,’ he carefully enunciated. Informing him that her husband was dead did not offer the solution expected.\textsuperscript{lxiv} A responsible man had to be provided. Finally, it was agreed that Miss Gaunt should write a letter authorising her male servant to receive the luggage on her behalf.\textsuperscript{1}

Miss A. S. Roe’s account of her travels in China is quite different from those quoted above. She exemplifies that type of woman of whom we so often read who counted it a virtue to make no concession at all to climate or to differing habits in the country she is visiting. Utilising the epistolary form, she opens from Shanghai on May 27\textsuperscript{th} 1907:

Dear Joan,

Here we are actually in China, but it is uncommonly difficult to realise. Imagine yourself transported hither on [a] magic carpet . . . You stray into beautiful gardens of velvet lawns and bright flowerbeds in which are English children and English nurses. There is even an English policeman in khaki uniform . . \textsuperscript{lxv} (1).

The reader is comfortably assured from page one that no unpleasantness or impropriety will intrude upon this tale. The Englishness of the Shanghai Bund does not strike Miss Roe as incongruous but as reassuring and no parent need fear for a daughter who reads on for all will serve to confirm the superiority of English life and the quaintness of the orientals. This is a fairy-tale land, not one of real people nor of a culture which is anything other than an opportunity for amusement. Miss Roe preserves constant good spirits and a willingness to see the funny side of things; a useful skill in a travelling companion, yet there is a distasteful ethnocentricity to this humour:

The next morning it was at the door, the queerest-looking conveyance [a mule litter] you can well imagine – something like a huge dog-kennel or a Diogenes tub slung on poles between two mules. . . Hun-Ding-Jing had covered it thickly with wadded quilts and cushions, so that, by the time we were ready to start, it bore the appearance of a bed made up in a dog-kennel more than anything else . . / The door led into the bedrooms! the (sic)inner one more or less a duplicate of our poultry house . . . / After supper Hun-Ding-Jing (sic) made up the beds, and I sprinkled Keating’s powder by way of a precautionary measure. Alas! It was not of much good. The creatures – especially the musical ones – ‘laughed’ at Keating’s powder, and so disturbed my slumber with their merriment that I was desperately sleepy when a knock came . . \textsuperscript{lxvi} (51,54,55).

A sedan chair is represented as a dog-kennel – hardly fit for a human conveyance,

\textsuperscript{1} This writer actually experienced the same at Bahrain port in 2004, being forced to bring along a guardian male in order to receive her belongings!
an inn room is compared unfavourably with accommodation in England – we would only put chickens in such a building, and even Chinese fleas are the occasion for a joke. This very humorousness is demeaning in its constant refusal to present China and the Chinese people in a serious light. At the same time, this is an example of a very acceptable feminine text; it is light, frivolous and clearly intended to entertain. Roe has no intellectual pretensions and no intention of being other than a very correct English lady. She treats her China adventure like an English picnic insofar as circumstances can be controlled, doing her utmost to avoid Chinese food and praising the ‘cold chicken and jellies’ provided by a kind friend en route to Peking ‘so we were fortunately independent of the savoury dishes of the inn kitchen which we had smelt in passing.’\textsuperscript{lxvii} (53).

If Roe felt constrained to carry western ‘civilised’ codes with her in spite of all difficulties, she was not alone; thousands of others did the same. Though her detailing of what she ate for lunch may seem frivolous, it is no more than a symptom of the general assumption that western ways are best no matter what, no matter where, stemming from the premise that western culture is ineluctably superior to all others. The ironic ‘savoury dishes’ points the reader to (obvious) ridicule – naturally the nasty fare of the Chinese will not be acceptable to the (civilised) Western visitor, who will reject such (nasty) fare. The nastiness of favoured dishes of other cultures being, of course, a common aspect of the ‘othering’ process. (Adams, 1993). Paramount in maintaining this superiority was the necessity of preserving essential differences between the races, for it was these differences which formed the core of the western colonial ideology. The adoption of ‘native’ clothing, customs or company carried such an awful stigma that even where common sense indicated it, the fear of being considered to have ‘gone native’ tended to mitigate against such a departure from western behaviour.

Mrs Hughes is the only writer of our sample who did not want to leave Britain. The other women went abroad in pursuit of that which Ruskin and his ilk disapproved: ‘useless acquaintance with scenes in which [she] shall never be called upon to act.’ Miss Roe travelled with another woman (Deborah) but even she, the least serious writer, chose to travel to China. Manifestly, the women did not have power or authority of any kind but that did not prevent them from feeling the yearnings which Ruskin so deplored. Undoubtedly many other women, like Mrs Hughes, would never choose to travel beyond the continent and many not even there. This only proves that some people have no desire to travel at all and this includes men. Conversely, those who do have the curiosity and adventurousness positively to yearn to experience different cultures may be of either sex. Women wishing to travel were not, we would suggest, unusual. What were unusual were opportunity and a suitable income. If the husband did not travel then, automatically, neither did his wife but this does not mean that she would not have liked to do so given money and freedom. Neither Isabella Bishop nor Mary Gaunt could have travelled as they did had they been encumbered by children or living husbands.

The differences in the travel writings are accounted for in the gender stereotyping which forced women to present their work in a ‘feminine’, specifically ‘non-masculine’ style. The hostility of men and women alike for forms of curiosity which might be construed as unfeminine (such as the desire to travel) were the consequence of the need
to protect and perpetuate male domination in all spheres of life and to maintain the belief of both sexes that this was right according to God’s laws, and in conformity with what was ‘natural.’

Only Isabella Bishop comes close to writing a ‘genderless’ text but she too had to bow to convention when necessary as shown above (although she probably enjoyed about as much critical acclaim as a woman traveller might have achieved in her day). Though Bishop’s style is relatively authoritative, she still has to kowtow to the establishment by remaining within the boundaries of accepted conventions for the female writer.

In contrast, male writers were free to choose whichever mode suited them: quasi-scientific, heroic, pioneer, missionary, even the epistolary had they wished. The women had a narrower range and whilst they might choose similar subjects, their discourses might not impinge on the masculine order. The constraints of their gender constitute a subtext which, whether stated or otherwise, never fails to inform their actions and their words.

Works cited:

Ibid., 16.
Ibid., 58,59.
Ibid., 118.
Ibid., 47.
Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 171.

Typically, the works by women are very personal accounts and some of those by men, as we show. None of the (nineteenth and early twentieth century) travel writings examined may be considered ‘travel guides’ and all are, in some degree, personal accounts.
Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 155.
Pat Barr’s *A Curious Life for a Lady*, details this remarkable woman’s life using Isabella’s published works and filling out many of the lacunae left in the latter from unpublished letters.
Ibid., 62.
Ibid., 63.
Surveillance by those whom the Little’s (and others in our study) had come to look at is, of course, an interesting irony and deserves separate study.
Ibid., 65.
Even poor Han Chinese women had bound feet.
This is a problem in remote areas even today.
There is a well-known photo of Mrs Little standing on the side of a mountain in which she is wearing a long dress and has a suspiciously small waist though we doubt if she was very tightly laced.
Ibid., 1.
Ibid., 239.
Ibid., 258.
Ibid., 258.
Ibid., 242.
Ibid., 241.
Ibid., 219, 220
Ibid., 220.
Ibid., 242.
Ibid., 1.
Ibid., 1-3.
Ibid., 2.
Ibid., 152, 153.
Ibid., 152.
Ibid., 153.
Rider Haggard’s novels spring to mind here.
Savage Landor, *In the Forbidden Land*, 259.
Ibid.
Parkes first arrived in the region at the age of 13 when he joined his cousin, Mrs Gutzlaff in Macau, studying Chinese under John Robert Morrison. He was later to distinguish himself as Consul in various Chinese cities and other parts of Asia. See *Encyclopaedia Sinica*.
Anachronistically perhaps, one is put in mind of the numerous five-star hotel chains
around the globe which ensure that the traveller need never rub shoulders with
the natives outside of waiting staff and cleaners.

Ibid., 14.
Ibid., 15.

Mrs Thomas Francis Hughes, Among the Sons of Han, (London: Tinsley
Brothers, 1881), 1,2.

Ibid., 313,314.


Ibid., 1,2.
Ibid., 2,3.
Ibid., 170,171.

Footbinding in China and its damaging effects relative to tight-lacing have been
examined in Sandra May Adams, ‘Nineteenth Century Representations of
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Upper class Manchu women wanted to bind their feet as tiny feet were such a
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pedestal was designed for the wearer walked with a gait similar to that of
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At this stage, I am assuming that she had never had a husband because of her
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Ibid., 51,54,55.
Ibid., 53.

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xxi Ibid., 62.

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xxvii There is a well-known photo of Mrs Little standing on the side of a mountain in which she is wearing a long dress and has a suspiciously small waist though we doubt if she was very tightly laced.


xxx Ibid., 1.

xxxi Ibid., 239.

xxxii Ibid., 258.

xxxiii Ibid., 258.

xxxiv Ibid., 258.

xxxv Ibid., 242.

xxxvi Ibid., 241.

xxxvii Ibid., 219, 220

xxxviii Ibid., 220.

xxxix Ibid., 242.


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