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Expatriate Writers and the China Coast Discourse: Exploring Spatial, Gendered and Discursive Motifs in Paul and Veronica King's *The Chartered Junk: A Tale of the Yangtsze Valley*

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Abstract:

The opening of China after the First and Second Opium Wars (1839-1842 and 1856-1860) engendered the presence of a substantial foreign community in the treaty ports. Over time, this community functioned as the propagators of the China coast discourse that not only trained the port residents about the techniques of effectively functioning in a Chinese world, but also consolidated their own position, holdings and identities within a largely informal imperialist set-up. Fomenting, as it were, a particularly specific vision of the Far East, and by extension of their own status therein, the discourse disseminated by these China coasters only served to strengthen the expatriate loyalties to their own community. Within this frame of reference, the current paper aims to examine the long-term expatriates Paul and Veronica King's 1910 novel *The Chartered Junk: A Tale of the Yangtsze Valley* with respect to their usage of foreign spaces to reinstate local sentiments; their unique take on the motif of the Women of the Empire; and finally their ambiguous engagement with China, caught between sensitivity and parochialism.

Keywords: Treaty ports, expatriate identity, imperialism, foreign spaces, women of the Empire.

Introduction

The opening up of China during the First and Second Opium Wars (1839-1842 and 1856-1860) facilitated the growth of a significantly large foreign community on the edges of the Chinese Empire by the first half of the 19th century. This community, inhabiting the narrow Westernised fringes of treaty port China, over time established for themselves a self-sufficient niche, one marked by a deeply insular outlook and a rather ambivalent engagement with the country of their residence. For many in this group, China was home and for yet others, a place of long-term dwelling, something which over time fostered the development of a unique expatriate life unlike those operating in full-fledged colonies like Hong Kong or India. Creating, as it were, a simulation of life at home, distant and totally disengaged from the realities of the country, the China coast community also became propagators of a discourse that could condition the port world about how to go about navigating the niceties of a quintessentially Chinese world. Writing largely for and about itself, the China coast discourse, therefore, became a potent means of disseminating a particular vision of China and by extension of their own coterie to not just new additions into the community, but also the broader world beyond the confines of their hallowed circles. As Bickers observes:

> … the experts' roles were filled by the publicists, apologists and activists of Britain in China who justified Britain in China, and demonstrated their own utility by representing themselves as the sole commentators on China to the West. Having hustled to get their jobs and acquire prestige, having come to China as medicine sellers or lowly customs clerks, they jockeyed to protect their jobs and the treaty port structure which facilitated their employment in China (42).

Within this frame of reference, the current paper aims to examine the long-term expatriates, Paul and Veronica King's *The Chartered Junk: A Tale of the Yangtsze Valley* (1910) vis-à-vis

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their ambiguous engagement with China, their usage of foreign spaces to buttress local sentiments, and their unique rendering of the motif of the Women of the Empire, a stance which reverses the popular trope of intrepid young heroes navigating an adventurous imperialist landscape. Being long-term residents of the China coast, both the Commissioner of the Imperial Maritime Customs Service, Paul King and his settler wife, Veronica, became prolific writers on a multitude of issues both during and after their departure from the country. Demonstrating, as it were, a sensitivity often lacking in the works of other treaty port writers, the Kings' engagement with China, nevertheless, remains somewhat marred by a consistent impulse to consolidate settler/expatriate position in their narratives, a stance which frequently thwarts a consistent representation. Such a sentiment finds an apposite reinforcement in a review of their own novel, *The Chartered Junk*—

> To China hands at Home, not less to the general public and particularly those residing in the Far East, this fascinating novel [...] will come as a joy and a pleasure, to the former in reminding many of them of their past associations with Shanghai and the Yangtsze Valley, and to the latter by the story which is woven round scenes with which many are familiar daily. To some such a tale as is unfolded, commencing in Shanghai and reaching beyond Ichang, would be considered an impossibility, but not so to those who are acquainted with China and the ways of the Chinese (*China Mail*).

Indeed, the act of "knowing" China by virtue of being long-term residents became a largely popular trope, one which the treaty port writers used to garner legitimacy and credibility in their literary endeavours. Whilst such a stance undoubtedly bolstered the self-perception of the China coast community as the upholders of a very specific discourse, it also enabled them to time and again further accurate commentaries on the socio-political conditions of 19th and 20th

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century China. Such a two-fold process whilst facilitating a highly disjointed discourse, thus also acted as means of indicating the narrative lacunae that informs the act of chronicling China.

Potential vs. Constraint: A Misleading Start:

In this framework, the Kings' novel *The Chartered Junk* starts off with a particularly balanced dialogue, one in which the author furthers a well thought-out perspective on the multi-faceted repercussions of Western incursions over China. Indeed, the almost archetypal imperialist figure and entrepreneur Augustin Lovaine is seen expressing his hopes for Westernisation and reform in China under the reign of the existing government and an ongoing European involvement, a stance which whilst supporting the much needed modernisation of the country, also simultaneously corroborates the necessity of consolidating Western position there. The vision of China as an untapped reservoir of wealth and potential, proffering itself up willingly or unwilling to colonial onslaughts is therefore successfully hinted at in Lovaine's initial perception of the country—

> He soon found that there was any amount of unoccupied ground in China, literally and metaphorically. The natural resources of the Empire were stupendous and had scarcely been developed at all, and if there was any truth in the teachings of political economy the prospects for the future were most promising, as great mineral wealth lay close to a vast and industrious population in a range of climate neither too hot nor too cold. All that seemed necessary was an enterprising someone to commence digging for the scarcely hidden treasure! (King 6).

Such a viewpoint, is however, immediately balanced out by a counter discourse by the radical reformer Mr Lin Yu who denounces Lovaine as an oppressor and enemy of "free China", instead advocating for a hyper-nationalist stance of "China for the Chinese" (King 8). Such a

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weighing of perspectives, thus, undoubtedly locates the Kings as a well-informed observer of modern China. Nonetheless, the novel's subsequent bend, being focused entirely on Lovaine and the Westernised Chinese, Mr Lo's scheme to secure a massive coal concession in Western China and rescue the latter from the clutches of an outlawed radical revolutionary group after the said concession, raises significant questions about the actual drift of the narrative. Indeed, the presence of concessions since the second half of the 19th century acted as an assault on Chinese sovereignty and jurisprudence, marking, as it were, a new era of foreign incursions over the country. As Tan Chung observes—"… [concessions] emerged as new economic centres in China. The Chinese economy became an export-import oriented treaty port economy, while the treaty ports became economically, more than politically, China's centres of gravity" (241).

Needless to say, the Kings' novel fails to address or critique the repercussions of foreign economic penetration of the Far East, being involved wholly with a plot-driven tale of adventure that follows the initial dialogues. Thus, while the first chapter does effectively hint at several crucial issues that remained relevant to Sino-foreign interactions of the 20th century—the role of the West vis-à-vis Chinese economic development, their presence in the country and what it entailed, the subject of reform and progress, and even the introduction of a new type of Chinese characters who are able to transcend the negative stereotypes so common in the literature of the era—the novel fails to develop these motifs to their maturity.

Women of the Empire: Role Reversal and a Gendered Discourse:

The bulk of the story follows the adventures of the experienced Rose Donne and Lovaine's half-sister Clara Miller on an adventurous journey across interior China and the Yangzi to retrieve the all-important papers of coal concessions, and in the process foil a plethora of unsavoury Chinese characters, namely Lo's enemies. Lovaine's inability to undertake the

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journey by himself (having been attacked and injured by Lo's enemies), therefore, provides the Kings with the opportunity to reverse the trope of intrepid young heroes traversing a dangerous imperial landscape, by replacing it with the exploits of resourceful women of the Empire embarking on similar quests. Indeed, Lovain's remark about the inherent precariousness and regression immanent in inland China, sets the tone of the rest of the story—"He forgot, or did not realize that the Model Settlement was a narrow strip of Western conditions lying on the edge of a very different conception of civilization. The twentieth century according to European calculation flourished on the Bund, but to travel a few miles inland was to find an epoch contemporaneous with the Roman Empire, or thereabouts" (King 12).

Accordingly, the Kings' narrative introduces a responsible and quick-witted protagonist, Rose Donne, who is effectively set against a nervous and capricious Clara Miller, a contrast which remains significant throughout the novel. Rose's fluency in the native tongue, her ability to discern and traverse an essentially hostile and dangerous landscape, therefore, functions as the linchpin which the author uses to subvert the motif of male-dominated exploration and conquest—

> The story of Mr. Lo's concessions, and the difficulties in which he had become involved, interested her very much, and she quite entered into the spirit of the adventure, and privately determined to bring it to a successful issue, if possible. It offered a pleasant change from the monotony of typing for a living in Shanghai, and she was well equipped for the part of interpreter, as in addition to the Shanghai dialect, which would not have carried them very far, she had learnt Mandarin, which is spoken with local modifications all along the Yangtsze Valley (King 53).

Equipped, thus, with the crucial ability to communicate in the local dialect and endowed, as it were, with "spirit of adventure", Kings' heroine thus checks all the boxes in the popular

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conception of the hero of the Empire, a trope which is tellingly reversed in the narrative (King 53). Interestingly, the Kings' portrayal of Rose and Clara and the kinds of encounters they have with the Chinese hinterland assumes a distinctly gendered and comic flavour. Accordingly, the delinquent Chinese boy with explosives, their experiences with motley crew of semi-comedic Chinese characters (Kao, Lao Yu, Han Ta Ko, etc.), Rose's climatic kidnapping by an equally farcical crew of Chinamen, her theatrical magic trials at the hands of the fraudster Han, or even Clara's whimsical inconsistency which poses a threat to the success of the mission, are at best comic episodes that are easily tackled by Kings' ever resourceful protagonist.

Indeed, the decidedly "romantic" overtones of these episodes, being set against "unknown hills" and "strange valleys" is commented upon by Rose herself—"… to think what an odd pilgrimage it was, like a progress in a nightmare, to be carried over these hot and misty hills to an uncertain destination, where Heaven alone knew what might await them" (King 76-77). Even in captivity, Kings' protagonist rarely loses composure, even being willing to adorn herself in Chinese jewels and fineries to trick her captors—" As she had nothing else to do it was rather an amusement to deck herself out in all this finery, and she could not help noticing that Chinese dress can be very becoming" (King 172).

Real hazards, thus, elude the women of the Empire who despite an apparent willingness or self-sufficiency to embark on and transcend a precarious colonial landscape, still has to rely on masculine aid to truly vanquish the forces that seemingly threaten imperialist prestige and respectability. Indeed, an undertone of concern towards the security of the two women is time and again made apparent in the words of multiple male characters—Lovaine remains wary of the "evil characters to be found" in the interior, the American missionary Gideon Hopper warns Rose about the inherent hazards of their journey, both the British consul Wharton and the

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gunboat captain Hathaway, and later the Dane, Lind express outrage and exasperation as the fates of either Rose or Clara (King 49). As Bickers adequately sums up:

> It is necessary to remember here that a recurring theme in correspondence from men in China is fear of male Chinese sexual desire for 'white' women … Chinese men were excluded from close physical proximity with foreign women, for example in swimming clubs, and were kept out of European brothels and massage parlours until the 1930s … The dress and dancing of European women in China also came in for such criticism. This taboo was characteristic of European colonial societies. For all the talk of the character, masculine virtues and restraint … the upholding of prestige and protection of identity were highly gendered. Women's bodies were the chosen repository of British morals in Eastern places (101).

The Kings' novel, thus undoubtedly hints at the subtle anxieties that informed much of treaty port life and society, and while their narrative does not necessarily take the motif of adventurous women of the Empire to its maturity, it nevertheless suggests a transformation that may be possible when gender roles are effectively reversed within a colonial framework. In this context, Rose's atypical response at the sight of the dead and dying men during the climactic battle with the radical revolutionaries at the end of the novel raises relevant questions about the suitability of such roles within an imperialist set-up—

> But it was a fact that the dead and the dying, twisting in their last agonies and weltering in their blood, were strangely like pictures, and the whole scene conveyed no sense of reality, though there was a ghastly kind of excitement and fascination about it that she had never experienced before, and she vividly appreciated all the details … (King 211).

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A similar sentiment is expressed yet again by Rose when she justifies the necessity of having undertaken the journey to both Hopper and Lovaine—

> Because I wanted to go on, no matter what came of it. I was tired of my life in Shanghai, as it had become monotonous and did not seem likely to lead too much … On my part, I shall always have it to remember that I then gained an experience by virtue of which I can enter personally into emotions that fate rarely allows a woman to share. One knew vaguely that there was something in life beyond money and fame and power, something that I can't define, but of which I caught a glimpse when the chartered junk was burning, and the end seemed near … It was the sense of a Great Personality, almost visible and coming very close to one's soul (King 233-236).

Kings' delineation of an adventurous woman protagonist, who traverses a typically masculine domain in her own right, while at the same time exhibiting a distinct form of agency, thus effectively challenges the established gendered narratives of colonial expansion that depict women as passive figures wholly subject to outside stimulus. Such a stance also enables them to examine the gendered dynamics of power within a colonial setting, in order to reveal how women, despite being constrained by societal expectations and conditioning, were often able to exercise subtle forms of influence, action or resistance.

A Simulated World: The Politics of Space and Spatial Metaphors:

Lodged at the height of the turbulence engendered by the impending Xinhai Revolution of 1911-1912, Kings' novel, thus, successfully captures the nuances of life on the narrow modern fringes of China and the kinds of hazards that foreigners may face when leaving behind the security fomented by the presence of simulations of home life in the treaty ports. Commenting on this proclivity of the community to fashion foreign enclaves in the ports, Bickers notes—

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the necessity of "recreating Britain in the home [served] both as a source of psychological relaxation, and also as a statement of identity and purpose" (89). Indeed, the kind of security fomented by their extraterritorial rights and privileges enabled the China coasters to remain largely aloof from the Chinese world on the other side of their settlements. Furthermore, the absolute dependence of the community on the Chinese themselves (either workers, compradors, coolies, domestic help, etc.) continued to remain a source of anxiety and perturbation, kindling, as it were, an underlying fear about the precariousness of their position on the edges of a largely unknown and often hostile native world. The creation and propagation of foreign spaces, thus, became exceedingly crucial to a community that wanted to safeguard their position, identity and holdings, while at the same time fashioning for themselves a secure domain away from what they perceived to be an alien world. As Bickers further observers—

> It was a British Chinese world, a Britain in China which evolved and expanded, siting its familiar practices and appurtenances on and in Chinese soil—its clubs, lawns, flower gardens, race courses—sometimes with Chinese characteristics, but more often than not with British Indian ones, but either way usually bluntly foreign, familiar, and clearly British. Histories or guidebooks would be published, and in time the early memorials or cemeteries would become sites of communal memorialization or sightseeing interest (272-273).

In Kings' novel, the covert usage of Western and Chinese spaces serve as potent metaphors to not only consolidate the significance of cultivating safe foreign enclaves in the heartland of an alien nation, but also to locate China as a treacherous locale unsuited to the well-being of foreigners. Indeed, the novel's progress from Shanghai (the mightiest Western stronghold in the Far East), through various semi-Western spaces (namely the ships, boats and the chartered junk) to the interior of the country, and its ultimate return via the H.M.S Green Finch (a potent

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British gunboat) to the British consulate in Ichang and then Shanghai, remain particularly significant. Such a journey, then undoubtedly becomes a symbolic rendition of the progress of the Kings' protagonist from secure foreign enclaves marked by the insignias of wholesale imperialist incursions into a thoroughly Chinese space, where a plethora of trials await the not-so-experienced women of the Empire who require, as it were, the aid of these symbolic simulations of homeland "to take them all back to civilisation and safety" (King 218). Their ultimate return to Shanghai, then becomes a means by which the small foreign community of the Kings' novel is able to reinstate a sense of control over an essentially unruly and wayward Chinese landscape, as corroborated even more by the double wedding that takes place at the end of the story.

While not as conspicuous as in the works of other treaty port writers, the significance of foreign spaces in the Kings' narrative can hardly be understated. In utilising the subverted motif of the women of the Empire and in tracing their journey across the Chinese hinterland, the novel then, doubtlessly furthers a covert discourse endorsing the significance of Western enclaves and the necessity of maintaining distance from what they perceived to be a hazardous locale unsuited for foreigners.

Sensitivity vs. Parochialism: An Ambiguous Discourse:

Indeed, this proclivity on their part to consolidate communal loyalties, position and holdings by encouraging the cultivation of these foreign spaces results in an ambiguous stance vis-à-vis their portrayal of China, something which effectively overrides their generally positive delineations of the nation as made apparent on multiple occasions. This sensitivity on the part of the Kings is made evident for the first time in the American missionary, Hopper's remark about the sheer extent of British incursions over the Yangzi valley after the signing of the Chefoo Convention of 1876—"… ain't the whole length of the Valley safe under the mighty

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paw of your British Lion ? That makes it at least half English …" (King 67). It is hinted at yet again in the British Consul, Mr Wharton's statement about the meaningless destruction of innocent lives over the upholding of pseudo-values and ideals—"… we have shed a good deal of Chinese blood, and enough of our own, over the clashing of their ideals and ours" (King 87).

Nevertheless, not unlike the Kings' other China novels, *The Chartered Junk* simultaneously reinforces certain negative stereotypes about the country so popular in Western imagination of the 19th and 20th centuries. For instance, when Lovaine suffers a broken leg during Lo's abduction, the two Chinese men who arrive on the scene are portrayed as being "rather stupid natives" whose "limited intelligence" prevents them from noticing or even understanding his injury (King 19-20). In a similar vein, although Rose's abductors are supposedly members of a radical political faction aimed at thwarting foreign influence in China, they are delineated as comic ruffians, more in tune with vagrant criminals than genuine revolutionaries or activists. In her very first encounter with the emissary Kao, Rose is seen describing him in highly clichéd terms, as a person with "a shifty expression of countenance which failed to inspire much confidence, and seemed distinctly ill at ease" (King 104). At a later point, the Kings also subtly play upon the motif of the corruptness inherent in the Chinese legal system in the local Magistrate's brief appearance at the Lo family mansion to extract monetary profit from a helpless Mrs Lo. Furthermore, even while in captivity, the protagonist Rose is seen deriving a peculiar sense of calm at the sight of West made kerosene lamps that had replaced bean oil lamps in China—"It seemed very incongruous in those surroundings, but its prosaicness had a calming effect on Rose, who otherwise might have felt rather creepy, as that common little lamp seemed a psychic link with civilization and safety" (King 165). This repeated significance placed on foreign insignias or spaces is reiterated once again at the height of the climatic pirate crisis that is symbolically thwarted by the arrival of a British and American ship, "two banners

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which as even their enemies would admit are always comforting sights and suggest deliverance to people who are in trouble at the ends of the earth" (King 205).

The "theory that East is East" is, therefore, made quite apparent in the Kings' novel (112). Such a statement, made for the first time in Rose's description of the thuggish revolutionary Lao Yu's exalted singing, nevertheless acts as a covert reference to Kipling's "The Ballad of East and West"—" East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet" (lines 1). Notwithstanding such a clichéd start, Kipling's poem does subvert this notion in a latter line—"But there is neither East nor West, border, nor breed, nor birth, / When two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the ends of the earth!" (lines 3-4). Such a reference on the part of the Kings, whilst being suggestive of certain pejorative stereotypes vis-à-vis the Chinese, may also be viewed as a springboard which they use to dilute the invisible barriers that encouraged distance between natives and foreigners (Hardy 291). Indeed, the motif of "there is neither East nor West" is mirrored yet again during Mrs. Lo and Rose's meeting, when the latter goes to retrieve the concession papers—"… and then they wrung one another's hands, and there was neither East nor West at that moment when those two women of the same spirit overpassed the barriers of race, and understood and trusted each other (King 142).

Utilising, as it were, Kipling's poem once again in his 1928 book *Weighed in China's Balance*, Paul King, whilst endorsing the seemingly unsurpassable barriers between the East and the West, also furthers an essentially sensitive and balanced outlook—

> But as the West has made the first move to meet, the onus is on us to understand and appreciate the East. We shall not meet comfortably and securely until the West has other ideas besides making money out of the East, and, what is worse, deciding off-hand that Asia knows nothing and has everything to learn from us (93).

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Such a generally positive stance is also made evident in their delineation of certain Chinese characters. For instance, the Chinese captain of the chartered junk that rescues Rose and Mr Lo is willing, even eager to act gallantly and resist the abductors, even though it entails significant personal danger. Furthermore, on multiple occasions, the novel encourages the readers to question the precepts of a white supremacist mentality that foments a bigoted or racist outlook. An apposite instance of this may be found in Lovaine's audaciousness that makes him single-handedly charge at Lo's kidnappers despite warnings, an event which leads to him being injured—"… he had a good share of the Briton's contempt for the fighting powers of Easterners, and had a cheerful conviction that he was a match, unarmed, for at least a dozen Chinamen" (King 19). Whilst such a presumptuous stance on the part of Loavine may be attributed in part to the West's successive victories in the several military encounters with China throughout the 19th century—the Opium wars, the Taiping, Sino-French war (1885), the Boxers (1899-1901)—it may also be the result of the conditioning imposed by the China coast discourse (Hardy 292). Commenting on the ubiquity and widespread influence of this discourse and the possible effects it may have had on an expatriate like Lovaine, Hardy observes—

> … Lovaine also may have read Robert Fortune's accounts of his experiences in China; in *Three Years' Wanderings in the Northern Provinces of China* (1847), a book that Mackerras says was influential in shaping Western images of China … in that book Fortune describes his two singlehanded victories over Chinese mobs numbering in the hundreds, and more significantly, his single-handed victories over pirates— one day fighting two pirate ships, and the next day six. Key to Fortune's victories over the pirates are Western weaponry and Chinese cowardice. Fortune's account is not unique; Major Henry Knollys's 1885 account of his experiences in China, English Life in China, states that 'a solitary resolute Englishman can cow into spaniel submissiveness, under certain circumstances, an almost unlimited number of Asiatics' … (292-293).

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Lovaine's conviction in his military prowess is then vastly misplaced, and while such an episode may itself be viewed as being an account of the dangers inherent in the Far East, it may also be seen as a covert critique of Western impudence, prejudice and intolerance.

Indeed, the Kings' portrayal of the novel's primary Chinese character, Mr. Lo, appears to support such a standpoint. Honorable, chivalrous and steadfast in his loyalty towards both nation and family, Lo is also delineated as someone who is able to converse in fluent English, instead of the distance inducing pidgin English, a medium forced upon natives as "baby-talk" and disseminated as a means to promote a discourse of Chinese regression that concurrently relegates them away from the audience as the "ultimate Other" (Wood 131). By contrast, the Kings' Chinese protagonist is presented as not only being able to discourse at length on a multitude of modern/Western concerns, but also appears as a tangible humane presence, rather than a stereotypical stock character (Hardy 294).

Even on a later occasion, when both Rose and Lo are detained by the revolutionaries, the Chinaman is portrayed as showing incredible moral righteousness by being willing to sacrifice himself to the rebels for the sake of saving his family from a cruel fate—"… if these robbers killed him, Peking would think him a good man, and would protect his mother and home, and let her have some of his money" (King 184). His unwillingness to escape or even heed her warning about the threat posed to his life eventually prompts Rose to acknowledge "… that Oriental stoicism had something admirable about it after all. Mr. Lo was not on the surface a very heroic character, and yet his code of ethics strengthened him in the hour of need, to face a hard fate for the benefit of his people" (King 184). Such a viewpoint furthered on the part of the Kings' protagonist, thus, doubtlessly assumes a thoroughly positive connotation. Nevertheless, as Hardy further points out—"… while the Chinese behavior is understandable, Western-style courage is better: Rose respects his viewpoint, yet she still wishes 'he had half as much active as he possessed passive courage'… Rose is able to encourage Lo to show more

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active courage, which then leads to their escape … Rose remains the leader and Lo the follower" (294).

Conclusion:

Such an ambivalent discourse on the part of the Kings, thus, raises significant questions about the task of narrating China by expatriate authors, partially influenced by settler discourses. The almost palpable inconsistencies in their narrative voices thus seem to suggest that the Kings were unmistakably writing for an expatriate audience, to disseminate, as it were, a specific vision of their own community and its role vis-à-vis the native world around them. So, while on the one hand, their discourse on China indubitably furthers a positive outlook with respect to the role of the West or the treatment of the Chinese by foreigners, an undercurrent of prejudice and parochialism remains apparent throughout the novel.

Indeed, the Kings' second China novel raises several critical issues of the day—the feasibility of reform under the existing regime, the impact of Western incursions on Chinese economic development, the role and function of women within a colonial setting, the inception of a new category of non-stereotypical Chinese characters, etc. Notwithstanding, a significant section of the novel resorts towards consolidating not just a Western supremacist standpoint, but also settler/expatriate position on the fringes of the Chinese Empire. While such anomalies may, in part, be attributed to an unsuccessful collaboration between the two authors, the inconsistencies inherent in their narrative ultimately positions the novel as a suggestive but untenable artifact of a specific epoch.

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