

# Papers

Explorations into Children's Literature

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## **Give, give; be always giving': Children, Charity and China, 1890-1939**

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'Father, what is it that always has its mouth open, and ... is always hungry ... and speaks, though we can't hear it with our ears—and—and the food we give it goes to feed numbers of other people?'

— Emily Elliott (1872), *Matty's Hungry Missionary-Box and the Message It Brought*

Before he reveals the answer to the riddle, nine-year-old Matty Bryan asks his father for a penny and his mother and grandmother for a halfpenny each. He then takes out his new missionary-box, explaining that the money is for 'black people, to buy them Bibles, and to send them preachers to tell them about God, and how they're to get to heaven; and Mr. Graham [his teacher] said that it was the same as giving them the Bread of life' (Elliott 1872, p. 17). This scene from Emily Elliott's novella *Matty's Hungry Missionary-Box and the Message It Brought* (1872) is an example of the creative ways children in nineteenth-century Britain were depicted as engaging in charity. Although not everyone agreed with the value of foreign missions, by the mid-nineteenth century, missionary societies such as the London Missionary Society (LMS, established 1795) and the Church Missionary Society (CMS, established 1799) had placed missionary boxes like Matty's in many homes, and children were taught to donate regularly (Cox 2008, p. 97). According to historian Frank Prochaska '[n]owhere in the charitable world did the young play a more important part than in the evangelical missionary movement' (1978, p. 103). While it is impossible to provide exact

figures for the amount of money Victorian children raised for missionary societies, it was a significant amount. The funds raised supported missionary ships, paid for specific cots in hospitals, and sponsored ‘native teacher[s]’ (Prochaska 1978, p. 107; Thorne 1999, p. 126; Elleray 2011, pp. 229-230). In the early twentieth century, children were told that for one penny a week, they could help support the LMS’s eighty-three missionaries in China who were involved in the work of ‘leper asylums, training homes, orphanages and schools for both boys and girls’ (J.M.B. [c 1900], p. 15).

Because childhood was regarded ‘as the key developmental phase in which to foster a life-long interest in both Christianity and missions’ (Morrison 2010, p. 159), many adults focused on training the child to contribute to missions from a young age. Missionary societies sponsored missionary talks, hosted lantern lectures, organised annual children’s bazaars, staged missionary plays and published children’s periodicals to encourage children to support missions. The joy of giving and its energising effects are depicted in appeals for donations in missionary literature, which emerged as a distinct literary genre in the nineteenth century. For example, in ‘The Missionary Society’s Four Great Wants’ published in the LMS’s *Juvenile Missionary Magazine* (1844-1887), the author states that very ‘few give according to their ability and according to the claims of a perishing world’ (1866, p. 95).<sup>1</sup> The text includes a short poem that encourages charitable contributions: ‘Give, give; be always giving./Who gives not is not living./The more we give/The more we live’ (1866, p. 95). Generosity is also encouraged in the hymn ‘Can I, a little child?’ in *He and She from O’er the Sea*, written by LMS missionary Robert Moffat, which includes the lyrics ‘First, then, I would implore/The

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<sup>1</sup> The Missionary Periodicals Database lists the end date as 1894 but most other sources state the end date as 1887. This is probably because the periodical changed names a few times. It was changed to *The Juvenile Missionary Magazine of the LMS*, then *The Juvenile, a Magazine for the Young*, and continued as *News from Afar* in 1895.

Lord to change their heart;/Then from my little store/I freely will impart' (Moffat, qtd. in J.M.B. [c 1900], p. 7).

Missionary periodicals prompted children to actively participate in philanthropy by encouraging 'a participatory relationship' (Elleray 2011, p. 232) between the child and missionary activities (see Morrison 2010, 2013; Hillel 2011). This essay shifts the focus away from periodicals to examine the representation of charity in relation to discourses of religion and child philanthropy in British Sunday school leaflets, pamphlets, books, and missionary recitations, cantatas and dialogues about China published between 1890 and 1939. China was one of the biggest 'unreached' territories that was not formally part of the British Empire but considered 'semi-colonised' because of the key treaty ports that established foreign concessions after China's loss in the two Opium Wars (1839-1842; 1856-1860). Importantly, China differed from other British colonies such as India in that it was termed an 'Empire' ('Celestial Empire') but 'was subject to multiple imperialisms, which competed and co-operated' (Bickers 1999, p. 8). By the late-nineteenth century, Britain had reached the height of its imperial power and China became the 'fulcrum for Western debates about the future of empire' (Forman 2013, p. 2). Therefore, how New Imperialist investments in empire intersected with discourses of child-based charity and representations of the Chinese at this time is worth investigating. This study begins in the late nineteenth century because this period was characterised by 'highly organized institutional philanthropy' (Siegel 2012, n.p.), which had been ongoing since the mid-nineteenth century, and ends when the British missionary enterprise waned in the mid-twentieth century. Within the context of empire and missionary activity in China, it considers how Chinese children are constructed and presented in relation to the target audience in terms of social, cultural and economic difference.

Western attitudes towards China have fluctuated between Sinophilia and Sinophobia over the centuries: French Jesuit missionaries and Portuguese Catholic missionaries who entered China from the sixteenth century onwards had a more positive view of Chinese civilisation compared with the Protestant missionaries who arrived in China in the nineteenth century (Zhang 2008). The first Protestant missionary to China, Robert Morrison (1782-1834), arrived in 1807. The increase in the number of Protestant workers in the 1860s can be attributed to the signing of the Treaty of Tientsin (1858) after China's loss in the second Opium War. The Treaty allowed missionaries to travel into the interior provinces of the country, giving them more opportunities to make contact with the Chinese population. Missionary societies such as the CMS and LMS responded quickly by sending more representatives into the country. In 1905 there were 3,445 missionaries and by 1920 there was almost double that number (Hutchings 2003, p. 311). These missionaries sent reports back to the metropole and many of them wrote separately for a child audience, usually in the form of Sunday school leaflets and pamphlets.

Because the majority of British readers in the nineteenth century relied on missionary literature to learn about other places around the world, these children's texts are an important source of information on foreign peoples (Cox 2008, p. 114). The texts I examine emphasise what the authors claimed to be the positive effects children's funds had on Chinese people's lives and the importance of continued support for missionary involvement in China. I will analyse the authors' narrative strategies, such as their use of the 'first person direct' and affective language and their rhetoric surrounding reasons for charity, to argue that the implied Western child readers are constructed as charitable agents with the ability to make a contribution to improving the lives of less fortunate 'innocent' Chinese children who are depicted as passive, helpless victims. These texts create a dichotomy between the lives of

British and Chinese children by describing their contrasting emotions such as feeling happy versus sad and loved versus unloved. The figure of the Chinese adult, particularly the stereotypically ‘cruel’ mother, is cast using the technique of what Jeffrey Cox terms ‘defamatory synecdoche’ or ‘taking one or a small number of characteristics of a foreign culture and using it as a representative of the whole’ (2008, p. 118). Techniques such as these are used to justify the need for funding missions. However, while the difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’ is highlighted, common humanity, notably the Christian belief that everyone is born a sinner, is also stressed. The emphasis therefore is not always on racial difference but rather on the difference between ‘saved’ and ‘unsaved’, a feature that distinguishes these missionary texts from the imperialist adventure fiction of the time.

### **Missionary Texts for Children**

Sunday school leaflets, pamphlets, periodicals, books, and missionary recitations, cantatas and dialogues were published and distributed within a highly institutionalised programme for children to educate them on missions, particularly after 1867 when the Children’s Special Service Mission (now Scripture Union) was established in England by Josiah Spiers. The organisation, which aimed to share Christianity with children, also reached international audiences because by 1893 thirteen million children’s leaflets had been distributed around the world (Scripture Union 2016). The main purpose of these texts was to persuade children to give, although not always in the form of monetary contributions. Some asked for prayers, while others encouraged children to devote their lives to becoming missionaries. Considering that in the mid and late nineteenth century, twenty-five percent of the LMS’s financial support came from Sunday schools (Cox 2008, p. 100), it is not surprising that the LMS published materials specifically intended for Sunday school readers. It announced in 1892 that it was ‘issuing a series of “Sunday School Leaflets” for gratuitous circulation in Sunday-

schools. These leaflets are 4pp. 16mo, are printed in two inks on coloured paper, and are made attractive by means of three or four small cuts' (LMS 1892, p. 125). As the announcement indicates, Sunday school leaflets were small in size, short in length and featured a few illustrations. Pamphlets were slightly longer, typically eight pages in length. These texts were usually written by missionaries or based on letters sent back by missionaries and categorised according to the age group of the target audience. Exact circulation figures are difficult to pinpoint, but they would have been significant if each child enrolled in Sunday school was given a copy of these texts. In 1851, for example, there were over two million children enrolled in the 23,135 Sunday schools in Britain (Brown 1991, p. 126).

Unfortunately, because of the ephemeral nature of these texts, not many are extant.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to their weekly offerings, people were also encouraged to give after watching children perform missionary recitations, dialogues and cantatas at missionary meetings, in Sunday schools, or during Sunday services. To enable children to stage performances more easily, the missionary societies who produced the scripts offered to lend costumes and props to groups for free. Details of the items available are usually listed at the front of the scripts. Sample props include chopsticks, divining sticks and Chinese books (J.M.B. [c 1900]). Costumes ranged from head-dresses for girls and caps with pigtailed attached for boys to a Buddhist priest's robe and Chinese wedding attire (Budden [c 1900]). According to the 1915 Annual Report of the LMS, despite the strain of war, the Loan Department sent out costumes and other objects on 1,170 occasions during 1914, suggesting a significant number of performances were staged every year (LMS 1915, p. 34). Performances varied in length. Longer ones lasted around an hour (e.g. *Missionary Cantata: Every-day Life in China*) but

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<sup>2</sup> The material for this article was collected from the School of Oriental and African Studies Library (University of London) Special Collections, which holds the London Missionary Society archives.

most were shorter (e.g. *He and She from O'er the Sea: Missionary Recitations and Hymns for Twelve Boys and Girls*; *Busy Bees: A Missionary Dialogue in Three Scenes*). Each production featured some dialogue or monologues delivered by children between the ages of six and sixteen. Older children were usually cast in the speaking roles while younger ones sometimes had non-speaking parts or sang in the chorus.

The lyricists often used emotive language to try to elicit a strong response from the audience. For example, in *Christ and the Children of China: A Sacred Cantata for Young People*, the singers plead for help: 'from our prison house of grief and pain, to you we cry again' because 'our eyes are blinded with the tears that fall, we cannot help ourselves, we are so small' (Hoatson et. al 1918, pp. 4-5). It is implied that because they are 'small' children, they cannot help themselves, but the irony is that the target audience is a group of children as well. This suggests an unequal power relationship between the British children and Chinese children: the former are empowered by their faith to help the disempowered, grief-stricken 'prisoners' who are 'blinded' not only by their tears but more importantly, blind to Christianity. British child audiences are constructed as active agents embedded within imperial power dynamics, while the Chinese children in the texts are presented as passive recipients of charity, unable to do anything about their plight.

According to Hugh Morrison, 'British children's participation in missionary support and learning was as much embodied as it was intellectual, engaging a multiplicity of senses' (2015, p. 221). Children's involvement in these performances is an example of this engagement with different senses. Some of the children engaged in 'yellowface', taking on the role of the exotic Other. For example, in *Every-day Life in China*, the children who play the slave girl and Chinese gentlemen are instructed to paint their faces yellow and the boys

who act as coolies are told to have legs and feet that are ‘stained brownish yellow’ (Budden [c 1900], ‘Notes on Costumes’). The act of colouring their bodies made them more aware of racial difference and the slipping on of Chinese clothes and shoes suggests that the Other can be easily known and embodied. These scripts seem to suggest that the temporary act of taking on the subject position of the racialised Other is enough to gain understanding of the ‘true’ lives of these distant people. Instead of highlighting the notion of shared childhood, these performances stress the urgent need to rescue the strange Other. Although the audience enjoyed the spectacle of the ‘exotic’ children on stage, they were also expected to be active respondents who would be inspired to help the missionary cause. For instance, at the end of *A Missionary Alphabet: For Recitation at Missionary Entertainments*, which includes four letters related to China (Hong Kong, Peking, Shanghai, Wuchang), the children challenge the audience to respond: ‘Y is for you, our audience kind/ We have tried our best; to our faults be blind:/And after to-night, allow us to say,/If your zeal has been roused, remember to pray’ (LMS 1900, p. 7).

The success of these performances rested on the audience’s response to appeals to feel sympathy for children in faraway lands. These texts do not reflect the idea that China was too geographically remote for the British to feel sympathy for its people, an idea that was exposed by Adam Smith in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1790). In this text, he states that one would be more distressed about the possibility of losing one’s little finger than with the news of an earthquake in China that killed all of its inhabitants (1984, pp. 136–137). He theorised that a person’s capacity to sympathise is related to his or her physical or social proximity to the subject. Philosophers and writers since the Enlightenment have grappled with the question of distance in relation to the capacity to sympathise. Scottish philosopher David Hume argued that ‘imaginative sympathy could not extend beyond the boundaries of

the nation state' (Cronin 2013, p. 103). However, other critics in the nineteenth century believed that it was easier to 'stir the conscience of the British public for suffering far from home ... than for the plight of the child chimney sweeps who walked the streets of every English town' (Cronin 2013, p. 104). At the end of *Busy Bees*, Ethel, who was initially reluctant to attend the children's meeting, says, 'Well, I do feel sorry for the Chinese women and girls' and asks what she can do to help (LMS 1902, p. 14). Feeling 'sorry' is not enough, it must be accompanied by action. The sympathy elicited is generated in various, sometimes opposing, ways. In the performances at missionary meetings, for example, a sense of pity for the 'unfortunate downtrodden' children is evoked, with an emphasis on difference. In other texts such as *Child Life in China*, imaginative sympathy is engendered by the British readers' understanding of their shared status as children.

### **Narrative strategies and missionary rhetoric**

A discussion on the 'most efficient methods of interesting children in missions' held at the World Missionary Conference of 1910 concluded that articles on missionary work should showcase '[a]n intimate human touch of a "personal" kind in child journalistic form' (World Missionary Conference 1910, p. 34). The best way to demonstrate this personal touch is to write 'in the first person direct' (World Missionary Conference 1910, p. 34). Many authors, such as Mary Isabella Bryson (d.1913), a missionary to Tientsin [Tianjin], employ this narrative strategy when reporting on China. She addresses the implied child reader directly in the book *Child Life in China*, noting

**You** cannot all take the long journey to China, so I will tell **you** something of what I have seen, and write out for **you** the stories of a few of my young Chinese friends.

When **you** have read the book, I trust that, knowing much more about China's

children, **you** will wish to do more than **you** have ever done before to make them as happy as **you** are. (Bryson 1900, p. 6, emphasis added)

The narrator draws the implied readers into the narrative by using the word ‘you’ seven times in these two sentences, and suggests that they react to the story in a particular way: ‘do more than you have ever done before’. The text presupposes that the implied child reader is ‘happy’ and leads a blissful life, especially compared to the Chinese waifs, and should therefore contribute to helping Chinese children attain the same level of happiness. As Morrison argues about nineteenth-century religious childhood, ‘Happiness, as a disposition, had a theological as well as psychological element, emanating from the ongoing work of God in children’s lives. Being “truly happy” was variously equated with being divinely “blessed”’ (2015, p. 82). Although Bryson’s child readers may not necessarily be from a middle-class background, since working-class children who attended Sunday schools could have also read the book, the text implies that because they know God, they are all blessed with true happiness. Therefore, despite the fact that the working-class children may have shared similar hardships with the Chinese children Bryson encountered, they were still expected to give. As the lyrics of a hymn from *He and She from O’er the Sea* state: ‘If you cannot give your thousands,/You can give the widow’s mite’ (J.M.B. [c 1900], p. 2). Songs like these emphasise that what matters is the proportion of money the children give relative to their financial ability, rather than the actual amount.

Bryson also wrote the eight-page *Some Chinese Waifs*, the fifth in the Sunday School Leaflets series, in which she provides vignettes of some poor Chinese children, which highlight the deplorable treatment of these young people by Chinese adults to elicit sympathy from the implied readers so that they will be motivated to give to missions. For example, she describes a five-year-old nameless Mongolian girl who ‘could not remember answering to any name

but that of “Ya-tou” or “Slave” because she had been sold by Chinese soldiers to work as a slave’ (Bryson [c 1902], p. 6). When the girl fell ill and was too sick to work, she was left for dead. Finally she was taken to the missionaries, who named her Ping-an (Peace), and she now attends the Tientsin girls’ school, a mission school catering for both orphans and local children. The narrator concludes with a direct appeal to the reader: ‘There are very many such waifs in China. Will you not try to do more than ever before to help the missionaries to rescue and train some of these little uncared-for Chinese children for whom Jesus died?’ (Bryson [c 1902], p. 8). She juxtaposes the portraits of these poor Chinese waifs who had ‘dark sorrowful eyes’ (Bryson [c 1902], p. 4) with the happy children who attend the missionary school who are ‘gaily dressed and playing games’ (Bryson [c 1902], p. 3). Equating ‘saved’ children with joyfulness and ‘unsaved’ ones with sadness is overly simplistic. Bryson’s description of the children does not reflect the struggles Chinese girls experienced when they were sent to mission schools that often forced them to unbind their feet as a prerequisite for attendance (Robert 2005, p. 174). Depending on the age of the girls, having unbound feet may have been more painful than bound ones because once the bones had been bent, it was very difficult for girls to walk without the tightly-wound bandages (Ko 2005, p. 11). They may not have been able to play games that involved running around the school. *He and She from O’er the Sea* briefly alludes to the ridicule that girls with unbound feet faced, when Cherry Blossom tells the audience that she used to laugh at her neighbour who had ‘big feet’ and that ‘we all made fun of her’ (J.M.B. [c 1900], p. 6). However, nothing is mentioned about the difficulties of walking once the feet have been unbound.

The good work that missionaries were able to do for Chinese children because of missionary funding is featured in *In the Streets of Peking*, a seven-page LMS Sunday School pamphlet. The narrator of this text also uses the first person direct, stating ‘Let me take you with me

into a Chinese home' (Pearson [1894], p. 1). This sentence places the readers alongside the missionary and they tour the house owned by Mr. Ju vicariously. According to the text, Ju's lame thirteen-year-old daughter has been crippled by her mother's frequent beatings (Pearson [1894], p. 3). The trope of cruel Chinese mothers appears frequently in texts about China as they serve to justify the need for foreign intervention and highlight the plight of suffering children whose parents do not love them as they should. These children are in need of 'rescuing' and exemplify the trope of the 'vulnerable child' in nineteenth-century literature who need the help of the 'charitable child' (Swain and Hillel 2010, p. 4).

Although Mr. Ju's daughter was baptised, he and his wife do not want to follow suit because they are afraid of persecution and unemployment (Pearson [1894], p. 7). The text juxtaposes the innocence and faith of the young against the stubbornness and fear of the adults, and emphasises how slow conversion can be and the challenges that Chinese Christians face. The narrator concludes with a request for prayers rather than an appeal for more donations. The text suggests that the readers can be agents of change because they can utilise the power of prayer to help those in distant lands but also implicitly prompts the readers for donations because the first page addresses the specific question of 'Where does the Missionary money go?' (Pearson [1894], p. 1).

Although Pearson's text does not explicitly ask for money, British children responded very well when prompted to support specific 'projects' (Prochaska 1978, p. 107; Thorne 1999, p. 126). This is reflected in the texts about China. For example, in the short four-page pamphlet *Twice Saved: The Story of Haw-San* (1920), the narrator relates how English boys and girls who had sent money to support a bed at the London Missionary Society Hospital in a village called Chian 'saved' Haw-san twice because of their subscriptions. The boy was forced to

leave his parents from a young age to work for monks at a temple at which his mother prayed because she had promised them his services if her husband was healed. This detail emphasises the superstitious nature of the Chinese as well as the cruelty of a mother willing to offer her son up for free child labour, which echoes Pearson's construct of the violent mother of the Ju family. Haw-san toiled in the temple until the age of sixteen when bad ankle pain incapacitated him. He was taken to hospital but could only afford a ten-day stay.

However, because there was a 'special bed' that the charitable children from a Sunday school in England had donated, Haw-san was able to recover at the hospital for six months and have 'food and medicines' paid for by the children's subscriptions. By the time he was discharged, he had become a Christian and started selling cakes, but winter came and he was re-hospitalised for a bad cough. Haw-san was thus saved again 'by the English boys and girls who had never seen him, but had helped to send out the doctors and nurses who gave him shelter and a warm bed' (LMS 1920, n.p.). This pamphlet empowers the child readers to see how their actions saved many children in China not only in terms of physical healing but also spiritual salvation, which is characteristic of medical missionary stories that tend to weave examples of physical healing together with spiritual healing (Schoepflin 2005, p. 574).

The LMS's Reverend John Parker (1860-1944) of Chung King [Chongqing, Sichuan] also addressed readers directly in the short four-page pamphlet *The Boy with a Borrowed Name* (1902). The narrative begins with an imperative that invites the reader's participation: 'Look at his black eyes with lids curved up like the sides of a saucer, and the sprouting pig-tail on his head' (Parker 1902, n.p.). The 'black eyes' and 'pig-tail' are marks of bodily difference while the simile that compares the boy's eyelids to 'the sides of a saucer' and the verb 'sprouting' add humour to the description. Parker's authoritative voice promises to introduce the child reader to four-year-old Ho because English boys and girls wanted 'an orphan

Chinese boy whom they could care for in Jesus' name' (Parker 1902, n.p.). It is worth noting that the child donors thought they were supporting 'an orphan' but Ho isn't one. Although fatherless, Ho has a Christian mother who has been struggling to provide for her three sons since the death of her husband. Fortunately, 'generous English children' have been sending money for two or three years, and the boy receives a monthly allowance (Parker 1902, n.p.). The climax of the story occurs when Ho's mother comes to Parker because her son is missing. Parker sends some Yamen Runners (local people hired by magistrates for specific jobs) to help in the search. Finally Ho's brother finds the boy 'naked, cold, and hungry, crying piteously among the big stones on the bank' (Parker 1902, n.p.). The evocative adjectives are utilised to elicit feelings of sympathy for the boy whose small size is more obvious when compared to the 'big stones' of the riverbank. Ho's abductor had thrown all his schoolbooks into the river, a detail that hints at the kidnapper's disdain for education as well as the victimisation of the innocent child who loves learning. After hearing a foreigner was searching for his captive, the man runs away. The text implies that the 'foreigner' had been the force behind the release of the boy and highlights the power of the British. The kidnapping adds an element of excitement to the story while drawing attention to the perils of living in an un-Christianised land. However, it also inadvertently reveals the potential dangers of associating with missionaries. The text does not explain why the villains targeted Ho, since he comes from a poor family, but perhaps they knew that the boy was receiving money from the missionary and hated his family for being 'rice' Christians, a common view held by many Chinese who accused their compatriots of converting only to receive material assistance from missionaries. Like *Twice Saved*, *The Boy with a Borrowed Name* attempts to provide vivid portraits of the young people who are being helped by English children who have never seen them and are 'too far off to see after [them]' (Parker 1902, n.p.). These texts, written by missionaries in China who act as surrogate caregivers for the donors, reassure the

boys and girls that their money has been used wisely to improve the lives of young people and encourages them to continue giving.

### **What's in a name?**

Parker's story is called *The Boy with a Borrowed Name* because Ho is known as 'Bar-dee-dee (that is Parker's little boy)' (Parker 1902, n.p.). Bar is the transliteration of Parker's surname into Chinese and 'Dee-dee [*didi*]' actually means little brother. Many missionary texts include details about 'strange' Chinese names. Some are presented to highlight the suffering of the Chinese children and the need for the British audience to help allay their pain while others are provided to convince them of Chinese irrationality. For example, *Every-Day Life in China* includes a Chinese girl called Kuei, which means 'a sceptre' (Budden [c 1900], p. 7) and a Chinese gentleman who introduces himself as Spring Dog, explaining, 'I was called so because we believe that the demons will then think that our parents do not care for us and so leave us alone, hence one often meets with such ignominious names as Dog, Vagabond, Flea, or Dirt' (Budden [c 1900], p. 5). This explanation once again highlights the superstitious nature of the Chinese and their irrational fear of the spiritual world. Similarly, the first lesson in *Chinese Stories for Little Children: Eight Lessons for Children aged 5-7 years*, 'Baby's Naming Day,' teaches children that Chinese babies are given 'very strange' names with meanings such 'Ugly little dog' (Debenham and Baugh 1933, p. 7). The narrator states that this 'stupid sort of name' came about because the adults were afraid that evil spirits would harm their baby so they wanted to trick the spirits into believing that they did not care much about their son. However, the narrator of this lesson, published over 30 years after *Every-Day Life in China*, acknowledges that the name would be changed when a boy reaches school-age, which indicates that the British had learned more about the Chinese since the character 'Spring Dog' was invented (Debenham and Baugh 1933, p. 7). What remains the same is the

love Chinese parents have for their baby boys and the desire to keep them safe, which contrasts greatly with their attitudes towards girls.

Names are also used to illustrate the inferior status of girls and women in China. For example, a young woman in *Every-day Life in China* states that her husband sometimes refers to her as his ‘Dust-Pan and Brush’ but never as ‘wife’ while she always addresses him as ‘Great Mandarin’ and ‘would never dare to address him, or even refer to him more familiarly’ (Budden [c 1900], p. 8). The demeaning name ‘Dust-Pan and Brush’ trivialises her value as a life partner, indicating she is expected to clean the house while he is venerated as a high official. Although she does not enjoy equal status with her husband, at least this character escaped the threat of female infanticide. A girl in *Busy Bees* named ‘Hoping for a younger Brother’ explains that the only reason she was not ‘thrown into a well like many hundreds of baby girls’ was because she was the firstborn and her parents thought she would be of some use because her name may bring a boy into the family (LMS 1902, p. 6).<sup>3</sup> She tells the audience about how Chinese girls are regarded as inferior to boys, how their fathers who are addicted to opium sell them off to the highest bidder, how their bound feet hurt and other dreadful details about their lives. For example, she explains that when they are struck by famine, some ‘only ate once in two days,’ causing the British girl to respond, ‘Oh, how dreadful! Why our fowls and canaries are better off’ (LMS 1902, pp. 6-7). Since even the birds in England live better than the children in China, the audience is positioned to agree with the British girl that ‘I should not like to be a girl in China!’ (LMS 1902, p. 7). However, ‘Hoping for a younger Brother’ is blessed because since she became an orphan, she has ‘been supported by some English Sunday School girls’ and has the opportunity to go to school (LMS 1902, p. 8). She notes that she will be baptised and hopes to become ‘a Teacher or

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<sup>3</sup> Similar names are used in some traditional Chinese families even today.

Bible woman' when she grows up. This narrative suggests the power that English Sunday School girls have to change the lives of poor Chinese orphans, prompting the audience to give generously.

In *Christ and the Children of China*, ten-year-old Little Bitterness, who has run away from home, explains that she got the 'funny' name because her parents wanted a baby boy but had her instead and when her baby brother 'Little Precious' died a few months after birth, her father blamed the death on her 'because [she] was a girl' (Hoatson et al. 1918, p. 30). His cruelty is further exemplified when he tells her 'he would be glad to know [she] was dead. [She] was only an expense to him and brought him bad luck' (Hoatson et al. 1918, p. 31). By the end of the dialogue however, her name has been changed to 'Little Happiness' because a missionary family cared for her and told her about Jesus' love. It is implied that she will stay with them instead of returning home, suggesting an improvement to her material conditions as well as emotional state. While the narrative suggests that conversion makes everyone equal in God's eyes, it does not mention that Christian converts faced challenges fitting into the new culture that was still racially hierarchical. Furthermore, Chinese Christians were often shunned by their own communities following their conversion (Haggis and Allen 2008, p. 699). These texts gloss over the complexities of life for Chinese Christians after conversion, providing an optimistic message that missionaries have been successfully bringing happiness to Chinese children with the help of generous British children who support missions.

Children are told in the conclusion of 'Baby's Naming Day' that 'We would like all boys and girls in China to love Jesus, and we help them when we pray for them, and when we give our pennies to help to send teachers to tell them stories of Jesus' (Debenham and Baugh 1933, p. 8). The first 'we' in the sentence seems to refer to the adult narrators but the latter use of 'we'

incorporates the implied child readers into the group of British Christians who wish to help those in China who are less fortunate. Chinese babies are understood to be innocent and undeserving of such strange names, so the readers should give money to help teachers educate the people of China. Two-fold action is required: lifting up the children in prayer and giving pennies to missionaries. The Chinese girl Kuei in *Every-Day Life in China* also asks the audience directly for teachers: ‘I hope you kind English people will send some more teachers to us. There are so many little girls in China, and they never learn these good things [about Jesus], but are often sad... Please don’t forget your little friend, Kuei’ (Budden [c 1900], p. 8). Again the ‘sad’ little Chinese girl appeals to the emotions of the ‘kind English people’ who should respond to their ‘little friends’ by raising funds to send teachers to educate them.

The appeal to affect can be seen in the descriptions of how Chinese girls suffer from the pain of foot-binding, are not allowed to go to school, are forced into arranged marriages, and may not even live to adulthood because female infanticide was a common phenomenon.<sup>4</sup> The focus on gender is not surprising considering Anna Johnston’s observation that ‘images of the degradation of local women by traditional custom were graphically depicted and deplored’ in nineteenth-century missionary writing on India, Polynesia and Australia and emphasised as a justification for imperial missionary projects (2003, p. 8). The traditional Chinese custom most often deplored was foot-binding, which was regarded as ‘backward’ and an indicator of China’s inferior status on the hierarchy of world civilisations. Cherry Blossom in *He and She from O’er the Sea* explains that foot-binding ‘gives us horrible pain, we cannot rest day or night, and we have many a good cry’ (J.M.B. [c 1900], p. 5). In *Busy Bees* the Chinese girl

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<sup>4</sup> As Anna Johnston and others have pointed out, condemnations of infanticide in India, Polynesia and other countries were common topics in missionary writing (2003, p. 158).

tells Rosie that foot-bound girls often lose sleep because of the pain, ‘and moan *piteously* hanging their poor little feet outside the bed ... they dare not cry very loud lest their father should come and *beat* them’ (LMS 1902, p. 7). Sold as a slave at the age of seven, Kien-Ki in *Every-day Life in China* tells the audience that ‘I have had several mistresses since then, many of whom had been very unkind to me, both kicking and beating me, and making me work very hard’ (Budden [c 1900], p. 1). This rhetoric about domestic violence against Chinese children is exaggerated defamatory synecdoche that is used to stress that children’s suffering, depicted through crying and moaning, can only be alleviated when missionaries intervene. The emphasis on the cruelty of foot-binding in missionary performances constructs China as an ‘uncivilised’ and oppressive regime, asserting the superiority of the British and the need for the Chinese girls and women to be ‘liberated’ by Western powers (Chen 2014). However, ‘while emphasising the excruciating pain caused by Chinese mothers while binding their daughters’ feet, the authors were silent on the plight of British girls suffering under corsets tightly-laced by their mothers’ (Chen 2014, p. 365).

### **Reasons to give**

Although most of the texts highlight the differences between the Chinese children and the implied British readers, some suggest that England used to be similar to China. In the final paragraph of *Child Life in China*, the narrator concludes,

Long, long ago, our ancestors in England were very much like the Chinese, and were bowing down to idols and offering human sacrifices upon the mountain tops and in the forest glades. But Christian people in other lands sent to those who came before us the bright light of the Gospel, and so we ought to pass it on to others who are now in darkness. (Bryson 1900, p. 160)

The narrator equates the British of ‘long ago’ with the Chinese, noting that they were once ignorant as well and the only difference is that they heard about the Gospel first, which is why they are so ‘enlightened’ and powerful now. The text suggests that all cultures are able to be brought out of the ‘darkness’ if they turn to Christianity. The reason for giving stems from a grateful heart but also a sense of Christian duty. These views are characteristic of ‘the doctrine of the universal depravity of humanity’ which stressed the need for Christianity among all people (Cox 2008, p. 121). The universality of humanity, and girlhood more specifically, is expressed at the end of the 64-page *Working Girls of China* (1920), directed at ‘senior girls’, when the narrator states that besides prayer the implied reader can give too because ‘[a]s we have received so we can pass on our share to others. Few of us are too poor for this. Some who read this may know that they have more than money to give. They may have talents, medical and scholastic training, that they hear the call to place upon the altar of true friendship’ (Whimster 1920, p. 59). The emphasis is on giving as a sign of ‘true friendship,’ indicating that the Chinese girls should be regarded as friends. Similarly, in *Christ and the Children of China*, Little Bitterness becomes Little Happiness because the missionaries’ daughter Ruth, who is the same age, wants to be friends (Hoatson et al. 1918, p. 31). While Ethel from *Busy Bees* wants to give because she feels sorry for the children, others’ motivation to give is out of friendship. On paper, the hypothetical friendship between British child readers with children in distant China is encouraged. However, the reality may have been the opposite. Some female missionaries at the turn of the century did not want their sons and daughters to be friends with Chinese children, who they regarded as having a negative influence on their family because of their unruly behaviour (Hunter 1984, pp. 108-109).

The excerpt from *Working Girls of China* mentions that '[f]ew of us are too poor' to give money, implying that the readers come from different socio-economic backgrounds. These texts imply a dual audience of both middle-class and working-class children, which complicates the argument that charity and philanthropy is a form of social control where the interests of the middle class are served, the distance between social classes are maintained, and political power structures are not challenged (Himmelfarb 1990; Siegel 2012; Bell 2013). The texts not only encourage financial sacrifice but also a greater giving of one's life to foreign missions, an appeal that many working-class children took seriously because records indicate that many nineteenth-century missionaries were from working-class backgrounds and their opportunities and lives abroad were sometimes better than what they would have had at home (Cox 2008; Johnston 2003).<sup>5</sup>

Because of their perceived innocence, an ideal image emerging from Romantic ideas of childhood, Victorian children were regarded as the most effective collectors. In 1890, the evangelical author E. J. Whately noted

The real strength of the work rests on the hundreds of quiet, unassuming collectors of small sums, who go on with their humble labours year after year without any taking count of them. The Sunday-school children with their missionary-boxes, and the cards with the labouriously gathered shillings and sixpences – these are the real main support of our great societies (qtd. in Thorne 1999, p. 126).

Whately's statement reveals that although children could not give much, the work that they did was crucial to the success of fundraising for missions. Most texts focused on the child's

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<sup>5</sup> For these people, missionary societies were 'an avenue of upward mobility' (Cox 2008, p. 187). Moreover, many of the texts encouraged female readers to become missionaries. The fact that there were more Protestant female missionaries than male missionaries at the end of the nineteenth century supports the more positive view that missionary philanthropy provided women with public vocation opportunities (Siegel 2012, n.p).

own power to give while others implied that children could not raise money independent of adult assistance. For example, at the end of *Busy Bees*, Rosie, who plans to become a missionary when she grows up, states: ‘Last year I painted some Christmas cards and sold them at a nursery sale my Aunt Helen let the children have. Some of us sang Kindergarten songs, we had musical drill, and everyone paid 6 d. to come in. Auntie gave them tea and biscuits, and we made nearly 15 pounds’ (LMS 1902, p. 15). Aunt Helen’s role in helping the children with the fundraiser raises questions about the relationship between implied readers of different backgrounds and their adult caretakers. For middle-class parents, it may not have been difficult to give their children money to put into missionary boxes each week, but for poorer families, parting with their earnings would have been harder. It is unclear how much of the money collected was from the children’s own savings or efforts at fundraising and how much was an extra burden on adults.

### **A call to action**

Missionary texts on China reflect the idea that imaginative sympathy could extend beyond the nation state and that implied audiences would feel motivated to give to missions. The authors used various narrative techniques and rhetorical strategies to persuade their audience to be moved by the affective power of the stories and give out of love and compassion for less fortunate children who were suffering physically from the torture of foot-binding, domestic violence, disease, war and other horrific situations. As Margot Hillel argues, late-Victorian missionary writing for children ‘ask[s] them to identify and empathise with other children who are “not like them”– contrasting images of security, safety and love with those of danger, rejection and heathenism’ (2011, p. 183). However, not all who gave were genuinely concerned for the Chinese but felt a sense of responsibility stemming from an attitude of superiority or guilt. While most of the texts emphasised the distinction between

‘us’ and ‘them,’ a few tried to blur the boundaries by convincing the reader that everyone is the same: sinners who need God. The reason for giving should be the realisation that the Chinese are friends and good things should be shared with friends in need, particularly girls who would not have had the benefits of education had the missionaries not built schools for them and persuaded their parents to allow them to attend.

Children’s philanthropic efforts also benefited hospitals and medical missionaries. It was not enough for children to put their own pennies into missionary boxes, however. The texts suggest that children should not regard themselves as powerless, but rather as active agents who use their hands to create items to sell at fundraisers, their voices to sing and perform at missionary meetings to educate the audience about the plight of children abroad, and their feet to travel to countries such as China when they grow up. Not only can they give monetarily, but they can also engage directly in charitable acts for those in need. Ultimately child readers and audiences are expected to help give children better lives, because even though they may be discontent with their own situation, it is nothing compared to the ‘wretchedness’ of those in places like China.

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