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‘That mighty Wall, not fabulous/China’s stupendous mound!’ China’s Great Wall in the Accounts of the Macartney Embassy

I

The case of the Great Wall of China viewed within the larger context of early British understandings of Qing China significantly complicates in interesting ways our understanding of Enlightenment and Romantic period travel writing. This essay discusses the first British encounter with the Great Wall in the accounts of the Macartney embassy of 1792-94. Applying a combination of historical contextualisation with aesthetic-materialist understanding of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century British travel writing about ‘antique’ monuments, it seeks to articulate the ways in which the Wall became a catalyst in the revelation of the embassy’s assumptions about class, race, and other categories. The key point is that Macartney’s embassy allowed Britons physically to view and describe the celebrated Great Wall for the first time in their history and to comment on the significance of the monument in several of the accounts that derived from this event. Julia Lovell, in her recent history of the Great Wall, has claimed that ‘Macartney’s visit marks a crucial episode in the modern history of both China and the Great Wall, his experiences and reactions helping to construct the view of the wall that is still widely, if erroneously, held today’. For Lovell, Macartney identified two walls, the physical landmark and the mental barrier that the Chinese state constructed to keep out foreign influence. Macartney’s comments thus commence a process by which, in the British imagination, the Wall is homogenized and made singular, despite being composed of many lesser walls. It also becomes a sign of China’s exclusivity, when, in fact, China

has historically been open to very many foreign influences and ideas, and when Qing expansionism into Mongolia had rendered the Wall redundant. The Great Wall thus became 'a symbol of Chinese civilization, power and precocious technological accomplishment … the all-defining emblem of China in the Western imagination'.[1] Yet as Macartney and others noticed, the Chinese themselves seemed to have very little interest in the Wall. This essay will attempt to discuss the ways in which the embassy's apparently objective and empirical description of the Great Wall was imbricated within the discourses of travel, diplomacy, aesthetics, race and ethnology. Although variously employing the categories of the picturesque, the pleasing, the beautiful and sublime, the aesthetic mode that is evoked by British accounts is that of the 'stupendous', of awe and wonder at the spectacle, combined with an appreciation of the material aspects of the monument. Utilizing a mixed discourse of objectivity and mensuration, and an aesthetics of a failed sublime, cross-hatched with the rhetoric of disappointment and temporality, these accounts move from key celebrations of the Wall by eighteenth-century figures, such as the Jesuits, Voltaire, and Samuel Johnson, to the detailed material discussions of the dimensions and historicity of the Wall itself. Voltaire favourably compared the Wall to the pyramids and Johnson 'expressed a particular enthusiasm' to visit it, advising Boswell, who had claimed he would like to see it but had children to look after, 'by doing so, you would do what would be of importance in raising your children to eminence. There would be a lustre reflected upon them from your spirit and curiosity. They would be at all times regarded as the children of a man who had gone to view the wall of China. I am serious, Sir'.[2]

II

Romantic period travel writing has been subject to much recent critical scrutiny.[3] By and large in this enquiry, travel accounts of China have been somewhat neglected. What difference, therefore, does it make to our understanding of Romantic period travel writing when China is included? China is very problematic in that, in one sense, it is one of the ancient and 'antique lands' explored by Nigel Leask in his seminal *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing 1770-1840*, yet, at the same time, China was also perceived by the consensus of seventeenth-century and Enlightenment minds as a modern, rational and powerful empire. The temporal and spatial dynamic, which Leask argues to be crucial in evaluating such lands and peoples, does not operate in the quite the same way for China as for India, Greece or Egypt; antique civilizations whose glories in British eyes lay firmly in the past. Professional diplomats or members of their entourages authored the accounts discussed in this essay, rather than the 'heroic' and 'suffering' Romantic travellers who are the primary focus of the studies of Leask and Carl Thompson. Nevertheless, issues such as the creditworthiness of the narrative and the reliability of the information received were still key issues for the public, despite the fact that China was not an unknown and unmapped land, as was the case with the 'South Seas' and the North and South Poles, other key sites of Romantic exploration. This essay is therefore cognate with those studies that seek to problematise any simple and straightforward binaries between European self and others, by stressing the complexities and *multipolarity* of exchange between Britain and China in an already globalised world. This essay, thus stresses 'the vulnerability rather than the self-sufficiency of European travellers […] and the instability rather than the authority of their published narratives' in a period in which Britain was only just beginning to emerge as a naval and imperial superpower. [4]

Leask further identifies a typology or kinds of travel accounts from the Romantic period: the 'curious' travel narrative, the 'geographical', the 'anti-travel' narrative and the 'integrated narrative'. He also comments on how Romantic-period travel writing frequently employs the idiom of the picturesque and the dominant mode of sensibility.[5] Throughout the period, he notes a crucial 'constitutive tension' between the literary aspects of travel writing and the need to produce a 'geographical narrative', a tension that is clearly manifest in the accounts of the Macartney embassy. Its major narratives exemplify these differing characteristics, yet conform most closely to Leask's description of the 'integrated travel account', in which 'literary representation of the foreign was at the cutting edge of emergent discourses of the self and of scientific knowledge' and which would be replaced in the nineteenth century by either the more personal literary narrative or the more strictly scientific description.[6] These accounts were written from the perspective of men employed on a government mission and not from that of the more familiar personae of the usually solitary Romantic traveller, exemplified by the accounts of Mungo Park, James Bruce, Giovanni Belzoni or Alexander von Humboldt. Rather the genre of writing they tend to exemplify most is that established by the numerous accounts generated by the voyages of James Cook with the obvious difference that it is the first extensive penetration of the Chinese interior that is their chief of interest.

Such accounts eschew the characteristic itemizing, anecdotal, narrative of the curious traveller in favour of the more geographical and generalizing official mode of the admiralty or expeditionary narrative, partaking of what Mary Louise Pratt influentially described as a larger 'planetary consciousness'.[7] Such accounts exploit a form of apparent objectivity and a compulsive tendency to extensive mensuration that Barbara Maria Stafford identified with a pre-Romantic notion of travelogue, one she

argues, avoids the aestheticized subjectivity of later travellers.[8] Yet as Leask has argued, Romantic-period travel accounts stress their aestheticized nature through the deployment of a form of 'affective realism' that is closely imbricated within the prevalent discourses of sensibility, sentimentalism and sympathy, derived from the Scottish Enlightenment and the writings of the third earl of Anthony Ashley-Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, and Francis Hutcheson. Summing up, Leask argues that travel writing in the period 'increasingly sought to express a holistic relationship between social and natural factors in diverse geographical environments, while parading sensibility as a marker of a "modern" Western self, capable of at once empathizing with and transcending the "antique" land and its inhabitants'.[9] The Macartney embassy accounts, written from the perspective of a substantial expedition assume a cultural distance from Chinese people, requiring, unlike their Jesuit missionary successors, no need for any cultural disguise or the kinds of cultural impersonation practiced by James Bruce and, later, by Richard Burton or Robert Fortune. Anxieties, however, exist in these narratives, largely located between the faultiness of class, nationality and gender (masculinity).

The persistence of such modes of affective realism permeates the apparently disinterested and objective accounts of Macartney, Barrow and Staunton. Yet by the time of the Macartney narratives, the official exploration narrative had achieved a certain generic stability employing a specific template honed by the desiderata of Joseph Banks and the Royal Society. Such accounts typically provided a first-person narrative of the journey including the personal reflections of the author with a series of analytical essays included, usually as appendices, on the manners and mores of the Chinese and organised under certain key headings. In these sections the technical and scientific material and data was set out. Macartney's 'Journal' is exemplary in this

respect. Often there was a tension between the narrative and the concentrated essay, especially regarding actual encounters with indigenous peoples and the more abstract summaries of their societies, manners and, often, racial characteristics. The narratives are usually written in the mode of the 'integrated account' combining first-person observation and commentary written in a plain and descriptive manner but frequently also employing 'affective realism'. What should be stressed, however, is the notion that such accounts with their observations and data were intended to be useful to the public and to replace existing knowledge about China with a new, first-hand objective account that revealed a true and demystified picture of the nation, what I have described as a Romantic Sinology.[10] Yet at the same time, the narratives were also engaged in a process of Romantic self-fashioning. Everyone involved in the embassy knew that his participation was potentially extremely lucrative. Macartney, an upwardly mobile career diplomat from a non-aristocratic Scots Ulster family, received an earldom and a substantial payment for his participation. John Barrow's inclusion propelled him on his career to becoming the powerful second secretary at the Admiralty and a key authority on global travel. His *Travels in China* (1804) was sometimes accused of egregious self-promotion, presenting himself as much more important to the embassy than was actually the case. Nevertheless, the grandiloquence of heroic explorers like James Bruce or the sentimentalism of Mungo Park, or the idiosyncrasies of mavericks such as Richard Burton are seldom present in these more detached and cooler accounts of China. These are very much the accounts of what Thompson has described as the 'exploration establishment'.[11]

III

The details of the Macartney embassy are now well known and do not require any retelling here.[12] Having travelled to Beijing on a diplomatic mission to establish 'modern' diplomatic and trading relations with Qing China, Macartney's entourage travelled north to attend the ceremonial of the Qianlong emperor's birthday at his summer retreat of *Wanshu Yuan* (Garden of Perfect Brightness). The party journeyed by the Gubeikou pass northeast of Beijing and encountered the Wall at one of its most impressive viewing points on 5th September 1793.[13] Here Macartney instructed Lieutenant Henry Parish, one of the embassy's two draughtsmen, to make detailed measurements of its various features, towers, walkways and ramparts. Parish also made several accomplished technical drawings of the structure. The embassy's more famous draughtsman and its de facto artist, William Alexander, although remaining in Beijing, was able to make a convincing watercolour of the Wall based upon Parish's plans and elevations. This then formed the basis of the famous and impressive engraving of the Wall contained in the folio volume of Staunton's *Authentic Account* which, in its turn, became the standard western visual depiction of the Great Wall for Europeans, creating the taste by which the Wall would be consumed throughout the century. Macartney's party - to the bemusement of their Chinese hosts - descended on the monument like locusts. Samuel Holmes, a dragoon, recorded in his *Journal* how pieces of it, 'were as anxiously collected as if they were wedges of the most precious metal, by all ranks, from his Excellency to the private soldier'.[14]

For the embassy, the Wall was described by the category of the 'stupendous', a mode highly suited to the integrated travels accounts, combining both affective response and detailed mensuration. 'Stupendous' from the Latin *stupendous* [*stupendus*?], 'that is to be wondered at, amazing', gerundive of *stupēre* to be struck senseless, be amazed at' (OED) was, it seems, the word most suited by the British to

describe their encounter with this antique monument. It was stupendous but not, as one might expect, sublime largely because it was a man-made structure, designed for defensive purposes and involving enormous amounts of forced labour, the kind and quantity of which was only available under an Asiatic despotism, as they increasingly came to view the Qing Empire. Rather than hint at a moment of sublime and Kantian self transcendence, the stupendous merely stupefies, or renders the viewer tired and confused, bringing on a state of stupefaction, maybe even dull stupidity, when contemplating its sheer scope. Like the sublime, the stupendous is closely associated with bathos, but more as an effect, than a polar opposite. It also invokes feelings of disappointment as well as wonder and astonishment. The sublime contrast between antique greatness and contemporary decay was not available in a modern China by which the British were still very much awed.

The embassy descriptions of the Wall contain both extensive measurements but also personal reflections on its significance. Staunton's official narrative presents a detailed description of the embassy's progress, synthesizing the journals of its members. It describes the soil, climate, mineralogy, geology, vegetation, population and topography of the area travelled through in great detail. As the embassy approached the Gubeikou Pass, Staunton contributed 'the first close-up description of the Wall by a foreigner'.[15] The Wall appears as 'a prominent line, or narrow and unequal mark, such as appear to be formed sometimes … by the veins of quartz when viewed from afar in the side of the mountains of Gneiss, in Scotland'.[16] This apparent geological phenomenon is 'sufficient to arrest the attention of the beholder' for him to feel the full power of the 'stupendous':

> What the eye could, from a single spot, embrace of those fortified walls, carried along the ridges of hills, over the tops of the highest mountains, descending into the deepest vallies, crossing upon arches over rivers, and doubled and trebled in many parts to take in important passes, and interspersed with towers or massy bastions at almost every hundred yards, as far as sight could reach, presented to the mind an undertaking of stupendous magnitude ….The travellers were now able to determine, from their own feelings, that it was not alone the dimensions of those walls, however considerable, that made the impression of wonder upon the persons who had hitherto seen these intended barriers against the Tartars. Astonishment is seldom excited by the mere effect of the continuance or multiplication of labour, that may be performed by common means. It was the extreme difficulty of conceiving how the materials could be conveyed, and such structures raised, in situations apparently inaccessible, which principally occasioned surprise and admiration (178-89).

For Staunton, the property that converts what otherwise might be an example of the sublime, with its Burkeian elements of power, height, obscurity and depth into the problematically 'stupendous', is not simply the 'multiplication of labour' that went into the making of the Wall, but the sheer difficulty of the construction. The 'stupendous' involves magnitude and dimension combined with wonder, in this case supplied by the inaccessibility of the terrain. It is this 'feeling' that supplies the 'astonishment' and 'wonder' characteristically associated with the sublime to the Wall and makes it a 'stupendous' experience. The fact, however, that the Wall is, in essence, a utilitarian object, a barrier against 'Tartar' invasion, disqualifies it from the true sublimity granted to other foreign artefacts, such as the Elgin Marbles or the giant

bust of Rameses II in Shelley's 'Ozymandias', soon to be ensconced in the British Museum. Yet, paradoxically, the massive solidity of this great barrier is then converted in to a more notional and liminal space, marking the boundary, geographic, stadial and racial between the 'civilised' Chinese and the 'restless' Tartars in the British imagination, an imposed distinction more difficult to maintain in practice (180).[17] Staunton's reflex against this pull to the insubstantial is to re-situate the Wall in the familiar context of ancient British history. He domesticates the foreign by comparing it to Hadrian's Wall, which the 'brave and warlike Romans' erected against the 'uncivilised Picts'. Here the savage Picts of Scotland become the Tartars and the civilized Ming Chinese the Romans. This prompts Staunton into a brief Enlightenment survey of times and places where nations of hunters and cultivators have come into contact, and of the expedients, such as wall building that they have undertaken. All pale beside the monolith of the Great Wall that Staunton believes has survived intact for two thousand years and that stretches for fifteen hundred miles, rather than being the composite of many different wall building projects. The Wall thus mediates between the man-made monuments of other constructions and the dynamic sublime of the 'rocky and mountainous bulwarks' that surround it.

Categories and practices of eighteenth-century travel writing are invoked as Staunton assumes the perspective of the landed, male gentleman to detail the prospect of the 'eye' that 'embraces' landscape. Staunton testifies to the 'wonder' and 'astonishment' that the Wall evokes in this eye trained in European concepts of landscape. Staunton's trained 'eye/I' would formally exclude most of the members of the embassy apart from himself, Macartney and the artists. Certainly excluded were the common ranks of soldiers and servants, like Samuel Holmes and Aeneas Anderson, who would publish their own accounts. Yet Staunton also universalizes his

aesthetic and critical judgments, applying them to the 'feelings' of the travellers as a whole, thus unifying them with a shared British sensibility when faced with the stupendous Wall. Pratt notably maintained that Europeans were often empowered in such encounters with foreign subjects. One of her key notions is that of the 'anti-conquest' narrative by which the European bourgeois male subject asserts supremacy through his 'imperial gaze', while at the same time asserting his enlightened and non-aggressive outlook.[18] Yet, as several commentators have argued with regard to China in the eighteenth century, cosmopolitan Europeans were perfectly capable of including within their frame of reference the cultural elite of the Qing, its court, artists and landscape gardeners. After all throughout the eighteenth century a heated debate raged about just how much the natural style of the English landscape garden, exemplified in the work of 'Capability' Brown and others, owed to the prior Chinese models of *Yuanming Yuan* and *Wanshu Yuan*.[19] The Wall, however, divides the British, who perceive its 'stupendous' nature, from the Chinese who do not. What is especially jarring for Staunton and Macartney is that the Chinese, who apparently understand the semiotics of the country estate, fail to appreciate the 'stupendous' power of the Wall. The light of the 'imperial gaze' is here thus split into a spectrum of complicated subject positions by the prismatic nature of the Great Wall.

Staunton is well aware that the Wall has lost much of its importance and significance now that the Qing dynasty has united both 'Tartar' and Chinese and now that the boundaries of the empire have extended massively to take in Tibet and large swathes of Mongolia. The Chinese view the Wall with indifference now the 'novelty of its construction has diminished', apparently incapable of feeling within themselves the 'stupendous' (184). For the Chinese, curiosity vanishes with novelty; yet for the British it is excited by the 'fame of this once important barrier' (189). The British

response to the Wall and their ability to feel and appreciate the effect of the stupendous serve to define their sense of self and superiority in such increasingly racialised aesthetic categories.[20]

For Staunton and his troupe, the stupendous Wall signifies all these things. Such discourses of aesthetics, history, anthropology and race are also crosshatched with an understanding of the sheer materiality of the construction, a monumentality which is crucial to our understanding of the stupendous. Staunton reprints Lieutenant Parish's extensive and extremely precise, close measurements of the Wall over several pages, of which the following extract will give some flavour:

> "The rest of those buildings consist of bricks of a blueish colour. They are laid in laminae of a brick thick each; forming, as it were, so many distinct walls as there are bricks in thickness. They differ in their dimensions according to the situations in which they are placed. Those in the front of the wall and towers are as follows:
>
> | | Feet. | Inches. |
> |---|---|---|
> | "Thickness of the bricks - - - | 0 | 3 ¾ |
> | "Width of the same - - - | 0 | 7 ½ |
> | "Length - - - - | 1 | 3 |
>
> (196-97)

Macartney's personal Journal utilises these measurements taken by Parish before reflecting on the Wall's larger significance.[21] He views it as 'certainly the most stupendous work of human hands', probably establishing the epithet most used to describe the Great Wall in Romantic period accounts for the embassy circle. He

certainly had the most expertise. Macartney designed his own landscape garden in his country estate Lissanoure in Ireland, and he was an expert reader of the semiotics of the country estate, well-read in the major theories and understanding its symbolism of taste and power, and the status it proffered, all things that he aspired to possess and which, by and large, his role in China finally achieved for him. William Alexander, left behind at Beijing with Barrow and some others, complained of this 'most severe decision, to have been within 50 miles of the famous Great Wall, that stupendous monument of human labour & not to have seen that which might have been the boast of a mans [sic] grandson as Dr Johnson has said, I have to regret for ever. That the artists should be doomed to remain immured at Pekin during this most interesting Journey of the Embassy, is not easily to be accounted for'.[22] The dragoon, Samuel Holmes, was also infected with this new appreciation, recording how 'all were anxious to see this stupendous piece of ancient architecture, which had stood for so many ages the wonder of the world'.[23] Macartney also reads the Wall through the specific context of his mission. China in the remote past must thus have been 'not only a very powerful empire, but a very wise and virtuous nation' to establish 'what was then thought a perpetual security for them against future invasion'. Speculating on what the Wall means for Chinese history, Macartney sees it as symbol of the Chinese obsession with cultural exclusivity with which his embassy famously had to grapple. The Wall indicates a defensive-mindedness among the Chinese, as until the 'establishment of the present dynasty on the throne she seems to have entertained no projects of foreign conquests', it being a 'favourite point of her policy to confine her subjects within the limit of the empire'. The Wall, Macartney notes, is now generally 'in a ruinous condition, and falling fast to decay', largely because the expansionist policies of the Qing emperor of the eighteenth century have rendered it irrelevant. He

doubts now 'whether his dominions without the wall are inferior to those within it' (113). The Great Wall in Macartney's account poses an interesting case. It is, in one sense, like the ruins and fragments of Egyptian or Grecian antiquity, pointing back to an earlier time of a prestigious and powerful ancient civilisation. As such, Macartney adopts the common 'temporalization trope' of ancient splendour and contemporary decadence. Yet the present of contemporary Qing China is simultaneously perceived by Macartney as a modern, expansionist empire, not as contemporary Egypt or Greece, nations bereft of their former glory. The Wall is thus not an aesthetic artefact that tells the British important, if ambiguous, lessons from the past, as in the case of the ruined statue in Shelley's 'Ozymandias' or of Keats's still intact Grecian urn. The decay witnessed by Macartney in the wall is not due to a loss of prestige and power, but paradoxically because of an excess of that power. The military, diplomatic and cultural successes of the 'three Emperors' of eighteenth-century Qing China have rendered the Wall essentially useless. Its lack of function is a marker of the extent of Chinese success, not its decadence. The Wall does not, as we might expect in a different context, prompt Macartney to indulge in any Byronic, sentimental musings on the lost glories of antiquity; rather it inspires him to have its dimensions and extent precisely measured. Nor does its enormous length and scale, anticipating both the Kantian mathematical and dynamic sublime, prompt him to invoke the mode, so common when representing the fragments and monuments of antiquity.

Staunton's and Macartney's patrician descriptions of the wall can be contrasted with those of the ambassador's valet, Aeneas Anderson, in the first published account of the embassy, *A Narrative of the British Embassy to China* (1795). Written to capitalise as soon as possible on the celebrity of the embassy, Anderson's ghosted prose is much more effusive than Macartney's. His narrative is

also more critical of British aspirations and practices and what it sees as the folly of the expedition. In this narrative some have heard the voice of the Paine-ite radical, suspicious of British pomp and cultural pride. Anderson concurred that the wall was the 'most stupendous work ever produced by man'. For him, however, the stupendous involves the rather puzzling process of formulating an 'idea' of the Wall's 'grandeur' which 'is not easily grasped by the strongest imagination'. He outlines the importance of the military purpose of the Wall, but also comments on the impressive prospect that he views from it. One could argue that in so doing, Anderson, the valet, appropriates the Wall from the more aristocratic and exclusive prospect of Macartney and Staunton providing a more inclusive viewing experience. Expressing his personal ability to formulate his own idea of the grandeur of the Wall as well as to exercise his own independent picturesque and sublime taste, Anderson comments that the Wall 'commands a very extensive view […] with all the romantic scenery connected with it'. From this beautiful and sublime prospect of plains, rivers and mountains - an 'amazing fabric' - Anderson then turns to reflect on this famous antiquity in the manner of Enlightenment radicals such as Constantin Volney in Egypt:

> But the most stupendous works of man must at length moulder away; and since Tartary and China are become one nation, and, consequently, subject to the same government, the wall has lost its importance: it is no longer necessary for defence or security, no attention is now paid to its preservation; so the time is fast approaching when this stupendous monument of persevering labor; when this unparalleled effort of national policy, will become an enormous length of ruins, and an awful example of decay: many of the parts of it are already fallen

> down, and others threaten to encumber the plain that they were reared to defend.[24]

Suprisingly, the manservant valet Anderson turns out to be more the 'curious traveller' than Viscount Macartney of Lissanoure. In search of wonder and amazement, he confesses to being disappointed by the wall. The 'wonder' of it consists only in its enormous extent and the brief period in which it was erected by enormous labour. Only a very small part of it may be seen. A written account of these facts might as 'equally astonish' as the real thing itself. When standing atop the wall Anderson, the romantic traveller, claims that he was obliged to 'exercise' or force his 'imagination as to the astonishing circumstances connected with it' seeing the wall 'in a comparative view with natural objects infinitely superior […] to any partial appearance of it' (163). Though more effusive, Anderson denies that the Great Wall has any intrinsically sublime characteristics, any astonishment or wonder he feels is the result of the workings and projections of his own imagination; an imagination equal to those of his employers and social superiors.

IV

The Macartney embassy accounts created for Britons the myth of the Great Wall of China, an ancient and continuous construction originating from the time of the Qin emperor and, as argued by Lovell and Man, a myth that fed into contemporary Chinese re-visionings of the monument. This was summed up for the age by John Barrow's *Travels in China* (1804), the most significant work of Romantic Sinology of the first two decades of the century. As predicted by Anderson, Barrow's later description is an entirely textual affair, written some ten years after the embassy

visited the structure and by someone who never saw it. Barrow creates the Romantic myth of the Wall, in the process simplifying the contradictions of the earlier embassy accounts. The Wall stretches over the 'immense distance of fifteen hundred miles … over mountains of two and three thousand feet in height, across deep vallies and rivers'. Raised by the Qin, or First, Emperor, 'this stupendous fabric … has no parallel in the whole world, not even in the pyramids of Egypt'. It contains more building materials than the masonry used in the houses of England and Scotland. Although Barrow does not anticipate twentieth-century misunderstandings that the Wall can be viewed from space, he indulges in that kind of speculation when he claims the Wall is 'more than sufficient to surround the circumference of the earth on two of its great circles with two walls, each six feet high and two feet thick'.[25]

When William Wordsworth described the gardens of *Wanshu Yuan*, visited by the embassy in Book 8 of the 1805 *Prelude*, he located them near 'That mighty Wall, not fabulous/China's stupendous mound!', probably taking his cue from Barrow's description in his *Travels* which he had recently read. For Wordsworth, Chinese public works such as both the Wall and *Wanshu Yuan,* with their use of massive forced labour were to be contrasted with the apparently free and un-alienated labour of the rural community of the English Lakes, 'Man free, man working for himself'.[26] In Wordsworth's lines the Wall becomes a symbol of China's Asian despotism, linked with the false paradises of its sensual pleasure gardens. China stupefies. For his friend, Charles Lamb, however, the Wall poses risks both of insanity and banality. In a letter of 5th December 1806 to Thomas Manning, then resident at Canton, Lamb associated the Great Wall with madness and queried its very existence: 'you may rave to the Great Wall of China. N.B. Is there such a wall! Is it as big as Old London Wall by Bedlam?'[27] Lamb's concluding bathos which privileges the old wall of London of

the imperial homeland against something neither of them saw was always implicit in Romantic period accounts of the 'stupendous' Wall.

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Notes

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[1] Julia Lovell, *The Great Wall: China Against the World 1000 BC-2000 AD* (London: Picador, 2006), 8, 10, 16, 262-295; see also Arthur Waldron, *The Great Wall of China from History to Myth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 194-227; John Man, *The Great Wall* (London: Transworld, 2008), 360-84.

[2] James Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, ed. G.B. Hill and L.F. Powell. 4 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934), 3: 339

[3] See Nigel Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing 1770-1840* (Oxford University Press, 2002); Tim Fulford, Peter Kitson and Debbie Lee, *Romantic Literature, Science and Exploration: Bodies of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge

University Press, 2004); Carl Thompson *The Suffering Traveller and the Romantic Imagination.* 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007),

[4] Leask, *Curiosity*, 16.

[5] Leask, *Curiosity*, 192. See also Andrew Rudd, *Sympathy and India in British Literature, 1770-1830* (Palgrave: Macmillan, 2010).

[6] Leask, *Curiosity*, 10.

[7] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 15-37.

[8] Barbara Maria Stafford, *Voyage into Substance: Art, Science, Nature and the Illustrated Travel Account* (Cambridge MS: MIT Press, 1984).

[9] Leask, *Curiosity*, 43.

[10] Peter J. Kitson, *Forging Romantic China: Sino-British Cultural Exchange, 1760-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 13-15.

[11] Thompson, *Suffering Traveller*, 153.

[12] See for instance, Alain Peyrefitte, *The Collision of Two Civilisations: The British Expedition to China 1792-94* (London: Harvill/HarperCollins, 1993); James L. Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1995).

[13] Peyrefitte, *Collision*, 185.

[14] *The Journal of Samuel Holmes. One of the Guards on Lord Macartney's Embassy to China and Tartary* (London: Bulmer & Co, 1798), 141.

[15] Man, *Great Wall*, 373, 367-379; Lovell, *Great Wall*, 2-10, 12, 55, 258-9.

[16] George Leonard Staunton, *An Authentic Account of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China*. 2 vols (London: Bulmer and Co, 1797), 2:178. Further references to this edition are cited by volume and page number in the text.

[17] This distinction is discussed in Peter J. Kitson, *Romantic Literature: Race and Colonial Encounter* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 175-214.

[18] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 38-68.

[19] Greg M. Thomas, 'Yuanming Yuan/Versailles: Intercultural Interactions between Chinese and European Palace Cultures', *Art History*, 32 (2009), 115-43.Yu Liu, *Seeds of a Different Eden: Chinese Gardening Ideas and a New English Aesthetic Ideal* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2008); Elizabeth Chang, *Britain's Chinese Eye* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010); Kitson, *Forging Romantic China*, 182-209.

[20] For the aesthetics of race see, Armstrong, Meg.' "The Effect of Blackness:" Gender, Race and the Sublime in Aesthetic Theories of Burke and Kant'. *Journal of Art and Aesthetics*, 54 (1996): 213-36; David Bindman, *Ape to Apollo: Aesthetics and the Idea of Race in the Eighteenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); Christine Battersby, *The Sublime, Terror and Human Difference* (New York and London: Routledge, 2007); and Kitson, *Romantic Literature, Race and Colonial Encounter*.

[21] Macartney's 'Journal' was published in John Barrow's *Some Account of the Public Life and a Selection from the Unpublished Writings of Lord Macartney*. 2 vols (London: T.Cadell and W. Davies, 1807), 2:161-531. Quotations are taken from J. L. Cranmer-Byng's scholarly edition, *An Embassy to China. Lord Macartney's Journal* (London: Longmans, 1962) and cited by page number in the text.

[22] William Alexander, 'Journal of a Voyage to Pekin in China on Board the Hindostan EIM Which Accompanied Lord Macartney to His Embassy to China'. British Library. Add MSSS 35174. August 28th 1793, f24v.

[23] *Journal of Samuel Holmes*, 140-41.

[24] Aeneas Anderson, *A Narrative of the British Embassy to China in the years 1792, 1793, and 1794* (Basel: J.J Tournissen, 1795), 161-62.

[25] John Barrow, *Travels in China*, (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1804), 333-35.

[26] *The Thirteen Book Prelude by William Wordsworth*, ed. Mark L. Reed. 2 vols (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991). Vol 2. Book 8: 826-28; 52-53.

[27] *The Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. Edwin W. Marrs. 3 vols (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975-78), 2: 244, 247.