

Knowledge Is Pleasure

Florence Ayscough in Shanghai

Lindsay Shen



香港大學出版社

HONG KONG UNIVERSITY PRESS

Hong Kong University Press
14/F Hing Wai Centre
7 Tin Wan Praya Road
Aberdeen
Hong Kong
www.hkupress.org

© Hong Kong University Press 2012

ISBN 978-988-8139-59-0

All rights reserved. No portion of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed and bound by Liang Yu Printing Factory Ltd. in Hong Kong, China

Contents

Acknowledgements	ix
Introduction	1
<i>Poise</i>	
1. Shanghaianders	7
<i>Guns, Gardens and Long-gone Houses</i>	
2. Images	45
<i>The Tastemaker</i>	
3. Words	75
<i>The 'sensuous realist'</i>	
4. Gardens and the Grass Hut	87
<i>'A liberal education'</i>	
5. After China	113
<i>Holding Open the Door</i>	
Afterword	139
<i>'Here all is alive'</i>	
Notes	143
Selected Bibliography	155
Index	159

Introduction

Poise

Christmas 1934, Shanghai

Winter sunlight glances off the polished fenders of the ‘Blue Tiger’, parked outside ‘the Grass Hut’—a seemingly traditional and prosperously un-hut-like Chinese courtyard house (*Figure 1*). A smartly dressed Western woman with impeccable posture is opening one of the twin planks of gleaming black wood that form the door; carved above her, the classical Chinese poets Li Po and Tu Fu are depicted playing *wei chi* or ‘hedged-in checkers’, while serving boys warm wine over a charcoal brazier. Above this scene of poise and quietude is a band of carved peonies, and surmounting the graceful arcs of the roof, fish flick their tails skywards—symbols of a plentitude that, even judging just from this picture, was so obviously realized in life.

The woman is Florence Wheelock Ayscough. Next month she will be sixty years old. The following year she will marry her second husband, move to Chicago, and, three years later, the site of this house will be occupied—appositely in light of Shanghai’s restless evolution—by the New Shanghai Construction Company.

For now, though, it’s a perfectly framed moment of stillness. A hiatus. Her demeanor doesn’t betray that the previous year she lost her first husband after years of debilitating illness and a

Introduction

soul-bruising trek through Europe in search of treatment. This ‘traditional’ house was built especially for them in 1922–23, and was situated near the northern border of Shanghai’s foreign-controlled International Settlement. But there’s nothing to suggest the recent tragedy of the Japanese razing of the Chinese-controlled district of Zhabei in the First Shanghai War of 1932, just north-west of this house, or the disquiet among foreigners that their Concession-era lifestyle of privilege may be ending, or the growing tensions that would soon lead to the outbreak of full-scale war between China and Japan. The recipients of this Christmas card would never imagine that surrounding this house are two coal companies, an iron works, a chemical factory and an electrical firm.

Is this Christmas card a subconscious slip? A foreigner’s proprietorial hand-on-the-door of traditional China? With the gleaming Blue Tiger as impotent protector of an untenable position? She is, after all, a British woman of substantial wealth and prominent social position.¹ She was born into the Wheelock family—early and pedigreed Western settlers in Shanghai who assembled a comfortable fortune out of freight. Her first husband belonged to all the right clubs and councils, and was part of the foreign-imposed apparatus that governed the city’s Western enclave. She is inextricably part of the last gasp of semi-colonialism, much maligned for its conservatism, protection of its own interests, prejudices and inertia in the face of a rising Chinese nationalism.

So firmly entrenched in elite Shanghailander life was her family that its members walk through the pages of the *North China Herald* like familiar characters in a family saga. Here, a prowler slips past their Sikh guard in the night and robs the servants of their umbrellas. There, she sets sail on the *Empress of Asia*, the ship plushly decorated in Louis Quinze, headed for Vancouver. Here, her husband masterfully defuses a heated quarrel at a meeting of

the shareholders of the Astor House Hotel Company. There, he bags 34 birds at the Shanghai Gun Club tournament as his wife graciously presents the trophy. Here, he complains in a Letter to the Editor about the ludicrousness of race ponies' names, arguing that the 'plucky little beasts' deserve more respect. There, her sister-in-law sets up a sewing project to help indigent women keep food on their tables; here are her father's golf and her brother Geoffrey's shooting scores.

Against this background of privilege and position, was it then an insensitive jest to call this comfortable house, with its central heating furnace room and plentiful bathrooms a 'grass hut'? There were indeed grass huts close by, but these were the squalid temporary dwellings of recent rural migrants to the city, who squatted on the boundaries of Shanghai's administrative units. By the 1930s these were proliferating in quantity and deteriorating in quality, especially around the railway station not far from the Ayscough residence. On one occasion a grass hut sprouted outside her very door—a temporary shelter for a northern family fleeing a bad harvest.

But Florence Ayscough's Grass Hut belongs in a very different context, as a tribute to the Tang-dynasty poet Tu Fu, who built his own grass hut in eighth-century Chengdu. Ayscough may be a moneyed Westerner who fully partakes of the pleasures of expatriate life, but she is also a remarkable scholar who by Christmas 1934 had just published the second part of a critically acclaimed translation of Tu Fu. During her lifetime she was regarded as one of the most perspicacious and sympathetic sinologists in the English-speaking world. Her 1925 publication *A Chinese Mirror: Being Reflections of the Reality behind Appearance* was widely admired for its ability to render China 'a living entity' to Western readers. Her subsequent translations of classical Chinese poetry—particularly

Introduction

her terse, Modernist translations of Tu Fu—engendered the respect of a great many esteemed literary critics and writers. Later, the American poet Kenneth Rexroth relied on her translations, among others, as the basis for his own work. John Thompson, a major Canadian poet, was deeply influenced by Ayscough's Tu Fu translations.² Although Ayscough is hardly a household name now, she made a contribution to modern poetry in English that resonates still.

Ayscough was an energetic woman, whose interests ranged from ethnography to art collecting, photography, gardening and sports. Her writings also attempted to delve into the lives of Chinese women and children—an aspect that has attracted attention from feminist critics. According to her own accounts, the spur to these scholarly activities was her involvement in the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society in Shanghai; she served as its librarian from 1907 to 1922 and was responsible to no small degree for its development as a major literary resource in China. She was a frequent speaker and contributor to the Society's annual *Journal*, and in 1921 was the first woman to be elected as an Honorary Member of the Society.

Because of the autobiographical nature of much of her writing, the preservation of many of her letters, and the Shanghai newspapers' interest in her family, her life story reveals a rare, intimate evocation of a Shanghailanders childhood, and of the experiences of a Western woman in Concession-era Shanghai. She lived in China during some of the most momentous episodes in its history, including the overthrow of the Qing dynasty and the establishment of a Republic ('After four thousand years there is no longer a Son of Heaven'). She writes as a historian of culture rather than politics, yet touches on topics still salient, which Chinese people themselves (often with government backing) are reappraising and

experiencing anew. Her interests ranged from classical painting to what was then modern Chinese art; she studied famous places and tourist sites and explained how they acquired their layers of meaning; she appreciated intangible culture, and wrote about festivals, customs and popular religion.

Knowledge is Pleasure.³ Her family and friends often remarked on her joy in the life of the body as well as that of the mind. As a younger woman she rode horses, 'had a splendid physique', sailed, swam in the English Channel and the bracing waters off New Brunswick (though not, as far as we know, in the less restorative currents of the Yangtze). She also revelled in cerebral pursuits, had a 'beautiful and penetrating mind', hunted ideas, flushed out meanings. An early adopter of technology she roamed Shanghai with her hand-held camera, created a collection of meticulously hand-coloured slides, appeared in film and spoke on radio, enthusiastically embraced innovation (she would have flown airplanes if her first husband hadn't so strenuously resisted). Both active and contemplative, she pursued whole-heartedly the enormously ambitious aim of making a seemingly impenetrable culture accessible to Western readers. If wonder is the beginning of philosophy happiness was its end.

Carved above the front door of the Grass Hut, Li Po and Tu Fu enjoy their intellectual puzzle. On a wooden beam in the guest hall is a carving of the Ho Ho twins, who after inventing the abacus, died of laughter.



3

Words

*The 'sensuous realist'*¹

In the twenty years since Ayscough and Lowell had been young women together in Boston, Lowell had been forging her own successful path as a poet and by 1917 had published three poetry collections. One of these, *Sword Blades and Poppy Seed* (1914) had been a critically acclaimed bestseller that catapulted Lowell into celebrity, while her public persona became a lure for controversy. Openly lesbian, obese, cigar-smoking and bellicose, she had become infamous for her feud with the Modernist poet Ezra Pound over 'ownership' of the poetic avant-garde. The details of this wrangle reflect on the project she was about to embark upon with Ayscough. In 1913, while Ayscough was delving into Chinese painting, Lowell discovered Imagism. A loosely-connected group of British and American poets, now recognized as incipient Modernists, the Imagists rejected traditional poetic conventions and adopted free verse, aspiring to reflect the cadences of everyday speech. Drawing on her ample financial resources and her influential social and publishing networks, Lowell was able to champion and promote this new group of writers, who included Hilda Doolittle (who wrote simply as 'H. D.'), Ford Madox Ford, and Richard Aldington. Her initial friendship with Pound soured,

and he refused to participate in the anthologies of Imagist poets that Lowell edited in 1915, 1916 and 1917.

When Ayscough turned to Lowell for help at the end of 1917, she was requesting not just the consolations of friendship but also Lowell's assistance as an established poet. If Ayscough was to sell her collection of Chinese paintings and calligraphy in America, she needed to make them as accessible as possible; obviously, her calligraphic paintings required compelling translations. She brought some rough attempts to Lowell, hoping her friend could transform them into something more poetic. Lowell was immediately captivated, explaining, 'I was fascinated by the poems, and, as we talked them over, we realized that here was a field in which we would like to work.'² What started as a favour turned into a four-year collaboration resulting in the 1921 publication of *Fir-Flower Tablets*. This book would contain some startlingly beautiful translations of poets already familiar to the West, and would also introduce some previously untranslated poetry.

Their work together was a four-year 'paper hunt' across continents and oceans. Lowell knew no Chinese; Ayscough wasn't a poet. But working together they believed they were producing work in translation superior to anything published by their contemporaries. Having translated enough of the scrolls for Ayscough to use in her lectures, they decided to embark upon the enterprise of translating several of China's most revered classical poets, including Li Po, Tu Fu and Wang Wei. In doing so they entered into territory fiercely contested by some of the West's most eminent sinologists and poets. Inevitably there were skirmishes and casualties, but their work was to both women 'a continually augmenting pleasure.'³

The process, though, was an arduous one. Ayscough would write out each poem word by word for Lowell, giving several

meanings for each character. Sometimes she provided an explanation of the characters' etymology. She also provided diligent and copious notes to help Lowell understand the historical and geographical context and the literary allusions. Lowell then used this as the raw material for creating poetry 'as near the originals as we could make them', while still being satisfying creations in the English language. When they were together they worked until 2 a.m. Lowell, whose energies were legendary and output prodigious, would continue to work alone through the night, leaving little yellow slips with notes for Ayscough to retrieve the next morning. When Ayscough was in St. Andrews the telephone would habitually ring at midnight, and Florence would rouse herself from bed to perch in her nightgown, responding down a crackling line as to whether the words were *tui tzu* or *toi tao*. They frequently agreed to disagree; after such a long friendship Ayscough must have learned her own way of deflecting Lowell's 'scorpion' words, spoken in a flash of anger, though arguing with Lowell 'was like plunging into a deep blue wave'.⁴ When she returned to China the process was complicated further by war-delayed mail. Lowell would send the manuscripts back to Ayscough via the *Empress of Asia*, or another of the liners that plied the Pacific, to be pored over by Ayscough and her teacher Nung Chu—the last and most inspiring of a series of teachers she worked with in Shanghai. Some of the poems made the return trip across the Pacific to Vancouver, then by rail to New England, several times.

By the start of this project Ayscough was already deeply immersed in the study of Chinese language and culture; *Fir-Flower Tablets* was a natural outcome of her interests. What motivated Lowell (beyond loyalty to a friend) was her immediate identification with the Chinese work Ayscough brought her. Lowell found in Chinese poetry values similar to those she espoused for herself

and the Imagists. The preface to her 1915 anthology outlines the movement's precepts:

To present an image (hence the name: 'Imagist'). We are not a school of painters, but we believe that poetry should render particulars exactly and not deal in vague generalities, however magnificent and sonorous ... To produce poetry that is hard and clear, never blurred nor indefinite. Finally, most of us believe that concentration is of the very essence of poetry.⁵

A Lowell poem in this anthology and a *Fir-Flower Tablets* translation are markedly similar:

Grass-blades push up between the cobblestones
And catch the sun on their flat sides
Shooting it back,
Gold and emerald,
Into the eyes of passers-by.

Lowell, from *The Travelling Bear*

Again the white water flower
Is ripe for plucking.
The green, pointed swords of the iris
Splinter the brown earth.⁶

Liu Shih-An (calligrapher),
from *One Goes a Journey* in *Fir-Flower Tablets*

There is the same intense concentration on a visual image, the same economy of words, the same insistence on a few well-chosen verbs rather than a pile-up of adjectives. There is nothing 'blurred or indefinite' in the splintering of soil. Of course, the Chinese poem is, rather, 'Ayscough and Lowell'. 'Splinter' is their word. But another time and culture's poetry is seen through the lens of our own, just as translation is rooted in its own time and place. It was

as an Imagist poet that Lowell approached Chinese poetry, and as an early twentieth-century critic that Ayscough could write of poems written in calligraphy: ‘A beautiful thought perpetuated in beautiful handwriting and hung upon the wall to suggest a mental picture—does not the possession of such a medium rouse the envy of Occidental imagists, who are indeed the spiritual descendants of the East?’⁷⁷

The dedication to choosing the *exact* words, shaped by Lowell’s Imagism and Ayscough’s diligence, attracted a minor squall of criticism that marred the reception of *Fir-Flower Tablets*. In attempting to ‘burrow’ out the allusions of characters, Ayscough at times delved into their etymology, justifying this by reasoning that for an educated Chinese reader, a character’s etymology would always be present in his mind. This was not a major feature of the translations, though, as Lowell explains, ‘The analysis of characters has been employed very rarely, and only when the text seemed to lean on the allusion for an added vividness or zest.’⁷⁸ That critics should have seized negatively on this is a pity, as the device was seldom employed. A much more salient feature of the poetry was the authors’ concern with accuracy and explanation.

In her own introduction Ayscough explains the difficulty she is trying to resolve when she asks the reader to imagine how a Chinese poet in a grass hut would understand Amy Lowell’s poem *Nostalgia* without an intermediary. *Nostalgia* offers a brief sequence of images, but for a Western reader it conveys a world of allusion to rail travel, marble-floored hotels with bellboys and elevators—allusions utterly inaccessible to the Chinese poet. Ayscough’s point is that the Chinese world is just as alien to Westerners without a guide. To orient her readers to this world, Ayscough wrote a lengthy introduction describing China’s topography, climate, and political and social history. This was appreciated by *The New York*

Times reviewer as providing ‘a more illuminating notion of China generally than any number of dry-as-dust treatises.’⁹

Fir-Flower Tablets is a collection of poetry, but it is also a guide to China’s culture and natural history. And it was Ayscough’s direct experience of nature in China, her childhood of horses and gardens and riverboats, and her observational acuity, that brought such diversity of natural species, nuance of colour and textural depth to those translations. In terms of flora and fauna, *Fir-Flower Tablets* is a species-rich celebration of the natural world. In a letter to the *China Journal of Science and Arts* (the publication of the Shanghai Museum and long edited by the Museum’s curator and a Society president for a time, Arthur de Carle Sowerby) Ayscough notes their ornithological precision:

I find that in our collection of one hundred and thirty-seven pieces, among the birds referred to are: kites, vultures, nightingales, yellow geese, wild geese, magpies, orioles, swallows, parrots, white herons, yellow herons, mandarin ducks, jackdaws, gulls, pheasants, cocks and chickens, to say nothing of the fabulous birds such as the Silver-crested Love Pheasant, the Green Fire-bird, and the Jade Love-bird.¹⁰

By contrast, it was a perceived lack of ornithological accuracy that attracted one of Ayscough’s few negative public comments about Arthur Waley, the *eminence grise* of Chinese translation. His mistranslation of a line suggesting that the poet *saw* (rather than heard) the reclusive golden oriole was, according to Ayscough, ‘... a mistake which every naturalist would condemn.’ While she acknowledged that although Waley—who had never been, and would never go, to China—could produce ‘exquisite’ poetry, he lacked ‘a certain vividness of perception, a vividness which only a visual experience of

China could give him.¹¹ Years later, in a letter to her close friend Mary Matteson Wilber, she described a distinct *modus operandi* amongst the art historians of Europe whose comprehension of China was ‘purely academic’, and who studied Chinese art ‘as if it were the art of Egypt say, of a people who have entirely departed from the realm of actuality ...’¹² Whether writing on art, or translating poetry, Ayscough believed that the decades she lived in China contributed so many more dimensions to her work.

At their most satisfying, the *Fir-Flower* translations are pared to their pith:

Shoals of fish assemble and scatter,
Suddenly there is no trace of them.

The single butterfly comes—

Goes—

Comes—

Returning as though urged by love.¹³

Ho Shao-Chi (calligrapher)

Sometimes, they seem burdened by particulars, and the demands of compass precision. While some lines are sharp and fresh, others feel overworked, exhausted perhaps by their transpacific excursions. This can be sensed by comparing the opening lines of the Ayscough/Lowell translation of Li Po’s *Saying Good-Bye to a Friend* with a much looser one by Ezra Pound, who relied almost entirely on the notes of Ernest Fenollosa, an American scholar who studied Chinese poetry in Japan:

Clear green hills at a right angle to the North wall,
White water winding to the East of the city.
Here is the place where we must part.
The lonely water-plants go ten thousand *li*;¹⁴

Ayscough/Lowell

Knowledge Is Pleasure

Blue mountains to the north of the walls,
White river winding about them;
Here we must make separation
And go out through a thousand miles of dead grass.¹⁵

Ezra Pound

Lowell was predictably acerbic about Pound's inaccuracies in his groundbreaking and much lauded *Cathay* (1915), and his cribbing of Fenollosa's translations. The literary critic in her nevertheless admitted that although 'they are not what he says they are,' she couldn't deny they were beautiful.¹⁶ Just as their own translations could be, when they leaned most on sensory experience of China:

Every time I have started for the Yellow Flower River,
I have gone down the Blue-Green Stream,
Following the hills, making ten thousand turnings.
We go along rapidly, but advance scarcely one
hundred *li*.
We are in the midst of a noise of water,
Of the confused and mingled sounds of water broken
by stones,
And in the deep darkness of pine-trees.
Rocked, rocked,
Moving on and on,
We float past water-chestnuts
Into a still clearness reflecting reeds and rushes.
My heart is clean and white as silk; it has already
achieved Peace;
It is smooth as the placid river.
I long to stay here, curled up on the rocks,
Dropping my fish-line forever.¹⁷

Wang Wei, *The Blue-Green Stream*

The still water reflecting rushes, the sensation of rocking, floating, and the calmness of a heart 'clean and white as silk' may well draw

on echoes of childhood experience on Chinese houseboats. When Ayscough referred to another Chinese poet (Li Po) as a ‘sensuous realist’ she might just as well have been describing herself.

A comparison with a translation of the same poem by their contemporary, the American poet and writer Witter Bynner (Bynner visited, rather than lived in, China), underscores the sensory richness of the Ayscough/Lowell version:

I have sailed the River of Yellow Flowers,
Borne by the channel of a green stream,
Rounding ten thousand turns through the mountains
On a journey of less than thirty miles ...
Rapids hum over heaped rocks;
But where light grows dim in the thick pines,
The surface of an inlet sways with nut-horns
And weeds are lush along the banks.
... Down in my heart I have always been as pure
As this limpid water is ...
Oh, to remain on a broad flat rock,
And to cast a fishing-line forever!¹⁸

Wang Wei, *A Green Stream*

The Bynner version is a visual description; the Ayscough/Lowell one is a sensory experience.

Although Ayscough was usually a generous critic, quick to see the worth in others’ efforts (‘the last thing I want to do is “throw bricks”—it is the *curse* of sinology¹⁹), Bynner stimulated an atypically hostile response from her. She and Lowell certainly considered him irreverent (he had spoofed Imagism in a 1916 publication *Spectra: A Book of Poetic Experiments*). In part it was personal; Bynner coined the cruel moniker *hippopoetess* for Lowell, which quickly gained currency in literary circles. Maybe more significantly, Ayscough recognized that their approaches to translation

were completely divergent. In her eyes he was uncommitted, impressionistic rather than precise, shoddy in his workmanship. He lacked heft: 'It is very simple to work the way Bynner does: what he doesn't understand he leaves out!'²⁰

Bynner was an amateur without the love. He came out to China and galloped through 300 Tang poems. A letter Ayscough wrote to him from Yokohama aboard the *Empress of Asia* crackles with frustration. Ayscough's letters are often beautiful artifacts in themselves, either typed, or written in purple ink on paper decorated with a pine needle motif, plus her personal seal. This one was written with such emotion that it jammed in the typewriter. It is blotched, full of crosses and corrections; even her irreproachable grammar deserts her. It does, though, contain the kernel of her belief about translation. She understood herself as a craftsman, who had served a long, self-abnegating apprenticeship, and who now approached her work in a spirit of veneration:

You see, so far, with the exception of Mr. Waley's, the translation have been very very poor & have misrepresented the Chinese poets in the most appalling manner, I had hoped that we had had enough of these approximations, this 'giving of the idea.' What I feel about your work is that if the Angel Gabriel himself under-took it he could not make a scholarly pices [*sic*: piece] of work. Therefore it must be another approximation. What I know of it bristles with inaccuracies. It is not your fault, it is that you are trying to do an impossible thing. Of course it may bring you a certain amount of 'kudos'—but it—is very hard on the T'ang poets....

Although it is not possible to render the delicacy, the subtlety, the beauty of Chinese poetry, in its marvellous terseness, if one works reverently, & humbly, if one studies without cease, if one spares no time

Words

or strength (a short poem often takes three days of hard work) one must surely produce something that is faithful to the spirit of these great men—& that is what working on the lines you are doing it is not possible to accomplish. Of course I do not suppose that you can care as I do—but there it is.²¹

Knowledge is pleasure—and also passion.

Notes

Introduction

1. Ayscough's father, Thomas Reed Wheelock, was Canadian, and hence a British subject. Ayscough's first husband was British. After marrying her second husband, the American scholar Harley MacNair, Ayscough declined to change her citizenship.
2. Peter Sanger, *White Salt Mountain: Words in Time* (Kentville, Nova Scotia: Gaspereau Press, 2005).
3. "Knowledge is pleasure as well as power." William Hazlitt, 'On the Pleasure of Painting, cont.' *Table Talk* (London: John Warren, 1821) 32.

Chapter 1 Shanghailanders

1. This painting may be viewed on the interactive site Virtual Shanghai http://www.virtualshanghai.net/Asset/Preview/dbImage_ID-18669_No-1.jpeg, accessed 30 March 2012.
2. Sanger 28.
3. I am grateful to Eric Politzer for information on John Andrews Wheelock, correspondence with author 31 March 2012.
4. Advertisement, *North China Herald* [cited next as *NCH*] 21 September 1861, p. 150.
5. *NCH* 21 June 1862, p. 99.

6. 'Obituary, T. R. Wheelock', *NCH* 10 January 1920, p. 86.
7. Catherine Mackenzie, 'Florence Wheelock Ayscough's Niger Reef Tea House', *The Journal of Canadian Art History* 23. 1–2 (2002): 55.
8. See Edward Denison and Guang Yu Ren, *Building Shanghai: The Story of China's Gateway* (Chichester: Wiley-Academy, 2006) 66, 251.
9. 'Bubbling Well Road', *Social Shanghai* IV (July–December 1907): 67–72.
10. Florence Ayscough, *Firecracker Land: Pictures of the Chinese World for Younger Readers* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1932) 5. Subsequent quotes on childhood from this source.
11. Written several decades after Ayscough's childhood, and based on personal recollection, *Firecracker Land* obviously has problems as source material about Shanghai in the 1870s and early 1880s; however, it does present a valuable sensory account (rather than history) of the city in these decades.
12. *NCH* 6 January 1917, p. 27.
13. C. E. Darwent, *Shanghai: A Handbook for Travellers and Residents* (Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, Ltd., 1920) 168.
14. Florence Ayscough and Amy Lowell, *Fir-Flower Tablets: Poems from the Chinese* [cited next as *FFT*] (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1921) 2.
15. *FFT* 48.
16. *Firecracker Land* 15–17.
17. Geoffrey Wheelock graduated from Noble and Greenough School, class of 1897. Isa Schaff, School Archivist, correspondence with Lindsay Shen, 28 October 2011. According to his obituary in *The Harvard Crimson*, Thomas Gordon Wheelock also attended this preparatory school. *The Harvard Crimson* 21 April 1902.
18. See Marvin Lazerson, 'Urban Reform and the Schools: Kindergartens in Massachusetts, 1870–1915', *History of Education Quarterly* 11.2 (Summer 1971): 115–42; Sharon Hartman Strom, 'Leadership and Tactics in the American Woman Suffrage Movement: A New Perspective from Massachusetts', *The Journal of American History* 62.2 (September 1975): 296–315.

19. Andrew Sackett, 'Inhaling the Salubrious Air: Health and Development in St. Andrews, N.B. 1880–1910', *Acadiensis* XXV.1 (Autumn 1995): 54–81.
20. Excerpts from *The Beacon* have been compiled by David Sullivan, the Pendlebury Press, and are available online at <http://www.seaside.nb.ca/algonquinbook/history/summerpeople/index.html>, accessed 22 June 2011.
21. The town's architecture has recently been surveyed in John Leroux and Thaddeus Holownia, *St. Andrews Architecture 1604–1966* (Kentville, Nova Scotia: Gaspereau Press, 2010).
22. *NCH* 10 January 1920, p. 86.
23. 'Ready for College Golf', *The New York Times* 3 May 1901, p. 7.
24. Obituary, Thomas Gordon Wheelock, *The Harvard Crimson*.
25. *Firecracker Land* 23.
26. Isabella Bird, *The Yangtze Valley and Beyond* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1899) 46.
27. Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore, *China, the Long-Lived Empire* (New York: Century, 1900) 292.
28. A memorial stained glass window in the church of St. James the Great, Cradley, dedicated by Florence Ayscough, makes clear Francis Ayscough's parentage.
29. Carroll Lunt (ed.). *The China Who's Who 1922* (Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, Ltd., 1922) 31.
30. Marriage notice, *Boston Daily Globe* 24 December 1898, p. 6.
31. *NCH* 21 November 1898, p. 959; Charles N. Davis, *A History of the Shanghai Paper Hunt 1863–1930* (Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, Ltd., 1930) 37.
32. 'The Paper Hunt Races', *Social Shanghai* VI (January–June 1909): 114.
33. *NCH* 14 February 1898, p. 239.
34. *NCH* 21 November 1898, p. 959.
35. *NCH* 17 April 1909, p. 138.
36. Florence Wheelock Ayscough diaries, 1903–7; 1908–11; 1921, Houghton Library, Harvard University, MS Am 2549.

37. *Firecracker Land* 26.
38. Photographs exist in Special Collections, Armacost Library, University of Redlands, CA.
39. NCH 18 March 1916, p. 756.
40. See, for example, Hanchao Lu, *Beyond the Neon Lights: Everyday Shanghai in the Early Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).
41. Ayscough, *The Autobiography of a Chinese Dog* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1926) 34.
42. NCH 20 June 1908, p. 743.
43. NCH 10 July 1909, pp. 86–7.
44. NCH 10 February 1917, p. 284.
45. Thomas Gordon Wheelock married the Hollywood actress Mary Astor.
46. Harold M. Otness, “‘The One Bright Spot in Shanghai’: A History of the Library of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society,” *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 28 (1988): 192.

Chapter 2 Images

1. Harley MacNair, *The Incomparable Lady: Tributes and Other Memorabilia Pertaining to Florence Wheelock Ayscough MacNair* (Chicago: privately printed, 1946) 15–16.
2. The Shanghai Literary and Scientific Society was founded in 1857 and within a year the organization was granted affiliation with the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland.
3. *Firecracker Land* 36.
4. Ayscough, *Friendly Books on Far Cathay: Being a Bibliography for the Student and Synopsis of Chinese History* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1921).
5. Librarian’s Report, *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (JNCBRAS)* 54 (1923): vii.
6. “The Porcelain Exhibition,” NCH 14 November 1908, pp. 422–4.

7. Nick Pearce, 'Shanghai 1908: A. W. Bahr and China's First Art Exhibition', *West 86th* 18.1 (Spring–Summer 2011): 22.
8. A. W. Bahr, *Old Chinese Porcelain and Works of Art in China* (London: Cassell and Company, 1911) 8, 10.
9. 'The Porcelain Exhibition', 423.
10. *NCH* 28 January 1922, p. 238.
11. *NCH* 28 May 1921, p. 595.
12. Ayscough, *A Chinese Mirror: Being Reflections of the Reality Behind Appearance* (Boston: Jonathan Cape, 1925) 332.
13. An invitation for submissions was placed in the *NCH* 7 October 1911. The organizing committee included Ayscough and Ferguson as well as several Chinese members.
14. I am grateful to Lara Netting for this information, e-mail to author 9 April 2012.
15. Mary Rankin, 'Nationalistic Contestation and Mobilization Politics: Practice and Rhetoric of Railway Rights Recovery at the End of the Qing', *Modern China* 28.3 (July 2002): 315–61.
16. Hong Zaixin, 'Comprador Liu Songfu and His Collection of Painting in the Modern Market', *The Study of Art History* (艺术史研究) 11 (2009): 483–511.
17. *Firecracker Land* 100. Of course, she may have significantly edited her recollections of Liu Songfu; *Firecracker Land* was, after all, a book for young readers!
18. Quoted in Katharine P. Burnett, 'Inventing a New "Old Tradition": Chinese Painting at the Panama–Pacific International Exposition', *History of Art and History of Ideas* (美术史与观念史) IX (April 2010): 19. I am most grateful to this author for making this article available to me.
19. Office of Shanghai Chronicles (2001), *Chapter 4: Attending International Business Meetings*, <http://www.shtong.gov.cn/node2/node2245/node4538/node56987/node57006/node57008/userobject1ai45396.html>, accessed 20 October 2011.
20. Burnett 30.

21. For a recent discussion on the formation of Freer's collecting tastes, see Ingrid Larsen, "Don't Send Ming or Later Pictures": Charles Lang Freer and the First Major Collection of Chinese Painting', *Ars Orientalis* 40 (2011): 6–38.
22. Charles Lang Freer, letter to John Trask, 17 May 1915, Charles L. Freer Papers, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.
23. Burnett 46.
24. Charles Baldwin, letter to William Sanders, 6 December 1917. The Cleveland Museum of Art Archives, Records of the Director's Office, Frederic Allen Whiting.
25. I am thankful to Robert Mintz, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Quincy Scott Curator of Asian Art at the Walters Art Museum, for tracking down the purchase record for the album of modern paintings.
26. Robert Mintz, letter to Lindsay Shen, 26 September 2011.
27. Ayscough, letter to Charles Baldwin, 5 December 1917. The Cleveland Museum of Art Archives, Records of the Director's Office, Frederic Allen Whiting.
28. Ayscough, Preface to *Catalogue of Chinese Paintings Ancient and Modern by Famous Masters* (Shanghai: The Oriental Press, 1914).
29. Ayscough, letter to Charles Baldwin.
30. Harley MacNair (ed.), *Florence Ayscough and Amy Lowell: Correspondence of a Friendship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945) 18.
31. See Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, 'Song and Yuan Dynasty Painting and Calligraphy', worksheet F1914.53, <http://www.asia.si.edu/songyuan/F1914.53/F1914-53.Documentation.pdf>, accessed 7 April 2012.
32. *NCH* 16 June 1917, p. 653.
33. Ayscough, letter to Charles Lang Freer, 12 December 1917, Charles L. Freer Papers, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.
34. I am most grateful to Ingrid Larsen for information on Lee's family, correspondence with author 10 April 2012.

35. The passages concerning Lee draw on correspondence and a police report now in the Charles L. Freer Papers, series 2.1, box 14, folder 5–6. I am extremely grateful to Rachel Woody for making this available to me.
36. Charles Lang Freer, letter to Florence Ayscough, 13 December 1917, Charles L. Freer Papers, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.
37. Ayscough, letter to Frederic Whiting, 27 January 1918. The Cleveland Museum of Art Archives.
38. Ayscough, ‘Chinese Painting’, *The Mentor* 6.20 (1918): 24.
39. *NCH* 24 February 1917, pp. 404–5.
40. Ayscough, letter to Frederic Whiting, 27 January 1918.

Chapter 3 Words

1. The quote is from Ayscough’s description of Li Po, *FFT* lxxx.
2. *FFT* vii.
3. *FFT* v.
4. *Firecracker Land* 108.
5. Amy Lowell, ed., Preface to *Some Imagist Poets: An Anthology* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1915) Kindle ebook file location 24.
6. *FFT* 156.
7. Ayscough, ‘Written Pictures’, *Poetry* 13.5 (February 1919): 268.
8. *FFT* viii.
9. Richard le Gallienne, review of *FFT*, *The New York Times*, 15 January 1922, p. 4.
10. Ayscough, correspondence, *China Journal* 2.6 (November 1924): 528–9.
11. Ayscough, review of *More Translations from the Chinese* by Arthur Waley, *The Chinese Recorder* (May 1920): 354.
12. Ayscough, letter to Mary Matteson Wilbur, 17 November 1930, Mc 561, 24.13 Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

13. *FFT* 166.
14. *FFT* 50.
15. Originally published in Pound's *Cathay*, 1915.
16. *Correspondence of a Friendship* 44.
17. *FFT* 123.
18. Witter Bynner and Kiang Kang-Hu, *The Jade Mountain: A Chinese Anthology* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1931) 199.
19. *Correspondence of a Friendship* 82.
20. *Correspondence of a Friendship* 170.
21. Ayscough, letter to Witter Bynner, 9 April [1921], MS Am 1891 (46) Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Chapter 4 Gardens and the Grass Hut

1. Ayscough described the building of the Grass Hut as 'a liberal education' in *A Chinese Mirror* 19.
2. *Correspondence of a Friendship* 181.
3. *JNCBRAS* 39 (1908): 115; *The Harvard Crimson*, 12 May 1909.
4. *Correspondence of a Friendship* 101.
5. *NCH* 19 June 1920, p. 725.
6. I am grateful to Dorothea Mordan, granddaughter of Albert and Eva Dunlap, for this information.
7. *Incomparable Lady* 8.
8. *NCH* 16 March 1912, p. 712.
9. *NCH* 25 March 1916, p. 789.
10. Dorothee Rihal, 'Foreign-administered Parks in Shanghai: Visual and Spatial Representations of New Forms of Public Open Spaces', <http://www.virtualshanghai.net/Article.php?ID=59>, accessed 22 October 2011.
11. *NCH* 7 June 1919, p. 655.
12. *NCH* 23 November 1912, p. 502.
13. *NCH* 17 May 1919, p. 460.

14. F. S. A. Bourne, *Gardening in Shanghai for Amateurs* (Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh Ltd., 1915) 23.
15. *Social Shanghai* VIII (July–December 1909): 257.
16. *NCH* 24 April 1915, p. 245.
17. *Social Shanghai* III (January–June 1907): 353.
18. *Social Shanghai* XII (July–December 1911): 246.
19. *NCH* 17 May 1919, p. 461.
20. Emil Bretschneider, 'Botanicon Sinicum', pt. 1 *JNCBRAS* 16 (1881); pt. 2 *JNCBRAS* 25 (1890–1); pt. 3 *JNCBRAS* 29 (1894–5).
21. *NCH* 23 August 1919, p. 493. The writer seems to have mistakenly made reference to Yu Yuen Road (the road running towards Jessfield Park), rather than Yuyuan, the garden.
22. *A Chinese Mirror* 82. The following quotations about the Grass Hut gardens and interiors are from this source.
23. Lin Yutang, 'The Monks of Hangzhou' (1941), Joseph S. M. Lau and Howard Goldblatt (eds.), *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Chinese Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995): 621–2.
24. *Social Shanghai* 2 (July–December 1906): 59.
25. Arthur de Carle Sowerby, *Nature Notes: A Guide to the Fauna and Flora of a Shanghai Garden* (Shanghai: The China Journal Publishing Co., 1939) 79–80.
26. *Social Shanghai* 12 (July–December 1912): 117–20.
27. An inventory was made of the collection at the time, though it lacks detail and its reliability is questionable. MacNair makes several references to the couple's donations in *Incomparable Lady*.
28. Elinor Pearlstein, 'Color, Life, and Moment', *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 26.2 (2000): 86.
29. *NCH* 12 April 1913, p. 119.
30. Ayscough, *Waterways of China*, exhibition catalogue of pastels by Lucille Douglass, 30 March–11 April 1925, n.p.
31. *NCH* 12 February 1921, p. 605.
32. *NCH* 29 April 1922, p. 570.
33. MacKenzie 45.

34. *Incomparable Lady* 57.
35. *Incomparable Lady* 57.
36. 'Amy Lowell and Sevenels', MS Am 2088 Houghton Library, Harvard University.
37. *Correspondence of a Friendship* 199.
38. *Autobiography of a Chinese Dog* 42.
39. *Acadia Bulletin* 14.2 (November 1928–January 1928): 8. Available online http://openarchive.acadiau.ca/cdm4/document.php?CISORO_OT=/AAB&CISOPTR=4455&REC=4, accessed 20 June 2011.

Chapter 5 After China

1. *Correspondence of a Friendship* 200.
2. Ayscough, *Travels of a Chinese Poet: Tu Fu, Guest of Rivers and Lakes*, vol. 2 (London: Jonathan Cape, 1934) 212. Ayscough grouped her English words to correspond with the Chinese characters, without retaining their order.
3. See Mackenzie for details of this project.
4. *Correspondence of a Friendship* 224.
5. *Correspondence of a Friendship* 225.
6. These are among the Honorary Members listed in the *JNCBRAS* 52 (1921): 237.
7. *The Society of Woman Geographers: A Register of Its Records in the Library of Congress*, available at <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/service/mss/eadxmlmss/eadpdfmss/2005/ms005005.pdf>, accessed 14 May 2009.
8. *The Geographical Journal* 71.1 (January 1928): 111.
9. Sanger 60.
10. Ayscough, letter to Mary Matteson Wilbur, 16 Nov. [1926], Mc561, 24.13 Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.
11. *Incomparable Lady* 19.
12. Ayscough, *Tu Fu: The Autobiography of a Chinese Poet* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1929) 232.
13. Ayscough, letter to John Livingston Lowes, 31 July 1927, MS Am 1493 Houghton Library, Harvard University.

14. Ayscough, letter to Wilbur, 5 January 1928, Schlesinger Library.
15. Ayscough, letter to Wilbur, 27 March 1928, Schlesinger Library.
16. *Tu Fu: The Autobiography* 159.
17. *Tu Fu: The Autobiography* 175. Lynn Pan has pointed out that Ayscough has mistranslated the word for 'countless' as 'few'.
18. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 1 (1930): 213.
19. Transcript in A. M. Sullivan Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library.
20. *Incomparable Lady* 50.
21. Ayscough, letter to Wilbur, 17 November 1930, Schlesinger Library.
22. *Correspondence of a Friendship* 226.
23. Ayscough, letter to Wilbur, Christmas 1931, Schlesinger Library.
24. Ayscough, letter to Wilbur, 5 May [1931], Schlesinger Library.
25. *Incomparable Lady* 8.
26. *Incomparable Lady* 31.
27. I would like to thank Sue Laker of the Prialux Library, St. Peter Port, Guernsey, for this information.
28. Ayscough, letter to Wilbur, 29 December [undated], Schlesinger Library.
29. Ayscough, letter to Lowes, 10 July 1943, Houghton Library.
30. He says this explicitly in *Incomparable Lady* 5.
31. *Travels of a Chinese Poet* 104.
32. *Travels of a Chinese Poet* 101.
33. *Tu Fu: The Autobiography* 305.
34. Ayscough, *Chinese Women, Yesterday and Today* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1937) 74.
35. 'Wedding in Britain for Mrs. Ayscough', *The New York Times* 26 September 1935, p. 20.
36. Maurice T. Price, 'Harley Farnsworth MacNair (22 July 1891–22 June 1947)', *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 8.1 (November 1948): 54.
37. *Chinese Women* 197.

38. *Incomparable Lady* 39.
39. Ayscough, 'An Uncommon Aspect of Han Sculpture Figures from Nan-yang', *Monumenta Serica* 4 (1934–40): 335.
40. Harley MacNair, letter to Wilbur, 15 March 1942, Schlesinger Library.
41. *Incomparable Lady* 82.
42. Although Price gives a date of 22 June, Harley's sister Hazel Steiner makes it clear that he died on 21 June. Hazel Steiner, letter to Mary Wilbur, 21 August 1947, Schlesinger Library.

Afterword

1. *A Chinese Mirror* 397.

Index

- Acadia University, Nova Scotia
111, 116, 152
- Aili Garden 101
- The Autobiography of a Chinese Dog* (1926) 92, 116, 146, 152, 155
- Ayscough, Francis (Frank) 30–6, 40, 42, 56, 87–9, 91, 93–4, 104, 114–6, 120, 123–6
- Bahr, Abel 53–4, 147
- Ballard, J. G. 35, 157
- Bird, Isabella 28, 145
- Bland, J. O. P. 18–9, 156
- Boston 12, 20–6, 31, 50, 66, 74–5, 87
- Bretschneider, Emil 96, 151
- Bynner, Witter 83–4, 150
- Calhoun, Lucy 104, 106
- Chicago 1, 65, 72–4, 89, 104, 106, 126–7, 130, 132–3, 135–7
- A Chinese Mirror* (1925) 4, 57, 88–90, 99, 102, 105, 107, 109, 116–7, 120, 139–40, 147, 150–1, 154–5
- Chinese Women, Yesterday and Today* (1937) 129, 132, 153, 155
- Cixi 53, 56–8, 113
- Commercial Press 48–9, 55
- Conger, Sarah Pike 57–8
- Douglass, Lucille 99, 105, 107–9, 111, 115–6, 139, 151
- Duanfang 53, 66
- Dunlap, Eva 7–9, 13, 28–9, 35, 37–8, 40, 42, 89, 126, 150, *Plate 2*
- Ferguson, John C. 47, 52–4, 59–60, 66, 147
- Firecracker Land* (1932) 13–4, 18, 47, 56, 108, 144–7, 149, 155
- Fir-Flower Tablets* (1921) 16, 76–81, 88, 106, 114, 116, 121, 137, 144, 155
- Freer, Charles Lang 62–3, 66–9, 148–9
- Giles, Herbert A. 51, 115–6
- Gove, Frank 25

Index

- Gove, Isabella 23, 25
Grass Hut, the 1–2, 4, 6–7, 35,
87–111, 128, 130, 132, 134,
150–1
Guernsey 89, 111, 115, 124–6, 130,
153
- Hobart, Alice Tisdale 118, 120, 156
Jessfield Park 93, 96, 101, 127, 151
Johnston, Reginald 88
- Lee Kee Son 67–8, 148–9
Legge, James 51
Lin Yutang 101, 120, 151
Li Po 1, 6, 16, 76, 81, 83, 149
Liu Songfu 60–8, 147
Lowell, Amy 17, 21–2, 39, 42, 66,
69, 72, 74–9, 81–3, 87–8, 102,
104, 108, 113–7, 124, 134,
137, 144, 148–9, 152, 155–6
Lowes, John Livingston 119, 126,
152–3
- MacNair, Harley 40, 45, 49, 89,
104, 108, 118, 126–31, 133–7,
143, 146, 148, 151, 153–4,
156–7
Moganshan 52, 96, 101
Monroe, Harriet 104
Morrison, Robert 51
- New Shanghai Construction
Company 1, 134
Niger Reef Tea House 115, 144,
156
- North China Branch of the Royal
Asiatic Society 5, 43, 46–8,
50, 53, 59–63, 66, 72, 96, 106,
116, 126–7, 146
Nung Chu 77, 88, 97–8, 100, 119,
121, 134, 139
- Panama-Pacific International
Exposition 61–2, 65, 130, 147
Pavlova, Anna 42
Pelliot, Paul 51, 116
Pound, Ezra 22, 75, 81–2, 150
Puyi 88
- Qiu Jin 50–1, 134
- Ren Bonian 64–5, 70, 72, 130,
Plate 1
Royal Asiatic Society of Great
Britain and Ireland 109, 115,
139, 146
Russell, Ada Dwyer 22, 72, 124
- Sausmarez, Sir Havilland de 46, 94,
115, 124
Scidmore, Eliza 29, 145
Scott, Harding and Co. 31, 60, 65
Shanghai American Women's Club
42, 56, 107–8
Shanghai Art Club 42
Shanghai City God Temple 29, 139
Shanghai Club 9, 40
Shanghai Country Club 40–1, 139
Shanghai Golf Club 33
Shanghai Horticultural Society 36,
42, 89, 91–2, 94–6

Index

- Shanghai International Recreation Club 26
- Shanghai International Settlement 3, 12, 31, 34–5, 37, 117
- Shanghai Municipal Council 13, 18, 31, 34, 40, 91, 93
- Shanghai Old City 28–9, 32, 96–7, 103, 107, 139
- Shanghai Paper Hunt Club 31–2, 145
- Shanghai Race Course 13, 32
- Shaw, Pauline Agassiz 20–1
- Sheng Xuanhuai 59–60
- Sirén, Osvald 123
- Smedley, Agnes 37, 40
- Sowerby, Arthur de Carle 80, 95, 101, 151, 157
- St. Andrews, N.B. 22–5, 33, 77, 87–9, 113–14, 118, 123, 126, 140, 145
- St. John's University, Shanghai 127, 135
- Steiner, Gerald 128, 154
- Steiner, Hazel (MacNair) 128, 154
- Strehlneek, E.A. 54–6, 139
- 'Topside' 24–5, 113, 115, *Plate 5*
- Trollope, Mark Napier 46
- Tu Fu 1, 4–6, 76, 88, 96, 108, 113–5, 118–21, 126–8, 152–3, 155
- Unkaza 101
- Waley, Arthur 80, 84, 149
- Walters, Henry 64, 148
- Wang Wei 55, 76, 82–3, 88
- Warren, Sir Pelham 46–7, 54
- Weihaiwei 52, 92, 116
- Wheelock, Edith (Clarke) 12, 18, 26–7, 56, 87
- Wheelock, Geoffrey 4, 17, 20, 23, 25–6, 33, 39–40, 42, 87–8, 144
- Wheelock, James 10
- Wheelock, John Andrews 10, 143
- Wheelock, Marjorie 17
- Wheelock, Thomas Gordon 17, 20, 23, 25–6, 42, 144–5
- Wheelock, Thomas Reed 4, 10–2, 17–8, 23, 25–6, 33, 87, 113–4, 143
- Whiting, Frederic 72–3, 148–9
- Wilbur, Mary Matteson 109, 117, 120, 123–4, 136, 149, 152–4
- Wylie, Alexander 48, 50–1
- Yuyuan (Yu Garden) 29, 97–8, 151