

The Life Writing of Hart, Inspector-General of the Imperial Maritime Customs Service

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Henk Vynckier and Chihyun Chang,
"The Life Writing of Hart, Inspector-General of the Imperial Maritime Customs Service"
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Abstract: In their article "The Life Writing of Hart, Inspector-General of the Imperial Maritime Customs Service" Henk Vynckier and Chihyun Chang analyze the life and writing of Sir Robert Hart (1835-1911). Hart arrived in China in 1854 and served as Inspector-General of the Imperial Maritime Customs Service 1863-1911. Although Hart disparaged his own role, Jonathan Spence views him as a key adviser to the Qing government. Despite of the historical importance of Hart's texts, of his seventy-seven volume diary only eight of the volumes have been published and the remaining volumes remain largely unexamined. Vynckier and Chang examine the complex transmission and reception of the diary and argue for the importance of our understanding of the intercultural dynamic between nineteenth-century China and the British empire.

Henk VYNCKIER and Chihyun CHANG

The Life Writing of Hart, Inspector-General of the Imperial Maritime Customs Service

When he first arrived in China in 1854, Robert Hart (1835-1911) was a nineteen-year-old student interpreter in the British Consular Service and was assigned to Ningpo, a commercial town in Chekiang with a foreign community of about twenty-five consular officials, merchants, and missionaries. When he departed fifty-four years later at the age of seventy-three, he was the Inspector-General of the Imperial Maritime Customs Service (IMCS) and was seen off at the Peking train station by Chinese government officials, diplomatic representatives from many nations, and Chinese, British, US-American, Italian, Dutch, and Japanese honor guards. Jonathan Spence accords to Hart as to how the student interpreter of 1854 became the Inspector-General of 1908 and "the most powerful Westerner in China" (93) has attracted considerable attention over the past one hundred years. The first to write about Hart's life story was his niece Juliet Bredon, who had lived near her uncle in Peking and knew him well. In her *Sir Robert Hart: The Romance of a Great Career* (1909) Bredon lionizes Hart as a great Victorian and, as the title suggests, highlights his devotion to duty, work, and ambition. She also narrates in some detail the episode at the train station and in doing so offers valuable clues regarding the extraordinary standing of Hart in China. In describing the scene, Bredon turned to personification and observed: "the little railway station must have been startled half out of its wits by all the people flocking in. Such a thing in all its history had never happened before" (117). She reports that the Inspector-General, while moved by the honor bestowed upon him, remained modest and calmly walked down the platform past the dignitaries, honor guards, journalists, and photographers. Yet, while he may not have said much that day, Hart had been a man of many words, many interests, and many friends throughout his career. Not only had he administered a vast civil service, but he was also a lifelong devotee of the written word and literary culture. Among the personal effects which he shipped overseas upon his departure were his diaries.

Despite the existence of voluminous textual and photographic archives documenting Hart's life in China, there still is no serious biography of Hart and only eight of the seventy-seven diary volumes have been published. Hart, moreover, existed at the center of three interconnected textual archives and that makes the lack of a reliable and complete biography even more noteworthy. In addition to his personal life writing archive of diaries and letters, there is the vast archive of memos, trade reports, semi-official circulars, statistics, medical reports, telegrams, maps, and other administrative materials of the civil service which Hart directed and, secondly, the library of memoirs, essays, scientific papers, historical studies, novels, diaries, and other writings of individual customs employees.

The first circle in this web of texts is the official archive of IMCS administration. The IMCS was a tax collection agency of the Chinese government, but played the role of a nerve center of expert knowledge frequently substituting for other agencies of the Chinese state in carrying out a wide range of tasks. As such, it made significant contributions to the Chinese government in the fields of diplomacy, finance, infrastructure building, state-craft, the military, the policing the waterways and harbors, map-making, weather reporting, the development of a postal system, education, etc. Much of the official correspondence, semi-official circulars, statistical records, telegrams, and other documents of the IMCS over its close to hundred years of history have been preserved in archives in Nanjing, Taipei, London, and elsewhere and contain a wealth of information about the above subjects. It is noteworthy that during the last years of Hart's career Max Weber, one of the founders of modern social science studies, was among the earliest theorists to focus on the role played by documents, the office, and bureaucracy in the creation and maintenance of governance (see Smith and Schryer 116). Hart's work seems in line with the emergence of the sort of documentary society described by Weber: his attention to detail and longevity at the helm of the Service resulted in the IMCS being referred to as "the empire within the empire" by some of its own European employees and there was never any doubt as to who was the emperor lording it over this realm. Paul King, for example, a longtime IMCS commissioner who included a twelve-page "pen-portrait of Sir Robert Hart the great I.-G. [Inspector-

General]" in his memoir *In the Chinese Customs Service* (1924), described Hart as a Napoleon, but then a Napoleon who never undertook Moscow or faced Waterloo (241).

Another remarkable aspect of the IMCS legacy is that not only Hart, but also many other employees of the Service pursued active research and wrote agendas in a variety of fields. The Service employed many hundreds of expatriates, a majority of whom were British, but also US-Americans, Frenchmen, Italians, Germans, Austrians, Dutch, Danes, Norwegians, Japanese, Koreans, and others and a few of these foreign residents of China were, as King observes in his memoir, "men who loved books" (19). Hart himself, for example, was a university-educated student of Greek and Latin classics and a keen reader of contemporary literature who was familiar with Charles Dickens and other Victorian authors, as well as travel literature, theological works, and other texts. He also became a published author in 1901 with the publication of *These from the Land of Sinim": Essays on the Chinese Question*, a collection of five essays which had a decisive influence on shaping the international public opinion regarding the Boxer Uprising and preventing an even more rabid response by the international powers. Other agents of the Service published historical studies, scientific papers, novels, journalistic reports, and memoirs. The US-American Hosea Ballou Morse, for example, did pioneering work as a historian following his long career as Statistical Secretary in the Customs Service and published a three-volume monograph entitled *The International Relations of the Chinese Empire* (1910-18), in which he gives ample attention to Hart. Augustine Henry, an Irishman who had been encouraged to enter the Customs Service by Hart contributed many thousands of plant specimens from China to the collection at Kew Gardens in London and became an internationally recognized botanist. The Englishman J.O.P. Bland published poetry, fiction, journalistic texts, and memoirs of his years in China and so did Bertram Lenox Simpson, another British Customs agent, who published a large body of writings under the pen-name Putnam Weale. King also co-authored novels and other books about China with his wife Veronica following his retirement. Other names associated with the IMCS include Fredrik Schjoth, a Norwegian currency collector and historian who published *The Currency of the Far East* in English with the University of Oslo in 1929; Sir Patrick Manson, the Scottish medical pioneer and founder of the field of tropical medicine; and Willard Dickerman Straight, a US-American reporter, diplomat, banker, and philanthropist. Taken together, the work of all these men of letters and scientists constitutes an impressive library and documents the intellectual horizons and fields of action of the Inspector-General and the milieu of foreigners in China.

In addition to the primary historical materials of the IMCS archives and the library of literary, historical, journalistic, and scientific works authored by Service employees, there is also Hart's own life writing archive. Hart was not the only one among the Customs men who had a habit of keeping a journal, but his was sustained the longest and has the greatest historical significance owing to his prominence. Hart commenced writing his diary on 27 August 1854 shortly following his arrival in Hong Kong and continued until the end of his residence in China in 1908. The diaries traveled with him from Hong Kong to Ningpo and on to Canton, Shanghai, and Peking and was almost lost in 1900 when his house in Peking was destroyed during the Boxer Rebellion, but was saved together with his correspondence with his secretary James Duncan Campbell of the London Office of the IMCS. The extent of Hart's diary is such that he can be ranked among some of the most assiduous and productive life writers in English history. He maintained his diary for fifty-four years and can therefore be compared with champions in the genre such as John Evelyn, who began his diary in 1641 when he was twenty-one and continued it for sixty-four years until 1707. Life writing has long been recognized as integral to the history of literature and society in the English tradition (see, e.g., Jolly) and it is noteworthy that the "Britain in Pictures" series of 126 books (see Carney) published between 1941 and 1950 and sponsored by the Foreign Office as a form of war-time propaganda, included two books on the genre in a subject group entitled "Literature and Belles Lettres," namely, *English Diaries and Journals* (O'Brien) and *English Letter Writers* (Vuilliamy). The inclusion of these volumes in a propaganda project — which also included work on the English people, theater, villages, and many other subjects by George Orwell, Graham Greene, the poet laureate John Betjeman and other prominent authors — indicates to what an extent life writing was viewed as contributing to the creation of a national value system rooted in and supportive of notions of "Englishness," domesticity, and self.

Retiring from his IMCS office and his many visits to the Zongli Yamen — the Qing government's General Office of Foreign Affairs — Hart wrote down his thoughts and emotions and reflected on the public and private events of the day. A question which clamors for attention and will become even more relevant as additional diary volumes are examined is why Hart kept a diary for over half a century? That a busy bureaucrat like Hart would regularly devote time to a different, more free and unrestrained sort of writing is intriguing. Several images of Hart in his office, both artist's sketches and photographs, show him at his desk surrounded by books, papers, and writing implements and confirm the view of a man immersed in an ocean of paper. Yet, at the end of many of his days he still withdrew into a private writing corner to cast some of the more personal and random aspects of his life onto the pages of his diary.

As a genre, the diary is a mixed bag and this is reflected in the fanciful title which Hart wrote at the top of the first page of his journal as a nineteen-year old student interpreter: "My Journal Narrative, descriptive, conjectural; semi-opinionative and critical" (see Bruner, Fairbank, Smith 12). A study of the limited sample of eight volumes published so far suggests that the diary was all that and more and offered Hart a space for writing his self, being a witness, narrating lives, negotiating meaning, interpreting China. It is possible that Hart began his diary with a view to documenting his encounter with China in case he should break off his appointment with the Consular Service and return to Ireland as he did give the latter option serious consideration during his time in Ningpo. As time went on, however, and he rose to the position of Inspector-General and became a settled and increasingly prominent in China, the diaries would become more of a mirror of his career ambitions and day-to-day work experience. The reportage on culture and panoramic vision of the earlier years gave way to a more restricted perspective focusing mainly on visits to the Zongli Yamen, the ill-fated undertakings of his predecessor Horatio Lay Nelson, the direction of Chinese government, diplomatic negotiations, and other public matters. Thus, the significance of Hart's diaries not only lies in his narrative description of his own day-to-day affairs, but also in his comments on the Chinese governmental institutions and the officials he worked with.

One interesting example is recorded in the entry for 17 January 1867 when Hart was invited by the important official Wen-Hsiang (1818-1876) to the Zongli Yamen and they discussed, among other things, the building of railways in China. British, US-American, French, and other international diplomatic and commercial interests had been maintaining for decades that China was stagnant and should move more quickly to introduce Western technology and industry. Wen Hsiang addressed this criticism and told Hart: "We are adopting a great many Western contrivances, s[ai]d he, as you well know, but you must give us time; you must not expect us to take to everything at once. Few of us know anything about these matters, & the few that do so have among them men that are afraid to offer their opinions ... Mark my words, in fifty years' time — I'll not live to see it — you foreigners will be as anxious to stop our learning as you now are to hurry us into it!" (Queen's University Belfast [QUB] Vol. 9, 17 January 1867). Information of this nature is rare in any contemporary Chinese materials as most Qing officials refrained from recording their personal observations and comments, especially on their colleagues, in their diaries. In sharing his true feeling regarding this Western perception of Chinese conservatism Hart is making an effort to take a critical look at his own society. At the same time, he is also envisioning a different China and calling upon his foreign interlocutor to displace himself for a moment and contemplate a time when his sense of "cultural superiority" may no longer be relevant. Such moments of honest intercultural contact recorded by Hart make his diaries a valuable source for historians and other scholars of the nineteenth century Sino-British encounter. In the long run, of course, Hart's own life in Peking would illustrate what would be the benefit to people like himself of all these conversations about Chinese investment in the building of railways. Every time he traveled in and out of Peking during the early stages of his career, he did so by means of the uncomfortable ox-carts or pony-carts which foreign visitors had to make do with during these pioneering days of foreign presence in Peking. Forty-two years following his conversation with Wen-Hsiang at the Yamen, Hart made his celebrated departure from Peking pleasantly seated aboard a railway carriage.

In spite of the historical significance of the diary, however, Hart was reluctant to make it available to scholars and he set in motion a chain of events that led to his life writing archive being locked away

for some sixty years following his death. In fact, in the eyes of many of his colleagues in the Service, Hart's later years were not as distinguished as his earlier and within the IMCS there was, according to King, "a common conceit to describe Mr Hart as a benevolent despot" (21). However, Hart was not overly concerned about these criticisms regarding his management of the IMCS and seemed more worried about his diary falling into the wrong hands. In the following passage (see below) — a letter to his London secretary and close confidant Campbell dated 6 April 1902 — Hart reported that, now being seventy his health was declining and the question of what might happen to the diaries following his death troubled him. There had been press coverage in 1900 regarding the burning of his house and the rescue of the diary and Hart contemplated the possibility that this "'precious' thing," as the newspapers had called it, would end up in the hands of strangers. His diary had been outed as it were and, in talking to Campbell, he wondered if it would not have been better if it had been swallowed by the flames after all: "The only thing that gives me any worry — unfinished work and family griefs apart — is the existence of so many volumes of my Journal: I now wish it had gone to the flames with my other belongings, for, first of all, it may get into the wrong hands and possibly its pages contain some things that would be better let fall into oblivion, and, in the second place, after the way the newspapers etc. have referred to the "precious" thing, I fear that not only would examination find it worthless, but indiscreet people might make a wrong use of what they could understand of its content, while even the discreet would fail to fully comprehend its brief references to various affairs, or, worse, would fail to make out or even misread my hastily written hieroglyphics" (Fairbank, Bruner, MacLeod Matheson Vol. 2, 1236).

Hart lists the reasons as to why the diary should remain private which he would repeat over the course of the decade every time the question of making it public was raised: it contains matter which he would prefer to keep secret; it is far from as valuable or informative as people seem to believe; there are things which people will not understand or — worse — misuse; and his handwriting is difficult to read. Further, Hart instructs Campbell that in case of his death he would want his diary to be made over to his son Bruce to be kept "as a family curio — and not to be either published or lent to writers of any kind" (Fairbank, Bruner, MacLeod Matheson Vol. 2, 1236). Hart must have been aware that depending on their antiquity, rarity, and value, family curios which are passed on from one generation to the next may end up becoming some form of cultural capital and be collected by either private collectors or public institutions. The diaries had, indeed, already been called "precious" in newspapers and the possibility of it becoming more valuable with the passage of time and entering the public domain must have been obvious to Hart. The conclusion seems inevitable that, whatever intentions of actually burning or otherwise disposing of the diary he may have harbored at one time, its baptism by fire in Peking ironically made it impossible for him to ever consign it to the flames. What he could do, however, was to belittle it as a curiosity and keep it locked away for the time being.

In any event, Hart was certainly correct about several points, including the difficulty of reading his hieroglyphic handwriting and the fact that "writers of any kind" would not have access to his diary for decades, although many would try both before and after his death. The former ICMS statistician, Morse, for example, covered Hart's career extensively in the second and third volumes of his three-volume *The International Relations of the Chinese Empire* (1910-1918) and wrote Hart for approval and support (vi-vii). Morse's main idea was to approach Qing international history by studying the "central figure" of Hart as the "connecting thread" between China and the international powers. In his response, Hart encouraged the initiative and praised Morse as being the right man for the task, but also expressed some reservations regarding his own contribution to the history of China: "I know that I have been in touch with the launching and introduction of almost everything done the last four dozen years, and the long retention of the same man, myself, in the same position, Inspector General, has not only made for continuity, but has also given me a sort of causative appearance, while, as a matter of fact, I have been for the most part but a 'fly on the wheel' of evolution. Therefore it would be unwise to make too much of me, while, at the same time, my name and career might perhaps be as appropriate [a] centre as you could find for logical, chronological, and artistic grouping of China's doings and movements during the last half century of her national life, and advance from seclusion and exclusion towards what later historians will recognise both as world power and world influence. (Vol. 2, vi-vii.). It is likely that Hart's image of "a fly on the wheel" refers to the first line of Francis

Bacon's essay "Of Vain-glory": "It was prettily devised of Aesop: The fly sat upon the axle-tree of the chariot-wheel, and said, What a dust do I raise!" (Bacon 54). Of course, much dust had been raised in China following decades of struggles with the so-called treaty powers, the Taiping Rebels, various tribal minorities, the newly confident Japanese republican revolutionaries, and others, but Hart appears as a much more modest fly than Aesop's and questions his own "causative" influence on Chinese history

While Hart approved of Morse's ambitious project, at the same time refused to permit use of his diaries and disparaged their potential value to researchers: "As to my journals, it is curious that they, being things which I wished to be burnt on my death, should have been preserved in the 1900 troubles when all else was lost: but that escape does not give them any special value, and I fear they would be not only difficult to read, but would also hardly repay the trouble of plodding through them: I think I am at the 70th volume now, & for even myself to read them again & strike out what is not to be used would probably require five or six years and there is not the slightest chance of my living so long" (Letter, Hart to Morse, 20 December 1906 [Hart qtd. in Bruner, Fairbank, Smith 150]). This passage again provides an interesting glimpse of Hart reading Hart and indicates his complicated feelings about his diaries. As in his letter to Campbell, Hart insists that the diaries are difficult to read, have limited historical value, and contain matter he wishes to keep private. At the same time, the use of the past tense in the phrase "things which I wished to be burnt on my death" suggests that he no longer had this intention and the diary volumes were, indeed, among the literary effects inherited by his widow and son after he passed away.

Also others coveted Hart's private materials for research purposes in the decades following his death, but they did not fare any better than Morse. For example, a file of letters in the Maze Papers at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) is as follows: "'Hart's Life': Proposals in Re (Letters from Aglen & Bland, in re)" contains a letter from 1923 from Sir Francis Arthur Aglen — who succeeded Hart as Inspector-General and served from 1911 to 1928 — to Sir Frederick Maze, Hart's nephew who would be Inspector-General from 1928 to 1943, and three letters from 1923 and 1924 from J.O.P. Bland, who had worked in the Customs Service from 1883 to 1896, also to Maze. The letters discuss plans for Aglen and Bland to work together on a biography of Hart and the importance of the diaries for any such endeavor. However, the diaries remained off limits and any plans by Aglen and Bland to write a biography were shelved. Several Customs Service in-house historians, nevertheless, published about Hart's life without access to the famous seventy-seven volumes. Bredon published *Sir Robert Hart: The Romance of a Great Career* in 1909 just one year following Hart's return to Britain and following Hart's death in 1911 his secretary Edward Drew published the first scholarly article on Hart entitled "Robert Hart and His Life Work in China" in the *Journal of Race Development* in 1913. A later study was contributed by Customs Commissioner Stanley F. Wright who published *Hart and the Chinese Customs* (1950), which is, by far, the closest work to a serious biography. In the opinion of Robert Bickers, all such work by in-house historians indicates an effort to "memorialise Hart" by members of the Service which he had shaped and especially Hart's nephew and successor Maze devoted himself to this effort (13).

An important new development took place, finally, in 1970 when Hart's great grandson passed away without issue and left the diaries to the library of Hart's alma mater, Queen's University Belfast: they form the core of a Robert Hart research collection consisting of the diaries, letters, photographs, and other materials (see Hart, Sir Robert Hart Collection). It was there, after more than six decades, that Edward LeFevour became the first scholar to examine the complete set of diary volumes and reported on his findings in *The Journal of Asian Studies* in 1974. LeFevour discovered that two volumes were missing and that Hart had torn out pages and crossed out entire sentences and paragraphs from other volumes following his return to Britain (437). This may be viewed as offering further proof that Hart was aware that his diary would be preserved and might possibly enter the public domain at some point. Anyone who plans to destroy a text in order to keep prying eyes at bay need not bother with editorial interventions. It is also possible that by means of a mixed strategy of talking down the value of the diaries, removing two volumes, editing the text here and there, and keeping it inaccessible for a long time Hart endeavored to construct a more complex narrative of confession. Destroying the entire set of the diaries was no longer possible because of public

knowledge, whereas presenting the original text as it was might have resulted in the revelation of earlier incarnations of the author, including the fact that as a junior consular official he kept a concubine. To intervene in the text and lock it away *sine die*, however, leaves later generations with a more comforting image of an older man who looks back and stands in judgment over his weak younger self.

Even before QUB received the diary and without access to the diaries, a modern academic Hart industry — which would continue the work of the "memorializing" IMCS historians — was already coming into existence. The term "Hart Industry" was coined by Elizabeth Bruner and referred to the work of Fairbank and his research team at Harvard University. According to Bruner, who was a member of this team, the Harvard Hart Industry started in 1968 when Fairbank was informed by Lester Knox Little, the last foreign Inspector-General of the Customs Service (1943-1950), of the existence of a copy of the correspondence between Hart and his secretary Campbell in the SOAS Library (Bruner, Fairbank, Smith 228-29). Fairbank thereupon initiated a project to edit the correspondence and after years of assiduous work his team published *The I.G. in Peking: Letters of Robert Hart, Chinese Maritime Customs, 1868-1907* in 2 volumes in 1975. Meanwhile, as the Hart diaries had once again appeared into view following the death of Hart's great grandson, Fairbank's team then decided to edit volumes 1-8 of the diaries. They worked hard on the journals for over a decade and transcribed and annotated the eight volumes, publishing *Entering China's Service: Robert Hart's Journals, 1854-1863* in 1986 (Bruner, Fairbank, Smith) and *Robert Hart and China's Early Modernization: His Journals, 1863-1866* in 1991 (Smith, Fairbank, Bruner). Following the publication of the second volume in 1991 Fairbank's death in 1991, however, the Harvard research team discontinued its work and volumes nine to seventy-seven remain unpublished and largely unstudied.

It is likely that the "hieroglyphic" nature of Hart's diaries is not the only reason as to why the rest of the diaries remained largely unstudied over the past two decades. The sheer complexity of the task of bringing to light the intensely private discourse of a man who was drawing together the many complex strands of his life from Ireland to China certainly also played a role. As Rachel Cottam observes in her entry on "Diaries and Journals" in the *Encyclopedia of Life Writing*, "the diary resides on the border between life and its representation, supplementing both ... it may be classified as art, or as document. On the one hand, it is continuous with the lived life: it is source material, used to explain the diarist's other writing (including other life writing). It is an artless presentation of the self, a text that can be looked through, to catch a glimpse of undistorted life. On the other hand, it is an unfinished art form that engenders (but is subordinated to) the polished work of art" (Cottam 268). Source material is of course what Hart's diaries contain in abundance and historians from Morse to Fairbank have tried to use the diary as "a text that can be looked through" to see the "undistorted life" of late imperial China in its relations with the Western powers. Yet, the episodic nature of the text and the immediacy of its mimetic representation is such that the raw historical process captured by Hart seems discontinuous, incomplete, and not easy to look through at all. Hart understood this himself as he observed in the letter to Campbell that even those kindly disposed towards him "would fail to fully comprehend its brief references to various affairs" (Fairbank, Bruner, MacLeod Matheson Vol. 2, 1236).

The Harvard team responded to this challenge by not only providing thoroughly researched annotations, but also a detailed narrative and interpretive framework which is prominently advertised on the title pages of the two published volumes. These narratives are placed between the various sections of the diary and serve to demarcate the stages in the development of Hart's character and career. Volume 1, for example, covering the period from 1854 to 1863, begins with a narrative chapter on "Hart's Origins" followed in Chapter 2 by the earliest diary entries from Hart's sojourn in Hong Kong. Chapter 3 is entitled "Hart's Induction into the Chinese Scene" and precedes the Ningpo diary entries in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 "Ningpo to Canton 1855-1858: Hart Grows with the Times" is another narrative chapter and introduces the diary entries from the time when Robert Hart resided in Canton in Chapter 6. As for Chapter 7, "Hart and the New Anglo-Chinese Order of the 1860," it narrates the fall of the first Customs Inspector-General Nelson and Hart's appointment as his replacement and is followed by the diary entries from 6 June to 29 November 1863 when Hart resided in Peking and Shanghai. Words like "Origins," "Induction" "Hart Grows with the Times," and "New

Order" evoke the language of the novel of education and apprenticeship and suggest that the editors adopted this generic model to create a more linear and intelligible narrative from the "artless" raw materials of the 1854-1866 diaries. A similar arrangement with narrative introductions and interludes was made for Volume 2.

The narratives provided by the published volumes' editors help to shape a more coherent and intelligible life history from the diary entries and this made it possible for others to explore Hart's life and pursue further readings. Yet, it can also be argued that the interspersed narratives in the two published volumes — while reflecting the admirable historical expertise of the editors — are both over interpreted and under interpreted. Over interpreted in that they tell the reader what to expect before he/she even engages with the text and get in the way of a straightforward, unmediated reading experience. Over interpreted also in the sense that the detailed narrative chapters between the various sections impose a certain generic grid on the material which is historically dated, namely, that of the novel of apprenticeship. At the same time, the narratives sometimes seem under interpreted in that they focus too narrowly on Hart. Anyone wishing to see things in a larger context will do well to read the work of Spence or Bickers or other contemporary historians of the Sino-British encounter to get a sense of the sweep of history and the wide range of historical figures, political forces, and cultural factors which contribute to the story. In sum, serious students of Hart and the IMCS might have been better served by a good continuous text edition of the Hart diaries with a proper introduction and a thorough scholarly apparatus but without interspersed narratives. The Janus-faced published volumes, meanwhile, read as a historical monograph wrapped around a text edition and it is doubtful that this approach can serve as a proper model for further editorial work on the Hart corpus.

The attention generated by the modern Hart Industry, nevertheless, also created interest among non-academics and the US-American novelist Lloyd Lofthouse, for example, garnered useful nuggets of information regarding Hart's early years from the published volumes and wrote two historical novels about Hart: *My Splendid Concubine* (2008) and a sequel entitled *Our Hart: Elegy for a Concubine* (2010), both of which feature Hart's relationship with his concubine. Hart, it is to be noted, confessed moral failings and sexual temptation in his diaries. In the opening pages, for example, he alludes several times to youthful peccadilloes from his Irish student days and later, in the Ningpo section, there are frank acknowledgements of sexual temptation and thoughts of either marrying a missionary daughter or taking a Chinese concubine. His erasures indicate an attempt to remove evidence of his relationship with his concubine following his return to Britain, but he was not systematic enough and sufficient traces remain for historians to be able to spell out the tale in some detail. Lofthouse, however, takes it one step further and creates a potent mix from the more salacious aspects of Hart's life story, the horrors of the Taiping rebellion, foreign soldiers of fortune, piracy on the China coast, the eccentricities of the Empress Dowager, etc. Thus, while Hart first entered the pages of literary history as a man who, as Bredon wrote, had experienced the "Romance of a Great Career," he now becomes a conflicted lover and man of power in a spectacular page-turner ready for Hollywood adaptation.

In conclusion, we see that the beauty of the diary is in the eye of the beholder. Bredon did not use Hart's diaries, but as a niece of the great man she knew about it and was aware of its importance to its author and when she surveyed the man and his life, she saw the romance of a great career. The Harvard scholars probed deeper into the diary and into the inner Hart than anyone had done before and they saw the *Bildungsroman* of a great career as a young man entered China's service and contributed to its modernization. The novelist Lofthouse stood on the shoulders of Bredon and the Harvard scholars and created an elegy for a concubine. Meanwhile, the task of examining the remaining sixty-nine volumes questions access to this valuable cultural capital and a lack of proper resources. As it happens, multidisciplinary research teams at QUB, Bristol University, and the Academia Sinica began work on Hart's diaries. Thus, new Hart industries are emerging and, while the Hart's diaries came from China to Europe a century ago, these important texts are now finally becoming available to answer the questions raised by the departure scene in the Peking train station.

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