

Chapter 13
THE BOXER UPRISING
II. Denigrating the Chinese on screen

INTRODUCTION

Summary

In this chapter we look at two aspects of the Boxer Uprising in cinema: staged films of the events, and the exhibition of the crisis on screen. At both these stages of representation the common assumptions were that the behaviour of the Boxers was savage, and that the international community was exacting just revenge for it. The predominant mood of these films and film programmes was anti-Chinese.

Some interesting exhibition practices emerged from this conflict, including an increasingly complex blending together of genres of films about the crisis. This complexity even went as far as mixing in films of the Boer War too. These practices demonstrate both the vibrancy and creativeness of the exhibition sector at this time, and more particularly that a kind of general purpose 'war genre' was evolving, which was almost independent of which war was being represented.

Most of this chapter is concerned with staged films of the conflict. The process of staging war films had reached its culmination in 1900 with the Boer War, but the Boxer Uprising was represented almost as intensively in topical drama. Part of the reason for this proliferation of films of the Boxer events is that public interest was pan-national, because the besieged citizens and later the armies of several countries were involved.

Dramatised topical films of the conflict were produced in France, Britain and the United States (all of which countries were also participants in the allied military action).¹ The main producers were Lubin, Mitchell & Kenyon (M&K) and Pathé, and in addition single films were produced by Amet, Edison, Méliès, Vitagraph and Williamson. Altogether at least seventeen fakes or symbolic representations were made of the Boxer Uprising.² These staged scenes tended to be pro-western propaganda, demonising the Boxers. In the fakes, especially, the Boxers were shown as beyond the pale, as unmitigated evildoers who must be destroyed; and some of the films show the outside world wreaking its revenge on these savages through superior firepower.

In the process of listing these staged films, comparing catalogue descriptions and viewing what film prints survive, I have identified for the first time that two of the films are extant; and also I have established more details than were known hitherto about other non-surviving titles. The most significant of all these films was Williamson's fake or 'representation' of the war, *Attack on a China Mission*. This was hugely popular at the time, and is now seen by

historians as one of the key films of the early history of cinema, for it helped to establish fictional narrative as the major cinematic form.³

‘EXCITING AND INTERESTING’: FAKED WAR FILMS

Faked films of the Boxer crisis (and of other events) gained more attention than symbolic scenes both at the time, and from historians too. Jay Leyda considered that these reconstructions, filmed – as he charmingly though none too accurately put it – ‘on Brighton lawns, in French parks, and on New Jersey farms’, were ‘the most significant film treatments of the Boxers’.⁴ I have identified three main themes or plots found among the fake films of the conflict (i.e. not including the symbolic representations): Attacks on westerners, particularly missionaries; beheadings or other punishment of Chinese, especially Boxers; and battlefield victories by the allies against the Chinese/Boxers. The most frequent of these themes was attacks on westerners (about seven films), followed by beheadings and battlefield victories (some four each). The common factor in these, needless to say, is a negative view of the Chinese. In what follows I examine the output of fakes company by company, in the process providing more general information about these films.

A suggestion for fakes

By the summer of 1900, with the Boer war considered virtually concluded, the events in China became the big story, and in Britain some showmen were wondering how they could translate this news story into paying customers. One pundit, writing in *The Showman* magazine in September, noted that ‘interest in the Boer war has very largely died out’, and advised that showmen might do better to choose ‘another subject of the same nature’ – that is to say, the conflict in China, or indeed the theme of China more generally, and suggested that they put on a combined projected/live show on this subject.⁵ The title he proposed was ‘Heathen Chinees – his manners and customs’. The only problem with mounting such a show was, ‘the scarcity of suitable slides and films’, so he also had a message for filmmakers:

‘The difficulty could, however, be got over by makers of these goods engaging some Chinese natives to take the parts that required personal acting, and there are plenty of these gentlemen about who can generally be obtained at moderate wages.’⁶

Even before he wrote, filmmakers had been doing as he suggested, making faked scenes of the conflict, though employing made-up western actors rather than ethnic Chinese to represent the Boxers.

Lubin and the Taku forts

US filmmakers were quick to fake the events of this war.⁷ The first off the block was probably Sigmund Lubin, whose interest in making films about the crisis might have been heightened by the fact that it had provoked an international military operation, including the US, but also European powers, and he was of German extraction and distributed his films in that country.

Lubin's company made at least four fakes about the conflict: *Chinese Massacring [sic] Christians*, *Beheading a [or the] Chinese Prisoner*, *In the Pillory* and *Bombarding and Capturing the Taku Forts*.

In June 1900, just as allied military involvement was beginning, the first two titles were re-enacted at Lubin's rooftop studio in Philadelphia.⁸ Both of these survive in George Eastman House. *Beheading the Chinese Prisoner* is described in the 1903 Lubin catalogue as follows:

'A Chinese prisoner is tried before one of the chiefs, and being found guilty, is sentenced to be beheaded, which sentence is immediately executed. The executioner displays the head to the spectators to serve as a warning for evil doers. Very exciting.'⁹

A contemporary advertisement and the 1903 Lubin catalogue both suggest that this film was marketed as an actuality straight from the war. But the film was indeed shot at the Lubin studio, which is very apparent from the stylization, and if one were in any doubt, both it and *Chinese Massacring Christians* include painted backdrops and an identical papier-mâché chopping block.¹⁰ [Fig. 3]

Also released by Lubin in the summer of 1900 were *In the Pillory*, and *Bombarding and Capturing the Taku Forts*.¹¹ The latter was sold in Germany (by Lubin's company), where it was advertised in *Der Komet* in September as, '...the siege and storming of the Chinese fortified harbour at Taku. Amazing views; one sees the explosions of mines under water, etc.'¹² Probably this film was made in the summer of 1900 (and as the bombardment of the forts occurred on 17 June 1900, the film could not have been made before about the end of June). The Taku bombardment was extensively celebrated in other western visual media too. [Fig. 9 and 10]

I believe that this film survives (derived from a paper print), but is not identified as a Lubin film.¹³ It was copyrighted by the Edison company on 16 August 1900, as *Bombardment of Taku Forts*, though Charles Musser doubts that it was actually produced by Edison: 'It seems probable that an Edison licensee made the film very shortly after the event, exploited the picture as an exclusive on its exhibition circuit and then turned over the negative to the Edison company.'¹⁴ Musser does not name Lubin as the producer, but does reprint the Edison catalogue description and other details, from which one can see several similarities to the Lubin film as described in *Der Komet*.¹⁵ The title of the Lubin film, *Bombarding and Capturing the Taku Forts*, is very similar to the surviving Edison-distributed title, and both are harbour settings with a naval bombardment. The Edison catalogue description mentions 'the explosion of mines' as does *Der Komet*. Furthermore, the footage matches: the Lubin film advertised in the *Komet* was 200 ft. long, and the surviving Edison-copyrighted copy is about the same length.¹⁶ My provisional conclusion is therefore that the original film was made by Lubin and distributed by Edison (perhaps even pirated/duped by someone at Edison?)

Quite apart from these issues of identification, this film is surprisingly

interesting, and relatively convincing. The setting is a model of a port city on a hill with two towers/forts at the sides, and a harbour or body of water in the foreground in which model ships are steaming about. [Fig. 8] The ships start turning and circling, and seem to fire their guns, and there are explosions and smoke in the town and around the ships. The film is quite long and has an improvised feeling about it: there are various similar angles jump-cut/spliced together, all wide shots, and the camera pans jerkily to capture the action, all of which helps give it a quite realistic, shot-as-it-happened quality. Indeed, a pressman of the time wrote: 'A wonderful and realistic naval battle.'¹⁷

The film was quite widely shown, not only in Germany (through Lubin's sales) but also apparently in France, where a film entitled 'Le Bombardement de TienTsin' was shown by the Royal Bioscope in August 1901. I take this to be the Lubin film, for Tientsin is just opposite to Taku, and this name might have been used because it was better known to the French public by then.¹⁸

An intriguing account survives by a spectator who saw this film at the time. Edmund Cousins was only a child when he went with his family to a local public hall to see a film advertised as the bombardment of the Taku forts by Allied warships. The family had just returned to England from China, where they had been refugees from the Boxer Uprising. Cousins claims that they 'had been present at the actual bombardment', and for that reason, 'it was adjudged suitable that this should be the first motion-picture that I should see, and I was accordingly taken'.¹⁹ His account is worth quoting at length, because it confirms both that fake films were sometimes claimed to be genuine, and that spectators on occasion saw through this sham:

'Sitting in the dark on a cane-seated chair I had a vivid mental picture of the real affair; the low, flat line of the mud forts a mile or so inland; the British and Japanese gunboats out in the harbour, the screaming of an occasional shell overhead, and the tiny white puff and cloud of black dust that marked its destination. We waited, eagerly, for this experience to be miraculously reborn.

I am convinced, looking back, that without the title which was considerably displayed we should have had no idea that it was the bombardment of the Taku forts we were witnessing. A model of a European mediaeval fortress, with towers at each corner reminiscent of the Tower Bridge, stood in a small lake, and round it swam several toy clockwork launches of a type and size then popular at 3/7 each [about \$1] (I owned one myself). Now and then a tiny puff of smoke would issue from the side of one of these vessels, and the top of a tower, as though by mutual agreement, would splash down into the water.

When the lights went up my mother, brother, and I sat gazing at each other in bewilderment, while the rest of the audience roared, clapped, and stamped its approval of the masterpiece. "Was that it?" said my mother, dazed.'

Other US fakes

Apart from Lubin, a couple of other producers made Boxer Uprising fakes in the USA. The Edison company produced a film entitled *Boxer Massacres in*

Pekin (though, like the Lubin Taku bombardment film, this might have been a buy-in).²⁰ Another producer who faked the conflict was Edward Amet, who made a film entitled *Execution of Six Boxers*.²¹ To stage this scene, Amet called upon friends and colleagues from the Waukegan area to re-enact the conflict (he also faked the Boer war in this way). A surviving Amet production still, with 'Boxers' armed with curved sword-spears, strongly suggests that a film on this subject was indeed made. [Fig. 4] A participant later recounted that a beheading scene, complete with red coloured water for blood, which was acted by Amet's brothers Herbert and Arthur, provoked the local authorities to curtail the film's public showing.²²

Mitchell and Kenyon

In July 1900 the British film company Mitchell and Kenyon released a series of fake war films, shot in the Lancashire area, relating to the Boer and Boxer conflicts. There were some ten Boer War dramas and four about the China events. Because the latter were made in the relatively early stage of the crisis, before the relief of the legations, they represent the Boxer threat and the barbarities of which these Boxers were deemed capable, rather than reflecting the allied response. The titles of the four films were:

Attack on a Mission Station
Attempted Capture of an English Nurse and Children
The Assassination of a British Sentry
*The Clever Correspondent*²³

A full synopsis of each film can be found in John Barnes' volume for 1900, so I won't restate this here, but one journal offered a brief summary:

'...here we see the attacks of murderous Boxers upon Mission stations and white children. The assassination of a British sentry, and the capture and execution of the "heathen Chinees," forms the thrilling theme for another film, while yet one more depicts the clever way in which a correspondent outwits and vanquishes two Boxers.'²⁴

The films were initially advertised on 14 July 1900, by the firm of John Wrench & Son, implying that this company also produced the films.²⁵ However, I have now found another listing of the films, which confirms John Barnes' suspicion that these were M&K films. A description in *The Photographic Dealer*, September 1900, notes: 'The above films are made by Messrs. Mitchell & Kenyon, and are supplied to the trade by Messrs. Wrench & Son, 50 Gray's Inn Road, London.'²⁶ So M&K produced them and Wrench was only the distributor, and what's more not the only one, for two other firms also handled these films in subsequent months: Harrison & Co. distributed *Boxers Sacking a Missionary Station*, which is more than likely the M&K film, *Attack on a Mission Station* and Walker, Turner, Dawson distributed all four titles.²⁷ Such an active rental history – with three distributors – suggests that these films were popular, as one of the trade writers predicted:

'Although these films were not actually taken at the seat of war, still they are sure to be very popular during the coming season. We have

had an opportunity afforded us of seeing the negatives of the following subjects, and can testify to their general excellence. Nothing is wanting in definition, and the subjects are posed in a most satisfactory manner and full of excitement.²⁸

A report of a showing in Newcastle of 'wonderfully reproduced scenes in the China and Boer Wars', suggests that they went down well, and they were the penultimate item on the programme, a typical placing for 'hit' items.²⁹ It seems that *Attack on a Mission Station* was the most noticed film, and this survives in the NFTVA.³⁰ Incidentally, Wrench were perfectly open that these were *faked* war films and called them exactly this in their ads, even drawing attention to the advantages of fakes over genuine war films in *The Era* in July when the films were released (which I have quoted in Chapter 2).

Pathé

The Pathé company in France produced a series of four fake films about the Boxer Uprising. It is not known exactly when the films were made, but sometime after M&K's and Lubin's, for they reflect a later stage of the conflict, after the allied victories. The films were distributed by Warwick from September, by Walter Gibbons in November, and by British Pathé too. The titles, as given in Pathé's 1903 British catalogue were:

532. *An Engagement Near the Walls of Peking*

533. *After the Bombardment of Tien-Tsin*

534. *A Missionary Martyred at Pao-Ting-Fou. Intervention of the Allied Troops*

535. *An Execution in Peking*

Two of the films showed military intervention by allied forces, one depicted Boxers attacking a mission station and subsequent rescue by the allies, and the last represented the execution of a mandarin. [see **Box** for more detailed list] Though it has until now never been identified as such, the last film survives in the NFTVA as *Beheading a Chinese Boxer*. I make this identification based on the action in the surviving print matching the catalogue description (decapitation followed by the head being shown around on a spear) and the length also matching that in Pathé's British catalogue (32').

The titles were available in Britain by September 1900, distributed by the Warwick Trading Co. with the titles: *Under the Walls of Peking*, *Chinese Attack on a Mission*, and *Chinese Prisoners and Decapitation*, the last being two of the films spliced together (533 and 535).³¹ The catalogue states, with Warwick's typical honesty, that these films about the war in China, 'are only representations, photographed in France', and gives the additional detail that they were shot 'at a military tournament'. So this means that Pathé wouldn't even have needed to make the settings or indeed the costumes for the performers: all had been done already for the tournament, and Pathé just had to film an existing production. One wonders whether this practice had been followed for other war fakes; certainly filming existing productions would cut costs.

As well as being distributed by Warwick, the films were shortly afterwards available in the UK from Walter Gibbons, listed in his ads with no specific indication that they were fakes. [Fig. 5] Possibly one of the titles was distributed by another company in the UK, and the films were later listed by the Pathé company itself in both its French and British catalogues.³² This rental history was therefore as active as that for the M&K films, suggesting that these Pathé films too were popular, or at least that the renters thought that they would be.

Henri Bousquet has found three places in Europe where these films were screened between 1900 and 1902.³³ The 1900 screening, in Limoges, was reviewed in the local newspaper as follows (the film referred to was probably the first):

‘The recent events in China are likely to encourage an appreciation of French patriotism, when one sees our brave troops, swords in hand, conquering places in Peking.’³⁴

The chauvinistic tone of this review is an indication of how some fakes, with their clear-cut victories by ‘our’ side, were received at the time by some audiences, or at least by some reporters. The popularity of other fake Boxer films (e.g. by M&K) suggests that such a triumphalist reaction by audiences might not have been uncommon.

Most interesting is the surviving title, listed as film number 4, which is described differently by its various distributors, especially in regard to the principal character, the condemned man. For Warwick the subject of execution is a Boxer; but Gibbons describes him as a Chinese soldier executed *by* Boxers; while Pathé has him as a mandarin (a high-ranking Chinese). This is then a classic example of how a film (especially a war-related film) could be re-described in a catalogue – or indeed in a showman’s verbal description – and therefore ‘re-interpreted’ to give a different impression.³⁵

Box:

The Pathé Boxer Uprising series
(descriptions by various British distributors)

This series of four fake films was distributed in the UK by three different companies, each of which had their own title for the group of four films: Warwick called the group *Representation of Chinese War Scenes*; Gibbons' title was *The Latest Chinese War Pictures*; while British Pathé dubbed the series, *Events in China*. Each company also had different titles for each of the four films, and different catalogue numbers and descriptions. I list all this data under the relevant film, and I have numbered the films 1 to 4 for clarity.³⁶ (Note that Warwick combined two of the films into one of 100 feet, *Chinese Prisoners and Decapitation* [7206], but I have separated this and listed it as the two original films.)

Abbreviations: WTC = Warwick Trading Co. catalogue, Sep 1900, p.177. Gib = Gibbons' ad, *Era*, 17 Nov 1900, p.30. P-GB = Pathé British catalogue, 1903.

1. *Under The Walls of Peking* [WTC, 7205]; *Outside the Walls of Peking* [Gib, 1035]; *An Engagement Near the Walls of Peking* [P-GB, 532]

This scene is a natural reproduction of a fort and walls of Peking, which the Chinese are defending against the assaults of the Allied Troops, who storm the fort after climbing the steep hill and walls, while many of the combatants are seen to fall and roll down the steep incline. 75 ft. [WTC]

A strong body of Boxer Troops is seen entrenched on a hillside, the walls of Peking being distinctly seen in the distance. They have an old piece of ordnance with them, and repeatedly discharge this and their rifles at the advancing Allies. Our brave troops eventually rush the position, many, however, falling in the attempt. The Boxers are taken prisoners, and the victors' colours are seen proudly floating in the van of the column now advancing on Peking. 90 ft. [Gib]

The Chinese hidden behind the walls of Peking attempt a sortie to repulse the allied troops: but the European forces rush to assault, enter the city and hoist their standards on the walls. A lively fire is kept up on both sides. 80 ft. [P-GB]

2. *Chinese Prisoners* [part of WTC, 7206]; *The Allied Troops Taking Chinese Prisoners Over Tien-Tsin Bridge, Outside Peking* [Gib, 1036]; *After the Bombardment of Tien-Tsin* [P-GB, 533]³⁷

... shows various squads of the Allied Troops escorting several batches of captured Boxers over a narrow bridge, connecting two sections of the fort over a deep moat, the sides of which are strewn with the killed and wounded. [WTC]

This picture shows various detachments of the Allied Troops leading Prisoners over the now famous Tien-Tsin Bridge. The various Banners waving as the different sections of the Regiments come into view, combined with the rugged scenery around this notorious place, make a very stirring picture. Length, 85 ft. [Gib]

The allied troops construct a bridge across a stream and cross over on their way to the town, escorting some boxer prisoners. 100 ft. [P-GB]

3. *Chinese Attack On a Mission* [WTC, 7204]; *The Burning of a Missionary and the Dispersing of the Infamous Monsters By the Allied Troops* [Gib, 1037]; *A Missionary Martyred at Pao-Ting-Fou. Intervention of the Allied Troops* [P-GB, 534]

A horde of Boxers are seen descending on a Mission station, and after dragging out the Missionary whom they hang up by the heels, they surround and fire the buildings. After running their sword spears through the body of the unfortunate missionary they build a fire under him, but during this proceeding the Chinese are put to the sword and routed by a squad of the Allied Troops, who suddenly put in an appearance. 75 ft. [WTC]

A very thrilling incident, showing the Chinese Boxers hanging up a missionary to burn. Huge flames and dense volumes of smoke are now seen rising from the fire, over which the ill-fated missionary hangs upside down. The infamous monsters now commence dancing with glee, but their merriment is cut short by the arrival of the allied troops who kill some of the rebels, dispersing the others. The picture is now filled with a multitude of troops, thus bringing to a finish one of the most exciting incidents ever portrayed by the camera. Length, 90ft. [Gib]

Boxers seize a missionary, and hang him by the feet over a fire, afterwards setting fire to the mission station. A detachment of the allies comes on the scene and charges them with fixed bayonets, putting them to flight, and killing a good many. 100 ft. [P-GB]

4. *Decapitation* [part of WTC, 7206]; *The War In China. Boxers Decapitating a Prisoner* [Gib, 1039]; *An Execution in Peking* [P-GB, 535]. Held in NFTVA.

...represents the punishment meted out to a condemned Boxer who is led forth by his pigtail, made to kneel in a stooping position, when the executioner cuts off his head with one blow of his sword. The head is then set up on a pole as a warning to others. [WTC]

An unfortunate Chinese soldier, taken prisoner by the rebels, is brought in bound and forced to kneel in the centre of a circle of Boxers; the headsman marches in, brandishing his broad-bladed sword, with one clean cut he causes the soldier's head to fall to the ground. It is immediately picked up and impaled on a spear, while the Boxers execute a characteristic war dance round the head of their unfortunate victim. Length, 85ft. [Gib]

A mandarin is condemned to death by the Court of Peking and is executed ; his head is placed at the end of a pike and insulted by the Chinese populace. 32 ft. [P-GB]

My description of NFTVA print: On a hillside is a semi-circle of over twenty men with spears. A shaven-headed prisoner is brought in by two men, one of whom has a sword. The prisoner kneels and, as his pigtail is held by the second man, the swordsman chops off his head. There is a splice in the film at this point, and we see the prisoner still in place with the 'severed head' on the ground. The head is then shown around by the second man, who takes one of the men's spears, sticks it in the ground and puts the head on it. The spearmen parade round and round it. 32 ft.

[NFTVA 602819]

Troops scaling Peking's walls

I will discuss one further Boxer Uprising film which is relevant; though rather than being a fake as such, it might simply have been a re-titled existing film. An extraordinary letter has survived in the American National Archives which refers to this film. The letter is from a certain George Campbell, who was an attorney, a noted writer on public issues, and former US Senator, based in Kansas but still with connections in Washington.³⁸ He wrote to the Secretary of War on 22 February 1902. [Fig. 7] His letter reads as follows:

'Dear Sir,

In the kinetoscopic pictures, showing the part taken by the troops of the various nations in the capture of Peking, the U.S. troops are represented as assigned to a place near the wall. One American soldier looks up towards the top of the Great Wall and immediately begins to climb it, and is followed by many other soldiers. They reach the top of the wall, and fire at the Chinese soldiers within the walls; and descend the other side of the wall into the interior, and open the great gates to the other nations. Is this representation borne out by the records of your office? Respectfully, Geo Campbell'.³⁹

Two key questions arise from this. One is Campbell's own query: did American forces really take part in such an action? The other, more pressing question for us, is about the true identity of this film (or 'kinetoscopic picture', as he calls it).

To the first, the answer is that US forces were indeed involved in an action similar to that depicted in the film as described. In fact it was one of the key exploits during the assault on Peking on 14 August 1900, and took place near the south-eastern gate (the Tung Pien Men). The Russian forces had blasted a hole in the outer gate but had become pinned down at the inner gate by Chinese gunfire. When American troops of the Fourteenth Infantry arrived they too could find no way through and decided to climb the wall even though they had no ladders. This was an act of heroism which became the stuff of legend. Once on top they soon controlled a sizable section of the wall, relieving the Russians at the gate.⁴⁰

The description of the film in Campbell's letter matches this in some respects, for the film did depict the climbing, and also showed Americans helping troops of allied nations.⁴¹ This issue, of whether the film's action matched the original battlefield action, was the crucial point for both Campbell and the War Department. It seems that they were not so concerned about whether the film was actually taken on site (for Campbell apparently realized it was a fake) but simply that it got the events right. He twice employs terms which indicate that he understood that the film was staged, for he uses the words 'represented' and 'representation'. And the official response too was about what happened, not about whether an actual cameraman on site had filmed the wall climbing.⁴²

The question remains, what was the film that Campbell saw? One possibility is that it was an existing Biograph film depicting soldiers climbing a wall. Six

frames from such a film were reproduced in a article about Biograph's productions in *Everybody's Magazine* of 1901, with the caption, 'French soldiers scaling Peking's walls', and it was implied that this film was shot by Ackerman during the conflict.⁴³ [Fig. 6] But these frames are not from Peking, and are actually from a Biograph film (no.76E) shot at the gymnastic school in Joinville, France in 1897, showing French soldiers in a wall-climbing drill !⁴⁴ The Biograph catalogue describes it as follows: 'This is a really remarkable exhibition. The wall is about 40ft high, and a battalion of soldiers by the use of scaling ropes clamber over it with amazing rapidity.'⁴⁵

Showmen might have been using this Joinville film to represent the heroic American action in scaling Peking's walls, but there are some discrepancies between the summary and Campbell's description of what he saw. Campbell says that after the soldiers reach the top of the wall they fire at the Chinese soldiers inside the city, then descend and open the great gates to the other nations. There is none of this in the Joinville film, and soldiers merely clamber over the wall using scaling ropes.⁴⁶ So another possibility is that the film which Campbell described was Pathé's *An Engagement near the Walls of Peking*, listed above. Part of the summary of this states that the 'Allied Troops... storm the fort after climbing the steep hill and walls', which does pretty much match the action as described by Campbell. It is always possible, of course that there was another, lost, film which matches Campbell's description even more exactly.⁴⁷

Attack on a China Mission

The most important film made about the Boxer Uprising was surely James Williamson's *Attack on a China Mission*. John Barnes describes it as, 'one of the key films in the history of the cinema', which 'has the most fully developed narrative of any film made in England up to that time'; Frank Gray hails it as 'one of the most sophisticated "edited" films of its time', a classic 'rescue narrative'. Georges Sadoul regarded it as equal in importance with the later *Life of an American Fireman* and *The Great Train Robbery* in the development of film narrative methods. It has been extensively described and analysed by Barnes and Gray, and what I offer here is mostly based on their work, with a few additional pieces of information and interpretations of my own.⁴⁸

Williamson's film was made in the autumn of 1900, and one source says November, which is possible, as the first advertisement that I have seen for the film was the following month.⁴⁹ It is even possible it was earlier, for there was a screening at the beginning of November in Brighton of a film representing an 'attack on a mission station by Boxers', which would be either the Williamson or the M&K version.⁵⁰

Williamson was an experienced filmmaker by 1900, and had already made at least 122 films when he made *Attack on a China Mission* late that year. He was already known for his 'one-minute comedies', as well as actualities. A few of the latter were multi-shot, but, as Gray notes, these were merely 'compilation films', and did not depict sequential action by dissecting a scene through varying camera position and framing.⁵¹ This is where *Attack on a China Mission* was different, for this four-shot work of 230 feet – an

unprecedented length for an English fiction film – was Williamson’s first edited multi-shot narrative film, and ‘its appearance marks his move from the production of ‘non-continuous’ to ‘continuous’ film narratives’.⁵² The following is my summary of the Williamson film, based on my own viewing and the descriptions of Barnes, Gray and the original catalogue.⁵³

Shot 1. Outside the mission compound, with the Boxers running in and firing.

Shot 2. Wide shot of the house inside the compound. The missionary is reading, with his daughter(?) He looks up to see the Boxers (one can just be seen in left frame), then sends his daughter inside, holding onto his wife and baby. He shoots at the Boxers, but his ammunition runs out and he fights at close quarters with another Boxer armed with a sword. He is overcome, and left presumably killed. The Boxers enter the house, more appear in right frame. The wife, who has taken refuge in the house, appears on the balcony waving a handkerchief.

Shot 3. View of the front gate, seen from inside the compound. A party of sailors race to the rescue in the distance, they climb over a fence and advance through the open gates, kneeling to volley fire as they approach to the rescue, under command of a mounted officer.

Shot 4. Wide shot of the house (a continuation of shot two). The Boxers are dragging the daughter out of the house, which they have set on fire, at the moment the bluejackets appear from the left of frame; a struggle takes place with the Boxers; the mounted officer rides up and carries the daughter out of the mêlée. The missionary’s wife rushes out of the house pointing to the balcony, where she has left her child; three sailors mount on each other’s shoulders and land the child safely in the mother’s arms. The Boxers are finally overcome and taken prisoner.

There is more of an attempt at realism here than might be apparent at first viewing, and in this sense it was probably a more effective fake than we can today appreciate.⁵⁴ For example, while a Hove house (Ivy Lodge) might seem to have little in common with a Chinese mission station, some ecclesiastical buildings in China were western in style, and contemporary reports had described the British Legation in Peking as ‘a garden of some ten acres, partly occupied by buildings, and surrounded with a high wall of sun-dried clay’.⁵⁵ Barnes notes that the bluejacket rescuers were played by ‘a contingent of professional sailors’, adding to the sense of realism.⁵⁶ As they come to the rescue they kneel to fire volleys, which to the modern eye looks stilted and unnatural, but this now outmoded method of firing was standard in the British forces in this period. Even the masses of smoke produced when the guns are discharged is not so far from reality, as ammunition was still in the process of transition to smokeless powder in 1900, and as Barnes states, it also enhances the dramatic effect of the fighting.⁵⁷

Though it was Williamson’s first attempt at a serious dramatic reconstruction of a contemporary theme, he was following the precedents of numerous reconstructions of incidents in the Boer and other wars, as well as Georges Méliès with his film of the Dreyfus affair. On the face of it, the plot seems very like the M&K film *Attack on a Mission Station*, which preceded Williamson’s by

about three months, but this does not necessarily mean there was plagiarism, for probably both drew on a similar source, such as the daily press.⁵⁸

The press, especially the illustrated press, is indeed a likely inspiration: a virulently anti-Boxer tone permeated newspapers and magazines at this time, and Williamson cannot but have noticed and absorbed this. Indeed, he interpreted the conflict in his film as a simple battle of good winning out against evil, or as Frank Gray characterises it, the victory of Empire and Christendom over the 'yellow peril'. Gray adds that in this way, the film may be seen as, 'a meeting point between the histories of Orientalism and early cinema'.⁵⁹

It is plain that the film was very popular, due to a combination of the subject matter being drawn from topical events, and the style of the film with its clearly-told story based on a 'rescue narrative' of great power.⁶⁰ From first release, the film's emotional pulling-power was remarked on. A trade journal in December praised it as, 'full of interest and excitement from start to finish', while a newspaper added, 'the attack on a Mission Station... proved a very exciting scene'.⁶¹ An early exhibitor, reminiscing about some of his early successes, was asked if he remembered *the film*: 'Oh, my word, yes,' he replied, 'Yes, rather, yes that was very popular.'⁶² It was something of an exhibition phenomenon, for it was being shown through 1901 in various locations in England, and was 'everywhere received with great applause'.⁶³ Early the following year a leading entertainment journal could conclude, 'This film has been before the public over a year, and is still a trump card'.⁶⁴

BOXER ALLEGORIES: MÉLIÈS AND OTHERS

As we have seen in earlier chapters, Georges Méliès faked several of the wars in this era. In this case, though, he didn't make a fake as such, but rather a symbolic representation of the struggle in China, and one with an unusually pro-China message. The film, made in 1900[?] and sadly now lost, was entitled (in English) *The Congress of Nations in China: A Topical Creation*, and it was also known more descriptively as *China Against the Allies*. This vignette ran about one minute – Méliès' typical brevity – and the catalogue description was as follows (my translation):

'A magician presents a circular piece of paper from which he removes the flags of the allies. Then from each flag he produces a soldier from the respective country, and finally he produces a Chinaman. But hardly have the allies seen the latter than they pounce on him and try to cut him into pieces. The funniest part of our story is that the Chinaman escapes in a balloon, with an expression of childish innocence on his face as the allies try to cut him up.' (20 m.)⁶⁵

Méliès who was often sympathetic to the underdog (as witness his films of *l'Affaire Dreyfus*) proved true to form in this case, and his is probably the only one among all the films/fakes of the Boxer Uprising which does not take an anti-Boxer stance. Furthermore, while clearly light-hearted and witty in Méliès'

usual style, the film is also intelligent in its action depicting a metaphorical chopping up, for an underlying cause of the Boxer Uprising was indeed that China was being cut up and taken over by foreign powers. In having the Chinaman escape, the filmmaker was expressing an aspiration, and not of course describing the current situation, because after the Uprising China was subject to extreme punitive action by the indignant foreign powers. Méliès notes at the end of the catalogue description, 'This parable requires a little commentary during projection.' One can imagine what he himself might have had to say about the wished-for escape of his innocent hero, China.

An American film by the Vitagraph Company was produced soon afterwards, in the Autumn of 1900, with virtually the same title as the Méliès film, *The Congress of Nations*. It sounds almost as interesting, though for different reasons (and sadly, it also does not survive). As well as copying Méliès' title, the plot synopsis too suggests that it was inspired by the French film. A stage magician has a hoop covered with white paper from which the flags of Germany, Russia, Ireland, England and China are brought forth, and from each a soldier of the corresponding country is produced.⁶⁶ So far it matches the Méliès version, but then the plot diverges. It seems (synopses disagree) that the other powers try to grab the Chinese representative, but through a dissolve effect he is transformed into a Statue of Liberty, and then other national flags appear, an American one most prominent, and there is a transition to a patriotic tableau.⁶⁷

The similarities with the Méliès version are evident, but in its American transformation the pro-Chinese tone of Méliès has become a piece of patriotic American propaganda, in which China literally disappears, and America dominates. This actually matched genuine events, for after the Boxer Uprising, China was considered fair game to be punished and plundered.

As if to reflect this mood, in September R.W. Paul made an allegorical film, *The Yellow Peril*, with a magical tone, and full of transformations and imps. It has many similarities to the two titles I have just described: a 'European conjurer' as the leading role, the presence of allied forces, and a Boxer as a floating, disembodied head (rather like Méliès' balloon). The narrative is complex, but in summary the film has a Boxer appropriating the allies' bags of gold (another meaning for the 'yellow peril') until the conjurer manages to take it back. He then cuts open the Boxer's head, and imps of disorder emerge, but as they are about to be attacked by warriors of the allies, they transform into a symbol of China, and peace breaks out, the allies laying their flags at China's feet.⁶⁸

If the Chinese are merely the losers in Vitagraph's film, in Paul's piece they are the villains, appropriating the money of the allied powers – an extraordinary insinuation from the filmmaker, given that the exact opposite was the case, as China had been plundered by other nations for years. By the end of Paul's story China has none of the allies' money and has been humbled, as peace is effectively imposed by the allies.

EXHIBITION OF BOXER UPRISING FILMS

Increasingly complex film combinations

In December 1900 a writer in a well known British music hall and theatrical journal expressed the opinion that the Boxer Uprising wouldn't feature strongly on the halls that Winter, 'managements being quick to recognize the general indifference with which the public has regarded that particular crisis'.⁶⁹ It is not clear where he got the impression of 'general indifference', but in any case this was not borne out either by the actions of managements or of audiences at halls and elsewhere, and the Boxer Uprising became a popular theme in films and other media.

In the Spring of 1901, Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show presented a re-enactment of the attacks on Tientsin and Peking and the capture of these cities.⁷⁰ But the famous siege of the legations remained the central and quintessential episode of the Uprising, in media representations and in the popular imagination. It constituted a perfect dramatic sequence of threat and struggle followed by salvation: the ideal 'rescue narrative' to use Frank Gray's felicitous phrase. The siege was the central event, for example, in a great military spectacular mounted at Earl's Court in London as long as a year after the conflict, with hordes of Boxers shown besieging the Legations.⁷¹

Films related to the Boxer Uprising were shown at various kinds of entertainment venues – music halls, fairgrounds and public halls – and the audience reactions were frequently highly positive.⁷² I have found few references to the screening of Boxer films abroad, so my coverage will be based on British examples. The popularity of the films emerges clearly from reviews of screenings especially from the Midlands and north of England.⁷³ Some interesting exhibition practices are also evident from these sources, notably concerning the way different kinds of films of wars and of genres were combined and mixed together in the shows.⁷⁴

One kind of mixing was in the combination of wars. A strong tendency emerges in exhibition practice at this time for films of the Boxer and Boer wars to be shown in the same section of the programme, these concurrent conflicts being, in a sense, conflated together. The advantages to the showman were that more film material would be available for two wars rather than one, and that the sense of national (British) triumph would be reinforced. Another possible benefit of combining wars was that the programme item so created was more of a 'feature' than a news film about one particular event.

Such 'combined war' programmes or sections of programmes proved popular. As early as the beginning of October 1900, 'representations of incidents' of the wars in South Africa and China were being shown at Wall's Boer Warograph in Nottingham to 'general approval' and, the reporter noted, 'no part of the fair seems to attract more attention'.⁷⁵ Similarly in Newcastle in December, films of the China and Boer wars were said to be, 'attracting enormous audiences'. The report stated: 'There is frequently quite a crush to gain admission, and notwithstanding the vast capacity of the hall many visitors are glad to find standing accommodation'.⁷⁶ Even into March of the

following year a similar combination of views of the 'Boer and China wars' were the chief attraction:

'...and judging by the enthusiasm which was displayed at both the matinee and the evening performance, the stay in Nottingham bade fair to be attended with unqualified success... The photographs of the stirring events in South Africa and China were received with unbounded delight.'⁷⁷

Another kind of programmed mixing of Boxer films also took place: the mixing of genres. In this way one had genuine and fake Boxer war films being grouped together, to create a special section in the programme about this far eastern war. Such exhibitions lasted for quite some time after the war had finished. A show in Brighton in late 1900, partly about the Boxer events, 'Sons of the Empire', seems to have integrated live elements as well as lantern slides, actuality views and 'composed' films (i.e. fakes).⁷⁸ At a show in Northampton as late as the summer of 1901, the second part of the programme was largely made up of war scenes, including the Naval Brigade setting off to China, followed by the (fake) storming of the Taku Forts, and then the landing of the Naval Brigade – the fake being sandwiched between the two actuality films.⁷⁹ A similar mixed group of staged and actuality films was shown earlier in the year when the North American Animated Photo Company exhibited three Boxer scenes – the bombardment of the Taku Forts, 'an attack by the Boxers' and 'a street scene in Pekin' – which were 'rendered startlingly realistic by the aid of gunpowder and various mechanical effects, and to the accompaniment of military music'. All this 'fairly took the audience by surprise, and a repetition was demanded'.⁸⁰ The latter two shows took place during the year after the main Boer and Boxer events had occurred, and it is impressive that such films had such a lifetime. Even so, by May 1901, there was a hint of a tailing off of interest. At the St. James's Hall in Manchester, though some new films of the 'China and Boer wars' still 'drew an enormous audience', the critic added that the spectators: '...probably grew weary and eye-tired' from too many films.⁸¹

CONCLUSION: FILMIC PREJUDICE?

I concluded the previous chapter by suggesting that the two most significant developments which came out of the filming of the Boxer Uprising were to do with film style and political significance. I would see the same two issues as being most significant with regard to cinema on the 'home front'. As my conclusion to this chapter I will examine, firstly, the issue of film style; and then will move on to discuss, in more depth, the political or propaganda content of films and screenings about the Boxer events.

Style

I would suggest that the most interesting stylistic development in exhibition of war films at this time was the way in which the mix of films in the programme became more complex. Films of various kinds to do with the Boxer events were programmed together, as were films of other wars. Evidently, exhibitors

were continuing to experiment with forms and combinations, and warfare was continuing to be a strong stimulus for these kinds of imaginative exhibition practices.

As far as staged films were concerned, the Boxer conflict marked a very significant point, for the conflict was the inspiration for Williamson's *Attack on a China Mission*. With this subject the war fake reached its apotheosis. This was the film which moved fakery into mainstream fictional filmmaking, for it is possible to argue that fakes, being the dominant form of acted stories on screen in the 1900 era, helped 'set the stage' for fictional narrative films as the dominant kind of motion picture, and Williamson's film provided the final link in the chain. I will have more to say about the relationship between fakes and narrative development in the Conclusion to this thesis.

Politics

The Boxer conflict came to public attention through attacks on westerners in China; the crisis culminated in the siege, and reached fruition with a multi-national, eight-nation response, which punished China as well as exacting reparations. The result was almost total triumph for the allied nations, and this was reflected in the staged films about the events, and in the triumphalist music hall reactions from audiences. Such reactions mirrored a generally demeaning, 'orientalist' attitude to the Chinese found in some western media of the time.⁸² Before going on to conclude our analysis of the message in these films, it might be as well to look at this wider, media context.

Firstly, it is important to note that in much adult non-fiction literature the image of China and her people remained positive, as it did, surprisingly, in some popular news reporting.⁸³ And furthermore, if some of the western media displayed 'orientalist' and prejudiced views about the Chinese – and had done so for many years [Fig. 1] – the reverse, 'occidentalism', was prevalent in China. For example, in the run-up to the siege of the legations, the Boxers spread their negative propaganda about foreigners using handbills and traditional puppet shows. In one of these shows the puppet characters were depicted in national costume, with the addition of a pig, which, it was said, 'always represents the missionary'.⁸⁴ [Fig. 2]

But, as xenophobic as such representations were, these Chinese shows were scarcely 'mass media', and the effects if any in China would have been sporadic. On the other hand, the western media, putting the other point of view to populations in industrialized countries through mechanically reproduced media, would have reached more people, more systematically. Here the predominant message about China was of the savage Boxers and their revolt, and of their ultimate defeat – a triumph of good versus evil'. This theme was seen in the performance media which I mentioned earlier, and was also prevalent in novels and stories, which made heroes of westerners and stereotyped the Chinese as a fanatic enemy. Such narratives were widely disseminated: one novel about missionary heroism during the Boxer events went through numerous editions and translations and remained in print to the 1940s.⁸⁵ Some historians argue that plots and themes of this kind reflected and helped to consolidate a sea change in the west's image of China following

the Uprising. In juvenile literature the Chinese race fell from commanding relative respect in 1870s and 80s to abhorrence after the Boxer events; the Chinese were now demonised as the 'yellow peril'.⁸⁶

In all the fake and symbolic films about the Boxer Uprising, with the exception of Méliès' film, the tone was one of 'yellow peril' – of hostility toward the Chinese and outright abhorrence for the Boxers. As we have seen, these films often depicted the gruesome habits and barbaric attacks by Boxers (all the worse because their victims were missionaries, men of God). In this respect the demonisation goes beyond what we see in the fake films of other wars in this period: for example, Spanish and Filipino fighters were depicted as merely cowardly, Boers were shown as sneaky, but not utterly savage.

The depicted barbarity is perhaps the key point. One might say that the Boxers were indeed barbaric: they did kill missionaries and their families and other Christians. Yet they had some cause for their anger, in that China had been plundered for years by foreign powers. But there was no effort to portray this history in these fake films. Only in the symbolic film by Méliès do we get some sense that China was being exploited and that international equity was called for. What's more, as discussed in my previous chapter, a scarcely more sympathetic view of the Chinese emerged from the cameramen who went to film in China – Ackerman and the like – for they were based with, and sympathetic to, the armies which were fighting the remnants of the Boxers.

One feels that perhaps this stress on defeating and humiliating the Chinese is what many spectators at the time expected and wanted. As we noted in discussing the Pathé fakes, one writer gloried in seeing a film representing, 'our brave troops... conquering places in Peking'. He hoped that this vivid representation of his countrymen re-asserting themselves in this manner might help to encourage French patriotism. One doesn't know if such films or the anti-Boxer fakes did have this effect or did help to perpetuate or engender negative stereotypes about the Chinese. All one can say is that they can't have helped to instil cultural tolerance.⁸⁷

All in all then, the representation of the Boxer Uprising in cinema cannot be seen in a very happy light. While filmmakers might have made significant technical and stylistic advances in representing this conflict (I am thinking of Williamson, especially), the content of these films, whether fiction or non-fiction, was one-sided and bigoted. In retrospect one might well trace the origins of the propaganda film to these xenophobic efforts of 1900.

Box:

The first film referring to China and to warfare (1895)

Unlikely as it might seem, one of the first films ever made (probably Britain's very first), contains a reference to a landmark in Chinese history which helped lead to the Boxer Uprising. Birt Acres' *Arrest of a Pickpocket* of April 1895 was an acted film, depicting a scuffle and arrest, and takes place in front of a selection of posters with headlines from newspapers, significantly including a reference to the recent peace treaty between Japan and China. This treaty, signed by Li Hung-Chang at Shimonoseki on the 17th of April 1895, ended the Sino-Japanese War.⁸⁸ It obligated the defeated China to pay Japan a substantial indemnity, and gave a green light to western powers to increase their incursions into Chinese territory (as discussed in my previous chapter). Acres' little film therefore, albeit unknowingly, marks a crucial moment in Chinese history.⁸⁹ [Fig. 11] This film was recently discovered (in 2005) by the Sheffield-based National Fairground Archive, and has been restored on their behalf.

Notes:

¹ No staged films were made in other countries which participated in the allied action in China, such as Germany, Russia and Japan. Komatsu notes that, while Japanese cameramen made this important actuality film of the events, 'Japanese film producers never took up the Boxer Rebellion as a form of fiction, as, for example, some of their British counterparts did.' Hiroshi Komatsu, 'Some Characteristics of Japanese Cinema before World War 1', in *Reframing Japanese Cinema: Authorship, Genre, History*, edited by D. Desser and A. Nolletti (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), p.237.

² Sopocy counts seven fakes of the war, but since he wrote his book more information has come to light. See Martin Sopocy, *James Williamson : Studies and Documents of a Pioneer of the Film Narrative* (Madison, N.J. ; London: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; Associated University Presses, 1998), p.40.

³ I have identified as extant Lubin's *Bombarding and Capturing the Taku Forts* and Pathé's *An Execution in Peking*; and I have shown that four alleged M&K fakes are indeed by that company.

⁴ Jay Leyda, *Dianying: Electric Shadows. An Account of Films and the Film Audience in China* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1972), p.4.

⁵ Val Royle, 'To Attract the Public', *The Showman*, Sep 1900, p.16-17. Royle noted that at that time, China was little known among the British public, and the ancient manners and customs could be potentially 'highly interesting', and a 'picturesque and realistic show representing them could not fail to be instructive and entertaining'.

⁶ Val Royle, op. cit. He added, in the common racist idiom of the day: 'These Chinese could also sing some of their native songs, and with their pigeon [sic] English would excite side-splitting laughter. In their picturesque dress they could not fail to make an interesting show, and one which would attract the public.'

⁷ Following Dewey's naval victory, the war in the Philippines and the action against the Boxers, America's thoughts had turned to this part of the world, along with plans for expanded world trade. As film historian Lewis Jacobs wrote, 'Dewey, Hay, and the Open Door were

perhaps the most talked of people and issues of the day, and movies helped to keep the pot boiling.’

⁸ Musser, *Emergence*, p.287.

⁹ S. Lubin, *Complete Catalogue, Lubin's Films* [January 1903], p.54. This film was produced by John F. Frawley and Jacob Blair Smith (?) at Lubin's rooftop studio, 912 Arch Street, Philadelphia, and runs 42 seconds. One author puts the shooting date at July or early August 1900. See Jan-Christopher Horak description in Jay Leyda and Charles Musser, eds., *Before Hollywood : Turn-of-the-Century American Film* (New York: Hudson Hill Press, etc, 1986), p.101.

¹⁰ Horak adds that, ‘Also, the exclusively Caucasian actors are dressed in traditional Chinese, rather than modern, dress, thus reinforcing contemporary stereotypes.’ I assume that by ‘modern’ Horak does not mean western dress, for Chinese people in 1900 still did dress in ‘traditional’ style, as contemporary photographs show, though not always in such ceremonial garb as we see in the Lubin fakes.

¹¹ This is according to Horak. A couple of these Lubin titles sound similar to the Pathé films, and one wonders if there was some copying going on here in either direction, of plot or of ideas for staging, or of the physical films themselves.

¹² This was one of several films listed in this advertisement, and cost 100 Marks. See *Der Komet* no.808, 15 Sep 1900, p.28. At the end of the year Lubin advertised his films again in Germany, including this film of the storming of the Chinese fortified harbour at Taku. *Der Komet* no.823, 29 Dec 1900, p.28. Incidentally, as Deac Rossell has informed me, this reconstruction of a contemporary event was an unusual kind of film for Lubin to be distributing, as, over the previous few months the Lubin ads had mostly been for comedies, Méliès films, a couple of films of fires, and the Passion Play.

¹³ Sometimes known as *Bombardment of Taku Forts, by the Allied Fleets*. Prints are held in the Library of Congress at FLA4979 and in the NFTVA at 605514. The Edison copyright reference was D16704.

¹⁴ Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures... Filmography*.

¹⁵ The Edison catalogue entry is as follows: ‘The scene opens by showing the battleships manoeuvring for a position. They finally draw up in line of battle and commence firing on the shore batteries. Immense volume [sic] of smoke arise from the fleet and from the distant shore. Shots are seen to fall thickly among the vessels and immense bodies of water are thrown up by the explosion of mines. A very exciting naval battle.’ *Edison Films*, July 1901, p.16. Quoted in Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures... Filmography*, no.837.

¹⁶ I measured the length in the 16mm paper print copy at 74’, equivalent to 185’ in 35mm. Niver gives it as 81’, equivalent to 202.5’ in 35mm. Kemp R. Niver, *Early Motion Pictures : The Paper Print Collection in the Library of Congress* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1985). Musser gives a 35mm length of 100 ft. rather than 200 ft., but he notes in his introduction that purchasers were given a choice of length for some films.

¹⁷ *NY Clipper*, 1 Sep 1900, p.604. The film was also noticed in the *NY Clipper*, 18 Aug 1900, p.564.

¹⁸ A newspaper of 25 Aug 1901 mentions the screening. Cited in Pierre and Jeanne Berneau, *Le Spectacle Cinématographique à Limoges, de 1896 à 1945* (Paris: AFRHC, 1992), p.36.

¹⁹ Edmund George Cousins, *Filmland in Ferment* (London: Denis Archer, 1932), p.31-33. The family had returned in the summer of 1900 and settled in Bedford. The notice stated that ‘Marvellous, True, and Authentic Moving Pictures of the bombardment of the Taku forts by Allied warships’ were to be shown. This reference was sent me by Tony Fletcher.

²⁰ This is listed in the Edison catalogue according to Lewis Jacobs, *The Rise of the American Film, a Critical History* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1968), p.13.

²¹ Terry Ramsaye, *A Million and One Nights: A History of the Motion Picture* (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., 1964, orig. 1926), p.403.

²² Kirk J. Kekatos, ‘Edward H. Amet and the Spanish-American War Film’, *Film History* 14, no. 3-4, 2002, p.405-417.

²³ *The Era* 14 July 1900, p.24e. The lengths of the films were, respectively, 87, 60, 91, and 54 feet. They are listed with prices etc, in Robin Whalley and Peter Worden, ‘Forgotten Firm: A Short Chronological Account of Mitchell and Kenyon, Cinematographers’, *Film History* 10, no. 1, 1998, p.35-51.

²⁴ 'Faked War Films', PD Aug 1900, p.35. It added, 'The price of the films is 1/- per foot', and this is indeed what was quoted, the prices being: £4 7s.; £3; £4 11s.; £2 14s (in the order of my listing of the films).

²⁵ Barnes, 1900 volume, p.109, wrote, 'With a company such as Wrench, which dealt in films from so many different sources, it is often impossible to be sure which films were actually made by the firm itself. Denis Gifford, in his *British Film Catalogue*, identifies the producers of the Boxer films, emanating from Wrench, as Mitchell & Kenyon. He may well be right, but I have found no contemporary evidence to support him in this matter. However, we do know that a series of films depicting the 'Procession of the City Imperial Volunteers', also listed by Wrench, were in fact made by Hepworth. So I am inclined to side with Gifford regarding the attribution of the Boxer films.'

²⁶ 'Chinese War Films', PD Sep 1900, p.67-68.

²⁷ See Barnes, 1900 volume, p.102, re Harrison (who released the film in July/August). Walker, Turner, Dawson (known as Walturdaw) offered these 'Interesting scenes representing the troubles with the Boxers in China' ('showing Boxers' barbarity', they noted) in their catalogue, *Animated Photography for the Cinematograph* (c.1900-1901) with exactly the same titles as the M&K originals. Leyda, *Dianying*, p.4 gives alternate titles for two films that Walturdaw distributed: *Attempted Capture of an English Nursery [sic]* and *Child by Boxers and Assassination of an English Citizen by Boxers* He implies that these have survived, and states wrongly that they were imitations of Williamson's *Attack on a Chinese Mission*.

²⁸ 'Chinese War Films', PD Sep 1900, p.67-68. This source lists the films with plot summaries, which are similar to those in the *Era* 14 July, though for some reason miss out the final sentence or two of the summaries in the *Era*.

²⁹ Though one cannot be sure that it was the M&K China fakes which were shown, the screening was by the American Animated Photo Company, which is known to have specialized in M&K films. *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* 4 March 1901. These war scenes were the penultimate of 12 items on the programme.

³⁰ *Attack on a Mission Station*, survives in the NFTVA as film no.603352. I have viewed it and can add the following details to *The Era* description: the missionary fights off the second sortie against three Boxers using a walking stick. Then three more Boxers appear. i.e. there are seven Boxers in all. Then four soldiers (marines?) run up from woods behind, firing rifles, and the officer firing his pistol. After they have driven off the Boxers they offer the family a drink, and overpower one remaining Boxer. At the end a soldier glances at the camera. Two frames from what looks like this film are in *The Pageant of the Century* (London: Odham's Press, 1933), section for 1900.

³¹ They are listed in supplement no.1 to the Warwick Trading Co. catalogue of September 1900 as three films, nos. 7204 to 7206. Bousquet makes a slight error in his catalogue in giving the two parts of the spliced film as numbers 534 and 535.

³² Gibbons ad is in *The Era* 17 Nov 1900, p.30, headed 'the latest Chinese War pictures'. On the same page of the *Era*, the Société Générale des Cinématographes et Films advertised *Boxers Killing Missionaries*, which may be the Pathé film no. 534. The series was listed in the French Pathé catalogue (March 1902?) possibly without the fourth title. Bousquet notes that 'Tous les titres sans indication d'origine proviennent soit du Catalogue de mars 1902, soit du Catalogue anglais de mai 1903. Cependant, quelques scénarios ont été retranscrits du Catalogue français d'août 1904.' In a handwritten note to me Bousquet indicated that the final title is only in the catalogue of May 1903, i.e. the British Pathé catalogue.

³³ Limoges, December 1900; Perpignan, March 1901; Trieste, June-July 1902. Cited in Henri Bousquet, *Catalogue Pathé des Années 1896 à 1914: Vol 1, 1896-1906* (Charente/Bures sur Yvette: Henri Bousquet, 1996), p.858-9. I have not seen the relevant citations, so I don't know if it is certain that it was these Pathé fakes which were screened.

³⁴ My translation from the French original, 'Les derniers événements de Chine sont également bien faits pour produire un mouvement où le patriotisme français se reconnaît, lorsqu'on aperçoit nos braves fantassins s'emparer à l'arme blanche des positions de Pékin.' The term, 'arme blanche' is not as racist as it sounds, as I state in a note in Chapter 1. In French it often meant using knives or swords; in English, as 'the white arm', it tended to mean the cavalry.

³⁵ Thanks to Frank Kessler for pointing this out.

³⁶ Pathé's 1903 British catalogue adds the following information, which I list as a matter of interest: the code words (for telegraphic ordering) and prices of these four films (in £ and

shillings). #532: Cantine, £2; #533: Canton, £2.10 s.; #534: Capable, £2.10 s.; #535: Capital, 16 s.

³⁷ Unlike the other sources, the Pathé catalogue mentions constructing the bridge. What's more the French Pathé catalogue (March 1902? from Bousquet) states that the bridge is being hastily built across a *ravine*, but doesn't mention a *stream*. (This is the only significant difference between the descriptions of these four films in the British catalogue and the French one).

³⁸ George Campbell of Oswego, Kansas, began his career as a teacher, but studied law determinedly and was admitted to the county bar in 1883. In 1896 he was elected state senator and served one term of four years after which he resumed his legal practice at Oswego.

³⁹ National Archives, Washington: RG 107, AGO, file no.422,777 of 1902. Handwritten letter from Geo Campbell, Attorney at law, Oswego, Kansas, 22 Feb 1902 to 'the Hon. Secty. of War, Washington, D.C.' The letter is on Campbell's firm's headed paper, which states that he is a member of the Supreme Court bar and registered attorney in the Interior Department, Washington, D.C. The fact that it was handwritten suggests his confidence that his name would be recognised, and his letter given attention. The 1902 date suggests that the film was shown in the USA a surprisingly long time after the events.

⁴⁰ A young bugler from the Fourteenth, Calvin P. Titus, volunteered to climb the wall, which kick-started the operation, for he found a portion of the top unoccupied, and soon the Fourteenth held a sizable section of the wall. They raised a flag, which was the first foreign flag to fly on the walls of Peking. Titus and other US servicemen in the campaign were later awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. Lynn E. Bodin and Chris Warner, *The Boxer Rebellion* (London: Osprey, 1979), p.18. Henry Keown-Boyd, *The Fists of Righteous Harmony : A History of the Boxer Uprising in China in the Year 1900* (London: Leo Cooper, 1991), p.178 and map on p.174. Eric T. Smith, 'That Memorable Campaign: American Experiences in the China Relief Expedition During the 1900 Boxer Rebellion', B.A., Dickinson College, Louisiana State University, 1994, p.57. Gerald McMahan, 'The Right of the Line', *On Guard*, 1990, and on web. Contemporary news reports about the taking of Peking noted that the Americans had scaled the wall to do so. See, for example, LW 8 Sep 1900, p.171.

⁴¹ The American troops may indeed have opened the great gates to other nations, as in the film, though I can find no confirmation of this. Why was Campbell particularly concerned with the truth of events depicted in this film? We can only speculate, but his writings indicate someone interested in America's colonial ambitions. So, perhaps he was trying to discover if American soldiers really did play a lead role in the capture of Peking, and if this was being truthfully portrayed to the American and world publics. Campbell was a writer of note, some of his best known works being: *America, Past, Present and Future*; *Island Home*; and *The Greater United States of America*. Cited in entry on Campbell in *Kansas: a Cyclopaedia of State History* (Chicago: Standard Pub. Co., 1912).

⁴² The summary on the cover-sheet might suggest a different interpretation – 'George Campbell... inquires if the kinetoscopic pictures of the taking of Peking, China by troops of allied forces are authentic' – but I believe that this use of 'authentic' too refers to events depicted, not to the nature of the film as a fake or otherwise. The Assistant Adjutant General (J. Peck?), replied 5 March to say that they had sent him, Campbell, a copy of part 7 of the Annual Report of the Lieutenant General Commanding the Army for 1900 relating to the operations of the United States Army in China, 'from which the proceedings by means of which the United States troops occupied Peking may be ascertained'. It is possibly significant that this letter came over a week after Campbell's letter, which is a long response time in this era – probably the officials needed some time for internal discussion of the matter.

⁴³ Roy L. McCardell, 'Pictures That Show Motion', *Everybody's Magazine* 5, August 1901, p.227-236. Though McCardell does not directly state who made this film, he does mention, p.231-32, that Ackerman filmed the American war effort in China and the frames of the climbing film are on adjacent pages, p.230-31. The caption states, 'Actual size of film' which indeed is the large Biograph frame size, approx 65 mm.

⁴⁴ Barry Anthony made this identification, noting that the film is almost certainly *l'Assaut d'un Mur*, filmed in Joinville, near Paris, in August/September 1897, and shown in London early the next year. Listed in Richard Brown and Barry Anthony, *A Victorian Film Enterprise : The History of the British Mutoscope and Biograph Company, 1897-1915* (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 1999), p.248. My suspicions were alerted when I realised this was not filmed in the

real Peking, for photographs of the real walls of Peking show loopholes for firing all along the top, giving it a 'serrated' look, while in the frames of the climbing film the top of the wall is smooth. Moser reproduces a photo of the city, and though it is quite distant, one can make out the serrations all along the top of the wall. [Michael J. Moser and Yeone Wei-Chih Moser, *Foreigners within the Gates : The Legations at Peking* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p.30.] The frames from Ackerman's films of the American action against the real South Gate in Peking also show the serrated wall top.

⁴⁵ So the *Everybody's* caption was correct in stating that the soldiers were French, but the Peking location was falsely claimed.

⁴⁶ However, perhaps the other action mentioned by Campbell could have been in lantern slides, or given verbally by the showman. Furthermore, Campbell does not state that he saw this film personally: he could simply be repeating an inaccurate description which someone had given to him.

⁴⁷ A few years later, this film or a similar one was the subject of much press deception and exaggeration, possibly generated by Biograph or its press agents, when it was given as an example of the sheer expense of making films. One entertainment trade publication claimed that, 'the costliest negative ever taken' was during the Boxer rebellion, namely, '...the pictures of the allied troops as they scaled the walls of the city. That film cost \$7,000'. I surmise that this cost figure might have come originally from the press campaign of 1901. This claim as the costliest film was stated in 'Varied uses of moving pictures', *Billboard*, 22 Sep 1906, p.3; repeated in 'Uses for moving pictures', *The Sun* (NY) 20 Aug 1906, sec.3, p.5; and in 'The value of film negatives', *MPW* 23 Mar 1907, p.40.

⁴⁸ Frank Gray, 'James Williamson's 'Composed Picture': Attack on a China Mission - Bluejackets to the Rescue (1900)', in *Celebrating 1895: The Centenary of Cinema*, edited by J. Fullerton (Sydney: John Libbey, 1998), p.203-211. Frank Gray, 'James Williamson's Rescue Narratives', in *Young and Innocent? : The Cinema in Britain, 1896-1930*, edited by A. Higson (Exeter: U. Exeter Press, 2002), p.28-41. Barnes, 1900 volume, p.47-55. See also Martin Sopocy, *James Williamson*, op. cit., p.39-45, 298-9: Sopocy presents important information about the film, but is, in my view, a little too concerned to promote the idea that it was accompanied by commentary. The film's full title was *Attack on a China Mission – Bluejackets to the Rescue*, though, as Frank Gray notes, a slightly variant title was used in early ads for this film. I abbreviate the title to *Attack on a China Mission*.

⁴⁹ Ad for Williamson's new film, *Attack on a Chinese Mission Station* in *OMLJ* Dec 1900, p.168. But Rachael Low, p.70, states the film was made in January 1901. (Low and Manvell, vol.1). See also Butcher Co. ad for Williamson films, including four frame stills (including *Attack*, which is 230 ft.) in *The Showman*, Dec 1900.

⁵⁰ The film was screened along with other 'composed' pictures, actuality views and lantern slides in a show at the West Pier in November 1900, 'Sons of the Empire'. 'The pictures have given unmistakable interest to large audiences,' noted the *Brighton Herald*, 3 Nov 1900, p.3. Cited by Frank Gray in 'James Williamson's 'Composed Picture'', op. cit., p.210.

⁵¹ These actualities comprised related views of a single activity or views of different activities taken at the same location - examples of what Tom Gunning has called the 'anthology format'.

⁵² This according to Gray, who adds that the film 'came after a summer of inspired filmmaking by George Albert Smith, his Hove friend and counterpart'. Frank Gray, 'James Williamson's Rescue Narratives', op. cit.

⁵³ This description is based on NFTVA print no.603653, labelled the 'composite version'. This is to distinguish it from NFTVA 613170, a version with a different, non-intercut shot order. Apart from the intercutting itself, the only real differences between the versions are that in the composite/intercut version the front of the first wide shot of the house (shot 2) is longer and I noticed more graininess in the gate shots, 1 and 3. It is not clear who edited the non-intercut version in the way it is, for the catalogue describes an intercut version.

⁵⁴ Barnes, 1900 volume, p.52, states that, 'The action is staged in depth and with a fair degree of realism'.

⁵⁵ As Gray has noted. Possibly Williamson aimed to relate this story directly to the siege of the Legations rather than to represent an attack on a generic mission station. Barnes notes (ibid, p.52-54) that Ivy Lodge 'was a derelict property in Hove which was soon to be demolished'.

⁵⁶ In all, the film fields a cast of over two dozen, the main performers including members of Williamson's family. Gray states (James Williamson's 'Composed Picture'): 'Williamson's

daughter, Florence, was cast as the 'young girl' or daughter. The 'Missionary' was performed by Ernest Lepard, Manager of the Brighton Alhambra Opera House and Music Hall. It is likely that the Bluejackets were members of the Hove Coast Guard and the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve.' A Mr. James played the officer. Tom Williamson, James' son, recalled: 'The missionary's wife actually was my sister. And I'm there as the Chinese boy.' ('When films began', transcript, p.2. In Anthony Slide collection, BFI.) Leyda writes in *Dianyng*, p.4: 'Brighton, as a center of the British vogue in chinoiserie at the start of the nineteenth century, was able to furnish all the Chinese costumes and properties that were wanted.'

⁵⁷ Barnes writes (1900 volume, p.52): 'Williamson, who was himself a chemist, seems to have devised special cartridges to give off the maximum amount of smoke when the guns are discharged so as to enhance the dramatic effect of the fighting.' It is not clear where this information comes from. For more on smoke and gunpowder see Chapter 1.

⁵⁸ John Barnes makes this point. Barnes, 1900 volume, p.109 And Barnes adds: 'In any case, the Wrench film merely consisted of a continuous action, recorded in one shot, whereas Williamson's made use of a more complex narrative technique by splitting the action into a number of separate shots. Besides, the Wrench film was only 87 feet long whereas Williamson's was 230 feet.' Barnes notes, p.54, of the M&K film: 'Its simple treatment goes to show what a tremendous stride Williamson had taken by breaking up his story into a number of separate shots.'

⁵⁹ Frank Gray, 'James Williamson's Composed Picture', op. cit.; Sopocy, op. cit., p.298.

⁶⁰ Barnes states (1900 volume, p.47) that: 'The plot more or less speaks for itself and can just about be understood without the help of a commentator.' Gray describes typical 'rescue narratives' as, 'stories in which familiar representatives of the dominant culture – a woman, a child or a family – are thrown into a crisis precipitated by the arrival of a disruptive force'. See Gray, 'James Williamson's Rescue Narratives', op. cit.

⁶¹ *The Showman* Dec 1900, p.56 re a Butcher and Co. screening. A newspaper cutting from mid December, headed, 'Entertainment at Burgess Hill', notes that the China crisis was 'fully illustrated, including the attack on a Mission Station, which proved a very exciting scene'. From Tee scrapbook, Brighton public library.

⁶² The words of Bert Chambers (an exhibitor, born in 1879). From 'When films began', transcript, p.2, in Anthony Slide collection, BFI.

⁶³ Several reports demonstrate its popularity. In July 1901 a Stalybridge reporter saw crowds at one fairground cinematograph show which was screening a representation of an attack on a Chinese Mission station. (*The Reporter*, 27 July 1901 – 'made in England possibly!' he added). Williamson's company stated: 'This sensational subject is full of interest and excitement from start to finish, and is everywhere received with great applause.' (Catalogue of CUTC, Nov 1903, quoting Williamson catalogues of Jan 1901 and Sep 1902). The *Halifax Evening Courier*, 12 Mar 1901, p.3 in reviewing a local show, praised 'an exciting episode in the shape of a Boxers' raid on a mission station, and subsequent vengeance and rescue by Bluejackets'.

⁶⁴ Ad for Williamson in *The Showman*, 3 Jan 1902.

⁶⁵ My rough translation from Georges Méliès and Jacques Malthête, *158 Scénarios de Films Disparus de Georges Méliès* (Paris: Association "Les Amis de Georges Méliès", 1986), p.36. The French title is *Le Congrès des Nations en Chine : Une création d'actualité* also known as *La Chine Contre les Allies*, no. 327 in the Méliès catalogue. In English it is also known (after Sadoul) as *China versus Allied Powers*. Stills from the film appear in Maurice Bessy, *Georges Méliès, Mage* (Paris: Prisma, 1945), p.147, photos 6 & 7, where it is entitled *l'Expédition Fantastique (Querelles à Pékin)*: these images were identified by Malthête as from the Congress film.

⁶⁶ Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures... Filmography*, Kemp R. Niver, op. cit., 1985. Clearly Blackton and Smith's background in magic would have influenced the film's magical milieu. Incidentally, the action includes an Irish policeman, rather than a soldier as for the other nations, emerging from the Irish flag!

⁶⁷ The Edison catalogue omits to describe a key point of this film, the Chinese representative being pursued by the other powers. Vitagraph's historian (describing the film as 'a noble gusher of emotional oil') supplied the missing part of the plot: '*The Congress of Nations...* depicted a tiny Chinaman standing in abject supplication, surrounded by a group...of towering figures representing the various nations involved in this shameful embroglio: John Bull, La Belle France, Germania, and so forth. At a given signal from the cameraman, Smith, ... the

Great Powers made a concerted grab for the little Chink who was, it must be admitted, dressed like a laundry-man rather than as a mandarin dignitary. But lo! before the grasping hands could dismember the unfortunate Chinaman he was magically dissolved into an animated Statue of Liberty, before whom the disgruntled Congress of Nations fell back... In their places there appeared, fluttering in amity with the American flag, which was uppermost in the background, the flags of all the Nations, with Miss Liberty smiling complacently around.' He added: 'The dual role . . . of the little Chinaman and the giant Miss Liberty was played by the Vitagraph clerk, Morris Brenner.' Quoted from Courtney's 1925 'History of Vitagraph', in Leyda, *Dianying*, p.6. According to Musser the cameraman was not Smith but Blackton, and Smith acted.

⁶⁸ Synopsis from *The Era* 15 Sep 1900, p.28, from Barnes, 1900 volume, p.12 and 194-5.

⁶⁹ MHTR, 21 Dec 1900, p.405: cited in John M. MacKenzie, ed. *Popular Imperialism and the Military, 1850-1950, Studies in Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), p.53.

⁷⁰ NYDM, 13 Apr 1901, p.15. Don Russell, *The Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill* (U. Oklahoma Press, 1960), p.419.

⁷¹ Sharf and Harrington, *The Boxer Rebellion, China 1900: The Artists' Perspective*, p.63.

There was one offbeat stage version of the siege by the famous *grand guignol* playwright, André De Lorde, *The Last Torture* in 1904.

⁷² In at least one case, a serviceman was at a screening in a music hall when he saw himself in a film: this being a navy man from HMS *Centurion* who recognised himself in the film of his unit's victory march, shown at the Cambridge music hall. *Era*, 26 Oct 1901, p.20.

⁷³ Many thanks are due to Vanessa Toulmin and the National Fairground Archive for all these citations from Midlands and northern newspapers which have given me a new perspective on the exhibition of films of this war.

⁷⁴ Actually, the mixing was none too surprising, for film showmen would frequently programme together a variety of kinds of films, such as general actualities, local films, dramas, comics, as well as the war films. For example, the American Animated Photo Company listed 12 items on the programme including local pictures and the China and Boer War films. (*Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 4 March 1901.) The Tee family showed films of the South Africa war and 'the struggle in China' along with 'humorous and other views', and they were accompanied by music and a lecturer. See *Mid Sussex Times*, 11 Dec and 18 Dec 1900, from Tee scrapbook, op. cit. In Liverpool, though the show at Hengler's Circus was headlined, 'War in Liverpool!' and the 'Boer and Boxer Wars' were main features on the bill, 'the comical has also its innings in grotesque tableaux, which afford no end of amusement'. The show was by the North American Animated Photo Company. (*Liverpool Daily Post*, 9 Apr 1901, p.9, c.3. See also an ad for this show in *Liverpool Daily Post* 22 Apr 1901, p.1, headlined 'Boer and China wars'.)

⁷⁵ *Nottingham Evening News*, 4 October 1900, p.4.

⁷⁶ *Newcastle Upon Tyne Evening Chronicle*, 11 Dec 1900, p.4, c.6. The animated views were at the Olympia.

⁷⁷ *Nottingham Evening Post*, 19 Mar 1901, p.4, c.3. The show, for that week only, was by Thomas Edison's Animated Photo Company, with the war films 'as its chief claim to support'.

⁷⁸ This was at the West Pier in November 1900, 'Sons of the Empire', noted in the *Brighton Herald* 3 Nov 1900, p.3. Cited by Frank Gray in 'James Williamson's 'Composed Picture'', op. cit., p.210.

⁷⁹ Ad in the *Northampton Mercury*, 27 Aug 1901. A few scenes of the Boer War were also shown.

⁸⁰ *Bolton Chronicle*, 2 Feb 1901.

⁸¹ *Manchester Evening News*, 7 May 1901, p.5. Re Edison's Animated Pictures. This added: 'Two hours and a half of vibrating 'graph' pictures is rather too much of a trial... A little more of the band and less of the pictures would probably have been welcomed by the audience.'

⁸² 'Orientalism' as used in the currently fashionable sense popularised by Edward Said (and one should add that his work has been much criticised) means a prejudiced western interpretation of eastern cultures and peoples. Similarly, 'occidentalism' implies negative, prejudiced views of the west when found in eastern societies.

⁸³ For example, we find two such articles in consecutive weeks in *Leslie's*, even in the wake of the Uprising. On 3 November 1900 China was described as 'a tremendous force' which would ultimately triumph: '... she will awaken, and nothing in the world can stop her then'. A week later another writer expressed similar optimism and positive views, noting that westerners

who went to China were often captivated by the society: 'those who have once lived there are never satisfied anywhere else', adding that they often settle down and marry, and thereafter come to find western language and manners 'harsh and abrupt'. See 'A Chinese statesman's solemn warning', LW 3 Nov 1900, p.318, and Guy Morrison Walker, 'China's irresistible charm', LW 10 Nov 1900, p.343. Pulitzer's New York *World* was commendably fair, and regularly included the Chinese side of the Boxer story, reported the deaths and losses incurred by Chinese citizens, and avoided anti-Chinese terminology. See Jane E. Elliott, 'Who Seeks the Truth Should Be of No Country : British and American Journalists Report the Boxer Rebellion, June 1900', *American Journalism* 13, no. 3, Summer 1996, p.255-285.

⁸⁴ The *Illustrated London News* reported the use of a Punch and Judy show as an anti-foreign instrument, and pictured a show set up in a Chinese street, with a member of the Boxers' society haranguing a small crowd while his associate operated the show. See 'The Boxers' propaganda: the Chinese punch and judy as an anti-foreign instrument', *Illustrated London News*, 25 Aug 1900.

⁸⁵ John M. Mackenzie, ed. *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester University Press, 1984), p.214, 226.

⁸⁶ See John M. Mackenzie, ed. *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), p.212.

⁸⁷ The generally negative image persisted in American films until the 1920s: the most anti-Chinese period in American cinema was before 1923, according to Leyda. Equally there was an anti-western tinge in Chinese media, and Leyda tells us that, 'The psychological need to "humiliate the foreigner" is still a dominant ingredient of historical films, whether of the far or the recent past.' Leyda, *Dianying*, p.4.

⁸⁸ Incidentally, Li himself was subsequently filmed on a number of occasions (see above).

⁸⁹ The only other early filmic reference I have found to China in international context is a Biograph film of diplomat Lord Charles Beresford returning from his mission in China, which was screened at the Palace music hall in London. Cited in a Palace Theatre programme, 1 Apr 1899, held in the British Library, shelf mark 11796.d.6.