

SEARCHING FOR THE *CHINE* IN FRANÇOIS BOUCHER'S CHINOISERIE

By

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To my grandparents: Roy and Dana Howard

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
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In 1737, the Beauvais tapestry manufactory commissioned François Boucher to design a lavish series depicting “Chinese” subjects, to be given as diplomatic gifts to other European powers. Eventually—for reasons explored in my study—a set of the tapestries would also be sent in 1764 to the Qianlong Emperor’s palace at Yuanming Yuan, where a special pavilion was built to house and display this kingly gift. Ironically, the emperor saw nothing Chinese in the tapestries, but regarded them as an example of ‘exotic’ European art, which he was pleased to incorporate into his growing collection of such art. The emperor’s response illustrates the disparity between authentic Chinese art and Chinese-inspired art for Europeans. It suggests that chinoiserie represented something besides East Asia.

This thesis focuses on the cultural politics of chinoiserie, with a particular focus on Boucher’s engagement with this stylistic mode that came into vogue in the eighteenth century. It seeks to understand how contact with China and Chinese art sometimes did and sometimes did not have anything to do with the production of East Asian-inspired art for Europe. Boucher’s oeuvre of chinoiserie provides a particularly useful case study for this endeavor because it demonstrates how even closely

appropriated elements of East Asian art could be quickly transmuted to serve as a generically orientalist vehicle for representing cultural politics within France.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

In January 1767, Chinese Jesuits Aloys Kao and Etienne Yang returned to their native China after a 14-year sojourn in Paris with French names and a set of Beauvais tapestries intended to be offered as a diplomatic gift to the Qianlong Emperor (1711-99) from Louis XV (1710-74). Although Kao and Yang were not official ambassadors to the Emperor of China, they were able to deliver the gifts using their connections to the Jesuits who resided within the Emperor's court. When the tapestries made their way into Qianlong's collection, they were housed in the European Pavilions at Yuanming Yuan until it was sacked by French and British troops during the Second Opium War in 1860. At least four pieces from the set were still in China as of 1924.¹

The set of tapestries sent to Qianlong was titled *Le Tenture chinois*, or *The Chinese Series*, and it was designed by François Boucher (1703-70) in 1742 (Figures A-1 to A-6). This series was an updated version of a previous 'Chinese' tapestry series woven at Beauvais from around 1690, titled *The Story of the Chinese Emperor*. Boucher's series resembles the rococo pastorals—a combination derived from his study of Venetian landscapes and Flemish figures—that he painted during the 1730s, such as the *Imaginary Landscape with the Palatine Hill from Campo Vaccino* of 1734 (Figure A-7).² Boucher's painted models for the tapestry series included scenes of feasting, dancing, fishing,

¹ Candace Adelson, *European tapestry in the Minneapolis Institute of Arts* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 1994), 333.

² Jo Hedley, *François Boucher: Seductive Visions* (London: The Wallace Collection, 2004).

hunting, a market, and a garden as well as a *Chinese Marriage* and an *Audience with the Emperor* (Figures A-8 and A-9). They were created from source material that included at least one Chinese text housed at the Royal Library, Dutch and Jesuit memoirs from their visits to China and Japan, *The Story of the Chinese Emperor* tapestry series, Boucher's own chinoiserie prints which he designed in the 1730s, and his personal collection of East Asian and East Asian-inspired art. The set of tapestries sent to the Emperor was commissioned in 1759 by Louis XV to be given to his Finance Minister, Henri Bertin, and it was Bertin who entrusted the tapestries in the hands of the missionaries to be delivered in the name of the King.

The passage of the tapestries to China was ultimately the result of a direct line of communication between the Kangxi Emperor (1654-1722) and Louis XIV (1638-1715) which was established by the Jesuits in the Imperial court at Beijing, when Louis XIV sent an embassy of Jesuits scientists in 1685. The Qianlong Emperor, grandson of Kangxi, had a particular interest in European aesthetics and employed many Jesuits as artists and advisors in his court. He also had more contact with Europe than his two predecessors, using French Jesuits to commission suites of engravings to be made in Paris and shipped back to China and to help design the European Pavilions at Yuanming Yuan.³ Despite his

³ See Richard E. Strassberg, "War and Peace: Four Intercultural Landscapes" in Marcia Reed and Paola Demattè (eds.), *China on Paper: European and Chinese Works from the Late Sixteenth to the Early Nineteenth Century* (Los Angeles, California: Getty Research Institute, 2007), 89-137. See also Young-tsu Wong, *A Paradise Lost: The Imperial Garden Yuanming Yuan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001).

special interest in the West, the Qianlong Emperor saw the decline of Chinese relationships with Europe. In 1784, the Emperor issued an edict to prevent missionaries from entering China from Macau, and tensions between China and Europe were further increased when the Emperor was personally insulted by the McCartney Embassy in 1793.⁴ By the end of the eighteenth century, much of the social and political discontent in China was blamed on the intrusions of the West, and, by 1811, Christianity was forbidden in China under pain of death.

My study outlines how the tapestry series designed after Boucher's painted models came to be by tracing the history of the two 'Chinese' tapestry series produced at Beauvais, and by examining how contact with China and other extra-European cultures shaped the ideological framework from which the series was created. It also provides an analysis of Boucher's chinoiserie designs from the 1730s and 1740s, his source material, and the significance of his chinoiserie designs in mid-eighteenth-century France. This study of Boucher's chinoiserie demonstrates that although elements of Chinese culture could be studiously appropriated for chinoiserie designs, ultimately these designs were not meant to represent China, but rather an orientalist version of 'China' as understood in eighteenth-century France. By conceptualizing the *Chinese Series* to in relationship to its predecessor, *The History of the Chinese Emperor*, my thesis maps the history of French contact with China from the reign of Louis XIV to the destruction of Yuanming Yuan in 1860, to demonstrate how cultural

⁴ Christina Miu Bing Cheng, *Macau: a Cultural Janus* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University, 1999), 59.

contact played a necessary role in the creation of chinoiserie and how the *Chinese Series* came to be an artifact of contact with lasting significance.

This study seeks to rectify the lack of interpretive analysis of the Boucher's tapestry series as well as limited understandings of how the processes of cultural contact between France and China in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries led to the creation of chinoiserie. It is my argument that the lack of information on chinoiserie as a complex cultural phenomenon is a direct result of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century criticisms of the mode, which denounced East Asian-inspired art as a degenerative force within French culture. Chinoiserie has remained somewhat of an enigma, and some scholars have treated it as an "oddity" and an extravagance of the Ancien Regime.⁵

My study challenges the conventional wisdom of most scholarship on chinoiserie. In the past, some scholars have treated chinoiserie as if it were merely a style that existed within the realm of the decorative arts, inspired solely by a fictive version of China.⁶ I argue that chinoiserie is in fact the manifestation of European contact with East Asia during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and that this contact, and subsequent inspiration for chinoiserie, was motivated by a colonial expansionist agenda that was largely unsuccessful in China. The fact that chinoiserie has been treated as mere decorative art is an

⁵ Dawn Jacobson, *Chinoiserie* (London: Phaidon, 1993), 2; Jacobson begins the opening statement of her book saying "Chinoiserie is an oddity."

⁶ Katie Scott. "Playing Games with Otherness: Watteau's Chinese Cabinet at the Château de la Muette." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 66 (2003), 189-248; I say most because Scott writes that it is her intention to "take chinoiserie seriously."

extension of this agenda as well as part of the overall negative perception of the decorative arts because of their association with the Rococo.

Furthermore, chinoiserie was created to simultaneously fulfill and stimulate the desires and anxieties that French audiences had about themselves and about Asian peoples and their cultures.⁷ Images of ‘Chinese’ people in East Asian-inspired art were created within an early modern racial ideological framework and subsequently informed Europe’s ideas about how actual Chinese people looked, dressed and acted—ideas that developed into racial stereotypes. Ideas about race embedded in chinoiserie were part of an intellectual system geared toward organizing the world’s people into a hierarchically arranged system with Europeans at the apex. The images of ‘Chinese’ peoples in chinoiserie were used as comparative tools, so that European audiences could compare how alike and different they were from their Asian counterparts. Dress and physiognomy in East Asian-inspired art are common articles of contention in chinoiserie scholarship that often denounces the ‘authenticity’ of chinoiserie, and particularly Boucher’s *figures chinoises*, as masquerade-like.⁸ I demonstrate the importance masquerade plays in chinoiserie by pointing out how Boucher references the significant roles costume and props had in creating a representation of ‘Chinese-ness.’

⁷ Scott, “Playing Games with Otherness.”

⁸ Madeleine Jarry, *Chinoiserie: Chinese Influence on European Decorative Art, 17th and 18th Centuries* (New York: Vendome Press, 1981).

It is my understanding that chinoiserie images and their reception were part of a complex orientalist agenda in which individual European nations fought among themselves to obtain religious, mercantile and eventually political power over East Asia.⁹ Europeans met considerable resistance from Chinese emperors who strictly limited their entrance and trading rights within China so as to keep their empire free from European influence. This resistance, which inhibited Europe's ability to colonize China and contributed to Europe's disillusionment with the Celestial Empire, was one reason Chinese figures were often derided in chinoiserie images, why the appeal of chinoiserie faded toward the end of the 18th century, and why chinoiserie was mocked so fiercely by its opponents. In *Cultural Contact*, Mary Sheriff takes issue with what she believes is a discrepancy between the scholarly attention paid to nineteenth versus eighteenth century Orientalism. She pinpoints the difference in the power dynamics between the two periods as the reason for the disparity: "when Europeans meet Ottomans on more or less equal footing—as they did in the eighteenth century—the visual record of their real or imagined encounters is taken as mere fashion. When Europeans begin to appropriate Ottoman territories in North Africa, the images that focus on the peoples of those territories are read as serious business, whether those images are faithful recordings, wishful fantasies, or racist caricatures."¹⁰ Sheriff says even racist caricatures are not a "pure product"

⁹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).

¹⁰ Mary D. Sheriff, *Cultural Contact and the Making of European Art since the Age of Exploration* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 11.

of Europe: “Interpreters sometimes sidestep the possibility that experiences with other cultures, practices, traditions—no matter the extent to which they were caricatured, misunderstood, appropriated or politically dominated by the West—had actual formative effects on European art and artists.”¹¹ Scholars such as Katie Scott, Perrin Stein, Michael Yonan, Mimi Hellman, David Porter, Julie Hochstrasser, and Madeleine Dobie have begun to interpret chinoiserie as global art with localized specificity that had formative consequences for its European audiences. My emphasis on cultural contact comes from Sheriff’s text, and my study demonstrates how a mode of art dismissed as “mere fashion” should be understood in relationship to globalization and the shifting cultural politics in France between the ages of discovery and colonialism.¹²

Chinoiserie was closely connected with the Rococo, the Ancien Regime, and the monarchy. Rococo artists were severely criticized for creating chinoiserie designs, and the same charges that critics leveled against the rococo—effeminization, frivolity—have also been applied to chinoiserie. Boucher’s chinoiserie has been characterized as inherently and stereotypically rococo and dismissed as charming but ultimately artificial and vacuous. It seems that East Asian-inspired art in eighteenth-century France suffered from what has been called ‘the Pompadour Effect,’ meaning it was the subject of a series of concentrated critical attacks on women and femininity in Boucher’s work that alluded to the Marquise de Pompadour, and that hyperbolized her political

¹¹ Sheriff, 12.

¹² Scott, “Playing Games with Otherness.”

agency and influence over the King.¹³ Pompadour was a supportive patron of the porcelain factory at Sèvres: a set of Boucher's tapestries hung in her apartments at Versailles, and Boucher designed a set of overdoors for her *boudoir chinoise* at Bellevue.

From the time the tapestry models were exhibited in 1742 until they were sent to China in 1767, reformists such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78) and Denis Diderot, who were phobic to both China and the rococo, began a campaign to transform what they saw as a debilitated artistic and political regime. In 1747, Denis Diderot complained about what he saw as the shameful and insipid decline of French virtuousness and aesthetic standards: "Giddy young people . . . talking of everything and knowing nothing, finding finesse in frivolities . . . interrupting to talk of politics and concluding with profound reflections on a hairstyle, a dress, a Chinese figurine, a Meissen nude or jug, a *pantin* by Boucher."¹⁴ It seemed to them that France, from the Crown to the Academy, had been emasculated by pioneering women, chiefly Pompadour, and undoubtedly with the help of Boucher, to corrupt the nation using feminine and exotic wiles.¹⁵

The deleterious influence of luxury goods, associated directly with femininity and Asian imports, became the chief moral concern of Rousseau in his

¹³ Melissa Lee Hyde, *Making up the Rococo: François Boucher and His Critics* (Los Angeles, California: Getty Research Institute, 2006).

¹⁴ Cited in Jo Hedley, *François Boucher: Seductive Visions* (London: The Wallace Collection, 2004), 95. See Denis Diderot, "La Promenade d'un Sceptique," 1747.

¹⁵ Hyde, 62-63.

Discourse on the Arts and Sciences and *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*.¹⁶

And, in his often quoted *Letter to d'Alembert on the Theatre*, Rousseau invoked both the image of Madame de Pompadour and the Orient to express his ire, writing "every woman in Paris gathers in her apartments a harem of men more womanish than she . . . while the idol lays stretched out motionless on her chaise-longue, with only her tongue and her eyes active."¹⁷ No doubt Pompadour was the intended target of his vitriol; Pompadour herself had appropriated harem imagery when she commissioned a set of overdoors from Carle van Loo for her residence at Bellevue that depicted her as a sultana taking coffee.¹⁸

After the 1750s, the Orient, both the Near and Far East, was increasingly associated with the moral decline of French culture. This reformist campaign monopolized the way scholars and critics treated East Asian-inspired art; and, since then, few scholars have attempted to address chinoiserie seriously as anything other than a stylistic offshoot of the rococo. The word chinoiserie itself is often used with particularly pejorative connotations, and some contemporary scholars use the term to distinguish 'bad' appropriations of Chinese culture apart

¹⁶ Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger, *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, England: Palgrave, 2003).

¹⁷ Quoted in Madeline Dobie, "Orientalism, Colonialism, and Furniture in Eighteenth-Century France," in Dena Goodman and Kathryn Norberg (eds.), *Furnishing the Eighteenth Century: What Furniture Can Tell Us about the European and American Past* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 13-36.

¹⁸ Perrin Stein, "Amédée Van Loo's Costume Turc: The French Sultana." *The Art Bulletin* 78/ 3 (September 1996), 417-438.

from 'good' ones.¹⁹ Until recently, rococo and chinoiserie have been approached most often in terms constructed by their critics rather than in terms originally intended by their creators.²⁰

To limit the scope of my study, I review the literature on chinoiserie and provide a brief history of French contact in China brought about by Louis XIV's Jesuit embassy of 1685. Then, I will focus on Boucher's chinoiserie prints and tapestry models from the late 1730s and early 1740s. Boucher's work in chinoiserie began when he was reproducing Watteau's *Figures chinoises* in the late 1720s. He was himself an avid collector of Asian and Asian-inspired porcelains, prints, costumes, furniture and other curious items like shells and fireworks, and his interest in these items informed his chinoiserie designs. During the 1730s he designed and engraved numerous chinoiserie prints that were held in private collections and sold to be used as models for painted decorations on lacquer furniture and porcelain. The models for the tapestry series were the culminating work of his career in chinoiserie and acted as a visual representation of China when it held a particularly privileged position within French culture and political and philosophical thought. I argue that Boucher's tapestry models should be read as a 'veiled' representation of France during the reign of Louis XV achieved through an illustration of an idealized 'Chinese' society that is derived from the Jesuits' promotion of China as a model civilization.

¹⁹ Basil Guy, *The French Image of China before and after Voltaire*; Studies on Voltaire and the eighteenth century, 21 (Genève: Institut et Musée Voltaire, 1963).

²⁰ Hyde, *Making up the Rococo*.

Since the beginning of the seventeenth century, Jesuit missionaries had promoted an ideal version of China in Europe for their own political purposes. Remaining in China allowed them to enjoy a unique relationship with the Imperial Court, gave them a monopoly in the market of proselytization, and placed them in a position to promote cultural exchange with France. The Jesuits carefully crafted version of China, one in which the nation stood as the exemplum of morality and good government, was the basis for thinking about China in mid-century France. From the 1730s and into the 1760s, proponents of China, most notably Voltaire, marketed the nation as a symbol of virtue, prosperity and universal civilization, and chinoiserie was thusly understood by them as a visual and physical manifestation of that great nation.²¹ Detractors of China and Chinese influence on French culture, such as Rousseau and Diderot, began to associate Boucher's 'Chinese' designs with what they considered to be the downfall of heroic French culture. Boucher's exhibition of his painted models for the *Chinese Series* in 1742 represents the climax of 'China mania' that swept through France during the 1730s. The passage of the *Chinese Series* to China in 1767 then marked the beginning of the end of the idealized Chinese model in France. Ironically, the idealized version of China formerly represented France and then came to represent France in China. The *Chinese Series* sent to Qianlong closed a circuit loop in the history of cultural contact between Europe and East Asia during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

²¹ Guy, 223.

In sum, the aim of my study is to examine the tapestry series and the mode of chinoiserie more broadly as the product of cultural contact. I argue that even though *chinoiserie* often had little to do with China, various modes of cultural contact—scientific and artistic exchange, trade, diplomacy, proselytization and colonial expansion—among the nations of Europe, but particularly France, and those of East Asia were foundational for the production of East Asian-inspired art in the eighteenth century. France and China actively decided how they would present their culture to others, which characteristics from foreign cultures they would adopt into their own, and how they would use foreignness as a means for representing themselves.

In Chapter 2, I review the current literature on chinoiserie and provide an analysis of the benefits and limitations of the methodological frameworks that have been used to examine chinoiserie in modern scholarship, and how those frameworks have shaped our understanding of the genre. I suggest a new conceptual framework to study chinoiserie—that of cultural contact—and argue that this relational mode of examination will provide a better understanding of how East Asian-inspired art came to be and how it was relevant in Chinese and European cultures during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Recent scholarship pays special attention to how cultural artifacts and the ideas about certain cultures attached to those artifacts were transmitted to different peoples and locations around the globe and evolved over time. In Chapter 3, I provide an analysis of *The Story of the Chinese Emperor* series in which I argue that it is both an idealized representation of French contact with the Imperial court at

Beijing and a symbolic representation of France's desire for cultural colonization of China. In Chapter 4, I discuss how Boucher created his chinoiserie through his own contact with East Asian and East Asian-inspired source material in the form of imported objects and printed texts and images. In Chapter 5, I provide my analysis of Boucher's models for the *Chinese Tapestries* in which I argue that the series provides a representation of a Chinese utopia that should be read as an allegory of good government and prosperity under the reign of Louis XV. Finally, in Chapter 6, I demonstrate how Boucher's tapestries were valued as an exotic representation of French culture within the Qianlong Emperor's collection in the uniquely hybrid European Pavilions at Yuanming Yuan.

CHAPTER 2 APPROACHES TO CHINOISERIE

Chinoiserie is a hybrid European mode of art inspired by contact among the nations of Europe, China, India and Japan. Made for European audiences, it provides an acculturated version of what China, or the Extreme Orient, “ought to be like” according to early modern European understanding of East Asia using a complex arrangement of East Asian and European styles, techniques, and art objects.¹ These objects, styles, and techniques represented East Asia to an audience who had little actual contact with the people the objects represented. Later, those diverse export items, and those manufactured in Europe after East Asian adaptations, collectively became known as chinoiserie, named aptly for the nation that seemed to best represent the Far East in Europe during the eighteenth century.

The word chinoiserie itself did not come into use until early in the nineteenth century; and its meaning, like rococo, was distinctly pejorative. It first appeared around the time of the First Opium War in Louis M. Clairville’s *L’opium et le champagne, ou La guerre de Chine, chinoiserie en un acte*, which showed at the Opéra-Comique, in May 1842. It then appeared in the Bescherelle Dictionary of 1845 and was defined as something done in imitation of the Chinese. While the suffix ‘erie’ can simply mean ‘esque’ as in ‘Chinese-esque,’ it was commonly used to identify certain Asian—particularly domestic commodities such as parasols—and Asian-inspired items as kitsch. Chinoiserie represented

¹ Oliver Impey, *Chinoiserie: the Impact of Oriental Styles on Western Art and Decoration* (New York: Scribner’s, 1977), 9-10.

the excesses of 'bad' Asian culture and the poor tastes of those Europeans who partook in it.² The revulsion for chinoiserie can be demonstrated in Gustave Flaubert's response to a critic for what he considers a mischaracterization of the décor in Salammbô's bedchamber: "Nor do I accept the word "chinoiserie" as applied to Salammbô's chamber, despite the "exquisite" you add to take the curse off it (like "devouring" applied to "dogs" in the famous Dream)."³ In 1872, Philippe Burty coined the term 'japonisme' in an essay of the same title in which he argued it should be named so as a "new field of study." In doing so, Burty was specifically defining japonisme from both 'japonnerie' and chinoiserie. In a broader sense, he was defining high and low art; fine from decorative, and reinserting what he saw as a lack of seriousness into japonisme that would distance it from the disreputable kitschiness of 'japonnerie' and chinoiserie.⁴ Edouard Manet's 1868 *Portrait of Emile Zola* demonstrates an intellectual mode of consuming japonisme (Figure A-10). Zola is seated at a desk with an *ukiyo-e* print tacked to the wall behind him, alongside a print of Manet's *Olympia*.

The need to distinguish between a preferred intellectual or aesthetic mode of consuming Asian art, as opposed to what was considered a base, consumer-driven approach can also be seen Edmond de Goncourt's remark, "The taste for

² Basil Guy, *The French Image of China before and after Voltaire*, Studies on Voltaire and the eighteenth century, 21 (Genève: Institut et Musée Voltaire, 1963).

³ Gustave Flaubert. *The Letters of Gustave Flaubert: 1857-1880*, translated by Francis Steegmuller (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1980), 42-43.

⁴ Jan Hokenson, *Japan, France, and East-West Aesthetics: French Literature, 1867-2000* (Madison, New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004), 29-30.

things . . . Japanese! We were among the first to have this taste. It is now spreading to everything and everyone, even to idiots and middle-class women."⁵ The hefty criticism leveled against chinoiserie and japonnerie in the nineteenth century ridiculed the genre and characterized it as unworthy of scholarly attention. After Burty's invention of japonisme, either japonnerie or japonaiserie could be used to distinguish art from kitsch. There was no equivalent or complementary term for 'good' 'Chinese' art.

In the twentieth century, the term chinoiserie began to be used to identify a vast range of objects and designs related to East Asia that proliferated in Europe, from as early as the Roman era to present day. These now-traditional texts on chinoiserie attempt to provide a well-rounded vision of the plethora of East Asian-inspired objects that entered European collections *en masse* during the early modern period. These texts take on the enormous task of compiling incredibly eclectic works created in diverse regions for very different purposes and patrons, under the heading of an ambiguous genre that evolved from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. They generally do an excellent job of organizing the diverse material into chronological segments classified by media and nationality. They also demonstrate how chinoiserie is both an orientalist mode—meaning it represents a version of China, or East Asia, produced by a European body of knowledge that has more to do with Europe than China—and

⁵ Quoted in G. Becker and N. Philips, *Paris and the Arts, 1851-1896; From the Goncourt Journal* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1971), 106.

a hybrid form of art contingent upon sustained cultural contact between Europe and East Asia.⁶

However, texts on chinoiserie almost always fall short in their critique of what images of East Asian people meant to European audiences, although they often demonstrate how these images were acquired and how they were used. They generally avoid sustained analysis of European interpretations of East Asian peoples found in chinoiserie that are often (racist) caricatures by dismissing these images as naïve examples of nascent or impotent racial ideologies, as poorly executed designs, or as a fashion of the times. Their quick dismissals of such images often hinge on the notion that chinoiserie is not meant to be taken seriously and reinforce negative assumptions about the genre. Some new approaches to chinoiserie, specifically Katie Scott's, apply a sustained approach to investigating how chinoiserie figures relate to racial ideologies to demonstrate that although chinoiserie does not take itself seriously at times, the mode deserves more in-depth, scholarly attention.⁷ Some contemporary scholarship on chinoiserie demonstrates how the mode played an important role in Europe's methods for identifying peoples from East Asia apart from and in relation to Europeans, Africans, and Amerindians.⁸

⁶ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).

⁷ Katie Scott, "Playing Games with Otherness: Watteau's Chinese Cabinet at the Château de la Muette." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 66 (2003), 189-248.

⁸ Julie Hochstrasser, "Remapping Dutch Art in Global Perspective: Other Points of View," in Mary Sheriff (ed.), *Cultural Contact and the Making of European Art Since the Age of Exploration* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 43-71. Madeleine Dobie, *Trading Places: Colonization and Slavery in Eighteenth-Century French Culture* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2010).

Traditional Approaches to Chinoiserie

Written in 1962, Hugh Honour's *Chinoiserie: The Vision of Cathay* is the standard for the traditional chinoiserie texts that followed. Honour identifies the purpose of his book as an attempt to answer the question of how chinoiserie came to be so different from the Chinese art objects that initially inspired the movement. His answer, in short, is that chinoiserie is the expression of how early modern Europe—and later, the United States—regarded the Orient.⁹ He writes that his book demonstrates how, through a “curious process of cultural inbreeding,” chinoiserie developed as an expression of an idealized vision of the Chinese Empire into an “autonomous style” that in turn influenced Europe’s understanding of the Orient.¹⁰ The impetus for creating chinoiserie was not in imitating Chinese art, but in expressing an idea of China as a utopic model for European society. Honour calls this concept of the ideal version of China the “vision of Cathay” and describes it as the way the Western world comprehends the East Asia during the medieval and early modern periods.

The Jesuits constructed an ideal version of China and presented it to Europe as a genuine portrait of the Celestial Empire.¹¹ This version of China was promulgated during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and it provided the ideological framework for the creation and collection of chinoiserie. This

⁹ Hugh Honour, *Chinoiserie: the Vision of Cathay* (New York: Dutton, 1962).

¹⁰ Honour, 1.

¹¹ See Basil Guy, *The French Image of China before and after Voltaire*, Studies on Voltaire and the eighteenth century, 21 (Genève: Institut et Musée Voltaire, 1963). See also David Porter, *Ideographia: The Chinese Cipher in Early Modern Europe* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2001).

version of China was derived from the work of Matteo Ricci, who arrived at Macau in 1583 and remained in China until his death in 1610, studying the language and religion. He was the first European to translate the five Chinese classics—*The Book of Odes*, *The Book of Documents*, *The Book of Changes*, *The Book of Rites*, and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*—and the four books of Confucius. He argued that for the Jesuits to be successful in their conversion of the Chinese, they must learn the language and customs. Most importantly, of the three Chinese religions—Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism—Confucianism was compatible with Christianity, and should be used as a cipher to establish continuity between China and Europe.¹² After Matteo Ricci's death, the writings and agenda of Nicolas Trignault framed the image of China for France.¹³

Trignault censored Ricci's unpublished writings and re-visited others to omit details such as unfavorable descriptions of prostitution and homosexuality. After Trignault, sinophilic writings on China provided immaculate portraits of the people and their culture. With the intention of continuing their sustained presence in China, the Jesuits espoused the character of the Chinese language, political system and morality, and their veneration of China earned them a privileged position there. Later, eighteenth-century scholars used Jesuit writings on China to compare and critique political, social, and economic progress in Europe. For instance, Basil Guy describes Voltaire's 1756 *Essai sur les mœurs*

¹² Porter, 78-132.

¹³Basil Guy. "Ad majorem Societatis gloriam: Jesuit Perspectives on Chinese Mores in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in G. S. Rousseau and Roy Porter (eds.), *Exoticism in the Enlightenment* (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1989), 66-85. See also Porter.

as an homage to China which he placed “in the vanguard of universal civilization” and to which he assigned “the most flattering role in his history.”¹⁴ Voltaire’s sources for this universal history were Jesuit, so he wrote of the Emperor as an embodiment of virtue itself, of the Chinese government as “the cult of justice,” and of the legal system that it “seemed not only to proclaim the dignity of man but also to prove the intrinsic value of human life.”¹⁵ Despite his Jesuit education, he identified China as the perfect deist nation without dogma—a notion developed specifically in opposition to the Jesuits’ teachings on Chinese religion and promoted the Chinese empire as a supreme example of religious toleration.

In his first chapter, Honour explains that the impetus for the “Vision of Cathay” was first conjured up during the fourteenth century by readers of Marco Polo’s *Description of the World* written in 1300, and *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* written in 1357, the latter of which Honour refers to as a “medieval best-seller.”¹⁶ Polo’s accounts were read as popular fiction and Mandeville’s as a testimonial; together they instilled in the minds of Europe the idea that China was Cathay, a fantastical land immeasurably distant from Europe, populated by immensely wealthy, extravagant and, above all, exotic foreigners. Honour credits China’s ‘xenophobia’ as the key factor in Europe’s infatuation with the East Asia, writing that the vision of the fabulous Cathay became a legend in the fifteenth century because the Ming Emperors closed China’s borders, preventing any new

¹⁴ Guy, *Studies on Voltaire*, 250.

¹⁵ Guy, 259-262.

¹⁶ Honour, 13.

information about China from entering the West. With the discovery of the sea route to Asia, new information about China began to circulate during the sixteenth century, and, with the rise of the Qing Dynasty during the seventeenth century, merchants were allowed to return to Peking under heavy restrictions. Honour argues that this limited interaction was just enough to kindle Europe's desire for more of the legendary Cathay:

Had free commercial relations between Europe and China been permitted, then or later, the romantic haze which surrounded the Flowery Land would have been dispersed and the legend of Cathay would consequently have faded away Europeans were thus given an occasional tantalizing glimpse of the fascinating country behind the Chinese barricade—a glimpse so brilliant and yet so fleeting that it merely whetted the appetite. Had the Chinese sought to cultivate the legend of Cathay, they could not have hit on a method more certain of success.¹⁷

Honour conflates the medieval Cathay with the virtuous Chinese empire marketed by the Jesuits to create a composite vision of China that he understands as the ideological framework within which chinoiserie was consumed. He describes this vision of China as merely an amalgamation of rococo-chinoiserie designs—upswept roofs, pagodas, oversized flowers, wispy-bearded old men and 'Chinese' coquets—ruled over by a philosopher-father-king. Because of the Chinese emperor's xenophobic defense from Western influence, China retained its mythical status in Europe, and Europeans were eager to import, imitate and even invent proof of its fabulousness. Enabled by the myth of Cathay, Jesuit scholars and Enlightenment philosophers alike invested in the creation of an ideal China, ruled by a philosopher-king who was

¹⁷ Honour, 16.

the apex of a rigorously fair and civilized government system that simply guided a supremely moral nation.

Spurred by visions of the mythical Cathay, sea-faring East India Companies were inaugurated, and sixteenth-century merchants embarked from Europe arrived toward the shores of China eager to take home tales and treasures alike. Portuguese merchants began trading in Japan in 1552 and were officially permitted to rent land and trade in Macao in 1557.¹⁸ The Dutch arrived in Canton in 1600, setting up a base on Formosa to trade with both the Chinese and Japanese; and, in 1612, the English set up a base in Siam. Honour suggests that the Portuguese imported enough Eastern wares that they had no need to produce their own East Asian-inspired wares; whereas, elsewhere in Europe, those nations that could not meet demands for Asian goods with imports, began attempting to make imitations. Factories at Delft, Nevers and Meissen began making faience, soft-paste porcelain and eventually hard-paste porcelain; while inventors elsewhere tried to replicate lacquer techniques, and hybrid versions of East Asian designs were circulated to decorate the surfaces of the furniture and porcelain. At this moment when European artists graduated from imitation to invention, according to Honour, chinoiserie became a genre in its own right. From there, he devotes a chapter to baroque chinoiserie, the first half of which focuses on the popularity of chinoiserie in the French court during the reign of Louis XIV, with special attention on 'Chinese' fêtes and masquerades. Next, his chapter on rococo chinoiserie discusses the regional

¹⁸ Honour, 41.

specificities in France, Germany, and Italy at the beginning of the eighteenth century and highlights the contributions of Watteau, Boucher and Pillement. He devotes an entire chapter to English rococo chinoiserie and another to the Anglo-Chinese Garden before moving into an extended conclusion.

In his chapter on “The Last Days of Chinoiserie,” Honour discusses the difficulty in defining the style of chinoiserie that was popular during the second half of the eighteenth century. He writes that he was incapable of using the phrase “neoclassical chinoiserie” because it is an oxymoron; the sparseness and symmetry of neoclassical design was antithetical to chinoiserie design, which reached its apex during the Rococo period.¹⁹ Similarly, he refused to title the chapter “Louis XVI Chinoiserie” because, he says, much of the chinoiserie produced at the time was made outside of France and was popular well after the monarch’s death. Instead, he chose to focus on the shift in thinking about China and chinoiserie during the latter part of the century: arguing that although chinoiserie was produced well into the Revolution, by the end of the century, the ideal image of China as a philosophical model for government had been played out, and, therefore, the fascination with Chinese Empire faded. In his final chapter, Honour discusses the influence of japonisme on nineteenth-century artists and the popularity of “japonaiseries,” arguing that the nineteenth-century fascination with Japan was begot by the same mode of thinking about Asia, and it was, therefore, an extension of chinoiserie.

¹⁹ Honour, 176-177.

The end of the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century marked a transitional period for contact among China and the nations of Europe during which time relations became increasingly tense. This period also marked the simultaneous disillusionment in the idealized version of China and decline in the popularity of chinoiserie in Europe. When trying to explain the reason for the decline of chinoiserie, Hugh Honour eulogizes Cathay: “As the eighteenth century proceeded, each of these distant countries seemed to draw nearer to Europe and consequently lost much of its enchantment. . . . China alone remained sufficiently distant and aloof to support a legend as romantic as that of Cathay. But, alas, she was not to remain inviolate forever, and once the isolation of China was broken, the vision of Cathay began to dissolve.”²⁰ Later, he cites the missions of Anson, Macartney and Amherst as contributing factors to the disillusionment of the vision of the ideal China and thus the downfall of chinoiserie at the end of the eighteenth century. For Honour, the more people actually knew about China, the less they could suffer the mythical version of Cathay supposedly represented in chinoiserie. But the problem here is more complex. In his chapter on “The Last Days of Cathay,” Honour describes his own difficulty in titling the chapter. At the end of the century, philosophers, political theorists, and economists were no longer inspired by China; that the titular classification ‘neoclassical chinoiserie’ is somewhat of an oxymoron—specifically, “this term might summon up a false impression of high-waisted Chinese nymphs with the coiffure of Mme Recamier, and of naked carrara

²⁰ Honour, 26-27.

marble pagods as lithe as an Apollo or an Antinous”—and that the designation ‘Louis XVI chinoiserie’ is also unsuitable, because the monarch did not live to see the period through.²¹ Jarry and Impey also include similar chapters, which describe the end of chinoiserie as coinciding with the close of the eighteenth century. I want to argue a different ending, actually not an ending at all, but a change of regime. The Jesuits’ special relationship with the Emperor was broken, and the notion of the ideal China they created—the ideological framework for chinoiserie—was nullified. Furthermore, the political and cultural context of the Old Regime in which chinoiserie thrived, ceased to be. So, chinoiserie was not simply incompatible with the Neoclassical style; it was unsuited for the quickly evolving socio-political climate in France. Interest in China and collecting chinoiserie did not die out; it merely acquired new meaning, and from this period the word chinoiserie was born.

Oliver Impey argues the hybridity of chinoiserie is its most distinguishing feature and the reason traditional twentieth-century scholars began using the term to cover such a broad scope of material:

Chinoiserie is thus the European manifestation of mixtures of various oriental styles with which are mixed rococo, baroque, gothick or any other European style it was felt was suitable. . . This, of course, is confusing, and it would be very much easier if we were able to subdivide the word into categories. But this would lead not only to some horrible new words but also to some horrible confusion. So it is better to use the umbrella term and to particularize when necessary.²²

²¹ Honour, 176-177.

²² Impey, 10.

Like Honour before him, Impey carefully notes that while imitation is an important process of chinoiserie, the mode itself does not merely comprise of degenerated versions of East Asian arts. He elevates the importance of the practice of imitation, saying the process is not simply the “degeneration of [Chinese] motifs into meaningless symbols, but a much more complex process, for new materials for copying were continually being made available.”²³ He writes that European factories made generally good imitations, “real copies,” before it began decorating porcelain in Kakiemon style rather than copying it, saying this is the essence of chinoiserie: Europeans aimed not to imitate, but to adapt Eastern styles and techniques to their own needs and tastes as demonstrated by the soft-paste porcelain wares produced at Chantilly in the 1730s-40s (Figure A-11).²⁴

Artists chose specific styles and techniques to imitate; imitation was necessary for understanding a style or technique, but once understood, they could be combined and adapted. He gives an example of how trade contact affected the processes of imitation and adaptation:

So here we might have a vase, say, made in Japan, of porcelain, in a European shape and painted in blue-and-white with a pattern taken from a Dutch imitation of a Chinese original that itself may well have been influenced by a Dutch pastiche of an earlier Chinese motif.²⁵

Thus, the process of chinoiserie is highly convoluted. Chinoiserie designs were constantly evolving through the processes of imitation, adaptation and substitution, making it difficult to trace the roots of a design to a single style or

²³ Impey, 10.

²⁴ Impey, 101.

²⁵ Impey, 103.

object. This process of imitation, adaption and substitution should be identified as “stimulus diffusion” or “trans-cultural diffusion.” Alfred Kroeber, who coined the term “stimulus diffusion,” defined the process: “the receiving culture adopts ideas and patterns from the outside source, but gives them a new, native content and is thus propelled in directions it would not otherwise have taken.”²⁶ Nearly all porcelain made in China and Japan during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was made for export and was not representative of their tastes or aesthetic principles. East Asian manufactures were also happy to oblige European requests for changes in designs that suited their needs and tastes. At a considerable cost, Europeans could send a book of engravings via the Dutch East India Company to Canton or Deshima to have the manufacturers decorate the porcelain exports with specific European designs, like religious scenes.²⁷

Madeleine Jarry uses a faience wall mural produced at Delft around the beginning of the eighteenth century to demonstrate how chinoiserie was the combined product of colonial exploration and exotic fantasy:

The attitude of the 17th century is perfectly exemplified by a wall panel composed of seventy-eight faience tile made, most likely, in Delft at the beginning of the 18th century. At the Rijksmuseum, this composite mural presents against a white ground a series of vividly colored Far Eastern scenes, which, in all probability, were copied from Chinese vases. At the top the deity Kuan-yin sits enthroned upon a lotus blossom surrounded by yellow curvilinear rays. At the center of the composition and below we find the somewhat

²⁶ Quoted in Julie Hochstrasser, “Remapping Dutch Art in Global Perspective: Other Points of View,” in Mary Sheriff (ed.), *Cultural Contact and the Making of European Art since the Age of Exploration* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 43-71; 48. Sheriff also quotes Kroeber in the “Introduction,” 13. See Alfred L. Kroeber, *Anthropology: Culture Patterns and Processes* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963), 176-178.

²⁷ Impey, 103.

anomalous presence of three black figures dressed in loincloths and feather headdresses. These represent the Tapuya Indians of Brazil, excerpted from paintings by Albert van Eckhout, one of the artists who had accompanied Prince Maurice of Nassau on his 1636-44 expedition to South America and Africa. The seafaring Dutch, always great explorers, had no difficulty with imagery in which African-like Indians appeared in a Chinese setting. Such a mixture simply satisfied their rather naïve notion of the exotic.²⁸

Jarry likely chose a faience wall mural, in particular, to represent the “attitude” of the 17th century toward foreign lands and peoples, because faience was one of the earliest European attempts to recreate porcelain. Much of the history of chinoiserie is characterized by European attempts to assuage the high costs of importing luxury goods from Asia by making their own versions of porcelain and lacquer. She notes that the mural is a “composite” representation, meaning it uses imagery from different cultures—Chinese and Japanese—but also probably from different time periods and genres within those cultures. More important, the combination of African-Indian and Asian figures “satisfied their naïve notion of the exotic”; the foreignness of the figures themselves signifies the exotic and pleasure in consumption of exotica. Although, the stylistic qualities and unusual flora, fauna and costumes were also key vestiges of the exotic, the emphasis is on the figures.

Her characterization of the seventeenth-century notion of the exotic as “naïve” is shared by Impey. He admits that “nowadays rococo-*chinoiserie* would be regarded as distinctly racist,” but the “fairly derisory air” in many

²⁸ Madeleine Jarry, *Chinoiserie: Chinese Influence on European Decorative Art, 17th and 18th Centuries* (New York: Vendome Press, 1981), 10.

chinoiserie was unintended.²⁹ In reference to the *Story of the Chinese Emperor*,

Jarry writes:

It seems that they had no concern for portraying the Chinese as members of any race other than their own—the Caucasian. Males were simply given a doll look, prominent eyes, and thin falling moustaches. As for the female image, it is hardly distinguishable from that of European women.³⁰

And, in reference to Boucher's chinoiserie, she quotes the Goncourts:

In the kind of blue-tinted landscapes that exist only in dreams, Boucher's spirited manner serves to draw from the weaver's shuttle a decorative effect of richness and plenty. All mixed together with a charming nonchalance are figural groups, exotic birds, strange animals, plumelike trees, wicker cages, multicolored flowers, farm equipment, fishing gear, rocky grottoes, pavilions with turned up roofs . . . in brief, the whole of the new picturesqueness that his century had characterized in a word created expressly for him—le fouillis ['tumbling abundance']. . . A few pagodas, some palms, costumes imitating the little magots or pagods imported by the *Compagnie des Indes*, pointed hats, bizarre musical instruments—such things are all he needs in order to give his compositions a touch of local color. Come close, however, and you discover that the Chinese lord and lady taking tea are in fact Parisians.³¹

During the seventeenth century and early eighteenth century, Europe's notion of the world was far more complex than they credit. This composite vision of East and West Indies illustrates how Chinese and Brazilian cultures would not have been connected during the Early Modern period if not for the ambitions of the sea-faring Dutch. As I demonstrate below, the combination of the geographically and racially distinct figures should not be mistaken or mischaracterized as naiveté, but understood as part of a complex process of identification and

²⁹ Impey, 14.

³⁰ Jarry, 18.

³¹ Quoted in Jarry, 26.

definition whereby peoples of the East and West Indies are defined apart from and in relation to each other for Western viewers.

New Perspectives on Chinoiserie

In her article, “Playing Games with Otherness: Watteau’s Chinese Cabinet at the Château la Muette,” Katie Scott attempts to reconstruct the now lost *cabinet chinois* at la Muette that had once been decorated with chinoiserie designs by Antoine Watteau from the 1720s. Scott suggests how versions of Watteau’s *figures chinoises* would have been pasted onto a paneled wall alongside a set of mirrors that would have reflected both the prints and the viewer, thus generating a spectacle in which the viewer could envision herself walking within the land of Cathay. The combination of mirrors and chinoiserie prints suggests that the *cabinet chinois* was a space for investigating sameness and difference through performative spectacle and personal introspection. Scott writes that the illusion of the spectacle is purposefully facile, a tactic she believes demonstrates her argument that chinoiserie is a joke: “Merely to play at difference, and in doing so to fall short of convincing illusion, smacks of frivolity. Chinoiserie is a joke; even its sins have appeared petty and trivial, unworthy of the effort to expose them.”³² The chinoiserie at la Muette combines both innocent and tendentious humor representative of a moment of “proto-colonialism” that existed in France between the ages of discovery and colonialism.³³

³² Scott, 207.

³³ Scott, 191.

Scott demonstrates that without the lighthearted arabesques, Watteau's *Figures chinoises* were a mode for inscribing racial distinction, using a form of persiflage geared toward humiliating the Chinese people as racial others.³⁴ She links the humorous degradation of the racial other to both gratification and the unification of a white, European racial and cultural identity by comparing chinoiserie to the Freudian tendentious joke in which a suitor receives sexual pleasure by partaking in gratuitous banter with the obstructor of his courtship at the expense of his love interest. Using one of Watteau's bonzes (Buddhist monks) from the cabinet as an example, she explains how the figure of the bonze encompasses both the pursued interest and the third-party obstructor. This scenario emphasizes the contradictory motives inherent in chinoiserie—the desire for the figure of the Oriental 'other' as a source for pleasure and the simultaneous need to reject that 'other' in order to establish superiority over him.

The binary relationships of self and other that exist in exotic representations of the colonial period are not applicable to Watteau's chinoiserie.³⁵ Early eighteenth-century chinoiserie was deeply connected to 'Chinese' masquerades in which the French elite could play at being an 'other' in order to create a more complex version of themselves.³⁶ Watteau's *figures chinoises* display a certain amount of hybridity in physiognomy, dress, and

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Scott, 210.

³⁶ Scott, 235.

landscape; but like the performers and party-goers who transform themselves using make-up and costume, they are ultimately French.

She suggests that Watteau deliberately substituted ambiguous images for 'authentic' ones to create masquerade-like clichés and double-entendres, making chinoiserie a humorous and witty game of refining one's identity through exotic ornament.³⁷ She also links it to games of chance by illustrating how chinoiserie objects were often used as prizes at roulette parties; the acquisition of these luxury items outside traditional means of production—the notion “that they were neither labored over nor labored for”—was a sign of nobility.³⁸ However, this influx of foreign luxury imports points to France's transition from a feudal to a mercantilist economic state that increased the avenues for social mobility in the eighteenth century and created an arriviste merchant class whose wealth challenged the aristocracy.

Finally, Scott connects chinoiserie to women's artistic agency and viewership, writing that within the privacy of their homes women used chinoiserie prints in *découpage*, cutting and pasting Watteau's *Figures chinoises* to decorate their *cabinets* as they pleased. Thus, in the eighteenth century, chinoiserie was associated with exoticism, changing social classes, luxury, female viewership, and women's artistic agency, all of which are aspects of rococo culture that came to be criticized during the 1740s and 1750s.³⁹

³⁷ Scott, 212.

³⁸ Scott, 236.

³⁹ Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger, *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, England: Palgrave, 2003).

David Porter argues that chinoiserie acts as a derisive and farcical force against the sinophilic image of China created by seventeenth-century Jesuits. He describes chinoiserie as the product of a “shift in prevailing modes of representation of China from the scholarly to the aesthetic.” While Sinologists struggled to “know” China, chinoiserie was a “flow of unmeaning Eastern signs” that allowed Europeans to “luxuriate [in their] own projected fantasies.”⁴⁰ He continues: “chinoiserie represents far more than a mere exotic twist on the rococo style. . . . Rather it suggests a dramatic reversal of those tropes and assumptions that had largely defined the European idea of China.”⁴¹ Jesuit Sinologists considered the Chinese to be “cultural authorities” in the realms of politics, agriculture and religion. Porter describes chinoiserie as a process of “cultural effacement” wherein Chinese cultural values were “flattened” into designs to be pasted and painted onto furniture and service ware, thus illegitimizing China’s cultural authority.⁴²

Perhaps the most virulent criticism of chinoiserie comes from David Porter who seethes:

There was little space on a teacup to evoke four millennia of cultural achievement, let alone the respectful awe such a prospect had once inspired. . . . With the reduction of an empire into a series of miniaturized motifs and the aestheticization of the very concept of the foreign into an excuse for the decorative extravagance, the ideal of a deep-rooted epistemological authority native to Chinese culture degenerated into brazen self-parody. No longer the home of ancient

⁴⁰ David Porter, “Chinoiserie and the Aesthetics of Illegitimacy.” *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* Vol. 28 (1999), 27-54; 28-30.

⁴¹ Porter, 29.

⁴² Porter, “Aesthetics of Illegitimacy,” 31.

and universal truths, China becomes in these images the site of capriciousness, folly and illusion.⁴³

Porter does not situate the problem with chinoiserie in the rococo style itself, but in the “aestheticization” of China. He does however say that the aesthetic China created by Europeans—chinoiserie—was merely an exotic twist on the rococo, and he goes on to demonstrate that the language he uses to condemn chinoiserie—“luxuriant,” “extravagant,” “a wellspring of depravity,” “wanton,” and “emasculating”—is derived from the criticisms of eighteenth-century English classicists who denounced chinoiserie, French influence and the *goût moderne*.

Despite his scathing view of chinoiserie, Porter does not argue that it is entirely the product of a European hegemonic fantasy. Rather, he stresses the fact that it is a hybrid of European and East Asian cultures, and that it deserves far more attention than it has received. He argues that chinoiserie’s hybridity is the cause for its disrepute and lack of scholarly attention. Porter characterizes chinoiserie as a hybrid because of its multicultural heritage and because of its status as “both legitimate art and fashionable commodity,” an oxymoron in the Western psyche which challenges “traditional conceptions of aesthetic value.”⁴⁴

His final reading of the illegitimizing power of chinoiserie has surprisingly feminist undertones; he argues, like Katie Scott, that chinoiserie provides a space for women’s viewership outside of traditional (masculine) modes of art consumption, and that this is also a likely cause for the scholarly consternation surrounding chinoiserie. He writes that critics like William Chambers and authors

⁴³ Porter, “Aesthetics of Illegitimacy,” 27-54.

⁴⁴ Porter, “Monstrous Beauty,” 400.

like William William Wycherley feared the agency that women would acquire through their interests in the applied arts, particularly exotic household items. He concludes that between the lines of anti-*chinoserie* rhetoric, critics feared that “a woman in possession of china has little need for a man,” that “chinoiserie represents for these women an emancipation of pleasure from the confines of patrilineal legitimacy,” and that women’s “wanton transgression in chinoiserie suggests a bold emasculating gesture.”⁴⁵

Like Porter, Michael Yonan and Alden Cavanaugh argue that the hybridity of chinoiserie blends traditional western concepts of fine art and commodity and, in doing so, instigates a certain amount of fear. Porcelain represented a foreign threat to Europe’s highly standardized, hierarchical genres of academic art. They argue that material culture, especially in the form of those items categorized as decorative arts, should be awarded the same theoretical attention as those traditionally favored academic arts—sculpture and painting. They describe this phenomenon, not in terms of favoring certain arts over others but in terms of fears and insecurities, writing that the “fear of the tchotchke” is endemic to Western art theory of the modern era:

Our disciplinary insecurity also derives from porcelain objects’ seemingly inapt application of decorative sophistication to utilitarian objects, a mixing that blurs the connection between art and tool that art historians have been eager to uncouple. Porcelain remains at odds with art history’s self-image as a discipline concerned with the

⁴⁵ Porter, “The Aesthetics of Illegitimacy,” 49-50.

significant cultural processes manifested in “great art” characterized by functionlessness, seriousness, and aesthetic detachment.⁴⁶

Yonan and Cavanaugh describe chinoiserie objects as the physical manifestations of a complex process of engagements with the Far East in which Western modes of thinking about Eastern cultures were at times parallel, competing and contradictory. They demonstrate how chinoiserie, despite all its fantastical elements, is a result of Europe’s interactions with the East and of the cultural and political implications of a burgeoning global system. Finally, they define chinoiserie as “a complicated process that involved both absorption of Chinese ideas and products into European culture as well as the projection of various urgencies, be they economic, cultural, or philosophical, onto a fictional image of the distant Chinese empire.”⁴⁷

Later, Yonan provides a reading of how elite European audiences might have identified with porcelain metaphorically. Using a porcelain tankard decorated with Boucher’s *Fire*, Yonan argues that porcelain’s transformation through fire, allowing it to metamorphose from a lowly earthly substance into a “dazzling,” sublime treasure should be read as the European aristocracy’s (inflated) view of their own status in a social and cosmological context.⁴⁸ In the same text, Mimi Hellman notes how rococo flower garnishes on chinoiserie

⁴⁶ Alden Cavanaugh and Michael Elia Yonan, *The Cultural Aesthetics of Eighteenth-Century Porcelain* (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), 7.

⁴⁷ Cavanaugh and Yonan, 7.

⁴⁸ Michael Yonan, “Igneous Architecture: Porcelain, Natural Philosophy, and the Rococo *cabinet chinois*” in Alden Cavanaugh and Michael Elia Yonan (eds.), *The Cultural Aesthetics of Eighteenth-Century Porcelain* (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), 65-86.

clocks and porcelain figurines simultaneously embodied French cultural values and defused any negative associations that might threaten French cultural confidence.⁴⁹ She refers to Katie Scott, arguing that the flowers surrounding the *pagodes* and other chinoiserie figurines mock and alienate the figure as an other to calm anxieties caused by the figures' overt foreignness embodied in their distended earlobes and exposed, laughing bellies. And, Adrienne Childs relates the black figures on a Meissen sugar bowl to the slave laborers who would have procured the sugar contained by the porcelain.⁵⁰

We should try to envision Europe's relationship with China during the eighteenth century within a larger global context in which Europe's contact among Asia, Africa and the Americas would be co-determinous. Madeleine Dobie argues that Europe's relations in the East and West Indies during the eighteenth century were structurally linked within a theory of displacement, which she loosely bases on the Freudian concept of the term—a process of repression and substitution—and applies to French culture at large.⁵¹ Dobie argues that eighteenth-century French writers and artists consciously and subconsciously underrepresented images of Africans and slavery because of their colonial guilt; while at the same time, they were obsessed with representing images of slavery through the trope of the harem in the Near and Middle East. The impetus for

⁴⁹ Mimi Hellman, "The Nature of Artifice: French Porcelain Flowers and the Rhetoric of the Garnish," in Alden Cavanagh and Michael Elia Yonan (eds.), *The Cultural Aesthetics of Eighteenth-Century Porcelain* (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), 39-64.

⁵⁰ Adrienne L. Childs, "Sugar Boxes and Blackamoors: Ornamental Blackness in Early Meissen Porcelain," in Alden Cavanagh and Michael Elia Yonan (eds.), *The Cultural Aesthetics of Eighteenth-Century Porcelain* (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), 159-178.

⁵¹ Madeleine Dobie, *Trading Places: Colonization and Slavery in Eighteenth-Century French Culture* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2010), 11.

Trading Places was Voltaire's 1756 *Essai sur les mœurs*, in which he argued that the Caribbean colonial islands were historically and geographically insignificant, contradicting the fact that they contributed to a hefty segment of the French economy and the influx of the goods produced there—coffee, sugar and cotton—helped shape French culture at that time. She writes that the silence—lack of writing and lack of visibility—on slavery as well as laws prohibiting slavery in France and preventing slave-owners from bringing slaves into France, were necessary avoidance mechanisms used because although slavery was believed to be morally wrong, it was economically beneficial.

She also argues that a practical reason for the lack of representation of Africans in the Caribbean colonies was that the French did not have the framework for understanding hybridity and the African diaspora because European understanding of peoples and cultures was linked geographically.⁵² Therefore, representations of peoples in the Caribbean and the Americas were focused on Amerindians who were envisioned as 'noble savages.'

In opposition to America, home of the 'noble savage,' China stood as an example of the zenith of civilization, representing an ideal version of society to which France could compare itself. An example of this can be seen in the 1769 performance—and subsequent representations of—the Dauphin following a plough in the traditional Chinese spring-tilling-of-the-soil ceremony, called the *k'eng-chi*. The Chinese version is illustrated in a 1696 print within the *Yuzhi Gengzhi Tu*, an imperially commissioned agricultural manual, and the French

⁵² Dobie, 12-13.

version is illustrated in a 1769 engraving by François Marie Antoine Boizot after Paulin de Fleins entitled *Monseigneur le Dauphin labourant* (Figure A-12). This performance likens the French economy to the supposed agrarian economy of the Chinese promoted by French Physiocrats, diffusing attention from the reality that the French economic system was generated largely by slave labor.

Anne Eatwell also discusses how imported commodities shaped European culture and were, in the European mind, structurally linked to the peoples and geographic locations that produced them illustrating how the world outside of Europe was classified ethnically and by the commodities they produced.⁵³ Trade competition among European nations increased motivations for colonial expansion and for the production of ‘domestic-exotic’ goods such as chinoiserie. As illustrated by Philippe Sylvestre Dufour’s frontispiece for the *Traitez Nouveaux et Curieux du café, du the, du Chocolat* titled *A Chinaman, Turk and American Indian*, each figure is associated with the commodity his culture was known for producing for Europe (1685, Figure A-13). The demand for tea, coffee, chocolate and sugar was directly related to the increase in trade of chinoiserie goods during the 1730s. The consumption of these hot liquids required specific vessels unique to each respective beverage.⁵⁴ For example, upon the birth of the Dauphin Louis XV presented Queen Maria Leszczinska with a *nécessaire*, a kit containing all

⁵³ Anne Eatwell, “Tea a la Mode: The Fashion for Tea and the Tea Equipage in London and Paris,” in Anne Dulau et al. (eds.), *Boucher & Chardin: Masters of Modern Manners* (Glasgow, Scotland: Hunterian, University of Glasgow, 2008), 50-76.

⁵⁴ Eatwell, 61.

the necessary items to make and serve tea, coffee and chocolate (1729, Figure A-14).

Dobie also coins the term “re-diversion,” identifying the process as one in which raw goods and materials from the Americas were disassociated from their region of origin and re-associated with the Orient when they were either stored in porcelain vessels or used to make luxury furniture that was lacquered and decorated with chinoiserie designs.⁵⁵ A drop-front secretaire designed by Rene du Bois with painted decorations after Boucher’s chinoiserie prints demonstrates how raw materials were ‘re-diverted’ using ‘Chinese’-inspired design imagery (c. 1770-75; Figure A-15). Julie Hochstrasser makes a similar argument about the connection between Asian luxury goods and raw commodities produced in the American colonies. She points out that porcelain sugar bowls in Dutch still-life paintings could conjure up nationalistic sentiments about Dutch economic and cultural success, or possibly challenge viewers to acknowledge their complicity in the brutal process of milling sugar, using slave labor in their colonies in Brazil.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Dobie, 63.

⁵⁶ Hochstrasser, 48-55.

CHAPTER 3 CHINOISERIE AND CULTURAL CONTACT

What were the social spaces of exchange between the Chinese and French in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries? What happens when cultures do not clash; but rather, meet under limited and mediated circumstances as imperial powers with more or less equal footing? Cultural contact between China and France began in the seventeenth century, when the French began sending mercantile vessels to purchase Chinese export commodities such as porcelain, lacquer and tea. Louis XIV sent an embassy of French Jesuit scientists to secure a direct line of communication between the two empires in 1685. His team was successful, and the addition of specifically French influence at the Celestial Court marked the beginning of a new phase of Jesuit interaction in China. Louis XIV intended to secure exclusive trading rights with China that would elevate France's status in Europe as an importer of East Asian goods and disadvantage France's European competitors. France did not secure the commercial alliance it sought, but it did obtain a special relationship with China, characterized by artistic and intellectual exchange. *The Story of the Chinese Emperor* tapestry series commissioned by the Beauvais manufactory commemorates this momentous occasion of cultural contact, albeit from a European perspective. The story of the French Jesuits' embarkation to China, and the tapestry series it inspired, prefigured Boucher's *Tenture chinois* and its own journey to China.

Inventories show that the members of the French court were avidly accumulating East Asian art objects during the early 1670s that included silks,

porcelains and lacquered furniture.¹ These imported East Asian objects were often placed among a plethora of objects in curiosity cabinet collections that also included shells, fireworks, weapons, and books with prints of exotic flora and fauna, sculptures, coins, maps, paintings, musical instruments, and costumes.² The increased demand for exotic goods cued the need for imports and domestically manufactured goods alike. Porcelain was the most sought-after commodity. During the Middle Ages mystical attributes were associated with porcelain—for instance, a porcelain bowl was said to break if poison was put in it—and these magical and fictional attributes made it a highly desired collectable.³ Faience—tin glazed earthenware—was introduced to Nevers from Italy as early as 1644, and was an early attempt to reproduce the shapes and texture of Chinese pottery. By the 1650s, the potters at Nevers were using chinoiserie designs derived from figures, birds and flowers on late Ming porcelain.⁴ Nevers also invented the style of *bleu persane* by reversing the Ming blue on white to create bold white designs on blue ground. Elsewhere in France, pottery factories were trying to imitate Chinese craftsmanship. Under the direction of Mme Chicanneau, the factory at Saint-Cloud began producing soft-paste porcelain at the end of the century and specialized in the production of *blanc de Chine*.

¹ Hugh Honour, *Chinoiserie: The Vision of Cathay* (New York: Dutton, 1962), 56.

² Oliver Impey and Arthur MacGregor, *The Origins of Museums: the Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Europe* (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1985).

³ Impey and MacGregor, 54.

⁴ Honour, 48.

The *Trianon de Porcelaine* was built in the winter of 1670-71 by architect Louis Le Vau in the park at Versailles for Louis XIV's mistress, Mme de Montespan. The Trianon was a single story and tiled with faience manufactured at Delft, Nevers, Rouen and Lisieux. The inside was decorated in a blue-and-white color scheme and accented with embroidered Chinese flowers. Madeleine Jarry indicates that the *Story of the Chinese Emperor* tapestry series was first made for Madame de Montespan's legitimized son, the Duc du Maine, who had a keen interest in China and the Jesuits' scientific work there.⁵ Hugh Honour suggests that Louis XIV's personal collection of Chinese or Chinese-inspired objects can be seen as symbolically motivated: "le Roi Soleil may well have considered the Son of Heaven as an alternative role to that of Apollo."⁶ It might be more likely that Louis XIV used chinoiserie as spectacle, as a way to underscore his own magnanimous identity. It would be an impressive display of the Sun King's power to harness the image of the supremely exotic and distant nation of China for the entertainment of his court. Any allusions to the Chinese emperor that might have been made by the kinds of East Asian objects in Louis XIV's collection would not have been intended to establish a likeness between the two. Rather, if Louis XIV garnered a representation of the Chinese emperor through his collections, it was done as an orientalist means of fashioning his own kingliness.

⁵ Madeleine Jarry, *Chinoiserie: Chinese Influence on European Decorative Art, 17th and 18th Centuries* (New York: Vendome Press, 1981), 16.

⁶ Honour, 54-55.

In 1684, Chinese Jesuit Michael Shen Fu-Tsung accompanied Father Philippe Couplet from Nanking on a tour of Europe and visited Versailles. It was noted in the *Mercure galant* that the King received the visitor at court and held a luncheon in his honor, during which Shen entertained the attendees by dining with chopsticks. Afterward, his portrait was engraved and sold publicly. The next year, Louis XIV held a masquerade ball at Versailles in which he dressed as half-Persian and half-Chinese, and his brother appeared as the Emperor of China. In January 1700, he gave a Chinese-themed ball at Marly in honor of the Duchesse de Bourgogne. Thirty musicians, dressed in 'Chinese' costumes, carried in the King on a palanquin; and twenty of the king's officers dressed as *pagodes* greeted the Duchesse as she entered. The other entertainers were also dressed in 'Chinese' costumes and the *accoutrements* of the banquet—napkins, tablecloths and plates—were all of oriental origin.⁷

In response to Shen's visit, Louis XIV sponsored a group of Jesuit scientists through the French Academy of Sciences, to travel to Beijing and present themselves to the Emperor as ambassadors and scientists to work in the latter's service at the behest of Louis XIV. They left France in 1685 and arrived at the court of the Kangxi Emperor in 1687. Of this group, Father Bouvet was selected to reside at the Emperor's court, then again to return to France in 1697 at the behest of the emperor to recruit more scientifically inclined Jesuits and

⁷Honour, 62-63.

foster a relationship of good faith between the emperor and Louis XIV.⁸ In 1697, Father Bouvet published *Portrait historique de l'empereur de la Chine* and dedicated it to Louis XIV.

In 1662, the Manufacture Royale de Gobelins had been created in “exclusive service to the king,” and it was tasked early on with making the tapestry series *L'Histoire du roi*, “devoted to glorifying the great events of Louis XIV’s reign.”⁹ The Manufacture Royale de Beauvais manufactured tapestries for clients other than the king, and from this factory came the *Story of the Chinese Emperor*. As noted above, the first set of the series was made for the Duc du Maine, Louis XIV’s legitimized son by Madame de Montespan. Jarry describes the series as “serious in spirit:” it became the “antecedent of all the other Orientalizing works that would be classified as chinoiserie [portraying] courtly life at Peking with fantasy, imagination, and a keen sense of the fabulous.”¹⁰ The *Story of the Chinese Emperor* was designed by Guy-Louis Vernansal, Blin de Fontenay, and Jean-Baptiste Monnoyer in the 1690s.¹¹ This series was designed after Jean de Berain’s grotesques and appropriated compositions, figures and motifs from the printed works of Johann Nieuhoff and Athanasius Kircher. The series was sold as a set of six chosen from the following: *The Emperor on a Journey*, *The Astronomers*, *The Collation*, *Harvesting Pineapples*,

⁸David E Mungello, *The Great Encounter of China and the West, 1500-1800*; Critical issues in history (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 67-68.

⁹ Jarry, 15.

¹⁰ Jarry, 20-22.

¹¹ Edith A. Standen, “The Story of the Emperor of China: A Beauvais Tapestry.” *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, 11 (1976), 103-117.

The Empress Sailing, The Return from the Hunt, The Emperor Sailing, The Empress's Tea, and two versions of the *Audience of the Emperor* (Figures A-16 to A-21).

Edith Standen attributes the costume of the Emperor in the *Emperor on a Journey*, to Kircher's portrait of the Kangxi in his *China Monumentis* published in Amsterdam in 1667; she notes that the figure is made to appear older than 13 years old, the age the Emperor was at the time the original portrait was made (Figure A-22).¹² She's also determined that the images of kow-towing to a Kircher print titled *Idol Worship*, which depicts a single man kneeling with his face to the ground in front of a naked, seated statue identified as *Pagodes Indorum Numen*.¹³ In the background, a pyramid of shrunken heads sits on a table centered between pillars of burning incense. The entertainer standing on a single stilt in the *Empress Sailing* is taken from Nieuhof's *Chinese Entertainers* in his *Description of an Embassy from the East India Co. of the United provinces to the Emperor of China* published in Amsterdam in 1665.¹⁴ Standen also identifies the seated figure with a white beard in the *Astronomers* as Father Johann Adam Schall von Bell and that the figure is derived from a portrait Schall engraved by Kircher in 1667 (Figure A-23).¹⁵ Schall's rank as a mandarin of the first order is depicted by his hat and by the white crane on the square of his robes, although

¹² Standen, 109.

¹³ Standen, 109.

¹⁴ Standen, 111.

¹⁵ Standen, 106; Standen also notes that Henri Cordier identified the very similar figure walking down the temple steps as Schall in horizontal version of the tapestry discussed in *La Chine en France au XVIII siècle* (Paris, 1910), 39.

Standen notes that the symbol pictured in the tapestry seems to be a white dragon rather than a crane. She also postulates that the astronomical equipment—the ecliptic armillary sphere and the celestial globe—pictured in the tapestry is derived from actual pieces made in China under the instruction of Father Verbiest and later depicted in Louis Le Comte's *Nouveaux Mémoires*.¹⁶

Because the tapestry series was commissioned specifically to commemorate the embarkation of the French Jesuit embassy, we should attempt to understand the series within the context of Louis XIV's desired outcomes for set mission. The series represents a reality in which the Jesuits—acting as embodiments of Western knowledge and culture—play a pivotal role in the daily life and education of the supreme authority of China. This story is a much-glorified version of the actual relations among the Chinese emperors and the Jesuits residing at their court. In the *Collation* and the *Astronomers*, European Jesuits are shown educating the Emperor in the ways of Western science and presumably religion. The central female figure of the tapestry series is the Empress, who appears to be enjoying an active outdoor lifestyle, *Harvesting Pineapples* and *Sailing*. She is white, European and presumably French. Arguably, the decision to represent the Empress as European was a practical one, because few highborn Chinese women were actually seen by the Jesuits in the Court at Beijing, and there were few printed images of Chinese women to serve as the basis for the figure of the Empress in the tapestry series. However, I think it is more likely that the Empress is figured as a blonde white woman

¹⁶ Standen, 108.

because of the long history of whiteness as the standard of beauty in European, and specifically French, painting and culture. Perhaps, the ‘marriage’ of the Chinese Emperor to a European woman can be seen as hope for successful Sino-French alliance. This way, the *Story of the Chinese Emperor* could be read as Louis XIV’s vision for a fruitful outcome of the successful marriage of French and Chinese cultures, one in which the Chinese are “properly” converted and assimilated to French culture.

When the French Jesuit mission arrived in Beijing in 1688, they ushered in a new era of Jesuit presence in China. Jesuits Fontenay and Visdelou arrived at court just in time to cure the Kangxi of a “long lasting fever” which immediately boosted the embassy’s reputation.¹⁷ Kangxi soon ordered Bouvet to return to France to bring more scientist-missionaries, and Bouvet returned on the first voyage of the *Amphrite* in 1700 with twelve more French Jesuits. The French Jesuits almost immediately came into conflict with the Portuguese Jesuits working in the Astronomical Bureau over issues of national interests, patronage and competition in scientific influence.¹⁸ The Portuguese Jesuits had been the chief purveyors of the Faith in China as part of the *Padroado*; they were awarded in the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas, and they essentially laid the framework for Jesuit missionary interaction in China during the seventeenth century.¹⁹ The Portuguese Crown established a Portuguese Vice-Province in 1612 and founded

¹⁷ Nicolas Standaert, *Handbook of Christianity in China* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2001), 314.

¹⁸ Standaert, 315.

¹⁹ Standaert, 286-87.

the Jesuit school at Macao that was responsible for training all Jesuits coming into China. In 1700, Jesuit General Tyrso Gonzalez de Santallas separated the French mission from the Portuguese Vice-Province, and Jean-François Gerbillon became the first Superior of the French Vice-Province. A new French church called Beitang was then built in 1703 with funding from both Kangxi and Louis XIV.

Before the French missionaries' arrival, Dutch merchants circumvented much of the cultural contact between France and China. The Dutch had a much longer history and a stronger presence in East Asia; they established trading ports in China and Japan, and mediated the dissemination of East Asian export wares in France. China and Japan had little interest or use for European imports, but were concerned with western impositions into their own cultures. They maintained strict trade relations with the nations of Europe, so actual contact between the merchants of Europe and China were limited to those interactions that took place within the port cities of Deshima, Canton and Macao where trade was heavily sanctioned by the native governments. In 1660, only 600 of about 10,000 European trading vessels belonged to the French, so in 1665, the first French East India Company was formed as part of Colbert's economic program.²⁰ By 1673, the French had established trading posts in Southern Madagascar, Senegal and Pondichery, but a French ship would not return from China until 1700. Despite the sluggish evolution of French mercantile

²⁰ Basil Guy, *The French Image of China before and after Voltaire*; Studies on Voltaire and the eighteenth century, 21 (Genève: Institut et Musée Voltaire, 1963), 31.

activity with China, France's relationship with China was ignited by the arrival of Louis XIV's Jesuit missionaries.

Basil Guy argues that the Society of Jesus was a "determining factor" in French trade with the East; he calls them "the first real brokers of exchanges," and writes that they created a body of knowledge on China that informed European interests in the Far East.²¹ Although the Chinese had no interest in European trade goods, they were piqued by European science, astronomy and mathematics. The Jesuits in China made a far greater impact on the cultural contact between Europe and East Asia than the marine merchants who transported chinoiserie goods. The Jesuits' interpretations of Chinese culture represented the people of East Asia in texts that supplemented and informed consumers of East Asian and Asian inspired goods. Not only did the Jesuits at Macao and in Beijing produce vast amounts of literature on China, they also translated important Chinese texts, and even acted as advisors within the Imperial court. French Jesuits taught astronomy, mathematics, European languages and European painting, design, and architecture at the court in Peking. Under the patronage of the Qianlong Emperor, Jesuits executed several portraits of the Emperor, Chinese painted silk scrolls, European and hybrid techniques, a series of military engravings and decorations for palace interiors, and designed the European Pavilions at Yuanmingyuan. Over the years, the Jesuits at Beijing sent hundreds of thousands of volumes of classical Chinese texts to the French Royal Library and, when in France, they published their own

²¹ Guy, 154

volumes (which included thousands of printed images) on Chinese history, government, religion and culture.

Although the Kangxi and Qianlong Emperors welcomed Jesuit scientists and artists in their court, outside of Macao and the court at Beijing, Jesuit influence in China was generally regarded with suspicion and sometimes met with hostility. Christina Cheng argues that the Jesuits' attempts to socialize the Chinese into Judeo-Christian beliefs and European languages, values and norms "was a project of religious colonization, de-culturation and acculturation," and asserts that the Chinese attempts to limit European presence within its borders should be seen as proactive measures to prevent European expansionism and proselytization.²² Qing Dynasty foreign policy followed that of its Ming predecessor, proscribing trade with Europe to Macao and Canton and allowing only the Dutch to trade in Beijing once every 8 years. The missionaries of the Society of Jesus held a privileged position in Beijing and were allowed to maintain a residence in Peking, but their presence in the city was often the source of controversy. When the Shunzhi Emperor died unexpectedly in 1661, German Jesuit and astronomical advisor to the Emperor, Adam Schall von Bell was imprisoned after being accused by the regent, Yang Guangxian, of being responsible for the Emperor's death. Although Schall was sentenced to death in 1664, the sentence was never carried out because of an earthquake and because of shrewd political maneuvering by the Empress Dowager, who feared

²² Christina Miu Bing Cheng, *Macao: a Cultural Janus* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University, 1999), 60.

the Regent would not relinquish authority to her grandson, the Kangxi Emperor. Schall's name was posthumously cleared by his successor, Ferdinand Verbiest, who became an advisor to the Kangxi Emperor and was charged with the task of renovating the astronomical observatory in Beijing. During a period of harmony with the Jesuits, the Kangxi Emperor issued an edict of toleration for Christians in China in 1692; but was later convinced to change his position in 1718, when he issued an edict to proscribe Christianity from the province of Guangdong. In 1726, the Yongzheng Emperor passed an edict that allowed only European Jesuits working in the court to remain in Beijing and required all other Christians in China to return to Macao.

Lauren Arnold describes China as “a sophisticated culture that in the end took what it wanted from the West and rejected what it didn't want, including the missionary effort.”²³ Toward the end of the Kangxi Emperor's reign, suspicion of European presence in China was rising, and Christians, whether native Chinese or European, were persecuted in many provinces. Incidents of violent persecution of Christians in the provinces occurred from 1746-48, 1754, 1768-69 and 1784-85.²⁴ Though the Jesuits received patronage from the Emperor and were privileged with a residence in Beijing, they lived in harsh conditions. In 1718, the Kangxi Emperor approved a proposal by the brigade-general of Guangdong to proscribe Christianity, but issued an edict that delayed the prohibition for several years. In 1724, Yongzheng issued an imperial edict to

²³ Lauren Arnold, “Of the Mind and the Eye: Jesuit Artists in the Forbidden City in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries.” *Pacific Rim Report 27* (April 2003), 8.

²⁴ Standaert, 298.

follow up that of his father by further proscribing Christianity, requiring all missionaries not employed by the court to retire to the Portuguese colony at Macao. During this time, all Jesuits within the Forbidden City were placed under house arrest, including Guiseppe Castiglione, then known as Lang Shining.

Jean-Denis Attiret privately lamented his position in Beijing:

Will this farce never come to an end? . . . I find it hard to convince myself that all this is to the greater glory of God . . . to be on a chain from one sun to the next, barely to have Sundays or feast days to pray to God; to paint almost nothing in keeping with one's own taste or spirit; to have to put up with thousands of other harassments . . . all of this would make me return to Europe if I did not believe my brush was useful for the good of religion, and a means of making the emperor favorable toward the missionaries who preach it. This is the sole attraction that keeps me here, as well as the other European in the emperor's service.²⁵

The Jesuits working in Peking understood their success within the Forbidden City as a crucial element to the entire Jesuit mission in China. In 1736 and 1746 it was documented that Shining attempted to persuade the Qianlong Emperor, during one of his visits to the artist's studio, to quell the persecution of the Jesuits. In 1736, the request was fulfilled, but in 1746, the Emperor responded, "You Europeans are foreigners. You do not know our manners and customs," and the execution of an imprisoned Jesuit went on as planned.²⁶

In summary, I have demonstrated that the social spaces of cultural exchange between France and China were situated largely within the Imperial Court at Beijing. China never sent official ambassadors to France, and on the

²⁵ Quoted in Arnold, 7.

²⁶ Arnold, 7.

occasions Chinese visitors appeared in France, it happened under the supervision of the Jesuits. The Jesuits' idealized portrait of China shaped Europe's understanding of East Asia: it provided the critical backdrop against which chinoiserie was recognized. However, it did not portray the realities of the Jesuits' interaction with the Chinese in Beijing. Next, I elaborate on the ideal version of China in eighteenth-century France and specifically how it related to François Boucher's chinoiserie. I also demonstrate how the direct line of communication established by Louis XIV's Jesuit embassy was crucial to the development of Boucher's chinoiseries and to the journey of his *Tenture chinois* to China.

CHAPTER 4 BOUCHER'S CHINOISERIE

Though famous as a painter, François Boucher was a prodigious printmaker, and a major purveyor of chinoiserie in pictorial form. Most of the chinoiseries he produced were engravings meant to be sold for individual use or to be used as models for decorating porcelain and furniture. Boucher, an astute student of printmaking, drew from a variety of resources including texts written and illustrated by seventeenth-century Dutch travelers and Jesuits in the court at Beijing, an illustrated Chinese agricultural manual in the French Royal Library, second-hand engravings of Chinese and Japanese prints by Jean-Antoine Fraise, and his own collection of Chinese and Japanese prints.¹ He was also an avid collector of Asian objects of art and furniture, which often appeared in his own printed and painted works.

Boucher's engagement with chinoiserie began when he was invited to reproduce some of Watteau's drawings for Jean de Julienne's *Recueil Julienne*. Between 1726 and 1729, Julienne published over three hundred of Watteau's drawings in the two-volume *Figures de differents caracteres, de Paysages, et d'Etudes dessinees d'apres nature par Antoine Watteau* with 55 of 132 plates by Boucher. Katie Scott contends that Boucher most likely met Gabriel Huquier through Julienne while Huquier was etching some of Watteau's arabesques for the *Recueil* and Boucher was reproducing the chinoiserie from the chateau of la

¹ Perrin Stein, "Boucher's Chinoiseries: Some New Sources." *The Burlington Magazine*, 138/1122 (September 1996), 598-604.

Muette for the same publication.² Boucher's work with Julienne helped finance his artistic sojourn to Italy from 1729 to 1731, which proved to have a significant impact on his painting style during the 1730s. Upon his return from Italy he married, upgraded his living quarters from the printmaking quarter on rue St-Jacques to the quarter of professional painters near the Louvre on St-Thomas du Louvre, and was awarded full membership to the Academy.³ Although he no longer resided at St-Jacques, he was still involved in the printmaking scene; and, in 1734, Gabriel Huquier began publishing Boucher's prints and advertising them in the *Mercure de France*.

Boucher's chinoiserie prints published by Huquier during this time include the 1737 *Scènes de la vie chinoise*, the 1738 *Recueil de diverses figures chinoises du Cabinet de Monsieur Boucher*, and the *Suite des Cinq Sens* (in 1738), and *The Four Elements* which was engraved by Pierre Aveline and exhibited at the Salon of 1740. The same year, when the famous *marchand-mercier* was looking to update the reputation of his shop, he renamed it *A la pagode* and commissioned Boucher to design his new trade card (1740, Figure A-24). In the Salon of 1742, Boucher exhibited the tapestry models (now in Besançon) which were the basis for the Beauvais commission—*Le Tenture chinois*—and Huquier published engravings after these paintings as well. Boucher also painted a set of Chinese landscape views for the overdoors of

²Katie Scott, "Reproduction and Reputation: "François Boucher" and the Formation of Artistic Identities," in Melissa Hyde and Mark Ledbury (eds.), *Rethinking Boucher* (Los Angeles, California: Getty Research Institute, 2006), 91-132.

³ Jo Hedley, *François Boucher: Seductive Visions* (London: The Wallace Collection, 2004), 37.

Madame de Pompadour's *boudoir a la chinoise* at Bellevue in the early 1750s.⁴ His chinoiserie designs were adapted and used at Beauvais, and also at the privately financed tapestry manufactory at Aubusson and the royal porcelain manufactory at Sèvres, where they continued to be used through the 1770s.

Boucher's personal collection of Asian art and artifacts was documented in a 200-page sale catalogue published in 1771 by Parisian art dealer Pierre Remy. Boucher owned several painted and graphic works: "a number of Chinese paintings, including four large landscapes on paper in gilt frames, four vases of flowers painted on paper cut out and laid on canvas, 36 little painted sheets of paper, four Chinese engravings of landscapes and marines, and a large scroll depicting a Chinese landscape."⁵ Boucher's sale catalogue also notes 168 pieces of porcelain and earthenware, with three-quarters of it having oriental origin including Terre des Indes, Pagodes et pates des Indes, Porcelaines de Japon, anciennes porcelains, faiences et porcelains de Perse and porcelains de la Chine which were sub-grouped into celadon, bleu-celeste (turquoise-blue ground), truitée (speckled) and craquelée (crizzled glaze).⁶ He owned two of his own biscuit groups from Sevres, *Le Petit Vendangeur* and *Le Petit Patissier*

⁴Melissa Lee Hyde, *Making up the Rococo: François Boucher and His Critics* (Los Angeles, California: Getty Research Institute, 2006), 79.

⁵ Hedley, 77.

⁶ Rosalind Savill, "François Boucher and the Porcelains of Vincennes and Sevres." *Apollo* 106/241 (March 1982), 162-170; 169.

created by Falconet in 1757. He also owned a green pot with fish scales in relief from St. Cloud, a set of parakeets from Meissen, and some English vases.⁷

Anne Dulau asserts that the chinoiserie items in Boucher's paintings from the 1740s may have been inspired by his personal possessions, but were not faithful reproductions.⁸ Instead, they were 'typologized' so they would be recognizable to patrons. Dulau draws a comparison between Kangxi period (1662-1722) blue and white and Brown-glazed Chinese export teapots—so-called 'Batavian' ware, c. 1690-1720, named for its "lustrous brown glaze" and for the Dutch trade post established in present-day Jakarta—and those tea pots were featured in the background of the fashionable interiors of three of Boucher's paintings from the 1730s, *The Breakfast*, *Woman on a Daybed* and *Woman Fastening her Garter* (c. 1690-1700, Figure A-25; 1739, Figure A-26; 1742, Figure A-27; and 1742, Figure A-28).⁹ She maintains that the painted pots would have been modeled after objects in Boucher's inventory, and the same is true for the lacquered, folding screens featured in *Woman on a Daybed* and *Woman Fastening her Garter*. Boucher's inclusion of these items in his paintings can be read a number ways. It was the fashion of the times. He was particularly interested in these items and wanted to showcase them. And, he was promoting a general interest in chinoiserie to enhance his own reputation. Without having

⁷ Savill, 169.

⁸ Anne Dulau, "In Focus: *Lady Taking Tea* and *Woman on a Daybed*," in Anne Dulau et al (eds.), *Boucher & Chardin: Masters of Modern Manners* (Glasgow, Scotland: The Hunterian Museum, University of Glasgow, 2008), 8-25.

⁹ Dulau, 97.

access to the items in his collection, it is impossible to determine whether the items were authentic Chinese or Japanese wares acquired through private merchants working within the East India Companies or hybrid Asian items made in Asia or France. Regardless, his collection played a key role in the development of his own chinoiserie, and he did have some first-hand knowledge of East Asian aesthetics through his contact with the objects of art inventoried in his sale catalogue.

Boucher was also influenced by the work of Jean-Antoine Fraise, another contemporary chinoiserie artist working in France and producing design models for the porcelain and lacquer factories at Chantilly. Susan Miller contends that through Huquier, Boucher acquired access to a copy of Fraise's *Livres de Dessesins chinois*, and the woodblock stamps and plates.¹⁰ Fraise published the *Livre de desseins chinois, tirés d'après des originaux de Perse, des Indes, de la Chine et du Japon, dessinés et graves en taille-douce, par Le Sr Fraise, Peintre de S.A.S. Monseigneur Le Duc* in 1735. The designs were inspired by Chinese and Japanese prints and silk handscrolls owned by Condé—Fraise's patron at Chantilly, Louis Henri, Prince de Condé. The best copy of the *Livre des Dessesins* is in the French National Library's collection in Paris, and Miller insists that this copy must have been the one produced personally for Condé as it includes hand-drawn details and is hand-colored in a style derived from

¹⁰ Susan Miller, "Jean-Antoine Fraise, "Gravé par Huquier." *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 31 (1996), 127-130.

kakiemon porcelains (1735, Figure A-29).¹¹ According to Miller, the copy Huquier possessed had at least some coloring, and Huquier reproduced thirty-two of Fraise's sixty prints from plates etched by Fraise in his own *Livre des différentes espèces d'oiseau, fleurs, plantes, et trophes de la Chine, Tirés du Cabinet du Roy. Gravé par Huquier*.¹²

In his *Livre*, Fraise combined Japanese brushwood fences with Chinese stylized leaves relative to those stiff, upright leaves circling the necks of Ming and Kangxi export porcelains as well as Chinese-inspired seventeenth-century Delftware.¹³ He also used *maki-e*—a Japanese technique in which gold flecks are sprinkled on wet lacquer—and imitated the technique in his paintings. This technique was also used on Saint-Cloud and Chantilly porcelains. Fraise designed and hand-painted floral patterns on the robes of some of the figurines made at Chantilly, which combine elements from Japanese textiles, dyed cotton fabrics from India, European acanthus leaves, and seventeenth-century Chinese-inspired Delftware.¹⁴ The Prince de Condé financed fabric, lacquer and porcelain workshops at Chantilly that attempted to increase France's access to luxury goods and promote her role as an exporter of luxury goods within Europe by

¹¹ Miller, 128.

¹² Miller, 127.

¹³ Susan Miller, "Images of Asia in French luxury goods: Jean-Antoine Fraise at Chantilly, c.1729-36." *Apollo* 154/477 (Nov 2001), 3-12; 6-9.

¹⁴ Miller, 6-9.

producing East Asian-inspired goods adapted from the Condé's collection by Fraise.¹⁵

The Metropolitan Museum of Art has several porcelain vases and figurines made from 1735 to 1740 at the factory at Chantilly and some are decorated with designs after Fraise. These figurines and figures on the porcelain vases clue us in to more material Boucher might have gleaned from the Fraise prints and plates owned by Huquier. Figures A-30 and A-31 show two sides of a soft-paste porcelain jar produced at Chantilly between 1735 and 1740 with painted decorations after designs by Fraise. One side shows a seated figure wearing a four-cornered headdress like the one Boucher used to adorn the Chinese emperor in his tapestry series. The second side shows a group of men sitting down to dinner at a table oddly angled diagonally toward the viewer. The composition is similar to one painted on the side of a potpourri vessel manufactured at Sèvres during the 1750s that also shows a group of men sitting around a table pointing diagonally toward the viewer (Figure A-32). It is possible Boucher adapted the table and card-players from Fraise's prints, foreshortening the corner of the table and lowering the angle at which it is viewed before passing the design along to the factory. Several of the porcelain figurines from Chantilly at the MET are laughing Buddhas strikingly similar to Boucher's 'Chinese' children, his *magots*, and other figures from his own *Recueil*. *The Chinese Botanist* from Boucher's *Recueil*, with his paunchy belly and an open-mouthed grin that meets the viewer's gaze, resembles the laughing *Shou Lou*

¹⁵ Miller, 3.

from Chantilly and closely resembles Boucher's grinning *magots* (1740, Figure A-33 and c. 1735-40, Figure A-34). The botanist is holding a branch over his left shoulder, and one of the leaves sticks out from behind his head in precisely the right position to appear as if it might be a hat rather than a leaf. The *Chinese Doctor*, with his grin and elongated earlobes, also bears a likeness to the Chantilly *Shou Lou*, or possibly the *Laughing Buddha with Jar* (1740, Figure A-35 and 1735, Figure A-36).

Perrin Stein demonstrates that Boucher engaged in a pattern of direct borrowing from Arnoldus Montanus' 1669 publication, the *Remarkable addresses by way of embassy from the East-India Company of the United Provinces, to the Emperor of Japan*. This illustrated text was first published in Amsterdam by Jacob Meurs, and the French translation was published in 1680. Two prints from Montanus' *Remarkable addresses* are the basis for Boucher's *Chinese Marriage* scene.¹⁶ The left side of the foreground is modeled after Montanus's *Man Leading Two Cows*, and the primary scene of the marriage ceremony is taken directly from Montanus's print, *Marriage Ceremonies*. Boucher used several images from Montanus' text as source material for his tapestry series.

Remarkable addresses was based on his voyage to Japan, not China. For Boucher's purposes, the difference between the two countries must not have been significant enough for him to scruple. Boucher also borrowed from Johann Nieuhof's *An Embassy from the East India Co. of the United provinces to the Emperor of China* published in Amsterdam in 1665 with one hundred fifty

¹⁶ Stein, 599.

illustrations engraved by Wenceslas Hollar from Nieuhoff's trip to Beijing in 1656. This text provided the basis for the figure of the emperor in the first *Tenture chinoise* produced at Beauvais in the 1690s. We know Boucher was at least familiar with the Nieuhoff *Frontispiece*, because the Emperor (seated on a dais with his left hand placed on a globe) in *Audience with the Emperor* from the tapestry series is adapted from this print.

Stein also points to a Chinese source, from which Boucher adapted entire compositions for his *Scenes of Chinese Life* series. She argues that Boucher must have used a 1696 edition of the *Yuzhi Gengzhi Tu*, which was commissioned by the Kangxi Emperor with engravings after Jiao Bingzhen.¹⁷ Thousands of volumes of Chinese texts became available during the time Boucher produced chinoiserie. In 1733, the Jesuits in Beijing sent copies of over 160,000 volumes of classic Chinese texts to Paris; and by 1739, there were nearly 400 original Chinese or Manchu texts in the French royal library.¹⁸ The *Gengzhi Tu* (Pictures of Farming and Weaving) was an illustrated agricultural manual originally compiled during the Song Dynasty, with emphasis on the production of rice and silk. The *Yuzhi Gengzhi Tu* was an imperial version of the original text commissioned by the Kangxi Emperor and includes poems inscribed by the emperor himself and by his scholar-officials in the emperor's style. The artist Jiao Bingzhen was a court astronomer who worked with the Jesuits there

¹⁷ Stein, 602.

¹⁸ Basil Guy, *The French Image of China before and after Voltaire*; Studies on Voltaire and the eighteenth century, 21 (Genève: Institut et Musée Voltaire, 1963), 383.

and was tutored in European mathematical perspective techniques by Father Ferdinand Verbiest.¹⁹ Verbiest's influence is evident in Bingzhen's prints.

The illustrations from which Boucher appropriated his figures focused on the harvesting and threading of silk. The harvest is depicted as a family affair, showing women, both old and young, actively engaged in the process of collecting silk while caring for their children. The images of the women and children are playful, charming and endearing. More important, these are among the only images of Chinese women in Europe at the time that originated from a Chinese source. Most of the prints depicting Chinese people seen in Europe and used for source material for chinoiserie were images drafted by male travelers and Jesuit priests who experienced little if any contact with Chinese women. These were usually images of soldiers, mandarins and merchants. That said, when Boucher's prints after those in the *Scenes de la vie chinoise* hit the market in the 1730s, it would have been the first time people in France saw images of Chinese women who did not resemble the blonde, European standard Venus, but had darkened hair and somewhat-Asiatic phenotypes. Upon seeing how Boucher's prints were adapted to decorate various surfaces in examples such as the Rene du Bois drop-front secretaire with painted decorations adapted from Boucher's *Fire* from the *Five Elements* series and *Touch* from the *Five Senses* series, we know that details such as these were easily opted out (1740, Figure A-37). Nonetheless, Boucher's appropriation of the *Gengzhi tu* and subsequent

¹⁹ Robert L. Thorp and Richard Ellis Vinograd, *Chinese Art & Culture* (New York: Abrams, 2001), 360.

distribution of his prints was a unique occurrence of cultural contact with China in France, even for Boucher.

The figural group from *Two Women Leading a Child* (which shows a woman leaning down behind a toddler to support his back beneath his arms as he walks) was adapted from *Silk Weaving on a Drawloom*; only Boucher rejuvenated the appearance of the elderly woman behind the child, to make her appear youthful in his own print (Figure A-38).²⁰ The *Child Reaching for a Caged Bird* is an inversion of the scene from *Boiling the Silk Cocoons*: a woman stands behind a toddler to support him as he reaches up to a pair of older children, who are peeking over a fence at him (Figure A-39).²¹ And, *Seated Woman with Children and Servants* is borrowed from *Silkworms' Second Molting* in which a standing woman passes a child to a seated woman, as the woman and child both reach for each other, and another small child tugs at a sash behind the standing woman (Figure A-40).²² A soft-paste polychrome vase from Sèvres decorated by Charles Dodin indicates that the factory was using Boucher's chinoiserie designs after the *Gengzhi Tu* into the 1760s (Figure A-41). The painted decorations on the vase combine the figure of the woman and child from *Two Women Leading a Child* and the seated woman from *Seated Woman with Children and Servants*.

The repetition of figures and their adaptation through various media by new artists was common practice by chinoiserie standards and especially in

²⁰ Stein, 602-603.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

Boucher's own practice. The figure of a *magot* makes a prolific number of appearances in Boucher's chinoiserie and paintings of fashionable interiors from the 1730s and 1740s. A seated *magot* atop a lacquer cabinet is a central figure in the trade card Boucher designed for Gersaint. A *magot* appears in the background of *The Breakfast*, in *Fire* from the *Five Senses* series, and next to his own signature in *Woman on A Daybed*. Melissa Hyde suggests that Boucher used the figure of *magot* as a symbol with a dual meaning: as a signature and self-representation.²³ It was not surprising then, when a malicious parody of Voltaire's *Orphelin de la Chine* was published by an anonymous 'Boucher' in March 1756, that it was titled *Les Magots*.²⁴ More than a signature, the figure of the *magot* in Boucher's chinoiserie must have something akin to a brand logo and was publicly recognized. In *Fire*, a grinning Boucher-*magot* presides over the scene of a dashed romantic interlude in which a seated soldier comically realizes, to his own horror, that the serving maid who approaches with his tea is actually a man. Unlike the rest of the prints from the series, the scene with the two men takes place on a raised platform. Though not unlike the architectural spaces Boucher derived from Chinese prints and used in his other chinoiserie

²³ Hyde discusses Boucher's habit of signing his paintings with "witty and self-regarding visual references" in *Making up the Rococo*, pp. 53; she identifies his signature on the ribbon box in his 1746 *The Milliner*, commissioned for Princess Lovisa Ulrika of Sweden, as an example of this tendency. See also: Melissa Hyde, "Getting into the Picture: Boucher's Self-Portraits of Others," in Melissa Hyde and Mark Ledbury (eds.), *Rethinking Boucher* (Los Angeles, California: The Getty Research Institute, 2006), 13-38. Katie Scott, "Reproduction and Reputation" from *Rethinking Boucher*. Colin Baily, "Surveying Genre in Eighteenth-Century French Painting," in Colin Bailey et al. (eds.), *The Age of Watteau, Chardin and Fragonard: Masterpieces of French Genre Painting* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press in association with the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 2003), 2-39.

²⁴ Guy, 225.

prints, this particular platform is not connected to any adjacent walls, but is frontally aligned toward the viewer and resembles a free-standing stage. The backdrop is a sparse set of two posts and a lintel upon which sits the *Boucher-magot* that foregrounds Boucher's presence as the creator of this vignette.

The placement of the figures in the composition is similar to those in the *Beautiful Kitchen Maid* in which the standing kitchen maid is wooed by her seated admirer (1733-34, Figure A-42). Symbols like the flaming kitchen stove in the background, the single broken egg that has tumbled to the floor from the maid's apron, and the cat that eagerly devours his captured bird all allude to, in a bawdy and wisecracking way, the sexual magnetism of a lovers' interlude. For *Fire*, Boucher arranges the figures so the surprised soldier points at his would-be sweetheart in the same way the young shepherd reaches up to hold the kitchen maid's hand, and the tea server grins mischievously in pleasure at the soldier's dismay. Familiar symbols like the flaming stove, the steam billowing from the teapot, and the disarmed shield in the foreground reference the element of Fire and guide the viewer's expectation of a romantic tryst.

The *Boucher-magot's* gaze breaks the page to meet the viewer whose expectations of a romantic interlude have been dashed by the clever scene. The dashed expectations for a romantic encounter seem to parallel France's relationship with China in which the Chinese denied access to French interests unless they were appealing to the Chinese. Perhaps in a dash of self-deprecatory humor, Boucher points out the interchangeability of his genre scenes and his chinoiseries. Perhaps he is drawing attention to a contrived nature of

chinoiseries, showing how a few props serve to make a genre scene 'Chinese.' Boucher seems to be poking fun at the very nature of chinoiserie, a hybrid genre foreign to both its Asian and European parentage.²⁵ By showing how such facile elements generate a notion of 'Chinese-ness,' Boucher's joke ultimately comes at the expense of the viewer. Boucher combines innocent and tendentious humor; although the Chinese figures are set up to be mocked, Boucher arranges the scene so that elements of playful self-ridicule are cast on himself and the viewer.²⁶ In this way, *Fire* shares the humor found in the 'Chinese'-themed comedies common during the mid-eighteenth century, which Guy describes as highly imaginative parodies of European customs that pretend to satirize the Chinese and rely heavily on the support of exotic settings.²⁷

Mark Ledbury demonstrates that Boucher's enduring engagement with theater from 1725 until his death in 1770 was incredibly rich and complicated.²⁸ His engagement with the theater influenced his painting, and his paintings often allude to theatrical references. Boucher worked as a costume and set designer for Madame de Pompadour's theatrical productions at Versailles. He collaborated with Charles Simon Favart and Jean Monnet. His *Tenture chinois* was used as the basis for Jean-George Noverre's 1754 ballet at the Opéra-Comique titled *Les Fêtes chinoises*, and he illustrated an edition of Moliere's

²⁵ Katie Scott. "Playing Games with Otherness: Watteau's Chinese Cabinet at the Château de la Muette." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 66 (2003), 189-248.

²⁶ Scott, "Playing Games with Otherness."

²⁷ Guy, 183.

²⁸ Mark Ledbury, "Boucher and Theater," in Melissa Hyde and Mark Ledbury (eds.), *Rethinking Boucher*, (Los Angeles, California: The Getty Research Institute, 2006), 133-160.

works in 1734. He had a penchant for what Ledbury calls ‘meta-theater’—an awareness of the beholder—and satire. He was knowledgeable of various modes of ‘exotic’ interiors, and was capable of translating exoticism from interior scenes to pastoral landscapes and genre scenes.²⁹ Boucher designed the ‘Salon Indien’ for Stanislas-Jean de Bouffler’s *Aline, reine de Golconde*, an oriental comedy that appeared around 1766. The play is about the queen of an exotic kingdom who pretends to be a shepherdess so that she may tease and tempt her lover, who does not recognize her in disguise. The play is the culmination of both exoticism and pastoralism and the dialogue is both Orientalizing and self-conscious—at one point, the protagonist, Saint Phar, asks, “Am I in France, or Asia, in Golconde, or in my homeland?”³⁰ This ambiguity of place points to an interesting aspect of Boucher’s own chinoiserie—the fact that they are all set out of doors and the locations are merely alluded to by their titles and the costumes of the figures.

A practical reason could be that his source material might have led him to do so. The prints from the *Gengzhi Tu* provide a traditional Chinese cutaway view of the architectural structures, so we have a streamlined view of the indoors and outdoors together. The architecture itself also flows naturally between the two, incorporating itself to the natural landscape. The unobstructed view of the

²⁹ Ledbury derives ‘meta-theater’ from Michael Fried’s concept of ‘theatricality’, 133-135. Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1980). See also Ellen G. Landau. “‘A Fairytale Circumstance’ the Influence of Stage Design on the Work of François Boucher.” *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 70/9 (November 1983), 360-378.

³⁰ Quoted in Ledbury, 152.

interior scenes diminishes the conventional division of the indoors and out-of-doors. Boucher might also have thought that his designs were destined to be adapted to a variety of surfaces, and, therefore any extra attention to the details of the backgrounds in his prints would have been superfluous; his designs would need to be easily interchangeable from one format to the next. The ambiguity of place in his chinoiserie seems to acknowledge the absence of China in the mode's production of Chinese-inspired art. It locates China not on a map but within costumes and props, on a stage; on paper, porcelain and framed canvases. It suggests that chinoiserie is more than a collection of objects produced in workshops. It is also a mode of production itself. Boucher seems to acknowledge that chinoiserie was an orientalist performance through which the French used East Asian-inspired art to construct a version of 'China' that was less about China than about France, so that they could produce an even more carefully crafted, cosmopolitan version of themselves against the backdrop.³¹

Whether or not Boucher was trying to imitate an Asian aesthetic style in his own prints, his interest in East Asian art and his work in chinoiserie proved to be points of contention for his critics. He demonstrated a knack for distorting the boundaries between French and 'Chinese,' and between artifice and reality in the context of his chinoiserie (works that played up the mode's inherent penchant for performativity and hybridity). It seems as if Boucher was trying to incite the ire of his critics by embellishing the particular qualities of that mode they protested. In 1748, La Font de Saint Yves wrote, "those who take a keen interest in him fear

³¹ Scott, "Playing Games with Otherness."

that the habitual study of the Chinese taste, which seems to be M. Boucher's favourite passion, will eventually alter the grace of his contours. They will no longer have the same softness if he continues to draw figures in this manner."³² Saint Yves, among many, criticized Boucher's style and school of painting at large, and accused the artist of having a ruinous effect on French painting and culture. His criticism also falls in line with a larger body of critique that included the efforts of classicists and xenophobes who condemned Chinese art and feared it would also have a ruinous effect on French painting and culture. Saint Yves' criticism marks the beginning of the decline of chinoiserie. The image of the ideal China, which had inspired the chinoiserie of the 1730s became increasingly contested over the following decades, and, by the time Boucher's tapestry series was sent to China, the once idealized empire had become a potent tool for disarming its own enthusiasts.

³² Cited in Hedley, 80. C. L. de Saint Yves 1748, op. cit., 28-29.

CHAPTER 5 BOUCHER'S TENTURE CHINOIS

When it came time for Beauvais to update the factory's 'Chinese' tapestry series, François Boucher was an obvious choice for the commission. Boucher had already been employed by Beauvais. Pleased with the success of his 1736 designs for the *Fêtes Italiennes*, the factory re-commissioned him to design a set of scenes depicting the story of Psyche that was first woven in 1741. His involvement with the *Recueil Julienne*, copying Watteau's *Figures chinoises*, his commission to design the Chinese-inspired trade card of the famed Edme Gersaint, and his success as a printmaker of *figures chinoises* made Boucher a veritable authority on representing China.

Why was there a need for a second 'Chinese' tapestry series in the middle of the eighteenth century? Jarry argues that the *Story of the Chinese Emperor* series needed to be replaced for a practical reason—the tapestry cartoons were worn out. The style of the tapestries was also well worn. The late-baroque designs after Jean Berain's grotesques hardly comported with contemporary tastes which were suited to Boucher's rococo *bambochades*. Also, the two tapestry series served two very different functions. The *Story of the Chinese Emperor* provided a portrait of the Emperor himself, and this image needed to be updated as the Kangxi Emperor died in 1722, and his grandson, the Qianlong Emperor came into power in 1735. The first tapestry series represented a fictionalized encounter between 'French' Jesuits and the Kangxi Emperor to commemorate the embarkation of a French Jesuit delegation sponsored by Louis XIV to the emperor's court. By the 1740s, the Orient was used as a literary and

aesthetic device through which the French elite could practice both personal and political self-critique. Rather than commemorating a moment of contact between France and China, the second tapestry series was designed to represent an allegory of France in the 'Chinese' mode.

The badly outdated representations of the Emperor, in a political climate in which the figure of the Emperor was often used to critique the French monarchy, could have been viewed as an affront to the King. I argue that Boucher cannily adapted the tapestry series to represent a pastoral utopia governed by a benevolent patriarch, so the series could be understood as a representation of the ideal vision of China promoted in France by the Jesuits and also as a favorable appraisal of Louis XV's reign. In making this argument, I examine how the concept of utopia in Enlightenment France was uniquely connected to the French understanding of China by comparing Boucher's representations of utopia to those conceived by Voltaire and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. I pay special attention to works of these two philosophers because their polarized views on China represent respectively the apex and the decline of how China—and subsequently chinoiserie—was received in France during the eighteenth century.¹ Boucher's vision of utopia predates both those of Voltaire and Rousseau, and is far more similar to Rousseau's pastoral utopia at the Wolmar estate than to Voltaire's epic version of a highly cosmopolitan Chinese civilization

¹ Basil Guy, *The French Image of China before and after Voltaire*; Studies on Voltaire and the eighteenth century, 21 (Genève: Institut et Musée Voltaire, 1963).

in his 1756 *Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations* and his 1755 *Orphelin de la Chine*.

In 1737, Louis XV committed to purchasing two sets of Beauvais tapestries annually, to be given to foreign diplomats, and it was determined at that time that none of the designs in Beauvais' collections were "suitable" for such an undertaking.² Boucher's painted models, produced for Beauvais in 1742, consist of six horizontal and two vertical canvases now housed at the Musée de Besançon. Full orders of the series were manufactured in sets of six, from the following: *Audience with the Emperor*, *The Chinese Emperor's Feast*, *The Chinese Fair*, *Chinese Hunting*, *Chinese Fishing*, *The Chinese Garden*, *The Chinese Marriage*, *The Chinese Dance*, *Chinese Curiosity* and *Chinese Entertainment* (Figures A-43 and A-44).

The first royal order for the series was not placed until 1754; a second royal order was placed in 1758, a third in 1759 and a fourth in 1767. The first royal order was given to the Danish count von Moltke and is now split between the Amalienborg Palace and the Rosenborg Castle in Copenhagen.³ Candace Adelson speculates that the second royal order was a gift from Louis XV to Madame de Pompadour and hung in her apartments at Versailles.⁴ The third order was the set placed in the care of Aloys Kao and Etienne Yang, to deliver to

² Edith A. Standen, "The "Amours des Dieux": A Series of Beauvais Tapestries After Boucher." *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 19 (1984-1985), 63-84.

³ Candace Adelson, *European Tapestry in the Minneapolis Institute of Arts* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 1994).

⁴ Adelson, 333.

the Qianlong Emperor. Of this set, four pieces were last documented in the Chinese National collection in 1924; the *Chinese Fair* was brought back to Europe in 1860 and burned in a fire at the Tuileries in 1871, and the whereabouts of the final tapestry is unknown.⁵ The fourth royal order was hung in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1769, with a sofa and set of chairs upholstered to match.⁶ All eight of the modelli were later purchased by Pierre-Jacques-Onésyme Bergeret—Royal Collector General for Montauban—and his wife, Marguerite Richard, who ordered a partial set of the tapestries that only included *The Chinese Fair*, *The Chinese Dance*, and *Chinese Fishing* woven in 1743.⁷

The series envisions the everyday life of the Chinese people and depicts them as a rural population who go about their daily business outdoors among their community and in the presence of the Emperor who casually oversees the goings-on of his people and formally receives guests. The paintings supply a rich mixture of figural groups and items Boucher adapted from his study of Chinese prints and chinoiserie objects. As I discussed in Chapter 4, Perrin Stein identified a number of printed works from which Boucher appropriated and adapted figures and compositions to create his chinoiserie designs. The figure of the Chinese emperor (who can be identified by his either black or blue, four-cornered headwear with red or blue pom-poms) is featured often throughout the series, namely in the *Audience with the Emperor*, *The Emperor's Feast*; but he

⁵ Adelson, 333.

⁶ Adelson, 333.

⁷ Adelson, 329.

also appears as the marriage officiator in *Chinese Marriage* and presides over the party in *Chinese Dance*. The figure of the emperor, seated with his hand resting on a globe in the *Audience with the Emperor*, is derived from Wenceslas Hollar's engraving after Johann Nieuhoff for the frontispiece for Nieuhoff's *An Embassy from the East India Co. of the United provinces to the Emperor of China* published in Amsterdam in 1665 (Figure A-45). But the costume and bodily comportment of the emperor, along with the four envoys kow-towing before him and the red-robed mandarin reading the conscription that announces the envoys' visit and the tributes they bring, are derived from Boucher's study of Jean-Antoine Fraise's *Livre des desseins*. Their tribute offerings include a lacquer cabinet, silks and parasols being carried into the left foreground, opposite a modified ancestral shrine devoted to food offerings in the right foreground. The Emperor appears to be holding court under a tri-canopied pavilion in what appears to be a central location within a small village. The two female attendants who tend to the ribbons flowing from his headdress, and the concubine seated on the dais at this side, are Boucher's inventions.

In *The Emperor's Feast*, the Emperor and a consort are seated on a dais underneath a parasol. The dais is surrounded by date palms, and a red lattice fence connects the dais to a pavilion where a servant appears to be conveying food out to the imperial diners. In the foreground, a child looks over the fence into the kitchen pavilion, a guard at-ease leans back against a crate and his companion appears to be snoozing on the ground. Across from them, a seated man tends a copper tea kettle over a square fire stand and looks up to converse

with a female servant who stands opposite him; the soldiers, children and the figural group with the fire stand are all variations of figures and groups that appear often in Boucher's chinoiserie engravings, such as *Le Feu*.

In *Chinese Dance*, the Emperor is seated alone on a raised platform watching the dancers and musicians perform. An-Ni Chang has identified the Chinese origin of some of the musical instruments in the *Chinese Dance*. To the right of the seated man, one of the three women is playing a *guzheng*—a “16-26 stringed Chinese zither with movable bridges”— and another is playing a *sanxian*—a three-stringed, fretless Chinese lute.⁸ Also, a man with several musical instruments near him holds two wooden sticks and plays a *muyu*, which is put on a small table; the *muyu* is “a wooden percussion instrument . . . [made of] a rounded woodblock carved in the shape of a fish, struck with a wooden stick.”⁹

The *Chinese Marriage* is derived from two of Arnoldus Montanus's engravings from his 1669 *Embassy of the East-India Company to Japan*—*Marriage Ceremonies* and *Man Leading Two Cows* (Figures A-46).¹⁰ The circular pavilion housing the statue of a god at the top of the steps where the ceremony takes place, the square individual parasols for the bride and groom, the lighting of torches underneath the pavilion and the female blacksmith in the foreground, holding an iron over the fire were all adapted from Montanus' *Marriage*

⁸ An-Ni Chang, *François Boucher and his Chinoiserie*, M.A. thesis University of Missouri-Kansas City (Kansas City, Missouri, 2010), 1-59; 35-36.

⁹ Chang, 35-36.

¹⁰ Perrin Stein, “Boucher's Chinoiseries: Some New Sources.” *The Burlington Magazine* 138/1122 (September 1996), 598-604; 599.

Ceremonies. Boucher's emperor officiates over the ceremony and wedding gifts—or possibly the bride's dowry—are delivered directly to the location of the ceremony. Boucher borrowed the cow being led into the left foreground either as a gift or a sacrifice from *Man Leading Two Cows*.

In *The Chinese Fair*, an official oversees the affairs of a public market as traders bring in elephants in the background and a merchant tries to sell a caged bird to an elegant woman in the right foreground. The bird seller in the foreground is certainly of Boucher's invention, and recalls his earlier series of Italian Fêtes for Beauvais. But the woman seated in the carriage parked below the official's platform, presumably his consort, is adapted from another of Montanus' prints, *The Rich Carriage of a Taikosama Lady in Waiting* (1669, Figure A-47). *The Chinese Garden*, *Chinese Curiosity* and *Chinese Entertainment* are adapted from Boucher's study of the *Yuzhi gengzhi tu* and use the same principal figural arrangements and themes from his *Scenes de la vie chinoise* series. *The Chinese Garden* is a toilette scene with an elite woman seated outside, underneath a parasol before a table, upon which sits a freestanding mirror. A female attendant adorns her coiffure with fresh flowers while a eunuch fans her with a palm frond and an inattentive guard sits at ease. *Chinese curiosity* is similar to *Sight* from *The Five Senses*; in it a woman assists a child peering into a looking-box, presumably to see a peep show, while an eager group of children wait for their turns. And in *Chinese Entertainment*, a seated woman pets an exotic bird taken from its perch, as a small child leans against her legs.

Because the series was meant for purchase by the Crown, it must have been tailored to suit Louis XV's tastes, which could account for the inclusions of hunting and fishing scenes. Boucher knew of the king's interest in exotic hunting scenes from his previous royal commission *The Leopard Hunt* for the *Petits cabinets du roi* at Versailles (1736, Figure A-48). *The Leopard Hunt* was commissioned in 1736, along with five other exotic hunting scenes, to decorate the intimate space of the *Petits cabinets*. Louis XV personally oversaw the renovations. In the *Leopard Hunt*, a turbaned rider emphatically gestures a follow-through motion from having just thrown a spear, as he sits astride a rearing horse that charges into the aftermath of a melee with fallen horses, men and leopards strewn about the ground against a rocky cliff side. F. Hamilton Hazlehurst argues that Boucher's *Leopard Hunt* was highly successful in comparison with the *Chinese Hunt* of the same series executed by Jean-Baptiste Pater.¹¹ Hazlehurst posits that Louis XV himself might have been personally displeased with Pater's work, which is why the artist was paid 400 livres less than other artists who executed paintings for the series. Boucher, however, was later commissioned the *Crocodile Hunt* in a follow-up series that hung in the Petite Galerie. In this light, the *Tenture chinois* might have provided the perfect opportunity for a re-envisioning of a 'Chinese' hunting scene, albeit in quite different terms. The *Leopard Hunt* was a royal commission of an orientalist

¹¹F. Hamilton Hazlehurst, "The Wild Beasts Pursued: the Petite Galerie of Louis XV at Versailles," *The Art Bulletin* 66/2 (1984), 224-236.

image for the King's private consumption, while the *Tenture chinois* was commissioned to represent the King publicly using an orientalist mode.

A comparison of the two 'oriental' hunting scenes by Boucher demonstrates the diversity of orientalist imagery at play during the eighteenth century. The *Chinese Hunting* scene epitomized the rococo palette of Boucher's pastoral scenes with its blue-green background, various shades of pink layered against each other, and gold accents. The composition is bisected vertically, a device that provides the opportunity for two pictures in one; there is a landscape on the left side of the canvas with a bird net in the foreground and greenery that recedes into the horizon, much like the back drops from Boucher's stage designs at this time. Whereas the *Leopard Hunt* is a dynamic action scene with a palette and composition that inject a sense of building energy, the *Chinese Hunting* is subdued. It is a harmonious image of a community simultaneously at work and leisure. Whereas the *Leopard Hunt* shows an equestrian warrior slaying a savage carnivore, the 'Chinese' hunters depicted are a small community or even a multigenerational family, quaintly capturing small birds alive, using a net to either sell them in the aforementioned *Fair*, or keep them as pets, as demonstrated by the young girl in the foreground holding a domesticated bird on her finger.

Boucher again used Montanus as source material in *Chinese Fishing*, for the figure of the fisherman standing in the water gathering his net.¹² Perrin Stein writes that the exact source for the fishing boat carrying the woman and child are

¹² Stein, 599.

unknown, but she provides a Chinese example from the year Boucher's tapestry models were executed to demonstrate that the thatched roof of the boat, the female passenger in the rear, and the child aboard the roof were common Chinese images. Boucher might have sourced these figures from any number of places: his own collection of chinoiserie, any of the aforementioned texts, or Jean-Antoine Fraise's plates acquired by Gabriel Huquier. Both the *Hunting* and *Fishing* scenes have images of maternal affection similar to those Boucher appropriated from his study of the *Genzhi Tu*. They add feelings of sentimentality, playfulness and preciousness to the series that are essential to the notion that the series represents an idealized familial community. These scenes show how women and children play active roles as members of the community; their participation is key to understanding the series as a vision of an ideal society modeled after a patriarchal family.

Although Voltaire did not believe that a society could achieve the status of utopia, he saw China as the most likely candidate, and he often praised China as such.¹³ David Porter notes "between 1722 and 1778, Voltaire mentions China in no fewer than fifty-nine works, including at least eight that treat Chinese themes at length."¹⁴ In entry "*de la Chine*" of the 1764 edition of the *Dictionnaire philosophique*, Voltaire wrote: "The organization of their empire is really the best in the whole world, the only one that is consistently based on paternal authority; .

¹³ Douwe Fokkema, *Perfect Worlds: Utopian Fiction in China and the West* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011).

¹⁴ David Porter, *Ideographia: The Chinese Cipher in Early Modern Europe*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2001), 127.

. . the only one that has set up prizes for virtuous behavior whereas everywhere else the laws are restricted to punishing crime; the only one that has persuaded its conquerors to adopt its laws.” Under the same entry, in the next year’s edition, Voltaire wrote that the Jesuits were expelled from China by eighteenth-century emperors because the Christian faith undermined familial relationships, particularly paternal authority, and because certain practices—specifically kneeling and confession—were immodest according to Chinese decorum, especially for women.¹⁵ Although he was educated in a Jesuit school and used Jesuit research for much of his own work on China, Voltaire vehemently disagreed with the Jesuits’ argument that Confucianism and Christianity were compatible doctrines. Voltaire’s arguments on Chinese religion were adapted from Pierre Bayle’s 1705 essay, *Continuation des pensées diverses*, in which he argued that the Chinese people, including Confucius, were atheists and yet still highly ethical, therefore implying that morality could exist independent of religion.¹⁶ Voltaire adapted Bayle’s argument to suit his own: rather than atheists, the Chinese were deists—proponents of a natural religion—which further emphasized their virtuousness and was a topic to which Voltaire continually returned.

Voltaire appropriated the Jesuits’ ideal image of China that created a role model for Europe and a tool for self-*reflexion*. Father Prosper Intorcetta’s handbook for incoming missionaries to Macao titled *Sinarum scientia politico-*

¹⁵ Fokkema, 148.

¹⁶ Fokkema, 147.

moralis, published in Goa in 1669, argued: “the two great resources of political morality in China were said to be 1) the community of interest uniting the sovereign and his people, to a point where each lost his identity in striving for the common good, and 2) the moral example set his people by the sovereign.”¹⁷ China, in the words of Father Intorcetta, offered the perfect comparison for absolutist France, “where absolutism produced completely different results.” Intorcetta’s stark contrast “between the unheard of wealth of China and the poverty of France” was a harsh critique aimed directly at Louis XIV.¹⁸ Intorcetta’s explanation of the differences absolutism produced in the two nations was that the Emperor’s unobstructed morality guided him. The fate of the Celestial Empire rested in the good judgment of the emperor who, much like the French monarch, played the role of the father-king; only with much better results. Intorcetta was an Italian Jesuit; thus his critique of the French monarchy is that of an outsider.

During the reign of Louis XV, the Orient functioned as a mirror through which the French could critique their own culture and government. Charles de Secondat Montesquieu’s *Lettres persanes* published in 1721 became the template for eighteenth-century orientalist works that provided veiled critiques of the French monarchy and society in the form of correspondences among ‘Eastern’ visitors to France who wrote about their experiences and the

¹⁷ Guy, 99.

¹⁸ Guy, 100.

differences in their own cultures and that of France.¹⁹ Montesquieu's *Lettres* were inspired by some notes and books left behind by the Chinese Jesuit, Arcade Wang, who died in Paris in 1716. In 1741, Jean Baptiste de Boyer, Marquis d'Argens, published *Lettres Chinoises, ou Correspondance philosophique, historique et critique, entre un Chinois voyageur à Paris et ses correspondans à la Chine, en Moscovie, en Perse et au Japon*. In Argens' *Lettres*, the Chinese visitors to Europe make friends with locals in Amsterdam and discuss the congestion of Paris streets. One such letter recounts a discussion with the Amsterdam locals, offering a comparison of English and Chinese ladies, and another contrasts the stability of China, caused by policies of tolerance, to the anarchy of Europe, torn by revolutions and religious wars. Guy argues that in sinophilic '*lettres*,' the Chinese emperor's particular brand of despotism was written as 'enlightened' or, aligned with the laws of nature, providing a stark contrast to the infamous Persian despotism outlined by Montesquieu.²⁰ China had become an Oriental other through which Europe could envision and reconstruct itself. As David Porter put it, "the European no longer simply looks upon the Chinese, but looks upon himself looking and criticizing what he sees . . . [he] discovers the rhetorical power of imagining a reversal of subject and object positions."²¹

¹⁹ Charles de Secondat Montesquieu, *The Persian Letters*, translated by John Davidson (Philadelphia: George Barrie & Sons, 1970).

²⁰ Guy, 350.

²¹ Porter, 124.

Ruled by an absolutist Son of Heaven, China was constructed as a metaphor for the old regime ruled by the Sun King, and became a field for sinophilic French philosophers to act out their anxieties about their impoverished political and cultural systems by holding up China a model society. Knowing the potential for Orientalizing works to critique the monarchy and knowing that the series itself would be made for purchase by Louis XV, Boucher designed the series to be a 'veiled' representation of France under Louis XV's reign. France was in relatively good economic shape during the 1730s, and, under ministrations of Cardinal Fleury, it had avoided military conflict within the continent. However, by this time, Louis XV, once known as the 'well-beloved' had fallen out of popular favor. So Boucher's 'Chinese' utopia structured as a patriarchal family in which communities are made of multi-generational families and shown in an active state of self-sustainment under the benevolent rule of a father-king could be seen as a corrective to the criticisms of the King.

Why didn't Boucher depict China as an agricultural utopia, especially considering that he used a Chinese agricultural textbook, the *Gengzhi Tu*, as his source material? China did not become a beacon for agricultural systems in Europe until the 1760s, so the hunting and fishing scenes provide a likely substitute for depicting a rural population's ability to self-sustain. Furthermore, images of Chinese peasants wealthy with the fruits of agricultural labor might simply have appeared in poor taste in 1742. Due to poor harvests from 1738-1741, as much as one-sixth of the population in France died from starvation, and, during these harsh times, grain was often funneled away from the rural areas and

into Paris to prevent riots within the city.²² The King personally heard complaints about food shortages. Bishops from the countryside sent letters informing him of the devastation to the communities there brought about by famine, and he was even approached by protesting peasants while in a coach between Paris and Versailles.²³ Had the series featured scenes of the Chinese people amid abundant harvests, it would have pointed out the disparity between the idealized image of prosperity and the realities of life in the French peasantry at that time, and would have been regarded as critical of the nobility and the monarchy for not fulfilling their responsibility to the people.

Boucher's images of China depict a utopia, but they are not visions of a grand cosmopolitan civilization like the ones Formosante visited or even like the highly refined court culture at Versailles. They are instead much akin to the melancholy, idyllic community envisioned in Rousseau's *Julie*. In contrast to Voltaire—or, in response to him, according to Guy and Douwe Fokkema—Rousseau often uses China and other East Asian locations as points of comparison to which the characters of his novels prefer their own European versions instead.²⁴

²² Colin Jones, *The Great Nation: France from Louis XV to Napoleon* (London: Allen Lane, 2002), 114-118.

²³ Jones, 121.

²⁴ Fokkema, 149. Voltaire's *Orphan of China* was adapted from a French translation of the Yuan-era *Orphan of the House of Zhao* found in du Halde's *Description*; it is set in Cambaluc (Khan balik or present-day Beijing) immediately after Genghis Khan captured the Imperial Palace in the Forbidden City. The play depicts the Mongolian invaders as savage barbarians rather than noble savages, showing that in the end the conquered people—the supremely virtuous and wise Chinese—are victorious over the conquerors.

Like Boucher's tapestry models, the Wolmar Estate evokes what Fokkema calls the 'island tradition' of utopian literature, in which the setting for utopic conditions must be highly secluded.²⁵ Surrounded by mountains and Lake Geneva, the employees of the estate are encouraged to stay there rather than visit and be (negatively) influenced by the nearby village. Because of its seclusion, the estate has the ambience of an exotic locale. Perhaps to further this association, Rousseau refers to the exotic Far East by having Saint-Preux writes that the estate is reminiscent of Tinian, an island near Guam where he visited during his travels; upon visiting the Wolmar garden, he expresses his preference for the Elysée over those he saw in China, through a careful comparison.²⁶ Prefiguring Rousseau, Boucher envisions a rustic 'Chinese' village isolated in verdant rococo landscapes and framed canvases. Ruled by a father-king who holds court *en plein air* and endearingly presides over matrimonial ceremonies, Boucher's 'Chinese' subjects are members of a family who work and celebrate together to better their simple, yet sophisticated rural society.

Fokkema argues that the Wolmar Estate represents life in the ideal version of human civilization, or lack thereof, which Rousseau envisions in the *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality among Men*. The estate, writes Fokkema, "depends on agriculture, avoids luxury, and abhors the decadence of city life" and "resembles the intermediary stage between the natural condition

²⁵ Fokkema, 114.

²⁶ Fokkema, 116.

and civilized society.”²⁷ Furthermore, Wolmar treats his servants “as a father would his children,” by match-making, providing housing for them and discouraging them from falling prey to the abuses of the near-by city, and in return for his loving care, he receives from them “unconditional loyalty.”²⁸ Perhaps it was the sentimentality of Boucher’s *Tenture* that helped inspire Rousseau to commission the artist to illustrate *La Nouvelle Heloise* in 1761.

By the time the tapestries were sent to Qianlong in 1767, the political and cultural context for understanding Asian-inspired arts in France had begun to dissolve. France’s power abroad had been weakened by the loss of the Seven Years’ War, and Louis XV had entered the waning years of his reign. Although Boucher was leading the Academy, and the students of his school had proliferated, proponents of an anti-rococo discourse that called for reinvigoration of a heroic French school of painting were poised to take down the artist’s legacy upon his death in 1770. In 1762, the Parlement prohibited the Jesuits from recruiting and practicing, and ordered that their congregations and colleges be dissolved. Louis XV had tried to publicly reform the Jesuits to appease the Jansenists in the Parlement, but was eventually forced to officially retract the order in 1764. The Parlement’s ability to force the hand of the King was seen as a blow to Louis XV and to the institution of the monarchy.²⁹

²⁷ Fokkema, 115.

²⁸ Fokkema, 115.

²⁹ Jones, 249.

During the period of Jesuit suppression and increasing proscription of Christian presence in China, France's interest in China continued. In 1777, the Abbé de Grosier published *Histoire Générale de la Chine*, which had been translated by Father de Mailla; it was a complete history of China translated from the 1650 Manchu version of what Guy refers to as the "the most widely read and perhaps the best history of China," the *Tzu-chih t'ung-chien*. And, in 1785, the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres awarded first prize in a competition for the winning essay on the topic, "Zoroastre, Confucius et Mahomet, comparés comme sectaires, législateurs, et moralists" to Claude-Emmanuel de Pastoret for an essay Guy describes as the beginning of modern sinology.³⁰ Guy argues that it was this kind of rigorous scholarship on China, in the absence of the Jesuits, which brought about a period of disillusionment regarding the nature of the Celestial Empire's government and economic success. Guy describes this as the result of an inherent flaw in the 'model' of China, saying that the Jesuits and subsequently Voltaire placed the reputation of the Empire on a pedestal from which it was certain to fall.³¹ He argues that Rousseau "dealt the death-blow to the China cult" first in his disavowal of despotism in any form in *The Social Contract* and second, by his favoring of 'sentimental' primitivism in *Julie, or the New Heloise* that contrasted to the outlandishly foreign China.³²

³⁰ Guy, 378-80.

³¹ Guy, 401.

³² Guy, 421.

Because so much official contact between France and China occurred through Jesuit missionaries, the dissolution of the Society of Jesus profoundly disrupted the flow of contact. Toward the end of the eighteenth century, the Chinese government grew to be distrustful of European mercantile contact because Europeans pursued increasingly aggressive trade advantages. European interest in the exotic Far East gave way to new fascination with Egypt and the Levant. Finally, the concept of China popularized in Old Regime France as an enlightened, wise, culturally mature, and absolutist nation (much like France) was simply not compatible with the Republican ideals that achieved socio-political prominence in the latter decades of the 18th century.

CHAPTER 6 EUROPEAN INSPIRED ART IN CHINA

Ritual public presentations of authority performed through dress and ceremony were necessary duties of the Chinese emperors who assumed the role of sovereign rulers of the Celestial Empire by the Mandate of Heaven, a concept closely akin to the Divine Right of Kings in Europe. Viewed as an ethnic outsider by many of the Han literati officials who were still loyal to the Ming dynasty, the Manchu Kangxi Emperor was acutely aware of how important his public image was to securing solidarity. To assuage his ascension, he adopted the practices of his Ming predecessors when conducting official state affairs and engaged in publicity campaigns as a means of controlling the public image of the Manchu dynasty.¹

Kangxi's eighteenth-century successors, the Yongzheng (r. 1722-35) Emperor and the Qianlong Emperor (r. 1735-1796) continued to follow his political program. They created and commissioned works of art as tools for self-fashioning imbued with political significance such as the series of costume portraits of Yongzheng, which included images of the emperor dressed as a Persian warrior, a Turkish prince, and a European hunter (1723-36, Figure A-49).² The emperor's foreign costumes diverted attention from his ethnic 'otherness' as a Manchu and re-inscribed it onto even more racially and ethnically distinct 'others.' They also evoked the presence of the European

¹ Jonathan Hay, "The Kangxi Emperor's Brush-Traces: Calligraphy, Writing, and the Art of Imperial Authority," in Wu Hung and Katherine R. Tsiang (eds.), *Body and Face in Chinese Visual Culture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005), 311-334.

² Wu, Hung, "Emperor's Masquerade: "Costume Portraits" of Yongzheng and Qianlong." *Orientalism* 26/7 (1995), 25-41.

Jesuits who played active roles within the Qing courts. Despite growing hostility to Christian missionaries that resulted in proscription of the Jesuits under Yongzheng's rule and a final edict issued by Qianlong in 1785 forbidding the missionaries from entering China through their base at Macao, Jesuits remained in prominent positions within the Qing courts as astronomers, linguists and artists. The emperors' predilection for European-inspired art was motivated by a desire to assimilate European mathematical and scientific knowledge, to increase the Empire's power for the glory of the Qing dynasty.

European and hybrid-European art was consumed in China, specifically within the court of the Qianlong Emperor. I highlight some of the European Jesuits working as artists within the Emperor's court and pay special attention to the Emperor's particular interest in European arts and architecture, specifically the European Pavilions at Yuanming Yuan which, as argued by Richard Strassberg, provided "a theatrical experience of the West that placed it firmly within the expanding global order of the Qing dynasty."³ In doing so, I hope to close the circle of the story of the *Tenture chinoise* by showing how the 'Chinese'-inspired, European tapestry series ended up as an exotic European artifact in a Chinese collection.

Despite a general suspicion of Jesuit proselytization in China, Qianlong was particularly interested in European art and architecture, and many Jesuits, especially French Jesuits, played active roles in his court as artists, engineers,

³ Richard E. Strassberg, "War and Peace: Four Intercultural Landscapes," in Marcia Reed and Paola Demattè (eds.), *China on Paper: European and Chinese Works from the Late Sixteenth to the Early Nineteenth Century* (Los Angeles, California: Getty Research Institute, 2007), 89-137.

mathematicians and linguists. These Jesuits included Giuseppe Castiglione (1688-1766), Jean-Denis Attiret (1702-68), Michel Benoist (1715-74) and Joseph-Marie Amiot (1718-93). Castiglione was an Italian Jesuit who served in three of the Qing Emperors' courts. He arrived in the Forbidden City in 1715, during the waning years of the Kangxi Emperor, and shortly thereafter adopted the Chinese name, Lang Shining. Lang Shining was one of the most favored Jesuits at Qianlong's court and was often commissioned to paint portraits of the emperor and genre paintings of tribute offerings in a hybrid-Chinese style that incorporated European perspective and modeling techniques. Jean-Denis Attiret became a Jesuit in 1735 and left for China with the *Compagnie des Indes* in 1738. Attiret was commissioned to execute European-style engravings and to help design the European Pavilions at Yuanming Yuan. Qianlong gave him the Chinese name Wang Zhicheng, and Lang Shining became his mentor. Michel Benoist a French Jesuit, in 1744 went to China, where he was employed as a court astronomer and also helped engineer the European Pavilions. Joseph-Marie Amiot went to China in 1750 and became a Western translator for Qianlong. He published a French-Tartar-Manchu dictionary in Paris in 1789, and fifteen volumes of *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences et les arts des Chinois* from 1776-1791.

When Qianlong commissioned works from the Jesuit artists at his court, he often personally oversaw the creative process from beginning to end. Pierre-Martial Cibot wrote about this process and how the works were selected for specific locations within his palaces:

When the emperor desires a painting for his apartments, it is generally the practice to have the European painter go to inspect the locations, in order to carefully consider what will be suitable there. Whether the emperor personally selects the subject or leaves the choice up to the artist, a reduced drawing must first be submitted to his majesty. It is not till after the drawing has been accepted, that the actual painting can be made.⁴

Qianlong would then visit the artists' studios, Lang Shining's in particular, to inspect and request alterations to the work-in-progress as he desired. Lang Shining was often asked to paint horses for Qianlong. Tribute horses were the most prized gifts the emperor received from subjugate nations and a key aspect of Manchu cultural identity. Lang Shining painted several versions of the classical Chinese subject titled *One Hundred Horses*, portraits documenting tribute horses, and equestrian portraits of the Qianlong.⁵ *One Hundred Horses in a Landscape* provides an example of the hybrid Chinese-Italian baroque style present in many of Shining's works (1728, Figure A-50). It illustrates traditional Chinese poses of horses rolling, bucking and galloping within a Chinese landscape that features a conventionally European horizon and perspective. Works such as this were used as educational models and were provided to incoming Jesuits to train their hands in the Chinese style.⁶

As well as equestrian paintings, Lang Shining was often commissioned to paint subjects dear to Qianlong, including portraits of his favorite concubines in

⁴ George R. Loehr, "Peking-Jesuit Missionary Artist Drawings Sent to Paris in the Eighteenth Century." *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 110 (October 1962), 419-428.

⁵ Lauren Arnold, "Of the Mind and the Eye: Jesuit Artists in the Forbidden City in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries." *Pacific Rim Report* 27 (April 2003), 2-12; 6.

⁶ Arnold, "Of the Mind and the Eye," 5

European dress, exotic animals gifted to the emperor, tribute portraits of the emperor receiving offerings from vassal territories, and Qianlong's favorite hunting dogs.⁷ One such example is the *Qianlong Emperor receiving tribute horses from Kyrgyz envoys* dated to 1757, shortly after the Manchu conquests in Central Asia (Figure A-51). Qianlong is shown seated on a dais in a round-backed folding chair with the seat covered in a yellow cloth and a footstool befitting his imperial status, as the Kyrgyz envoy *kow-tows* on the ground before him. *Ten-Fine Hound* is a painting on silk of a hunting hound named Yellow Panther, presented as a tribute by the Manchu vice-minister San He. Presented within a conventional Chinese bird-and-flower genre painting, Yellow Panther's shoulder and rib cage are emphasized by modeling as he pauses to look up at the magpie, whose nearly solid-black shape contrasts sharply with the figure of the dog. These images of tribute gifts document the offerings themselves, and more importantly are meant to exhibit the sovereign power of the Qianlong Emperor. Furthermore, the act of commissioning these tribute images from the Italian-Jesuit artist is itself a means of demonstrating his thrall over the European representative by acquiring the tribute of his service.

Although the European Jesuits were often commissioned to create 'exotic' European and hybrid-European works, they were required to be fully assimilated to Chinese artistic techniques and styles. They underwent a rigorous reeducation to be capable of practicing in Chinese modes of art. One of

⁷ Arnold, 7

Shining's colleagues, Father de Ventavon, expressed the difficulty of assimilating to Chinese culture:

A European painter is in real difficulties from the outset. He has to renounce his own taste and ideas on many points in order to adapt himself to those of this country . . . Skillful as he may be, in some respects he has to become an apprentice again.⁸

Aesthetic theory was often a point of contention among the European Jesuit artists working in China and their hosts. Wu Li, a Chinese Jesuit artist who served in Kangxi Emperor's court after he spent six years during the 1680s studying at St. Paul's Cathedral in Macao, compared Chinese and European styles of painting:

Our painting does not seek physical likeness and does not depend on fixed patterns . . . we call it divine and untrammelled. Theirs concentrates entirely on the problems of light and dark, front and back, and the fixed patterns of physical likeness. Even in writing inscriptions we write at the top of a painting and they sign at the bottom of it. Their use of the brush is also completely different.⁹

Li pointed out some practical differences between the two, but seemed more concerned with the European spirit, believing that European art was unfeeling. His final remark identified a point of contention in the contact between China and Europe, which was felt on both sides and endured through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The subtlety of refined brushwork was the key to artistic genius in China, and it was an aspect of Chinese aesthetic theory difficult to communicate to the European Jesuits working in China.¹⁰ The European

⁸ Arnold, 4.

⁹ Arnold, 2-9.

¹⁰ Arnold, 4.

proclivity for rendering naturalistic images in two dimensions using modeling and perspective was thus viewed in China as a scientific and mathematical means of representation rather an expression of aesthetic quality.

The use of one-point perspective in hybrid-European and European works commissioned by the emperor was meant to showcase his power, by harnessing European mathematical technology as a surrogate for Europe itself. The emperor strove for a level of ‘authenticity’ in his European works that could only be achieved by European hands, so on a few occasions he had drawings by Shining, Attiret and others sent to Paris to be engraved and published. On these occasions, all materials were supposed to have been returned to the Emperor, but often plates were kept and used to publish French versions of the texts. The *Conquetes de l’empereur de la Chine* was published in Paris in 1785 by Isidore Stanislas Henri Helman, although it was never intended for a European audience. The series was commissioned when Qianlong wished to have a recorded history of his military victories printed in the European manner.¹¹ The battle scenes were drawn by Shining, Attiret, Giovanni Damasceno and Ignatius Sichelbart, and then sent to France for execution, a process that took nearly a decade to complete (from 1765-1775). The copper plates and all editions of the prints were meant to be returned to the Emperor, but Helman kept a few suites for his own purposes, rearranging the compositions, reducing the sizes and changing the captions before publishing them in France.¹² Having the series

¹¹ Strassberg, 97-98.

¹² Strassberg, 97-98.

published in France and printing on European printing presses was an extravagant display of power to use his foreign resources.

When Qianlong wanted a copy of the *Dijian tushuo* printed in European style, he had Attiret redraw the prints and send them to Paris to be engraved under the supervision of Charles-Nicolas Chochin II.¹³ The prints were engraved by Helman, who published them in France in 1788, in a series of twenty-four, titled *Faits mémorables des empereurs de la Chine, tirés des annales chinoises*. The *Dijian tushuo* was an illustrated instructional manual composed of classical tales about certain Emperors of China, first designed to teach the young Wanli Emperor to be a good ruler.¹⁴ The manual included examples of good emperors—who followed suggestions from ministers, cared for the people, and avoided vice—and bad emperors—who were self-indulgent, squandered the empire’s wealth, and kept poor company. One example was the good Emperor Yao, who placed a drum and a tablet outside his palace, so his subjects could alert him when they wrote their concerns on a tablet he hung by the palace door (1788, Figure A-52). An example of bad imperial authority was Shang Dynasty Emperor Zhouxin, who succumbed to the will of his sadistic consort Daji. In Helman’s engraving, Zhouxin and Daji are seated on a dais, watching two men duel on a platform over a pile of burning logs, in which a third competitor already

¹³ Paola Demattè, “Christ and Confucius: Accommodating Christian and Chinese Beliefs,” in Marcia Reed and Paola Demattè (eds.), *China on Paper: European and Chinese Works from the Late Sixteenth to the Early Nineteenth Century* (Los Angeles, California: Getty Research Institute, 2007), 29-51.

¹⁴ Demattè, 41.

writhes. Attiret borrowed the figures from the Chinese woodcut *Daji haizheng*, which translates to “Daji harms government.”¹⁵

The European Pavilions of Yuanming Yuan. The area northwest of Beijing was known as “Three Hills and Five Gardens” until the Qing Emperors began consolidating the five gardens into one. Yuanming Yuan or, The Garden of Perfect Clarity, was childhood the home of Qianlong, and the primary imperial residence for Yongzheng, Qianlong, Jiaqing (r. 1796-1820), Daoguang (r. 1821-1850) and Xianfeng (r. 1851-1861).¹⁶ Yuanming Yuan was not simply a garden as the name suggests, but a palace complex; a walled-in world of its own north of the Forbidden City created to synthesize all the diversity of nature into one perfect ‘garden.’ It was also not a ‘Summer Palace’ as many have misstated; the emperors actually spent their summers at *Chengde bishu shanzhuang*—Chengde Summer Mountain Retreat.¹⁷

The purpose of the garden was to recreate all the complexities of the natural world—mountains, hills, valleys, forests, streams, lakes and ponds, with game and fish to fill them. The architectural structures within the complex consisted of halls, pavilions, terraces, chambers, belvederes, gazebos, garden porches, galleries, chapels, cottages, landboats, studios, bridges, walls and

¹⁵ Demattè, 42.

¹⁶ Young-tsu Wong, *A Paradise Lost: The Imperial Garden Yuanming Yuan* (Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 3.

¹⁷ Philippe Forêt, *Mapping Chengde: the Qing landscape enterprise* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000).

pagodas.¹⁸ The natural elements of the garden were constructed so that they flowed together seamlessly, and the architectural structures were carefully placed so they would have exquisite views of the landscapes around them. Influenced by nature, poetry, and inkwash landscape paintings, the Garden was meant to be a physical manifestation of a folding scroll that simply and fluidly rolled through a series of vignettes that together represented the vastness of nature.¹⁹ Qing emperors were continually renovating the garden, and they employed the Lei family, a prominent family of architects, to keep up with Yuanming Yuan's renovations and maintenance. Lei Jinyu was awarded a permanent position within the Office of the Imperial Household at Yuanming Yuan for his work designing the Kangxi emperor's Joyful Spring Garden, and his descendants inherited his position and became the principal architects at Yuanming Yuan.²⁰

The Garden was a political project as much as an artistic one, and the construction of the European Pavilions was a symbolic means of incorporating Europe into the Chinese cosmological framework under Qing rule.²¹ The European Pavilions were cloistered behind walls and hills in the northeast corner of the Eternal Spring Garden, so that only the roofs could be seen from a

¹⁸ Wong, 16-18.

¹⁹ Wong, 9-10.

²⁰ Wong, 21.

²¹ Forêt discusses the Qing emperors' building projects as forms of exercising imperial authority in *Mapping Chengde*.

distance. The European section was constructed on a 65-acre piece of land, and a wall and screen separated the Pavilions from the rest of the Eternal Spring Garden.²² The Eternal Spring Garden itself was the single most costly expansion in Yuanming Yuan's history. Inspiration for the Pavilions came when Qianlong was impressed by an image of a European palace with a mechanical fountain in front, with spewing jets of water.²³ Planning for the European Pavilions began in 1747, and Qianlong meant for it to be his retirement palace. Construction commenced in 1749. Plans were extended in 1751, after the Emperor was pleased with the first round of construction; and the final additions came when the Observatory of Distant Oceans was conceived to house the *Tenture chinois*, in 1767 (1783-86, Figure A-53).²⁴

Lang Shining was commissioned to design the first stage of the Pavilions, drawing on classical and Italian baroque architecture and images of the royal palace and grounds at Versailles to create the plans.²⁵ The Lei architects interpreted and executed the plans, which were continually reviewed and revised by Qianlong himself throughout the process. Qianlong insisted on adding certain Chinese elements such as “meandering streams, dragon imagery, and hipped and tiled roofs” alongside European elements such as Greco-Roman columns,

²² Wong, 26; 64.

²³ Strassberg, 107; Wong, 51.

²⁴ Strassberg, 107-108.

²⁵ Strassberg, 107.

marble balustrades and glass windows.²⁶ The second expansion, completed in 1759 for Qianlong's fiftieth birthday, included the Hall of Calm Seas (*Haiyantang*), which was modeled after the Court of Honor at Versailles; it had a fountain in front, a glass ceiling, and a goldfish reservoir continually filtered with mechanical pumps.²⁷ The Hall of Calm Seas was a two-story structure with a fountain in front. The banisters of the double stairs carried water into the basin and water cascaded from a marble shell in the center. Two rows of Daoist creatures with human bodies and the heads of zodiac animals, perched on rocks in the pool, spouted water at hourly intervals—and once all together at midday—to represent the Chinese calendar.

Construction on the Observatory of Distant Oceans was completed in 1781, when Qianlong began to use it as a vacation home; it was a brick building with carved marble around the doors and windows, and a pair of marble pillars flanking the entrance.²⁸ Boucher's *Tenture chinoise* remained there until the Yuanming Yuan was sacked in 1860, by French and British troops under the command of Baron Gros and Lord Elgin. Looting began on October 6, when the troops entered the garden and led a sustained campaign of pillaging and arson until the Treaty of Beijing was signed on October 23. Lord Elgin commanded the entire garden to be burned to the ground. His troops described the aftermath of the fires as a world "dark with shadow," and the pollution from the mass arson

²⁶ Strassberg, 108.

²⁷ Wong, 63.

²⁸ Wong, 64.

caused permanent ecological damage to the surrounding areas.²⁹ At least one of the tapestries was brought back to Europe among the loot in 1860, and was burned in 1871 during the Paris Commune. The tapestry returned to France was shown in an exhibition (among the rest of the official loot from Yuanming Yuan) held at the Tuileries. It is ironic that an eighteenth-century French tapestry from a Chinese-inspired series sailed from Europe to China, escaped the fires and destruction of Yuanming Yuan, to sail back to France and be exhibited as part of a Chinese collection, only to be destroyed in a fire during the Paris Commune.

It is possible the rest of the tapestry series survived the fires in the garden, as the Observatory of Distant Oceans is still today one of the most intact buildings among the ruins of Yuanming Yuan (Figure A-54). It is also ironic that the European Pavilions are the lasting legacy of the palace at Yuanming Yuan. Because the structures were made of stone and marble, as opposed to traditional Chinese architecture constructed with wooden interior framing, the facades of the Pavilions survived the fires of the sacking and are today the main attraction of Yuanming Yuan Heritage Park. The exact amount of gold and precious objects taken from the garden will never be known, because Yuanming Yuan's financial documents and inventories were lost in the fires.³⁰ It is remarkable, given the prolific destruction of Yuanming Yuan, that four of the six tapestries were seen in Beijing in 1924.

²⁹ Wong, 149-151.

³⁰ Wong, 154.

In the 1920s, the Beijing city government turned most of the imperial gardens into public parks. After the termination of the Cultural Revolution in 1976, the Administrative Department of Yuanming Yuan officially began to manage the site, and initiated the first major renovations of the ruins. Then in 1980, the first symposium on preserving Yuanming Yuan was held to commemorate the 120th anniversary of its destruction. Debates as to whether Yuanming Yuan should be preserved as a historic site or restored to its pre-1860 version are ongoing. However, in 2006, the Zhejiang Hengdian Corporation committed two billion *yuan* over a 5-year period to restore the Garden to nineteenth-century state.³¹ Initial repatriation of the twelve zodiac heads from the Hall of Calm Seas, during the 2000s, aroused international awareness about the future of restoring Yuanming Yuan and the important role of repatriating the lost artifacts from the Garden in restoring China's cultural heritage. It is a deeply felt sentiment in China that the ruins of Yuanming Yuan are the 'scarred' remains of a bitter legacy from the tumultuous period of imperialist conquest within China during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and restoration of the Garden would be a physical and symbolic act of healing.³² If Yuanming Yuan is eventually restored to its pre-1860 state, it is possible a set of Boucher's *Tenture chinoise* might once again hang in the Observatory of Distant Oceans.

³¹ Wong, 180.

³² *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION

Tracing the story of Boucher's *Chinese Series* required a combined examination of Jesuit contact in China, the taste for chinoiserie in Europe, cultural politics in eighteenth-century France, and nineteenth-century French intervention in China. The story unfolds over the course of two centuries, surveying how moments of cultural contact between France and China relate to the creation of the *Chinese Series* and its journey. The story of Boucher's *Chinese Series* is riddled with irony. The tapestry series was commissioned to depict the exotic and idealized Celestial Empire; Boucher designed it to represent French cultural politics through a 'Chinese' façade. The set sent to China became an object of cultural contact when it traveled from Paris to Beijing and came to represent France for the Chinese emperor.

The presence of French Jesuits in the imperial court at Beijing during the reigns of the Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong emperors was essential to the creation of the *Chinese Series* and its journey to China. The Jesuit mission sponsored by Louis XIV successfully established a direct line of communication between France and China that resulted in a century of artistic and intellectual exchange, climaxing in the passage of the tapestry series.¹ Following his Qing lineage, the Qianlong Emperor employed Jesuit artists in his court and commissioned hybrid Chinese and European works from them to suit his own tastes and foster a multicultural, multi-ethnic vision of his empire. The European

¹ Basil Guy, *The French Image of China before and after Voltaire*; Studies on Voltaire and the eighteenth century, 21 (Genève: Institut et Musée Voltaire, 1963).

Pavilions at Yuanming Yuan were built by Chinese architects but designed by Jesuits to house the *Chinese Series*. This was personally and politically significant to Qianlong. Their incorporation into Yuanming Yuan was a symbolic and physical manifestation of the Qing emperors' understanding of Europe as a territory within their own expanding empire. This symbolic act of cultural colonization mirrored the creation of the *Story of the Chinese Emperor* tapestry series woven at Beauvais to commemorate the embarkation of Louis XIV's Jesuit mission. The *Story of the Chinese Emperor* illustrated an idealized union of the French Jesuits and the Chinese emperor that revealed a desire to incorporate China into France's own expanding empire.

With the previous 'Chinese' series in mind, Boucher designed his own *Chinese Series* to be a 'veiled' representation of the reign of Louis XV. Curiously, Boucher's series represented not the ultra-civilized court cultures at Versailles or Beijing, but an idyllic, pre-civilized society that pre-figured Rousseau's concept of a natural state of humanity that would come to subvert absolutist power in France. Thus, the journey of Boucher's tapestry series is a unique and ironic moment in the history of cultural contact between France and China, because the tapestries were foreign to both cultures, and because the series was sent as a diplomatic gift from one absolutist monarch to another in the twilight of absolutism.

My study developed as a result of the lack of scholarly attention paid to Boucher's tapestry series and has attempted to correct some of the particularly dismissive criticisms of the *Chinese Series* and of Boucher's engagement with

chinoiserie. It has been demonstrated here that Boucher studiously adapted elements of East Asian design and culture from a variety of sources to create chinoiseries that were 'authentic' to his French audience's notion of China and their consumption of exotic luxury goods.² Furthermore, Boucher seemed to display a unique understanding of chinoiserie as a mode for inscribing European identity through East Asian-inspired objects, costume, and design. His 'Chinese'-inspired designs often evinced an awareness of the spectacle involved in chinoiserie, and he humorously referred to himself throughout these works to foreground the masquerade-like qualities of the mode.³

My study serves to rehabilitate the reputation of chinoiserie, which has been derided by its critics since opponents of the rococo (specifically Diderot and Rousseau) began to disparage the value of East Asian-inspired art alongside Boucher, whose art they condemned as a debilitating force in French culture.⁴ Until recently, the *goût chinois* was most often approached as merely an exotic sub-genre of the decorative arts. However, the scholarship of Katie Scott, Mary Sheriff, and others suggests that the study of chinoiserie should be used to better

² Perrin Stein, "Boucher's Chinoiseries: Some New Sources." *The Burlington Magazine* 138/1122 (September 1996), 598-604. Anne Dulau et al. (eds.), "In Focus: *Lady Taking Tea and Woman on a Daybed*," from *Boucher & Chardin: Masters of Modern Manners* (Glasgow, Scotland: The Hunterian Museum, University of Glasgow, 2008), 8-25.

³ Katie Scott, "Playing Games with Otherness: Watteau's Chinese Cabinet at the Château de la Muette." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 66 (2003), 189-248. Melissa Hyde, "Getting into the Picture: Boucher's Self-Portraits of Others," in Melissa Hyde and Mark Ledbury (eds.), *Rethinking Boucher* (Los Angeles, California: The Getty Research Institute, 2006), 13-38.

⁴ Melissa Lee Hyde, *Making up the Rococo: François Boucher and His Critics* (Los Angeles, California: Getty Research Institute, 2006). Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger, *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, England: Palgrave, 2003).

understand how the effects of globalization in the eighteenth century contributed to changes in the French mindset brought about by the emerging mercantile economy, colonial conquest, and the Enlightenment.⁵

⁵ Scott, "Playing Games with Otherness." Mary D. Sheriff, *Cultural Contact and the Making of European Art since the Age of Exploration* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010)

APPENDIX
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