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TRAVELS TO CHINA: THE TRAVEL NARRATIVE AS A GENRE
IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITAIN

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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This dissertation examines how the eighteenth-century British travel narrative can have a genre-like coherence while at the same time consisting of great formal variation. A mode of narration that was immensely popular due to Britain's maritime exploration of the world, it generated a wide range of representations, making it difficult to identify a common set of formal conventions. I address this problem by focusing on narrative epistemology, a defining characteristic of the travel narrative, so that I can disclose a range of distinct subgenres that bear a generic family resemblance. Using actual and virtual travel narratives to China as my samples, I examine in each chapter a different subgenre and its formal approach to telling the "truth," whether that be based in historical factuality or constructed imaginatively. Chapter One explores the actual scientific expedition the British partook in during the Macartney Embassy. Using the detached third-person narrator to compile the embassy members' accounts, George Staunton conducts a narrative form of quantitative experimentation to produce an empirically objective account of Chinese culture. In Chapter Two, I discuss the explicitly speculative

or imaginative conjectures John Barrow makes based on the empirical information he has collected during the Macartney mission to generate a probable account of China and its place in a universal history of human civilization. Chapter Three investigates Daniel Defoe's imaginary voyage, in which he overlays England with the virtual world of China to satirize the English government. In order to promote his political project, Defoe mildly parodies the "strange, therefore true" trope to give material form to intangible concepts such as state polity. Chapter Four examines Thomas Percy's use of a Chinese novel that relates its male protagonist's virtual journey. Through his interruptive footnotes, Percy contributes to the novel's aesthetic distance from the senses so as to encourage a critical comparison between the reader and the heroine, whom Percy sees as representing Chinese society. I argue that these subgenres, by embracing the utility of imaginative virtuality to different degrees in their self-conscious attempts to narrate the "truth" about China (and England), constitute a coherent genre despite their apparent formal disparities.

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Introduction

This dissertation began with my interest in the phenomenon of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century travel to foreign lands. There was a steady increase in British travelers during this period as they continued their maritime exploration of the global world that was first opened up by sixteenth-century voyages of discovery.¹ One crucial factor that motivated the British to engage in travel overseas was the desire to discover trade routes, open markets in remote geographical locations, and accumulate new wealth. Although the British began their travels relatively late in comparison to the Spanish and the Portuguese, they soon became a serious contender by first circumnavigating the world and discovering Guiana in the sixteenth century and then crossing the Atlantic Ocean and establishing colonies in North America and the Caribbean in the seventeenth century (Bohls, Introduction xv). The colonies in the New World proved to be especially profitable as the British cultivated crops like cotton and sugar in North American plantations with African slave labor. Such mercantile and imperial activities continued well into the eighteenth century with the British additionally exploring the South Pacific, West Africa, and Asia for similar economic opportunities (Bridges 55). Of course, Britain's commercial expansionism would not have been possible without the concomitant development of its Royal Navy. As Larry Stewart rightly points out, it was "not simply a matter of entrepreneurs striking out into ill-charted waters," but one that "brought navies into play" as "long-standing European conflicts" broke out in the turbulent waters (826). Britain's victories over France, its main competitor in the

¹ For critical works that discuss sea travel and travel writing in the sixteenth century, see Campbell's *Witness and the Other World* 165-255, Foulke 66-111, and Sell 1-192.

eighteenth century, resulted in the emergence of Britain as Europe's leading naval power, which helped realize its political and imperial visions.

Another way sea travel helped form Britain's sense of identity during this period was through the knowledge the British accumulated during their voyages of discovery. Although the expeditions were for the most part commercially motivated, they were also geared towards acquiring knowledge about the natural world and non-European societies. Captain James Cook's three expeditions to the South Pacific Ocean illustrate this well. While the main objective of his voyages was to determine the existence of *Terra Australis* (a continent posited to exist in the Southern Hemisphere) and the Northwest Passage (a navigable sea passage to the Arctic Ocean), both of which Cook, much to his frustration, proved did not exist, the expeditions enabled Cook and his crew members to amass an enormous amount of data about the geographical areas they traversed and the indigenous peoples they encountered (Iliffe 627, 629-31, 634). It is therefore no coincidence that Joseph Banks, the President of the Royal Society of London, closely collaborated with Cook throughout the entire process, equipping the ships with "the best scientific instruments," "most up-to-date charts," and "a greenhouse that would shelter plants against insects, rats, and seawater" (Iliffe 619-20).² If the voyages of discovery helped enhance Britain's scientific knowledge of the world, they also proved to be a good opportunity to test out new instruments, especially those pertaining to the technology of sea travel, which became an innovative industry during this period. For instance, the British were able to better measure longitude with the aid of a chronometer during Cook's second expedition, a feat that ensured greater navigational accuracy in long-

² For articles or chapters that examine the diverse means by which natural scientists established a complex network of communication and exchange with travelers and other related institutions during this period, see Harris 341-62, Findlen 454-68, and Frantz 15-29.

distance travel (Iliffe 634, 636). According to Klaus A. Vogel, it was such knowledge of the natural world and development of scientific devices that enabled the British to compare themselves favorably to other countries and gain “confidence in their global power” (838). Although Vogel somewhat exaggerates Britain’s self-confidence in its scientific knowledge, something that will become more apparent in my first chapter where I discuss the Macartney Embassy to China as a less self-assured expedition, the voyages of discovery undoubtedly helped Britain develop a sharper sense of its global identity.³

If sea travel exercised extraordinary power over British ambitions, it also had a considerable effect on their imaginations. In addition to promoting greater physical mobility on land, which in turn contributed to social mobility and the destabilization of traditional ways of thinking, the voyages of discovery led the British to engage in philosophical inquiries into subjects like the nature of the government’s authority and the plurality of worlds. Notable examples include Francis Godwin’s *Man in the Moone* (1638) and Henry Neville’s *The Isle of Pines* (1668), in which both authors use the conventions of sea travel to imagine an extraterrestrial journey to the moon and a society that is in a primitive state of civilization. Whereas Neville employs the primitive island race the English castaway George Pine has propagated to consider the origins of the government’s authority, Godwin is more interested in using the sense of possibility that

³ Jonathan Lamb makes a similar argument in his monograph on eighteenth-century travel narratives to the South Seas: “Confronted with the vastness of [the South Pacific] ocean, and the unclassifiable diversity of its people and its plants, its navigators rather redoubled their ignorance than increased their knowledge. The journals of James Cook’s three voyages record a mounting bewilderment in the commander’s mind, no doubt partly caused by his failure to locate either of the two grand objectives of his quests, the Great Southern Continent and the Northwest Passage. His bafflement culminated in behavior so unaccountable that his colleagues thought him infatuated. Nor is his case singular. George Vancouver, William Bligh, John Byron, and David Cheap acted in ways so far from reasonable that they lost the confidence of their crews, and the thread of their purpose” (4-5). For a detailed account of how the expeditions to the South Seas “troubled the stability of the European self,” see Lamb *Preserving the Self* (5).

accompanies sea travel to venture into the “unknown” (239). Using his preface to make the point that Columbus’s assertions concerning the existence of land across the Atlantic Ocean were initially regarded with great incredulity and then proved to be true through his later discovery of the Americas, Godwin stresses the possibility of the moon’s habitability, the knowledge of which he claims is “properly reserved for ... our discovering age [when] Galileos can by advantage of their spectacles gaze the sun into spots and descry mountains in the moon” (239). Although the *Man in the Moone* is ultimately geared towards projecting a fantastic utopian society on the moon so as to satirize the various shortcomings of European society, a common feature of imaginary voyages, Godwin’s lunar narrative demonstrates well how sea travel led the British to engage in diverse imaginative speculations.

The widespread influence sea travel had on British ambitions and imaginations is a topic that invites further investigation in a number of different directions. However, as I became increasingly familiar with the great range of travel documents, my scholarship over time came to focus especially on the techniques by which sea travel was represented due to my dominant interest in literary form. The various techniques writers employed to represent sea travel were thrown into relief by the careful records travelers kept during their journeys. As Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs rightly note, “documentation [was] an integral aspect of the activity [of traveling]” (3). Travelers were not only encouraged to keep a daily journal of their geographic and protoethnographic observations, but also given explicit instructions on “how to observe and how to write down their observations” (Hulme and Youngs 4). For example, the Royal Society, which was deeply invested in the expeditions that took place during this period, issued a checklist for travelers entitled

“Directions for Seamen, bound for Far Voyages” that contained specific instructions such as “observ[ing] the Delineation of the *Compass*, or its Variation from the *Meridian* of the place, frequently; marking withal, the *Latitude* and *Longitude* of the place, wherever such Observation is made, as exactly as may be, and setting down the *Method*, by which they made them” (quoted in Frantz 15, 22). In addition to prescribing the proper methods of observation, the Royal Society stressed the significance of transforming the travelers’ observations into a narrative form that would “render [the truth documented in their journals] more stylistically accessible and ‘methodical,’” explaining the supplementary directions the Society issued in regard to the techniques of constructing narratives (McKeon, *Origins* 103). Although some travelogues like those commissioned by the government or trading companies remained concealed due to the valuable information they contained, a good number of these documents were disclosed and extensively edited for diverse purposes.

This generated a wide range of representations that became available for public consumption in the English literary market. In addition to actual travelogues that were composed into a relatively coherent narrative based on the observations the travelers carefully recorded in their journals, there were more-or-less explicitly fictional ones that loosely employed the material of actual travel reports to construct a journey to either an actual or an imagined location, all of which attracted a large readership in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Britain.⁴ On the one hand, I came to see these representations of sea travel as a singular and distinctive mode of narration despite their great variety. Its similarities with the early English novel, which was in the process of being formed

⁴ A good example of the former would be Mungo Park’s *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa* (1799), which he published after returning from an expedition to West Africa to discover the course of the Niger River. Of the latter, Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726) would be a representative example.

during this period, suggested that the travel narrative could also be characterized as an emergent genre.⁵ But on the other hand, the many formal disparities that I saw existed within the broad spectrum of travel narratives led me to question whether the travel narrative even had its own set of formal conventions, a question that numerous literary critics have asked without providing a satisfactory answer. They instead tend to either emphasize the travel narrative's formal flexibility, which J. Paul Hunter does when he characterizes the travel narrative as being "loosely constructed, capable of almost infinite expansion, and susceptible of a great variety of directions and paces," or to stress its affiliation with other genres, as Joan-Pau Rubiés does when he describes the travel narrative as "a collection of related genres" that are as varied as "chronicles and histories, geographical and cosmographical treatises," "political reports," "chivalric and picaresque romances," "utopian and anti-utopian literature," "philosophical works," and "educational treatises" (Hunter *Before Novels* 354, Rubiés 10). It is by taking such issues into consideration that my dissertation coalesced into its present form around this central question: can the travel narrative of this period be described as having a genre-like coherence while at the same time consisting of great formal variation? In order to conduct my investigation, I deemed it necessary to limit my subject in two crucial ways.

Narrative Form: The Conventions of Truth-Telling

First, I concentrated my focus on a central aspect of narrative form, namely narrative epistemology, the techne of truth-telling. Virtually all travel narratives of the time seem preoccupied with this matter. If we examine the title pages and prefaces of

⁵ For critical works that examine the formal intersections between travel narratives and the eighteenth-century English novel, see Adams' *Travel Literature* 81-212, McKeon's *Origins* 100-117, and Bohls' "Age of Peregrination" 98-101.

both actual and fictional voyage accounts that were published in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they all purport to be telling the “truth.” For instance, in *A New Voyage Around the World* (1697), William Dampier stresses “the truth and sincerity of [his] relation” by describing his account as “a plain piece” that refrains from “telling stories” (Preface, Dedication). Daniel Defoe also begins his imaginary travel narrative *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719) with a similar claim: “The Editor believes the [Story] to be a just History of Fact; neither is there any Appearance of Fiction in it” (4). Whereas the majority of travel writers simply affirm the credibility of their accounts as in these examples, some choose to engage in a form of “brotherly backstabbing” by “defend[ing] [their] own observations while deploring the credulity or errors of [their] predecessors,” a risky maneuver that could always be used against them by their successors (Adams, *Travel Literature* 87).

Nothing was more important to travel writers than the claim to be telling the truth in their narratives. Although they did not experience any problems attracting and maintaining the interest of their readers, they faced the difficult challenge of convincing their readership of the truth-value of their representations, a problem that Jonathan Lamb discusses in great detail. Lamb describes travel writers as being in an “unsociable [and] nonpolite” relationship with their readers, who were becoming increasingly skeptical of all travelogues and in many cases accused the travelers of being liars (85).⁶ Although

⁶ In his monograph on “travel liars,” Percy G. Adams firmly distinguishes between imaginary voyages and what he calls “travel lies,” which he defines as “a tale told by a traveler or pseudo traveler with intent to deceive” (1). While he recognizes that “from the point of view of the authors, both [types] are fictional, imaginary,” he justifies his distinction between travel lies and imaginary voyages on the rationale that “one was real and the other was not” from the viewpoint of readers (*Travel Liars* 3). Yet, as Adams is quick to point out himself, there were imaginary voyages like Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, whose fictionality was not so apparent and could easily belong to the other category of travel lies (*Travel Liars* 2). Furthermore, when we consider how writers of travel lies and imaginary voyages employed similar techniques to argue for the truthfulness of their representations, I wonder if it makes much sense to separate them as Adams does in his

readers put considerable pressure on travel writers to make their representations more reliable, not always an easy task considering the novelty and peculiarity of their experiences, readers had good reason to question the credibility of all voyage accounts, for they found it increasingly difficult to distinguish actual travelogues from imaginary ones, both of which employed similar techniques to argue for their veracity. For this reason, writers of both actual and imaginary travel narratives experimented extensively with narrative form so as to devise a way of faithfully delivering, or at least seeming to deliver, the “truth” to their readership. While writers of actual voyage accounts experimented with empirical styles of narration, which had by this time become the new default mode of telling the truth, so that they could clear themselves of what they deemed to be unjust charges of composing falsehoods, the writers of imaginary ones partook in various formal experimentations in order to convince their readers of the truth-value of their imaginatively constructed realities, which came to aspire to a different form of truth that was still in the process of formation during this period. Although empirical epistemology presented writers with numerous problems in that it did not provide any clear guidelines on how to most effectively narrate the truth, it also had the effect of making people reflect on the question of whether there was only one empirical sort of secular truth (McKeon, *Origins* 110, 119).⁷ Travel writing became a sort of practical laboratory for testing such philosophical questions, the result of which was the gradual

visual arrangement of travelogues, where he positions actual voyage accounts in the center and then places the travel lies to the left and the imaginary voyages to the right (*Travel Liars* 2-3). Rather than having the two types constitute two separate spectrums, in which Adams arranges them accordingly to the magnitude of the “lies” the former tells and the degree of fictionality the latter embraces, it seems more productive to combine the two, which is what I propose to do with the actual and fictional (or virtual) voyage accounts I examine in my dissertation.

⁷ For a detailed discussion of the challenges the “naïve empirical style” posed to writers seeking to narrate the truth, see McKeon’s *Origins* 105-117.

emergence of an alternative secular mode of truth that we will see manifested in my last chapter on Thomas Percy's Chinese novel (McKeon, *Origins* 101, 118, 119-120).

Besides its overwhelming importance in defining the nature of travel narrative, narrative epistemology was important to my investigation because the wide range of conventions it authorizes to support claims of credibility discloses a range of what might be seen as distinct "sub-genres" that bear a broad generic family resemblance. As I have already intimated in my observations on imaginary travel narratives, in order to support my argument that epistemologically speaking there exist several sub-genres of the travel narrative in this period, I needed to examine not only "actual" but also "imaginary" – or as I will generalize and rationalize that category, "virtual" – travel narratives. (As we will shortly see, "imaginary travels" or "voyages" have a more particular status as one kind of virtual travel narrative.)

What are virtual travel narratives? All the travel narratives I discuss are virtual in the sense that they are representations of voyages. My concern with virtual travel is not with this fundamental condition of representation as such but with the fact that many of the travel narratives that flourished in this period are about voyages that never actually occurred. The results of my research are four subgenres that range from actual travel through kinds that are in this sequence increasingly explicitly virtual. Although their names derive from different sources and different travel aims, they all reflect distinct approaches to telling the truth: scientific, conjectural, imaginary, and aesthetic.⁸

⁸ In doing so, I diverge from the way anthologies and surveys of travel writing usually classify the travel narratives that flooded the English literary market during this period. By limiting their investigation to accounts of actual voyages, they typically focus on the agents and purpose of travel. Although I also consider the purpose of travel, I focus more on how this translates into narrative epistemology, which anthologies and surveys do not take into account when classifying travelogues. For instance, in *Travel Writings 1700-1830: An Anthology*, an extensive collection of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century British travel narratives, the travelogues are first categorized by their geographical destination and then

“Scientific travel” refers to actual voyages that were undertaken to make empirical observations and conduct experiments with the aim of accumulating knowledge about natural and social phenomena. “Conjectural travel,” a category I extrapolate from the method of “philosophical” or “conjectural history” that was identified and pursued in later eighteenth-century Britain, is both actual and virtual in that it employs empirical data collected during an actual journey to make explicitly speculative or imaginative conjectures. “Imaginary travel” is a category that derives from the later seventeenth-century phenomenon of the “imaginary voyage,” the narration of a voyage that never actually happened. Imaginary travel is therefore by definition virtual travel in that it mentally transports its characters and readers to a virtual world that retains traces of, but at the same time intentionally diverges from, actual reality. But the range of variation is wide, and because imaginary travel shares the conventions of actual travel narratives, its virtuality can be at times indeterminable. Unlike imaginary travel, “aesthetic travel” is explicitly virtual. It coordinates the travel literary characters may undertake in a fictional yet probable plot with the psychological “transport” experienced by readers as they sympathetically identify with its characters.

Abstracted from a large body of exemplary travel narratives, these four subgenres distil four distinct ways eighteenth-century British travel writers contended with the challenge of not only telling the truth in narrative, but also being perceived to do so. Scientific travel attempts to achieve empirical objectivity by separating out the

subcategorized into different types of travelers. William H. Sherman adopts a similar approach in his general survey of early modern travel narratives by first tracing the diverse trajectories English travelers undertook between 1500 and 1720 and then tendering a categorized list of travel writers (20-30). It is interesting to note here that Sherman includes the category of “editors,” most notably Richard Hakluyt and Samuel Purchas, in his list (22-24). In doing so, he draws attention to not only actual travel, but also “armchair” travel, which is often overlooked in anthologies and surveys of travel literature.

experiential variables that color all particular accounts of empirical data through comparative techniques and quantitative experimentation, whether that takes the form of actual scientific experiments or experiments with empirical styles of narration (McKeon, “Dramatic Aesthetic” 203-08, 215-31). In conjectural travel, one makes explicitly speculative or imaginative conjectures based on the empirical information one has collected. On the basis of this “reasoned” form of imagination, a calculated hypothesis that derives from empirical observations, one is able to make probable connections between the seemingly unrelated social phenomena one witnesses as well as determine the probable causes of the similarities and differences one sees existing between national cultures (Carrithers 240, 241-43). It is through such imaginative conjectures that conjectural historians seek to produce a probable account of conditions in the unrecorded or insufficiently recorded past, allowing one to gain access to a cultural past that is otherwise inaccessible (Carrithers 242).⁹

In imaginary travel, one does not place a limit on what the imagination can fantastically posit as long as it derives from sense experiences and generates still-visualizable images.¹⁰ While this may seem to conflict with the truth-telling concerns that I assert are common to all subgenres of the travel narrative, the writer of the imaginary voyage strives to empower his imagination so that he can overlay actual locations with other imagined ones and highlight either the negative or the positive implications for actual places. The elements of the actual that help structure the imaginary voyage’s depiction of a virtual world are therefore crucial to its satirical or

⁹ For a detailed examination of the methodology and aims of conjectural history, see Carrithers 232-70, Palmeri 1-21, Phillips 171-89, and Wokler 31-52.

¹⁰ For an annotated checklist of the 215 imaginary voyages that were published in the eighteenth century, see Gove 198-420.

panegyric aims. In aesthetic travel, the writer, in the manner of Joseph Addison's theorization of the aesthetic, postulates the imagination as being distanced from sense experiences, but not as distanced as the abstract understanding is in Addison's discussion (McKeon, "Dramatic Aesthetic" 238). It is such aesthetic distance from the senses that produces a probable representation of a virtual world that makes apparent its fictional nature but at the same time retains a semblance of the actual owing to its basis in empirical experience (McKeon, "Dramatic Aesthetic" 234-35). The effect on the reader is an awareness that a persuasively close account of the actual has been mediated by artistic technique, encouraging (in Coleridgian terms) the suspension of the reader's empirical disbelief in the narrative's imaginatively constructed reality (McKeon, "Dramatic Aesthetic" 241, *Origins* 128).

As one can surmise from my brief descriptions of scientific, conjectural, imaginary, and aesthetic travel, the arrangement of my chapters, in which I focus in detail on one representative example of each subgenre, is not chronological. I begin my dissertation with travel narratives published in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries and then go back in time to examine those published in the early- and mid-eighteenth century. By ordering my chapters this way, I demonstrate how different types or subgenres of the travel narrative embrace the utility of imaginative virtuality to different degrees in their highly self-conscious attempts to narrate the truth. In other words, it is not that the eighteenth century begins with efforts to achieve scientific objectivity and ends with the novelistic aesthetic. Rather, the chapter sequence of my dissertation aims to show the close relation between these different subgenres of the travel narrative. I begin with those that are dominated by empirical epistemology yet

acknowledge in their method the inevitable role of the imagination, and I conclude with those that exemplify an innovative aesthetic method that combines empirical epistemology with self-conscious reflexivity.

Narrative Content: Travels to China

The second limitation I needed to impose on my research program to ensure its practicability required me to select, from what already was becoming a global enterprise of travel and travel narratives, a single location. Why travel narratives to the Chinese Empire? China was a remote geographical location that the British had limited access to for the most part of the eighteenth century. While critics like David Porter, Eugenia Zuroski Jenkins, and Chi-ming Yang stress China's prevalence in Britain's print and material cultures, they tend to overlook – or to underemphasize – one crucial aspect of Britain's cultural encounter with China during this period, namely, China's physical inaccessibility.¹¹ Despite the regular reminders of China's cultural influence on the everyday lives of the British, China nonetheless remained a remote geographical space, to which Britain did not have direct access. In this regard, the status of China in eighteenth-century Britain resembles what Elizabeth Hope Chang aptly calls the “familiar exotic”

¹¹ The success with which China dominated the print and material cultures of eighteenth-century Britain is well documented. Porter illustrates well the Britons' preoccupation with the Chinese Empire in *Ideographia*, where he primarily examines the vast body of writings on various aspects of Chinese civilization such as its language, religion, arts, and commerce that circulated the public sphere. Porter further establishes China's prevalence in British culture by investigating the “Chinese and Chinese-styled goods” that occupied Britain's commercial and domestic spaces in his later book *The Chinese Taste* (2). We can witness an interesting convergence of textual and material representations of China in Zuroski Jenkins' *A Taste for China*, where she focuses on depictions of chinoiserie that abounded in a wide variety of literary texts such as periodical essays, prose fiction, and poetry (2). Yang similarly combines the two in *Performing China* by devoting a chapter to discussing theatrical performances of China. According to Yang, it was on the English stage that writings about Chinese civilization such as its morality were materialized in the figures of the virtuous mandarin and his family, which appeared alongside Chinese decorative objects that featured prominently in the costumes and set designs (30).

(6).¹² A phrase that Chang devises to “account for China’s simultaneous presence and difference in the nineteenth-century imagination,” it emphasizes the “paradoxical sense of everyday foreignness” that I argue also applied in the eighteenth century (6). While Chang sees the sense of foreignness as mainly deriving from “China’s aesthetic difference,” whether that be “the fantastical, artificial, and unnatural qualities of Chinese artistic productions” or “the restricted, immobile, and shallow powers of Chinese perception,” I suggest that the inability to travel to China added to this sense of foreignness or remoteness (6, 5).

Contrary to what one would think, the lack of direct access the British had to the mainland of China was not due to the great physical distance that existed between the two countries. As I mentioned earlier, the eighteenth century witnessed an unusual increase in the number of British travelers, leading the *Critical Review* to describe the eighteenth century as “the age of peregrination” (19: 361). Although the British successfully made their way to various remote locations such as Continental Europe, Africa, the Caribbean, the Americas, the Middle East, India, and Australia, they experienced difficulties in gaining direct access to China primarily due to the empire’s closed-door policy, which the Chinese government implemented in order to restrict material and intellectual exchanges with foreigners. As a result, British interactions with the Chinese were limited

¹² This recalls the controversial concept “orientalism” that Edward Said asserts was employed to sharply differentiate between the West and the East. While Chang similarly implies a notion of difference with the term “exotic,” it lacks the major ideological implications of Said’s argument, namely the use of cultural difference to indicate a hierarchical relationship between the two different regions. Such dissimilarity between Chang and Said’s arguments can be attributed to the specific historical condition of China’s economic dominance, which Robert Markley claims persisted until 1800 (2). For a more detailed discussion of China’s dominance in the global economy and the influence it exerted on the English imagination in the seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries, see Markley 1-29, 70-219.

to the trading port at Canton for the greater part of the eighteenth century.¹³ It was not until the 1790s that the British were first able to travel to the interior of China by sending an embassy to the Qing court to negotiate trade agreements and establish a diplomatic treaty between the two countries. But even then, they were not very successful in gaining greater access to the Middle Kingdom. They not only failed to accomplish the commercial and political objectives of their mission, but they also encountered obstacles to observing China's physical and cultural landscapes during their journey. Fearing that the delegation was sent to collect vital information that would later enable Britain to initiate a military attack on China, the Chinese government imposed severe restrictions on where and, more important, how long embassy members could traverse the Chinese Empire. Despite Lord Macartney's formal request that they be granted permission to stay in Peking after their assembly with the emperor, the British were rather unceremoniously dismissed and ordered to leave before the advent of winter so that the falling temperatures would not impede their journey to Canton through the Imperial Canal.¹⁴

¹³ China's inaccessibility proved to be frustrating to the British for several reasons, the most obvious being its obstruction to international trade. If the Britons initially saw the abundance of natural resources in China as a means of overcoming a future shortage in their own supply, which they feared due to an upsurge in England's population in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, they later envisioned trade with the opulent and populous China as a way of capitalizing on recent economic developments within England and further increasing their profits (Markley 14-15, 180). This explains why they were so aggravated with the numerous restrictions, to which their merchants were subjected at Canton. In addition to having to pay ever-increasing duties to the Hong merchants who monopolized all foreign trade after 1755 and therefore were in a favorable position to overcharge foreign merchants as they wished, the Britons' commercial dealings with the Chinese were strictly confined to Canton (Pritchard, *Anglo-Chinese Relations* 109-54). The British saw the latter restriction as limiting the exposure of English manufactured goods to potential consumers in interior China, which Earl H. Pritchard claims contributed to the commissioning of the Macartney Embassy (*Anglo-Chinese Relations* 175).

¹⁴ In *A Narrative of the British Embassy to China* (1795), one of the numerous travel narratives generated by the Macartney mission, Aeneas Anderson summarizes the situation well when he characterizes the delegates' voyage to the Chinese Empire in the following manner: "In short, we entered Peking like paupers; we remained in it like prisoners; and we quitted it like vagrants" (181). An account that relates the mission from the perspective of a male servant, Anderson's *Narrative* is more forthright than those of higher-ranking officials in that it highlights the supplicatory nature of the British interaction with members of the Chinese court. The similes that Anderson chooses to describe the disadvantageous terms of their

In short, the Chinese Empire, despite all its interest as a culture that the British increasingly encountered in this period, came to seem my obvious choice for practical reasons. The limited access the British generally had to interior China resulted in fewer travel narratives to China, hence a smaller body of texts for which I had to account.¹⁵ However the relatively smaller size of my sample had no effect on the basic spectrum of ways of truth-telling that I wanted to assess and compare.

The texts I have selected to represent the four subgenres of travel narrative to China are as follows: first, Sir George Staunton's detached third-person narrative, which compiles multiple accounts in *An Authentic Account of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China* (1797), the official narrative of the Macartney Embassy that relates the scientific expedition its members participated in during their journey; second, the explicitly speculative or imaginative conjectures John Barrow, a fellow member of embassy, makes based on the empirical information he has collected in his firsthand account of the Macartney mission *Travels in China* (1804), which also functions as a conjectural history of the Chinese Empire; third, Daniel Defoe's mild parody of the "strange, therefore true" trope with the "strange" technological inventions his narrator discovers during his imaginary voyage to China and the moon in *The Consolidator: Or, Memoirs of Sundry Transactions from the World in the Moon* (1705); and fourth, Thomas Percy's employment of the novel's aesthetic distance from the senses

relationship with the Chinese are in line with the limited access the British generally had to interior China during this period.

¹⁵ The nineteenth century witnessed a proliferation of British travel narratives to China, which Chang attributes to "the broad lifting of interior passport restrictions," one of the many changes that were brought about by the two Opium Wars (1840-42, 1856-60) (12). For an examination of the Treaty of Nanjing (1842) and the Treaty of Tianjin (1858), which led to the relaxation of the regulations that prohibited foreigners from trading and traveling in the interior of China in the nineteenth century, see Chang 11-12.

in *Hau Kiou Choaan, or The Pleasing History* (1761), a Chinese literary work that Percy edited by means of an intrusive footnote commentary.

Chapter One

Scientific Travel to China:

The Sociable Truth of the Macartney Embassy, 1792-1794

The Macartney Embassy to China marks a momentous occasion in the history of Anglo-Chinese relations. Commissioned in 1792 with the main objectives of improving trade relations and establishing a diplomatic treaty between the two countries, the British embassy set out for China, eventually arriving at Tianjin in June 1793. In bypassing Canton altogether to first land on the northern coast of mainland China, the embassy marks a significant departure from Britain's previous interactions with China, which were strictly limited to the trading port. The embassy's consequent progression to Peking and the emperor's summer residence in Jehol before departing from Canton in January 1794 not only enabled the British to sidestep the local officials at Canton and directly negotiate, albeit unsuccessfully, with the members of the Qing court, but also afforded them an opportunity to directly observe the physical and cultural landscapes of China, a much coveted opportunity that had not been granted to the British until the mission. While the mission ended on a rather disappointing note without having accomplished any of the embassy's stated aims, it generated a large body of knowledge about China made public by the following publications: Lord Macartney's *An Embassy to China: Being the Journal Kept by Lord Macartney during his Embassy to the Emperor Ch'ien-lung*, a private journal that was written during the mission and was later selectively published in John Barrow's 1807 and Helen Robbin's 1908 biographies of the ambassador; Sir George

Staunton's *An Authentic Account of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China* (1797), the official account of the embassy which compiles Staunton's own observations and those of other high-ranking officials; John Barrow's *Travels in China* (1804), a travel narrative that also functions as a conjectural history of China; and Aeneas Anderson's *A Narrative of the British Embassy to China* (1795), an account which narrates the mission from the perspective of a male servant.¹⁶

This plethora of embassy narratives has in turn generated a multitude of critical works, the most seminal of which are Earl H. Pritchard's *The Crucial Years of Early Anglo-Chinese Relations, 1750-1800* and J. L. Cranmer-Byng's "Lord Macartney's Embassy to Peking in 1793 from Official Chinese Documents." As Robert A. Bickers states, both Pritchard and Cranmer-Byng have drawn attention to the issues that are most pertinent to the mission: the unfulfilled commercial and political objectives of the embassy, the Chinese emperor's edict to King George III, the endless negotiations regarding the kowtow, and the misunderstandings on the part of both parties that plagued the mission (7-8). Yet their critical analyses can be distinguished by their respective emphases on the commercial and political aspects of the embassy. In his last three chapters devoted to examining the Macartney Embassy, Pritchard firmly locates the mission within the framework of Anglo-Chinese commercial relations by seeing it as a culminating effort to alleviate the trade restrictions imposed by the Canton system and to address the grievances the British merchants incurred at the hands of Chinese officials.

¹⁶ Other less notable travel narratives produced by the Macartney Embassy are the private journals of Samuel Holme, a private guard of the embassy, Dr. Gillian, one of the expedition's physicians, and George Thomas Staunton, Sir George Staunton's thirteen-year old son (Marshall 11). Among the three, only Samuel Holme's account is made available on *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* and I have excluded it from my discussion due to its having failed to attract the attention of both eighteenth-century readers and modern critics.

Paying great attention to the special aims put forth in the instructions of both George III and the East India Company, Pritchard characterizes it as a commercial mission aspiring to “open the whole East to British commerce” by negotiating a treaty with the Chinese Empire and generating greater demand for British manufactured products in China (*Crucial Years* 308). Pritchard, however, regards it as a futile endeavor doomed to failure due to China’s closed-door policy and economic self-sufficiency and ultimately describes it as a mistake that cost the East India Company a hefty sum of eighty thousand pounds (*Crucial Years* 382-84). Cranmer-Byng shares this pessimistic prognosis for the British embassy on political grounds. Seeing the establishment of equal diplomatic relations with China as the mission’s main objective, he discusses the political impediments it faced, materialized in the 1793 Imperial Edict and the negotiations over the proper etiquette the Qing court demanded the British envoys observe in front of the emperor. Using the edict to reveal the patronizing attitude the Chinese exhibited towards the “barbarian” nations from the West, Cranmer-Byng bestows great significance upon Macartney’s refusal to perform the traditional kowtow, which he claims incensed the emperor and his ministers (138, 156). He concludes his article by characterizing the embassy as “a head-on collision between Western ideas of ... diplomacy as conducted between sovereign and equal states and the Chinese concept of a world-state of which China was the center and in which all other states were inferior” (181). Although it admittedly took more time (and warfare) for the British to successfully convince the Celestial Empire of the change in the balance of imperial powers, Cranmer-Byng claims that the embassy triggered a change in political awareness (181-83).

More recent commentary on the Macartney Embassy has broadened the perspective to not only include a wider range of sources, both English and Chinese, but also investigate a wider range of themes. David Porter, for example, discusses the embassy in relation to “the eighteenth-century commercialist doctrine that posited the free circulation of economic and cultural capital as the basis of progress and prosperity” (*Ideographia* 12). Examining the various embassy narratives including that of Lord Amherst, the ambassador of the 1816 mission to China, Porter argues how the British later extended their characterization of Chinese trade policies as “obstructionism” to the Chinese state itself (*Ideographia* 211). According to Porter, China, contrary to the earlier perceptions of the Middle Kingdom as an ancient and enlightened state, came to be perceived as a stagnant one, whose “obstructionist” trade policies inhibited not only the circulation of goods but also the cultivation of intellectual curiosity and sociability (*Ideographia* 211, 217, 226). China was thereby effectually divested of its political and cultural authority (Porter, *Ideographia* 229, 235). James L. Hevia too expands the object of investigation by examining the Macartney Embassy within the context of Qing China’s policy on foreign relations. Yet Hevia’s monograph diverges from Porter’s chapter on the embassy by taking into consideration Chinese sources and examining the mission from the perspectives of the Chinese as well as the British. In doing so, he demonstrates his commitment to the task of resisting “the tendency to apply ‘objectivist’ Western theory, particularly social science models, to non-Western data,” one that Porter does not follow himself but finds in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britons (7). Such a critical practice enables Hevia to see the embassy not as “a symbolic ... confrontation between ‘traditional’ [or regressive] and ‘modern’ civilizations,” but as a struggle between “two

imperial formations,” whose “competing ... views of the meaning of sovereignty and the ways in which relations of power were constructed” were put at odds with each other (2, 25, 28).

While these two critical works (and others) have certainly enlarged the scope of discussion in relation to the Macartney Embassy by examining its historical and cultural significance, they nonetheless remain firmly focused on the commercial and political aspects of the embassy. I would like to diverge from this course by drawing attention to the mission’s often-overlooked scientific aims of observing China’s physical and cultural landscapes. Of course, this is not to suggest that the scientific aspect of the embassy has been completely neglected in the critical literature. There have been intermittent forays, like Hevia’s brief discussion of Macartney’s “naturalist’s gaze” and Simon Schaffer’s examination of the scientific instruments in the delegation’s shipment of British goods.¹⁷ My aim in this chapter is to engage in a more systematic investigation of the Macartney Embassy as a scientific expedition, which extends beyond taking scientific apparatus as presents to the Qing court, and consider it in relation to the delegation’s commercial and

¹⁷ Hevia, for example, briefly discusses how Macartney employs the “naturalist’s gaze” when observing the physical and cultural landscapes of China (84). However, he jumps too quickly to what he takes to be the imperialistic implications of such an act: “This procedure of recording phenomena produced, moreover a new kind of knowledge about China, a kind lodged now in the detail of description, measurable and quantifiable, and hence generalizable. It carried added weight because it was gathered firsthand, and perhaps even more significantly, because in the process of its production *it clearly identified its debased other*” (89, my emphasis). For Hevia, the significance of the embassy’s scientific enterprise lies in its contribution to the Britons’ sense of superiority, which in turn brought about their misunderstanding of the terms of the Qing Guest Ritual (114-15). Simon Schaffer discusses the instruments (planetarium, air pumps, telescopes, and so on) brought to China by the embassy less for their specifically scientific significance than as “cargo,” which he succinctly defines as “potent objects supposed to embody the culture and the economy of which they are components” (218). Although they were dismissed as curious ingenuities by the Qing court, Schaffer claims they were brought to primarily represent “British advances in natural philosophical and astronomical hardware” resulting from the “free and unrestrained communication” that the British were so eager to persuade the Chinese to join (231). However, as in the case of the planetarium, which was designed to embody not only “the political economy of free trade,” but also “Copernican astronomy and eschatological religion” by its pietist priest designer, the scientific instruments were bestowed with an overabundance of cultural significance, leading them to be interpreted in very different ways by the British themselves (Schaffer 231, 232, 238-39).

political objectives. As I will argue in the following sections, the embassy members not only partake in the study of various subsections of the natural sciences such as botany and zoology, but also participate in the ongoing development of protoethnography in the late eighteenth century. I will demonstrate that in the process of observing Chinese customs and manners so as to better ascertain the emperor and mandarins' intentions, the expedition participants come to realize that the methods devised for observing and analyzing nature are not applicable to studying foreign cultures. In addition to experiencing difficulties in gaining direct access to the objects of their study (both the general Chinese populace and the Chinese mandarins), they are unable to repeat their encounters with the Chinese natives like they do with their experiments with nature, making them more susceptible to being influenced by their material interests when observing Chinese culture. This in turn leads Staunton to engage in a narrative form of quantitative experimentation, namely his use of a detached third-person narrator so as to effectively compile the accounts of his fellow embassy members. In doing so, he seeks to extract the experiential variables that could have potentially colored the individual accounts of empirical data and consequently produce an empirically objective narrative of Chinese culture, similar to what the expedition participants achieve with their observations on China's natural phenomena through actual scientific experiments (McKeon, "Dramatic Aesthetic" 203-08). However, the compiled narrative, which is based on the sociable relations the embassy members form with each other in their collaborative effort to accumulate empirical knowledge about China, remains suspect due to the shared goals of the expedition participants. It is my argument that the scientific aspect of the embassy therefore forms an uneasy relationship with the mission's

competing objective of commercial expansionism and helps complicate our understanding of the embassy's well-documented failure. While some of the expedition's scientific practices certainly intersect with the mission's commercial agenda in that the data and specimens its participants collect contribute to generating new lucrative branches of trade like horticulture, the expedition's scientific protocols also require a disengagement from such agendas in order to produce a reliable account of China and its inhabitants, which I argue they have limited success in accomplishing.

The Macartney Embassy to China as Scientific Travel

The king's private instructions to Macartney state that the expedition was "little confined to mercantile interests at Canton," but extended to include "the pursuit of knowledge and ... the discovery and observation of distant countries and manners" (*Authentic Account* 1: 57, 55). George III reiterates this ambition in his letter to the Chinese emperor:

The natural disposition of a great and benevolent sovereign, such as his Imperial Majesty, ... was to ... take plans for disseminating happiness, virtue, and knowledge among his subjects.... [George], impressed with such sentiments ... had taken various opportunities of fitting out ships, and sending, in them, some of the most wise and learned of his own people, for the discovery of distant and unknown regions; not for the purpose of conquest, or of enlarging his dominions, which were already sufficiently extensive for all his wishes, nor for the purpose of acquiring wealth, nor even for favouring the commerce of his subjects; but for the sake of increasing the knowledge of the habitable globe, of finding out the various productions of the earth.... He had been still more anxious to inquire into the arts and manners of countries, where civilization had been improved by the wise ordinances and virtuous examples of their sovereigns, through a series of ages; and felt, above all, an ardent wish to become acquainted with those celebrated institutions of his (Chinese) Majesty's populous and extensive empire, which had carried its prosperity to such a height, as to be the admiration of all surrounding nations. (*Authentic Account* 1: 56-57)

One can question the sincerity of George's stated aims of the embassy given the extent to which he denies the commercial (and possibly even military) aims of the delegation.

This is evidently a letter written to stroke the Chinese emperor's ego in order to facilitate the mission's commercial ambitions as well as to placate the emperor's suspicion that it was sent to collect vital information that would later enable the British to initiate a military attack on the Chinese Empire. However, George III seems to have been quite sincere in his desire to accumulate "knowledge of the habitable globe," giving his envoys the discretionary authority to visit and survey a number of countries as they navigated their way across the Atlantic and Indian Oceans to China (*Authentic Account* 1: 56).

In fact, this explains why the majority of the embassy accounts devote a significant portion to relating their travels *prior to* their arrival in China. For example, Staunton dedicates the entire first volume of his official account (a staggering 429 pages) to narrating their navigations through Madeira, Teneriffe, St. Jago, Rio de Janeiro, St. Helena, Tristan d'Acunha, Java, Sumatra, the Nanka Isles, Pulo-Condore, and Cochin China. It is in this segment of their journey that the mission's scientific aims first become prominent. The embassy members demonstrate themselves to be actively engaged in the following tasks: charting their route, "in which a new tract of sea was to be explored; ... of no part of which there was any recorded account, by European navigators" and thereby "adding so much to marine knowledge" (*Authentic Account* 1: 37); making empirical observations of the natural phenomena they encounter (the failed attempt to use a barometer to measure the height of Peak of Teneriffe, a measurement that was widely disputed within the transnational scientific community [*Authentic Account* 1: 110-25]); collecting specimens (the beautiful pheasant Macartney receives as

a gift from his Dutch host at Batavia, which is “sent to England, and shewn to a gentleman of acknowledged eminence in all branches of zoology,” who in turn pronounces the pheasant to be “a bird, which from every examination of the writers on ornithological subjects, appeared to be yet undescribed” [*Authentic Account* 1: 279]); and investigating the customs and manners of foreign cultures (the religious ceremonies of the natives at Rio de Janeiro [*Authentic Account* 1: 180]). Examples of such activities are too copious to list here and confirm that the embassy was motivated by the scientific objectives of examining the physical and cultural landscapes of the countries they traversed, which persisted throughout the delegation’s travels in China.

Given the scientific aspect of the embassy, it is no great surprise that its key members had either impeccable scholarly qualifications or extensive experience in their respective fields. Lord Macartney, for instance, was highly esteemed for having “an ardent and inquisitive mind,” and had consequently acted as an envoy to Russia and the governor of Madras prior to becoming the first British ambassador to China (*Authentic Account* 1: 35). As his second-in-command, Sir George Staunton was a well-respected botanist and Fellow of the Royal Society, who later collaborated with Sir Joseph Banks, the President of the Society, when publishing the official account of the embassy. Other notable members of the delegation include Sir Erasmus Gower, the Commander of the expedition who “had, twice, at an early age, been round the world” and therefore was “provided with resources against the accidents of untried routes” (*Authentic Account* 1: 38-39); Doctor Gillian, a skillful physician who was “likewise deeply versed in chemistry” (*Authentic Account* 1: 41); and John Barrow, another Fellow of the Royal

Society who was “conversant in astronomy, mechanics, and every other branch dependent upon the mathematics” (*Authentic Account* 1: 41).

But what is perhaps more important than the impressive credentials of the embassy members is their gentlemanly status, which Staunton makes sure to point out in both the title page of the account and in his descriptions of their qualifications and accomplishments. Their gentlemanly status is significant in that it not only furthered invaluablely the embassy members’ knowledge as indicated above, but also enabled them to allegedly enjoy what Steven Shapin calls “free action” (77, 38). As Shapin asserts in his examination of scientific practices in seventeenth-century England, “free action” was a crucial factor indicating the reliability of a testimonial source, for impartiality was generally considered to derive from one’s material independence and consequent freedom from social constraints (38-41).¹⁸ So by this understanding, gentlemen were in general regarded as being disinterested and therefore reliable witnesses, whereas commoners and merchants, who were not able to enjoy such advantages, were not (Shapin 40, 93).¹⁹ It is

¹⁸ Shapin calls attention to a key seventeenth-century scientific figure, Robert Boyle, who too used his “gentle identity to protect against the damage that attribution of professional special interest might do to the credibility of testimony” (xxviii): “The physician, the chemist, the schoolman, the priest, and the professional author might all be presumed to speak out of trade or mercenary interest, while Boyle and his associates repeatedly pointed to his gentlemanly status as an argument against imputing any such interest to him.... Boyle’s acknowledged identity as Christian gentleman and Christian scholar meant that he was one whose experimental realities might be relied upon with security, who could speak for empirical realities inaccessible to other practitioners, and whose representations might be accepted as corresponding to things themselves” (xxviii).

¹⁹ In *The Secret History of Domesticity*, Michael McKeon questions the generalizability and the longevity of this customary assumption that gentility and disinterestedness go together, providing counter-testimony that as early as the 1660s, some of the Royal Society’s principal actors thought that a gentleman’s education might interfere with his capacity for the sort of direct observation that was available to uneducated commoners (342-53). While I do not see explicit instances of the key embassy members’ gentlemanly status having an adverse effect on their understanding, their privileged education is not entirely necessary when they are observing and recording natural phenomena. As *A Narrative of the British Embassy to China* demonstrates, Anderson is well capable of such a task despite (or because of) his not having received a traditional education. In fact, he makes incredibly insightful observations that the higher-ranking officers are unable or unwilling to make. For example, Anderson comments on the extreme measures the embassy takes in order to ensure they do not leave an unfavorable impression on the Chinese. He points to the prison-like conditions of the servants’ quarters (“a regulation so contrary to every principle

therefore no coincidence that Staunton represents the key embassy members as men of science who are also of elite social status; he thereby effectively signals to his readers how they are to perceive them, in other words, as men they can rely on to provide a truthful account of the Chinese Empire. Of course, whether the key embassy members were truly disinterested, given their roles as officials commissioned by both the British government and the East India Company to improve trading relations with China, and how this influenced their travel narratives of China are issues that need to be further explored.

The firsthand accounts from such allegedly disinterested and reliable sources gain great significance when one considers the main concern the British had in relation to previous travel narratives to China. Because the Britons' past interactions with the Chinese had been strictly restricted to the trading port of Canton, they had to rely mainly on the narratives of either British merchants or Jesuit missionaries for their information on China and its inhabitants. As one might surmise from Shapin's argument, the merchants' accounts were almost immediately dismissed as being untrustworthy. In addition to being critiqued for their lack of understanding, their narratives were suspected of being unfavorably biased due to their compromised circumstances of being financially entangled with the Chinese natives. The Jesuit missionaries did not fare much better in the British readers' eyes. While they were deemed more reliable than the merchants in that they were educated and had greater access to the Chinese people, they were not

of right or justice" [162]) that are enforced under the officers' "strict and watchful eyes" (159). This is an incredibly insightful observation that prefigures Michel Foucault's discussion of panopticism in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977). But whether the higher-ranking officers' silence on such contentious issues has to do with what McKeon aptly calls their "occlusive education" or their material interests (n.b. the embassy members are also officials commissioned by both the British government and the East India Company to accomplish certain objectives) remains unclear (*Secret History* 353).

considered disinterested observers due to their religious mission. As numerous critics have convincingly argued, the missionaries tended to produce biased representations of the Chinese so as to convince their readers of the viability of their mission to convert the Chinese emperor (and eventually his subjects) to Christianity.²⁰ Such skewed representations later led to the Rites Controversy, a great dispute within the Catholic Church that took place from the early-seventeenth century to mid-eighteenth century regarding the issue of whether the Chinese rituals of making offerings to their ancestors were incompatible with Catholicism and should be seen as acts of idolatry. Pope Clement XI eventually pronounced the Chinese rites as being contradictory to the practices of Catholicism in 1715, a decision, which Pope Benedict XIV later again confirmed in 1742. With their verdicts, the popes partially discredited Jesuit writings about China and its inhabitants. While the multiple travel narratives generated by the Macartney Embassy worked to supplement and later supplant these accounts, the question of whether readers back home were entirely convinced of the truth-value of the embassy narratives remains very much a different matter, a matter that I will demonstrate

²⁰ As Basil Guy argues, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Jesuit relations on China were celebratory accounts that bordered on propaganda rather than the disinterested reports they purported to be (74). According to Guy, in contrast to Ricci, who attempted to convey an unbiased view of the Middle Kingdom by including discussions of disagreeable topics such as concubinage and prostitution, Nicholas Trigault, through his great revisions of Ricci's journals after his death in 1610, presented a severely partial picture of the Chinese that was more compatible with their religious beliefs (72-74). For example, Trigault not only inserted passages such as those regarding St. Thomas's voyage to Asia that boasted the great progress the Jesuits made in their mission of converting the so-called heathens to the Christian faith, but also deleted negative portrayals of the Chinese that he felt would endanger their mission (Guy 72-74). Considering the difficulties the Jesuits continually experienced in procuring the moral support and the financial resources necessary for their mission and the great opposition they later confronted during the Rites Controversy, it is understandable that Trigault and the Jesuits would set forth a biased picture of China. However, Guy finds problematic the fact that such a view came to dictate Europe's outlook on China until the eighteenth century, which he claims was made possible through "successive generations of Jesuit propaganda" (74). See Mungello *Curious Land* and Porter's *Ideographia* 78-132 for a similar argument regarding the Jesuits' skewed representations of China's religious practices.

was exacerbated by the expedition participants' agonizing self-doubt over the accuracy of their empirical observations about the Chinese natives.²¹

Different Modes of Scientific Observation: Natural Science and Protoethnography

As a scientific expedition, the Macartney Embassy participates in the project of obtaining empirically-based knowledge of the natural world ("increasing the knowledge of the habitable globe" [*Authentic Account* 1: 56]). Given their interest in various subsections of the natural sciences such as astronomy, chemistry, geology, zoology, and botany, the embassy members adopt a number of scientific practices to accommodate their diverse studies. For instance, when examining the geological features of China such as the width, depth, and velocity of the Yellow River, the expedition participants not only take empirical measurements, but also conduct experiments:

[The Yellow River's] width little exceeds a mile, and its depth in the middle of the stream, not more than nine or ten feet; yet, tho the country through which it passes in this place, be to all appearance a perfect plain, the water is carried through it with a velocity of seven or eight miles per hour.... In order to be able to form some idea of the quantity of mud suspended in water of the Yellow river, the following experiment was made; a gallon and three quarters, ale measure, taken out of the middle of the stream where it was running at the rate of seven or eight miles an hour, and at a depth of nine feet, deposited a mass of matter, which, when compact and pressed into the form of a brick, was equal to two solid inches and a third.... According to this proportion ... of mud suspended in the waters of the Yellow river, a quantity equal to 3,420, 000, 000 solid inches or 2,00,000 of solid feet of earth is wasted to the sea in every hour; or 43,000,000 every day, or 17,520,000,000 in a year. (*Authentic Account* 3: 234-36)

The expedition participants conduct this experiment so that they can compare the abovementioned figures with those of the Nile River, which Staunton claims Doctor

²¹ The embassy members were not the only ones to encounter such a problem, for British readers were generally skeptical of travel narratives during this period. For a discussion of the various difficulties travel writers faced in not only attracting the readers' interest, but also convincing them of the credibility of their accounts, see Lamb 82-85.

Shaw of the British Museum has calculated based on a similar experiment performed in Egypt. Although Staunton does not provide Shaw's precise figures other than that Shaw found "the residuum" to form "only a hundred and twentieth part of the original bulk" of the river, we can safely presume the mud suspended in the Nile River is considerably less than that of the Yellow River, whose residuum comprises "one-third of the whole" (3: 326, 325).

When engaged in the study of botany, the embassy members focus more on observing and if possible, collecting specimens of the plants that are unique to the provinces they traverse in China. For example, one of the plants that capture the delegation's attention is the lotus, which they see growing in a lake near the imperial palace (*Authentic Account* 2: 295). Due to its relative scarcity in Europe, Staunton includes a detailed description of the plant's composition:

The leaf of this plant, beside the other uses for which nature had intended that part of the vegetables, has from its structure, growing entirely round the stalk, the advantage of defending the flower and fruit growing from its centre, from any contact with the water, which might injure them. The root of the lien-wha, furnishes a stem, which fails to ascend in the water from whatever depth, unless in case of a sudden inundation, until it attains the surface, where its leaf expands, rests, and swims upon it, and sometimes rises above it.... Its flowers are as beautiful and fragrant as the seed is grateful to the taste. (2: 295-96)

In addition to tendering a detailed description of the plant, Staunton makes sure to include its Linnaean classification ("*nymphaea nelumbo*, or *lien-wha*" [*Authentic Account* 2: 295]), a practice he continues to observe in his examination of Chinese plants throughout his narrative.

If different disciplines of science call for different protocols, they also yield different relations to the commercial agenda of the embassy. While natural statistics such as the width, depth, and velocity of the Yellow River bear no close relation to the

mission's commercial objectives, the embassy members' knowledge about China's botanic world is directly connected to the more commercially oriented practices of horticulture.²² That Joseph Banks, the leading botanist of the Royal Society, gave explicit instructions to the expedition participants about obtaining knowledge of cultivating plants in China indicates that there were intersections between the eighteenth-century practices of botanists and horticulturists (F. Fan 18, Voskuil 8). Banks was particularly interested in transporting exotic flowers to enrich British gardens and more important, plants of economic value such as the tea plant to decrease Britain's reliance on foreign products (F. Fan 36-39, Stewart 838-40). Replacing imported goods with domestically produced goods became an especially urgent matter as the demand for Chinese luxury items such as tea increasingly grew in the latter half of the eighteenth century and exerted a negative influence on the British economy.²³ It is no surprise then the embassy members devote great attention to observing the composition as well as the cultivation of the tea plant, specimens of which they procure and later send to Bengal (a city under British rule that has a climate similar to China and therefore is appropriate for

²² While Mary Louise Pratt sees the Linnaean classification of plants as an exercise in Western colonial aggression in that it "extract[s] specimens ... from their places in other peoples' economies, histories, social and symbolic systems," it is in effect an application of scientific method, which by principle involves abstracting the constant from the variables (31). I suggest it is rather botany's close relation to the commercially oriented practices of horticulture that makes botany an integral part of Britain's commercial expansionism.

²³ In a chapter devoted to examining what he aptly calls the "Chinese rage," William Appleton attests to the negative influence Chinese luxury goods such as porcelain, silk, and tea exerted on Britain's economy (90): "It was likely to disturb the lives of the most sensible citizens. One such, a wealthy landowner plagued by a fashionable wife in league with an Oriental upholsterer, within a short space of time found his house unrecognizably altered to the prevailing fashion.... Cursed with such a wife, the solid citizen proved as subject to the inexorable laws of economics as the eccentric virtuoso. With his house become a fashionable show place, the fine rolling acres surrounding it melted away. So persistent was the vogue in spite of these dire consequences, that as late as 1779 the essayists in *The Mirror* were still pointing out to citizens similar examples of false taste and bad economy" (109).

growing tea bushes) for transplantation (*Authentic Account* 3: 295-98).²⁴ That the key participants of the expedition attend to the more commercially oriented sciences in their investigation of China suggests they are not exclusively men of “free action,” as Shapin suggests (38). If the embassy members’ material interests influence their study of natural phenomena by determining which specimens they should prioritize observing and collecting, we will shortly see that they have even greater consequences for their investigation of Chinese culture primarily due to the methodological differences in the natural sciences and protoethnography.

Unlike the natural sciences, which employ quantitative experimentation to extract the experiential variables from individual accounts of empirical data, protoethnography primarily depends on making empirical observations and drawing inferences from the observed particulars.²⁵ Given the intractability of humans, the protoethnographer cannot reproduce the lab-like environment, in which the natural scientist conducts a series of experiments to abstract the constant (or the “typical,” “characteristic,” and “ideal,” as Daston and Galison term it [66]) from the variables and thereby uncover the general

²⁴ For an alternative interpretation of the practice of transplantation, see Lynn Voskuil’s discussion of Robert Fortune, a nineteenth-century British horticulturist who travelled to China in order to bring back specimens of Chinese plants and flowers for cultivation in England: “Rather than persistently viewing China as the primitive ‘Other’ whose landscapes serve merely as a horticultural warehouse for British gardens, [Fortune] sees horticultural expertise in Chinese gardens and pursues the practical knowledge to build on that expertise in other parts of the world with similar environments.... He ... comfortably downplays—or even (at times) ignores—Britain’s imperial primacy in favor of a more complex perspective that configures the world in terms of parallels or networks rather than hierarchized binaries. This perspective is most prominent in his discussions of *Camellia sinensis*, the Chinese tea plant. The horticultural innovations he pioneered with *Camellia sinensis*, I argue here, bespeak a global imagination with the potential to destabilize the categories we have long and almost exclusively used to comprehend the scope and figuration of Britain’s empire during the nineteenth century” (6).

²⁵ Of course, this is not to suggest that the drawing of inferences from empirically observed particulars does not take place in the natural sciences. As Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison rightly point out, it was considered as a crucial part of the process in uncovering the general principles of nature, which was made all the more necessary by the great amount of unrefined empirical data travelers amassed during their journeys (59). Nonetheless, it was deemed suspect as the natural scientist’s preconceived notions could influence his interpretation of empirical data, explaining the use of quantitative experimentation. For a detailed discussion of what scientists sought to accomplish with quantitative experimentation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see McKeon’s “Dramatic Aesthetic” 203-08, 215-31.

principles of nature. Of course, this does not mean that the eighteenth-century protoethnographer did not attempt to rise to the natural scientist's theoretical level of natural knowledge in his investigation of humans. But it took place through different routes such as thought experiments in the form of history (in order to isolate the characteristics common to all mankind) and cross-cultural comparisons (in order to determine the different stages of development that all human societies supposedly undergo) (Carrithers 241-43). Staunton, however, does not seem to be interested in producing such generalized knowledge, whether that be the universal features that the British and Chinese share or "the point of rank which China may be considered to hold in the scale of civilized nations," the latter of which his colleague Barrow assesses in his *Travels in China* (4). Staunton is more focused on providing a reliable description of Chinese customs and manners so as to better understand their interactions with the Chinese, which explains his great emphasis on making empirical observations. It is because of this difference in the object of their study as well as the restrictions in their scientific practices that I argue the embassy members undergo difficulties in producing a credible account of Chinese culture.

In the case of the expedition participants' observations of the general Chinese populace, they fail simply because they are not granted direct access to their object of study. Gerd Spittler's examination of the different forms of travel sheds light on why the embassy members have no choice but to observe the Chinese natives from afar during their travels. As Spittler convincingly argues, "travel according to whether it [is] organized by Europeans or [natives] and whether the organization [is] large or small" has great implications for the kind of research the travelers can conduct (232). In the case of

the expedition, which he defines as “a large travel venture, led by Europeans, composed of Europeans and European equipment and organization,” travelers often meet resistance from the natives due to their fear of being invaded and are consequently prevented from having direct contact with them (232, 239, 243). This is what happens during the Macartney mission. As the great number of British members and the low level of native participation in the expedition excite great suspicion in the Qing court, they are given very few opportunities to interact with the general population (or to use a more modern term, engage in a “participant observation” of the Chinese natives). This explains the difficulties they experience in situating their protoethnographies in their accounts of the embassy’s transactions, which is made most evident in the journal of Lord Macartney who relegates his description of Chinese manners and customs to the appendix. While Staunton and Anderson are more successful in integrating their descriptions of Chinese society with their direct experiences, their insertions are oftentimes awkward, disrupting the flow of their narratives. Such difficulties explicate the form Barrow later assumes, which segregates the account of the embassy’s transactions from his descriptions of Chinese society, arts, sciences, government, and religion. Despite the delegation’s best intentions to provide their readers with an insightful understanding of Chinese culture, the peculiar complexity of their observed object explains why their narratives are at times reduced to static descriptions of cultural phenomena.

The British do not fare any better in their observations of the Chinese mandarins despite having what appears to be greater access to the object of their study. During their diplomatic interactions with the Qing court, the embassy members find themselves repeatedly facing the obstacles of “jealousy” and “ceremony,” terms that also appear in

accounts of other delegations to the Chinese Empire.²⁶ Although they are more often than not discussed as problems obstructing the embassies' commercial and political objectives, I think they can also be understood as corresponding to the scientific problem of deceptive senses, a fundamental problem that one encounters while making empirical observations, regardless of whether the object of observation is nature or humans (McKeon, *Origins* 71-72). The reason why the expedition participants often misread the Chinese mandarins is because the latter often engage in misleading behavior due to their "jealousy of all foreigners" (*Authentic Account* 2: 189). A representative figure who engages in such deceptive behavior is the Colao, who first gains the trust of the delegation with his seeming "frankness and affability" and his seeming willingness to discuss and negotiate with the British regarding their formal petition to the emperor (*Authentic Account* 3: 24-26). It therefore comes to them as a great shock when he later reneges on his earlier promises to the delegation and conveys the imperial order commanding them to depart for Britain before the severe winters of Peking set in. While they do not believe "the affected solicitude for the health of the Embassy," they have difficulties explicating the Chinese authorities' sudden dismissal (*Authentic Account* 3: 145). The mandarins' strict adherence to formal "ceremony" also poses a similar problem in that it leads the members of the Chinese court to abide by ceremonious

²⁶ Robert Markley, for example, discusses how Jan Nieuhoff attributes the failure of the Dutch East India Company's embassy (1655-1656) to "the machinations of the [jealous] Portuguese" who too had a considerable stake in Europe's trade with China and the Dutch's misinterpretation of "the ceremonies of tributary relations ... as semiotics of civility, of a mutual desire to negotiate the specifics of Dutch trading privileges" (121, 124). In her examination of the Amherst Embassy to China (1816-1817), Eun Kyung Min discusses the contradicting notions of "ceremony" that the British had to negotiate in their interactions with the Qing court. While the British saw Chinese tributary ceremonies as impeding free trade, they paradoxically had to rely on "courtly ceremonial display" to "showcase British opulence, grandeur, arts, and knowledge for the instrumentality of commerce" (Min, "Narrating the Far East" 167). According to Min, this was a contradiction the British were unsuccessful in resolving, which contributed to their failure in not only accomplishing their commercial objectives, but also "contain[ing] China within its own discourse" ("Narrating the Far East" 161).

displays of civility, which their society dictates in their interactions with foreigners regardless of their true intentions. Staunton repeatedly expresses the embassy members' frustration over this problem of deceptive senses, which is exacerbated by the additional issues of linguistic incompetence and interference of the Portuguese Jesuit missionaries.

In order to overcome such problems of "jealousy" and "ceremony," Staunton proposes that they forge close relations with Sun-ta-zhin and Chaung-ta-zhin, delegates the emperor sends to accompany the embassy members in their departure from Peking. As they travel to Canton, the embassy members and the two Chinese mandarins repeatedly have informal meetings, during which they engage in civil, frank conversations on a wide variety of topics ranging from Macartney's previous residence in Russia to Sun-ta-zhin's personal library. It is during such close interactions that the British are finally able to closely observe the Chinese natives, including the emperor through the personal dispatches he sends to Sun-ta-zhin and Chaung-ta-zhin and their testimonies about the Imperial Majesty. While their cultural understanding may not extend to include the entirety of the Chinese populace, the British leave China with what I assert to be a false belief they have at least acquired a better understanding of the emperor's character as well as those of Sun-ta-zhin and Chaung-ta-zhin based on their informal interactions.

If the delegation's previous two failures mainly result from the peculiar complexity of the object of their study, the difficulties they experience in discerning the true intentions of Sun-ta-zhin and Chaung-ta-zhin seem to stem more from the subjects' minds. Although their close interactions with Sun-ta-zhin and Chaung-ta-zhin provide them with their first real opportunity during their voyage to put their powers of

observation to good use, they ultimately fail because they cannot distinguish between “sensible objects and the ideas [they] have of them” (McKeon, “Dramatic Aesthetic” 227). Here, McKeon’s discussion of David Hume’s examination of the human mind in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40) is particularly informative in that it explains how such confusion can occur:

Having posited sense impressions as a distinct stage that mediates between our senses of external objects and our ideas of them, Hume argues that our experience is limited to the internal relationship between our impressions and the ideas that are their copies.... The senses present impressions to the mind, which produce ideas, cease to be mentally present, and are succeeded by impressions that are distinct from the first and in turn produce their own distinct ideas. Yet “we attribute a CONTINU’D existence to objects, even when they are not present to the senses,” and “we suppose them to have an existence DISTINCT [i.e. in both “external position” and “independence” of “existence and operation”] from the mind and perception.” (“Dramatic Aesthetic” 227-28)

But why is protoethnography particularly prone to this problem and why does this become so prominent in Staunton’s account? As McKeon astutely points out, this is not a problem that is unique to protoethnography, but rather one we encounter regardless of whether we make observations of nature or of humans, for it is a complication inherent in the act of observation (“Dramatic Aesthetic” 226). Yet protoethnography seems to be *more* susceptible to this problem due to its methodological difference from the natural sciences we observed earlier in this section, namely its primary reliance on empirical observations and consequent difficulties in removing the experiential variables of time, place, and person. This is certainly the case for the embassy members, for the peculiar circumstances of their encounter with the Chinese exacerbate such a potential problem inherent in the practice of protoethnography. Not only are their interactions with both the mandarins and the general populace severely limited, preventing them from being able to extract the variables of time and place from their perceptions of the Chinese through

repeated encounters, but they also suffer from the more serious problem of wanting to achieve the commercial aims of their mission, a variable of the observer that, to use McKeon's words, "cling[s] to [the expedition participants] and frustrate the experimental ambition to distinguish and identify its constants," which would be in this instance the observed Chinese natives ("Dramatic Aesthetic" 226). In other words, the embassy members' material interests in the mission are responsible for coloring their perceptions of the Chinese.

Given the expedition participants' ardent desires to accomplish the commercial objectives of their mission, it is not surprising that they misread Sun-ta-zhin and Chaung-ta-zhin, whom they characterize as men of both "civility" (a more sincere form of civility unlike the ceremonious kind that we previously saw in the other members of the Qing court) and "curiosity" (*Authentic Account* 2: 161, 3: 176).²⁷ The reason the embassy members wish to perceive the select mandarins in this way becomes clear when they see Sun-ta-zhin and Chaung-ta-zhin's civil curiosity as inducing a more thorough examination of the British. When we consider that this was deemed imperative to correct the wrong impressions the British merchants at Canton had left on the Chinese, the main cause the government felt to be behind China's refusal to freely trade with Britain, it is no wonder that the embassy members are so relieved to finally meet Sun-ta-zhin, who Staunton claims seems "actuated by personal curiosity in his questions" (3: 176).

Through their civil conversations with the curious mandarin, they are confident of having

²⁷ This proposed combination of "curiosity" and "civility" distinguishes Staunton's solution from that of Nieuhoff and Evret Ysbrants Ides (the envoy of the 1692 Russian mission to China), who, according to Markley, "use [the semiotics of civility] to override linguistic, religious, and cultural differences, to convince themselves that a mutual understanding of economic, social, military interests exists between European merchants and Chinese and Manchu authorities" (105). However, in the case of the Macartney Embassy, "civility" does not produce any benefits other than initiating civil conversations with the mandarins, which remain limited to the exchange of social pleasantries and do not extend to the advantages I discuss above.

corrected his “narrow” national prejudices, which he conveys to the emperor: “The picture probably given of their manners, ... having been discovered by Sun-ta-zhin to be distorted and unjust, the disgust he felt at such a misrepresentation, was sufficient to incline a mind like his, to be, at least, as favorable in the account he transmitted of them as could be consistent with his own observations and opinion” (*Authentic Account* 3: 177). Staunton thereby distinguishes Sun-ta-zhin’s gaze from that of the general Chinese populace, which the British find disconcerting and uncondusive to their purposes. Unlike Sun-ta-zhin, the crowds of Chinese people that continually flock to the river banks and the imperial roads to witness the passage of the delegation seem to view the delegation as a mere object of curiosity or spectacle. In fact, there is one particular incident where the excessive gathering of Chinese people causes a barge on the bank of the canal to collapse and several individuals on the barge to fall into the river. Rather than saving these unfortunate “victim[s] of ... curiosity,” the crowd remains captivated by “the passing spectacle” of the delegation, causing Staunton to characterize the Chinese crowd as mere “spectators” while reserving the more respectable term “observers” for the embassy members and the select mandarins (*Authentic Account* 3: 206-07, 2: 200).

Another way the select mandarins’ civil curiosity works to the Britons’ advantage is that it allows British commodities to receive a more favorable reception. This is no small feat, since the British attempted to entice the Chinese into trading with them by flaunting their allegedly superior manufactured goods and advanced sciences. However, much to their great disappointment, the embassy members are not entirely successful in generating the emperor’s interest with their gifts during their stay in Peking and Jehol. The presents that the British administration so painstakingly selected in preparation for

the embassy (“the latest and most improved instruments for assisting [astronomy’s] operations, ... the most perfect imitation that had yet been made of the celestial movements,” “specimens of the best British manufactures, and all the late inventions for adding to the conveniences and comforts of social life” [*Authentic Account* 1: 49]) are essentially dismissed as the emperor asks very few questions about the gifts. Although Staunton tries to explain the Imperial Majesty’s lack of curiosity about the British goods by blaming the incompetent interpreters, he cannot successfully mask the indifference of the emperor: “The interpreters found much difficulty in explaining many technical expressions; a circumstance which evidently abridged the number of [the emperor’s] questions” (3: 141). James Dinwiddie, a British astronomer that accompanied the Macartney delegation, is more upfront about this matter when he reports the emperor to have said, “Theses things are good enough to amuse children” (quoted in Hevia 110). The embassy members, however, later succeed in attracting the curiosity of Chaung-tazhin with “a small phosphoric bottle” that Macartney uses to light a match (*Authentic Account* 3: 374). This exhibition of British technology consequently leads them to engage in “a conversation on other curious subjects, from whence it was sufficiently apparent how much the Chinese, though skillful and dexterous in particular arts, were behind the Western nations in many philosophical and useful branches of science” (*Authentic Account* 3: 374). Having allegedly procured “the admiration, esteem, and consequent good treatment of the natives” based on the mandarins’ “consciousness of superior knowledge and acquirements in Europeans,” the British leave China optimistic about their future trade relations with the Chinese Empire (*Authentic Account* 3: 375). While the embassy members must have relished their good fortune, the tidy way in which

everything is resolved at the end must also have seemed too good to be true. It is this lingering doubt that induces Staunton to experiment with different empirical styles of narration.

Experimentation with Empirical Styles of Narration

In accordance with their scientific objectives and practices, Staunton adopts a plain style of narration, the use of which was first encouraged by the Royal Society of London in the late seventeenth century and later continued throughout the eighteenth century.²⁸ As a member of the Royal Society and therefore well acquainted with its proposed writing techniques, Staunton refrains from using linguistic ornaments in *An Authentic Account*. He especially takes great care to distance his and his fellow travelers' accounts from more literary narratives. In fact, there is a memorable moment in his account, in which they are given a tour of the Emperor's palace and adjoining gardens after arriving at Peking. The latter is notorious for being the site of a dreadful incident that took place soon after the Tartars invaded the emperor's palace. Staunton writes:

²⁸ Thomas Sprat, for example, encourages the use of a plain style of narration in *The History of the Royal Society of London, For the Improving of Natural Knowledge* (1667). After outlining the scientific objectives of the Society, Sprat discusses how its members have consequently adopted "a close, naked, natural way of Speaking; positive Expressions, clear Senses; a native Easiness; bringing all Things as near the mathematical Plainness as they can; and preferring the Language of Artizans, Countrymen, and Merchants, before that of Wits, or Scholars" (113). He contrasts such plain language to a more decorative one, which he claims has been rendered ineffective by the ill usage of "Ornaments of Speaking" (111): "They were at first, no doubt, an admirable Instrument in the Hands of *wise Men*; when they were only employ'd to describe *Goodness, Honesty, Obedience*, in larger, fairer, and more moving Images; to represent *Truth*, cloath'd with Bodies; and to bring *Knowledge* back again to our very Senses, from whence it was at first deriv'd to our Understandings. But now they are generally Chaung'd to worse Uses; they make the *Fancy* disgust the best Things, if they come found and unadorn'd; they are in open Defiance against *Reason*; professing not to hold much Correspondence with that; but with its Slaves, the *Passions*; they give the Mind a Motion too Chaungeable and bewitching, to consist with *right Practice*. Who can behold, without Indignation, how many Mists and Uncertainties, theses specious *Tropes* and *Figures* have brought on our Knowledge? How many rewards, which are due to more profitable and difficult *Arts*, have been still snatch'd away by the easie Vanity of *fine Speaking*!" (111-12). Sprat is quite forceful here in that he not only argues for a plain style of narration, but also equates the use of eloquent language with the misrepresentation of truth.

The ill-fated monarch [of the Ming Dynasty], too slightly supported, and possessed of too little energy to resist; but with sentiments too elevated to brook submission to an enemy who had been his subject, and determined to save his offspring from the danger of dishonour, stabbed his only daughter, and put an end to his own life with a cord, in one of the abovementioned edifices, which had been erected for far other purposes. (2: 294-95)

This incident, having captured the imagination of the British public, often appears in British literary works on the Chinese Empire. For example, the emperor's suicide figures predominantly in Elkanah Settle's heroic tragedy entitled *The Conquest of China* (1669). Settle, however, takes great liberties with the tragic event by having the death of the emperor's daughter replaced by those of his wives and having the princess appear as an Amazon general who battles against the Tartars.²⁹ The anonymous writer of *The Bonze: or Chinese Anchorite, an Oriental Epic Novel* (1769), on the other hand, is more faithful to the historical event, structuring his main narrative of Prince Zangola and Confuciango around the Chinese emperor's murder-suicide.³⁰ While Staunton is not completely impervious to the imaginative potential of the tragic incident, as demonstrated in his narration, he immediately redirects his gaze to the gates of the palace walls. It is through the gates that he observes the city wall and the lake in between, which he describes as

²⁹ For a detailed summary and discussion of the literary work, see Qian's "China in the English Literature of the Seventeenth Century" 53-57 and Yang 44-61.

³⁰ *The Bonze* is essentially a Chinese version of Antoine Galland's *Mille et une Nuit* (1704), which employs the frame narrative of a recluse sage named Confuciango relating a series of stories to two English merchants in order to instruct them the doctrine of transmigration. Confuciango begins by narrating his own experiences during the collapse of the Ming dynasty. As the son of General Ousanguay, a close confidant and aid of the Chinese emperor, Confuciango experiences firsthand the terrible losses incurred during the Tartarian invasion. Not only does his father die during a battle, but his sister Philasanga, Prince Zangola's wife, is also atrociously murdered by the soldiers who invade the royal palace. In order to evade the fate that befell their families, Confuciango and Zangola flee from China, after which they convert to Protestantism. However, Zangola soon dies and later pays Confuciango an "angelic visitation" (1: 78). It is Zangola's stories detailing the origins of evil (Satan's defiance of God and his consequent fall from Heaven), the fall of man (Adam and Eve's consumption of the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge), and his previous reincarnations that Confuciango narrates to Captain Wilford and Mr. Theodore Johnson. Confuciango relates these stories with the explicit purpose of instilling virtue in his audience. For a detailed discussion of the literary work, see Ballaster 230-33 and Qian's "China in the English Literature of the Eighteenth Century" 166-68.

being “almost entirely overspread with the peltated leaf of the *nymphaea nelumbo*, or *lien-wha* of the Chinese” (2: 295). Staunton immediately proceeds to give a detailed account of the delegation’s empirical observations of the lien-wha, a mode of narration that persists throughout his *Authentic Account*.

However, the use of the empirical style in travel narratives was not without its problems. As McKeon rightly argues, the empirical style was used to substantiate imaginary travel narratives, eventually resulting in the growth of a skeptical readership back home:

The claim to historicity appeared committed ... to the truth-value not of things but of words, so that if a narrative observe[d] the proper conventions, it demonstrate[d] its own veracity.... This [was] a problem that [was] equally felt by writers who [were] ‘sincere’ in seeking to tell a ‘true history’ and by those who [were] not, since in both cases the question of truth [was] accessible ... only in terms of the choice between competing conventions. (*Origins* 110)

Another problem that McKeon points out in relation to the empirical style of narration is that it encouraged the tedious documentation of superfluous details that later needed to be excised as one composed a narrative based on the observations recorded in one’s journal (*Origins* 106). In order to “render [the truth documented in one’s journal] more stylistically accessible and ‘methodical,’” the narrator often had to select what was relevant and delete what was not, without any strict guidelines as to how to perform such a task (McKeon, *Origins* 103). It was during this compositional process that the narrator sometimes fell into the trap of enforcing his own overarching narrative order despite his best intentions to deliver a truthful account of the journey.

While the enforcement of an overarching narrative does not necessarily mean that the travelogue is fabricated per se, it is in effect a narrative embodiment of the problem of reflexivity that we saw plaguing the delegation’s description of the Chinese mandarins

Sun-ta-zhin and Chaung-ta-zhin. Barrow's *Travels in China* demonstrates this well in that his disappointment over the embassy's failure to have produced any substantial changes in Anglo-Chinese trade relations seems to have significantly colored his empirical account detailing the physical and cultural landscapes of China, an argument that Porter convincingly makes by drawing attention to the numerous images of "blockage and stagnation" Barrow includes in his travel narrative as he extends his characterization of China's "obstructionist" trade policies to the Chinese state itself (*Ideographia* 218, 213, 211). For instance, similar to the way the Chinese suppress the free circulation of goods by refusing to engage in foreign trade, Barrow portrays them as also obstructing "the natural and salubrious [exchange] of sentiment and fellow feeling" (Porter, *Ideographia* 225). Although I continue to argue in the next chapter that Barrow's voyage account is more balanced and nuanced in its examination of Chinese culture due to its relatively sophisticated method of explaining the peculiar social phenomena he observes in China as well as the similarities and differences he sees existing between national cultures, it is, at least in Staunton's eyes, a less positive example of what a scientific travel narrative should look like in that it too wholeheartedly embraces its individual viewpoint, which retains the risk of drawing inaccurate probable inferences from the empirically observed particulars.³¹

³¹ Staunton's *Authentic Account* was not without its detractors, but they seem to have been more concerned with the failure of the embassy than with the credibility of the account itself. John Wolcot, under the pseudonym Peter Pindar, tenders a satirical representation of the Macartney Embassy in his "Ode to the Lion Ship of War, on her Return with the Embassy from China" (1794): "O think upon thy Britons, how disgraced, / As to the palace of Jehol they raced, / So shabbily, so tawdrily array'd! / The Natives, with horse-laughs, the tribe remarking; / While grunting, kicking, braying, howling, barking, / Hogs, dogs, and asses, join'd the Cavalcade! / ... / Who told our King, the Embassy would thrive, / Must be the most egregious fool alive: / God mend that courtier's head, or rather trash-pot! / Perhaps he cried, "Upon the rich Hindoo / Your glorious Majesty has cast its shoe; / And China next, my Liege, must be your wash-pot" (349-50). As made evident by his ode, Wolcot clearly disagrees with Staunton on the alleged success of the mission.

The most noteworthy distinction between Staunton's and Barrow's accounts is the former's choice of a detached (and seemingly disinterested) third-person narrator. It is almost astonishing how Staunton effaces his presence as the second-in-command as he relates the transactions of the embassy. In fact, we never get the sense that Staunton as narrator and Staunton as character coincide in the narrative. His name rarely appears in *An Authentic Account*. Even when he enumerates the key participants and their qualifications at the beginning of the account, he intentionally omits his own name from the list. In the rare instances he relates his role in the mission, it is strictly with a distanced editor's voice that makes it difficult to grasp that he is indeed referring to himself. For instance, when the delegation temporarily dwells in Rio, Staunton refers to himself as only a "gentleman of the Embassy" when relating one of the excursions he makes there (1: 199). It is only when we read Macartney's journal describing the same excursions that Staunton's role as a principle figure of the scientific expedition becomes prominent: "Sir George Staunton, whose curiosity and attention was awake to everything and carried him everywhere, could scarcely find expressions to describe the raptures he was thrown into by what he had seen and felt in the course of his excursions" (*Our First Ambassador to China* 195). This sense of detachment in Staunton's account persists even when he is discussing his son, who accompanied the delegation as Macartney's page. Often referred to as simply "the youth," George Thomas Staunton appears several times in the narrative, which is understandable considering the esteemed status he acquires in the mission. As the sole British member of the delegation to acquire a level of proficiency in the Chinese language, he not only plays a part in diplomatic transactions, but also later receives a personal gift from the emperor for his talents (*Authentic Account*

3: 40). While this must have been a source of great pride for his father, Staunton refrains from expressing such sentiments and instead relates the incident in a detached manner.

Staunton's use of the detached third-person narrator enables him to effectively compile the multiple voices of the key embassy members without enforcing his own overarching judgment on the narrative. In fact, he seems to have structured his own narrative around the papers of the expedition's key participants. In his title page, he claims that his *Authentic Account* is "taken chiefly from the papers of his Excellency, Knight of Bath, his Majesty's Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Emperor of China; Sir Erasmus Gower, Commander of the Expedition, and of other Gentlemen in the several departments of the Embassy." Their testimonies repeatedly appear in the form of blocked quotations that often surpass five or six pages. Based on a brief comparison between Staunton's *Authentic Account* and Macartney's journal, the only narrative among the aforementioned sources I have access to in its complete form, it appears that Staunton copies and pastes from the participants' journals or reports. While the inclusion of these multiple voices functions to connect the embassy members' different disciplines of science and reflects their collaborative effort to accumulate empirical knowledge about China, it also addresses Staunton's concern about the subjectivity of his own empirical observations, an issue that I discussed in the previous section. We can therefore see his compilation of the expedition writers' accounts as a quantitative experiment in narrative form, through which he strives to extract the experiential variables that exist in each individual account, including his own and thereby generate an empirically objective and therefore truthful account of the Chinese Empire. This is why I call the truth of the Macartney Embassy "sociable," for it is dependent on

the sociable relations the expedition participants form with each other as they combine their different disciplines of science as well as their individual narratives.

Yet the compiled narrative and the sociable truth it puts forth remain suspect to Staunton (and his readers) because of the shared goals of the embassy members. While some participants would have been less invested in the commercial aims of the mission than Staunton, who bore the brunt of the mission's burden with his commander Macartney, we cannot deny that the key members of the expedition kept such objectives in their minds as they traversed China. Although such lingering doubts as to whether they are accurately reading the mandarins do not take explicit form in *An Authentic Account*, one can sense them in the somewhat jagged movements of the narrative. That the organization of each individual chapter reflects Staunton's state of mind is suggested in the second chapter of the third volume, which relates the delegation's return to Peking after visiting the emperor's court at his summer residence in Jehol. Within the entire narrative, it is the least organized chapter, jumping from one random topic to another with only the tenuous connections between them. For instance, after discoursing at length the alleged deficiencies in Chinese paintings, Staunton continues to discuss how the Chinese have invented the figure of the lion in their imaginations as opposed to the elephants they have brought to China from other regions of the world (3: 122-28). He then immediately proceeds to describing the eunuchs he witnesses at the imperial palace at Peking (3: 128). To give an idea of how abrupt the transitions are in this chapter, I will cite the section, in which Staunton immediately shifts from discussing elephants to the eunuchs:

The Chinese elephants are smaller than those of Cochin-China. They are literally granivorous, being generally fed with rice and millet, tho the food of that animal

in its wild state, consists like that of the giraffe, the camel, and the goat, more frequently of the tender leaves of trees and shrubs, than of seeds or blades of corn or grass.

The offices of the household and other attendants in the Imperial palaces, are all, or most of them, persons who, before the age of puberty, were deprived of the means of becoming men, or who, since that period, have ceased as being such. Nothing assuredly but the tortures of a maddening jealousy could have first suggested the idea of mutilating one sex, in order to render it an unsuspected guard upon the other; and nothing less than the extreme abuse of unlimited authority, could effectuate so cruel and unnatural a purpose. (3: 127-28)

The abrupt transitions suggest the great confusion Staunton must have felt after getting what the delegation thought to be a reasonably hospitable reception from the Qing court and then being ordered to immediately depart from China. The following two chapters, which relate the embassy's departure from Peking to first Han-choo-foo, and then Chusan and Canton, are better organized, indicating the sense of security Staunton felt as the delegation formed close relations with Sun-ta-zhin and Chaung-ta-zhin. However, each chapter succumbs again to uncertainty, as indicated by its abrupt movement to the list of plants the embassy members have collected in that particular province. It is as if Staunton feels the need to reassure himself (and his readers) of the reliability of their empirical observations by reverting to a description of natural phenomena, one of the very few footholds the embassy members have in their scientific expedition. The entire account concludes in a similar manner with an appendix full of lists and tables of quantifiable (or in other words easily verifiable information), which we can see as Staunton's attempt to compensate for the doubts he continued to entertain about the delegation's observations about the Chinese mandarins (and the emperor).

Coda

If the embassy members' self-agonizing doubts are relatively well contained in Staunton's *Authentic Account*, they emerge in full force in Macartney's private journal. After having repeatedly remarked on the mandarins' conflicting behavior, his frustration finally erupts near the conclusion of their journey:

How are we to reconcile the contradictions that appear in the conduct of the Chinese Government towards us? They receive us with the highest distinction, show us every external mark of favour and regard, send the First Minister *himself* to attend us as cicerone for two days together through their palaces and gardens; entertain us with their choicest amusements, and express themselves greatly pleased with so splendid an Embassy, commend our conduct, and cajole us with compliments. Yet, in less than a couple of months, they plainly discover that they wish us to be gone, refuse our requests without reserve or complaisance, precipitate our departure, and dismiss us dissatisfied; yet, no sooner have we taken our leave of them than we find ourselves treated with more studied attention, more marked distinctions, and less constraint than before. I must endeavor to unravel this mystery if I can. (*An Embassy to China* 164)

That Macartney is so blatantly honest about their inability to discern the true intentions of the members of the Qing court makes sense when we consider the different form of his narrative. Unlike Staunton's retrospective account that was carefully constructed for the explicit purpose of print circulation so as to convince their readers of the partial success of their mission, his journal was never intended to be read by anyone apart from those who commissioned the embassy.³² More important, it was written while they were still travelling in China: not "writing to the moment," as Samuel Richardson would say, but something similar since Macartney wrote almost daily in his private journal. Such a writing practice does not allow him to edit his previous entries, which explains why he

³² It was in Cranmer-Byng's 1962 edition that Macartney's *complete* account of the mission first became available for public consumption. However, I also use Robbins' *Our First Ambassador to China* for my discussion of the embassy. While Robbins' biography only contains extracts from Macartney's journal, it includes the portions that relate the delegation's voyage from London to Cochin China, of which Cranmer-Byng only gives a short summary in his edition. Considering that it is during this part of the journey that the scientific aspect of the embassy first becomes apparent, it was necessary that I consult both editions.

himself often widely diverges from a favorable opinion of the Chinese to a more negative one, exposing himself to the imputation of capriciousness he somewhat ironically directs towards the Chinese mandarins.

Like Staunton, Macartney concludes his account by consoling himself with the claim that they have formed attachments with a few choice mandarins. He too devotes a good portion of his narrative to detailing the attention that Sun-ta-zhin and Chaung-ta-zhin allegedly shower on the delegation. In his concluding journal entry, in which he summarizes the opinions he has formed, Macartney remarks: “Gained by our attention, we found them capable of attachment; though in public ceremonious, in private they were frank and familiar. Tired of official formalities, they seemed often to fly to our society as a relief, and to leave it with regret” (*An Embassy to China* 214). He is even optimistic that the future deployment of a resident ambassador in China will further improve those relations, enabling the British to acquire a more comprehensive understanding of Chinese manners and customs:

Dispositions like these an able Minister would not fail to improve. By his intercourse with the Viceroy, the Fo-yen, and the Houpou, he would be able to excuse irregularities and clear up mistakes. He would discover the proper seasons for advancing or receding, when to be silent with dignity and when to speak with confidence and effect. (*An Embassy to China* 214)

While Macartney cannot guarantee that such an improvement in Anglo-Chinese relations will lead to an improvement in Britain’s trade relations with the Chinese Empire, he is hopeful that the future deployment of a resident ambassador in China will at least alleviate the grievances the British merchants incur at the hands of Chinese officials: “But, above all, the King’s Commission would authorize him to write to, and entitle him to be heard by, the Court of Peking itself – a circumstance probably alone sufficient to awe

the Regency of Canton and keep them within the bounds of justice and moderation” (*An Embassy to China* 214).

That the delegation could not have been further from the truth is made evident in Hevia’s book, in which he examines Chinese records documenting the Macartney Embassy. Contrary to what its principal figures believed, Sun-ta-zhin and Chaung-ta-zhin were not their allies, but rather imperial envoys sent to primarily determine whether the British had any hostile intentions, a concern that constantly plagued the Qing court (Hevia 198). Hevia claims that it was by “sooth[ing] the ambassador’s anxieties and disappointment” that they were able to placate such concerns (198). Furthermore, the acts of “civility” they performed in indulging the embassy members’ “curiosity” were acts of “kindness [that the Chinese government showed] to men from afar,” as stipulated by the Qing Guest Ritual (Hevia 204-05). In fact, what seemed to be erratic treatment on the part of the Chinese mandarins was an attempt to seek a “center path” in their foreign relations, curtailing excessive acts of generosity whenever they felt the British were diverging from their status as a tributary state and again bestowing rewards when the British showed the proper respect and humility (Hevia 162).

Joanna Waley-Cohen’s investigation of the Chinese court’s public statements regarding Western scientific technology also confirms the embassy members’ cultural ignorance in that they bestow too much significance upon what now appears to be idle curiosity about the phosphoric lighter on Chaung-ta-zhin’s part. According to Waley-Cohen, the members of the Qing court were indeed interested in the scientific discoveries and inventions of Britain, but their interest was primarily limited to those of military significance such as cartography and artillery (1527, 1529, 1530). Moreover, they were

careful not to openly express such curiosity, for it was important to the Tartar ruler that the court maintained the façade of China's self-sufficiency (and its concomitant indifference to foreign technology) to not only the international community, but also his Chinese subjects:

This emperor, with his pretensions to universal monarchy, was hardly likely to admit openly to the representative[s] of a foreign ruler an interest that, in Chinese minds, could be unfavorably interpreted as an intimation of inferiority. [His professed disinterest] may well also have been subtly intended to remind Qianlong's Chinese subjects that their [Tartar] rulers remained faithful to the traditional public Chinese attitude of superiority toward foreigners. (Waley-Cohen 1541)

The double obligation, under which the mandarins were not to exhibit any sort of interest in European scientific devices, makes it highly doubtful that Chaung-ta-zhin paid explicit attention to the phosphoric lighter. It is rather the merchants that would have demonstrated a greater learned interest in the British manufactured goods and scientific apparatuses, an argument that Cranmer-Byng and Trevor H. Levere make in their examination of Chinese responses to Western science in the eighteenth century (516). That the British rather dismissively characterize the merchants, who comprise a large proportion of the general Chinese population and would have been most likely on the banks of the canal on the day the barge collapsed, as mere "spectators" again demonstrates the expedition participants' erroneous interpretations of the Chinese natives (*Authentic Account* 3: 207).

In conclusion, the embassy members had good reason to doubt the truth-value of their empirical accounts of China and its inhabitants, the only accomplishment they could proudly claim from what was otherwise a disastrous mission. Despite the manifold efforts to prove otherwise to both themselves and their British readers, they were right to

be skeptical of their empirical observations about the Chinese natives, distinguishing the Macartney Embassy from the other more self-assured scientific expeditions in the eighteenth century.

Chapter Two

Conjectural Travel to China: A “Most Interesting Subject for the Investigation of the Philosopher” in Barrow’s *Travels in China*

Europe experienced its initial influx of information about China in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries through the Franciscans and Marco Polo (Cameron 63-106, Spence 1-18). After a brief intermission in the fourteenth century due to the collapse of the *Pax Mongolica* and the closing of the Silk Road, Europeans again began to acquire knowledge about the Chinese Empire through merchants and missionaries in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (Cameron 123, Spence 19). However, it was not until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that Europe experienced the massive inflow of information made possible by the Society of Jesus, the members of which gained unprecedented access to China. While the Jesuit missionaries may have been unsuccessful in their religious mission of converting the Chinese to Christianity, their actual feat lies in making available the resources necessary for interpreting the ever-elusive Middle Kingdom.³³ Considering the great influence that Jesuit accounts had on Europe’s encounter with China and the production of its knowledge thereof, it is understandable that critics have devoted a great deal of attention to the missionaries’

³³ As the Jesuit missionaries increasingly encountered obstacles to their religious mission in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they instead shifted their attention to accumulating information about Chinese culture. Their contributions to the study of Chinese civilization through their various travel narratives, geographical treatises, and scientific reports are considered inestimable, so much so that Paul A. Rule suggests they should be used as sources by contemporary historians (181-83). He cites their careful “preserv[ation of] copies, translations, and comments on memorials absent from the notoriously deficient *Shih-lu* of K’ang-hsi” and their “outsider’s point of view [that] led them to record much that the class bias of Chinese records distorts and conceals” as reasons why their accounts remain “of value to the student of Chinese religion and society” (183).

published writings. However, there is a curious lack of attention to the flood of writings that originated from the Jesuit accounts, especially the popular ones, which were targeted at the general public and aimed to satisfy their curiosity by providing them with general knowledge of China. Ashley Millar is an exception in that she begins to consider them in her examination of European popular writings that reused information from the Jesuit sources. Millar specifically focuses on how empirical facts about China's political economy and the inferences the Jesuits made from those facts travelled from the missionaries in China to various geographers and historians in Europe, causing them to fiercely debate the accuracy of the information from what they saw to be overly idealized accounts of China (8, 25). Despite their skepticism about Jesuit sources, Millar concludes that the popular writers in Europe had no choice but to rely on the information the missionaries provided, regardless of whether they agreed with the Jesuits' estimation of Chinese civilization (29).

The popular British work I will examine in this chapter is John Barrow's *Travels in China* (1804), a firsthand travel account of the Macartney Embassy that diverges from the other embassy narratives. In addition to being published later than its predecessors, it assigns only a small portion of the text to relating the embassy's transactions. Claiming that it would be "an idle, and, indeed, a superfluous undertaking ... to dwell on [the proceedings and result of the British Embassy to the court of China] which have been treated by [Sir George Staunton] in ... a masterly manner," Barrow instead sets out to provide his reader with a general view of the Chinese Empire (1-2).³⁴ Despite the

³⁴ This objective explains the particular form Barrow adopts to recount the "descriptions, observations, and comparisons" he makes and collects during the delegation's temporary residence at the imperial palace and the consequent journey they take from Peking to Canton (Title). Unlike the other embassy members who structure their narratives chronologically, Barrow organizes his account thematically with individual

information recently made available by the mission, Barrow relies, although reluctantly, on Jesuit missionary accounts. Throughout the course of his narrative, he repeatedly professes his frustration over the limited access the British are granted during their short stay in China. As he remains behind at the imperial palace of Yuen-min-yuen while select members of the delegation proceed to the emperor's summer residence in Jehol, Barrow complains several times how the remaining participants are kept under strict surveillance and are therefore unable to freely wander around the palace, much less Peking, to make observations about the empire and its inhabitants (106, 233). For instance, he recounts an incident in which he inadvertently wanders beyond the perimeters of the delegation's residential quarters, causing the suspicious eunuchs to raise "uproar" in the imperial palace (233). While Barrow at times refers to George Staunton's official account of the embassy and Lord Macartney's unpublished journal to compensate for the gaps in his own narrative, he more frequently refers to Jesuit sources, especially in the chapters that provide a general view of Chinese customs and manners, arts and sciences, government, religion, and economy. Barrow thereby confirms Millar's argument that Jesuit sources continued to occupy a significant position in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century British writings about the Chinese Empire (29).

I would like to extend Millar's discussion by examining in greater depth the means by which Barrow assesses the accuracy of the claims the Jesuit missionaries make about Chinese civilization in their accounts and the additional measures he adopts to revise them. That Barrow is interested in aspects of Chinese society, such as its religious beliefs and cultural accomplishments, which, as Millar correctly points out, the Jesuits

chapters devoted to examining China's customs and manners, arts and sciences, civil institutions, religious practices, and modes of economic production.

had a considerable stake in portraying more favorably than a neutral topic like China's political economy, makes it more imperative that he takes on these difficult tasks in order to produce a reliable account of the Chinese Empire (9). It is my argument that Barrow achieves these objectives by not only applying the standards of empiricism to Jesuit writings, but also by making cross-cultural comparisons in order to have a more accurate sense of "the point of rank China may be considered to hold in the scale of civilized nations" (4). It is during this process of challenging and correcting Jesuit sources that Barrow finds himself contributing to the conjectural histories of the Enlightenment. After making cross-cultural comparisons to better measure the state of Chinese civilization, he is led to speculate as to why the similarities or differences he observes taking place between China and other national cultures exist, thereby engaging in a mode of comparative analysis that David Carrithers identifies as being integral to conjectural history and the concomitant debates regarding the evolution of human societies (241-43). If Barrow, like his more learned and philosophical counterparts, envisions the different stages of human civilization, I assert that he also helps sophisticate the schematic order by considering China's ostensible challenge to it, a feat he achieves by staying more grounded in the observed particulars of Chinese culture in his travel narrative.³⁵ In other words, *Travels in China* is not a travel narrative that simply compiles miscellaneous

³⁵ Millar makes a similar distinction between popular writers and their more learned and philosophical counterparts by emphasizing the former's greater emphasis on "primary facts" and the latter's on "theories and models" (29). However, I think she exaggerates the extent to which "scholars tended to prioritize their theories and models over facts" (29). In addition to using empirical facts to first construct their theories and models, Enlightenment philosophers strived to further substantiate them by accumulating more evidence. It is travel narratives like Barrow's *Travels in China* that play a significant part in the latter part of this process, for they focus on cultural particulars that deviate from those theories and models and thereby help identify where they may be lacking and in need of further adjustment. In this regard, Barrow confirms Mark Salber Phillips' argument about how travelers are the best sources for "supplying the information required by the deeper researches of the conjectural historian," an investigation that I suggest Barrow also participates in through his cross-cultural comparisons and speculative conjectures (186).

information about China, a misevaluation that might explain why it has not received much critical attention. It is rather a significant work that makes a valuable contribution to the Enlightenment project of unearthing the shared characteristics of human societies and developing narratives about their common course of development.

Barrow's *Travels in China* as Conjectural Travel

Barrow begins his travel narrative by stressing the need to correct Jesuit missionary accounts in order to convey a truthful representation of the Chinese Empire and its inhabitants to his readership:

The voluminous communications of the missionaries are by no means satisfactory; and some of their defects will be noticed and accounted for in the course of this work; the chief aim of which will be to shew [the Chinese nation and its people] in their proper colours, ... to divest the court of the tinsel and the tawdry varnish with which, like the palaces of the Emperor, the missionaries have found it expedient to cover it in their writings. (3)

As demonstrated by various contemporary British writings about China, this was a fairly common complaint, especially in the latter half of the eighteenth century.³⁶ However, such a damning assessment of Jesuit sources does not do justice to the missionaries, who were also men of science, a feature that Florence C. Hsia highlights in her monograph on the Jesuits and their scientific expeditions to China in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. Although she complicates the notion of the “missionary-scientist” by pointing out how it was one of the many “shapes” the Jesuits assumed and carefully cultivated in order to promote their religious mission of converting the Chinese to the

³⁶ While the anonymous writer of *The Chinese Traveller, containing a Geographical, Commercial, and Political History of China* (1772) acknowledges “the superior abilities of the Missionaries” to instruct the reader about the Chinese Empire, he claims that one has good “reason to distrust the fidelity of the above-named authors in their relations [wherever] the religion or particular interest of the Jesuits order is concerned” (iv). William Winterbotham, the writer of *An Historical, Geographical, and Philosophical View of the Chinese Empire* (1795), tenders a more critical view of the Jesuit missionaries when he characterizes their accounts as containing “absurdities” (Advertisement).

Christian faith, she traces the various ways their activities intersected with those of mathematical scientists in Europe (2, 1). If the Jesuits had greater success in reconciling their scientific and religious personas in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by using their scientific knowledge to gain unprecedented access to the Chinese court and to establish close connections with the Académie Royale des Sciences in Paris, they began to experience difficulties in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, resulting in the strange disjunction between the scientific and the religious we will shortly see in their writings (Hsia 33-38, 93-100, 130-36). Yet their accounts continued to be valued for their observed particulars on various aspects of Chinese society, which the Jesuits persisted in diligently recording in their narratives. This explains why British writers continued citing them, a practice that Barrow follows, but with the crucial difference of challenging some of the missionaries' more unsubstantiated conclusions.³⁷

After critically examining some of the more unreliable claims that the Jesuits have made, Barrow illustrates the fundamental flaw in their methodology: their occasional rejection of empiricist standards and subsequent reliance on the authority of ancient texts in service of their religious agenda. Such a methodological error is made most evident in the conjecture they make about the ancient origins of the Chinese Empire and its people, a matter that was greatly disputed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries due to the alleged unreliability of Chinese historical records.³⁸ Unlike the various European

³⁷ As we will see in a later chapter, Thomas Percy is a curious exception in that he criticizes the Jesuits' adherence to the standards of empiricism. According to Percy, the stricter attention the Jesuit missionaries pay to their sense experiences often produces minor factual discrepancies that he dismisses as being inconsequential to the kind of understanding he wishes his reader to attain of Chinese culture. He instead makes the radical argument that one can attain a more insightful understanding of Chinese society by reading a fictional work, the implications of which I will later discuss at great length.

³⁸ According to Edwin J. Van Kley, China's historical records were discredited on the basis of the inaccuracies European scholars observed in ancient Chinese astronomy and the burning of ancient books by Shih Huang-ti, an emperor of the Ch'in dynasty, in 213 B.C. (375-78). While the former did not greatly

scholars who questioned the empire's great antiquity by discrediting the ancient Chinese annals on empirical grounds, the Jesuit missionaries employed those same historical records not only to argue for the empire's ancient past, but also to assert that Noah or his descendants most likely founded China after the Genesis flood. Although this required some minor adjustments on their part, like using the less commonly-accepted Septuagint chronology to accommodate Chinese history to the Judeo-Christian timeline, the missionaries used the chronological correspondences between the Bible and the Chinese annals to make such a conjecture, which we can safely presume they did in order to convince both the Chinese and their readers back home of the validity of their religious mission.³⁹ Louis le Comte replicates such a methodological error in his *Nouveaux mémoires*, a Jesuit account that was, along with Jean-Baptiste du Halde's *Description de la Chine*, most read and quoted by the British in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁴⁰ Like his predecessors, Le Comte also exclusively refers to Chinese historical

undermine the authority of the ancient Chinese annals, Van Kley suggests the latter severely damaged their credibility by throwing into question any historical information prior to the Ch'in dynasty (377-78). For a more detailed discussion of the various concerns European scholars voiced in relation to China's historical records, see Van Kley 373-79.

³⁹ The dates in the Chinese annals did not correspond to the established Biblical chronology, a problem that Van Kley highlights in his discussion of the problems Chinese history posed to world history (362). According to the Vulgate chronology (a chronology that is derived from the Hebrew version of the Bible), the creation of Adam and the Genesis flood were computed to have taken place in 4004 B.C. and 2348 B.C. (Van Kley 361). However, the date that the annals assigned to the reign of China's first emperor Fu Hsi preceded 2348 B.C., thereby essentially refuting the Bible, which argued for the death of all humans except Noah and his children (Van Kley 363). The Jesuit missionaries therefore needed to adjust their own chronology by adopting the less commonly accepted one based on the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Bible) (Van Kley 362). Unlike the Vulgate, the Septuagint placed the flood sometime in the fourth millennium B.C., which preceded the beginning of Fu Hsi's reign and therefore did not conflict with the Chinese annals (Van Kley 366, 363).

⁴⁰ Louis le Comte, a participant in the 1687 mission to China, wrote *Nouveaux mémoires sur l'état présent de la Chine* (1696, translated into English in 1697) after his return to France in 1691. Composed of fourteen letters addressed to various recipients, *Nouveaux mémoires* relates the observations Le Comte made during his temporary sojourn in the Chinese Empire. Unlike the scientific treatises of his fellow travelers Jean de Fontenay and Jean-François Gerbillon, Le Comte's account adopted a more popular approach by giving general descriptions of the missionaries' voyage from Siam to Peking, China's climate, geography, history, economy, language, culture, government, religion, and the Jesuit mission in China (Mungello 331). Unlike Le Comte, Jean-Baptiste du Halde did not go to China and instead compiled

records for indications of the early emperors' belief in a monotheistic God so that he can assert that they "in all probability founded this Empire ... [and] transmitted the Knowledge of [their Creator] and instilled the fear of him into all their descendants" (313). By using the ancient Chinese annals to demonstrate how the emperors supposedly practiced their proto-Christian faith by "build[ing] a Temple to the Sovereign Lord of Heaven," "institut[ing] Priests or Ecclesiastical Mandarins in several Provinces to preside over the Sacrifices [to the Supreme Spirit of Heaven and Earth]," and "follow[ing] the dictates of the purest Charity, which is the very quintessence and perfection of [Judeo-Christian] Religion," Le Comte conjectures that the Chinese "have preserved the knowledge of the true God," an act befitting their status as Noah's progeny (314, 317). It is such speculative claims that lead Barrow to describe Le Comte as an "inventor" and dismiss his letters as "pleasant stories" (441).

While Barrow's harsh assessment of *Nouveaux mémoires* generally extends to other Jesuit writings, he surprisingly does not disregard all of their conjectures. For example, there is an interesting moment in *Travels in China*, where Barrow addresses the Jesuits' radical claim that Noah and his descendants probably travelled to the Far East after the flood. Instead of automatically dismissing this allegation, Barrow gives a secular (or to use a more modern term, socioanthropological) explanation as to why Noah and his children would have settled in China based on the exceptional heights of Tartary and the fertility of China's extensive plains, which are empirical observations that

various missionary accounts to produce a comprehensive view of China in his *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique, et physique de l'empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise* (1735, translated into English in 1736 and 1741). For a more detailed examination of these two works, see Mungello 329-43 and Hsia 130-46.

modern naturalists have made.⁴¹ As we can see here, Barrow firmly distinguishes himself from the Jesuit missionaries. Unlike the Jesuits who make such a claim based on the somewhat forced correlations between Biblical and Chinese chronologies and the phrase that Noah and his sons travelled “east” in the Scripture, Barrow relies more on empirical data than on the textual authority of the sacred Bible and the ancient Chinese annals. Even in the case of the Genesis flood, he refers to “the great Linnaeus,” who “acquiesced in the [purported] truth of the sacred writings, that the whole globe of the earth was, at some period of time, submerged in water, and covered with the vast ocean,” a hypothesis Barrow stresses the naturalist supported with “a number of facts, many of which have fallen within his own observation, of the progressive retreat of the sea, the diminution of springs and rivers, and the necessary increment of land” (430).⁴²

It is by resorting to empirical data that Barrow is also able to discredit the Jesuits’ fundamental claim about Confucianism’s compatibility with Christianity, which they postulated by again relying on the authority of ancient texts, the Confucian classics. In his examination of the Jesuits’ accommodationist policy, David Porter discusses how neo-Confucianism posed a problem to the missionaries in that it had deviated from its originary philosophy by containing elements of Buddhism and Taoism, therefore making

⁴¹ Barrow writes: “We may suppose that the ark ... first struck ground in that part of Tartary which is now inhabited by the Eleuths, as being the most elevated tract of country in the old world. From these heights large rivers flow towards every quarter of the horizon.... From such a situation, admitting the earth to have been peopled in succession, the two great rivers which took the southerly direction and crossed the fertile and extensive plains of China, were fully as likely to direct the few survivors of the deluge to this country, as that they should follow any of the other streams; and probably more so, as these led to a warmer and more comfortable climate, where fewer wants were felt and those few more easily supplied. Considered in this point of view, the opinion of the Jesuits will not appear so ill founded, which supposes that Noah, separating from his rebellious family, travelled with a part of his offspring into the east, and founded the Chinese monarchy; and that he is the same person as the *Foo-shee* of their history” (432-33).

⁴² Despite its religious premise, the Bible continued to hold some value as a historical source in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Here Barrow resembles conjectural historians like John Millar, who did not automatically dismiss the Old Testament and instead employed it as an ethnographic account of the pastoral period, for which there were no historical records (Phillips 187).

it markedly different from Christianity (*Ideographia* 90, 92, 94). However, in their desire to uncover the ancient Chinese belief in a monotheistic God, Porter argues that the Jesuits used the Confucian classics not only to “insis[t] ... on a sharp differentiation between Confucianism and its rivals,” but also to “distil[l] the teachings of this favored school in a pure and rarefied form that would ultimately admit of an unproblematic comparison and fusion with Christianity” (*Ideographia* 92, 93-95). In contrast to the missionaries, Barrow employs the empirical observations he and other travelers have made to emphasize more the corruption ancient Chinese religion has undergone since its inception and thereby illustrate its present dissimilarities from Christianity. He carries out this task in the chapter devoted to examining China’s religious practices, in which he first tenders a succinct history of “the different people who, at various times, have gained admission into China, and some of them for no other purpose than that of disseminating their religious tenets” (448-49). By stressing the continued presence of “Jews, Christians, Indians, and Mahomedans,” whom various travelers have seen still living and propagating their religious beliefs in China, Barrow successfully argues that “the primitive worship of the country [that prevailed in the time of Confucius] has experienced many changes and innovations” and therefore “no longer exists, or exists only in a corrupted state” at the present time (449, 486). He further reinforces this claim by employing his own empirical observations about the various “articles of faith” and “modes of worship” in the Chinese Empire, which Porter asserts the missionaries also recognized but tried to downplay so as to maintain “an idealized core doctrine of ur-Confucianism” (Barrow 486, Porter *Ideographia* 92).

Such a refutation of the alleged similarities between Confucianism and Christianity proves to have great ramifications, for Barrow uses it to throw into suspicion the missionaries' high estimation of Chinese civilization, more specifically its morality.⁴³ According to D. E. Mungello, it was not enough to posit Noah and his sons as the originators of the Chinese Empire (337). The Jesuits also needed to show that the Chinese natives carried on this spiritual legacy by adhering to an ethical code that closely resembled that of the Christian faith, explaining their repeated emphasis on the alleged affinities between Confucianism and Christianity (Mungello 337). By postulating the Chinese as having preserved for the most part this spiritual legacy, the missionaries were able to portray China as "a demi-paradise in the Far East" that had evaded the problem of moral corruption witnessed in European nations and therefore could "lay claim to God's instrument for the temporal and spiritual salvation of humankind" (Markley 76, 79, 74). The Jesuits' representation of the Chinese as model practitioners of religiosity is most clear in Le Comte's *Nouveaux mémoires*, where he makes the rather provocative claim that China had "the knowledge of the true God, and practiced the more pure Morality, while Europe and almost all the World wallowed in Error and Corruption," an estimation of Chinese religion that would not have been acceptable to many Europeans (320). Barrow clearly shares this sentiment, which motivates him to seriously consider the state of China's civilization in his *Travels in China*.

⁴³ Not all English writers were so skeptical of the Jesuit missionaries and their high estimation of Chinese morality. In his examination of Samuel Johnson's favorable reception of Du Halde's *Description de la Chine*, Cunzhong Fan discusses how Johnson eulogized the Chinese, especially Confucius, for their ethics, indicating the wide range of responses the English had to the Jesuit sources (270): "[The reader] will find a calm, peaceful Satisfaction, when he reads the Moral Precepts, and wise Instructions of the Chinese Sages; he will find that Virtue is in every Place the same, and will look with new Contempt on those wild Reasoners, who affirm that Morality is merely Ideal, and that the Distinctions between Good and Ill are wholly chimerical" (*Gentleman's Magazine*, quoted in C. Fan 270).

In order to have a more accurate sense of “the point of rank China may be considered to hold in the scale of civilized nations,” Barrow proposes comparing China with other national cultures (4). As he explicitly states, comparison plays an integral role in such a project, for “the qualities of good and evil, excellence and mediocrity in any nation, can only be fairly estimated by a comparison with those of the same kind in others” (32). In this particular instance of examining the moral character of the Chinese, Barrow takes a cue from the notable conjectural historian John Millar and compares the condition of women in China to that in ancient Greece and modern England, since “it is an invariable maxim that the condition of the female part of society in any nation will furnish a tolerable just criterion of the degree of civilization to which that nation has arrived” (138). While I will speak more of the significance of Barrow’s reference to Millar and his investigation of human manners in the following section, I would like to emphasize here how Barrow adopts Millar’s comparative method, which lies at the heart of all conjectural histories. As we can see in Barrow’s discussion of the social status of women in China, he does not stop at illustrating how the Chinese fall short of the standards the British have set with their polite treatment of women. He goes yet further in his use of cross-cultural comparisons to envision the different stages of civilization, through which all or most human societies were thought to go in succession, thereby demonstrating his contribution to the conjectural histories of the Enlightenment (Carrithers 241-43). Here Barrow specifically employs the debasement Chinese women suffer at the hands of Chinese men as evidence of how barbaric cultures similarly abuse women. Like “the Greeks of old” (or “the Europeans in the dark ages”), who prevented women from engaging in social intercourse with the other sex, relegated even those of

royal status to the drudgery of housework, and sold them at a price that corresponded to their physical beauty, the Chinese also “deprive [their women] of liberty” and “render [them] a degraded victim, subservient to the sensual gratification, the caprice, and the jealousy of tyrant man” by not only binding their feet, but also making it a moral crime for them to be seen outside their homes (140, 139). While Chinese women of lower social status do not have such severe restraints imposed on their liberty, they are instead confined to “hard and slavish labor,” again demonstrating how they are greatly mistreated (141). The English, on the other hand, have discarded their barbaric status by “[holding women] in a proper degree of consideration,” a change that Barrow acknowledges only recently took place within the past two hundred years (139).

If cross-cultural comparisons help Barrow determine the degree of civilization China has reached, they also lead him to investigate the causes of that degree. In continuation of his examination of the degraded status of Chinese women, Barrow notes that the Chinese are actually indiscriminate in their abuse of their fellow countrymen, for they inflict cruelty on children and men as well as women. He speculates that such egregious behavior derives from the laws and maxims of the Chinese government, which dissuade their subjects from exchanging natural sentiments, thereby making them less susceptible to the suffering of others:

The natural disposition of the Chinese ... seem to have suffered almost a total change by the influence of the laws and maxims of government, an influence which, in this country more than elsewhere, has given a bias to the manners, sentiments, and moral character of the people.... While they are by nature quiet, passive, and timid, the state of society and the abuse of laws by which they are governed have rendered them indifferent, unfeeling, and even cruel. (160)

Here I would like to draw attention to the conjecture that Barrow makes and the integral role his mind or imagination plays in tracing the probable cause of the Chinese people's

moral character to the laws and maxims of their government (or, as Carrithers aptly puts it, perceiving “the critical connections between facts that might at first seem to bear no important relation to one another so that, ultimately, one may discover ‘the chain that ties them all together’” [240])). In making these connections, I argue that Barrow engages in a “reasoned” form of imagination, a calculated hypothesis that derives from empirical observations, thereby distinguishing it from fancy. This explains why he makes the conscious decision to relate his travel narrative from his perspective, marking his divergence from his predecessor Staunton: “The Author of the present work has ventured ... to lay before the public the point of view in which *he* saw the Chinese empire, and the Chinese character” (2). In contrast to Staunton, who finds his individual viewpoint detrimental to his aim of producing an empirically objective account of Chinese culture, causing him to employ the detached third-person narrator and compile the narratives of his fellow embassy members, Barrow embraces his personal point of view, for it enables him to make imaginative connections between the natural and social phenomena he observes in China. While he recognizes that different connections or conclusions can be drawn from the same set of facts, for “different persons will generally see the same things in different points of view,” he sets out to demonstrate the greater plausibility of his own speculative or imaginative conjectures (and by extension, the credibility of his representation of the Chinese Empire) “by [way of] facts and analogy” (3, 2).

In sum, the measures Barrow takes in order to challenge and revise the Jesuit missionary accounts (empirical observations, cross-cultural comparisons, and speculative or imaginative conjectures) lead him to produce something akin to conjectural history. In addition to his methodology lining up with that of conjecturalist writers, he makes

explicit references to notable conjectural historians like Millar and Montesquieu, the latter of whom he mentions while discussing the probable reasons for the practice of polygamy, a particular form of maltreatment women receive in China:

All the observations of this lively and ingenious author with regard to China, and particularly the inferences he draws with respect to climate, fall to the ground. It is not the vigour of natural propensities, as he has supposed, that destroys the moral ones; it is not the effect of climate that makes it to be considered among these people “as a prodigy of virtue for a man to meet a fine woman in a retired chamber without offering violence to her”.... The climate being every where temperate, and the diet of the majority of the people moderate, I might say scanty, these have little influence in promoting a vehement desire for sexual intercourse. (147-48)

It is interesting to note that Barrow does not simply refer to conjecturalist writers (as he does, for example, in the case of Millar), but rather critically engages with their inferences. As we have seen in his refutation of the Jesuits’ conjectures, he again relies on empirical data to disprove Montesquieu’s well-known argument about climate and its influence on people’s behavior.⁴⁴ Having had the opportunity to observe the different regions of China and their moderate climate during the delegation’s journey from Peking to Canton, Barrow is able to refute the connection Montesquieu posits between a hot climate and, in this particular case, the tyrannical power men exercise over women in China. Barrow instead attributes it to the laws and maxims of the Chinese government (or to continue using Montesquieu’s terms, “moral causes”), the significance of which Montesquieu also stresses in shaping the collective behavior of the Chinese (Carrithers

⁴⁴ Robert Wokler tenders a succinct summary of Montesquieu’s argument about the influence climate has on people’s behavior: “With respect to physical causes and particularly climate, Montesquieu’s argument is quite familiar. Much inspired by John Arbuthnot’s *Essay concerning the effects of air on human bodies* of 1733, it has two main elements that address nerve fibers, on the one hand, and the productivity of the soil, on the other. A hot climate, claimed Montesquieu, expands nerve fibers, and because nature is bountiful it renders men and women passive, more inclined to despotism, and thus to Catholicism. A cold climate constricts nerve fibers, and because in cold regions the fruits of the earth are more scarce, individuals are forced to be more self-reliant, more inclined to freedom, more drawn to republicanism, and also to Protestantism” (40).

253-54). When we take into account the greater emphasis Montesquieu lays on moral than physical causes when explaining the social phenomena in China, it is somewhat strange that Barrow homes in on this particular inference about the climate. Nonetheless, it illustrates well Barrow's critical engagement with other conjectural historians, especially those who are considered the pioneering figures of the genre, indicating his participation in the Enlightenment debates about the development of human civilization.⁴⁵

The Peculiarity of the Chinese Empire

As suggested in the previous section, speculative or imaginative conjectures were made with the aim of building a schematic order that would help explain the observed dissimilarities in different national cultures. This schematic order, however, did not amount to a single chronology that assigned the different modes of subsistence (hunting, pasturage, agriculture, and commerce) as the four stages all human societies allegedly underwent in procession, otherwise known as stadial theory. Calling into question "the seemingly automatic identification of Enlightenment historical thought with the idea of the 'four stages,'" Mark Salber Phillips makes the valid point that "the thematics of [conjectural] history were much wider than the questions of property and subsistence underlined by [stadial theory]" (172): "They ranged from ... Kames' speculation on the progress of sciences and morals to Millar's analysis of the 'rank and condition of women

⁴⁵ Although Phillips aptly calls Montesquieu "the father of the genre," Carrithers does a more thorough job of discussing the integral role Montesquieu played in the development of conjectural history (Phillips 171, Carrithers 243-44, 249-50). In his detailed survey of the genre, Carrithers notes how the French philosopher helped generate a socioanthropological analysis of national cultures by first stressing the casual relations between social phenomena and later "narrow[ing] the list of basic components of ... the 'general spirit' of a society to climate, religion, laws, maxims of government, historical precedents, manners, and customs" in his principal work *De l'esprit des lois* (1748) (243, 250).

in different ages” (172-73).⁴⁶ Barrow’s account reflects such diverse interests of the Enlightenment philosophers in that he proposes various criteria by which to measure China’s state of civilization. Although he does employ the mode of economic production to explain the suspension of China’s social progress, which I will later discuss in greater detail, Barrow also suggests using the moral character of the Chinese people, the state of their arts and sciences, and the stability of their government as a means of determining “the degree of civilization to which [the Chinese Empire] has arrived” (138).

In this regard, Barrow’s *Travels in China* exemplifies how conjectural history dovetails with the history of manners. In addition to shifting its focus from political events to a wider range of experiences within the social realm, conjectural history examines the synchronic conditions of a particular national culture, all of which combine to indicate its level of development (Phillips 173, Carrithers 253).⁴⁷ This is certainly true in the case of Barrow’s conjectural history of China, for he is not only invested in investigating China’s place in a general history of human civilization, but he is also

⁴⁶ While Frank Palmeri also stresses “the distinctive arguments, positions, and emphases” various writers of the Enlightenment adopted in order to “explain the origins and developmental history of religion, languages, and forms of political organization,” he identifies four basic features that give their conjectural histories “a family resemblance” to each other (3, 4): “(1) a naturalistic approach that avoids recourse to a deity or providence for the explanation of social organization and development; (2) an organic conception of society in which laws, religion, customs, and manners are interrelated and interdependent; (3) an emphasis on the unplanned, unforeseen, and noncontractual development of institutions; and (4) a conception of the stages which most or all societies develop, though at different rates with local variation, in the natural course of things. These stages are usually cast either in [the descriptive] terms of their means of subsistence (hunter-gatherer, pastoral, agricultural, commercial), or in [the evaluative] terms of their level of civilization (savage, barbarian, civilized)” (3-4). We can see Barrow’s *Travels in China* fulfilling these four basic traits of conjectural history, again indicating its affiliation with the genre.

⁴⁷ The history of manners and conjectural history reflect the great transition in historiography that Phillips notes taking place in eighteenth-century Europe. If traditional historiography is primarily concerned with narrating political events or the political actions of individual figures, the history of manners and conjectural history expand the scope of historiography to include the experiences of the social realm such as customs and manners, language, religion, education, civil institutions, and arts and sciences (Phillips 173). Yet, as Phillips is quick to point out, conjectural history adopts a more systematic and theoretical approach than the history of manners in order to “investigate the causes of different usages of mankind” in different countries and thereby narrate a general history of human civilization (173, 188-89). For a more detailed discussion of the similarities and differences between the history of manners and conjectural history, see Phillips 147-89.

interested in examining the various elements that comprise Chinese society at the present moment. Given such interest, it is no great surprise that Barrow mentions Millar, since Millar similarly stresses the interrelationship between various societal factors in his *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks* (1771): “His investigations typically unify ... questions of manners and matters of economy. Primitive societies are indeed governed by narrow material necessities, but ‘polished’ nations have won a wider freedom and form a more complex unity” (Phillips 185). As Phillips suggests, Millar sees the material concerns of a society as being in inverse proportion to its cultural situation, with the former giving way to the latter as a national culture acquires a greater degree of civilization (184). While primitive cultures devote most of their attention to acquiring the basic necessities of life, the more polished ones demonstrate a greater investment in making advances in the arts and sciences and consequently providing their general populace with the conveniences and luxuries of life (Phillips 184). By examining such component elements of Chinese society in tandem, Barrow seeks to accurately determine its stage of societal development.

Yet China poses a problem to such a method of evaluation in that there is a lack of correspondence between its synchronic modes of cultural experience.⁴⁸ Barrow clearly sees the Chinese as lagging behind the Europeans in their failure to value women for their

⁴⁸ I wonder if this helps explain the numerous analogies Barrow draws between China, Greece, and the Roman Empire. Like China, Greece and the Roman Empire display a lack of correspondence between their synchronic modes of cultural experience, an observation Phillips claims that Adam Ferguson makes in his *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767): “Ferguson recognizes in his initial account of progress the Greeks must be called barbaric, and for much of their history the Romans too, if by this we mean a people not far advanced in commerce, ‘profuse of their own lives,’ and vehement in their attachments and enmities. Only the greatness of ancient literature – especially of their historians – has allowed the moderns to accept their manner of life.... By their ‘activity of their mind,’ their abilities, and their spirit, the Greeks have acquired the first rank among nations” (182). Barrow similarly points to the incongruence between the Greeks’ and the Romans’ primitive state of agriculture and their cultural achievements such as “the beautiful and symmetrical works of art displayed in the temples of the Greeks” and “the grand and magnificent remains of Roman architecture (5).

moral and intellectual accomplishments, to improve their ingenious discoveries and inventions such as the compass, and to make efficient use of their natural sources due to the primitive state of their agricultural methods.⁴⁹ However, he is more ambivalent about how he should see the order and stability of their government:

If the test of a good government be made to depend on the length of its continuance, unshaken and unchanged by revolutions, China may certainly be allowed to rank the first among civilized nations.... Whether good or bad, it has possessed the art of moulding the multitude to its own shape in a manner unprecedented in the annals of the world. (394)

This is a favorable assessment of the Chinese polity that comes from comparing “the preservation of internal tranquility in China” to the disturbances in Europe resulting from the French Revolution, which Barrow mentions several times throughout the course of his narrative (395). Here, he seems to take a conservative stance to the revolution much like the English government did. Fearing that the rampant violence and chaos in France could spread to England, the English government imposed severe restrictions, like suspending the Habeas Corpus Act and prohibiting meetings that were attended by more than 50 people, the latter of which Barrow also observes the Chinese implementing and speculates as contributing to their government’s durability. While *Travels in China* was

⁴⁹ Although Barrow, for example, credits the Chinese for the ingenuity of their various discoveries and inventions, he criticizes them for not having further developed them, a feat the Europeans have accomplished within the past few centuries. For example, when discussing the chain-pump, the development of which has enabled the British to continue their physical and intellectual exploration of the world, Barrow writes: “Like the rest of their inventions, the chain-pump, which, in Europe, has been brought to such perfection as to constitute an essential part of ships of war and other large vessels, continues among the Chinese nearly in its primitive state, the principal improvement since its first invention consisting in the substitution of boards and basket-work for wisps of straw” (311). Such comparisons between China and Europe’s different rates of development in their sciences, arts, and manufactures lead him to make the following conclusion about China’s state of civilization: “The Chinese have been among the first nations, now existing in the world, to arrive at a certain pitch of perfection, where, from the policy of the government, or some other cause, they have remained stationary: they were civilized, fully to the same extent they now are, more than two thousand years ago, at a period when all Europe might be considered, comparatively, as barbarous; but they have since made little progress in any thing.... They, at this moment, compared with Europe, they can only be said to be great in trifles, whilst they are really trifling in every thing that is great” (355).

published after the termination of the French Revolution, the fear of political unrest seems to continue to weigh heavily on Barrow's mind. This makes sense when we consider it actually had a direct influence on the delegation in 1794, when they had to curtail their plans to travel to other regions in East Asia after departing from China.⁵⁰ Having experienced firsthand the negative consequences of political turmoil in Europe, Barrow seems to see "the preservation of internal tranquility in China" as something that merits recognition, especially in this "age of revolutions" (395, 380).⁵¹

If Barrow's examination of China's synchronic conditions demonstrates the challenge it poses to conjectural history, so do the probable causes he attributes to its social phenomena. For every comparison Barrow makes between China and other societies, he stresses its "peculiar circumstances," therefore making them inapplicable to explaining other national cultures and their different stage of development (160). In the instance of the stability the Chinese government has enjoyed for the past two thousand years, Barrow speculates that the following "various accidents, improved by policy seem to have led to its durability" (395): the country's natural barriers and strict foreign policy that enable the government to "mould its own subjects into the shape it wished them to retain"; the language that is "of a nature well calculated to keep the mass of the people in a state of ignorance"; and the customs that deter social intercourse, the combined effect

⁵⁰ For instance, after having received intelligence of the impending war with France, Staunton recounts how Lord Macartney immediately ordered the *Lion*, a sixty-four gun warship under the command of Sir Erasmus Gower, to depart from Macao so as to safely transport the delegates (and other English trading ships) back to England (3: 154-55).

⁵¹ Here, Barrow is probably also referring to the Haitian Revolution, which took place until 1804. It was a particularly violent revolution with news about the mass slaughter of white settlers in St. Domingue adding to the Europeans' ever-growing apprehensions about local insurrections, so much so that Sybille Fischer claims "Haiti vanished from the front pages of European and American newspapers" and left "silences and gaps that punctuate the historical and cultural records" (2). In a way, Barrow's account confirms Fischer's argument, for he barely mentions Haiti while explicitly referring to France several times in *Travels in China*. The only time he alludes to Haiti is when he quotes Lord Macartney's observation of how "the negroes," along with the French, have "fall[en] into all the excesses of folly, suffer[ed] all the paroxysms of madness, and be[en] found ... unfit for the enjoyment of rational freedom" (417).

of which dissuade “those kind of turbulent assemblies, where real or imagined grievances are discussed with all the rancour and violence that malicious insinuations against government too frequently inspire” (395). Barrow similarly attributes the little progress the Chinese have shown in the sciences (and the subsequent absence of a scientific revolution in China) to an unusual set of circumstances that exist only in the Chinese Empire. After examining how the Chinese, in contrast to the Europeans, have failed to improve their knowledge in various branches of science such as astronomy, geography, mathematics, and chemistry, he conjectures that “little progress is likely to be made in any of the speculative sciences” due to the following factors (263): the extreme difficulties of learning the Chinese characters, and the mode of Chinese education that emphasizes reading the classical Confucian texts, an extensive understanding of which is required to obtain the most elevated positions in the government. It is significant to note here how Barrow again imaginatively connects various factors as disparate as the government’s strict foreign policy, the language, the lack of social intercourse, and the mode of education based on the empirical information he has collected during his journey. By making such calculated hypotheses, he transforms what could have been a collection of random empirical observations into a narrative that provides its readers with a probable explanation for the peculiar social phenomena he observes in China. Although this helps his readership attain a more insightful understanding of the Chinese Empire, it does not seem to support any of the more common schematic orders eighteenth-century conjectural historians devised to narrate a universal history of human civilization.

When we consider Barrow's repeated references to the Chinese language whenever discussing the empire's "peculiar circumstances," it is worth noting how the language itself embodies the peculiarity Barrow ascribes to the entire nation (160). As with other component elements of Chinese culture that have generated heated debate, Barrow again devotes a significant portion of his narrative to critically examining the Chinese language, including the inferences other writers have made about its difference from other systems of writing.⁵² With his usual reliance on facts and analogy, Barrow refutes the "erroneous" opinion that the Chinese script is hieroglyphical by demonstrating the etymological comparisons between Chinese characters and hieroglyphics to be "fallacious" (235, 241). He instead asserts that the Chinese language "is entirely peculiar to itself": "Neither the Egyptian inscriptions, nor the nail-headed characters, or monograms, found on the Babylonian bricks, have any nearer resemblance to the Chinese than the Hebrew letters have to the Sanscrit.... Nor are any marks or traces of alphabetic writing discoverable in the composition of the Chinese character" (244-45). In characterizing the Chinese written character in this way, Barrow signals its marked divergence from a developmental history of language. If the conjectural history of language, as Eun Kyung Min notes, posits a gradual progression from first using pictures, and then proceeding to use hieroglyphics, arbitrary characters that still retain traces of previous modes of inscription, and alphabetic writing, Barrow highlights the challenge

⁵² According to Porter, the Chinese script first generated interest in the seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries due to its "antiquity, changelessness, and apparent grounding in originary philosophical meanings" (*Ideographia* 10). Such qualities made the Chinese script especially appealing to European scholars who endeavored to "create, discover, or restore thoroughly grounded, originary, and potentially universal forms of languages" as a means of coping with the following changes during this period: "the decline of Latin as a lingua franca, the corresponding rise of undisciplined vernaculars, and the call for modes of speech and writing suited to the rigorous exigencies of science" (Porter, *Ideographia* 10). For a more detailed discussion of how Europeans interpreted Chinese writing in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Porter's *Ideographia* 15-77.

the Chinese writing system poses to the schematic order (“Chinese Miscellanies” 316).

He does this by not only disproving the conjecture that “their present character sprung out of hieroglyphics,” but also observing how the Chinese language “has ... not undergone any material alteration for more than two thousand years,” nor is likely to in the future as shown by its insistence in maintaining the words of their language and Sinicization of foreign names (248, 249).

Barrow thereby stresses China’s peculiarity and its ostensible divergence from the more schematic products of conjectural history, especially its underlying hypotheses of social progress and unifying principles in the history of human civilization (Phillips 173). In doing so, Barrow confirms Staunton’s declaration that China is “the grandest collective object that can be presented for human contemplation or research” and his own statement that China poses a “most interesting subject for the investigation of the philosopher” (4). It is such emphasis on the intellectual stimulation China’s peculiarity provides the philosopher that distinguishes my reading of *Travels in China* from that of Porter, who instead focuses on the lack of interest Barrow also claims China holds for the scientist, the artist, and the naturalist. Highlighting the great disappointment that the embassy members must have felt at having failed to fulfill their commercial objectives, Porter discusses how their frustration with China’s “obstructionist” trade policies, which suppressed the free circulation of goods, negatively influenced Barrow’s representation of Chinese culture (*Ideographia* 211):

The effects of this cramping and constriction cast their pallor over the entire face of Chinese society. Although there are isolated sights and customs that capture each traveler’s interest, the overall impression left on the legendary land of Marco Polo and the Kubla Khan on the minds of late-eighteenth century English visitors is, rather remarkably, one of drab and tedious monotony.... China seems to bore

its visitors by means of the same pervasive anticirculatory inertia that stifles the energies of its own artists and scholars. (*Ideographia* 218)

Having written his voyage account after the failure of the Macartney Embassy was made apparent, Barrow obviously felt the need to defend both the embassy and its commander-in-chief against their detractors, who condemned the mission for having failed to bring about any substantial changes in Anglo-Chinese trade relations. One way of downplaying the delegation's failure was to emphasize China's cultural stagnation and limit the commercial value it holds for England, which corresponds well to Porter's reading of Barrow's travel narrative. However, I maintain that Barrow also draws attention to China's peculiarity and the intellectual stimulation it provides the philosopher. It is his recognition of its peculiarities (as well as his speculative or imaginative conjectures) that enables him to produce a more balanced and nuanced understanding of Chinese society and, as I suggest in the following section, of the general history of mankind's development.

The Sophistication of Historiography

If I previously stressed the challenge China's peculiarity poses to conjectural history, I propose to discuss what this means for conjectural history, more specifically the stadial theory of history, in this section. The reason I choose to focus on stadial theory despite my recognition of the diverse themes of conjectural history is because Barrow is preoccupied with materialist concerns in *Travels in China*. As Porter continues to argue in relation to Barrow's negative representation of the Chinese Empire, Barrow's criticism of Chinese culture is not arbitrary in its conception, but is rather informed by the "the eighteenth-century commercialist doctrine that posited the free circulation of economic

and cultural capital as the basis of progress and prosperity” (*Ideographia* 12). Porter specifically homes in on Barrow’s “instances of blockage and stagnation” that he sees mirroring “China’s seeming hostility to the circulatory impulse in the economic domain” (*Ideographia* 213, 211). Similar to the way the Chinese suppress the free circulation of goods by refusing to engage in foreign trade, Porter discusses how Barrow portrays them as also stifling the “free flow of invention and ingenuity,” which is exemplified by their failure to have improved the compass (*Ideographia* 216, 212). Another good example of “the absence of ... healthy, civilized forms of circulation” that Barrow views as characterizing Chinese society and therefore contributing to its cultural stagnation is the social conventions that obstruct “the natural and salubrious [exchange] of sentiment and fellow feeling” (Porter, *Ideographia* 215, 225). Considering how Barrow’s understanding of China’s economic policies significantly influences his depiction of Chinese civilization, it is only natural that he assigns a considerable portion of his narrative to examining China’s mode(s) of economic production. However, it is during this process that Barrow also considers the complications the Chinese Empire poses to the stadial theory of history, producing a nuanced understanding of China and stadial history that I assert characterizes his travel narrative.

Barrow discusses China’s means of subsistence at great length when he addresses the question of the empire’s immense population, a matter that invited great speculation due to England’s own concerns about its ever-growing population. According to Markley, the English first experienced an upsurge in its population between 1500 and 1650, causing them to fear a future shortage in their natural resources (14). This in turn led them to redirect their attention outwards, specifically to the Far East and its abundant

natural resources, so as to relieve the mounting “demographic pressures” they faced at home (Markley 14, 15). Unlike the seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century writers that Markley discusses in his monograph, Barrow does not seem to view China and the potential it holds for international trade as a solution to England’s demographic problems. He instead represents it as a nation that has faced and succumbed to a similar crisis of its own, a fate he suggests the Chinese could have evaded if they had better managed their natural and human resources like the English. Barrow does this by first comparing China’s population to that of England and claiming that the former is not as staggeringly high as one thinks, especially when one considers the vast amount of land the empire occupies. According to his calculations, which he bases on the figures provided by Chou-ta-gin, “a plain, unaffected, and honest man who on no occasion had attempted to deceive or impose on us,” the number of people per square mile only amounts to 256, which is roughly double that of England (120 people per sq. mile) (574). This leads Barrow to engage in a thought experiment that is akin to the rational form of imagination I discuss in the previous two sections. Supposing that Britain was “under the same circumstances as China” such as primarily using its land to produce food and not draining the best hands of the country in foreign trade and large manufactures, Barrow inquires whether Britain would be “capable of supporting twice its present population,” a question he answers in the affirmative (576). This hypothetical comparison not only enables him to refute the opinion that the land in China is insufficient to maintain its immense population, but also leads him to conjecture that China’s economic progress has been halted due to their inferior skills in agriculture. Unlike the great English farmers, the Chinese “have no knowledge of the modes of improvement practised in the various

breeds of cattle; no instruments for breaking up and preparing waste lands; no system for draining and reclaiming swamps and morasses” (567). “For want of this knowledge,” Barrow speculates, “a very considerable portion of the richest land, perhaps, in the whole empire, is suffered to remain a barren and unprofitable waste,” a problem Barrow maintains the English do not have due to their more advanced agricultural skills and commercial activities (567).

That Barrow pinpoints the different means of subsistence (England’s commercialism and exploitation of technology and China’s primitive state of agriculture) as the probable cause of England’s ability, and China’s lack of it, to provide their general populace with the conveniences and luxuries of life might suggest a schematically simple form of stadial thinking. Yet in his conjectural method, identifying a general stage of subsistence is not the end but the beginning of understanding, to which a knowledge of the context and its particular and variable conditions – geographical, political, customary – is essential. It is for this reason that Barrow proceeds to further speculate on the probable causes of China’s frequent famines, again enlisting the aid of his imagination to make probable connections between the following factors he has empirically observed during the mission: “I am of opinion then that three principal reasons may be assigned for them: First, the equal division of land; Secondly, the mode of cultivation; and Thirdly, the nature of the products” (584). To this list he adds that “one-fourth part of the whole country, [which] nearly consists of lakes and low, sour, swampy grounds ... may serve to explain the frequent famines” (567). It is significant to note here that while Barrow identifies China’s mode of cultivation as having caused the general poverty he witnesses in its rural regions, he also goes deeper into the specific conditions of China’s agricultural

mode of subsistence and finds there specific conditions that make it hard to generalize about the mode itself. In addition to observing the consequences of China's governmental policy of equally divvying up its land among its people and of its geographical composition, he remarks how its primary grain of consumption yields fewer crops than potatoes, the combined effect of which prevents the Chinese from producing enough food. This proves to have great ramifications, for agrarian surplus is one of the sources that Adam Smith identifies as promoting "the natural progress of opulence" in *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776) (Book 3, Chapter 1, 376). It is through this means that subsistence can be stabilized, surplus products can be exported, and attention can be turned to advancing the arts, sciences, and manufactures (Smith, Book 3, Chapter 1, 376-80). If China has fallen behind European nations in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Barrow deploys comparison so as to enable his readers to understand China's lag not as a deficit in its essential capacity for civilization but as the consequence of complex and overlapping historical contingencies.⁵³ In the hands of Barrow (and some others), stadial history, by attending to the variable conditions that must accompany existence at any given stage, becomes a relatively sophisticated and explanatory method.

⁵³ Karl Marx would speculate that the lack of economic progress in China also prevents them from suffering the alienation and mental deterioration that characterize Western capitalist economies, a concern that the Scottish Enlightenment thinkers also voiced with regard to the fourth stage of stadial history (Marx 470-91, Spadafora 275, 281). David Spadafora argues that the Scottish, having witnessed firsthand the advantages and disadvantages of commercial progress in the uneven developments that took place in the Lowlands and Highlands, did not necessarily see progress in exclusively and normatively economic terms (253-54). According to Spadafora, the Scottish conjecturalists were troubled by the possible "subject[ion] to deterioration from certain 'diseases' associated with economic prosperity" (275). They were particularly concerned about the harmful effects of commerce, such as the potential decay of morals and manners deriving from an "excessive and all-engrossing gratification of the senses," an unfortunate side effect of luxury, and the "[deterioration of] social health and dehumanization" deriving from the division of labor (Spadafora 277, 281). Barrow seems to share these concerns when he briefly discusses how "the effects of overgrown wealth," along with other disturbances such as "the ravages of war, ... internal commotions, or pestilential disease" can result in negative outcomes, "sometimes sweep[ing] away one half of a nation within the usual period allotted to the life of man" (589).

Barrow again complicates the four-stage schematism by observing that China currently practices commerce as well as agriculture. Although the type of trade the Chinese engage in is largely internal due to the government's policies limiting material and intellectual exchanges with foreigners, China boasts a domestic trade that Barrow sees as exceeding that of the rest of the world: "This trade ... employs such a multitude of craft of one description or other, as to baffle all attempts at a calculation. I firmly believe, that all the floating vessels in the world besides, taken collectively, would not be equal either in number or tonnage to those of China" (399-400). In a way, Barrow anticipates the argument both Andre Gunder Frank and Kenneth Pomeranz make about China's dominance in the global economy until the early nineteenth century. Although Barrow may not be as radical as Frank in arguing that the social progress of Europe did not derive from its capitalist economy and the Industrial Revolution, nor as statistically sophisticated as Pomeranz in explaining how Europe was able to surpass China only by overcoming its ecological constraints via its American colonies, he similarly challenges the uniformly linear conception of economic development that Frank and Pomeranz find problematic in "Eurocentric social theory" (Frank 1, 321-39, Pomeranz 264-97).⁵⁴

Barrow accomplishes this by highlighting the particular (or "peculiar") form of

⁵⁴ Pomeranz employs the concept "ghost acres" to examine the "ecological relief" that the colonies in the Americas provided Europe (275, 274). He adds to Barrow's discussion of England's primary grain of consumption by investigating how sugar became an alternative source of nutrition by comprising 4 percent of the Englishman's daily diet in the early-nineteenth century (274). While Pomeranz concedes that "the 4 percent figure ... may seem modest," he claims "it is worth recalling that an acre of tropical sugar land yields as many calories as more than 4 acres of potatoes ... or 9-12 acres of wheat" (275). In other words, if the English had not consumed sugar as part of their daily diets, they would have required "at least 1,300,000 acres of average-yielding English farms and conceivably over 1,900,000 [acres]" to supplement their nutritional deficiencies (Pomeranz 275). "Given that the total arable land of Britain was roughly 17,000,000 acres," Pomeranz concludes that "the 3,000,000-4,000,000 New World 'ghost acres' ... [were] a non-trivial addition to Britain's land base," which enabled the English to overcome the demographic crisis Barrow shows as having overtaken the Chinese in his travel narrative (275). For a more detailed discussion of "ghost acreage" and its implications in relation to England's social progress, see Pomeranz 264-97, 313-15.

civilization China assumes, one that bestows great value upon ancient forms of knowledge and therefore does not abandon earlier modes of subsistence while simultaneously partaking in the changes that have taken place over time. In doing so, he suggests that the four stages that stadial theory posits all human societies go through in succession are no more than an initial, heuristic guide in accounting for the ways national cultures can develop. Through his careful investigation of China's cultural differences, Barrow puts stadial theory to use as a fruitful method of historical understanding and a clear alternative to the ideological service to which it has been put in justifying the colonization of peoples alleged to be essentially incapable of material and economic development.

Barrow's conjectural history of China thereby confirms Daniel Carey and Sven Trakulhun's argument that universalism and cultural diversity are not mutually exclusive concepts in Enlightenment thought (241-43). Challenging the criticism the Enlightenment has subsequently received from postcolonial scholars for its universalizing impulse (or what some critics have interpreted as its imperialistic ideology of progressivism), Carey and Trakulhun examine the ways in which various writers of the movement actually sought to preserve cultural differences (240, 242-43). While Carey and Trakulhun employ the toleration of religious difference as their primary example, I suggest that such a case can be similarly made for conjectural or stadial history, or at least Barrow's version of it (243-46). Of course, I do not mean to suggest that stadial theory does not postulate a universal history of mankind's development. However, one must also recognize that it retains the potential to admit cultural diversity as demonstrated by Barrow's travel narrative. By examining the complications China's peculiarity poses

to stadial schematism, Barrow highlights their dialectical relationship, in which the particularities he observes during his journey in China not only support, but more importantly sophisticate the universalism of stadial theory (Carey and Trakulhun 242). That Barrow's stadial history undergoes substantial changes in the process of accommodating China's cultural dissimilarities is made evident when we compare it to the Jesuit missionaries' attempt to reconstruct a more traditional form of world history. Although the missionaries too make adjustments like adopting the Septuagint-based chronology in order to successfully integrate ancient Chinese history into the Judeo-Christian timeline, their biblical history remains essentially the same in that it narrates mankind's shared "development ... from the Creation to the Last Judgment" related and prophesied in the Old and New Testaments (Van Kley 362, Breisach 83). Barrow's conjecturalism sacrifices the clarity and coherence of Christian history, as it does those of naïve stadial history, by deploying a more responsible and persuasive historical method.

Barrow's treatise ends in modest skepticism, with a recognition that comparison is crucial to its method, which is therefore in an important respect "defective." Its defects are not conceptual – e.g., the a priori application of universal categories – but empirical: the lack of sufficient data, and kinds of data, to make any conclusions fully probable:

The comparisons I have made were given with a view of assisting the reader to form in his own mind some idea what rank the Chinese may be considered to hold, when measured by the scale of European nations; but this part is very defective. To have made it complete would require more time and more reading, than at present I could command. The consideration of other objects, those of a political nature, which are of the most serious importance to our interests in China, is more particularly the province of those in a different sphere, and would, therefore, be improper for me to anticipate or prejudge, by any conjectures of my own. It belongs to other persons, and perhaps to other times. (621)

Barrow is therefore right to point out the incompleteness of his account, especially in fulfilling its aim of helping the reader measure China's present state of civilization. In addition to introducing complicating factors such as China's primary grain of consumption and its engagement in various modes of subsistence without fully explaining how conjectural or stadial history can accommodate them, he stresses the need to further examine the Chinese polity in order to proceed with his inquiry.

As Barrow suggests with his cross-cultural comparisons, China's governmental policies appear to have greatly influenced Chinese civilization not only in terms of its moral standards and internal stability, but also in terms of its economic development. The procedures the Chinese government implements in order to promote agriculture over foreign trade are especially noteworthy. Besides helping explain in part China's chilliness toward British commercial invitations, they enable the reader to see the movement through the principal modes of subsistence as an empirical marker of development that is not inherently an evaluative judgment of superiority. After introducing the criterion of political policy to clarify why China's dominant mode of subsistence is one that the British are displacing with their manufactures and trade, Barrow also adduces cultural difference such as the great esteem the husbandman as "an honourable, as well as useful, member of society" enjoys in Chinese society as well as the financial benefits he receives (397).⁵⁵ By adducing political and cultural contexts that

⁵⁵ Another good example in which Barrow adduces political and/or cultural difference to have a more nuanced understanding of Chinese civilization is the practice of foot binding. After initially using the custom to exemplify China's barbaric treatment of women, he qualifies his unfavorable assessment by insisting that it would be unfair to condemn the Chinese custom as being barbaric "merely because they differ from us in the little points of dress and manners, seeing how very nearly we can match them with similar follies and absurdities of our own" (74). Barrow instead considers the practice within the terms of Chinese culture (an ocular demonstration of the woman's high social status, like the long fingernails men of learning sport in order to distinguish themselves from those who perform manual labor), which gains

help illustrate how the mode of subsistence cannot be separated from other factors when analyzing any given stage of development, Barrow contributes to transforming what are usually considered markers of “inferiority” and “underdevelopment” into those of “difference.”

Coda

If I discuss in the previous sections the integral role imagination plays in Barrow’s conjectural history of China, transforming what could have been potentially a static description of particular details into a narrative that makes imaginative connections among the those details to tender a comprehensive account of Chinese culture and its place in the history of human civilization, I would like to use the conclusion to explore the connections between conjectural history and virtual travel. While Barrow, like the other members of the Macartney Embassy, actually travels to China, he also invites his readers to partake in a virtual voyage through time to observe and experience the evolution of human societies, which he achieves through his historical method of combining empirical observations with speculative conjectures. In other words, by imaginatively reconfiguring the empirical information he has gained from his actual journey, Barrow engages in a distinct mode of virtual travel that grants readers access to a cultural past that is even more remote than the physically distant Chinese Empire due to its virtuality. In this regard, Barrow’s actual voyage account *Travels in China* resembles the literary works I will discuss in the following two chapters, in which the writers, even in the absence of actual travel, also mentally transport their readers to a virtual world that

greater significance when we take into account that the custom was often used by Westerners to exemplify China’s economic and cultural stagnation from the latter half of the eighteenth century.

diverges in different degrees from the material reality of China, but likewise allows them to gain the knowledge and pleasure of actual travel.

Chapter Three

Imaginary Travel to China:

Technological and Narrative Inventions in Defoe's *Consolidator*

Daniel Defoe's *The Consolidator: Or, Memoirs of Sundry Transactions from the World in the Moon* (1705) was published shortly after he was released from Newgate Prison, where he was detained for approximately seven months for writing the highly controversial tract *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* (1702).⁵⁶ Having written the pamphlet with the intention of opposing the religious persecution that the Dissenters were increasingly suffering after Queen Anne's succession to the throne, Defoe made the unfortunate choice of parodying the rhetoric of the High Anglicans, which he achieved so successfully that he ended up being mistaken for one. While his three days in the pillory were, to use Michael Seidel's words, "unexpectedly triumphant" in that he garnered moral support from the public as opposed to the hostility and contempt the humiliating sentence was supposed to incite in the spectators, his imprisonment left him financially ruined and greatly disillusioned (Seidel et al. xvi, Backscheider 118).⁵⁷ With great vehemence, Defoe resumed his criticism of the High Anglicans in the *Consolidator* by

⁵⁶ See Seidel et al. xv-xvii and Sill 1-4 for a more detailed publication history of the *Consolidator*.

⁵⁷ Defoe tenders a similarly triumphant account of his three-day sentence in the *Consolidator*. Using his narrator's anecdote about the lunar philosopher, whom critics rightly identify as Defoe's alter ego due to their parallel histories, he relates how the spectators voiced their sympathy for the unfairly penalized writer (Sill 7): "He published some such bold Truths there, from the Allegorical Relations he had of me from our World: That he was call'd before the Publick Authority, who could not bear the just Reflections of his *damn'd Satyrical way of Writing*; and there they punisht the Poor Man ... [and] expos'd him in the *high Places of their Capital City*, for the Mob to laugh at him for a Fool: This is a Punishment not unlike *our Pillory*, and was appointed for *mean Criminals*, Fellows that Cheat and Couzen People, Forge Writings, Forswear themselves, and the like; and the People, that it was expected would have treated this Man very ill, on the contrary *Pitied him*, wisht those that set him there placed in his room, and exprest their Affections, by *loud Shouts* and Acclamations, when he was taken down" (29).

viciously ridiculing the hypocrisy he saw prevailing in English church and state politics. Using the lunar voyage, a subgenre of the imaginary voyage that was newly vitalized during this period, as the framework for his allegorical relation of England's political history, Defoe was able to make thinly-veiled attacks on key events that took place in England from 1660 to 1705, particularly those involving the High Anglicans.⁵⁸

When we consider the imaginary voyage's great versatility, it comes as no great surprise that Defoe chooses this particular genre to criticize the English polity. Its basic motif of a fictional journey that one undertakes in order to travel to a new geographical destination grants the writer enough flexibility to utilize the imaginary voyage in multiple ways. The various possibilities open to the writer in his depiction of the imaginary location and its institutions, in particular, enable him to explore a wide range of issues. Defoe, for instance, employs his narrator's imaginary journey to China and the moon not only to reflect on the failings of the English government, but also to explore other topics such as science and religion. Such great flexibility explains why the imaginary voyage was immensely popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Some common uses of this genre during this period include the following: a satirical examination of the defects in one's society or a projection of a utopian world that is free of those defects (Cyrano de Bergerac's *L'Autre Monde* [1619], Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World* [1666]); an engagement in philosophical inquiries such as the origins and nature of the

⁵⁸ A popular subgenre of the imaginary voyage that was existent from as early as the second century (Lucian's *A True Story* and *Icaromenippus*), the lunar narrative underwent proliferation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries due to the two following developments that David Cressy and Howard Marchitello outline in their survey of the subgenre: the discovery of new worlds such as the Americas, which made future discoveries, even those of celestial planets, more plausible; and advances in astronomical science and technology, which led to a number of new, startling observations about the moon such as the great resemblance its surface bears to that of earth (Cressy 962-63, Marchitello 161-64). Notable examples of the lunar voyage are John Wilkins's *The Discovery of a World in the Moone* (1638), *A Discourse Concerning a New World* (1640), and Francis Godwin's *The Man in the Moone* (1638), to which Defoe refers in the *Consolidator*.

government's authority (Henry Neville's *The Isle of Pines* [1668]); and a fictional enactment of colonial fantasies or a critique of colonial expansionism (Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* [1719], Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* [1726]).

In addition to its various functions, the imaginary travel narrative freely alternates between different modes of representation. While the great formal diversity that exists within the broad spectrum of imaginary voyages further enables writers to use the imaginary journey in service of their projects, it explains why literary critics experience difficulties in defining this genre (or as I argue, subgenre of the eighteenth-century British travel narrative), a difficulty that Paul Longley Arthur attests to in his monograph on imaginary travel narratives to the Antipodes (12-15). Using his preliminary chapter to summarize past literary criticism on this genre, Arthur traces previous efforts to classify the imaginary voyage into several subdivisions, which he claims the critics chose as an alternative to devising "a widely applicable definition ... in the hope that this would provide a key to formulating a better general understanding of the genre" (15).⁵⁹ Such past endeavors have led some critics to employ terms like "impossible" and "possible" to help categorize the imaginary travel narrative (Arthur 13). Yet, as Arthur rightly points out, such terms are too vague and not as easily distinguishable as we think, which we will quickly discover in our examination of the scientifically grounded yet at the same time fantastic devices in the *Consolidator* (13). Given the imaginary voyage's close resemblance to actual travel narratives, two different kinds of which I have examined in my first two chapters, it makes more sense to formally classify them according to

⁵⁹ Unlike other critics who classify the imaginary voyage into subdivisions as various as "romanesque, marvelous, fantastic, satiric, philosophical, allegorical, realistic, and extraordinary," Phillip Gove resists doing so in an attempt to provide a comprehensive list of eighteenth-century imaginary travel narratives (177). He instead tenders a broad definition of the imaginary voyage by including it within an even larger category of fiction, which he terms "geographical fiction" (178).

whether they faithfully imitate, parody, or abandon altogether the strategies that real voyage accounts employ to argue for the veracity of their narratives. As indicated by the eponymous flying machine that successfully transports the narrator to the moon, Defoe does not consistently nor seriously seek to make the reader believe in the actuality of his narrator's travels in his lunar text. In other words, unlike the large category of imaginary voyages that strives to create and maintain an illusion of authenticity, of which the first two installments of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* trilogy (1719) are representative examples, the *Consolidator* belongs to the other large category that does not.⁶⁰

Despite the apparent formal differences between the *Consolidator* and Defoe's better-known imaginary travel narratives *Robinson Crusoe* and *Farther Adventures*, I argue that we can trace a connection in both the content and form of these works. China demonstrates to be a key figure in illuminating such connections, for it is the only geographical location that appears in Defoe's formally distinct imaginary voyages, which he also happens to describe in considerable detail. In the case of the *Consolidator*, Defoe devotes the first 26 pages (61 pages in its original 1705 publication) to relating his unnamed narrator's journey to China, after which he travels to the moon. Defoe similarly assigns a significant portion of *Farther Adventures* to portraying the Chinese Empire. In addition to allocating 14 pages (22 pages in its original 1719 publication) to depicting Crusoe and his partner's meandering sea journey through China's various shores, which they must undertake in order to evade the vindictive Dutch merchants that erroneously

⁶⁰ After the great commercial success of *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Defoe proceeded to publish *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and *Serious Reflections During the Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, With His Vision of the Angelick World* (1720) in quick succession. While *Farther Adventures* relates the continued adventures of the protagonist, *Serious Reflections* comprises of a series of essays that addresses a wide variety of topics such as solitude, honesty, immoral behavior, and religion and an imaginary voyage to space that is reminiscent of the *Consolidator*. For articles or chapters that discuss the three works in conjunction, see Markley 177-209 and Turley 176-93.

believe them to be the instigators of a mutiny on a Dutch trading vessel, he devotes another 17 pages (27 pages in its original 1719 publication) to narrating their trek across mainland China and Tartary. China's prominence in *Farther Adventures* becomes even more apparent when Defoe includes a protoethnographic account of the country and its inhabitants, something he admits he has not done with any of the other places Crusoe traverses throughout the course of his eleven-year journey: "As this is the only Excursion of this kind, which I have made in all the Accounts I have given of my Travels, so I shall make no more Descriptions of Countrys and People" (*FA* 174). If it is fairly evident that Defoe continues the practice of using the imaginary world of China to reflect on the shortcomings of actual England in *Farther Adventures*, it is my argument that we can also trace the drastic change in the form of his imaginary travel narratives to his discussion of literary techne in the *Consolidator*. As I will later demonstrate, Defoe employs the fantastic devices, the majority of which his narrator encounters in the Chinese section of the text, as direct analogies for his literary techne. I assert it is through these analogies that Defoe first expresses his concern regarding the extensive use of the imagination to shed light on the various problems afflicting actual English society, resulting in his later adherence to the standards of empiricism in the first two volumes of his *Robinson Crusoe* trilogy. It is by examining such connections between Defoe's formally distinct imaginary voyages that I seek to redress the limited attention the *Consolidator* has received from literary critics and demonstrate its valuable contribution to Defoe's canon.

The *Consolidator* as Imaginary Travel

Defoe's unnamed narrator in the *Consolidator* marks an interesting divergence from the travelers I examine in the previous two chapters. In addition to being an explorer, a type of traveler that was quite rare in eighteenth-century China due to the empire's strict foreign policy, he does not keep a detailed record of his journey to China (and his next destination, the moon).⁶¹ He thereby firmly distinguishes himself from the members of the Macartney Embassy as well as the Jesuit missionaries, whose accounts John Barrow methodically examines in his conjectural travel narrative to China. Of course, this is not entirely of his own volition, for Defoe's narrator is initially prevented from taking any notes at Tonquin Library, where he acquires the majority of his information about the Chinese Empire and its inhabitants: "They admit of no Strangers to write any thing down, but what the Memory can retain, you are welcome to carry away with you" (4). Yet he seems to continue such a practice throughout the remainder of the text, since there is no mention of him taking notes afterwards, even when he is no longer under such a restriction while traveling the lunar world. We can therefore safely presume that the narrator relies solely on his memory when writing his travel narrative, which we will shortly see has important ramifications for the *Consolidator's* mode of representation.

The narrator's reliance on memory gains great significance when we consider Thomas Hobbes' discussion of memory and its relation to imagination in *Leviathan or*

⁶¹ With the exception of Jesuit missionaries and foreign embassy members, who were granted permission by the Chinese emperor, most travelers experienced difficulties in gaining access to the interior of China, which persisted until the end of the Opium Wars (1840-42, 1856-60). The "racial disguise" that Robert Fortune, a British horticulturist employed by the Royal Horticultural Society, had to don in order to search for new ornamental species in China attests to the obstacles explorers faced (Chang 56). For a more detailed discussion of Fortune and his travel narratives *Three Years Wandering in the Northern Provinces of China* (1847), *Journey to the Tea Countries* (1851), *A Residence among the Chinese* (1857), see Chang 55-67 and Voskuil 5-18.

The Matter, Forme and Power of a Common Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil (1651).⁶²

Seeing all human thoughts as deriving from sense experiences, Hobbes defines imagination as “decaying sense” in that it is a dim recollection of past sensations (88): “For after the object is removed, or the eye shut, we still retain an image of the thing seen, though more obscure than when we see it. And this is it, that Latines call Imagination” (88). He similarly defines memory as “fading” sense, for the passage of time has a similar effect on the mind, causing the images of things seen in the past to become “obscure” as “other objects more present” press on the senses (88).⁶³ In this regard, Hobbes perceives imagination and memory to be “but one thing” (89). Given the memory and imagination’s shared distance from the realm of the senses, it seems there are no limits to what the human mind can fantastically posit, especially when a significant amount of time has passed from the viewing or sensing. As Hobbes continues to argue, the images of objects sensed in the past are prone to become even more

⁶² Written during the English Civil War, the *Leviathan* is a political treatise that argues for absolute sovereignty. Claiming that human beings are innately selfish and therefore constantly struggling with each other for power, Hobbes posits the state of nature as being “a warre, as is of every man, against every man” (185). He continues to postulate how the “solitary, poore, nasty, brutish and short” lives of individuals eventually lead them to enter into a social contract, in which they surrender their rights to a figure of absolute authority (the sovereign) in exchange for peace and security (186). In order to make such claims, Hobbes devotes the preliminary chapters of his work to discussing the mechanism of the human mind and its effects on people’s behavior, which C. B. Macpherson identifies as laying the background for Hobbes’ controversial argument (28-30). For a general introduction to the work, see Macpherson 9-63.

⁶³ Many other works that were published between Hobbes’ *Leviathan* and Defoe’s *Consolidator* also discuss the mental faculty of memory. In his explanatory endnotes, Seidel homes in on Defoe’s representation of the memory as a “Warehouse” of past experiences and sees this as an allusion to John Locke’s *An Essay Concerning the Human Understanding* (1689), where he describes the memory in similar terms (Defoe 7-8, Seidel et al. 173): “Memory, which is the store-house of our ideas” (Locke Book 2 Chapter 10, quoted in Seidel et al. 173). Yet I assert that we can see a stronger connection between Defoe’s conception of memory and that of Hobbes. In addition to his description of memory’s inner workings, which I will shortly discuss, Defoe’s characterization of the recollections the memory stores recalls Hobbes in that he draws attention to man’s innate selfishness by describing the memory’s warehouse as primarily belonging to the Devil and his guards “*Pride and Conceit*” (8). Even the memories that are artfully constructed in “Memory’s Garden” are those of “Envy, Slander, Revenge, Strife and Malice, with the Additions of Ill-turns, Reproaches, and all manner of Wrong,” again demonstrating Defoe’s affiliation with Hobbes and his basic definition of human nature (8). Yet they greatly differ in the political implications they draw from such a definition. Whereas Hobbes proceeds to argue for absolute sovereignty, Defoe highlights how the monarch is also subject to the aforesaid failing, causing him to call for the establishment of a commonwealth.

indistinct due to the “great distance of time” (89): “The longer the time, after the Sight, or Sense of any object, the weaker is the [image of the thing seen]” (88). In addition to the passage of time, Hobbes suggests that the mind’s ability to compound images further contributes to the distortion of past sense experiences. By imaginatively combining images of material things one has seen at different times, the mind at times conceives an object that one has not seen or cannot empirically see, much like the example of the centaur, which is generated “from the sight of a man at one time, and of a horse at another” (Hobbes 89). In other words, it does not adhere to actual reality despite it being grounded in the senses and therefore constituting a still-visualizable image. This explains why Hobbes calls the products of “compound imagination,” which specifically relies on memory to provide the various “decayed” or “faded” images it uses as its basic materials, a “Fiction of the mind” (88, 89).

This coincides with Defoe’s understanding of the mind, particularly the memory, the retentive and *inventive* qualities of which he highlights with the aid of Mira-cho-cho-lasmo’s anatomical model of the human mind in the *Consolidator*. One of the more strange inventions that the narrator encounters in China and later learns as having originated from the moon, the model grants him unprecedented access to the human mind, including the part of the brain that stores and recalls previous sense experiences (or as Defoe aptly puts it, “Nature’s strong Box, the Memory, with all its Locks and Keys” [7]). Having gained the keys, he unlocks “Nature’s strong Box” to reveal not only the content of individual memories, which are categorized “Classically, Annually, Numerically, and Alphabetically,” but also the inner workings of memory itself (7). After carefully examining the human brain’s various repositories and the different kinds

of remembrances they store, Defoe broadly classifies the memory's function as being both retentive and inventive. Although he may not be as theoretically sophisticated as Hobbes in explaining how the memory comes to acquire the latter capacity, Defoe uses horticultural imagery to draw attention to the mind's imaginative construction of memories. By describing how "things [in Memory's Garden] are not only Deposited, but Planted, Transplanted, Grafted, Inoculated, and obtain all possible Propagation and Encrease," Defoe stresses how memories are "carefully *Cultivated with all imaginable Art*" (8, my emphasis). He therefore reaches a conclusion similar to that of Hobbes in that he pinpoints to the "multitudes of ... Story, Fiction, and Lying" that are produced from the mind's artful construction of memories (8).

If Defoe emphasizes the memory's inventive quality with Mira-cho-cho-lasmo's anatomical model, he has his narrator perform an act that is remarkably similar to that of Hobbes' "compound imagination" in the *Consolidator*. By using his mind's ability to imaginatively combine images he has seen in the past, Defoe's narrator overlays actual places (England and China) with other fully imagined ones (the moon and the China portrayed in the text) that are not unlike the supernatural centaur in Hobbes' *Leviathan*.⁶⁴ It is therefore no coincidence that we can identify passages in Defoe's imaginary representations of China and the moon that are reminiscent of actual England (and China) such as China's political constitution, the moon's political history, and the strange

⁶⁴ In his monograph on "travel liars," Percy G. Adams investigates examples of actual travelers manipulating their memories to produce a fantastic account of their journeys. In the instance of David Ingram, an English sailor who accompanied Sir John Hawkins in his third expedition to Mexico (1567-68), Adams examines how Ingram claimed to have seen "marvelous sights" such as "'cities' at short distances from each other all across the continent, of gold and silver and pearl" during his trek from Rio Panuco to Acadia, which Adams attributes to not only "hearsay about the reputed riches of the Spanish in New Spain," but more importantly "the fantasies of an imagination working on a malleable memory" (*Travel Liars* 134). For a more detailed discussion of Ingram and his "fantastic memories," see Adams' *Travel Liars* 132-35, 140-41.

discoveries and inventions his narrator witnesses in both imaginary or virtual locations. Such semblance of the actual, which is admittedly very weak given the *Consolidator*'s deviation from the standards of empiricism, works to serve Defoe's political project of highlighting the failings of the actual English government. While I will later discuss this as retaining great significance for the imaginary voyage's relation to the other subgenres of the travel narrative, I would like to first point out how Defoe creates virtual destinations that greatly differ from actual reality by imaginatively compounding the attributes of actual places. Like Hobbes' centaur, China and the moon take on supernatural qualities in the *Consolidator*. The moon with its various instruments that convey the supernatural power to penetrate people's minds and reveal their hidden intentions to its user is evidently fantastic. And so is China, where the narrator encounters analogous devices. Although Defoe starts out with real inventions such as gunpowder, the printing press, the magnet, and the compass, he quickly shifts into the fantastic with his descriptions of machines that instantaneously duplicate one's letters, immediately transcribe one's speech, read other people's thoughts, transport people to space, and so on. He attributes the existence of such marvelous instruments to China's close association with the lunar world, which he makes explicit by having the empire's vice admiral Mira-cho-cho-lasmo originate from the moon: "He was no Native of this World, but was Born in the *Moon*, and coming hither to make Discoveries, by a strange Invention arrived to by the *Virtuoso*es of that habitable World, the Emperor of *China* prevailed with him to stay and improve his Subjects, in the most exquisite Accomplishments of those *Lunar Regions*" (7). It is such incredible devices that

motivate the narrator to travel to the lunar world, which was not initially included in his itinerary.

Similar to the way Defoe uses actual places to create virtual locations that greatly deviate from actual reality, he draws from recent scientific advances to devise the fantastic discoveries and inventions his narrator encounters in China and the moon. For instance, “the Glasses of Hogs Eyes that can see the Winds,” with which the narrator states the Chinese are able to “give strange Accounts both of its regular and irregular Motions, its Compositions and Quantities” and consequently “cast up its Duration, Violence, and Extent” resemble the actual experiments that the Royal Society of London was conducting at this time, an astute observation Ilse Vickers makes in her discussion of the text (Defoe 6, Vickers 70).⁶⁵ Although it is unclear why the glasses should be specifically built with hogs’ eyes, a question that Geoffrey Sill tentatively answers by referring to the Fellows’ use of animals’ eyes when investigating the passage of light through ocular lenses, the glasses can be seen as alluding to both the telescope that boasted great powers of observation and a scheme that Robert Hooke devised to observe and predict weather fluctuations (Sill 217, Vickers 70, 108-09). Another good example would be the eponymous device, which the narrator first discovers in China and later uses to make his extraterrestrial flight to the moon:

But above all his Inventions for making this Voyage, I saw none more pleasant or profitable, than a certain Engine formed in the shape of a Chariot, on the Backs of two vast Bodies with extended Wings, which spread about 50 Yards in Breadth, compos’d of Feathers so nicely put together, that no Air could pass; and as the

⁶⁵ Another good example would be the ancient Chinese tracts that divulge “whence [the Wind] comes, and whither it goes,” “how the exact Pace is kept between the Moon and the Tides, with a most elaborate Discourse there, of the Power of Sympathy, and the manner how the heavenly Bodies Influence the Earthly,” and “how Sensation is convey’d to and from the Brain; why Respiration preserves Life; and how Locomotion is directed to, as well as perform’d by the Parts” (6). As Vickers rightly points out, anyone with even a cursory knowledge of the Royal Society’s activities would recognize this as a list of experiments or inquiries that its Fellows were carrying out in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (70).

Bodies were made of *Lunar Earth* which would bear the Fire, the Cavities were fill'd with an Ambient Flame, which fed on a certain Spirit deposited in a proper quantity, to last out the Voyage; and this Fire so order'd as to move about such Springs and Wheels as kept the Wings in a most exact and regular Motion, always ascendant. (15)

The narrator's depiction of the Consolidator as an artificially-winged chariot that runs on some sort of magical spirit obviously indicates its fantastic nature.⁶⁶ However, as Seidel and Sill suggest, Defoe also seems to be drawing from Francis Bacon's *Novum Organum Scientiarum* (1620) when he designates the "Ambient Flame" as the source of the propelling force or energy that sets the flying machine in motion (Seidel et al. 187, Sill 223). In doing so, Defoe again demonstrates how he imaginatively combines recent scientific developments with actual contraptions like the chariot to create the incredible devices his narrator discovers in China and the moon.

While the text's scientific details, especially those in the Chinese section have led critics like Aaron Parrett to argue for the *Consolidator*'s "scientific verisimilitude," I assert that the text remains very much an impossible sort of imaginary voyage (74).⁶⁷ In this regard, the *Consolidator* resembles Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, which is both a parody of an actual journey and an impossible imaginary journey. If Swift, as Michael

⁶⁶ In her examination of the *Consolidator*, Marjorie Hope Nicolson professes her temptation to read the "certain Spirit" that fuels the engine as anticipating the modern use of gasoline (185-86). Yet she quickly admits that this is an anachronistic reading of the flying device that puts the text well ahead of its time, an analysis with which I agree (186). While it would be somewhat of a stretch to view Defoe as a visionary figure in the field of mechanical engineering, I argue that there are elements in his description that draw on actual scientific discoveries of that period.

⁶⁷ In the section that relates the narrator's flight to the moon, there is a striking passage where Defoe attributes the uneven movement of the Consolidator to the following cause: "This may happen from an Alteration of Centers, and Gravity having past a certain Line, the Equipoise changes its Tendency, the Magnetick Quality being beyond it, it inclines of Course, and pursues a Center, which it finds in the *Lunar World*, and lands us safe upon the Surface" (24). As Parrett points out, this is obviously an allusion to Isaac Newton's gravitational theory, which was greatly popularized after the publication of his *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (1687) (76-77). Although Parrett wonders "why in the post-*Principia* world [Defoe] still insists on the reference to magnetism," he sees Defoe's reference to the moon's and earth's centers and the effect they have on the gravitational force between the bodies as deriving from Newton's widely-disseminated discoveries (77). It is such instances that lead Parrett to argue for the *Consolidator*'s "scientific verisimilitude" (74).

McKeon notes, “adorn[s] [his text] with all the claims to historicity and all the authenticating devices of ... travel narrative[s]” in order to satirize actual travel narratives, he also engages in a fully fantastic mode of travel in *Gulliver’s Travels* (*Origins* 351). This is especially made apparent in the third book, where Gulliver journeys to Laputa and witnesses various marvels such as the floating island, the magicians in Glubbudbrib who can raise spirits from the dead, and the immortal Struldbrugs. The strange schemes or instruments that Gulliver observes at the Grand Academy of Lagado are similarly marvelous, but they are noteworthy in that they are reminiscent of the fantastic machines we see in the *Consolidator*.⁶⁸ Although Swift questions their practicality, they also have remarkable capacities such as “extracting sunbeams out of cucumbers, which [are] to be put in phials hermetically sealed, and let out to warm the air in raw inclement summers,” “reduc[ing] human excrement to its original food, by separating the several parts, removing the tincture which it receives from the gall, making the odour exhale, and scumming off the saliva,” “calcin[ing] ice into gunpowder,” and “curing [colic] by ... convey[ing] [a large pair of bellows, with a long slender muzzle of ivory] eight inches up the anus, and drawing in the wind” (151, 152, 153). While I will later discuss how Defoe and Swift diverge in their use of such devices so as to serve their different projects, I would like to first call attention to how the fully fantastic sort of imaginary voyage also prevails in the *Consolidator*. It may not be as predominant as in *Gulliver’s Travels*, but nonetheless characterizes Defoe’s lunar narrative.

⁶⁸ For a list of critical works that examine Swift’s indebtedness to Defoe in *Gulliver’s Travels*, see Gove 206-07.

China as Political Dystopia: England's Other Alter Ego

The fantastic nature of the imaginary destinations in the *Consolidator* makes them particularly apt vehicles to reflect on England. They mostly function as blank spaces, onto which Defoe transposes actual aspects of English society, thereby demonstrating the imaginary voyage's connection to the other subgenres of the travel narrative. Although the imaginary voyage's portrayal of a virtual world that greatly diverges from actual reality seems to conflict with the truth-telling concerns that I argue are common to all subgenres of the travel narrative, the elements of actual England that help configure the virtual worlds of China and the moon in the *Consolidator* are crucial to its aim of satirizing England's various shortcomings.

Defoe's use of virtual locations to indirectly represent actual England as an object of derision or contempt, a procedure that is characteristic of imaginary voyages, is fairly evident in the case of the lunar world. Similar to the way Swift employs the dispute between the low-heeled Slamecksans and the high-heeled Tramecksans, the war between Lilliput and Blefuscu, and the strife between the Big-Endians and the Little-Endians as satirical allegories for the dispute between different political factions in England, the war between England and France, and the prolonged conflict between Catholics and Protestants in *Gulliver's Travels*, Defoe uses the lunarians to tender an "allegorick Relation" of the events that transpired during James II's administration (51). Whereas Swift is less discriminating in his satire, expanding his target of derision to include all European societies and their various follies, Defoe specifically homes in on the hypocrisy in English state and church politics, which he highlights by pinpointing the High Anglicans' duplicitous use of the doctrines of divine right and passive obedience. As he

relates in great detail in the lunar segment of the narrative, the Solunarians (High Churchmen) first pretended to passively obey the king of “Abrogratzian Faith” (the Catholic James II) so that they could persecute the Crolians (Dissenters), whom they severely rebuked for being “*Rebels, Murtherers, [and] King-killers*” during the English Civil War and the Monmouth Rebellion (54, 52). However things did not go as the Solunarians intended, for the Abrogratzian king, mistakenly believing their “pretence [to] this *Passive Obedience Principle*” to be sincere, began to oppress all lunarians by encroaching upon “their *Laws, their Liberties, their Corporations, their Churches, their Colleges*” (54, 62). Needless to say, the Solunarians quickly dropped their pretense and were “the first [to call] in Forreign Power, and [take] up Arms against their Prince,” causing him to bewail their hypocrisy (69): “*Horrid Hypocrisy! Surprizing Treachery! Is this the absolute Subjection which in such numerous Testimonials or Addresses you profest, and for which you so often and so constantly branded the poor Crolians, and told me that your Church was wholly made up of Principles of Loyalty and Obedience*” (66-67). Despite having successfully deposed their king, the Solunarians found themselves in another quandary, for they could not easily “reconcile the contraries of *taking up Arms*, and [vowing] *Non-Resistance*” (70). This was obviously problematic for the Solunarians, since they had previously distinguished themselves from the Crolians by charging the latter with “the *damnable Sin of Resistance*” (70). It is here that Defoe again reveals the Solunarians’ hypocritical behavior by recounting how they resumed their “old Doctrine of absolute Submission” and continued their persecution of the Crolians, which he sees persisting in the reigns of William III and Anne (70).⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Prior to the *Consolidator*’s publication, the High Anglicans attempted to pass the bill against Occasional Conformity by again using dishonest means, namely the tacking of the bill to a land-tax measure. Although

As I will demonstrate in this section, Defoe reveals the Chinese officials to similarly engage in such hypocritical behavior, again illustrating his use of virtual destinations to indirectly criticize the shortcomings of actual England. However, China's shared function as the virtual repository of England's failings is not made as explicit as in the lunar portion of the narrative. In contrast to the segment on the moon, where Defoe portrays the lunar populace, especially the Solunarians, as "Terrible People," he has his narrator highly praise China and its inhabitants (49). For example, the narrator not only describes the Chinese as "an Ancient, Wise, Polite and most Ingenious People," but also delivers a glowing review of their civilization, including their political constitution (2). Yet Defoe is clearly being ironic here in that he intends the reverse of what he has his narrator state here. Although, as Fredric V. Bogel observes, "ambiguity" and "interpretive uncertainty" always accompany irony, Defoe's use of irony in the Chinese section is one of those cases where "the probability of one meaning is significantly greater than that of the other" primarily due to the obvious factual errors that Narelle L. Shaw meticulously tracks throughout this segment (Bogel 67, Shaw 391-99). For instance, after arguing for the superiority of ancient Chinese arts over modern European inventions, the narrator announces his intention to prepare a "Scheme of all those excellent Arts [the Chinese] are Masters of, for publick View" which he declares "may serve as a *Lexicon Technicum* for this present Age" (2). According to Shaw, Defoe's readers would have seen the "manifest absurdities in such a project," especially since the English already had a *Lexicon Technicum* of their own, which was recently published in 1704 by John Harris, a well-respected member of the Royal Society who later went on to

the bill was defeated, it raised great outrage and protest in the Dissenters including Defoe, who proceeded to satirize it at great length in his lunar narrative. For a more detailed discussion of this "consolidated" bill and its significance in the *Consolidator*, see Furbank and Owens 42-44.

become the Society's vice-president (393). Shaw also adds that the readers would have easily recognized the suspect nature of the sources that the narrator employs to substantiate his assertions about ancient Chinese wisdom (393). While the ridiculousness of the royal historian's name ("*Ibra chizra-le-pegizar*" [2]) and the implausible manner in which the historical records are preserved at Tonquin Library ("Printed in Leaves of Vitrify'd Diamond" [3]) would have been clear indications of the bogusness of the narrator's claims, it was also a wide-known fact that the Chinese suffered from a severe deficiency in their annals, which resulted from Shih Huang-ti, an emperor of the Ch'in dynasty, having burned the majority of the empire's books in 213 B.C. (Shaw 393, Van Kley 377). In other words, the narrator's insistence that there are historical records attesting to the superiority of ancient Chinese learning does not correspond to the well-established fact regarding Chinese annals, an obvious inaccuracy that Shaw maintains the audience would have recognized and therefore taken as clearly indicating the narrator's lack of credibility (393).⁷⁰

Unlike Shaw who mainly discusses the passages where the narrator praises China's advanced learning in order to examine Defoe's participation in the great eighteenth-century quarrel between the ancients and the moderns, I would like to instead focus on the passage on China's political constitution so as to examine its role in Defoe's

⁷⁰ The narrator makes fewer errors as the narrative progresses, for he receives instruction from Defoe's lunar alter ego. Although the narrator is not entirely cured of his fallibility, as indicated by his insistence on the legitimacy of the War of the Spanish Succession, his observations about the moon are for the most part reliable. Even in the few occasions he commits an error, the lunar philosopher takes care to immediately correct it, as he does with his letter explaining the faulty logic by which the "Man of the great Lip" (Leopold I, the Emperor of the Austrian Habsburg dynasty) asserts his right to bequeath the throne of Ebronia (Spain) to his second son (113). Defoe argues that if it is within the monarch's power to "gift" a kingdom to someone other than his eldest son, the Gallunarians (the French) actually have a better claim to the throne, for the grandson of the Gallunarian king (Louis XIV) received it from the recently deceased Ebronian monarch (Charles II of Spain) himself (121-22). However Defoe proclaims this is a moot point, for he believes that the monarch does not possess such a right. He instead urges that the Ebronians should have a "Meeting of the People" either "Collectively" or "Representatively" to select whom they want as their ruler, thereby demonstrating his progressive political views (124).

political satire of England (391). Shaw's suggested method of checking for obvious factual inaccuracies in the text is useful here in that it helps us begin to ascertain Defoe's true intentions when he has his narrator extol China's polity. Basing his positive assessment solely on the annals he reads at the Tonquin Library rather than on his empirical observations, another indication that something is amiss here, Defoe's narrator writes the following in relation to the Chinese government:

The first Class I came to of Books, was the Constitutions of the Empire.... It was present Death for the Library-keeper to refuse the meanest *Chinese* Subject to come in and read them; for 'tis their Maxim, *That all People ought to know the Laws by which they are to be govern'd*; and as above all People, we find no Fools in this Country, so the Emperors, though they seem to be Arbitrary, enjoy the greatest Authority in the World, by always observing, with the greatest Exactness, the *Pacta Conventa* of their Government: From these Principles it is impossible we should ever hear, either of the Tyranny of Princes, or Rebellion of Subjects, in all their Histories.

At the Entrance into this Class, you find some Ancient Comments, upon the Constitution of the Empire.... But above all, One I took particular notice of, which might bear this Title, *Natural Right prov'd Superior to Temporal Power*; wherein the old Author proves, the *Chinese* Emperors were Originally made so, by Nature's directing the People, to place the Power of Government in the most worthy Person they could find; and the Author giving a most exact History of 2000 Emperors, brings them into about 35 or 36 Periods of Lines when the Race ended; and when a Collective Assembly of the Nobles, Cities, and People, Nominated a new Family to the Government.

This being an heretical Book as to *European* Politicks, and our Learned Authors having long since exploded this Doctrine, and prov'd that Kings and Emperors came down from Heaven with Crowns on their Heads, and all their Subjects were born with Saddles on their Backs; I thought fit to leave it where I found it, least our excellent Tracts of Sir *Robert Filmer*, Dr. *Hammond* L...y, S....l, and Others, who have so learnedly treated of the more useful Doctrine of Passive Obedience, Divine Right, &c. should be blasphem'd by the Mob, grow into Contempt of the People. (5)

If Defoe's praise of the "excellent" English tracts that promote the doctrines of divine right and passive obedience is a good indication of his irony here, the factual mistakes his fallible narrator makes clearly illustrate the ironic nature of Defoe's representation of the Chinese government (and its subjects) in his imaginary voyage. Contrary to what the

narrator states, there have been numerous instances in actual Chinese history where the emperors have violated the fundamental principle of Chinese governance, which is to act as a benevolent paternal figure of authority. And although such cases are less common, there also have been several occasions where the Chinese people were provoked to rebellion by their emperor's excessively tyrannical rule.⁷¹ The narrator's claim that the Chinese people exercise their natural right by collectively appointing the leaders of the new ruling dynasty is another obvious factual inaccuracy. As the actual historical records detailing their last imperial succession demonstrate, the Tartar leaders who successfully invaded and conquered China were the ones that eventually possessed the reign of the empire regardless of whether the general Chinese populace deemed them worthy of being their new rulers.

If Defoe is less forthright in his negative assessment of the Chinese government by having his unreliable narrator commend it, he is more straightforward in his other writings, where he explicitly states what he slyly suggests in the *Consolidator*. For example, in *Serious Reflections*, Defoe describes the Chinese government as an "absolute Tyranny, which, by the Way, is the easiest Way of ruling in the world where the people are dispos'd to obey as blindly as the *Mandarin* commands or governs imperiously" (*SR* 140).⁷² In addition to denouncing the mandarins (and presumably the emperor) for the despotic power they exert over their subjects, he condemns the Chinese people for their

⁷¹ In *Nouveaux mémoires* (1696, translated into English in 1697), an account that was one of the most read and quoted Jesuit sources by the British in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Louis le Comte writes about the revolutions that have taken place in Chinese history: "Such is the temper of the Chinese, that when their Emperor is full of Violence and Passion, or very negligent of his Charge, the same Spirit of Perverseness possesses also his Subjects.... The People ... oppressed and trampled under foot, and by Consequence miserable, are easily stirred up to Sedition.... Such beginnings as these have occasional fatal Consequences, and have oftentimes put China under the command of new Masters" (256-57).

⁷² For other negative references to the Chinese Empire in Defoe's works, see Chen's "Daniel Defoe, China's Severe Critic" 215-48.

excessive submissiveness, which he asserts contributes to the absolute tyranny one witnesses in China. We can attribute such a difference in Defoe's method of critique to his use of the essay in *Serious Reflections* and of the imaginary voyage in the *Consolidator*, the latter of which calls for a less direct satirical procedure. Such generic dictates of the imaginary voyage can also help us explain Defoe's different method of addressing the alleged unreliability of Chinese historical records, a topic that also figures prominently in my chapter on conjectural travel. Unlike Barrow who directly challenges the claims that ancient Chinese annals make by discrediting the records on empirical grounds, Defoe indicates more subtly and derisively their lack of credibility through the royal historian's ridiculous name and the implausible manner of their preservation, thereby illustrating how the same topic is used differently depending on the nature of the travel (Shaw 393).⁷³

Contrary to what the historical records at Tonquin Library assert (and what Defoe's narrator gullibly believes), the Chinese polity is clearly not an idealized form of government, to which England should aspire. While we can see Defoe's ironic representation of China's political constitution as a dig at both the actual Chinese government and England's uncritical adulation of China, which David Porter notes persisted in the first half of the eighteenth century, this does not seem to be his primary

⁷³ Although Barrow is rigorous in his critical examination of ancient Chinese annals, Francis Wilson notes that many travel writers did not observe such a practice when writing about the Chinese Empire. Like Defoe's narrator who "proceeds to swallow [the historical records at Tonquin Library] whole without chewing," Wilson traces how actual travel writers demonstrated "critical lapses," which often resulted in their narratives being "swamped in a torrent of exaggerated, religiously explosive, and obviously unverified detail" (200, 204, 201). While Defoe mocks the image of China as "the repository of all earthly wisdom," Wilson claims "Defoe's true contempt is reserved for those travel writers (and the gullible consumers of their products) who have confused data transcription for empirical observation, and romantic fiction for cultural representation" (195). Wilson argues that Defoe crudely parodies the defects of actual travelogues rather than directly calling attention to them, again confirming my point about Defoe's indirect satirical method of criticism in his imaginary voyage (195).

goal (*Ideographia* 7). As indicated by his use of terms like “divine right” and “passive obedience” as well as his citation of English theorists of absolutism like Filmer, Defoe seems instead more concerned with employing the virtual society of China to highlight and reflect on the problems that plague the actual English government. In doing so, Defoe illustrates how he fully embraces the utility of imaginative virtuality to tell the “truth” about the English government, more specifically that of the High Anglican party, a characteristic of the fantastic imaginary voyage that will become more apparent in the next section. Similar to the way he employs the Solunarians and their duplicitous use of the aforesaid terms to demonstrate the hypocrisy of the High Anglicans, Defoe uses the Chinese and the inconsistencies in their behavior to highlight the inconsistent actions that the High Anglicans had to overlook (“the contraries of *taking up Arms*, and [vowing] *Non-Resistance*” [70]) in order to continue their persecution of the Dissenters. If we return to the passage on China’s political constitution, we can see that it is likewise fraught with contradictions. That the keeper at Tonquin Library would face a punishment as severe as death for simply denying access to the books on China’s polity conflicts with what the officials purport to do by granting even “the meanest Chinese subject” the freedom to know the laws by which he is governed, an act that is in itself paradoxical given the subject’s inability to question, let alone defy those laws (5). In other words, the Chinese officials similarly engage in inconsistent behavior that they can only justify with the aid of “the wonderful Art of *Wilful Forgetfulness*,” an art that Defoe introduces when examining Mira-cho-cho-lasmo’s anatomical model of the human mind (8). An “Art above the Devil” that requires one to “remember to forget, and at the same time forget to remember,” it is presumably what enables the Chinese emperor and the mandarins to

renege on “the Pacta Conventa of their Government” and exert despotic power over their subjects (9, 5).

Such deceitful conduct on the part of the Chinese officials explains the existence of the mind-reading machine, which the Chinese people continue using in the hope of preserving “humane Society against all sorts of Frauds, Cheats, [and] Sharping” (4). It is also no coincidence that Defoe presents in the Chinese segment the incredible device that aids one’s memory by allowing one to simultaneously “write his Letters with one Hand, and Copy them with the other” and instantaneously “have [one’s Speech] down in Writing before ‘tis spoken”: “a most Noble Invention, being an Engine I would recommend to all People to whom *‘tis necessary to have a good Memory*; and which I design, if possible, to obtain a Draft of, that it may be Erected in our Royal Societies Laboratory” (3-4).⁷⁴ Although the narrator continues to enumerate the men of different professions (merchants, lawyers, and preachers), for whom this machine would be particularly useful, he neglects to add politicians to this list, not a particularly surprising omission when we consider previous demonstrations of the narrator’s fallibility (or Defoe’s satiric intentions). As with the mind-reading device, the memory-enhancing machine most likely exists in the virtual world of China to help prevent the emperor and the mandarins from inducing selective amnesia whenever it suits their interests.

In this regard, the Chinese Empire also functions as the virtual repository of the English government’s failings, an interpretation that coincides with George A. Starr’s

⁷⁴ Like the marvelous machines I discuss in the previous section, this device is drawn from recent scientific developments. Using the actual schemes that John Wilkins, a founding member of the Royal Society, proposed to improve methods of communication (“cryptography and rapid correspondence via sight and sound devices”) as his basic materials, Defoe again imaginatively constructs a device that boasts supernatural powers, which are in this case the instantaneous duplication of one’s letters and the immediate transcription of one’s thoughts (Seidel et al. 165).

general reading of China in Defoe's works: "[Defoe] is less interested in China for its own sake than in using it as a stalking horse for his critiques of the East India Company and British trade policy, 'divine right' autocracy, idolatry and deism, and so on" (436).⁷⁵ Although Starr's interpretation extends beyond my examination of China's government, for he proceeds to discuss its religion and trade policy, he concurs that Defoe primarily uses China as "a monitory example of [the] various principles and practices [in England] he deplores" (436). The Chinese Empire therefore performs a role similar to that of the moon in that it embodies the problems Defoe sees afflicting the actual English government. Yet there exists a crucial difference between the two virtual locations. Unlike the moon that functions as a negative parallel world of England, China maintains a sense of distinction from England despite their shared characteristics.⁷⁶ Due to Defoe's use of actual places to create the virtual destinations in the *Consolidator*, there remain traces of actual China that cannot be easily attributed to England. Perhaps this explains why Defoe primarily employs irony rather than allegory to represent China in this section of the text. As Bogel continues to argue in his examination of irony's "intrinsic structure

⁷⁵ Eugenia Zuroski Jenkins makes a similar argument when she declares, "modern English selfhood first takes shape through strategies of identifying with rather than against certain forms of 'China'" (1). Her means of reaching such a conclusion is, however, markedly different in that she specifically focuses on literary representations of "things Chinese" such as chinoiserie (2). By examining how literature "put[s] the English self in a mutually defining relationship with things Chinese," she traces the significant role chinoiserie and other material objects associated with China play in forming the concepts of selfhood and taste in eighteenth-century England (3).

⁷⁶ The motif of analogous worlds is well established within the tradition of lunar narratives. A motif that we can trace back at least to the second century (Lucian's *Icaromenippus*), it was revived in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a result of Galileo's telescopic observations, especially those he made about the moon's geography and its resemblance to that of earth (Marchitello 161-62, 164): "Anyone will then understand with the certainty of the senses that the Moon is by no means endowed with a smooth and polished surface, but is rough and uneven, just as the face of the Earth itself, crowded everywhere with vast prominences, deep chasms, and convolutions" (*Sidereus Nuncius*, quoted in Marchitello 164). Whereas Galileo points to the similarities between earth and the moon, Defoe goes further to stress the equivalence between the two worlds, a conclusion his narrator reaches with the aid of the lunar philosopher's "extraordinary Glasses" (28): "[We] perfectly satisfied ourselves with Demonstration, That these Worlds were Sisters, both in Form, Function, and all their Capacities; in short, *a pair of Moons, and a pair of Worlds, equally Magnetical, Sympathetical, and Influential*" (29, my emphasis).

of doubleness,” the “shadow of the second meaning ... can never be obliterated entirely” even in the cases where “the probability of one meaning is significantly greater than that of the other” (67-68). While Defoe certainly does not intend to give greater weight to “the second meaning” (the narrator’s characterization of China as a utopian society that stands in stark contrast to England), he seems to use irony’s mechanism to signal the potential dissimilarities between China and England, which we will later see become more pronounced in Crusoe’s imaginary voyage to China in *Farther Adventures*.

Technological and Narrative Inventions

As hinted in the previous section, Defoe’s incredible devices play an integral role in helping the narrator (and the reader) better comprehend the problems that plague the actual English government. In addition to the mind-reading machine and the anatomical model of the human mind the narrator encounters in the Chinese Empire, the various glasses he discovers in the lunar world allow him to penetrate the Chinese mandarins’ and the Solunarians’ minds and learn their hidden motivations. For instance, he is able to clearly see “State Polity, in its Meanders, Shifts, Turns, Tricks, and Contraries” with the aid of the “strange sort of Glass that did not so much bring to the Eye, as ... carried out the Eye to the Object” (31). But rather than seeing this improvement in the narrator’s (and the reader’s) understanding as simply deriving from the devices’ supernatural powers, I would like to examine in greater depth *how* these machines grant their users such enhanced insight. I explore this question by discussing the “strange” devices in relation to Defoe’s formal parody of actual travel narratives, more specifically their use of the “strange, therefore true” trope.

In parodying the truth claims of actual voyage accounts, Defoe does not use the more common strategies such as presenting the traveler's biographical information or interspersing the narrative with the geographical coordinates of his journey.⁷⁷ He instead employs the "strange, therefore true" trope, a trope that McKeon notes writers of travel narratives utilizing to clear a space for the potential accuracy of their accounts (*Origins* 111). By insisting "what seems strange to one age may be revealed as true to its inheritors," they urge readers not to automatically dismiss their reports of what they have witnessed in foreign lands solely due to their strangeness (McKeon, *Origins* 71). Similar to the way Columbus's assertions concerning the existence of land across the Atlantic Ocean were initially regarded with great incredulity and then proved to be true through his later discovery of the Americas, they assert that future expeditions will demonstrate the veracity of their claims (McKeon "Virtual Travel"). Appearing no less than 57 times in the text, the adjective "strange" is the one that Defoe's narrator also uses most frequently to describe his journey, including the incredible discoveries and inventions he comes across in China. However, as I have already mentioned, what initially appear to be absurd and outlandish devices turn out to greatly resemble the actual experiments that the members of the Royal Society were conducting at this time, which would have been obvious to Defoe's readers through the extensive publications that were issued by the Society itself or made available by other contemporary writers (Vickers 70). A good example illustrating the plausibility of these strange contraptions in China would be the

⁷⁷ To this list of common strategies that writers of imaginary travel narratives use to argue for the truthfulness of their accounts, Arthur adds the following: the editor's detailed preface, in which he explains how he came to acquire the traveler's manuscript; the inclusion of the traveler's letters or personal journal; and the incorporation of maps (8-9). Although Defoe does not make use of such devices in the *Consolidator*, we see him doing so in his later imaginary voyages *Robinson Crusoe* and *Farther Adventures*.

“wonderful Tellescopes” that allow the user to “as plainly see what a Clock it is by one of the Dials in the *Moon*, as if it were no farther off than *Windsor-Castle*” (14). This is obviously a reference to the telescope that boasted great powers of observation, which Defoe amplifies to allow sight of not only “the Lands and Seas in the *Moon*,” but also smaller objects in the lunar world (14). In other words, we might see these devices as a spatial version of the “strange, therefore true” trope, in which the “strange” Chinese contraptions are discovered to be “true,” not through future expeditions, but rather through the reader’s spatial knowledge of England, where similar machines and schemes are known to already exist.

Yet there is a parodic element to Defoe’s employment of this trope, for he at times embellishes the experimental scientists’ actual discoveries and inventions to the point that they border on the absurd. We have already witnessed an example of Defoe’s parodic use of the “strange, therefore true” trope in the way he comically combines the Royal Society’s experiments with animals’ eyes, the telescope, and Hooke’s weather scheme to form the outlandish hog glasses (Sill 217, Vickers 70). And we can see a more obvious instance in the “Speaking-trumpet” that is designed to “convey Sound” from China to the moon, a technological invention that the narrator claims Mira-cho-cho-lasmo was unfortunately not able to complete constructing before his death (14). In her discussion of the *Consolidator*, Vickers points out how this sounds remarkably similar to an actual device the seventeenth-century diarist John Evelyn discovered at the residence of John Wilkins, who was a prominent member of the Society (35, 70-71). Among the various curious contraptions Evelyn observes and meticulously notes in his diary, he writes about “a hollow statue which gave a Voice, & uttered words, by a long & concealed pipe which

went to its mouth, while one spake thro it, at a good distance” (quoted in Vickers 35).

While Defoe’s “Speaking-trumpet” accords with the statue’s basic mechanism of transmitting sound across long distances, it is evidently an absurd version of Wilkins’s machine in that it purports to convey sound from China to the moon, a great distance that surpasses 200,000 miles (or 350,000 kilometers).

In parodying these devices, Defoe reminds us of Swift’s parody of the Royal Society and their experimental instruments in the third part of *Gulliver’s Travels*. As numerous readers, both contemporary and modern, have commented, Swift employs the Grand Academy of Lagado and the fantastic schemes that Gulliver witnesses there to satirize the Society’s experiments, which Swift deemed impractical and therefore of no value to society.⁷⁸ Some critics have similarly interpreted the Chinese material in the *Consolidator* as a satire on the Royal Society. However, they not only acknowledge that “Defoe’s satire on modern experimental and speculative science is neither as pointed nor as venomous as his ... satirical allegory of English political history,” but also experience difficulties explaining exactly “what prompts his anti-scientific spleen” (Seidel et al. 172).⁷⁹ Their bewilderment over this matter is understandable when we consider Defoe’s enthusiastic support of modern experimental science, which Vickers illustrates by examining the various ways his writings propagate Bacon’s methods and ideas (15-17).

⁷⁸ For a more nuanced discussion of Swift’s satire on the Royal Society, see Patey 809-39.

⁷⁹ Sill challenges the view that Defoe satirizes the new science in the *Consolidator*. He instead explains Defoe’s parody of the Royal Society’s experiments by arguing that “[his] satire is rather directed at those philosophers and scientists who attempt to ‘solve the Difficulties of Supernatural Systems’ by reducing the notion of the Deity to ‘a mighty vast Something, who has no Form but what represents him to them as one Great Eye’” (10). While Sill recognizes this to be a “rather severe reflection on the limits of science,” he insists that Defoe balances such an evaluation with “the fact that whatever insights the narrator gains on the Moon are obtained through observation, usually through glasses of some sort or by inventions ... that serve as metaphors for valuable intellectual processes” (11). This leads Sill to reach the following conclusion, one that coincides with Vickers’ argument about Defoe’s general attitude towards modern experimental science: “Defoe’s implication appears to be that, while science cannot replace revelation, mankind’s vision in the temporal world needs to be assisted by devices of his own inventions” (11).

Her in-depth discussion of the rarely examined *General History of Discoveries and Improvements* (1725-27) is particularly enlightening, for it is in this work we can clearly witness Defoe's advocacy of the new philosophy:

What was the World before? Where were the Men that arriv'd to Characters, to Fame, and to Distinction, ... by the Knowledge of natural or experimental Philosophy? Where was ... the *Veralums* [Bacon], the *Boyls*, or *Newtons* of those Ages? Nature being not enquir'd into, discover'd none of her Secrets to them, they neither knew, [n]or sought to know, what now in the Fountain of all human Knowledge, and the great Mistery for the Wisest Men to search into, I mean *Nature*.⁸⁰ (*GH* 238-39, quoted in Vickers 75)

Here, Defoe speaks of the new science and its experimental philosophy in glowing terms by drawing attention to the vast amount of knowledge mankind has recently acquired about the natural world, an accomplishment he sees firmly setting the early modern period apart from previous ones (Vickers 74-75). Although *General History* is admittedly a work that was published significantly later than the *Consolidator*, Vickers maintains that we can trace a similar outlook throughout the entirety of his writing career (73).

Defoe therefore distinguishes himself from Swift by not only defending the Royal Society, but also embracing the "strange, therefore true" trope. If we return to the passage above, we can see that Defoe's advocacy of the Society's experiments is closely related to the trope in that the Fellows explore the mysteries of nature so as to verify claims that were previously considered farfetched or downright absurd. When we take into account Defoe's acclaim for modern experimental science and its acceptance of the

⁸⁰ A serial work that Defoe wrote in the form of monthly publications, *A General History of Discoveries and Improvements, in useful Arts, particularly in the great Branches of Commerce, Navigation, and Plantation, in all Parts of the known World* (1725-26) tenders a condensed history detailing the "discoveries and improvements" mankind has made from after the Great Flood to the present age, with a special emphasis on the recent advances in experimental science. For a detailed examination of this work, see Vickers 73-80.

strange, which McKeon confirms by asserting that “to seek the strange and expect the unexpected ... had become a tenet of scientific method,” it makes more sense to interpret his parody of the Royal Society’s instruments as a mild parody of the “strange, therefore true” trope (“Virtual Travel”). It is my argument that Defoe does this in order to further blur the boundaries between the real and the unreal, or as McKeon aptly puts it, “to expand drastically the spatio-temporal continuum of experience” (“Virtual Travel”). In other words, Defoe works to expand the imagination so as not to be restrained by material reality. Such expansion proves to have important ramifications for his political project, for it is what allows him to give material form to “strange things, which pass in our World for Non-Entities” (31). It is with the aid of his imagination that Defoe configures intangible and therefore abstruse concepts into something more concrete and easily comprehensible such as the following objects: the anatomical model of the human mind, which takes the shape of a “*Glass Beehive*” so that one can easily see the mind’s inner workings, particularly those of the memory; and the arrangement of “State Polity” and “its Meanders, Shifts, Turns, Tricks, and Contraries” in a “Globular Form” so that it can “discover the all the Lines of Wickedness to the Eye at one view” (7, 31). He thereby succeeds in granting his reader enhanced insight into the problems afflicting the English polity, particularly the hypocrisy of the High Anglicans who “could act this way to Day, and that way to Morrow, without any regard to Truth, or the Rule of Honour, Equity or Conscience” in order to promote their self-interests (117). By empowering the imagination so as not to be restrained by actual reality, Defoe demonstrates his extensive use of imaginative virtuality, which firmly distinguishes his imaginary voyage from not only the actual voyage accounts I examined in the previous two chapters, but also the

different sort of virtual travel narrative I will discuss in the next. Yet, as I have mentioned earlier, Defoe's fantastic imaginary voyage nonetheless bears a generic family resemblance to the other subgenres of the travel narrative in that it attempts to convey a faithful representation of actual England by having elements of actual England configure the virtual worlds of China and the moon. In other words, the *Consolidator* partakes in the truth-telling concerns that I assert are common to the travel narrative and its various subgenres of this period. Of course, the question of whether the impossible sort of imaginary voyage is an effective method of faithfully delivering the "truth" to its readers needs to be further examined, one that Defoe himself explores by using the strange technological inventions his narrator encounters in China and the moon.

In addition to helping his readership attain a more accurate and insightful understanding of English society and its shortcomings, the strange discoveries and inventions perform the crucial function of serving as direct analogies for Defoe's literary techne in the *Consolidator*. Here, Defoe seems to take a cue from Francis Godwin's *Man in the Moone* (1638), to which he alludes by mentioning "the artificial Wings of the Learned *Spaniard*" (14). This is clearly a reference to Godwin's protagonist Domingo Gonsales who travels to China and the moon with the aid of a flying machine made of mechanical pulleys that evenly distribute the user's weight and magical wild swans ("gansas" [248]) that migrate yearly to the moon during the fall. If Godwin provides Defoe with the idea to incorporate a China that is closely associated with the moon, he also inspires Defoe to posit a connection between his technological and narrative inventions.⁸¹ Like the technological "invention" that Gonsales creates by deliberately

⁸¹ In her examination of Godwin's *Man in the Moone*, Mary Baine Campbell points to the following similarities between China and the moon: an imperial bureaucracy that is comprised of meritorious officials

combining the magical gansas with the mechanical pulley, Godwin's narrative is "an essay of fancy, where invention is showed with judgment" (249, 239). In the *Consolidator*, Defoe similarly links his technological and narrative inventions by having the technological device of the Elevator mimic what he himself does in terms of form in his lunar narrative. One of the strange contraptions that Defoe's narrator first discovers on the moon and later claims also exists on earth (presumably China), the Elevator is an engine that fuels one's imagination so that one's "Senses are raised to all the strange Extrems [one] can imagine" (46). If this sounds uncannily similar to what we have seen Defoe doing with his parody of the "strange, therefore true" trope, a ride on the Elevator also produces similar results. The user not only gains the ability to "converse with [disembody'd Species such as] *Visions, Guardian-Angels, Spirits departed*," but also acquires imaginative access to a virtual world that greatly differs from actual reality (46): "By [the fermentation of the imagination], a Man fancies himself *in the Moon*, and realizes things there as distinctly, as if he was actually talking to *my Old Phylosopher*" (47). Here, Defoe fuses the two kinds of invention by having the technological device produce the imaginative techne.

Yet, as Defoe's language of heat and inflammation suggests, there are certain dangers that arise from the influence the engine (or his imaginary voyage) has on one's "*Fancy*, or Imagination, which by the heat of strong Ideas, is fermented to a strange heighth" (47). Whenever the machine injects "*Hundred Thousand* rational

implementing the emperor's rule; and a language that is not only akin to music, but is also uniform throughout all the lunar regions, thereby facilitating communication ("Impossible Voyages" 5-6). Here, I would like to add the Lunars' receptiveness towards Christianity as manifested by their falling down upon their knees and holding their hands high when they hear the word "Jesus" from Gonsales's mouth (264, 267). It is striking how Godwin's portrayal of the moon greatly resembles the Jesuit missionary accounts of China, making me wonder if he had consulted Jesuit sources while composing his lunar narrative, which is not unlikely given the great popularity they enjoyed in seventeenth-century Europe.

Consequences” into the user’s head, it also inserts “*Five times the number* of Conjectures, Supposes, and Probabilities, besides an innumerable Company of fluttering Suggestions, ... which hover round the Imagination, and are all taken in as fast as they can be Concocted and Digested there” (47). According to Defoe, this has a harmful effect on “weaker Heads,” for whom he declares it is “no uncommon thing ... to be intirely deceived by himself, not knowing *the brat of his own Begetting*, nor be able to distinguish between Reality and Representation” (47). It is from such a circumstance that he claims we can witness the following consequences:

We have some People talking to Images of their own forming, ... seeing more Devils and Spectres than ever appear’d, ... seeing imperfect Visions, as of Horses and Men without Heads or Arms, *Light* without *Fire*, [and] hearing *Voices* without *Sound*, and Noises without *Shapes*, as their own Fears or Fancies broke the *Phaenomena* before the intire Formation. (47)

While it is doubtful that reading the *Consolidator* causes the more susceptible members of his audience to mistake fictional representations for actual reality, Defoe seems justified in worrying about the imagination becoming overstimulated. As his vivid description of readers seeing “imperfect Visions” and hearing “Noises without *Shapes*” demonstrates, it ultimately results in their failure to make “the more Genuine and perfect Use of these vast Elevations of the Fancy,” namely the enhanced insight to the various failings of actual England that we previously saw Defoe attempting to generate with the virtual worlds of China and the moon as well as the strange technological inventions his narrator discovers there (47). When we take into account the significant role the moderately aroused imagination plays in illuminating the problems afflicting the actual English polity, Defoe is right to express concern over his literary techne potentially

backfiring and giving rise to an overly inflamed fancy that has no other benefits than the creation of fantasy that evidently and crudely diverges from the actual.

Coda: Defoe's Farther Adventures in China

Perhaps the dangers of the overly inflamed fancy that Defoe identifies with his analogy to the Elevator can help us explain the drastic shift in form he makes from the *Consolidator* to the first two installments of the *Robinson Crusoe* trilogy. Here, the Cogitator can also be of use in answering this query, for Defoe presents this technological device as a means of correcting or counteracting the detrimental effects the Elevator can have on the imagination. A "Chair of Reflection" that requires its user to screw himself to the device, the Cogitator "effectually ... shut[s] out all *Injecting, Disturbing Thoughts*" by the following mechanism (40):

Here are *certain Screws* that draw *direct Lines* from every *Angle of the Engine to the Brain of the Man*, and at the same time, other direct Lines to his Eyes; at the other end of which Lines, there are Glasses which convey or reflect the Objects the Person is desirous to *think upon*. Then the main Wheels are turn'd, which wind up according to their several Offices; *this* the Memory, *that* the Understanding; a *third* the Will, a *fourth* the thinking Faculty; and these being put all into regular Motions, pointed by direct Lines to their proper Objects, and perfectly uninterrupted by the Intervention of Whimsy, Chimera, and a Thousand fluttering *Dæmons* that Gender in the Fancy, but are effectually Lockt out as before, assist one another to receive right Notions, and form just Ideas of the things they are directed to. (40-41)

In contrast to the Elevator that elevates the "Senses ... to all the strange Extrems [one] can imagine," the Cogitator enforces the boundaries of the real by having its user focus solely on the sense objects that lie in his view (46). The "direct Lines" that the machine draws from those objects to the user's eyes and brain ensure that his mind is constrained to collecting sensory information, which he then interprets with the aid of his mental

faculties such as his memory, understanding, and will (41). Contrary to the liberties we previously saw the memory taking with past sense experiences, the Cogitator seems to prevent such imaginative flights with its “direct Lines” so that the user can “receive right Notions and form just Ideas” of the sense objects without being derailed by “the Intervention of Whimsy, Chimera, and a Thousand fluttering *Dæmons* that Gender in the Fancy” (41). In this sense, the Cogitator anticipates Defoe’s strict adherence to the standards of empiricism we later see in *Robinson Crusoe* and *Farther Adventures*.

Defoe’s empirical epistemology is manifested in the near absence of supernatural phenomena in *Robinson Crusoe* and *Farther Adventures*. What initially appear to be fantastic occurrences are given a rational explanation, demonstrating how Defoe learns to ballast his later imaginary travel narratives more securely with the plausibility of the actual. For instance, the footprint that Crusoe at first imagines to be the work of the “Devil” is later deduced to have originated from those who occasionally come to the shore of Crusoe’s island (*RC* 135). The “miraculously”-grown grain of corn is also explained in a similar manner when Crusoe realizes he “had [shaken] a Bag of Chickens Meat in that Place” earlier during his stay on the island (*RC* 67, 68). Even when a supernatural phenomenon is present in the form of divine Providence, Defoe acknowledges that telling the difference between a calling from God and an imaginative reconfiguration of one’s self-interested desires is not an easy task (McKeon, *Origins* 331-33). Here, I am specifically referring to the fulfillment of Crusoe’s dream where he delivers a savage from the cannibals, which uncannily takes place eighteenth months after he has the dream. Despite his earlier recognition that it is not his calling or duty to kill the cannibals, he claims to have been “call’d plainly by Providence to save this poor

Creature's Life" (*RC* 171). Although Crusoe continues to have qualms about his divine calling, he plans and executes a violent attack on the cannibals, after which Crusoe names the rescued savage Friday and has him address Crusoe as "Master" (*RC* 174). While McKeon employs this incident, specifically Crusoe's repeated casuistry stimulated by his doubts regarding the origins of his desire to save Friday from the cannibals, to draw attention to how Crusoe learns to invest his material existence on the island with spiritual meaning, I would like to use it to emphasize more Defoe's adherence to the standards of empiricism (*Origins* 329-33).⁸²

Defoe's empirical epistemology is what primarily contributes to the illusion of authenticity (or to use McKeon's term, "the naïve empiricist claim to historicity" [*Origins* 82]) that he so zealously strives to create and sustain in his later imaginary voyages: "The Editor believes the [Story] to be a just History of Fact; neither is there any Appearance of Fiction in it" (*RC* 4). Of course, it remains a highly contested issue whether his readers believed in the actuality of Crusoe's travels, the most notable evidence being Charles Gildon's hostile response. In a pamphlet mockingly entitled *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Mr. D_____ De F___* (1719), Gildon has Defoe engage in a conversation with Crusoe and Friday, during which Defoe not only confesses to having written a fictional (and immoral) work, but is also severely punished for his lies by being forced to consume the volumes of his novel. Regardless of such criticism, Defoe insists on falsely claiming the factual authenticity of his imaginary travel narrative. This insistence on Defoe's part most likely derives from his belief in the "rhetorical

⁸² Although I stress here Defoe's empirical epistemology in *Robinson Crusoe* in order to highlight the text's formal difference from the *Consolidator*, *Robinson Crusoe* in effect vacillates between secular and religious modes of being. For differing views on the (seemingly) contradictory impulses that reside in Defoe's narrative, see I. Watt 60-92, Hunter's *Reluctant Pilgrim* 1-22, and McKeon's *Origins* 314-37.

efficacy [of the standard of historical truth],” which gains greater significance when we take into consideration the fears he previously expressed with regard to his literary techne in the *Consolidator* (McKeon, *Origins* 120). It is only when he is equipped with the potency of historical truth that he can, with the aid of his imaginary voyages, instruct his readers on a number of subjects without encountering any of the dangers associated with an overstimulated imagination.

Despite such formal differences in the *Consolidator* and *Farther Adventures*, Defoe similarly portrays China as a dystopia that he sets in contradistinction to the utopian society formed on the imaginary island, the virtuality of which is indeterminable due to Defoe’s use of empirical epistemology.⁸³ Maximillian E. Novak tenders a similar reading of the imaginary island in that he stresses how the “Common-Wealth” formed on the island is, in Defoe’s eyes, an “ideal” form of government that is “a more or less democratic state with most of the power in the hands of the able and diligent” (Defoe *FA* 112, Novak 338). I, however, would like to add to Novak’s interpretation by drawing attention to its religious aspects, which I argue contributes to its utopian qualities. In addition to being a “Common-Wealth,” the imaginary island is comprised of devout Christians such as the pious Spaniards and the religiously converted English mutineers, of whom Will Atkins is a representative figure (*FA* 112). China, on the other hand, is an absolutist state filled with idolatrous heathens. Such a negative representation of China is made evident in Defoe’s protoethnographic account of the empire, where he describes the

⁸³ Robert Markley tenders a contrasting reading of the imaginary island. He describes it in almost dystopian terms when he characterizes it as a “[failed] model of colonialism” (184). While the island may be, as Markley aptly puts it, “an out-of-the-way and unprofitable backwater,” I argue that it is a utopian society when considered within political and religious contexts (183). As for the problems of “political and religious conflicts and external threats” that Markley rightly observes the island as succumbing to after Defoe’s departure, they are characteristic of utopian narratives in that they highlight the difficulties entailed in maintaining an utopian world and its nearly-impossible ideals (184).

Chinese not only as “Pagans, [who are] little better than Savages,” but also as “a contemptible Hoord or Crowd or ignorant sordid Slaves; subjected to a [tyrannical] Government qualified only to rule such a People” (*FA* 173, 174).

We therefore can see Defoe undertaking similar projects in the *Consolidator* and *Farther Adventures*, but with the crucial distinction that he focuses more on China’s religious doctrines than its political ones in the latter work. That he is more interested in castigating China’s idolatrous practices than its absolutist government is made evident by the vicious way Crusoe attacks some villagers, whom he describes as worshipping an idol “frightful as the Devil” (*FA* 192).⁸⁴ Considering the great anger and disgust Crusoe previously expressed at his crewmembers’ massacre of the savages in Madagascar, this is a striking incident that indicates where Defoe’s interests in relation to China lie in this imaginary voyage. Of course, this is not to suggest that Defoe accuses the English of engaging in idolatry or insincerely practicing the Christian faith as he indicts the English government for exercising absolute authority in the *Consolidator*. His condemnation of China’s paganism pertains more to the declining status of Christianity in the world and

⁸⁴ Although Defoe identifies the pagan villagers as being Tartars, he does not seem to distinguish them from the Chinese, especially in their religious practices. Like the villagers’ diabolical idol that “[has] a Head certainly not so much as resembling any Creature that the World ever saw; Ears as big as Goats, Horns, and as high; Eyes as big as a Crown-Piece, a Nose like a crooked Ram’s Horn, and a Mouth extended four Corner’d like that of a Lion, with horrible Teeth, hooked like a Parrot’s under Bill” and is “about eight Foot high, yet [with] no Feet or Legs, or any other Proportion of Parts,” the Chinese idol that Crusoe witnesses in Nanking is also misshapen and monstrous (*FA* 192): “It had a thing instead of a Head, but no Head; it had a Mouth distorted out of all Manner of Shape, and not to be described for a Mouth, being only an unshapen Chasm, neither representing the Mouth of a Man, Beast, Fowl, or Fish: The Thing was neither any of the four, but an incongruous Monster: It had Feet, Hands, Fingers, Claws, Legs, Arms, Wings, Ears, Horns, every Thing mixt one among another, neither in the Shape or Place that Nature appointed, but blended together and fix’d to a Bulk, not a Body; form’d of no just Parts, but a shapeless Trunk or Log, whether of Wood or Stone, I know not” (*SR* 139-40). It is interesting to note that Defoe imaginatively combines features of actual objects and animals here as he does with the outlandish hog glasses in the *Consolidator*. Yet such an imaginative reconfiguration takes on more ominous implications in *Farther Adventures*, resulting in an idol that is “frightful as the Devil” (*FA* 192). I wonder if this has to do with the different mode of representation in Defoe’s later imaginary voyages, which do not permit such divergences from the standards of empiricism.

the lack of appropriate measures the English have taken to address what he evidently sees to be an urgent matter (and discusses as such in *Serious Reflections*).⁸⁵ This explains why Defoe devotes a good portion of the island narrative to the lengthy conversations Crusoe has with the Catholic priest, during which they both express concern over the “unaccountable Neglect” the English mutineers have displayed by not teaching their savage wives “any thing of the Christian Religion” (*FA* 89). If the pacific way, by which Will Atkins teaches his wife the absurdity and falseness of her “Idolatry and worshipping [of] they knew not who,” highlights the utopian characteristics of their island society, the excessive violence Crusoe uses to punish the idolatrous villagers, a method that Defoe claims is “inconsistent with the Nature of Religion itself,” contributes to China’s dystopian qualities (*FA* 89, *SR* 210).

In addition to Defoe’s different emphases on China’s politics and religion in the *Consolidator* and *Farther Adventures*, which speak to the flexibility of significance that geographical locations take on in imaginary voyages, we can witness another crucial difference in the two imaginary travel narratives, namely the severity of Defoe’s reflection on England. While Defoe continues to employ China in attaining a clearer view of England’s various failings, he also directs his satirical gaze at China in *Farther*

⁸⁵ Defoe devotes two chapters in *Serious Reflections* to examining “the Present State of Religion in the World” and “the Proportion Between the Christian and Pagan World.” In the former, he has Crusoe lament over the fact that he has “never set [his] Foot in a Christian Country” during his travels, leading him to the “melancholy Reflection [on] how all these Parts of the World” are “abandon’d to the grossest Ignorance and Depravity” (*SR* 133). In the latter, Defoe resumes his discussion of the declining status of Christianity by again pointing out the great disproportion between pagans and Christians (*SR* 201-02). As for the matter of converting the pagans to the Christian faith, Defoe finds himself discouraged by the following difficulties: the sectarian divisions within Christianity itself; and the violence that often accompanies efforts to “subdue the barbarous and idolatrous Nations of the World in Order to suppress the Worshipping of the Devil, who is the Enemy ... of God, and of all true Religion in the World” (*SR* 210). Defoe distinguishes between “forcing Religion upon People ... and opening the Door for Religion to come among them” by describing the former as “a Violence ... inconsistent with the Nature of Religion itself, whose Energy prevails and forces its Way into the Minds of Men, by another Sort of Power” (*SR* 210). He therefore proposes “a War not with Men, but with the Devil; a War to depose *Sathan*’s infernal Tyranny in the World, and set open the Doors to Religion, that it may enter if Men will receive it” (*SR* 210).

Adventures. As I suggest above, it is not only Crusoe's violent response that makes the Chinese Empire a dystopian society. Its dystopian characteristics also have to do with the falseness and absurdity of its religious practices, which are in effect what invite the excessively violent retribution from the English. In other words, there is a less severe reflection on England in *Farther Adventures* than in the *Consolidator*, which can be explained by relating it to the formal dissimilarities I previously discussed. In line with Defoe's attempts to make the reader believe in the actuality of Crusoe's journey including the places he traverses, China no longer solely functions as a relatively blank space, onto which Defoe freely transposes elements of actual England, or in other words, the virtual repository of actual England's failings, the virtuality of which is however indeterminable owing to his empirical epistemology. It also functions as an actual destination that exists in its own right, one that Defoe viciously attacks for its idolatrous beliefs (and absolutist government) in his imaginary voyage.⁸⁶ By highlighting and denouncing its dissimilarities from England, Defoe anticipates China's later role as the Other figure, against which England increasingly established its national identity in the latter half of the eighteenth century, a tendency that will become more apparent in my subsequent analysis of Thomas Percy's *Hau Kiou Choaan, or The Pleasing History* (1761).

⁸⁶ For an explanation as to why Defoe is so vehement in his criticism of China, see Markley 177-209.

Chapter Four

Aesthetic Travel to China: The Pleasures and Dangers of the Imagination in Percy's *Hau Kiou Chooan*

In the mid-eighteenth century, there was a proliferation of Chinese tales on the English literary market. While the majority of these tales were of English origins, written in the “Chinese” manner to accommodate the public’s growing demand for Chinese goods, a number of them were authentically Chinese in the sense they were actual Chinese works that were not substantially revised to meet the various needs of European writers and readers.⁸⁷ Thomas Percy’s *Hau Kiou Chooan, or The Pleasing History* (1761) is a representative text of the latter category in that as a translation it remained *relatively* faithful to the original Chinese novel in the hands of its editor.⁸⁸ A renowned literary work in China, *Hau Kiou Chooan* was first translated by James Wilkinson, an East India Company employee residing in Canton, in 1719 as an exercise in studying the

⁸⁷ The oriental tale remains an indeterminate genre due to the multiple forms it assumed in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England, which Ros Ballaster examines in great depth in her monograph on the oriental tale. While Ballaster acknowledges that such formal flexibility makes it difficult to firmly distinguish Chinese tales from their Turkish, Persian, and Indian counterparts, she identifies two features (among others) that are characteristic of Chinese tales (10-12): 1) a moralizing framework, which is inspired by the cultural figure of Confucius; and/or 2) fantastic elements, which correspond to the fanciful imagery of chinoiserie in the decorative arts (243-45, 235). See Ballaster 193-253 for a detailed examination of tales written in the “Chinese” style.

⁸⁸ Here I stress the term *relatively*, for Percy takes some liberties with the text, which I will discuss at great length in the following section. Yet Percy remains more faithful to the work than other English writers who adapted literary works of Chinese origins for their political and/or social ends. Here, I am specifically referring to Arthur Murphy’s *Orphan of China* (1759), which is an English adaptation of the thirteenth-century Chinese play *Zhaoshi Guer*. As Chi-ming Yang argues, Murphy makes substantial revisions to the play by offsetting the Confucian virtues embodied by the honorable mandarin Zamti and his family with a theatrical display of Chinese luxury (148). Yang claims that Murphy, by juxtaposing the “figure of the virtuous Confucian family” with “the play’s exotic costumes [and] set designs,” stresses China’s ambivalence as both “a model for British sensibility” and “a chastised source of luxury and unhealthy consumerism,” which he utilizes to envision a new form of moral virtue that is compatible with the newly commercialized economy (30, 182). For a detailed discussion of Murphy’s *Orphan of China*, see Yang 148-83.

Chinese language. Having received the manuscript from Wilkinson's relations in the 1750s, Percy proceeded to complete the translation and more importantly, carefully edit the text before its publication.⁸⁹ In an attempt to preserve "the peculiarities of its style and manner" so that the English reader could study an example of Chinese literature and obtain information about Chinese culture, Percy refrained from making drastic alterations to the main text, limiting them to refining Wilkinson's English translation and further enhancing the artful qualities of the Chinese novel (1: xx). He instead devoted most of his attention to adding footnotes, the extensiveness of which he justified by the cultural dissimilarities between England and China: "The manners and customs of the Chinese, their peculiar ways of thinking, and modes of expression are so remote from our own, that they frequently require a large detail to render them intelligible" (1: xxiv-xxv). A good portion of the footnotes is indeed explanatory, providing background information pertinent to the narrative by citing travel narratives.⁹⁰ But the footnotes are also the site of Percy's digressive commentaries, in which he critically examines Jesuit sources and generalizes about Chinese cultural characteristics. Despite his great reliance on Jesuit sources for the information they provide on the Chinese Empire, Percy does not deem them entirely reliable, especially their overly favorable representations of Chinese culture. In addition to pointing out what he sees to be the limitations of Jesuit sources, he tenders an alternative account of the Chinese Empire based on his own reading of the

⁸⁹ When Percy received the manuscript from Wilkinson's relatives, only the first three volumes were in English with the fourth in Portuguese, which Percy proceeded to translate into English (see Chen's "Thomas Percy" 301-17 for a more detailed publication history of the Chinese novel). Although Chen does not consider Wilkinson and Percy's collaborative work a "careful translation," he admits it is an "intelligible" work that effectively conveys the substance of the Chinese novel to its English readers ("Thomas Percy" 309).

⁹⁰ For example, when the male protagonist Tieh-chung-u encounters "a young man clad in blue," Percy explains the cultural significance of the latter's uniform with the following footnote (1: 11): "The habit of those who have taken the lowest degree, or *Sieou-tsai* [*Bachelor of Arts* in our universities], is a blue gown, with a black border round it, and a pewter or silver bird on the top of their cap" (1: 11n).

novel and its main characters in the footnotes. It is therefore in the footnotes that we can witness Percy's revision of Jesuit writings on Chinese civilization, making *Hau Kiou Chooan* an important literary work within the context of eighteenth-century British representations of China.

However, it is only within the past decade that *Hau Kiou Chooan* has begun to receive serious critical attention from literary scholars. Following the footsteps of their eighteenth-century predecessors who found both the main text and Percy's exhaustive footnotes too tedious to merit serious notice, modern critics tend to focus instead on Percy's much better-known work *The Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765).⁹¹ The few commentators in the former half of the twentieth century that did review the work see it as a curious literary artifact and are therefore mainly concerned with its complex publication history, the accuracy of its English translation, its deviation from the original Chinese novel, and the alterations Percy as editor made to the text, matters of inquiry that Shouyi Chen further pursues in his chapter on Percy and his Chinese studies.⁹² It is only in James Watt's, Eun Kyung Min's, and David Porter's more recent articles and chapters that the study of *Hau Kiou Chooan* has been extended to see it as a significant literary work participating in eighteenth-century debates about Chinese civilization and thereby laying the groundwork for Percy's nationalistic project of reviving England's cultural heritage in the *Reliques* (Watt 95, Min "Chinese Miscellanies" 319, Porter *Chinese Taste*

⁹¹ For instance, a contemporary reviewer described the plot as a "cold and uninteresting narrative of the amours of Tieh-chung-u ... and Miss Shuey-ping-sin," which he claimed caused him to have "with some difficulty ... dragged through *Hau Kiou Chooan*" (*Critical Review* 12: 373). As for the exhaustive footnotes, Percy's *Reliques* collaborator William Shenstone was apparently greatly disappointed by the Chinese novel's extraneous material, a response Percy's publisher Robert Dodsley shared when he later told Shenstone he would "never own" *Hau Kiou Chooan* (Groom 211).

⁹² For articles that mainly discuss *Hau Kiou Chooan* as a curious literary artifact, see Milner-Barry 52-53; Powell 446-55; Milner-Barry and Powell 216-17; Ogburn 30-36; T. Fan 117-25; and Chen's "Thomas Percy" 301-17.

155). These three critics all focus on Percy's innovative use of the novel as a source of information about China, which enables him to discredit the more celebratory Jesuit missionary accounts and consequently chip away at what he deems to be the façade of ancient Chinese civilization (Watt 97-99, Min "Chinese Miscellanies" 312-14, Porter *Chinese Taste* 157-58). By establishing China as England's cultural foil, either in the form of Chinese slavishness or Chinese artificiality, they claim that Percy's annotations in *Hau Kiou Choaan* form an integral part of his project to elevate the status of English culture, especially its literary achievements (Watt 95, 105-06, Min "Chinese Miscellanies" 314-19, Porter *Chinese Taste* 175, 177-78, 182-83).

I wish to extend this discussion by considering the formative role the idea of the aesthetic, which was being theorized most notably by Joseph Addison in his *Spectator* papers on the "The Pleasures of the Imagination," plays in Percy's two-fold project of critically engaging with Jesuit sources and celebrating England's cultural past (and present). It is my argument that the distance Addison claims the imagination takes from the realm of the senses is essential to producing what Percy alleges to be a more truthful account of the Chinese Empire than the one the Jesuit missionaries provide. In addition to producing a representation of a virtual world that makes apparent its fictional nature and yet at the same time retains a close semblance of the actual, the aesthetic distance produced by the Chinese novel's greatly contrived plot and Percy's interruptive footnotes enables the reader to remain sufficiently detached from the immediate sense experiences of the characters and thereby prevents him from succumbing to an absorptive reading that can potentially collapse the barriers between himself and the characters (McKeon, "Dramatic Aesthetic" 234-35, 240). This in turn allows the English reader to critically

compare himself to the Chinese heroine, whom Percy sees as a representative figure of China and its society. Percy asserts that the missionaries fail to produce a credible representation of Chinese culture precisely because they do not offer the kind of critical comparison that Percy induces in the reader with the aesthetic detachment from the senses. Any imaginative engagement with a literary work, however, has its dangers, for it is difficult to control the reader's aesthetic response due to the imagination's unstable and unpredictable nature. Percy, in particular, experiences difficulties in inducing what he deems the appropriate aesthetic response to the Chinese novel and its characters. His limited success in doing so becomes problematic, since he uses his reading of the female protagonist to generalize about Chinese cultural characteristics, which he then assesses unfavorably in relation to those of the English in order to elevate English nationalism. This explains Percy's turn to critical documentary footnotes, demonstrating a diverse use of his footnotes. In addition to guiding his reader's interpretation of the Chinese characters, Percy's footnotes take on the difficult task of authenticating his contrasting representations of Chinese and English civilizations through a systematic examination of various sources including the novel. However, I argue that Percy is unsuccessful in his endeavors due to the great textual authority the novel enjoys as the only existing manuscript of the work, which prevents him from freely modifying it and thereby substantiating his imaginative construction of Chinese culture.

Hau Kiou Choaan as Aesthetic Travel

Hau Kiou Choaan is the intertwining story of the two protagonists, Tieh-chung-u and Shuey-ping-sin, who repeatedly run into each other as Tieh-chung-u travels through

China (see figure 1 below).⁹³ The novel begins with Tieh-chung-u leaving his birthplace Tah-ming and embarking on his journey to Peking to visit his father, who is a mandarin of justice in the Chinese court. On his way to court, he temporarily lodges in the village of Wey-tswun, where he comes across a young scholar whose fiancé has been kidnapped by a corrupt mandarin named Tah-quay. Tieh-chung-u, moved by the scholar's story, decides to take a detour and go to the city of Tong-chin, where Tah-quay resides, so that he can rescue the young lady. This incident is soon resolved, and the characters of this subplot all proceed to Peking, where an imperial trial is held and the corrupt mandarin is consequently punished for abusing his power. After receiving recognition from both the emperor and his parents for helping bring the corrupt mandarin to justice, Tieh-chung-u resolves to visit "the four parts of the world," which Percy explains as signifying the Chinese Empire, before returning to Tah-ming (1: 6). It is during his travels that he encounters the female protagonist Shuey-ping-sin, whose story closely resembles that of the young lady in the subplot, in the city of Tsee-nan. As the daughter of a disgraced mandarin, Shuey-ping-sin finds herself vulnerable to the devious plans of her uncle who wishes to seize her father's possessions by marrying her to Kwo-khé-tzu, the son of another influential and corrupt mandarin named Kwo-sho-su. Although she previously has been able to escape from their snares by using her intelligence and ingenuity, she is no match against sheer physical force. It is when she is about to be physically forced into

⁹³ The frontispiece to each volume represents a crucial scene from the novel, which Percy indicates with specific page numbers beneath the illustrations. The frontispiece to the first volume depicts Shuey-ping-sin's kidnapping, the second portrays Tieh-chung-u's departure from Shuey-ping-sin's home after recovering his health and the continuation of his journey (figure 1), the third represents the tribunal of the Grand Visitor (a representative of the sovereign who is sent to each province alongside the viceroy), at which Tieh-chung-u accuses the corrupt mandarins of abusing their power, and the fourth depicts the (fake) marriage ceremony between the two protagonists. Besides the frontispieces, there are no other illustrations in the text. Considering Percy's preference for verbal descriptions over visual presentations, which I will shortly discuss, it is not surprising that there are very few illustrations in the Chinese novel.

Kwo-khé-tzu's carriage that Tieh-chung-u intervenes on her behalf. Upon hearing her distressed cries for help, he aids her flee back to the safety of her house. After this initial meeting, Tieh-chung-u finds his fate becoming increasingly entangled with that of the ill-fated Shuey-ping-sin as he randomly comes across characters that play a part in the unfolding of her narrative – for example, her disgraced father, whom Tieh-chung-u helps reinstate without knowing his identity – during his travels in China.⁹⁴



Figure 1. The frontispiece to the second volume

Source: Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers University Libraries

⁹⁴ The remainder of the plot is as follows. The two protagonists later wed without consummating their marriage, as a stopgap measure against the plan of the corrupt mandarins, who wish to avenge the couple by forcing Tieh-chung-u to marry the hideous niece of the Emperor's favorite eunuch and Shuey-ping-sin to marry Tah-quay, the corrupt mandarin from the subplot. However, this stopgap measure backfires and the corrupt mandarins bring them to trial for being in a sham marriage and defying the Emperor's orders. It is during the grand imperial trial in Peking that the Emperor hears their story, rewards the virtuous couple and punishes the corrupt mandarins. The novel concludes with the couple's legitimate marriage and Tieh-chung-u's appointment as the Colao (Prime Minister) in Peking, bringing an end to his travels around China.

In line with the travel motif that dominates the Chinese novel, Percy also encourages his readers to see *Hau Kiou Choaan* as a kind of travel narrative, but one that faithfully delineates Chinese customs and manners through its representation of its main characters. In the preface, he makes the radical argument that *Hau Kiou Choaan* conveys a more “faithful picture” of Chinese culture than collections of travels, universal histories, accounts of the present state of China, narrative forms (or subgenres of the travel narrative) that I have discussed in my first two chapters (1: xv). Although Percy claims the novel’s ability to truthfully portray Chinese society has largely to do with the nationality of its author, he suggests that its fictional mode of representation also plays a crucial role (1: xv). His explanation of why fiction offers a more faithful account of a foreign culture than actual voyage accounts is notable in that it contains metaphors reminiscent of those in Addison’s *Spectator* papers on the “Pleasures of the Imagination,” which theorize the imagination as a faculty of representation. While travel narratives based on eyewitness testimonies are akin to a “portrait” in that they bear “a dead resemblance” to the represented object, fiction is a “lively narrative” that imaginatively describes the object in action (1: xvi-xvii). It is worth noting here that Percy contrasts eyewitness narrative to fictional narrative in terms that resemble Addison’s contrast between the two modes of representation, visual presentation (“Painting” [3: 537]) and verbal description (“Description” [3: 537]). Although the actual travel narrative and the novel are both distanced from physical objects in that they are representations of “objects [that] are not actually before the Eye,” the latter is *more* distanced than the former, since the novel, in the manner of Addison’s verbal description, “runs yet farther from the things it represents than Painting” (3: 559).⁹⁵

⁹⁵ In his discussion of Addison’s “Pleasures of the Imagination,” McKeon stresses how “the literate

According to Addison, it is this greater detachment from sense experiences that enables the writer to give freer rein to his imagination and “get the better of Nature” in his verbal description (3: 560):

The Poet gives us as free a View of it as he pleases, and discovers to us several Parts, that either we did not attend to, or that lay out of our Sight when we first beheld it. As we look on any Object, our Idea of it is, perhaps, made up of two or three simple Ideas; but when the Poet represents it, he may either give us a more complex Idea of it, or only raise in us such Ideas as are most apt to affect the Imagination. (3: 561)

Percy seconds such an opinion when he asserts that the author of *Hau Kiou Choaan* is able to capture “the spirit, the life, the expression” of the Chinese that the writers of actual travel narratives cannot (1: xvi). Unlike the travel writers who are restricted to representing what they observe during their journeys (or as in Barrow’s case, restricted to making speculative conjectures that derive from the empirical observations he makes during his journey), the Chinese author is at liberty to embellish or modify his portrayal as he pleases, a feature that Percy stresses when he describes the novel as not being “founded on real fact” (4: 168).⁹⁶ He sees such freedom producing fictional characters, whose multi-faceted nature allows the writer to convey to the reader a more complex yet

experience is yet more distanced from the sensible object than is the experience of its performance”: “The pleasures of imaginative reading are thus four times removed: sight from the other senses, the imagination from sight, the representational from visual imagination, and description from the other media of representation” (“Dramatic Aesthetic” 237).

⁹⁶ Percy finds the representations of travel writers, especially those of the Jesuit missionaries, too restricted by their sensory experiences and therefore limited, like a man “sitting for his portrait, *stiffened* into a studied composure, with every feature and limb *under constraint*” (1: xvi, my emphases). According to Percy, the stricter attention the Jesuit missionaries pay to their sense impressions of China often produces minor factual discrepancies that he dismisses as being inconsequential to the kind of understanding he wishes his reader to attain of Chinese culture. For example, it does not matter whether the bonzes (Chinese monks) accommodate all travelers or only the mandarins in their pagodas, a disagreement that arises from the Jesuit missionaries having resided in different places at different times in China: “The disagreement observable in the accounts of these Authors, may be owing to the different regulations, which may have been made at different times and places, concerning the Bonzes” (1: 222n). For Percy, it is more important to draw attention to the bonzes’ belief in transmigration, which he distinguishes from the Christian belief in future rewards and punishments and therefore dismisses as superstition. While the Jesuit missionaries do make a similar observation about the bonzes and their belief in transmigration, it does not get emphasized as much due to their flooding their narratives with other, in Percy’s eyes, less significant sense experiences.

discriminating picture of Chinese culture than a straightforward description enumerating their various customs and manners does. This explains Percy's use of the language of animation to describe the Chinese writer's "lively narrative" (1: xvii). By infusing life into his characters so that the reader can see "every passion in play, and every part of [the characters] in motion," the Chinese author is able to tender a more discerning portrayal of their "sphere of life" that ultimately lends to a more accurate and insightful understanding of Chinese society (1: xvi).

Of course, fiction would not be able to achieve such representational power, if it were not the imagination's simultaneous proximity to the realm of the senses. As Michael McKeon rightly points out in his examination of Addison's essays on the "Pleasures of the Imagination," the imagination is still foremost "a faculty that derives its ideas from the senses," distinguishing it from abstract understanding and the extreme distance the latter takes from sense impressions ("Dramatic Aesthetic" 235, 238). By positing the imagination as faculty of representation that "mediates between the senses and understanding," Addison differentiates his view of the imagination from that of Thomas Hobbes, who discusses the imagination only in relation to sense experiences and does not place any limits on what it can fantastically posit as long as it produces still-visualizable images like the supernatural centaur (McKeon, "Dramatic Aesthetic" 238). Although Percy does not position the Chinese author's imagination in relation to abstract understanding as Addison does, he makes sure to point out the former's basis in empirical experience by strictly distinguishing the Chinese novel from the more fantastic oriental tales: "It ought ... to be observed in favour of the Chinese, that if they do not take such bold and daring flights as some of the other Eastern nations, neither do they run into such

extravagant absurdities.... They pay a greater regard to truth and nature in their fictitious narratives than any other of the Asiatics” (1: xiii-xiv). The novel as the Chinese writer’s work of imagination then illustrates what McKeon identifies as the proximity and distance that the imagination (in comparison to the understanding) simultaneously takes from sense experiences in Addison’s discussion (“Dramatic Aesthetic” 238). While it is detached from the realm of the senses due to its freedom to embellish and modify nature, it at the same time remains firmly grounded in empirical experience, thereby distinguishing the Chinese novel from not only oriental tales, but also the fantastic imaginary voyages I examine in the previous chapter. It is then the imagination’s comparative distance from the senses that enables the Chinese writer (and Percy) to convey to the reader a virtual world that makes apparent its fictional nature, but at the same time retains a close semblance of the actual, which promotes in Coleridgian terms the suspension of the reader’s empirical disbelief in the novel’s imaginatively constructed reality (McKeon, “Dramatic Aesthetic” 234-35, *Origins* 128).⁹⁷ However, I would like to focus more on the aesthetic perspective that allows the reader “to tell the difference ... between art and life” and in turn encourages him to self-consciously compare the virtual with the actual experience of what is being represented in the Chinese novel (McKeon, “Dramatic Aesthetic” 235, 239). I argue that such comparison plays a crucial role in not only enhancing the reader’s pleasurable consumption of the text, but also producing what

⁹⁷ It is in the novel’s aesthetic distance from the senses that we can witness the alternative secular mode of truth that gradually emerged in the eighteenth century: a more complex method of telling the truth that “validate[d] literary creation for being not history but history-like, ‘true’ to the only external reality that still makes a difference, but also sufficiently apart from it (hence ‘probable’ and ‘universal’) to be true to itself as well” (McKeon, *Origins* 120). For a more detailed discussion of aesthetic truth, see McKeon’s *Origins* 118-28.

Percy claims to be a credible account of the Chinese Empire, which I will discuss in greater detail in the next section.

The fictional or virtual nature of the Chinese novel, which derives from the aesthetic distance the writer's imagination takes from sense experiences, is manifested in its greatly contrived plot. Its intricately constructed plot is made evident early on in the narrative, when Tieh-chung-u discovers his father Tieh-ying to be involved in the incident regarding the young scholar's kidnapped fiancé. Tieh-ying learns of this act of injustice when he meets the young lady's parents by so-called chance on his way home from the Emperor's palace in Peking. Like his son, he too attempts to have the corrupt mandarin Tah-quay punished by submitting a petition to the Emperor. Tieh-ying's negligence in procuring witnesses for his petition, however, lands him in prison for alleged slander, making it even more imperative for the male protagonist to rescue the young lady from the corrupt (and lecherous) mandarin and bring him to justice. This subplot is replicated on a grander scale in the remainder of the narrative, with characters from the subplot reemerging and playing a significant role in the unfolding and resolution of the main plot, further illustrating how intricate the Chinese novel's plot is. For example, Tah-quay later appears as the proposed husband of Shuey-ping-sin, reprising his role as the lecherous mandarin. The wronged young scholar Wey-phey also makes an unexpected reappearance as the newly-appointed Che-hien (governor) of Tsee-nan and helps exonerate Shuey-ping-sin and Tieh-chung-u at the grand imperial trial, where they are accused of being in a sham marriage and disobeying the Emperor's orders. By helping prove the couple's innocence, he aids in doling out the proper punishment to the corrupt mandarins and thus accomplishes what he himself was unable to do earlier in the

narrative, providing a neat resolution to the entire story. It is the way the story comes full circle that draws comments from the characters themselves regarding the interconnectedness of the seemingly random and unrelated incidents. While they do remark on the opportune nature of these incidents, they also draw great attention to the unlikelihood or fabulous nature of these encounters. For instance, when Tieh-chung-u's father learns that his son is personally acquainted with the cause of his unjust confinement, he remarks how "very unlikely" this is before rejoicing in his release from prison (1: 33). Another notable example is Shuey-pin-fin commenting "how fabulous it seems," when she learns of Tieh-chung-u's chance encounter with her father and his role in reinstating her formerly disgraced father, which all take place without the two characters being aware of each other's identity and connection with Shuey-ping-sin (3: 176).

Drawing attention to the Chinese novel's "unity of design" in the preface, Percy attempts to reinforce it by making slight alterations to the main text (1: xiv). Although he acknowledges *Hau Kiou Choaan* to be "more regular ... than is generally seen in the compositions of the East," he still finds it lacking in comparison to European novels in that not "all of [the incidents] are ingeniously contrived" (1: xvi, xii). This explains why Percy postpones the revelation of Tieh-chung-u's identity to a later point in the first volume. Rather than immediately disclosing the identity of the random young "stranger," with whom Kwo-khé-tzu's servants collide as they kidnap Shuey-ping-sin, Percy strategically waits until the corrupt governor of Tsee-nan later demands to know who has caused such a disruption in the emperor's court by filing a complaint against Kwo-khé-tzu (1: 196). It is only then that we hear the stranger make the following scathing reply:

Truly a great court of the Emperor's...! Why I have gone into the house of the greatest Mandarin [Tah-quay], a house given him by the Emperor himself, and therefore sacred: I have broken open the doors in order to rescue and protect the injured; yet he hath not dared to load me with obloquy; and are you of so exalted office, as to heap abuses upon me, and to charge me with impudence? (1: 207)

Such a reply obviously refers to Tieh-chung-u's actions in the subplot, making his identity apparent to both the characters and the reader. This carefully staged revelation works to reinforce the Chinese novel's virtual nature as the random benevolent stranger is revealed to be the male protagonist, who resumes his previous role as savior and enforcer of justice in his interactions with Shuey-ping-sin. Despite Percy's initial intention to maintain "fidelity to the original" by "mak[ing] no other alterations than what grammar and common sense merely require," he ends up making other minor adjustments to the text, which he justifies by criticizing the Chinese author's poor execution of the novel's complex plot (1: xx): "[He] with great simplicity, opens his account of this adventure by telling us ... that the people of Kwo-khé-tzu met with and run against 'Tieh-chung-u being just arrived from the province of Ho-nan, who was seated on a mule, &c.'" (1: 208n). Percy consequently "presumes he shall be excused the liberty he hath taken," for he "conceive[s] the suppressing of this circumstance for a page or two [will] serve to awake the Reader's attention and heighten the surprise" (1: 208n).

In this respect, *Hau Kiou Choaan* bears a great resemblance to Henry Fielding's novels, with which Percy's translated and edited text is contemporary. A prominent characteristic of Fielding's novels is their well-crafted plot, a feature that McKeon underscores when he makes the following observation about *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews* (1742): "Because *Joseph Andrews* is periodically punctuated by coincidental meetings that increasingly seem too neat to be natural, ... its

entire plot gradually takes on the air of a ‘historical’ line that has been charmed, by the magical intrusions of ‘romance,’ into a circle” (*Origins* 406). If Tieh-chung-u has encounters that are, to borrow McKeon’s words, too “coincidental” to be “natural,” so do the characters in *Joseph Andrews* (*Origins* 406). Here, I am specifically referring to Joseph’s timely encounter with Parson Adams at the inn after being mugged, Parson Adams’ meeting with Fanny just as she is about to be attacked, Joseph’s meeting with Mr. Wilson, whom he later discovers to be his father, Fanny’s encounter with her former acquaintance Peter Pounce who rescues her from her abductors, Mr. Wilson’s timely visit to Parson Adams’ parish, which provides a neat resolution to the entire story by revealing Joseph’s true identity so that he can marry the socially-elevated Fanny, and so on. I wonder if it is such similarities between the two novels that make Percy refer to Fielding in the preface. Other than stating that one will “form a truer notion of the genius and spirit of the English, from one page of Fielding, and one or two writers now alive, than from whole volumes of Present States of England,” Percy does not say much about him (1: xvii). But I find it significant that Percy specifically names Fielding, especially since he discusses how fiction may generate a more reliable account of a foreign culture than actual voyage accounts and specifies what kind of fiction the Chinese novel is (based in empirical experience, yet containing an unity of design that makes apparent the work’s virtual nature) in the three pages immediately preceding that statement.

Percy again evokes Fielding when he uses the footnotes to explicitly signal the virtuality of the Chinese novel. Similar to the way that Fielding asks his reader to insert an idealized female name (“Miss [Whoever the Reader pleases]”) in the narrative and thus reminds his reader of the text’s virtual nature by inviting him to partake in its

construction, Percy also engages in an ongoing conversation with his reader in his footnotes (*Joseph Andrews* 196). For instance, when explaining the significance of Shuey-ping-sin's laughter at the poorly written satire that her uncle Shuey-guwin and Kwo-khé-tzu have circulated to defame Tieh-chung-u's character, Percy writes: "The Author of this History intend[s] to sink these two characters very low in the opinion of his Readers by representing them so illiterate in a country, where high letters are in high repute, and also very common" (2: 226n). Percy makes explicit to his reader here that these two antagonists are not actual persons, but rather figures of the Chinese author's imagination. Another example comes when Percy remarks on the preparations for the grand imperial trial, during which Wey-phy procures witnesses to prove the two protagonists' innocence. Among such witnesses is the bonze (Chinese Buddhist monk), who attests to Tieh-chung-u's "unblemished" conduct during his stay at the inn (4: 134). In addition to drawing attention to the authorial contrivance that produces (or fails to produce) the necessary witnesses, Percy brings to light the Chinese author's failure to punish that bonze for having poisoned Tieh-chung-u at Kwo-khé-tzu's command: "This Chinese author seems in the following part of the story to have forgot this circumstance; for this witness is never produced afterwards. It is also some imputation on the Author's [poetic] justice, that this Bonze is not punished along with the other criminals" (4: 116-17n). In criticizing the Chinese author's inattention to minor details, Percy again emphasizes the tangible presence of the author, who intervenes in the narrative not only to advance the main storyline, but also to partially provide the poetic justice that does not take place in the actual world of China.

Sympathetic Identification and Critical Comparison with the Chinese Heroine

Percy's attempts to enhance the reader's awareness of the novel's virtual nature are crucial to increasing his pleasures of the imagination, for there is much in *Hau Kiou Choaan* that would incite considerable grief and fear in the reader if he were to actually witness or undergo a similar experience. Throughout the novel, the Chinese writer continuously draws attention to Shuey-ping-sin's predicament of having to single-handedly ward off the corrupt mandarins in order to maintain her virtue.⁹⁸ A notable instance would be her near abduction by Kwo-khé-tzu's men, prior to which she is lured from her home by a false order of pardon for her banished father. Not only is Shuey-ping-sin devastated to learn that her hopes for her father's reinstatement have been thwarted, but she is also distraught to find herself entrapped by villainous men. She consequently resolves to commit suicide before she is rescued by Tieh-chung-u who, upon hearing her story and witnessing her tears, is portrayed as being "strongly *moved* at her distress" (1: 214, my emphasis). It is worth noting here that Percy uses the word "moved" to convey Tieh-chung-u's emotional response, indicating another form of aesthetic travel that takes place in the Chinese novel. An emotional form of "transport" that resembles Tieh-chung-u's physical journey through China in its virtual mobility, it is also one that more directly involves the English readers in its invitation to imaginatively share such feelings and be similarly moved or transported.⁹⁹ This distinct mode of

⁹⁸ In this regard, the Chinese novel bears a great resemblance to another well-known mid-eighteenth-century English novel, Samuel Richardson's *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* (1740), inviting speculation as to the extent of the novel's Anglicization at the hands of its translator and editor. However, this is a question that cannot be properly answered without comparing the original Chinese novel with Percy's version, a task that is unfortunately beyond my language skills.

⁹⁹ In his examination of Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy* (1768), James Chandler investigates Sterne's "transformation of the picaresque novel to create the sub-genre of the sentimental journey" (30). Chandler discusses how Sterne, by "recasting the picaro's travels in terms of the discourse of sensibility," "manage[s] to find a conceit in which he [can] figure the practice of sympathy as

aesthetic travel becomes a pleasurable experience for the reader, precisely because, as Addison argues, the aesthetic distance from the senses allows the reader to compare his situation with that being represented (or compare the virtual with the actual experience of what is being represented) and take comfort in the reflection that he is not in actual danger:

When we look on such hideous Objects [in a Description], we are not a little pleased to think we are in no Danger of them. We consider them at the same time, as Dreadful and Harmless; so that the more frightful Appearance they make, the greater is the Pleasure we receive from the Sense of our own Safety.... When we read of Torments, Wounds, Deaths, and the like dismal Accidents, our Pleasure does not flow so properly from the Grief which such melancholy Descriptions give us, as from the secret Comparison which we make between our selves and the Person who suffers.... This is, however, such a kind of Pleasure as we are not capable of receiving, when we see a Person actually lying under the Tortures that we meet with in a Description; because, in this Case, the Object presses too close upon our Senses, and bears so hard upon us, that it does not give us time or leisure to reflect on our selves. (3: 568)

In other words, aesthetic distance prevents the reader from being immersed in the “frightful” sense experiences of the Chinese character. It is by preventing such an absorptive reading of the text that aesthetic distance allows the reader to safely identify with Shuey-ping-sin and to take delight in sharing the great suffering she undergoes. To borrow Samuel Johnson’s words, it enables the reader of the Chinese novel to experience the pleasure of “terror without [actual] danger” (46).

I have already discussed how Percy signals the virtual nature of the narrative through the content of his footnotes, which I argue helps prevent the reader from

a kind of imaginative mobility” that enables one to “feel *beyond* [oneself]” (26, 25). As Chandler continues to argue, Sterne’s great innovation derives from closely linking Yorick’s physical and emotional movements so that they cannot be distinguished from each other: “Yorick’s itinerary is guided by affection. His movements respond to his being moved, and they express his capacity to go beyond himself” (26). While Tieh-chung-u’s emotional transport is not as pronounced as Yorick’s is in Sterne’s *Sentimental Journey*, Tieh-chung-u is similarly moved, an emotional response that is also incidentally inspired by his physical journey through China. For a more detailed discussion of Yorick’s “virtual travel *in sentiment*,” in which I assert Tieh-chung-u (and by extension, the English reader) also partakes in Percy’s *Hau Kiou Chooan*, see Chandler 25-30.

succumbing to an absorptive reading so that he can enhance his pleasurable consumption of the text. But Percy's footnotes also achieve a similar effect with their sheer *physical* presence. For instance, Shuey-ping-sin's first display of emotional distress is disrupted by an extensive footnote, the content of which bears no great relevance to the incident at hand.¹⁰⁰ As we can see from the figure below, Percy devotes a significant portion of the page to describing the Chinese literati's religion in order to explain the expression of gratitude Shuey-ping-sin pays to "Heaven" for her narrow escape (1: 213n). While extraneous footnotes are not an uncommon occurrence in the novel given Percy's zeal to provide the narrative with pertinent (or more often than not impertinent) background information, the particular placement of this explanatory footnote is somewhat strange, especially when we consider the multiple opportunities Percy has beforehand to explain the Chinese characters' references to "Heaven" (1: 17, 21, 110, 205). We can therefore surmise with good reason that Percy strategically placed this extensive footnote to

¹⁰⁰ Percy's digressive footnotes call to mind the digressions in Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* (1759-67), with which Percy's translated and edited text is also contemporaneous. While they both divert the reader's attention from the narrative with the intention of providing the reader with information pertinent to the novel, they are different in that Percy's digressions lack the sense of progression that accompanies those of Sterne: "My work is digressive, and it is progressive too.... I have constructed the main work and the adventitious parts of it with such intersections, and have so complicated and involved the digressive and progressive movements, one wheel within another, that the whole machine, in general, has been kept a-going" (52). For instance, when Tristram interrupts the narrative of his birth to briefly discuss the town midwife, whom Parson Yorick has helped acquire her license so that the townspeople would stop using his horses to visit the midwife living on the outskirts of the village, this particular digression leads to the well-known essay on hobby-horses, which not only speaks to the idiosyncrasy of one's mental workings, a key theme in the novel, but also anticipates Uncle Toby's narrative. This sort of progression usually does not take place in Percy's Chinese novel. While Percy's digressive footnotes sometimes advance his project of discrediting the Jesuit sources, they more often than not leave the reader with pieces of random information about the Chinese Empire that bear no great relevance to both his project and the novel. This most likely stems from Percy's desire to authenticate the Chinese origins of the novel, which Min argues is a central concern in *Hau Kiou Chooan* ("Chinese Miscellanies" 311). She claims that Percy, "by squaring [the novel's] content with existing reports of Chinese culture," either in the form of footnotes or addenda, "treat[s] the problem as one [that is] perfectly soluble by cross-referencing data" ("Chinese Miscellanies" 312). Min, however, remains doubtful as to whether this is an effective solution, considering that "China already was a sign divided against itself" and did not easily admit an "agreement of signs" at this time ("Chinese Miscellanies" 312).

prevent the reader from being too engrossed by the distressful circumstances of the Chinese heroine.

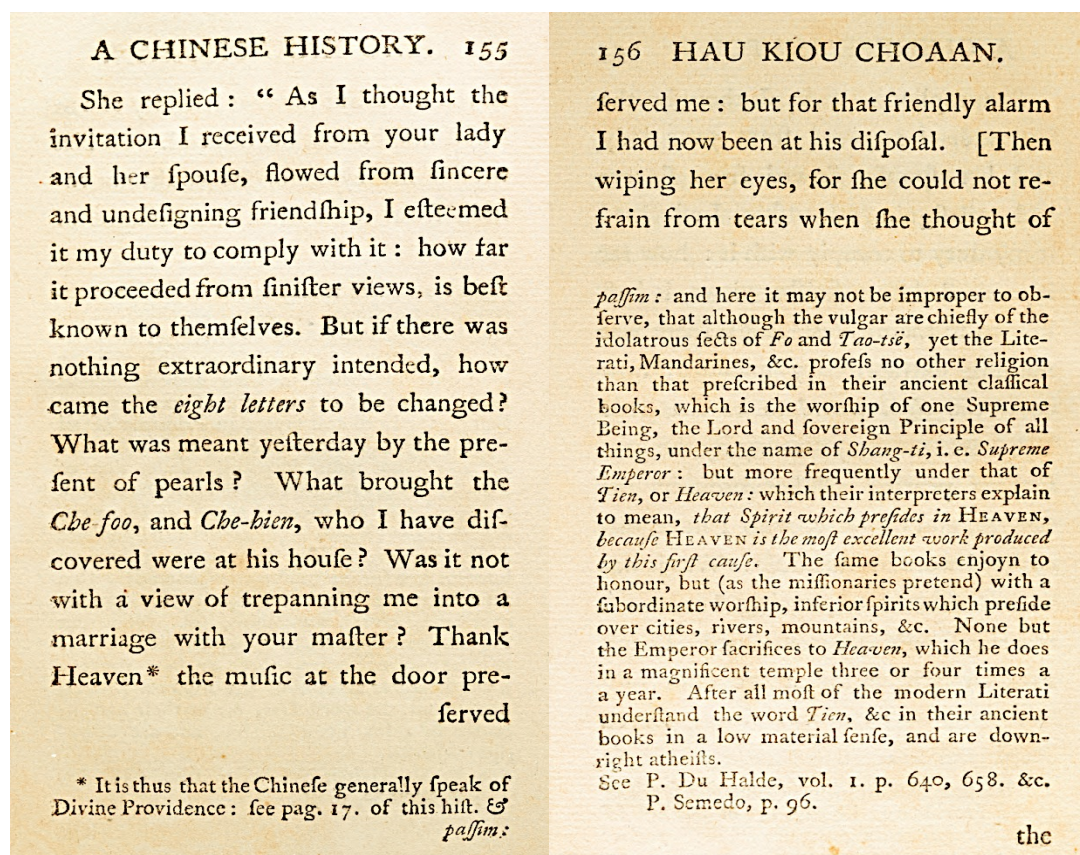


Figure 2. Percy's interruptive footnotes

Source: Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers University Libraries

Such disruption of an emotional scene similarly takes place in Fielding's *The Life of Jonathan Wild the Great* (1743), helping us draw further parallels between Percy and Fielding. Although Fielding does not use footnotes here, he too interrupts Mrs. Heartfree's relation of her adventures with a well-timed outburst that occurs outside the prison cell that the Heartfrees are conversing. As Mrs. Heartfree draws near to the climax of her narrative, during the course of which she has narrowly escaped from a series of ravishers (the captain of the French privateer, the captain of the English man of

war, and the Count disguised as her fellow prisoner) only to be finally cornered by a French castaway hermit in an isolated cave, Fielding opportunely interrupts her account with Jonathan Wild's enraged outburst at having discovered his wife Laetitia's affair with his accomplice Fireblood. Of course, as McKeon points out, Wild's discovery of his wife's infidelity has much to do with the scene it disrupts, for it "provides a perspective on both Heartfrees: a reflection of the wife's false idealism, and a foil for the husband's easy agreement to be deceived" (*Origins* 391). But I would like to put more emphasis on the effect the narrator's digression has on the reader's emotional response to Mrs. Heartfree's story. By disrupting this anxiety-ridden scene, in which the hermit proceeds to profess and act on his amorous feelings for Mrs. Heartfree, Fielding prevents the reader from being overwhelmed by the emotional disquietude her sense experiences generate, a feat her husband is not able to accomplish as demonstrated by the "Symptoms of the utmost Disquietude in ... [his] Countenance" (*Jonathan Wild* 154).

Percy therefore marks an interesting departure from Western critics, who generally consider the footnote's interruptive force as one of its main defects. In addition to discussing how some nineteenth-century historians placed their references at the end of their text in order to prevent them from "detract[ing] from the illusion of veracity and immediacy that [they] wished to create" in their historical narratives, Anthony Grafton refers to the twentieth-century author Noël Coward, who memorably likened the act of reading a footnote to that of "having to go downstairs to answer the door while in the midst of making love" (69-70). In Percy's text, however, this bothersome act of having to shift to the bottom of the page and read the footnote (or go back and forth between the different pages to read the extensive footnote and then resume reading the narrative)

proves to be advantageous for the reader. By distracting him from the physical and emotional immediacy of the narrative, Percy's interruptive footnotes allow the reader to safely identify with Shuey-ping-sin or in other words, remain sufficiently distanced from her sense experiences so as to create the pleasure of "terror without danger," an imaginative pleasure the reader would not be able to enjoy if he were to engage in absorptive sympathy with the Chinese heroine (Johnson 46).¹⁰¹

It is important for Percy that the reader does not succumb to absorptive sympathy, since it has the disturbing potential to collapse the division between the reader's self and Shuey-ping-sin, a danger that David Hume suggests in his discussion of sympathy in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739) (Mullan 26).¹⁰² Such collapse of the barriers between the reader's self and Shuey-ping-sin becomes especially problematic for Percy, since he ultimately wishes the English reader to critically compare himself with the Chinese

¹⁰¹ Percy's desire to distance his reader from the emotional immediacy of the narrative calls to mind the workings of sympathy in Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). Smith writes: "As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no ideas of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation. Though our brother is upon the rack, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our sense will never inform us of what he suffers. They never did, and never can, carry beyond our own person, and it is by imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations" (9). Here, there is no direct transmission of feelings as in Hume's model of sympathy. The spectator can only reproduce the emotions of the sufferer through the act of imagination, thus protecting him from sympathetic absorption. Yet Smith, like Hume, ultimately seeks to accomplish an "entire concord of the affections," but in a way that precludes the spectator's passions being raised against his will to match those of the sufferer (27). By using spectatorial distance to judge the propriety of the sufferer's sentiments, Smith's model of sympathy instead "lower[s] [the sufferer's] passion to that pitch, in which the spectators are capable of going along with him" (27). Percy, on the other hand, is not interested in overcoming the emotional disparities between the Chinese heroine and the English reader, for he wishes the latter to remain distanced so that the reader can extend examining the disparities in their sentiments to exploring those in their cultures.

¹⁰² Employing the image of a series of mirrors reflecting back on each other, Hume describes how sympathy occurs through an immediate transmission of sentiments between individuals (365). While this idea accounts for human sociability, John Mullan discusses how the instantaneous and involuntary nature of this exchange signals the potential dangers of Hume's model of sympathy: sympathy's troubling potential to collapse the barriers between self and other, causing one to be completely absorbed by the other (29-30, 26). For a detailed discussion of Hume's theory of sympathy, see Mullan 18-56.

heroine so as to contrast the customs and manners of England and China.¹⁰³ If Addison encourages the reader of the Chinese novel to compare Shuey-ping-sin's adverse circumstances to the reader's own situation so that he can share her experiences and yet receive "Pleasure ... from the Sense of [his] own Safety," Percy encourages the reader to go yet further in his comparison with the Chinese character (3: 568). He does not want to limit the reader's comparison to the different situations, in which they respectively find themselves, but rather extend it to include their fundamental characteristics. This comes to light when Percy (somewhat forcibly) extracts from his audience the following comparison between the English reader and the Chinese heroine regarding their different virtues, which ultimately serves to highlight Shuey-ping-sin's alleged subtlety and craft in the reader's eyes:

The reader must have observed that these qualities [subtlety and craft] are predominant in the character of Shuey-ping-sin; who is yet set forth by the Chinese author, as a perfect exemplar of all virtue. The Chinese morals, notwithstanding their boasted purity, evidently fall short of the Christian, since they know not how to inspire that open and ingenuous simplicity, void of all guile, which more elevated principles of morality propose to our esteem and imitation. (1: 129n)

The stakes involved in such a critical comparison become clear when Percy converts Shuey-ping-sin's allegedly immoral (or insufficiently moral) character into a defining characteristic of the Chinese in general.¹⁰⁴ That he is more concerned with inducing in

¹⁰³ Watt makes a similar argument about how Percy seeks to "interrupt or obstruct an absorptive sympathy with the novel's main characters, in particular its heroine" and "foster a critical comparison between the divergent customs and manners of European and Chinese societies" (104). Yet Watt does not discuss in great detail as to how Percy accomplishes these two objectives other than referring to the content of his footnotes. I argue it is not so much the content of the footnotes, but rather the effect of virtuality Percy achieves through his interruptive footnotes.

¹⁰⁴ While Tieh-chung-u plays a crucial role in the unfolding of the events in *Hau Kiou Chooan*, he remains on the periphery of Percy's project in that he is not the object of cultural comparison as Shuey-ping-sin is. Unlike Shuey-ping-sin who is posited as a representative figure of Chinese society, Tieh-chung-u is specifically referred to as a "gentleman" and consequently portrayed as possessing the attributes of an English gentleman (2: 120). That Percy wishes to distinguish Tieh-chung-u from the Chinese natives is

the reader such an understanding of Chinese society than the reader's imaginative pleasure is made evident in the preface, when he asks his audience to consider the novel primarily as "a faithful picture of Chinese manners" (1: xv). In this sense, Percy has an objective that differs from that of Addison despite using a similar model of mediation. For Percy, the aesthetic distance from sense experiences, which he cultivates by either reinforcing the virtual nature of the narrative or disrupting an emotional scene, is ultimately geared towards generating and maintaining a firm sense of division between the English reader's self and the Chinese heroine so that the former can critically compare their national characteristics.

Percy employs such critical comparison to produce an account of Chinese culture that he maintains is more reliable than the one the Jesuit sources provide. Although his representation of Shuey-ping-sin (and by extension, the general Chinese populace) is unconvincing for several reasons, which I will examine in greater detail in the following section, Percy is correct in identifying a key failing on the Jesuit missionaries' part. In order to procure the moral support and the financial resources necessary for their mission, Jesuit missionaries set forth a skewed (and therefore unreliable) representation of China, particularly its religious doctrines, which Percy also problematizes in the preface.¹⁰⁵ A

made evident when he asks his English reader to reserve judgment about "his seeming Indelicacy and want of Gallantry," which Tieh-chung-u demonstrates in his brusque refusal to Shuey-guwin's proposed marriage between him and Shuey-ping-sin (2: 127n). While ungentlemanly behavior is to be expected from Chinese men, amongst whom Percy declares "it is impossible there should be any such thing as Gallantry ... [due to the lack of] intercourse between the two Sexes," Percy hints that this is not the case with Tieh-chung-u (2: 127-28n). As we later find out, Tieh-chung-u's refusal of the proposed marriage actually results from his gallantry, for he fears that their marriage would confirm the suspicions the corrupt mandarins harbor about his temporary stay at Shuey-ping-sin's home and the inappropriate relationship they are unfairly accused of having during this short period.

¹⁰⁵ Percy draws attention to the biased nature of Jesuit missionary accounts in the preface: "Now these accounts have been taxed, as partial and defective, especially so far as they describe the religious ceremonies of the Chinese. For the reader is to be informed that the Jesuites have been accused by the missionaries of other orders, of making very improper concessions to their Chinese converts, and of so modeling Christianity, as to allow an occasional conformity to many superstitions, under a pretense that

key strategy they employed in their attempts to convince their readers of the viability of their mission of converting the Chinese to Christianity was to draw extensive analogies between the doctrines of Christianity and Confucianism. While such analogies were, as Porter argues, admittedly predicated on the differentiation of Christianity (and Confucianism) from what Matteo Ricci dubbed the idolatrous sects of Buddhism and Taoism, the Jesuit missionaries placed greater emphasis on the fundamental similarities between the classical Chinese sages and Christians by portraying the former as being as “venerable, wise, and thoroughly imbued with proto-Christian virtue” as the latter (*Ideographia* 99, 101-02, 109). Not only was this an ill-chosen strategy that Porter claims later undermined “the unique exclusivity that formed the basis of [the Jesuits’] own faith,” but it was also one that required the missionaries to disregard significant differences that existed between them and the Chinese literati (*Ideographia* 109).¹⁰⁶ That the missionaries neglected to critically compare the religious doctrines of Christianity and Confucianism was later made evident during the Rites Controversy, during which their adversaries within the church criticized the Jesuit missionaries’ interpretation of Confucianism for the following claims: Ricci’s suggestion that Chinese references to “heaven” in canonical texts denoted a divine being similar to God, which his opponents refuted by claiming that such references were devoid of spiritual significance; and Ricci’s argument that the Chinese rituals of making offerings to their ancestors were nonreligious demonstrations of their devotion towards their parents and ancestors, which his

they are only of a civil nature. How far this charge was true, we will not pretend to determine, but probably it was not altogether groundless, as sentence was given against them by their superiors. These disputes have subsisted near a century; and in all the descriptions of China, published by the Jesuites during this period, it may be expected that would give such an account of the Chinese ceremonies, as would best favour their cause” (1: xviii).

¹⁰⁶ While the Jesuit missionaries associated the lower classes with the idolatrous sects of Buddhism and Taoism, they saw the literati as having preserved for the most part the originary Confucian traditions of the classical Chinese sages (Porter, *Ideographia* 94).

opponents again refuted by seeing the rites as acts of idolatry (Porter, *Ideographia* 109-10). Of course, it is difficult to determine whether the Jesuit missionaries' stricter attention to their sense experiences of China contributed to the collapse of the division between themselves and the Chinese literati without delving into a close examination of their writings, which is not within the purview of this discussion. But it is clear that Percy wishes to obstruct such close association with the inhabitants of China. He therefore refutes the Jesuit writings, particularly those that commend the religiosity or morality of the Chinese, aligning his aesthetic travel narrative with the more critical accounts of Chinese civilization like those of Daniel Defoe and George Anson.¹⁰⁷

The Turn to Critical Documentary Footnotes

Percy's interpretation of Shuey-ping-sin as devious and therefore immoral by Christian standards is problematic in that it is one he quite forcefully imposes upon his reader, a problem that Ralph Hanna III, a modern editor of Middle English literary texts, highlights in an examination of his own annotative procedures:

My practice suggests to me that [an annotator] is in fact creating himself as reader – and thus creating the reader of his work. For when I annotate, what I am doing is reading through the text with my profoundest attention, asking what it is that a reader should be given so as to facilitate [the] most attentive reading I can give.... In effect, rather than serving a community, I have articulated it, created it. In this way, the forms of annotation speak what is not: they exist deliberately to obscure the aggressive act of controlling audience consumption of the text. (181)

¹⁰⁷ As we have seen in the previous chapter, Daniel Defoe disparages Chinese civilization in *Farther Adventures* (1719): "But when I come to compare the miserable People of these Countries with ours, their Fabricks, their Manner of Living, their Government, their Religion, their Wealth, and their Glory, (as some call it), I must confess I do not so much as think it worth naming, or worth my while to write of, or any they shall come after me to read" (173). China does not fare much better in George Anson's *A Voyage Round the World* (1748). Despite having minimal interaction with Chinese people, Anson expresses no reservations in denouncing them for their "inattention and want of curiosity," "an incontestable symptom of a mean and contemptible disposition which alone is sufficient confutation of the extravagant panegyrics, which many hypothetical writers have bestowed on the ingenuity and capacity of this nation" (quoted in Qian's "China in the English Literature of the Eighteenth Century" 119).

Under the guise of his self-proclaimed role as a cultural mediator between a foreign text and its readership, Percy also attempts to control or “create,” as Hanna aptly puts it, his reader’s response to the Chinese novel (181). In addition to stating outright how his audience should consume the text as in the previous example regarding Shuey-ping-sin’s moral values (“The reader *must have observed* that [subtlety and craft] are predominant in the character of Shuey-ping-sin” [1: 129n, my emphasis]), Percy defines his ideal readership and in turn identifies the standards by which his reader should interpret the novel and its characters. According to Percy, his model reader is foremost a Christian one, who has extensive knowledge of the Bible.¹⁰⁸ This explains why Percy feels the need to apologize whenever he inserts a passage from the Scripture in his footnotes. While he does so on the perchance a less religious readership might also be reading the text, he recognizes that this is not necessary for his model reader, who neither needs to “glance his eye over the following animated and sublime Injunctions” nor “meet with a Hint of this kind in the margin of a Novel” (2: 52n). Percy further tightens the bonds of this Christian (or to be more specific, Protestant) community of readers by inviting them

¹⁰⁸ For instance, Percy writes: “Many other Chinese expressions exactly correspondent to those in Scripture will occur in this History; which the Editor would not pay so bad a compliment to the Reader’s sagacity, as to suppose it necessary always to point it out” (2: 66n). Such analogy might seem strange in light of the distinction he wishes to ultimately make between England and China, but Percy initially does this so that he can grant England a morality that rivals the ancient wisdom of Chinese civilization. He, however, later works to elevate the former by denouncing the latter: “But after all, as the Chinese Laws are merely political institutions, and are backed by no sanctions of future rewards and punishments, thought they may influence the exterior, they will not affect the heart, and therefore will create an appearance of virtue, [rather] than the reality [of virtue]” (2: 167n). This process of association and disassociation corresponds to the four distinct modes of response Porter observes Chinese culture eliciting in Percy (“admiration,” “identification,” “disidentification,” and “condescension and disdain”) in *Hau Kiou Chooan* (*Chinese Taste* 161-70): “The ‘warmth’ Percy expresses in favor of certain of his Chinese subjects is ... bound up with a recognition of congruities and a desire to identify with a foreign symbol of admired values.... Percy’s warmth rapidly cools once this identification approaches a threshold of self-abnegation.... This shift is ... an ongoing dialectical process that structures the work as a whole” (*Chinese Taste* 173-74). For a more detailed discussion of how this exemplifies Britain’s “instrumental amnesia” in relation to “the non-English origins of British aesthetic culture,” see Porter’s *Chinese Taste* 10, 154-83.

to share a laugh at the expense of both the Chinese writer and the Jesuit missionaries, whose representations of Chinese culture he works to discredit. For instance, when remarking on the minor deletions he made from the text, Percy informs the reader of a “ridiculous” passage the Chinese author wrote, which Percy states “will not fail to make [the reader] smile” (1: 116n). Another example would be when he adds the following comment on Jesuit sources to his description of the bonzes’ vegetarian diet:

As it is well known [the Chinese bonzes] dare not touch flesh, the Reader will smile at the story told by P. le Comte of their feasting on ducks, of which they had defrauded a peasant, under the pretense that the souls of their fathers were transmigrated into them. This may show, what credit is to be given to some other stories of the Bonzes by the Jesuits. (2: 15n)

As we can see here, Percy not only shares a sly joke over the unreliability of the Jesuits’ claims about the bonzes, but also establishes the boundaries of his Christian readership by distancing them from the Jesuit missionaries.

Despite his manifold efforts to create a certain community of readers and thereby control their consumption of the text, Percy is not entirely successful in his endeavor, for he meets a formidable opponent in the Chinese author. Unlike Percy, the Chinese author promotes a more compelling and, more important, a favorable reading of Shuey-ping-sin through the similar means of aesthetic detachment. As in the case of Percy, he too signals the virtual nature of the narrative through the novel’s great unity of design so that the reader remains sufficiently detached from the experiences of the Chinese heroine to critically compare himself with her. Yet the Chinese author’s repeated emphasis on Shuey-ping-sin’s extraordinary “wit and judgment” invites a different kind of critical comparison, through which the Chinese character’s intelligence and ingenuity are accentuated (2: 2). Although there are numerous examples throughout the novel to

demonstrate such qualities, the way Shuey-ping-sin deftly avoids the arranged marriage that her uncle has set up with Kwo-khé-tzu illustrates well “the rare endowment of her mind, and greatness of her capacity” (1: 70). Sensing correctly that her aversion to the marriage will not deter her uncle and Kwo-khé-tzu, she pretends to comply with her uncle’s wishes. She does this with the intention of putting her hideous cousin, who normally would not be able to attract a reasonably desirable bachelor like Kwo-khé-tzu and therefore expresses no reservations about marrying him, in her stead. Shuey-ping-sin successfully achieves this difficult feat by secretly writing her cousin’s birth date and time instead of her own on the Nean-kang (a writing of eight letters or characters, containing the aforesaid information, which is given to fortune-tellers to predict the marital compatibility of a couple), by having the marital present from Kwo-khé-tzu delivered to her uncle’s house, and by having her uncle address her as his daughter on the wedding invitations with the rationale that he functions as her surrogate father due to her father’s banishment. It is on the wedding day that she finally reveals her plan and helps deceive Kwo-khé-tzu by coaching her cousin to behave with modesty when her groom attempts to unveil her and instructing the waiting women to ply him with wine so that he does not discover the switch until it is too late. While Percy uses such actions to argue for her craft and subtlety, the Chinese author promotes a different (and a more positive) interpretation that diverts the reader’s attention from her morality or lack thereof.

Perhaps it is this lingering fear of the Chinese novel’s ability to generate a different reading, or in Percy’s eyes, the possibility of the reader’s imagination going awry, that motivates him justify or authenticate his own interpretation of the Chinese

heroine.¹⁰⁹ This is made all the more necessary, when we consider how counterintuitive his reading is, an opinion other modern critics reiterate. For example, Watt accuses Percy of “ignor[ing] the actual content of [Shuey-ping-sin’s] distress, and focus[ing] instead upon the manner in which she articulates her sense of grievance” when Percy condemns Shuey-ping-sin for not being forgiving enough to forget the injustices she has suffered at the hands of the corrupt mandarins (98). Min is more explicit in her criticism when she characterizes Percy’s interpretation of the Chinese heroine as “a bizarre and fearless anti-reading of the novel [that] ignore[s] altogether subtleties of plot and presentation” (“Chinese Miscellanies” 314). It is in Percy’s justification for his reading that we witness an interesting turn in his usage of the footnotes. If he primarily employs the footnotes to provide background information and guide the reader’s aesthetic response to the novel and its characters, he also uses them to conduct a “systematic scrutiny and citation of original evidence and formal arguments for the preferability of one source over another” (Grafton 24).¹¹⁰ This is a somewhat ironic move on Percy’s part when one considers that

¹⁰⁹ Kathleen Lubey identifies a different kind of danger that accompanies the reader’s imaginative engagement with a novel. While Lubey also takes note of the imagination’s distance from the senses in Addison’s essay, she stresses that the body nonetheless remains crucial to the imagination (431). This in turn causes the reader’s imagination to sometimes “generate visions of and desires for impolite things,” especially if the reader, unlike Addison’s more self-disciplined gentlemanly reader, has an amorous mind (Lubey 444, 416). According to Lubey, Addison tries to address such a concern with his theorization of the aesthetic: “Addison’s theory of aesthetic affect, as it unfolds throughout the *Spectator*, helps us understand this concern with readers’ responses not simply as an urgency to prevent sexual curiosity but as an ongoing literary experiment that seeks to ‘warm’ readers sufficiently to animate their imaginations while circumventing the libidinal impropriety that could result from descriptions that are too evocative” (444). However, given the chaste nature of the Chinese novel and the efforts of both the Chinese writer and the English editor (Percy) to prevent the reader from immersing in a sensory experience of the novel, this is not a vital concern in *Hau Kiou Chooan*.

¹¹⁰ Contrary to the widely accepted view that Ranke invented critical documentation, Grafton claims that such an impulse preexisted the German historian, starting as early as in the sixteenth century during the religious wars (133-42). The predominant use of footnotes in historical writing, however, can be first found in Pierre Bayle’s *Historical and Critical Dictionary* (1679), whose footnotes were initially composed to point out the faults or errors in scholarly debates, but were later altered to help demonstrate the “truths” put forth in the main text (Grafton 210). Percy’s footnotes are of a similar nature in that they critically examine Jesuit sources and attempt to substantiate what Percy purports to be a “truthful” account of the Chinese natives.

critical documentary footnotes were principally used in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century historiography to make history adhere more to the strict empiricism of the sciences, which is precisely what Percy denounces as obstructing the reader's understanding of Chinese culture in the preface (Grafton 34-61). In his examination of the footnote's history, Grafton discusses how Leopold von Ranke (and other historians) endeavored to make history empirically exact through a critical examination of primary sources (43-52). However, as Grafton continues to argue, even critical documentary footnotes could not clear history from the allegations of inaccuracy or unreliability, for they were often demonstrated to be a rhetorical device that could be used or manipulated to corroborate an argument or position, an offense Percy is also guilty of committing in *Hau Kiou Choaan* (166-67). Of course, whether Percy is successful in authenticating his interpretation of the Chinese heroine, which he uses to generalize about the cultural characteristics of the Chinese, with his critical documentary footnotes needs to be further examined.

In order to reach his conclusion regarding the deficient morals of Shuey-ping-sin and the Chinese natives, Percy must undertake a series of steps. The first of these steps is to discredit Jesuit sources that argue for Confucianism's compatibility with Christianity. I have already discussed how Percy dismisses Jesuit sources for their unwillingness to critically compare the doctrines of Christianity and of Confucianism, which prevents them from producing a credible account of Chinese culture. Through a meticulous examination of multiple Jesuit writings, he further reveals the missionaries to have supported such a "false" claim by intentionally overlooking contrary evidence they themselves have recorded. In the first volume, there is a particularly long footnote, in

which Percy accuses the Jesuit missionaries of having omitted an “account of the Chinese Oaths or Forms of swearing” (1: 158n). He painstakingly unearths passages from their accounts to illustrate that the Chinese literati are indeed “not without [their] Forms of Swearing,” which he deduces take place as follows (1: 159n): “The manner of Swearing in China is to fall prostrate before the image of one of their [multiple] Genii, Spirits, &c. calling upon him to attest the truth and integrity of their words or actions, and to punish any deviation from it” (1:162n). Using the accounts of Fathers Martinius, Picart, and Jartoux, Percy demonstrates that the Chinese literati regularly “take an oath, ... calling upon the Spirit to bear witness [to their promises of discharging their duties] and to punish their default” (1: 159n, 160-62n). In other words, he uncovers evidence from Jesuit writings that reveal Confucianism to contain elements of Buddhism and Taoism. Having discredited the Jesuit sources, Percy now uses the novel as textual evidence to bestow greater credibility to his claim that the Chinese literati are not imbued with Christian beliefs.

However, Percy fails in his attempt to not only deliver a “faithful” representation of the Chinese Empire, but also be perceived as doing so, when he disregards evidence from the novel that is contrary to his reading of Chinese morals, despite having argued for the preferability of the novel as a source (1: xv). In fact, he commits the same error that he criticizes the Jesuit missionaries for doing. As an instance of what Min calls his “bizarre and fearless anti-reading of the novel,” Percy condemns “the Morality of the Chinese Author” as “appear[ing] in a very contemptible light compared with the Christian” when he has his female protagonist refuse to forgive her enemies for the injuries they have inflicted upon her (Min “Chinese Miscellanies” 314, Percy 2: 51n). In

doing so, Percy conveniently neglects to consider how Shuey-ping-sin upholds moral standards by rescuing her benefactor Tieh-chung-u as an expression of her gratitude. Although the Chinese writer does not intend to portray his heroine as the embodiment of Christian morality, Percy surely cannot fail to notice the significance of her actions when we consider that gratitude is another basic tenet of Christian faith that guides the actions of its followers. After evading the close surveillance of the mandarins at the inn, where Tieh-chung-u is being secretly poisoned and detained against his will, the Chinese heroine brings her benefactor to her house so that she can help him recover from his illness. In doing so, she also violates the ancient Chinese tradition that prohibits men and women from interacting with each other, an act along with her morality that I will later demonstrate as having important ramifications for Percy's nationalistic project in the *Reliques*. Percy again commits the error of neglecting evidence from the novel when he indiscriminately groups the virtuous female protagonist and the corrupt mandarins as having "an appearance of virtue, than the reality [of virtue]" (2: 167n). This is evidently a reading that disregards the basic premise of the novel, which sets the Chinese heroine in stark opposition to the mandarins as shown in the rewards and punishments they respectively receive in the conclusion. Despite being deployed to substantiate his interpretation of the Chinese heroine (and by extension, the Chinese in general), the evidentiary footnotes ultimately undermine Percy's attempt to convince his readers the truth-value of his imaginative construction of Chinese culture by revealing his flawed thought process, a potential danger that Grafton identifies as accompanying the use of critical documentary footnotes (22-23).

China as England's Cultural Foil in *Hau Kiou Choaan* and the *Reliques*

While Percy is not entirely successful in contrasting what he purports to be the deficient morality of the Chinese to the Christian morality of the English, he does this so that he can elevate English nationalism. In this regard, *Hau Kiou Choaan* bears a great resemblance to Percy's much better-known work *The Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765), a three-volume collection of traditional ballads that he compiled in order to celebrate English literary tradition. That these two works are similar projects is first made evident by their external similarities. As Min notes in her comparison of them, both projects were initiated with Percy's fortuitous discovery of old manuscripts, one about to be burned in a fireplace at his friend Humphrey Pitt's house and the other in a pile of papers at a trader's residence ("Chinese Miscellanies" 309, 311). In addition, both manuscripts were unfamiliar texts that required Percy not only to edit the texts, but also to intervene as a cultural mediator so as to make them comprehensible to his readers through extensive footnotes (Min, "Chinese Miscellanies" 311). Porter adds to these similarities Percy's self-proclaimed role as "an impartial ethnographic observer, ostensibly concerned less with showcasing poetic merit than with exhibiting the cultures of distant times or places" (*Chinese Taste* 176). What seem to be insignificant similarities, however, amount to something more meaningful as Percy's ethnographic observations about ancient England and China both contribute to his project of promoting English nationalism. In the same way that he gives the English a moral advantage over the Chinese by critically comparing their different ethical standards in *Hau Kiou Choaan*, Percy grants the English Goths the status of being "the original inhabitants of Great Britain" and therefore the proud progenitors of British literature by contrasting their

culture to that of the Celtic Scots in the *Reliques* (Groom 68). That Percy's participation in this great eighteenth-century antiquarian debate about the origins of British literature was ultimately concerned with asserting England's cultural superiority is made evident by the following statement from Nick Groom: "There was nothing less at stake [in the speculations and researches into poetic origins] than a proof of cultural supremacy" (72). This demonstrates the fundamental similarity between Percy's Chinese novel and the *Reliques*.

Hau Kiou Choaan bears such a great resemblance to the *Reliques* that several critics actually see them as not only parallel projects, but also a connected one. Although Percy admittedly does not refer to China in the *Reliques*, Watt, Min, and Porter all assert that Percy implicitly posits China, not Celtic Scotland, as England's cultural foil in his better-known work.¹¹¹ Watt, for instance, draws attention to the fact that Percy refers to "the same criteria of cultural comparison – religious practices, writing, and the condition of women" in both works, thereby preparing for his celebration of English culture in his later work with his negative assessment of Chinese civilization in *Hau Kiou Choaan* (106). Min and Porter, on the other hand, are more specific in that they home in on Percy's misunderstanding of Chinese language and consequent negative estimation of

¹¹¹ The more commonly accepted view is to see James Macpherson's Celtic Scotland in his Ossian poems as opposing Percy's Gothic England in the *Reliques*. For example, in his monograph on Percy's *Reliques*, Groom devotes an entire chapter to examining the alleged rivalry between Macpherson's Celtic bards and Percy's Gothic scalds and the different ways Macpherson and Percy validated their different poetic genealogies (61-105). He writes: "The literary-antiquarian debates of the eighteenth century were all to a degree with the ethnographical origins of culture and society: the invention of language, letters, and poetry. In Britain, these issues focused on two particular areas: ascertaining the original inhabitants of Great Britain, and tracing their descendants. Macpherson and Percy were both concerned to establish the pure racial origins of their material, but the ways in which they went about it were radically different [in that Macpherson sought evidence of ancient voices in oral fragments and Percy focused more on printed manuscripts]. Each argument developed in a way that legitimized one poetic lineage and excluded the other" (68). This leads Groom to characterize the *Reliques* as not only "an example of the literary-antiquarian taste, an early attempt to assemble the nation's literary inheritance, and an influential anthology of popular verse," but also "a resounding response to Macpherson's *Ossian*, a reinvention of the Gothic, and ultimately a manifesto for a new poetics of the source" (104).

Chinese poetry, which he begins to formulate in the footnotes and addenda of *Hau Kiou Choaan* and fully develops in his later Chinese work *Miscellaneous Pieces Relating to the Chinese* (1762).¹¹² Min examines how Percy comes to develop in these works a “complex theory of the Chinese language as essentially divided between an underdeveloped orality and an overdeveloped script,” which he consequently uses to explain the inability of Chinese poetry to “embody an impassioned, expressive orality” due to its lack of “a proper alphabetic ‘vehicle’ for its expression” (“Chinese Miscellanies” 315, 316). Min asserts that “by defining poetic value primarily in terms of ‘artless’ voice,” Percy “[gives] native British antiquity an aesthetic and moral advantage over the artifices of Chinese antiquity” (“Chinese Miscellanies” 317). In addition to tendering a similar argument about how Percy draws on his misunderstanding of Chinese language to imaginatively reformulate the barbarous qualities of ancient English ballads as the basis of their literary merit and thereby elevate ancient English culture in the *Reliques*, Porter discusses how Percy again employs China as a cultural foil to argue for England’s literary progress (*Chinese Taste* 177-78, 182-83). In contrast to the alleged stagnation in China’s literature that he sees as arising from the difficulties in learning the arbitrary Chinese letters, Percy accordingly frames the *Reliques* as “an evolutionary fable,” in which he narrates “the gradual maturation of English genius” that eventually

¹¹² In addition to the novel, *Hau Kiou Choaan* includes the following: “The Argument or Story of a Chinese Play”; “A Collection of Chinese Proverbs”; and “Fragments of Chinese Poetry.” In his later Chinese work *Miscellaneous Pieces Relating to the Chinese* (1762), Percy compiles the following various essays and works: “A Dissertation on the Language and Characters of the Chinese”; “Rules of Conduct by a Chinese Author, from the French translation of P. Parrenim, Jesuit”; “*The Little Orphan of the House of Chao; a Chinese Tragedy*. From the French translation of P. de Premare, Jesuit”; “On the Chinese Drama, from Mr. Hurd’s Discourse on Poetical Imitation”; “Authentic Memoirs of the Christian Church in China, from the German of J. L. de Mosheim”; “Of the Art of laying out Gardens among the Chinese by Mr. Chambers, Architect”; “A Description of the Emperor’s Gardens and Pleasure-Houses near Peking, from the French of Frere Attiret, Jesuit”; and “A Description of the Solemnities observed at Peking on the Emperor’s Mother entering on the 60th year of her age, from the French of P. Amyot, Jesuit.”

culminates in the great literary works of Shakespeare, Milton, and Pope (Porter, *Chinese Taste* 182-83).

It is then by contrasting Chinese culture to that of the English that Percy is able to pursue his nationalistic project of reviving and celebrating England's cultural heritage.¹¹³ By chipping away at what he deems to be the façade of Chinese civilization in *Hau Kiou Chooan*, Percy is later able to postulate England as a nation, whose cultural history not only matches the antiquity of the Middle Kingdom, but also surpasses its cultural achievements in the *Reliques*. While Watt, Min, and Porter do an admirable job of connecting these two works in the aforementioned way by broadening their investigation to include Percy's discussions of Chinese religion, treatment of women, and language found in the footnotes and addenda of *Hau Kiou Chooan* as well as his later Chinese work *Miscellaneous Pieces*, I argue that a similar connection can be made from Percy's critical examination of the Chinese heroine's attributes. In continuation of my previous discussion of how Percy neglects to consider Shuey-ping-sin's ingenuity and attendant willingness to defy ancient Chinese traditions, he seems to suggest through his biased reading of the female protagonist that the Chinese are not only immoral, but also are slavish adherents to their ancient customs rather than independent agents capable of

¹¹³ The assertion that China, not Celtic Scotland, functions as England's cultural foil gains greater force when we consider Philip Connell's argument that Percy did not necessarily wish to pit Gothic England against Celtic Scotland in his *Reliques*, which he makes by drawing attention to how Percy was "studiously diplomatic" about James Macpherson's Ossian poems (176). According to Connell, Percy's diplomatic stance can be traced to his desire to dissociate himself from radical English patriots like John Wilkes, who satirized Macpherson's poetry to attack John Stuart, the third earl of Bute and to stop the growing influence that Scotland was having within Britain at that time (167-69, 179-81). Connell convincingly argues that Percy was successful in "reconcil[ing] his Gothicism theories of English cultural identity with a Moderate, Bute agenda of Anglo-Scottish cultural rapprochement" by adding Scottish ballads to the *Reliques*, adopting an "air of studied antiquarian impartiality [in the preface] ... to represent the *Reliques* as a site for the cultural reconciliation of ancient enmities [between the English and the Scottish]," and "elid[ing] the distinction between Celtic and Germanic cultural traditions" in his historical essay "On the Ancient English Minstrels" (176-78).

critically assessing the legitimacy of their traditions.¹¹⁴ As we can see in the preface, Percy's negative portrayal of the Chinese is instrumental to his nationalistic aim of promoting English literary culture, for he uses the Chinese people's submissive spirit and fear of innovation to explain the "littleness and poverty of genius" he sees in their literary works (1: xii): "The abjectness of their genius may easily be accounted for from that *servile submission, and dread of novelty*, which enslaves the minds of the Chinese, and while it promotes the peace and quiet of their empire, dulls their spirit and *cramps their imagination*" (1: xiii, my emphasis). Such a bold statement lays the groundwork for Percy's *Reliques*, in which he uses the ballads of Gothic scalds to reconstruct the history of English literature and elevate its status. The rebellious Goths not only demonstrate themselves to be exempt from such failings of the Chinese, but also embody the imaginative freedom that has presumably enabled the English to differentiate their ancient poetry from that of the Chinese and to continue their literary progress as manifested in their present literary works of genius (Watt 103, 105-06, Porter *Chinese Taste* 182-83).

It is interesting to note here that Percy appropriates the Goths for the purpose of self-legitimation, further demonstrating the similarities between him and the Jesuit missionaries I observed in the previous section. If we saw earlier Percy replicating the Jesuits' error of disregarding evidence when attempting to substantiate his interpretation of Shuey-ping-sin and the culture she represents, we also see him adopting their key strategy of erasing cultural differences, which he previously pinpointed as an indication

¹¹⁴ In the index, where Percy alphabetically catalogues the "dark" and "bright" sides of Chinese national character, the adjective "slavish" prominently features as one of the characteristics comprising the former category (4: 259). Whereas he designates specific page numbers from the novel to illustrate such "dark" attributes of the Chinese, he simply writes *passim* for "slavish," indicating that numerous references to this particular trait can be found throughout the text (4: 259).

of the unreliability of their accounts. Similar to the way that the missionaries stress the proximity between the religious beliefs of the English and those of the Chinese, Percy highlights the proximity between the English and the Goths so that he can ultimately narrate a triumphant account of England's cultural progress. Given his earlier condemnation of the Jesuit missionaries and their negligence to critically compare themselves with those of a different culture, it is somewhat ironic that Percy appropriates the same strategy he denounces the Jesuits for using.

Yet Percy seems to have greater success in demonstrating England's cultural superiority in the *Reliques* than in *Hau Kiou Chooan*. Considering that this is predicated on his imaginative constructions of English minstrelsy and Chinese culture, Percy's limited success in authenticating the latter has important ramifications for his nationalistic project. As I argue in the previous section, he experiences difficulties in persuading his readers of the validity of his interpretation of Shuey-ping-sin, for there are too many details in the Chinese novel that do not adhere to his reading. Yet strangely enough, Percy does not freely modify the main text of *Hau Kiou Chooan* as he does with the ballads in the *Reliques*. This is either a lesson that he has yet to learn in 1761 and will later implement in his 1765 publication or, in my opinion, a maneuver he is unable to execute with the Chinese text. In his "micro-bibliographical" study of *The Reliques*, Groom examines how Percy worked with multiple textual sources in his search for ballads that would grant access to Britain's cultural past (17, 119-121).¹¹⁵ According to

¹¹⁵ In the preface, Percy enumerates the multiple manuscripts he has consulted for his project: "a large collection of ancient English ballads, near 2000 in number, which [Samuel Pepys, secretary of the Admiralty in the reigns of Charles II and James II] has left pasted in five volumes in folio"; "a small collection of ballads, made by Anthony Wood, in the year 1676, containing somewhat more than 200"; "a multitude of curious political poems" contained in the archives of the Antiquarian Society at London; "a large treasure of ancient English poems in MS" preserved in the British Museum; and other private collections, including "one large folio volume which was sent by a lady" (*Reliques* 1: xi-xii).

Groom, Percy did not see any of the texts including the famed Folio Manuscript as being “an authoritative foundation for the *Reliques*,” which gave Percy the liberty to modify the various texts as he saw fit in order to recover the ballads from “the corrupt documentary evidence” (121, 131). In other words, both the oral tradition of the ballads and their numerous textual variations legitimized Percy’s own textual interferences. While such interferences might entail only minor alterations such as modifying the ballad’s conventions of spelling and punctuation, they also sometimes verged on imaginative creations, for Percy would invent significant portions of the ballads (Groom 122-24, 128-29).¹¹⁶ Groom claims that this consequently enabled Percy to imaginatively create English minstrelsy, not unlike his attempt to imaginatively construct Chinese culture (61). Percy, however, is not able to make such substantial changes to the main text of *Hau Kiou Choaan* and therefore fails to authenticate his representation of the Chinese as being immoral and blindly adhering to their ancient customs. Unlike the oral ballads of the *Reliques*, the Chinese novel only exists in the form of the one textual manuscript that Percy received from Wilkinson’s relatives, granting it greater textual authority than Percy’s Folio Manuscript ever enjoyed. In other words, there are no other textual variations in England that would encourage his own radical variation should he choose to pursue it.¹¹⁷ This explains Percy’s limited alterations to the main text of *Hau Kiou Choaan*, for which he compensates with extensive footnotes that nonetheless do not violate the bodily integrity of the novel. Such intractability arising from the Chinese

¹¹⁶ For instance, Percy adds onto lines 147-48 of the Folio Manuscript (“he tooke his boate att the Lough Leuen / for to sayle now ou[er] the sea”) so that it looks like the following stanza in the *Reliques*: “<Has took his boat at the Lo> / ‘The winde was fayre, the boatman called, / ‘And William Douglas was readye’ / Hee tooke this boat at the Lough Leuen / For to sayle now over the sea” (Groom 129).

¹¹⁷ According to Chen, Sir John Davis produced a different textual version of *Hau Kiou Choaan* in 1829 by directly translating the novel from a Chinese manuscript (“Thomas Percy” 307). Even if this other version had appeared earlier than 1829, there still would not have been enough variations to allow significant changes made to the novel.

novel's textual authority is analogous to its power to generate an alternative account of Chinese culture that is as convincing as, or perhaps even more than the one Percy presents in his footnotes to *Hau Kiou Choaan*. By resisting his myriad attempts to manipulate (or even create) its text and the reader's response to it, the Chinese novel remains frustratingly out of Percy's control.

Perhaps Percy's failure to control the Chinese novel explicates the commercial failure of *Hau Kiou Choaan*. Although Chen argues for its positive reception by drawing attention to the translations it underwent in France, Germany, and the Netherlands, other critics are of the contrary opinion, understandably so when one considers the Chinese novel in relation to the immensely popular and critically acclaimed *Reliques* (Chen "Thomas Percy" 304, Watt 101, Min "Chinese Miscellanies" 317, Porter *Chinese Taste* 156).¹¹⁸ In addition to not selling well, *Hau Kiou Choaan* received harsh criticism from literary magazines, most notably the *Critical Review*.¹¹⁹ The publication records made

¹¹⁸ According to Watt, the 1,000 copies of *Hau Kiou Choaan* that were first printed in 1761 remained for the most part unsold (101). This contrasts considerably with the sale records of the *Reliques*. Among the 1,500 copies that were first printed in 1765, Groom states that 1,100 copies were sold by July of that year (7).

¹¹⁹ While the *British Magazine* calls the Chinese novel "curious" for being "a genuine Chinese performance," it ultimately criticizes *Hau Kiou Choaan* for "not [being] very entertaining" (2: 662). The *Critical Review* tenders a similar view, which it expresses in quite damning terms. Describing the plot as a "cold and uninteresting narrative of the amours of Tieh-chung-u ... and Miss Shuey-ping-sin," the reviewer claims to have "with some difficulty, and without falling asleep over it above five or six times, dragged through *Hau Kiou Choaan*" (12: 373). He concludes this harsh review with the following derogatory statement about the Chinese and their literary accomplishments (or lack thereof): "We indeed [do not] think this work can be of any other service, than to convince us that the Chinese are a dull, phlegmatic, ignorant, and illiterate people" (12: 380). Ralph Griffiths from the *Monthly Review* is more specific in his criticism of *Hau Kiou Choaan*: "An European critic, who expects to find in all works of imagination, a display of fine writing and masterly composition, will indeed be greatly disappointed in this performance. The Chinese appear to be an ingenious and a cunning people; but they are neither orators nor writers" (25: 431). Yet this does not entirely explain the novel's negative reception, since this is an assessment that Percy makes in the preface, warning the readers beforehand of its "littleness and poverty of genius" (1: xii). Moreover, Griffiths himself acknowledges that it would not be just "to judge of [the Chinese novel] by our rules for writing, and to determine by our own standard of taste" (25: 430-31). In fact, he asserts that this would be as "absurd" as "the London mob exclaiming at the dress and complexion of a foreigner" (25: 431). Given such statements from both Percy and Griffiths, I would like to tender another explanation for the novel's disappointing sales.

available by the *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* confirm its unfavorable reception with *Hau Kiou Choaan* only undergoing two editions in 1761 and 1774 and the *Reliques* undergoing four editions in London alone in the years 1765, 1767, 1775, and 1794.¹²⁰

While modern critics give varying explanations for the former's disappointing sales and reception, most likely due to the reticence of contemporary reviewers to identify what they found so unsatisfactory about the Chinese novel other than its dullness and deviation from English literary standards, Min tenders an argument that resembles mine in that she pinpoints Percy's inability to authenticate his representation of Chinese culture: "Percy was too obviously an amateur to be able to substantiate his claims [of the extreme artificiality and formality of Chinese poetry]" ("Chinese Miscellanies" 317). She specifically refers to his failure to identify and eliminate unreliable secondary sources such as John Turberville Needham, whose conjecture about Chinese characters originating from Egyptian hieroglyphs played a crucial part in Percy's theorization of Chinese writing and poetry, but was later quickly disproved ("Chinese Miscellanies" 317). While Percy's inept usage of his secondary sources may have been a reason for *Hau Kiou Choaan*'s negative reviews, his inept control of his primary source also seems to have contributed to the Chinese novel's commercial failure and consequent erasure from eighteenth-century English literary history.

¹²⁰ Milner-Barry and Powell question whether the second edition was ever published, but they acknowledge that copies of the reissued *Hau Kiou Choaan* do exist, albeit in limited numbers (214-15). They nonetheless claim that the reissue is not a second edition in the normal sense in that it still bears the date of its initial publication of 1761 and only includes an advertisement dated 1774 (215).

Coda

In conclusion, Percy's *Hau Kiou Chooan* attests to the pleasures and dangers of the imagination. While his narrative detailing the male protagonist's (and by extension, the English reader's) virtual travel through China allows the reader to derive imaginative pleasure and more important, attain an insightful understanding of Chinese culture from comparing himself to the Chinese heroine, it also runs the risk of derailing into what Percy would consider erroneous readings due to the imagination's unstable and unpredictable nature. This explains the added measures Percy takes so that his audience does not veer from his prescribed interpretation of the Chinese text and its characters, which we saw playing an integral role in his nationalistic project of elevating English culture. In addition to dictating how the English reader should consume the narrative, Percy endeavors to authenticate his interpretation of both the Chinese heroine and the national culture she represents by systematically examining various sources in his footnotes. It is in his use of critical documentary footnotes that we can witness an interesting transition in the generic classification of the text. By this, I mean that what begins as a work of fiction also starts to increasingly resemble a history in Percy's editing hands. Despite his employment of the novel's aesthetic distance from the senses to produce a truthful account of China, one that is not based in historical factuality and yet nonetheless conveys a "faithful picture" of its customs and manners, Percy also demonstrates his occasional deviation from aesthetic travel with his historicization of the Chinese novel, further attesting to the extensive formal experimentation the travel narrative, as a genre, partook in so as to narrate the "truth" during this period (1: xv).

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