

**AN ORIENT
EXHIBITED**
**The Exhibition of the Chinese Collection
in England in the 1840s**

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By

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ABSTRACT.

This thesis focuses upon the exhibition of Nathan Dunn's Chinese Collection of art and artefacts in London in the 1840s. The examination has been with a view to assessing the significance of the event in our understanding of cross-cultural representations in the nineteenth century. The first chapter traces the history and physical nature of the Collection, describing its origins in China, establishment in America and progress in England through to 1851. This is followed by an account of the extent of availability of Chinese culture here before the event, giving the context in which the audience would have perceived the display, and the likely points of reference they would have brought to it. The third chapter is a detailed analysis of a substantial sample of press reviews, which follows closely the preoccupations, techniques and vocabulary of the writers, bearing in mind the character of the exhibition as a representation of an enemy and 'Other' culture. The final chapter draws upon current thinking around exhibitions, from which ideas of the importance of the show within the histories of ethnological, object-based, and Eastern subjects in English scholarship and leisure have been attained. Whilst all the chapters address a wide range of material and literary data, each has been constructed with a keen awareness of the specific lines of inquiry generated by the Collection itself, and consequently the thesis maintains a tight chronological and conceptual form, dealing as far as possible with the direct historical demands and resources of the 1840s. The study concludes with a summary of the findings of the thesis in

the light of both contemporary retrospective evaluations of the exhibition and pertinent present-day thought.

INTRODUCTION: THE CHINESE COLLECTION.

The exhibition of Nathan Dunn's Chinese Collection in London in the 1840s is significant as the first single public display of Chinese 'life' and artefacts available to the English. One of the primary aims of this research is to examine the relationship between exhibitions and the countries and cultures in which they were and are constructed and displayed. The extent to which an exhibition might affect, as well as express or embody the preoccupations of the society in which it has been conceived will be considered, and the connection between the objects shown and the attending audiences will be addressed as a potentially dynamic interchange rather than as a straightforward opposition of observed and observer. To these ends, it will be essential to assess the Chinese Collection with a clear knowledge of its constitution, from the initial moment at which the objects were amassed until their eventual dispersal. The collection will be established as a single entity, wherein the unified identity of the display will be seen to be as important as the characteristics of the objects or groups of objects from which it was assembled. The parameters of 'exhibition' will therefore be taken to extend beyond a catalogue of the items, to include not only what sorts of objects were presented, but also what kind of environment was created by them, how long they sustained interest and by what devices (how the visitors were encouraged to inspect and perceive them), and indeed, what characteristics were expected of the visitors themselves.

CHAPTER ONE: NATHAN DUNN, THE CHINESE COLLECTION, AND ITS EXHIBITION IN PHILADELPHIA AND LONDON 1838-1851.

The Chinese Collection was created by Nathan Dunn (1782-1844), a Philadelphian merchant. Information about Dunn's interests and activities arises from three major aspects of his life: his membership of the Society of Friends, his occupation as a merchant in America and Canton, and his status as a prominent figure in the history of early nineteenth-century Philadelphia. In the first context, Arthur W. Hummel has written a biography of Dunn which lists the basic facts of his career,¹ and in the last Jean Gordon Lee has examined his cultural and mercantile activities in Philadelphia in detail.²

Born of Quaker parents on November 11th., 1782, near Woodstown, Salem County, New Jersey, Nathan Dunn was the youngest of five children. The first event in his career recorded by Hummel is his being received as a member of the Philadelphia Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends on October 21st., 1802.³ It appears that for the next fourteen years he was engaged in trade, for Lee cites entries from the Philadelphia city directories which list his addresses in apprenticeship and partnerships.⁴ In 1816 he had financial difficulties, and was disowned by the Philadelphia Meeting on November 28th. on the grounds of 'over-extension, alleged assignment of effects to secure some creditors,

¹ Hummel, A.W. 'Notes and documents: Nathan Dunn,' *Quaker History* 59, (1970), 34-39.

² Lee, J.G. *Philadelphians and the China Trade* Exhibition catalogue, Philadelphia Museum of Art (1985), 11-18.

³ Hummel, 34.

⁴ Lee, 14.

and insufficient evidence that he was qualified to see his error.⁵ In 1818 he sailed for China, and joined the community of Philadelphian merchants at Canton, where he remained until January 6th., 1831, when he left for London in the East India Company ship the *Canning*.⁶ He shortly returned to Philadelphia, where, for two years he maintained an interest in Canton through his partnership in 'Nathan Dunn & Co.'⁷ Around 1832 he began building his 'Chinese Cottage' in Mount Holly, but in 1838 had the opportunity to house the large number of objects he had brought back from China to greater advantage, as he established his Chinese Museum on the ground floor of the new Philadelphia Museum. In 1842 Dunn took the Chinese Collection to London, where it was set up in St. George's Place, Hyde Park Corner. In 1844, whilst it was still on display, Dunn went to Switzerland, and died there at Vevey on September 19th., 1844, aged sixty-two. He never married, and in his will bequeathed substantial sums amounting to half a million dollars to his half-sisters, nephews, nieces, and various charitable causes.⁸

Dunn's life in Philadelphia before going to China is well-documented by Lee. Of his residence at Canton during the 1820s,

⁵ Philadelphia Monthly Meeting Minutes, Department of Records, Yearly Meeting, Religious Society of Friends, Philadelphia, quoted by Lee, 14.

This has been interpreted as bankruptcy by the *Index of Quaker Biography* at Friends' House Library, London.

⁶ Low, *Harriet My Mother's Journal from 1829-1834* ed. Katherine Hilliard, (1900), 85.

⁷ An agreement between Dunn and his partners is indicated in the *Canton Register* (Jul. 15, 1833), cited by Hummel, 36.

⁸ Hummel, 38. Hummel states that the details of the will are complicated, but that Dunn's relatives were left more than \$10,000 each. No specification for the preservation or otherwise of the collection is given.

the China Coast literature of that time provides primary material through which the activities of the American merchants are accessible, and this is aided by several historical analyses of the structure of the Cantonese economy and society. If an accurate understanding of the sorts of objects Dunn collected and how he acquired them is to be formed, then some knowledge of his probable role in the China Coast community is useful. The economic history of Canton is extremely complex, and in the first decades of the nineteenth century its role as the sole site of western trade in China was becoming a major political issue for the English and the Chinese. By the late 1830s and '40s this had escalated into the Opium War.⁹ Military hostilities increased tension at Canton between the foreign and Chinese communities, to the extent that the social activities of foreigners were fairly restricted. The penal code of the Chinese state specified that private relationships between foreigners and Chinese were systematically guarded, and that personal environments were prescribed, assertions which were seen to be arrogant and implicitly unChristian by some English commentators. For example, in an account of the city of Canton the foremost China-coast journal, the *Chinese Repository* wrote:

'...all social and friendly intercourse is disallowed. The foreigner is seldom permitted to enter under the roof of his Chinese friend; and the native that allows it, acts contrary to the usages of the land, and except he is in authority or has influence with those who rule, expresses himself to reproach and

⁹ There is a considerable bibliography of the complicated events of the War. An appraisal of this literature and a summary of the chain of events is given in Twitchett, D., and Fairbank, J., *The Cambridge History of China: Late Ch'ing* (1978), part 1, chapter 4, 'The Canton trade and the Opium War'.

punishment..."foreign ladies can by no means be allowed to come up to the provincial city." And thus that which God has joined together, man here puts asunder.¹⁰

Similarly, Doctor Robert Morrison expounded:

'A foreigner must not buy Chinese books; he must not see their gazettes; no scholar, gentleman or official person must visit him. He must remain in his warehouse or factory, and be guarded by hong merchants, compradors, and coolies! Servants to attend on his person he must not have. The law of the province requires the *cook* and *coolies* whom he employs, to act the part of spies on his conduct...'¹¹

The laws were clearly not strictly adhered to, as Morrison concedes

'The law has done its duty in guarding against foreigners, and if the people would do theirs, the life of a foreign merchant in Canton would be insupportable. But, we are told, the laws are broken. True, they are not intended, even by those who issue them, to continue at all times in force...'¹²

This ambiguous relationship is crucial for an understanding of the nature of objects available for English and American engagement, and will be especially important in interpreting how Dunn's collection was presented and publicised. Whilst the laws were not actively enforced, social interaction between the Chinese and foreigners was officially illicit, a fact which must have had a bearing on their mutual perceptions. The consideration of such prohibitions as audacious suggests several western attitudes towards the Chinese. Whilst the law-makers at Peking were seen

¹⁰ *Chinese Repository* vol.2 (May1834-Apr.1835), 5.

¹¹ From an article written by Morrison on Negotiations with China, quoted in an obituary notice for him in the *Chinese Repository* vol.3 (May1835-Apr.1836), 422.

¹² Morrison, 423.

as authoritarian, a desire was expressed for friendly interchange with fellow-merchants, and for appreciation of their culture, interests which are themselves ambiguous, possibly stemming from a need for defensive knowledge, or, from genuine good will. What is important here, though, is that the laws were flouted, and to some extent foreigners did acquire insights into the lives of the Cantonese merchants, for whatever reasons. The restrictions do also mean that few reports of this participation were published, although the *Chinese Repository* did give a brief account of the homes of the Chinese, especially those who would have had freedom to socialise outside the law:

'Another class of dwellings, inhabited by a more wealthy but less numerous part of the society, are the residences of those in easy circumstances, who enjoy plenty, without any of the accompaniments of luxury...if allowed to enter some of those dwellings, more pleasing scenes will open before you, different enough however from the home of your childhood...The houses of a few of the most opulent in Canton are in no respect inferior, except it may be in the space they occupy, to the Imperial Palace.'¹³

One source of insight into the society which accompanied trading activity is the journal of Harriet Low (1809-1877), the young niece of a prominent American factory owner from Salem, Massachusetts. In it she describes the social lives of the wives and families at Macao, and provides the only specific references to Dunn's lifestyle to be found in the China Coast literature. It appears that Dunn had steadfastly remained at Canton during his years in China, as six months before he left she wrote:

¹³ *Description of the City of Canton* first published in the *Chinese Repository* 1834, reprinted as a separate volume, (1835).

'June 22nd.,1830.

After breakfast received some things from Canton, among them a splendid comb from friend Dunn, who has not seen a lady for eight years! He has come down to do us the honour of being the first ladies he has called on in China.'¹⁴

She also gives an indication of his personal taste and surroundings at Canton:

'January 25th.,1831.

Mr. Dunn took passage in the *Canning* for England after having been feasted, toasted, and cheered to his heart's content. He has the good wishes and good will of all who have known him in Canton. He is very fond of good living, and will have everything of the nicest kind, and is as particular in laying a cloth under the table to make it match the stripes of the carpet as ever Mrs. Ropes was.'¹⁵

One other entry mentions Dunn, in which Miss Low states that she had seen a portrait of him in the studio of George Chinnery (1774-1852), an Irish artist resident at Canton, and she describes it as 'A most perfect likeness.'¹⁶ From the oblique impression gained of western society at Canton in the 1820s and 1830s from the China Coast periodicals and Low's journal, some idea of Dunn's life there can be imagined. He was evidently financially comfortable, meticulous, and had a reputation for propriety. It is significant that he was referred to as 'friend' Dunn, in spite of his rejection from the Society of Friends in Philadelphia, indicating either a conscious wish to be identified with the Quakers, perhaps

¹⁴ Low, 67.

¹⁵ Low, 85.

¹⁶ This entry is in the manuscript copy of her journal now in the Library of Congress, Washington D.C., cited by Hummel, 36. The painting is now in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the gift of a descendant of Dunn's, Mrs. Joseph Gaskill of New Jersey.

conforming to the general identity of his fellow Philadelphians,¹⁷ or a perception that he still adhered to the principles of the Society. For the purposes of this examination of his collection, however, most striking is that no reference is made to his having an interest in art or in Chinese material culture. The emergence of the Collection comes only with his return to America in 1831.

Lee states that Dunn stayed in London for a few months after leaving Canton, and that whilst there acquired 'the nucleus' of a library and print collection, before sailing to Philadelphia in October 1831 in the *Monongahela*, a ship owned by another American merchant, Thomas Pym Cope.¹⁸

Dunn's return to America and the Chinese Museum in Philadelphia.

Why Dunn left China is not apparent. He still had debts in Philadelphia, and now had the means to pay them off, which might be a plausible explanation. The *Index of Quaker Biography* actually states that soon after returning, in 1832, he gave a dinner for all his creditors, at which each found a cheque for his repayment under his plate.¹⁹ Although his motives for returning are not clear, his feelings on doing so are recounted in letters written by his former associates at Canton. His friend John R. Latimer wrote to his sister on March 28th., 1831, shortly after Dunn sailed:

¹⁷ Hummel, 35. Hummel states that in correspondance he was addressed as 'Friend Dunn' and signed himself 'Thy Friend.'

¹⁸ Lee, 14.

¹⁹ Friends' House Library, *Index of Quaker Biography* (cumulative, ongoing), no specific source given.

'When leaving us I saw he was depressed and asked the reason. He answered "Why John, I am about returning to Philadelphia so changed in appearance that none will remember me, and certainly I shall know but few when I land."'²⁰

Harriet Low also refers to a letter written by Dunn to John Reeves (1774-1856), a fellow-traveller on the *Canning*, from which she summarised that 'He does not like the manner of living, that he is freezing to death and that the help is no help at all.' However, Dunn did soon become acclimatized, as Matthew C. Ralston, a Philadelphian, wrote to Latimer in Canton on August 3rd., 1832: 'N.Dunn is living a few miles from the city, living in quite a rational way, and appears to be happy; he has been paying off all his debts, both capital and interest, and has established an excellent name.' Dunn's setting up residence a few miles from the city is the point at which he has been first acknowledged by historians of the cultural life of Philadelphia, and by architectural historians. From 1832 he built for himself a 'Chinese Cottage' at the corner of High Street and Bartram Avenue in Mount Holly,²¹ a large house in 'Chinese' style, of which John Notman of Philadelphia was architect.²² Goldstein points out that several Philadelphians had already created architectural structures inspired by the trading experience with China:

'Other Philadelphians did not stop at having just a few Chinese artifacts around the house. They had their buildings designed and constructed in the Chinese style, with chinoiserie inside and out. Five examples of such building styles in the Philadelphia area

²⁰ This and the following letter to Latimer are cited by Hummel, 37.

²¹ Hummel, 37.

²² Lee, 15.

were Van Bramm's "China Retreat," Croydon, Philadelphia, 1796; John Markoe's Summerhouse, Philadelphia, 1806, and John Latimer's, Wilmington, Delaware, 1838; Peter Browne's Philadelphia pagoda, 1828; and Nathan Dunn's "Chinese Cottage," Mount Holly, New Jersey, 1832.²³

It is notable that the term 'chinoiserie' is used to describe these buildings, as the extent to which differentiation was made between genuine Chinese art and artefacts and those made in their style will be a seminal issue in the examination of how Dunn's collection was perceived. Conner states that Dunn's residence was described as 'semi-oriental', an adage which he considers fair, 'since the curious pinacles and serrations were not specifically Chinese.'²⁴ The building still stands in Mount Holly, remodeled, and used as a school for girls.²⁵

But if Dunn's residence was not a totally original spectacle in Philadelphia, and if Chinese artefacts were owned by many returning traders, he was yet to provide a unique opportunity for engagement with 'Chinese' culture there: the establishment of an integrated public display of Chinese 'life' in the form of his Chinese Museum. Lee shows that Dunn was approached by Escol Sellers, a grandson of Charles Wilson Peale (?-1827), who had originally set up the Philadelphia Museum Company, and was founder of a large natural history collection. Sellers was on the new board of directors of the company, and suggested that Dunn house his collection in the planned new Philadelphia Museum to

²³ Goldstein, J. *Philadelphia and the China Trade 1682-1846: Commercial, Cultural and Attitudinal Effects* (1978), 75.

²⁴ Conner, P. *Oriental Architecture in the West* (1979), 176.

²⁵ Lee, 15.

mutual advantage.²⁶ Dunn put up \$20,000 security for the land on which it was built, and Peale's collections occupied the two upper floors from July 4th., 1838. Dunn installed his objects on the ground floor and leased it for \$1,600 per annum. It is from this moment that the first indication that Dunn had been collecting artefacts whilst in China becomes apparent. Several accounts of the exhibition in Philadelphia are available, including formal catalogues which were sold at the museum. Enoch Cobb Wines, a Quaker Minister, wrote a volume 'for Mr. Dunn,' entitled *A Peep at China*,²⁷ which served as an informal narrative through the collection, commenting on Chinese manners and customs with little description of the objects; simultaneously William B. Langdon produced a more orderly catalogue listing the exhibits, and also providing historical and popular facts about the Chinese nation and people.²⁸ Although Langdon's volume was more formal and actually declared itself a catalogue, the relationship between the two volumes and the collection is unclear. The last paragraphs of both guides are identical, as the following conclusion from Wines' guide appears word for word in Langdon's Philadelphia catalogue, and those he subsequently wrote for the exhibition in London:

'When the missionary shall find an auxiliary in the stainless life of every compatriot who visits the scene of his labours, for purposes of pleasure or of gain,- when he can point not only to the

²⁶ Sellers, C.S. *Mr. Peale's Museum: Charles Wilson Peale and the First Popular Museum of Natural Science and Art* (1980), 273-4, cited by Lee, 16.

²⁷ Wines, E.C. *A Peep at China, in Mr. Dunn's Chinese Collection, with Miscellaneous Notices Relating to the Institutions and Customs of the Chinese, and Our Commercial Intercourse with Them* (Published for Nathan Dunn, 1839).

²⁸ Langdon W.B. "*Ten Thousand Chinese Things.*" *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Chinese Collection* (1839).

true maxims and sublime doctrines proclaimed by the Founder of his faith, but to the clustering graces that adorn its professors,- then indeed will the day dawn, and the day-star of the millenium arise upon the world!²⁹

As both works were published at the same time, and both commissioned by Dunn, it is impossible to suggest who was first responsible for these lines. It could be that the books co-existed, or were commissioned in succession. What is significant is that the sentiments expressed by both writers were maintained in catalogues throughout the duration of the collection, in Philadelphia and in London, and were evidently intergral to Dunn's aims in showing it. Wines' friendly account begins with a description of the opening evening of the museum, on December 22nd., 1838, recounted by Lee:

"Friend Dunn" entertained " a select party of his friends, over a hundred gentlemen," including "artists, mechanics, editors, and...a goodly representation from all the learned professions...".'

She also gives the dimensions of the room from "*Ten Thousand Chinese Things*"": 'A room measuring 163 feet by 70 feet with "lofty ceilings, supported by 22 neat and substantial wooden pilasters" housed his display.'³⁰ Goldstein states from *A Peep at China* that there was a total of 1,200 objects and natural history specimens, and in addition 'several hundred paintings by Chinese artists working for the export trade.'³¹

²⁹ Wines, 152, and Langdon, *Descriptive Catalogue* (1839), 169. It could be suggested that Wines' status as a prominent Quaker Minister in Philadelphia would have enhanced Dunn's favour in the city, and that Langdon had the authority of a friend and colleague from his time in China, giving Dunn dual credibility.

³⁰ Lee, 16.

³¹ Goldstein, 78.

Further information about the appearance and construction of the display is afforded by personal accounts of it surviving in diaries and journals. Benjamin Silliman, Professor of Chemistry at Yale, visited the museum as it was being set up, and gave his impressions of it in his journal. Writing at New Haven in January, 1839, he first introduces Dunn as a man of integrity and cultivated privilege

'who, it will be admitted by every one on the spot, had conducted himself toward all classes in a manner to win their esteem and confidence...he soon discovered that it was in his power to obtain favors not usually granted to strangers. One after another he procured, either by purchase or as presents, those rare and costly articles constituting his collection'³²

and then describes the initial appearance of the exhibition:

*'The entrance partition, of Chinese work, forms a vestibule, through the centre of which you enter a great saloon...with a double colonnade; to the right and left of which are the numerous cases containing specimens of all that is rare, curious, or common, to be procured in the celestial empire.'*³³

Like Wines, Silliman gives little of the actual arrangement of the objects, but identifies the major attractions and the general categories into which the glass cases were divided:

'Accurate likenesses in clay.- The visitor is first attracted by the accurate and characteristic whole size figures of various rank, from the mandarins to the coolies, from women of distinction to those sculling their boats on the rivers. These are in number seventy or eighty, and were made by a very experienced artist in this line, from living subjects...the effect of this department is to exhibit to the spectator the inhabitants of China as they really

³² Silliman, B. *Mr Dunn's Chinese Collection in Philadelphia* (1841), 3.

³³ Silliman, 4.

exist. Great care was taken in procuring the likenesses, and about three years of the time of the proprietor were occupied in bringing them to perfection...many conspicuous characters of China Street, &c. will be recognized at once by those who have been to Canton.'³⁴

The other groups of exhibits listed and discussed are: Porcelain and earthenware manufacture; Agricultural and other instruments; Models of boats, bridges and Summer houses; Paintings; A Chinese room (reconstructed in an alcove at the east end of the saloon); Furniture, books, &c.; Natural History; Minerals; Shells; and Miscellanies, of which he says

'The jos-houses, pagodas, articles of virtu, of ornament, of stone, of jade, of ivory, bamboo, wood, metal, rice, &c., are so numerous that we can only allude to them.'³⁵

Silliman's entry concludes in praise of Dunn, and of the relevance of the exhibition:

'Space is wanting to perfect this notice of a collection highly creditable to the taste and liberality of the proprietor, and valuable to our country. No where else can we see so complete an exhibition of this interesting nation.'³⁶

A critical issue for Dunn's representation of 'China' is how far the collection consisted of items manufactured in or for Canton itself. It has already been shown that the community at the port was characterised as a site of cultural interchange between the foreigners - Englishmen, Americans, Dutch and Portuguese (who had first settled at Macao, and of whom there was an important Jesuit contingent) - and the Chinese, and that their relative

³⁴ Silliman, 6.

³⁵ Silliman, 16.

³⁶ Silliman, 17.

relationships were informed by economic, political, and religious factors. The vast majority of China was in fact totally inaccessible to the traders and settlers, although they were able to obtain certain Chinese goods brought into Canton. The *Description of the City of Canton*, in its account of the internal trade of China, described the goods which were brought there from other provinces, listing silks, rice, fish, salt, fruits, vegetables, wood, silver, iron, pearls, cassia, betel-nut, green and black teas, camphor, sugar, indigo, tobacco, paper, lacquered ware, cloths, mineral products, fans, pencils, wines, dates, hams, drugs, skins, ginseng, raisins, deer's flesh, spirits, musk, brass, precious stones, gold, quicksilver, tin, birds, peacocks' feathers, lead, incense, honey, hemp, and china ware.³⁷

From the first, the collection was promoted and perceived as an encapsulation of the entire Celestial Empire, one visitor entitling his account *A Nation in a Nutshell*.³⁸ The exhibition was praised for its comprehensiveness, as Meyer writes:

'...the Collection which Mr. Dunn made during his twelve years residence in the East, is not of the arts and productions of any particular city or province, but of an entire nation. *He has enclosed a whole people in glass cases, and classified them...*'³⁹

His particularly effusive account further suggests that the collection could offer a fuller experience of China than an actual visit there:

'Believe me then, when I add, that it is no fiction of fancy - no departure from truth - no prompting of exaggeration to assert, that a man may learn more of China and the Chinese in a single

³⁷ *Description of the City of Canton*, 60.

³⁸ Meyer, Brantz *A Nation in a Nutshell* (1841).

³⁹ Meyer, 19.

visit to Mr. Dunn's Collection, than could be acquired by a month's reading, or even in a voyage to Canton.'⁴⁰

This assertion was reiterated by Daniel Bowen in his guide to the history and sites of Philadelphia:

'Every lover of RARE Curiosities, and every one who also takes pleasure in accurate knowledge, will here find, in a few hours, that which cannot be procured, from reading, views from engravings, or even an *actual visit to China*.'⁴¹

In this way the collection was perceived to offer an experience of China which exceeded that to be gained from a visit to Canton. In other words, it was believed that it provided objects from the interior of the empire, or at least objects which were not available to less privileged and diplomatic men than Dunn. His friendliness with the Chinese is constantly emphasised, especially that with the merchants known to foreigners as Ting-Qua and Hou-Qua.⁴² But again, it has been shown that such friendships were not straightforward, and without any evidence of the sorts of artefacts possessed by the Chinese with whom Dunn associated, it is impossible to prove the extent to which he had or had not procured items from the interior. An English visitor, James Silk Buckingham, was convinced that Dunn did have contacts inside China: 'Not content with what he could procure at Canton, he had agents for collecting objects of interest in Nankin and Peking,'⁴³ but regardless of the lack of further reference to these agents, there is no doubt but that they must have been Chinese. There

⁴⁰ Meyer, 27.

⁴¹ Bowen, D. *A History of Philadelphia* (1839), 86.

⁴² Meyer, 19.

⁴³ Buckingham, J.S. *The Eastern and Western States of America* (1842), 44.

are, however, some hints in the catalogues and reviews that a large proportion of the exhibition specifically represented Canton. Silliman's insistence that the 'real-life' figures were recognisable as inhabitants of Canton indicates that the most prominent attraction did so. The most numerous single type of exhibit cited by Goldstein was paintings, and their status as 'Chinese' is also ambiguous. For whilst they were executed by 'native artists', he states that those artists were working for the export market, and thus it cannot be assumed that they represented the art of the interior. In this way, the insistence upon Dunn's endeavour to be realistic and his intimacy with the Cantonese undermines the status of the display as representative of the whole of China. Crucially, though, the Philadelphians perceived it as such, and the success of the exhibition rested on the criteria of encapsulation:

'whether we examine the Collection as careless observers, or in the spirit of critical enquiry - still, we cannot fail to be impressed with a conviction of its completeness as a whole.'⁴⁴

The reviews are valuable not least because of their characterization of Dunn's activities at Canton, although it is not clear if Silliman, Meyer, or Bowen had actually known Dunn in China. Silliman indicates that Dunn was assisted in forming at least one part of the collection by another Philadelphian:

'A young gentleman of Philadelphia, well known there as an enthusiastic naturalist, Mr. William W. Wood, son of Mr. William Wood, made his way to Canton in search of objects of interest, in the reasonable expectation of bettering his condition. Mr. Dunn at once sought his aid to perfect his collection, and employed his valuable time for a very considerable period.'⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Meyer, 18.

⁴⁵ Silliman, 14.

The elder Wood has been identified as a popular tragedian actor from Philadelphia.⁴⁶ Dunn's young assistant, William Whiteman Wood, was to become a prominent figure in Canton, renowned for his sketching ability, his introduction of photography to the China Coast, and primarily for his role as the first editor and compositor of the *Canton Register*, the first English language newspaper in China, setting up his press in November, 1827.⁴⁷ He was also for a time romantically involved with Harriet Low.⁴⁸ Bowen reiterates that Wood had aided Dunn. He also acknowledges the role of Langdon, but does not specifically state that he had been at Canton:

'The City of Philadelphia, and the public generally, are largely indebted to the very enterprising PROPRIETOR of this wonderful COLLECTION, as well as to Messrs. W.W.WOOD, and WILLIAM. B. LANGDON, and other gentlemen, who have afforded their AID, in perfecting the SCIENTIFIC ARRANGEMENT, of this unparalled COLLECTION.'⁴⁹

In later catalogues, Langdon himself states his long-term relationship with Dunn: 'The author of this hasty introduction, speaks from many years personal knowledge of Mr. Dunn, in China, and in the United States. He was intimately acquainted with him in both countries...'⁵⁰ He was later to play an important

⁴⁶ Hummel, 37.

⁴⁷ *Description of the City of Canton*, 109; account of English presses in China, *Chinese Repository* vol.2 (May 1834-Apr. 1835), 6.

⁴⁸ Low, *passim*.

⁴⁹ Bowen, 83.

⁵⁰ Langdon, *Descriptive Catalogue* (London, 1843), 13; see Appendix I. for the whole of Langdon's introduction from this catalogue.

part in the display of the collection in England, when he was appointed curator, as indicated in the London catalogues, and it is unfortunate that few clues are available as to his identity and background. He does not appear in the *Index of Quaker Biography*, and the lists of foreigners resident in China published by the *Chinese Repository* begin only from 1836, and he is not mentioned in them, presumably having sailed to America in 1837 at the latest.⁵¹

In Langdon's catalogue Dunn's original motives for collecting objects is stated:

'The design at first, was merely to collect a few rare specimens for his own gratification; but the appetite grew with what it fed upon, and thus we may, without exaggeration, describe the result as the "Chinese World in Miniature."⁵²

Again, the personal nature of the collection was seen to enhance its credibility as an intellectual and uncommercial enterprise:

'this apparent perfection, so seldom found in collections of any kind - might, I think, be attributed to the fact that Mr. Dunn, regardless of expense, accumulated his superb variety in the spirit of a connoisseur, as a private Museum, for his own pleasure and that of his friends - and not with any view to its general publicity.'⁵³

Evidence for Dunn's philanthropic activities can be found in his patronage of Haverford College, the Philadelphia House of Refuge, and the Laurel Hill Cemetery.⁵⁴ However, once made available to the public, the exhibition was certainly a commercial enterprise,

⁵¹ These lists were published for the years 1836, and 1841-1851 inclusive, in vols. 5, and 10-20 of the *Chinese Repository*.

⁵² Langdon, *Descriptive Catalogue* (1843), 13.

⁵³ Meyer, 18.

⁵⁴ Lee, 16.

and a successful one. Bowen reported that it drew audiences from outside Philadelphia itself: 'This Collection is already so well-known, OUT OF THE CITY, that parties, frequently are formed, in neighbouring cities, and villages, purposely, to visit it'.⁵⁵

Lee suggests that about 50,000 copies of Langdon's catalogue were sold within two years of its publication.⁵⁶ In early 1842, in spite of there still being six years to run on Dunn's lease of the Philadelphia Museum, he and Langdon transported the whole collection for exhibition in London.

The transportation of the Chinese Collection to England, 1842.

Langdon states that Dunn was encouraged to show the collection in London by specific requests from eminent Englishmen:

'The proprietor has been induced to transport it to England, at the suggestion of many of the most influential, scientific, and learned persons of the British metropolis and kingdom.'⁵⁷

Those persons are not named, and there appear to be no clues as to who they were. One institution which was interested in exhibitions was the Royal Society of Arts,⁵⁸ of which Benjamin Silliman was a corresponding member,⁵⁹ but there are no letters from him held by the Society which mention the Chinese

⁵⁵ Bowen, 86.

⁵⁶ Lee, 17.

⁵⁷ Langdon, *Descriptive Catalogue* (1843), 15.

⁵⁸ Hudson, D. and Luckhurst, K.W. *The Royal Society of Arts, 1754-1954* (1954), 192-4, shows that small exhibitions of art and manufactures were held at the Society's house in the 1840s.

⁵⁹ Silliman appears in lists of corresponding members in the *Transactions of the Royal Society of Arts* in the 1830s and 1840s.

Collection. Two Englishmen certainly visited Dunn's museum in Philadelphia, and expressed their admiration for it. Joseph Sturge viewed the collection in 1841, and visited Dunn himself at the Chinese Cottage. He was particularly impressed by what he perceived to be the philanthropic motives behind it:

'A beneficent Creator has implanted within us a thirst for information about other scenes and people. To be totally devoid of this feeling would argue, perhaps, not merely intellectual but moral deficiency. Such being the case, the founder of the "Chinese Collection" deserves to be regarded as a public benefactor, for, by spending a few hours in his museum, with the aid of the descriptive catalogue, one may learn more of the Chinese than by laborious perusal of all the works upon them that have ever been written.'⁶⁰

Yet Sturge was evidently not overtly responsible for its coming to England, for in a note at the end of his review he wrote that 'While the above was passing through the press, I have learned that this interesting collection has arrived for exhibition in this country.'⁶¹ James Silk Buckingham also visited the exhibition, and devoted a whole chapter of his account of the States of America to it.⁶² He wrote that the museum was the 'most beautiful and perfect of its kind, perhaps, that exists in the world,' and felt 'a longing desire' to have it transferred to London. He was sure of its favourable reception in England,

'where it would gratify ten times the number of persons that it can do here, and where the visitors would, I think, feel more pleasure, from the more sensitive and ardent temperament of

⁶⁰ Sturge, J. *A visit to the United States in 1841* (1842), 62.

⁶¹ Sturge, 67.

⁶² Buckingham, 42-73.

Europeans generally, compared with the coldness and indifference of the Americans.'⁶³

His account is the only available comment that hints at an alternative reception of the display in Philadelphia, as he observes the visitors:

'here, though I saw many during my stay, who were visitors for the first time, I did not observe instance of any emotion. The only observations that escaped the lips of any were to the effect that several of the articles were very "neat" or very "pretty;" while the greater number contented themselves with a very hurried glance along the room, remained but a short time in it, and were soon either satisfied or fatigued...its probable return of interest or profit from the daily receipts of admission, were much more frequently the subject of the visitor's calculation, than any estimate of the degree of Civilization which all this betokened...'⁶⁴

He suggests reasons as to why Dunn should maintain the collection in Philadelphia, however, being 'ambitious enough to desire that his labours should enjoy their deserved reputation in his native city,' and rich enough to have turned down an offer of \$100,000 from King Louis Phillipe of France for the removal of the display to Paris.⁶⁵ Like Sturge, Buckingham acknowledged that the collection had come to London during the publishing of his book, but does not indicate that he was instrumental in its transfer:

'This desire is now gratified, as Mr. Dunn has brought his beautiful Collection to England...These details of my visit to it in Philadelphia, and the impressions which the inspection of its content left...will, I hope, have the effect of inducing many to visit it...'⁶⁶

⁶³ Buckingham, 42.

⁶⁴ Buckingham, 43.

⁶⁵ Buckingham, 70.

⁶⁶ Buckingham, 43.

The incident of the King of France's offer is otherwise unsubstantiated, but it appears that any wish to keep the collection in America had been overridden by 1842. The mysterious identities of the Englishmen with whom Dunn communicated before bringing the collection to London renders his motivation for doing so oblique. It is possible that his evident desire to restore his reputation at Philadelphia had been fulfilled; one member of the Philadelphia Meeting that had disowned Dunn in 1816 was a member of the board of managers which received his gift to Haverford College.⁶⁷ He had long since withdrawn his business interests in Canton, and had no financial compulsion to remain in Philadelphia. Langdon hesitantly acknowledges Buckingham's observation that Dunn enjoyed the personal prestige of having his hard-sought objects on display, and desired the appreciation of a wider audience:

'He naturally feels a deep anxiety for the favourable verdict of the intelligent and discerning upon his labours. And although by no means solicitous for notoriety, or that noisy fame which so frequently accompanies mere excitement and clamour, he would be false to himself and to human nature, should he prove indifferent to the kindly expressions of that valuable portion of society who seek to make their fellow-creatures better, wiser, and happier.'⁶⁸

It is clear that Dunn did have a preoccupation with philanthropy, in accordance with his sympathies with the Society of Friends. But in 1842 the significance of bringing the exhibition to London far exceeded Buckingham's simple expectation that Europeans

⁶⁷ Lee, 18.

⁶⁸ Langdon, *Descriptive Catalogue* (1843), 15.

would be less mindful of the profits Dunn was or was not incurring; that could have been proven by taking it to France.

From 1839, the precarious situation which had existed between the English traders and Chinese government during the 1830s had escalated to the extent that the community at Canton was becoming the object of daily coverage in the national press. The Chinese authorities had become increasingly intolerant of the British opium trade, and Britain had responded aggressively by sending a naval fleet to restore its commercial freedom. The English force, far superior in technology and experience to the Chinese, succeeded, and in 1842 the Treaty of Nanking was signed, effecting the official opening of the five ports of Canton, Amoy, Foochow, Ningpo and Shanghai for British trade. The conflict attracted world-wide attention, and in early 1842 was the subject of prominent debate in both the British newspapers and the House of Commons.

Whatever the response of the British public to the issue, the war did not escape extensive comment, and the pertinence of bringing an exhibition of the hitherto aloof nation of China cannot have been coincidental to Dunn's decision. But it is still not clear whether he interpreted that moment as one ideal for educating the barbaric English, or one from which he could actively profit, personally or financially. Langdon's introduction opens with the general observation that

'At no period in the history of the world, has the attention of civilised nations been so fully directed towards China, its early history, and modern position, as at the present moment.'⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Langdon, *Descriptive Catalogue* (1843), 11.

but places that interest more in the context of an increasing Christian missionary zeal, and the opportunity afforded by the war for its successful fulfillment, than in that of the stirring of English nationalism:

'an empire, vast and wonderful, and hitherto barred from the general diffusion of missionary knowledge, is about to be thrown open to all who are willing to take the Bible in their hands, and engage in the delightful work of winning their fellow-creatures to the true source of both temporal and external happiness.'⁷⁰

It is not possible to establish the most powerful forces behind Dunn's leaving Philadelphia, but he could safely have assumed an audience for his exhibit. The safest reasoning would be that he did desire some education of the English public - after all he had steadfastly refused to partake in the opium trade whilst in China⁷¹ - but that he knew that in doing so he would remain financially secure.

Dunn was certainly aware of the risks of transporting the collection; Buckingham states that at the time of his visit it was valued at \$50,000,⁷² and for the trip to England it was insured for \$60,000.⁷³ The setting up of the exhibition in London involved a series of commercial transactions and strategies. Dunn used a

⁷⁰ Langdon *Descriptive Catalogue* (1843), 12.

⁷¹ In the Philadelphia catalogue, Langdon wrote: 'No amount of pecuniary advantage can make that right which is wrong in itself. Opium is a poison, destructive alike of the health and morals of those who use it habitually, and ,therefore, the traffic in it, under any circumstances, is nothing less than making merchandise of the souls of men...The introduction of opium into China is contrary to the laws of the land, and consequently can be effected only by an act of public and gross dishonesty.' *Ten Thousand Chinese Things* (1839), 118-119, quoted by Lee, 15.

⁷² Buckingham, 43.

⁷³ Hummel, 38.

building in St. George's Place, on the south side of Knightsbridge, near Hyde Park Corner, the history of which has been traced by Elizabeth Phillips.⁷⁴ The decision to show the collection near Hyde Park in the 1840s was itself significant. Until the nineteenth century Knightsbridge had formed a suburb on the edge of London, famous for its inns and places of entertainment, and Magistrates' courts at which inquests on suicide cases of drowning in the Serpentine were performed.⁷⁵ Hyde Park had been a notorious site for centuries.⁷⁶ At Hyde Park Corner, Apsley House, built in the 1770s, had been bought by the Duke of Wellington from his brother in 1817. The house was dubbed 'No. 1. London,' and the area became a sight of homage to the most popular national hero of the age.

Phillips has shown that in 1827 John Phillips, a corn merchant of Knightsbridge, acquired the piece of land on which the Chinese Gallery was to be built, including some of the old buildings which were formerly the Foot Guards' Barracks. He himself lived in Wilton Place, a road off Knightsbridge, and owned several sites in the area. Langdon states in the catalogue that Dunn 'has built a spacious edifice'⁷⁷ to house the exhibition, but it is probable that this refers to the pagoda-like structure which

⁷⁴ Phillips, E. 'A Pagoda in Knightsbridge,' *Journal for Pre-Raphaelite Studies* vol.4, (1983-1984), 37-42. Phillips' interest in the building arises from the first showing of a Pre-Raphaelite painting in London there in 1849, Rossetti's *Childhood of Mary, Virgin*. She is the great great granddaughter of John Phillips, who owned the site.

⁷⁵ Phillips, 38.

⁷⁶ Several histories of the park have been written. J. Harding's *Hyde Park from Domesday Book to Present Times* (1886), is especially concerned with the sensational events which had taken place there.

⁷⁷ Langdon, *Descriptive Catalogue* (1843), 15.

formed the facade. A press review stated that the building had been erected by Messrs. Grissell & Peto, and confirmed that it was indeed adapted from the Old Foot Guards Barracks near the White Horse Tavern.⁷⁸ Another review gave an idea of the external appearance of the facade, describing it as

'a showy Chinese pagoda, of two stories, with green roofs, edged with vermilion, and supported by vermilion pillars, bearing on its front a hieroglyphical inscription, signifying "ten thousand Chinese things."⁷⁹

Langdon indicated that the design of the pagoda was based on a model of a summer-house in the collection.⁸⁰ It is most likely that Dunn was leasing this building from John Phillips, as there is no record of Dunn in the Knightsbridge rate books for 1842, whilst Phillips was being assessed between 1842-1855 for a large building referred to as 'A Museum.'⁸¹ Elizabeth Phillips has located a watercolour view entitled *A Panorama from Mr. Hudson's Park House at Albert Gate*, painted and exhibited at the Royal Academy by George Vawser in 1847, and now held by the Guildhall Library.⁸² She provides an annotated reproduction of the picture, pinpointing the Chinese Gallery [Fig.1]. From this its proximity to Apsley House can be seen, and the obvious impact of the facade in the sober St. George's Place. Some idea of the scale and appearance of the 'pagoda' is afforded by the illustration of it which formed the frontispiece of Langdon's *Descriptive Catalogue*

⁷⁸ Review from the *Morning Post*, quoted in the *Chinese Repository*, vol.12, (Jan.-Dec. 1843), 562.

⁷⁹ *Old Humphrey's walks in London and its Neighbourhoods* (c.1842), 328.

⁸⁰ Langdon, *Descriptive Catalogue* (1843),17.

⁸¹ Phillips, 39.

⁸² Guildhall Library, W2/KNI.

[Fig.2.]. The construction of the facade entailed a device designed to tantalize and entice the public:

' Upon the left-hand side of the inclined plane, extending from Hyde Park Corner to Knightsbridge, and towards the extremity of St. George's Place, a grotesque erection has lately sprung up...as the work proceeded, many were the guesses at the purpose for which it was intended; and, to feed the suspense of the many thousands who daily pass this thoroughfare, the work was covered with canvas until just completed.'⁸³

This visual strategy was accompanied by advertisements and notices in the press for the exhibition's imminent opening. In the *Literary Gazette*: on May 14th., 1842, it was reported that

'The building recently erected at Knightsbridge for the reception of an extensive collection of models, instruments, productions, &c., &c., to illustrate the curious habits, industrial and social, of the ancient people of the celestial empire, is rapidly approaching completion...the entrance...will be the representation either of a Chinese pagoda or a Joss-house.'⁸⁴

and on May 21st. it carried an advertisement that the 'Chinese Collection will be shortly opened for public inspection.'⁸⁵ Further publicity was solicited for the collection by the holding of three separate private views in the few days before the opening, which lent the exhibition a degree of respectability not shared by many

⁸³ *Illustrated London News* Aug. 6, 1842, 204.

⁸⁴ *Literary Gazette* May 14, 1842, 333.

⁸⁵ *Literary Gazette* May 21, 1842, 349.

of the numerous other spectacles of London.⁸⁶ *The Times* reported that on June 18th., 1842, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert 'visited and inspected the contents of the museum, and expressed great satisfaction with what they saw,'⁸⁷ and the Queen wrote in her journal for that date that

'The collection is splendid and very complete, down to the smallest details. There were life size figures, dressed in various beautiful costumes, all done in China, indeed one could almost have fancied oneself in China.'⁸⁸

She also stated that Dunn had made the collection 'in order to have it exhibited in aid of Charities,' and that the profits made were to be applied to charitable purposes. This statement appears to seal Dunn's intentions as primarily philanthropic. *The Times* also related that on June 20th. and 21st., 'the places was thronged by the nobility,' and that on the 22nd. there was a third view for 'men of literature and science.' The notice also observed the relevance of the exhibition, and the almost dutiful obligation to learn more of the Chinese, reiterating the intentions laid down in the catalogue:

'It is a complete illustration of the manners, customs, and in many respects, of the history and religion of an immense empire

⁸⁶ Lee reports that Dunn had also approached the Duke of Wellington in an attempt to interest Parliament in the exhibition, and although Wellington declined, he wrote to Dunn and assured him of 'the stature and real importance of your Museum, the interest which it excites, and the desire felt on all quarters to visit it...You may rely upon it that all who can find leisure to visit it will do so without any pains or trouble on your part.' Letter dated July 26, 1842, Society Collection, HSP., quoted by Lee, 17.

⁸⁷ *Times* Thursday Jun. 23, 1842, 6.

⁸⁸ Quoted from Queen Victoria's Journal, now in the Royal Archives, by Phillips, 38.

but imperfectly known to Europeans. It ought, and no doubt will be visited by many thousand persons - indeed, by all persons at all interested in the events which are now in development in China.'⁸⁹

A week after the opening of the exhibition on June 23rd., an advertisement was placed in the *Literary Gazette* signed by one 'FRED. S. THOMAS, Agent.,' which indicated the scope of the exhibition and gave practical details:

'This extensive Collection, consisting of objects exclusively Chinese, comprising upwards of Fifty Figures, as large as life, in their Native Costume, from the highest Mandarin to the Mechanic; and replete with Articles illustrative of their Manufactures, Habits, and Domestic Arrangements, is NOW OPEN for Public Inspection.

Admission, 2s. 6d. Open from Ten in the Morning till Ten at Night.'⁹⁰

There is an important detail in this notice which gives a clue as to the expected nature of the visitors to the collection. At 2s. 6d., the exhibition, was among the most expensive in London at that date.⁹¹ In one of the many guide books to London produced in 1851 for the benefit of visitors to the city for the Great Exhibition, Arthur Freeling gave a list of prices for the principle attractions in the metropolis, and it is clear that one shilling was the standard charge for admission to most sights and institutions. This was the fee for the British Institution, Burford's Panorama, the Cosmorana and diorama in Regent's Park, the Casino at Lowther Arcade, the Polytechnic Institution, the Royal Academy, the Society of British

⁸⁹ *Times* Thursday Jun. 23, 1842, 6.

⁹⁰ *Literary Gazette* Jul. 2, 1842, 471.

⁹¹ A review in *John Bull* stated that yearly season tickets were available at 10s. 6d. Quoted in the *Chinese Repository* vol.12 (Jan.-Dec. 1843), 570.

Artists, the Society of Painters in Watercolours, the Zoological Gardens at Walworth and in Regent's Park, Madame Tussaud's, and the Walhala at Leicester Square. Certain public sights such as Westminster Abbey were free, and others, like the Tower of London, 6d. Only the Hall of Rome in the Haymarket was also 2s. 6d., and the Great Exhibition itself, after the initial three weeks, could be seen from Monday to Thursday for 1s.⁹² It seems reasonable to conclude that Dunn's aim in pricing admission so highly could be explained by the cost of transporting the objects to London leasing the building from Phillips, and constructing the new facade. But it is also possible that he wished to establish the serious nature of the display, to seal its respectability, by differentiating it from other exhibitions which shared some of his methods of presentation. Madame Tussaud's, for example, in presenting three-dimensional models of real people, forms an immediate comparison, but at that date the figures there were presented with no context, and could not be seen to illustrate the lives and histories of its subjects as Dunn sought to. For example, in 1843 a waxwork was exhibited of a prominent Chinese protagonist in the opium conflict, Commissioner Lin - confirming the popular interest in the War - and was placed in a room with, among others, John Wesley, Baron Swedenborg, Shakespeare, Mrs. Siddons, and Paganini.⁹³ By far the most popular attraction at Madame Tussaud's was the Chamber of Horrors, which cost an additional 6d. for entrance.⁹⁴ The tactics employed by that museum to gain custom were intended, primarily, to induce

⁹² Freeling, A. *Sights, Amusements and Exhibitions of London* (1851), 7-28.

⁹³ Madame Tussaud, *Guide to Madame Tussaud's* (1843), 23.

⁹⁴ Freeling, 23.

curiosity, as the only information given about Commissioner Lin and his consort aside from Lin's participation in the war is that Chinese ladies preserve their nails in bamboo cases at night.⁹⁵ The constant insistence in American reviews and catalogues of Dunn's collection that he had diligently sought correct information and was intimate with the Chinese must surely be seen as a reaction against such anecdotal observations, and a desire to educate more than to amuse. The extent to which he was successful will be examined in subsequent analysis of reactions to the exhibition.

Once the collection was open interest was maintained through publicising favourable press reviews, for example on posters, one of which survives, and is held by Westminster Public Library [Fig.3].⁹⁶ Pamphlets of press coverage were also produced, one of which was sent to the editor of the *Chinese Repository* at Canton, together with a copy of Langdon's catalogue.⁹⁷ Some indication as to how the exhibition looked, or at least how it was portayed is offered by two illustrations executed shortly after its opening. The Guildhall Library Department of Prints and Drawings holds an image of the interior of the exhibition in the form of a steel-engraved vignette, which has led the Guildhall staff to believe that it was originally intended as a

⁹⁵ Tussaud, 22.

⁹⁶ Westminster Public Library, local history section (Victoria), in a scrapbook of miscellaneous posters and ephemera relating to popular events in London in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

⁹⁷ *Chinese Repository* vol.12 (Jan.-Dec. 1843), 71: 'This volume has been sent to us by our friend, Mr. Dunn, accompanied by a note, and a pamphlet containing "Opinions of the press on the Chinese Collection."'

letterhead [Fig.4.].⁹⁸ If this is the case, then it was surely commissioned by someone closely associated with the collection (although no name or address appears), which would suggest that it is reasonably accurate. The representation shows the length of the saloon seen from just inside the entrance, with the structure of the display resembling that described at Philadelphia, being a long room divided into three by a double colonnade flanked with cases on either side, and terminating with a reconstruction of a large Chinese apartment. The writer of a rambling guide to London, *Old Humphrey's Walks*, described how the visitor entered the saloon after passing through the facade:

'You enter the pagoda by a flight of steps to a vestibule, and then ascend a larger flight, after which, pursuing your course along the length of the lobby, you soon find yourself in a goodly apartment of a novel kind, more than two hundred feet long, broad enough and high enough to form a most agreeable promenade.'⁹⁹

The catalogue states that the precise dimensions of the room were 225 feet in length, and 50 in width, and that the cases containing the life-size figures ran the length of the right-hand side of the saloon.¹⁰⁰ From the illustration, however, little impression can be gained of the contents of the individual cases, except that on the immediate right was a case displaying three large Buddhas, on the left a reconstruction of a silk-mercantile's shop, and about half-way down the room two large state chairs in glass cases faced each other. The atmosphere of the scene is serene, with only a few

⁹⁸ Guildhall Library Department of Prints and Drawings' Ephemera Collection, Pr/W2/HYD/cor.

⁹⁹ *Old Humphrey's Walks*, 328.

¹⁰⁰ Langdon, *Descriptive Catalogue* (1843), 17.

visitors portrayed, all quietly absorbed in the exhibits or catalogues. Freestanding cases in the centre aisle appear to be symmetrically arranged, and in the centre foreground is a table on which there are catalogues. The second illustration available is one carried by the *Illustrated London News* on August 6th., 1842 [Fig.5].¹⁰¹ This image is taken from exactly the same angle as the one held by the Guildhall Library, but depicts the exhibition as more crowded, while the table at the front has been replaced by small benches. Again the visitors are without exception carrying catalogues. Here the left foreground is occupied by a case of ceramics, in place of the mercer's shop, and this questions the layout, but could be accounted for by the practices of periodical illustration at that date. The *Illustrated London News* used wood engraving as its illustrative technique, whereby an initial sketch would be made at the scene of the subject, transferred onto one or more woodblocks, worked on by several engravers, and ultimately re-assembled for the final image.¹⁰² This practice implies that the more expensive and personally-commissioned steel-engraving is more likely to present a true representation. The precise resemblance of the composition to the Guildhall one may even indicate that an official image was passed on to the engravers and elaborated, but the *Illustrated London News* depiction is nonetheless important as an image that was presented to the public. The illustrations do not give an accurate idea of the distribution of the exhibits, but afford a general impression of the

¹⁰¹ *Illustrated London News* Aug. 6, 1842, 204.

¹⁰² An account of the division of labour in the practice of wood-engraving in the nineteenth century is given by Webb in 'Explorations in the theory and practice of wood engraving in the nineteenth century,' in RCA/V&A MA Course *Studies in Design and Technology* (1988), 300.

appearance of the display. Using them together with the accounts of the exhibits in the catalogue, the layout of at least part of the collection can be gained. Langdon requests that the visitor 'commence with the screen at the entrance, and then take the large wall cases on the right hand in the order in which they are numbered, commencing with the temple.'¹⁰³ The order of the cases containing the scenes of life was as follows: Chinese Temple and Colossal Idols; Visit of Ceremony to a Superior Mandarin; Two Priests of Tao and Fuh and a Gentleman in mourning; A Chinese *conversazione* ; A group of Chinese ladies; Actors; Itinerant barber and blacksmith; Chinese gentleman in a sedan chair; Interior of a Chinese gentleman's summer residence. Approximate indications of how these figurative tableaux looked are provided by the engravings which illustrated the *Descriptive Catalogue* [Figs. 6-14.].¹⁰⁴ On the left-hand side were cases containing lacquered-ware, articles of vertu, china-ware, models of Chinese boats, pagodas and summer-houses, a china-ware shop, a silk-mercantile establishment, tobacco and opium pipes, swords, sporting implements, a pair of State chairs, lanterns, ornithology, conchology, silver-ware, enamels, carved ivory, porcelain, silk and cotton, cutlery, musical instruments, books, edible birds' nests, fruits, teas, rice, shoes and caps, butterflies, fish, tools, and numerous miscellaneous articles. The arrangement of these cases is not indicated, except that in the illustrations they all appear to be glass. As for the nature of the individual objects themselves, the catalogue does not describe them in great detail, and this has

¹⁰³ Langdon, *Descriptive Catalogue* (1843), 17.

¹⁰⁴ No engraving of the case containing the actors was provided in the *Descriptive Catalogue* .

prevented their being traced to the present day. Typical entries run:

'CASE XII. CHINA- WARE.

192 & 193. Flower-pots of a peculiar ware, resembling cast iron.

194 & 195. A pair of porcelain flower-pots.

196 & 197. Pair of beautiful flower jars.

198. Square porcelain vase.

199. Sweetmeat vessel.¹⁰⁵

'CASE XXVI. ARTICLES OF VERTU.

458. A gentleman's pocket mirror, the back of which is of ivory, with beautifully carved figures.

459. A gentleman's pocket-mirror, with back of sandal-wood, carved in a similar manner.

460. Richly carved ivory case, to contain a gentleman's snuff-bottle.¹⁰⁶

much of the catalogue consisted of commentary in which the exhibits could be contextualised, giving, for example, details of Chinese etiquette and traditional manners under the entry for the case containing the reconstruction of the 'visit to a superior Mandarin,' and historical information about religion in China in the account of the models of the Priests of Tao and Fuh.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Langdon, *Descriptive Catalogue* (1843), 64.

¹⁰⁶ Langdon, *Descriptive Catalogue* (1843), 86.

¹⁰⁷ Langdon, *Descriptive Catalogue* (1843), 21-29.

The progress of the exhibition, 1843-1846.

In 1843 the exhibition underwent some radical changes. The *Times* reported on November 13th., 1843, that the collection had been closed for a short time, 'in order to undergo the necessary reparations and alterations for the ensuing season.'¹⁰⁸ A major innovation was gaslighting, which the *The Times* stated would 'greatly assist the splendour of the gilding and decorations of the gallery.' Further exhibits were added, but the only one specified was 'a very curious figure of Confucius, which the admirers of Chinese relics will be gratified with.' The most important change in terms of understanding the aims and potential impact of the show was that the price of admission was lowered to 1s., which the *Times* believed would render 'the inspection of the contents of the collection accessible to almost all persons.' It may be that the lowering of admission was not uncommon after the initial period following the opening of an exhibition - again the organisers of the Great Exhibition operated a similar strategy of having a scale of prices - but it is also possible that the educative principles on which the display was founded could not be fulfilled if only a small minority of the population could afford to go. In addition, the price of 1s. would have had commercial bearing, for it would have given access to a large market consisting of people for whom spending 1s. say once a week, would have been an established leisure activity.¹⁰⁹ It is important to note, however, that the price of 1s. would not have

¹⁰⁸ *Times* Monday Nov. 13, 1843, 5.

¹⁰⁹ An account of the habitual practices of exhibition going in the 1820s, '30s, '40s and '50s is given by R.D. Altick, in *The Shows of London* (1978), chapter 17, 221-235.

made the collection available to 'all classes,' as Greenhalgh has shown that this was affordable at best to artisans, and would not accommodate the whole of the labouring classes. In the case of the Great Exhibition, he has suggested that this was deliberately prohibitive, 'the shilling fee being fixed so as to guarantee that the lower reaches of the working class would be absent,'¹¹⁰ but without evidence of how much was expended in leasing and maintaining the Chinese Gallery, it is difficult to prove an ulterior motive of this kind for Dunn's exhibition.

Before the adjustments to the display, in January 1843,¹¹¹ Langdon had produced an enlarged catalogue entitled *Ten Thousand Things Relating to China and the Chinese*, which reissued exactly the descriptions of the exhibits in the *Descriptive Catalogue*, but included further accounts of the history, religions, customs, and industries of China.¹¹² His aim in writing this additional volume is laid down in a short advertisement on the first page, in which he states:

'the copious remarks contained in former Catalogues of the Chinese Collection having been so favourably received by the public (of which upwards of 80,000 copies have been sold), the author has been induced to increase the size of the present volume by the addition of much original matter, together with

¹¹⁰ Greenhalgh, P. *Ephemeral Vistas The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939* (1988), 30.

¹¹¹ The first review of it appears in the *Literary Gazette*, Saturday Jan. 14, 1843, 17. A second edition was published in April.

¹¹² Langdon, W.B. *Ten Thousand Things Relating to China and the Chinese: An epitome of the genius, government, history, literature, agriculture, arts, trade, manners, customs, and social life of the people of the celestial empire; together with a synopsis of the Chinese Collection* (1843); the exterior cover, frontispiece portrait of the Chinese Emperor, and title-page bearing the introduction 'Ten Thousand Things' in Chinese, illustrate the more elaborate production of the volume [Figs. 15 & 16].

information obtained by an abridgement of the latest and best authorities.'¹¹³

The authorities to which he refers are the large number of historical and informative books which had begun to be written about China from the 1820s. The most prestigious of these was J.F. Davis's *The Chinese: a general description of China and its inhabitants*, from which Langdon quotes extensively, and he also draws on Staunton, Gutzlaff, and Kidd.¹¹⁴ Again *Ten Thousand Things* would have placed the exhibits in the context of a comprehensive understanding of the Chinese, and maintained the collection as an illustrative tool towards that aim.

After 1843, however, events were staged at the gallery which sought to enhance the exhibition as a self-contained spectacle. On October 17th., 1844, the *Times* reported that the collection had been visited by his Royal Highness the Duke de Montpensier, and that it was the only museum in London to have been visited by the Duke during his stay in London. The report concludes that 'This highly popular museum...is now re-opened to the public, having recently been completely renovated,'¹¹⁵ but there is no indication as to whether this was referring to the refurbishing in 1843, or if the gallery had undergone further developments. On November 1st., 1844, an advertisement was placed in the *Times* which recounted 'the flattering approval of

¹¹³ Langdon, *Ten Thousand Things* iii.

¹¹⁴ Davis, J.F. *The Chinese: a general description of China and its inhabitants* (1836 and 1840); Staunton, G. *Miscellaneous Notices relating to China and our commerce with it* (1822); Gutzlaff, C. *A sketch of Chinese History, Ancient and Modern* (1834); Kidd, J. *China: its Symbols, Antiquities, Government, Customs and Superstitions* (1841).

¹¹⁵ *Times* Thursday Oct. 17, 1844, 8.

all classes in England and the United States' for the collection, and promoted musical evenings:

'H.R.H. Prince Albert's band will be in attendance on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday evenings, on which nights the porcelain Pagodas will be brilliantly illuminated.'¹¹⁶

It is interesting that in this notice the tone of promotion for the collection has shifted, as it describes the saloon as 'crowded with interesting novelties,' which implies a different enticement from the 'complete illustration...of the celestial empire' offered in the 1842 notices.¹¹⁷ In December, 1844, lighting effects were employed again to create an exotic atmosphere, as the *Times* announced that the exhibition would be reconstructing the Chinese festival of the 'Fete of the Dragon,'

'in a way as brilliant and effective as can be shown in a place of exhibition. The great lanterns are all lit up, and from the ceiling of the gallery is suspended an enormous dragon, the whole body and limbs of which are transparent, so that the lights within them make the huge monster one great illuminated mass. The effect is very good. The whole of the gallery has been improved by many minute arrangements, and it is now in an admirable state for the visitors at Christmas.'¹¹⁸

From this notice and the previous ones it can be seen that the exhibition was constantly invigorated with a view to sustaining its momentum, and that whilst the serenity of the display demonstrated in the Guildhall illustration had been displaced by a more lively approach, simultaneously the status of the exhibition was assured by its royal associations. At the closing of the

¹¹⁶ *Times* Friday Nov. 1, 1844, 3.

¹¹⁷ An examination of the significance of the changing nature of the event throughout the decade will follow in the final chapter.

¹¹⁸ *Times* Wednesday Dec. 11, 1844, 7.

exhibition it was reported that there were two Chinese youths in attendance, with whom the visitors could converse.¹¹⁹ Lee states that they were A. Sheng and A. Yow, 'who after the death of their sponsor, an English sea captain on route from Liverpool, were making their living by appearing in the Chinese museum,' but gives no source for this.¹²⁰ By such attractions the exhibition had become as much a place of entertainment as of education. This is not to say that the educational value of the display would necessarily have been considered diminished by the audiences, though, as the concept of entertainment in the nineteenth century very often denoted instructive activities which might today be incongruous. That instruction and amusement were capable of combination in a single space is demonstrated by the successful sales of at least two editions of *Ten Thousand Things* just as the nature of the display and public to whom it was accessible was becoming more populist.

In early 1844 Dunn had gone to Switzerland, and died there on September 19th. It is open to conjecture as to whether this was in any way contributory to the changing image of the event, and it is not clear how far Langdon was involved. Subsequent editions of the *Descriptive Catalogue* were sold into 1845, but this does not mean that the museum was still under his curatorship.

In late 1846 the exhibition closed. Tickets were issued offering two persons admission for the price of one shilling, two of which survive in the Guildhall Library Ephemera Collection.¹²¹

¹¹⁹*Times* Monday Oct. 26, 1846, 7.

¹²⁰ Lee, 18.

¹²¹ Guildhall Library Department of Prints and Drawings' Ephemera Collection, filed under 'Westminster/Hyde Park Corner.'

The tickets are dated September 9th., and October 14th., 1846, and stated a plausible reason for the removal of the exhibition, as one of them reads:

'TERMINATION OF LEASE
And
THE LAST OPPORTUNITY OF VISITING
THE
CHINESE COLLECTION,
HYDE PARK CORNER.
THIS HALF-PRICE TICKET
Will admit Two Persons
During the hours of 10 till 6; and from 7 till 10, upon paying
- SIXPENCE EACH. -
(AT THE CHINESE COLLECTION ONLY,)
ADMISSABLE UNTIL WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9TH, 1846.
ALL TICKETS OF PREVIOUS DATE STILL RECEIVED.
Will very shortly be removed. See Daily Papers.'

The *Times* reported that the proprietors were 'about to exhibit the contents in the various large towns and cities of the country,'¹²² and that they were still active in encouraging visitors by holding special events. The notice indicated that the exhibition was still well-attended, and had retained its unique appeal:

'...the company promenaded the long gallery for several hours, listening to the band that was in attendance...It was a repetition of what is termed the "Feast of Lanterns." The whole appearance of the place was brilliant, not to say, magnificent. The variety of colours and the splendour of the illumination produced an excellent effect... and which resembles nothing to be seen in any other exhibition in London.'

¹²² *Times* Monday Oct. 26, 1846, 7.

The Collection, 1846-1851, and other reconstructions of China in London in the late 1840s.

Aside from the *Times'* s assertion that the collection was intended to tour the country after leaving St. George's Place, there is a widespread belief amongst historians who are interested in Dunn that this was the case. Lee, Altick and Phillips all accord with this,¹²³ but no press reports or advertisements have been found to confirm it. Though not sufficiently substantiated, these suggestions would accord with the educative principle by reaching new audiences, and would fill a gap in the available chronology for the collection, but acceptance of this suggestion must be tempered by recognition that an undertaking to tour a show as large and valuable of Dunn's has no precedent or parallel in this period, and must ultimately be regarded as highly unlikely.

The next absolute indication of its whereabouts is that in 1850 the diminished Collection was bought by P.T. Barnum, and temporarily exhibited at his American Museum in New York. Barnum's autobiography indicates that he had increased the sensational appeal of the show through the addition of a Chinese Family sometime in 1850. He also states that it was by his initiative that the show was returned to London in 1851.¹²⁴ At this point a new catalogue was published, *The Exhibition of Nathan Dunn's Chinese Collection at the Celestial Palace, Albert Gate*, dated 1851. This catalogue indicates that the proprietor was now a Mrs. Ellis, and categorically states that this was not the

²³ Lee, 18; Altick, 294; Phillips, 39.

²⁴ Barnum, P.T. *The Life of P.T. Barnum, written by Himself* (1855), 201.

same exhibition as the one held at Hyde Park Corner. It is stated as compiled by William Langdon, but it is not clear whether this was entirely written by, or appropriated from, Langdon's original volume. A small article appeared in the *Illustrated London News* in May, describing the new impetus of the family:

'A pleasing addition has been made to the Chinese Collection, consisting of a Chinese lady, named Pwan-ye-Koo, with small lotus-feet only $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length, a Chinese professor of music, his two children (a boy and a girl), the *femme de chambre* of the lady, and an interpreter. The children are gay, lively, and intelligent, the lady herself agreeable and interesting, and the gentlemen civil and obliging. A Chinese concert forms part of the entertainment; the lady Pwan-ye-Koo singing a Chinese air or two, accompanied by the professor, who likewise treats the public with an exhibition of his vocal powers. The group is one that has much to commend it: it is picturesque and peculiar, and presents an image in high relief of the native manners of a Chinese family. The conduct of the domestic blended the humble and familiar in a significant manner: and there was an air of freedom, and a sense of mutual obligation manifested in the whole party, calculated to make a favourable impression on the spectator'.¹²⁵

It is not recorded how long the collection had been established at Albert Gate, but it is certain that it was dismantled by December, for from the 10th. to 15th. of that month, it was auctioned at Christie's. At the sale, the collection was called *The celebrated assemblage which formed the Chinese Exhibition, collected by the late Nathan Dunn, Esq.*, and was sold over five days in six-hundred and six lots.¹²⁶ Some of the lots consisted of

¹²⁵ *Illustrated London News* May 14, 1851; this account was accompanied by a portrait of the group [Fig.17].

¹²⁶ Christie & Manson, *Catalogue of the celebrated assemblage which formed the Chinese Exhibition, collected by the late Nathan Dunn, Esq.; Comprising fine specimens of porcelain, bronzes, rich silks, dresses, carvings in jade, &c.; And a collection of Natural History* Wednesday Dec.10 - Monday 16, 1851.

several items, but it is clear that the original number of 1,341 objects had diminished, and notably, the clay or wax figures which had inhabited the reconstructed scenes were absent. This might support Hummel's notice of inconclusive reports that some of the collection was destroyed by fire on being transferred to Edinburgh.¹²⁷ By far the most prolific buyer at the sale was the dealing firm of Hewett's, who acquired just under a third of the objects, but the firm has been insufficiently researched to enable any conclusions to be drawn about the subsequent destination of this part of the collection.

Between 1846 and the reappearance of the collection in 1851, three events took place in London which embodied the sustained belief that China and the Chinese were subjects of popular interest. An advertisement was placed in the *Illustrated London News* on August 21st., 1847, announcing the opening of a 'Chinese Collection' at Fairfield, Bow, which echoed some of the techniques that had been used in Dunn's display for representing China. It was housed in seventeen 'Monstre Carriages,' which constituted a 'GRAND SALOON.' It claimed that

'Chinese scenes are so faithfully reproduced, that the huge golden Gods in their mystic temple - the Emperor on his throne - the Mandarins in their costly homes - the Judge in his court - the Merchant in his shop - the host of Boatmen, Agriculturalists, Street Traders, and Mendicants; together with interesting domestic scenes, and curious paintings, may be seen almost at a glance.'¹²⁸

It cannot go unnoticed here that the scenes described resemble those that had been recently dismantled at the Chinese Gallery,

¹²⁷ Hummel, 37.

¹²⁸ *Illustrated London News* Aug. 21, 1847, 127.

and there is no absolute explanation for this. It could be that the figures from Dunn's display missing at the 1851 sale had been revived in reduced circumstances, or that this event was completely unconnected with his exhibition, but realised the potential for maintaining a popular display of China. Altick has suggested that this 'Collection' was of an entirely different nature from Dunn's, and devoid of credible links with China:

'Discounting the verbiage, one may doubtless assume that the "Seventeen Monstre Carriages" were actually ordinary showman's caravans thrown together at fairs, and that the "pictorial epitome" was either a group of crude paintings or a series of peepshows.'¹²⁹

This may be so, but the display was significant in relation to Dunn's exhibition at least in that it appropriated his title, denoting its popular currency.

In 1848, a more spectacular Chinese exhibit arrived in London. A Chinese junk, the 'Keying,' was sailed from Canton by one Captain Kellet, and brought for display to East India Docks. Visitors were encouraged on board, where there was a saloon which contained miscellaneous Chinese artefacts, and a guide was sold which gave details of the voyage, and some account of the objects [Figs. 18-20].¹³⁰ The guide stated that the junk had left Canton on October 19th., 1846, and arrived at Gravesend via America on March 28th., 1848. The arrival of the vessel was given wide coverage in the *Illustrated London News*, which published two articles and large illustrations celebrating the

¹²⁹ Altick, 294.

¹³⁰ *A Description of the Chinese Junk, "Keying"* (Printed for the author and sold on board the Junk, 1848) The following references to the nature and content of the display of the Junk are taken from this catalogue, 17-18; 5; 19; 23-31.

novelty of the exhibit [Figs. 21&22].¹³¹ The author acknowledged the Chinese Collection as 'a most interesting and valuable collection of Chinese curiosities,' but promoted the superiority of the voyage as a feat of extracting Chinese culture:

'These, however, were things which could be put into packing cases, and transported, with comparative facility, from one part of the world to another...not so with the acquisition of the Junk...The Chinese appear to have an almost insurmountable objection to part with their vessels to foreigners, except for the purposes of home trade...as soon as it was known that she was registered in ballast only...every effort was used to prevent the voyage.'

The vessel was manned by a Chinese crew, and carried on board a Mandarin of the fifth class, Hesing, and a painter, Sam-sing, to whom is attributed many of the paintings in the saloon. Of the other objects on display, there were cases containing musical instruments, and weapons, and other items such as scrolls, carved roots, hats, and lanterns were distributed around the saloon. Other miscellaneous objects were displayed on the upper and lower decks, and there were about 150 artefacts displayed altogether. The major emphasis of the guide, however, was the boat itself, and much of the catalogue and many of the exhibits recounted the voyage and invited comparisons with English sailing practices. The junk remained in the Thames until at least 1851, when Hesing made an appearance at the opening ceremony of the Great Exhibition, occasioning the apocryphal belief that he was unknowingly treated as the Chinese Emperor by Queen Victoria.¹³² The aims in bringing the 'Keying' to London shared little with Dunn's overtly intellectual preoccupations, and the

¹³¹ *Illustrated London News* Apr. 10, and Apr. 24, 1848.

¹³² *Times* May 2, 1851, cited by Altick, 460.

exhibits on board do not appear to have been selected with any view towards education, but the display of the junk between 1848 and 1851, together with the collection at Bow, maintained the exhibition of 'China,' in a variety of forms for a full decade.

A third instance of the Chinese being 'exhibited' in this period was the visit of a Chinese family to London in 1851. This event was extensively reported in the *Illustrated London News*, mostly because the family was given an audience with Queen Victoria at Osborne. On August 23rd. the paper described the family and the visit:

'THE CHINESE FAMILY AT COURT. - On Monday last, the Chinese family, recently arrived direct from Canton by the British ship *Lady Peel*, visited her Majesty, at Osborne, by the special request of the Queen, conveyed through Colonel Phipps. The party consists of a Chinese gentleman, named Chung-Atai, his two wives, his sister-in-law, and a Chinese female attendant...The family left London on Sunday afternoon, and sleeping at Radley's Hotel at Southampton, proceeded to the Isle of Wight by the mail steamer on Monday morning...The ladies, accompanied by Mr. Chung-Atai, Mr. Crawford, who was their fellow-passenger from China, and Mr. Lane, for many years resident there, proceeded to Osborne by her Majesty's desire, at half-past eleven...'133

The following week the journal printed an engraving of the family at Osborne [Fig.23], and gave more details of their visit to London, including their attendance at the Great Exhibition, and stressed the unique interest of their presence in London:

'THE great honour conferred by our most gracious Majesty, of an interview at Osborne Palace, last Monday week, of Mr. Chung-Atai, a Chinese gentleman, who, with his two small-footed wives and sister-in-law, lately arrived in this country from Canton, forms the subject of the accompanying illustration. It being the first instance of any Chinese family having enjoyed so high a

133 *Illustrated London News* Aug. 23, 1851, 238.

privilege, and the enterprising spirit being so remarkable which must have been exercised in order to enable them boldly to make up their mind to leave their own celestial country, and thereby overcome the strongly-rooted prejudices which exist in every Chinese mind, against allowing any lady of condition to leave China, render the event extremely interesting...'¹³⁴

The historical interest of this account is that there is no reference to the political topicality of the family's visit. In terms of the relationship of the visit to Dunn's show, it is clear that this family cannot have been that which was then participating at the Chinese Collection, as the latter were certainly employed initially by Barnum in America, and the documentation of the second family's arrival in England in August confirms this. The treatment of the family in the *Illustrated London News* is also significant because of its subjective emphases, and these will be discussed further in consideration of the attitudes towards China and the Chinese which prevailed during the second period of the exhibition.

The Chinese Gallery, 1846-1855.

After the vacation of the Chinese Gallery by Dunn's Collection in late 1846, it was used to house other exhibitions, none of which was connected with China. The gallery was variously known as the 'Chinese Gallery' and 'St. George's Gallery,'¹³⁵ and several advertisements and press notices have been located which indicate its function from 1847-1855. The *Illustrated London News* reported that in 1847 it displayed a prize-winning painting, *Christ's Baptism in the River Jordan*, and referred to the site as

¹³⁴ *Illustrated London News* Aug. 30, 1851, 269.

¹³⁵ Altick, 294.

the 'Gallery of the Chinese Exhibition.'¹³⁶ In 1848 and 1849 it was the site of two exhibitions held by the Free Society of Modern Art which had previously used the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly, of the first of which the *Illustrated London News* gave an illustration which offers a useful view of the interior of the saloon [Fig.24.].¹³⁷ It shows the paintings hung on canvas, or heavy cloth attached to the columns lining either side of the room, concealing the side-aisles in which Dunn had placed his larger cases. The gallery appears to have a pointed roof, constructed of glass panels. The exhibition of 1849 included the painting by Rossetti which interested Elizabeth Phillips, and has become renowned as the first public exhibition of a painting bearing the initials 'P.R.B.'¹³⁸ In 1850 the gallery held another display of foreign culture, this time of South Africa. Gordon Cumming, an obsessive big-game hunter, exhibited his trophies there, and in a derogatory review, the *Athenaeum* opined that the 'old Chinese Gallery' looked like 'a combination of a baronial hall and a furrier's shop.'¹³⁹ Altick states that in 1852 Cumming's collection was removed,¹⁴⁰ and that in 1853 a 'Kaffir troupe' was shown at the gallery,¹⁴¹ but that the 'South African Exhibition' was still there (possibly concurrently) in 1854 is suggested by its inclusion in an account of 'Panoramas and elegant places of amusement' in a

¹³⁶ *Illustrated London News* May 1, 1847, 127, cited by Altick, 294.

¹³⁷ *Illustrated London News* Jul. 29, 1848, 61.

¹³⁸ Phillips, 40.

¹³⁹ *Athenaeum* May 11, 1850.

¹⁴⁰ Altick, 291, cites a notice from the *Illustrated London News* from August, 1852, in which it is advertised that the exhibition is 'to be shortly removed.'

¹⁴¹ Altick, 294.

Pictorial Handbook of London of that date.¹⁴² Phillips recounts that as well as Cumming's show, in 1851 an artist Peter Phillips (not related to John Phillips) showed a diorama of Queen Victoria's tour of Ireland, and in 1852 a diorama of London on the day of the Duke of Wellington's funeral was exhibited.¹⁴³ She further states that at this time the site was known as St. George's Gallery. She cites a Turkish Exhibition, held in 1854, as the last event held in the gallery. John Phillips died in 1855, and the gallery was demolished; his son had a terrace of six houses and a carriageway built on the site. Phillips has traced the demolition of these houses to the 1970s, and has located the site of the Berkeley Hotel on the corner of Wilton Place and Knightsbridge as that of the original Chinese Gallery.¹⁴⁴

Phillips surmises from the fact that the gallery had been renamed by the early 1850s that the pagoda had been demolished after the close of Dunn's show. A history of Victoria Park in Hackney reveals that this was not the case, as the pagoda was sold to Hackney Council and erected on an island in the park's pleasure lake. Poulsen recounts in this volume how the pagoda was advertised and bought after the close of the exhibition, in 1847:

'Another exotic feature of the park, now unfortunately destroyed, was a charming Chinese summerhouse on the larger island of the boating lake. Always known as "the pagoda", it was

¹⁴² *The Pictorial Handbook of London. Comprising its antiquities, architecture, arts, manufacture, trade, social, literary and scientific institutions, exhibitions and galleries of art; together with some of the principal suburbs and most attractive localities* (1854), 700. It is also possible that such guides were not entirely up-to-date, and this could explain the absence of the Turkish exhibition cited by Phillips at this date.

¹⁴³ Phillips, 40-41.

¹⁴⁴ Phillips, 41.

not the tall many-storied tower usually associated with the name, but a single open pavilion with red upturned eaves and a little attic floor with an upper roof of its own. This curio was advertised for sale in 1847 as

"The entrance building to the Chinese Collection at Hyde Park Corner, taken after a correct model. It cost £800 to build, and is now to be disposed of. It is well worthy the attention of Noblemen and Gentlemen for country seats."

...it was purchased and installed on the island; £75 was spent in painting it "after the correct model" in red, blue and gold.¹⁴⁵

He then describes how the pagoda became a popular feature, and locates it firmly in the tradition of outdoor gentil *chinoiserie* architecture:

'The site was at once dubbed Pagoda Island. The public showed such interest in this strange structure that it was decided to allow access to it, and Pennethorne designed a flat "Chinese" bridge to cross the water. It resembled the Chippendale school of Chinese art, resting on four square piers with elaborate oriental capitals, and a balustrade of interlocking squares and rectangles, bearing wooden Chinese lanterns at intervals. Sketches of the park at this time show this delightful bridge spanning the lake to the tree-covered hilly island, with the fretted roof-ridge and curving red eaves peeping prettily above a weeping willow. A smaller rustic bridge connected the island with the further shore, and was later replaced by a delicate suspension bridge'.

Poulsen then offers a nostalgic account of the effect of the pagoda before its deterioration led it to be demolished in the 1970s, and this reveals the extent to which Chinese motifs retained the ambience of 'fairyland' into the twentieth century:

'Victoria Park was a great place for children then, as it is now, but more mysterious...We did not understand what was on the island in the "duckpond", where there was and still is a Chinese pagoda. The L.C.C. has now destroyed all the mystery by throwing

¹⁴⁵ This and the following descriptions are taken from Poulsen, C. *Victoria Park: A Study in the History of East London* (1976), 60-62; no source for the advertisement is given.

open the island by means of a bridge, but 60 years ago...we children thought that Chinese lived in the pagoda, and at night took care of the swans, ducks and waterfowl...'.¹⁴⁶

The origins of the Chinese Collection can be traced to the 1820s, when Dunn's enterprise was to assemble Chinese artefacts of his interest as a personal pursuit. The absence of any references to the objects whilst he was in Canton in the China Coast literature can almost certainly be taken to indicate that he did not display them publicly there, although from Harriet Low's commentary it appears that he was renowned as a man very much concerned with objects.¹⁴⁷ This is supported by the fact that Dunn had returned back to America seven years before setting up the Chinese Museum in Philadelphia, when the collection first took on a formal identity.

In England the context of the exhibition was one of pertinent current debate around China and the Chinese, and it has been shown that the display was moderated constantly to ensure sustained interest, which it seemed to achieve. The effectiveness of the exhibition in terms of the preconceptions about China which the audiences were likely to have brought to it, through examination of popular experience of Chinese life and artefacts, and later analysis of press reviews will reveal public reactions to this subject.

¹⁴⁶ Poulsen quotes this from Lansbury, George, *My Life* (1928).

¹⁴⁷ Concluding its review of the reports of the collection in 1843, the writer in the *Chinese Repository* stated that he had 'seen not a few of the articles before they were carried from China,' but there is no indication that this was in anything but private circumstances. *Chinese Repository* (Jan.-Dec. 1843), 582.

It was stated at the beginning that the motivation behind exhibitions can be as revealing as the objects they display, and in the case of Dunn it appears that his aims were primarily philanthropic, although he can be recognised as a shrewd businessman. His identity with the collection, and the perception of his extraordinary extraction of it from China was constant, indicated by the endurance of his name in the exhibition set up at Albert Gate seven years after his death, and by the recognition of the collection as the 'Celebrated Assemblage...of Nathan Dunn' seven years after his death, at the ultimate sale of many of the objects in 1851.

CHAPTER TWO: THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO EXHIBITING CHINA IN LONDON.

The essential aim of this chapter is to locate the cultural presence of China, the Chinese and Chinese artefacts in London in the period immediately preceding the exhibition of Dunn's Collection. One of the basic preoccupations of this entire examination of that event is to assess its historical status as the first venture to present China to the British public using objects exclusively. In order to establish its import and influence, an outline of the contemporary public perception of China will indicate to what extent Dunn was innovative in his choice of exhibits and mode of display. Further, this immediate context will be used to reconstruct possible expectations of the show amongst the visitors, which will inform the study of reviews and reactions to it in the following chapter.

A fundamental difficulty in exhibition history lies in the unrecorded nature of the audience, which precludes any close scrutiny of the infinitely variable experiences, interests and prejudices brought by individual spectators. The intention here, therefore, is not to assert and illustrate a universal or typical early-nineteenth-century knowledge of China, but rather to chart the currency of Chinese material culture and scope of interpretative imagery across several sections of London society. It will be apparent that the media through which experience was made available were many and diverse, and assessment of their primary interests will denote that these dictated their treatment of Chinese culture as a subsidiary.

Concentrating upon the perceptions of the audience themselves, it might be appropriate to address the broad sinological sweep - acknowledging a probable blurred

characterisation inspired from The Royal Pavilion to the Forbidden City and many sites between - but such an approach would not easily clarify the position of Dunn's exhibition therein. A method of differentiation and arrangement has been developed by looking at the structure of the event itself, as two simple and distinctive qualities point to areas of interest from which its visitors would have arisen: first, its subject, leading to institutions and individuals directly concerned with China and its productions, and second, its presentation as one of many popular commercial exhibits and spectacles offering education and entertainment.

From this an account will be traced from the sites which most closely resembled Dunn's own in terms of collecting and displaying Asian objects, such as national museums, through to pursuits and amusements which referred incidentally to Chinese culture, using stylised motifs and pastiches, such as the theatre. It should be stressed that no hierarchy of attitudes is assumed here, or implications that the popular mythologies around China were simplifications of institutionalised beliefs. Rather, the progression from elite to popular media serves to reflect the chronological development of Langdon's management as narrated in the previous chapter, whereby the initial presentation which courted educated appreciation was later transformed to place greater emphasis on wider audiences and showy attractions. Moreover, the sources used here have been utilised in order to attend the public, not private formulations of 'China' in the belief that popular stereotypes are at least as influential in establishing ideas of national identity across society as are respected philosophies and state policies.

An issue arising from the subject of publicity is the legacies of the presence of *chinoiserie* in Britain in the seventeenth, and especially eighteenth centuries. Whilst this phenomenon can be seen fundamentally as one propagated amongst the higher social levels - through private collections, decorative schemes and architectural commissions¹ - it raises the question as to how far more widespread recognition of 'Chinese' material culture actually focussed upon western appropriations and reconstructions. In addition to acknowledgment of the coexistence of western and Oriental artefacts, the consequently complicated composition of Chinese products themselves also gives rise to discussion of the 'authenticity' of the perceived culture of China.² In the light of Dunn's foregrounding of his display as authentic, the extent to which images and ideas were sustained from the eighteenth century and accepted as genuine until the exhibition will be acknowledged.

The comprehensive nature of Dunn's Collection has determined the wide range of media addressed in this chapter. Sources corresponding to the display of fine art, objects ephemeral and of great commercial value, and latterly people, together with the architectural erection of the pagoda and the narrative catalogues, have led to consideration of a spectrum of orientalism

¹ There are several books devoted to *chinoiserie*. The major works are: Honour, H. *Chinoiserie: The Cycle of Cathay* (1961), Impey, O. *Chinoiserie* (1977), Jarry, M. *Chinoiserie* (1981), Conner, P. *Oriental Architecture in the West* (1979).

² Aside from the attention given to *chinoiserie*, some scholars have addressed the nature of 'real' Chinese artefacts current in Europe at this time, notably: Clunas, A.C. *Chinese Export Watercolours* (1984), and *Chinese Export Art and Design* (1987); Conner, P. *The China Trade 1600-1860* (1986); Crossman, C.L. *The China Trade* (1972).

from the cheapest racist stereotypes to the loftiest missionary discourses. The period covered is, broadly, from 1800 until the exhibition was under way, but where early data has been studied, it has been with a view to highlighting transitions or degrees of consistency within specific media, leading to the position in the 1830s and 1840s.

It will emerge that although Chinese objects no longer had extensive private appeal, public attention to the nation was increasingly drawn by press reports of trade conflicts, political tension, and military action. Cultural treatments of China were therefore many in this period, but were essentially those of individual concerns with no ubiquitous ideology or procedure, varying enormously in knowledge and interest. Dunn's exhibition of the Collection must accordingly be seen as self-consciously topical and an individual enterprise. It will be concluded, however, that although his representation did resemble those of commercial entrepreneurs in some aspects of organisation, promotion, and so forth, it was unique not only in its singularity of subject, but also in the combination of its scope of media, its claim to reject stereotypes in favour of 'real' people, selective attention to material culture and stress upon the authenticity of its exhibits.

Permanent ethnographical exhibitions: the British Museum, the India Museum and the Museum of the Royal Asiatic Society.

The British Museum, India Museum and Museum of the Royal Asiatic Society constituted almost the only institutions exhibiting objects from distant nations in the first half of the nineteenth century, and further, each of these was itself in an embryonic formative state, with their major objectives and capabilities as yet undefined fully. Regarding foreign 'living' cultures (as opposed to ancient civilisations), each was concerned with 'Oriental' culture in the widest sense, and all addressed China within that flexible parameter at various stages in their development. Examination of the circumstances of their acquisitions of Chinese objects will reveal first, to what extent China was practically accessible, and second if, and for what reasons its artefacts were actively sought after. The physical presentation of their galleries will also be considered as contributory to the connotation of ideological assertions by the quantitative content of the collections. The respectable authority these museums invoked through Royal and State connections must suggest that their displays of civilisations personally unknown to the vast majority of Britons had substantial influence over the perceptions formed of those countries by their audiences.

Some indication as to public access to these collections should be given: at the British Museum the admission procedure in the eighteenth century had been complex and restricting, as visitors had to apply in writing and supply references, but these rules were relaxed in 1803-4, and by the 1830s there were over

100,000 visitors each year;³ it is not known when the public were first admitted to the India Museum, but by 1817 the Keeper was complaining that he could not cope with the number of visitors, and from 1833, when 4,000 visits were recorded, there was heated debate as to how far access should be restricted. In 1838 the public were admitted without tickets on Saturdays;⁴ unfortunately there is no record of the extent of access to the museum of the Royal Asiatic Society.

The British Museum.

The British Museum was founded by Act of Parliament in June, 1753. The historiography of its early development persistently demonstrates its nature as an amalgamation of three individual collections: the libraries of an eminent politician, Sir Robert Cotton (1570-1631), and Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford (1661-1724), and the cabinet of natural history specimens, antiquities and 'curiosities' amassed by a physician, naturalist and traveller, Sir Hans Sloane (1660-1753). Of the three, Sloane's provision has been consistently identified as the catalyst to which the National Museum 'owes its first establishment'⁵ or 'owes its foundation,'⁶ for Sloane actively designated that his collection be displayed 'for the use of the nation'. The words of his will insisted upon a dual

³ Miller, E. *That Noble Cabinet: A History of the British Museum* (1973), 107, 146.

⁴ Desmond, R. *The India Museum 1801-1879* (1982), 27-30. Desmond points out that this was 'consistent with the normal practice of similar institutions'.

⁵ *The People's Handbook to the British Museum* (1843), iii.

⁶ De Beer, G.R. 'Sir Hans Sloane and the British Museum', *British Museum Quarterly* (1953), 2.

purpose in his bequest for leisure and education, a combination which was to prevail in the aims of many nineteenth-century displays, including Dunn's: 'that they...may be rendered as useful as possible, as well towards the desire of the curious, as for the improvement of knowledge, and information of all purposes,'⁷ and was reiterated in the *Act to Incorporate the British Museum*: 'not only for the inspection and entertainment of the learned and curious, but for the general use and benefit of the public; may it be enacted...for public use to all posterity.'⁸ In addition to initiating the manifesto of the museum, Sloane was also to inform the occasion of its acquisitions, as in the early period, the majority of its contents came from donations. Walpole's observation that the museum was to become a showpiece of patriotism is recorded by Miller:

"The Establishment of the British Museum," he wrote, "seems a charter for incorporating the arts, a new era of *vertu*." A collector who "should destine his collection to the British Museum," would feel "he was collecting for his country..."⁹

Furthermore, Sloane's personal interests are seen to exemplify the cultural explorations of his day, being

'the product of two traditions, one historical, the other scientific: the antiquarianism of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, and the scientific curiosity of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe.'¹⁰

⁷ Will of Sir Hans Sloane, 1739, quoted in Mordaunt Crook, J. *The British Museum* (1972), 47.

⁸ *An Act to Incorporate the British Museum* (1753), quoted in Mordaunt Crook, 39.

⁹ Miller, 72-3.

¹⁰ Mordaunt Crook, 49.

and as such were to influence the actual categories of objects given. This is to say that the most important early donations were libraries, collections of the antique and natural history: 'the finest collection of classical sculptures then existing in England formed by Charles Towneley'¹¹ in 1807, the Elgin Marbles in 1814-15, the Phigaleian Marbles in 1815-16, the library and bronzes of Richard Payne Knight in 1824, and Sir Joseph Banks' library and natural history collection in 1827.¹²

With regard to the status of oriental objects within this, it is apparent that whilst Chinese and Japanese books and manuscripts were valued by the library, such as the Kaempfer Collection of woodcuts donated by Sloane,¹³ Asian artefacts were maintained along with items from other non-European and non-'antique' cultures under the general heading of 'Ethnographical Curiosities.' These were identified as subsidiary to Sloane's scientific pursuits, being 'numerically few in comparison with those relating to natural history,'¹⁴ and this was to shape the profile of ethnographical material for over a century until the keepership of A.W. Franks from 1866- 1896.¹⁵ With the hindsight of twentieth-century realisation that this material has great historical value, it has been celebrated that Sloane's collection encouraged its admission to the museum:

¹¹ Miller, 97.

¹² Mordaunt Crook, 68.

¹³ Gray, B. 'Sloane and the Kaempfer Collection', *British Museum Quarterly* (1953), 20-23.

¹⁴ Brauholtz, H.J. 'The Sloane Collection: Ethnography', *British Museum Quarterly* (1953), 23.

¹⁵ Brauholtz, 'History of Ethnography in the Museum after 1753', *British Museum Quarterly* (1953), 91.

'Sloane's varied interests embraced the so-called "artificial curiosities" of remote and primitive peoples, which we now call ethnographical...they were significant in providing a basis for subsequent growth and in establishing ethnography's title to inclusion in the British Museum from its first foundation. Had this nucleus not existed it is open to doubt whether the Museum would have benefited, as it did, from the ethnographical harvest...',¹⁶

'Here, the Sloane Collection...was of paramount importance. The fact that the Museum from the very beginning had possessed examples of the arts and crafts of primitive peoples undoubtedly led to other and more valuable objects of the same kind being sent to join them.'¹⁷

It has become apparent, however, from close attention to the single cultural case of Chinese objects, that although Sloane's activity might have set a precedent for British acknowledgement of 'primitive peoples' in general, it did not determine the particular countries in which the National Museum was actually interested. In his article on the ethnographical contents of Sloane's collection, Braunholtz has traced his acquisition of foreign specimens, which were listed under the 'Miscellanies' sections of the various catalogues Sloane produced, concluding that at his death in 1753, of the 79,575 objects left in total (excluding plants), around 400 only are ethnographical.¹⁸ Of these, it has been shown that a number were Chinese, including ceramics, soapstone carvings, swords, ivories and the inevitable 'curiosities', such as hats, shoes, pipes, tobacco, etc.¹⁹ For the purposes of this study it is crucial to note here that the Museum held Chinese artefacts from the outset.

¹⁶ Braunholtz, 'The Sloane Collection: Ethnography', 23.

¹⁷ Miller, 75.

¹⁸ Braunholtz, 'The Sloane Collection: Ethnography', 24.

¹⁹ Jenyns, S. 'Oriental Antiquities from the Sloane Collection in the British Museum', *British Museum Quarterly* 1953, 18-20.

At first the Museum consisted of three departments: Manuscripts, Medals and Coins; Natural and Artificial Productions; Printed Books. Ethnography was contained in the second of these, and was mostly located in the last room of the '*Collectio Sloaniana*', in which, according to an account of 1769, undifferentiated 'productions of art' were 'disposed in several cabinets'. The description of this room indicates that several Chinese items were on show, including 'China paper', 'figures of their gods', 'forks, backscratchers, steelyards, weights and beads', 'curious earthen ware', and 'gilt China ware of various shapes'. In the same room were North-American Indian items, Roman Catholic relics and a piece of work in ivory 'made by the late queen of Denmark'.²⁰ Other Chinese objects were also on display in the collection of T.Hollis, headed '*Antiquates variae. T.Hollis, armt. dono dedit*' : 'A variety of musical instruments from the East and West Indies...likewise drums of several kinds from China and America, but more particularly some from Lapland.'²¹ These descriptions are striking in that primarily they indicate the diversity of cultures contained within one space, and also, in the last comment, that qualitative judgements as to their relative significance were made with no explanation. In the 1770s, ethnography became more prominent as the sending of objects from foreign explorations referred to above began. The 'harvest' of 'primitive productions' becomes fully characterised at this point, being 'to a large extent a reflection of geographical exploration and colonial

²⁰ Description of the British Museum from *A New and Compleat History and Survey of London and Westminster down to the beginning of the year 1770* 1769, 347, contained in a book of cuttings pertaining to the Museum 1753-1870 compiled by Frederic Madden, Keeper of MSS. 1828-1873, 13.

²¹ *A New and Compleat History* , 344.

enterprise',²² an effect which was consciously desired by the donors:

'The Admiralty, Maty stressed, was insistent that these collections must be placed in the Museum "in a particular manner and in a distinguished place as a monument of these national exertions of British munificence and industry."²³

Thus, in 1778, the 'Otaheiti or South Sea Room' was established to hold the specimens of Polynesian manufacture gathered by Captain Cook in the HMS *Endeavour*.

How the acquisition of ethnographical items developed regarding specific countries in the following three decades is unrecorded, but it is clear that by 1807, when there was a change of departmental administration, there had been no questioning of policy with regard to distant productions, as they were still unified, having become "Modern Curiosities", and were retained with natural history, 'together with other objects that could not easily be fitted in elsewhere.'²⁴ However, the following year a purpose in displaying these items was formally articulated, as although

²² Brauholtz, 'History of Ethnography in the Museum after 1753', 90; it should be noted that where Brauholtz cites 'colonial' enterprise, it was specifically naval officers who were the main protagonists in collecting spoils and souvenirs which came to the British Museum.

²³ Miller, 75. Dr. Matthew Maty (1718-1776) was a physician who was one of the earliest Under-Librarians at the Museum.

²⁴ With the acquisition of the Towneley collection in 1803, Towneley himself pointed out that the proportion of 'antiquities' held at the museum was growing, and that it was no longer satisfactory for them to be retained as part of the old Department of Natural and Artificial Productions. In 1806, on the death of the Keeper of Natural History, the old departments were rearranged into two departments: Natural History and Modern Curiosities, and Antiquities and Coins. Miller, 99-100.

'The basis of the [ethnographical] collection was still those objects bequeathed to the museum by Cook, Menzies, Banks and other eighteenth-century travellers and explorers, together with the material transferred from the Royal Society in 1782',²⁵

a decision was taken to house them in the South Seas Room 'to illustrate particular Customs of different Nations; their Religion, their Government, their Commerce, Manufacturers or Trades.' Miller posits that this was an 'admirable purpose', but there were problematic connotations in the room aspiring to be a definitive representation of the countries it illustrated. An 1812 account of the museum states that the contents of the room were 'arranged geographically', possibly implying its role as an aspiring microcosm of distant cultures. The allocation of the objects and cases, however, reveals an unrepresentative global distribution of cultures, in which the continents of Africa and South America, for example, had one case each, whilst the Sandwich Islands and Marquesas eight cases between them:

'Europe, cases I. to IV. Asia, V. to VII. Africa, VIII. South America, IX. East Coast of N. America, X. West Coast of N. America, XI. to XIV. Otaheite, XV. to XVIII. Sandwich Islands and Marquesas, XIX. to XXII. Friendly Islands, XXIII. and XXIV. New Zealand, XXV. and XXVI.'

the author also gives an interesting dismissal of this room, denoting its assumed inferiority to the coveted exhibits of antique civilisations and natural history: 'This collection, the greatest part

²⁵ This and the following information about the foundation and aims of the display are from *Committee Minutes* June 29, 1808, quoted in Miller, 221.

of which consists of donations, not being strictly of a scientific nature, no further detail is here given of its contents.'²⁶

In the early years of the museum space was at a premium, and whilst travellers continued to give objects at a constant rate, this one room served to hold the entire ethnographical collection until 1845, when a new 'Ethnographical Room' was founded,²⁷ and evidently priorities were established as to which nations were of privileged interest. The *Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum* of 1832 indicates that at that date the room contained 'Artificial Curiosities from the less civilized parts of the world', still had twenty-six cases, and that Chinese objects had been removed from the display.²⁸ A volume produced in 1838, *A Visit to the British Museum*, states that this was still the situation, and provides another example of the perception of the objects shown:

'The contents of this room, with the exception of those on the table, may be generally characterized as artificial curiosities, the productions of uncivilized tribes and nations.'²⁹

The presence of the exceptional objects on the table highlights the randomness of the display provoked by lack of space; they were an original manuscript and an engraved facsimile of the Magna Carta, a quintessentially English historical landmark, shown here

²⁶ Wilkinson, G. *Montagu House and the British Museum* (1812), from Madden Cuttings Book, 32.

²⁷ This was actually the first time that the term 'Ethnographical' was officially employed; Brauholtz, 'History of Ethnography in the Museum after 1753', 93.

²⁸ *Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum* 27th. ed., (1832), 4.

²⁹ *A Visit to the British Museum: Containing a Familiar Description of Every Object of Interest in the Various Departments of that Establishment* (1838), 8.

in the midst of a display of unrelated international attractions. Regarding the contents of individual cases, this volume also demonstrates the lack of differentiation of media and deficiency of information given about the objects. The text is constructed as a dialogue between 'Mr. Edwards', his son, Charles, and nephew, Ralph, for whom he is narrating a tour of the museum. Approaching specific cases, Ralph offers general observations, such as 'The third case seems to exhibit considerable variety in its contents', and 'The ninth case contains so many singular objects that one can hardly tell which to look at first', to which Mr Edwards responds: 'Let us then proceed regularly to notice such as deserve attention.'³⁰ These were objects from the Sloane and Towneley collections, their value lying in the fact that they 'have been lodged in the Museum nearly ever since its foundation,' rather than in their aesthetic or mechanical qualities. The objects next given priority are Mexican and Peruvian items, and following these, an idea that there was a hierarchy of cultures within the generally 'uncivilised' is articulated: 'this, as well as the remaining cases, contains articles furnished by more rude and untutored tribes than the Mexican or Peruvians.'³¹ The narrative is somewhat stilted by references to relevant books on specific countries, and Ralph's overtures give an interesting (presumably exemplary) characterisation of a well-read visitor to the museum: 'Over the next range of cases I see a Greenlander's Kajak, or fishing-boat; such as I have read of in Crantz's History of Greenland'; 'I remember, Sir, that Caesar, in his Commentaries, giving an account of his second invasion of Britain, mentions this

³⁰ *Visit to the British Museum*, 9,15.

³¹ *Visit to the British Museum*, 22.

practice...'.³² Before the climactic consideration of the Magna Carta, a final hint that the ethnographical objects were not satisfactorily laid out is given, as Mr. Edwards says of a canoe from Queen Charlotte's Island 'one cannot help wishing it was a little more accessible, that we might subject it to closer examination.'³³

A popular guide of 1843, *The People's Handbook to the British Museum*, refers to the contents of this room as 'Polynesian Curiosities, &c.',³⁴ and reveals that there had been no reinstatement of Chinese items among them. The *Synopsis of Contents* for that year describes thirty-four cases, the last two of which contain objects from the South Sea Islands given by Queen Victoria in 1841, and thus the consistency of this area of aggressive exploration as a source of exhibits is apparent. It was the incidence of a gift made by the Queen which was to initiate the return of Chinese artefacts, as in 1844 she presented a Chinese bell, acquired from a Buddhist temple near Ningbo.

The *Illustrated London News* reported the Queen's receipt of Chinese military trophies in the form of swords and weapons displayed at Windsor Castle early in January, 1844. A fortnight later it euphemistically observed that 'Her Majesty is becoming rich in Chinese presents', produced engravings of a large bell and a pair of vases taken from a temple at Ningpo, and described them as 'the finest specimens of Celestial civilization which have yet

³² *Visit to the British Museum*, 14, 25.

³³ *Visit to the British Museum*, 30.

³⁴ *People's Handbook to the British Museum*, 10.

reached this country'.³⁵ These items were displayed temporarily in the library of Buckingham Palace, but sometime in 1844 were given to the British Museum, as the bell next appears engraved in the *Illustrated London News* installed in the centre of the new Ethnographical Room in October, 1845. The accompanying text cites a startling reversal of the profile of China within the display: 'On account of the present position of the Bell, the new apartment at the Museum has been called the "Chinese Room...", but the incongruity of this and essential re-presentation of the eighteenth-century colonial booty is noted: '...though, besides this spoil, there are but few curiosities of Celestial civilization. Here will be found the specimens of South Sea manufacture which formerly filled the first suite of the Museum Rooms.'³⁶ This demonstrates that the War, and not the objects themselves determined the importance attributed to Chinese items at this time. In 1846 the *Illustrated London News* carried an article on 'the celebrated Car of Juggernaut', in which it again stated that the New Room was 'popularly known as "the Chinese Room"', in acknowledgement of the bell.³⁷

In the late 1840s Chinese artefacts were finally brought to the fore, and filled the first five cases of the seventy-one in the room.³⁸ By 1850 the *Synopses* credited the acquisition of each

³⁵ *Illustrated London News* Jan. 20, 1844, 36. This assertion is interesting in that the author evidently considered these items superior to any in Dunn's Collection, to which the journal had paid close attention. It could be surmised that the incidence of the bell and vases being in possession of Queen Victoria coloured this opinion.

³⁶ *Illustrated London News* Oct. 11, 1845, 237.

³⁷ *Illustrated London News* Jan. 17, 1846, 35.

³⁸ *Synopsis of the contents of the British Museum* (1850), 240-242.

object, which in ethnography were still donations. The Chinese items came from three main sources: naval officers (especially Sir Everard Home and Sir E. Belcher); two British residents in China, Sir G.T. Staunton³⁹ and G. Tradescant Lay;⁴⁰ and the revived oriental residue of Sloane's collection. Those of the first source were basically the unselective material deposits of war, or represented the specific geographical areas in which their donors had been engaged; thus, one of Home's gifts was 'A wooden trunk, in which the Sycee siver of the Chinese ransom money was transported to England, and most others were from Woosung, while Belcher's included a 'sight of a cannon', 'punishment billets of a military mandarin', and 'an amulet...Taken during the war from a private chapel behind How-qua's hong.' Staunton and Lay contributed a wide range of objects from shark fins to coins, and Lay's largest exhibit was a collection of musical instruments. Sloane's original display was not reproduced in full, but some items were evidently those which had been on show in the late eighteenth-century, such as chopsticks, knives and steelyards. In the fifth case, a few objects from Japan were placed alongside the Chinese, and even 'specimens of Japan ware, made by a Dutchman', indicating that whilst eastern artefacts had gained in

³⁹ G.T.Staunton (1781-1859), was the son of Sir G.L. Staunton, and had accompanied his father on Macartney's embassy in 1792. In 1798 he became a writer in the East India Company's factory at Canton, in 1808 became an interpreter there, and in 1816, chief of the Factory, in which capacity he accompanied Amherst's embassy in the same year. He wrote numerous books on many aspects of China, and was a founder member of the Royal Asiatic Society.

⁴⁰ G. Tradescant Lay (? -1845), was a naturalist who accompanied Beechey's expedition to China in 1825-8, when he made collections of plants at Macao and Canton. In 1836 he returned to China as an agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and in 1842 was made Consul at Canton.

representational stature, the process of ethnological differentiation had not been fully established.

By 1845, then, ethnography had gained attention, and this was to increase throughout the latter half of the century, when although it was incongruously part of the department of 'British and Medieval Antiquities', it was finally taken seriously under the Keepership of Franks, who 'did not underrate the importance of ethnography and devoted much of his energy to this branch of the new department'.⁴¹ It has been shown that China underwent a diametric inversion of representation within the British Museum from being a very minor part of an almost accidental interest in foreign nations at the time of foundation, to having prominence in the more flourishing Ethnographical Room after 1845. The nature of the ethnography collection has been seen to be a haphazard assemblage of incoherently displayed colonial exhibits, in which Chinese objects were totally ignored in favour of the South Seas and North America for at least thirty years, and only came back into play as a result of the Opium War. When Dunn's exhibition opened, China was not represented at the Museum, but by the time it was reshowed in 1851, there was an established oriental display. The essential facts for this examination are that at no point was Chinese material culture shown in isolation, and that the overriding ideology of the Museum regarding distant cultures was one of opportunism, ambivalence and lack of discrimination.

⁴¹ Braunholtz, 'History of Ethnography in the Museum after 1753', 90.

The India Museum.

In the introduction to his book devoted to the history of the India Museum, Desmond sets out to answer the question

'How did it come about that a great commercial organisation like the East India Company with shareholders dedicated to the pursuit of profit acquired and maintained such a multifarious collection?'⁴²

To this end, in the following chapters he recites the physical development of the museum through its various directors and acquisitions. Yet the simple critical answer to the enquiry is that the museum constituted a cultural counterpart to the exploring and trading exploits of the Company; it served to illustrate with artefacts, books and works of art the geographical and political scope of its power. Unlike the British Museum, the India Museum was not founded by the State on the nominal principle of public interest, but, in being established by the East India Company at its central offices in Leadenhall Street, it had the authority of the most prominent protagonist in British relations with the East, residing in 'Charles Lamb's "Stately home of merchants", the headquarters of the Honourable East India Company whose mercantile activities ranged from St. Helena in the Atlantic to the China Seas.'

The museum was first conceived in 1798 when the Company's historiographer lamented that there was no library for oriental books and manuscripts in England. The Directors soon

⁴² This and the following quotations and information regarding the early history of the museum are from Desmond, R. *The India Museum 1801-1879* (1982), 1-19.

after proposed a repository for oriental writings at East India House, and at some time in that year the Company received some Indian ornaments and dresses which seem to have prompted the idea of also establishing a museum. Desmond's history is largely narrated through individual directors, the first of whom was Charles Wilkins. His manifesto for the museum was planned in 1799, and visualised three departments: 'A Cabinet of Natural productions: Under this head are included Animal, Vegetable, and Mineral Productions'; Artificial Productions: Under this title come generally samples of all the manufactures of Asia, and particularly, of every article in silk and cotton'; 'Miscellaneous Articles: To consist of curiosities, chiefly presents, and generally such things as cannot conveniently be classed under any of the former heads.' Desmond points out that this was a charter for the exhibition of natural history, trade and technology, and placed an emphasis on the scientific and industrial role of the display. It is notable that natural history was, as at the British Museum, perceived to be the prime inherent interest Asian civilisations held for the West. The library and museum were eventually founded on Wilkins' criteria in 1801.

From the beginning, the process of acquisition was unsystematic, relying on an appeal from the Library Committee for 'any articles of curiosity', which resulted in the first year seeing 'a very mixed assortment of objects' including the 'Babylonian Stone', an important Mesopotamian relic. In 1802, however, the pivotal position of India and its environs in the operations of East India House was first illustrated in the museum, when a number of natural history specimens gathered after the capture of Ceylon by the Company from the Dutch in 1796 were

donated. Progress in collecting was slow in the years following this, and the Directors wrote to the headquarters in Bengal complaining of its indifference. The reticence identified here on the part of the Indian Government to send donations will also be seen to be a problem experienced by the Royal Asiatic Society in its attempts to acquire exhibits. Plenty of Indian items were to be brought by returning Englishmen, however, the most popular of which arrived in 1808. This was the mechanical tiger which had belonged to the Tipu Sultan, and at the storming of his capital in 1799 by British troops, it was seized and presented to George III.⁴³ It was to be the most publicised exhibit for decades, arising from its mechanical motion and sound effects, but it should be stressed that it also symbolised a crucial victory for the British in the campaign in India, and in retrospect is not an innocent centrepiece to the display.

The first Chinese artefacts were gained in 1803-4, described disparagingly by Desmond, indicating their relative lack of significance in spite of the founding tenet that the rooms would represent the whole of Asia: '1803 and 1804 were lean years and the museum was glad to receive anything, even samples of white copper in its raw and manufactured state, brought back from China...and a Chinese compass.' Chinese items did become important in 1810, but like Tipu's tiger, the glory lay in the method of acquisition rather than the intrinsic value of the objects. A large octagonal Chinese lantern and four carved miniature landscapes are cited by Desmond as 'the most notable acquisitions of 1810', yet that notoriety was precipitated by their reputedly being seized by the British Navy from a French ship in

⁴³ VAM: 2545 (IS).

which they were being conveyed to the Empress Josephine, as gifts from the Chinese Emperor. It has been shown, however, that although this was the story put forward in early guide books to the museum, no primary evidence exists to support it. It is important here, however, that these Chinese items owed at least some of their cherished status in the display to this link with the Napoleonic engagement, which must be seen to deny that they were displayed for their inherent value.⁴⁴

As no catalogue of the contents of the museum was produced until 1848, it is difficult to chart the relative proportions of exhibits representing different nations, yet general comments can illuminate public perceptions of the whole. An account of 1815 highlights the regularity with which the East was seen in terms of 'curiosity' and frivolity, calling the India Museum 'a curious museum of eastern curiosities and literature, which will afford the most enlightened hours of delightful amusement.'⁴⁵ In 1841-44 Knight's four-volume historical guidebook *London* included an account of East India House, and his description of the facade gives a useful image of the relationship between Britain and Asia which the Company symbolised:

'the pediment was an emblematic sculpture by Bacon, representing the Commerce of the East protected by the King of Great Britain, who stood in the centre of a number of figures, holding a shield stretched over them. On the apex of the pediment was a statue of Britannia: Asia, seated upon a dromedary, being at the left corner; and Europe, on horseback, at the right.'⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Hay, K. 'Empress Josephine's Garden', *Apollo* (May 1987), 350-356.

⁴⁵ *The Picture of London for 1815* quoted in Desmond, 26.

⁴⁶ Knight, C. *London* (1841-4), 61.

Of the actual upper part of the house he stated that it contained a library, holding' the most splendid collection of Oriental Maunscripts in Europe' and 'a copy of almost every printed work relating to Asia', and the museum, of which he wrote that

'the objects exhibited were curious and interesting, consisting as they did of specimens illustrating the manufacturing processes of Oriental nations; objects of natural history; models of musical instruments...many other objects connected with the religion of Buddha...'⁴⁷

His most detailed description is of Tipu's Tiger. In 1841 another comment on the museum was published in the *Penny Magazine* (published by Knight), which has an important bearing on the relative roles played by the British Museum and the India Museum in the activity of promoting Asian culture:

'those who are acquainted with the general contents of the British Museum will perceive...that the curiosities deposited in the India House are of different character, on account of their peculiar relation to Asiatic countries. The British Museum is by no means largely supplied with Oriental curiosities and rarities, and on that account the Museum...is well worthy of a visit.'⁴⁸

Provoked by this comparison, Desmond gives a list of Eastern objects on display in the third and fourth decades of the century, of which all but the exhibition of the Burmese State Carriage in Bullock's Egyptian Hall in 1825 are Indian or 'Hindu.'

In 1837 the museum was given more rooms to cope with its growing collection, and at this time, in addition to the Chinese compass of 1803-4 and Chinese lantern and miniatures acquired in 1810, there were cases holding writing, weighing and

⁴⁷ Knight, 62.

⁴⁸ *Penny Magazine* May 29, 1841, quoted in Desmond, 33.

measuring instruments, trinkets and, 'inevitably, the diminutive footwear of a Chinese lady.'⁴⁹ In the early 1840s the museum was gaining in popularity. In 1851 it benefited from taking on some of the objects which had been sent to form the Indian contribution to the Great Exhibition, and more followed from the 1855 *Paris Exposition*. A new gallery was set up to hold these, which inspired a review from the *Times* summarising what the museum had increasingly become:

'The new collection contains some monumental and artistic records of the progress of the British Empire in the East, but its principal object is to illustrate the productive resources of India, and to give information about the life and manners, the arts and industry, of its inhabitants.'⁵⁰

The India Museum differed from the British Museum in two major ways: first, it was a private concern, and second, its scope was not aiming for global celebration. It is apparent, however, that it was perceived as the most authoritative and active collector of Indian artefacts, and as such was perceived to represent Asia definitively. China did command some respect within the library and drawings collections, as it has been shown by Archer that these departments requisitioned items from Canton, yet it does not seem that artefacts aside from graphic material were avidly sought-after. For whatever motives however, although it was usually short of space the museum did constantly show its few Chinese holdings. There was no change in its attitude towards China in the event of the Opium War, as by

⁴⁹ Desmond, 36.

⁵⁰ *Times* Apr.7, 1858, quoted in Desmond, 42.

this time the dominance of India in the displays was well established and was its main preoccupation.

The museum of the Royal Asiatic Society.

Whilst the role of the India Museum was essentially to affirm publicly the natural value of the Indian Empire to the British (noted by the *Times* review above), the establishment of the Royal Asiatic Society was ostensibly an enterprise for mutual benefit. A centenary volume of the *Journal* of the Society produced in 1923 posited that

'It was instituted for the investigation of the sciences and arts of Asia, with the hope of facilitating ameliorations there and of advancing knowledge and improving the arts at home...The scope would embrace...in short, the progress of knowledge in Asia and the means of its extension.'⁵¹

The Society was founded in 1823 by a Sanskrit scholar, Henry Colebrooke, and again the initial inspiration was towards literary knowledge and study. Chinese material was acknowledged from the start: in the original Prospectus one of the motives stated was that

'research in Oriental matters had a peculiar attraction, and the literature of the Chinese was almost untrodden ground; and an association of intelligent persons might encourage research, extend intercourse between Europe and Asia, and lead to results reciprocally beneficial.'

⁵¹ The following information and quotations about the foundation of the Royal Asiatic Society and its Museum are from Pargiter, F.E., (ed.), *Centenary Volume of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland 1823-1923* (1923), Preface, i-viii.

Moreover, Pargiter asserted that the Society, unlike the British and India Museums, perceived the significance of Asia in a universal context, and further, recognised the multiplicity of cultures within its broad geographic designation:

'Asia was the most anciently and most numerously peopled region of the globe, and the range of research would comprise the whole of it and be as various as its peoples.'

Its main activities in its early years were the holding of monthly meetings and the giving of papers on relevant subjects.⁵² Of these, between 1827 and 1846 twenty-two were related to China, ranging from readings of documents concerning Anglo-Chinese relations: 'Extracts from the *Peking Gazette* and 'Two Edicts from the Hoppo of Canton to the Hong Merchants' given by Davis in 1827;⁵³ to philological pieces: 'Transcript and translation of Manifesto in Chinese', given By Morrison⁵⁴ in 1834; to general items on Chinese society, such as 'Medical Art amongst the

⁵² An index to articles and contributions was provided by Pargiter, 4-56.

⁵³ J.F. Davis (1795-1890), had served in Amherst's embassy of 1816, and until 1835 worked for the East India Company, lately as Chief Superintendent of trade in China. He was a scholar and a philanthropist, and during his years in China produced many works and translations on Chinese literature, and in 1836 published *The Chinese*, recognised for many years after as the definitive work on China.

⁵⁴ R. Morrison (1782-1834), was a pioneering Protestant Missionary to China. in order to take up residence in China he had been Chinese translator to the East India Company since 1809, and in 1816 also accompanied Amherst's embassy, as official interpreter. He lived in Canton until his death.

Chinese', given by Gutzlaff in 1837'.⁵⁵ In the same period, however, one hundred and fifty-five papers were read on India, and that country was really to be the main focus of attention for the Society.

In 1824-6 a 'Committee of Correspondance' was set up, the purpose of which was to receive information from non-resident members. Its objects were 'to receive intelligence and inquiries, relating to the arts, sciences, literature, history, and antiquities of Asia and especially of India'.⁵⁶ There is evidence that there was some financial motivation behind this emphasis, implied through the formation of the 'Oriental Translation Committee' in 1827, which aimed to 'search for and make public all that was valuable in the literature of Asia and especially of British India'. It was funded through public support, which it received 'munificently' from the East India Company.⁵⁷ The survival of the whole Society in fact depended upon donation, and from its foundation the Company had pledged one hundred pounds each year, the vitality of which was realised when that source was removed on the transfer of India from the Company to the Crown after the Mutiny in 1857-8.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ C.F.A. Gutzlaff (?-1851), was a German missionary who, like Morrison, became an interpreter in order to become resident in China, initially working on opium ships. On Morrison's death in 1834 he became an interpreter for the British government, and was Chinese Secretary to the Hongkong government from 1843 until his death. He is renowned for providing a Chinese translation of the entire Bible, which he published at his own expense.

⁵⁶ Pargiter, x.

⁵⁷ Pargiter, xi.

⁵⁸ Pargiter, xviii; The East India Company was dissolved in 1858, and India became a British viceroyalty.

The initial request for public subsidy resulted not only in money, but also in 'liberal donations of books and articles of value and interest', and from these a library and museum were formed.⁵⁹ A Journal was begun in 1834 which printed the papers given and reported the monthly and annual meetings, including listing the donated printed material and artefacts, or 'Items laid on the Table.'⁶⁰ The lists indicated that more items were received by the library than by the museum, but in the period 1834-1846 around one hundred and fifty-five exhibits were given (some consisting of several objects, such as 'Hindu and bamboo items' given in 1833).⁶¹ Of these, eleven were Chinese, including ephemera such as playing cards and pastilles,⁶² items relating to the tea trade,⁶³ and several illustrating English activity at Canton.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Pargiter, ix.

⁶⁰ Appendices to volumes of *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1834-1846).

⁶¹ *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1834), lxxxii.

⁶² Donated by Signor E. Bottone, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1841), lx.

⁶³ 'Chinese box and canister, containing flower of the tea-plant', donated by Thomas Weeding, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1836), xxxvi.

⁶⁴ "'Grand Chop," or Chinese official clearance of an English ship, from the Custom House of Canton', donated by Thomas Weeding in 1836; 'Model of Pagoda and Convent of Prests at Canton, assigned for Residence of British Ambassadors at Canton', and 'Painting by a Chinese artist of the Court of Justice of the Chinese Authorities in the hall of the British Factory at Canton, investigating the murder of seamen of H.C.S. Neptune', given by Sir G.T.Staunton, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1834), xxxiv.; Lithographed copy of the same given by Staunton, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1841), lxii.

After the Opium War, notice was taken of the advantage of greater British access to China, as at the twenty-first anniversary meeting of the Society in 1844 it was observed that

'The more intimate relations which have recently been established between this country and the great empire of China, naturally excite the most lively hopes that our acquaintance with every subject of interest in the vast and varied regions, and among the singular people of that remarkable portion of Asia, will be largely and rapidly improved.'⁶⁵

This did not lead to an increase of Chinese items in the museum, however, as there was no change in the small proportion of the whole display they formed. The close relationship of the Society to the East India Company was made apparent in 1839, when J.F. Royle, who had been secretary to the 'Committee of Agriculture and Commerce' and had begun to collect a museum of commercial products, was secured as a Secretary by the Company and became Keeper at the India Museum.

The role of artefacts in the general activities of the Society was minimal, and the museum had far less significance and probably far fewer visitors than the collections at the British Museum and East India House, but its small Chinese collection was shown from the 1830s. China was recognised independently within the 'East', and several members were active scholars at Canton.⁶⁶ Within the Society, then, China was recognised independently within 'The East', and although stifled by the

⁶⁵ *Proceedings of the twenty-first anniversary meeting of the Royal Asiatic Society* May 11, (1844), v.

⁶⁶ These included J.F. Davis, Rev. C. Gutzlaff, G. Tradescant Lay, Rev. W.H. Medhurst, J.R. Morrison, Rev. P. Parker and Sir G.T. Staunton, cited in *Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland List of Members, Committees, &c.* (1843).

preoccupation with India, the treatment of it was more enlightened than at the other two institutions. Yet in terms of the accessibility to objects, it cannot have been greatly influential.

Literary works on China and the Chinese.

The early nineteenth century was subject to a substantial increase in the number of books written concerning China and the Chinese. The greatest objective of the Royal Asiatic Society was to collate and publish information and commentary on all aspects of the East, and of the authors who gave papers before it dealing with China, several produced volumes in their own right, arising from their individual interests and activities. The following survey of those works and others about China will examine the approaches taken and the cultural and social areas upon which they concentrated. It will transpire that while the general scope of these works was great, of the more 'serious' volumes most dealt with similar subjects and all were written from the perspective of visits to, residencies in, or knowledge of the vicinity of Canton.⁶⁷

Two books were recognised as the most authoritative works on China throughout the first half of the century: The *General*

⁶⁷ Barrett's recent work has been especially useful in considering the earliest founders of Sinology as an academic discipline in England, and demonstrates that many were former officials or residents in China before establishing more scholarly careers on their return; Barrett, T.H. *Singular Listlessness: a Short History of Chinese Books and British Scholars* (1989).

History of China, written by a Jesuit priest, J.B. Du Halde,⁶⁸ and published in English 1741 but still widely referred to a century later, and J.F. Davis's *The Chinese*, written in 1836 and immediately reissued in numerous editions. These volumes were held in the greatest esteem by scholars, and Davis, particularly, was deferred to in many of the works discussed below, and indeed by Langdon in *Ten Thousand Things*. Du Halde and Davis were comprehensive, thoroughly researched and widely read, but the importance of shorter and less authoritative books should not be underestimated, given that Dunn's audience would almost certainly have included less committed readers who looked for a brief account of China once the events of the Opium War had caught their attention.

In 1800 and 1805 three works appeared which were residual of eighteenth-century interests in China: first, Mason's *Punishments of China* and *Costume of China*, which were expensively-produced collections of illustrations of those subjects, being in fact reproductions of Chinese 'export' images and motifs circulated during the vogue for *chinoiserie*; and second, the *Costume of China*, published by William Alexander, who had been the draftsman to Macartney's Embassy to Peking in 1792-3. Alexander's volume did not deal with costume exclusively, as in addition sights and views he had witnessed were reproduced, but it was essentially a visual counterpart to the verbal commentaries

⁶⁸ J.B. Du Halde (1692-1743), was a Jesuit Priest, about whom little biographical material is available. Couling, in his *Encyclopaedia Sinica* (1917), 151, states that he was never in China, but it should be emphasised that until Davis's account his was held to be the most authoritative work on the subject.

produced by members of the Embassy on returning to England.⁶⁹ In 1804 the first nineteenth-century revival of a perennial genre of Sinological literature, the travel journal, was published by Barrow, entitled *Travels in China*.

In 1814 another account of personal experience was published by Wilkinson,⁷⁰ but differed from previous journals in that it was entitled *Sketches of Chinese Customs & Manners*, and thus seems to have courted an interest in China itself, rather than the simple narration of an individual's voyage.⁷¹ The work is of value to this study because unlike travellers who simply recorded views, Wilkinson described cultural events he had witnessed in Canton, very much related to the social activities in which Dunn must have participated there, and because it discusses Chinese artefacts and productions subjectively. It is not stated in what capacity he was present on the voyage, but Wilkinson clearly had no pretensions to knowledge of China beforehand, and another attractive quality of the book is that it relates in a series of letters to a friend a disinterested opinion of random experiences, yet

⁶⁹ Notably *The Historical Account of the Embassy to the Emperor of China* Sir G. Staunton the elder, (1797).

⁷⁰ G. Wilkinson (?), narrated his visit to China undertaken in 1812. No published biographical material survives about him, but from the eye-witness accounts he gives of his experiences in China, such as being received by the Viceroy of Canton and visiting the homes of prominent Chinese merchants, it seems that he was amongst an eminent British party, perhaps accompanying a group of traders.

⁷¹ Furthermore, Wilkinson's journey did not only take in China, but that was the only nation he chose to recount extensively: Wilkinson, G. *Sketches of Chinese Customs and Manners, in 1811-12, taken on the spot; and interspersed with a variety of Curious Occurrences, during a voyage to the Cape of Good Hope, Pulo Peneng, China, Canton, Whampoa and Saint Helena...* (1814).

incidentally introduces the personality of the merchant Houqua and the location of China Street, which were to become emblematic in popular engagement with Canton, and were in fact integral to Dunn's Exhibition.

The first point of interest after letters describing the trip to Whampoa harbour is the author's horrified reaction to the sight of a poor woman rowing a boat on the river. He expostulates on the contrast he perceives between her and the 'fair and too much indulged daughters of Albion', thus reciting a longheld presumption that the Chinese were uncivilised or barbaric.⁷² In the next letter, his encounter with an old Chinese man leads to a prolonged discussion of Lavater's science of physiognomy, another indication of his absorption of racialist theories becoming prevalent in western treatment of the east in the nineteenth century.⁷³ Once in Canton, the first letter opens with polemic on the 'extravagance and folly everywhere', and then describes 'A Sing-Song, or Theatrical Exhibition'. This was an entertainment given by 'a rich Security merchant, of the name of *Howquaw*', and was held on a stage erected at the back of his warehouses. The description of the room in which this was held is evocative of the 'Chinese Apartment' recreated at the Exhibition, and given that Wilkinson's visit coincided with Dunn's, it is possible that this was the same:

'We ascended a flight of stairs, where we found a kind of saloon, fitted up in a rather neat style, with an open *virander* for the accomodation, we learned of his select friends and acquaintance'.⁷⁴

⁷² Wilkinson, Letter XIII., 125.

⁷³ Wilkinson, Letter XIV., 135-7.

⁷⁴ Wilkinson, Letter XVIII., 173.

Unimpressed by the 'barbarous performance', the author then wonders on the lack of taste and judgement he has just witnessed, and registers surprise that the eminent Houqua could condone it. He concludes that this is an inevitable result of the heathenism of China, again reiterating a basic belief in an inherent inferiority of Asia:

'But I might have checked myself in the midst of these exclamations, by recollecting it was a Chinese exhibition; and these were the reflections of a European, who possessed as little relish for the *excellence* of their drama, as he did *respect*, and reverence for the *purity* of their religion!'⁷⁵

Letter XIX described a visit to an area of Canton much-frequented by foreign traders, China Street. Wilkinson immediately drew an English comparison: 'CHINA-STREET may be called the Bond-Street of Canton'. His observations on this street are useful in that they indicate the sorts of items most commonly seen for sale in Canton and the fact that they were intended for the European market, and for noting habitual characteristics attributed to Chinese workmanship and demeanour. The superficiality of Chinese manufactures and art is asserted through the vocabulary of frivolity partially employed by the museum commentators above:

'This street is plentifully stored with all those articles of luxury and curiosity most likely to attract the eyes of European visitors',

'these things are more for shew than for use',

'to the curious, and to those who are interested in trifling subjects, Canton opens a wide field of amusing objects.'⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Wilkinson, Letter XVIII., 181.

⁷⁶ Wilkinson, 183,185,186.

The articles he saw are listed as jewellery and trinkets, ivory, tortoise-shell and mother of pearl goods, such as snuff-boxes, fans, needle-cases, tweezers, memorandum tablets, etc. Of these he most admired fans, and expressed a popular opinion that the Chinese excelled at 'intricate' craftsmanship: 'Human ingenuity seems to have raised to its highest pitch of invention to produce the infinite variety of figures and flowers, in a delicacy...one would think beyond the powers of manual execution.' A Chinese attribute accompanying mechanical dexterity was mental cunning: 'no people can cheat with a better shew of liberality than themselves.'⁷⁷ Porcelain had perpetually been the outstanding exception to western condescension towards Chinese goods, and Wilkinson summarises the prevalent perception of it by the nineteenth century:

'Their porcelaine, for which they have always been so much famed, appears to have undergone no change or improvement; it still retains its primitive heaviness..but I could not help admiring it...'⁷⁸

Painting was at the opposite end of the scale of western esteem, as it did not adhere to the principles of post-renaissance aesthetics.⁷⁹ At Canton Wilkinson considered that the only artistic merits were to be found in imitation:

'In their own paintings they have not the remotest idea of perspective...Wherever they attempt any originality it is too gross and indelicate for a refined European taste:'

⁷⁷ Wilkinson, 185.

⁷⁸ Wilkinson, 185.

⁷⁹ For discussion of the nature, status, and perception of Chinese painting in the West see Clunas, A.C. *Chinese Export Watercolours*.

'but at the same time I must do them also the justice to acknowledge their superior talents and execution in copying pictures and prints to the most admirable minutiae.'⁸⁰

Wilkinson has been dwelt upon here for the reasons given above; his brief account of Canton refers most directly to the scenes and objects recreated by Dunn of all the texts on China in this period. It has already been noted that many books arose from the Opium Issue, but it is perhaps surprising that its topicality was exploited as early as 1822. Staunton had produced a volume of translations from Chinese in 1821, and in 1822 published *Miscellaneous Notices Relating to China, and our Commercial Intercourse with that Country*, which he prefaced with this assessment:

'Some important questions, connected with our commercial system with respect to China, are at present in agitation, upon which, certainly, a very great diversity of opinion exists, and which are considered, by all parties, to involve commercial interests of the very first magnitude.'⁸¹

Most of the work is concerned with commerce, but it is notable that curiosity was also attended in the 'Literary Notices', which included 'notes on pastimes, rituals, ceremonies, etc.', such as

⁸⁰ Wilkinson, 187.

⁸¹ Staunton, G.T. *Miscellaneous Notices relating to China, and our Commercial Intercourse with that Country* (1822), iv. Barrett shows that Staunton was largely responsible for the early acceptance of sinology as an recognised discipline, as he persuaded University College, London, to appoint its first Chair of Chinese Studies, the Reverend Samuel Kidd (see below). Barrett, 69.

'Popular Game among the Chinese, called *Tsoey-moey* ', and 'Chinese Court Ceremony of the Ko-tou.'⁸²

J.F. Davis was an eminent scholar of all aspects of Chinese history, language and culture, and had been the British Chief Superintendent in China. His *The Chinese* was a culmination of prolonged study (evidenced in the numerous papers he gave to the Royal Asiatic Society in the 1820s and 1830s), and was comprehensive in its coverage. The subjects it dealt with were: European intercourse, geography, history, government, character, manners and customs, cities, natural history, industry, agriculture and commerce. He intended to produce a work for the 'general reader', and opined that 'The superiority which the Chinese possess over the other nations of Asia is so decided as scarcely to need the institution of an elaborate comparison.'⁸³ Davis and Staunton together presented an official interpretation of China, and their books would have been closely identified with State policy towards it. Davis, especially, was the most widely read author on the subject.

There had been a missionary presence in China since the Portuguese settled there in the mid-sixteenth century, but the results of the trade war gave a fresh optimism to the British mission there. Rev. C.F.A. Gutzlaff's *China Opened* appeared in 1838, and celebrated the new potential for both the promotion of Christianity and the increase in knowledge for the West:

⁸² Staunton, 57,119.

⁸³ Davis, J.F. *The Chinese: A General description of the Empire of China and its Inhabitants* (1836), 6.

'China is now happily open to our commerce: China will soon be open to our more general intercourse: and China will eventually be open to Missionary enterprise. It is therefore a favourable circumstance, that it is being opened to our understanding by a variety of useful publications...'⁸⁴

Gutzlaff was the first of many authors to feel compelled in his preface to justify his addition to the increasing literature, particularly in the light of Davis's superlative study: 'Admitting they have merit (and some of them, especially, Davis, have great merit), it will be found a valuable addition...'; his work had the specific intention to 'ultimately bring to them...the true religion', though, informed by unusually favourable perception of the status of the Chinese: 'the most singular, extensive, and important people on the face of the globe'. The aspects of China he covered were, briefly: geography, natural history, topography, history, language and literature, manners, customs, institutions and government.

In the same year W.H. Medhurst of the London Missionary Society⁸⁵ published *China: Its State and Prospects*, stating his motivation to be a widespread interest in his experiences in China expressed on his return. He perceived 'a sympathy on behalf of China', and wished to perpetuate this through his book, 'embracing the general state of CHINA; and its STATE and PROSPECTS, with

⁸⁴ Gutzlaff, C.F.A. *China Opened* (1838), v.

⁸⁵ W.H. Medhurst (1796-1857), was an early member of the London Missionary Society, and wrote many books in English and Chinese. He is known for supervision of printing works in Asia, beginning at Malacca in 1817, and especially for setting up the first press at the Mission in Shanghai after the opening of the Treaty Ports in 1843.

especial reference to the DIFFUSION of the GOSPEL.⁸⁶ The publication dealt extensively with Mission, its problems and requirements, and also treated history, population, civilisation, government, language and literature and religions. Amongst the short bibliography is Du Halde's *History*.

The missionary works are important in that one of the major antagonisms felt towards the Chinese was their adamanace against Christianity, and the experiences of Gutzlaff and Medhurst could conceivably have attracted a wide readership. However, it should be observed that both described China broadly, through academic spheres of geography, history, religion and government, with little, if any attention to contemporary society.

By 1840, 'China' in general was apparently an established subject-area for books of many genres, and some writers turned their attention to the more immediately relevant questions arising from the newly increased access to it gained from the signing of the Treaty of Nanking. Thus W.C. Young's *The English in China* and Mudie's *China and its Resources* were both published in that year. Mudie, especially, dealt more with the practical implications of the changes in trade with China than any other work of this time.⁸⁷ He categorically stated that no result could arise from the Opium conflict other than bad relations with the Chinese: either China would become 'more insolent' through victory, or England would be defeated in armed attack and have to leave China

⁸⁶ Medhurst, W.H. *China: Its State and Prospects* (1838), iv.

⁸⁷ No published biographical material about Mudie survives, but from the preoccupation of his work with the Tea Issue, it is feasible that he had not actually visited China.

indefinitely.⁸⁸ His only concern was with tea, as he considered it the only reason for engaging with the Chinese, and the point of his volume was to put forward a scheme by which tea could be bought elsewhere - Assam - and intercourse avoided altogether. Yet he also considered that all previous works on China were 'partisan', and wished to redress the balance with a logically reasoned account of the Empire. He further acknowledged the non-specialist reader, and inferred a pragmatic understanding of the limited scope of attention and dedication writers on China could expect from their audience:

'People generally know little or nothing of China, and consequently come to erroneous conclusions respecting it; and I believe...that the public attention now excited, will create the desire of some knowledge of China, by those who have neither leisure nor disposition to read voluminous works, or collate them with each other, so as to ascertain in what points they are right, and in what wrong. Therefore, I have given a brief outline of all the peculiarities of China...'

This outline covers 'general importance', geography, topography, politics, 'physical characters', government, language and literature, history, commerce, manufactures, foreign trade and the Opium Question; in total these topics constituted around half the contents, the remainder being a description of, and argument for, the advantages of procuring tea from Assam instead of China.

This work has been isolated here from other documents relating to tea because it was not written by an actively-interested trader, and because it provided a brief account of China

⁸⁸ Mudie, R *China and its Resources, and peculiarities, physical, political, social, and commercial; with a view of the Opium Question, and a notice of Assam* (1840); the following comments and quotations from Mudie are from his preface, ii-v.

designed to appeal to the casual reader, potentially capturing an audience insufficiently interested to read Davis's two volumes, coincidentally reprinted in 1840.

In 1841 two works were published which identified the Opium War as an opportunity to sanction the importance of China in global terms. Kidd perceived a requirement to justify augmenting the body of literature on China, observing in the preface of his own work that there was always room for fresh approaches and methods of presentation.⁸⁹ The purpose of his *China* was solely to present a sympathetic view inspired by academic recognition of the unique role of China in a worldwide perspective, unbiased by trade, political or mission preoccupations:

'The specific object of the volume is to excite an interest on behalf of the Chinese, in those who are seeking comparatively unexplored fields of research, where they may acquire extended views of man, in his moral and intellectual state, in his social

⁸⁹ S. Kidd (1799-1843), became an agent of the London Missionary Society in 1824, and in 1827 was Professor of Chinese at the Anglo-Chinese College. He returned to England on health grounds in 1832, and in 1837 became the first Chair of Chinese Language and Literature at University College, London; Barrett points out, though, that Kidd was extremely traditional in approach and preoccupation, 'his sinological attitudes being more reminiscent of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries', and further, far from developing Sinology as an established discipline, 'after his death in 1843 the chair was allowed to lapse'. Barrett, 70-2.

connections, and in relation to the Supreme power from which he believes himself to have emanated.⁹⁰

His work has a detached tone, as he further considers 'a Chinese' to be 'a suitable specimen of one of the wide extremes to which members of the same great family may diverge...irrespective of Christian principle', but he paradoxically emphasizes his personal (and therefore subjective) experience of China as a valuable selling point. Although the book was aimed for general readers as well as scholars, its contents are more analytically laid out than in previous works, dealing specifically with 'Origin and genius of the Chinese language', ancient history, the Three sects, moral philosophy, the political State, superstitions, antiquities, customs, education, literature, medicine, botany and natural history. However, this list demonstrates that the work resembled in stature and themes all of the 'serious' works hitherto produced, differing only in that it was an academic enterprise, and probably read only by deeply interested fellow-scholars.

Tradescent Lay's work of the same year, *The Chinese as they are*, extended identification of the importance of China to define the Empire as in fact a physical half of the world, in which half of all human experience and endeavour could be located:

'To the merchant, the antiquary, the Christian philanthropist, and the lover of natural science, this moiety of the world presents a field well calculated to make every man of enterprise ask, with

⁹⁰ Kidd, S. *China, or Illustrations of the symbols, philosophy, antiquities, customs, superstitions, laws, government, education and literature of the Chinese, Derived from original sources, and accompanied by drawings from native works* (1841), v.

the deepest anxiety, "How can I get through the thick fence which policy has thrown around it?"⁹¹

He then suggests that 'Providence' (a euphemism for military engagement) was about to solve this problem, allowing hope for 'a consummation so devoutly to be wished'. His own residence in China seems to be presented as an example of how the thirst for knowledge could at present be fulfilled by evasion of the governing classes and attending 'the people', who 'are reasonable in their views and conceptions', and he stresses that his work differs from 'previous gentlemen writers', in that it has been researched personally and through native works. In contrast to Kidd, he aimed to be concise, again seeing that the market for weighty tomes on China might well be saturated:

'A larger work was designed; but as so many books prefer their claims to the leisure of reading men, the Author has done rightly, perhaps, in yielding to those who suggested that a small one would be more acceptable.'

Lay's work did differ in that its topics resembled a series of sketches of China and the Chinese rather than adhering to academically-defined disciplines through which to explore the nation, its chapters including more 'trivial' items such as 'Strolling Doctors and Fortune-tellers', 'Gymnic Feats', 'A Chinaman's Estimate of the female Character' and 'Thrifty habits of the Chinese', interspersed with religion, manufactures, philosophy, metaphysics, military and Navy, and so forth.

⁹¹ Tradescant Lay, G. *The Chinese as they are: Their moral, social, and literary character; a new analysis of the language; with succinct views of their principal arts and sciences* (1841); again the notes and quotations are taken from his preface, vi-vii.

By 1841, then, China was the subject of avid study as a result of its currency in public media, yet the scope of inquiry was expanding to consider the Chinese outside the direct issues thrown out by that currency. Kidd and Tradescant Lay can be seen to illustrate the broadening range of intellectual activity around China which was developing by the early 1840s, showing that it had gained value both in universal philosophical objectives and in illustration of the diversity of mankind in everyday habits. The last literary example of sinological interest to be looked at here, however, will demonstrate that concurrent with these more sophisticated treatments of China, some works continued to be produced which constituted simplistic summaries of the Chinese, evocative of Wilkinson's *Sketches*, and which persisted in offering understanding of China through by now familiar myths and motifs.

The last example here is from literature produced for the instruction of children, which is perhaps a useful genre for gauging the extent of public interest in, or popular appeal of, topical issues. Between the mid-1830s and mid-1860s, William Martin (1801-1867) wrote many children's books and annuals using the pseudonym 'Peter Parley', of which some were extremely popular, running to several editions.⁹² In 1843 he published *Tales about China and the Chinese*, with a preface beginning in the global spirit of Kidd and Lay: 'In this volume you

⁹² Several dealt with foreign nations, such as *Tales about the sea, and the Islands in the Pacific Ocean* (1838); *Tales about Europe, Asia, Africa, and America* (1842); *Our Oriental kingdom; or, tales about India* (1857).

have an account of one of the most interesting nations on the face of the earth', and continuing

'I have called China *one of the* most wonderful countries in the world: if I had called it *the* most wonderful, I should not have been far from the truth'.⁹³

This celebration is reasoned through the pattern recognisable from some of the authors discussed above: because China has the oldest government, is the most populous nation, was the first to invent printing, has the earliest recorded history, and so forth. However, Martin then demonstrates that his feeling of 'wonder' does not reside exclusively in the adulatory definition of the word, and the rest of the preface is devoted to pointing out the essential inferiority of China in the present, in spite of its auspicious past:

'But the greatest wonder of all is, that the Chinese, with all their great advantages, are not a *great* nation, in the sense in which Britain is a *great* nation. They go on from age to age without making any progress, and they do not communicate the blessings they enjoy to other countries. It is true, we may get tea, silk, and china from them, but only under absurd and jealous restrictions; and...we can now make china ware, and grow and manufacture silk, in Europe, better than they can.'

This last display of competitive edge will be seen to be recurrent in the volume, for whilst Parley gives generally concise, 'factual' accounts of Chinese culture and society, the text frequently draws on comparisons with the West to sustain interest. Whilst this is not unreasonable given that he is attempting to provide a perspective of learning for children: 'reflect properly on what you learn, [and] you will one day be able to form conclusions for

⁹³ Parley, P. (pseud. of William Martin) *Tales about China and the Chinese* (1843), v-vi.

yourselves...', the preface ends with a statement of fundamental nationalism which the comparative analysis is fundamentally trying to uphold: '...and will then see how thankful you ought to be that you were born Britons'.⁹⁴

The subjects covered in the book are: geography, public works, religion, arts and sciences, fashions, characters, customs, cities, historical stories and events. Some descriptions are especially reminiscent of Wilkinson's observations, as in this reference to the theatre, from which Parley, like Wilkinson, draws ethical conclusions:

'They have also plays, and stage representations of various kinds, but for the most part of a gross and whimsical nature, by no means calculated to improve the morals of the people',⁹⁵

The impressions given of material culture and manufactures are also similar to those described in Wilkinson's tour of China Street: 'The Chinese have various manufactures...the chief are - lacquer-ware, carving in ivory and mother-of-pearl, spangles, and embroidery', and again porcelain is singled out as remaining the ultimate achievement of Chinese industry

'The fabric of porcelain...originated entirely with the Chinese; and although the taste both of the English, French, and Germans, has produced more elegant patterns, yet "Chinese china" is still unsurpassed in whiteness, hardness, and transparency'.⁹⁶

Some items are particularly admired: 'a pattern-book, containing representations of birds, beasts, flowers, trees, mythological figures, and other devices, which would have done credit to the

⁹⁴ Parley, viii-ix.

⁹⁵ Parley, 77.

⁹⁶ Parley, 87.

most civilized nations', 'the Chinese have a great share of practical cleverness in making many sorts of articles',⁹⁷ but these praises are always conditionally accompanied by notice of the stagnation of China:

'though certain kinds of learning flourish among them; yet the arts and sciences make but little progress. Whatever the Chinese know, or can do, at present, it seems likely that their ancestors knew, and could do, many centuries ago'.⁹⁸

Chinese women's feet are inevitably discussed, but Parley gives a unique frame of reference for their consideration:

'In our country, it is said that her most gracious Majesty, the Queen, has the smallest and most beautiful pair of feet in the empire - and long may she wear them; but these, as regards smallness, would be nothing in comparison with the foot of a Chinese lady'.⁹⁹

This is followed by a reasonable recognition that footbinding 'is certainly not worse than our "tight-lacing" system'.

Parley's motivation for writing the book is not openly stated, but it can be seen that it fitted in with his general choice of subject-matter. He does implicitly claim to have visited Canton: 'I purchased for thirty cash, a beautiful pattern-book'.¹⁰⁰ Regarding the Opium War, some history of recent events in China is given, for example of Commissioner Lin seizing chests from the foreign traders, and he states that further coverage will be given 'when I shall give an account of the opium war'.¹⁰¹ Such an account does

⁹⁷ Parley, 125, 72.

⁹⁸ Parley, 125.

⁹⁹ Parley, 89.

¹⁰⁰ Parley, 125.

¹⁰¹ Parley, 110.

not appear in *Tales about China*. The only overtly aggressive comment on the situation comes in a subjective passage dealing with the *Pekin Gazette*:

'...it is principally a tissue of misrepresentations and falsehoods, written entirely to mislead the people, as regards the true state of affairs...If we could read it at the present time, no doubt we should find it full of falsehoods regarding our nation, and the proceedings of our brave troops'.

Tales about China and the Chinese is useful for this study as it demonstrates how popular images and illustrations present in literature at the beginning of the century still had currency by the time Dunn's collection was established.¹⁰² If Martin had visited China, he did not discover or describe anything that had not been dealt with previously, but this is possibly justified in that his was the first account offered to children. The fact that it was a children's book is significant to demonstrate that by 1843 China had become topical enough a subject to be aimed at an expanding audience, diverse in knowledge and expectation, and by no means limited to specifically interested linguists, missionaries, philosophers or businessmen.

¹⁰² For example the fascination with Chinese forms of punishment shown in Mason's *Punishments of China* forty years earlier is brought up to date by Parley in the description of Lin's attempts to foil the western traders: 'finding...that neither strangling, bastinadoing, the pillory, nor banishment, could prevent it...', 110.

**The representation of China in 'Public Amusements':
Bullock and the Egyptian Hall, the Leicester Square
Panorama, and Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum.**

Martin's 'Peter Parley' series was part of a literary genre which drew on international issues and diluted them to address children and the uninformed reader. This section will study those popular exhibitions with similar opportunistic strategies for illustrating topical events which included treating foreign cultures. One major obstacle facing any examination of public entertainments of the nineteenth century lies in the relative lack of documentation available in comparison with to the archival data for national institutions. This is lamented by Altick: 'Of the many London showmen we meet by name in the old records, few can be seen in sufficient detail for us to conceive the sort of persons they were'.¹⁰³ Yet he isolates Bullock, founder of the Egyptian Hall, as a notable exception, for although his dates are unknown, documentation of his career from the 1790s until the early 1820s is quite extensive. The protagonists of the Panorama, the Barkers and Burfords, have also been looked at in some detail owing to their arguable status as fine artists,¹⁰⁴ and the continued ownership of Madame Tussaud's by her family into this century has led to a considerable nostalgic literature around her early activities and setting up of the Museum. Unlike Parley, the Egyptian Hall, Panorama and Wax Museum were concerned with

¹⁰³ Altick, 235.

¹⁰⁴ The elder Barker apparently gained approval for his technical invention from Sir Joshua Reynolds; this fact is recited by all the authors used below in discussion of the Leicester Square Panorama.

'real people', visual representations and artefacts, and it will be shown that a great emphasis was placed on the authenticity of their exhibits. Where foreign nations or races were displayed, the manner in which the images or objects were procured is recited to reinforce their status, a strategy which Dunn and Langdon themselves exploited. This survey of the three institutions will trace their attention to China before, during and after the Opium War, and further will look at their essential origins, progress and ideologies in view of their prominent status as successful commercial attractions.

William Bullock and the Egyptian Hall.

William Bullock was a Liverpool jeweller and silversmith who in the late eighteenth century exercised his interest in natural history through buying rare specimens from the crews of returning ships. The first public display of his collection in Liverpool has been dated at 1795 by Altick, and described by him as 'a typically eighteenth-century, which is to say highly mixed, exhibition of natural and artificial curiosities'.¹⁰⁵ In 1799 Bullock published the first catalogue, or *Companion* to his museum, listing 'Three Hundred Curiosities'.¹⁰⁶ Subsequent *Companions* indicated eight hundred items in 1801 and 'over four thousand' in 1808.¹⁰⁷ In 1809 he moved the collection to London, calling it the 'Liverpool Museum', and housing it at 22, Piccadilly. It was

¹⁰⁵ Altick, 235. All subsequent quotations from Altick pertaining to Bullock are taken from chapter 18, 'William Bullock and the Egyptian Hall', 235-252.

¹⁰⁶ Mullens, W.H. 'William Bullock's London Museum', *Museums Journal* 17, (1917-18), 32.

¹⁰⁷ Mullens, 133.

immediately successful, illustrated by *Bell's Weekly Messenger* in 1810, quoted by Altick, which described it as 'the most fashionable place of amusement in London; more than 22,000 have already visited it during the month it has been opened'. By 1811 Bullock boasted 'upwards of ten thousand Natural and Foreign Curiosities';¹⁰⁸ in 1812 the museum had been entitled 'The London Museum', and was made more ostentatious, being taken to the 'Egyptian Temple', Piccadilly, then 'just erected for its reception.'¹⁰⁹ It has been pointed out that the architectural exterior was reputedly based on the Temple of Tentyris, yet was in fact 'a mixture of various elements',¹¹⁰ but, as Altick observes, 'To passersby, it sufficed that the hieroglyphs *looked* Egyptian; and the building's purpose was, in any event, adequately spelled out by the words LONDON MUSEUM carved beneath the feet of Isis and Osiris.'

The 1812 edition of the *Companion* stated in its 'Address' that the move had been provoked by 'the very flattering and general approbation which honoured the Exhibition...', which was 'a convincing proof that future efforts for the extension and improvement of the collection would be duly appreciated.'¹¹¹ It was also asserted that 'in most departments, the subjects have been doubled in number', and had grown to 'about Fifteen Thousand species of Quadrupeds, Birds, Reptiles, Fishes, Insects,

¹⁰⁸ Mullens, 133.

¹⁰⁹ Quoted from the twelfth edition of Bullock's *Companion* (1812), in Mullens, 32.

¹¹⁰ Honour, H. 'Curiosities of the Egyptian Hall', *Country Life* 115, (1954), 38.

¹¹¹ This and the following quotations and information regarding the status and aims of Bullock's museum are taken from his preface: Bullock, W. *A Companion to Mr. Bullock's London Museum and Pantherion* 12th. ed. (1812), i-v.

Shells, Corals, &c. &c. collected during twenty years of unwearied application, and at an expense exceeding thirty thousand pounds'. It is interesting that from this description Bullock's collection seems to have developed just as Sir Hans Sloane's had in the mid-eighteenth century, and further, Bullock's universal aims nominally resembled Sloane's in putting it before the public: 'for the study of the Naturalist, the Instruction of the Curious, and the Amusement of those who are delighted in viewing the Beauties of Nature, or the Curiosities of Art...' Where Sloane and Bullock crucially differed, however, was in Bullock's use of his cabinet for commercial purposes, indicated by his statement of its value above, and underlined by reiteration of it at the end of his Address, giving details of admission charges:

'When the information and delight which may be derived from this exhibition...are considered, the great sum expended in forming it, and the erection of the present large and commodious building...the Proprietor trusts that the terms will be approved of'.

This financial awareness of the Hall's potential was to shape both the progress of Bullock's activities and the subsequent exhibitions housed there throughout the century.

One other characteristic shared by Sloane and Bullock's museums was the incidental inclusion of ethnographical specimens resulting from their indirect modes of acquisition, whereby they relied heavily on the unselective gatherings of naval officers and other travellers. The London Museum consisted largely of natural history, but did have small sections showing 'Works of Art', 'Curiosities', and 'Miscellaneous Articles', among which were many foreign objects. By these, the geographic area most represented was the Sandwich Islands (Bullock having

benefitted as the British Museum had done from Captain Cook's expedition) and these had more space than both 'Curiosities of North and South America', and 'African Curiosities'.¹¹² Chinese objects formed a very small percentage of the exhibits, but their nature and location within the display reveal much about Bullock's attitude towards China as an area of interest. In the 1812 *Companion* description of 'Works of Art', were the following entries:

'*Model of a Chinese Pagoda*, made of Mother-o'-pearl, ornamented with carving and gilding',

'Sixteen hollow *Balls of Ivory*, cut within each other out of one solid piece by the Chinese in the most wonderful manner, every ball being pierced of a different pattern, almost as fine as lace',

and under 'Curiosities of North and South America':

'*Chinese Money*. These pieces have square holes through them, and are always strung together. Seventy-six of them are the value of an English sixpence',

'*Rouge*, used by the Chinese ladies to colour their faces'.

These were all the Chinese objects listed. The first two exhibits serve as contemporaneous illustrations of the European appreciation of Chinese intricate treatment of exotic materials expressed in Wilkinson's narrative of Canton discussed above. The inclusion of the second two in the American display is remarkable in retrospect, but suggests proof of a widespread practice of arbitrary categorisation of 'distant' cultures first exemplified at the British Museum. The other Chinese items in the museum were a Golden Pheasant, accompanied by a note that

¹¹² This and the following information and entries describing the exhibits in his museum are from Bullock, (1812), 1-11, 12-15, 16-18, 19-20, 81, 36 .

'This splendid bird is now bred in this country, and will stand our winters tolerably well', and some men's and women's shoes in a case devoted to 'shoes of different nations'. Taken collectively, these particular artefacts were some of the typical components which illustrated a fragmented perception of China: Pagoda, Ivory, Money, Rouge, Shoes, Pheasant.¹¹³ It is further notable that both the money and the pheasant were accompanied by commentary placing them in comparison with British objects, which could be tentatively read as an unconscious signal of the competitive tone with which Chinese culture was to be annotated in later decades. There was apparently no further development of Bullock's Chinese holdings.

The commercial potential of the Napoleonic Wars indicated by Bullock's choice of an ostensibly Egyptian facade for the Hall was further emphasised in the preface to the 1813 *Companion* :

'The Museums of France have been enriched with the spoils of nearly the whole Continent...but...our unrivalled Navy, and the extension of our Colonies throughout the habitable world, present such advantages to this country, that the writer feels confident that...he will very shortly be enabled to make a collection...far surpassing anything of the kind at present in existence...'.¹¹⁴

Its material exploitation was actually realised through the next significant installation at the museum in 1816: Napoleon's Carriage. Altick points out that since the Battle of Waterloo, Napoleana had consistently drawn crowds at the Waterloo Museum at 97 Pall Mall, but he then shows that the carriage was

¹¹³ The British Museum had held one of these 'Chinese Pheasants' in the Sloane Collection since its foundation. *A New and Compleat History*, 348.

¹¹⁴ Quoted by Mullens, 134, from Bullock's *Companion* 15th. ed. (1813).

to prove the most successful spectacle: 'The show attracted 10,000 a day - more than had any previous London exhibition...[the] total reached 222,000 by the time the show closed.'¹¹⁵ Bullock himself netted over £20,000 from the display of the carriage,¹¹⁶ and invested part of this in a 'Museum Napoleon'.

In 1819 Bullock put the entire contents of the Hall up for auction, and this was the end of any representation of China there. At that date the museum comprised three main collections: the 'Roman Gallery' of antique marbles, the Pantheon and natural history displays, and the 'Museum Napoleon'. After the sale, the museum housed a great number of diverse shows, of which it is significant that many were of ethnological interest, and the site became the foremost arena for the display of single nations exclusively, some of which Dunn's resembled in that the proprietors emphasised that they had actively visited foreign nations and acquired their exhibits, and of examples - invariably 'curiosities' - of distant races. Abrahams has charted the events at the Hall, and has shown that generally several exhibits would run concurrently in different galleries.¹¹⁷ In 1822 a family of Laplanders were shown with reindeer, with good financial returns, netting £100 a day for six weeks. The following year an 'African Museum of Natural History' was established, amassed by a M. Villette over twenty years' residence at the Cape of Good Hope. In 1824 an 'Esquimaux' man and woman were shown, as was a machine for 'Hatching Chickens by Artificial Heat', and the result

¹¹⁵ Honour, 38, states 800,000 visitors (no source given).

¹¹⁶ Abrahams, A. 'The Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly, 1813-1873', *Antiquary* 42, (1906), 62.

¹¹⁷ The following events are selected from Abrahams, 139-144.

of a trip made by Bullock to South America, 'Ancient and Modern Mexico'. Fine art was constantly displayed and sold, ranging from contemporary work such as that of Benjamin Haydon to Italian Old Masters. 'Freaks' were another regular feature, from Siamese Twins in 1829 to a four-legged boy in 1837 to General Tom Thumb in 1845. Without reciting all the shows at the Egyptian Hall, it should be emphasised that ethnology was evidently an increasingly rich field for commercial enterprise, exemplified by the endurance of the 'North American Indian Museum' from 1840 to 1845.¹¹⁸ The consistent attention to 'Primitive' peoples was matched only by that to Napoleon in terms of recurrent representation. Regardless of the Opium War, at no point did the Chinese become subjects of display at the Hall.

It is apparent, then, that Bullock and his successors consciously presented exhibitions which reflected British activity abroad, and the repetition of the Waterloo theme was a reminder of British military prowess. It is initially surprising that no displays arose from India, the most prized colonial possession, but this indicates that there was no thorough ideology demanded by the site or proprietors, and that the personal interests of various entrepreneurs were autonomous. It is significant that the main display at the museum during the Chinese exhibition was Catlin's, for the two were to be compared in review, but the difference in

¹¹⁸ This exhibition was set up by another American showman, Catlin, and was extremely popular, as it included 'live' subjects and co-ordinated spectacular evenings during which the American Indians 'performed' War Dances, and so forth. Catlin's show is important here in that it was often compared to Dunn's, as will be shown in Chapter 3, and the two Americans were considered together as exemplary of their nation's talents for initiative and entrepreneurship.

venue should also be stressed, for the notion of China 'in Miniature' promoted by Dunn was not available for Catlin at the 'Egyptian' Hall which he shared with, amongst other things, a pantomime entitled 'Napoleon's Generosity'; 'The Missouri Leviathan Skeleton'; a machine for composing hexameter Latin verses; a moving diorama of Constantinople; two Bushmen children; and 'The Great Pennard Cheese'.

The Panorama at Leicester Square.

'The panorama is a pictorial representation of the whole view visible from one point by an observer who in turning round looks successively to all points of the horizon. Instead of, as in the case of an ordinary picture, the scene being projected on a plane as represented by a flat canvas...the artist finds it convenient to suppose himself surrounded by a cylindrical surface in whose centre he stands, and to project the landscape from this position on the inner face of the cylinder'.¹¹⁹

The invention of the Panorama in the above form as it was to become commercially utilised in the early nineteenth century is widely attributed to Robert Barker, an Edinburgh artist, working in the 1780s.¹²⁰ Artists working in the popular landscape genre in the eighteenth century had painted circular pictures before, but Barker is credited with having scientifically solved the problem of recreating a straight horizon on a flat surface. Barker recognised the lucrative possibilities of his formula, and took out a patent for it in 1787, but if his views were to be shown to the public to full effect, he required a large circular building lit exclusively from

¹¹⁹ Andrews, H.C. 'The Leicester Square and Strand Panoramas: Their Proprietors and Artists', *Notes and Queries* 159, (1930), 57.

¹²⁰ Many of the following facts concerning the Panorama are taken from Altick, chapter 10, 'The Panorama in Leicester Square', 128-140.

the top and ventilated without windows. To court sponsorship, he took his ideas to London and showed them to Joshua Reynolds, who was apparently impressed, but thought them impractical. However, Barker compromised his ideal conditions, and in 1788 showed a watercolour view of Edinburgh on a circular canvas twenty-five feet in diameter at 28 Haymarket, with 'instant success'.¹²¹ This panorama attracted financial backing from a joint stock company, 'and, just as important, Reynolds, the lawgiver of British art, was won over'.¹²² Reynolds' interest has been cited as the subject of several dubious anecdotes by Altick, for example a story grew up that he 'left his breakfast table, walked to the Haymarket in his dressing gown and slippers, and having inspected the picture, congratulated its creator'. Altick points out that this is extremely unlikely, as Reynolds had partially lost his sight by then, but it is nonetheless important that Barker wished to seek his approval, and that the public recognised it, for this must have admitted the panorama as a serious artistic genre, and one perceived to be appropriate for an intelligent audience.

Barker's son, Henry Aston Barker, had assisted in the drawings for the panoramic experiments since the age of twelve, according to his memoirs,¹²³ and in 1789 he made the drawings for a view of London presented at their home, which met with the enthusiasm that Edinburgh had and gained more sponsorship. This enabled Barker to lease a site in Leicester Square in 1793,

¹²¹ Andrews, 58.

¹²² Altick, 130.

¹²³ Quoted in 'The Panorama: with memoirs of its inventor, Robert Barker, and his son, Henry Aston Barker', *Art Journal* n.s.3, (1857), 46.

and to erect a building ideally suited to the pictures. It was around then that the exhibition was named the 'Panorama' (Greek: all-embracing view),¹²⁴ again indicating Barker's desire to place his pictures in the tradition of classical painting. The building had two concentric viewing circles, enabling two pictures to be shown concurrently.

In the early years of the Leicester Square Panorama, the Barkers concentrated for their subject-matter primarily upon naval exploits and battles, beginning in 1794 with views of the fleet at Spithead and Lord Howe's Victory. These were followed by the Battle of the Nile, Plymouth, and Cornwallis's Retreat in 1799; The Battles of Constantinople and Copenhagen in 1801 and 1802; Paris following the Peace of Amiens in 1803; Gibraltar in 1804; Trafalgar in 1806; Cairo in 1810; Malta in 1812; Vittoria in 1814; Elba, and the Battle of Paris in 1815; and Waterloo in 1816. While seascapes and battles were undoubtedly suited to the genre, it has been conceded that Barker 'took the fullest advantage of such exceptional opportunities and the pecuniary results'.¹²⁵ Moreover, the naval protagonists themselves colluded with these representations, as Henry Barker related of his visit to Constantinople in 1799:

'I was introduced to Lord Nelson, who took me by the hand, saying he was indebted to me for keeping up the fame of his victory in the Battle of the Nile for a year longer than it would have lasted in the public estimation'.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ 'The Panorama...' *Art Journal* 47.

¹²⁵ Andrews, 59.

¹²⁶ Quoted in 'The Panorama...' *Art Journal* 47. The following anecdotal material about H.A. Barker's exploits is also from this article.

The superiority of the Leicester Square exhibits over other rival panoramas in London at this time is asserted by Altick: 'Above all it was their ability to provide a superior illusion that guaranteed a steady box office', and he also posits their public importance: 'Panoramas became the newsreels of the Napoleonic era'.¹²⁷ The meticulous extent of the Barkers research has also been celebrated:

'Mr. Barker Frequently travelled, to take his own drawings for his pictures, which were always remarkable for faithfulness and truth',

'For accuracy he obtained from Captains Barlow and Seymour of the *Pegasus* a plan of the position of every ship, at about 1 o'clock on that day...'

Altick's term 'illusion' is crucial here in that the criteria of accuracy related above cannot be seen to be neutral. Although the Barkers always went to great lengths to gain correct topographical plans of their views (if they did not take these themselves they used sketches by other travellers), they were never present during battles, and relied heavily for their representations of actual manoeuvres and actions on the accounts related by British participants: 'after the Battle of Waterloo he [Henry Barker] visited the field, and...obtained from the officers at head-quarters every necessary information on the subject of the battle'. As the original canvases have not survived, it is impossible to suggest a deconstruction of the images in terms of whether they misrepresented events, and it would be presumptuous to locate the artists as blatant conspirators. The author of the *Art Journal* article posits that Henry Barker found

¹²⁷ Altick, 136.

favour with Nelson because of his 'knowledge of nautical matters, and accurate representation of shipping, &c.', however it should be emphasised that public recognition of these 'accurate' methods permits conjecture that their 'superiority' lay in the greater strenuousness of their efforts to capture British moments of triumph.

Robert Barker had died in 1806, leaving his son as proprietor at Leicester Square. He was assisted from then on by John Burford, who had been his father's pupil. It has been shown in the discussion of Bullock's museum that the Napoleonic Wars sustained public interest long after Waterloo, and panoramas relating to these events continued to be shown up to 1853.¹²⁸ Having established the site as one of London's major attractions, however, Barker and Burford began to exhibit other subjects, mostly views of foreign countries, and sometimes contemporary domestic events such as the Coronation of George IV in 1822. In the mid-1820s Henry Barker retired, apparently allowed by the profits from the picture of Waterloo.¹²⁹ John Burford and his brother Robert then took on the business, and continued to show battles, such as Navarino in 1827 and the siege of Antwerp in 1833, and views from travellers in the colonies, such as Calcutta and Bombay in 1831, Sydney in 1830, and Niagara in 1833-4. They also took advantage of the rising interest in archaeology, showing the City of Thebes in 1835 and the Coliseum at Rome in 1839, and all these specific areas of interest were interspersed with adaptations from drawings from returning travellers, among

¹²⁸ The Battle of Waterloo picture was shown again in 1846 and 1853. Andrews, 77-8.

¹²⁹ 'The Panorama...' *Art Journal* 47. The author states that this was around 1826; Altick, 137, states 1822.

them Bullock, who provided the views for the 1825 panorama of Mexico.¹³⁰ In 1826 John Burford retired, leaving Robert Burford the sole proprietor.

The consistency with which the proprietors of the Panorama had exploited the topicality of scenes generated by theatres of war and conflict meant that almost inevitably views of China began to be shown during the Opium Crisis. The first of these was Canton, shown in 1838. This was followed in 1840 by Macao, in 1844 by Hong Kong, and in 1845 by Nankin.¹³¹ A surviving pamphlet accompanying the Macao picture gives an idea as to how the audience were encouraged to view the pictures, and to what extent Burford aimed to inform about his subjects, as well as impress with his technical skill and aspirations to realism. [Fig.25] The pamphlet states that the view was taken with its audience in mind: 'The panorama taken from the Bay of Typa, exhibits the city, on what may be termed the British side, consequently in its most interesting aspect'.¹³² Enclosed is a small reproduction of the panorama, annotated with numbered references to points of interest, primarily the houses of British residents, Portuguese churches and geographical landmarks. The only references to the Chinese are junks and boats in the harbour, and the Custom House. The text gives a brief history of European presence at Macao, descriptions of the town and harbour, and the activities of foreign traders. Burford is anxious to emphasize the beauty of the view, 'a most picturesque and beautiful scene', 'the

¹³⁰ Andrews, 75-6.

¹³¹ Andrews, 76-7.

¹³² This and the following quotations about the Macao image are from Burford, R. *Description of a view of Macao in China* (1840), 2.

general effect, interest and beauty of the scene', and is coy about the ongoing conflict, 'the subsequent unfortunate misunderstanding with the English...It is to be hoped that all differences will speedily be amicably arranged'.¹³³ The pamphlet is concise and basically informative, with no attempt to engage directly with contemporary politics, and it can be concluded that Burford's chief intention was to represent to his London audience the environment of compatriots whose activities had only recently been brought to popular notice.

From this study of the Panorama it is evident that China was a natural source of subjects once it became an arena for military activity, and that in spite of Burford's reticence to discuss the war - 'the best informed on the subject can scarcely venture to predict'¹³⁴ - it was the sole reason behind his decision to exhibit the beauty of that country. Yet the respectable status of Leicester Square above other panoramas in this period suggests that it would have been frequented by people wishing to gain an accurate impression of its subjects, and might have provided images of British interest in China taken by visitors to Dunn's exhibition. The prominent role of the Napoleonic Wars in the success of the panorama from the first has been dwelt upon here because it reinforces two implications drawn from the history of the Egyptian Hall: first, that popular entertainments found their greatest commercial gains in exploiting British defeat of the French, and second, that the display of all other foreign cultures in the early nineteenth century was in the context of that atmosphere of British superiority. In the next section it will be

¹³³ Burford, 2,3,4.

¹³⁴ Burford, 4.

shown that the third of the most popular commercial entertainments of this period, Madame Tussaud's also gained substantially from this ideological frame of reference.

Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum.

Marie Tussaud (1761-1850) was taught wax modelling by a relative, Phillippe Curtius (1737-1794), in Paris in the 1770s.¹³⁵ Curtius was a physician who began making wax models to improve his anatomical knowledge, but by 1770 he had perceived a market for wax portraits, and opened an exhibition of life-sized figures. In 1783 he added a section called the *Caverene de Grands Voleurs* 'which was the forerunner of the "Chamber of Horrors"',¹³⁶ but it was after the onset of the Revolution in 1789 that he was to gain his greatest publicity, as he and Madame Tussaud made wax impressions of the heads of some of the guillotined, including Marie Antoinette.¹³⁷ Historians have maintained that Curtius and Tussaud did this against their will,¹³⁸ and that the experience drove Tussaud to London in 1802, never to return to France.

She set up the exhibition that she and Curtius had built up in Paris at the old Lyceum theatre in the Strand. At this time the figures represented were predominately protagonists in the

¹³⁵ Pyke, E.J. *A Biographical Dictionary of Wax Modellers* (1973), 158, and Tussaud, J. *The Romance of Madame Tussaud's* (1920), 15, state that he was her uncle; more recent research has suggested that she was his illegitimate daughter, *Le Palais Royal Exhibition catalogue*, (1988), 121.

¹³⁶ Pyke, 158.

¹³⁷ Tussaud, J., 36.

¹³⁸ Pyke, 158, Tussaud, J., 33.

Revolution or French artistocrats, such as Madame Du Barry, the late Royal Family, Marat, Mirabeau, General Moreau, Robespierre, Charlotte Corday, and so forth.¹³⁹ In 1803 the display was removed, and toured the British Isles for the next thirty years, until it was brought back to London and established at the Royal London Bazaar in Gray's Inn Road in 1833.¹⁴⁰ A volume of the *Biographical Sketches* for 1830 indicates that some of the French Revolution figures were still in evidence, but that more contemporary models had been added, such as the Coronation of George the Fourth, Wellington, the Emperor of Russia and Burke and Hare.¹⁴¹ In 1835 the show was removed to the 'Bazaar' in Baker Street, where it remained, managed after Tussaud's death by her sons, until 1884.¹⁴² The opening hours were from 11 a.m.-5 p.m., and from 7 p.m.-11 p.m., and the Bazaar was advertised as 'Brilliantly Illuminated at 8', presumably by gas. John Tussaud also asserts the early popularity of the museum: 'When the place was closed, seats were provided in the vestibule, and it was no uncommon sight to see from fifty to a hundred persons waiting for the reopening of the doors at 7 p.m.'¹⁴³ An impression of the interior and style of presentation at Baker Street is given by an engraving of 1842 in Mead's *London Interiors*.¹⁴⁴ The image portrays a loosely 'neo-classical' interior, with the wax figures displayed singly on podia, resembling methods used for exhibiting

¹³⁹ *Biographical Sketches of the Characters Composing the Cabinet of Composition Figures, Executed by the Celebrated Curtius of Paris, and his successor* (1803), i-ii.

¹⁴⁰ Tussaud, J., 63, 70.

¹⁴¹ Tussaud, M. *Biographical Sketches...* (1830), 3, 5, 16, 20.

¹⁴² Pyke, 158.

¹⁴³ Tussaud, J., 80.

¹⁴⁴ Mead, J. *London Interiors* (1842), 79.

antique sculpture, but as this is the only picture of Madame Tussaud's in its early period, it is not clear if this was representative of the whole museum.

The 1843 edition of *Biographical Sketches* shows that in that year, according with the policy of reflecting current issues illustrated by the introduction of such figures as George Canning, Horatio Nelson and Daniel O'Connell in the 1830s,¹⁴⁵ a new pair of figures had recently been added: 'Commissioner Lin and his favourite Consort'.¹⁴⁶ Thus, as at the Leicester Square Panorama, China became a subject of interest at Madame Tussaud's only when the Opium War had heightened public awareness of it. The short text accompanying the Chinese models, and the account of other figures in the same gallery reveal much about Tussaud's prompting of appreciation for individual exhibits, and the socio-historical stance connoted by the collective display. The notes on each exhibit in the display are brief, giving information regarding the acquisition of authentic drawings, clothes and props, and in the case of Lin, the model itself was declared not to have been made at Tussaud's, but 'Modelled expressly for this Exhibition by the celebrated Lamqua, from life, through the instrumentality of a gentleman [unnamed] resident of Canton nineteen years.' Then the particular merits of the figures are given 'dressed in magnificent Chinese costumes, lately imported; head dress of the female singularly beautiful', and the model of the consort is used to impart trivial details of Chinese femininity, a characteristic area of 'difference' in western reconstruction of the Orient:

¹⁴⁵ Tussaud, M., 1830, 26, 25, 22.

¹⁴⁶ Tussaud, M. *Biographical Sketches* (1843), 11.

'Please to observe, the Chinese ladies usually colour their complexion white, and their lips vermilion colour; they pencil their eyebrows, and, to preserve their long nails, they put them into bamboo cases during the night'.

Motivation for obtaining the models is stated: 'as they convey all the originality peculiar to the Costumes of China, they cannot fail to be interesting', and from this it seems that Tussaud was ostensibly soliciting the same market for 'curiosity' which had inspired Mason's *Costumes of China* forty years earlier. The last sentence of the text indirectly provides the more immediate opportunity for the inclusion of Lin, however, and gives an enlightening summary of the interpretation by a generally disinterested commercial entertainer of the actual events in China:

'It will be recollected that Lin was chosen by the Emperor to put a stop to the opium trade, and, in consequence, destroyed property to the amount of two millions sterling, belonging to British merchants, which may be regarded as the origin of the War'.

One other reason is given for procuring the pair:

'Madame Tussaud and Sons have great pleasure in introducing the above figures to their Patrons, which has been done at a great expense, as, they believe, they are the only figures of the kind exhibited in this country'.¹⁴⁷

This statement is interesting in view of the fact that Dunn's collection of life-sized figures (possibly wax, and certainly often mistaken for this medium) had been in evidence for at least six months at the time this edition of *Biographical Sketches* went to press. Several explanations could be offered for this - that the

¹⁴⁷ Tussaud, M., (1843), 12.

Tussauds were genuinely unaware of the Chinese Collection, that they were blatantly ignoring it, that they would have defined their figures as significantly different from Dunn's, or that they perceived their museum to be drawing upon a different audience - but it would be futile to favour any of these in particular. A valid conclusion to be drawn, however, is that the Tussauds were anxious to emphasize the idiosyncratic appeal of their exhibits.

The figures displayed in the same room as Lin represented a wide historico-cultural sweep, as at this time the *tableaux vivant* formula later adopted had not yet developed, except for major attractions such as the 'Shrine to Napoleon'.¹⁴⁸ In 1843 Lin was accompanied by John Wesley; Baron Swedenborg; Shakespeare; an actor in the character of Hamlet; Mrs. Siddons in the character of Queen Catherine; an opera singer; "Father Mathew" - a temperance fanatic; Paganini; the Regent of Spain; the Chartist leader Frost; an infant protegee of Napoleon's and an infant son of Madame Tussaud.¹⁴⁹ This list demonstrates that figures were included for various reasons: for example because they were notorious political activists (Frost and "Father Mathew"), or of sentimental value (Tussaud's son), or symbolic of British artistic heritage (Shakespeare and Mrs. Siddons), or religious protagonists (Wesley and Swedenborg), and so forth. Their only common attribute was Fame, making their collective display an interesting social document.

For this study, however, the most important facts are that Lin and his consort, the only Chinese representatives of the period, were not shown with any attempt to suggest an original

¹⁴⁸ Illustrated in Tussaud, J., 117.

¹⁴⁹ Tussaud, M., (1843), 13-15.

environment, and were present at Madame Tussaud's through the simple criterion of current celebrity.

The Egyptian Hall, Panorama and Wax Museum were all extremely popular in the first half of the nineteenth century. It has been demonstrated that all were concerned with illustrating topical concerns in the widest sense, but that none had a systematic strategy for choosing subjects. The Napoleonic Wars dominated their commercial enterprises, attracting the largest audiences, and yielding the greatest profits. Tussaud's medium, and the establishment of living exhibitions at the Egyptian Hall meant that displays at those sites emphasized realism and authenticity, which Dunn's show also boasted. In terms of the representation of foreign nations in isolation, the all-encompassing panoramas more closely resembled his aspiration towards a 'Nation in a Nutshell'. At no time elsewhere did China receive the depth of scrutiny the Chinese Collection reflected; and it is clear that during the Opium War it was attended by Burford and Tussaud primarily as a current British issue, and not through any sudden recognition of its inherent interest. Bullock's small selection of Chinese artefacts are interesting in that they were examples of material culture typically associated with China early in the century, but more important is that when the Hall ultimately became established as a site for exhibiting distant cultures, China never came into play, as entrepreneurs concentrated upon the colonies.

The three institutions have been studied in depth here because they, of all exhibitions in London, most closely resembled Dunn's, being commercial ventures relying on self-promotion and

emphasis on uniqueness, falling into the vast category of 'Public Amusement', undefined in terms of its relative pretensions to entertain or educate and in all probability drawing to a great extent from the same audience. The evidence from their histories conclusively affirms that whilst references were intermittently made to China, nothing like the scale, or of the rigour, of the Chinese Collection had been presented before 1842.

References to China in the theatre.

This section will look at the presence of Chinese themes, scenarios and motifs presented and utilised in London theatres early in the nineteenth century. In his book *Harlequin in His Element* Mayer has dealt comprehensively with the diversity of theatrical styles and settings in the pantomime genre in this period, and demonstrates that of these 'Eastern' was one of the most prevalent in the 1810s, 1820s and 1830s.¹⁵⁰ Mayer posits that the introduction and sustenance of theatrical orientalism resulted directly from the publicity for China and Persia provoked by the Prince Regent's Royal Pavilion at Brighton, views of which were frequently used as backdrops, and miniature reproductions produced for toy theatres, and his narrative takes the form of a parallel chronology of the activities of the Prince Regent and the theatres. This attribution of importance to the Royal Pavilion is significant for this study in that amongst historians of *chinoiserie* there has been widespread consensus that it generally did not

¹⁵⁰ Mayer, D. III. *Harlequin in his Element: The English Pantomime, 1806-1836* (1969). Unless indicated all following references and quotations in this section are from chapter IV. 'The Pantomime Scene', 140-164.

actually affect public taste in terms of promoting eastern artefacts. In that case its consistent presence in the theatre, and specifically in pantomime must give an important insight into both public perception of the artistic status of the Pavilion, and of its nature as an emblem of the East, at least in this popular genre at this time.

Mayer's analysis also reveals that in the theatre, as elsewhere, the East was represented in an undifferentiated and eclectic way, often serving simply as a novel setting for reworkings of established plots and characters, or for experimentation with new mechanical effects. The titles and themes of some of the plays will be traced here, in order to discover how far the theatre aimed for 'accuracy' in its scenes, accommodated contemporary events and established stereotypical characters. It will also be considered how far the harlequinade subjects were affected by the Opium War.

Mayer has located the first nineteenth-century play to use a Chinese motif as *Harlequin in his Element* in 1807, 'specifying a landscape ornamented with a "Pavilion and Chinese bridge"', followed by *The Mandarin; or, Harlequin in China*, a lost pantomime at the Royal Amphitheatre in 1811, but he attributes the onset of China's popularity to Charles Dibdin the Younger's *Whang Fong; or, The Clown of China* staged at Sadler's Wells in 1812. Dibdin attempted to make his production as factually correct as possible, which at that date entailed reference to literary works produced around Macartney's embassy, and thus a book of songs accompanying the play stated that "The Chinese Scenes are copied from Alexander's Views in China'. This attention to authenticity was not adhered to, however, and in

subsequent orientalist plays haphazard mixing of scenes and characters was very much the norm. This began at Drury Lane in 1813, when *Harlequin Harper; or; A Jump from Japan* was staged, and Mayer's description of it demonstrates its precedence for later productions:

'Although the title clearly promises Japanese taste, the orientalism of the pantomime made no distinction between Chinese and Japanese. The characters...are given names that are merely English concepts of Oriental names; the costumes...are a generalized oriental style...'

In 1814 the Prince Regent staged celebrations for the defeat of Napoleon in Hyde, Green and St. James's Parks, at which his 'taste for chinoiserie led him to command Chinese decorations', such as the erection of a bridge and an illuminated pagoda in St. James's Park. The theatres adopted these structures in the scenery for two plays of the same year, *Harlequin Horner* at Drury Lane, and *Harlequin and the Sylph of the Oak* at Covent Garden. In 1815 a pantomime was staged at Covent garden which used *chinoiserie* interiors, *Harlequin and Fortunio; or, Shing-Moo and Thun-Ton*. Mayer has analysed the set designs from some drawings published in 1815 and 1816 for toy theatres, and demonstrates that scenes drew on various English sources of information on China. Two scenes 'owe an unmistakeable debt to Sir William Chambers' engravings of Chinese interiors and temple facades';¹⁵¹ two more 'recall parts of the backgrounds to William Alexander's costume plates';¹⁵² and the final scene was a 'View of the Steyne at Brighton'. This last scene is interesting in that at that date the

¹⁵¹ This refers to Chambers, W. *Designs of Chinese Buildings, Furniture, Dresses, Machines and Utensils...* (1757).

¹⁵² This refers to Alexander, W. *The Costume of China*.

exterior of the Royal Pavilion had not yet been completed in the Persian eclectic style, but was still 'restrained neoclassical', indicating that the Pavilion was an emblem of the East even before its precise decorative iconography was visibly manifested. In 1822 the present exterior of the Pavilion was finished, and a surviving comic print from a pantomime of that year, *Harlequin and the Ogress* shows the completed vista, 'all spires, domes, columns, and Moorish fancy'.

Regarding the relationship of these and similar plays to contemporary events in China, Mayer concludes:

'embassies and travelers and the current vogue for chinoiserie stimulated Chinese pantomimes as imaginative and inauthentic as those resulting from the concern with India. In the thirty-year period [1806-36] more than thirty pantomimes were produced with titles indicating that Chinese characters or settings were used in the opening, but these...offered little that illuminated the customs or manners of the Chinese and less that reflected the extensive interests of the British in the China Trade'.¹⁵³

There were some notable exceptions to this last observation: *Disputes in China; or, Harlequin and the Hong Merchants*, was shown at the Coburg in 1822, and contained a confrontation between the harlequinade character Clown and 'John China-man',¹⁵⁴ and provides a perhaps surprisingly early popular reference to the mounting tension at Canton. Two pantomimes produced in 1832 referred to a more specific event in China: the destruction of the European traders' Factories. In *Harlequin and the Elfin Arrow* at the Queen's Theatre, 'Clown sits in the kitchen of a tavern reading a paper containing an account of a "Great Fire."

¹⁵³ Mayer, 296.

¹⁵⁴ Mayer quotes this scene from a description by Charles Whitehead in the *Memoirs of Joseph Grimaldi*.

Still reading, Clown picks up a cup of tea that bursts into flames as it nears his lips', and in *Harlequin and the Royal Ram* at the Coburg a diorama was included as a backdrop which portrayed a tour of Canton and the fire.

The great extent to which these plays presented an amalgam of the Orient is clear from further evidence of different scenes which incorporated eastern cultures other than China. Egyptian scenarios were sometimes created as a result of the Egyptian campaign against Napoleon, including in the aforementioned *Harlequin in his Element*, *Harlequin and the Ogress*, and *Harlequin and the Royal Ram*. Turkish and Arabian settings were used in many plays of this period, from *Kelaun and Guzzarat* in 1806, through to *Harlequin and the Flying Chest* in 1823. The mixing of unrelated cultural motifs is well illustrated by the presence of an elephant, a tiger hunt and a Persian cook in *Harlequin and Padmanaba* in 1811.

A useful summary of public perceptions formed about 'the "fable" of the East' from these representations is provided by a review of *Harlequin and the Red Dwarf* from the *Times* in 1813:

'Its forms of fantastic loveliness and supernatural power, its winged Spirits, its haughty and malignant Genii, its Enchanters in the midst of forest and cavern, lighting the fires of incantation, and calling around them the shapes of other worlds, - its magic hosts, its tents and standards blazoned with gems and gold, - its towers of imprisoned beauty fenced strong with many a spell, pour upon the mind and memory in dazzling and splendid confusion'.¹⁵⁵

The language of this reaction is extremely enlightening in that it exemplifies the terminology and metaphors with which the East

¹⁵⁵ *Times* Jan. 5, 1813, quoted in Mayer, 157.

was inscribed in much orientalist literature, and through which the Chinese Collection was interpreted in reviews thirty years later. Mayer constantly asserts that the Royal Pavilion was the most pervasive influence in the representation of foreign cultures in the theatre in the early nineteenth century: 'the effect of this building on popular taste and pantomime decor cannot be minimized...', and gives a clue to the reason for this in his observation that 'The Royal Pavilion might have answered the specifications for the palace in an *unidentified* eastern country...' [emphasis added]. It can be concluded that the success of the Royal Pavilion as an oriental icon lay in its inherently eclectic characteristics, whereby it was

'a remarkable and delightful hodge-podge of Moghul architecture, imported to England from Persia and India under the generic title of Hindu style, with an interior lavishly executed in Chinese decor',

and Mayer himself even confusingly attempts to differentiate as to the most dominant of the styles it embodied:

'Of these styles, the Chinese exercised the earliest influence and was most strongly felt in the pantomime between 1812 and 1823';

'The most pervasive foreign and exotic style was the potpourri of Indian and near-Eastern styles variously called Asiatic, Hindu, Eastern, or Persian'.¹⁵⁶

The most important conclusion regarding the Royal Pavilion to be drawn from Mayer's work, however, is that in the theatre, at least, it was consistently referred to and implicitly commented upon in this period. The evidence that China was regularly

¹⁵⁶ Mayer, 140; 156.

featured in the first four decades of the century is crucial to this general study, in that the theatre can thus be seen to be the most consistent of the media examined here in its representation. However, the use of Asia and impressions it left as a theatrical motif cannot be attributed to the interest of playwrights and producers in the East for its inherent value, but rather the increasing currency of exotic themes was part of a development within the theatre itself whereby visual stimulation, technical effects and elaborate stage machinery replaced traditional literary material in the preoccupations of the theatre-owners:

'Legitimate drama...yielded to the demand for spectacle and sensation. Pantomime and ballad-opera were already firmly established...now melodrama, equestrian drama, aquatic drama, and every kind of "show" conquered...'¹⁵⁷

In this atmosphere it is clear that the 'frivolous' and exotic East characterised in the eighteenth century, together with the flamboyance of the Prince Regent captured in the Royal Pavilion, would have been seen to have provided perfect subject-matter for the legitimation of extravagant effects and sets which would have been incongruous for the scripts of established 'serious' drama, or even orthodox pantomime.

It should also be emphasised that China was usually used as part of a wider reference to "The East", and further, that old sources such as Chambers were still used in tandem with the new inspiration of the Pavilion. It is notable that some plays did draw on contemporary events, such as *Harlequin and the Hong Merchants*, but it is clear that this was an exception to the general

¹⁵⁷ Rowell, G. *The Victorian Theatre: A Survey* (1956), 11.

pattern which simply reiterated the unspecific vision of Asia projected by the national museums and commercial entertainers.

This chapter set out to analyse some of the sources from which Dunn's visitors might have formed their perceptions of China and the Chinese in the period leading up to 1842. Examination of the national museums, sinological literature, commercial entertainments and theatre was prompted by the premise that between them, these sites must have attracted and generated a considerable part of the audience for the Chinese Collection, and it has been shown that each resembled and differed from Dunn in some respects, be they strategic, ideological, or in visual effect. It can be concluded that whilst Chinese culture generally gained a more prominent profile as the events preceding the Opium War developed, the independent interests of the various protagonists of the museums, entertainments, theatre and literature determined that it was characterised in a very fragmentary way. This ranged from the arbitrary blurring of China into 'The East' in some areas, to the conscious exploitation of the tensions of the China trade as a potential arena for British national pride and glory in others. It is also apparent, however, that certain objects, motifs and images (such as porcelain, tea, silk and footbinding) were recurrent in representation of China, and that some degree of common recognition or association can probably be assumed.

In the following analysis of the reviews of and reactions to the exhibition, a close awareness of both the generalised indifference towards China and the specific 'typical' Chinese

characteristics will be maintained, and the ideas that their mutual presence can now be seen to connote will be compared with the ideologies around China and the East stated and implied by the reviewers. Taken together, the conclusions and information drawn from looking at the cultural presence of China before the show, and the articulated responses to it, will reveal whether, and to what extent Dunn's Collection changed knowledge of, and attitudes towards China.

CHAPTER THREE: RESPONSES TO THE CHINESE COLLECTION 1842-1846.

The preceding chapter constituted an attempt to evaluate the impact and importance of the Chinese Collection within the spectrum of visual representation of the Orient extant in the early nineteenth century, with particular attention given to the activity of offering exhibitions of artefacts. In this way the development of practices and policies of entrepreneurs, public and private institutions, merchants and others in displaying Chinese material culture before Dunn's show has been traced, but it remains to establish how the public actually responded to his construct of 'China'. The parallel and interdependent growths of general literacy and the production of newspapers and journals from the late eighteenth century onwards point to press reviews as a potentially fruitful and representative gauge of public opinion in this period, and this chapter will accordingly scrutinise a sample of reviews of the Chinese Collection. It should be recognised from the outset, however, that the functional and formal structures of the nineteenth-century Press were complex and inconsistent, and this analysis will maintain a strong and cautious awareness of the large extent to which journalistic data and opinion cannot be interpreted without acknowledgment of the political, cultural and socio-economic factors which affected the decisions of publishers, editors and proprietors.

It will be demonstrated that the press was nonetheless powerful in determining the success of exhibitions, that entrepreneurs including Dunn were aware of this, and that although the circulation and influence of individual publications varied enormously, the journalistic community can be utilised

profitably as a critical face representing an anonymous and (now) inaccessible lay public. Assessment of the content of this data will therefore be informed by judgement of the circumstances and diversity of exhibition reviewing as a genre, in terms ranging through the practicalities of space allocation, the scope of audience, the relative sophistication of critical levels to the nature of editorial ideologies.

The sample of reviews under examination here has been selected from the initial period of the collection's display in London from 1842-6. The table below [p.171-172] lists the newspapers and journals in chronological order of the reviews and indicates the frequency, day of issue and price of each publication at the date of its review. It will be shown that these facts are pertinent to their critical aims and approaches. Regarding these reviews collectively, one aspect of reviewing practice which is immediately striking is that in the nineteenth century, unlike now, exhibitions were not automatically reviewed instantly after opening to the public, and the four years of the display have yielded reviews from its opening day through to late 1844 - some inspired by the changing nature of the event as documented above - and ultimately closing notices appeared in 1846. In addition to this, Langdon's publication of *Ten Thousand Things relating to China and the Chinese* in 1843 provoked a fresh appraisal of the exhibition, with many reviewers paying as much, if not more, attention to the event as to the publication, giving a body of reviews from newspapers and journals which might not ordinarily have addressed an exhibition. A few reports have been located from the time of the diminished collection's re-exhibition in 1851, which provide opinion informed by a context of

exhibition-awareness aroused by the Great Exhibition and not formerly a characteristic of considerations of popular displays.

The actual lengths of reviews vary widely, from a four-line announcement in the *Age* to a complete satellite parodic 'catalogue', *Punch's Guide to the Chinese Collection*, but although this will be borne in mind, the texts will not be addressed systematically in isolation, but rather a basic agenda of analytical issues will be followed in treating the sample as a whole. Thus, it will be for the most part probed through issues which have arisen as important or recurrent within the collective preoccupations and descriptions offered by the reviewers themselves, and, in addition, certain aspects of the reviews which emerge as of particular interest in this overall examination will be attended. The content of the accounts will be considered as follows: as an overture, the pre-reviews of the show which appeared immediately the show opened in the major London dailies will be analysed in order to demonstrate how the event was initially announced to its potential audience; subsequently the bulk of reviews which were published in the weekly and monthly periodicals will be examined in terms of their more expansive narratives of the events and issues briefly introduced by those introductory texts, namely: recognition of the context of the Opium conflict, information and physical description, special objects of interest and emphases, the role of Langdon's catalogues, perception of the display as an encapsulation of China, celebration of the 'realistic' nature of the representation, the location of the Chinese within a hierarchy of civilization, the dispersal of preconceptions and drawing of comparisons, and the particular semantic structure of the reviews themselves. A short isolated

analysis of *Punch's Guide to the Chinese Collection* will be offered as an epilogue, demonstrating the extent of pervasion of critical attitudes towards China through to more lighthearted media.

The nature and status of the press in the 1840s.

The primary purpose of providing an outline of the overall condition of the press through which these reviews were produced is to demonstrate that the practices of publishing and writing for newspapers and periodicals in this period were highly politicised activities. This is not to say that all individual journals and journalists necessarily belonged to specific political parties, but rather that the existence and development of the press as a whole were matters of great public prominence, surrounded by, as well as perpetuating, constant moral debate and contention. This means that whilst many of the reviews under examination do not overtly express factional bias or opinion, each was nonetheless written to a varying extent in an atmosphere of politicised journalistic competition and insecurity. It would be misleading to suggest that reports of exhibitions were by any means crucial to any press publication's strategy for survival and consolidation, but it will be shown that at this time they were more accessible, and therefore potentially more influential, than ever before.

Most simply, the press, like most other industries, was characterised in the early decades of the century by an acceleration of both production and consumption, largely facilitated by a vigorous surge of technological innovation. The sudden increase in output of newspapers, however, was unique in the gravity and ferocity of comment which it provoked, because,

coinciding as it did with an unprecedented and growing state of public literacy, it augured a potentially deeply disruptive effect upon a fundamental instrument of power in the systematic maintenance of the hierarchical order of society: the possession of knowledge.

Within the historiography of the press a feeling of ambiguity towards the new expansion of communicative capability is constantly alluded to, and the opposing opinions of politicians and men of letters for and against the dissemination of information are often recited. Whilst the political and ideological implications of the promulgation of knowledge had been recognised and articulated since the introduction of the earliest printing presses centuries earlier,¹ the expense of printing and publishing using hand technologies together with the (at least perceived) restriction of reading ability to the private domains of intellectuals and 'gentlemen' meant that censorship could (at least be seen to) be effective in preserving the secrecy of state procedures and policies and cherished knowledge. Dudek points out that the ability to read had grown considerably in the eighteenth century, and 'Not only among the middle classes, but also among the workingmen, self-teaching and elementary tuition in workhouse schools, Sunday schools, and charity schools, had laid the groundwork for wide literacy.'² He then suggests that subversive political activists had utilised this fresh audience effectively in the 1790s and during the Napoleonic Wars: 'The

¹ A fierce debate on the freedom of the press from the seventeenth century is discussed at length in Lee, A.J. *The Origins of the Popular Press in England 1855-1914* (1976), ch.2: 'Liberalism and the newspaper'.

² Dudek, L. *Literature and the Press: A History of Printing, Printed Media, and Their Relation to Literature* (1960), 99.

radical press... - as the distribution of Paine's books and Cobbett's *Register* show - was able to reach hundreds of thousands of people who could listen to others read or could read themselves.' This heightened awareness of the power of the press and its precipitation of a new (and overt) freedom of thought was universally recognised; the Duke of Wellington, for example 'ruefully admitted that the country was governed by the "Gentlemen of the Press," and that he owed his downfall in

November 1830 to his neglect of the newspapers.'³ As the profile of the industry grew, however, it was as aggressively attacked as defended. In general it was not the principle of Freedom of

³ Dudek, 67.

It is also worth quoting here the 'Invocation to the Press' with which Wilkinson prefaced his *Customs of the Chinese* in 1814 (discussed in Chapter 2), as it demonstrates with startling hyperbole the reverential and fearful mythology surrounding the Press even that early in the century:

'O! Thou, who unshackled wouldst be the greatest of those privileges which Britons enjoy from their invaluable Constitution; - thou dispenser of wisdom and science throughout the universe; - thou humblest the oppressor, and exaltest the slave; - thy slow, yet sure operations, perform more real wonders than hosts of armies; for all their murderous connotations must ultimately owe to thy decisions, and own the superiority of reason above force! Thy thunder is terrible to the guilty; - thy lightning flashes conviction on the minds of the unenlightened, and breaks the adamant chains of prejudice and superstition! To thee, what then can be impossible that lies within the controul of human understanding? Thy energies, in the hands of the wicked, may inflict predicamental evil; but, under the direction of the good and wise, thou canst coneract thy own poison - error, by its antidote - TRUTH - as the rising sun disperses the baleful vapours of the night! Thou art an universal physician to mankind; for thou hast even a pancea for the venom of slander!

To thee, great arbiter of the fate of man, of nations, and of all nature, do I give that homage which is thy due. Thou, who strengthenest, while walking with the infant mind; - who restrainest the adolescent; - runnest with manhood in his full vigour; - and cautiously reflectest the effects of experience from the hoary sage. Thou art the universal focus in which the rays of intellect are congregated, concentrated, and then dispersed throughout space!

Great patron of the arts, and fosterer of the sciences! Thou, who pourest out with equal hand, the cup of information to the meanest artisan, and most profound astronomer; - who trainest the vessel, accompanies and guides the seaman through his toils and perils; may the human race, by thy omnipotent influence, be taught, that "the proper study of mankind is man and nature, the *nothi seauton* of the Greeks; and that the most sublime CULTE, after what should be rendered to the Deity, is

- that of INTELLECT!

Wilkinson, vii.

Speech *per se* which was contested, but rather it was feared that the technological enablement of cheaper and cheaper publications could not be qualitatively controlled, and public opinion could not be effectively checked. Thus, as two contrasting quotations from Lee demonstrate, whilst journalists and proprietors extolled the revelation of new vistas of knowledge in tones of naive wonder, yet simultaneously independent onlookers predicted the dangers of what appeared to signal the blatant commercialisation of education: the *Westminster Review* celebrated in 1824:

'The newspapers...are the best and surest civilisers of a country. They contain within themselves not only the elements of knowledge but the inducements to learn... It is necessary to have seen a people among whom newspapers have not penetrated, to know the mass of mischievous prejudices which these productions instantly and necessarily dissipate',

while in 1829 J.S. Mill scorned 'more affectation and hypocrisy are necessary for the trade of literature, and especially the newspapers, than for a brothel-keeper.'⁴

Lee posits that Liberal belief was most comfortably disposed towards harnessing the press as a political force, and from this denotes the enthusiasm for journalistic output to be a fundamentally middle-class phenomenon:

'it was the Liberals who made the most effort, and were the most successful at capturing this valuable political weapon. In part this was the consequence of a natural identity of interest between enterprising publishers and Liberal political and economic policies, although it also owed something to the fact that the aristocracy remained unhappy with and suspicious of the newspaper, and were usually inept in their attempts to control it.'⁵

⁴ Quoted in Lee, 21, 24.

⁵ Lee, 25.

The spirit of enterprise highlighted here was manifested comprehensively through a middle-class endeavour to create what has been termed 'rational recreation.'⁶ Cunningham describes this as an attempt to establish a culture within which 'leisure activities should be controlled, ordered and improving' in order to counter 'vacuous idleness or aristocratic dissipation' in the first place, and from the 1820s on to overthrow working-class 'popular culture with its emphases on drink, on spontaneity, on emotional involvement, on physical contact'. The process of 'improvement' was to be perpetuated through the transmission of specifically middle-class aesthetic experiences and cultural goods from which the working classes had previously been deliberately excluded, and among these were 'Books, museums, exhibitions and music'. The struggle towards a freer press can also be seen as a component of this programme, and this locates entrepreneurial and 'philanthropic' events such as the Chinese exhibition and the new practices of journalism by which it was reviewed within the same finite spectrum of conscientious middle-class cultural precipitation. Cunningham points out, however, that the movement was not consistent in practice, as middle-class patrons frequently 'differed amongst themselves as to what should be offered and how,' and further, he suggests that the actual motivation behind it was ambiguous. This is to say that the middle-class 'missionaries' were driven to an extent by guilt 'at their own exclusiveness,' but the imposition of their pursuits on the lower classes can also be read as an attempt to establish

⁶ Cunningham, H. *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution c.1780 - c.1880* (1980), 91.

power hegemonically through a demand for acceptance of a cultural hierarchy, so that 'Social control reasserted itself, but in a more subtle and insidious way.'

This ambiguity renders 'rational recreation' at best patronising and unrealistic, and at worst hypocritical. It has already been shown that in the case of exhibitions the ostensible gesture of offering cerebral activities to the working classes was in fact refuted by economic means, as the standard admission price of 1s. was prohibitive to all but the wealthiest of artisans, and that Dunn's opening charge of 2s.6d. was especially so, in spite of his insistence on wanting to illuminate persons 'of all classes'. Lee shows that this ambivalence was also detectable within the conceptions of newspaper proprietors, as ultimately

'Rhetoric and ideology aside, the Victorian newspaper was not, or even primarily, a vehicle of national education or of political democracy. It was for those who ran it first and foremost a business, and had long been recognised as such... There can be little doubt that the proprietors...ran them in the vast majority of cases in order to make a profit.'⁷

This conclusion denotes that the new press publications of the 1820s, '30s and '40s were the products of a compromise of good intention and self-preservation; but Lee errs in detaching the motive of profit from 'Rhetoric and ideology'. The newspapers and journals in reality assented to a very powerful ideology, participating in capitalism and the Progressive harnessing of science and technology in the pursuit of advancing civilisation. These issues, which accompanied and generated beliefs in competition and national superiority, must be seen to be vital to

⁷ Lee, 49.

the understanding of western perceptions of foreign cultures in the nineteenth century, and indeed those beliefs are blatantly glorified in some reviews; their seminal role in the formation of the press will subsequently be keenly remembered in scrutiny of the evaluations of 'China and the Chinese'.

In accordance with the close ideological foundations shared by the middle-class periodical and weekly press and leisure pursuits noted above, the bulk of the reviews of the Chinese Collection appeared in those sections of the press. Yet predating these, a few reviews were carried by major dailies at the time of the exhibition's opening, and the most dominant press product of the period, the *Times*, published several reports during the show's history in 1842, 1843, 1844 and 1846. These reports differed from the critical reviews offered by the periodicals and weeklies in that they always attended the event as a 'news' item and were primarily concerned with conveying factual information, but they are important in this study in that they were written for an audience of whom very few would have seen the show, and thus the representations of it would potentially have been critical to the coercion of visitors. The value of this promotional role was clearly recognised by Dunn himself, as the private press review was held the day after Queen Victoria's preview visit, and the day before the exclusive view of the nobility, 'men of literature and science, &c.' The established respectable status of the dailies themselves, and the prestige they commanded through their exclusive public communication of 'national' issues, and most of all their consistent achievement of large circulations, further enhances their interest.

It is clear that the success of the major dailies arose from the capacity of the proprietors for innovation, and the alacrity and opportunism with which they utilised new technologies, an advantage which later preserved them against new competitors, particularly after the reductions of the Advertisement and Stamp taxes in the 1830s.⁸ Thus the *Times* and *Morning Herald* each boasted circulations of 15,000 by 1836,⁹ and, as will be shown later, the new titles of the 1820s, '30s and '40s tended not to compete in the daily markets, partly because the radical tradition by which they were inspired operated through the periodical press in opposition to the exclusively conservative dailies, and partly through lack of capital with which to compete in harnessing new technology, and instead launched the new weekly genre.¹⁰ Of the dailies, the *Times* is most significant, and is recognised to have dominated and determined the nature of the whole press in

⁸ Williams posits that the history of the press reveals a consistent desire and necessity (for financial gain) to communicate issues most quickly and easily, and that in the 1830s, '40s, and '50s, control of technology determined the relative successes of individual papers and publishers:

'This is the recurring tendency in the history of journalism: the absorption of material formerly communicated in widely varying ways into one cheaply produced and easily distributed general-purpose sheet. The economics of the newspaper business had, from the beginning, set this course, and it is clear how appropriate these factors of concentration and cheapness were, in a continually expanding culture. A wide range of interests was being brought into a literate form, and the pioneer of each expansion was the cheapest and most extensive print', Williams, R. *The Long Revolution* (1971), 214-5.

⁹ Dudek, 66.

¹⁰ Although some weeklies, and especially Sundays, did compete in terms of offering a week's news for little more than the price of a daily, the immediacy of the dailies' communication of news, and the habit of daily reading amongst their audience established since the eighteenth century, meant that they were never really under threat.

the nineteenth century. Thus Morison, Dudek and Lee concur that the invention of the Koenig platen press in the *Times* office in 1814 was the most seminal invention in the history of the nineteenth-century press as a whole, making the *Times* 'the Classic nineteenth-century morning paper'¹¹ and 'the most influential newspaper in England.'¹² Lee points out that the new press enabled the production of larger advertising supplements, which increased the prosperity of any newspaper.¹³ From 1814 on this initial breakthrough allowed the *Times* the power to capitalise again and again on technology: hence it commissioned newer presses in 1827, enabling more copy space; it quickly adopted the electro-magnetic telegraph for foreign news reporting from China and India in 1844;¹⁴ and it was the first paper to run special trains for swifter and more efficient national circulation in 1845.¹⁵

From this combination of capitalist enterprise and shrewd technological experimentation, Dudek locates the *Times* as the centre of the nineteenth-century arena of journalism, suggesting that 'At the mid-century...*Around it* there flourished...typical newspapers of the Victorian age.' [emphases added].¹⁶ Morison goes on to state that other papers inevitably looked to the *Times* as the definitive model, in terms of both content and form:

¹¹ Morison, S. *The English Newspaper: Some Account of the Physical Development of Journals printed in London between 1622 & the Present Day* (1932), 206.

¹² Dudek, 76.

¹³ Lee, 86.

¹⁴ Morison, 216-17.

¹⁵ Lee, 59.

¹⁶ Dudek, 66.

'The power - material, mechanical and editorial...became such that two generations of fine journalists...were unable effectively to change its supremacy';

'Even the new paper, announced (in 1843) as "the novelty of the nations and the wonder of the world", and entitled *The News of the World*, boasted that it was the size of *The Times*'.¹⁷

He also considers that the *Times* produced better journalism than any other organ, but without entering into subjective debate, it suffices to note that it did have the best retrieval systems for news, and as a result gained massive prestige and authority, so that by 1841 'it sold twice the number of copies as the *Morning Post*, *Morning Herald*, and *Morning Chronicle* put together, and by 1850 four times as many.'¹⁸ The importance of the *Times* has been dwelt upon here because every other newspaper and periodical of the era was willingly or unwillingly deferential to it, particularly in London, and until the 1850s it also sustained governmental respect and support. In view of this, its relatively persistent notice of the Chinese Collection has repercussions for the understanding of both the nature of the event and the attention paid to it by the press as a whole.

The major dailies which provided pre-reviews were the *Times*, *Morning Herald* and *Morning Post*, all of which were Conservative,¹⁹ as the powerful Liberal dailies, the *Daily News* and *Daily Telegraph* had not yet been founded.²⁰ The reviews

¹⁷ Morison, 207, 217.

¹⁸ Lee, 47.

¹⁹ Lee, 134.

It is regrettable that issues of the *Morning Chronicle*, the other major daily paper of the period, and the only Daily with more liberal sympathies, have not survived, and consequently a review has not been located therefrom.

²⁰ They were established in 1846 and 1855 respectively.

themselves will not prove politically explicit, but their language and approach to the exhibition will be taken into account in the light of their status as the most powerful and widely-read issues of the press at this time.

The major organs in which these reviews appeared were weekly and monthly newspapers and periodicals. It remains to examine what the form and content of these publications were: how they looked physically, what the frequency of editions was, how much they cost, and what sorts of writing they carried. Having noted that the middle-class zeal for attempting to indoctrinate through the press must be viewed with caution in terms of precisely what intentions lay behind it, this should be qualified by observation that even where proprietors and writers were sincere in their desire to further education and democracy, their task was made extremely difficult by laws which restricted their freedom to do so. The repeal of Stamp Duty on newspapers in 1836 is widely regarded as a critical moment in the escalation of the industry's output. Dudek states that

'By 1836 the ground was fully prepared for the great unleashing of newspapers...The machinery now existed to satisfy a much greater demand,' and that 'Immediately after the reduction of the Stamp Tax in 1836 the newspaper press began to mushroom at an astonishing rate.'²¹

Morison demonstrates that before this date 'The dead weight of taxation upon paper, upon advertisements, and an extra 3¹/₂d. upon each and every sheet, made the newspaper an expensive

²¹ Dudek, 66,69.

possession...', and he asserts that this made for a serious and reverent audience: '...It was taken up in the spirit of duty and read religiously.'²² The fight to repeal the tax was instigated by working- and middle-class radicals who had before then to a limited extent taken the risk of publishing unstamped papers,²³ but now sought a legitimate public identity and right to expression. This met with opposition from the government, an extreme spokesman of whom is quoted by Lee: 'the government tried to suppress what Lord Ellenborough called "the pauper press," in order to stop short of "having statesmen at the loom and politicians at the spinning jenny".'²⁴ The 1836 Act was a compromise, as the tax was not abolished, but reduced from 3¹/₂d. to 1d. In 1833 the advertisement tax had already been reduced from 3s.6d. to 1s.6d. Whilst these reductions undoubtedly did allow more financial freedom to publish, historians have interpreted the qualitative results for both the agitators and journals very differently. Dudek considers that the period after 1836 was that of 'the triumph of Liberalism, the expression of its best qualities in life and art through the generous interplay of ideas at a high level of intelligence,'²⁵ but Morison suggests that the existing proprietors and not the public gained, as cover prices were not lowered proportionately,²⁶ and Lee further asserts that the reduction 'provided for a cheaper, but not for a cheap press...because it was accompanied by stricter enforcement of

²² Morison, 206.

²³ A detailed account of both legal and illegal radical journalism is given by Morison, 242-7 and 257.

²⁴ Lee, 42.

²⁵ Dudek, 70.

²⁶ Morison, 217.

other controls.' These consisted of tighter securities on printers and publishers, with the fine for selling or possessing an unstamped newspaper raised to £20, that for publishing without having made a declaration to £50, and newspapers of more than two sheets in size, or costing 6d. or more, no longer exempted from the tax. The summary effect of this was

'generally to protect the established papers...In so far as it served to maintain the price of newspapers, and thus inhibited the growth of smaller journals...the fears expressed...about floods of cheap, worthless papers were not substantiated.'²⁷

The 'triumph of Liberalism' thus did not take the form of a great philanthropic awakening of the working-classes; the new publications were still produced for the 'genteel' and financially comfortable reader with the most prolific genre to emerge being the middle-class periodical:

'Neither sensational penny fiction, nor penny magazines of useful knowledge represented the true character of English periodicals after 1836. Victorian society was ruled by mediocre middle-class taste, and its character soon found expression in typical magazines perfectly adapted to this taste. A multitude of such magazines existed; in the one year 1859 there were 115 new periodicals started in London...'²⁸

Dudek reinforces this impression of undynamic journalism in the period through his own particular interest in the literary periodicals, as he states that they were 'inherently an ephemeral form - based on an insecure demand - and they easily deteriorated under mediocre editorship into superficial and

²⁷ Lee, 42.

²⁸ Dudek, 104.

fashionable feedlines of mediocre tastes.'²⁹ The proliferation and domination of middle-class weeklies, monthlies and quarterlies can also be partly attributed to a diversion of strongly-held radical interests elsewhere, as Lee points out that they became less intensely concerned with the Free Press, 'less cowed by authority than distracted by other movements, notably by Chartism and the Anti-Corn Law agitations.'³⁰ Ironically it had been in periodical literature that radical thinking had been most apparent in the eighteenth century, and some new titles benefitted in terms of courting readers by sustaining a facade of 'political' gravity,³¹ but with committed activists now engaged more openly in parliamentary campaigns, the appropriated medium became watered-down and cautious. Thus 'the middle-class magazines changed the entire purpose of periodical publishing by giving their main attention to the story or serial and turning away from politics, religion, or ideas.'³² Ultimately, from this Dudek again emphasizes that the realisation of the press as an economically profitable business led to the apparent and perceived depoliticisation of the periodicals:

'Controversial subject matter gradually became taboo in popular periodicals...This complacency sprang from a commercial desire on the part of publishers to preserve or create a homogenous market, undisturbed by the shifting winds of opinion and controversy.'

²⁹ Dudek, 113.

³⁰ Lee 43.

³¹ Of the *Literary Gazette*, for example, Dudek, 112, notes: 'The format of this kind of paper was clearly suggested by such political weeklies as the *Examiner* and *Political Register*; and the kinship between the political and the literary weeklies continued to hold strong...'

³² Dudek, 106.

To recapitulate, the newspapers and journals which carried the reviews were mostly of the middle-class press fostered from the turn of the century and established as a mediocre or uncontroversial legitimised communicative system by 1840. The next major upheavals for the industry were to be the total repeal of the advertisement tax in 1853 and the abolition of paper duties or 'taxes on knowledge' in 1861, from which time until the 1890s a period of relative stability was enjoyed by provincial Liberalism, closely connected with and aided by the press. In the 1840s, however, the *Times* reigned amongst the dailies, and complacent acquiescence amongst the licensed periodicals.³³

The result of the limitations and preoccupations described above is that the formats and content-structures of many of these

³³ The exceptions to this situation were the new genre of Sunday newspapers, which had begun to appear in the 1820s. A few of the reviews are from these sources, and their different characteristics from the standard dailies' and weeklies' should be noted. Williams suggests that the Sundays can be seen as broadly 'radical', but that limitations of cost determined that at first they could not perform as serious political organs:

'the new [Sunday] papers of the 1840s were...alike in their predominantly Radical tone and in their selection of news. At first, however, to avoid even the 1d. stamp, *Lloyd's Weekly* published no actual news, but serial stories and fictitious news, with ample illustrations'.

he asserts that by 1843 Sundays had become more competitive, but that their content conformed to the sensationalist tendencies of eighteenth century cheap publications:

'The provenance of this class of journalism is in fact not far to seek. There is a long history of chapbooks and ballads carrying this kind of material, especially in relation to murders, executions, and elopements...Just as the eighteenth-century newspaper had absorbed a proportion of 'magazine interest', so these nineteenth-century papers absorbed the chapbook, ballad, and almanac interest, and at a much cheaper price'. Williams, 214.

publications share similar characteristics. This is attributed by Morison to the dominance of the *Times*:

'As in journalism nothing succeeds like success, it was inevitable, first that the example of *The Times* should be taken as a typographical model by the printers and publishers of other newspapers; and secondly that the appearance of the journals of the first half of the century should lack variety.'³⁴

Certainly the technological breakthroughs made by the *Times* can be seen to have determined the formal development of other press products. Sabel and Zeitlin have demonstrated that the adoption of certain technological processes or machinery is determined by the context in which the technology first appears: 'There is no guarantee that competition drives society to the frontier of its productive capacities, and the contingencies surrounding the precise timing of any breakthrough influence the general line of development.'³⁵ In the case of the nineteenth-century press, the contingencies surrounding the *Times* - the desires to increase the amount of copy through the production of larger sheets, greater advertising space, and closer type-setting - were adhered to by its contemporaries and rivals regardless of the specificity of their own ideological aims and target audiences. The *Morning Herald*, *Morning Chronicle* and *Morning Post* perhaps logically followed the *Times*'s lead in terms of cost and format, as they were competing in the same market, but the emphasis on impression through sheer bulk of text was also characteristic of the weeklies and Sundays. This deference

³⁴ Morison, 206.

³⁵ Sabel, C. and Zeitlin, J. 'Historical alternatives to mass production: Politics, market and technology in nineteenth-century industrialisation', *Past and Present* 108, (1985), 23.

extended to stabilising cover prices. It can be seen from the table below that within the sample under examination, reviews have been located in weekly papers differing in cost from 3d. (the *News of the World*) to 10d. (the *Atlas*), but between these extremes the majority cost from 5d. to 7d., with 6d. being the most common charge. The importance of advertising in determining prices is clarified by the simple equation that the newspapers which allocated them most space, such as the *Athenaeum*, were almost proportionately cheaper than those which allowed less such as the *Literary Gazette*. Until the founding of the *News of the World* in 1843, in fact, no alternative source of profit aside from advertising revenue was sought, so that publishers were relatively apathetic regarding the size of their circulations. The *News of the World*'s publisher, John Browne Bell, launched his paper at half the standard price, and in its first editorial stated that on no account would it rise; his investment was to be recouped through a large circulation ostensibly courted through his flaunted denunciation of 'an infamous conspiracy against cheap knowledge'.³⁶ This paper was however exceptional, and the only one of the sample which was not complacent in retaining a cover charge which prohibited extensive access amongst the lower classes.

For the purposes of this study, the most important way in which the *Times* influenced the rest of the press was that it effected very similar technological and economic processes and shared ultimate purposes across the range of middle-class media publishing, and subsequently this resulted in a predetermined

³⁶ *News of the World* Sunday Oct. 4, 1843, 1.

and consolidated textual agenda. Aside from the fact that all the publications in the sample carried large numbers of advertisements, often filling the front and/or back pages, in terms of content all were divided in their attention to 'serious' news or 'intelligence' coverage and regular columns devoted to art, entertainment, literature, court circulars, sport, and so forth. The papers divided this text in similar ways, all privileging news matters on the first few pages following advertisement space, and following these with the reviews, listings, and gazettes. Some papers were targetted at specific audiences and accordingly devoted more space to specialised interests: for example as is suggested by their titles, the *United Service Gazette* carried a greater than average amount of naval and military information and advertising, denoting that it catered for a male audience; the *New Monthly Belle Assemblee* contained serialised romantic fiction and fashion notes and aimed at women; the *City Chronicle and Tea Dealers' Journal*, *Law Intelligencer*, and *Wesleyan Watchman* offered items for particular traders, professionals, and Christians of specific denomination. Most of the journals in the sample, however, being weeklies, simply sought to offer comprehensive news and leisure reporting. The significance for the Chinese Collection of the ways in which text was allocated becomes apparent when it is noted that, although dividing practices were generally similar, the exhibition itself was differently categorised and treated, according to whether it was perceived and located as 'Entertainment', 'Amusement', 'Variety', 'Fine Art', 'Theatre', straightforward 'News', or in the case of *Ten*

Thousand Things reviews, 'Literature'.³⁷ It is clear that the choice of location in each publication was sometimes determined by its usual placing of exhibitions, but these various approaches nonetheless made for a wide range of review lengths and preoccupations. It is particularly interesting that the event was sometimes raised to the status of 'News', and it will be shown that these decisions affected the projected qualities of the exhibition, and, by extension, the expectations of its audience.

Having examined the nature of the press in which these reviews appeared, it remains to show, before analysing their texts, that private exhibitors in London were very well aware of the potential power of papers and journals to render their entrepreneurial and artistic ventures successful or otherwise. In *The Shows of London* Altick demonstrates that press publicity was directly courted, as proprietors sought both 'acknowledged' and 'covert' advertising, referring to the buying of advertising space and the staging of (often elaborate) private views for the press respectively. Altick states that 'The press regularly reported on exhibitions as a distinct genre of London sights',³⁸ but the sense that this resulted from an inherent value of shows is

³⁷ For example, the Collection was reviewed under 'exhibitions' in the *Illustrated Polytechnic Review*, under 'Fine Arts' in *Britannia*, under 'Theatre' in the *News of the World*, under 'news' in *John Bull* and the *Illustrated London News*, under 'Christmas Amusements' in *Lloyd's Illustrated London Newspaper*, and briefly noticed amongst 'Our Weekly Gossip' in the *Athenaeum*; *Ten Thousand Things* was generally located within 'Literature', or 'New Books', but occasionally more euphemistically: on 'Our Library Table' in the *Watchman*, and in 'The Templar's Library' in the *Law Intelligencer*.

³⁸ Altick, 221.

somewhat dulled by his extravagant explanation of the strategies through which the exhibitors ensured that this was the case. Previews and free tickets were proffered, often including refreshments and dinners, and whilst some journalists protested uncorruptibility, 'the press continued to be amenable to showmen's hospitality, a fact Vidocq recognised when he maintained a private bar for newspapermen during his exhibition...'. Such attempted near-bribery would not always guarantee a favourable notice, but it is further suggested that entrepreneurs often went so far as to save papers the expense and application of reviewers by issuing 'planted items...posing as news stories or reviews', and that bluntly, 'access to the entertainment news columns of some newspapers was a saleable commodity...Only in the case of negative criticisms can one be fairly sure they did not originate with the proprietor.'³⁹ In contrast to this cynical call for caution, Altick shows elsewhere that some journalists did view exhibitions with genuine interest, for example William Jerdan, editor of the *Literary Gazette* from 1817-50, stated in his autobiography that

'For some twenty-five years there was not a known show or curiosity, from the charge of a halfpenny to a guinea, that I did not see...in short, giants, dwarfs, mermaids, Albinos, Hottentot venuses, animals with more heads or legs than "they ought to," and all other curiosities and monstrosities, were my affections.'⁴⁰

Enough evidence fortunately survives of Dunn's relationship with the press to clarify partly the extent of his intervention in and determination of what the papers printed. As was shown in

³⁹ Altick, 423.

⁴⁰ Jerdan, W. *Autobiography* (1852-3), II, 88, quoted in Altick, 225.

Chapter 1, initially he did place advertisements in some journals in the few weeks before the show's opening and during its progress. It was noted that this notice is signed 'Fred. S. Thomas, agent', which indicates that Dunn used a professional publicity campaigner. Before the opening he gave a press preview, but the hospitable extent of this is not documented. After an assertion in one of the earliest reviews in the *Spectator* that the cost of admission to the Collection was too high, Dunn personally wrote a letter of justification (published in the next issue) as a response, indicating that the opinion of that journal at least, was taken seriously and perhaps fearfully.⁴¹ Regarding the allegation of planted reviews, it cannot be proven whether any of the notices of the exhibition in the sample appeared in this way, although similarities in the phraseology of some would suggest that an account of, or press release for the show had been circulated, and this will be remembered in analysis of the form and expression of the reviews. In the case of the *Ten Thousand Things* reviews, there are three which are almost identical, and as they appeared in the same week (two on the same day), this shows that there must have been a press release which they printed almost verbatim, differing only in tiny details.⁴² For this analysis, however, this is useful, as it indicates that the other reviews of the book, whilst they would almost certainly have had access to

⁴¹ The review appeared in the *Spectator* on Sat. Jun. 25, 1842; Dunn's prompt reply was published in the next issue, on Sat. Jul. 2, 1843.

⁴² These accounts were published in *Bell's New Weekly Messenger* Sun. Jan. 15, 1843, *The Planet* Sun. Jan. 15, 1843, and *The City Chronicle and Tea Dealers' Journal* Tues. Jan. 17, 1843. The account in *Bell's Weekly Messenger*, Sat. Feb. 11, 1843, also shows passing resemblances in phraseology, but differs in form, and to a considerable degree content, from these uniform texts.

this press release, referred to it to varying extents, and chose to present their own views, or, at least, to phrase their accounts in original ways. The final way in which Dunn actively utilised the press (again noted in Chapter 1) emerges from the review of *Ten Thousand Things* which appeared in the *Chinese Repository* in November, 1843, in which the writer states that Dunn had sent the volume to him in Canton 'accompanied by a note, and a pamphlet containing "Opinions of the Press on the Chinese Collection."' ⁴³ These publicity manoeuvres demonstrate that Dunn engaged with the press quite extensively and personally over the first two years of the Collection's display. After his death, at the close of the show, at least one newspaper, the *Times*, reported that closure was imminent, and urged last-minute visitors.⁴⁴ It does not emerge that Dunn's promotional activity through newspapers was more or less intensive than was common practice in view of Altick's description, but it is clear that journalists and editors were deliberately and persistently made aware of the event.

⁴³ *Chinese Repository* Vol.12, No.11 (November 1843), 561. The reviews contained in the pamphlet were those from the *Morning Post*, *John Bull*, *Athenaeum* and 'Perambulator'.

⁴⁴ *Times* Mon. Oct. 26, 1846. Other public notices of the closure of the show were noted in Chapter 1.

Pre-reviews of the Chinese Collection from three London Dailies: The *Morning Post*, *Times*, and *Morning Herald*.

Morning Post Tues. Jun. 21, 1842.

Times Thurs. Jun. 23, 1842.

Morning Herald Thurs. Jun. 23, 1842.

These three reviews appeared before the public were able to gain admission. The authors in the *Morning Post* and *Times* do not state that they had attended the show, and it is possible therefore, that their reviews were constructed from press releases, but in the *Morning Herald* it is stated that 'we were present yesterday at a private view', indicating that the press did have access before the opening. The three reviews together will be seen to prefigure many of the techniques and preoccupations of those in the rest of the sample, but this will not be attributed to their dictation of subsequent treatments; rather the homogeneous nature of the press characterised above will be held responsible for like approaches and emphases. The pre-reviews are different, however, in that formally they are shorter than the later reviews in weeklies and monthlies, and in that intentionally they were to entice, as well as enhance experience of the event itself. Thus, there are two aspects of the event which they emphasize in accordance with their greater preoccupation with 'News': the solving of the publicly mysterious construction of the entrance - pagoda, and the private showing to Queen Victoria and Prince Albert before any other visitors.⁴⁵ The *Morning Post* states that the 'unique, and at the same time gorgeous, appearance of the

⁴⁵ In all these dailies the exhibition appears as a general item, not designated under the sections of 'Arts', 'Entertainment', and so forth.

entrance has...attracted many observers', and the *Morning Herald* asserts that 'all who saw it inquired in wondering accents why it was placed there', and then reveals 'The reason is now apparent...'. The *Morning Post* and *Times* give attention to the Queen's visit, with the *Morning Post* in fact laboriously devoting most of its description to the minutiae of the schedule and reactions of 'so illustrious a personage':

'Her majesty inspected the whole of the curiosities...with the greatest minuteness; and from the quickness of her majesty's perception of the use of the different articles, and the characters of the figures, it was evident that her majesty had well studied the history of that interesting country. Her majesty, after remaining in the exhibition until half-past five o'clock, retired...'

It should be noted that whilst the proportional privileging of royalty inevitably reduced attention to the display, it cannot but be seen as good publicity for Dunn, particularly in view of the *Morning Post*'s endorsement:

'The collection...is not yet open to the public...the intelligent proprietor having preferred that his collection should pass the dictum of royalty before it was submitted generally.'

Aside from these specific emphases, the pre-reviewers concisely provide introductory physical information commonly offered for new exhibitions. All three give summaries of the sorts of objects displayed, with the *Morning Post* and *Morning Herald* more substantially representing the scene, stating dimensions and the arrangement of cases. As for most of the sample, this information is conveyed through précis of the 'General View of the Interior of the Saloon' with which Langdon begins his *Descriptive Catalogue*. The passage is so often recited or adapted, and its

ideas and language reiterated to such an extent in the reviews that it is given in full here:

'The apartment occupied by the collection is 225 feet in length by 50 in width, with lofty ceilings, supported by numerous pillars. On passing through the vestibule, the visitor finds himself, as it were, transported to a new world. It is China in miniature. The view is imposing in the highest degree. The rich screen-work, elaborately carved and gilt, at either end of the saloon, the many-shaped and varied-colored lanterns suspended throughout the entire ceiling; the native paintings which cover the walls; the Chinese maxims adorning the columns and entablatures; the embroidered silks, gay with a hundred colours, and tastefully displayed above the cases containing the figures, and the multitude of smaller cases crowded with rare and interesting objects, form a *tout ensemble*, possessing a beauty entirely its own, and which must be seen before it can be realised.'⁴⁶

From this the *Morning Post* and *Morning Herald* borrow not only objective adjectives - 'numerous pillars', 'rich screen-work' - but further, concur that the appearance of the room 'is that of China in miniature', and seems 'to leave no object unrepresented'. Whilst the reviewers are not to be reprimanded here for utilising the text with which Dunn and Langdon were indeed anxious that they should complement their experiences of the exhibition, it will be suggested that the fact that the assertions and terms of the catalogue, and the ideological presumptions it perpetrated were rarely questioned in the press reveals a great deal about the common views and descriptive methods of dealing with China resident (or not) in the middle-class media.

An issue closely connected with this is how far reviewers chose to introduce the delicate observation that Britain was in fact at war with China at this time, or whether the Collection was seen

⁴⁶ Langdon, *Descriptive Catalogue* (1843), 17.

to be detachable from the political context which had provided its obvious market for Dunn. Of the pre-reviews, only the *Times* noted that 'It ought, and no doubt will be visited...indeed by all persons at all interested in the events which are now in development in China', whereas in contrast, the *Morning Herald* reviewer states that his inspection provoked 'a degree of interest which we scarcely thought the whole Celestial Empire could have excited'. The collective orientation of the press towards the Opium Conflict will be seen to exhibit a range of positions between extremes of aggressive crude humour, cautious acknowledgement and the startling indifference of which the latter comment is an example.

Universal amongst the reviewers, regardless of stated opinion of, or implicit attitudes towards, events in China itself, is praise for the presentation and extent of the Collection. Dunn is admired for his expenditure and effort by the *Times*, and the display itself is deemed 'more worthy of being seen than anything of the kind that has ever been presented to our notice' by the *Morning Herald*. Given the massive popularity of spectacles of foreign and novel cultures and objects in this period, delight in what the *Morning Herald* calls 'A magnificent collection of objects from China, the most ample and curious that has ever been seen in this or any other European country' is perhaps not surprising, but where favourable qualitative comment holds greater interest is when it is applied to the Chinese productions themselves. The brevity and informative nature of these pre-reviews precluded much discussion of the merits of the actual exhibits, but the *Morning Post* does state that all were '*beautiful, interesting, and Chinese*' [emphasis added]. Without extrapolating too much about

the nineteenth-century concept of beauty from this plainly casual summary, it will be seen in later examples that there was some debate around the quality of Chinese art and manufacture, particularly addressing painting, and that some reviewers were prepared to concede that they had previously been mistaken or ignorant.

That ignorance and even bigotry on the part of the typical middle-class writer should not be too righteously chastised now, however, because of both the relative sparsity of Chinese material culture previously accessible and the legacy of Sinological literature described in Chapter 2 above. The penetrative depth of texts on China is especially apparent in the reviews, as the language through which the exhibition is described is astonishingly consistent throughout. Again descriptive terms are often taken from Langdon (himself a Western perceiver of the Orient), as items are considered 'rich', 'elaborate', 'rare', and 'interesting', and further, there are other adjectives employed by the journalists which are repeated frequently and can be seen to form the core of a limited inscriptive vocabulary for China and 'The East'. The *Morning Herald* introduces 'unimaginable', 'remarkable' and 'fantastic', the *Morning Post* 'unique' and 'gorgeous' (the last twice in under 300 words), and all three reviews refer more than once to 'curiosity' and things 'curious'. It is vital to acknowledge that the use of 'curious' and words rooted by it in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was complex and connoted many meanings no longer resonant, but its emergence as the most extensively used adjective within the sample must surely suggest a commonly-perceived status and significance for

the exhibits. 'Gorgeous', too, is a word rich in implication, and both these terms, with other linguistic devices, will be scrutinised.

It has already been acknowledged that the role of the dailies' reviews was to announce, rather than analyse the exhibition, but they have been examined here in order to illustrate that even within brief notices of this sort there are certain shared characteristics in their treatments of the display. Again this can be seen to result from their similar journalistic aims, but it will become clear that they were also all sub/consciously manifesting an agenda of issues regarding attitudes towards both shows of foreign culture and China itself. It will be demonstrated that individual exhibits and cases within the display repeatedly aroused interest in the reviews, and that, as is strikingly apparent in the pre-reviews, a specific vocabulary was constantly applied in dealing with them.

The pre-reviews are further important in that they were presented to a potential, and not an established audience, and, as they are all favourable, can be seen to reveal the aspects of the event which they considered would encourage visitors. To summarise those attractions, the visit of Queen Victoria was clearly an incentive, and of the collection itself, its perceived novelty and comprehensiveness were most emphasized, as the *Morning Herald* marvels that 'The cases...are filled with...everything indeed that can throw a light on the domestic habits of the small-eyed nation', and the *Times* states that 'It is a complete illustration...of an immense empire but imperfectly known to Europeans', and that there was 'something to please all inquirers.'

Reviews of the Chinese Collection from the periodical press:

- Spectator* (6d. Long-established literary journal). Sat. Jun. 25, 1842.
- John Bull* (6d. Standard weekly newspaper). Sat. Jul. 9, 1842.
- Literary Gazette* (8d. Established literary journal; high profile for exhibitions). Sat. Jul. 16, 1842.
- Illustrated London News* (6d. Established 1842; first profusely-illustrated newspaper). Sat. Aug. 8, 1842.
- Athenaeum* (4d. Standard art & literature weekly). Sat. Aug. 8, 1842.
- Britannia* (6d. Standard weekly newspaper). Sat. Aug. 8, 1842.
- New Monthly Belle Assemblee* (1s. Monthly art, fiction & fashion journal for women). Aug., 1842.
- Punch, or the London Charivari* (1s. Leading satirical newspaper). Oct., 1842.
- Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* (4d. Standard weekly newspaper). Thurs. Dec. 3, 1842.
- Art Union* (8d. Monthly art & literature journal). Dec., 1842.
- Lloyd's Illustrated London Newspaper* (6d. Newly-established illustrated Sunday newspaper). Sun. Jan. 1, 1843.
- 'Perambulator' (Reprinted in the *Chinese Repository* ; date of the original unknown). Pre-Nov., 1843.
- News of the World* (3d. Established Oct., 1842; concerted attempt to undercut complacent weeklies). Sun. Jan. 19, 1843.

Reviews of *Ten Thousand Things relating to China and the Chinese* in the periodical press:

- Literary Gazette* (As above). Sat. Jan. 14, 1843.
Britannia (As above). Sat. Jan. 14, 1843.
Bell's New Weekly Messenger (6d. Newly-established Sunay newspaper). Sun. Jan. 15, 1843.
Planet (4 1/2.d. Standard Sunday newspaper). Sun. Jan. 15, 1843.
City Chronicle & Tea Dealers' Journal (6d. Standard weekly newspaper). Tues. Jan. 17, 1843.
Court Gazette & Fashionable Guide (6d. Standard weekly newspaper). Sat. Jan. 21, 1843.
Atlas (10d. Standard weekly newspaper). Sat. Jan. 21, 1843.
United Service Gazette & Naval & Military Chronicle (7d. Standard weekly newspaper). Sat. Jan. 21, 1843.
Law Intelligencer & Templar (8d. Standard weekly newspaper; review in last of only 3 issues before folding). Sat. Jan. 28, 1843.
Conservative Journal & Church of England Gazette (6d. Standard weekly newspaper). Sat. Jan. 28, 1843.
Age (6d. Standard weekly newspaper). Sun. Jan. 29, 1843.
Watchman & Wesleyan Advertiser (5d. Standard weekly newspaper). Wed. Feb. 1, 1843.
Athenaeum (As above). Sat. Feb. 4, 1843.
Bell's Weekly Messenger (6d. Standard weekly newspaper). Sat. Feb. 11, 1843.
Keene's Bath Journal & General Advertiser (5d. Standard weekly provincial newspaper carrying items on London society). Mon. Feb. 13, 1843.
Illustrated Polytechnic Review (4d. Standard weekly illustrated newspaper). Sat. Feb. 18, 1843.
New Monthly Belle Assemblee (As above). Feb., 1843.
Gentleman's Magazine (1s. Long-established art, literature & leisure journal for men). Jul., 1843.
Chinese Repository (? Established China-coast news & academic journal). Nov., 1843.

'The opening of China': recognition of the Opium Conflict.

The periodical reviews which form the bulk of the sample under examination are, without exception, favourable in their accounts of the exhibition. This is perhaps disarming in the light of the Opium War, as some degree of criticism of Dunn's blatantly sympathetic representation of China would reasonably be expected. More surprising than this, however, is the caution with which the reviewers treated the issue, and further, that only half did so at all. The most exceptionally explicit remarks did recognise the far-reaching results of the war, as the *Court Gazette* noted that 'The termination of the Chinese war, will, doubtless, add greatly to our knowledge of the real social condition of China, as to morals, manners, domestic comforts and refinements', and the *Atlas* acknowledged a global significance: 'The opening of China is one of the most important events of modern times, and everything which throws light on its history, customs and institutions is necessarily invested with intense interest'. Notices of the war are always brief, and more typically the residue of interest in China is acknowledged, but not the crisis itself, so that the *Watchman* observes 'persons of all classes thinking and talking of the Celestial Empire', the *Spectator* states 'At any time, such a museum as this, giving an insight into the habits and arts of life of a people of whom we know so little, would be interesting; but at the present juncture it is most especially so', and the *United Service Gazette* implies the event was a fortuitous occurrence: 'Its arrival here appears to have been singularly well-timed, for our interest in the people and products of a land which has hitherto been a *terra incognita* to a great mass of Europeans had been

strongly excited...'. One of the more extremely complacent characterisations of the frame of mind of the potential visitor is suggested by the *Literary Gazette*'s metaphor of the hungry reader: "'Ten thousand things" about the celestial empire are exactly what we are gaping for at the moment; and any body who pops even five hundred into our mouths must be welcomed with a ready palate and a good appetite.' Aside from these almost incidental references to the Anglo-Chinese political situation, some other reviewers do introduce the war implicitly or in passing, for example in discussions of Chinese physiognomy or weapons, and these will be cited later. Considering the whole sample, however, the comments above surely demonstrate a sparse presentation of the conflict. It is not legitimate here to interpret this as a conscious conspiracy of silence on the part of the journalists, or even to find a universal explanation for it. What does emerge is that collectively the reviews do exhibit shared approaches towards the event which effectively anaesthetised potential tension regarding its subject-matter. These include some acceptance of Dunn's appreciation of Chinese culture, in a few cases with genuine self-reproach, but in others from the patronising stance of the now apparently proven superiority of the victorious westerner. But the most prevalent reviewing technique is to detach the exhibition in England from its commercial and military *raison d'etre*, and to address rather the nature and quality of the representation *per se*, as if regardless of its political content. This strategy is exemplified by the disclaimer in the *Art Union* : 'Our late warfare has subdued them, yet certainly will not convince them, of our superiority in humanity or justice. But this is a question upon which we have no desire to

enter, our business being with the exhibition itself...'. It will be shown that this business was conducted across the sample through persistent recourse to Langdon's catalogue, numerous qualitative statements praising Dunn and the appearance of the show, and the use of a specific range of terms and phrases through which the exhibition was neutralised and China painlessly kept at a distance. Of course these dominant methods are interspersed with journalistic eccentricities, and these will be noted for their own interest and significance, but ultimately a common ideology amongst the reviewers will be detected and accounted for.

'The Chinese House in Knightsbridge': general information.

Whilst the basic objective of this analysis of the reviews is to observe and rationalise their projections of China and the Chinese through a theoretically-informed critique of their underlying ideological and linguistic nature, it should not be overlooked that a primary function of reviews was and is to inform the public of the physical structure of their subject. Much of the text accordingly provides information about the origins of and objects in the collection, about Dunn and his collecting activities, and gives descriptions of the pagoda and saloon and first reactions to the most immediate attractions of the whole scene. Indeed these reviews have yielded a substantial amount of the information available for practical understanding of the Chinese Collection for this study.

First, almost all the reviews, including those for *Ten Thousand Things*, give the location of the exhibition (variously as 'St. George's Place', 'Hyde Park Corner', and 'Knightsbridge'). Some further explain the approach to the building, and reveal as did the pre-reviews, the purpose of the striking pagoda-facade:

'The attention of persons passing along Knightsbridge has been lately attracted by a Chinese house, resplendent with gold and bright colours...This fanciful structure...is the entrance-hall to an exhibition of extraordinary beauty and interest...' (*Spectator*),

'Upon the left-hand side of the inclined plane, extending from Hyde Park Corner to Knightsbridge, and towards the extremity of St. George's Place, a grotesque erection has lately sprung up...The structure in question is the entrance to an extensive apartment filled with "curiosities of China"' (*Illustrated London News*).

Many accounts establish the Collection as Dunn's private initiative, noting the building 'which Mr. Nathan Dunn, the enterprising and liberal proprietor has erected at St. George's Place' (*Watchman*), and emphasize his personal application:

'The collection is the result of twelve years' indefatigable exertions on the part of Mr. Dunn, an American gentleman' (*Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*),

'Mr. DUNN, in bringing this extraordinary collection to this country, has afforded us an opportunity of a better acquaintance with China' (*City Chronicle*).

The reviewers also accept from the outset the unusual extent of Dunn's access to jealously-guarded Chinese artefacts, publicising his relatively high status as a foreigner in Canton:

'in forming it he was facilitated by HOWQUA and other Hong merchants, and a priest of Honan, who entered into his views very zealously' (*Spectator*),

'Mr. Dunn was...assisted in his labours by Howqua, Tingqua, and other Hong merchants of note; and who, in this instance,

seemed to rise above the prejudices of their countrymen, in being "most willing to communicate" (*Illustrated London News*).

Another promoted aspect of Dunn's endeavour was the parallel his activity was seen to provide to Catlin's much-acclaimed capture of North American Indian culture then on show at the Egyptian Hall: 'What Catlin did for the Red Indians, Dunn has accomplished for the Chinese, - introduced them...to the untravelled traveller' (*Literary Gazette*), and this common achievement is even implicitly attributed to an American talent for entrepreneurial enlightenment:

'It is singular enough, that to Mr. Catlin and Mr. Dunn - both natives of the United States - we are indebted for the most valuable assemblages of modern times' (*Art Union*),

'that which Mr. Catlin has done to preserve the manners, customs, habits, personal and national features, dress, and the diversified social accidents of the aborigines of North America...Mr. Dunn, a countryman of his, has effected, in order to introduce us to a knowledge of a people who...have yet remained...isolated from their fellow-men' (*John Bull*).

There are several interesting issues arising from these associations with Catlin, regarding the status of foreign cultures in general, the belief in their portability, and the perceived capabilities of figurative or 'live' displays, and these will be attended later, but here it is noted that resemblances between the impressive qualities of the shows were felt.

Other relevant preliminary information given concerned the price of admission and the clientele. Of the former, the unusually high charge has already been discussed, but it was not generally announced by the reviewers, only a few of whom gave opinions as to its aptness as the event progressed. It has been seen that one

of the earliest periodical notices, in the *Spectator*, reckoned it too high, though a week later the writer in *John Bull* contested 'His price of admission...is we have heard it objected to, too high...but it is not a prohibition price - far from it; and by keeping out the *plebs*, is more likely to induce the other classes to come'. It was shown earlier that 2s.6d. was prohibitive, and *Lloyds' Illustrated London Newspaper* echoed the *Spectator* : 'The Chinese Collection has, we assume, been formed more as a medium for indulging the curiosity of the rich than for the gratification of the million', but this same review indicates that the exhibition nonetheless attracted large numbers, albeit of 'the other classes' above mentioned: 'There were amongst the visitors many of the nobility and residents in London, and a great concourse of respectable persons, and scientific men &c.' In a review of October 1843, after the reduction of admission to 1s., the *News of the World* observed that the show remained 'very numerously attended', and was not demeaned by its new audience: 'the company seem quite as respectable as attended at the higher rate - a clear proof to us that the exhibitions at a moderate rate of admission are always the most profitable...'. After the pre-reviews' and earliest weeklies' references to the private views, however, there is little description of the visitors, except occasionally that it is 'well attended by a fashionable and distinguished public' (*Court Gazette*), or 'entertainment of a superior kind...visited by many of a high condition' ('Perambulator'). This is not surprising in reviews of limited copy space; it suffices to see that any audience profile for the show carried through the press was essentially of respectability.

'A goodly apartment': physical description.

Having given this preliminary information, nearly all the reviews then describe the appearance of the exhibition.⁴⁷ These descriptions vary greatly in length and detail, as the short accounts summarise concisely what is on offer, whilst the more leisurely attempt to represent the complete experience of a visit, one even from journey and arrival by omnibus ('Perambulator'). There are, however, specific vital aspects which are frequently included, and similar general impressions conveyed. Two reviewers begin their descriptions immediately inside the pagoda, again yielding useful physical facts, as 'Perambulator' states 'You enter the pagoda by a flight of steps to a vestibule, and then ascend a larger flight, after which pursuing your course along the lobby, you soon find yourself in a goodly apartment...', and the *Illustrated London News* notes a thoughtful visual device: 'after passing through a vestibule of extreme plainness (doubtless, to give better effect to the collection itself), we found ourselves in an apartment...'. The briefer and more casual accounts simply note the 'spacious' or 'commodious' saloon (*Athenaeum*, *Literary Gazette*), and then relate its contents through summarising lists:

'The exhibition...is illustrative of the customs of this singular people, and shews the actual dress, implements, &c., &c. in use among them' (*Law Intelligencer*),

'the collection introduces us to the idols, temples, pagodas, bridges, arts, sciences, manufactures, costumes, residences, ornaments, weapons of war, and, in short, every object which can conduce in the slightest degree to illustrate the state of society' (*United Service Gazette*),

⁴⁷ All the Chinese Collection reviews do so; some of those of *Ten Thousand Things* are less particular about the actual spectacle.

'He places in focus all their objects of national interest - their idols, temples, pagodas, bridges; their various arts and manufactures; their tastes; their whims; their reception-rooms; their dresses; weapons of war; their vessels; the natural and artificial productions of their country; their books; their paintings...' (*Art Union*).

Most of the reviews which give fuller physical descriptions follow the same formal pattern. Some give an initial impression of the overall effect, stating that the arrangement presents 'a gorgeous coup d'oeil' (*Spectator*), or that 'the eye of him whose bump of order is his prominent phrenological development will be first attracted by the symmetrical arrangement of the whole. A perfect harmony prevails' (*John Bull*), or recite Langdon's statement that the whole forms 'a *tout ensemble*, possessing a beauty entirely its own, and which must be seen before it can be realised' (*Watchman*). The majority of accounts then recite the dimensions of the gallery, and some describe the dominant visual foci at either end: the large screen and the reconstruction of Howqua's pavilion:

'A superb screen of carved work, richly coloured and gilt, and adorned with paintings, covers one end of the room; the other is occupied by a spacious apartment in the summer residence of a wealthy Chinese' (*Spectator*),

'A screen, unrivalled for size, and for a quality not often found in conjunction with size, for its exquisite delicacy of design and workmanship, forms the upper end of the saloon, and stretches across its entire breadth. The lower end is formed by a fac-simile apartment in the house of a wealthy Chinese, and represents a visit of ceremony' (*John Bull*).

Many narratives of the display are constructed around Langdon's prescribed route from the tableaux cases on the right-hand side around to the smaller cases of artefacts on the left. In some

accounts this path is overt: 'We first pause before the Chinese Temple...Turn we next to the Chinese Mandarins...What have we next? Two gentlemen in mourning'(*Athenaeum*), 'Case 1 contains a mandarin...Case 2 contains two priests...' (*Britannia*), whilst in others the contents are described in Langdon's order without specification that this was their actual arrangement ('Perambulator'). The case-by-case route was the most prevalent among the reviews, with the tableaux invariably receiving more attention than the miscellaneous works of art and artefacts, which were mostly introduced in brief lists. A very few of the longer accounts gave further details of the arrangement of cases:

'as many as fifty glass cases, enclosing an infinite variety of specimens of natural productions and works of art and manufacture, are ranged along the floor' (*Spectator*),

'All these cases project from the sides of the saloon, the walls of which, in the spaces between each case, are covered with paintings...The walls above the cases are separated on either side into compartments containing curiosities of every kind, from idols downwards...' (*John Bull*).

Some reviewers were more rigorous than others in the extent to which they described everything available, in fact most (perhaps understandably) devoted proportionate space to the objects and ideas they considered to be of greatest significance. What those decisions themselves signified will be considered below.

'Peculiarly interesting': special objects of interest.

Several reviewers had idiosyncratic primary interests, for example the *Art Union* and *Court Gazette* were both initially drawn by musical instruments, with the latter using the Collection to support and enhance its topical concern with Egypt (the most captivating of Eastern cultures from the Napoleonic Wars until the Triumph over India):

'Before entering into the details of the exhibition, we cannot avoid observing upon two "ideas" that occurred to us during our progress through the collection - the barbaric rudeness of their musical instruments, and the awkwardness of their warlike weapons' (*Art Union*),

'The extraordinary resemblance between the Chinese instruments of music, and the Egyptian, as represented in the palaces and tombs, or bodily preserved in the new room of the British Museum, has been demonstrated in an elaborate paper in the *Court Gazette* (which has attracted much notice)' (*Court Gazette*).

Some objects gained more coverage because of their location at the beginning of the display, as, for example, the *Illustrated London News* creates a formal imbalance by describing the screen-work and Buddhist Temple closely, and, implicitly, systematically ('we commenced with a superb screen...', '...Next is a Temple...'), and then regrets its inability to attend much else: 'It is impossible within newspaper limits to enter into the details of this gorgeous exhibition'. Others made more thoughtful decisions as to what they emphasized, thus the *Watchman* turned naturally to religion: 'Our readers will peruse with interest Mr. Langdon's account of THE PREVAILING RELIGION IN CHINA',

and *Keene's Bath Journal* acknowledged the concerns of its provincial readership: 'we are induced to notice it [*Ten Thousand Things*] both for the sake of recommending the exhibition...and also to afford our country friends some idea of the science of agriculture as it is practised among the people of Eastern Asia'.

Again, however, the figurative tableaux attracted most attention across the whole sample. Described in the *New Monthly Belle Assemblée* as 'peculiarly interesting', and by *Britannia* as 'assuredly the most interesting part of the exhibition', the figures are the most constant focus, and within the range of scenes, the Temple and priests, shops and tradesmen, and 'Group of Chinese Ladies' generated the most debate. It is not surprising that the figures representative of religion, commerce and sex were of greatest interest to a Victorian audience, but it should be recognised that the emphases upon these institutions arose from English preoccupations and not from their inherent dominance in the reconstructed culture of China. This is to say that some fundamental Chinese social and economic practices, such as scholarship and agriculture, were not foregrounded by the reviewers, but rather the perceived equivalents of dominant English elements were most fully discussed. This will be seen to be partly a result of the exhibition's real identity as a representation not of China, but of Canton, but also, the urge to compare will be seen to signify an underlying attempt to maintain Western conceptions of Civilisation.

Religious issues were inevitably pronounced by the three figures of Buddha, as 'The first objects which strike us on entering the room are three colossal figures...' (*Britannia*), or 'Your attention is immediately arrested by three richly-gilt colossal and

imposing idol figures...' ('Perambulator'). It has already been noted that the *Watchman* characteristically gave a long extract on Buddhism, but it is interesting that other reviewers voiced strong opinions on the subject. The *Illustrated Polytechnic Review* also gave its longest extract from Langdon on the Buddhist faith, calling it 'a most tempting theme', and some writers were apparently defensive in their resistance to it, as the *Art Union* warned:

'if given to seek a religion new to yourself, you may make acquaintance with "the three precious Buddhas;" and then, if you are not what we should be sorry to imagine, you will rejoice a hundred-fold in the great privilege of Christianity',

and the *Athenaeum* objected in its review of *Ten Thousand Things* : 'we find it difficult to comprehend a religion whose chief lesson to its followers is "to do *nothing*, to think on *nothing*, and to live as much as possible on *nothing* "'. The same journal, in its earlier review of the Collection itself, had drawn on the physiognomy of the figures as evidence of their depravity: 'The character of the religion is stamped upon the images of its deities; conceit of superior sanctity, absence of sympathy for joy or sorrow, - a religion void of fear, hope, and love', and 'Perambulator' guarded against their seductive splendour:

'The three large idols are imposing things to gaze on, being gloriously gilt, with the finest leaf of gold, but when the thought that three hundred and sixty millions of people, bowing down to such things, comes across the mind, "How is the gold become dim! How is the most fine gold changed!"'

The subjectivity of these analyses is, however, illustrated by the (in this instance) more reasonable *Britannia* :

'We are apt to laugh at the barbarity of the Chinese mythology; a little reflection, however, will lead one to regard it with a feeling very different from ridicule. These divinities, are, no doubt, sufficiently absurd in appearance, especially when compared with the gods and goddesses of Greece; we are to recollect, however, that, if less beautiful, they are far more moral'.

Like the Buddhas, the silk-mercens and china-ware shops demanded attention through their visual dominance, as by *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* they were noted primarily because of the impressive feat of their complete reconstruction:

'this chamber is vast enough to contain *many* completely fitted up Chinese rooms, and *two entire houses*, with shops, stock in trade, &c. &c. And as the last are among the startling novelties which first attract a stranger, we will begin by describing them...'

But they and the tradesmen were also seen to permit insights into everyday life, as they brought the visitor 'down to the populace' (*Britannia*), and 'attract much attention, bringing before us, as they do, the manners and customs of the people' ('Perambulator'). 'Perambulator' further indicates that the tradesmen were especially appealing, as they 'cannot be regarded without interest...', and implies that this stems from their provocation of direct comparison: '...and we naturally enough compare them with those among us who follow the same trades'. In reviews which use comparative devices extensively, such as that in the *Athenaeum*, exhibits were used to invite anecdotes of England:

'Itinerant barbers, blacksmiths, and shoemakers travel about China, as they did in Lancashire and Yorkshire not more than a century ago. There was a man not long since alive in Rochdale, who remembered Sir Richard Arkwright as an itinerant vendor of wigs, and so celebrated for his skill in dressing both wigs and hair...'

More generally, the tradesmen were noted for their peculiarities, as the shoemaker's unusual spectacles drew comment (*Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*), and the relatively large number of Chinese barbers was puzzled over ('Perambulator'). Of the blacksmith, the most unusual opinion is offered in *Britannia*, which states that he is 'more intelligent and less Chinese-looking than any other in the series'. Both the shops were received favourably by the reviewers, being praised for their 'air of order' and arrangement of shelves 'much after our own fashion' (*Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*), or even their superiority over English establishments:

'The shop of the silk-mercator is not unlike some of the small establishments which we find in English country-towns; but the goods are more neatly arranged, and the shop has a greater appearance of business-like habits' (*Athenaeum*).

The most frequently noted (and most frequently noted first) figures were the Chinese Ladies. The appearance and treatment of Chinese women provoked much comment, ranging from recognition of their crucial role in society through to details of their nails, lip-colours and, most persistently, feet. In some instances, women were simply described more fully or given 'lengthened extracts' (*Watchman*), or, in shorter reviews, would be selected for attention within limited space (*Bell's New Weekly Messenger, Planet*). *Bell's Weekly Messenger* sought to fill in its fragmentary outline of knowledge of China, and begins 'In every society, barbarous as well as civilised, the women necessarily occupy their full share in number and importance', whilst the *Literary Gazette* wanted to show all that was 'strange' about China, and celebrated *Ten Thousand Things* : 'How can we more

properly illustrate this than by glancing at some of the novel portions of this entertaining book. *Place aux dames!* We begin with the little-footed ladies'. The *Gentleman's Magazine*, too, 'turned to the account of the Chinese Ladies as the first subject of inquiry', and gives an account solely of the cosmetic practices thereof:

'we found that a Chinese lady must not show her hands, which are covered with long sleeves; that her nails must grow very long; that she must have large pendant ears; a slender willow waist; that her natural eyebrows must be removed, and a delicate pencil-line, resembling Lewshoo, must be drawn instead; that her foot must not exceed two inches in length; and that she must paint her face white and red'.

Athenaeum pinpointed a transcontinental and transhistorical coincidence of feminine taste, as it characteristically emphasized a seemingly minor aspect of Chinese womanhood, using it as a self-promotional device: 'It is interesting to find that the lotus lily is as great a favourite with the Chinese ladies as it was with the princesses of ancient Egypt (see *Athenaeum* No. 508)'. Yet women were foregrounded more philosophically in the same context in *Keene's Bath Journal* as it cites women as exemplary of its belief in shared aspects within distant cultures:

'with them [the Chinese] the word happiness is the same as official employment or promotion, but in many cases it is the same with us; nor are we unable to cite other instances in which the customs of the extreme nations assimilate; thus, no woman in China is so poor as to neglect, or so aged as to give up adorning herself with a head dress of natural or artificial flowers'.

These are not the only comments on Buddhism, trade and women within the sample, and in turn, these figures were by no means the only ones discussed, but the aim here is to show that in

terms of the content of the tableaux, the three themes were the most commonly attended. Subsequent analysis of the reviewers' ideological pursuits and linguistic designs will utilise much more of the text generated by the frozen likenesses.

'A picturesque narrative': the role of Langdon's catalogues.

Before discussing the ways in which the catalogues were used and quoted by reviewers, it is worth reiterating briefly what exactly the practical and intended nature of those volumes were. The *Descriptive Catalogue* was produced in conjunction with the event from the outset, was intended to be used initially during visits, but did contain additional contextual descriptions of Chinese culture. *Ten Thousand Things* was a much larger volume, first published in January 1843, which consisted of a catalogue of the Collection with considerably more information and illustrations, and was intended to stand as a work in its own right. The extent to which both were taken seriously as academic accounts of China was not unanimously agreed upon amongst reviewers, as the *New Monthly Belle Assemblée* wrote of the small catalogue: 'A more succinct, well-selected, and cleverly written treatise on the Chinese, we have (excepting Davis's book) never met with, where, too, we least expected to find it, in an exhibition catalogue', whilst conversely, the *Watchman* was not convinced of the erudition even of the larger volume independent of the event:

'when we come to examine the book a little more closely, however, we find it is in reality an extended Catalogue of the

Chinese Museum at Hyde Park Corner...As the volume is sold only at the Exhibition, no purchaser can be deceived as to its real character'.

Most reviewers' judgements were less attentive to the definition of the book, and were generally very favourable, regardless of the generic uncertainty of the texts. Many writers praised both catalogues for their production, describing them as 'handsomely got up', or 'peculiarly elegant' (*Britannia, Atlas*), also for the presence and quality of illustrations: 'It is profusely illustrated', 'the woodcuts are well designed, and cleverly executed' (*Conservative Journal, Age*), and Langdon's resourcefulness and effort was acknowledged:

'It is more than a synopsis of the collection. It is a history...written by its intelligent curator Mr. Langdon' (*Law Intelligencer*),

'But there is something which the cataloguer-compiler could not very delicately say of himself, which we think it but just to say of himself, which is, that *his* labours are deserving of all praise' (*New Monthly Belle Assemblee*).

More important here, however, is how far the reviews presented or disclosed the premises of the texts, whether through direct assertion or implicit acquiescence.

The provision of a catalogue for the show was obviously mutually beneficial to both proprietor and audience, as the collector was enabled to justify and enhance his exhibition (and increase his financial return), and the visitors were offered greater understanding of a display which by any estimation consisted largely of entirely unknown scenes and objects. It has already been shown that the reviewers drew extensively on the catalogue for a wide range of descriptive information, and that

many reproduced or summarised extracts from Langdon concerning the origins and appearance of the show. Closer examination of the accounts reveals that the catalogues in fact had a far more penetrative effect than this, as the ideas therein were repeated.

Perhaps the most crucial feature of the reviews as a whole is their acceptance of the truth of Langdon's texts, both in terms of the nature of the event itself, and, most important, regarding China and the Chinese. This is to say that the reviewers were characteristically passive, accepting, and in most cases celebrating the interpretative precepts laid down in the catalogues and embodied in the display, with very little questioning of the methods and accuracy of either. The following analysis will lay down the ways in which this is manifest in the reviews, and further will extrapolate the significant and fundamental ideas they reiterated.

First, within the construction of the reviews themselves, several used extracts to a greater extent than solely to draw practical information about the show, as they reproduced passages and precis in order to provide insight into China itself. Some reviewers of *Ten Thousand Things* not unreasonably printed extracts from Langdon as samples, but only exceptionally was this done to demonstrate his writing craft:

'he has something to say, says it in a plain way, and then proceeds to say something else; sure of his end, careless of the manner of obtaining it. Let the following...serve as a specimen' (*Illustrated Polytechnic Review*),

'The following description of a Chinese picture of Canton will serve as a specimen of the copious details with which Mr. Langdon presents the reader' (*Conservative Journal*).

In all other instances of giving extracts aside from these, the aim is to enforce that the catalogues can teach about China, denoting belief in the credibility of Langdon's information. Thus the *Literary Gazette* review consists of six lengthy passages linked with sparing editorial comments

'Exceedingly unlike England, the *Literati* of China are the highest class of society. Respecting them, we learn: - ...',

'The punishments are despotic, prompt and barbarous. *Ex. gr.:-* ...',

and the *Watchman*, too, emphasizes the educative merits of *Ten Thousand Things* :

'We meet here with an instructive account of THE COSTUME OF THE CHINESE...'

'Such we are assured, are not uncommon in China; on the contrary, Mr. Langdon speaks thus of CHINESE LITERATURE...'

Only two reviewers challenged Langdon's accuracy on any theme, and both questioned his description of Chinese religion. The *Chinese Repository* criticised his information regarding the doctrines of Confucius, and the *Athenaeum* states 'The account of the Buddhistic creed; given as a comment on the representations of the three Buddhas...is incomplete and partially inaccurate...', but the latter account then qualified this with its opinion of the inherent incomprehensibility of Buddhism: 'but most writers on Buddhism might profitably imitate Cicero's honest confession, "Though I have translated the *Timaeus* of Plato, I do not understand it"', and indeed this review is amongst the most effusive regarding the value of both exhibition and catalogue. Most accounts simply reproduce extracts on themes they considered most attractive to their readers. The reviews in which

the influence of the press release is greatest all gave condensed quotations on Chinese Nobility, Ideas of Beauty, the Streets of Canton and "Mode of Living &c." (*Bell's New Weekly Messenger*, *Planet*, *Bell's Weekly Messenger*), and the *Gentleman's Magazine* recounted feats of juggling, the menu of a Chinese meal eaten by a Captain Laplace at the Mansion House, and Davis's account of tea along with its dominant portrayal of women.

It is not the aim here to reprimand the reviewers for illustrating the nature of Langdon's books with quotations, but it should be noted that this is done without acknowledgement of any subjectivity within his works. Reviews which did not reproduce Langdon extensively also expressed their conviction in his texts, through both their assessments of its universal validity and praise for its extent and interest. *Bell's New Weekly Messenger*, the *Planet*, *Bell's Weekly Messenger*, and the *City Chronicle* all opened their reviews with the following sentence (with very minor variations), foregrounding Langdon's assertion that *Ten Thousand Things* was more than a catalogue:

'Although the author of the present work very modestly puts it forth to the public as an arrangement to give information and instruction in Chinese matters, as connected with the Chinese Collection itself, it is unquestionably one of the most erudite works on China and the Chinese that has ever been published'.

More independent reviews also opined that *Ten Thousand Things* stood in its own right:

'Whether, however, he is enabled to visit the realities or not, Mr. Langdon's description of them, illustrated as it is by a great number of wood engravings, will be found, *per se*, to contain an infinite fund of amusement and instruction' (*United Service Gazette*).

The press release had evidently promoted the volume as suitable for a wide readership, as the aforementioned adaptations similarly repeated that 'not only the general reader, but those to whom China is now becoming a country of paramount importance, will find so much to interest and amuse, that we feel, the work must find its way amongst every class of readers'. Again this universal appeal was generally reinforced, as *Keene's Bath Journal* 'cordially recommended' it 'to all classes of our readers', and the *New Monthly Belle Assemblée* deemed it 'worthy to be placed in the library of the man of taste, the studio of the artist, and the boudoir of the woman of taste'; the *Court Gazette* further suggested it merited a more intellectual and discerning audience: 'We recommend it as a useful and requisite *vade mecum*, to the numerous distinguished and fashionable visitors of that collection, as well as a valuable accession to the library of the antiquarian and scientific *virtuoso*'.

Briefer comments on the texts echoed these explicit praises of erudition, as descriptions such as 'well-drawn up and instructive', 'Ample, amusing and instructive...invested with intense interest', 'very interesting and entertaining' and giving 'so close an insight' frequently recur across the sample (*John Bull*, *Atlas*, *Age*, *New Monthly Belle Assemblée*). Aside from admiring the quality of information about China, the reviews also praised the complementary relationship between the texts and the display. The *Law Intelligencer* thought *Ten Thousand Things* gave 'a very accurate notion' of the contents of the collection, and *Keene's Bath Journal* began its account with a playful extension of that

relationship from writer to spectator: 'This is the title of a book for which we owe the writer ten thousand thanks!'

In addition to these implicitly appreciative and approving public recommendations of Langdon's approach and ideas, two reviews of the Collection itself celebrated them more forcefully by reproducing a large section (two pages of the original) of the introduction to the catalogue. The *Illustrated London News*, having introduced and described the pagoda, offered a very slightly condensed precis of Langdon's passage spanning several paragraphs:

'it remained for an American gentleman, Mr. Nathan Dunn, of Philadelphia, to enter more minutely into the costume, the manners, the habits, sciences, arts, trades, agriculture, and genius of this wonderful people...we may, without exaggeration, describe the result as the "Chinese World in Miniature"...Here we have not one object, but thousands; not a single production, but an empire with all its variety of light and shade, its experience, its mind, and the results of both for four thousand years'.⁴⁸

The passage is followed by the *Illustrated London News*' agreement: 'So states the introduction to the catalogue, extending to 150 large pages, and the assertion is not overcharged'. The *New Monthly Belle Assemblee* reproduced a slightly shorter extract from within the above:

'We feel satisfied, that the expectations of those who may feel a desire to examine this collection...and thus in some sense, analyze the mental and moral qualities of the Chinese...will not be disappointed...As a means of education, this enterprize is invaluable. It teaches by *things* rather than words. The images are visible and tangible, and therefore cannot be easily misunderstood'.

⁴⁸ Langdon, *Descriptive Catalogue* 12-14, see Appendix I for full passage.

The journal prefaced this extract stating Langdon 'very properly makes these remarks', and concludes it that 'Although written by a person interested in the success of the exhibition, these remarks are in every particular borne out by the visitor'.

There are two major presumptions within these passages from Langdon which he (and Dunn) were most anxious to promote regarding the achievements of the exhibition. These were: first, that the collection constituted an encapsulation of China, and second, that because the display consisted of three-dimensional objects, that encapsulation was more than one of essence, being a tangible realisation of Chinese material culture, as well as a symbolic image of its spiritual or intellectual identity. It will now be shown that these claims were concurred with by the accounts as a whole, not only through the two instances of overt compliance above, but further, through the connotations of the reviewers' narrative techniques.

'China in Miniature': the Collection as Capsule.

Langdon asserts that the Collection was 'China in Miniature' in the long passage quoted above, and re-emphasizes this in the 'General View of the Interior of the Saloon' which opens the *Descriptive Catalogue* proper. At the publication of *Ten Thousand Things* this claim was continued for the volume, as its full title deemed it 'an *Epitome* of the Genius, Government, History, Literature, Arts, &c. &c. of the Celestial Empire...' [emphasis added]. Both these terms of embodiment occur in the reviews, along with others

which can reveal by which criteria the writers accepted the Collection as encapsulatory. For some it was the sheer effort behind and scale of the undertaking which were most impressive, as the *Art Union* stressed Dunn's single-minded conviction: 'A collector's noble fortune, the energy of a life - and the life of an intelligent as well as an industrious man - has been devoted to bringing into the heart of Europe an epitome of the Chinese Empire', and the *Athenaeum* noted the necessity of prolonged attention: 'The merits of this exhibition cannot be appreciated in a single visit; it is at once a guide to the history of the largest empire, and the mind of the most numerous nation known to history'. 'Perambulator', too, advocated more than one visit, admiring the 'profusion' of exhibits, but also especially emphasized the show's representation of a whole social spectrum and its ability 'to add much to your knowledge of the Chinese people, of their dress, manners, customs, ingenuity, and works of art, from a mandarin of the first class, to the blind mendicant, in his patched habiliments'. This notion of range was important for other reviewers, as they celebrated the full scope of the display and catalogue: the *Spectator* stated that that show required two or three hours 'to scan superficially...offering at one view an epitome of Chinese life and character, arts and manufactures, scenery and natural productions', and subsequently described the saloon 'in which he has absolutely realized the Celestial Empire'; of *Ten Thousand Things* the *Conservative Journal* recommended its 'representing all that is curious in the domestic and public life in China'. *Bell's New Weekly Messenger* itself epitomised these generally appreciative remarks:

'this collection is so full, so well arranged, and so abounds...in everything which makes up the scheme amid circumstances of public and private life, that the description of the different articles collected in the exhibition becomes in fact a picturesque narrative of the whole form of Chinese life and manners;'

Many reviewers located their consideration of the event and texts within the specific context of previous contact with China. The *Art Union* reckoned that the Collection

'will give a better idea of the Chinese character, and the customs, habits, and occupations of this singular people, than all the volumes that have been written on the subject';

Britannia wrote

'it is, perhaps, as good a book as can be purchased for furnishing a familiar and descriptive account of the Celestial Empire and its inhabitants';

the *Court Gazette* stated

'we again draw attention to the illustrations and descriptions of this work, for the best birds-eye view extant of the social groundplan of China'.

In his original introduction, Langdon had asserted the representative capacity of the Collection as greatly superior to that of literary texts, listing in point the works of 'du Halde, Macartney, Amherst, Davis, Morrison, Bridgman, Gutzlaff and others'. The *New Monthly Belle Assemblee* recited that list, and asserted

'were all these works attentively studied, [they could not] give the reader a more vivid or accurate impression of the domestic and general condition of the Chinese than this extensive collection well examined, with the help of the clever and complete catalogue which belongs to it'.

On the publication of *Ten Thousand Things* the roll of authors was recalled again by the press release reviews, which concluded that the book, presumably owing to its roots in the Collection, was, in itself, superlative: 'it furnishes us with a better insight into the manners and customs of the Chinese than any work that has hitherto been published' (*Bell's New Weekly Messenger, Planet*), and ultimately this merit by association was accepted by more authentic reviewers of the book:

'it goes through almost every division of Chinese trade and arts, and describes the tools and processes in each. Under the name of a catalogue, it is in fact one of the most complete accounts published of the details of Chinese domestic life and manners' (*Bell's Weekly Messenger*),

'Next...to that collection itself, and more successfully than any book that has previously been written, does it conjure up notions of what the Chinese must be' (*Illustrated Polytechnic Review*).

Without entering into qualitative debate here as to whether Langdon's work was or was not more representative of China than previous publications, it has to be recognised that the Collection, consisting of artefacts, did permit a considerable widening of experience of the country's physical culture, and *Ten Thousand Things*, in using those artefacts as its narrative basis, was unique in its approach and appeal. However, there is one conclusion which the reviewers drew (not, apparently, suggested by Langdon) from the perceived all-encompassing nature of the event which is far more presumptuous, and reveals something of the ideological standpoint of these ostensibly moderate and objective journals. This was the idea that a visit to the Collection could provide an experience of China at least as enlightening as a

visit to the land itself. It was noted earlier that belief in the possible transportation of oppositional cultures was implicit in the early promotion of the exhibition as parallel with Catlin's 'preservation' of the North American Indians, and in one early instance this total access was openly accepted and indulged:

'You have but to walk to Piccadilly to smoke the pipe of peace with the "braves of the Rocky Mountains"; or take the "bus" to Hyde Park Corner to drink tea with a bevy of beauties...from the Celestial Empire' (*John Bull*).

This review displayed more thorough reasoning than most in its global commentary, and its connotations will be discussed later, but several affirmed that the Collection comfortably recreated China at St. George's Place. The relatively cautious *Watchman* suggested that the exhibition afforded opportunity of 'obtaining a more lively view of China than could be procured from any other source, except an actual residence in the country', whilst others were more emphatic; in the earliest review of the periodical sample, the *Spectator* declared that the Collection 'will possess the visitor with an idea of China almost as complete and vivid as could be formed by a voyage to China'. *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* was equally absorbed: 'after a visit, as long as that we paid to this wonderful collection, one feels inclined to talk of one's "residence in the celestial empire"', and *Britannia* was rapt:

'whoever has a wish to visit China has only to step down to Hyde Park Corner, where...we find ourselves...transported to Canton, and this with such completeness of illusion it is very difficult to believe one is anywhere else'.

It is important that this reviewer (perhaps unwittingly) acknowledged that if the Collection was fully representative of a

culture, it was that of 'Canton' rather than 'China'. This issue is complicated, however, by the fact that at this date Western experience of China was, by design of the Chinese, inevitably limited to Canton and its environs. One reviewer actually recognised the import of the Sino-European relationship, admiring Dunn's show for

'portraying China as it was five years ago, but, most probably, as it never will be again - for the European has entered its sanctuaries, and, the privacy of the Chinese once violated, they must become more assimilated to us in all things" (*Art Union*),

but these two acknowledgements of the geographical and temporal limitations upon the representation constitute the only challenges - and mild or unintended at that - to the credibility of the event. Indeed, both the above writers were amongst the most vociferous of Dunn's publicists, and further, both did describe the Collection elsewhere as absolutely Chinese. *Britannia* characterised the display as 'Chinese life, in short, in all its gradation, in doors and out, from the blacksmith's shop to the mandarin's hall', and *Art Union* elaborated upon one of Langdon's summarising sentences, delighting in

'a picture - all but living - of China and the Chinese...the Chinese Empire, with all its variety of light and shade...which has existed, unchanged, during a period of four thousand years - concentrated, by the zeal and ability of one man, in a pavilion close to Hyde Park: supplying an exhibition more interesting, and instructive than any we have ever had in the British Metropolis'.

'A picture - all but living': authenticity and realism.

In order that the spectacle should be effectively identified as an encapsulation of China, it was essential that the exhibited objects and tableaux accorded with the expected conventions of authenticity and 'realistic' representation. It can be seen from the above that two major criteria of completeness were that the exhibition displayed Chinese life 'in all its gradations' and 'all but living'. Closer examination of the accounts reveals that these characterisations, of spectrum and near-animation, were consistently emphasized as prime merits of the show, contributing greatly to its status as 'the most splendid of all the attractive, and, what is better, of all the instructive, amusements that have ever been submitted to an English public' (*Keene's Bath Journal*).

Again Langdon's introduction can be seen to have triggered and encouraged a widespread preoccupation with the unique three-dimensional and material constitution of the collection, as included in the seminal extract reproduced in the *Illustrated London News* and *New Monthly Belle Assemblée* noted above, was the polemic on the educative power of objects:

'The eye and the mind are both enlightened at one and the same moment; and thus, as it frequently happens, an individual to whom it would be impossible to convey a notion of a certain machine or piece of fancy-work, by a written description, has a full and perfect impression of the entire object at a single glance. As a means of education, this collection is invaluable. It teaches by *things* rather than words. The images are visible and tangible, and cannot be easily misunderstood'.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Langdon, *Descriptive Catalogue* 14.

The reviewers accordingly delighted in the 'ten thousand things', and were especially impressed by the 'fac-simile' figurative tableaux, accepting Langdon's claim that the visitor appears to have the living Chinese in the images before him'. It will be suggested later that the emphasis upon the figures as particularly demonstrative in fact created at least two dichotomies within the reviewers' philosophy concerning the nature of the 'truth' the show presented, in these respects: the stress upon the scenes as perfect reproductions of individual 'slices of life' from Canton cannot be seen to accord with the insistence that the collection constituted an epitome of the Chinese Empire complete, and the celebration of the tactile qualities of the tableaux does not correspond with the feelings of illusion the whole display generated.

In addition to the direct quotation of Langdon's claims in the two latterly-mentioned journals, many reviewers reiterated the communicative force of objects indirectly. The *New Monthly Belle Assemblée* preceded its passage from Langdon with consideration of (other) subjective accounts of China:

'the reports of travellers do not always afford the most correct notions of a foreign people. We have their opinions and prejudices to contend against in arriving at the truth...His picture is often painted rather from circumstances than from nice observation. But the Chinese Exhibition, [sic] these disadvantages do not exist. Here we can judge for ourselves. Here we see the actual dresses, implements, furniture and arms...'

The underlying statement here is that because Dunn procured material evidence whilst in China, his representation is more authentic or 'truthful' than those of visitors who simply wrote down what they experienced. In order that this premise should

be enforced, it was crucial that the Collection offered a comprehensive assemblage of Chinese culture. Langdon had pointed out that in contrast to the learned chroniclers of China, who 'have for the most part given the grand features of the empire, the lofty objects, the leading traits', Dunn enters 'more minutely' into the costume, habits, science, arts, trade, agriculture and genius of the Chinese, and that in the catalogue, Langdon himself had avoided frivolous diversion: 'A studious effort has been made to narrate nothing but *facts*, and thus to impart correct information'. In the press release reviews of *Ten Thousand Things* this attention to the commonplace was emphasized again:

'but these authors have only entered into the lofty objects and leading traits of these singular people; whilst the present work follows them into their own homes, and into their daily avocations. We have set before us their costumes, habits, sciences, arts, trades, agriculture, and all that their singular genius can produce' (*Bell's New Weekly Messenger, Planet*).

The appeal of the everyday, or 'real-life' had already been articulated in reviews of the Collection, as *Art Union* found the visitor

'in the midst of this exclusive people; you are invited to inspect their marts; to take coffee in their drawing rooms; you may, if you please, weep with the widower who mourns in white; you may pour over manuscripts with literary gentlemen; or tingle the guitar with the ladies - oh! rare advantage! who could never have been literary; you may inspect the tails of the mandarins...This, and ten times more...',

and others continued to relish the 'domestic' aspects of the display, praising its showing of 'the actual dress, implements, &c.

&c. in use among them' (*Law Intelligencer*), and its inclusion of invaluable detail, so that it presented

'in short, every object which can conduce in the slightest degree to illustrate the state of society, habits, manners, customs and amusements of the most remarkable people in the world' (*United Service Gazette*).

Several reviewers were preoccupied by the educative potential of the Collection, and prescribed its minutiae as enabling particularly thorough knowledge. The *Watchman* concluded that not only was the Collection infinitely interesting, but also that every object commanded attention, as it posited that 'to be appreciated, they must be seen, and seen not in a hasty way, or as a mere recreation, but carefully examined in detail, as presenting a field of most curious and instructive *study* ', and the *Athenaeum* advised: 'Those who wish to become acquainted with the usages of the Celestial Empire should visit this interesting collection immediately, for they will find useful instruction even in its minutest details'.

The fact that the tableaux attracted most attention from the reviewers has already been discussed. In the matter of the realistic characterisation of the event they were crucial. The *Literary Gazette* asserted the absolute realism of the display in relation to the *Ten Thousand Things* commentary, stating that if its review was considered inadequate by its readers 'they have only to go to Hyde Park Corner and see the realities of these descriptions as large and quite as good as life'. The main criteria of 'reality' within the figures for the reviewers can be seen to be their accuracy of scale and anatomy, as *Britannia* declared they were 'of the full size of life, exhibiting all the varieties of costume,

and in the exercise of their ordinary vocations', and *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* effused:

'The figures both here and throughout the collection are so wonderfully life-like, that it is with difficulty we can persuade ourselves they will not presently begin to speak, the delusion of course being greatly assisted by the costumes, which are, in fact, veritable dresses of the Chinese. The figures are the size of life...'

and repeated its enthusiasm later in the review

'...here, as in all the instances already alluded to, we must beg the reader to remember, that these are no miniature representations, but full-size figures, most wonderfully life-like, their dress and appendages being all real'.

The accuracy of costume was also heavily emphasized by the *Watchman*, as it described the mandarins 'as large as life, and in their characteristic costume', the priests 'in full canonicals', and the ladies 'in full costume'. It has already been noted that the representations of tradesmen and shops were especially attractive, and for some reviewers this was owing partially to their particularly convincing appearance, as the *Watchman* described the silk-mercantile's shop 'with its astonishingly life-like figures', and *Britannia* felt those figures to be 'surprising beyond the rest, in the look of reality and life'. Others were impressed by the overall arrangement of the tableaux and the success of the sculptural medium of the figures, though there was some discrepancy as to precisely what that was. The *Art Union* broadly noted that Dunn 'groups their figures truthfully and artistically together', but whilst *John Bull* saw 'waxen figures the size of life, clothed in habiliments peculiar and proper to each class', *Britannia* considered they 'have not the slightest appearance of wax-work,

although draped and got up in the same manner...', and the *Illustrated London News* quipped 'the figures we here mention are of life-size, and, like ourselves, made of clay'. It is the stress on realistic effect which is important here, but it is interesting that differentiation was made between Dunn's figures and conventional waxwork representations, as *Britannia* continued '...They are made by Chinese artists of a peculiar species of clay, which in colour and texture is admirably adapted to this purpose', and *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* echoed that they were 'modelled from a peculiar species of clay admirably adapted for the purpose'. Indeed, the fact that the models were made in China, and claimed to be studies from life was also particularly admired, as the *New Monthly Belle Assemblée* stated 'they are carved in the exact resemblance of individuals'.

There is no reason to doubt that these promoted qualities of the figures were fact, or that they would have been uniquely impressive in relation to the representation of foreigners at this date, but it is regarding the issue of their status as individual 'real-life' studies that the reviews reflexively contradict their own grounds for praise. Several reviewers, having admired the precise specificity of the origins of the tableaux, subsequently discuss the general nature of the Chinese, drawing their comments and opinions from the perspective of the then-experimental science of physiognomy. The paradox here is that the reviewers established the realism of the representation on the grounds of its attention to minutiae and, in the case of figures, of its scrupulous depiction of anatomically perfect living individuals, and then used the same models as evidence to consider and reinforce generalised racial ideas and stereotypes. Thus *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*

acknowledged the declaration of true portraiture, but drew wide conclusions:

'Though a sort of family resemblance runs through almost all the collection, we understand they are, for the most part, accurate likenesses of individuals...High cheek-bones, small eyes, flat noses, a dingy yellowish complexion, and rather a heavy expression of countenance, seem the prevailing characteristics'.

The *New Monthly Belle Assemblee* further reiterated the stereotype perception of the anonymous face of China:

'by the way, it is a general remark of all travellers in the country, that the people are so much like each other in face, that it is not until a stranger has resided some time in China, that he can distinguish one from another',

and *Britannia* was the most personally repulsed, recoiling from the Ladies:

'Not altogether propitiated with the Chinese physiognomy, we turned eagerly from these male figures to No.4, which is occupied by half-a-dozen ladies, hoping that the eternal monopoly of feature might be modified and enlivened in the female face. But their faces we are afraid we must give up; the insipidity is too inveterate to be tolerated by any degree of gallantry'.

Some writers extended their observations to philosophical speculation on the universal character of the Chinese, again drawing on the physical evidence they perceived:

'There is a character of antiquity, at once, and of immutability, the latter founded on intermutual fitness, that pervades the objects in the gallery' (*Illustrated Polytechnic Review*),

'That which most strikes us is the primitive, aboriginal character of the Chinese people' (*Britannia*),

'the expression of their countenances and the whole bearing of the people are exceedingly gentle and childlike...We can fancy their turning, with determination, when injured or insulted; but

their *physique* is certainly incapable of strong or sustained exertion, while there is a dogged positiveness in their downcast eyes that leads us to a belief that it would be very difficult to turn them from an old, or give them a new, idea. This strong peculiarity has kept them from some evil, and much good' (*Art Union*).

Only one reviewer, in *Keene's Bath Journal*, recognised the danger of presumptuous generalisation:

'They have a proverb declaring: It is better to sit than to walk; - better to lie down than to sit; - and still better to sleep than do either; such a proverb is a key to a great portion of the Chinese character; and only to a portion; it shows a want of energy, but this want is not universal; it is not astonishing that they who employ it are credulous people, not only believing in all the horrors of necromancy, but gravely receiving the assertions of their writers on natural history that hawks become pigeons; that moles are turned into quails...'

This, however, is an exception to the basic feeling left by the figurative representation, as the *Literary Gazette* calmly highlighted the same proverb: 'Nothing surprises a Chinese gentleman more than the voluntary exertion which Europeans impose on themselves for the sake of health as well as amusement'. In summary, the following concluding comment by the *Illustrated Polytechnic Review* is exemplary of a widespread recognition and establishment of difference:

'[the collection] more than any work, no matter how eloquently or lucidly written, than any series of drawings, be they never so spirited and graphic, makes the European feel the distinctness from himself of the singular people of whom we have been speaking'.

It should be recognised here that unlike the acceptance of the promoted worth of the Collection's representation, these projected relationships of Chinese physique and nature did not

originate with Langdon, for whilst he offered general observations on the relative civilisation of Chinese culture (especially their resistance to Christianity), he did not base these on physiognomical data or proof. Rather the growing interest in physiognomy and racial hierarchy of which these reviews are illustrative related to a developing ideology of compulsive human advancement which was becoming increasingly important in the pervasive atmosphere of global competition precipitated by the British urge to industrial supremacy and empire-building. The evidence of this ideology within the reviews will be charted below, in terms both of its overt glorification and its specific location of the Chinese within an embryonic spectrum of civilised Progress.

'Denizens of an earlier world': Progress and Advancement.

Most of the text of this nature in the sample concerns China and the Chinese, but two reviews opened their accounts with toasts to the triumphant English harnessing of communication and transportation which allowed the exhibition of 'China in Miniature' in London. Langdon had stressed the importance of improved communication and potential for travel in terms of increasing knowledge of foreign cultures, but his stated hope, albeit patronising, is that this will lead to greater worldly understanding and enlightening of distant lands, not the reduction of their cultures to essences for the benefit of the West:

'this wonderful people have latterly excited more attention, especially among European nations, than at any other period of their national existence. It may be, that a new and nobler destiny awaits them; that light, knowledge, and Christian civilisation, and a more liberal communion with the families of man in other portions of the earth, are about to form an epoch in their career...The imagination pauses at the thought and while we contemplate the wonders of steam, and the many other improvements, discoveries, and appliances of modern science, we are almost tempted to doubt the impossibility of change in the progress of nations'.⁵⁰

In contrast to this extrovert dream, similar observation allowed the English to formulate the belief that ultimately global experiences could be successfully and amply acquired from residence in the centre of the British Empire, and indeed this phenomenon was seen to be realized less than a decade later at the 'Great Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations' in Hyde Park. With hindsight and recognition that that event constituted an exercise in the cultural consolidation of imperial policies, the occurrence of prefigurative attitudes towards foreign cultures in conjunction with displays such as the Chinese Exhibition are highly significant.

Appropriately enough the two reviews which advanced these ideas were *John Bull* and *Britannia*. *John Bull*'s description began

'Steam is superseded and railways are out of date. One need no longer travel to see distant lands: all that is worth attention and likely to create and repay curiosity within them is certain to visit us. The extreme west and east now meet on our shores'.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Langdon, *Descriptive Catalogue* 15.

⁵¹ The extremes referred to were Catlin's North America and Dunn's China; this journal's consideration of them as parallel representations has been discussed.

Britannia articulated more details of the capitalist endeavour which permitted this meeting, and even enhanced the inevitability of it through the sanction of England's greatest cultural icon:

'Thanks to trade, capital, and speculative enterprise, we have no occasion to traverse earth and seas to see the wonders of the world. We are enabled, as Shakespeare has it, "to shake hands from the opposed ends, of the earth;" to have the antipodes, and all that in them is, set down at our own doors. The other day, the American wilderness with its savage inhabitants were snugly located in Piccadilly. Now, whoever has a wish to visit China has only to step down to Hyde Park Corner'.

It is further significant that both these reviews were amongst the most vociferous regarding the position of the Chinese within the hierarchy of races in pursuit of civilisation. *Britannia* was the most adamant that the Chinese lacked the essential fitness to survive, as it neatly attributed their plight in the face of British aggression to physiognomical deficiency:

'They look like a people who have no right to be alive; denizens of an earlier world, and disentombed from the grave of countless ages. When we recollect that at this moment we are waging war on those effeminate, inoffensive, helpless looking creatures, one cannot help looking on them with pity; fervently hoping that neither mismanagement on our part, or obstinacy on that of their rulers, may involve them in protracted suffering.'

Most reviewers discussed Chinese civilisation in more abstract terms, however, and the three perceived qualities which generated most direct comment were strangeness, stagnation, and ancientness. In some instances China was simply distanced as different or unknown:

'Truly it may be said, the Chinese are a strange people' ('Perambulator'),

'the most ancient and singular people on the face of the earth' (*Gentleman's Magazine*),

'In our former papers we have given an account...of this half-civilised people' (*Bell's Weekly Messenger*),

and occasionally there is indignation at its mystery:

'The jealous exclusion which causes this singular people to shroud themselves up in their fancied superiority, and to exclude strangers from their country, has hitherto prevented us from obtaining very just notions of their habits, manners or condition' (*New Monthly Belle Assemblee*).

Of stagnation and antiquity, these issues were often considered in conjunction, provoking ambiguous responses ranging from dismissal of what was contemptuously regarded as an impotent culture to ironic admiration of its prolonged survival, and even implicit acknowledgement that 'advancement' was subjectively defined. Thus *John Bull* and *Britannia* emphasized the apathy and intransigence of the Chinese:

'a people who, preceding the rest of mankind in developing some of the most valuable elements of civilization, have nevertheless stood still at the point from which others have progressed as with the vigour of a new life, and who, outnumbering by millions the inhabitants of every other nation on the face of the earth, have yet remained, from politic considerations only, as isolated from their fellow-men as did the small knot of Hebrews under a religious injunction' (*John Bull*),

'The processes of change, collision, and intermixture by which Providence has carried on the improvement of the human race, seem in them to have been omitted, or inefficient' (*Britannia*),

whilst the *New Monthly Belle Assemblee* conceded:

'But with all their vanity, and (as we see them) strange peculiarities, the Chinese are, without doubt, the most wonderful nation on earth. The laws and political system - however revolting parts of them may appear - must on the whole be wise

and efficient, which have kept together the most extensive of empires in one compact whole, for *three thousand years* ',

and *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* concluded

'Shut up from the period of their very origin as a nation, denied the reflected light of the stranger's wisdom, the Chinese people have remained children in intellectual advancement...The advancement of the Chinese is their own; they are self-educated; and their love of peace, industry, and ingenuity, as well as their reverence for learning, albeit the stream must flow only in one appointed channel, are traits in their character on which the thoughtful would fain build bright hopes for the future'.

Perhaps the passage which best represents the collective opinion of the reviewers concerning the state of Chinese civilisation was again from the *Illustrated Polytechnic Review*, as it grudgingly noted the extent of cultural development, yet could not but conclude that it felt little common experience with the Chinese:

'The traces of high civilisation, of a strict subordination of ranks, of singular mechanical skill, of some sensibility to the arts, of a condition of humanity multifarious in its phases, and diversified in its being, surround them, but do not excite the sympathies, scarcely rouse the appetite, and occasionally only suggest to the mind the memory of the common nature that binds mankind into one family'.

The Collection was essentially intended at least partially to dispel these feelings of alienation the last reviewer clearly associated with Chinese culture, as has been demonstrated by Langdon's anxiety to present the show as an 'absolute realization' of the Celestial Empire, and the reviewers' acceptance of it as such, notwithstanding the observation of one that 'Mr. Langdon, whose recorded opinion of them resembles the summing up of testimonies by a judge, views them in a light rather favourable

than otherwise' (*Keene's Bath Journal*). It remains to be seen to what extent the writers acknowledged that the display did enlighten them or change their minds, and to examine the techniques by which they attempted (or not) to revise their understanding. It will be shown in the final two sections below that whilst some reviewers conceded that their opinions of Chinese culture, or specific aspects of it, had been altered, the majority continued to describe China using the established terminology of the East as 'Other'.

'A very different light': preconceptions and comparisons.

In the characterisations of China charted above, its mysterious qualities before the show are implicit. In some reviews these were articulated further, as writers recounted their limited and fragmentary knowledge:

'The general impression produced by a view of the collection will vary, of course, with the individual. Many of our preconceived notions were scattered to the winds by it' (*John Bull*)

'It would, indeed, be our own fault, did we not know more of the habits and manners of the Chinese than we have yet done. Mr. Dunn, by bringing us his splendid collection to this country, has placed the people before us in a very different light to that which we have been in the habit of considering them' (*Bell's New Weekly Messenger, Planet*).

The *Watchman* gave a lengthy account of the excited state of public anticipation regarding China and the manifest expectations of different sections of society:

'military men scanning the merits of the achievements by which our brave troops have brought "the Brother of the Sun and Moon" to his senses; politicians weighing the proceedings of Sir

Henry Pottinger...commercial men speculating on the impulse to trade which our pacific relations are expected to impart; old ladies luxuriating in the prospect of cheap tea...young ladies and gentlemen anticipating the amusement of seeing a real, living, Chinese Ambassador, with a long *tail*, going about the streets of London; Puseyites concocting schemes for sending out to Hong Kong...Romanists bestirring themselves to reinforce the Jesuits...and many who are neither Puseyites nor Romanists, but sound Protestant Christians, combining their strength to carry the truth through that door which is now happily and widely open',

and 'Perambulator' described the more commonplace motifs of China available to the middle classes:

'And now comes, confusedly to your memory, all that you know of China, not unmingled with shame that you know so little, and recollect even that little imperfectly. You have heard China called the "Celestial Empire," and understand that it has many more than three hundred millions of inhabitants. You have marveled at the strange figures painted on the tea chests, and watched the nodding mandarins in the shop of the grocer. You have seen the Chinese puzzles, and ivory toys, with drawings on rice paper...The names Whampoa, Macao, Peking, and Canton are familiar to you. You are not ignorant that a Great Wall was built by the people to keep out the Tartars...that Taukwang (Reason's Glory) is the present emperor of the country; and that Confucius was a famous Chinese philosopher. You have seen a great deal in the newspapers about hong-merchants, war-junks, and the taking of Chusan, Ningpo, and Chinhai, and have even read Barrow's China, and the accounts of lord Macartney's and lord Amherst's embassies. Having summoned all this information to your aid, together with what you have read of missionary efforts, you prepare yourself, book in hand, to make a grand tour of the Chinese collection'.

As *John Bull* pointed out, every perception of China must have been unique, but the perspectives of *Watchman* and 'Perambulator' together provide an indication of the range of expectations from specific Christian factions to the uninformed tea-drinker and shopper.

A primary method employed within the reviews for using the collection to increase understanding of knowledge was to present comparisons between equivalent English practices and attitudes. This potentially served at once to reveal the cross-cultural parallels which were (happily or grudgingly) seen to exist, and to reinforce the differences which were necessary to sustain the Otherness of what was (however ineffectually or seemingly irrelevantly for the reviewers) an enemy nation. In fact, few comparisons were drawn regarding issues of fundamental cultural significance, such as politics or religion, as most merely highlighted 'curious' or 'peculiar' everyday practices amongst the Chinese. The exhibits about which writers most openly expressed favourable surprise at Chinese prowess were the productions of Fine Art. *John Bull* stated that of all 'preconceived notions' the show scattered 'none more completely than the idea of the grotesque, puerile, and absurd which we had been accustomed to associate with our thoughts of Chinese decorative art', and 'Perambulator' suggested 'An examination of the paintings...will do something towards leaving a more favourable impression, with regard to Chinese art, than that which is generally entertained'. These concessions, however, are complicated by identification of the criteria upon which Chinese painting was being judged, and the lack of overt recognition that the works on display were, undoubtedly, export products, for, in some instances, it was a correlation to post-renaissance Western art which aroused admiration, as, for example, the *Spectator* noted 'some portraits and landscapes with pictorial effects equal to European art', and *Britannia* used that observation to criticise English practice:

'native paintings, too, adorn the walls, at some of which we were not a little surprised, as they manifest a feeling for colour and effect, and more especially for *chiaroscuro*, with which we imagined Chinese art to have been wholly unacquainted. Some of these pictures, indeed, evince a feeling which shows that if the artists were drilled for a few years in the English school, they would be likely to compete, in arbitrary arrangement of light and shade, and slap-dash execution, with our most hardened exhibitors'.

Again, the predominant use of familiar comparison as a critical device was to enable the uses and characteristics of the exhibits to be more fully envisaged. Of this numerous examples can be found, as the reviewers describe 'chairs of state, magnificent enough for Czar or Caesar', 'a Chinese Kean', 'the sedan...not very unlike those used by us in the last century', and so forth (*John Bull, Illustrated London News, Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*). The comparative references for tradesmen and shops have already been noted, and of the more popular figures, women, too, were often isolated for comparison. The treatment of women here is interesting, because several reviewers take the opportunity to criticise women in general, and in this respect, the resemblance between England and China is perhaps most fully established and accepted. It will be demonstrated in the following chapter that the representation of Eastern women in the West was a vital part of the construction of the Orient, and that further, femininity, or, more frequently effeminacy, were perceived to be inherent weak characteristics of the 'Oriental' peoples and cultures. The fact that reviewers were more carefree in their generalisations about women than any other aspect of the show is recorded here in view of that characterisation and signification. For 'Perambulator', again

Chinese women are not admired for their physique, but are acceptable if they can be seen to comply with western conceptions of and demands for womanhood:

'According to our European impression of beauty, the Chinese ladies, with all their rouge and flowers, their "tiny feet," "willow waists," and eyes like "silver seas," are far from being beautiful; yet if it is true, as it is reported, that they possess much common sense, and make devoted wives and tender mothers, it is more to their credit than to be regarded as "golden lilies" in their generation',

and *Bell's Weekly Messenger* opened its account of *Ten Thousand Things* : 'It will be seen from the following account...that in China also, the women are anything but slaves'. *John Bull* and *Britannia* used the Chinese Ladies to reiterate western stereotypes of the preferred self-presentation of women, and, paradoxically, to chastise their vanity:

'The distinction betwixt the high-born and the plebeian is as distinctly marked in that group...as the goddess Fashion could desire or the force of blood accomplish. How delicate are the features, how *distingue* the *tournure* - what an air of languid elegance or elegant langour is there in the three ladies of the *ton* at Pekin...Contrast these several traits with the coarse features and ungainly forms of the domestics behind - and you will perceive that in China as here Nature's stamp is vulgar compared with the modish impress of Art' (*John Bull*),

'Nevertheless, in the general air of the figures, and in the style of costume, which although it nearly envelops the person, is both graceful and becoming, the ineffable grace of the female figure becomes apparent...The barbarous contraction of the feet (called by the Chinese golden water lilies) might be transferred to the waist, to which our more enlightened habits have confined that rational mode of comprehension' (*Britannia*).

The only actual artefacts which elicited unconditionally adverse remarks were weapons, and this in only two instances:

'There are also two soldiers, one armed with a matchlock, the other with a bow. The bow is the more formidable weapon of the two; a company of raw militia would defeat a host of such awkward fellows if they had no better arms than this clumsy weapon' (*Athenaeum*),

'As for the soldier and the archer, one cannot but laugh, whether in reference to the men or their weapons. To think of such things being opposed to British soldiers and sailors' (*Britannia*).

It was suggested much earlier that the lack of direct engagement with or criticism of specific exhibits and figures can be attributed to the establishment of distance between the exhibition and China itself, or rather, to the formulation that the exhibition precluded necessity for experience of the real China, so that the China exhibited could be uncontroversially examined and appropriated. It has been shown that reference to the Opium War was avoided, consciously or otherwise, and that the content of the display was not deeply scrutinised, as reviewers chose to emphasize the qualities of the organisation of the event and to rely heavily upon Langdon's assertions of its achievements. The final section will examine how controversy was further displaced by the reviewers' use of a specific terminology for the spectacle, both in terms of the identity of the exhibition itself and of the vocabulary employed for inscribing China and the Chinese within a finite and unthreatening notion of Orient.

'The China of the Arabian Nights': the semantic structure of the reviewers' texts.

The method of analysis so far has been to treat the reviews as a single text as well as singular accounts written for potential audiences for the exhibition, and this has been in order to observe parallels, consistencies, and differences within them regarding their factual and ideological content. This final section will, more than any other, address the complete sample, as it will investigate and quantify their semantic structure. It must be acknowledged that this consideration of all the reviews together is a function of a contextual study of the exhibition, and is not informed by presumption that any visitor was likely to have read all, or even one, of the reviews, and to this extent the exercise is contrived. The value of this approach, however, lies in the assumption that the press, originating from, operating in, and circulating through the middle-class exhibition audience, must be seen as the closest gauge remaining by which widespread public response to the event can be judged. The aim of this section, therefore, will not be to suggest that the reviewers conspired through repetition of vocabulary and phrase to produce a definitive and confined East, but rather, the supposition drawn from linguistic and semiotic consistencies will be that they reveal a uniform perception and means of expression determined by ignorance and lack of critical framework in which China could be accurately located.

Several reviewers demonstrate their visions of the East openly, as they describe their impressions of the show in personal terms, but (in addition to their own interest), within these descriptions, specific motifs and metaphors are employed which

must have been thought to be comprehensible to their readers, and thus part of a common sphere of reference for the effects they perceive and project. It emerges that the dominant images of the exhibition these devices denote are of fantasy and illusion. In some instances the journey into the unknown is signalled through quotation of Langdon's projection: 'They who have visited the gallery...must have felt, when within its walls, as within a new world' (*Illustrated Polytechnic Review*), or in others the impression of adventure is implied by single words, as in the feeling of bewilderment experienced by the *Illustrated London News*: 'the effect is very striking, and you are almost bewildered by the vast assemblage...'. In other cases, a fuller representation is provided, in attempts to evoke more spectacular escape:

'we find ourselves, as if by a whisk of Merlin's wand, or Aladdin's Lamp (talk of railroads!) transported to Canton...' (*Britannia*)

'I like to know what impression is made by a first general glance, and to ask myself, what is it that I prominently see? and what is it that I particularly feel?...Imagine myself to be in St. George's chapel, at Windsor, or rather, perhaps in that of Henry VII., in Westminster Abbey, gazing on the fretwork roof, the painted windows, the carved stalls, and the pendant banners that give a gloomy glory to that goodly temple. And now imagine that the wand of a magician has been waved, suddenly altering the character of the place...at once, transforming solemn, sepulchral pomp and gloomy glory, into attractive beauty and lightsome gaiety. If you can fancy this, you will have before you something like the very scene upon which I am now gazing' ('Perambulator'),

'The spacious saloon, the elaborate carvings...the embroidered silks...the immense decorative lanterns...seem to realize those imaginings of the gorgeous East, which have haunted us like dreams of childhood. We seem to be in the China of the Arabian Nights - a realized world of Fancy, and we move about in a state of doubtful consciousness, what we see mingling with what we dream, until it is scarcely possible to distinguish observation from speculation' (*Athenaeum*).

Whilst these reveries must be recognised as rhetoric, the references to magic and 'fancy' they use are identifiable as part of an established tradition of myths of the Orient dating back to Marco Polo's thirteenth-century *Tales* which had set up an agenda of mystery, myths and monsters for succeeding travellers throughout several centuries.⁵² In the comments of *Britannia* and *Athenaeum*, indications of the origins of the perceived fantastic nature of the East are denoted, as they refer to 'Aladdin's Lamp' and 'the China of the Arabian Nights'. It was shown in the previous Chapter that the character of Aladdin, as a representative of China, was well established in the popular culture of the theatre, but that his authenticity as a figure of Chinese mythology is at best doubtful, as it is certain that he originated in the *Tales of the Arabian Nights*. The second reference to China in relation to that popular fantasy of the Orient reinforces a sense that perceptions of the East were not nationally specific, and that the better-known Middle East was thought of as all-embracing and symbolic of all Eastern cultures. The introduction of the Arabian Nights as evocative of 'the gorgeous East', and akin to 'dreams of childhood' also suggests the influence of that work in promulgating a notion of a strange, awesome, yet essentially superficial and frivolous East. One other fantasy account of the East is included in the *Athenaeum*, as it cites the work of Jehanghir as exemplary of unbelievable exploit, and yet

⁵² See Wittkower, R. *Allegory and the Migration of Symbols* (1987), Chapter 4, 'Marco Polo and the Pictorial Tradition of the Marvels of the East', 75-92, for an account of the fallacies and fantastic aspects of the East set up and diffused in the West by repetitions and reinterpretations of Polo's *Tales*.

perceives that the real life of China surpasses even his imagination in arousing astonishment:

'Some of the feats of the Chinese jugglers rival those which the Emperor Jehanghir has recorded in his memoirs, and which European writers, with little respect for imperial veracity, have stigmatized as "falsehood." Without at all denying that Jehanghir is a little inclined to act out the part of Baron Munchausen, we must confess that the following trick is nearly as difficult of explanation as any which he mentions...'

A confirmation of adventurous fantasy within Chinese culture is implicit in the additional association of Baron Munchausen, hero of possibly the most popular and widely-read work of Nonsense of the time.⁵³ The metaphors of the waving of a magician's wand, and more specifically Merlin's wand are interesting because they positively signal the idea of Chinese culture as unreal, intangible, or illusionary. It has already been established that the same journals which evoke this feeling of delusion had already, or would subsequently, insist upon the real 'life-like' nature of the representation, and here the paradoxical ideas of the reviewers regarding the identity of the exhibition as simultaneously exemplifying the distinctness of China from ourselves (bearing no

⁵³ Raspe, R.E. *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* (First London edition, 1785), was reprinted almost every year throughout the nineteenth century. It is worth noting that the Baron did refer to China, stating that a Sphinx which had been sent to Europe by the Emperor of China was called upon to attend him, and subsequently accompanied him to Darkest Africa (Vol. II, Ch. XXIV, 173), and thus contributed to the mythology of monsters to be found in the East, but aside from (not unimportantly) reinforcing the sense that the East was open to exploitation as a stage for ridiculous adventures, it is extremely unlikely that the work could have suggested any real impression of China; the undoubted significance of such subliminal identities for the East within popular culture will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

resemblance to our own reality), and yet being a true and perfect reconstruction of Chinese culture (consisting of authentic items and 'the living Chinese') becomes especially apparent. In *Britannia*, in fact, the discrepancy is clear within the same sentence, although it is never qualified as such, as the passage above continues: '...and this with such completeness of illusion that it is difficult to believe one is anywhere else. Illusion is in fact no term for it, here are the realities...'. It could be seen as significant that the wand waved is specifically that of Merlin, for the other main referent of fantasy in these accounts is English pre-renaissance history. Merlin would have been immediately evocative of Arthurian legend, an apocryphal arena recently tangentially re-established in popular consciousness by the 'romantic' movement, and connoting both sublime and morally uplifting subjects, later to be exploited much further by the Pre-Raphaelites. The era of English history then becoming most widely romanticised and explored in many literary and fine art genres and in architecture and craft, however, was the Middle Ages. What is now termed "The Gothic Revival' had begun as early as the mid-eighteenth century, and was well underway in the 1830s and '40s, and its status as a referent for escapist spectacle was realised in Owen Jones' and Pugin's interior designs for the Great Exhibition and particularly its Medieval Court in 1851. These few metaphoric images of the medieval period noted in the reviews can be seen to demonstrate again the presence of a common public perception of that era as one characterised as dark and glorious by escapist literature and art. Thus 'Perambulator' cites a celebrated Gothic Revival renovated building, St. George's Chapel, Windsor, and then an authentic

Middle Ages one, Henry VII's chapel in Westminster Abbey, as useful environments in which to imagine the transforming effect of the radiant Chinese Collection, and in the *Illustrated London News*, also, this period had been utilised as a comparative aid to envisaging the show's glittering effects in its description of the overwhelming Screen:

'The whole is surmounted by richly-carved and gilt fretwork, and strongly reminded us of the screens in our own magnificent halls of the time of Elizabeth or James I., but so illuminated with gold and brilliant colours, as to throw our decoration into the shade'.

Alongside these overt expressions of fantasy effects perceived in the exhibition, the most basic means of ascertaining what the reviewers' common perception of both the Collection and China was is to examine the actual descriptive vocabulary they used. Reading the reviews as a whole, the consistencies and repetitions in terminology and single words, particularly adjectives, are highly marked. Of course it must be accepted that the nature of journalism outlined at the beginning of the chapter can account for this to some extent, as the shared structures of production and ideology within the press leads to complementary copy in spite of rivalry, both because writers were of like minds and because in all probability they borrowed and adapted accounts of news and leisure from each other as a matter of course. Moreover, they also copied Langdon in this respect no less than they had done in terms of the facts and ideas they extrapolated from him. This is to say that both the extenuating circumstances of the production of the accounts, and their complacent reliance upon Langdon's text, cannot be

underestimated in consideration of their linguistic homogeneity. The following discussion of the reviewers' vocabulary, however, is offered from the admittedly contrived perspective of the study of the whole sample, from which the repetition of words is constantly striking, and further, in recognition that both those qualifying factors - the lack of originality of the reviews, and the use of Langdon - are themselves characteristic of an at best uninformed, and at worst appropriative agenda for engagement with the East.

A survey of the adjectives and descriptive phrases predominantly used by the reviewers reveals that many were first used in the context of this event by Langdon in his introduction and 'General View', namely: rare, specimens, wonders, vast, exclusive, astonished, ingenuity, variety, beauty, novel, singular, curiosity, imposing, rich, elaborate, and interesting. It can be observed straightaway that these are amongst the most widely re-employed by the reviewers. Several terms are in fact almost always transferred in Langdon's original context, such as 'rich' and elaborate', most often as 'rich and elaborately carved', in description of the Screen, and 'rare', and 'specimens' are frequently in conjunction, as Langdon had placed them. There are some descriptive terms here, however, which are consistently used and which are of interest not least because Langdon chose to use them, and, arising from the premise that their recurrence denotes lack of extensive or alternative vocabulary for China amongst writers and audience, the following brief discussion will suggest some of their functions as both his intended, and the reviewers' reinforced, signifiers of the sort of exhibition and exhibits to be anticipated.

There are three aspects of the treatment of the event in which the most frequently used terms emerge: first, the status of the display itself, second, the enforcement of that status as of high material value, owing in turn to the luxurious nature of the actual objects, and third, the characterisation of China as remote and Different. In the first case, the terms in which the show and *Ten Thousand Things* are predominantly praised (and this is the most persistent aspect of all), are fairly evenly divided between words denoting learning and entertainment. To this end, the collection contains 'specimens', for study, and they and *Ten Thousand Things* are consistently designated as 'instructive'. The latter approval often appears in conjunction with 'amusing' in descriptions of the book, and in all instances the show and text are 'interesting' - the most widely-used blanket term of the sample. This marrying of amusement and instruction in intentions of proprietors and perceptions offered by reviewers of nineteenth-century exhibitions and spectacles was far from unusual, and this assertion of a general appeal was both a common marketing strategy and a reflector of the audience profile from inquirer to idler.

In order to promote the Chinese Collection as special, therefore, unique attraction had to be established, and it can be seen that the exhibition (not forgetting its extortionate price of admission) was characterised as presenting material luxury and an atmosphere of opulence. Thus the saloon is acclaimed as 'magnificent' and 'splendid', and the exhibits themselves 'beautiful', 'decorative', 'costly', and 'gorgeous'. It has already been shown that great emphasis was laid, visually and reportedly, upon the 'rich' and 'elaborate' screenwork. Whilst it is unlikely

that any proprietor would promote a show on the merits of its mundaneness or lack of sensory impact, these insistences upon the expensiveness of the display resonate images of the 'Gorgeous East' above mentioned, and perhaps contradict claims made in the more specific descriptions of the exhibits for the appeal of the everyday 'real-life' on display. This is not to suggest that commonplace objects could not be seen to be 'beautiful' or co-exist with glamorous items in a comprehensive representation, but rather to observe that the general terms in which the exhibits were described collectively inscribe a precious and materially valuable China. Again, luxury and decadence were characteristics often projected onto the East, and were to become more so with the submission of India, the Jewel in the Crown.

The other notice which had traditionally been made of the East was of its Mystery. This was a vital part of the identification of the East as 'Other' to the Occident, more of which will be analysed in the concluding Chapter. In the reviews exhibits are often described as displaying something (an aspect of workmanship, a national feature, a subjective motif) 'characteristically', or 'remarkably', but other terms are used which more strongly enforce the idea that the Chinese differ in their means of production or criteria of taste. In this respect the words 'novel', 'strange', 'wonderful', 'peculiar' and 'singular' are often repeated. As noted in discussion of the pre-reviews, it must be acknowledged that these terms bore different meanings in the nineteenth century than those with which they are associated now, as, for example 'novel' and 'singular' were far more widely used in discourse around objects than current more acutely-defined historical and critical disciplinary practices would allow.

A good illustration of the range of meanings of 'singularity' is provided by *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*'s incongruous description of Chinese footwear: 'their shoes are singular...'. Both words, however, cannot be detached from their connotations of engagement with the unknown, or unfamiliar, and at the very least their repetition denotes a lack of specificity in the reviewers' terminology of foreign objects.

Aside from 'interesting', the word which occurs most regularly across the sample is 'curiosity'. Of all the terms under discussion here, this has perhaps become the most disused and most confined in the present day. It was applied to the Collection in three ways: in the first instance the show itself contained a 'multitude' of 'Curiosities'; then regarding the exhibits, they frequently appear 'curious'; a further adaptation of the concept of 'curio' is embodied in the encouragement of the 'curiosity' of visitors. The latter two senses are perhaps not so far from those of contemporary usage, but the generic definition of objects as 'curiosities' is not now common practice amongst serious critics and analysts. In order to understand what that definition might have suggested to the Collection's potential audience, the development of the collections at the British Museum recited in Chapter 2 serve as a case in which 'curiosities' denoted a specific (though wide in scope) range of artefacts. 'Curiosities' were essentially objects which were not considered to fit into more academically-defined groups, such as Fine Art and Natural History. At the British Museum, all 'natural and artificial' productions of colonised, non-European, or non-Ancient cultures were contained in its 'curiosities' collection until the late nineteenth century, alongside non-precious items of quaint

interest and origin of the nature of things contained in eighteenth-century cabinets. Given the widespread use of 'curious' and 'curiosity', their application here should not be interpreted as demonstrating a conscious defamation or belittling of the exhibits, but the very generality of their root, and their frequent use, must indicate again supposed engagement with ephemeral, or perhaps disrespected objects.

This brief analysis has not addressed the individual contexts in which all these terms have been used, as the essential point here is that a limited range of descriptive vocabulary emerges when the reviews are considered as a whole. It is difficult to explain convincingly shades of meaning and signification of individual terms as has been attempted here, but in the following Chapter further examination of the importance of representations of the Orient - that is whether they are visual, textual, or three-dimensional - will be offered.

'China was made out of Chelsea': Mr. Punch visits the Chinese Collection.

There was one press publication which differed from the rest in function and structure, and which is dealt with here in isolation in recognition that its intentions in reviewing the Collection were necessarily separate from the straightforward attempts to describe and promote the show with which all the others were preoccupied. Moreover, it is dealt with following discussion of the language of the reviews, because its form, in contrast to the subconscious semantic discourse created by the rest, was overtly

determined by linguistic concerns, predominantly jokes. *Punch* published an account of the exhibition in two parts in October, 1842, and then produced a satellite pamphlet, *Punch's Guide to the Chinese Collection*, midway through the run of the event, in 1844.⁵⁴ Whilst the potential audience for the show would have been aware of the comparative levity of the *Punch* accounts in contrast to the basically informative role of the 'serious' reviews, the two texts will be examined here in the belief that ostensibly frivolous material of this nature cannot be deemed as of less significance in the formulation of widespread attitudes towards foreign cultures, and in fact recent attention to popular culture suggests that if anything, it is more instrumental in those formulations than erudite philosophy and criticism.⁵⁵ With this in mind, the content and devices of the *Punch* texts will be considered with a strong awareness of the extent to which they ideologically concurred or disagreed with the bulk of the reviews.

The formal structure of *Punch* copy was unique in that it was founded in the subversion, rather than clarification, of written language as a communicative medium. In the case of the Collection reviews this is manifest in the alacrity with which puns are made wherever possible, regardless of their gravity of subject or status as humour. Thus the journal's review contains plays of varying quality, from the reasonably clever (by virtue of a vague

⁵⁴ *Punch's Guide* is reproduced in Appendix II.

⁵⁵ In an article dealing with the construction of oppositional cultures, Whannel convincingly posits that political standpoints are formulated through observation of populist imagery of the kind *Punch* adapted: 'When politicians of all parties attempt to mobilise concepts of nation they are not referencing abstract, legal, historical or philosophical concepts. They are tapping a rich vein of popular imagery...' Whannel, G. 'It's A Knockout: Constructing Communities', *Block* 6, (1982), 45.

foundation in a truth): 'The first is decidedly a pacific sect, for they worship their "Fo," and try to make a friend of him', and 'Some authorities say the name of the first Emperor was Fuh-he, but not a Few-he left behind him deny this', to the plainly gratuitous: 'We shall not attempt a description of the arts in use by so artful a people as the Chinese'. The journal was illustrated with jokes on Chinese stereotypes such as the fat grinning idler who forms the initial letter of the review [Fig.26], and the puns on the celestial status of the Emperor and the familiar 'nodding' models of Chinese with which tea-dealers dressed their windows [Figs.27&28].

Of the content, the most striking aspect of both the *Punch* accounts is that they are intensely aware and exploitative of the context of the Opium Conflict and tea issue. This is especially the case with the initial *Punch* review, which begins 'It is well known to every Englishman who loves tea and his country, that the East India Company have latterly got into hot water with the Chinese...', and consistently plays on the terminology of tea throughout, sometimes to good effect, as the following can be read in at least three pertinent ways: 'we take, for the present, our (tea) leaves of the Chinese in their own country'.⁵⁶ Weapons and armoury are also given a much higher profile in this account, and are used as a basis from which to draw further open and implied

⁵⁶ The sentence could be broken down in the following ways and have relevance to the political awareness of the author:

'we, take, for the present, our leaves of the Chinese in their own country';

'we take for the present [now] our tea of the Chinese in their own country';

'we take for the present [gratis] our tea of the Chinese in their own country'.

ridicule of the Chinese, and to emphasize English heroism through relation of a (presumably fictitious) incident of Wellington visiting the Collection and studying their armaments:

'the Duke of Wellington, who has been in several battles - some of them rather severe ones (considering his opponents were not Chinese), and who is generally considered to be a *bravish* man...when he first found himself alone before the glass case which contains them, although a moment's reflection would have told him that they could not be loaded, could by no means face it without a shudder, or rather shrug of the shoulders; and "*they do say* " that he actually turned his head away and smiled'.

The other topics emphasized in this review stem from traditional concerns with Chinese culture: porcelain, religion, punishments, and women. Discussion of porcelain provided an ideal opportunity for linguistic play on the nature of 'C/china', as a convoluted anecdote beginning with an antiquarian living in Cheyne Walk leads to the conclusion that 'a *long, long* time ago *China was made out of Chelsea*'. Again the chance to pun is taken out of context in the account of religion, in which it is suggested: 'The doctrines of Confucius are embodied in nine volumes, which we recommend to the attentive perusal of Messrs. Spode and Copeland, for they contain "The whole duty of a Chinaman"'. In some instances puns are made through comparative technique, and, as in the serious reviews, the aim of this can be to caricature European culture: 'The astonishing rapidity with which the heads of offenders are sometimes taken off is enough to excite the jealousy of Monsieur Daguerre'. The most blatantly critical comments are made of Chinese physiognomy, again for the sake of easy humour: 'The general face of China is flat, especially the nose', 'Corpulence is considered a beauty in a man - so much so that people seem to

think but little of slight acquaintance'. Of women, humour extends to a weak humiliation of both Chinese and Black cultures, in a laboured story relating to footbinding:

'These tiny lumps of deformity are dignified with the appellation of "Golden Lilies," a name which is supposed to have had its origin in the exclamation of a negro, who, on first seeing a Chinese lady's foot in a yellow silk shoe, cried out, "O me fader - dere's a lilly golden ting!" And yet how the negro could say this when the binding which checks the foot won't *let* the knee grow, we cannot guess'.

In a few instances, however, the *Punch* reviews are refreshing in that the critical notions implied by the serious narratives, for example regarding weapons and women, are stated blatantly and concisely:

'As to their arms - the arms of the Chinese are almost as curious as the feet of their wives - and these may be called, when it is remembered that we are at war with them - the most attractive portion of the exhibition'.

That this interest was genuine and biased is suggested by the punctuation of the entire review with jokes on arms, and the concluding sentence - ultimately foregrounding the popular political context of the exhibition - that

'Half -a-crown is the only risk; and there is, in truth, no greater risk to this half-crown than there would be to the whole crown of him who would stand for half-an-hour before a Chinese battery, when such a battery was in what they would call, full earnest - though, in what our soldiers would call, full play'.

Punch's Guide to the Chinese Collection differs formally from all the other texts on the event in that its strictly parodic nature, from which it is constructed as a case-by-case guide,

determines that cases of artefacts receive the correct proportionate attention in relation to the figurative tableaux. Moreover, the single objects it chooses to highlight are dictated by linguistic preoccupations, so whilst some of these coincide with those selected by the serious accounts, others attract idiosyncratic interest and receive new resonances. In this way, of the popular attractions, the celebrated screen attracts a converse view: 'From the size of this article, it would seem that the Chinese require a good deal of screening', and the perceptions of the serious reviewers of the Temple and shoemaker are concisely summarised: 'The Idols might be called Idles', '28 is a shoemaker at work; and the most remarkable feature about him is the eye, which presents a striking spectacle', but in addition, the emphasis on physical description evident in the other accounts is sometimes casually disregarded: 'We now come to CASE NUMBER 1 which contains the figures of three Mandarins, a couple of arm chairs, and some miscellaneous articles', or subjects which had generated no interest at all are opportunistically stressed for their humorous imagery:

'Individuals of high rank begin to bow at stated distances when they visit, and the higher the rank, the greater the distance at which the bowing commences. If the Queen of England should visit the Emperor of China, the preliminary bowing would be so tremendous, that it is doubtful if the two potentates would ever, during their whole life-time, get together'.

Again many items in this lengthy commentary are isolated for the sake of punning, and again to varying effect, ranging from incisive to insipid:

'Among the most interesting articles..is a Vase with a beautiful representation of the great dragon attempting to swallow the moon. The great dragon must have a great jackass to contemplate an act bordering so closely on lunacy',

'CASE NUMBER 17 is a Silk-mercantile establishment, with a couple of customers, one of whom is examining a piece of silk, and casting a sly glance around the shop, as if he contemplated giving a lift to the concern, by a little bit of shop-lifting'.

Like the serious reviews and the earlier *Punch* account, *Punch's Guide* used comparative devices for different effects throughout the text. In some instances this was for clarification, as an actor is described as 'a Chinese Macready', and in some for placing Chinese procedures favourably alongside English equivalents:

'A Chinese barber never talks while shaving a customer; and it is not necessary, therefore, to keep replying, as one is forced to do in England, at the risk of having a mouthful of lather when least expecting it',

'358 and 359 are specimens of pipes for tobacco and opium, the smoking of which produces a frightful prostration of the intellect, and may be compared to the pernicious custom in this country, of reading the Parliamentary debates, - a habit that has diminished greatly with the advance of education',

and in others, characteristically, to ridicule the Chinese: 'the Chinese tradesmen take all their meals in their shops, - just as if Messrs. Swan and Edgar were to be found at dinner on the counter of their large concern in the Quadrant'. The most pertinent points of comparison, however, concern the serious preoccupation with Chinese physiognomy, lack of civilisation, and ineptitude in battle. Criticism of physique is couched in plainer terms than is ever found in the main reviews:

'while in England it is a mark of respect to uncover the head, in China it is the reverse: and when we reflect what a very ugly

object a Chinese head is, the custom of putting it out of sight appears a very proper one',

'21 and 2 are figures of a Mother and Boy of the middle class; while 23 represents a Daughter of the same family. They do not call for any remark; though, from their excessive ugliness, we should say they were, familiarly speaking, very plain sort of people',

'the ornamental stand (No.465)...contains a toothpick, an ear-pick, and a tongue-scraper. These articles throw a strong light on Chinese habits. We should not have thought, however, from the ugliness of a Chinese ear, that it was customary to pick them, for picking implies choosing, and the ears of a Chinaman are not such that any one would make a choice of'.

The idea that the Chinese were uncivilised is never deliberately or philosophically discussed as it had been in the major reviews, but some of the minor caricatures of Chinese beliefs and habits indicate that this was a subtext within the frame of reference of the writer, as the very antiquity of China is doubted:

'The annals of China would furnish a magnificent series of illustrated mugs and milk-jugs; particularly that part of the Chinese history which relates to the period before the creation of the world, an era that leaves ample scope to vigorous fancy',

and elsewhere different cultural practices are stubbornly misunderstood:

'here we have a few specimens of Chinese books, the titles of which are at the end; so that it is presumed one wants to know what they are about after one has finished reading them',

'No.472 is a pair of Chop-sticks, which are the Chinese substitutes for knives and forks, being a sort of half-way between the primitive custom of eating with the fingers, and the more refined habit of resorting to the aid of cutlery'.

Although *Punch's Guide* is less acidic and smug regarding the now-fading context of the Opium War, references to military activity (or lack of it), strongly pervade the text again. Every

opportunity is taken for emphasising the British victory, as weapons are lingered upon:

'CASE 18. A. contains a model in ivory of a Chinese War Junk, which is certainly more effective under a glass case, than in the heat of action',

'At the back of the case is a Cannon taken by the British at Chusan; but the Chinese never could have missed it, for when they had it, they never did any good with it',

'Figure 9 is an Archer in the Imperial Army. He has at his side a number of arrows, which are not intended to do any harm, but are discharged only for amusement; an object which was fully accomplished in the late war, when the English had a hearty laugh at their war-like efforts. Some of the archers ride on horseback - probably to facilitate the grand military manoeuvre of running away, which is the most perfect feat of the Chinese soldiery'.

Furthermore, references to cowardice are again introduced in discussion of completely unrelated exhibits, reinforcing underlying complacency, as in accounts of cases of birds and miscellanies:

'Whether birds or not, they are not so apt to fly as the Chinese soldiers themselves, who have no feathers at all, but fully make up for the deficiency by their two legs, of which they make the best use possible',

'482 is a Chinese seal, which is placed on official documents. When the government entered into a treaty with England, the seal was not put on until we had supplied the whacks, without which, we found it difficult to make any impression on the Chinese authorities'.

In summary of *Punch's Guide*, it is clear that its preoccupations and techniques were still informed by the opportunism which led the initial review to milk the Opium issue for comic purpose, but it also appears that the pamphlet was appreciative of the exhibition, as it concludes

'If we have here and there spoken with ridicule of the objects that the Collection contains, it is not that we mean to depreciate its value, which consists chiefly in the remarkable care that has been taken to get together even the most trifling articles peculiar to China, and thus present the English public with the best possible insight into the habits, arts, and manufactures of the Chinese people'.

This final statement of the reviews, however, reveals that at this date, after the show had been open for two years, it was still being promoted for its presentation and proprietorial achievement. The reiteration of old and hackneyed stereotypes of Chinese culture had remained resident in at least one area of middle-class culture, and would still sell. There is no evidence within the press that traditional perceptions were seen to be radically challenged by the display.

The construction of this Chapter has been determined by the formal and ideological nature of the reviews themselves. In this way the whole text of the accounts has been fragmented and reassembled from a historical and analytical viewpoint, and this approach might have precluded vision of the real structure of the individual commentaries as the nineteenth-century audience would have perceived them. This method of examination, however, was chosen in preference to consideration of the reviews singly and/or chronologically, which would have made for a repetitive and laborious exercise in which the central issues would not have been so pronounced. It is hoped that enough data from the accounts themselves has been

re-presented here to permit a sense of their typical formats and preoccupations, notwithstanding the status of this analysis as itself ungrounded in direct experience of the Collection.

The final Chapter will return to several of the ideas which have been raised from the reviews regarding the characterisation of China in general in Western culture in the nineteenth century, and in the increased awareness of the structures and strategies of those characterisations recognised and examined in recent texts around 'Orientalism'. It is hoped that the relevance of the issues pinpointed here will become even more heightened as their position in the spectrum of approach towards the Chinese Collection and China itself in that period and in the present becomes clearer.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EXHIBITION OF THE CHINESE COLLECTION.

The primary aim of the preceding chapters has been to collate information available for understanding the nature of the Chinese Collection as a historic event. In accordance with the three broad aspects of the show discussed above, this chapter will consist of three sections, dealing with the significances of the accounts of structure, context and response collectively. The first chapter established that the Collection was an Exhibition, and from this issues of the role and nature of previous and subsequent exhibitions - especially of 'ethnological' subjects - will be analysed. In chapter 2 it was demonstrated that the display was unique at that date in its depiction of China through artefacts, and its potentially superior effectiveness as impressive of 'Chineseness' was acknowledged; here the connotations of the special use and power of objects as culturally representative and 'real' will be explored. The account of the reviews in the third chapter highlighted many aspects of the event as an exhibition and as constructed around objects, but the essential point it attempted to foreground was the extent to which the nature of the artefacts as specifically Chinese determined particular stances for the reviewers; among these was the evasion of the Opium War, and from this the context of exhibiting enemy, or more generally, 'alien' cultures will be examined. Ultimately, the fact that that culture was Oriental and Chinese will be subject to study informed by current thinking around 'Orientalism' as an inherently

offensive process and the aptness (or otherwise) of that method of thinking about representations of China.

A Nation in a Nutshell: the place of the Chinese Collection in the history of nineteenth-century exhibitions of foreign cultures.

Exhibitions in general have been under-considered in the history of the nineteenth century. While actual objects might still remain, only from rare, mostly International events, can any approximate idea be gained of the physical experience of visiting an exhibition. The thousands of shows produced by private entrepreneurs are consequently neglected, with the notable exception of Altick's work and monographic studies of flamboyant protagonists such as Bullock and Barnum.

Most immediately striking is that exhibitions were widely-attended and popular throughout the century, being for Altick 'as much of an institution as the theatre'.¹ His book is prefaced by an extract from an observer writing in 1840, who provides an incentive to examine exhibitions for cultural understanding of the period:

'The Public Exhibitions of a Nation, principally form and establish that *peculiar character*, which the rest of Mankind agree in annexing to their general ideas concerning them. - Look around you, in this extraordinary Country, and contemplate the various Shows and Diversions of the People, and then say,

¹ Altick, 221.

whether the temper or mind at various periods of our History, may nor be collected from them?'²

For the reasons given above, our understanding of the Victorian temper or mind from these events is not easy, but exhibitions can be recognised as prime examples of contentious sites of meaning, in which important social, moral and class issues were being played out. The recorded and implicit reactions of the middle classes to the extensive range of character and content of public displays can be seen to represent a spectrum of moral concerns, from perceptions of debauchery and corruption (surrounding events such as market Fairs), to appreciation of respectability and national pride (generated, for example by the British Museum). Here the ways in which the Chinese Collection related to the context of exhibiting in London will be traced, and the different roles it acquired in that perceptual spectrum of moral value will be acknowledged as the event will be seen to change significantly from the time of its initial display in 1842 through to its last stand in 1851. In addition to its place in the controversial arena of exhibiting and the unique context of its display alongside the Crystal Palace, the Collection is also important in having as its content a foreign, or 'ethnological' subject, and the status of shows which represented unknown lands in the 1820s, '30s, '40s and '50s will be considered.

The discussion of the development of the middle-class press in the previous Chapter demonstrated that that phenomenon was a crucial part of a drive towards 'rational recreation', and the

² 'G.S., Peckham', from British Library Scrapbook *Exhibitions of Mechanical and Other Works of Ingenuity* (1840), quoted in Altick as preface, iii.

education of the lower orders. Public exhibitions must be located in this same context, for whilst again, they are insufficiently acknowledged, they were, in theory, vehicles for the exposure and transmission of ethical ideologies and doctrines of Taste. In some cases, particularly in shows of Fine Art, they were recognised as such.³ In one respect they posed a greater threat to the preservation of knowledge than the diffusion of ideas through the press, for in terms of intellectual qualification, they were accessible on some level to people of all literate capabilities. It must be recognised, however, that both the creation of that specific genre of literature, and the establishment of exhibitions as popular leisure sites in this period, cannot be attributed to a straightforward desire on the part of the middle classes to educate, or nurture an improving morality amongst the 'lower orders'. The most practical aspect of exhibitions which points to this conclusion is that the labouring classes were often prohibited from popular exhibitions by cost, opening hours, and regulations of dress. This economic and socially coded power to determine audience possessed by the middle classes indicates that the activity of exhibition-going did not transcend social boundaries. As Golby and Purdue show, the complex relationship between concerns to tame the working classes and to maintain the highbrow character of middle-class recreational spheres existed in many areas of culture:

'just as large sections of common land had been made private for the benefit of the middle and upper classes, so too nearly all

³ An account and examples of the debate concerning the desirability of allowing working-class access to Fine Art exhibitions is given in Denvir, B. *The Early Nineteenth Century: Art, Design and Society 1789-1852* (1984), 68-73.

the places of cultural improvement from which the working classes could benefit - art galleries, botanical gardens, libraries and museums - were denied to them, either because they could not afford the subscriptions or entrance fees or because they were, if not positively excluded, at least not welcomed'.⁴

The ambiguities resident in nineteenth-century exhibitions were not confined to questions of exactly who should see them. It is clear that there were contradictions within the acceptable parameters of 'respectable' leisure for the middle classes themselves, and therefore, as Cunningham points out, 'Frequently they differed as to what should be offered and how'.⁵ A good example of the inconsistency of middle-class tastes and principles within the context of exhibitions is the constant advertisement of Madame Tussaud's as a site of lofty instruction, whilst in fact by

⁴ Golby, J.M. and Purdue, A.W. *Popular Culture in England 1750-1900* (1984), chapter 4, 'Improving and amusing recreations, 1820-60', 91.

⁵ Cunningham, H. *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution c.1780-c.1880* (1980), 91.

far the most popular part of the display was the lurid and graphic Chamber of Horrors.⁶

The widespread method by which the dilemma of whether to educate or amuse was overcome was that exhibitors, with varying degrees of sophistication, glossed their displays with claims of intellectual interest, allowing their audiences the delusion that they were in fact being instructed as well as entertained, and in some cases titillated. Thus, in order to establish respectability and simultaneously draw crowds, many exhibitors simply paid lip-service to the degree of instruction required, so that, as Altick points out "'scientific" interest was attributed even to exhibitions of palpably contrived mermaids'.⁷ The fact that audiences accepted sensationalist shows as instructive has implications for the sorts of truths and 'facts' which would be communicated and accepted through various

⁶ An advertisement for Madame Tussaud's printed in a handbook for London in 1851 announced the display as

'MADAME TUSSAUD & SONS' Historical Gallery of nearly Two Hundred national characters, established fifty years', yet the most part of the advertisement celebrates

MARIA MANNING, GEORGE MANNING,

and

BLOOMFIELD RUSH,

Taken from Life at the Trials; a Cast in Plaster of

MR.O'CONNOR,

WITH PLAN OF THE KITCHEN WHERE HE WAS MURDERED.

MODELS OF STANFIELD HALL,

The seat of the late T.JERMY, Esq., and POTASH FARM,

the Residence of the Assassin, are now added to the

Chamber of Horrors.'

Richardson, Rev. J. *The Exhibition London Guide, and Visitors' Pocket Companion, describing, on a new plan, the Great Metropolis and its environs* (1851).

⁷ Altick, 4.

displays, and this will emerge as particularly pertinent for ethnological subjects.

A major advantage which the exhibitors had in addition to this fervent wish of visitors to believe in the serious values of their shows, was the popularity many gained amongst prominent and respected members of society. It was demonstrated in the last chapter that William Jerdan, long-time editor of the widely-read *Literary Gazette*, visited almost anything which appeared in the guise of 'exhibit', but Altick shows that far more influential and symbolically powerful people also endorsed a wide range of popular displays, as Queen Victoria 'liked to keep au courant with...shows',⁸ and the commitment of the monarchy to the value of exhibitions was to be indelibly sealed by Prince Albert's involvement in the Great Exhibition; second, or even equal to the Royal Family in a scale of public awe was Wellington, who also visited, and therefore to some degree sanctioned, many exhibitions, being, indeed, 'nowhere oftener seen than at exhibitions'.

Shows were widely-attended, precipitated by the controversial yet amorphous 'rational recreation' movement, and endorsed by royal and respectable figureheads, all of which identifies them as carriers of significant historical meanings. In spite of this the only critical attention they have received to date has been either incidental - as part of general surveys of the period - or centering on the great International events, with few

⁸ Altick, 222-3. He further points out, as has been observed in chapters 1 and 3, that 'when the sheer size of the display, such as the Chinese Exhibition..made this impracticable, the couple came to a private view on the premises'.

rare exceptions.⁹ Critiques of the Internationals, however, notably those of both Greenhalgh and Benedict, have articulated aspects of those displays which reveal their political and potentially powerful identities, and which are useful in terms of thinking about the effectiveness of exhibitions in general and the mediated nature of ethnological representations in particular.¹⁰

Most simply, it is pointed out that the series of events both these works describe were generated by fierce industrial and cultural International competition, and cannot be seen as innocent or apolitical occurrences. They were, rather, aggressive and celebratory displays serving to glorify the respective host countries, predominantly Britain, France, and the United States. Benedict asserts that a world's fair is a site in which 'all sorts of power relations...are being expressed', and that such events are inevitably competitive, as 'the contestants are jockeying for advantage in the worlds of both commerce and politics'.¹¹ He further explains that the factor which fixed these shows as powerful was their International identity; the consolidation of ideas of global superiority commanded by capitalist and colonising nations could be achieved only through direct comparison, both with parallel 'progressive' countries and less threatening 'primitive' ones. Greenhalgh's more thorough analysis emphasizes that the creation of 'entire communities' was crucial from as early

⁹ Schneider, W.H. *An Empire for the Masses: The French Popular Image of Africa 1870-1900* (1985).

¹⁰ Benedict, B. *The Anthropology of World's Fairs: San Francisco's Panama Pacific International Exposition of 1915* (1983); Greenhalgh, P. *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939* (1988).

¹¹ Benedict, 6.

as the original 'Great Exhibition', as it facilitated the impression of industrial and commercial ascendancy for Britain:

'Whilst in London English industry was still considered to lead the world, it was also recognised that competition was growing and that the only way to defeat it was to outsell it. To invite all nations of the world to take part in 'friendly competition' of an international exhibition was to create a potential for market expansion abroad'.¹²

The characterisation which emerges of the Great Exhibition is valuable for consideration of the Chinese Collection for two reasons: during the last phase of the Collection's display the proximate Crystal Palace was revolutionising public and State awareness of the national role of exhibiting, and also, the Great Exhibition was the first spectacle to presume to lay bare 'all Nations' (including China), in a comparative format singly and definitively, being *'The Works and Industry'* thereof [emphasis added].

Of the many works which deal with the Great Exhibition, few attend the conceptual origins of it outside the overt interests and aims of its main protagonists, Henry Cole, Prince Albert, and Paxton.¹³ Where consideration is given of previous exhibitions, the displays characterised as embryonic are the domestic shows of art and manufacture pioneered by the Mechanics' Institutes from the 1830s. While these were certainly the foremost references in the minds of the 1851 Commissioners, again this approach

¹² Greenhalgh, 10.

¹³ There are numerous books which chart these individual roles unquestioningly, the most prominent of which are: Hobhouse, C. *1851 and the Crystal Palace* (1937); Gibbs-Smith, C. *The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Commemorative Album* (1951); Howarth, C. *The Year is 1851* (1951); French, Y. *The Great Exhibition* (1951); Pevsner, N. *High Victorian Design* (1951).

precludes notice of the importance of the foreign presence for the instilling of the real message of the Great Exhibition.¹⁴ A crucial fact in the formative construction of 1851 which is almost always overlooked is that Henry Cole was motivated as much by his visit to the Exposition of Industry in Paris in 1849 as by his activities as 'Felix Summerly', Design Reformer. He recognised the need to respond equally to the immediate commercial challenge of the French. Further than this the urge to make the British event international can be located in his and Prince Albert's reaction to the decision of the French to keep their show domestic (and possibly, paradoxically, from the display of the colony Algeria at the Exposition) as Cole recorded Prince Albert's assertion that 'It must embrace foreign productions...International certainly'.¹⁵ Converse to the historical acceptance of Prince Albert's aim to 'embrace' other cultures, Greenhalgh perceives that the basic intention behind the event was an extrovert one, and that Cole's real conception 'was to present empire as a treasure-house, a vast reservoir of tappable wealth'.¹⁶ This is manifest in that Britain, now having become a host country, was in a position to mediate the representation of foreign nations within the exhibition, and in fact did so. This is important not only because the competitive nature of the event has only recently been recognised, but moreover the organisers actively claimed that the invited

¹⁴ An example of this attention to domestic exhibitions of manufactures is Kusamitsu's 'Great Exhibitions before 1851', in which he rightly notes the affinity of the small events with the Internationals in that they too were fired by 'a general notion of the importance of educating "the working classes" (partly with a view to "social control")'; Kusamitsu, T. 'Great Exhibitions before 1851', in *History Workshop Journal* (1980), 72.

¹⁵ Gibbs-Smith, 8. Quoted in Greenhalgh, 11-12.

¹⁶ Greenhalgh, 53.

countries were responsible for their individual shows. Closer inspection of the mechanics of the display reveals that this was not in fact the case. This suggestion that foreign cultures were mediated will be shown to highlight the inevitably vicarious qualities of experiences provided by all ethnological displays, not only 'comprehensive' international events. In the case of the Chinese Collection, special need for this recognition is occasioned by the promoted realism of the representation and the undoubted lack of experience of the subject amongst its audience.

It is not suggested here that the processes of manipulation of other cultures in 1851 were systematically calculated, but rather an overview suggests that in order for the exhibition to make sense in England, they differed for specific nations or groups of nations, dependent upon their status in relation to Britain. Durrans, in a paper addressing current ethnological displays, has emphasized the necessary presence of an underlying standard, or 'motivation' through which the parallel exhibition of different cultures makes sense, thus:

'While detailed, localized studies are essential if there is to be anything to compare in the first place, these are usually carried out most productively when they are geared to some larger theoretical motive that gives point to comparison'.¹⁷

In the formulation of the exhibition, countries were perceived and subsequently projected according to the extent to which they shared commercial and cultural interests with Britain, namely the doctrines of capitalism and technological enablement. This

¹⁷ Durrans, B. 'The future of the other: changing cultures on display in ethnographical museums', in Lumley, R. (ed.) *The Museum Time Machine: Putting cultures on display* (1988), 156.

characterisation for the event was effectively fixed in a speech made by Prince Albert at the Mansion House in March, 1850:

'The distances which separated the different nations and parts of the globe are rapidly vanishing before the achievements of modern invention, and we can traverse them with incredible ease; the languages of all nations are known, and their acquirement placed within the reach of everybody; thought is communicated with the rapidity, and even by the power, of lightning...The products of all quarters of the globe are placed at our disposal, and we have only to choose which is the best...'18

The last clause of this extract is a key to the beliefs of the Commissioners that the enabling power of technological prowess was to permit choice, and thereby lead to the ultimate refinement of man's productions. The exhibition was to be a demonstration of that choice, but crucially, the decisions as to what would be shown - products of industry - were made by one select group of eminent Britons, and thus, the objects did not simply represent the works of 'All Nations', but fundamentally affirmed the right of politically and economically dominant nations to define by what routes and criteria other countries and cultures could attain success and the perfection of humanity. Cole claimed in the *Official Catalogue* that the original intention was to show objects according to their generic categories, broadly divided as Raw Materials, Machinery, Manufactures, and Fine Arts, and in fact 'not merely on the basis of the four sections, but each similar article should be placed in juxtaposition without reference to nationality, or local origin',¹⁹ but this arrangement was rejected on the

¹⁸ Murray, J. *Speeches of the Prince Consort* (1862), 111.

¹⁹ Cole, H. Preface to the *Official Catalogue of the Great Exhibition of the Works and Industry of All Nations* (1851), Vol.I., 23.

grounds that insufficient information was available regarding the space need for foreign exhibitors, as

'The great distance of other countries rendered the transmission of the information impossible, and practically it was not known what articles many important countries would send, until they actually arrived'.²⁰

As a solution, foreign countries were allocated space in superficial feet, and 'No choice remained but to adopt a geographical arrangement'.²¹ Thus the appearance of the exhibition paradoxically claimed the unity of the nations through 'modern invention' and communication celebrated in Prince Albert's message, whilst in fact establishing distance and difference through the geographical display, necessitated by the difficulties of the 'transmission of information'.

The adoption of a 'geographic' format together with the supposed presence of the entire globe means that the show must inevitably be seen as having epitomic resonances. The consolidation of an imperial right to choose is located in the construction and mediation of the display as an encapsulation of the world. For whilst the list of countries exhibiting was impressive and almost genuinely globally representative, the proportional space and layout of the exhibits betray the politically-defined microcosmic pretensions of the display. Cole's

²⁰ Cole, 24.

²¹ Of the allocated space, Britain and its colonies were given just over half; for the foreign nations allocations were given according to their industrial status: France had the largest space, followed by the United States and Germany, with the smallest spaces given to South American states. Of the colonies, India had by far the largest allocation, with 30,000 feet, the next largest being New South Wales with 2,000.

apology for the compromising arrangement does not account for the gaping divide between the British Empire and the rest of the world, or for the anomalous placing of Switzerland next to China and Tunis, Sweden next to the United States, or the separation of India from Ceylon by Malta. It would be naive to suggest that geographical accuracy could have been achieved in such a space, but it remains that the privileging of India decyphers the message of the entire arrangement, and that country cannot but be seen as the showpiece of the whole exhibition.

It has been shown that International shows embodied a dichotomy between the aim to present an entire community and the actual characterisation of the participants as 'contestants'. The task of the Royal Commissioners in creating an exhibition which simultaneously promoted trade rivalry and celebrated international unity was not a straightforward one. It depended upon the striking of a balance between the innocent appearance of the joint endeavour to celebrate universal achievements, and the undoubted desire of Britain to insist upon her own superiority.²²

²² Whannel provides a useful analogy for the precarious nature of interpolation in 'friendly competition', as in his article dealing with the *It's A Knockout* and *Jeux Sans Frontiers* television competitions of the late 1970s, he points out that whilst within Britain a cosy ambience of community could be maintained, in the European contest the specific destination of the television transmission and commentary determined an erosion of objectivity:

'The visual discourse, while originating from the host country, is constructed within the conventions of neutrality. But the verbal discourse is not, and cannot be, from this impartial position. It stems from the nation rather than from Europe as a whole. The verbal level is in this sense partisan - committed to a part rather than to the whole', Whannel, G. 'It's A Knockout: Constructing Communities', in *Block* (1982), 38.

Although there is no reason to doubt that Cole had no control over what foreign nations actually sent, the issues of mediation did not lie in simply envisaging the exhibits, but the mechanics of presentation and narrative once they had arrived determined their roles in the host/guest interchange. Whilst the decisions around what to exhibit were bestowed on foreign governments, in practice the degree of participation within those countries varied considerably. Egypt attracted four hundred exhibitors, each of whom showed one or two objects each, whilst from Tunis there was only one exhibitor, the Bey of Tunis. No genuine Chinese exhibitor sent, only the apocryphal 'Great Porcelain Works at Nankin', but Chinese objects were sent by British merchants and residents at Canton, and London dealers, with the dealers Hewett & Co. showing the majority of the display. Most important for the success of the imperial display, was that for the colonies, the government was of course Britain, and the selection of their exhibits was conducted by all-British committees. The crucial fact about all these modes of selection is that every representation was promoted as comprehensive, and the degree of intercession or participation was not stated. In all instances Britain could command a measure of intervention in the perception of foreign exhibits. Even for fully independent and 'equal' countries, information about their objects was relayed to the audience through printed English guides, written by knowledgeable Britons.

Discussion of the processes of mediation in the Great Exhibition has been extensive here partly because there is sufficient data from which to draw out the experiences of individual nations, and also the specific context of host/guest

interface facilitates a clear view of the relationship between the exhibiting and exhibited cultures. This situation was by no means as apparent with private shows, for so much less evidence survives of the decisions made concerning what was exhibited and how. The fundamental conclusions to be drawn from the case of the Great Exhibition, however, are that displays of foreign cultures were formed with a view to locating them in a hierarchy of Progress relative to Britain, and that in order that such representations should attain legitimacy and credibility in an atmosphere of demands for serious instruction, they had to be objective, authentic, and convincing. Without the advantage of authority enjoyed by the Great Exhibition, and yet operating in the same moral climate, private entrepreneurs had to be especially mindful of a need for 'accuracy' or 'real life' exhibits. The following examination of the nature of specifically ethnological exhibitions will reveal the extent to which the demand for scientific realism was felt by independent exhibitors during the history of the Chinese Collection, and how far the event changed physically and conceptually according to its adherence to that demand.

It was noted earlier that a potential provenance for the Great Exhibition in representations of foreign countries is not acknowledged in its established chronologies, but that this is not unreasonable given the uniquely public nature of that event and its overt concerns with domestic trade and manufacture. By 1851, however, ethnological displays, particularly of colonised cultures, were rife and popular in London. Altick states that by the early nineteenth century, the occasional exhibiting of human 'specimens' from abroad in isolated and disorganised

circumstances was being overtaken by thoughtful and comprehensive shows of single cultures.²³ Among these were the shows noted in Chapter 2 which took place at Bullock's Egyptian Hall, and Cumming's South African Exhibition which was to occupy the Chinese Gallery after the Collection's departure.

It is essential to emphasize from the outset that the discipline of 'ethnology' from which displays of foreign cultures have gained a loosely coherent generic identity, was by no means established in the early 1840s. Further than Altick's suggestion of an 'expanding geographical interest', however, the period preceding Darwin's seminal publication of the *Origin Of Species* in 1859 was an important formative time for disciplines such as ethnology and anthropology, and to an extent the development of foreign exhibitions reflected the broad concerns of these subjects. Having said this, it should be noted that the approach here towards ethnology and related disciplines will be to maintain caution regarding the extent to which they actually had any cogency at this time. This is to say that the common historical perspective through which attention to ideas of race in the nineteenth century tends to assume a deterministic trail to Darwinism will be avoided. Moreover, the great differences in the nature of ethnological exhibitions will be seen to reinforce an idea that both areas were pluralistic or externally weighted (inscribed by the concerns of individual theorists and exhibitors).²⁴

²³ Altick, 288.

²⁴ The ideas and activities will be referred to in their most general aspects here, with the aim of providing a context for the exhibitions; the more precise connotations ethnological interest had for the act of representing China will be dealt with in the final section.

In her broad study of 'Race and the Victorians', Bolt demonstrates that the major difficulty in attempting to understand Victorian attitudes to other cultures is that although 'race' is clearly an important concept for any consideration of a period of intensive and aggressive colonisation, and that our perception of that concept in the last century is that it is implicitly unpleasant, the active data shows that above all, ideas of 'race' and 'the races' were frequently imprecise, a fact caused by the often immense distances from which theories were formed:

'race often became merely a vague but potent force; an explanation of differences and antagonisms between human groups, and a concept whose importance was understandably debated by Britons who had little acquaintance with "inferior" races at home but controlled, with minimal numbers, a greatly extended empire overseas'.²⁵

She does allow however, that a certain hardening of racial attitudes did develop as the century progressed, and that the relationship between racism and imperialism also became clearer then:

'As the growth of the empire and of opposition among the colonised suggested that imperial responsibilities would last longer and weigh heavier than was once supposed, the ideology of Anglo-Saxon supremacy more than ever served as a guide and comfort to the colonisers and as a rationale for coercion of their troublesome subjects. Race is therefore less the moving force behind British imperialism, or the key to understanding its forms, than its variable though invaluable adjunct'.²⁶

²⁵ Bolt, C. 'Race and the Victorians', in Eldridge, C.C. (ed.) *British Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (1984), 126.

²⁶ Bolt, 146.

The significance for this for the earlier Victorian period is that whilst empire was an important figure in national identity, racist ideas were then in some respects coincidental, and although interest in foreigners was permitted by expansion, it did not, at that date, consciously advocate it: 'there is no demonstrable *causal* relationship between racism, expansionism and colonial policy, especially in the "pragmatic" mid-Victorian period'.²⁷ This formulation (or lack of it) is borne out by Lorimer's more specific chapter on 'Scientific Racism and Racial Attitudes', in which he examines the ideas of early ethnologists and anthropologists.²⁸ He charts the progress of the Ethnological Society, founded in 1843, and chiefly philological in discipline, asserting that at first 'the Society's tone was humanitarian and monogenetic', and indeed a speech given at the first anniversary meeting bears out the impression of genuine interest, stating that the Society was

'formed for the purpose of inquiring into the distinguishing characteristics, physical and moral, of the varieties of Mankind

²⁷ Bolt, 145.

²⁸ Lorimer, D.A. *Colour, Class and the Victorians: English attitudes to the Negro in the mid-nineteenth century* (1978), chapter 7.

which inhabit, or have inhabited the earth; and to ascertain the causes of such characteristics'.²⁹

Lorimer then recites how the credibility of the Society fell, however, when monogenesis was decisively disproved, and that in any case 'By 1850 interest in the scientific and humanitarian defence of alien races was clearly on the decline', and 'the ethnologists had also lost their lead in the scientific study of race, for interest turned from philology to the new methods in craniology'. The change in scientific emphasis is then explained in accordance with Bolt's idea of consolidation of racial thought to imperial concerns:

'In the course of the century, race became more and more a physical category; but, at the same time, it became a determinant of intellectual, psychological and moral nature. As this biological determinism became more pronounced the ethnocentrism of the scientists intensified into racism'.³⁰

The early Victorian period can therefore be seen to have fostered independent interests in race amongst scientists more concerned with establishing their own theories, whether of genesis, or the relative merits of philology, craniology and phrenology, but

²⁹ King, R. 'Address to the Ethnological Society of London delivered at the anniversary meeting, 25th. May, 1844', reprinted in *Journal of the Ethnological Society of London* Vol.I (1848), quoted in Lorimer, 134. Monogenesis is a form of Creation theory which posits that God created all the races at the same time, and was often accompanied by an environmental attribution of the differences between them. This is in opposition to polygenesis, which contends that the races were created severally, and are therefore at different stages of development, with the Caucasians created first, and so forth; both genesis theories were in opposition to the concept of evolution which Darwin was to consolidate.

³⁰ Lorimer, 136.

fundamentally, in the 1820s '30s and early '40s these activities were founded in empirical science, whereas by the 1850s they had become irreversibly bound up with commercial and political processes of justification.

If the notes above can be seen to provide an outline of the self-conscious and academic state of cross-cultural interest, ethnological exhibitions offer insight into the currency of that interest in popular middle-class leisure pursuits. This is important not only for the historian of exhibitions, but also because ethnographical displays provided the most immediate physical and public referents for the establishment of national stereotypes in the sense indicated by Whannel earlier. Again the implications of this specifically for China will be discussed in the final section.

Perhaps the most fundamental fact regarding ethnological exhibitions of this period arises from Durrans' observation that 'museums emerged from classical antecedents as a peculiarly western phenomenon in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries'.³¹ From this he goes on to question whether ethnological displays are, therefore, inherently insidious, and whether museums can ever be established in non-western countries without self-compromise. Leaving this complex issue aside, his notice that in the nineteenth century it was always the West who represented the East and native Americas is crucial, for it delineates a persistently one-sided relationship wherein the West was always exhibitor, and the rest always exhibited. This characterises a situation of immense representative power for the West on many levels. In the first place, Benedict points out that

³¹ Durrans, 152.

the practical and physical quality (and sometimes length) of life of 'specimens' and subjects are totally manipulable, and that further, the power of the exhibitor can dictate the perception of the audience of those subjects:

'The exhibitor may control all or most communication between the individuals exhibited and the host society. Exhibited individuals may be confined to special quarters and only allowed out into the host society under supervision...This social distance has important consequences for the images that the audience is allowed or sometimes encouraged to have about the individuals on show and for the attitudes about their audience it engenders among individuals exhibited'.³²

These observations describe the most extreme and striking instances of mediation of foreign cultures, but the attempted argument here is that the same degree of representational power and appropriation for the west exists in non-human displays. Indeed, without wishing to suggest that shows of people are not the most offensive form of display, it can be noted that in exhibitions of material culture as well as, or instead of humans, the latter notion of mutual reaction suggested by Benedict does not apply. Whilst this means that object- or image- based displays are less immediately exploitative, it does render the power of the exhibitor absolute.

The earliest large-scale representations of whole cultures in London were set up by Bullock at the Egyptian Hall in the early 1820s. In 1822 he exhibited native Laplanders, and in 1824 the fruits of his voyage to South America, 'Ancient and Modern Mexico'. Both these displays attempted to be comprehensive, and the impression of 'real life' was depicted through panoramic

³² Benedict, 43-4.

backdrops. For the Laplanders the display was intended to depict reality through the empirical creation of an 'everday' environment, in which 'Sledges, snowshoes, weapons, and domestic utensils were ranged around the room',³³ and of the Mexico exhibition Bullock was praised for his thorough attention to all aspects of the culture and for the realism of the scene:

'the *Literary Gazette* commented: "Bullock is certainly matchless in the office of getting up exhibitions. He forgets nothing; he procures everything that can be interesting...he arranges his materials in a way that cannot be surpassed." Downstairs...one was confronted with a panoramic view of Mexico City..."in order to heighten the depiction, and to bring the spectator actually amidst the scenes represented, a *facsimile* of Mexican cottage and garden..."³⁴

Whilst these displays clearly held a degree of novelty value for the audience, it seems that the representations were admired for their scientific attention and comprehensiveness. By the 1840s two more exhibitions at the Egyptian Hall can be seen to have recognised the higher premiums to be gained from laying on entertainment as well as instruction, as Catlin's North American Indian show, opened in 1840, was again praised for its extent but assumed a dual identity by day and night:

'During the day, the show was conducted as a purely educational enterprise. Catlin's longtime right-hand man was on hand to answer all questions...Three evenings a week, in another room, Catlin put on a performance of what...were billed as "Tableaux Vivants Indiennes"...as for the Indians, they were in fact local talent...who, decked out in feathers and war paint,

³³ Altick, 274.

³⁴ Altick, 246-8; quotation from the *Literary Gazette* Apr.10, 1824, 237.

uttered war cries, performed war dances, demonstrated "Indian file," held a war council, and smoked the peace pipe'.³⁵

The display of five Bushmen (without contextual setting) in 1845 provoked recognition in the *Illustrated London News* of the mixture of appeal, as the exhibits were:

'a fine subject for scientific investigation, as well as a scene for popular gratification, and rational curiosity. It was strange, too, in looking through the windows of of the room into the busy street, to reflect that by a single turn of the head might be witnessed the two extremes of humanity - the lowest and highest of the race - the wandering savage, and the silken baron of civilisation'.³⁶

The last part of this extract and the description of the simulated activities of the Indians at Catlin's show indicate the move towards more sensationalist shows noted earlier as characteristic of the drive for profit and described by Schneider in the instance of French displays of Africa, as he states that they

'originated as an attempt to popularize science, and the interest that was generated soon drew crowds of several hundred thousand spectators. But the very success of the exhibitions proved to be their downfall as serious educational efforts...attracting larger crowds became their primary concern, even at the risk of sacrificing scientific accuracy...Bizarre customs and savagery were emphasized'.³⁷

Benedict also concludes from his wider survey of the World's Fairs that ultimately science became simulated, so that by 1904, at the St. Louis Show

³⁵ Altick, 276.

³⁶ *Illustrated London News* Jun.12, 1847, 381.

³⁷ Schneider, 203.

'There was an attempt to arrange what were termed "the living exhibits" in evolutionary order with "the more advanced tribes...in and near the Indian School, while less advanced tribes occupied ranges extending away...and terminating with African pygmies and Igorots from the Philippines"'³⁸

Returning to the 1850s, the decline away from science was epitomised by Cumming's extremely successful South African exhibition at the Chinese Gallery from 1850-2, which consisted of fifteen tons of big game spoils and a Hottentot boy who served as narrator brought from Africa by the proprietor, described by Altick as 'the archetype of the Big Game Hunter who found a sensual joy in killing',³⁹ and which sealed the identity of Africa as a land of sensational adventure, yielding romance and glorious trophies for the westerner.

If this discussion of the early foreign shows is insufficient through lack of data concerning the innumerable shows which have not left as much evidence as those of the Egyptian Hall, one observer in the 1850s published his opinions of ethnological shows, and this has also informed the analysis above. John Conolly, President of the declining Ethnological Society, published *The Ethnological Exhibitions of London* in 1855, and was highly critical of the recent shows he had witnessed, on the grounds that they were wasting opportunities for the furtherance of knowledge of Man:

'There is scarcely a year in which, among the miscellaneous attractions of a London season, we do not find some exhibitions illustrative of the varieties of mankind. But some of these are

³⁸ Benedict, 50.

³⁹ Altick, 290.

unsatisfactory, some deceptive, and nearly all unprofitable, because not rendered instructive, to the public'.⁴⁰

He considered that England's strong commercial success placed it in an ideal position for 'intercourse with all the races of men', and that 'in no metropolis ought we to expect to find, from time to time, such instructive illustrations of all parts of this science as in London'. Whilst firmly located in the ideology of Progress and Advancement himself, stating that such exhibitions should be aimed towards 'the possible improvement of all the varieties', by providing

'manifestations of human intellect and modifications of human development in various parts of the globe, and illustrative of man's unwritten history and progress',

he was appalled at the lack of gravity which sensational shows embodied, seeing that rather

'the observations made in voyages and travels seem to have been considered interesting chiefly in proportion to their marvellous character; and specimens showing the progress made in arts and science among rude people and in remote regions, and even the natives of such regions, when brought to our country, to have been merely regarded as objects of curiosity or of unfruitful wonder'.

The bulk of the pamphlet criticises individual exhibitions, but the gist of his complaints are that first, the public are being deceived, as 'the genuineness of a portion appeared doubtful', and second, crucially, the means of representation diverts the public from the

⁴⁰ This and the following quotations are taken from Conolly, J. *The Ethnological Exhibitions of London* (1855), 5, 7, 8, 11, 44.

true value of the displays. Thus of the show of the Bushmen he writes

'The Bosjemen proved the most attractive of all these; although even they appeared to be merely looked at as zoological curiosities, a little higher than the animals in the Gardens, but beings in the lowest scale of mankind. Their quick observation, their swift comprehension, their impressionable character, were as little appreciated by the exhibitor as by the crowd of daily and hourly spectators'.

Having established the various points of instruction available from several London shows, he guards against the pseudo-scientific categorisation of ethnological shows, in the hope that:

'Such deceptive shows would, doubtless, still be followed, but followed as mere means of making money; but not ranking among objects of real instruction, and perverting knowledge'.

In the closing paragraph of his account Conolly inadvertently prefigures Durrans' observation above of the inevitably distorting nature of western displays, as he regrets:

'I can never reconcile myself to regarding the different specimens of mankind, brought under our observation, as if they were inanimate objects in a museum',

but in addition he shrewdly observes that essential knowledge is ultimately offered inadvertently, rather than through grand or monolithic disciplinary schemes:

'We are interested, as Ethnologists, in tracing...the great history of man on the globe; his wanderings, his difficulties, his modifications by climate and change, his struggles, and his progress. But in the course of our inquiry, often overclouded and obscure, and which will, perhaps, never be quite satisfactory, facts of great importance are incidentally displayed to us...and thus,

commencing merely with a view of philosophical research, find suggestions everywhere to practical exertions...!.

The account above has attempted to provide a framework through which to examine the Chinese Collection as an ethnological exhibition in the 1840s and in 1851. The following description will chart the progress of the structure of the event as it was informed by the development of exhibiting generally, and the specific nature of ethnological events in this period, but will maintain awareness of the importance of the proprietorship of the show at any point, as it was implied in the foregoing analysis that above all such events were fundamentally fixed by the preoccupations of the exhibitor, and not by the demands of the specific subject of the representation.

In the first place, it is important to recognise that the origins of the Collection were not determined by an intention to set up an exhibition, but rather the bulk of the objects were amassed by Dunn for private motives of taste and interest, and perhaps obsession. This means that whilst Dunn might have conscientiously collected anything and everything which was available through gift and purchase in China, the status of the show as systematically comprehensive must be in doubt. On transferral to Philadelphia it is noted that Dunn did, however adapt and amend the Collection with a view to providing a viable permanent exhibition, and although the exact identities of his additional acquisitions are not recorded, it is certain that the figurative tableaux were procured for public exhibiting purposes. At Philadelphia the display was praised for Dunn's personal endeavour, but in addition a general interest in China can be

presumed from the vital trading link that city had with Canton. A further context for the exhibition in America which was not the case for London was the legacy of a limited tradition of exhibiting collections of Chinese artefacts, the most notable of which was that owned by another merchant, Van Braam, in the 1790s.⁴¹

Once taken to London, the display took on further connotations than the simple mutual cultural interest in a trading partner which had existed in Philadelphia, for the Opium War placed China in an immediate (albeit complacently felt) relationship of conflict with Britain. It was shown above that displays of foreign countries were dependent upon the intentions of the 'host' or exhibitor, and that in the case of an official and ideologically-defined display such as the Great Exhibition this made for a relatively coherent or at least detectable rationale behind the mode of representation; for the Chinese Collection the nature of the mediation of China must be considered in the light of both Dunn's personal, basically sympathetic attitude towards his subject and his conscious presentation of a potentially controversial or unwelcome show in London. Looking closely at the mechanics of the event, it can be seen that Dunn overcame this dilemma in two major ways. First, as was shown in chapter 1, he diplomatically toned down his contempt for the Opium Trade which had been pronounced in the original Philadelphian catalogues by switching the emphasis to the philanthropic opportunity for engagement with, and religious conversion of, the

⁴¹ This was sold by Christie's in 1799; the catalogue of that date reveals that the collection was far less extensive than Dunn's at the time of sale, having only 66 lots, and consisting mainly of volumes of drawings. There will be further attention to the significance of these sales in the next section.

Chinese promised by the Treaty: 'the doors of a new empire are about to be opened! A living light is about to flash among the benighted millions...'⁴² and second, he pitched the status of the event very much in terms of its serious and instructive value. The initially extortionate price of 2s.6d. ensured that the event was only accessible to the established 'respectable' classes, and the Guildhall Library engraving which might have been commissioned in conjunction with the show exudes an atmosphere of quiet reflection and reverence for the exhibits - that is, the display was primarily emanating the most acceptable forms of London shows such as the British Museum. Again it has already been noted that Dunn aimed for the highest seal of respectability in offering a private view to Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, and that as the reviews revealed, their approval was instrumental in announcing the overt prestige of the exhibition from the outset. The catalogue further courted the interest of 'learned and scientific' persons by its insistence upon the comprehensiveness and realism of the representation, and this tenet can be seen to accord with the requisites of sincere ethnological inquiry at this date. By inscribing the show in scientific terms - referring to exhibits intemittently as 'rare specimens', 'vast materials' and 'the variety of specimens' - Dunn partly deflected the possible antagonism which could have been felt had he emphasized the aesthetic achievements of Chinese culture, and further, where the beauty of the Collection was claimed, the objects were described in fantastic terms, as 'this vast magazine of curiosities and wonders'. From these mediatory characterisations of essentially unfamiliar artefacts, Dunn was able to achieve a compromised

⁴² Langdon, *Descriptive Catalogue* 12.

recognition for the scientific, empirical and aesthetic value of his display without upsetting the assurance of victory nominally conferred upon the British.

At the overhaul of the event in 1843, however, Dunn can be seen to have changed its nature to comply less with the overt demands of 'rational recreation' and more with the actual techniques of display which were successful under that guise. The reduction of cost to permit 'all classes of persons', whilst it clearly did not do so, did allow a much larger audience, and one which would have responded best to the balance of education and amusement which characterised Catlin's contemporary show. The Collection took on a higher profile, suggested by the *Illustrated London News* image, as it began to stage evenings of entertainment, but was not transformed by day and night to the extent of the North American Indians, as Dunn's extravaganzas such as the 'Feast of Lanterns' and 'Fete of the Dragon' were maintained under the respectable auspices of royalty, boasting the presence of 'Prince Albert's band', and as the *Times* reported in 1844 the event retained its respectability ('elegance'), whilst offering lighthearted spectacles ('novelties'): 'A novel mode of illuminating this elegant exhibition has been adopted, and at the same time a novelty introduced, called the "Fete of the Dragon"'.⁴³ The simultaneous publication of the serious work *Ten Thousand Things* also contingently ensured that the highbrow value of the event was not lost altogether. After Dunn's death, the remainder of the first period of the exhibition seems to have continued as a typical instructive/entertaining site, and the characterisation left

⁴³ *Times* Dec. 11, 1844.

by the closing review in the *Times* of 1846 emphasized the inherent empirical value of the exhibits, as it urged:

'Those, therefore, who have not hitherto had an opportunity of examining the almost innumerable specimens of Chinese and Oriental productions with which it abounds, will do well to make as early a visit as they can, and avail themselves of the short period yet left to gratify their curiosity and increase their knowledge of countries as yet imperfectly known',

whilst depicting its less rational recreational identity as a fashionable lounge and sensory delight:

'the company promenaded the long gallery for several hours, listening to the band which was in attendance...The whole appearance of the place was brilliant, not to say magnificent. The variety of colours and the splendour of the illumination produced an excellent effect, such a one as it is difficult to imagine...'⁴⁴

Little can be speculated on the nature of the display of the Collection in Barnum's American Museum in New York, except to say that at that site the qualification for exhibition was curiosity in the widest sense, and all the trading and political resonances incurred in Philadelphia would not have been present. Returned to England in 1851, the show faced, as all private exhibitions did, the ambiguous benefits or disadvantages of the dominance of London by the Great Exhibition. By this time Barnum had engaged a Chinese Family, and this had become the main selling-point of the event, as the advertisement in *Richardson's Guidebook to London* illustrates [Fig.29]. The advertisement shows that Dunn's commendable initial attempt to dispel, at least partly, the traditional mythological iconography of China had been forgotten,

⁴⁴ *Times* Oct. 26, 1846.

and the Collection had now become a backdrop for the sensational display of bound feet:

'UNPRECEDENTED ATTRACTION.

THE CHINESE LADY.

PWAN-YE-KOO,

Seventeen Years of Age, with small Lotus Feet, only 2¹/₂ Inches
in Length!

HER NATIVE FEMME DE CHAMBRE,

CHINESE PROFESSOR OF MUSIC,

TWO INTERESTING CHINESE CHILDREN,

Male and Female - 5 and 7 Years of Age, and Suite,

AT

THE CHINESE COLLECTION

ALBERT GATE, HYDE PARK⁴⁵

In reviews the display had lost all its Opium War pertinence, and its credence as 'China in Miniature' and 'An Epitome of the Celestial Empire', as it was reported instead as 'This curious collection', with the emphasis firmly upon the Family, and especially Pwan-Ye-Koo:

'In addition to the many specimens, both natural and artificial, of the Celestial Empire, there is a Chinese Family - a young lady, whose feet are of the most aristocratic proportions of her native country, and who is considered by those most capable of judging a perfect vocalist, according to the Chinese notion, of vocalism; a musical professor of the first rank, and two children, who are precocious in talent, and very amusing; an interpreter, and a lady's maid. This interesting group gave specimens of their powers to a crowded audience, and were very favourably received'.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Richardson, J. *The Exhibition London Guide, and Visitors' Pocket Companion, Describing a new plan, the Great Metropolis and its Environs* (1851), 199.

⁴⁶ *Times* May 2, 1851.

Without wishing to argue strongly from absence, it is also worth noting that the Collection does not feature in many of the most popular guidebooks to London published for exhibition year, for which the prerequisite for inclusion seems to have been, broadly, respectability or instructive value, as most listed sites such as the British Museum, the Royal Institution, the Law Courts, and so forth, but it is interesting that exhibitions which can be seen to parallel the Chinese Collection in terms of projected audience, such as Madame Tussaud's and the Chinese Junk, did gain entry.⁴⁷

It can be concluded that the status of the Collection independent of the context of exhibiting retained respectability, being advertised for sale finally as 'the Celebrated Assemblage of Nathan Dunn', but that during its various phases of display its nature changed according to both the shifting attitude of Britain to China from covert hostility to idle indifference, and the very different preoccupations of the known proprietors Dunn and Barnum. The state of ethnological exhibitions at the later date however, as suggested by the success of Cumming's fantasy of South Africa and Conolly's complaints of sensationalism, can be seen to make wider sense of the devaluation of the show from a place of scientific observation to an example of the cheap exploitation of racial stereotypes, aside from the plainly arbitrary sensationalism of Barnum. The general point to be made is that the structure of the event from start to finish was determined by external exhibitors, in various combination American and English, and that the notion of 'realism' the Collection imparted (and from

⁴⁷ Popular *London Guides* which did not list the Collection included *Casell's*, *Partridge's*, *Harthill's*, *Gray's*, and *Clarke's*; of these *Casell's* and *Clarke's* both listed Madame Tussaud's and the Junk.

historical perspective the show still does seem more 'representative' than many other foreign displays), was based on the general conventions of western exhibiting of other cultures. The other means by which the show emphasized its authenticity were through its insistence upon the superiority of objects as cultural evidence and its promotion of those objects as truly Chinese. The extent to which those factors would have permitted a more realistic image will be examined in the following sections.

The Orient objectified: the nature of artefacts as vehicles of Truth.

It has been shown above that the mediatory mode of display of China enacted by Dunn and Langdon was characteristic, and perhaps inevitably so, of that which was to recur again and again throughout the century in displays of foreign cultures. Underpinning the style of the spectacle chosen as appropriate, the form of the representation was a crucial component of the calculated package; this is to say that the choices of the sorts of things and images on display were equally important in achieving the desired message or in providing a basis for judgement. Again it was shown in Chapter 2 that displays of Chinese artefacts were, to say the least, rare and fragmented in England at this date, and that Dunn was anxious to emphasize the unique value of his Collection in offering material culture. This section will examine the nature of the objects on display in terms of their various functions, values and possible effects throughout the event. It will be shown that all these properties altered during the history

of the show, and the implications of the shifting status of the group of objects as an ethnological representation will be traced.

First, authors of the recent work *The New Museology* have questioned how far a collection or an exhibition of artefacts as a whole can actually be considered fully representative of anything. The fundamental problem lies in the clearly infinite definitions and interpretations emitted by and projected onto any represented subject. No theme or culture can be absolutely substituted through a process of inevitably subjective selection, as Vergo roundly assails:

'Whether we like it or not, every acquisition (and indeed disposal), every juxtaposition or arrangement of an object or work of art, together with other objects or works of art, within the context of a temporary exhibition or museum display means placing a certain construction upon history, be it the history of the distant or more recent past, or our own culture or someone else's, of mankind in general or a particular aspect of human endeavour'.⁴⁸

This recognition is crucial for displays in general in that it directly counters a common acceptance of museums as neutral and innocent or even sanctified sites, whereby the weight of connoisseurial authority to which they aspire permits presumption on the part of the exhibitor, and trust from the audience, that an objective representation results. As Saumarez Smith explains elsewhere in the volume:

'The literature of the transformation of goods as they travel through a life-cycle suggests that once artefacts appear in museums they enter a safe and neutral ground, outside the arena where they are subjected to multiple pressures of meaning. This

⁴⁸ Vergo, P. (ed.) *The New Museology* (1989), Introduction, 2-3.

is not true; on the contrary, museums present all sorts of different territories for display, with the result that the complexities of epistemological reading continue'.⁴⁹

This notion of the effect changes in location and context have on individual objects is crucial and will be examined in detail. For the moment, the acknowledgement of the status of whole displays is noted, as it is an especially important issue for ethnological treatments, in that depictions of other cultures are so often promoted and readily perceived unproblematically as comprehensive, typical, and microcosmic. It has been shown that the Chinese Collection was actively advertised and accepted in these terms, being for Langdon 'China in miniature', and for reviewers 'an Epitome of the Celestial Empire'. It is not the intention here to prove that Dunn's depiction was false, or to suggest alternative means and items with which he might have offered the 'real' China, or basically, to list what he left out; from a Western historical perspective this is not vaguely possible, or even desirable. In fact Dunn's representation does seem, from the evidence of lack of access to Chinese culture at this time, to have been thoughtful and impressive, but it must be stressed that the claim for its absolutist and almost ambassadorial status must be treated with extreme caution, especially in view of the widespread lack of substantial engagement with China.

It was demonstrated in the previous section that the detectable processes of mediation reveal that displays of whole cultures were not in fact neutral, and that the practical and ideological structures of events changed according to the

⁴⁹ Saumarez Smith, C. 'Museums, Artefacts, and Meanings', *The New Museology* 12.

preoccupations of the proprietors and exhibitors. Bearing in mind the chronological development of Dunn's show charted above, this section will address the implications of changing contexts for the objects themselves and whether in fact they retained neutrality - whether they had inherent locked meanings which could embody a kind of 'reality' if correctly presented - or if they were actually constantly codified in the way suggested by Saumarez Smith above. At the first moment of collectivity, when Dunn amassed the artefacts in China, the objects might be perceived to have been in their most independent epistemological state in that he bought them for their plain interest. In an article about the personal relationships between people and things, however, Clifford points out that in the West the formation of even the most private of collections has some political meaning, as 'collecting has long been a strategy for the deployment of a possessive self, culture and authenticity'. Thus, from the first instance of an object being procured as part of a 'collection', it immediately becomes drawn into the egotistic domain of the collector, open to change and interpretation (physically and meaningfully), and furthermore, as Clifford explains, this appropriation is expected, as at any viewing of the collection the exhibitor will be seen as an authority,

'expected to label them, to know...(it is not enough that they simply exude power or mystery), to tell "interesting" things about them, to distinguish copies from originals'.⁵⁰

This designation becomes more dangerous when collections become public displays and attain additional authority through

⁵⁰ Clifford, J. 'Objects and Selves - an Afterword', in Stocking, G.W. (ed.) *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Culture* (1985), 238-9.

the prestige of a large, personally disinterested and unknowing audience, and through the self-conscious assertion of the credence of the sort of knowledge Clifford describes. Again this danger is compounded further when the subject displayed is generally unknown (foreign in the widest sense), and even more so when knowledge of it is actively sought - often for powerful use - by the audience, as in the cases of ethnological exhibitions in the nineteenth century. Clifford reiterates an identification that such collections present, through the mechanics of museological display, what is considered an encapsulation of the subject, permitting complete knowledge through partial engagement:

'collecting - and most notably the museum - creates the illusion of adequate representation of a world by first cutting objects out of specific contexts (whether cultural, historical, or intersubjective) and making them "stand for" abstract wholes - a "Bambara mask," for example, becoming a metonym for Bambara culture'.⁵¹

As has already been shown, when a specific message was being enforced through a display, the belief that a display can "stand for" something was coerced through the seductive techniques of 'realistic' forms of representation, because as Durrans points out:

'In order to work effectively as legitimizers of imperial exploitation, they had to retain an image of detached objectivity, and the simplest way to retain that image was by working...with a positivist orientation and commitment to science'.⁵²

⁵¹ Clifford, 239; the extrapolation is from Stewart, Susan, *On Longing*.

⁵² Durrans, 155.

In this mid-century climate demanding empiricism, classification and accuracy in ethnology, Dunn capitalised on his collector's knowledge, emphasizing the objectivity of artefacts over art and literature, so that the authoritative essence of his venture was that 'It teaches by *things* rather than words'. This means that what he promoted as true was that things provided purer evidence of life than verbal or written records, and that he was therefore offering a more 'realistic' experience of China. The claim that this form of representation was more authentic, however, would have been reinforced by a corresponding movement in art and literature to reclaim the definition of the 'real' in the material world. As was connoted by the discussion of mediation above, the definition of the 'real' nature of the subject is determined not by the perfect gathering of its anatomical components - it is impossible to represent an entire culture - but by the construction of a Truthful image by the exhibitor, which is itself dependent on a self-referential agenda of authenticity. This is to say, quite simply, that realism is itself a subjective concept, and whilst this might appear an obvious fact in the current moment of postmodern questioning of truths across the board, in the nineteenth century many notions of the real existed and were considered absolute. Williams has neatly summarised the intention of realist authors and artists to assert 'at first an exceptional accuracy of representation, later a commitment to describing **real** events and showing things as they actually exist',⁵³ whilst Nochlin has observed the polemical claim for Realism in French painting as 'to give a truthful, objective and impartial representation of the real world, based on meticulous

⁵³ Williams, R. *Keywords* (1984), 259.

observation of contemporary life', and that the techniques through which this was attempted were attention to detail and peculiarities to an almost 'photographic' degree.⁵⁴ Whilst these definitions are by no means uncontroversial, and in fact diametrically opposed nominalist ideas of the nature of reality continued to have currency at this time, the equation of reality with accuracy and scrupulous observation are fundamental to this study in that they had particular impact and resonances for the representation of the East in Europe in the Fine Arts as well as in scientific ethnology. This is explained by Richon in his scrutiny of a particular Orientalist painting, as he notes that the 'accurate' impression of the East is achieved through the depicted imagery of a 'real' event in Williams' sense:

'As metonymy, the painting is grasped as a fragment, an arrested motion which implies a before and an after, that is, an element of time prior to, and beyond the frame, but contiguous with it: an anecdotal slice of life - "once upon a time" in Egypt',

and he extends the notion of the importance of the anecdotal in his perception of the role of peculiar details in fixing the referent of the East:

'The various props - fruits, flowers, drapes and architectural details - are anecdotal signs adding to the veracity of the scene and anchoring the picture in the realm of the Exotic'.⁵⁵

It should be noted that the analysis immediately following of the role of things in Dunn's exhibition concerns the artefacts and works of fine art exhibited in the display, and not the

⁵⁴ Nochlin, L. *Realism* (1971), 13.

⁵⁵ Richon, O. 'Representation, The Harem and the Despot', *Block* 10, (1985), 38.

figurative tableaux, as the latter were commissioned especially for the event, and were overtly intended to function from the outset as part of a representation of 'real' Chinese subjects. The tableaux will be dealt with separately at the end of this section, as there are particular issues of 'realism' and 'truth' which they generate and which are interesting in consideration of the authenticity of the whole exhibition.

Within the disciplines of museology, anthropology, archaeology and material culture studies there is considerable disagreement, and in some instances direct opposition, regarding the value of things as evidence of unknown cultures. The basic issue is whether objects only bear meanings which are read on to them at any given spatial or temporal location, or if they carry constant, accessible values from site to site and age to age. On one side Jordanova posits that objects cannot disclose the essence or feeling of the subject they are intended to represent, as , using the example of the display of children's games at the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood, she warns:

'They have the same status as other historical documents: they are texts requiring interpretation, and they need to be set in their proper historical context. It is crucial to be clear about what they do *not* reveal. They do not themselves indicate who bought them, why they did so, how the games were used, or what impact they had on those that used them. Strictly speaking, they do not, indeed cannot, evoke "childhood".'⁵⁶

Whilst the formulation given above of objects as texts is itself problematic because of the notion of narrative it denotes, the general idea can be useful here in that exhibitions can be

⁵⁶ Jordanova, L. 'Objects of Knowledge: A Historical Perspective on Museums', *The New Museology* 29.

interpreted in this way, as they are intended to communicate, and do assume an author-audience relationship. Jordanova goes on to explain that the observation she makes regarding the children's games are especially pertinent because of the abstracted nature of her subject in point, but it could be argued that the ability to conceive of foreign cultures - both in the nineteenth century and now - was and is equally difficult, if not impossible: 'China' is as intangible as 'Childhood'. Jordanova's premise appears to accord with Clifford's refutation of the transferrable 'objective' knowledge of the collector, being that whilst things undoubtedly inspire intellectual and emotional responses, these should not be regarded as 'knowledge', but are rather the products of the imagination of the viewer:

'it is clearly not just the visual experience such items give rise to that is important. Objects are triggers of chains of ideas and images that go far beyond their initial starting point. Feelings about the antiquity, the authenticity, the beauty, the craftsmanship, the poignancy of objects are the stepping-stones towards fantasies, which can have aesthetic, historical, macabre or a thousand other attributes. These strings of responses should not be accorded the status of "knowledge", however...The "knowledge" that museums facilitate has the quality of fantasy, because it is only possible via an imaginative process'.⁵⁷

This issue is complex because of the collective reactions which are sometimes felt amongst audiences, and this can lead to the conclusion that the object actively effects those reactions. But, the discussion above implied that the coercive mode of representation of items and their subliminally coded identities as collections could in fact be responsible for their uniform impact, and that this

⁵⁷ Jordanova, 23.

would especially be the case where the audience wanted to draw finite conclusions.

Converse to this sort of theory is the optimistic hope that engagement with objects can somehow place a viewer in contact with, or at least permit a feeling of affinity to, the culture which they represent, thus allowing some sense of the 'reality' of its original values. This assertion has recently come to the fore in the American discipline of Material Culture studies, notably through the work of Glassie and Prown. Prown points out that in the study of 'primitive' or 'lost' cultures, artefacts are the only medium through which social and historical understanding can be attempted:

'Henry Glassie has observed that...Objects are used by a much broader cross section of the population and are therefore potentially a more wide-ranging, more representatative source of information than words',⁵⁸

and this might indeed be the case - again it should be emphasized that Dunn's endeavour in producing the extensive Collection is not to be undermined here. However, Prown further suggests, as Langdon did, that consideration of any culture is always advantaged by engagement with its material residue rather than any other:

'Cultural expression is less self-conscious, and therefore potentially more truthful, in what a society produces, especially such mundane, utilitarian objects as domestic buildings, furniture, or pots';

'A single article will illustrate whole pages of written description...An hour passed with such curiosities will afford, even to the youthful and careless of inquiry, a more definite and

⁵⁸ Prown, J.D. 'Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method', *Winterthur Portfolio* 1982, 3.

permanent idea of these Tartar-governed millions than volumes of ordinary details'.⁵⁹

The difficulty with this equation is that Prown's characterisations of 'less self-conscious' and 'mundane' items stems from his own cultural practice. Whilst this is a somewhat pedantic point, Miller's study of ceramic usage and symbolism in India reveals that Prown's no doubt arbitrary example of pots is not in fact available for straightforward interpretation as Miller has identified that in general there is 'eloquent evidence for the distance between form and function in non-industrial as well as industrialised societies', and that in the particular culture of his study this is exemplified by ceramic production:

'Detailed observation of the hand-made containers used in a south Asian village reveals a wide variety of forms designed to serve identical purposes, and a very loose relationship between form and fitness for function'; ⁶⁰

similar cross-cultural surveys of furniture and domestic buildings would probably reinforce the idea of infinite variations in the perceptions of what are mundane or elite amongst categories of artefacts denoted by Miller's work. Prown's citation of certain objects as more and most veracious than other forms of cultural evidence accords with his observations on 'Cultural Perspective', which can be seen to underly the presumptions of the Chinese Collection also. Prown does concede that

⁵⁹ Prown, 4; Langdon, *Descriptive Catalogue* 13-14.

⁶⁰ Miller, D. *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (1987), 116; his detailed study of this particular example is published as *Artefacts as Categories: a study of ceramic variability in Central India* (1985).

'We, the interpreters, are products of a different cultural environment. We are pervaded by the beliefs of our own social groups - nation, locality, class, religion, politics, occupation, gender, age, race, ethnicity - beliefs in the form of assumptions that we make unconsciously', 61

yet he cannot accept that this nature is inevitably and persistently distortive, that 'we are irredeemably biased by our own unconscious beliefs', and he looks to consummate engagement with things as a means to greater objectivity:

'By undertaking cultural interpretation through artifacts, we can engage the other culture in the first instance not with our minds, the seat of our cultural biases, but with our senses. This affective mode of apprehension through the senses allows us to put ourselves, figuratively speaking, inside the skins of individuals who commissioned, made, used, or enjoyed these objects, to see with their eyes and touch with their hands, to identify with them empathetically...Instead of our minds making intellectual contact with minds of the past, our senses make affective contact with senses of the past'.⁶²

Langdon does not articulate this belief in intrinsic spiritual values in objects, but his analogy of the teaching and coercive process of the exhibition with the witnessing of a ship in full sail by a person who had not seen one before relies on the same underlying belief that the meanings and significances of individual objects can be demystified by direct physical or sensory contact with them:

'What immense labour, for example, and what intricate details would be necessary to give an individual, who had never seen such an invention, a correct idea of a ship in full sail. Yet, present the object to the eye, and a look would at once suffice to elicit admiration, and impart a more complete general knowledge than page upon page of the most minute and elaborate composition'.⁶³

61 Prown, 4.

62 Prown, 5.

63 Langdon, *Descriptive Catalogue* 14.

The danger of this idea is that it depends upon a premise that at some point objects acquire values which are never lost, regardless of their transportation in context and use. In the instance of the Chinese Collection, the clear dedication of Dunn to promote, and the English audience to accept, the exhibition as an absolute presentation of China, combined with this belief in the incontestable truth of objects, effectively established the show as an authentic microcosm of China. More simply, it said that Chinese porcelain looks like this, Chinese craftsmen work like this, Chinese merchants entertain in rooms like this, and so forth. This is reinforced by the definitive commentary provided by the catalogue in conjunction with exhibits and groups of exhibits, whereby the objects are used as illustrations of the authoritative factual narrative. Recent research into the 'social life' of things suggests that no such sustenance of value (of any kind) exists, and that they therefore have no fixed functions or meanings through which the transcendence of cultural barriers described above can be fulfilled. The following discussion will demonstrate that whilst the items on display in the Chinese Collection probably were providing as accurate an idea of Cantonese culture as could be achieved then, this was not their sole value. The importance of this is that a desire to know more of China was growing in England at this time because of the Opium War, and that there would, therefore, have been a willingness to accept the depiction as true, so that it was open to interpretation and appropriation of the sort presented by the reviewers. The partial charting of the biographies of the things will show that the identification 'exhibit' was not consistently common to all the items, and that all had

(and some have) histories in which constituting the Collection was a very small part. The aim of this observation is to demonstrate that unlike Orientalist texts or paintings, the inherent function of those objects was not to be representative.

This idea of tracing the 'biographies' of Dunn's objects has arisen from *The Social Life of Things*, a volume discussing and charting the 'life-histories' of various sorts of artefacts.⁶⁴ The method underlying the case studies is laid down in Appadurai's introductory chapter, 'Commodities and the politics of value', in which he posits that 'commodity' is not a definitive term for describing certain types of objects, but is rather a specific value which any thing or group of things might possess to a varying extent throughout its existence. Whilst Appadurai's concern is with 'commodities' rather than other species such as gifts, spoils, or exhibits, and to an extent his argument is about redefining what was once a tightly-defined economic term of identification, his ideas of variability of categorisation and contextualisation are useful in thinking about the unquestionably ambiguous status of exhibited objects, and moreover his sweeping definition of a commodity as 'anything intended for exchange',⁶⁵ admits application to almost any thing. In addition, the characterisation of 'value' as predominantly materialistic or economic to which Appadurai is somewhat tied in view of his specific discussion of commodities will be widened here, as the social, political and cultural values which are simultaneously differentiated in an object's life will also be attended. In the broadest terms,

⁶⁴ Appadurai, A. (ed.) *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in cultural perspective* (1986).

⁶⁵ Appadurai, 9.

Appadurai takes on Simmel's formulation that value is 'never an inherent property of objects, but is a judgement made about them by subjects', and that further, values only become apparent in the sphere of exchange, so that 'the economy as a particular social form "consists not only in exchanging *values* but in the *exchange* of values"'.⁶⁶ From Simmel's quite abstract existential position, Appadurai seeks to explore 'the conditions under which economic objects circulate in different *regimes of value* in space and time', and from this notion of 'regimes' the changing status and significances of the items which at one time constituted the Chinese Collection can be illuminated, or themselves evaluated. Before this, however, Appadurai offers a disclaimer which is of special importance in consideration of a now-dispersed body of exhibited artefacts, which is that without the tangible movement or record of that movement of the things themselves, understanding of their meanings and values is not permitted,

'Thus, even though from a *theoretical* point of view human actors encode things with significance, from a *methodological* point of view it is the things-in-motion that illuminate their human and social context...we have to follow the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories. It is only through the analysis of these trajectories that we can interpret the human transactions and calculations that enliven things'.⁶⁷

This will be seen to be a crucial qualifying observation in tracing the values of things whose whereabouts, or even survival, are now unknown, and serves to point out that the full 'biographies' of the Chinese Collection is not actually available, but this in turn

⁶⁶ Simmel, G. *The Philosophy of Money* (1978); Appadurai, 3-4.

⁶⁷ Appadurai, 5.

denies the presumption that such a group of objects could be fully representative of China without being subject to formal contextualisation. It should not be overlooked that the period of existence of Dunn's Collection was about thirty years, and that it altered with changes of objects, location and proprietorship; at any given time the status and meanings of the exhibits are variously accessible, with some movements of high profile and overt significance, and others of disappearance and inconclusion. The following general 'biography' however, will highlight the different values the objects embodied at particular points of interest.

In the first place, all the objects in the Collection which Dunn acquired in China were, initially, 'products' in the sense that they were made for sale, mostly for the export market, and were uncontroversial 'commodities'. At the point of Dunn's first procuring his collection, some objects would have been identified in currency as 'gifts', some as 'commissioned', and others as 'bartered', and whilst the precise nature of individual items is not of high importance here, what is is that altogether they differed, and thus were not gathered in a coherent scheme towards forming 'An epitome of the celestial empire'. Dunn's time in Canton provides the first recorded moment of exchange for this study, and provokes recognition of the crucial effect that moment was to have for the Chinese and for Dunn, as Appadurai notes that it is not only artefacts which gain new values:

'These valuables acquire very specific biographies as they move from place to place and hand to hand, just as the men who exchange them gain and lose reputation as they acquire, hold, and part with these valuables'.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Appadurai, 18.

In the case of Dunn's Collection, the terms of the original exchange were not with a view to exhibition, and aside from the financial differences this may or may not have determined for those transactions, it is further significant that Dunn was to re-value the objects to his own ends, regardless of those original terms. Although this does not matter in that producers of most artefacts do not suffer through, or expect to authorise, their ultimate destinations or uses, the point here is that Dunn was later to use the objects to represent the producing culture comprehensively, whilst in fact they had come together in a convoluted, almost arbitrary, and, in Clifford's view, inherently egotistical way.

Once established as Dunn's 'Collection' in Philadelphia, the objects were under greater control, and gaining more culturally-cohesive values as 'interesting', 'curious', 'authentic', 'representative', and so forth, enabled by the accepted mechanisms of authoritative collecting laid down by Clifford above. At Philadelphia there would also have been the context of Sino-American trade, which might possibly have generated consideration of the material value of the exhibits as goods, although this is not to endorse the bigoted depiction of the dollar-conscious Americans articulated by Buckingham in Chapter 1 above. At this point of becoming representative of China and the Chinese, however, the objects were also undergoing material changes in value, as the notion of items being illustrative of the Other, regardless of their in some instances minimal costing or 'value' for the Chinese producer, meant that they would have been desirable for their rarity in the exhibiting culture, as Appadurai has it:

'Thus, despite the presence of broad conventional exchange rates, a complex qualitative calculus exists which permits the competitive negotiation of personal estimates of value in the light of both short- and long-term individual interest'.⁶⁹

For identification of the 'individual' here, new values were projected by Dunn himself as eminent collector, and by the unusualness of the subject for the specific American or English audience. This is to say quite simply that an exhibited pair of shoes or a pipe from China would have elicited more interest amongst the English than the equivalent artefacts from their own culture would have done, or, even more simply, that they would have acquired novelty value. Clifford's observations on the power of connoisseurial collectors to determine perceptions of subjects are upheld by Appadurai, as he points out that the further objects become detached from their original contexts, the more the manipulation and contortion of appended knowledge becomes uncontrollable:

'peculiarities of knowledge accompany relatively complex, long-distance, intercultural flows of commodities, though even in more homogeneous, small-scale, and low-technology loci of commodity flow, there is always the potential for discrepancies in knowledge about commodities'.⁷⁰

For ethnographical exhibitions under private proprietorship, it was shown in the preceding section that great efforts were made to construct displays as 'authentic' and comprehensive: mythologies regarding alien cultures were desired and promoted. Again Appadurai states that this becomes more possible with

⁶⁹ Appadurai, 19.

⁷⁰ Appadurai, 41.

increases of distance, time, and the depersonalisation of spheres of exchange

'as the institutional and spatial journeys of commodities grow more complex, and the alienation of producers, traders, and consumers from one another increases, culturally formed mythologies about commodity flow are likely to emerge'.⁷¹

Elsewhere in the volume, Spooner expresses the difficulties of retaining a 'realistic' view even when the problems of distance are openly acknowledged:

'We must not be misled by the values ascribed to craftsmanship, for these values have also changed significantly over the past hundred years. They are based explicitly on the search for historical truth, but we are of course steadily moving further and further away in time from the sources on which the reconstruction of that truth depends',⁷²

but this formulation becomes even more dangerous when the presumption exists, as it did for Dunn and his audience, that far off truths were capable of recuperation and complete understanding, so that the show was, as Meyer insisted, as valuable as a trip to China:

'Believe me then, when I add, that it is no fiction of fancy - no departure from the truth - no prompting of exaggeration to assert, that a man may learn more of China and the Chinese in a single visit to Mr. Dunn's Collection, than could be acquired by a month's reading, or even a voyage to Canton'.⁷³

In fact in Philadelphia and in London, infinite values are possibly readable into both the Collection as a whole and its single

⁷¹ Appadurai, 48.

⁷² Spooner, B. 'Weavers and Dealers: the authenticity of an oriental carpet', in Appadurai, 200.

⁷³ Meyer, B. *A Nation in a Nut-shell* 27.

components, entirely dependent upon the contexts in which each visitor mentally located those items: thus, some might have perceived the artefacts 'aesthetically', as was seen in some of the reviews, and this itself is made more complex by an underlying desire not to address the political context; some might have been interested in Eastern artefacts specifically in the light of growing ethnological inquiry and an increased availability of foreign culture in London (this attitude is clear in instances of direct comparison with Catlin's exhibition, for example); some might have had no direct method of thinking about Chinese objects, and could have seen them as purely exotic, not acknowledging any factors of use or beauty as would have been the case for a collection of Western items; some, conversely, might have treated the objects in terms of direct comparison with Western equivalents. In addition to these there are numerous potential responses which are irrecoverable, but although a coherent agenda of reaction cannot be confidently put forward, it is vital that above all, perceptions of the objects, even when they were presented in a fairly ordered and prescriptive form, cannot be seen to embody a uniform attitude, and this in turn demonstrates that the objects did not have constant evocative values. Having said this, at one point, when the exhibition first opened in London, there was a particular set of circumstances which instigated the setting up of the event there, and which would undoubtedly have informed evaluation to varying extent as the concurrence of the Opium War, would, as was seen of the reviews, have generated a fairly similar approach, even if that similarity was characterised as essentially evasive. The most forceful response of the reviews was to accept and reiterate Dunn and Langdon's claims for the

value of the exhibition, to avoid confrontation with the material culture of China, and rather simply to acknowledge its 'curiosity'. It is impossible to suggest what reactions might have been to the show had the Opium War not existed, but Appadurai makes a useful observation regarding the heightening of interest in everyday items which occurs in times of conflict, as whilst he is discussing the practices of warfare, his comment illuminates the peculiar circumstances of exhibiting the minutiae of an 'enemy' culture in *wartime* :

'In such plunder, and the spoils that it generates, we see the inverse of trade. The transfer of commodities in warfare always has a special symbolic intensity, exemplified in the tendency to frame more mundane plunder in the transfer of special arms, insignia, or body parts belonging to the enemy'.⁷⁴

It should be emphasized, however, that perception of the importance or otherwise of the War itself in public consciousness is equally unattainable, and it is clear that the War alone would not have sustained interest for the four years of the initial display.

The fact that the meanings for us of the Chinese artefacts is dependent upon their recorded context is exemplified by the void of significance which occurs in the history of the event between 1846 and 1850. It could be suggested that the disappearance of the exhibition for this period indicated that the objects had lost currency as 'interesting' because of the waning topicality of the Opium War, but the lack of evidence as to the proprietorial decisions and preoccupations which determined its closure disallows any conclusive evaluation of that moment. The re-

⁷⁴ Appadurai, 26.

emergence of the diminished display at Barnum's museum is one of the most telling changes in this charting of its history, as his absorption of the Chinese Collection as generally 'curious' and 'celebrated' demonstrates the extent to which the show was open to manipulation of meaning, and re-presentation to different audiences. Both the educative and soberly intellectual slant which Dunn had invested in the exhibits, and the context of the Opium War in England, can be seen to have been suppressed in New York, as Barnum undoubtedly acquired the objects solely for their notoriety and 'otherness'; this speculation is upheld by his hiring of the 'peculiar' Chinese Family as the star attraction.

On sending the display to London in 1851, Barnum was attempting, as many private exhibitors did, to exploit the exhibition frenzy surrounding the neighbouring Crystal Palace, but again the event was pitched in that last period as a sensational site with live performance and display of the traditional mythological iconography of China through the foregrounding of Pwan-Yee-Koo's bound feet. At this time, the event was still described as 'Nathan Dunn's Chinese Collection', a fact which highlights the authoritative impact that the collector's possessive power retained as a selling-point and attraction, and this was perhaps more important for the identity of the whole event throughout the decade than the immediate context of the Opium War.

At the sale of the objects in 1851, a new set of values can be detected for the artefacts, as they returned to the arena of economic transactions in which many had originated, but it must be recognised that there are vast differences in the status of the items when first procured in China from their nature in the

auction room at Christie & Manson. The credibility of the Collection as having been laboriously amassed by Dunn was retained until the end, with the sale catalogue announcing *The Celebrated Assemblage which formed the Chinese Exhibition, collected by the late Nathan Dunn, Esq.*, but closer examination of the descriptions of the objects and the tone of the catalogue reveals that in fact they were being sold largely through their status within the London art market, acquiring economic value through rarity, precious materials, and the established values of Chinese objects amongst private collectors and dealers. In this way the items, although nominally meaningful because of their relationship with Dunn and his exhibition, were not in fact valued at sale because of their one-time status as exhibits, but were rather sold within the conventions of trading in Chinese artefacts which was then current in England. In this way, at the sale porcelain and fine art objects fetched the highest prices, whilst the everyday items which had attracted the most attention amongst the exhibition audience, were in this context de-valued. The concrete terms in which Chinese objects were perceived in the auction environment become more apparent in the light of the resemblances between the catalogue descriptions of the items and collection in comparison with those which appended a similar sale in 1799, that of Van Braam's smaller collection of Chinese art and artefacts which had also originated in Philadelphia, and was also sold by Christie and Manson. At the Van Braam sale, as there was to be surrounding Dunn's exhibition, there was a constant emphasis upon the genuineness and originality of the collection, and especially upon the extent of dedication and endeavour of the proprietor, so that the 1799 catalogue introduces the lots as 'THIS

superb Collection made by Mr. VAN BRAAM, during his late residence in China, and in the Course of his extensive Travels through that Vast Empire...', and the comprehensive nature of the collection is stressed, as it is said to offer many paintings, drawings and items 'illustrative of the Mythology, Antient [sic] and Natural History, Customs, Ceremonies, and Punishments, Manufactures, Trade, Shipping, Musical Instruments, and Games of the Chinese'.⁷⁵ Like Dunn, Van Braam was anxious to emphasize the specialness of things he had procured from the Interior, and whilst he had drawings, and not items, therefrom, the catalogue insists upon their authentic value

'This invaluable Collection of Views in the Several Provinces of China, were executed by an Ingenious native Artist, who travelled for this express Purpose, through the Interior of the Empire, by the Directions, and at the Expençe of Mr. Van Braam, who afterwards in his Travels to Pekin...had frequent Opportunities of witnessing the Fidelity of the Artist in representing many of these spots, which lay upon his Road. - This naturally induced a Belief in Mr. Van Braam, that an equal Attention had been paid to Truth, with regard to Places which he had no opportunity of Seeing'.⁷⁶

Regarding the items for sale, the descriptive terms in which they were presented at Van Braam's sale were, typically, characterising Chinese art and objects as intricate, clever, rare, and sometimes odd, as words such as 'genuine', 'delicate', 'finely executed', 'ingeniously carved', 'beautiful', 'uncommon', and 'curious' recur often. In the concluding paragraph of the catalogue the whole is described as a 'valuable and highly curious Assemblage'. In the

⁷⁵ Christie & Manson *Catalogue of a capital, and truly valuable assemblage of Chinese Drawings, Paintings, Natural and Artificial Curiosities, the Property of A.E. Van Braam, Esq.* (Fri. Feb.15-Sat. Feb.16, 1799), 2.

⁷⁶ Van Braam catalogue, 9.

1851 sale catalogue, there is, for the first time in the Collection's history, a detraction of attention from Dunn, and greater emphasis upon the rare and bejewelled value of the items, as although many 'miscellaneous' items are characterised as 'curious', most descriptive attention is given to porcelain and ivories, and they are evaluated in terms of their material or artistic merits, as they are 'richly enamelled', 'elaborately carved', 'very elegant', 'elegantly ornamented', 'beautiful', 'superb', 'very fine...a rare specimen', and so forth. From this it can be seen that the auctioneers were selling these artefacts with a view to their preciousness, as no matter how 'rare' things such as shoes and caps might have been in England, everyday things did not reach high prices, and were sold mostly in large collective lots. This accommodation of the exhibits back in the art market can be seen to in some senses suggest a return to the 'commodity state', and that they had been, as Appadurai terms it, temporarily 'diverted'. He also explains how in certain circumstances it is not surprising that objects seem to be easily subsumed into a different system of evaluation from the one in which they had previously had quite opposite significances, as the processes of connoisseurship through which they were sold did not attend the fact that they had once been celebrated as representative exhibits of China, but were more rigidly entrenched in older spheres of interest: 'ways of knowing, judging, trading, and buying are harder to change than ideologies about guilds, prices, or production'.⁷⁷

Once again, from the time of the sale until the present day, the objects are lost to us, and their ultimate or current meanings cannot be established. This reinforces the fact that it is only

⁷⁷ Appadurai, 46.

through the historical event of the exhibition that they have any collective identity at all, and that their status as a permanent representation of the essence of China is not historically valid.

All this has been to demonstrate that Dunn's display could not be perceived from a critical viewpoint as an ultimate reconstruction of the subject he claimed, but it would be unjust to his exhibition to suggest from this that the event was essentially meaningless or deceitful in terms of its real historical significance. What the Collection did successfully offer was a more comprehensive and representative portrayal of Canton -actually the only part of China to which Westerners had access - than had ever been experienced before in England, and whilst it was misleading in that it claimed to exhibit a whole Empire, there is an extent to which this criticism is harsh in the light of the lack of substantial engagement with China in London, and it would be naive to expect that the English audience could or should have differentiated between the real micro- and macrocosmic achievements of the show. The most convincing components of the event in sealing the display as epitomic were, as was seen in the previous Chapter, the figurative tableaux. It was suggested in consideration of the reviews that there was a dichotomy concerning the status of the clay sculptures in that on one side they were admired for their truth to life and identity as individual portraits, and that on the other they were seen to symbolise the collective categories of Chinese people of whom each figure was seen to be an example, in accordance with the characteristics of metonymic representation of the East described by Richon above. The following brief discussion will attend the

special nature of wax and clay figures as a sub-genre much used for 'real-life' exhibitions, and also how recent theoretical work has suggested that such figures occupy a particular place in a hierarchy of sculptural representation, and that this has particular resonances for Dunn's use of them in the Chinese Collection.

On the most tangible level, it is clear that realistic sculptures in many media were often used in exhibitions, particularly of foreign subjects, in the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. The established nature of this illustrative mode is indicated by the use of life-size sculptures of 'native' figures outside their respective countries' courts at the Great Exhibition, and sculptures continued to be used in foreign displays, especially when live peoples were not shown. Of the types of figures, waxworks have received the most attention, partly because of their established use in scientific anatomical research, and also in the context of their use by artistic sculptors; the sustained success and popularity of Madame Tussaud's and the Grevin wax museum in Paris could also be cited as indicating the consistent appeal of more popular wax displays. Whilst it is probable that Dunn's figures were formed of some kind of clay and were certainly promoted as superior to wax, the fact that they were mistaken for waxworks and shared the same modes of presentation of tableaux such as the showpieces of Madame Tussaud's⁷⁸ (in that they were dressed in 'real' garments, placed in true-life domestic/workplace environments, and so forth), permits use of literature dealing with waxwork as helpful in thinking about them. Waxworks can be

⁷⁸ Although it has been shown that Chinese figures were not displayed in this way at Madame Tussaud's, the more spectacular exhibits, such as Napoleon lying in state and the Chamber of Horrors, were presented 'in context'.

recognised as a logical medium for the representation of foreign peoples in ethnographical exhibitions in that those shows were founded in empirical observation, and the media of fine art monumental sculpture such as marble and bronze would therefore have been inappropriate for both the instructive and sensational tones of representation desired. Moreover, the relationship between wax modelling and scientific investigation would have accorded with the requirements of credibility and classification prevalent in ethnological research and theory at this time, and was therefore a fitting medium for communicating 'realistic' and authentic evidence. Jordanova, writing about Madame Tussaud's, has pointed out some of the ambiguities which arise from viewing wax figures, however, in that the scientific principles and creation of meticulous effects suggest an instructive power, whilst the same details inevitably evoke emotional responses:

'On the one hand we "learn" something from the models, while on the other a whole array of feelings - from admiration to hate - may be elicited...And in all these cases we can admire the craftsmanship, which is in effect to acknowledge wax models as human creations, while at the same time being struck by their verismilitude, which is to play down their artificiality'.⁷⁹

The last sentence here exactly frames the dual responses to Dunn's figures already recorded, as his sculptures were praised for their fidelity to life, and their execution by 'native' artists, but then were readily accepted as realistic and capable of revealing emotional and personal characteristics of the Chinese in general.

The same observations regarding the assumptions made around realistic sculpture have been offered by Schor in her

⁷⁹ Jordanova, 36.

analysis of the contemporary photorealist American sculptor, Duane Hanson.⁸⁰ Introducing Hanson's work, Schor locates it in a tradition of detailed representation epitomised by Balzac, and she records an assessment of the encapsulatory effects Hanson's sculptures have been seen to achieve:

'Duane Hanson is the Balzac of twentieth-century American sculpture, a creator of types rendered in highly particularized and ideally transparent detail: "not a line around the mouth, wrinkled pouch beneath the eyes, discolored skin on the neck, stubble on the chin, or frayed cuff is shown that does not betray its bearer's sex, age, health, social class, diet, occupation, character, idiosyncracies and personal habits. From such a compendium social historians could reconstruct a convincing model of the society in which the subject lived".⁸¹

This is an elaborate rephrasing of the ideology Dunn and Langdon asserted, and again accords with Prown's idea that cultural artefacts can be used as psycho-sociological gauges. Schor also posits that Hanson's sculptures have been seen to emit emotional power and intimidate the viewer in the same way that Jordanova noted of Madame Tussaud's:

"Encountering a Hanson...is shocking; it violates our sense of reality"; "Hanson's sculptures can cause one shock after another. They are so realistic that they are thrilling, almost frightening."

The shock effect created by Hanson's lifelike sculptures is one we know better under a different name: the uncanny'.⁸²

⁸⁰ Schor, N. *Reading in Detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine* (1987), Chapter 9, 'Duane Hanson: Truth in Sculpture', 131-140.

⁸¹ Greenwood, M. 'Current Representational Art: Five Other Visions', *artscanada* (Dec. 1976-Jan. 1977), 24; quoted in Schor, 131.

⁸² O'Doherty, B. and Beckelmann, J., quoted by Bush, M.H., *Duane Hanson* (1976); quoted in Schor, 134.

She goes on to examine the concept of the uncanny from the psychoanalytical works of Jentsch, a contemporary of Freud, in which he noted of waxes

"The disagreeable impression easily aroused in many people upon visiting wax-museums, wax-works, and panoramas is well-known. It is often difficult, especially in the half-darkness, to distinguish a life-size wax figure or similar figure from a person. Such a figure, for some impressionable individuals, has the power to prolong their discomfort, even after they have decided whether or not the figure is animated",⁸³

and in order to determine what causes this discomfort, Schor turns to consideration of the fact that they are clothed. Thus she notes of Hanson that

'the shock effect produced by Hanson's sculptures is due not to their anatomical verisimilitude, but rather to their vestimentary realism. In an article comparing Hanson to John de Andrea, whose plastic figures are naked, Joseph Mashek states: "Duane Hanson's people are clothed. The nature of their dress, in fact, grants them a truly realistic quality of exemplarity",⁸⁴

and in another instance,

'Harold Rosenberg writes "Of the sculpture...Hanson's *Businessman* comes closest to fooling the eye, no doubt through the assistance of authentic posture and clothing; de Andrea's *Sitting Black Boy* is, by being naked, unable to rise to this level of deception".⁸⁵

⁸³ Jentsch, E. *Psychiatrisch-Neurologische Wochenschrift* (1906), 22; quoted in Schor, 138.

⁸⁴ Mashek, J. 'Verist Sculpture: Hanson and de Andrea', in Battock, G. (ed.) *Super Realism: A Critical Anthology* (1975), 196; quoted in Schor, 138.

⁸⁵ Rosenberg, H. *Super Realism* (1972), 139; quoted in Schor, 139.

Dunn's figures, and the genre to which they belong, can, therefore, be seen to fit the characterisation of deceit not so much through the use of real subjects as models, but rather the appending of real clothing, furniture, settings, and so forth, which permit the mistaking of wax figures for real people noted by Jentsch. Whilst none of this is to suggest that Dunn's tableaux were actually or actively frightening or alienating, it is clear that they were some of a species of sculpture which was and is perceived to be ultimately 'realistic' in Richon's 'slice of life' terms; Schor goes further to suggest 'hyperrealistic'.

The notion of the 'hyperreal' has received some attention recently amongst writers addressing the breaking down of certainties concerning concepts of what is 'real', 'fake', 'fact', 'fiction', 'truth', 'simulation', and so forth, which has been identified as characteristic of postmodernity. Without wishing to divert this discussion into consideration of the validity of these ideas, the work which deals most overtly with hyperrealism in museums of popular culture, Eco's *Travels in Hyperreality*, contains observations of the particular techniques and effects of wax museums which are especially pertinent for thinking about 'realistic' representations which rely upon physical or tacit verisimilitude for their authority and power. In his introduction, Eco defines the 'Hyperreal' which he has experienced in the wax museums of America. For him the most disturbing fact about such displays is that there is no overt acknowledgement on the part of the exhibitors that what is presented is not 'the real thing'; that in the specific case of reconstructed works of art, for example, there is no admission that what is now on offer will not be exactly as effective - if not more so - than the original. This notion that the

refutation of the original is potentially deceitful is interesting in thinking about representations of alien cultures in that as has been shown, there is no recognition there, either, that it is not the authentic experience, but a simulated one, of the subject which is being offered (or, more precisely, sold). Thus Eco speaks of the techniques by which the wax museums achieve these effects: 'in the reconstruction...the original object and the wax figurine mingle in a continuum that the visitor is not invited to decipher'.⁸⁶ This can be seen to have been exactly the situation at the Chinese Collection, wherein the location of the life-size models within 'real' environments complete with real furniture and so forth deluded the audience into the belief that this was what Chinese people were. Whilst it would be patronising to suggest that any audience, Victorian or contemporary, would be incapable of differentiating between these models and living Chinese, Eco's observations have special weight in that he posits that such reconstructions are especially dangerous when the viewer has no access to the original subject from which to formulate judgement as to the validity of the representation. This is to say that in such displays, the impression of realism is achieved not through the audience's own appreciation of the resemblance between the original and the simulated, but rather, the degree of accomplishment of conventional techniques of representation determined by the exhibiting culture enforce the success or otherwise of the display:

'The authenticity...is not historical, but visual. Everything looks real, and therefore it is real; in any case the fact that it

⁸⁶ Eco, U. *Travels in Hyperreality* (1986), 9.

seems real is real, and the thing is real even if, like Alice in Wonderland, it never existed'.⁸⁷

The last phrase of this quotation points to what was potentially harmful about the realism of Dunn's display: whereas China, unlike Alice in Wonderland, did exist, the real knowledge and experience of it possessed by the nineteenth-century audience was so little that there can have been no room for comparison with the 'original' or referent. It will be shown in the following section that there were serious consequences for the East of this type of 'authentic' representation within the West, and that whilst none of this is to blame Dunn for seeking to give an accurate view of China, this lack of referent gave him authority to represent China in any way he chose, and be accepted.

The extent to which wax images can be seen to be more powerful when what is represented is an unknown quantity is illustrated by the instance of Silliman's visiting Madame Tussaud's on his visit to England in 1851. He was immediately drawn to the Chinese figures on display, and playfully described their resemblance to life:

'On entering the first room of the museum, exactly at the door and sitting in a chair, a pleasant young Chinese, a door-keeper, as I supposed, almost spoke to me, and I did quite speak to him, so lifelike was he, but as he seemed not to understand English, we passed on...Although no figures in these rooms spoke, three gave signs of life. One, a Chinese lady in a rich oriental dress, was standing on her little feet, by her husband, while he, a Hong merchant in splendid attire, was listening to some communication from her; and although we could not hear what she said, she gave effect to her address by an earnest look and by a gentle movement of her head'.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Eco, 16.

⁸⁸ Silliman, B. *A Visit to Europe in 1851* (1854), 430-1.

Although it is clear that this extract is lighthearted and intended to enhance the success of Madame Tussaud's modelling, it is reproduced here in order to demonstrate simply that such jokes could be made about Chinese figures; Silliman would surely not have used images of Wellington, or Queen Victoria to make this point without facing ridicule for his lack of recognition that they were obviously not originals.

There is one part of the event which differed from both the artefacts and the figures in that it had a separate life-history and became detached from the Collection at a relatively early stage, and can be seen to have performed a unique function for the show. The pagoda which formed the facade of the original building in St. George's Place served a particular use in that it was the direct visual draw for the audience, and was intended to be striking in its own right, in addition to announcing the subject it prefaced. The pagoda was subject, as were all the other exhibits, to an insistence upon its authenticity, as it was described as being a copy from a model of a real Chinese Summer House in the Collection, and it was also used to emphasize the extent of Dunn's individual achievement as it was promoted as being laboriously erected for the purpose. The 'biography' of this component of the exhibition can be summarised briefly, but it is nonetheless significant, for it reinforces the identification of context as crucial to meaning as was observed of the exhibits themselves, and further, its eventual destination can be seen to typify an attitude towards a specific aspect of Chinese culture which had existed

from the early eighteenth century and remnants of which still can be seen at the present day.

When it was first built, the significance of the pagoda is easily identifiable: it was an enticement to see the exhibition, and could depend upon attracting attention through its exoticism relative to the buildings which surrounded it. This role remained unchanged until the closure of the show in 1846, and its sale to Hackney Council for erection in Victoria Park. At this point the original referent of the structure, the Collection, was lost, and its meaning can be seen to have been greatly transformed, as it became part of a different arena of leisure and recreation. Benedict points out that built structures which had once performed a vital unifying symbolic function in the duration of the International shows, such as the Crystal Palace in 1851 and the Tour Eiffel at the Paris show on 1889, are frequently all that remain of the complete events after their closure, but further that their relationship to those events is usually quickly and easily forgotten:

'These focal structures were ephemeral. They represented the fair, a rather hodgepodge collection of exhibitors, while it lasted. When the fair closed, most of them were torn down...Their original significance was forgotten or recalled with difficulty. The focal structures represented the collectivity that was the fair. When it disappeared, they disappeared also or changed their referents'.⁸⁹

This can be seen to have been the case for Dunn's pagoda, but unlike the Crystal Palace for the Tour Eiffel, the pagoda was not sufficiently unique in form to have lost all meaning aside from technological achievement or visual impact, as a particular frame

⁸⁹ Benedict, 14.

of reference already existed for pagodas. This was that pagoda-like structures and 'oriental' architectural motifs had long been connected with frivolity and amusement through their use on private estates and in public pleasure parks and gardens.⁹⁰ It is ironic, therefore, that Dunn's structure, which had been erected partly for the impact it would have in a predominantly residential area, should have been relocated in its most natural and uncontroversial environment in England. But further, it is historically significant that there was such a natural site, and that ultimately this part of Dunn's radical endeavour to present China seriously should have been so easily transferred back into a traditional arena of Orientalist representation.

This section has attempted to analyse the significance of the exhibition in that it used a particular object-based form of representation, and it can be concluded that whilst Dunn's reconstruction of Canton and offering of a large number of Chinese objects was unique in extent at the time, its claims for absolute realism cannot be justified. In addition to this and the context of exhibiting foreign cultures which was attended in the first section, it remains to be seen how far circumstances and expectations for the specific representation of China, as opposed to any other nation, affected and effect the contemporary and historical significance of the event.

⁹⁰ Conner's history of the development of Eastern motifs and structures within European buildings describes the use of pagodas comprehensively. The most famous and popular public sites at the time of Dunn's show would have been the *chinoiserie* gardens of Ranelagh and Vauxhall, which had been 'orientalised' in the mid-eighteenth century. Conner, P. *Oriental Architecture in the West*, chapter 4.

A Chinese Museum, Curiosity Street: attitudes towards China and the Chinese during and after the exhibition.

The final section of this study will examine the significance of Dunn's exhibition as a representation of the specific subject of China and the Chinese. Recent research into the relationship between West and East in the nineteenth century points to events such as the Chinese Collection as having historical pertinence in addition to that within the contexts already charted, in that they were part of a persistent drive towards cultural appropriation of the Orient by Europe, a process which was in turn part of the development of political and economic imperialism. Said's pioneering work *Orientalism* is the most prominent in this field, and although his analysis is problematic in its lack of direct relevance to some parts of the East including China, the general observations he posits are useful in thinking about a collective Western approach towards 'Oriental' cultures at this time. It has been shown that the consolidation of what Said terms an 'Orientalist' ideology was achieved during the nineteenth century through many cultural forces, among them scientific and linguistic disciplines, artistic and literary works, the media, and ethnographical exhibitions. In order to discern to what extent the Chinese Collection can be considered as part of Western Orientalism, there follows a brief account of attitudes towards China during and after the event, and from this it will be seen how far the show affected those attitudes. It will be concluded that the exhibition plays an important role in enhancing understanding of cultural interaction between East and West in this pre-Darwinian, proto-Imperial period.

Said's basic premise, which has challenged many aspects of humanitarian studies of the East, is that 'the Orient is not an inert fact of nature', and that study of it cannot but be subjective, so that 'Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and "the Occident."'91 He states that the purpose in setting up this distinction has always been in order that the West overpowers the East comprehensively, so that Said's personal definition of this cultural phenomenon is of 'Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient'.92 Much of the work describes the strategies used by various European and American disciplines to insure that authority, but, crucially, in all fields from interior design to phrenology it is the fact that the power of definition of the 'Orient' is presumed by the West which allows authoritative judgement and justification:

'The Orient was Orientalized not only because it was discovered to be "Oriental" in all those ways considered commonplace by an average nineteenth-century European, but also because it *could be* - that is, submitted to being - *made Oriental*'.93

There are difficulties with this suggestion in the case of China, which was not, in Said's sense of colonisation, 'submissive', yet the ultimate conclusion drawn from the fact of the 'Orient' being an entity and concept essentially created by the West is at the crux of this study of the Chinese Collection. Said notes that what Orientalist practice really tells us about is not the East, but the processes of self-identification in the West:

⁹¹ Said, E. *Orientalism* (1985), 4; 2.

⁹² Said, 3.

⁹³ Said, 5-6.

'my real argument is that Orientalism is - and does not simply represent - a considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture, and as such has less to do with the Orient than it does with "our" world'.⁹⁴

From this it can be seen that the real purpose of setting up the Orient-Occident polar axis is to establish difference and encourage comparison with the 'Other' (in this case the Orient), so that the defining culture 'never loses the upper hand':

'a more knowledgeable attitude towards the alien and exotic was abetted not only by travelers and explorers but also by historians for whom European experience could profitably be compared with other, as well as older civilizations'.⁹⁵

Why Said's work is especially relevant to this study arises from his identification of the nineteenth century as a crucial period for the unification of approaches towards the Orient across many disciplines, permitted by a compounding European belief in the enabling power of technology and progress to conquer the world:

'During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the Orientalists became a more serious quantity, because by then the reaches of imaginative and actual geography had shrunk, because the Oriental-European expansion in search of markets, resources, and colonies'.⁹⁶

The confidence allowed by this new status for Orientalist studies made for an authoritative 'schematization' of the Orient, which effectively established limited 'objective' forms for representing it. Thus:

⁹⁴ Said, 12.

⁹⁵ Said, 117.

⁹⁶ Said, 95.

'Out of this comes a restricted number of typical encapsulations: the journey, the history, the fable, the stereotype, the polemical confrontation. These are the lenses through which the Orient is experienced, and they shape the language, perception, and form of the encounter between East and West'.⁹⁷

The significance of the power and desire to 'encapsulate' the East articulated here has obvious bearing upon Dunn's endeavour. As the suppositions of Orientalism became more established, the scientific, literary, artistic, and philosophical activities of which it consisted began to engage in a process of reiteration and confirmation - this was to become especially important later in the century when Orientalism had lost most of its humanitarian thrust, become inextricably linked with colonialism, and 'had accomplished its self-metamorphosis from a scholarly discourse to an imperial institution'.⁹⁸ Said asserts that it is not the desire to know the Other which is harmful, but rather, the idea of absolute possession which results from constant restatement of established mythologies makes for ignorant and self-gratifying practice which leaves no room for fresh, topical consideration or unbiased analysis. He explains

'There is nothing especially controversial or reprehensible about such domestications of the exotic...My point, however, is to emphasize the truth that the Orientalist, as much as anyone in the European West who thought about or experienced the Orient, performed this kind of mental operation. But what is more important still is the limited vocabulary and imagery that impose themselves as a consequence',⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Said, 58.

⁹⁸ Said, 95.

⁹⁹ Said, 60-7.

and, moreover, this leads to a cyclical process: 'What the Orientalist does is to confirm the Orient in his readers' eyes; he neither tries nor wants to unsettle already firm convictions'. From this, eventually the lack of ability or unwillingness to reappraise leads to a loss of all sight of the original referent, and 'truth, in short, becomes a function of learned judgement, not of the material itself, which in time seems to owe even its existence to the Orientalist'. This issue of the authority of the individual expert has already been looked at in terms of the status of ethnological collectors - and of which Dunn was especially confident - and Said, too notes the reputation of and trust in complete knowledge enjoyed by Orientalist specialists, to the extent that their real subject becomes redundant: 'The modern Orientalist was, in his view, a hero rescuing the Orient from the obscurity, alienation, and strangeness which he himself had properly distinguished'.¹⁰⁰ Across different disciplines, and genres within them, therefore, the same ideas were recited and re-emphasized, so that the 'East' was consistently accommodated - and suppressed - to fit the Western requirements of 'Otherness':

'From the onset, then, Orientalism carried forward two traits: (1) a newly found scientific self-consciousness based on the linguistic importance of the Orient to Europe, and (2) a proclivity to divide, subdivide, and redivide its subject matter without ever changing its mind about the Orient as being always the same, unchanging, uniform, and radically peculiar object'.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Said, 121; Said states earlier that by 'modern', he is referring to scholars and writers from the late eighteenth to the twentieth centuries.

¹⁰¹ Said, 98.

There are many ways in which Said's observations have bearing upon understanding and evaluating English perceptions of China during the 1840s and the role played by Dunn's Collection therein. There follows a brief survey of direct consideration of the Chinese at the time of the event, and, using the general scheme of Orientalism laid down above, the study will culminate with suggestions as to what the exhibition reveals about British attitudes towards the East at this time. It should be noted that Said himself, albeit consciously, has his own chosen notion of 'Orient', and, given his personal preoccupations with the Franco-British treatment of the Middle East which forms the bulk of his research, it is only the aspects of his work which inform analysis of Orientalism in general which will be taken into account. It will be concluded that China, although not unique in falling outside his central focus, can be seen to have exhibited special characteristics, and provoked particular responses within the West.

One of the most important aspects of the consolidation of Orientalism in the early and mid-nineteenth century was the escalation of scientific interest in other races. This has already been discussed in the context of its relationship to ethnographical exhibitions, but, as the development of anthropology and related disciplines were to become such important constituents and vindicators of British imperialism, it remains to be seen how pre-Darwinian theory located the Chinese. These disciplines were not, before Darwin, cogent or unilateral in their ideologies, and the notion of a concrete racial hierarchy was by no means fully established. A brief survey of some of the most prominent writings on race in the first half of the century will reveal that

within them, the Chinese were discussed through a range of attitudes encompassing complete lack of interest, cautious respect and meticulous anatomical empiricism.

A good example of the 'vague but potent' concept of race cited by Bolt above as prevalent in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is provided by the work of a surgeon, Charles White, entitled *An account of the Regular Gradation in Man, and in different animals and vegetables; and from the former to the latter*. Herein White attempted to describe the various types of man through comparative anatomy, but, characteristically for this period, the analysis is unbalanced, dealing predominantly with negroes, Jews and gypsies. His underlying premise is that Europeans are the most advanced of races, and that 'the African, more especially in those particulars in which he differs from the European, approaches to the ape'.¹⁰² There is no systematic description of races other than negroes and Europeans, with Asiatics not present at all, from which it could be concluded that White was simply uninterested or uninformed about them, or, more tenuously, that they did not easily fit into his linear theory, as was to be the case in later anthropological works. In any case his grand conclusion clarifies the message he seeks to enforce, and reveals the nature of the work as an idealistic glorification of European peoples:

'Ascending the line of gradation, we come at last to the white European; who being most removed from the brute creation, may, on that account, be considered the most beautiful of the human

¹⁰² White, C. *An account of the Regular Gradation in Man, and in different animals; and from the former to the latter*. Read to the *Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester in the year 1795* (1799), 83.

race. No one will doubt his superiority in intellectual prowess...In what other quarter of the globe shall we find the blush that overspreads the soft features of the beautiful women of Europe, that emblem of modesty, of delicate feelings, and of sense? Where that nice expression of the amiable and softer passions in the countenance; and that general elegance of features and complexion? Where, except on the bosom of the European woman, two such plump and snowy white hemispheres, tipped with vermillion?'¹⁰³

By the 1810s and '20s more sophisticated and contentious writings were beginning to proliferate in England and America, among the most influential of which were those of a Professor of Anatomy, Sir William Lawrence. Lawrence was essentially a monogenesist and humanitarian, and as Lorimer explains, although he 'thought Negroes resembled monkeys and were less intelligent than Europeans,' he fundamentally 'argued in favour of the unity of man', and 'concluded that racial differences were similar to variations in breeds of domestic animals'.¹⁰⁴ In spite of his belief in monogenesis, however, Lawrence's work was seen to challenge basic religious beliefs, as he advocated the equality of all types of men regardless of their status as heathens or Christians, and the publication of his ideas in 1819 under the title *Lectures on Physiology, Zoology, and the Natural History of Man* provoked many published responses.¹⁰⁵ Rennell's *Remarks on*

¹⁰³ White, 134.

¹⁰⁴ Lorimer, 134.

¹⁰⁵ These included: Rennell, T. *Remarks on Scepticism...Being an answer to the views of...Mr. Lawrence, &c.* (1819); Anon, *Cursory observations upon the lectures on Physiology, Zoology, and the Natural History of Man...by W.L.,...in a series of letters addressed to that gentleman; With a concluding letter to his pupils. By one of the people called Christians* (1819); Philostratus (pseud.), *Somatopsychonoologia...Being an examination of the controversy concerning life carried on by MM. Lawrence, Abernethy, &c.* (1823).

Scepticism and the anonymous *Cursory Observations* displayed particular indignance, as Rennell considered it 'my duty, from the office which I hold in the University of Cambridge, to call the attention of the Public to the mischievous tendency of such opinions',¹⁰⁶ and the latter writer was outraged at both Lawrence's message and his delivery:

'Instead of contemplating physiology, in its reference to surgery and medicine, you have exhibited it as the road to materialism in metaphysics, to faction in politics, and to infidelity in religion...Neither you, nor any other man, have a moral right to use such a public office, for the purpose of degrading and vilifying the civil and religious institutions of their country. When our children are sent to acquire a knowledge of surgery and anatomy, we do not expect them to be hearing tirades against the manners, the laws, and the religious principles of their ancestors...'¹⁰⁷

Whilst Lawrence too did not discuss Asiatic races, his role is important in that he was authoritative in thinking about race and the question of genesis which was to dominate scientific scholarship in the 1830s and '40s. This issue can be seen to account for the centering of attention upon the incongruity of establishing equality of races in the light of the patent 'defects' of what were considered to be the 'lowest' races of Africa and away from the less obvious lack of civilisation in the East.¹⁰⁸

As the debate around monogenesis escalated in the 1840s, however, its major protagonists became increasingly concerned

¹⁰⁶ Rennell, v.

¹⁰⁷ *Cursory Observations*, 8,16.

¹⁰⁸ One of Rennell's chief objections to Lawrence was that he abused his professorial power, as he states in his introduction that 'The treatises, which I have been induced to notice, strike deep at the root of all Religion, both natural and revealed, and, as I have been lately informed upon the best authority, upon the minds of many they have had a considerable effect', 5.

with collecting scientific evidence to support their opposing viewpoints, and as research became more rigorous, all races, including those of Asia, had to be accounted for. Both S.G. Morton, Professor of Anatomy at the University of Pennsylvania and a disclaimer of monogenesis, and J.C. Prichard, an English medic who argued for it, in different ways discussed Asians including the Chinese to support their theories. One point upon which they were agreed was that Europeans were undoubtedly the superior world race. Morton did not commit himself on the true nature of genesis, but did consider that the five different global races he identified, 'Caucasian, Mongolian, Malay, Aboriginal American and Negro', evolved through adaptation to environment. From this he posits that judgements of relative merit can be drawn from the success with which each race has done so, a theory for which the Chinese caused him problems, as he could not refute their fitness for prolonged survival. In order to overcome this recognition that the Chinese have a considerable record of achievement, Morton's final surmise is that Caucasians must be superior because they have infiltrated and overpowered more parts of the world than any other race, so that

'In Asia, Africa, in America, in the torrid and in the frigid zones, have not all the other races of men yielded and given place to this one? In the Mongolian family civilization was early, its progress was slow, and its degree is fixed. What it has been for ages, it is now. But the Caucasian stock, as seen in the Egyptians, the Chaldeans, the Greeks, the Romans, in the various nations of southern Europe, and of later time in the Anglo-Saxon race to which we ourselves belong, has marched onwards from one degree of civilization and refinement to another, which the other

racess have never approached, nor are likely, in the ordinary course of events, ever to realise'.¹⁰⁹

Prichard, adding force to Lawrence's much-read monogenetic humanitarian theories (the ninth edition of his *Lectures* was published in 1844), proposed that 'original man was black, and paled in colour as civilisation progressed'.¹¹⁰ In contrast to Morton, he sought to give authoritative proof of his ideas by presenting unrhetorical empirical data rather than referring to historical achievement as he attempted to establish a detailed hierarchy. Within this the Chinese are treated cautiously, so that no real judgement is made as to their location in a racial scheme, and Prichard concentrates most upon anatomical evidence of the Chinese countenance: 'Its greatest characteristics are breadth and flatness in the suborbital region of the face, outward extension of the zygomatic bones, and an angular position of the eyes'.¹¹¹ Nothing is said of their society or 'civilisation', therefore, but there is some implicit allowance for their refinement as it is physically manifest; crucially this is permitted in terms of how far the Chinese are seen to resemble Caucasians:

'M. Abel Remusat...assures us that the women of the middle provinces have fine complexions with as great variety of colour as those of the middle countries of Europe...M. Gutzlaff says, that at Tientsin he found the inhabitants more like Europeans than any

¹⁰⁹ Morton, S.G. *Brief Remarks on the Diversities of the Human Species, and on some kindred subjects. Being an introductory lecture delivered before the class of Pennsylvania Medical College, in Philadelphia, Nov. 1st. 1842* (1842), 22.

¹¹⁰ Lorimer, 134.

¹¹¹ Prichard, J.C. *The Natural History of Man; comprising inquiries into the modifying influence of physical and moral agencies on the different tribes of the human family* (1843), 231.

Asiatics whom he had seen...the females are fair and are allowed to walk about'.¹¹²

The above writings reflect the inconclusion of racial theories at the time of Dunn's exhibition; in the late 1840s Morton was to refute monogenesis conclusively and make way for a far less humanitarian approach, as Lorimer suggests:

'Morton's telling rebuttal of monogenesis came at a propitious time in the development of English racial attitudes. By 1850 interest in the scientific and humanitarian defence of alien races was clearly on the decline'.¹¹³

Consideration of these pre-Darwinian theories has been given here because ethnographical exhibitions undoubtedly owed some of their public interest to the awakening of these disciplines, and *vice versa*. It was noted earlier, also, that science and empirical research were utilised by political and economic imperialists in order to justify their activities. It is clear, however, that that very empiricism was based upon categories of 'race' which were only originally permitted by the reportage of travellers - missionaries, explorers, colonialists, and latterly, entrepreneurs - so that, as has been shown, the races which attracted most interest amongst scientists were those with which the West had integrated or had subjugated most. Thus, as Said notes, even geography became a flexible matrix: 'The geographic boundaries accompany the social, ethnic, and cultural ones in expected ways'.¹¹⁴ Science, therefore,

¹¹² Prichard, 230.

¹¹³ Lorimer, 136.

¹¹⁴ Said, 54.

was as subjective as any other discipline, and in the sphere of establishing knowledge regarding foreign peoples, lay far behind the activities of historians, fiction writers and artists in the establishment of accepted truths. Said posits that the assertions of the latter practitioners were more likely to have been influential than the drier human scientists in the realm of the exotic:

'It seems a common human failing to prefer the schematic authority of a text to the disorientations of direct encounters with the human. But is this failing constantly present, or are there circumstances that, more than others, make the textual attitude likely to prevail? Two situations favor a textual attitude. One is when a human being confronts at close quarters something relatively unknown and threatening and previously distant...'¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Said, 93.

This is important for ethnographical exhibitions in general in that they offered a combination of science and visual imagery, and in some cases, accompanying texts; it has been shown that the Chinese Collection purported to be the ultimately comprehensive and credible representation of its subject: an 'Epitome' of the Celestial Empire. From 1851 onwards, exhibitions were to become vital symbols of imperial ideology and were seen as serious and reliable sources for understanding foreign cultures, yet the influential status of ethnological shows before that date remains ambiguous, and it should be established whether existing approaches to China remained prevalent in the West after the exhibition. To this end, two recorded accounts of visits to China in the late 1840s, one English, and one American, will be looked at. These were not directly linked to the exhibition in that there is no evidence that either author had seen the show, and the following observations will not, therefore, attempt to evaluate the immediate effect of Dunn's specific representation. They are valuable, however, in that they reveal an affinity of approach towards Chinese material culture, although written by Westerners of different nationalities, and also in that they treat China in a way which yet stresses its Western mythologisation through 'curiosity' and peculiarity. Both of these characteristics of the two texts raise interesting issues regarding the existence of a common, transcontinentally-established view of China dependent upon traditional iconography and vocabulary, regardless of the advances of science, and indeed, exhibitions.

Forbes' *Five Years in China* (1848) is interesting in itself in that it is a narrative of his stay in China between 1842 and 1847, approximately the duration of the Chinese Collection's establishment in London. He was a Lieutenant in the Royal Navy, and states that he was present in China during 'the late hostilities', but in his introduction it is stressed that his volume is not intended as a narrative of the Opium War, but rather, he confines himself 'to what I was able to learn of the country and its inhabitants'.¹¹⁶ Much of his account accordingly consists of eye-witness descriptions of his experiences and personal observations, and whilst he offers chapters dealing with education, religion and agriculture, he admits that when 'at a loss to understand many things that came under my notice', he referred to the *Chinese Repository* and Staunton.¹¹⁷ The sections of his work which will be looked at in detail here are his account of women and his description of the city of Shanghai, in which he discusses material culture and the characteristics of the Chinese people.

¹¹⁶ Forbes, F.E. *Five Years in China; from 1842 to 1847* (1848), 2.

¹¹⁷ Forbes, 8.

Osmond Tiffany does not state his purpose in visiting China, but in his work *The Canton Chinese, or the American's sojourn in the Celestial Empire* he indicates that he sailed from Boston, Massachusetts for Canton in 1844 and later settled in Macao.¹¹⁸ His work resembles Forbes' in that it is a personal account, reciting in detail his journey and experiences. The volume is shorter, and does not address any national or intellectual issues, but there is evidence that he is informed by sinological scholarship to some extent, as he refers to Davis. The chapter which is of interest here is entitled 'A Chinese Museum', in which Tiffany describes his impressions of the streets and shops of Canton.

The purpose of comparing the texts is that there are similarities in their reactions to and method of recording their experiences of wandering through the Chinese streets. The significance of this will be reinforced as it becomes apparent that in terms of content and style both share the general characteristics of approach of many of the reviews discussed in Chapter 3 above. This is to say that the visitors were drawn to the same foci - not always immediately presented by their subject - as were the reviewers, and further, that the like ways in which they described them are consistent with the idea of a cumulative agenda of vocabulary and imagery for the East posited by Said.

Forbes' work is especially reminiscent of the reviews in his account of women, which he entitles 'Fancies of the Ladies'. Prompted by observation of the wife of a mandarin, Forbes first notes that

¹¹⁸ Tiffany, O. *The Canton Chinese, or the American's sojourn in the Celestial Empire* (1849), iv.

'The feet are perhaps the point on which ladies pride themselves most, and to render them the most useless to themselves would appear to be the desideratum of Chinese female happiness, but Chinese only'.¹¹⁹

This is followed by a physical description of footbinding, and then by other familiar Western points of interest in Oriental women:

'Another curious fancy of the ladies, is letting the nails of the fingers grow so long as to render the hands totally useless...The eyebrows are pencilled with Indian ink, and the eyelashes put into correct shape by the barbers. The ladies of quality are seldom or never seen, but are shut up like Turks; their lives pass in music, tea-drinking, embroidery, smoking and playing chess. About one in ten of them are educated.'

These characteristics were undoubtedly of interest to Westerners, but the importance of Forbes' portrayal is that it recites the same features of females which were seen in both the description of Commissioner Lin's wife at Madame Tussaud's and the reviewers' accounts. The significance of this is that notwithstanding Dunn's inclusion of women of the lower classes in his display, it was still the most alienating ladies of the mandarin ranks who were cited as typical of Chinese femininity. The power of this mythology of universal footbinding and idle leisure in Eastern women still pertains today.

¹¹⁹ This and the following comment on women is from Forbes, 270-1.

The personal nature of Forbes' and Tiffany's accounts determines that even within the parallel descriptions of street culture, there are obviously variations in preoccupation: Forbes devotes more attention to itinerant traders, whereas Tiffany concentrates upon the most strikingly novel artefacts. Forbes describes the general effect of the streets as 'brilliant', and the thoroughfares as typically Eastern, having 'the appearance of a bazaar, or arcade'.¹²⁰ In his accounts of individual sights he adopts the familiar vocabulary of the Orientalist, using terms such as '*en grotte*', 'exotic', 'variegated', 'handsome', and 'gaudy'. The atmosphere of fantasy is suggested by the image of a tea-shop as 'fairy-like', and several objects are identified as 'curiosities'. He is quick to cite the notorious wiliness of Chinese tradesmen, stating that they show 'great ingenuity in making the purchaser and his money part good friends', and in the itinerants he displays curious interest, in some cases making comparisons with English activities, ultimately concluding that

'Every cry almost to be met with in London, or other cities, may find its equivalent in China. Dancing on the tight-rope, travelling players, gambling, cakes, oranges, &c., in short, every species of out-of-door mode of extracting money from the unwary'.¹²¹

Tiffany's account is more colourful, and opens with a sweeping conclusion as to the inherent nature of Chinese manufacturing:

¹²⁰ Forbes, 28.

¹²¹ Forbes, 46.

'Their minds, having no interest in the great topics of government or politics, are forced into the direction of the strange and fantastic; and as pay is scarcely more than enough for daily subsistence, every little root or stone becomes an object of value, if it can be turned into a wild or rare shape to hit the fancy of a virtuoso.

In the same manner, the upper classes delight in the purchase of these things, and the more outre their appearance, the higher they are valued, and kept as heirlooms in families, as plate is handed down in other countries'.¹²²

His notion of these artefacts as 'curious' is constantly apparent, as the principal thoroughfare of Canton is called 'Curiosity Street'. Again, objects are described in exotic language, as they are 'singular', 'eccentric', 'odd', 'remarkable', 'exquisite', 'enigmatical', and 'beautiful'. The workmen are praised for 'ingenuity', 'skilful deceptions', and 'miracles of modelling'. There is an interesting comparative discussion of the Japanese, but its terms are limited, and demonstrate that the extent of generalisation in respect of foreign cultures is, to some extent in ratio to the degree of unfamiliarity:

'The Japanese are more singular than their tea-drinking rivals...The Chinese have several times endeavoured to conquer them, but have always been soundly beaten by this warlike and fierce people'.¹²³

The whole concept of Canton as a 'museum' is remarkable in its connotation of the rarity and value of the items 'on display', and it seems that for Tiffany it is a useful label by which to rationalise this pleasurable Other kind of commerce:

¹²² Tiffany, 89.

¹²³ Tiffany, 103.

'It might seem proper to apologize for the manner in which these rarities are mentioned, but it is impossible to give more than a catalogue of such as are worthy of notice, and to skip from one to the other just as they come'.¹²⁴

It is important to note that both authors leave China with generally favourable impressions, but also that both emphasize the strangeness of the Chinese people. Forbes' introduction reveals his limited knowledge of China before his trip, but his tone is basically one of inquiring enthusiasm:

'It having been my lot during the last five years to cruise about the country where the quaint figures that are familiar to us on porcelain have a real existence, and man appears under such an extraordinary aspect as to have led some writers to doubt whether Noah might not have settled in China with a fourth post-diluvian born son...'¹²⁵

Early in Tiffany's volume, he is philosophical yet cautious of Eastern heathenism, but again, here and in his 'Farewell to China' at the end, he is finally positive regarding Chinese material culture and potential:

'for ages have they been acquiring those habits and customs, that must now render them so singular; and ages again must elapse before they can change and become as Christianized, liberal people. But while they have been vastly under-estimated, and while industry and ingenuity are regarded with favor, they must hold rank among the nations.

¹²⁴ Tiffany, 99.

¹²⁵ Forbes, 1.

And are not the Chinese great in their industrial arts? They have been celebrated throughout all the world for their rare and curious fabrics, and European skill has in vain endeavoured to equal many of them...Their manners, their habits, language, dress, and sentiments, have all been made the butt of witless ridicule for too long. They need a wiser government, a holier religion, in short, Christianity, to entitle them to foremost rank with the most exalted nations of the earth'.¹²⁶

These conclusions reveal an essentially aimable but non-committal interest in Chinese culture. This section has demonstrated that this is not especially surprising, even in spite of the Opium War, as disciplines attending foreign cultures at this time were inconclusive regarding China, and in general Chinese civilisation was treated with a cautious respect for a prestigious unknown, and not as an inferior potential colony. Said's analysis suggested that practically, this avoidance of controversy was permitted by the maintenance of an established iconography of 'China', as was displayed in Forbes' and Tiffany's texts.

This chapter has analysed the historical significance of the Chinese Collection today, using current writing around exhibitions, objects and Orientalism. It has been shown that the combination of these constituents of the event made for a show which reveals much about the nineteenth-century integration of academic ethnology and middle-class leisure, the role of artefacts in realistic representation, and the methods by which China was dealt with as an 'alien' culture.

¹²⁶ Tiffany, 88; 266.

CONCLUSION.

This thesis set out to chart the importance of the event of the exhibition of the Chinese Collection in terms of enhancing our understanding of nineteenth-century perceptions of, and attitudes to foreign cultures. The period in which the show was in London can be identified as a formative one for many movements and ideologies in Britain which are now seen to have become consolidated later in the century. These include colonialism, social Darwinism, trade expansion, and Orientalism, all of which influenced, and were reflected by, the sorts of ethnological displays offered by Dunn and his contemporaries. In terms of the specific subject of Dunn's show, the thesis has demonstrated that perceptions of the East and China in the 1840s were fragmentary and often contradictory, but that certain mythologies prevailed in the West, and were reinforced regardless of the widely varying intentions of exhibitors of and commentators upon the Orient. Thus, during the last phase of Dunn's show in 1851, opposing attitudes towards the Chinese can be detected within popular middle-class literature, as the favourable treatment of the Chinese Family recorded in Chapter 1 was effectively countered by a blatantly racist contemporary text: *An Authentic account of the Chinese Commission Which was sent to report on the Great Exhibition*. This is a fictional account of the visit of two envoys of the Chinese Emperor to the exhibition, in which the Chinese are characterised through the most enduring and basic myths of their barbarism, mostly with a technique of inversion, for example:

'To England, a land of perpetual fog,
Where the dog-fanciers even don't fancy roast dog;

Where the bird-nests are cared for by none but the boys,
 Who instead of devouring them treat them as toys;
 Where the tam-tam is silent, unsounded the gong;
 Where the feet of the women are eight inches long;
 Where opinions in faith are forbidden to none,
 And the number of wives is restricted to one...¹

The narrative is punctuated by familiar puns, as the Emperor laments, 'The Whole of our China is hopelessly cracked', and ultimately, when the two envoys, Congou and Sing-Song, return to Peking they receive their respective rewards for their loathing and celebration of England:

'Old Congou, next morn, was a Mandarin made,
 For having his cards so judiciously played;
 While Sing-Song, for taking a one-sided view,
 Was sentenced forthwith to be severed in two'.²

This text is interesting in that it reveals the sustained currency of particular ideas about the East, in spite of the efforts of humanitarian ethnologists, the dynamic celebration of China by philanthropists such as Dunn, and the acceptance of the Chinese family by the Queen. Whilst it would be foolish to suggest that subversive ideologies are not constantly present at any moment, the point here is that in the face of the Other, dominant and familiar imagery retains precedence in the formation of national identities over more sophisticated and oblique frames of reference. This is clarified by the original report of the *Illustrated London News* of the Chinese Family, which, although respectful

¹ Edwards, S. *An Authentic account of the Chinese Commission Which was sent to report on the Great Exhibition* (1851), 8; the work is also illustrated with caricatures of the Emperor and the two protagonists in China and in London, including at the Great Exhibition [Figs.30-36].

² Edwards, 32.

and charitable, really expressed most interest in the same constant focus for attention on China as the *Chinese Commission* :

'The three ladies possess the exceedingly small feet constituting the peculiar characteristic of the females of the upper ranks in the Chinese Empire...her Majesty and the Royal children being much amused at the helpless, and certainly inelegant, mode of walking of the ladies, the contortion of their feet effectually preventing and pedestrian exercise beyond a very short walk',³

"Tis said of women's feet this vile constraint
With Chinese Bloomers forms a great complaint;
But really nature's laws are so imperious,
It must have caused complaints a deal more serious'.⁴

The thesis has demonstrated that whilst passages such as the above show that attitudes towards China were not changed absolutely by the exhibition, this is not surprising given the embryonic nature of ethnographical displays at this time. This does not detract, however, from the importance of the event within the history of exhibiting, as it has been shown that engagement with Chinese culture in London in the preceding period was scarcely available, and the show offered by far the most comprehensive and thoughtful public display of China yet seen in Britain. The coincidence of the event with the Opium War gave extra significance to the investigation, in that reactions to it illustrate the strategies through which enemy cultures were dealt with and controversy dissipated. Moreover, in this specific instance, the evasion of confrontation with the subject-matter so clear in the reviews reveals that the nature of Orientalism was not as delineated or consistent as Said suggests.

³ *Illustrated London News* Aug. 23, 1851.

⁴ Edwards, 23.

The variety of significances which resonated from the event at the time is neatly encapsulated by two very different analyses which were not dealt with in Chapter 3. A German visitor to the show, C.G. Carus, gives an account which reveals that as an ethnological exhibition the Collection certainly achieved its aims to be comprehensive and impressive of the importance of China:

'It presents a complete collective picture of these singular people from the ceremonies used in their temples, with their colossal idols, to imitations, in carved wooden figures as large as life, of the different modes of living, trades, customs - the most complete collection of all the objects of necessity or productions of art...'

but, in terms of Dunn's undoubtedly sympathetic stance towards the Chinese, Carus's strident evaluation demonstrates the extent to which the show could not, regardless of its 'epitomic' status, determine absolute reactions in its visitors:

'after one has gone through the long hall and examined the various objects which it contains, one is constrained to come to the lamentable conclusion, that the light of more elevated beauty has never shone upon a nation of more than 3,000,000,000 of men! This view suggests a long series of melancholy thoughts. When one sees the high artistical skill of their works - contemplates the nature of their social relations - thinks upon the industry and indefatigable ingenuity of the people - one is disposed to exclaim: "Why is light given to the miserable!" Is all that mass as it is here exhibited to be compared to a single work of Phidias - to a single noble free and deep thought of Plato, or to the perfect form of a Sixtine Madonna. And why have these millions been condemned to wander in darkness, and with their ridiculous world of ceremonies and most complete servility, to form the genuine type of a "Philister?" And yet there blooms even there peculiar fortune - there is evidence of a particular kind of science and art,

and a peculiar phase of humanity is there developed. I must, however, curb the flights of thought, for time presses forward'.⁵

The last dismissive phrase of this extract could be interpreted as characterising the event as essentially a leisure-time diversion (not to be allowed too long a series of 'melancholy thoughts'), but Carus's personality could of course account for the comment. A more restrained and perhaps typical consideration of the impact of the exhibition in London is afforded by the retrospective review published in the *Art Journal* immediately following the 1851 sale, which locates the effect of the event within this period of nineteenth-century exhibiting:

'THE CHINESE COLLECTION. - This once-important collection, after many years of travel, and many resting-places, far asunder, dwindled in its progress to less than half its original size, re-appeared in London near its former locality, for the purpose of attracting the sight-seers at the Great Exhibition. A building was constructed to it close to the Albert gate, Knightsbridge, but the attraction of the Crystal Palace "allowed no rival near its throne," and, like many other exhibitions last year, it proved a failure. The building, which was intended to be merely temporary, was obliged to be constructed stronger, and many expenses were consequently incurred, which left the proprietor a loser. After an unprosperous season, the whole collection had been brought to the hammer of Messrs. Christie & Manson, the building which held it demolished, and a few scattered specimens in private hands comprise all that remains of this once curious assemblage of Chinese works'.⁶

This assessment reveals that the Chinese Collection was considered important and was respected in its time. The attribution of its demise to the dominance of the Great Exhibition

⁵ Carus, C.G. *The King of Saxony's Journey through England and Scotland in the year 1844* (1846), 146.

⁶ *Art Journal* (continuation of *Art Union*), Jan., 1852.

is perhaps ironic in view of the crucial role played by foreign cultures in the impact of that event, but reinforces the deduction that that role was of greatest significance in the context of comparison with Britain. This fact is indicative of the whole message the thesis has formulated: that other cultures in this proto-imperialist period could arouse respect, interest, indifference and contempt simultaneously in the West, and that above all, they were treated according to their relative status to what considered itself to be a dominant and superior nation.

APPENDIX I.

Introduction to the *Descriptive Catalogue of the Chinese Collection* William B. Langdon, 1842.

AT no period in the history of the world, has the attention of civilised nations been so fully directed towards China, its early history, and modern position, as at the present moment.

The single fact, that that nation comprises within its limits, a population of *three hundred and sixty millions* of human beings, and that a struggle has ensued between Great Britain and the Celestial Empire, which may involve the mightiest results, both as regards commerce and Christianity, is of itself sufficient to awaken the deepest degree of interest in the mind, as well of the philanthropist, as the philosopher. These "latter days," as they are sometimes called, are, in the prophetic view of many, destined to be marked by events of most momentous importance: events calculated no little to facilitate the onward and upward march of civilisation, to penetrate with the light of knowledge and science the darkest portions of the earth, to soften the roughness of the savage, and subdue, into something like Christianity, the millions and tens of millions of human beings, who have yet to experience the beneficent influences of a religion that has for its handmaidens, Faith, Hope, and Charity. Both these views, and the long train of eagle imaginings that are likely to be kindled in the sanguine and far-seeing mind by anticipations of what may be, prompted in some sense by what has already taken place, the aspect and destinies of China are calculated to excite the most attentive and profound consideration. It is a wonder, indeed, that a people so multitudinous, and an empire so vast, should - for many ages, and amid the numerous vicissitudes and conflicts that have prostrated thrones, revolutionised nations, and trodden, as it were, kingdoms into the dust - have experienced but little change, comparatively speaking, and existed from century to century, with scarcely a phasis observable upon its general and national characteristics and surface.

But, we think we hear some devoted missionary to the great cause of religious liberty and human happiness exclaim, that the doors of a new empire are about to be opened! A living light is about to flash among the benighted millions, and the symbols and banners of the only true God, are about to be planted in a soil and among a people who are, in many respects, prepared for the reception of the sublime truths of the gospel. A new morning seems to break upon the religious world - a new triumph is about to hymned among the cherubim and seraphim in the brighter region above us - another victory is to be achieved by the cross of

Calvary - an empire, vast and wonderful, and hitherto barred from the general diffusion of missionary knowledge, is about to be thrown open to all who are willing to take the Bible in their hands, and engage in the delightful work of winning their fellow-creatures to the true source of both temporal and eternal happiness. These to some may appear wild expectations. But all, ay, all, may be fully and speedily realised. In any event, however, the people of China, their government, morals, manners, habits, customs, tastes, and characteristics, are, at the present moment, worthy of especial study. Hitherto, these have been measurably covered with a veil; the inner traits of the nation, the minute peculiarities, the fashionable *boudoir*, the literary *coterie*, and the domestic temples of this numerous people, have been hidden from the eyes of European and American curiosity and scrutiny. True, we have had valuable books from such pens as the Abbe du Halde, Lord Macartney, the editor of Lord Amherst's Embassy, Davis, Morrison, Bridgman, Gutzlaff, and many other writers. To the literary and inquiring world are much indebted. But the authors referred to, have for the most part given the grand features of the empire, the lofty objects, the leading traits; while it remained for an American gentleman, Mr. Nathan Dunn, of Philadelphia, to enter more minutely into the costume, the manners, habits, science, arts, trades, agriculture, and genius, of this wonderful people. The author of this hasty introduction, speaks from many years personal knowledge of Mr. Dunn, in China, and in the United States. He was intimately acquainted with him in both countries, as an extensive and successful merchant, and knew that while he resided in China, for a period of twelve years, his opportunities for collecting every information were indeed extraordinary, and that they were abundantly improved by patient research, indefatigable industry, tact, courtesy, and a degree of popularity amongst the Chinese, never surpassed in the history of any foreigner. He was assisted, moreover, in his commendable labours, by Howqua, Tingqua, and other Hong merchants of considerable note; and who, in this particular, seemed to rise above the prejudices of their countrymen, and to take delight in imparting correct information. The design, at first, was merely to collect a few rare specimens for his own gratification; but the appetite grew with what it fed upon, and thus we may, without exaggeration, describe the result as the "Chinese World in Miniature." We feel satisfied that the expectations of those who may feel a desire to examine this Collection, to investigate its wonders, and thus in some sense, analyse the mental and moral qualities of the Chinese; to gather some knowledge of their idols, their temples, their pagodas, their bridges, their arts, their sciences, their manufactures, their tastes,

their fancies, their parlours, their drawing-rooms, their clothes, their finery, their ornaments, their weapons of war, their vessels, their dwellings, and the thousand *et ceteras* which make up their moving and living world, will not be disappointed. One indeed, is astonished at the vast materials, the thousands of objects, which by years of patient labour and unwearied effort, the enterprising proprietor of this Exhibition has collected. The mere catalogue, as will be seen by the extent of this volume, forms quite a study of itself. And yet, to those who really love to ponder on the results of ages and ingenuity of habit, especially among an exclusive people like the Chinese, this brief outline will afford but an imperfect idea of the mass of materials, the variety of specimens, the beauty, rarity, novelty, and extreme singularity, that are combined in this vast magazine of curiosities and wonders. A single article will illustrate whole pages of written description. The visiter appears to have the living Chinese in the images before him, and, with a little imagination, to be moving and living among them. An hour passed with such curiosities will afford, even to the youthful and careless of inquiry, a more definite and permanent idea of these Tartar-governed millions than volumes of ordinary details. The eye and the mind are both enlightened at one and the same moment; and thus, as it frequently happens, an individual to whom it would be impossible to convey a notion of a certain machine or piece of fancy-work, by a written description, has a full and perfect impression of the entire object at a single glance. As a means of education, this Collection is invaluable. It teaches by *things* rather than words. The images are visible, and tangible, and, therefore, cannot be easily misunderstood. What immense labour, for example, and what intricate details would be necessary to give an individual, who had never seen such an invention, a correct idea of a ship in full sail. Yet, present the object to the eye, and a look would at once suffice to elicit admiration, and impart a more complete general knowledge than page upon page of the most minute and elaborate composition. So with this Collection. Here we have not one object, but thousands; not a single production, but an empire with all its variety of light and shade, its experience, its mind, and the results of both for four thousand years. Writers of the highest character have been consulted in preparing this volume. It is designed as a sort of mute guide; and as the observer passes from scene to scene, the interest may be varied from the eye to the mind, by turning from the object before him to the history or description of that object. A studious effort has been made to narrate nothing but facts, and thus to impart correct information. All fiction and romance have been carefully avoided; and what is stated, has in no instance been committed to these pages, unless on competent authority. At

Philadelphia, the Collection was visited by hundreds of thousands, and in every instance, it is believed, with entire satisfaction. Many persons passed hours, nay, whole days in the room, and those who visited the Collection most frequently, seemed more delighted with every new return. The proprietor has been induced to transport it to England, at the suggestion of many of the most influential, scientific, and learned persons of the British metropolis and kingdom. He naturally feels a deep anxiety for the favourable verdict of the intelligent and discerning upon his labours. And although by no means solicitous for notoriety, or that noisy fame which so frequently accompanies mere excitement and clamour, he would be false to himself and to human nature, should he prove indifferent to the kindly expressions of that valuable portion of society who seek to make their fellow-creatures better, wiser, and happier. He has devoted the flower of his life to this Collection, and has never hesitated at expense. His effort in England has been to render, not only the Collection, but the saloon in which it is exhibited, worthy of the visits of the respectable classes. For this purpose he has built a spacious edifice, and endeavoured to make it as suitable and commodious as possible. But we must draw our hasty preface to a close. The details which follow, enumerate and furnish outlines of the leading objects of curiosity, taste, and skill in the Chinese world. As we remarked at the commencement, this wonderful people have latterly excited more attention, especially among European nations, than at any other period of their national existence. It may be, that a new and a nobler destiny awaits them; that light, knowledge, and Christian civilisation, and a more liberal communion with the families of man in other portions of the earth, are about to form an epoch in their career. If so, who may foretel the result? Who may predict what another century will accomplish? The imagination pauses at the thought and while we contemplate the wonders of steam, and the many other improvements, discoveries, and appliances of modern science, we are almost tempted to doubt the impossibility of any change in the progress of nations. But to the details of the Collection. We conclude this introduction with a few remarks on Chinese history, as an appropriate preliminary to a study of "matters and things" in the Celestial Empire.

The Chinese claim a national existence, coeval with the most remote antiquity. Much that is recorded in their annals, however, is admitted even by their own historians, to be doubtful; while the authors of every other nation who have written upon the subject, pronounce the earliest so-called history of China as absolutely fabulous. Good authorities name Fuh-he, who flourished about 2247 years before Christ, as the first Emperor. Yaou, a virtuous

sovereign, some centuries after, reigned 102 years. The empire then floated down the stream of time without any extraordinary event or national convulsion, while the morals of the people were greatly improved by the precepts and writings of their great philosopher, Confucius, who was born 550 years B.C. In the twelfth century of the Christian era, the Chinese used a paper currency, founded on Government security, being the earliest record we have of paper money. It has, however, been long discontinued, and its place supplied by the present metal coin, previously to which the shell of the tortoise and pearl oyster were used as a circulating medium in exchange for commodities, till about 200 years B.C., when the tseen above alluded to, was introduced, a description of which will be found in the following pages. A.D. 1246, Marco Polo, a Venetian, visited China, and shortly after, his brother joined him. They were received with favour by the Imperial Sovereigns. Catholic, and particularly Jesuit, missionaries, were afterwards permitted to reside in China for several ages; but were at length expelled on the pretext, real or assumed, that they interfered with the government. In the thirteenth century, China was invaded by Ghengis Khan, who put millions to the sword; and the nation finally submitted to the Mongul Tartar sovereigns, A.D. 1280. In 1368, however, the Tartars were driven out, and a native dynasty continued until 1644. In that year the Mwan-chow Tartars invaded the empire, and placed their chief upon the throne, and the present monarch, Taou Kwang, is descended from that successful warrior. The Portuguese were the first European traders to China; and they were soon followed by the British, French, American, and other nations.

APPENDIX II.

Punch's Guide to the Chinese Collection
(London, Punch Office, 1844). 6d.

'INTRODUCTION.

The geographical position of the Chinese Collection is near Hyde Park Corner, and within the longitude of a sixpenny omnibus, but the fare by a cab must depend on the latitude which the driver allows himself.

The building appropriated to the Exhibition was not long in erecting; but now that it is erected, it is one of the longest rooms in the metropolis. On entering, the visitor might fancy himself in China, except that he is, in plain English, asked for a shilling, which he will have no reason to grudge for such a treat as that which is in store for him.

The popular information in this country regarding China has until latterly been obtained from the shop-windows of the tea-dealers. From these sources, it has been ascertained that the Chinese are a people whose heads are very lightly fixed on to their bodies, which may account for the very great facility with which the former are severed from the latter, at the will of the Emperor.

Perhaps, however, the earliest record that we have of Chinese customs, is to be found in the willow-pattern plate. From this it would appear that the Celestials are in the habit of fishing from the tops of bridges, with baits something like oranges, by means of lines not long enough to reach the water. It follows, therefore, that the Chinese fishes, if they are ever caught, must be in the habit of springing out of the water, and seizing in their mouths the bait, that is held at a distance of several feet above them.

Neither Macartney nor Amherst say anything of this piscatorial phenomenon, and we therefore feel justified in treating the willow-pattern plate as a piece of monkfish ignorance on the part of the potteries.

The present collection is, however, calculated to remove all errors of this nature; and we shall now proceed to our detailed description of it.

On entering, the visitor will perceive, on his right hand, a rare specimen of a Chinese Screen, which covers the whole of one end of the Exhibition-room.

From the enormous size of this article, it would seem that the Chinese require a good deal of screening. It is covered with paintings of flowers, and some instructive specimens of naval architecture - so instructive, indeed, that if any ship-builder were

to follow the specimens, his utter inability to find any one to buy his ships would be a pretty lesson to him.

Nearly opposite the door at which the visitor enters there is

A CHINESE TEMPLE AND IDOLS.

The Idols might be called Idles, for they have the appearance of doing nothing. They represent the "Three precious Buddhas - Past, Present, and To Come." Past is on the right of the spectator, and Present is in the centre. They are both raising their right hand as if in the act of taking a pinch of snuff, or smoking a cigar, though, from the lights placed before them, the latter hypothesis seems the most feasible. The Idol whose reign has not yet come, has got his hands in his lap, and by the calmness of his attitude he seems to be saying to the other Idols "Take your time, I'm in no hurry."

Buddhism or Boodhism is the chief religion of China; and the founder flourished 200 years ago; so that the light of Buddhism - or Chinese Bude-light, is of very remote antiquity.

We now come to

CASE NUMBER 1.

Which contains the figures of three Mandarins, (Nos. 1, 2, and 3,) a couple of arm chairs, and some miscellaneous articles. The one who is seated without a hat, is of the highest rank; for, while in England it is a mark of respect to uncover the head, in China it is the reverse: and when we reflect what a very ugly object a Chinese head is, the custom of putting it out of sight appears to be a very proper one. Behind the principal figure is a secretary with official documents, the beauty of which seems to be, that they are not very ponderous, as *official* documents usually are. The dress of the secretary is a cross between the costume of a parish pauper and a charity boy. The other two dignitaries have nothing about them that calls for remark, except that each has a ball on the top of the cap, which in China is characteristic of rank, but in England is peculiar to the eleemosynary head-dress known as the muffin. When an officer is degraded, the ball of his cap is either cut off with a pair of scissors, or unpicked by the Emperor.

A military officer always wears the figure of a tiger on his dress, as a hint to him, no doubt, that he ought to come well up to scratch. A tiger is also the emblem of a Chinese Minister, from the propensity the ministers have to pounce upon whatever they can lay their hands upon. A military commander is said to be the father of his soldiers, and a father may kill his children, - a provision which seems to give the parent in China the privilege which in this country is exercised by the parochial authorities under the New Poor Law.

Personal merit has considerable weight in China, on the principle, no doubt, that a rare commodity is always valuable.

The arm-chairs in this case do not appear to be particularly easy, and the table with the marble top must be content to stand upon its legs, which are the only portions worthy of examination.

The maxims on the wall look like indifferent drawings of a half-opened razor, a bugle, a five-barred gate, and other objects, which it seems are the Chinese for various noble sentiments.

CASE NUMBER 2.

The figures 4 and 5, in this case, are priests in full canonicals: they belong to different sects, but they seem to understand each other tolerably well, and appear to be both in very good condition. Figure 6 is a Gentleman in Mourning, and figure 7 is his Servant. Pretty figures they both are, being dressed in a costume something like that worn on board the hulks by our transported felons. The period of mourning in China is three years, which is practically reduced to 27 months, and with some very practical people it is cut down to as many hours.

When an Emperor dies, the whole of the people lie upon straw for three years; which must give a tremendous impetus to the palliasses and mattress trade during the period of mourning.

Figure 8 is a Chinese Soldier with matchlock. His cap is quilted, and when he ventures into battle his jacket is very often quilted also. The matchlock seems particularly adapted to sparrow-shooting. On the wall are several weapons, which the Chinese use in war; the most prominent of which is a boat-hook, valuable no doubt for showing off, when they want to get away from the enemy. The standing army of the Chinese is estimated at about 700,000; the whole of whom form themselves into a running army when the battle commences. The Chinese officers as well as the men are liable to corporal punishment, which is, perhaps, intended to accustom them to the beating they are almost sure to get from the enemy.

White facings are invariably worn by the Chinese soldiery, to be in keeping with the paleness of their visages. They have the word "valour" inscribed on their backs, which those who run may read; that is to say, those who run after them.

Figure 9 is an Archer in the Imperial Army. He has at his side a number of arrows, which are not intended to do any harm, but are discharged only for amusement; an object which was fully accomplished in the late war, when the English had many a hearty laugh at their war-like efforts. Some of the archers ride on horseback - probably to facilitate the grand military manoeuvre of running away, which is the most perfect feat of the Chinese soldiery.

CASE NUMBER 3.

The figures Nos. 10, 11, and 12, are those of Chinese Literary Gentlemen in summer costume. The literary gentlemen appear to be talking to each other, which accounts for the dulness of their looks; and one of them has a paper in his hand, which has all the appearance of a rejected farce, or an unaccepted Magazine article. The 13th figure is a Servant handling a book; and the haggardness of his looks, as well as the seediness of his livery, bespeak the nature of his master's occupation. The three literati are possibly clubbing together, and maintaining one tiger amongst the lot; but the furniture, consisting of two empty book-cases, appears to threaten the speedy breaking up of the whole establishment. Figure 14 is a Mandarin of the fourth class, who from his black looks seems to be a creditor of one, or perhaps, all of the three literati. They have got him to take a seat, and one is in the act of reading to him, - probably some work from which the trio are in the hope of realising enough to meet or compromise their liabilities. The Mandarin has at his belt a variety of appendages, which look like sheaths for daggers, and boxes for cartridges; but they are, in fact, nothing more than a case for a fan, and a tobacco-pouch. The 15th figure represents a servant of the Mandarin, who appears to be looking down with pity and contempt upon the flunky of the literati.

It has been truly observed that the Chinese are remarkably addicted to letters, and this predilection for letters accounts for there being so many letters in a Chinese alphabet; though fond of letters, they don't like having words with strangers, but are of a particularly pacific disposition.

The following specimen of Chinese poetry will afford a very good idea of what the Pekin lyrists were in the Augustan age:

A cloud of snow across the sky advancing,
 A goose's feathers in confusion dancing,
 The surf upon the sea when winds are blowing,
 The froth upon the pot that's overflowing,
 The painted bud that decorates the lily,
 The ray shot from the moon when all is stilly,
 All these are fair and bright, but only prove
 How much more fair and bright is she I love!

CASE NUMBER 4.

It is usual to pay attention when there is a lady in the case; but as there are no less than half a dozen ladies in this case, it must be an object of especial interest. No. 16 is a Lady of Rank, with a fan; while No.17 is a ditto preparing to smoke; and 18 is a

ditto about to play on such a guitar as a clown generally breaks over the head of a Pantaloon in a pantomime. The ladies are tolerably good-looking, but the flatness of their noses restrains us from proceeding to flatter. The Chinese ladies wear wooden shavings as part of their head-dress, which is more becoming than shaving the head - which is customary with the Chinese gentlemen. 19 and 20 are two Female Servants, who, it will be observed, have feet of the natural size - their walk in life requiring that they should put up with great extremities. 21 and 22 are figures of a Mother and Boy of the middle class; while 23 represents a Daughter of the same family. They do not call for any remark; though, from their excessive ugliness, we should say they were, familiarly speaking, very plain sort of people.

Personal beauty is much prized by the Chinese, and long ears are considered characteristic of aristocratic descent; which, from a certain analogy to several of our own nobility, we should think exceedingly probable. The following prescription for making up a Chinese beauty would, if faithfully followed by one of Nature's journeymen, present a specimen of female loveliness. Cheeks red as the almond flower (a sort of rose pink); mouth like the peach's bloom (qy. in size or colour?); waist slender as the willow leaf, (this idea is span new); eyes bright as autumnal ripples, (so that any lady with speculation in her eye must have a kind of bubble speculation in it, if autumnal ripples be just a comparison); and footsteps like the flower of the water-lily, (it is to be hoped the boots would be waterproof.) The little feet of the Chinese women are proverbial, and a foot that runs about upon two inches is thought much more of than a very enlarged understanding. In walking along the streets, a Chinese female reels from side to side, which must give a very social appearance to the fair sex, as if they had been all out to dinner, and were all coming home again.

CASE NUMBER 5.

This case is devoted to the drama, which certainly appears to be in a better case at China than it is in England. No.24 is a Chinese Macready, or leading tragedian, who is accompanied by 25 and 26, the Juvenile Actors, and is looking with legitimate contempt on 27, a Chinese Juggler. The tragedian and two juvenile performers look as if they were upon half salaries; but the juggler has a jar poised upon his head, so that he may be said to have realised a respectable balance. There are against the wall a number of theatrical properties, - the term property being applied to any rubbish that is used in dramatic representations.

Theatricals are said to be in a very flourishing condition in China, and actors attend parties by the night, like the men who go

about by the Jack-o'lantern. In these cases the Imperial guest calls for a play, and the performers, who are expected to be "up in it," are compelled to go through with their parts. There are no regular theatres in China, but temporary buildings are made of bamboos; so that the actors, being often mere sticks, are quite in character.

While we are on the subject of national amusements, we may allude to the extraordinary Chinese custom of tossing up with the butcher for his meat; though, by the by, this practice is, after all, European to a certain extent, for with many butchers it is a toss-up whether they ever get their money. In Canton the butcher sometimes throws up a whole sheep, and if it comes down on its head, it goes to the customer; if on its tail, it is sent home again.

CASE NUMBER 6.

The figure 27 is a Barber shaving a customer's head with an implement that looks uncommonly like a chisel. When it is remembered that no soap is used, but that hot water is applied instead of lather, the operation of shaving must be supposed to be a tolerably pleasant one. A Chinese barber never talks while shaving a customer; and it is not necessary, therefore, to keep replying, as one is forced to do in England, at the risk of having a mouthful of lather when least expecting it. There is no regular price at Peking for shaving, and the various grades of "easy," "comfortable," "cheap," and "luxurious," do not fluctuate as they do here, from the rapid reap at a penny, to the mild mow at three pence. 28 is a Shoemaker at his work; and the most remarkable feature about him is the eye, which presents a striking spectacle. The glasses he wears are of pantomimic proportions. Figure 29 is a Travelling Blacksmith; while 30 and 31 are figures of Boatwomen, one of whom has an infant on her back, and carries a block of wood, which it is usual to attach to a child left in a boat, so that if the infant falls into the water, there is a buoy to take care of it.

On the walls are several bamboo hats and rush coats, which serve the purpose of umbrellas and macintoshes in rainy weather.

CASE NUMBER 7.

This case contains a man in a Sedan, being carried by a couple of Coolies, and very coolly he appears to be taking it. A servant is carrying a lantern, or, in other words, holds the light for those who are obliged to support the heavy. The sedan is the principal mode of conveyance, and according to the rank of the owner, is the number of servants who carry him. With a private gentleman it is merely two and carry one; but the officers of state

are allowed more; and the Emperor, whose dignity is not so portable, requires no less than sixteen servants to sustain the weight of it.

On the wall is a Chinese complimentary card, left at the residence of the owner of this Exhibition on his leaving China. The card is 13 feet long by 8 feet wide, and offers a slight idea of the size of the card-cases which the Chinese people carry about with them when visiting. The larger the card the greater the respect intended to be paid; and, when the size of the cards begins to diminish, it is a sign that the person who leaves it, wishes to discard the acquaintance of the individual the card is left with.

The mode of Chinese visiting is much the same as in England, and the following is a specimen of what is said on such an occasion.

The Guest. The moon has visited us four successive periods, and mine eyes have not feasted on the features of my friend; (being in other words, "I have not seen you these four months.")

The Host. My heart within the house of my bosom, is rejoiced that we have once more mingled in the intercourse of friends, (or in other words, "I'm glad to see you.")

The Guest. My friend has not lost the recollection, that he is still a blithesome and venerable male bird, (or in other words, "You *are* a jolly old cock.")

The visitors then occasionally go into rum and water, when the conversation becomes less stiff, if the stiffness of the grog is properly provided for.

CASE NUMBER 8.

At the end of the saloon is a pavilion representing an apartment in which there are six figures engaged in paying and receiving a visit. The stiffness of the whole affair shows a great assimilation to the same sort of thing in this country. The way of shaking hands in China is to shake the closed hands in the face of the person you are visiting. This mode of salutation would amount to an assault in England, but it is the height of Chinese courtesy. Individuals of high rank begin to bow at stated distances when they visit, and the higher the rank, the greater the distance at which the bowing commences. If the Queen of England should visit the Emperor of China, the preliminary bowing would be so tremendous, that it is doubtful if the two potentates would ever, during their whole life-time, get together.

The conversations between visitors are not particularly lively, as may be readily supposed by the following specimen. They appear to take delight in a species of adulation, amounting to what would be termed in this country downright chaff. "I was expecting," says one, "the illumination of your presence;" which is

equivalent to saying, "I hope you intend to flare up, old fellow, now you are here."

Then one tells the other that he has "thought with veneration of the *fragrance* of his name," as if the name had really not been in particularly good odour.

A Chinese dinner, according to Captain Laplace, generally begins with pickled worms; there comes next a second course of leather stewed in hot water. This is taken with soy, known to be a preparation from black beetles; and then come pigeons' eggs, with grubs of a sort of butterfly, and the fins of a shark dressed *a la* boiled potatoes.

The Chinese eat with sticks, which are certainly a prior invention to forks; but, over these, fingers must be allowed to claim a still greater antiquity. By way of winding up with a treat, bamboo salad is usually brought on to finish the repast - for all who like it.

CASE NUMBER 9.

This case, including Nos. 32-52, embraces a quantity of lacquered ware, comprising, among other things, a tea-set, the most remarkable feature of which is, that the spoons hold about as much as the tea-cups. There is also a metallic mirror, from which it appears that before the introduction of glass, the Chinese looked at themselves in their tea-trays, - a custom something like the military habit of showing before a highly-polished boot, - a practice which is handed down to us upon some of our earlier blacking bottles.

CASE NUMBER 10.

This case contains an enormous quantity of lacquered ware, commencing with No.53, and finishing at 142. The articles are a good deal like those that are to be seen on the counters of the bazaars at Margate, in the height of the season, when for a shilling you may make one of a party of a hundred, who have a chance of obtaining a five-shilling tea-caddy. No.73 is a Chinese Compass and a Sundial; in reference to which it may be observed that they ascertain the time by the dropping of sand, or the descent of liquids. It was, perhaps, in his zeal to know the time of day, that Key Sing resorted to the descent of liquids until he became thoroughly intoxicated on signing the treaty with this country. Their method of making a clock strike is to stand by it with a mallet till the hour comes round, - a practice we should recommend for the clock of St. Clement's. A Chinese gentleman always wears two European watches in his pocket, so that he may have plenty of time at his own disposal. No. 106 is an article called a swan-pan, of which there are several in this collection. It

is used for counting, and has seventeen pins as well as seven balls. In adding, they count by tens and hundreds, while in decreasing they go by fives and fifties; but with all this, their pecuniary affairs sometimes go to sixes and sevens.

CASE NUMBER 11.

The goods in this case are numbered 143 to 191, both inclusive. Among the most interesting articles is No. 158, which is a Vase with a beautiful representation of the great dragon attempting to swallow the moon. The great dragon must be a great jackass to contemplate an act bordering so closely on lunacy. No. 176 is an instrument with which the Chinese watchmen are in the habit of giving alarm; and, considering the timidity of the whole nation, the instrument for giving alarm must be in constant requisition. No. 181 is an ancient bronze bell, which, with the cleverness peculiar to the Chinese, has no clapper: so that if you are in the parlour and wish to ring the bell in the kitchen, you must run down stairs and tap upon the bell with the end of a stick or any other handy article. Muffled hammers are sold for the use of the ninny-hammers of China. No.191 is a pair of wooden bellows, so constructed as to create a continuous blast; and, as the Chinese are addicted to perpetual puffing, this instrument must be regarded as particularly national.

CASE NUMBER 12.

China Ware forms the contents of this case, which begins at No.192, and goes down to No. 267. The objects are chiefly jars and vases, the most valuable of which are those that are "crackled in the burning."

It must be presumed from this, that when hot water poured into a tea-cup causes it to fly, the "crack in the burning" adds materially to its value.

The figures 211 to 213 in this particularly interesting case represent in porcelain the three principal Chinese felicities. The first of which is official employment; a figure which looks the very *beau ideal* of idleness. Longevity is the next felicity; and male children the third; though in England those "tiresome boys" are the terror rather than the comfort of the public, and are particularly formidable to that infelicitous official *employe*, the street-keeper.

CASE NUMBER 13.

This case carries us from No.268 to No.339. It consists of specimens of Jugs and Vases, so that if we were to set out each item, our Guide would have the appearance of an auctioneer's

catalogue, in which the word *ditto* would run down the page with tiresome frequency.

No.287 is a piece of ornamental porcelain, intended as a coping to walls; but here our porcelain manufacturers must go to the wall, for the Chinese porcelain is of such a kind as we should find it impossible to cope with.

No.304 is a model of the famous porcelain Pagoda at Nankin, formerly the capital of China. The Pagoda at Kew is said to be taken from it; but we believe this to be an error, for the Pagoda at Kew could not very well be taken from a place it never went to. The use to which pagodas are put in China is a matter of much doubt; but we should think, from the immense number of floors, that it would be a capital speculation to let out a pagoda in lodgings. It would, however, require such a series of bells, that to ring the top one would be impossible without a ladder.

The porcelain manufacture of China is so important, that it is said a tea-cup passes through fifty different hands; but in this country, it seldom goes through so many hands without getting broken.

The designs for porcelain are greatly deteriorated within the last three hundred years, owing to there being no encouragement on the part of the government. It is thought that the art would revive if the Emperor would advertise for some designs for dishes, and cartoons for coffee-cups.

The annals of China would furnish a magnificent series of illustrated mugs and milk-jugs; particularly that part of the Chinese history which relates to the period before the creation of the world, an aera [sic] that leaves ample scope to a vigorous fancy.

CASE NUMBER 14.

This case is devoted to specimens of Chinese Boats, of which there are several varieties. No.342 is a San-pan or family boat, of which there are 40,000 on the Canton river, and are inhabited by poor people, who contrive somehow or other to keep themselves above water. The Chinese boats have always a great eye painted on each side of the vessel, which is often the only look out that is kept on board of them. A Chinese rudder is very large, it being no doubt imagined by the Celestials that the larger the rudder the better must be the steering. The quantity of craft on the rivers of China is greater than anywhere else in the world; and this accounts, perhaps, for the Chinese having the character of being the most crafty people in the universe. The Chinese are very fond of boat races, and practise in seventy-oared- cutters, with a view to obtaining speed, which is the chief quality they exercise, - by running away, - in their naval engagements.

No.347 is a document by which a ship may clear the port, and it is called a grand chop. It appears to be a very lively production, and by the lovers of Chinese literature it will no doubt be perused with interest. In the same case is a model of a Pagoda nine stories high, the floors getting small by degrees and beautifully less, until the highest or the attic finishes in something very like a pigeon-house.

CASE NUMBER 15.

Contains some specimens of summer-houses, which bring to mind those exposed for sale in the King's Road, Chelsea. No.353 is a Bridge of Granite; and 354 is a Domestic Shrine, fitted up with candlesticks and images like a lodging-house chimney-piece. On the wall are maxims, wrought in bamboo; and the custom of teaching lessons by means of bamboo, is equivalent to the English practice of using the cane as a scholastic stimulant. Though the Chinese pagodas are very high, the Chinese houses are very low, and it is said that the Emperor, on seeing a view of a London Street, said (in broad Chinese) "Why 'pon my honour, the houses are so high, in England, that the people might pluck the stars!" Upon which Lin, who was standing near, remarked, "Pluck the stars indeed! Ah, by jingo! they have pluck enough for anything!"

CASE NUMBER 16.

This department represents a Shop in China for the sale of China-ware; and the assortment of cups, saucers, teapots, plates, and milk-jugs, would do credit to any establishment for the sale of ancient crockery. There is a shrine to Plutus in one corner, to which the tradesman offers incense with the hope of growing rich; but this foolery is only likely to incense his customers, by keeping them waiting. The goods in the shop are not ticketed, nor do we know whether it is a Chinese practice to mark the various articles, as in London, with labels on the subject of "alarming sacrifices," and insinuations that the necessity for "Cash Down" has reduced a sixpenny jug to a cheapness which the words "Look here! only 3d." can but weakly notify. There is an inscription in Chinese, prohibiting the entrance of either priests or beggars; which looks as if both these classes were looked upon in China as shocking bad customers.

CASE NUMBER 17.

Is a Silk-mercantile Establishment, with a couple of customers, one of whom is examining a piece of silk, and casting a sly glance round the shop, as if he contemplated giving a lift to the concern, by a little bit of shop-lifting. The proprietor is in the act of making out an account, which he seems to be doing entirely

from memory; so that the customer, whoever he may be, will, no doubt, be frightfully victimised. A servant is preparing breakfast - for the Chinese tradesmen take all their meals in their shops, - just as if Messrs. Swan and Edgar were to be found at dinner on the counter of their large concern in the Quadrant, or Howell should be taking tea with James in the midst of their crowds of customers. At the door is a beggar, who, being always on the look out, has looked in to see what he can get; but he is getting nothing.

The Chinese tradesmen rise very early, and the Viceroy of Canton is said to jump out of bed punctually at 3, when he rings for his chisel to shave himself.

The Emperor is also a very early bird, and is generally "stirring," like Norfolk, "with the lark:" that is to say, if there happens to be any lark stirring.

CASE NUMBER 18.

Contains the Model of a Boat for pleasure parties; and, from its comic appearance, we presume it is a Chinese Funny. 357 is a pair of swords to be used by both hands. The object of having a sword in each hand, is to enable the soldier to give it to the enemy right and left; but nevertheless, it often happens that notwithstanding the two swords, the soldier only cuts away as fast as he can from danger. 358 and 359, are specimens of pipes for tobacco and opium, the smoking of which produces a frightful prostration of the intellect, and may be compared to the pernicious custom in this country, of reading the Parliamentary Debates, - a habit that has diminished greatly with the advance of education. Captain Davis gives a graphic description of an opium-smoker, which would apply equally well to the case of a reader of the reports of the speeches sometimes spoken in the House of Commons. "He lies languid, with an idiotic smile on his countenance, too much under the influence of the drug (such as his wife's handing him a cup of tea at his breakfast) to care much for passing events." But let us turn away from a picture so truly horrible, and come to No.351 - a model of a Bridge of granite, the arches of which have no key, but all the canals have locks to them; so that the keys are not missed from the bridges. Among other objects in this case is some Chinese gunpowder (No.367), which is very inferior to that used by us. In fact, when it gets into battle, its ardour appears to be completely damped, for it seldom goes off when it is required.

CASE 18. A.

Contains a model in ivory of a Chinese War Junk, which is certainly more effective under a glass case, than in the heat of action. The junk is the largest of Chinese vessels, and is built after

the model of a fish, the inventor forgetting that fishes go under water, and that ships are intended to keep above it. The top of the vessel is generally painted like a fish, and, being very high up, it looks, of course, like a fish out of water. The fleet of China deserves the name of fleet only from its fleetness when running away from the fire of the enemy. The Chinese are not far advanced in nautical science, but they understand the management of the gib-sail; for, gibbing being nothing more than backing out, they are particularly apt at it. They have no nautical instruments but an hour-glass, such as we use in England for boiling eggs, and a compass, with which they cannot compass all that they desire. There is a chair of State, the feet of which are beautifully carved and gilt, that it may be said to stand upon its own merits.

CASE NUMBER 19.

This case is full of very fine birds, one of which, in hand, would be worth more than a dozen of those birds to be found in ordinary bushes. No.374 is the Euplocomos Nycthemerus, or pencilled Pheasant, so called, perhaps, from the extraordinary notion of the Chinese Naturalists that his feathers, instead of being used as pens, may be converted into pencils. Most of the birds in this case look a great deal too old to be caught with chaff; and it is probable that all of them, but particularly the hens, if they were brought to this country in a ship, would have come in the hatch-way.

CASE NUMBER 20.

This case is nearly filled with an enormous Lantern, which is ten feet high, and if lighted by a candle, must require a pair of pantomime snuffers to keep it snuffed. At the back of the case is a Cannon taken by the British at Chusan; but the Chinese never could missed it, for when they had it, they never did any good with it.

CASES NUMBER 21 AND 22.

Are devoted also to birds, one of which, No.387, is a Chinese Teal, a sort of sentimental duck, who never mates twice, and goes melancholy mad of her first and only drake is taken away from her. The following affecting anecdote of the Chinese Teal, or Mandarin Duck - probably the very duck now ticketed as No.387, - is related by a recent traveller. We have thrown it into poetry, as being most appropriate to the subject.

One day a duck and drake, who long together,
The storms of life had managed both to weather,

Were rudely, fiercely, vilely torn asunder,
 By somebody, who, bent on wicked plunder,
 The aviary did visit, and did take
 Far from the broken-hearted duck the drake.
 This circumstance the mournful duck did hip so,
 She pin'd as for Ulysses did Calypso.
 Her food, good German-paste, she long rejected,
 Her person, too, she dreadfully neglected, -
 In fact ne'er wash'd from Saturday to Friday,
 And did become of ducks the most untidy:
 Until, one day, the stolen drake was found,
 Into each other's arms the birds did bound.
 Than true affection, what on earth is finer?
 Then imitate the ducks and drakes of China!

The classification of birds is a favourite pursuit with naturalists; and one of them has observed, that anything with two legs and feathers must be called a bird. If this be the case, what would the Chinese naturalists say to our grenadiers, who certainly have two legs, and wear feathers, which make them birds to all (Chinese) intents and purposes? Whether birds or not, they are not so apt to fly as the Chinese soldiers themselves, who have no feathers at all, but fully make up for the deficiency by their two legs, of which they make the best use possible.

CASES NUMBER 23 AND 24.

Are filled with Shells, which are labelled, and though very fine names are given to them, several of the shells look a good deal like those of the homely, but nutritious whelk, or the coarse, but invigorating cockle. The Chinese being a puny race, are not famous for their muscles.

CASE NUMBER 25.

Is full of objects which speak for themselves; but by a pair of silver tankards, Nos. 429 and 430, we are reminded of the historical fact that Yu - the Chinese Noah - after getting exceedingly drunk upon wine, banished the person who had introduced it, and who, it may be presumed, was his wine merchant. This case also contains a superb set of chessmen, (No.433), which were presented to the proprietor of the Exhibition, pawns and all, as a pledge of friendship. The skill of the Chinese in working at ivory is remarkable. They inherit it from their infancy; and even the children, before they have cut all their own teeth, are enabled to cut the tooth of the elephant.

CASES NUMBER 26 to 31.

Are devoted to various articles which do not require any minute description. It may, however, be worth while to examine attentively the ornamental stand (No.465), which contains a toothpick, an ear-pick, and a tongue-scraper. These articles throw a strong light on Chinese habits. We should not have thought, however, from the ugliness of a Chinese ear, that it was customary to pick them, for picking implies choosing, and the ears of a Chinaman are not such that any one would make a choice of. The tongue-scraper must be very useful under a despotic government, where the people are constantly in fear of getting into a scrape with their tongues.

No.472 is a pair of Chop-sticks, which are the Chinese substitutes for knives and forks, being a sort of half-way between the primitive custom of eating with the fingers, and the more refined habit of resorting to the aid of cutlery. 473 to 475 are cups for wine, which the Chinese always drink warm; so that if they get a good bottle of port, they are pretty sure to make a mull of it. The Chinese custom of pledging is something similar to our own: they present the silver goblet to the spout of the wine-vessel. We go a little beyond this when we pledge, for we take the silver goblet, we then present it to the spout, and having put it completely up the spout, we leave it there. 482 is a Chinese seal, which is placed on official documents. When the government entered into a treaty with England, the seal was not put until we had supplied the whacks, without which, we found it difficult to make any impression on the Chinese authorities. No.484 is a Mandarin's couch, which is sometimes used as a bed, and is warmed by putting a fire underneath it. It is to be hoped that the mandarins' lives are insured against fire, if they are in the habit of putting the fire under the bed, instead of under the chimney. No.493 is a collection of tea-pots, which are covered with hieroglyphics in praise of good tea - such as "buy our four shilling black, strongly recommended for family use," and other pithy apophthegms which may be considered appropriate to the subject.

CASES NUMBER 32 and 33.

Contain Musical Instruments, among which trumpets are conspicuous; the Chinese being famous for blowing their trumpets to an extent that is truly wonderful.

CASES NUMBER 34,35,36,37, and 38.

Contain a rare collection of Lizards, Toads, and Fishes, forming a very fine Museum of Natural History. The Chinese toad resembles the English toad, except that there is perhaps a shade of greater melancholy in the countenance of the former. Though we

are told by Shakespeare that the toad, ugly and venomous, "carries a precious jewel in its head," the Chinese toad does not seem to have taken it into its head to carry one.

CASE NUMBER 39.

Is resplendent with Cutlery, against which a Bricklayer's Trowel is conspicuous for its strength and dignity. Trowels are in fact in high favour with the Chinese, and are generally used at Court, for every one is expected to pay adulation to the Emperor. The courtiers therefore vie with each other in laying it on with a trowel.

CASE NUMBER 40.

Here we have a few specimens of Chinese books, the titles of which are at the end; so that it is presumed one wants to know what they are about after one has finished reading them.

CASE NUMBER 41.

This case has a variety of articles, including specimens of Trees, Birds'-nests, Fruit, Toys, Tobacco, Tea, Writing-paper, Invitation Cards, Drugs, and Letters. Chinese authors write with hair pencils upon slates, so that they can rub out what they may consider rubbish.

CASES 42 to 48 INCLUSIVE.

These are filled with Miscellaneous Goods, which though undoubtedly all Chinese, put one very much in mind of old curiosity shops, where the articles seem chiefly valuable, because it is impossible to say of what use they could be to any one.

CASES 49,50,51, and 52,

Present an admirable assortment of Shells and Birds, many of which, but for their names, we should have regarded as particularly every-day animals. When, however, the thrush is called *Cossiphus Gularis*, and a mere Finch is styled *Fringilla Kawarahaiba*, we can account for their admittance, under such splendid titles, into this Exhibition.

CASE NUMBER 53.

Here we have a pound or two of Candles (Nos. 902 and 903) which are made of wood, with a place at the top for a lamp; as well as a Chinese Carpet (No.916), which is said to be printed like our druggets, and the likeness is so good that we had no idea how thoroughly Chinese the stuff really is which we buy at the shops

where they make "an alarming sacrifice," not of the goods, but the purchasers.

CASES 54 and 55

Introduce us to more Birds, and a Chair of State; while

CASE NUMBER 56

Contains a Model of a Pagoda.

CASES 57, 58 and 59

Enable us to luxuriate in the contemplation of Insects and Butterflies; the most remarkable of the former being a very interesting old cock-roach, whose quaint look and comic expression of the eye, render him a great favourite with the visitors.

CASE NUMBER 60.

Is remarkable for being the last, and is filled with Fish, some of them deserving the epithet of odd; but we fancy we have seen many like them at Grove's, or even at Billingsgate.

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

In taking leave of this Exhibition, we are enabled to give it our most unqualified praise. If we have here and there spoken with ridicule of the objects that the Collection contains, it is not that we mean to depreciate its value, which consists chiefly in the remarkable care that has been taken to get together even the most trifling articles peculiar to China, and thus present the English public with the best possible insight into the habits, arts, and manufactures of the Chinese people.

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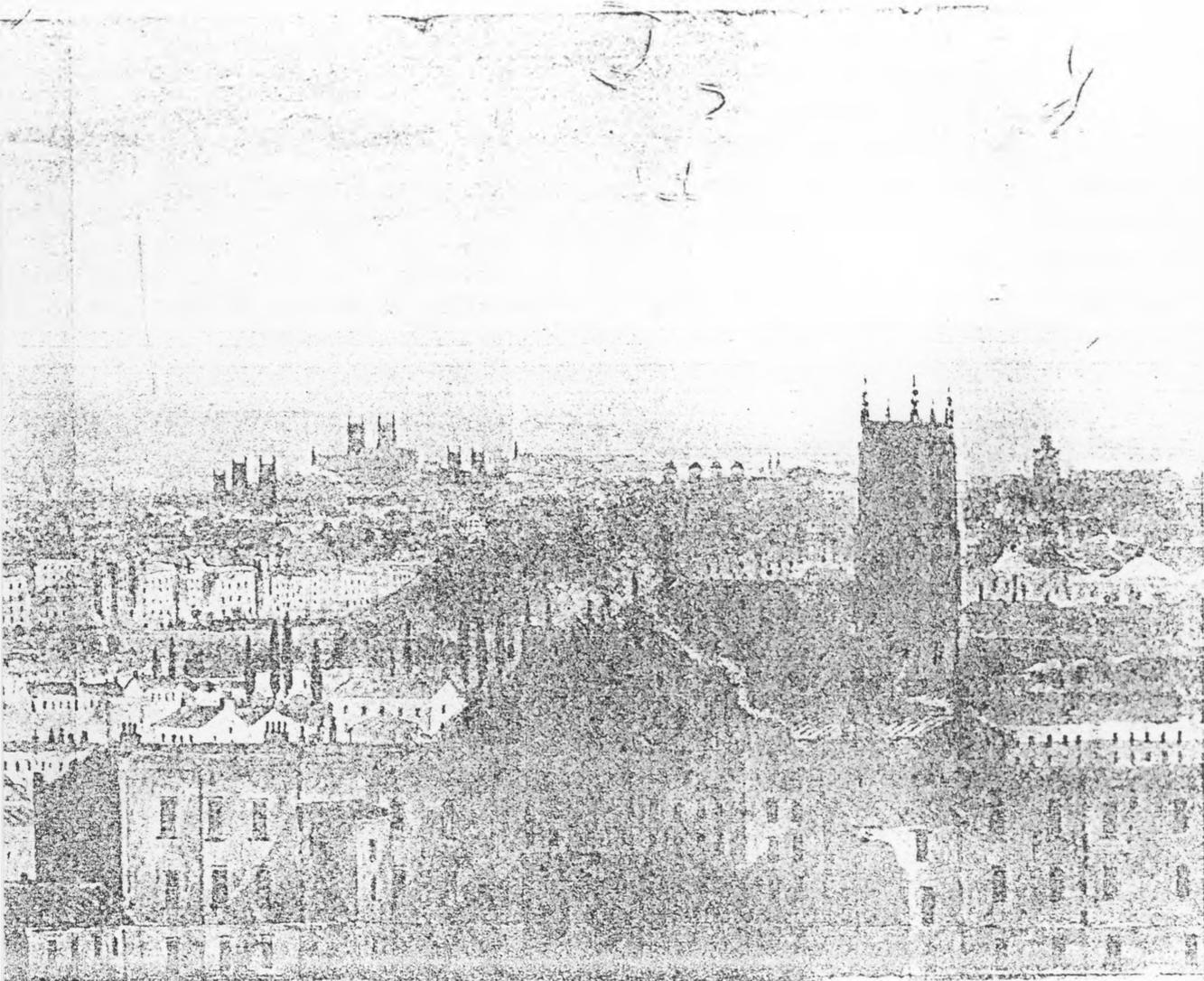
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Sallery. Later known as
Hyde Park Sallery and St Georges Sallery



Phillips house.
32- Wilton Place.

↑
St Paul's church
Wilton Place.

's house Now the French Embassy building

47

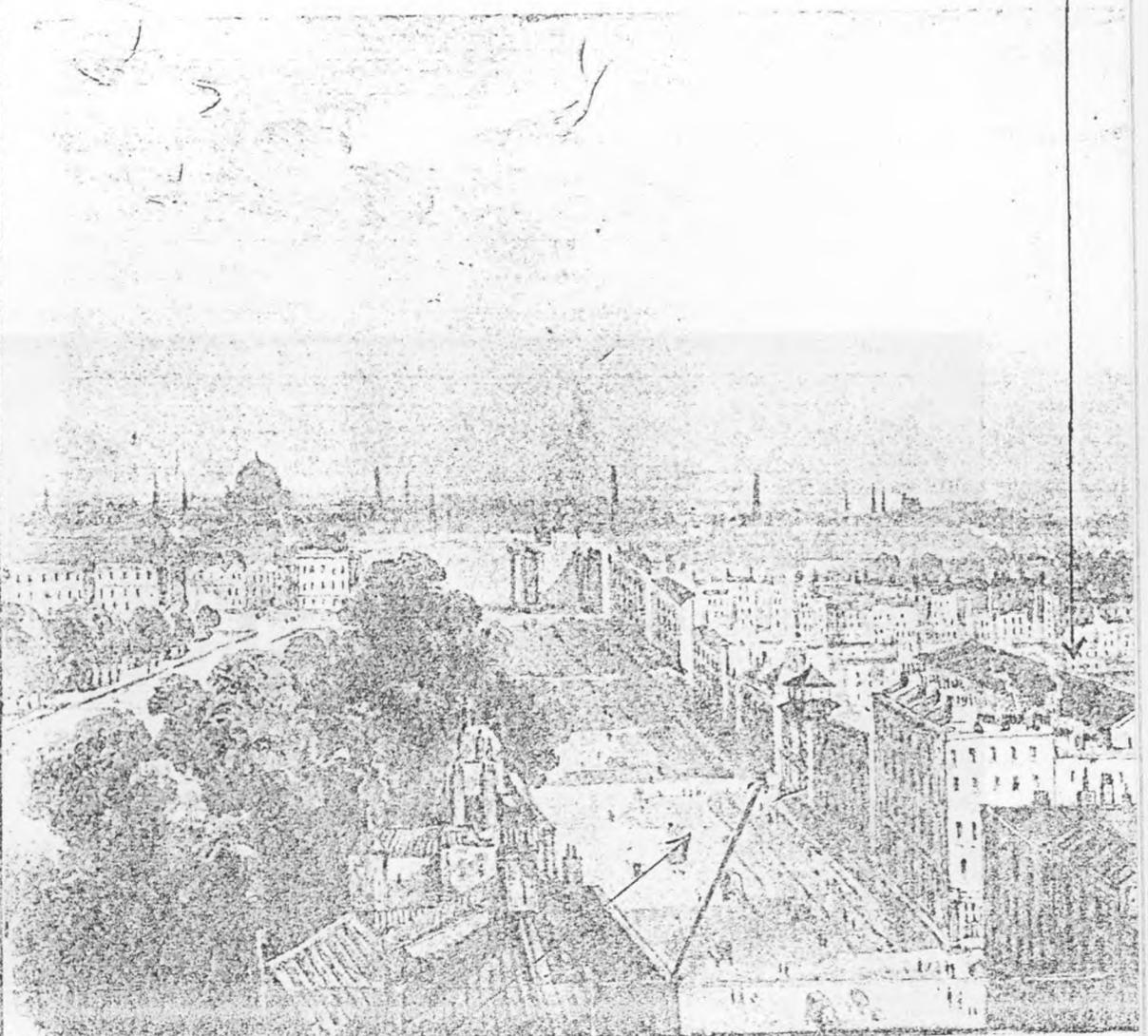
Courtesy of Guildhall Library.

"A panorama from Mr. Hudson's Park house at Albert Gate."
George W. Vawser 1847. Exhibited at the Royal Academy.

FIG. 1. ANNOTATED COPY OF 1847 WATERCOLOUR OF LONDON BY
GEORGE VAWSER.
E. PHILLIPS, 'A PAGODA IN KNIGHTSBRIDGE', JOURNAL
FOR PRE-RAPHAELITE STUDIES.

st Paul's
cathedral

Roof of



↑ Hyde Park. Knightsbridge Road. Old Barrack Yard entrance. ↑ Rosoda. ↑ Wilton Place

Panorama from Roof of MR Hu
Knightsbridge.

Watercolour by George Vawser.
Guildhall Library. w2/ KAM.

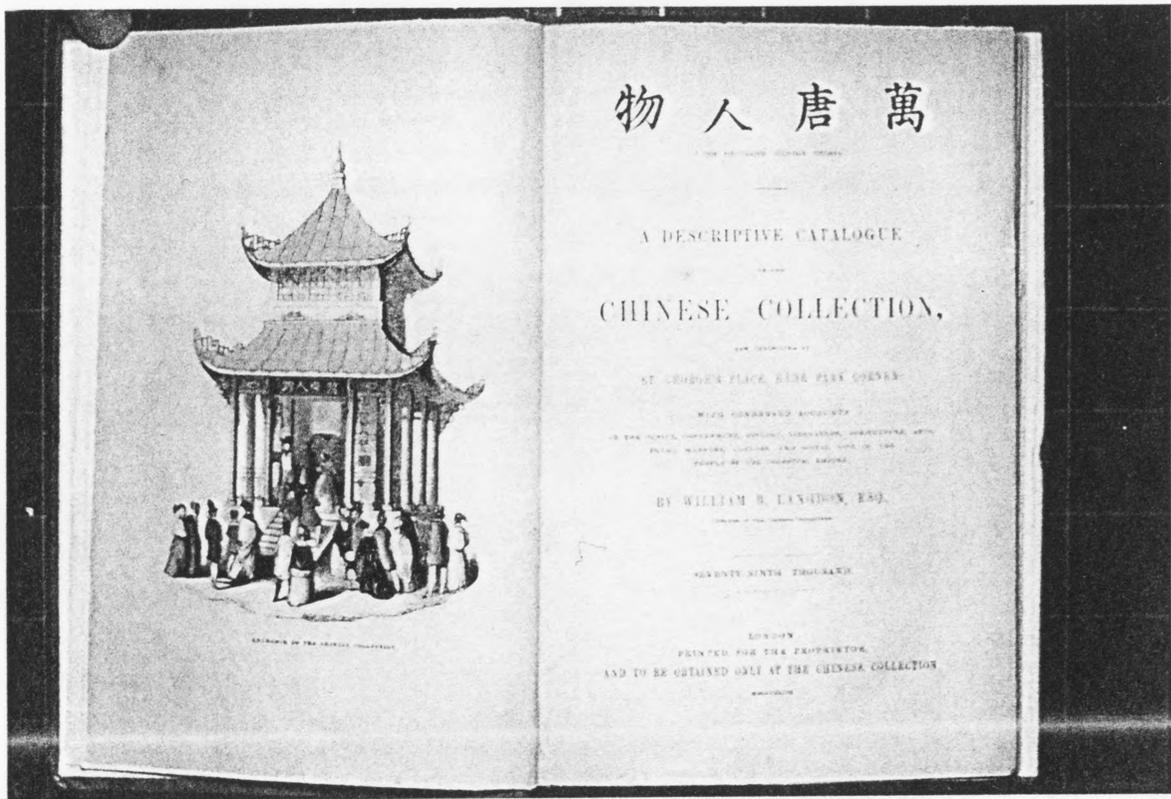


FIG.2. Frontispiece and title page of Langdon's *Descriptive Catalogue of the Chinese Collection* (1843).

CHINESE COLLECTION



Open from
10 o'clock in the
MORNING,

UNTIL
10 o'clock in the
EVENING.

ADMISSION
2s. 6d.

CHILDREN
1s.

ST. GEORGE'S PLACE, HYDE PARK CORNER,

This splendid Collection, consisting of objects exclusively Chinese, and surpassing in extent and grandeur any similar display in the known world; entirely filling the spacious Saloon 225 feet in length, by 50 feet in width, embracing upwards of 50 Figures as large as life, all fac similes in groups, in their native costumes, from the highest Mandarin, to the Blind Mendicant, in his patched garments. Also many thousand specimens, both in Natural History and Miscellaneous Curiosities, illustrating the Appearance, Manners and Customs of more than 300,000,000 Chinese, respecting which, the nations of Europe have had scarcely any opportunity of judging till the present time.

Opinions of the Press.

On Saturday Her Majesty the Queen, accompanied by Prince Albert, visited and inspected the contents of the museum, and expressed great satisfaction with what they saw, and at the manner of the general arrangement. On Monday and Tuesday the place was thronged by the nobility, and yesterday there was a private view to men of literature and science. This collection, the result of great expense, and a residence of 11 years by Mr. Duns, the proprietor, is amongst the most curious ever exposed in London. It is a complete illustration of the manners, customs, and, in many respects, of the history and religion of an immense empire, but imperfectly known to Europeans. It ought, and no doubt will be visited by many thousand persons—indeed, by all persons at all interested in the events which are now in development in China. There is an immense collection of all sorts of things connected with the manufactures, the modes of living, the costume, and domestic economy, and the state of the arts in China; there is something to please all inquirers.—*Times*, 23rd June, 1842.

On passing through the vestibule, the visitor finds himself, as it were, transported to a new world. It is China in miniature; the crew is imposing in the highest degree. The rich screen-work, elaborately carved and gilt, at either end of the saloon; the many-shaped and varied-colored lanterns suspended throughout the entire ceiling; the native paintings which cover the walls—the Chinese mariners adorning the columns and retables—the embroidered silks, gay with a hundred colours, and tastefully displayed above the cases containing the figures, and the multitude of smaller cases crowded with rare and interesting objects, form a tout ensemble possessing a beauty entirely its own, and which must be seen by the reader before it can be realized.

We can only say, in conclusion, that a visit to this museum will amply reward the most sanguine expectation, and will convey to the British public, a general knowledge of the resources and capabilities of the singular people to whom it refers. It is an exhibition quite unique, and a collection which could only be perfected by the perseverance, the tact, and the taste of the proprietor, and by the opportunities enjoyed by him during a long residence in the Celestial Empire.—*Morning Chronicle*, June 23, 1842.

We were present yesterday at a private view of a magnificent collection of objects from China, the most ample and curious that has ever been seen in this or any other European country; and inspected it with a degree of interest, which we scarcely thought the whole Celestial Empire could have excited. To offer a detail of the countless objects that compose this Collection would, after one visit only, be impossible; we must, therefore, content ourselves on this occasion, by merely adverting to its general character and several prominent features.

We have not enumerated a title of the curiosities which this Collection consists of; but want of space prevents us from saying more, and all we can add therefore, is, that it is more worthy of being seen, than anything of the kind that has ever been presented to our notice.—*Morning Herald*, June 23, 1842.

An exhibition of extraordinary beauty and interest, offering at one view an epitome of Chinese life and character, arts and manufactures, scenery and natural productions. Passing through a vestibule, the visitor enters a lofty saloon, 225 feet in length by 50 in width, filled with the products of Chinese industry, admirably arranged, so as to present a gorgeous coup d'œil; all the details of which it takes two or three hours to scan superficially.

At any time, such a museum as this, giving an insight into the habits and arts of life of a people of whom we know so little, would be interesting; but at the present juncture, it is most especially so. A few hours spent in studying the contents of this Collection, with the aid of the descriptive catalogue, which is full of information, much of it original, will possess the visitor with an idea of the Chinese, almost as complete and vivid as could be formed by a voyage to China.—*Spectator*, June 25, 1842.

The room is so crowded with gorgeous and interesting specimens of Chinese civilization, that it will be impossible to do more, in our first notice, than give a general sketch of its character, and assert it to be the most attractive exhibition of its class, which has yet been exposed in London.

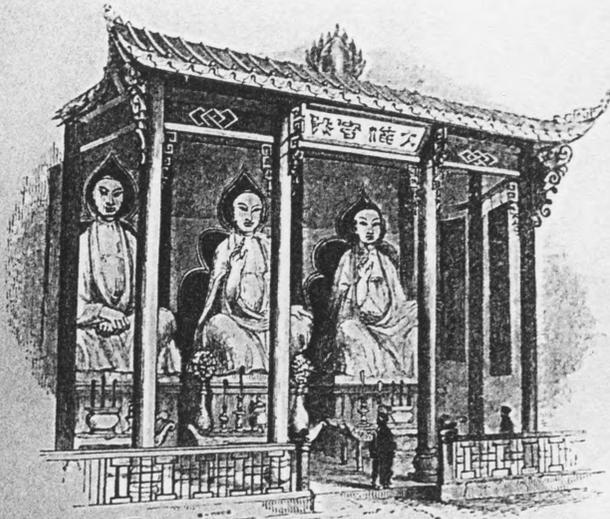
When it is recollectcd that Mr. Duns has expended a pecuniary fortune in the purchase of this noble Collection, we sincerely trust that he will find himself repaid (permanently he can never be) by the admiration and interest which it excites.—*Morning Post*, June 23, 1842.

G. McKeown, Printer, 9, Great Workmen-street, City.

Courtesy of Westminster Public Library.
Poster for the Chinese Collection 1842.
FIG. 3. POSTER ADVERTISING THE
CHINESE COLLECTION,
WESTMINSTER PUBLIC LIBRARY.

THE UPPER END OF
ION.

ely occupied with a rare and
It is of ample dimensions,
work of the wood work in
and the silk inserted in
by a profusion of exquisitely
and magnificent of eastern
and beauty of spring.
and show the
a knowledge of their art by
there is also a row of
and showing traces of
The whole is sur-
of exquisite beauty and



CHINESE TEMPLE, AND COLOSSAL BUDDHA IDOLS.

FIG. 6. 'Chinese Temple, and Colossal Buddha Idols'; Illustration from Langdon's *Descriptive Catalogue*.

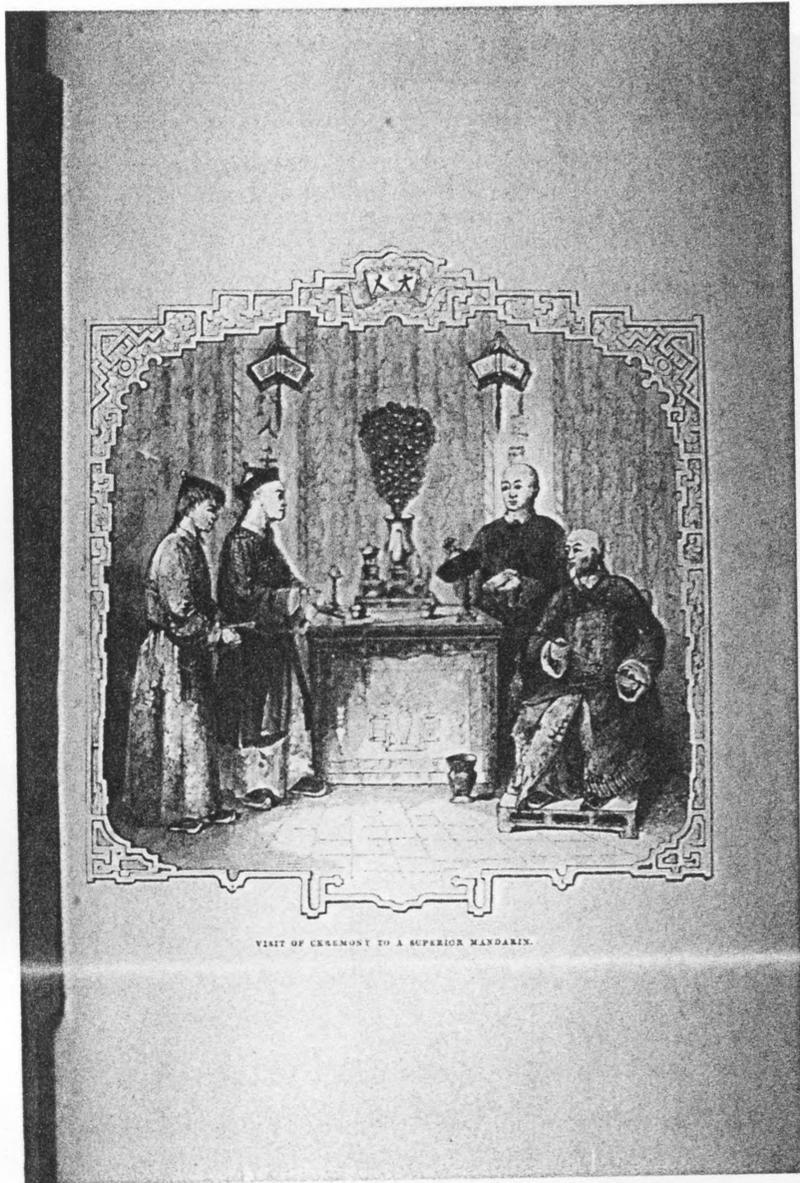


FIG.7. 'Visit of Ceremony to a Superior Mandarin';
Illustration from Langdon's *Descriptive Catalogue*.

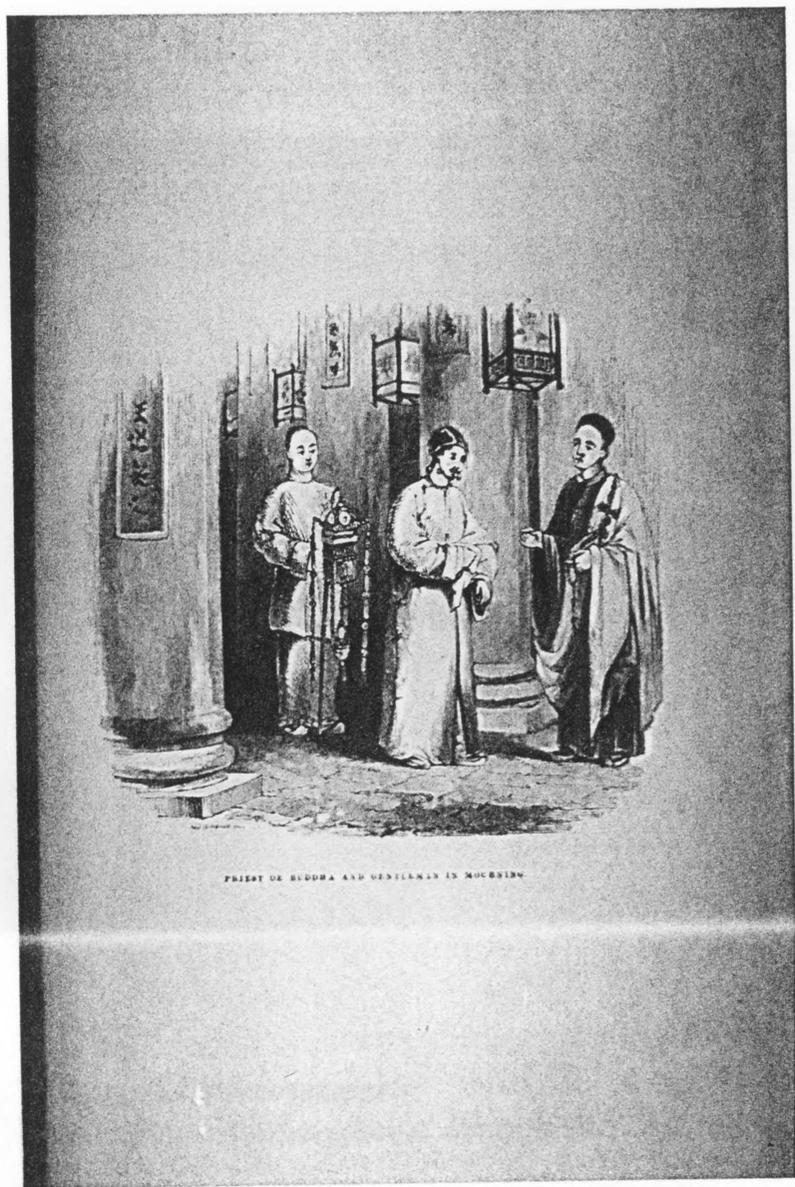


FIG. 8. 'Priest of Buddha and Gentleman in Mourning';
Illustration from Langdon's *Descriptive Catalogue*.

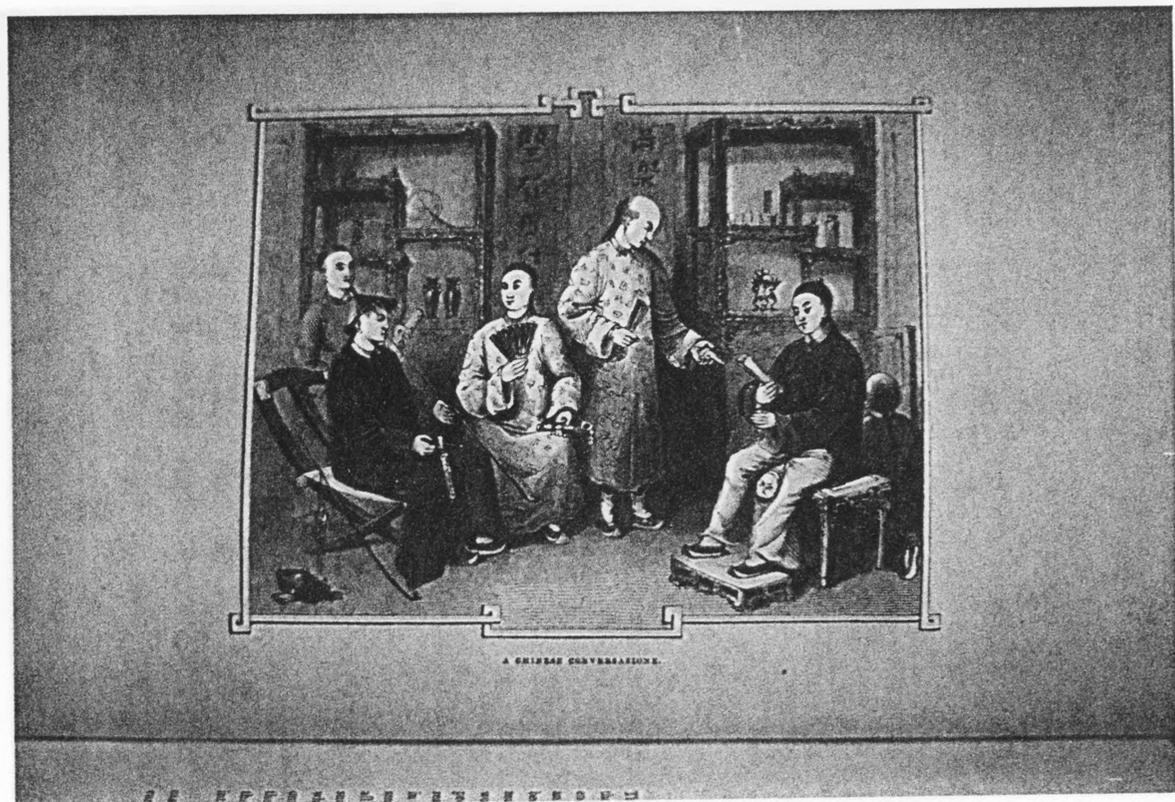
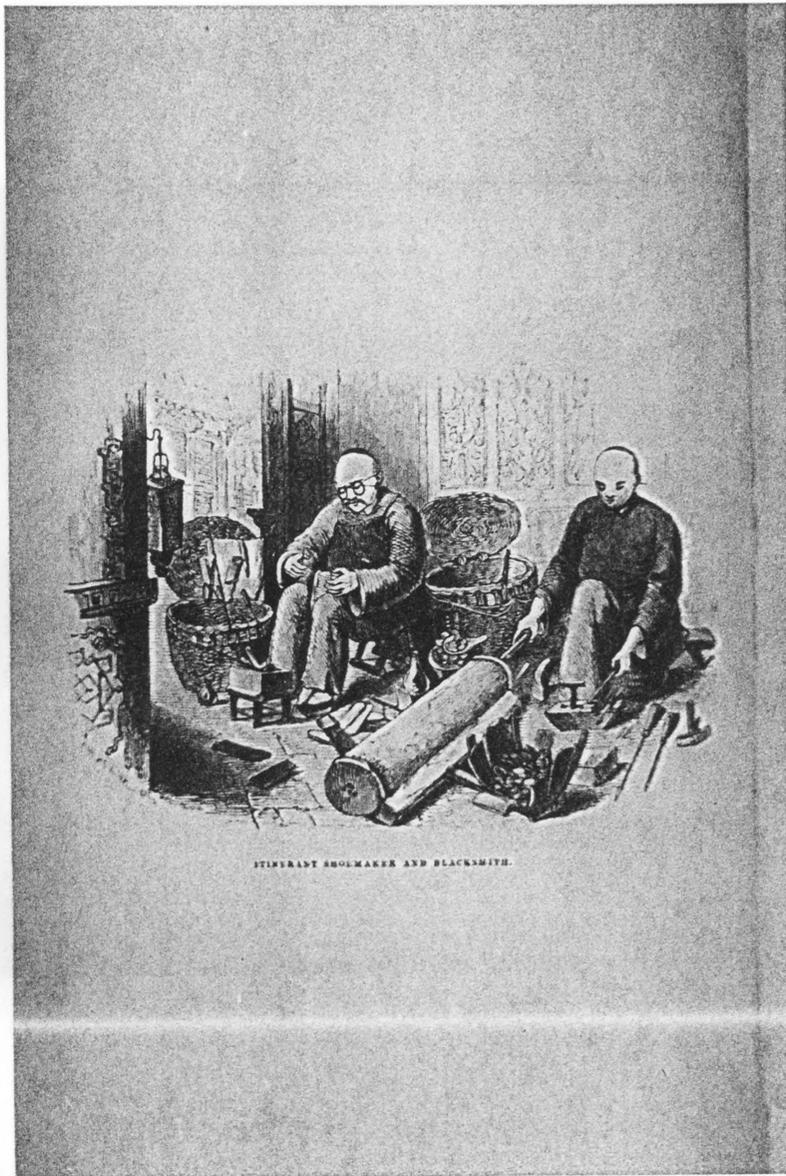


FIG.9. 'A Chinese Conversation';
Illustration from Langdon's *Descriptive Catalogue*.



FIG.10. 'A Group of Chinese Ladies';
Illustration from Langdon's *Descriptive Catalogue*.



ITINERANT SHOEMAKER AND BLACKSMITH.

FIG. 11. 'Itinerant Shoemaker and Blacksmith';
Illustration from Langdon's *Descriptive Catalogue*.

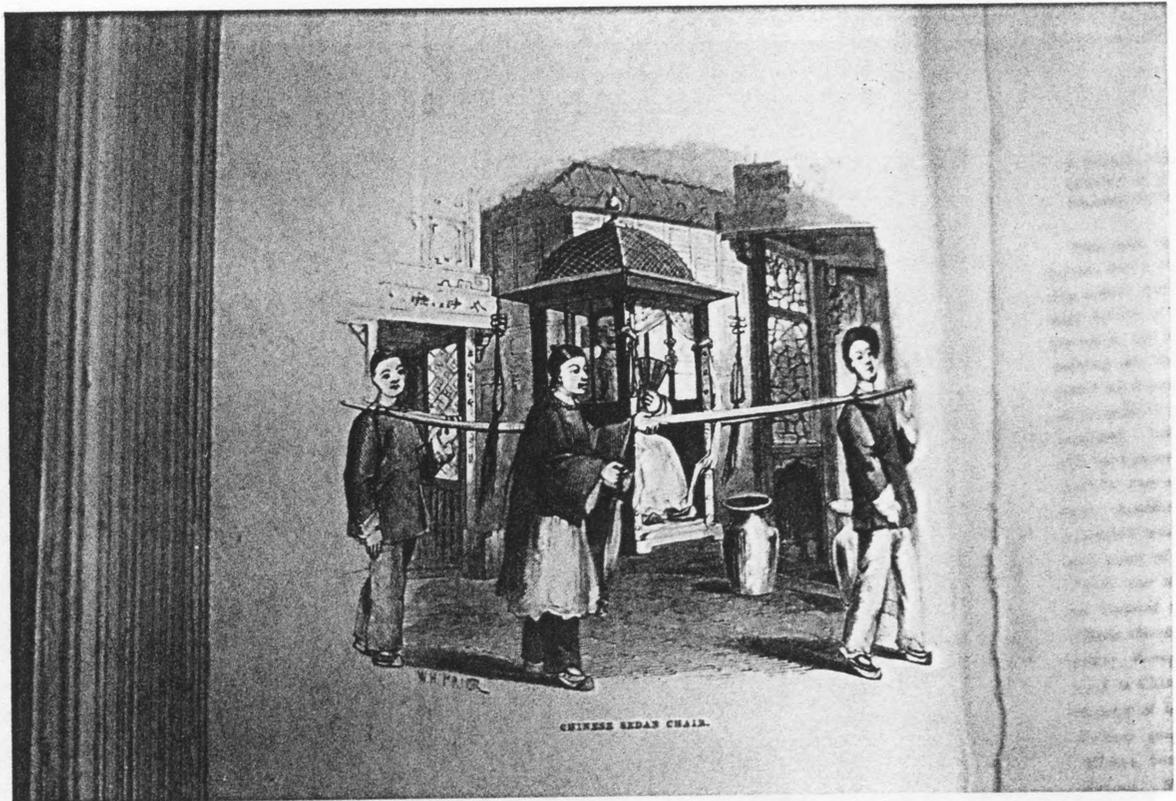


FIG.12. 'Chinese Sedan Chair';
Illustration from Langdon's *Descriptive Catalogue*.

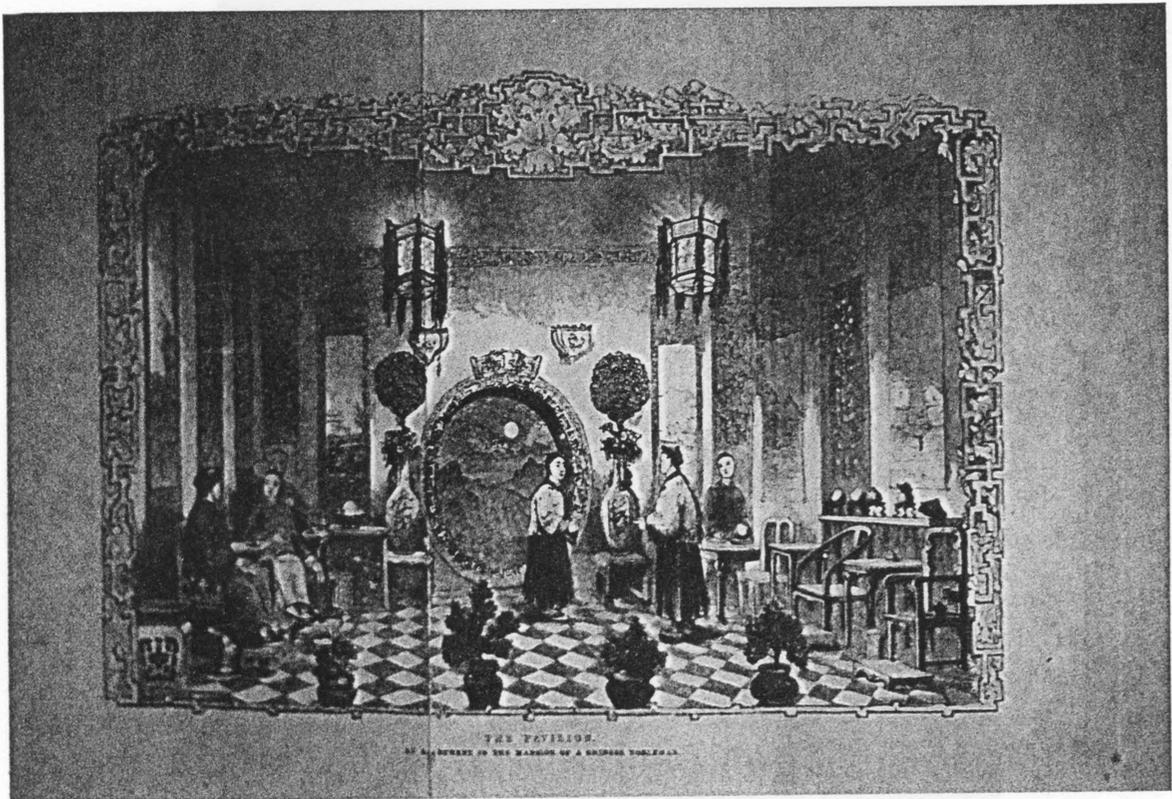
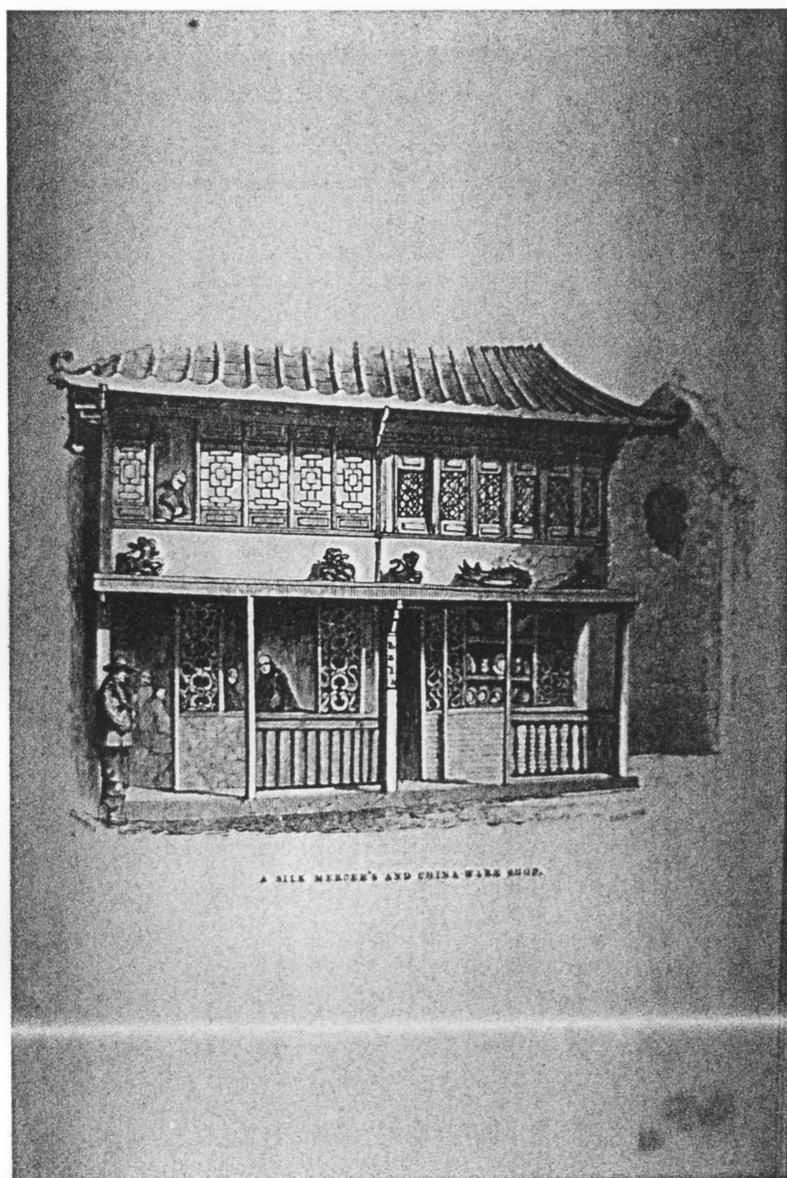


FIG. 13. 'The Pavilion: An apartment in the Mansion of a Chinese Nobleman'; Illustration from Langdon's *Descriptive Catalogue*.



A SILK MERCER'S AND CHINA WARE SHOP.

FIG. 14. 'A Silk Mercer's and China Ware shop';
Illustration from Langdon's *Descriptive Catalogue*.

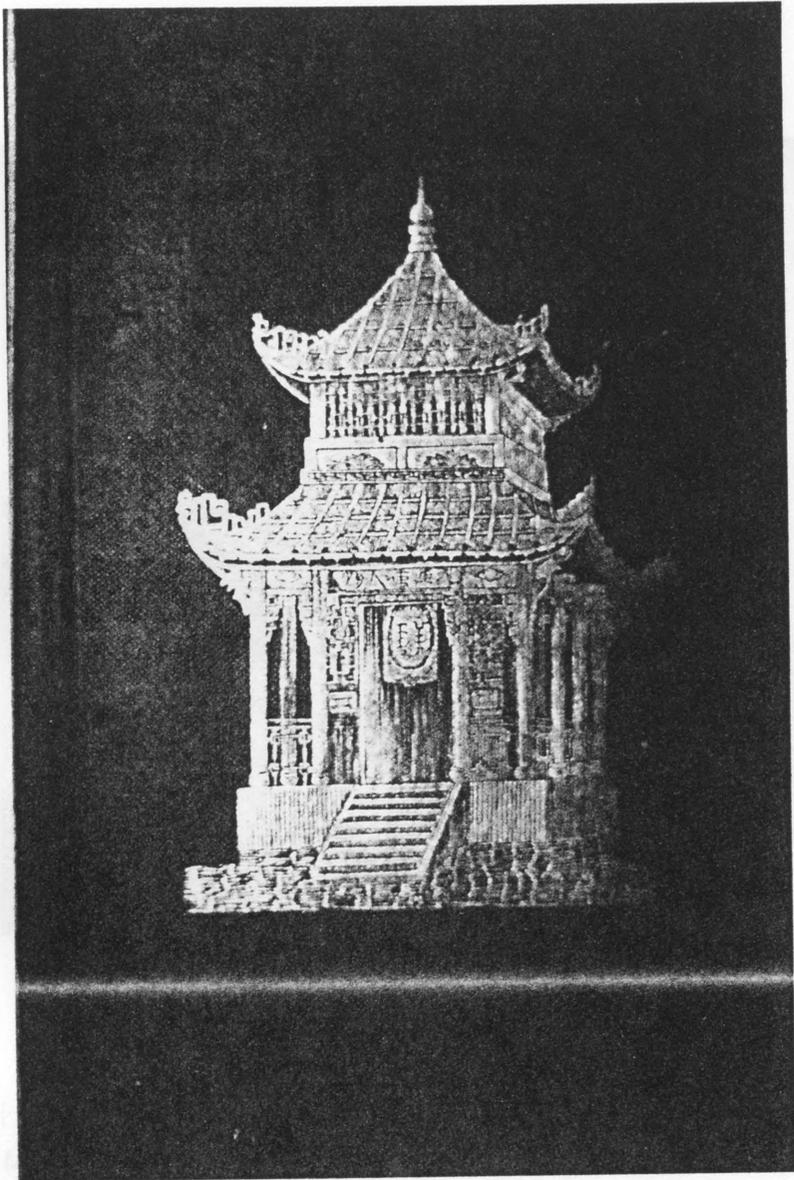


FIG. 15. Cover of *Ten Thousand Things relating to China and the Chinese* (1843).

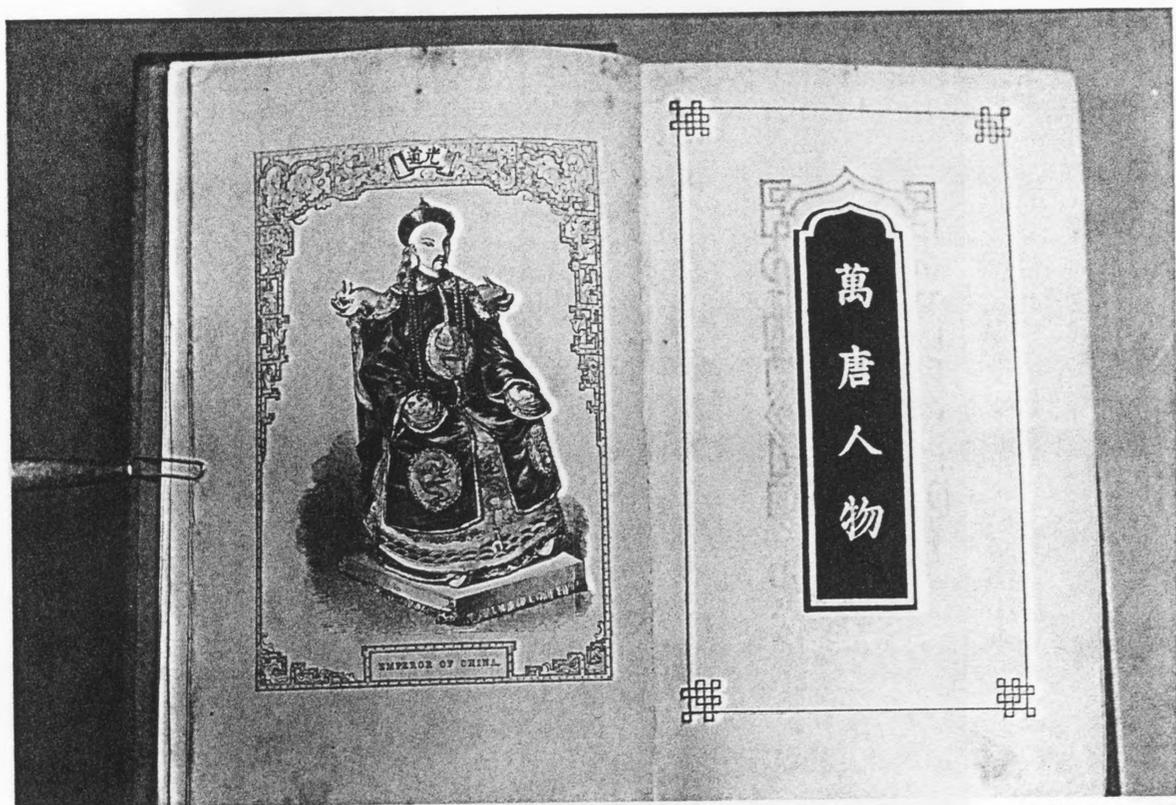


FIG.16. Frontispiece and title page of *Ten Thousand Things relating to China and the Chinese*.

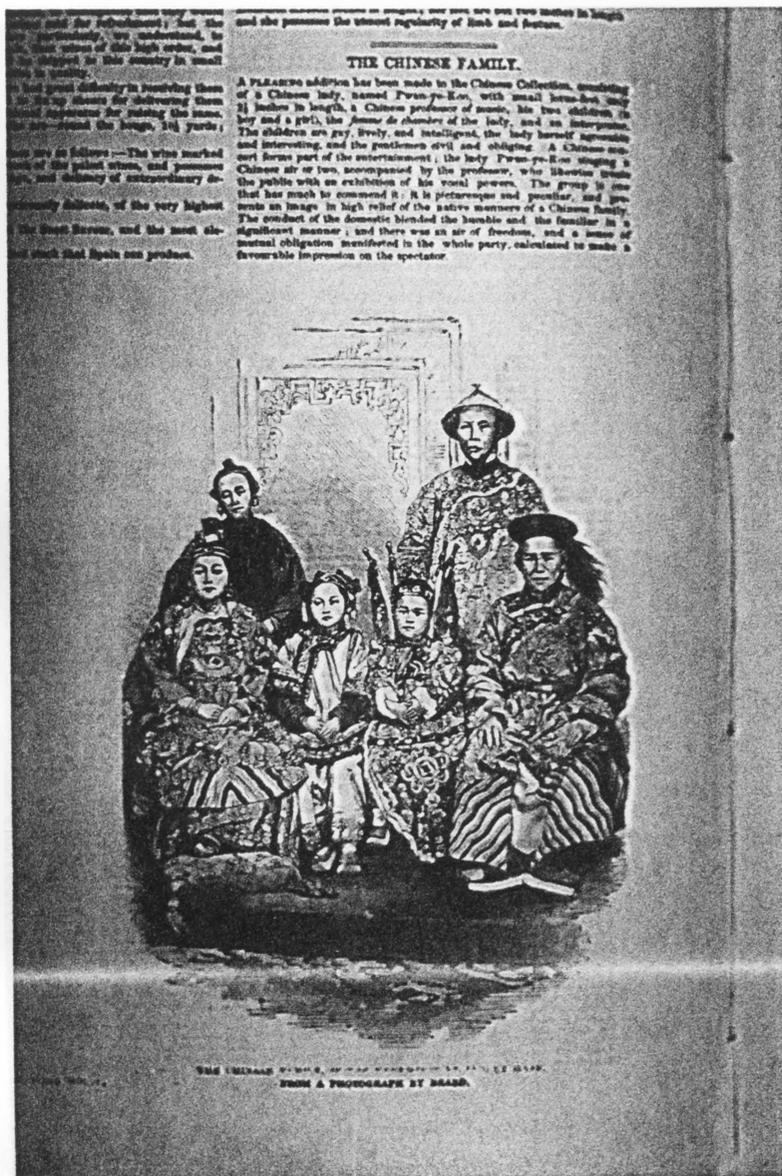


FIG. 17. Portrait of the Chinese Family which was part of the Chinese Collection.
Illustrated London News (May 14, 1851).

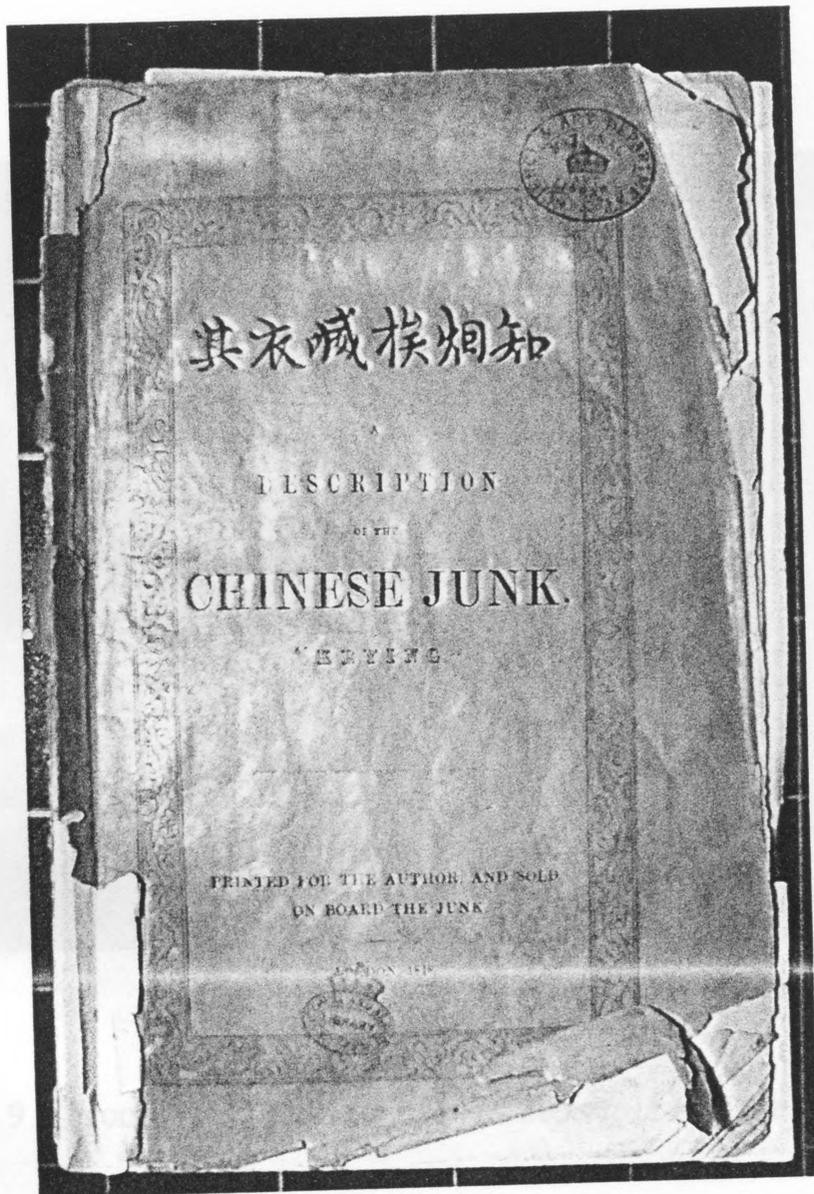


FIG.18. Cover of *Description of the Chinese Junk "Keying"* (1848).

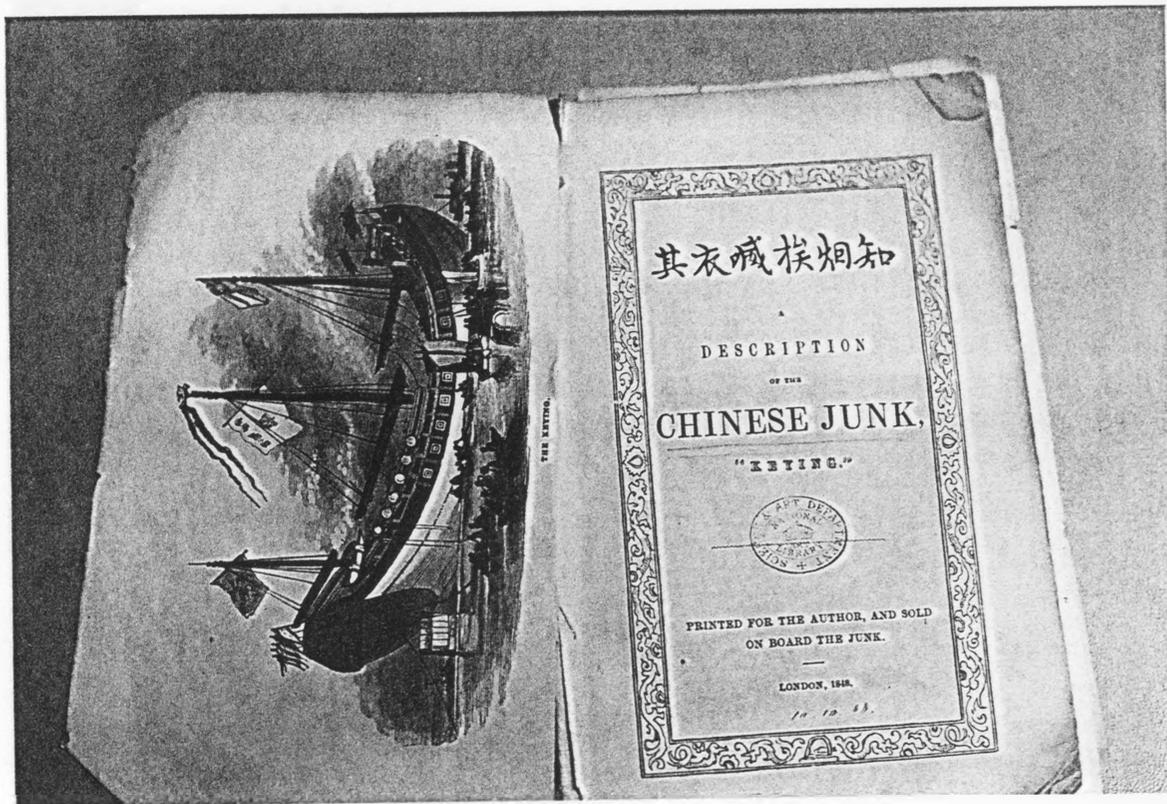


FIG.19. Frontispiece and title page of *Description of the Chinese Junk*.

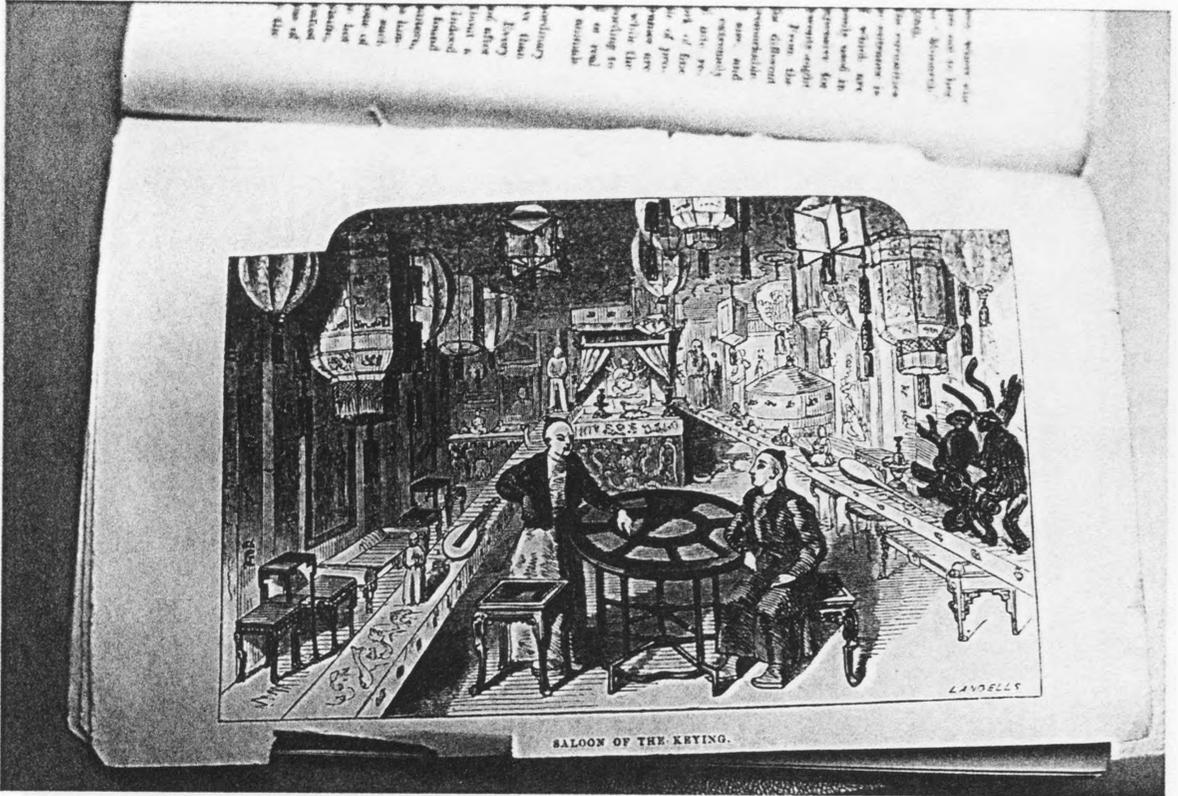
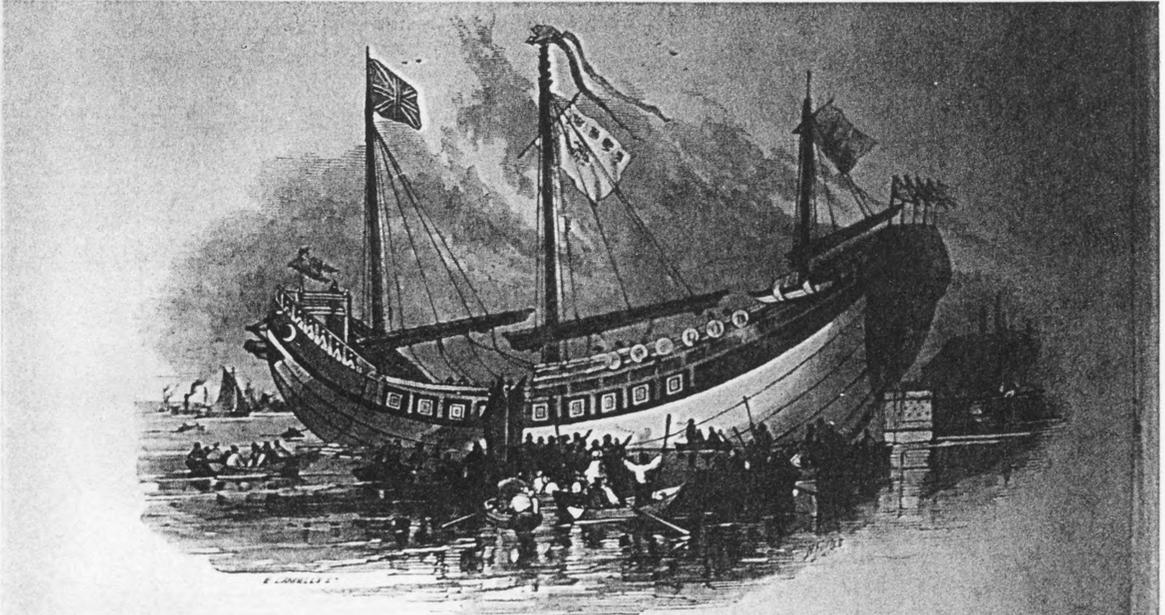


FIG.20. Saloon of the Chinese Junk from *Description of the Chinese Junk*.



THE CHINESE JUNK "ASTOR."

(Continued from page 120.)

By the supply of provisions and water running short, and the crew becoming demoralized and almost insensible at the length of the voyage, her captain (Kellie) deemed it necessary to make for New York. She entered the port amidst a general display of flags and saluting from the large number of shipping in the harbor. The anxiety evinced by the inhabitants to visit the vessel was extremely great, and by a succession of days subsequent to her arrival, no more than 5000 to 6000 persons daily went on board.

The *Argo* next visited Boston; whence she sailed direct for London on the 17th of February last, and arrived at St. Andrew's Bay, Jersey, on the 12th March, having performed the voyage from land to

re-painted, and will, in a few days, be at Blackwall, for exhibition to the right-loving Londoners.

LAUNCH OF THE "VLADIMERE," RUSSIAN WOOD STEAM FRIGATE.

This ceremony of launching this beautiful specimen of naval architecture took place on Wednesday, 27th ult., from the ship-building yard of Messrs. C. J. May & Co., Orchard Wharf, Blackwall, in the presence of a numerous and able company of spectators, among whom were many officers of the Russian Navy. The symmetry of form and magnitude combined in this vessel are very striking; and it will well repay the

form. The last-named boats, belonging to the North-Western Steam Navigation Company, have lately proved of most essential service to the English at the various French ports, in consequence of their well-known speed and sea-worthiness.

The following are the principal dimensions of the *Vladimere*—

Length between the perpendiculars	170
Length of the keel for tonnage	150
Breadth, mainmast	45
Breadth, mizzenmast	36
Breadth for tonnage	35
Depth in hold	18
Burthen in Tons, 1855	1100
Displacement of water complete for sea	1300

FIG. 21. Exterior of the Chinese Junk.
Illustrated London News (Apr. 10, 1848).

T INDIA DOCKS.

A large class Junk, which is now on exhibition. The interval and putting in order this section. Already she has upwards of an hour in the hands, as well as the Duke of Albany, the Queen and his and on Wednesday Queen he ship by inspecting it.

The Junk lies in the East India Dock, Blackwall. This will render it a fine sight, in the dock, in comparison with the huge steamship, having passed which she is dressed with flags and she vane, bearing on its body,



THE SALOON.

Their elegance of form and beauty, and lightness of rigging, have been repeatedly before the Chinese, without their exhibiting symptoms of the superiority of domestic sailing. Their incomprehensible prejudice, and their contempt for everything foreign, is a hindrance to all improvement, and by such an obstacle to the career, that if a Chinese Junk should be built with any departure from the old system, an additional port duty would be exacted, by the Emperor's decree, as if it were of foreign build.

As we stepped on board the Junk, the appearance of the deck strongly reminded us of the jetties and piers of the large early English steamships, such as the *Great Britain* and *Great Eastern*. Her structure was

The furniture, consisting of tables, chairs, and benches, is of dark heavy wood, and is simple and unadorned. There is a kind of table covered with a blue cloth, and on one end a small table, and on the other a small table, and on one end a small table, and on the other a small table. The floor is covered with matting. Around the apartment, in rows, and upon the tables, is a kind of "collection," including a glass, various articles and musical instruments, and



FIG.22. Saloon of the Chinese Junk.
Illustrated London News (Apr. 21, 1848).



FIG.23. Reception of the Chinese Family at Osborne.
Illustrated London News (Aug. 30, 1851).



FIG.24. Interior of the Chinese Gallery during the exhibition of the Free Society of Modern Art.
Illustrated London News (Jul. 29, 1848).

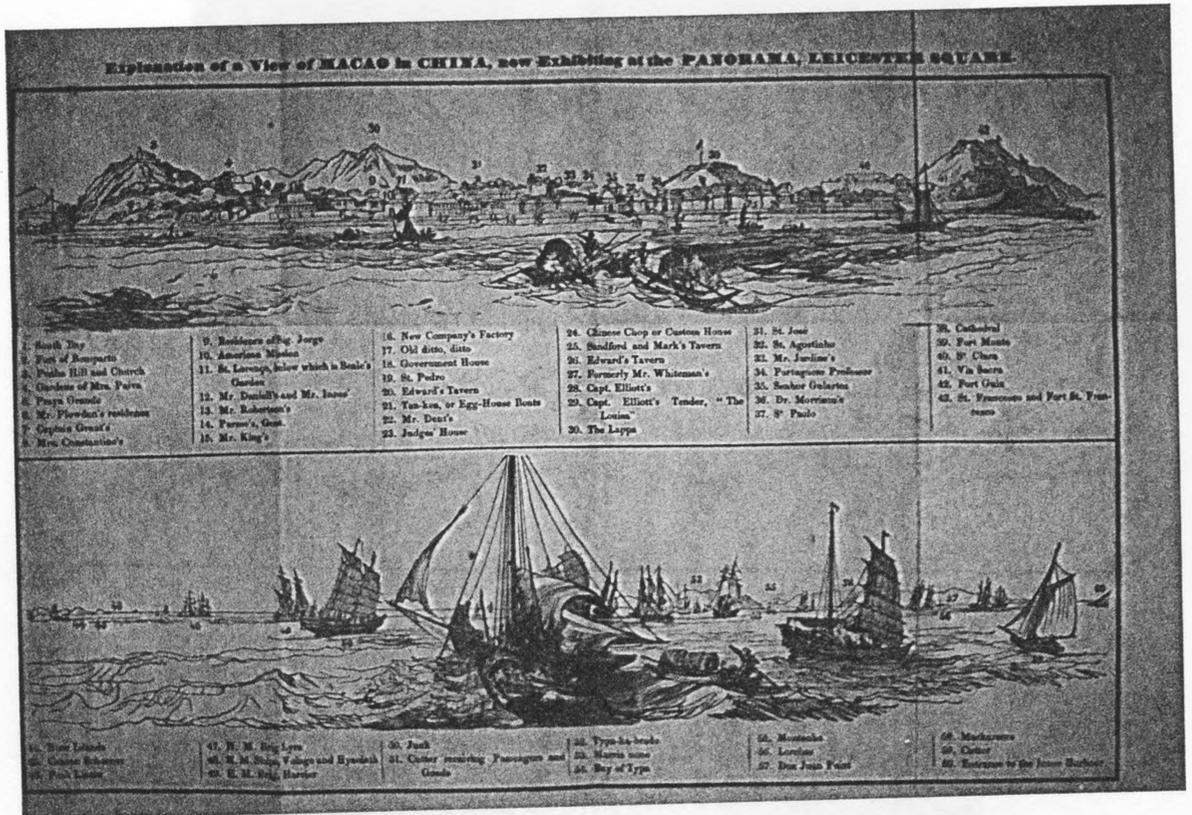
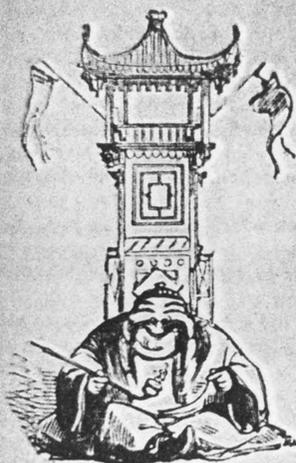


FIG.25. Annotated illustration of Burford's Panorama of Macao from *Description of a view of Macao in China* (1840).

PUNCH, OR THE LONDON

THE CHINESE EXHIBITION AT KNIGHTSBRIDGE.



It is well known to every Englishman who loves tea and his country, that the East India Tea Company have latterly got into hot water with the Chinese, and that the memorable O. P. row at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, is likely to be eclipsed by the O. P. row at the Imperial Theatre of War, Canton. A line of demarcation has been drawn, and the Celestial soldiers are ordered to fire upon the "Company" who come, without being invited, to tea. In other words, the line is to be strictly guarded, and if the Company attempt to cross their teas, the troops are to dot their eyes with sugar-of-lead. The Chinese themselves, who are universally admitted to be nice men for a small tea party, use no sugar—

and, judging from the above order, we should say very little milk—of human kindness. The attempt to shoot their lead at us, although they have not the courage to follow it up by a charge, has naturally excited the anger of the great men of Leadenhall Street; and the tea-dealers, on both sides, are trying which is the strongest. Which side of the quarrel is the just one, it is beside our purpose to inquire; but it is clear that, even if we are wrong, still we are strong, and therefore, although our conduct may be black, theirs is green. It is no consolation to us that they cut their own throats by endeavouring to prevent their tea from cutting ours. We are used to the beverage, and cannot submit to be deprived of our tea totally. As long, therefore, as the war party, or rather tea party, in China, think fit to keep up their fire, so long must we send war-steamers with large boilers, and give them pound for pound. These strange little people, many of whom are sorcerers, are said to fight best in their cups. Be that as it may, our sea-chests hold as good

FIG.26. Initial letter from review of the Chinese Collection from *Punch* (Oct., 1842).

page of the country, a neck bones.

CHINESE IDEAS OF BEAUTY.

Corpulence is considered a beauty in a man—so much so that people seem to think but little of a slight acquaintance. On the other hand, light ladies weigh heaviest in the scale of beauty, while heavy ladies are made light of. However, there is no rule without an exception, for the most celebrated Bell in Peking weighs 123,000 pounds. So general an objection exists to great feet, and such a great feat is it thought to have small ones, that the feet of female children of five years old are actually taken up and bound over not to grow any more. Their soles thus become as small as Rochester soles, and they are as easily caught, for they cannot walk straight; so that, like other small soles, they might with more propriety be called slippers. These tiny lumps of deformity are dignified with the appellation of "Golden Lilies," a name which is supposed to have had its origin in the exclamation of a negro, who, on first seeing a Chinese lady's foot in a yellow silk shoe, cried out, "O me Fader—dere's a lilly golden ting!" And yet how the negro could say this, when the same binding which checks the foot won't let the knee grow, we cannot guess. Surely it is not only a cruel but a short measure which cribs ten inches out of every foot!

CURIOSITIES OF CHINA.

There are many curiosities in China; so many, that we must leave travellers to discover them for themselves. One hint, however, may help to save them time. In every city, town, and even village, they may visit, they will find the greatest curiosity of the place in the possession of the ladies.



A N-ODD MAN.

RELIGION OF CHINA.

There are three sects—the Buddhist, the Taou sect, and the Confucian. The two first are the more regular Chinese religions, which

FIG. 27. Illustration from reviews of the Chinese Collection from *Punch*.

THE
CHINESE EXHIBITION AT KNIGHTSBRIDGE.

CIVIL GOVERNMENT IN CHINA.

The civil institutions of China claim to be fashioned upon the exact model of a wise family government. The Emperor is invariably spoken of as the "Father of the Nation,"—and justly, for the most



FATHER OF THE SUN.

anxious parent never whipped his children more frequently. Chinese whipping, however, seems to be the very antipodes of English, for there they often whip people's heads off. The astonishing rapidity with which the heads of offenders are sometimes taken off is enough to excite the jealousy of Monsieur Daguerre. The process, indeed, is brought to great perfection; the execution is instantaneous—and if the likeness is not striking, the executioner is. In busy times, we should imagine that heads may be purchased there for about the same price they are openly sold in the shops here—namely, one penny. In the capital the operation is usually performed under the immediate superintendence of the Emperor himself; in the provinces, under that of the officer whose province it is.

FACE OF THE COUNTRY.

The general face of China is flat, especially the nose. The only prominent parts are called, in the mono-syllabic but expressive language of the country, Tscheek Bones.

CHINESE IDEAS OF BEAUTY.

Corpulence is considered a beauty in a man—so much so that people seem to think but little of a slight acquaintance. On the other hand, light ladies weigh heaviest in the scale of beauty, while heavy ladies are made light of. However, there is no rule without an exception, for the most celebrated Bell in Pekin weighs 120,000 pounds. So general an objection exists to great feet, and such a great feat is it thought to have small ones, that the feet of female children of five

FIG. 28. Illustration from review of the Chinese Collection from *Punch*

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TROPE,

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R MAJESTY,
f. of H. R. H.
E FOURTH,

SONS'

GS,

ISEMAN,

LIFE
ANNING,

aster of

MURDERED.

CASH FARM,
ed to the

er of Horrors,
7 till 10.

UNPRECEDENTED ATTRACTION.

One of the Chief Lions of the Day."—Times.

THE CHINESE LADY.

PWAN-YE-KOO,

seventeen Years of Age, with small Lotus Feet, only 2½ Inches
in Length!

HER NATIVE FEMME DE CHAMBRE,

CHINESE PROFESSOR OF MUSIC,

TWO INTERESTING CHINESE CHILDREN,

Male and Female—5 and 7 Years of Age, and Suite,

Exhibiting Daily, from 11 till 1, 2 till 5, and 6 till 10,

AT

THE CHINESE COLLECTION,

ALBERT GATE, HYDE PARK,

The Lady PWAN-YE-KOO will sing

A Selection of Chinese Airs,

And will be accompanied by the Professor, on Chinese Musical
Instruments, at 12, 1, half-past 2, 3, 4, and 5 each Day, and at
7, 8, and 9 every Evening.

ADMISSION TO
THE TWO EXHIBITIONS,
ONE SHILLING.

FIG. 29. Advertisement for the Chinese Collection from *Richardson's Exhibition London Guide, and Visitors' Pocket Companion* (1851).

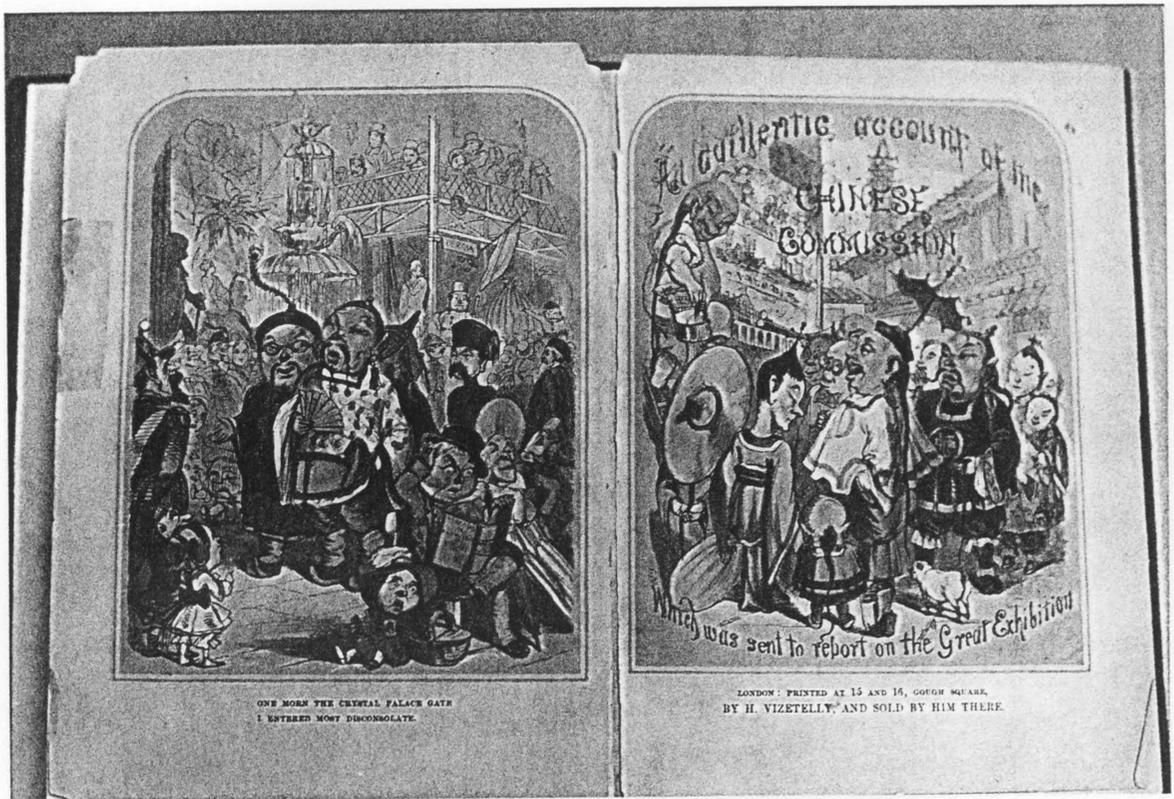


FIG.30. Frontispiece of Edwards' *Authentic Account of the Chinese Commission Which was sent to report on the Great Exhibition* (1851).

Each deed was a farce, and, like many they play,
 Not at all of a nature to make people gay.
 The wildest absurdity marked every act;
 And although a good plot was a thing which he lacked,
 In less than an hour he invented a lot,*
 And killed all concerned, whether guilty or not;
 Thus his actions, unless they supposed him insane,
 Formed a great Chinese puzzle, which none could explain.
 After this, as he felt in no better condition,
 He determined to call in and kill a physician.
 So Sing-Song was sent for, and he, with a groan,
 Said his physic as well to the dogs might be thrown.†
 And perceiving his Prince had some weight on his mind,
 He pretended, the balance of health if he'd find,
 He must throw off whatever thus pressed on his soul—
 Then the Emperor, as follows, acknowledged the whole:
 "Sing-Song — it was thus that his Greatness began—
 " Ere now, you have probably heard of the plan
 Which the Western barbarians of Europe suggest
 For collecting all things which they think they make best

* But now we reflect on it, these were not new,
 For to give the French President all that's his due,
 The plots he gets up have the same slight foundations
 As the Emperor's, which clearly were mere adaptations.

† But although in Great Britain in that way we treat them,
 It's not so in China, a place where they eat them.



AS THE EMPEROR FELT IN NO BETTER CONDITION,
 HE DETERMINED TO CALL IN AND KILL A PHYSICIAN.

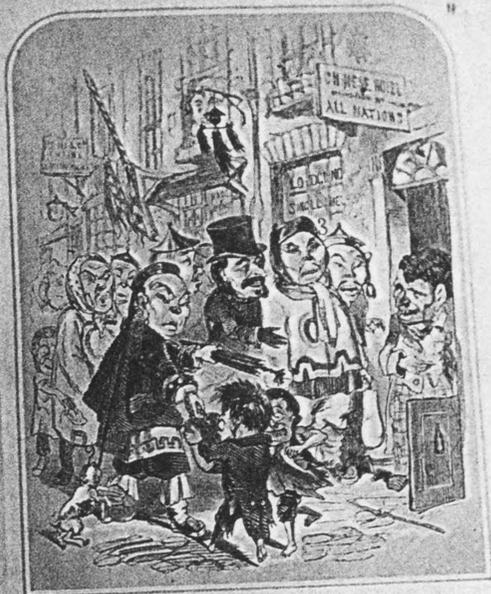
FIG.31. 'As the Emperor felt in no better condition,
 He determined to call in and kill a physician';
 Illustration from Edwards' *Chinese Commission*

II.

In Pekin many a bill was seen—
Informing those who felt aversion
To prices high, that there had been,
A project for a cheap excursion
To England's capital: indeed,
A "run across" had been devised,
And those who wished to run, might read
The terms in which all charges were comprised.

The price in Chinese numbers sounds
So strange, we'll say it was put down
At less than twenty thousand pounds,
And rather more than half-a-crown.
For, in a journey of the kind,
However great the traveller's care is,
When could he s'er exactly find
What the expense, or even what the fare is?

Our two Chinese perused the bill,
And thought the trip was very cheap.
The plan was this:—On Saffron Hill
Celestial travellers to keep



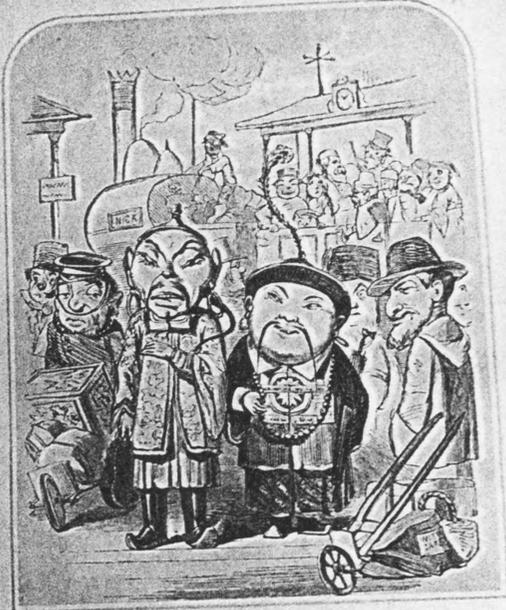
THE PLAN WAS THIS:—ON SAFFRON HILL,
CELESTIAL TRAVELLERS TO KEEP.

FIG. 32. 'The plan was this:- on Saffron Hill,
Celestial travellers to keep';
Illustration from Edwards' *Chinese Commission*

IS AN AUTHENTIC ACCOUNT OF THE CHINESE COMMISSION.

Had he touched porcelain then a further break
Might have occurred, and fans without a doubt
Would but have tended a fresh breeze to make ;
So Congou, caring not to put him out,
Left Sing-Song by himself to walk about.
T was clear he ne'er would get the least replies
From the old sage, whatever might befall ;
And Congou was, of course, a deal too wise,
In hopes of conversation e'er so small,
To speculate on things which "answered not at all."

And thus, as before we have stated,
Arrived in Great Britain the pair,
Each hating the other, and hated ;
And as they approached the "World's Fair,"
It appeared very clear, that whatever
In England the couple might see,
The opinions of either would never
On one single topic agree.



AND THUS, AS BEFORE WE HAVE STATED,
ARRIVED IN GREAT BRITAIN THE PAIR.

FIG.33. 'And thus, as before we have stated,
Arrived in Great Britain the Pair';
Illustration from Edwards' *Chinese Commission*



CONGOU WAS ASKED TO DINNER IN GREAT STATE,
AND THEN PRESENTED WITH A PIECE OF PLATE.

THE CHINESE COMMISSION.

(And so he could, and did, boast every day,
Although the fact was quite the other way.)
And when 't was heard that he was vastly rich,
Enthusiasm reached to such a pitch,
That all his friends resolved, without dissent,
A testimonial they must now present—
That only by a general subscription
Could merit of so solid a description
Be ever duly honoured. Thus, ere long
(The public feeling being very strong),
Congou was asked to dinner in great state,
And then presented with a piece of plate.

And when the first of May arrived,
Congou still kept his high position,
Nor had he yet at all contrived
To think about the Exhibition;
While Sing-Song of nought else could dream.
But Sing-Song's name reminds us now
That we shall most neglectful seem,
Unless we mention where and how
He lived. We left him at the railway station
With Congou; thence we take up our narration:—

FIG.34. 'Congou was asked to dinner in great state,
And the presented with a piece of plate';
Illustration from Edwards' *Chinese Commission*



AND I FOUND THEY ATE DOGS, WHEN I VENTURED TO TRY
A THING WHICH THEY SOLD AS A MERE MUTTON PIE.

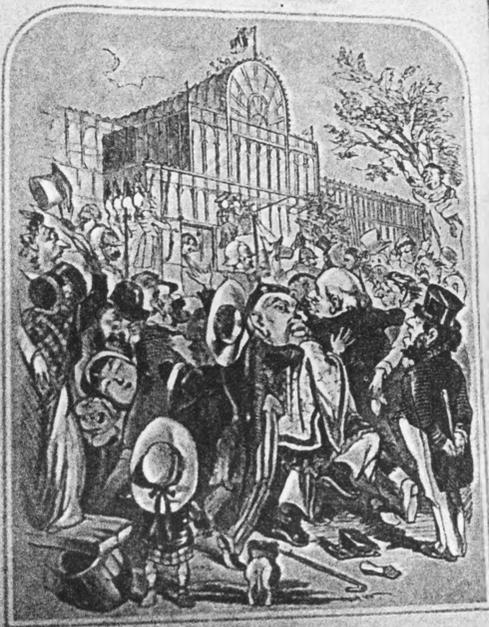
THE CHINESE COMMISSIONER.

What strange contradictions were seen in each place,
For instance, to go into one single case,
In her surgical instruments France had rewards,
While she also gained prizes for muskets and swords,
To promoters of death the same medals they give
As to those who enable sick mortals to live.

If the affair, we sum up it must be allowed
To be one of which England may justly be proud;
It's a barbarous land, but you find there much good,
Though the uses of opium are not understood,
Still e'en in that matter the next generation
Will doubtless improve, for a late calculation
Proves that myriads of children drink laudanum each day,
So the country is now in a promising way,
And I found they ate dogs, when I ventured to try
A thing which they sold as a mere mutton pie.

To speak candidly, England's becoming a nation,
And presents a few points worth our close imitation.
I think the barbarians have not a bad notion
Of what they affectedly call locomotion:
For instance, they've roads on which men have the power
Of travelling dozens of miles in one hour.
No doubt that the tales which they tell of the pace
Have been much overstated in every case;

FIG.35. 'And I found they ate dogs, when I ventured to try
A thing which they sold as a mere mutton pie';
Illustration from Edwards' *Chinese Commission*



THE OPENING, IN SHORT, WAS AS DULL AS COULD BE;
THERE WAS NO EXECUTION WHATEVER TO SEE.

There's Sibthorpe the Colonel, and Laurie the Knight,
Who opposed the concern from the choice of a site
To the very last day; and, e'en now, they declare
That a famine or plague may still end the affair.
And then, when the building was opened, a blunder
Was committed, at which our great sovereign will wonder—
For when the barbarians saw their Queen pass,
As she went through the Park to the Palace of Glass,
They shouted and screamed in so noisy a way,
That in China a man who awoke the next day,
And discovered his shoulders still carried a head,
Would have sworn that all justice and law must be dead.
But then they've a Sovereign with such a faint heart,
That although there was uproar in every part—
Though the streets in all places with rabble were filled,
She sentenced not one of the lot to be killed.
The opening, in short, was as dull as could be;
There was no execution whatever to see;
There was no one impaled, and the use of the saw
Is not even mentioned in Englishmen's law;
And the last thing (whatever a miscreant might do)
Which they'd think of, would perhaps he to saw him in two.
The classes called upper, appeared not to know
That the nails of their fingers they ought to let grow.
T is thus we Chinese tell the men who ne'er work
From the low-mid-ordinates, who from labour can't shirk

FIG.36. 'The opening, in short, was as dull as could be;
There was no execution whatever to see';
Illustration from Edwards' *Chinese Commission*