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## The Looting of Yuanming and the Translation of Chinese Art in Europe

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Abstract:

In 1860, French and British forces looted the enormous imperial palace of Yuanming Yuan outside Beijing, a process that revealed a range of attitudes and value systems among both the looters and the cultural agents receiving the stolen art objects in Europe. The author explores Empress Eugénie's display of looted works at the palace of Fontainebleau, arguing that the display nostalgically echoed eighteenth-century politics and taste.

## The Looting of Yuanming and the Translation of Chinese Art in Europe

by Greg M. Thomas

The imperial palace of Yuanming Yuan (or Garden of Perfect Brightness) used to stand about 20 kilometers northwest of Beijing, close to the so-called Summer Palace that tourists can still visit today. Most of it was constructed between 1709 and 1772 by the emperors of the Qing Dynasty, including the emperor Qianlong, whose long reign (r.1736–95), enormous power, and cultural wealth gave him a nearly mythical stature similar to that of the earlier Louis XIV in France (r.1643–1715). The palace complex that Qianlong completed included hundreds of wooden buildings and pavilions constructed in classical Chinese style, scattered throughout a vast complex of artificial waterways and classical gardens (fig. 1). Like Louis XIV's Versailles, Yuanming Yuan was made an official seat of government, at times used more often than the older and now more famous Forbidden City in Beijing. And like Versailles again, Yuanming Yuan was a vast and sumptuous repository of the greatest productions of the country's royal culture, including architecture, gardens, painting, sculpture, and especially decorative arts.<sup>[1]</sup>



Fig. 1, Anonymous, *Overview of Yuanming Yuan*, photographed 2004. Display painting. Beijing Yuanming Yuan Park. [\[larger image\]](#)

The palaces and gardens of Yuanming Yuan exist no more. In 1860, during the Second Opium War, invading French and British forces looted the palaces before the British army burned them to the ground, ignoring French objections. Our primary visual record of the complex is a set of 40 paintings commissioned by Emperor Qianlong in 1744, representing the so-called “40 scenes” of the central garden complex (fig. 2). Each painting accurately depicts a unique architectural ensemble, set against a semi-imaginary landscape of the kind that the surrounding garden was meant to evoke. These paintings reside today in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, and it is the irony of this cross-cultural transaction, and other ironies like it, that I want to emphasize in this essay.<sup>[2]</sup> By examining the looting of the palace, the reception of looted objects in Europe, and the display of looted art in the French empress's *Musée chinois*, or Chinese Museum, we can see the ironic ways in which Chinese art was simultaneously understood and misunderstood in Europe.



Fig. 2, Tang Dai and Shen Yuan, *Forty Views of Yuanming Yuan*, 1747. Volume 1, scene 1 “Zhengda guangming” (“Grand Uprightness and Illumination”). Ink and watercolor on silk. Paris Bibliothèque Nationale de France. [\[larger image\]](#)

My argument will be based on three primary hypotheses. First and most simply, I view the looting and subsequent display of these treasures as an illuminating form of intercultural transmission, one that radically transformed the meaning of the looted objects. Second, I believe the looting acted to appropriate Chinese imperial culture as a way of reinforcing France’s own imperial ambitions during the reign of Emperor Napoleon III (r.1851–70). And third, less straightforward, I believe this symbolic cultural-political process depended on an implicit, underlying recognition of similarity and even equivalence between China’s imperial culture and France’s own royal and imperial heritage. This twofold process of exercising both domination over and equivalence with China’s alien culture suggests a process more complex than a simple, unilateral Orientalist assertion of power and control. It suggests instead a process of destruction and reconstitution that drew on the *prestige* of Chinese imperial culture in order to bolster the prestige of French imperial culture. This translation of Chinese arts thus involved numerous kinds of irony, a word I will use frequently to point up instances of doubled meanings, i.e. new meanings that may duplicate, mirror, or reverse original meanings but that in any case carry an unexpected resonance between two seemingly incongruous objects or events. Many of these ironic resonances extend back to the 18th-century origins of Yuanming Yuan, when Jesuit descriptions of the palace greatly influenced Chinoiserie and the development of the English style garden.<sup>[3]</sup> But here I will concentrate only on the death of the palace, and its afterlife in France. The first two sections focus on the looting of Yuanming Yuan, and the final two on the reception of looted art objects in France.

#### *Equivalence and Inversion in the Translation of Yuanming Yuan*

At the end of the First Opium War (1839–42), China was forced to open five ports to British merchants and cede the island of Hong Kong. During the Second Opium War (1856–60), an 1858 treaty forced China to accept a further ten treaty ports, expand Hong Kong’s territory onto the mainland, legalize opium imports, and allow foreign travel and missionary activity.

When China backed away from signing this new treaty, Britain and France deployed a joint army of 23,000 soldiers to force the emperor's compliance. The army first overran the coastal Fort Dagu near Tianjin in 1860, where Felice Beato made a number of important trophy photographs in one of the first examples of war photography. When the Chinese kidnapped a negotiating team of 39 diplomats and soldiers, the allies marched for Beijing, where they followed retreating Manchu forces around the city and directly to the gates of Yuanming Yuan. Arriving the evening of October 6, 1860, and taken quite by surprise at this unexpected turn of events, the Europeans stopped pursuing the Chinese army and spent two full days inspecting and looting the abandoned grounds. On the third day, October 9, they moved out to besiege Beijing. Nine days later, the British army returned and set fires throughout Yuanming Yuan and neighboring imperial parks in Yihe Yuan (Garden of Clear Ripples—at the time called the Qingyi Yuan and now restored as the Summer Palace known to tourists) and Xiang Shan (Fragrant Hills), wiping out almost all the wooden buildings and ruining a set of Western-style stone palaces designed by the Jesuits in a far corner of Yuanming Yuan. The French ambassador, Baron Gros, had protested this destruction, but the British ambassador, Lord Elgin—the son of the Earl of Elgin who took the Parthenon statues from Greece—went ahead on his own, for two reasons. First, he wanted to exact revenge on the emperor for kidnapping the diplomatic team, imprisoning them at Yuanming Yuan, and treating them harshly. Second, this destruction, coupled with a threat to go on and burn the Forbidden City in Beijing, persuaded Emperor Xianfeng to allow his brother, Prince Gong, to sign the forced treaty, which was now adjusted to penalize China further. Yuanming Yuan, and more particularly its destruction, was thus instrumental in the actual military conquest of China.<sup>[4]</sup>

While the logic of this destruction is fairly simple, the process of looting is more complex. We have almost no visual records of the palace or looting in 1860—Beato made only a few plates—and most of the tens of thousands of looted objects remain dispersed and undocumented.<sup>[5]</sup> But we do have a number of eyewitness accounts from British and French officers, soldiers, and journalists. These provide a rich and revealing picture of how imperial arts were treated in the field. As a form of intercultural interaction, looting involves three main processes: evaluating a site, selecting certain objects to take, and selecting others to destroy. By examining each of these processes, we can understand how different kinds of intercultural agents reacted to Yuanming Yuan in different ways. We can also begin to appreciate how deeply intercultural judgments of cultural, moral, and economic value depend on the recognition of similarity, compatibility, and equivalence, as well as exotic difference.

In first evaluating the treasures unveiled to them, British and French officers and soldiers reiterated some of the aesthetic patterns drawn by earlier writers in the 18th century, especially in proclaiming and mystifying the vast size, rich variety, and exotic aesthetic of the palace grounds. British witnesses dwelt particularly on the gardens, in which they identified affinities with Britain. In the most widely quoted account of the expedition, Robert Swinhoe, a British interpreter, expressed disdain for the buildings while swooning over the gardens, where he recounts “magnificent trees,” “picturesque summer-houses,” “fantastic bridges,” and so on. Echoing 18th-century language and taste, he writes: “The variety of the picturesque was endless, and charming in the extreme; indeed, all that is most lovely in Chinese scenery ... seemed all associated in these delightful grounds.”<sup>[6]</sup> This appreciation suggests that even after the violence of the 1860 campaign, Swinhoe could look

back upon the gardens with the admiration due an equal civilization. Henry Loch, a secretary to Lord Elgin who was also one of the hostages, showed similar appreciation for the gardens while declaring that “the buildings in themselves possessed but little architectural beauty.”[7]

French witnesses, in contrast, focused more on the palace’s art and treasure. General de Montauban, the first to probe the interior, wrote to the Minister of War on October 8 that “nothing in our Europe can give an idea of comparable luxury.”[8] And to his superior in Paris, he wrote:

It would be impossible, Monsieur le Maréchal, for me to convey to you the magnificence of the many buildings ... which are known as the emperor’s summer palace; a succession of pagodas all contain gods of gigantic size in gold and silver or in bronze. Thus one single bronze god, a Buddha, is about 70 feet high, and all the rest is of a piece; gardens, lakes, and curious objects piled up for centuries in white marble buildings, covered with dazzling shiny tiles of every color; add to that views of a beautiful countryside and Your Excellence will have but a feeble idea of what we have seen.[9]

Grasping the total effect of this ensemble of art, architecture, and landscape, Montauban also emphasizes the enormity and depth of what seems a great antique civilization. Only a few images in Qianlong’s 1744 album show these temples; most were situated outside the album’s scope, in Yihe Yuan and the Fragrant Hills, but one gets some sense of their effect by visiting the extant temples subsequently constructed to replace them. Beato’s sole surviving photograph of the ruined grounds, for example, shows the main hill of Yihe Yuan, where the Tower of the Fragrance of Buddha now holds a five-meter tall statue of a bodhisattva dating from 1574 (figs. 3 and 4).[10]



Fig. 3, Felice Beato, view of Yihe Yuan (detail), October 1860. Photograph. [\[larger image\]](#)





Fig. 4, The author, view of Yihe Yuan, 1999. Photograph. [\[larger image\]](#)

The most detailed account of the looting is the diary of Charles Dupin, a lieutenant-colonel who accompanied Montauban and published his account under the pseudonym Paul Varin.<sup>[11]</sup> Like Montauban, he too was impressed by both the overall aesthetic effect and the endless richness of objects. He describes passing a pair of 3-meter bronze lions to enter the main audience hall, where they found a marvelously sculpted throne in black wood (Swinhoe sniffed that it was an inferior wood pretending to be ebony), framed by two huge cloisonné enamel incense vases.<sup>[12]</sup> Here we can begin to imagine the effect by referring to a painting of this audience hall in Qianlong's album (fig. 2) and two prints based on eyewitness visits to the hall—an early engraving of the throne reproduced in the official record of Lord Macartney's 1793–94 embassy visit and an 1840s etching of the hall's front courtyard by Thomas Allom illustrating George Wright's hugely successful compendium on China (fig. 5).<sup>[13]</sup> To the left, according to Dupin, the wall was covered by an enormous silk painting “depicting views of the imperial palaces,” while shelves around the room were loaded with more cloisonné vases, piles of delicately painted albums, and books written by the emperor in beautiful boxes.<sup>[14]</sup> Dupin himself apparently took Qianlong's massive album of *Forty Scenes* from here. He then describes a second, stunning throne room behind the first before coming to the emperor's private apartments, where the magic and excess of it all prove overwhelming. Expanding on Montauban's hyperbole, Dupin states:



Fig. 5, Thomas Allom, *Hall of Audience, Palace of Yuen min Yuen, Peking*, originally published in George N. Wright, *China, in a Series of Views ...*, 4 vols. (London Fisher, n.d. [1843]). Etching with later hand-coloring, c.1840s. Hong Kong collection of the author. [\[larger image\]](#)

One must give up trying to describe the contents of these apartments. Words fail to depict their material and artistic treasures ... It was a vision from the Thousand and One Nights, such a fairyland that a delirious imagination couldn't dream of anything comparable to the palpable truth we had before us!<sup>[15]</sup>

Another French soldier drew the same analogy, calling Yuanming Yuan a "veritable palace from the Thousand and One Nights" and exclaiming that "It would take volumes to describe all the splendors amassed over the centuries in the favorite palace of the emperor of the Celestial Empire."<sup>[16]</sup> A book glorifying the expedition for young readers repeated the claim, describing diamonds and gold statues in the residences and temples.<sup>[17]</sup> Even France's official government report, despite a far more staid tone, marvels at length over both the monetary and artistic wealth discovered by Montauban. Summing up the scene, it comments: "Everything, in the whole and in the parts, held a stamp of grandeur and elegance, a splendid picture of the customs of the Far East."<sup>[18]</sup>

These witnesses' first impression, even when recalled months later in these reflective writings, was clearly of a palace and palace culture that equaled or surpassed France's own in grandeur and variety, exceeding rational comprehension. Yet it also signified an exotic, seemingly fantastic Orient as indicated by the reference to the *Thousand and One Nights*. This famed Middle Eastern text was first translated into French in 1704–17, and many editions of its stories were published in the 1850s.<sup>[19]</sup> Soldiers probably had in mind scenes such as the jinni's magical creation of a palace on the command of his master Aladdin, "built of jasper and marble, lazuli and mosaics," with a dome whose windows were "encrusted with emeralds, rubies, and other precious stones"; the dazzling palace was laden with endless treasures of gold, Chinese and Indian silks, magnificent horses, beautiful "slaves and serving-girls," and so on.<sup>[20]</sup> It was this fantasy of absolute power and material excess, now filtered through Orientalist discourse, that seemed to be physically realized in Yuanming Yuan. This exoticism was augmented by a decline in China's 18th-century reputation as a model civilization; as Geremie Barmé has written, "Western perceptions of the Chinese monarch had changed greatly from the days when Lord Macartney had met with Qianlong ... The emperor was now, if anything, regarded as a decadent and corrupt oriental despot."<sup>[21]</sup> General Montauban, for example, mixed awe with disenchantment, writing to the Minister of War: "What is sad amidst all these splendors of the past is the neglect (*incurie*) and abdication of the current government and the two or three governments that preceded it; nothing is kept up, and the most beautiful things, except those that decorated the palace in which the emperor was living, are in a deplorable state of decay."<sup>[22]</sup> France's official report repeated the charge, asserting that except for the emperor's private quarters, "a painful feeling gripped the experts in seeing the state of neglect into which these marvels had been abandoned."<sup>[23]</sup> And Dupin, though marveling that one of the temples at Yihe Yuan (behind the hill in Beato's photograph) was as tall as the Pantheon in Paris and held a colossal 900-armed statue with a "Greek profile," estimated—erroneously—that legions of monks must once have lived there and then abandoned it centuries earlier, for grass now filled the courtyards along with thousands of pigeons.<sup>[24]</sup>

The implication in such comments was clear, and typical of European imperial aggression elsewhere: China's rich cultural past equaled France's but its debased moral present rendered the nation inferior.<sup>[25]</sup> Commentators pressed the point by expressing disdain for a cowardly emperor who boasted of rejecting foreigners but then fled before them. A soldier

named Armand Lucy, for example, praised Chinese arts but called the Chinese “imbeciles” for not copying and using the howitzers given by Macartney or his successor Amherst, which Lucy found unused.[26] Swinhoe expressed similar sentiments, but no observer was so scathing as Antoine Fauchery, a photographer and correspondent for France’s *Moniteur universel* traveling with the army who first revealed the looting to the French public in a long dispatch dated October 13 and published in France on December 28.[27] His description of the palace is prefaced by a long denunciation that explicitly equates France and China in cultural terms in order to exaggerate a contrast in political moralities. Condemning Xianfeng for allowing such a military humiliation, he writes: “Surely nowhere else could one see the leader of an empire as large as Europe, and ruling three hundred million subjects, flee before 7,000 soldiers.” No other ruler, he continues, could abandon “everything, including the site of his favorite retreat, the most vast and sumptuous of his residences, the Chinese Versailles or Saint-Cloud, and leave it in the care of ten men armed with arrows and lances ...”[28] It is Yuanming Yuan’s clear equivalence with French palace complexes that makes the emperor’s actions so opaquely incomprehensible. Fauchery calls the palace part of an “immense farce” and likens the expedition to a “dream” in which the Europeans might suddenly fly into the air or disappear down a hole. Of the fact that a small army of foreign soldiers is suddenly wearing the emperor’s furs and eating his pastries, he concludes: “People believe in a campaign; it’s a nightmare.”[29]

This rhetoric of farcical disorientation, recalling the irrationality of Alice in Wonderland, establishes the ambivalent play of splendor and decadence that underlies his Orientalist description of the palace itself. The glitter of it all makes the ordinary soldier “forget all the fatigues and privations of the road, leaving only memories of the dazzle of gold, silver, and silk such as only the experience of reading the *Thousand and One Nights* could provide.”[30] Such ecstasy, however, is blunted by “neglect”—the same word Montauban used—and “bad taste,” and “unfortunately you cannot take a step through the Chinese splendors without your eye being hurt by the coarse, clumsy, and artless way in which the objects of unheard luxury are arranged.”[31] He describes corridors without issue, side rooms with no purpose, and immense halls all piled up with “treasures of the most dazzling antiqueness”—“monstrous” heaps of Nanjing porcelain, old cloisonné enamels, rare red lacquer boxes from Beijing, a thousand kinds of jade sculpture, lace, ivory, agate, coral, sandalwood carvings, bronzes from Canton, and pearls the size of hazelnuts. Each “of these works of art, of these *knick-knacks*” is, he concedes, admirable and valuable in its own right, but because they are “piled up from floor to ceiling in the most incoherent and grotesque conglomerations!” their effect on the viewer is an “indigestion of curios,” leading to “a violent headache.”[32]

Fauchery’s obsessive anxiety—he rails on similarly for paragraphs—is clearly rooted in his inability to navigate this luxurious but overwhelming alien environment, whose highly refined semiotic and aesthetic order he seems at an utter loss to comprehend. Nevertheless, he tries to link the site back to France, and it is the failure of this mirroring that seems particularly to have exacerbated his disorientation. The profusion and confusion of objects, he says in touring the residences, would make an auctioneer despair or “drive to distraction a monomaniac flâneur from the quai Voltaire.”[33] This is a jarring comment, unexpectedly splicing looting in exotic recesses of the globe into that arch-emblem of Parisian modernity, the *flâneur*. As so many scholars have discussed, the concept of *flânerie* encapsulates the commercial, sexual, and class-based consumption of Parisian spectacle that developed in



the reign of Napoleon III, and to be a *flâneur* was to survey and make sense of the dizzying, labyrinthine array of new sites, characters, and diversions available to the modern man.<sup>[34]</sup> By berating the supposed disorder of Yuanming Yuan, by further criticizing the circuitous arrangement of compartmentalized building complexes, and by explicitly disparaging the endless waterways as an “aquatic labyrinth” whose effect is “more strange than picturesque,” Fauchery interprets his experience as failed *flânerie* before an aesthetic-cultural system that resisted Eurocentric modes of mapping and visualization.<sup>[35]</sup>

This interpretive move, not surprisingly, contrasts old Oriental irrationality to modern Western clarity, but it also simultaneously likens the consumption of Yuanming Yuan to a modern commercial enterprise. Yet he goes on to devalue commercial consumption as well when, to conclude his article, he compares the storerooms of Yuanming Yuan to the stores of Paris. These “virtual emporiums” are as big as “the stores of the Cities of France or the City of Paris,” each crammed with enough silk or cotton, fur, necklaces, watches, statues, pastries, or other goods to fill a ship or clothe all of China.<sup>[36]</sup> The excess of it all offends him, and his final diatribe targets the emperor’s tasteless penchant for hoarding European music boxes and other mechanical trinkets, which the soldiers played, to Fauchery’s chagrin, all the way back to port. It seems the emperor’s worst crime of all was to mirror Europe badly, to appropriate the wrong European goods and approximate the wrong European commercial practices—all the more ironic since capitalist commerce was, after all, a root aim of the Opium Wars.

To find this all exotic, even decadent, was normal Orientalist reception. But to find it *nightmarish* implies a misrecognition founded on mirroring, and the pronounced uncanniness of that mirroring—the sense of a seemingly familiar but highly distorted reflection—emerges at its most awkward and ironic in the Europeans’ encounter with Yuanming Yuan’s Western palaces. Dupin, the only one of our military witnesses to describe them in any detail, found the buildings doubly passé, both outmoded and in disrepair. After indicating that they were abandoned and used as storerooms, he writes:

In one of these palaces, built in the Louis XV style, we saw a series of rooms covered in Gobelins tapestries with the French coat of arms and on whose walls were hung full-length portraits of beauties of the French court, with their names below. But tapestries and paintings alike were tattered and ripped, and smacked of long-term neglect.<sup>[37]</sup>

To Fauchery, on the other hand, this was the only thing worthy of praise, and specifically because of its likeness to Europe:

Among all these palaces, there is one that stands out from the sanctioned form. It’s a Louis XV palace, a rococo palace! Trianon, Luciennes, or Marly—take your pick! A testimony of such strong sympathy paid to France by the most eccentric people in the world could not decently have come about except in the era when we ourselves, in our customs, arts, ethics, and politics, tended very closely to resemble Chinese people.<sup>[38]</sup>

While Fauchery thus identifies the palace as an explicit instance of mirroring, it signifies for him a nostalgic moment from the past, when a better emperor ruled and Jesuits were

welcome at court. This “Pompadour fantasy,” he goes on, contains souvenirs of earlier French architectural ornaments, decorations of Olympian gods and goddesses, imitations of Watteau and Boucher, porcelain baskets, crystal fragrance jars, and so on.

Eminently navigable, this environment is for Fauchery the inverse of the main palace; it is familiar, logically ordered, meaningful, even if out of date (and more stuffed with knick-knacks than the emperor’s quarters). He recognizes a certain grotesqueness in this uncanny simulacrum, saying it is “full of anachronisms, mangled, bastard,”[\[39\]](#) but he praises the workmanship and declares that:

the intimate links that exist between the spirit of minuteness and innate taste for little things among the Chinese, and the affectation, the preciousness, the pursuit of the tiny detail—little verses, little marquises, little suppers—in short, the unfortunate disease of little trifles that characterized one aspect of the ephemeral era of the Richelieus and the Fronsacs, was enough to give this pastiche, though imperfect, a relative value that is not without merit.[\[40\]](#)

Europe and China once mirrored each other, he implies, back in the age of Chinoiserie, when France’s royal palace culture was thriving and Rococo and Chinese aesthetics matched and intersected, similarly decorative and effeminate. However, as the Rococo virtually embodied France’s pre-Revolutionary order, Fauchery understandably shows no particular fondness for this “unfortunate”, now defunct taste (that, we will see, would be left to Empress Eugénie). He only finds that the mirroring of old France, however twisted, makes this the only culturally meaningful, and thus translatable, part of Yuanming Yuan.

One of the few accounts written truly on the spot, Fauchery’s captures the fundamental irony underlying the entire military reception of Yuanming Yuan. As a cultural embodiment of imperial prestige, the palace deserved admiration as an equal to those of Europe, while the emperor’s presumed moral decadence rendered it deserving of appropriation and destruction. In a similar way, the Western palaces within seemed concretely to signify the equivalence or translatability between the two parallel systems of imperial or monarchic culture, yet they too were now perceived as decadent in their own way, passé and outmoded. Fauchery’s rhetorical inversion of China, tied so directly to the military inversion, depended essentially on a recognition of equivalence between the two countries.

#### *The Intercultural Aesthetics of Looting*

If appreciation and denunciation were inextricably linked in the moral-aesthetic evaluations made by these officers, soldiers, and reporters, the actual process of looting and destruction reveals how the visitors applied those evaluations to specific categories of objects in the field. The looting and burning of the palace complex also introduces still deeper levels of ironic equivalences and inversions, all of which again turn on the degree of compatibility between the exotic objects and European values.

Exactly how the looting began is a point of bitter dispute between French and British sources.[\[41\]](#) All agree that the French general, Montauban, first toured the emperor’s residence at eight o’clock on the morning of October 7, accompanied by a group of French and British officers, Swinhoe, a French infantry company, and some British dragoons.[\[42\]](#)

Montauban always maintained that nothing was removed before Grant and Elgin arrived around eleven o'clock (except by Chinese brigands), but all other accounts contradict this. [43] Dupin and Lucy claim British officers began pocketing things, setting off a general frenzy among officers and soldiers alike, while Swinhoe accuses French officers of first grabbing watches and small valuables, with Montauban doing nothing to stop them. [44] In either case, Swinhoe and Fauchery apparently obtained passes to re-visit the interior, and then Montauban toured again with Elgin and Grant so that both sides could select the most precious objects to send back to their sovereigns. Two commissions oversaw this dividing up of the choicest spoils that afternoon, after which the grounds were opened to all soldiers, resulting in random looting and often wild destruction. The British, following trophy practices from colonial India, set up a system in which soldiers had to turn in their loot so the commissioners could auction it and divide the profits equally, with one-third going to officers and two-thirds to the soldiers, and with Indian units receiving reduced cuts. [45] French officers let their soldiers loot freely, and Armand Lucy describes soldiers with enormous sacs of goods, which they paid local peasants a few pennies to carry for them when the armies moved out on October 9 to besiege Beijing. [46] An illustration of one such scene, with a dubiously over-sized Chinese man led on a leash by a soldier, emphasizes the physical scale of the operation and the local complicity needed to carry it off. (fig. 6) All witnesses also agree that there was significant looting and destruction by Chinese, both those living nearby and others who were following the armies. [47] Many of their goods, promptly declared illegal by imperial officials, were hastily sold off to the foreigners. [48]



Fig. 6, Anonymous, illustration of a French soldier leading a Chinese porter with loot, in Armand Lucy, *Souvenirs de voyage Lettres intimes sur la campagne de Chine en 1860* (Marseille Jules Barile, 1861), p. 113. Wood engraving. Paris Bibliothèque Nationale de France. [\[larger image\]](#)

The soldiers took a wide variety of objects, most of which had obvious monetary value. A stash of 800,000 francs in gold and silver was directly distributed to the 10,000 or so men present. [49] Swinhoe mentions French soldiers with “a string of splendid pearls” (later sold for cash in Hong Kong), “pencil-cases set with diamonds,” and “watches and vases set with pearls.” [50] At the three-day British auction he lists huge piles of silk and crape, along with “white and green jade-stone ornaments of all tints, enamel-inlaid jars of antique shape, bronzes, gold and silver figures and statuettes, &c.; fine collections of furs ... and court costumes, among which were two or three of the Emperor’s state robes of rich yellow silk ...” [51] London and Paris auction catalogues of the time confirm that these same kinds of

things, along with watches and other Western gifts, were later sold off in England and France.<sup>[52]</sup> Soldiers were translating values not just between cultures but between different value systems as well, converting emblems of imperial culture into military souvenirs and commodities before passing them off in Hong Kong or Europe as art or decorative art. Swinhoe brings out such contrasts in reception when he writes: “No one just then cared for gazing tranquilly at the works of art; each one was bent on acquiring what was most valuable.”<sup>[53]</sup>

Many values matched up on opposing scales; for example, the endless porcelains and lacquer ware listed in catalogues were equally recognized as great decorative art in both imperial China and bourgeois Europe. But one glaring inversion of value did occur, for in all the eyewitness accounts and auction catalogues, only a few historical paintings and not a single work of calligraphy are mentioned, despite their obvious ease of transport.<sup>[54]</sup> The one exception is the bulky but all-important album of *Forty Views of Yuanming Yuan*, which was taken by Dupin, the leader of the attack on Fort Dagou and one of the three members of France’s loot commission. Even this work, however, seems to have been viewed more as a souvenir than a work of art; when he auctioned it off in Paris in 1862, it twice failed to attain its minimum price before being sold cheaply to a dealer, who sold it to the Imperial Library, now part of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.<sup>[55]</sup> Painting and calligraphy were the highest of China’s classical arts, and imperial calligraphy carried supernatural status as a physical embodiment of imperial authority.<sup>[56]</sup> Such works should logically have been collected as the Chinese equivalent of Italian paintings by Leonardo and Raphael held in the Louvre. Yet none of the European looters seem to have recognized any aesthetic, political, or monetary value in these works of art.<sup>[57]</sup>

The presumed abandonment of paintings and calligraphy introduces two further dimensions of aesthetic selection in the looting process, those objects merely neglected and those actively destroyed. As the entire palace complex was burned to the ground, we have little evidence of what was overlooked or left behind. For objects destroyed, on the other hand, accounts offer a clear glimpse of the large scale and intensity of concerted destruction. The fullest description is in the published letters from Lucy, who had an eye for art. He deplores his army’s ignorant pillaging of beautiful works, writing to his father:

I found the furniture store, an unparalleled bazaar, which our soldiers were ransacking, an odd scene, deplorable, burlesque. Almost everything was broken; this is one of the peculiar joys of the soldier, who in his choice demonstrates the most eccentric taste. I saved several pretty cloisonnés, but what can I do with them? I saw great porcelains broken into pieces, old lacquer ware, crackled porcelain, ivories, jades, all coating the ground; enameled vases with which men were playing ball—that was hard to watch—it was enough to make one cry!<sup>[58]</sup>

Lucy himself particularly admired a throne canopy, which he called a “tour de force of sculpture where Chinese bizarreness had exhausted all its fantasies ...”<sup>[59]</sup> But when he went back the next day to take it for his father, he found it smashed to pieces. Swinhoe likewise describes soldiers throwing things at mirrors and shooting at chandeliers:

What a terrible scene of destruction presented itself! How disturbed now was the late quiescent state of the rooms, with their neat display of curiosities! Officers and men,

English and French, were rushing about in a most unbecoming manner, each eager for the acquisition of valuables. Most of the Frenchmen were armed with large clubs, and what they could not carry away, they smashed to atoms.[60]

Lucy backs up this observation, describing how on October 8 “The troops continue fervently smashing what they can’t carry!” He attributes this frenzy in part to each soldier’s anger over finding personal belongings of the French hostages (“having no Chinese in hand, he turns to Chinoiserie ...”), and it is clear the French soldiers did burn down a few of the emperor’s residential buildings because of this.[61] Still, eyeing these objects’ aesthetic or artistic value, Lucy was appalled at the loss not just of monetary but of *cultural* wealth. Swinhoe took a more philosophical view, interpreting the pillaging as proof of “the innate evil in man’s nature when unrestrained by the force of law or public opinion.”[62] One senses also a certain class difference at work here. Just as in France’s revolutions—including the 1871 Commune that followed Napoleon III’s downfall—rampant destruction among ordinary soldiers was common, generally aimed at attacking the symbology of autocratic rule and aristocratic privilege. While Swinhoe and Lucy decried such vandalism as a lack of high cultural appreciation, vandalizing was *one* form of cultural interaction shared by ordinary Europeans and ordinary Chinese.

Lord Elgin and General Montauban were working at the other end of the social spectrum, trying to identify the very greatest objects for Queen Victoria and Napoleon III. They wanted to transfer the political and cultural prestige attached to the emperor’s belongings to their own sovereigns, de-emphasizing monetary value. Montauban wrote to the Minister of War that he had recommended selecting only those objects “having value in terms of art or by their antiquity.”[63] Following Chinese recommendations, they first took two jade and gold scepters, very different in form from European ones but equivalent in signifying the heavenly sanctioned absolute authority of the monarch.[64] The only other items sent to Victoria that I have found specifically mentioned were some four-foot high cloisonné enamel vases from the main audience hall.[65] For the French, on the other hand, the exact choices made by Montauban and the commission—and now on view in French museums—were listed by one witness as follows:

Two imperial batons ... A full outfit of the Chinese emperor ... A pagoda of gilded and chased bronze, of remarkable workmanship; gigantic enamel vases in various colors; several gold and enamel divinities. ... Two enormous chimeras in gilded copper, each weighing close to 400 kg. Two fabric blinds of inordinate length and remarkable workmanship. Finally rings, necklaces, goblets, lacquer ware, porcelain, and a thousand curios.[66]

The batons were scepters and the “pagoda,” actually a stupa, was found in a private chapel connected to the emperor’s main audience hall. It was related to Qianlong’s lavish patronage of Tibetan Buddhism, which was in part politically motivated, but he also commissioned a number of stupas like this one to hold his mother’s hair and other precious artifacts.[67] As for the giant chimeras, these were apparently three-meter high bronze lions guarding the entrance to the main audience hall—the very same statues Macartney’s embassy team had ridiculed as bad art in 1793–94. Dupin reports that they had to be abandoned and were replaced by “two gilded bronze dragons” taken from a marble bridge on the palace grounds.[68] This ensemble of royal souvenirs is something of a mishmash,



combining religious and secular objects, artistic and symbolic, grandiose and minor. What unifies most of them is their great political significance, which was the basis for a smooth translation from Chinese to European courts. Notably absent again are any works of painting or calligraphy.

Montauban reported that once these objects were chosen, the commission consulted the army, which unanimously “wished to make a gift, as a souvenir to Her Majesty the empress, of all the odd objects carried off from the palace, as well as to His Majesty the emperor and the imperial prince.”<sup>[69]</sup> He said the soldiers wanted to express gratitude for launching France’s most distant military expedition ever, but he later recounted that the army wanted specifically to thank the empress for providing medical supplies for the mission.<sup>[70]</sup> The commission also set aside seven objects as gifts for Gros, the Minister of War, and five or six military leaders before sending the rest to Paris.<sup>[71]</sup> Montauban himself was given three jade necklaces for his wife and two daughters, taken from hundreds stored for bestowal on Mandarin officials. He instead made them into a rosary, which he had blessed by the newly restored bishop of Beijing and then personally presented to Eugénie at Fontainebleau. Ironically, this act of pious homage drew intense public criticism when it was found the necklace had little monetary value.<sup>[72]</sup> Even at home, different agents could make very different value judgments depending on whether they used political, monetary, or aesthetic grounds of assessment. This again adds nuance to Europe’s attack on Yuanming Yuan. China was not simply positioned as an inferior, exotic Other inviting conquest; rather, the palace complex embodied a variety of political, economic, and cultural meanings, which were variously appropriated, ignored, or destroyed based on competing systems of meaning and value. In China, the jade beads, though financially unremarkable, carried great political weight as an indication of official rank ordained by the Son of Heaven. Montauban appropriated that divine political prestige, transforming it into a signifier of divine honor bestowed on his own sovereign, yet his act was misinterpreted within France because the object’s monetary insignificance outweighed its political importance. Such ironic misunderstandings were based not on the incompatibility between the two cultural systems, but on the incompatibility among different registers of value *within* each system.

Yuanming Yuan’s final, spectacular transformation came at the hands of Lord Elgin nine days after the looting. Thirteen of the 26 British hostages survived and were released, along with five of the eleven French, on October 8–9, as the armies moved out of Yuanming Yuan. The brutal treatment they reported outraged both armies.<sup>[73]</sup> Upon their capture on September 18, according to French accounts, they had been bound hands to feet and carried on sticks through Beijing, where people hit them and threw garbage at them as the guards tightened their wet ropes. They then were held in chains at Yuanming Yuan for three days without food or water, and guards stuffed their mouths with human excrement when they signaled for water. Although they were transferred on September 29 and treated well, several more died, including one Englishman who first lost his fingers to gangrene. Retribution for mistreatment was now added to the allied demands for signing the treaty. Under threat of bombardment, Beijing’s impenetrable city gates were opened for allied occupation on October 13. Elgin and Gros then demanded a payment of 300,000 taels (100,000 pounds) to Britain and 200,000 (1.5 million francs) to France as compensation to the hostages and their families.<sup>[74]</sup>

Elgin further proposed burning down Yuanming Yuan, for two reasons. Primarily, he wanted to punish the emperor for the hostage incident, and he explained that this was the best punishment for several reasons: because demands for even more money could not be met; it would be impossible to punish responsible individuals; Yuanming Yuan was the site of the hostages' imprisonment; and it was important to punish the emperor rather than the people, and these were his private pleasure grounds.[75] Elgin also saw a tactical rationale; coupled with a threat to burn the Forbidden City in Beijing, it would force the Chinese to sign the treaty. Montauban and Gros, negotiating with the help of the Russian ambassador Count Ignatieff, strongly opposed the plan. They argued that destroying such a cultural treasure was an inappropriate punishment and that it could endanger the treaty signing, which was already assured, and lead to burning the Forbidden City and thus ending the Qing Dynasty, which was contrary to their mission.[76] When Elgin went ahead anyway, the French army took no part.

On October 18, a large British force under General Michel began burning the thousands of widely dispersed wooden structures in the Yuanming Yuan complex. Swinhoe's detailed account shows that they also burned down all they could find in the adjacent Yihe Yuan, including its three large temples (which, contrary to Dupin, he judged "in excellent repair"), and went to the trouble of extending their reach to the Jinming Yuan (Garden of Golden Brighthness) park beyond that and to the temples and other structures dotting the expansive Xiang Shan (Fragrant Hills) park still farther west.[77] The enormous ruined foundation of the Zhao Miao (Luminous Temple) that one still finds there today gives some sense of the reach and scale of this devastation. Swinhoe mentions, incredibly, that Michel spared a pagoda in the Jinming Yuan because it impressed him "as a work of art," that soldiers did their best to loot these previously untouched locations as they burned, and that the work required two full days of labor. The result was exactly the kind of visible display Elgin intended: by the first evening, a vast column of smoke "increased in magnitude, and grew denser and denser, wafting in the shape of a large cloud over Peking [*sic*] ..." [78] Appreciating the blend of beauty and destruction, Swinhoe says the red flames made the soldiers look like demons and, while marveling at the beauty and grandeur of all the works being destroyed, concludes his description at Yuanming Yuan's main gate:

We ... watched with mournful pleasure the dancing flames curling into grotesque festoons and wreaths, as they twined in their last embrace round the grand portal of the Palace, while the black column of smoke that rose straight up into the sky from the already roof-fallen reception-hall, formed a deep background to this living picture of active red flame that hissed and crackled as if glorying in the destruction it spread around.[79]

The blending of beauty and ruination is most ironic in Swinhoe's summary of his impressions, when he declares "how impossible it is to call to the mind's eye of the reader, by any display of words, what one glance of his own eye ... would have conveyed to himself." [80] This echoes one of the earliest European descriptions of Yuanming Yuan, in 1743, when the French Jesuit missionary Jean-Denis Attiret wrote that the palace complex was too grand and exotic to put into words.[81]

Tactically, the devastation of Yuanming Yuan worked. Prince Gong, representing his brother the emperor, capitulated to all demands and delivered the 500,000 tael penalty on October 20.<sup>[82]</sup> On October 21, the British seized the home of the emperor's cousin Zai Yuan, Prince of Yi—who had helped imprison the hostages—as their new embassy.<sup>[83]</sup> Gong signed the treaty with the British on October 24 and the French on the 25th, and the allies began withdrawing from Beijing on November 1. At the signing ceremonies, portraiture played a role in reinforcing the mirroring and inversion between powers. Gros presented Gong with some French money and photographs of Napoleon III, Empress Eugénie, and—to demonstrate photography's fidelity—himself.<sup>[84]</sup> Such surrogates effectively brought the two emperors face to face, implying a certain cultural/political equivalence between the two even while reinforcing their new relationship of military domination and submission. The British made the opposite move, having Beato photograph the British delegation and Prince Gong, whose renowned portrait was taken that day.<sup>[85]</sup> Dupin relates that Gong and his companions were motionless with fear when Elgin shouted “freeze,” and that this breach of etiquette, combined with Elgin's general haughtiness, made them despise the British and favor the French.<sup>[86]</sup> But Dupin proved himself equally imperialistic, and even more racist, by reading his interpretation of China's decrepitude into the Prince's physiognomy. Discerning craftiness and sensuality in his ugly mouth, he writes:

Now and then one caught some flashes of intelligence in his elongated and prominent eyes; but their expression, usually dull and lusterless, showed a man worn out and even degraded by the frequent and premature indulgence in pleasures. Indeed, his entire appearance revealed a weak and ruined constitution.<sup>[87]</sup>

Portraiture helped substantiate the new, inverted relationship between European and Chinese rulers, and European photographic technology fixed a new image of China in bluntly documentary terms, draining much of the imaginative grandeur from Chinese imperial culture.

Yuanming Yuan, on the other hand, almost completely escaped photography to live on only in the imagination. The French left no pictures of the site, even though Gros, Fauchery, and Dupin were photographers. And Beato apparently made only one or two photographs of buildings in the Yuanming Yuan complex proper and another three or four of Yihe Yuan. One shows the Wanshou Shan (Longevity Hill) after the burning, with the octagonal Foxiang Ge (Tower of the Fragrance of the Buddha) and many supporting structures gone and the beamless, stone and tile Zhihuihai Fodian (Sea-of-Wisdom Temple) standing alone on the hilltop (fig. 3).<sup>[88]</sup> The latter offers one shadowy, fragmentary glimpse of the grandeur that had just been destroyed. Had Beato recorded more views, or had Elgin not been ambassador, the subsequent life of Yuanming Yuan would have been quite different. At the least, we would know far more about how it looked, and if it survived subsequent wars, it would easily rival the Louvre as a global tourist attraction of world heritage. Instead, it disappeared nearly completely, with Qianlong's album and his engravings of the Western Palaces remaining virtually its only visual records. Ironically, however, its physical annihilation magnified its symbolic reputation both in China and in Europe, where the destruction provoked complex new moral, museological, and artistic reactions related to Europe's own processes of empire formation.

*Bringing China Home: Yuanming Yuan in Europe*

With its total destruction, Yuanming Yuan took on a new life in the European imagination. Its reputation was transformed from a vanquished political power to a vanished artistic culture as its myriad objects of material culture, violently de-contextualized by looting, were placidly re-contextualized as museum specimens. In this upending of palace order and prestige, the meanings of objects were reversed or inverted, shifting from internal classicism to external exoticism, and from living culture to retrospective ruin. Yet viewed another way, in terms of royal semiotics, this inversion was a cross-cultural mirroring, with symbolic capital being transferred symmetrically from the Chinese emperor to his European counterparts. The ghost of Yuanming Yuan was appropriated as part of the living cultural production of imperial power in the court of Napoleon III. As the following two sections will show, these new meanings took shape through both textual reception of the demolished palace and contextual reception of its scattered material fragments.

Morally, the burning of Yuanming Yuan drew widespread condemnation in France. Echoing similar debates today, most commentators contrasted the site's cultural and artistic importance with the political and economic aims of the military expedition, and they condemned the British for mixing the two. One unidentified French participant wrote that the British, to avenge their anger, "found nothing better to do than burn the palace they sought to loot. Call this action by any name you please; for me, I call it *vandalism*."<sup>[89]</sup> Montauban's immediate reaction on October 18 was regret that one civilization would destroy the culture and history of another: "I've just now been informed, *three o'clock*, ... that all the magnificent pagodas, whose marvelous workmanship I had admired, are at this moment the victim of flames: a vengeance unworthy of a civilized nation because it destroys admirable objects that have been respected for several centuries."<sup>[90]</sup> Varin similarly interpreted this in 1862 as the loss of a great civilization's culture: "Nothing was spared! Imperial residences, libraries where over forty generations of literary and artistic achievements had been found piled together, pagodas more ancient than our known world—all went up in flames ..." <sup>[91]</sup> Yet he, like Lucy, still defended the destruction as a military necessity. While many have condemned it as "an act of savage vandalism," he writes, it succeeded in ending the fighting, and Montauban should have supported it, placing military needs above "antiquarian factors."<sup>[92]</sup>

The British participants were more dismissive of the cultural loss. Swinhoe admitted a "secret gratification" that the "cruel destruction" had in part expiated "the foul deeds committed to the prisoners."<sup>[93]</sup> More extreme was the defense mounted by Loch, one of the hostages, who denied the cultural value of Yuanming Yuan altogether:

It may be urged that it was a ruthless act to destroy so much that was rare, beautiful, and valuable; but wonderful as was the extent of the palace, ... still there was no utter annihilation of works of art or learning; for on good authority it was stated, that nothing unique either in the shape of books or manuscripts was kept at Yuen-Ming-Yuen, and in the subsequent search for both, previous to the burning, very few were found, and certainly none of any exclusive rarity.<sup>[94]</sup>

These nebulous 'authorities' were apparently unaware that, in addition to holding much of China's imperial art collection, Yuanming Yuan had also held one of only seven sets of the

*Siku Quanshu* (Collected Works of the Four Treasuries)—36,000 hand-copied volumes of China's greatest literary and philosophical texts.[95] Putting aside this inaccuracy, people on all sides of the debate acknowledged a distinction between military strategy and cultural heritage, a distinction we commonly make concerning conflicts today. Yet in this case they contradicted the very purpose of China's palace complexes, which deployed and regulated high culture precisely as an essential component of imperial authority. Destroying Yuanming Yuan *was* in fact a way of vanquishing the emperor's political authority, and to argue for separating art from politics was to undermine its indigenous meaning. Such distinctions also allowed Europeans to overlook the more fundamental moral dilemma, which was the illegitimacy of the entire military expedition.

Concerning the art itself, however, Britain's official loot, destined for Queen Victoria, was absorbed into the royal collections, where it presumably remains today. France's official loot arrived in Paris in February, 1861 and was put on public display until April in the Tuileries Palace, connected to the west end of the Louvre. The Tuileries was Napoleon III's primary residence and, ironically, would itself go up in flames just ten years later, during the French Commune. But in 1861, the Tuileries is where the exhibition of Chinese objects was mounted, illustrated in the *Illustrated London News* (fig. 7) and *Monde illustré* (fig. 8), and reviewed for the first time by a real China scholar named Guillaume Pauthier in the *Gazette des beaux-arts*, France's first professional art history journal, founded in 1859.[96] Pauthier, a prolific scholar of Chinese philosophy and history, first contrasts the objects' unique artistic value with their unfortunate military fate. He writes on the first page:



Fig. 7, Anonymous, "French Spoils from China Recently Exhibited at the Palace of the Tuileries," in the *Illustrated London News*, vol. 38, April 13, 1861, p. 334. Wood engraving. Hong Kong University of Hong Kong Libraries. [\[larger image\]](#)





Fig. 8, Anonymous, illustration of the Yuanming Yuan exhibition in the Tuileries palace, in *Le Monde illustré*, 1861. Paris Bibliothèque Nationale de France. [\[larger image\]](#)

I can't stop myself from here expressing, first, regret, and a profound regret, that these objects of art have fallen ... into the hands of our soldiers by the brutal law of war; and, further, that collections gathered over more than a century in the emperors' summer palaces—collections surely unique in China for the abundance and rarity of objects—have been dispersed in all directions, and that only a small sample has arrived in France, which, in itself, is far from sufficient in giving a full idea of Chinese art.[\[97\]](#)

This regret is based not so much on moral as on museological grounds; the war's brutality lies in destroying many art treasures and dispersing the rest, such that China has lost a unique collection of art specimens that France is unable to recuperate. In this formulation, China and France are not adversaries but moral and artistic comrades, facing the common enemy of war. He makes this mirroring explicit in the next paragraph, when he compares China's defeat to Napoleon's a half century earlier: "We would certainly have found it immoral if, in 1814 or 1815, the coalition armies had sacked and then burned the palace-museums of Saint-Cloud, Versailles, or Fontainebleau ..."[\[98\]](#) Pauthier further accents this moral/cultural equivalence of China and France by chastising the British, and Elgin in particular, for the militarily superfluous destruction.

With the loot's moral dubiousness thus deflected, Pauthier goes on to praise China's imperial treasures in purely aesthetic terms. He writes of "these marvelous pieces of porcelain" and "fabrics of silk with such brilliant colors"; he commends "the curators of the imperial museum of Yuanming Yuan" for labeling objects so clearly; and he equates Chinese and French royal manufacturing houses, writing that Yuanming Yuan, with its artisan villages, "was Sèvres, the Gobelins, Beauvais all in one ..."[\[99\]](#) Part of his stated aim is to convince an ignorant public that Chinese art has value, and in doing so he draws a comparison to classical Greece. He says the serpentine designs of ancient Chinese bronzes (now known as *tao tie*) are often thought to derive from Greek vases but actually preceded them and surpassed them in elegance. The modern cloisonné vases on view, he further argues, prove that China is still producing great art—a critical counter to Orientalist discourse marking Others as degenerate, as noted above in the discussion of criticisms by Lucy and Swinhoe.[\[100\]](#) While Pauthier spends some time emphasizing the artistic value of vases and jades, however, even he remains mute on painting and calligraphy. His silence is

somewhat puzzling, for upon his request, Gros had purchased in Beijing two enormous encyclopedias of Chinese art history, focusing on calligraphy and painting.[101]

Similar moral tensions inhabit the most famous critique of the destruction, a letter written November 25, 1861 by Victor Hugo, addressed to a Captain Butler. Hugo, who owned a large collection of Chinese porcelain and later purchased fabrics looted from Yuanming Yuan, states baldly that the looting and destruction of the palace was a crime perpetrated by two criminals—England and France. And he explains the enormity of this crime by, again, drawing an explicit symmetry between China and Europe:

There was, in a corner of the world, a marvel of the world: this marvel was called the Summer Palace. Art has two principles: ideas, which produce European art, and chimeras, which produce Oriental art. The Summer Palace was to chimeric art what the Parthenon is to ideal art. All that the imagination can spawn from an almost superhuman people was there.[102]

The comparison is one of perfect, inverted mirroring. Whereas the Parthenon epitomizes human idealism, Yuanming Yuan epitomizes human *imagination*, an enormous museum of humankind's most extravagant dreams. The Parthenon's classical rationality—its geometric order and ideal symmetry—is matched in inverse by Yuanming Yuan's classical style of supposed whim and fancy. By equating China with chimeras—a word referring both to fantastic myths and to China's imaginary lion guardians—Hugo invokes a standard Orientalist trope designating the Other as irrational and primitive. Yet for Hugo, champion of romanticism, this was a prized corrective to Western rational classicism, rendering the palace's destruction a loss of one half—the better half—of human nature. Like Pauthier, he also takes a nationalistic swipe at Britain by noting that the name Elgin “is associated with” the ruination of *both* of these iconic monuments of human civilization.[103]

As the imperial Tuileries exhibition was dismantled, art collectors were beginning to buy up similar objects at auction. Catalogues in both Paris and London reveal the circulation of thousands of artifacts from Yuanming Yuan, usually grouped as jade, lacquer ware, ivory, silk, and porcelain, along with miscellany such as fans, small bronzes, gems and gold jewelry, weapons, and all manner of souvenirs.[104] All objects, including many taken from Buddhist temples, were being re-contextualized as art, and decorative art in particular. Their value seems to have been further inflated by their prestigious pedigree—these were the spoils of an exotic emperor, redistributed among the bourgeoisie—and by the palace's destruction, which rendered the artifacts irreplaceable. In a detailed analysis of British looting practices in China, James Hevia demonstrates that objects taken in 1860 were generally advertised as loot more than as art, supporting a discourse of domination.[105] After the Western powers' looting of 1900, by contrast, he notes that appreciation of Chinese decorative arts had risen such that markets identified stolen works as precious works of art, downplaying their violent and political past. The lack of artistic appreciation in 1860 is evident in the fate of Qianlong's album of forty paintings. Colonel Dupin's sale catalogue envisioned political and artistic value reinforcing each other: “The objects found in the summer palace of Yuanming Yuan, in the emperor's secret study and the large pagodas, have a historical interest that increases their value as a work of art.”[106] It adds that the Qianlong album of forty paintings should be particularly attractive, since it contains the only images of the vanished palace. Yet as mentioned earlier, the album failed to sell. Buyers

apparently were interested in neither the archaeological history of the palace nor in the Chinese fine arts of painting and calligraphy.

A similar bias is noticeable in the two illustrations we have of the French loot. The impressive full-page wood engraving in the *Illustrated London News* (fig. 7) focuses primarily on military paraphernalia while exoticizing the collection through the prominent display of one imperial gilded dragon in the right foreground. Disparate objects are jumbled together as in an ethnographic exhibition at the Universal Expositions of the time, with art objects outnumbered by military ones. In France, the *Monde illustré* depicted the objects on exhibit in an ornate gallery of the Tuileries. (fig. 8) Even here, however, both the display and the print of it emphasize the trophy character of the collection. The left-hand wall is lined with suits of military armor, all facing a suit of armor belonging to Qianlong against the opposite wall, with the emperor himself apparently embodied by a mannequin. This imperial double forms the symbolic center of the exhibition, standing in the middle of three niches and looming over signs of imperial power at his feet—flags, batons, and dragons. Behind him are displayed three Buddhist silks, a jarring clash of war and peace that is nevertheless contained within a tripartite structure typical of both Chinese and French architectural frames. In the middle of the room rests the emperor's golden stupa, unknowingly referring back to both the Buddhist paintings and—through its reliquary function—the emperor's body. Several large vases and incense burners are lined up with the stupa, but most decorative art objects are eliminated from view. We see only one table of miscellaneous items, arranged again like ethnographic curiosities on stepped shelves. By positioning the central cupola of the Tuileries Palace—the architectural icon of Napoleon III's rule—in the window opposite us, the printmaker further emphasizes the military context of this transfer of relics, reinforcing the message that this is a man-to-man appropriation of one emperor's culture by another.

#### *Transferring Imperial Culture: The Chinese Museum at Fontainebleau*

With the dismantling of this temporary exhibition, Yuanming Yuan largely disappeared from public view, with most objects scattered through the art market or sequestered in the British royal collection. In one place, however, the palace was re-constituted in a microcosmic semblance of a whole. This was the French empress's *Musée chinois*, or Chinese Museum.<sup>[107]</sup> Following the Tuileries exhibition, the military items given to Napoleon III were sent to the Artillery Museum (now absorbed in the Army Museum), while Eugénie kept the rest, displaying a few of her favored items in her art studio in the Tuileries.<sup>[108]</sup> That summer, the court made an extended visit to the palace of Fontainebleau, one of France's own 'summer palaces,' situated outside Paris, staying from May 30 to August 3, 1861. On June 27, an embassy from the King of Siam arrived to celebrate renewed diplomatic ties, presenting 48 cases of gifts, most of which were replicas of royal objects including a crown, palanquin, parasols, weapons, and jewelry. These were offered specifically to Eugénie, who exhibited them at Fontainebleau and helped sanctify their historic and artistic value by commissioning the painter Jean-Léon Gérôme to paint a view of the imperial couple receiving the kowtowing ambassadors.<sup>[109]</sup> That same summer, she decided to combine the 60 or so Siamese and nearly 400 Chinese objects into a mini-museum. Plans for renovating the so-called Great Pavilion (*Gros Pavillon*) at Fontainebleau were drawn up in December, 1861 and executed in the spring of 1863.<sup>[110]</sup> When Eugénie arrived June 2, 1863, she oversaw the arranging of the objects herself, and the display was inaugurated on June 14. Some Chinese objects were apparently diverted to Eugénie's private office, established in

1868 in a nearby room that was decorated in a Chinese style and has never been open to the public.<sup>[111]</sup> In these early years, Eugénie also added other objects to the Museum from existing royal collections, purchases, and gifts, including annual birthday presents from Napoleon III, Japanese objects from the estate sale of the Duc de Morny, and diplomatic gifts from Indo-China.<sup>[112]</sup> Most notably, the museum finally gained guardian lions, in lieu of those left behind at Yuanming Yuan, when, in November 1865, the Minister of the Navy sent a white marble pair taken from the Pagoda of Jiangsu as a gift to the French emperor, ostensibly with Chinese agreement.<sup>[113]</sup>

Although Eugénie and others called this formal display the Chinese Museum, it was a hybrid Asian collection and had only a limited public life. She issued an order on July 6, 1863 that it be closed to everyone except with her personal permission, which was automatically granted to uniformed officers. From July, 1864, the emperor permitted public visits to Fontainebleau on Sunday and Thursday afternoons, but the Chinese Museum remained accessible only with a special pass.<sup>[114]</sup> Shuttered completely upon Napoleon III's downfall in 1870, it was re-opened to the public in 1881, after most furnishings had been removed and the courts had returned the empress's personal paintings and sculptures to her.<sup>[115]</sup> What seems to be the only published account of the museum in the 1860s is a brief review in the *Monde illustré* newspaper in July, 1863. Noting that few people can see the collection, the writer says the objects on view—"from China and Japan"—are masterpieces of craftsmanship but bizarre. He proclaims:

The most fantastic imagination remains surprised amidst these grotesque, eccentric specimens of Chinese fantasy ... Evidently, the imagination of this people is sick, it's a mixture of childishness and maturity in art, an amalgam of roughness and refinement in craftsmanship that denotes a civilization passing beyond the end and returning to the beginning.<sup>[116]</sup>

Recalling Hugo's association of China with the imagination but without granting it the weight of classicism, this populist judgment is a textbook example of Orientalist rhetoric accusing the Other of degenerate primitivism; China was once great, but has evolved into a Mannerist state of childishness. As the expert Pauthier had feared, the collection's public reception was limited to stereotype.

The museum installation itself, on the other hand, is far more interesting and equivocal. After a meticulous restoration from 1984 to 1991, its appearance now closely matches its original state, as revealed by the only published image of the original museum—a full-page print accompanying the *Monde illustré* article (fig. 9)—and three superb, previously unpublished photographs probably made in late 1863.<sup>[117]</sup> One would enter the museum suite from a main hallway, pass through a narrow vestibule housing the Thai palanquin into an antechamber, then turn left into the enlarged main salon (fig. 10). With windows on one's right and a Louis XIV-style vitrine displaying the most precious Chinese objects on the left, this sitting-room was furnished with tables and sofas, and ornamented by Sèvres porcelains, European statues and paintings, and a few Chinese items (fig. 11). At the opposite end, windows looked out onto an exterior porch and stairway, which opened onto the Fountain Courtyard and was flanked by the marble Chinese lions. Before those far windows, one

would turn left to enter the museum proper, a large room almost entirely adorned by Chinese objects in Chinese-style cases, with damask fabrics of Chinese silk (figs. 12 and 13).





Fig. 9, Anonymous, *Le nouveau Musée chinois de S. M. l'Impératrice, installé dans le palais de Fontainebleau (d'après le croquis de M. Moullin)*, in *Le Monde illustré* no. 325, 4 July 1863, p. 5. Wood engraving. Paris Bibliothèque Nationale de France. [\[larger image\]](#)

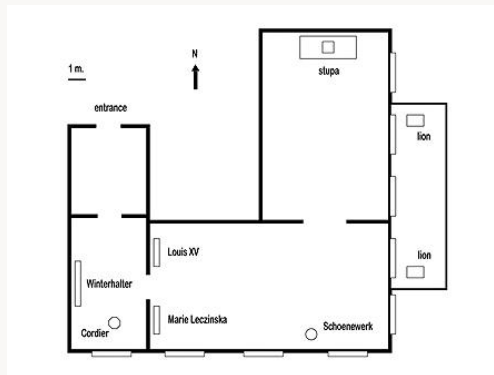


Fig. 10, Plan of the Musée chinois. [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 11, Anonymous, modern view of the Musée chinois, in Colombe Samoyault-Verlet et al, *Le Musée chinois de l'impératrice Eugénie* (Paris Réunion des musées nationaux, 1994), p. 22. Photograph. [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 12, Anonymous, view of the Musée chinois from the main salon, probably 1863. Photograph. Fontainebleau Archives of the Musée National du Château de Fontainebleau. Note the stupa against the far wall and the Buddhist paintings on the ceiling. The windows on the right open onto the outer porch with lion statues. [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 13, Anonymous, view of the Musée chinois from the inner room into the main salon, probably 1863. Photograph. Fontainebleau Archives of the Musée National du Château de Fontainebleau. Schoenewerk's marble sculpture *Au bord d'un ruisseau* is visible against the far wall. [\[larger image\]](#)

This salon display opened a series of cultural/political mirrorings and inversions that simultaneously preserved and destroyed Yuanming Yuan. Certain porcelains were literally inverted and used as chandeliers. As in ethnographic collections, objects were crammed into their vitrines in essentially random order, following the aesthetics and pragmatics of museum display rather than Chinese notions of aesthetic hierarchy, national history, or cultural identity. Most striking is the complete erasure of Buddhist identity, which Qianlong had spectacularly cultivated in huge temple complexes at Yihe Yuan and Rehe (or Jehol, located in Chengde). Eugénie intermixed Buddhist and secular objects, converted a set of five monumental ritual vessels into candelabras, and hung the three silk tapestries

representing the Buddha—almost surely taken from a temple altar—on the ceiling. The gilded reliquary stupa was turned into a centerpiece, flanked by politically symbolic dragons (and, later, elephant tusks) and backed by lacquer landscape panels.<sup>[118]</sup> All the Chinese objects, in addition, were intermixed with Thai, Japanese, and Indo-Chinese objects and framed by the European furnishings of the main salon, including Pierre-Alexandre Schoenewerk's white, classicist statue *On the Bank of a Stream* of 1861. This contrasted in turn with Charles Cordier's 1862 Orientalist polychrome statue *Arab Woman*, situated in the antechamber.<sup>[119]</sup> A visitor from China could justifiably view this wildly eclectic imperial ensemble—as the French reporter Fauchery had viewed Yuanming Yuan—as a disorienting and grotesque incoherence leading to aesthetic indigestion.

At the same time, however, this re-contextualization established a number of equivalencies, both conscious and unconscious. Overall, the museum site perfectly mirrored the original. Yuanming Yuan was widely (though erroneously) known in Europe as China's "summer palace," which closely matched Fontainebleau's function and reputation. Both were rural retreats near the capital, and Napoleon III similarly used Fontainebleau for both diplomatic receptions and private leisure, including boating, hunting, and receiving friends.<sup>[120]</sup> Fontainebleau's role as a repository of great national art from the French Renaissance onward also mirrored Yuanming Yuan's museological display of the Qing Dynasty's convoluted artistic heritage. Chinese decorative arts at Fontainebleau, despite their disoriented arrangement, in fact lived much as they had at home—scattered on furniture and in cases to enrich the monarch's environment and embody the national culture over which he reigned. Porcelain, the museum's most prevalent ware and one virtually synonymous with China, proved especially meaningful in both palace cultures, as a symbol of the monarch's historical heritage and supreme aesthetic taste. Thus, while de-contextualized and inverted, the objects of Yuanming Yuan were re-deployed in an essentially parallel pattern of imperial ideological framing. The author of the *Illustrated London News* article on the Tuileries exhibition implicitly grasped this symmetrical transfer. Noting that it "must be a galling souvenir to the Chinese Emperor" to contemplate his treasures "passing from hand to hand of unappreciating amateurs," he writes:

As to one portion, however, his Celestial Majesty may be tranquil. Promoted from the palatial abode of Hien-fou to that of Napoleon III, they have merely changed their address without compromising their dignity; for the thirty cases of valuable objects ... were escorted with all due attention and honour from their recent habitat to that of the Tuileries, where they will be lodged, till such time as a permanent retreat can be found for their reception within the walls of the glorious Louvre.<sup>[121]</sup>

These objects lose none of their imperial prestige in moving from one palace system to another, perpetuating their role as aesthetic guarantors of political authority. The key difference between the two displays—indeed, the pivotal ideological reversal giving meaning to the appropriation—was that Eugénie's re-display connoted not only China's cultural/political parity but its military submission as well.

Such resonances at Fontainebleau also have an added, retrospective dimension relating all the way back to the 18th-century origins of Yuanming Yuan and Chinoiserie. The Great Pavilion, where the Chinese Museum was installed, had been built under Louis XV (r.1715–74) and completed in 1750, just six years after Qianlong completed Yuanming Yuan. To

recognize this heritage, copies of Hyacinthe Rigaud's *Portrait of King Louis XV* and Louis Tocqué's *Portrait of Queen Marie Leczinska* were hung on the entrance wall of the museum's grand salon.<sup>[122]</sup> (fig. 10) And while Napoleon III and Eugénie's living quarters were in an older wing built in the 16th century, they kept offices adjoining the Great Pavilion in the Louis XV wing, so named because Louis XV had rebuilt it. In hers, Eugénie began a full-scale "Chinoiserie" decoration, including wallpaper and furniture. In the museum proper, she also requested Chinese lacquer panels owned by Marie-Antoinette, queen to Louis XVI, to make display cabinets; when the director of museums resisted, she found an 18th-century Chinese lacquer screen in storage and mounted its panels behind the pagoda. (figs. 9 and 12)

These associations with France's pre-Revolutionary *ancien régime* were emphatically and spectacularly capped by Franz Xaver Winterhalter's renowned portrait of *Eugénie Surrounded by her Ladies in Waiting*, which in 1865 was hung in the antechamber, apparently on axis with the main salon.<sup>[123]</sup> (fig. 14) Painted in a markedly retrospective, Rococo style, the painting declares Eugénie's devotion to reviving Rococo taste and a concomitant politics of old-fashioned aristocratic privilege. Napoleon III had commissioned it to hang in the place of honor at the 1855 World Exposition in Paris, thereby making it an official, public testament of a nostalgic cultural/political program, effectively linking the imperial present back to the *ancien régime*. By re-hanging it in the place of honor at the Chinese Museum, Eugénie further linked this distant royal past to the geographically distant Chinese empire. It is similar to the nostalgia that the journalist Fauchery expressed about the Western Palaces he saw at Yuanming Yuan, which for him recalled an era when "we tended very closely to resemble Chinese people."<sup>[124]</sup> Such nostalgia was a double mirroring, viewing China's present as a reflection of France's own past. In trying to build a new, modern empire distinct from the Restoration and July Monarchy, it seems Napoleon III and Eugénie sought to revive this past absolutist political culture and the Chinoiserie visual culture that went with it.



Fig. 14, Franz Xaver Winterhalter, *Eugénie Surrounded by her Ladies in Waiting*, 1855. Oil on canvas. Compiègne Musée National du Château de Compiègne. [\[larger image\]](#)

This referencing of the 18th century introduced a number of further ironies, twisting original meanings into surprising new configurations that still resonate in some way with the original. Echoing the 18th century, when Chinese buildings were erected in European gardens and European buildings were erected in a remote corner of Yuanming Yuan, the

Chinese Museum was installed in the rear of the palace, in the wing most devoted to leisure and pleasure and belonging primarily to the empress. Whereas the lions at Yuanming Yuan had guarded the emperor's Main Audience Hall, those at Fontainebleau adorned this feminine precinct.<sup>[125]</sup> Moreover, this quarter opened directly onto Fontainebleau's special English Garden, which for us now indirectly references both Yuanming Yuan—an inspiration for such designs—and England, which had just destroyed the Yuanming Yuan model. Most ironic of all was the subsequent fall of Napoleon III in the 1870 Franco-Prussian War, during which some of his own summer palaces were looted by the Prussian army.<sup>[126]</sup> The Chinese Museum was shut down and Napoleon's own Tuileries palace in Paris, part of the Louvre complex whose completion he had just overseen, was looted and burned to the ground during the French Commune in 1871. A lasting Republican government converted all royal palaces and art collections into public property, putting a definitive end to France's royal palace culture—just as China's royal culture would be overthrown and converted in 1911.

The Chinese Museum thus represented a brief moment when Napoleon III and his empress, seeking to establish a modern empire, tried to revive or recall a pre-Revolutionary age of great royal art, and a period of exchange between two similar monarchic palace cultures. But both political and artistic nostalgia failed before competing visions of modernity. Democracy took over government as avant-garde Impressionism and professional Academic art dominated the art market. As the old political model of empire gave way to the new capitalist model of imperialism, China suffered further oppression and vandalism from the now “modernized” West (especially in 1900), but without the nostalgic Chinoiserie appreciation sponsored by Napoleon III and especially Eugénie. With the extinction of France's Second Empire came the definitive extinction of Yuanming Yuan, which receded into a museological death, its objects sitting irrelevantly on the shelves of a now irrelevant old palace, its chain of significations and mirrorings silenced. China's artistic reputation thus fell victim to France's internal political shifts while Meiji-era Japan, which had opened up suddenly and peacefully, with no pre-history of imperial associations, was regarded as a more modern, urban, and bourgeois form of exoticism. Japan was the exotic civilization that would help propel French art forward in the 1860s and 1870s, while China effectively drowned with the palace culture that had so long supported France's kings and emperors.

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## Notes



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[1] The most detailed scholarly sources on Yuanming Yuan in Western languages are Hope Danby, *The Garden of Perfect Brightness* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1950); Geremie R. Barmé, "The Garden of Perfect Brightness, a Life in Ruins," in *East Asian History*, no. 11 (June 1996): 111–58; Che Bing Chiu, *Yuanming Yuan: Le jardin de la Clarté parfaite* (Besançon: Les Editions de l'Imprimeur, 2000); and Young-Tsu Wong, *A Paradise Lost: The Imperial Garden of Yuanming Yuan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001).

[2] Commissioned by Qianlong in 1738 and delivered in 1747, the album was taken by the French Lieutenant-Colonel Dupin in 1860: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, item B9 Réserve. The album and related images are thoroughly documented and reproduced in Chiu, *Yuanming Yuan*, 106–21 and 181–265.

[3] I develop this more fully in "Yuanming Yuan / Versailles: Intercultural Interactions between Chinese and European Palace Cultures," forthcoming in *Art History*, February 2009.

[4] My summary is drawn from various Western accounts of the expedition, including most notably: Anonymous, *The Annual Register, or a View of the History and Politics of the Year 1860* (London: J. & F. H. Rivington, 1861), 258–71; Henry Brougham Loch, *Personal Narrative of Occurrences during Lord Elgin's Second Embassy to China in 1860*, 3rd ed. (London: John Murray, 1900; original 1868); Armand Lucy, *Souvenirs de voyage: Lettres intimes sur la campagne de Chine en 1860* (Marseille: Jules Barile, 1861); Charles-Guillaume-Marie-Apollinaire-Antoine Cousin de Montauban, *L'Expédition de Chine de 1860: Souvenirs du général Cousin de Montauban, comte de Palikao* (Paris: Plon, 1932); Charles de Mutrecy, *Journal de la campagne de Chine* (Paris: A Bourdilliatet, 1861); Robert Swinhoe, *Narrative of the North China Campaign of 1860* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1861); and Paul Varin (actually Charles Dupin), *Expédition de Chine* (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1862). For modern histories of the events, see especially Michael Mann, *China, 1860* (Wilton, Salisbury: Michael Russell, 1989); Barmé, "Garden of Perfect Brightness", 111–58; Chiu, *Yuanming Yuan*, 288–330; and Bernard Brizay, *Le Sac du Palais d'Été* (Monaco: Editions du Rocher, 2003).

[5] On Beato's participation in the expedition, see David Harris, *Of Battle and Beauty: Felice Beato's Photographs of China*, exh. cat. (Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1999), 24–36.

[6] Swinhoe, *Narrative*, 301.

[7] Loch, *Personal Narrative*, 169.

[8] Quoted in De Mutrecy, *Journal*, 371. "... rien, dans notre Europe, ne peut donner l'idée d'un luxe pareil."

[9] "Il me serait impossible, monsieur le maréchal, de vous dire la magnificence des constructions nombreuses qui se succèdent sur une étendue de quatre lieues, et que l'on appelle le palais d'été de l'empereur; succession de pagodes renferment toutes des dieux d'or et d'argent ou de bronze d'une dimension gigantesque. Ainsi un seul dieu en bronze, un Bouddha, a une hauteur d'environ 70 pieds, et tout le reste est à l'avenant; jardins, lacs et objets curieux entassés depuis des siècles dans des bâtiments en marbre blanc, couverts de tuiles éblouissantes, vernies et de toutes les couleurs: ajoutez à cela des points de vue d'une campagne admirable, et Votre Excellence n'aura qu'une faible idée de ce que nous avons vu." Letter of October 12 and 15, 1860, in de Mutrecy, *Journal*, 374–78 at 377. De Montauban later recounted seeing "des appartements d'une splendeur indescriptible ...;" in de Montauban, *L'Expédition*, 310.

[10] *The Summer Palace* (Beijing: Morning Glory Publishers, 2001), 60. On the photograph, see Harris, *Of Battle and Beauty*, 151.

[11] On Dupin/Varin, see Brizay, *Le Sac du Palais d'Été*, 471–72.

[12] Varin [Dupin], *Expédition de Chine*, 233: "... un trône en bois noir, sculpté à jour, d'un travail merveilleux et d'une prodigieuse dimension." And Swinhoe, *Narrative*, 294.

[13] See George Staunton, *An Authentic Account of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China* ..., vol. 2 (London: W. Bulmer, 1797), 129; and George N. Wright, *China, in a Series of Views* ..., vol. 3 (London: Fisher, n.d. [1843]), 8–10.

[14] Varin [Dupin], *Expédition de Chine*, 233–34: “... représentant des vues des palais impériaux ...”

[15] Varin [Dupin], *Expédition de Chine*, 235–36. “Il faut renoncer à décrire ce que contenaient ces appartements. Les mots manquent pour en peindre les richesses matérielles et artistiques ... C’était une vision des Mille et une nuits, une féerie telle, qu’une imagination en délire ne saurait en rêver de comparable à la palpable vérité qu’on avait devant soi!”

[16] De Mutrecy, *Journal*, 26: “... ce merveilleux palais, véritable palais des Mille et une Nuits,” and 27: “Il faudrait des volumes pour décrire toutes les splendeurs amoncelées depuis des siècles dans le palais favori de l’empereur du Céleste Empire.”

[17] Lodoïx Enduran, *La Chine et les français en 1860* (Limoges: M. Ardant frères, 1862), 69–72. This work was published in four versions, then republished in 1864.

[18] Dépôt de la Guerre, ed. *Relation de l’expédition de Chine en 1860* (Paris: Imprimerie impériale, 1862), 149: “Tout, dans l’ensemble et les détails, offrait un cachet de grandiose et d’élégance, splendide image des mœurs de l’extrême Orient.”

[19] Historical information is from H. J. Dawood, trans. and ed., *Tales from the Thousand and One Nights*, rev. ed. (London: Penguin, 1973), 8–9; and from the catalogue of holdings of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

[20] Dawood, *Tales*, 207–8. *Aladdin* was one of the book’s most popular stories; French editions of it appeared almost every year from 1850 to 1859.

[21] Barmé, “Garden of Perfect Brightness” 111–58, 131–32. On China’s earlier reputation, see for example Jonathan Spence, *The Chan’s Great Continent: China in Western Minds* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998).

[22] Montauban, letter to the Minister of War, dated October 12 and 15, 1860, in de Mutrecy, *Journal*, 377. “Ce qui attriste au milieu de toutes ces splendeurs du passé, c’est l’incurie et l’abandon du gouvernement actuel et des deux ou trois gouvernements qui l’ont précédé; rien n’est entretenu, et les plus belles choses, à l’exception de celles qui garnissent le palais que l’empereur habite, sont dans un état déplorable de dégradation.”

[23] *Relation*, 150. “... un sentiment pénible saisissait les experts en présence de l’état d’incurie dans lequel étaient abandonnées ces merveilles.”

[24] Varin [Dupin], *Expédition*, 242–43: “une statue colossale ... au profil grec ...”

[25] This point is best developed by Annie E. Coombes, in the context of the British looting of Benin, in *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994).

[26] Lucy, *Souvenirs de voyage*, 110: “ces imbéciles de Chinois ...”

[27] Antoine Fauchery, “Lettres de Chine,” *Le Moniteur universel* no. 362, December 28, 1860, 1533–34. On his work, and death in Japan in 1861, see Régine Thiriez, *Barbarian Lens: Western Photographers of the Qianlong Emperor’s European Palaces* (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach, 1998), 6–8.

[28] Fauchery, “Lettres,” 1533. “Nulle part ailleurs assurément on ne verrait le chef d’un empire grand comme l’Europe et commandant à trois cents millions de sujets s’enfuir devant sept mille soldats, ... tout, jusqu’au lieu de son séjour favori, la plus vaste et la plus somptueuse de ses résidences, le Versailles ou le Saint-Cloud chinois, et le laisser à la garde de dix hommes armés de flèches et de lances, ...”

[29] Ibid. “farce immense,” “un rêve,” “On croit à une campagne, c’est un cauchemar.”

[30] Ibid. “... oublier toutes les fatigues et les privations de la route, pour ne plus lui laisser que le souvenir d’éblouissement d’or, d’argent et de soie comme la lecture seule d’un conte des *Mille et une nuits* pourrait en donner.”

[31] Ibid. “l’incurie;” “le mauvais goût;” “... malheureusement vous ne pouvez faire un pas à travers les splendeurs chinoises sans que le regard ne soit blessé par la façon grossière, maladroite, sans art, dont les objets d’un luxe inouï sont disposés.”

[32] Ibid., 1533–34. “des trésors de l’antiquaille la plus éblouissante;” “chacun de ces objets d’art, de ces *bibelots*;” “échafaudée du sol au plafond dans les superpositions les plus incohérentes et les plus grotesques!” “indigestion de curiosités;” and “une violente migraine.”

[33] Ibid., 1533. “... rendre fou un flâneur monomane du quai Voltaire.”

- [34] See, for example, various essays in Keith Tester, ed., *The Flâneur*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1994). For the journalistic aspect of flânerie in Paris, see especially Robert Herbert, *Impressionism: Art, Leisure, and Parisian Society* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), 33–57. On flânerie as labyrinthine disorientation in an Asian context, see Ting Chang, “Disorienting Orient: Duret and Guimet, Anxious *Flâneurs* in Asia,” in Aruna D’Souza and Tom McDonough, eds., *The Invisible Flâneuse?: Gender, Public Space, and Visual Culture in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2006), 65–78.
- [35] Fauchery, “Lettres,” 1534. “labyrinthe aquatique” and “plus étrange que pittoresque.”
- [36] Ibid. “véritables entrepôts” and “les magasins des Villes de France ou de la Ville de Paris.”
- [37] Varin [Dupin], *Expédition*, 240–41: “Dans un de ces palais, bâti dans le style Louis XV, on voyait une série de chambres revêtues de tapis des Gobelins aux armes de France, et aux murs desquelles étaient suspendus des portraits en pied de beautés de la cour de France, avec leurs noms au bas. Mais tapis et tableaux étaient délabrés, crevés et sentaient l’abandon de longue date.”
- [38] Fauchery, “Lettres,” 1534. “Entre tous les palais, il en est un seul qui ressort de la forme consacrée. C’est un palais Louis XV, un palais rocaille! Trianon, Luciennes ou Marly, choisissez! Un témoignage d’aussi haute sympathie payé à la France par le peuple le plus excentrique du monde ne pouvait décemment se produire qu’à l’époque ou nous-mêmes, par nos moeurs, nos arts, notre morale et notre politique, nous tendions à ressembler beaucoup à des Chinois.”
- [39] Fauchery, “Lettres,” 1534. “... rempli d’anachronismes, tronqué, bâtard ...”
- [40] Ibid., “... mais les rapports intimes qui existent entre l’esprit minutieux et le goût inné des petites choses chez les Chinois, et l’afféterie, le précieux, la recherche du menu détail: petits vers, petites marquises, petits soupers; la triste maladie, enfin, des petits riens qui caractérisa un des côtés de l’époque éphémère des Richelieu et des Fronsac, suffit pour que ce pastiche quoique imparfait, possède une valeur relative qui n’est pas sans mérite.”
- [41] I rely here especially on Montauban, *L’Expédition de Chine*, 309–17; Varin [Dupin], *Expédition*, 226–48; *Relation de l’expédition*, 143–51; Lucy, *Souvenirs de voyage*, 104–14; de Mutrecy, *Journal*, 24–27; Swinhoe, *Narrative*, 292–312; and Montauban, letters reprinted in de Mutrecy, *Journal*, 370–71, 374–78.
- [42] According to Montauban (*L’Expédition*, 310) and de Mutrecy, (*Journal*, 376, and *Journal*, 25), the British officers included General Pattle, Major Ley or Sley, and Colonel Fowley, while the French included Colonel Schmitz and Generals Jamin and Collineau.
- [43] Montauban, *L’Expédition*, 310–11. Ambassador Gros, in a letter to Prince Kong on October 15, claimed that all the destruction so far was done by Chinese robbers; in Montauban, *L’Expédition*, 315. Swinhoe claimed the British team arrived around two o’clock that afternoon (*Narrative*, 299).
- [44] Varin [Dupin], *Expédition*, 236–37; Swinhoe, *Narrative*, 298.
- [45] See James Hevia, “Looting Beijing: 1860, 1900,” in Lydia H. Liu, ed., *Tokens of Exchange: The Problem of Translation in Global Circulations* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999), 192–213. The exact figures are from Swinhoe, *Narrative*, 312, who also notes that Grant donated his share to his men. Montauban claimed that Sikh soldiers, like Algerian Arabs, cheated and that Chinese coolies with the British army undermined the system (*L’Expédition*, 311).
- [46] Lucy, *Souvenirs de voyage*, 112–13.
- [47] Here Varin is most detailed (*Expédition*, 242), describing on October 8 “d’innombrables bandes de Chinois” reappearing as fast as they were chased away, “pillant et détruisant tous les objets qu’elles ne pouvaient emporter ...”
- [48] Wong notes from Chinese records that despite the execution of some looters and a one-month amnesty for turning in imperial treasures, very few objects were returned (*Paradise Lost*, 154–55).
- [49] This exact figure is provided by Montauban, in Mutrecy, *Journal*, 376 and Montauban, *L’Expédition*, 313.
- [50] Swinhoe, *Narrative*, 299.
- [51] Ibid., 311.
- [52] I have examined the following London auction catalogues: Christie, Manson and Woods, *Catalogue of a very extensive and valuable assemblage of ancient and modern Chinese and Japanese bronzes, porcelain, and works of art ...*, London, December 20, 1860; Christie, Manson and



Woods, *Catalogue of a valuable collection of curiosities, bronzes, porcelain, lacquer ...*, London, January 11, 1861; Philipps, *A catalogue of a collection of ancient porcelain, received direct from China ...*, London, January 24, 1861; Philipps, *A catalogue of a valuable and interesting collection of objects of Chinese art from the summer palace at Peking ...*, [sic] London, April 18, 1861; Christie, Manson and Woods, *Catalogue of a beautiful collection of Japanese porcelain, bronzes ... and some beautiful Chinese enamels, crystals, &c., from the Summer Palace ...*, London, May 27, 1861. And the following Paris catalogues: Drouot (Escribe and Evans), *Catalogue d'objets de curiosité du Palais d'été de l'empereur de Chine ...*, Paris, January 13–14, 1862; Drouot (Baudry and Dhios), *Catalogue des objets précieux provenant en grande partie du palais d'été de yuen-ming-yuen ... de M. le Colonel Du Pin*, Paris, February 26 – March 1, 1862.

[53] Swinhoe, *Narrative*, 306.

[54] Most of the emperor's collection of painting and calligraphy was apparently kept at the Forbidden City, but numerous examples are known to have been kept at Yuanming Yuan (my thanks to Yeewan Koon for assistance with this question). Montauban (*L'Expédition*, 315) does mention a building full of “the archives of China,” comprised of paintings and inscriptions 50 cm. square; he says he and his officers managed to take a few but that regrettably, almost everything was likely destroyed by Chinese looters. Except for the Qianlong album, no other work of painting or calligraphy on paper or silk is mentioned in any catalogue, although a few were likely included in mixed lots of little value.

[55] See Chiu, *Yuanming Yuan*, 106–7, 302. The album was auctioned as part of Dupin's Chinese and Japanese loot on March 1, 1862 and re-offered on May 2. It is listed in *Objets d'art et de curiosité provenant en partie du Palais d'Été de Yuen-Ming-Yuen et composant le musée japonais & chinois de M. le Colonel Du Pin*, Drouot cat., February 26–28 and March 1, 1862, 44, item 329. Instead of the 30,000 francs hoped for, it was let go for 4,000, then purchased by the imperial library on June 1 for 4,200 francs.

[56] See, for example, Angela Zito, *Of Body and Brush: Grand Sacrifice as Text/Performance in Eighteenth-Century China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

[57] The only reference I have found to painting as art in 1860 is when Swinhoe says Yuanming Yuan's gardens resemble “the better class of Chinese paintings.” (*Narrative*, 301)

[58] Lucy, *Souvenirs de voyage*, 107. “J’ai trouvé le garde meuble, un bazar sans pareil, que nos soldats pillaient, scène curieuse, déplorable, drôlatique [sic]. Presque tout était cassé, c’est une des singulières joies du soldat, qui dans son choix fait preuve du goût le plus excentrique. J’ai sauvé quelques jolis cloisonnés, mais qu’en ferai-je? – J’ai vu là d’admirables porcelaines brisées en miettes [sic] des vieux laques, des craquelés, des ivoires, des jades, qui macadamisaient le sol, des vases émaillés avec lesquels on jouait aux boules, cela faisait mal à voir, c’était à en pleurer!”

[59] Lucy, *Souvenirs*, 107. “... tour de force de sculpture où la bizarrerie chinoise avait épuisé toutes ses fantaisies, et où le roccocotisme le plus extravagant venait se relier avec une habileté surprenante aux ornementsations du goût le plus exquis!”

[60] Swinhoe, *Narrative*, 305–6.

[61] Lucy, *Souvenirs*, 109. “Les troupiers s’acharnent à briser ce qu’ils ne peuvent emporter!” And “... n’ayant pas de Chinois sous la main, il s’en prend aux chinoiseries ...”

[62] Swinhoe, *Narrative*, 305–6.

[63] Letter to the Minister of War, October 8, 1860, in Mutrecy, *Journal*, 371. “Dans ce partage, j’ai recommandé à nos commissaires de ne s’attacher qu’aux objets ayant de la valeur au point de vue de l’art ou par leur antiquité; j’espère envoyer ... des curiosités assez rares en France.”

[64] Montauban, *L'Expédition*, 311. He emphasizes that he “gallantly” allowed Elgin first pick.

[65] Lucy, *Souvenirs*, 104.

[66] Mutrecy, *Journal*, 25–26. “Deux bâtons de commandement ... Un costume complet de l’empereur de Chine ... Une pagode en bronze doré et ciselé, d’un remarquable travail; de gigantesques vases en émail aux couleurs variées; plusieurs divinités en or et en émail. ... Deux énormes chimères en cuivre doré, et pesant chacune près de 400 kil. Deux stores d’une longueur démesuré [sic], et d’un travail remarquables. Enfin des bagues, des colliers, des coupes, des laques, des porcelaines, et mille objets de curiosité.”

[67] Lucy, *Souvenirs*, 105; and Varin [Dupin], *Expédition*, 238–39. Samoyault-Verlet says the stupa came from the same temple as the large cloisonné enamel incense burners that were sent. (see “Fontainebleau,” below, 65)

[68] Varin [Dupin], *Expédition*, 232–33. “les deux dragons en bronze doré ...” For Macartney's views, see Staunton, *An Authentic Account of an Embassy*, vol. 2, 310–12.

- [69] Letter to the Minister of War, October 12 and 15, in Mutrecy, *Journal*, 376. “... désirait faire un cadeau à titre de souvenir à S. M. l’impératrice [*sic*] de la totalité des objets curieux enlevés dans le palais, ainsi qu’à S. M. l’empereur [*sic*] et au prince impérial.”
- [70] Montauban, *L’Expédition*, 313.
- [71] *Ibid.*, 313–14. He specifies seven objects but alludes to eight people.
- [72] *Ibid.*, 313. In a separate book, he explains that while malicious rumors spread that he would present a priceless pearl necklace, these were in fact cheap jade necklaces with which he intended to honor Eugénie’s piety. See Cousin de Montauban, Comte de Palikao, *Un ministère de la guerre de vingt-quatre jours ...*, 3rd ed. (Paris: Plon, 1874), 185–88. On the reopening of Beijing’s cathedral, see Armand Lucy, *Souvenirs de campagne: Les établissements catholiques de Pé-king* (Marseille: Jules Barile, 1861).
- [73] This version of events is from Varin [Dupin], *Expédition*, 248–52.
- [74] See figures and explanations in Wong, *Paradise Lost*, 146, 151; Montauban, *L’Expédition*, 357; Brizay, *Le Sac du Palais*, 369.
- [75] Elgin’s own explanation is quoted in Swinhoe, *Narrative*, 326–29.
- [76] Letters exchanged among Gros, Montauban, and Elgin are reproduced in Montauban, *L’Expédition*, 348–61.
- [77] Swinhoe, *Narrative*, 329–37.
- [78] *Ibid.*, 330.
- [79] *Ibid.*, 336–37.
- [80] *Ibid.*, 336.
- [81] Attiret’s letter is reprinted in *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses de Chine par des missionnaires jésuites, 1702-1776*, ed. Jean-Louise Vissière (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1979), 411–29; see especially 413.
- [82] Varin [Dupin], *Expédition*, 270.
- [83] Loch, *Personal Narrative*, 172–73.
- [84] Varin [Dupin], *Expédition*, 277–78.
- [85] At least two portraits by Beato exist; see, e.g., Clark Worswick and Jonathan Spence, *Imperial China: Photographs 1850-1912* (New York: Pennwick/Crown, 1978), 40, and Chiu, *Yuanming Yuan*, 319.
- [86] Varin [Dupin], *Expédition*, 272.
- [87] *Ibid.*, 275. “On surprenait [ça] et là quelques éclairs d’intelligence dans ses yeux très-longes et à fleur de tête; mais leurs rayons, ordinairement ternes et effacés, indiquaient un homme fatigué et même abruti par l’usage fréquent et prématuré des plaisirs. En somme, son aspect général révélait une constitution faible et ruinée.”
- [88] See Thiriez, *Barbarian Lens*, 3–10. She concludes that Fauchery and Beato were the only ones to photograph during the expedition; that Fauchery’s few works show other parts of Beijing, and that of Beato’s six views labelled Yuanming Yuan, only one or two are accurate. Wu Hung identifies one as a nunnery within Yuanming Yuan in “The Hong Kong Clock – Public Time-Telling and Political Time/Space,” *Public Culture* 9, no. 3 (Spring 1997): 329–54. Montauban explicitly mentions that he regretted not having a photographer in the expedition (Mutrecy, *Journal*, 377).
- [89] “les Anglais ... n’ont trouvé rien de mieux à faire que de brûler le palais qu’ils espéraient piller. Appelez cette action du nom qu’il vous plaira; pour moi, je l’appelle *vandalisme*.” In Emile Maisson, *Expédition de Chine: Lettres d’un volontaire au 102<sup>me</sup>* (Paris: Benjamin Duprat, 1861), 107. Maisson claims to have based his text on letters from a friend.
- [90] Letter to the Minister of War, October 18, 1860, in Montauban, *L’Expédition*, 361. “On m’apprend à l’instant, 3 heures, ... que toutes les magnifiques pagodes, dont j’avais admiré le merveilleux travail, sont en ce moment la proie des flammes: vengeance peu digne d’une nation civilisée, car elle détruit des objets d’admiration et qui ont été respectés par plusieurs siècles.”
- [91] Varin [Dupin], *Expédition*, 267. “Rien ne fut épargné! Résidences impériales, bibliothèques où se trouvaient entassés les produits littéraires et artistiques de plus de quarante générations, pagodes plus vieilles que notre monde connu, tout fut livré aux flammes ...”
- [92] Varin [Dupin], *Expédition*, 268. “un acte de sauvage vandalisme” and “des considérations d’antiquaire.” See similar comments in Lucy, *Souvenirs*, 123–24.
- [93] Swinhoe, *Narrative*, 337, 338.



[94] Loch, *Personal Narrative*, 167–68.

[95] See, e.g., Danby, *Garden*, 58. Pauthier mentions that the translator Thomas Wade took some books from Yuanming Yuan for the British Museum. Guillaume Pauthier, “Des curiosités chinoises exposées aux Tuileries,” *Gazette des beaux-arts* 9, no. 6, (March 15, 1861), 366.

[96] Pauthier, “Curiosités chinoises,” 363–69. Background information from Colombe Samoyault-Verlet et al., *Le Musée chinois de l’impératrice Eugénie* (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1994), 12–13.

[97] Pauthier, “Curiosités chinoises,” 363. “Je ne puis m’empêcher d’exprimer d’abord ici le regret, et un regret profond, que ces objets d’art soient tombés, avec tant d’autres, entre les mains de nos soldats, par le droit brutal de la guerre; et, ensuite, que les collections accumulées depuis plus d’un siècle dans les palais d’été des empereurs, collections assurément uniques en Chine, pour l’abondance et la rareté des objets, aient été dispersées à tous les vents, et qu’il n’en soit arrivé en France qu’un faible échantillon, lequel, à lui seul, est loin de suffire à donner une idée complète de l’art chinois.”

[98] Pauthier, “Curiosités,” 364. “Nous aurions certainement trouvé mauvais qu’en 1814 ou 1815 les armées de la coalition fussent allées saccager, et ensuite brûler les palais-musées de Saint-Cloud, de Versailles ou de Fontainebleau ...”

[99] Ibid., 364, 364, 368, and 364 respectively: “ces merveilleuses pièces de porcelaine décorées avec tant de richesse ...” and “ces étoffes de soie au couleurs si éclatantes et en même temps si douces ...”; “les conservateurs du musée impérial de *Yuen-ming-Yuen*,” and “C’étaient Sèvres, les Gobelins, Beauvais réunis ...”

[100] Ibid., 366–68.

[101] Ibid., 365.

[102] “Il y avait, dans un coin du monde, une merveille du monde: cette merveille s’appelait le palais d’Été. L’art a deux principes, l’idée, qui produit l’art européen, et la Chimère, qui produit l’art oriental. Le palais d’Été était à l’art chimérique ce que le Parthénon est à l’art idéal. Tout ce que peut enfanter l’imagination d’un peuple presque extrahumain était là.” Chiu, *Yuanming Yuan*, 11; the entire letter is reproduced on 11–12. On the purchase of silks, see Wong, *Paradise Lost*, 154.

[103] In Chiu, *ibid.*, 11: “On voit mêlé à tout cela le nom d’Elgin, qui a la propriété fatale de rappeler le Parthénon.”

[104] Catalogues cited above, in the discussion of looting processes.

[105] Hevia, “Looting Beijing.”

[106] *Objets d’art et de curiosité ... de M. le Colonel Du Pin*, 5–6: “Les objets trouvés dans le palais d’été de Yuen-Ming-Yuen, dans le cabinet secret de l’empereur et dans les grandes pagodes, ont un intérêt historique qui en augmente la valeur comme oeuvre d’art.”

[107] Unless otherwise noted, details here and below of the museum’s formation are from Samoyault-Verlet, *Musée chinois*, 12–26, and Colombe Samoyault-Verlet, “Fontainebleau, le musée chinois de l’impératrice Eugénie,” *L’Estampille – l’objet de l’art*, no. 254, Jan. 1992, 60–69. Since the present article was drafted, a detailed study of the *Musée chinois* has been published, to which I refer occasionally below: Alison McQueen, “Power and Patronage: Empress Eugénie and the *Musée chinois*,” in *Twenty-First-Century Perspectives on Nineteenth-Century Art: Essays in Honor of Gabriel P. Weisberg*, ed. Petra ten-Doesschate Chu and Laurinda S. Dixon (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008), 153–61.

[108] McQueen reproduces an undated painting by Giuseppe Castiglione showing the stupa and other objects in Eugénie’s studio (“Power and Patronage,” 155). One witness described the display as a picturesque contrast of Louis XIV armchairs and Oriental fabrics, Syrian copper vases and porcelains from the China campaign, where Eugénie went to draw and paint watercolors; Jacques Boulenger, cited in the Duc d’Albe et al., eds., *Lettres familières de l’impératrice Eugénie conservées dans les archives du palais de Liria ...*, vol. 2 (Paris: Le Divan, 1935), 239.

[109] Gérôme’s *Réception des ambassadeurs de Siam par Napoléon III dans la salle de Bal du château de Fontainebleau*, completed in 1864, was hung in the history galleries at Versailles (now in the Musée National du Château de Fontainebleau). McQueen notes that the gifts were offered to Eugénie (“Power and Patronage,” 154). The kowtow is especially ironic considering Lord Macartney’s famous refusal to perform such a prostration when visiting Emperor Qianlong in 1793.

[110] The inventory, dated August 30, 1865, is item 19985 in the Fontainebleau museum’s archives.

- [111] Samoyault-Verlet, *Musée chinois*, 20, 22. I am grateful to Mr. Vincent Droguet, of the Musée National du Château de Fontainebleau, for showing me this room and providing further information about it.
- [112] On the Japanese and Indo-Chinese objects, see McQueen, "Power and Patronage," 155. On the others, see Samoyault-Verlet, *Musée chinois*.
- [113] The relevant series of letters between November 14, 1865 and February 9, 1867 is in the Fontainebleau archives, under code A.N. F21/801. The lions were first sent to Fontainebleau, then removed to the Tuileries Palace on March 5, 1866, and returned to Fontainebleau at an uncertain date.
- [114] The term *Musée chinois* appears regularly in records of the time, including the title of the 1865 inventory. Access information is in letters from the Imperial Household, in the Archives of the *Musée chinois*, items 18820 (July 6, 1863) and 18841 (July 24, 1863). See also Jacques-Joseph Champollion-Figeac, *Le Palais de Fontainebleau, ses origines, son histoire artistique et politique, son état actuel* (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1866), 524; and Samoyault-Verlet, *Musée chinois*, 20.
- [115] Samoyault-Verlet, *Musée chinois*, 20–23.
- [116] I. de P., "Musée chinois de S. M. l'Impératrice," *Le Monde illustré* no. 325, July 4, 1863, 6, col. 1 (with illustration on page 5). "L'imagination la plus fantaisiste reste surprise au milieu de ces spécimens grotesques, excentriques, de la fantaisie chinoise ... Evidemment l'imagination de ce peuple est malade, c'est un mélange d'enfance et de maturité dans l'art, un amalgame de grossièreté et de raffinement dans la main-d'œuvre qui dénotent une civilisation dépassant le but et retournant au point de départ."
- [117] I am indebted to Mr. Droguet for sharing these photographs with me. A letter from the Ministry of the Emperor's House to the Manager of the Palace, dated August 11, 1863 (Fontainebleau archives, item 18903), says the empress has authorized photographs to be made to record "the various views of this Salon-Museum" ("les divers aspects de ce Salon-Musée"). It also calls for an inventory to be made.
- [118] On the iconography and possible dating of the stupa and dragons, see Samoyault-Verlet, *Musée chinois*, 66–72. The tusks were apparently added in 1865; McQueen, "Power and Patronage," 155.
- [119] McQueen states ("Power and Patronage," 154) that Cordier's statue was moved from the Château of Compiègne and placed in the antechamber rather than the main salon. She also notes that Eugénie purchased Schoenewerk's work at the Salon of 1861 and suggests Eugénie probably purchased Cordier's at the Salon of 1862.
- [120] Samoyault-Verlet, *Musée chinois*, 16.
- [121] Anonymous, "French Spoils from China," *The Illustrated London News* vol. 38, April 13, 1861, 339.
- [122] This according to Samoyault-Verlet, *Musée chinois*, 18–19; and McQueen, "Power and Patronage," 154.
- [123] The date of installation follows McQueen, "Power and Patronage," 158.
- [124] Fauchery, "Lettres," 1534.
- [125] In this context, McQueen's emphasis (in "Power and Patronage") on Eugénie's strong and traditionally feminine role as a sort of curator of gift displays reinforces the museum's feminized associations.
- [126] Brizay mentions (*Le Sac du Palais d'Été*, 418) that the writer Alphonse Daudet in 1871 compared the two episodes of pillaging as similar outrages.

## Illustrations



Fig. 1, Anonymous, *Overview of Yuanming Yuan*, photographed 2004. Display painting. Beijing Yuanming Yuan Park. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 2, Tang Dai and Shen Yuan, *Forty Views of Yuanming Yuan*, 1747. Volume 1, scene 1 “Zhengda guangming” (“Grand Uprightness and Illumination”). Ink and watercolor on silk. Paris Bibliothèque Nationale de France. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 3, Felice Beato, view of Yihe Yuan (detail), October 1860. Photograph. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 4, The author, view of Yihe Yuan, 1999. Photograph. [\[return to text\]](#)





Fig. 5, Thomas Allom, *Hall of Audience, Palace of Yuen min Yuen, Peking*, originally published in George N. Wright, *China, in a Series of Views ...*, 4 vols. (London Fisher, n.d. [1843]). Etching with later hand-coloring, c.1840s. Hong Kong collection of the author. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 6, Anonymous, illustration of a French soldier leading a Chinese porter with loot, in Armand Lucy, *Souvenirs de voyage Lettres intimes sur la campagne de Chine en 1860* (Marseille Jules Barile, 1861), p. 113. Wood engraving. Paris Bibliothèque Nationale de France. [\[return to text\]](#)





Fig. 7, Anonymous, “French Spoils from China Recently Exhibited at the Palace of the Tuileries,” in the *Illustrated London News*, vol. 38, April 13, 1861, p. 334. Wood engraving. Hong Kong University of Hong Kong Libraries. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 8, Anonymous, illustration of the Yuanming Yuan exhibition in the Tuileries palace, in *Le Monde illustré*, 1861. Paris Bibliothèque Nationale de France. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 9, Anonymous, *Le nouveau Musée chinois de S. M. l'Impératrice, installé dans le palais de Fontainebleau* (d'après le croquis de M. Moulin), in *Le Monde illustré* no. 325, 4 July 1863, p. 5. Wood engraving. Paris Bibliothèque Nationale de France. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 10, Plan of the Musée chinois. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 11, Anonymous, modern view of the Musée chinois, in Colombe Samoyault-Verlet et al, *Le Musée chinois de l'impératrice Eugénie* (Paris Réunion des musées nationaux, 1994), p. 22. Photograph.

[\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 12, Anonymous, view of the Musée chinois from the main salon, probably 1863. Photograph. Fontainebleau Archives of the Musée National du Château de Fontainebleau. Note the stupa against the far wall and the Buddhist paintings on the ceiling. The windows on the right open onto the outer porch with lion statues. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 13, Anonymous, view of the Musée chinois from the inner room into the main salon, probably 1863. Photograph. Fontainebleau Archives of the Musée National du Château de Fontainebleau. Schoenewerk's marble sculpture *Au bord d'un ruisseau* is visible against the far wall. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 14, Franz Xaver Winterhalter, *Eugénie Surrounded by her Ladies in Waiting*, 1855. Oil on canvas. Compiègne Musée National du Château de Compiègne. [\[return to text\]](#)