Global Histories

A Student Journal

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DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.17169/GHSJ.2025.700

Source: Global Histories, Vol. 10, No. 2 (December 2025), pp. 7–26
ISSN: 2366-780X

Publisher information:
Global Histories: A Student Journal is an open-access bi-annual journal founded in 2015 by students of the M.A. program Global History at Freie Universität Berlin and Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. *Global Histories* is published by an editorial board of Global History students in association with the Freie Universität Berlin.

Freie Universität Berlin
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ABSTRACT

The early modern period marked an era of more frequent contact between Europe and China, leading to cultural exchange that generated intellectual challenges for Western and Chinese scholars alike. This article highlights one aspect of this transcultural encounter by employing a history of emotions approach to examine ways that eighteenth-century European writers engaged with Chinese garden design. Through the works of writers who had not travelled to China, such as Joseph Addison and Claude-Henri Watelet, as well as of others who had actually experienced Chinese gardens firsthand, including Matteo Ripa, Jean-Denis Attiret, and William Chambers, this study explores how emotions served as a medium of cultural translation and played a crucial role in imagining the Other, as well as in negotiating foreignness, ultimately lending familiarity to what was otherwise radically unfamiliar. In this light, discourse around gardens, which are spaces abound with emotional practices, can offer unique insights into the emotional dynamics of early modern cross-cultural encounters.

BY

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Introduction

While increased contact between Europe and China in the 1600s had already familiarised some Europeans with the Chinese form of garden design, it was during the eighteenth century that Europeans took significant interest in it. Earlier reports about Chinese gardens, such as the ones from missionary Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) and traveller Johan Nieuhof (1618–1672), were too sporadic or had limited dissemination and cultural impact.[1] Unlike Ricci and Nieuhof, however, European writers of the eighteenth century lived in an era of "jardinomanie,"[2] amidst a spirited debate around garden design, the emergence of new gardening techniques, and increased horticultural experimentation. A record number of texts about gardening were published during this time, and especially during the 1770s, which has been called a, "seminal decade" in terms of gardening literature in Western Europe.[3] Additionally, *chinoiserie*, i.e. the imitation of Chinese or Chinese-inspired decorative motifs, became increasingly influential during this century, with considerable effect on European fashion, architecture, garden buildings and design.[4]

Throughout the eighteenth century, a considerable number of Western writers incorporated descriptions of Chinese gardens or used their 'exotic' paradigm to support their own arguments on their preferred style of garden design. Most of those writers had not actually visited China; rather, they were *imagining* China based on accounts of certain agents of cultural exchange: travellers, missionaries, or merchants. In their imagined confrontations with Chinese foreignness and 'exoticism,' some writers employed a variety of emotional responses, including amusement, embarrassment, curiosity, and admiration. While existing scholarship on early modern Sino-European cultural exchange has largely focused on the material impact of these encounters, as well as the intellectual responses to otherness, less attention has been paid to the role of emotions in these cross-cultural experiences. With regard to European perceptions of early modern Chinese gardens, scholars like Craig Clunas have

1 Crucially, both Ricci's and Nieuhof's notes about gardens in China did not include any thoughts over Chinese garden design in relation to the European style of gardening. See Osvald Sirén, *China and Gardens of Europe of the eighteenth century* (The Ronald Press Company, 1950), 7-8.

2 Marie-Pierre Dumoulin-Genest in her "Note sur les plantes chinoises dans les jardins français du XVIIIe siècle. De l'expérimentation à la diffusion" *Études chinoises* 11, no. 2, (1992): 147.

3 Claude-Henri Watelet, *Essay on Gardens. A Chapter in the French Picturesque*. trans. Samuel Danon (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 3.

4 For reactions to chinoiserie see e.g. Beverly Sprague Allen, *Tides in English Taste (1619-1800). Vol. 1* (Harvard University Press), 1937; David Porter, "Monstrous Beauty: Eighteenth-Century Fashion and the Aesthetics of the Chinese Taste," *Eighteenth-Century Studies 35*, no. 3, (2002): 395-411, https://www.jstor.org/stable/30054206.

already highlighted the ideological aspect of Western discourse around Chinese gardens,[5] while environmental historians as well as art historians have examined the reciprocal botanical and architectural influence between both European and Chinese gardens.[6] Others, including Bianca Maria Rinaldi, have explored how Chinese garden design ideas were interpreted by European writers and were subsequently incorporated into European garden design.[7] In doing so, they have mostly overlooked the emotional practices that mediated the comprehension and appropriation of Chinese horticultural traditions. This study therefore aims to examine the underdiscussed role of emotions as a medium of negotiation with otherness, which can either accentuate cultural differences or facilitate the process of cultural translation.[8]

The history of emotions has provided researchers with useful methodological tools in order to analyse historically contingent emotional responses. Viewing emotions as performative practices, for example, in line with the framework shaped by Monique Scheer's concept of emotional practices and Andreas Reckwitz's praxeological perspective,[9] is vital in understanding the ways that emotions both reflect and construct social realities. By analysing emotions expressed or implied in these written accounts as *practices* that serve social and cultural functions, I will explore the role emotions played in legitimising the aesthetics of 'exoticism,' therefore reflecting the emotional and social dynamics of early modern cross-cultural encounters.

5 See Craig Clunas, "Nature and Ideology in Western Descriptions of the Chinese Gardens," *Extrême-Orient Extrême-Occident* 22, no. 22 (2000): 153-166, http://www.jstor.com/stable/42635703.

6 See e.g. Marie-Pierre Dumoulin-Genest, "Note sur les plantes chinoises dans les jardins français du XVIIIe siècle. De l'expérimentation à la diffusion," *Études chinoises* 漢學研究, vol 11 no. 2 (1992): 141-158; Lianming Wang, "How Water Became Landscape: Fountains and Hydraulic Devices in Early Modern China," in: *Memorial Landscapes: World Images East and West*, eds., Uwe Fleckner et al. (De Gruyter, 2020): 193-215.

7 See Bianca Maria Rinaldi, *Ideas of Chinese gardens: Western accounts, 1300-1860*. (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); the incorporation of Chinese garden design ideas into European gardens is also explored by art historian Osvald Sirén in his classic work: Osvald Sirén, *China and Gardens of Europe of the Eighteenth Century*, (Ronald Press Company) 1950.

8 The juxtaposition of these various writers can lead to the impression that they were directly conversing with each other, but most of the texts explored here remained influential mostly within their countries' national borders: e.g. Watelet's work was officially translated into English for the first time only in 2003.

9 See Monique Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (and Is That What Makes Them Have a History)? A Bourdieuian Approach to Understanding Emotion," *History and Theory* 51, no. 2 (2012); Andreas Reckwitz, "Affective Spaces: a Praxeological Outlook," *Rethinking History* 16, no. 2 (2012): 241-258.

Imagining the Chinese Gardens

One of the first Western accounts concerning the Chinese style of garden design can be found in the work of Joseph Addison, editor of *The Spectator*,[10] who wrote in 1712 an article advocating for a more natural-looking garden.[11] Addison took most of his inspiration from William Temple, a late seventeenth century English diplomat whose essay "Upon The Gardens of Epicurus, or Of Gardening in the Year 1685" praised Chinese gardens. Temple, despite not having visited China himself, used the example of Chinese gardens in order to support his argument that beauty is not always antithetical to irregularity, ultimately wishing to express his dissatisfaction with the then-dominant model of the French formal garden, whose main attributes were the use of geometrically placed parterre designs, strict symmetrical layouts, and the pursuit of monumentality — features meant to assert control over nature and project a sense of power and grandeur.[12] Addison, believing that when nature is imitated "it gives us a nobler and more exalter kind of pleasure," and that "artificial works receive a greater advantage from their resemblance of such as are natural," used Chinese gardens to reinforce his argument. He claimed that the Chinese "choose rather to show a genius in works of this nature, and therefore always conceal the art by which they direct themselves"; for him, Chinese gardens exemplified how garden design could effectively conceal its own artificiality by imitating 'natural' patterns.[13]

Interestingly, Addison did not simply reproduce Temple's rhetoric: while Temple had argued that the Chinese scorn the formal way of garden design by allegedly saying that even, "a boy that can tell an hundred, may plant walks of trees in straight lines, and over against one another, and to what length and extent he pleases,"[14] Addison, using this passage, stated: "Writers who have given us an account of China, tell us the inhabitants of that country laugh at the plantations of our Europeans, which are laid out by the rule and line; because, they say, any one may place trees in equal rows and uniform figures."[15] I argue that Addison chose a much more explicitly emotional narrative to describe

10 English daily publication of the early eighteenth century; not to be confused with the modern magazine.

11 Joseph Addison, "No. 414, Wednesday, June 25, 1712" in: *The Spectator* (London: J.J. Chidley, 1841), 476-7

12 See e.g. Chandra Mukerji, "The Political Mobilization of Nature in Seventeenth-Century French Formal Gardens," *Theory and Society* 23, no. 5 (1994): 651-677, https://www.jstor.org/stable/658091.

13 Addison, ibid.; Regarding the ideological uses of the concept of nature, see Clunas, "Nature and Ideology," 153-166.

14 William Temple, "Upon the Gardens of Epicurus; or Of Gardening in the Year 1685," in *Sir William Temple Upon the Gardens of Epicurus, with Other XVIIth Century Garden Essays* (Chatto and Windus, 1908): 54.

15 Addison, ibid.

what Temple had also described: the artful geometrical design of the European formal garden was now ridiculed, presented as *laughed* at by the Chinese, a nation Addison revered and about which his upper- and middle-class readership was enthusiastic to learn more.[16] If anything, to use Tzvetan Todorov's words, "such admiration emphasises rather than erases the distance between them and himself."[17]

Temple's view that the Chinese showed contempt for the European style of garden design underscored cultural difference, presenting an opposing viewpoint to reinforce his critique against the paradigm of the European formal garden — a critique grounded in a narrative of European failings set against and compared with the Chinese masterful way of designing more 'natural' gardens. Addison's use of laughter in his argument not only accentuated this dynamic but also highlighted the emotional aspect of this bewildering encounter with foreignness: how this intellectually challenging experience of confronting the Other can be accompanied by emotions such as embarrassment or discomfort. By imagining the Chinese as laughing at what early modern English elites otherwise generally considered major horticultural and artistic achievements, Addison places his readership within a state of humiliation and discomfort: it is the affective imagining of the reactions that such cross-cultural encounters entail. Admiration for the 'exotic' and a subtle anxiety about the prospect of humiliation thus formed a kind of symbiosis within the emotional dynamics of early modern cultural exchanges.

Claude-Henri Watelet was a French academician who also promoted a more naturalistic style of garden design, being one of the first major French contributors to the discourse about the guiding principles of this naturalist, in France also called 'picturesque,' garden.[18] While describing his own garden in the last chapter of his *Essai sur les Jardins*, published in 1774, Watelet mentioned a poem carved on a tree next to where he used to sit: "Rejoice in the secret charms, of this delightful, shaded place. Find some peace if you are sad; add to your joy if you are merry."[19] Watelet used similar sentimentalist tropes throughout his essay to support his view that gardens are of utmost importance as places of emotional refuge and appreciation for the natural world.

16 For eighteenth-century readership of English newspapers and journals and its middle-class connections see Hannah Barker, "Newspaper Readers" in *Newspapers, Politics and English Society, 1695 – 1855* (Longman, 2000), 46-64; For eighteenth-century English middle and upper classes' infatuation with China see e.g. Allen, "Europe's Discovery of the Far East" in *Tides in English Taste,* 180-191.

17 Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America. The Question of the Other* (Harper and Row, 1984), 130.

18 Watelet, *Essay on Gardens*, 3-4.

19 Ibid., 69.

What is noteworthy, though, is how this long chapter in which he thoroughly described his garden, Moulin Joli, is placed directly after a chapter about the Chinese style of garden design titled "le jardin chinois." In this part of his essay, Watelet refrained from commenting much about the Chinese gardens. Instead, he used what seems to be a translated version of the description an eleventh-century Chinese scholar, Sima Guang, had made of his own garden.[20] Watelet, not having visited China himself, relied on this source to understand Chinese gardening. In the passage that Watelet attributed to this "Chinese sage," Sima Guang described his garden as a, "place of solitude" where he found, "pleasure in [his] leisure time,"[21] and experienced joyous emotions that would "immerse [him] in a sweet reverie."[22] The emotional resonance of both Watelet's and Guang's gardens is evidently similarly described; besides, Watelet himself recognised that despite some significant differences between the two gardens, both his and Guang's accounts described a retreat, "intended for the same usages."[23] What is more, he also offered the following commentary at the end of Guang's description:

> His detailed account shows that in all places and at all times wisdom is the consolation of learned men; friendship, their greatest happiness; study, their truest pleasure. This description, moreover, has an exotic quality and wears a foreign costume, features that may well pique some people's curiosity.[24]

While recognising the inherent foreignness of the 'exotic' Chinese garden, Watelet simultaneously acknowledged how *both* European and Chinese gardens are spaces of similar emotional and social practices. The gardens' similarly described emotional impact attenuated their differences – foreignness became less foreign in the event of shared emotional practices.

Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *aesthetic disposition* is insightful in this regard. It refers to the idea that, for any cultural product to be legitimised and appreciated by a certain social class, it must align with its socially determined sense of taste — one that reflects and reaffirms its identity and self-perception. Through this lens, Bourdieu has explained how the "propensity and capacity to recognize [a class of works] as worthy of admiration in themselves […] is inseparable from the capacity to recognize in them something already known."[25]

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20 For information about Sima Guang and the scholarship around his text see Watelet, *Essay*, 81-82.

21 Ibid., 56.

22 Ibid., 59.

23 Claude-Henri Watelet, *Essai sur les Jardins* (Prault, Saillant & Nyon, Pissot, 1774), 123-124.

24 Watelet, *Essay on Gardens,* 59.

25 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Harvard University Press, 1984): 26

In a Bourdieusian manner, Watelet essentially utilised emotions as a medium for recognising the distinctive value of what he views as 'exotic' Other. By including this long chapter on Chinese gardens and the emotional and social practices they entail, he signified how a cultural item so foreign can be legitimised when one can effectively identify the appropriate, "aesthetic intention capable of recognising and constituting [it] as [a] work of art."[26] In other words, what was otherwise so *absurdly* 'exotic' could become meaningful and legitimate when certain emotional practices, represented as similar to those practiced by European "learned men" like Watelet, were also recognised.

Experiencing The Chinese Gardens

Crucially, gardens are *emotional spaces*, i.e. spaces whose design and spatial arrangements are closely related to emotional practices.[27] Gardens are also ever-changing spaces: whether it is seasons changing, plants growing, or the visitor moving through their different areas — gardens are not static. When European missionaries or merchants travelled to early modern China, their confrontation with the 'exotic' style of Chinese garden design was, unlike Addison or Watelet who had never set foot in China, a tangible physical reality — their emotional experiences were spatially framed, and so were their memories.[28] Besides, if, "emotions are something we *do*, not just *have,*" as Monique Scheer has argued, they are not solely the result of sociocultural dynamics but also entail a corporeal aspect.[29] This bodily element can help researchers to better explain the appeal of emotions in transcultural contexts and the role of emotions in cross-cultural translation and communication.

In this part of the article, I will examine how European travellers to early modern China *felt* about their encounters with Chinese gardens or to be more precise, how they *wrote* they felt. Indeed, most texts I reviewed do not really *get emotional* in the most obvious ways: explicit mentions of emotional experiences, of what William Reddy has called *emotives*,[30] are rare. Despite that, I argue that

26 Bourdieu, *Distinction,* 29.

27 For the interplay of emotions, spatiality, and materiality see e.g. Andreas Reckwitz, "Affective Spaces: a Praxeological Outlook," *Rethinking History* 16, no. 2 (2012): 241-258, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13642529.2012.681193; Christopher Tilley and Kate Cameron-Daum, *Anthropology of Landscape: The Extraordinary in the Ordinary* (UCL Press, 2017), 1-22; Margrit Pernau, "Space and Emotion: Building to Feel," *History Compass* 12, no. 7 (2014), 541-9.

28 See e.g. Owain Jones, "An Ecology of Emotion, Memory, Self and Landscape," in *Emotional Geographies*, ed. Joyce Davidson, Liz Bondi, and Mick Smith. (Ashgate Publishing, 2016), 210.

29 Monique Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (and Is That What Makes Them Have a History)? A Bourdieuian Approach to Understanding Emotion," *History and Theory* 51, no. 2 (2012): 194, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23277639.

30 See William Reddy, "Against Constructionism: The Historical Ethnography of Emotions," *Current Anthropology* 38, no. 3 (1997): 327-351, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/204622.

the emotionality of these texts is found in narratives that their writers employ; these narratives can reveal the writers' aesthetic disposition, to use Bourdieu's term, towards what they view as radical foreignness. Emotional narratives found in discourse about Chinese gardening traditions can thus demonstrate the transformative experience of trying to understand the 'exotic' Other in early modern societies.

An important account on Chinese gardens comes from Italian missionary Matteo Ripa. Ripa arrived in China in 1710 as part of the Propaganda Fide congregation and served at the Qing imperial court as a painter and engraver for more than a decade, until 1732, when he returned to Europe. His arrival in London drew considerable interest among English intellectuals, who were then also introduced to some of his engravings depicting Chinese gardens (Figure 1).[31] Additionally, Ripa had recorded some of his impressions of China in a personal journal, which he organised into his memoirs upon his arrival in Italy. These impressions were finally published in Italian, posthumously, in 1832.[32]

[Figure 1. Matteo Ripa, Thirty-six views of the Imperial Summer Palace at Jehol, Plate 30, 1713, engraving on paper © The Trustees of the British Museum]

In his memoirs, Matteo Ripa included his own description of the gardens he had seen while in China. One of them was the imperial garden named Changchun Yuán (長春園), the "Garden of Joyful Spring," located in Kangxi emperor's Summer

31 According to Patrick Conner, his engravings' influence has been overestimated, as garden theorists still mostly cited authors like Attiret. Imagining the Chinese gardens through written accounts proved to be more appealing than 'looking' at them, see Patrick Conner, "China and the Landscape Garden: Reports, Engravings and Misconceptions," *Art History 2*, no. 4 (1979): 431-432.

32 There is still not a full English translation of all three volumes of this work, although Bianca Maria Rinaldi has translated into English the points mostly analysed in this paper; it can be found in, Bianca Maria Rinaldi, *Ideas of Chinese gardens: Western accounts, 1300–1860* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 84-90.

Residence near Beijing, which Ripa described as very dissimilar to the European gardens he had known. He noted this difference, explaining that "we [Europeans] artfully attempt to distance ourselves from the natural […]; the Chinese, on the other hand, work with art to imitate nature […],"[33] and he revered the aesthetic appeal of the variety of elements found in Chinese gardens. He described it as a place of pleasurable social interaction at least for the few allowed to be there in the first place.[34] Ripa then introduced an interesting simile: this scene of the imperial garden reminded him of the Neapolitan crèche, i.e. the representations of the Nativity of Christ scene found in Naples, his hometown. "To describe this complex in a few words," he wrote, "I will say that it has much of the taste of the good crèche scenes here in Naples made to represent the nativity of Our Lord naturally."[35] As Rinaldi has convincingly argued, Ripa chose the Nativity scene as the emblematic representation of those Chinese gardens, essentially using an already familiar microcosm in order to describe a radically unfamiliar one.[36] In doing so, though, he did not just compare the imperial garden to the Neapolitan crèche in terms of pictorial similarity; he spoke of them as sharing a similar 'taste' (*gusto*), ultimately pointing to their aesthetic similarity as well as emotional impact. This process of recognising a degree of aesthetic familiarity in an otherwise 'exotic' space reveals the affective strategies at play in Ripa's cross-cultural encounter especially given that the Nativity scenes must have been of profound emotional effect for a pious man like him. For Ripa, as well as his audience, this Chinese garden became intelligible — and by extension legitimate as a distinctive work of art — through successfully reproducing emotional practices already familiar to them. As Reckwitz has shown, "affects only form when a space is practically appropriated by its users, which always activates these users' implicit cultural schemes and routines."[37] In seeking to comprehend the cultural differences he had experienced in this garden, Ripa symbolically appropriated its design, reinterpreting its aesthetic appeal and translating its 'exotic' aesthetics into something recognisable but also *emotionally palpable*. Emotions, in this way, functioned as a medium of transcultural translation: they created equivalences in meaning and a sense of transculturally shared emotional experiences.[38]

33 Rinaldi, *Ideas of Chinese gardens*, 84-85.

34 Similarly to Ripa, other travellers to China had also mentioned how difficult it was for anyone to have access to those gardens; see e.g. Peter Osbeck, *A Voyage to China and the East Indies,* vol. 1, (Benjamin White, 1771), 326.

35 Rinaldi, *Ideas of Chinese gardens*, 87; for the original Italian text, see Matteo Ripa, *Storia della Fondazione della Congregazione e del Collegio de' Cinesi*. vol. 1. (Manfredi, 1832), 402.

36 Rinaldi, *Ideas of Chinese gardens*, 83-4.

37 Reckwitz, "Affective Spaces," 255; My understanding of this aesthetic aspect in the broad sense and not just in terms of beauty is also influence by Reckwitz.

38 Gammerl, Benno, Phillip Nielsen, and Margrit Pernau, ed., *Encounters with Emotions: Negotiating Cultural Differences since Early Modernity* (Bergbahn Books, 2019), 11.

Another missionary to China in the early eighteenth century was the Jesuit painter Jean-Denis Attiret. Attiret travelled to China in 1738 and then spent the remainder of his life there serving the Qing emperor as a painter. Part of his correspondence was published, some of it becoming very popular not only in his native France, but also in neighbouring England. One particular letter he wrote in 1743, published in 1749 and then translated into English in 1752,[39] enjoyed lasting popularity: it was the description of the imperial gardens of Yuánmíng Yuán (圓明園), the "Garden of Perfect Brightness," and it was the first such description to reach a wide audience, largely owing to the contemporary infatuation with Chinese designs and the chinoiserie fashion.

Attiret's description creates a visual narrative that guides readers as if they are travelling from one part of the palace complex to another. Attiret notably admired the variety featured in the garden and suggested that "you must examine every piece by itself, and then you would find enough to amuse you for a long time, and fully satisfy your curiosity,"[40] While acknowledging that "nothing bears the least resemblance to our manner of building,"[41] his description is enthusiastic and almost cinematic: the reader is invited to imagine landscapes filled with zig zag paths, pavilions, grottoes, mountains offering awe-inspiring views, canals, various bridges and islands, in what was, "indeed a terrestrial paradise"[42] and also a "beautiful disorder."[43] The experience of wandering around the garden consisted of different scenes that are part of various emotional experiences.

Attiret then stressed the importance of spatiality in this emotional experience, by wishing his addressee could teleport there, and physically explore this garden himself instead of merely reading about it:

> To make you more sensible of the entire beauty of this single spot, I wish I could transport you there, when the lake is covered with the barks finely

39 In the first English translation, a large part of the original text is missing because its writer, Sir Harry Beaumont [Joseph Spence], wanted to better adjust the text to his audience's preferences, depriving it of its emotional narrative which the translator probably considered hyperbolic; therefore, I used Thomas Percy's translation which is complete and more literal. Jean-Denis Attiret, "A Description of the Emperor of China's Gardens and Pleasure-Houses Near Peking," *Miscellaneous Pieces Relating to the Chinese,* vol. 2, ed. Thomas Percy, (Dodsley, 1762).

40 Attiret, "A Description," 181.

41 Ibid., 155.

42 Ibid., 157.

43 Ibid., 180.

> gilt and varnished, rowing either for pleasure or exercise, or for the purpose of fishing, or for mock-encounters, tilting and other sports.[44]

It is not just the pleasant views that made Attiret so enthusiastic: the garden's emotional appeal is also related to its spatial and material frame. It is this exact material frame that could not be translated effectively with any other means other than with emotional narratives. Attiret's description of the garden's emotional resonance was not meant only to describe the emotions such a space can generate but explain, *through these emotions*, this otherwise 'exotic' space itself. In trying to translate cultural difference, affective strategies served to amplify what was otherwise culturally illegible: where ideas could not be easily translated, emotions could by providing what Porter has called "familiar structures of meaning."[45]

Attiret did not approach Chinese gardens from an intellectual or philosophical standpoint, his focus being rather impressionistic. Attiret's account is less of an effort to understand Chinese gardening principles and more of an attempt to grasp its aesthetic and emotional appeal; it is the description of a "sequence of emotional moments engendered by aesthetic seduction and a sense of discovery," as Rinaldi aptly puts it.[46] In this regard, I argue that he emphasised the garden's form instead of substance as a means for imposing his *own* meaning to what was otherwise culturally unfamiliar; for Chinese garden design to become available for appropriation, it first had to acquire meaning capable of proving the taste it illustrates and its worth as a distinctive work of art.[47] This process of explaining and translating cultural differences is closely linked to the process of actively redefining them based on the agent's own disposition.

In this way, eighteenth-century readers of Attiret's letter are supposed to *feel* the Chinese garden design notwithstanding its cultural unintelligibility, ultimately giving them the freedom to interpret, essentially impose, its meaning depending on their own dispositions. As Conner has noted, "Attiret's letter was exploited [by European garden theorists], as Ripa's engravings could never have

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44 Ibid.,166-167; See also the original in French: pour vous faire mieux *sentir* toute la beauté [italics added] found in Jean-Denis Attiret, "Lettre du frère Attiret de la Compagnie de Jésus, peintre au service de l'empereur de Chine, à M. d'Assaut. A Pekin le Ier novembre 1743," *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses, écrites des missions étrangères, par quelques Missionnaires de la Compagnie de Jésus*, vol. 27. (Guerin, 1749): 19.

45 David Porter, "Beyond the Bounds of Truth: Cultural Translation and William Chambers's Chinese Garden," *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal 37*, no. 2. (2004): 55, https://www.jstor.org/stable/44030380.

46 Rinaldi, *Ideas of Chinese gardens*, 91.

47 Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 29

been, to promote the already-established [naturalistic] gardening fashion."[48] While Ripa's engravings presented this sense of 'wilderness' found in Chinese gardens, Attiret's impressionistic description explicitly proved the ways in which this 'wilderness' could be meaningful.

Another frequently cited description of early modern Chinese gardens is that of William Chambers. When Chambers first published his *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* in 1772, he did so after an already successful career in designing governmental buildings, houses, and gardens for the highest strata of English society. Born in Sweden in 1723 and having travelled extensively across Europe, mostly in France and Italy, as part of his studies in architecture, he also had the extraordinary opportunity to witness Chinese architecture while employed for the Swedish East India Company in the 1740s. Chambers proved willing to capitalise on his experience in China, despite it being considerably limited compared to Ripa's or Attiret's;[49] only a few years after returning to England from the Continent, in 1757, he published another work on Chinese architecture called *Designs of Chinese Buildings*.

Chambers' essay "Of the Art of Laying Out Gardens among the Chinese," included in his 1757 Designs work, is illuminating in understanding his view on Chinese gardens. As Porter has claimed, "[Chambers] deeply admired the Chinese model, but simultaneously despised it."[50] Despite belittling Chinese buildings as "toys in architecture,"[51] he lauded the Chinese for their achievements in garden design and the pleasurable variety of forms and colours. Chambers mentioned that distinctive features of Chinese garden design helped the visitor become fully immersed into a physical space designed to provoke different emotions: "strange and uncommon sounds," "extraordinary trees," "monstrous birds and animals," inter alia, created an enchanting atmosphere meant to "excite surprise." "Horror scenes" are also featured, and are meant to be alternated with pleasurable ones, and included "impeding rocks, dark caverns and impetuous cataracts rushing down the mountains."[52] Therefore, in his *Designs*, Chinese gardens were revealed as emotional spaces whose varied spatial structure was meant to maximise the

48 Conner, "China and the Landscape Garden," 434.

49 Chambers travelled to Canton twice, in 1743–44 and 1748–49. Although these voyages were certainly transformative for him, their duration as well as their extent is not comparable to the experiences of missionaries like Attiret or Ripa. We should also account for the duties he was surely tasked with, which were, as Sirén points out, "rather exacting" while his "personal freedom of movement was restricted" as a member of the Swedish East India Company, see, Sirén *China and Gardens,* 65.

50 Porter, "Beyond the Bounds," 47.

51 William Chambers, *Designs of Chinese Buildings, Furniture, Dresses, Machines, and Utensils* (London, 1757), Preface.

52 Chambers, *Designs*, 15.

visitors' emotional experience.[53] This work enjoyed enduring popularity as one of the few detailed accounts of Chinese architecture and garden design, with Chambers being virtually the only Western architect of his time to have personally seen Chinese gardens, which surely added to his own prestige as an authority on this topic.

When Chambers revisited the topic of Chinese gardens, in his 1772/1773 *Dissertation*,[54] he engaged in a controversial polemical rhetoric against the then-dominant trend in English garden design promoted by personalities such as Lancelot "Capability" Brown. This trend, known as the English landscape garden — characterised by its purposefully irregular garden typology and its declared attempt to achieve an idealised "naturalness" — enjoyed lasting popularity starting in the mid-eighteenth century.[55] Although this style of garden design was a significant break with the tradition of formal, symmetrical gardens that had shaped seventeenth-century garden design ideals and which Chambers himself did not think highly of, the landscape garden had led, according to him, to the creation of monotonous, unimaginative gardens that were completely devoid of artfulness. "Because, in the Old Gardening, art, order and variety were carried to an extravagant excess, you have, in the New, almost totally excluded them all three; to mend an exuberant fantastick dress, you have stripped stark naked; and, to heal a distempered limb, you have, […], chopped it entirely off," in his own words.[56] In his *Dissertation*, Chambers essentially presented his argument that gardens should not strive to create the impression of "natural" simplicity, but rather embrace the Art needed to design a garden that can be a space of various emotional practices. [57] His own cross-cultural experience served as inspiration for the rejuvenation of what he saw as terribly uninteresting contemporary English gardens. Although he mentioned in detail the actual ways that the Chinese achieved such a variety of scenes and forms, his main goal was to achieve what can best be described as transcultural translation,

53 Research on whether Chambers' account is a faithful representation of Chinese garden design is inconclusive: certain aspects of his description are close to the views of early modern Chinese garden theorists, while others are exaggerated or imaginary. See Richard E. Strassberg, "War and Peace: Four Intercultural Landscapes," in *China on Paper: European and Chinese Works from the Late Sixteenth to the Early Nineteenth Century*, ed. Marcia Reed et al. (Getty Research Institute, 2007), 124-5.

54 After fierce criticism over the initial edition of his Dissertation, Chambers had a second edition published in 1773, which included an "Explanatory Discourse by Chet-qua," presented as if written by a Chinese sculptor named Chet-qua, although Chambers admitted writing it by himself. See Wiliam Chambers, *A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening*, 2nd ed. (W. Griffin, 1773).

55 See e.g. Rudolf Wittkower, *Palladio and English Palladianism* (Thames and Hudson, 1974): 177-190

56 Chambers, *A Dissertation*, 154-155.

57 Sirén, *China and Gardens,* 68-77; however, Strassberg considers that the assertion that Chambers' Dissertation was almost exclusively an attack to his contemporaries is exaggerated (Strassberg, "War and Peace," 127).

an interpretation of the Chinese garden design and its way of bridging Art and Nature. What Chambers intended to do is explain this 'exotic' form of garden design to his European audience by rendering its aesthetics meaningful within the European cultural framework. I argue that what can provide meaning to this otherwise radically foreign aesthetics is a set of emotional practices; besides, Chambers explained that what makes Chinese gardening so distinguished as a work of art is, "its efficacy in moving the passions."[58] Whether his description of Chinese garden design was genuinely representative of early modern Chinese gardens is unimportant in this regard. Rather, his work, being the result of a cross-cultural encounter, should be examined for the narrative strategies he employed to negotiate and respond to cultural difference. In Porter's words, such artifacts of cross-cultural encounters can highlight "the imaginative epiphany engendered by the recognition of difference."[59]

Chambers' *Dissertation* could be viewed as an allegorical journey of a traveller confronted with a radically different cultural framework. Porter has suggested that the *Dissertation* should be read "as a narrative mapping of the lived experience of Chinese difference,"[60] and that in describing the variation of scenes found in the Chinese gardens, Chambers' writing resembles that of travel writing.[61] Indeed, he frequently used "traveller" or "passenger" to describe what the reader could see while wandering in a Chinese garden.[62] In another part of his *Dissertation*, Chambers suggested, allegedly quoting an unnamed Chinese gardener, that "if the planter be a traveller, and a man of observation, he can want no such helps to variety, as he will recollect a thousand beautiful effects along the common roads of the countries through which he has passed, that may be introduced with much better success."[63] He essentially promoted travelling as a form of invaluable education, in what must reflect his own formative years spent in China, France, and Italy. Besides, he also bemoaned the, "state of languor which the mind naturally sinks, by dwelling long on the same objects."[64] For Chambers, confronting alterity serves as a preventative measure against lethargy.

Chambers' narrative building is also inextricably linked to his own writing experience. His writing of this *Dissertation* must have been a very emotional

58 Chambers, *A Dissertation*, 13.

59 Porter, "Beyond the Bounds," 56.

60 Ibid., 51.

61 Ibid., 52.

62 See Chambers, *A Dissertation*, 38, 42, 45, 50, 52, 54, 97, and 154.

63 Chambers, *A Dissertation*, 49; although Chambers frequently includes such Chinese accounts in his text, most of these sources are either unnamed or explicitly made up, serving only as disguise.

64 Ibid., 51.

process, as a way of reliving, decades after this encounter, his own experience of confronting foreignness.[65] Chambers maintained that his writing is based on, "[his] own observations in China, from conversations with their Artists, and remarks transmitted to me at different times by travellers."[66] Given how his experience in China was admittedly limited and could not have provided him with this range of images and scenes described in his *Dissertation*, his lengthy descriptions must have been primarily a reflection of other travellers' accounts.

I would argue that it was an *imaginative upset*, the result of his cross-cultural experiences, that was ultimately the guiding principle in his writing.[67] Therefore, while the process of reading about other travellers' cross-cultural encounters is an emotional experience per se,[68] Chambers was actively reliving and *performing* the emotions of his *own* past. Thus, when he was admiring gardening as an art form whose "charms […] are equally sensible to the ignorant and the learned,"[69] he was perhaps reflecting on his own inexperience when he first encountered Chinese gardens at the age of 20.[70] When, again, he was commending the ornaments that "study, travelling, and long experience can supply [gardeners] with,"[71] he was also praising his own journeys across cultural divides. When, likewise, he was describing how "by constantly hiding parts of [the open space of the garden], they create a mystery, which excites the traveller's curiosity,"[72] he was also reminiscing about his own experience of not being allowed access to everything he wished to discover in China. Similarly, when he was expressing the view that the quest for novelty is vital and only unfamiliarity can, "excite any strong sensations in the mind of the beholder, or to produce any uncommon degree of pleasure,"[73] he was also illustrating the emotional dynamics of cross-cultural experiences. In this regard, Chambers' *Dissertation* is a fascinating work of emotional response to otherness, and can be summarised in his own words:

65 Ripa's and Attiret's accounts also share this emotional aspect of transcribing their own memories. Unlike them, however, Chambers wrote this text several decades after his journeys.

66 Chambers, *A Dissertation*, Preface, ix.

67 See Porter, "Beyond the Bounds," 49. Porter uses the term 'imaginative trauma of encounter.' I would argue that 'upset' is a more appropriate term to describe the affective strategies that are employed as a response to cultural difference.

68 See e.g. Renate Dürr, "Emotions as Guide to Untrustworthiness. John Lockman's Struggle with What He Could Not Check," in *Far from the Truth: Distance, Information, and Credibility in the Early Modern World,* ed. Michiel van Groesen and Johannes Müller (Routledge 2023), 232.

69 Chambers, *A Dissertation*, Preface, ii.

70 Rudolf Wittkower says Chambers was 17 when he first visited China, but he is probably conflating it with an earlier journey Chambers made to Bengal. See Wittkower, *Palladio*, 219.

71 Chambers, *A Dissertation*, 14.

72 Ibid., 54.

73 Ibid., 16.

> [A winding road] has not the power of raising violent emotions, yet, by bringing the passenger suddenly or unexpectedly to great or uncommon things, it occasions strong impressions of surprize and astonishment, which are more forcibly felt, as being more opposite to the tranquil pleasure enjoyed in the confined parts of the road.[74]

In another part of his *Dissertation*, Chambers addresses the temporal element in the design of the Chinese gardens, claiming that the Chinese contrive different scenes for every season of the year. He then proceeds to describe those scenes, starting off with the winter scenes, composed of evergreen plants and "gloomy productions" amongst whom they put conservatories to protect plants suited to warmer weather.[75] Spring scenes follow, abound with blossomed trees and flowers like roses and daffodils and filled with buildings for practicing sports such as wrestling, fencing, and running.[76] Then, summer scenes, with their lakes and water-works, surrounded by flowers and trees, as well as spacious buildings meant for a variety of activities, social or solitary, like eating, conversing, bathing or meditating, are the only ones to be extensively described: perhaps a reflection of Chambers' own acquaintance with the summer activities in such gardens.[77] As for the autumnal scenes, they are filled with all sorts of decaying buildings and ruins which serve as "mementos to the passenger," mausoleums and cemeteries and, "whatever else may serve to indicate the debility, the disappointments and the dissolution of humanity."[78]

The described order of the scenes resembles the one in actual journeys: as was standard for voyages of the Swedish East India Company, also confirmed by Swedish naturalist Peter Osbeck whose travels to China postdated Chambers' by less than a decade, travellers would begin their journey in the winter, reach China by the late summer, only to depart again for Europe in the beginning of the following winter.[79] This rambling description of the different seasons and landscapes could arguably be an allegory of this transoceanic journey. The voyagers' southwardly sail towards the Cape of Good Hope, through the torrid zone, is reflected in the winter scenes of the Chinese gardens, where "rare shrubs, flowers and trees of the torrid zone" were covered with glass frames — in a way that the visitor could be close to them, yet not touch them. In Osbeck's description, the voyagers would, "frequently find some [fish] which shine in water,"[80] while in Chambers' described winter scene some "gold and silver fishes"

74 Ibid., 50.
75 Ibid., 25.
76 Ibid., 27.
77 Ibid., 27-32.
78 Ibid., 38.
79 Peter Osbeck, *A Voyage to China and the East Indies,* vol. 2, (Benjamin White, 1771), 132.
80 Ibid., 141.

were kept porcelain cisterns.[81] In the late spring, when the Swedish ships would go ashore in Java before sailing off to China, Chambers would be acquainted for the first time with such a variety of plants and animals: he would not have been able to witness, at least not in China, the "other flowers as appear in […] March and April" or the "all sorts of tame or ferocious animals, and birds of prey" which he described in his Dissertation,[82] but he could have seen, if his journey was anything like Osbeck's, the "most remarkable animals" found in Java.[83] In the end of autumn, after months of acclimatisation to China, Chambers would be reminded of the transient nature of his cross-cultural encounter; the change of season would be an actual "memento" to a passenger such as himself.

Chambers does not call on European gardeners to imitate the Chinese model; he uses the Chinese example as inspiration, asking European gardeners to use their imagination to design gardens that could generate various emotional experiences and creatively bridge Art and Nature, an aspiration found already in Addison's 1712 article. Indeed, Chambers himself rarely built anything in Chinese style — most of his designs were actually neoclassical.[84] The Great Pagoda, designed by Chambers and located at Kew Gardens, was an exception to his style of building; even the Great Pagoda, though, which was indeed imitating Chinese architectural designs, was not part of an attempt to recreate a 'Chinese garden.' Instead, it was surrounded by other buildings of Western or Eastern inspiration, in what was ultimately a celebration of British imperial ambitions and a representation of a *global geography* in a garden of the British royalty (see Figure 2).[85] Chambers, if anything, created a model for the hybrid juxtaposition of different architectural elements, which was the result of a transcultural approach that allowed him to integrate heterogeneous designs by aesthetically redefining them. More so than any other writers examined in this article, Chambers practically appropriated Chinese architectural designs. Therefore, his Dissertation could arguably be part of his effort to legitimise, a posteriori, his use of such designs — and in this effort, the means for translating and legitimising the Chinese aesthetics considered 'exotic' were primarily, as I have shown, emotional.

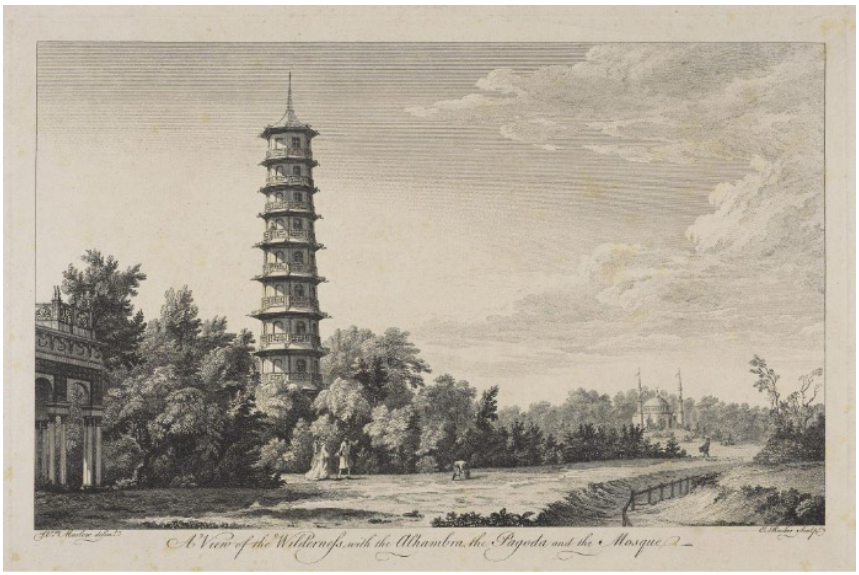
81 Chambers, *A Dissertation*, 26.

82 Ibid., 27.

83 Osbeck, *A Voyage,* vol. 2., 141.

84 Strassberg, "War and Peace," 124; for his architectural designs, his long-term stay in France and especially in Italy was particularly impactful.

85 Ibid., 125-6.



[Figure 2. William Chambers, A View of the Wilderness with the Alhambra, the Pagoda and the Mosque, etching included in *Plans, Elevations, Sections, and Perspective Views of the Gardens and Buildings at Kew in Surrey*, London, 1763 © The Trustees of the British Museum]

Chambers' account also illustrates how emotionally charged discursive practices could reflect processes of identity construction, as he sought to affirm his compatibility with the ideal type of the *Enlightened Man*. His claim that opposition to novelty was driven by, "interests and prejudices" of the, "angry champions of the old" reflects a rhetorical topos that is typical for Enlightenment authors.[86] Besides, infatuation with China as a model of wise governance and universality was a commonplace Enlightenment idea, one shared by Frederick, Prince of Wales, who was close to the Swedish architect and had probably influenced him a lot during his early years.[87] Similarly, to defend his idea that in a proper garden Nature should be artfully "improved," Chambers claimed that a naturalist garden deprived of emotional experiences is "in opposition to reason."[88] His underlying openness to the 'exotic' was not only a product of his youthful overseas experiences, but also a reflection of his self-perception; as a member of a cosmopolitan intellectual elite, distinguished enough to be able to appreciate the works of Chinese gardeners, whom Chambers describes as "men of high abilities."[89] In other words, his appreciation of the ingenuity of Chinese gardens was the result of his emotionally charged cross-cultural encounter *as well as* his aesthetic inclinations that permitted him to "perceive, classify and memorise [his emotional experiences] differently."[90] With his Dissertation,

86 Chambers, *A Dissertation*, Explanatory Discourse, Preface.

87 Strassberg, "War and Peace," 124.

88 Chambers, *A Dissertation*, 144.

89 Ibid., 14.

90 Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 28.

Chambers is a prime example of Bourdieu's "cultivated man" whose social identity — constitutively linked to a declared openness towards other cultural experiences — is what allowed him to master the means of symbolic, as well as *emotional*, appropriation of the 'exotic' aesthetics of Chinese gardens.[91]

Conclusion

By building upon the burgeoning literature around the history of emotions, this article is an attempt to uncover aspects of Western discourse around Chinese gardens that are often overlooked due to the emphasis put into examining the reciprocal material or intellectual influences of cross-cultural encounters. Sino-Western cultural exchange, as any other cultural exchange, was also deeply affected by emotional dynamics that shaped the way that people reacted to otherness. Regardless of whether the emotions represented in these texts, including admiration, embarrassment, surprise, and curiosity, were accurately representative of the emotional practices linked to confronting foreignness, they were surely part of emotional narratives that eighteenth-century European writers employed in their writings, ultimately shaping the ways that Chinese garden design was integrated into Western thought.

Essentially, all authors examined here attempted to translate their cross-cultural encounters or comprehend the cultural differences that they found in the Chinese style of gardening. In doing so, they frequently used emotions to mitigate the intellectually challenging effect of encountering radical foreignness. They were not, by any means, using the same approach; nor were they employing the same emotional narratives. The utilisation of emotions in their rhetoric was sometimes direct, such as in the accounts of William Chambers and Jean-Denis Attiret, or covert, as in the case of Matteo Ripa. Other than that, texts that are fundamentally descriptive of one's own experiences, as in the case of Ripa's memoirs, were quite different from manuals or prescriptive texts such as Watelet's *Essai* or Chambers' *Dissertation*.

I would also argue that their utilisation of emotions as a means of negotiating otherness and translating their cross-cultural encounters was also, ultimately, a way for them to extend aesthetic legitimacy to the Chinese style of garden design. Based on the Bourdieusian idea of aesthetic disposition, I argue that for these authors striving to achieve transcultural translation, emotions were the only way, or simply the most effective one, for this piece of exoticism

91 Ibid., 563.

to acquire recognisable legitimacy and overcome its illegibility.[92] The capacity to recognise in Chinese gardens something already known — or in the case of emotions, something already *practiced* — was necessary for this aesthetic legitimacy to take hold among early modern Western elites. While potentially projecting their own thoughts, ideals and preconceptions, European 'cultivated men' found that the most effective strategy for symbolically appropriating the aesthetics of exoticism was, evidently, emotions.

92 See Ibid., 26: "[…] the very principle of the disposition to recognize legitimate works, a propensity and capacity to recognize their legitimacy and perceive them as worthy of admiration in themselves, which is inseparable from the capacity to recognize in them something already known"; see also, David Porter, "Monstrous Beauty," 395-411.