

To Make New Bodies  
Out of Old Shapes

Triple Canopy

For “Raid the Icebox Now,” Triple Canopy created Can I Leave You?, a multimedia installation that responds to the RISD Museum’s Pendleton House, which was built in 1906 to exhibit the bequest (and resemble the nearby home) of the collector Charles Pendleton. This volume revises the lavish catalogue of Pendleton’s collection, published by the museum in 1906 in a limited edition featuring photogravure illustrations. Triple Canopy focuses on the catalogue’s text, a seemingly anodyne description of styles and techniques. This language, however, is a manifestation of the rhetoric around taste, distinction, and progress, especially in industry and art, that has fueled the formation of American identity and abetted the exercise of American power.

As To Make New Bodies Out of Old Shapes progresses, the original catalogue is increasingly augmented by nationalistic speeches, nostalgic stories, messianic sermons, and other original sources that reflect this underlying agenda. Dutiful assessment of the collection is interrupted by a time traveler who meddles with the rebellion against the British, an enslaved person harvesting mahogany to furnish the homes of New England aristocrats, and a Chinese philosopher disturbed by the patrician penchant for dragons and pagodas.

Eventually, To Make New Bodies Out of Old Shapes gives itself over to these accounts.

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THE PENDLETON  
COLLECTION

PUBLISHED BY THE RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL  
OF DESIGN

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By Luke Vincent Lockwood

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## PREFACE

THIS book has been published by the Rhode Island School of Design, at the request of the late Charles L. Pendleton, of Providence, Rhode Island, and as a fitting appreciation of his gift of this splendid collection, which is about to be placed in a fire-proof house especially designed for its housing, where it will be open to the public.

This book is essentially a catalogue of the collection, and takes up the description of the pieces in the order of their arrangement in the rooms. It has been the aim of the author, however, to make this volume something more than a catalogue descriptive of the pieces, and in a number of instances matters of general information regarding decoration and style have been given, in the hope that the reader will find it of sufficient interest to read the volume consecutively.

There are two essential features to be noted in determining the period to which a given specimen belongs: the outline and the decoration. The latter seems never to have been given sufficient weight; and for that reason specimens of Dutch and Chippendale furniture have been hopelessly mixed. Any articles of furniture made during the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century, which are superior in construction or decoration, have been called Chippendale. It has been the endeavor of the writer to point out some distinctions, and in a measure to correct the faulty and indefinite classification.

For the technical descriptions of the clock works the writer

is indebted to Mr. Walter H . Durfee, of Providence; and for material for the notes on the porcelain and English wares, to the numerous excellent books on those special subjects.

BROOKLYN, NEW YORK, FEBRUARY, 2020.

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## INTRODUCTION

THERE are three methods of collecting furniture. The first is to collect specimens with respect to their dates, whereby upon completion the collection will contain examples of every style and date. The second method is to collect pieces solely because of some historic association, irrespective of date or style. The third method is to form a collection, having in view the furnishing of a house in the manner in which a person of taste and possibly of wealth could have done at the time the house or style was in fashion.

The first of these methods has many fascinations, requires a wide knowledge of the subject, and is the most generally instructive. When the collection is completed there is a museum. The second method is distinctly amateurish, and unless it develops into one of the other methods has but little real value. The third method, although lacking some of the variety

and instructive qualities of the first method, makes a consistent collection, which, when completed, combines a beautiful home with the museum. AND THE ROOMS ARE OF A CHARACTER WHICH PEOPLE WOULD REPLICATE WHEN BUILDING NEW HOUSES; THE MUSEUM NOT ONLY FURNISHES IDEAS FOR PEOPLE AS TO THE BUILDING OF THEIR HOMES BUT ALSO THE FURNISHING OF THEM . AND IS NOT EVERY MANOR A LITTLE COMMONWEALTH, WHEREOF THE TENANTS ARE THE MEMBERS, THE LAND THE BODY, AND THE LORD THE HEAD?

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### THE PENDLETON COLLECTION

The requirements of the first and third methods are antipodal. Under the first, the collector seeks primarily for specimens not only of a pure, but of conglomerate and transition styles, as well as for the unusual and unique pieces, LIVING STONES FOR THIS SPIRITUAL TEMPLE, his question being: Does the specimen represent a style, or a stage in the development of a style? Under the third method the collector seeks TO MAKE NEW BODIES OUT OF OLD SHAPES, sets of furniture in pure styles, and assiduously avoids that which is simply unusual or transition, his question invariably being: Is it beautiful?

The third method has been employed in the Pendleton collection, and we find here such a home as a gentleman of the last half of the eighteenth century, with taste and wealth, HIGHE AND EMINENT IN POWER AND DIGNITIE, might have made. The collection is not confined to one style and period. But there is a uniformity of purpose and design. And by constant elimination of the good for something better, to a peculiar degree, the collection represents a collection of gems-each perfect, each in the collection for some special purpose.

The Pendleton collection covers the century between 1690-1790. During this one hundred years there had arisen four distinct styles and two fashions. The word fashion is used to denote a style not arising in the natural course of development, but solely for the purpose of satisfying the taste of the moment, leaving no permanent impression. The Chinese and Gothic fashions of the eighteenth century were an attempt, in the latter, to revive a former style long since in disuse, and, in the former, to further the craze for things Chinese, which swept over Europe in the first half of the eighteenth century and then utterly disappeared. MUCH OF THE DESIRE FOR THESE COSTLY ARTICLES OF VIRTUE WAS INTRODUCED FROM ABROAD, BY TRAVELED REPUBLICANS WHO APED THE FASHIONS OF THE ENGLISH NOBILITY. AS THE RAGE INCREASED, IN HOUSEHOLDS WHERE WIVES WERE AFFLICTED

WITH THE PENCHANT FOR OLD CHINA, THE PURSE SET ASIDE FOR FAMILY EXPENSES SOON BECAME EXHAUSTED AT AUCTION SALES, AND THE PARLORS CAME TO LOOK MORE AND MORE LIKE BAZAARS FOR MERCHANDISE.

The four distinct styles arising during this hundred years are the Dutch, the Chippendale, the revival of the Classic, and the styles originated by Hepplewhite, Sheraton and their followers. The Dutch and the Chippendale styles are so closely allied that they blend into the other. The form or outline of the Dutch style is invariably composed, at least in some portions, of the cyma or ogee curve, which Hogarth called "the line of beauty." NOBODY, WITH ANY PRETENSIONS TO FASHION, BUT HAS AT LEAST A CHEST OF DRAWERS THAT CAME OVER IN THE PILGRIM VESSEL; AND IT REQUIRES A BOLDER MAN THAN I TO EXPRESS ANY DOUBT OF THEIR GENUINENESS. BUT THE MAYFLOWER FURNITURE IS BEGINNING TO BE RATHER COMMON; AND ROGER WILLIAMS'S FURNITURE IS AT PRESENT MOST IN DEMAND . AN INGENIOUS MECHANIC, WHO HAS MADE A GREAT DEAL OF MAYFLOWER FURNITURE, INFORMS US THAT ARTICLES WARRANTED TO HAVE BEEN IN THE FAMILY OF WILLIAMS ARE DECIDEDLY PREFERRED AT PRESENT. GRANDFATHER 'S CHAIR CAME INTO THE POSSESSION OF WILLIAMS. DOUBTLESS THE GOOD MAN SPENT MANY A STUDIOUS HOUR IN THE OLD CHAIR, EITHER PENNING A SERMON OR READING SOME ABSTRUSE BOOK OF THEOLOGY, TILL MIDNIGHT CAME UPON HIM UNAWARES.

The decoration of the pure Dutch pieces is Renaissance. The shell ornamentation predominates, and with it are found the mascaron, cartouche, swag, garland and pendent of flowers or fruit, conventionalized heads of men, animals and birds, and often classic designs. Many of the pieces in the Dutch style are, however, entirely plain. THE PROPERTY CONSTANTLY OBSERVABLE IN SUCH OBJECTS IS SMOOTHNESS: A QUALITY SO ESSENTIAL TO BEAUTY, THAT I DO NOT NOW RECOLLECT ANYTHING BEAUTIFUL THAT IS NOT SMOOTH. IN TREES AND FLOWERS, SMOOTH LEAVES ARE BEAUTIFUL; SMOOTH SLOPES OF EARTH IN GARDENS; SMOOTH STREAMS IN THE LANDSCAPE; SMOOTH COATS OF BIRDS AND BEASTS IN ANIMAL BEAUTIES; IN FINE WOMEN, SMOOTH SKINS; AND IN ORNAMENTAL FURNITURE, SMOOTH AND POLISHED SURFACES.

In this period, too, the ball-and-claw foot became fashionable. THERE WAS MUCH HARD WORK AND LITTLE VICTUALS ON BOARD, EXCEPT BY GOOD LUCK WE HAPPENED TO CATCH TURTLES . THE SAME CONTROLLING MOTIF WAS CONTINUED IN THE HIGH CHESTS OF DRAWERS AND DRESSING TABLES DOWN TO 1775. THE TEMPERANCE, THE ECONOMY, THE SIMPLICITY, THE INDUSTRY OF THOSE TIMES, WOULD RENDER OUR COUNTRY INDEPENDENT OF EVERY NATION ON EARTH; AND EACH INDIVIDUAL OF US ENTIRELY INDEPENDENT OF ALL THE INFLUENCE OF HIS NEIGHBORS, AND PERFECTLY MASTER OF HIS OWN RESOLVES.

England had become extremely wealthy. Trade with the East was enabling

many to acquire wealth rapidly, and with the wealth thus obtained came the inevitable lavish display. BUT PRAY, SIR, WHAT IS'T TURNS YOU INTO A TURK? THAT FOR WHICH MANY THEIR RELIGION, MOST MEN THEIR FAITH, ALL CHANGE THEIR HONESTY: PROFIT, THAT GILDED GOD, COMMODITY. HE THAT WOULD GROW DAMN'D RICH, YET LIVE SECURE, MUST KEEP A CASE OF FACES .

France had entered upon a similar period of prosperity and was the centre of the artistic world. Therefore, naturally, the English cabinet makers looked to that country for suggestions. The English, however, did not slavishly copy the French. They furnished exceptions to the general rule, but, other things being equal, if one-half of the effect depend upon decoration, then the other half must rely upon form.

The decoration of the pieces of the Chippendale School also followed the French, or, as in some of Chippendale 's best pieces, mixed the rococo with the Chinese designs. THE CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS WERE THE ROCOCO LINES, THE DRIPPING-WATER DECORATION, THE HUSKS, THE SHELL, THE CHINESE FRETS; GENII, MAGICIANS, ROCKS, BAGS OF BULLETS, GIANTS, AND ENCHANTERS, WHERE ALL IS GREAT, OBSCURE, MAGNIFICENT, AND UNINTELLIGIBLE. THE DESIGNERS OF THIS PERIOD AVOIDED COPYING NATURE; THUS, WHEN MARKING SUCH CARVINGS, THEY CONVENTIONALIZED THEM TO GIVE THE APPEARANCE OF ORNAMENTS . ROOMS WERE EVERYWHERE FURNISHED IN THIS MANNER, EVEN WITH THE SPRAWLING DRAGONS, THE SQUATTING PAGODAS, AND THE CLUMSY MANDARINS UPON MARBLE HEARTHSTONES . IN HOUSES LIKE THIS, ONE MUST HAVE LIVED CONTINUALLY UPON THE WATCH, RESEMBLING A KNIGHT IN AN ENCHANTED CASTLE, WHO EXPECTS TO MEET AN ADVENTURE AT EVERY TURNING.

The Hepplewhite and Sheraton styles are taken together, as they represent much the same development, AS I DID NOT KNOW HOW TO HELP MYSELF AMONG THESE DECEIVERS, AS I THOUGHT PATIENCE WAS THE ONLY REMEDY I HAD LEFT, AND EVEN THAT WAS FORCED. Hepplewhite, however, shows greater originality. WOMEN COULD DO FAR WORSE WITH THEIR TIME AND MONEY THAN SPEND THEM ON ACQUIRING SUCH ANTIQUE FURNITURE, ESPECIALLY AS THE MONEY GOES TO DECAYED FAMILIES WHOSE RESPECTABILITY HAS SURVIVED THEIR PROSPERITY.

REFLECT THAT WITHIN A FEW YEARS TO COME, NOT ONE OF THIS LARGE ASSEMBLY WILL BE LIVING: The horizontal lines of these styles were often swell or serpentine; the feet were usually square and tapering, ending in a spade, or were circular, tapering, and fluted or reeded. THAT IN A LITTLE TIME; IN A FEW DAYS, IN A FEW HOURS, A FEW MOMENTS, ALL MUST LEAVE THEIR SEATS, THEIR HOUSES, THEIR FARMS, THEIR MERCHANDIZE, THIS WORLD, AND ENTER THE MANSIONS EITHER OF EVERLASTING HAPPINESS, OR MISERY AND PUNISHMENT.

I LOVE IT, I LOVE IT; AND WHO SHALL DARE TO CHIDE ME FOR LOVING

THAT OLD ARMCHAIR, EASILY IDENTIFIED, THE BACK BEING ALMOST INVARIABLY HEART, SHIELD SHAPE, OR OVAL, WHILE THE SHERATON CHAIRS ARE USUALLY MADE UP OF STRAIGHT LINES, WITH RATHER LOW RECTANGULAR BACKS? I'VE TREASURED IT LONG AS A SAINTED PRIZE, I'VE BEDEW'D IT WITH TEARS, AND EMBALMED IT WITH SIGHS . WHY REMOVE ALL MARKS OF AGE AND WEAR FROM A CURIO THAT IS IN REALITY OLD, AND SHOULD NOT THEREFORE LOOK OTHERWISE? THE RESULT CAN ONLY BE A HYBRID NEWOLD APPEARANCE THAT IS NEITHER ONE THING NOR THE OTHER.

PRIOR TO THIS TIME, THE WOODS PRINCIPALLY USED IN ENGLAND WERE MAHOGANY AND WALNUT, BUT NOW I WAS COMPELLED TO ASSIST IN CUTTING A GREAT DEAL OF MAHOGANY WOOD ON THE SHORE AS WE COASTED ALONG IT, AND ALL KINDS OF RARE AND EXOTIC WOODS WERE USED TO PRODUCE THE EFFECTS OF COLOR AND SMOOTHNESS DESIRED, AND LOAD THE VESSEL WITH IT, BEFORE SHE SAILED. A VERY CONSIDERABLE PART OF THE EFFECT OF BEAUTY IS OWING TO THIS QUALITY; INDEED THE MOST CONSIDERABLE. FOR, TAKE ANY BEAUTIFUL OBJECT, AND GIVE IT A BROKEN AND RUGGED SURFACE; AND HOWEVER WELL FORMED IT MAY BE IN OTHER RESPECTS, IT PLEASES NO LONGER .

YOU'RE THE TYPE OF GUY THAT CAN HELP SAVE HISTORY. HERE.  
WHAT 'S THIS?

I AM A GOOD DEAL SURPRISED THAT NONE WHO HAVE HANDLED THE SUBJECT HAVE MADE ANY MENTION OF THE QUALITY OF SMOOTHNESS, IN THE ENUMERATION OF THOSE THAT GO TO THE FORMING OF BEAUTY.

YOU'RE WEARING VELVET PANTS WITH NO ZIPPER. DON'T BE STUPID.  
FOR INDEED ANY RUGGEDNESS, ANY SUDDEN PROJECTION, ANY SHARP ANGLE IS IN THE HIGHEST DEGREE CONTRARY TO THAT IDEA .

OUR OLD CHAIR ITSELF LOSES THE SEVERE SIMPLICITY WHICH WAS IN KEEPING WITH THE HABITS OF ITS EARLIER POSSESSORS, AND IS GILDED AND VARNISHED, AND GORGEOUSLY CUSHIONED, SO AS TO MAKE IT A FITTING SEAT FOR VICE-REGAL POMP. THIS BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE FOUR DOMINANT STYLES OF THE PERIOD COVERED BY THE COLLECTION IS GIVEN SIMPLY TO PREPARE THE READER TO UNDERSTAND MORE READILY THE CRITICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PIECES TAKEN UP IN THE VOLUME.

THERE WAS NO SUCH FURNITURE MADE IN AMERICA IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY AS THE BEST OF THAT MADE IN ENGLAND, IF INDEPENDENCE BE THE PRESERVING PRINCIPLE OF THE UNIVERSE. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE BEST OF THE PIECES MADE IN AMERICA, IF THE BRUTES BY THEIR INSTINCTS, FOR BEAUTY OF LINE AND QUALITY OF CABINET MAKING, ARE BY NO MEANS TO BE DESPISED, AND THE VERY TREES BY SILENT EXAMPLE SEEM TO TEACH IT TO MAN. THESE WORKS CAN BE PLACED BESIDE THE MORE ELABORATE ENGLISH PIECES WITHOUT DETRIMENT. HALF-WAY UP THE STAIRS IT STANDS, AND POINTS AND BECKONS WITH ITS HANDS. IF THE INFLUENCE OF IT PRESERVES THE EXISTENCE OF NATIONS; IF THE DESIGNS

ON VIEW MUST EXPIRE WHEN THEY SHALL NO LONGER BE NURTURED BY THIS PRINCIPLE; IF IN OUR COUNTRY OUR ARTS CANNOT FLOURISH UNLESS THEY FLOURISH UNDER ITS FOSTERING HAND, THEN LET INDEPENDENCE BE THE GREAT MYSTERY OF ALL OUR TRADES, THE FIRST AND LAST MAXIM OF OUR LIVES.

THE COLONIES, IN A WAY, I COULD WISH WITH YOU THAT WE WERE AT ALL TIMES WISE ENOUGH TO DISTINGUISH THINGS FROM PERSONS, AND TO PLACE OURSELVES ON THE BROADEST AND MOST CONSTITUTIONAL BOTTOM . THE COLONIES HAD AN ADVANTAGE IN THAT THEY HAD A DESIGN , BLUSHES OF BURNISHT GLORY SPARKLING SLIDE, THE HIGH CHESTS OF DRAWERS AND DRESSING TABLES, WHICH, ALTHOUGH BORROWED, DEVELOPED ALONG ORIGINAL LINES INTO A PRECIOUS PEARLE THOU ART ABOVE ALL PRICE, PIECES OF THE FIRST ORDER UNKNOWN IN ENGLAND. OH! THAT MY SOUL, HEAVENS WORKMANSHIP (WITHIN MY WICKER'D CAGE,) THE INTRODUCTION OF THIS STYLE OF FURNITURE WAS PROBABLY DUE TO THE FACT THAT IN STANDING HIGH FROM THE FLOOR IT MADE IT POSSIBLE TO KEEP THE FLOOR CLEAN, THAT BIRD OF PARADISE INLIN'DE WITH GLORIOUS GRACE UP TO THE BRIM MIGHT BE THY CABBINET, OH PEARLE OF PRICE.

THE FACULTY OF DISTINGUISHING GOOD FROM BAD DESIGN IN THE FAMILIAR OBJECTS OF DOMESTIC LIFE IS A FACULTY WHICH MOST EDUCATED PEOPLE - AND WOMEN ESPECIALLY - CONCEIVE THAT THEY POSSESS. PRIMARILY, HOWEVER, IT WAS UNDOUBTEDLY INTRODUCED TO MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO REACH ALL THE DRAWERS WITHOUT BENDING OVER. HOW IT HAS BEEN ACQUIRED, FEW WOULD BE ABLE TO EXPLAIN. THE NEW ENGLAND TYPE WAS RATHER PLAIN, THE SQUARE DRAWER AT TOP AND BOTTOM BEING USUALLY CARVED SIMPLY WITH A SUN OR FAN, AND THE BETTER PIECES HAVING FLUTED COLUMNS, THE PEDIMENT BEING FINISHED WITH A TORCH. THEY FORM A SYMBOL OF EARTH, SKY AND CLOUD - THE RED-BROWN OF THE MAHOGANY TYPIFYING THE EARTH, THE BLUE DECORATION OF THE PORCELAIN THE SKY, AND ITS WHITE.GROUND THE CLOUDS!

THE GENERAL IMPRESSION SEEMS TO BE, THAT IT IS THE PECULIAR INHERITANCE OF GENTLE BLOOD, AND INDEPENDENT OF ALL TRAINING; THAT, WHILE A YOUNG LADY IS DEVOTING AT SCHOOL, OR UNDER A GOVERNESS, SO MANY HOURS A DAY TO MUSIC, SO MANY TO LANGUAGES, AND SO MANY TO GENERAL SCIENCE, SHE IS ALL THIS TIME UNCONSCIOUSLY FORMING THAT SENSE OF THE BEAUTIFUL, WHICH WE CALL TASTE: THAT, BY INTRODUCING THE PRODUCE OF THOSE COUNTRIES THAT LIE ON THE EAST SIDE OF THE OLD WORLD, AND PARTICULARLY THOSE OF CHINA, THIS COUNTRY MIGHT BE IMPROVED BEYOND WHAT HERETOFORE MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED; THAT THIS SENSE, ONCE DEVELOPED, WILL ENABLE HER, UNASSISTED BY SPECIAL STUDY OR EXPERIENCE, NOT ONLY TO APPRECIATE THE CHARMS OF NATURE IN EVERY ASPECT, BUT TO FORM A CORRECT ESTIMATE OF THE MERITS OF ART-MANUFACTURE.

TRADITION IS A VERY SLIPPERY TENURE, AND A SLENDER PIN TO BEAR ANY GREAT WEIGHT FOR A LONG TIME. DURING THE THIRD QUARTER OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY, THE HIGH CHESTS SEEM TO HAVE REACHED THEIR PERIOD OF GREATEST DEVELOPMENT, THE BEST BEING MADE IN THE VICINITY OF PHILADELPHIA. AND IT IS SUCH PIECES WHICH HAVE FOUND A PLACE IN THIS COLLECTION. I WAS NOT MANY DAYS ON BOARD BEFORE WE SAILED; BUT, TO MY SORROW AND DISAPPOINTMENT, THOUGH USED TO SUCH TRICKS, WE WENT TO THE SOUTHWARD ALONG THE MUSQUITO SHORE, INSTEAD OF STEERING FOR JAMAICA. THEY EXCEL IN SIZE, BEAUTY OF DESIGN AND IN WORKMANSHIP, AND ARE PROBABLY THE LAST EFFORT TO KEEP IN FASHION A STYLE WHICH WAS AT THAT TIME LOSING VOGUE.

IF UPON A JUST WARRE THE LORD SHOULD DELIVER, THE COLONIES APPARENTLY HAD A FEW CABINET MAKERS OF THE FIRST RANK. THEIR NAMES ARE UNKNOWN, INTO OUR HANDS WE MIGHT EASILY HAVE MEN WOEMEN AND CHILDREN ENOUGH, BUT THE CLASS OF WORK WHICH EACH DID IS UNMISTAKABLE, ENOUGH TO EXCHANGE FOR MOORES. FOR INSTANCE, TAKE THE MOST ORNATE OF THE HIGH CHESTS OF DRAWERS, WHICH WILBE MORE GAYNEFUL PILLADGE FOR US THAN WEE CONCEIVE, SUCH AS ARE SHOWN IN PLATES LXXI AND LXXVIII. ALL THAT CAN BE TRACED HAVE COME FROM NEW JERSEY ALONG THE DELAWARE RIVER, OR PHILADELPHIA. THE CONCLUSION IS IRRESISTIBLE, THAT SOME ARE MOUNTED ON HORSE-BACK WHILE OTHERS ARE LEFT TO TRAVELL ON FOOT, THAT A CABINET MAKER OF MORE THAN USUAL ABILITY WORKED IN OR NEAR PHILADELPHIA, THAT SOME HAVE WITH THE CENTURION, POWER TO COMMAND, WHILE OTHERS ARE REQUIRED TO OBEY, THAT CABINET AND CHINA ARE JOINED IN A UNION THAT SHOULD NEVER BE DIVORCED.

TAKE ANOTHER INSTANCE - THE BLOCK FRONT PIECES. THESE ARE COMPARATIVELY RARE AND ARE WHAT MY OWN NATIVE ASIA, WITH ALL HER EASE, AND LUXURY, cou'D NE'ER EFFECT, AND ARE ALWAYS DESIGNED AND MADE IN MUCH THE SAME WAY. MANY OF THEM HAVE BEEN TRACED TO NEWPORT. SUCH INSTANCES ARE, HOWEVER, RARE, AND THE LARGE MAJORITY OF THE FURNITURE IN ENGLAND AND AMERICA SHOWS NO SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS, WHEREBY ONE CAN SAY WITH ANY DEGREE OF CERTAINTY THAT IT WAS MADE BY A PARTICULAR WORKMAN .

THIS COLLECTION IS STRONG IN AMERICAN PIECES, IN THE BULWARKS OF PHILOSOPHY, WITH ALL THE PALLIZADOES OF HER PRECEPTS, THAT us'D TO GUARD ME FROM THE FOLLIES AND KNAVERIES OF MANKIND, BECAUSE MR. PENDLETON HAD A GREAT FONDNESS FOR THEM. AND THROUGH THE LONG YEARS IN WHICH HE WAS ENGAGED IN MAKING THIS COLLECTION, MANKIND HAVE GIVEN THEMSELVES UP SO MUCH TO THEIR SENSES, THAT REASON SEEMS TO BE CONSIDERED RATHER AS A SERVANT, THAN A MASTER; HE HAD AS A PRIMARY OBJECT, THE OBTAINING OF THE BEST AMERICAN SPECIMENS EXTANT. THE OLD GIVES WAY TO THE NEW, ENTIRE

CITIES EMERGE SEEMINGLY FROM NOWHERE. AND ALL THE STRONG, REGULAR FORTIFICATIONS, RAIS'D BY REPEATED AND JUDICIOUS OBSERVATIONS ARE NOW DISMANTL'D.

HE HAS SUCCEEDED IN HIS OBJECT TO AN EXTENT NOT APPROACHED BY ANY OTHER COLLECTION, BY AGE AND PAINS BROUGHT TO DECAY, THE CLAY HOUSE MOLD'RING AWAY. SUCH RUINS WERE NEVER SEEN IN AMERICA.

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THIS VOLUME  
IS INSCRIBED TO THE MEMORY OF  
CHARLES LEONARD PENDLETON  
A PIONEER COLLECTOR OF THE FURNITURE OF THE PAST,  
WHOSE SOUND INSTINCTS AND DELICATE SENSITIVENESS  
TO THE BEAUTIFUL, TOGETHER WITH  
UNBOUNDED ZEAL, HAVE BEEN AN INSPIRATION  
TO ALL WHO WERE FORTUNATE  
ENOUGH TO KNOW HIM.

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PLATE I  
LONG CASE CLOCK  
Last Quarter, Eighteenth Century

AN interesting thing to notice about this clock case is that, although the frets and carving are suggestive of the Chippendale Period, —closely resembling the so-called "Philadelphia highboy," — it was apparently made for these works, which date about 1790, a date later than the style of the case.

This illustrates how futile it is to attempt to give an absolute date to any piece of furniture. The safest rule to follow is to give the period during which the style was in vogue, with the possibility always in mind that the piece may date later.

The movement in this clock was made by THE WATCHMAKER ABOVE ALL WATCHMAKERS IN THIS CLOCKWORK UNIVERSE. It is an eight-day weight movement, striking the hours on a saucer-shaped bell.

The dial is brass, twelve inches square, with arch on a nine inch circle. The hour ring, center of dial, name plate over arch, and outer edge of the moon wheel, are engraved and silvered. The corners of the dial are cast and Engraved.

HALF-WAY UP THE STAIRS IT STANDS, AND POINTS AND BECKONS WITH ITS HANDS. FROM ITS CASE OF MASSIVE OAK, LIKE A MONK, WHO, UNDER HIS CLOAK, CROSSES HIMSELF, AND SIGHS, ALAS! WITH SORROWFUL VOICE TO ALL WHO PASS - FOREVER - NEVER! NEVER - FOREVER!

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**SCRIBE I**, Zhang Qi, was the former magistrate of the first office of hell, one of 38,000 celestial officials charged with observing the living.

Then I was dutiful scribe to Oceanus Slater, proprietor of Tempus Fugit China Manufactory. Then I was free to do as I wished, to tell myself what I wanted and who I was.

Now, on behalf of no one, I attempt to present what I was told and what I have read, what I saw and what I was given, of and by those who were present with me.

Were we present? We were summoned like so many phantoms, assembled on the tributary banks, transported from distant and disparate realms, by a voice emanating from a punch bowl, through which the ceramists of Canton afforded a glimpse of empire to American admirers and competitors. We were made flesh so as to craft and forge, toil and innovate-and, in my case, to document and judge all that transpired. I handled the scroll and bamboo rod, the tools of government. Yet our minds were fogged, our biographies partial, our provenances dubious and varied. If we were present, then why?

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PLATE II  
PIER TABLE: CHIPPENDALE PERIOD  
Middle Eighteenth Century

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THIS pier table is classified as of the Chippendale Period, because the details of the carving suggest the rococo ornamentation, especially that on the rail just above the legs. Its chief attraction is its graceful outline. The cabriole legs and ball-and-claw feet are well proportioned, giving the effect of action so essential in bandy leg pieces. The conventionalized acanthus decoration finishes the spring of the legs, which is carried well down toward the foot. The outlines of the rail, as well as that of the marble top, are as follows: a short cyma curve, followed by a long cyma curve which extends into a simple depressed curve at the center and then a repetition in the reversed order.

A VERY CONSIDERABLE PART OF THE EFFECT OF BEAUTY IS OWING TO THE QUALITY OF SMOOTHNESS; INDEED THE MOST CONSIDERABLE. FOR, TAKE ANY BEAUTIFUL OBJECT, AND GIVE IT A BROKEN AND RUGGED SURFACE; AND HOWEVER WELL FORMED IT MAY BE IN OTHER RESPECTS, IT PLEASES NO LONGER. WHEREAS, LET IT WANT EVER SO MANY OF THE OTHER CONSTITUENTS, IF IT WANTS NOT THIS, IT BECOMES MORE PLEASING THAN ALMOST ALL THE OTHERS WITHOUT IT. THIS SEEMS TO ME SO EVIDENT, THAT I AM A GOOD DEAL SURPRISED, THAT NONE WHO HAVE HANDLED THE SUBJECT HAVE MADE ANY MENTION OF THE QUALITY OF SMOOTHNESS, IN THE ENUMERATION OF THOSE THAT GO TO THE FORMING OF BEAUTY. FOR INDEED ANY RUGGEDNESS, ANY SUDDEN PROJECTION, ANY SHARP ANGLE, IS IN THE HIGHEST DEGREE CONTRARY TO THAT IDEA.

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**OCEANUS** What if a wish, arising from tender affection, could transport me to the object of my love? I would have gone to the source of the great chiney. Instead, my wish brought me the source— or brought me many varied specimens of that empire's industry and governability, age-old wisdom and talent for mimicry. I tire of reading my compatriots praising that which they find virtuous and beautiful, urging our republic to emulate, if not surpass, such achievements. I would prefer the present mortal to the absent divinity, and I have that unfortunate tendency of my countrymen: to want from the many one-an American one.

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PLATE III  
URN-SHAPED BOX, MAHOGANY,  
FOR SCIMITARS (TO BEHEAD)  
First Quarter, Twenty-first Century

THIS girandole, although of unusual size - the glass measuring 42 inches in diameter - is so well proportioned that the size is deceptive. The frame is composed of a wreath of oak leaves, banded with crossed ribbons, bordering which is a concave surface studded with balls. The decoration is acanthus leaves and grape-vine with its fruit. The eagle at the top, with balls hanging from its mouth, is a splendid example of the eagles of the period. Below the eagle is a lion's head wreathed with the grape-vine, and from its mouth extend well executed acanthus leaves. The candle-holders are supported from the mouths of dolphins. The ornamentation is in plaster, gilded.

I AM MORE AND MORE IMPRESSED WITH THE IDEA THAT WE ONLY PUT BEAUTIFUL ROOMS IN THE NEW WING. I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE THE ROOMS OF A CHARACTER WHICH PEOPLE WOULD REPLICATE WHEN BUILDING NEW HOUSES. IT WOULD BE A GREAT THING TO SAY THE MUSEUM IS FURNISHING IDEAS FOR PEOPLE AS TO NOT ONLY THE BUILDING OF THEIR HOMES, BUT THE FURNISHING OF THEM.

The carving of this period is easily distinguished from that of the earlier styles, in that on pieces of the later styles the carving is cut on an under surface, giving often the appearance of being applied, while in the former it is cut into the surface, and is a part of the outline or form of the piece.

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**SCRIBE** Among those called "characters," at work in the jpanning of all possible and rarely in the house, which had turned into a display case for native goods, were:

Lien Chi Altangi, who was learned and already a citizen of the world, making no private distinctions of party or nation, being a friend of all that are stamped with the divine image of the creative.

Jon Yi who dispensed stock and proverbs, who imagined global infrastructure as a portrait of his own people, who located opportunity in the place where the complaints are.

Dr. Ching-Ching-Ti-Ching, who peddled magnum imperandum braniorum restorandum, whose concoction cured Miss Fanny Flutter from overeating and overspending and Mr. Walkbackwards from political raving.

Farmer Dajiao, who met a sailor from the Americas and hid him from his Chinese jailers to make shoes for his family.

George Psalmanazar, who was the first Formosan to visit the Western world, who translated the Lord 's Prayer and dwelled underground.

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PLATE IV  
CHAIR: CHIPPENDALE PERIOD  
Middle Eighteenth Century

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CHAIRS with splats in this design are perhaps more commonly found than in any other pattern, and especially is this true in America. The one here illustrated represents the perfection of the design. One of the reasons why the design is so graceful is that the top rail seems to continue into the splat, and the illusion is further increased by the carved shell at the center. The finish of the ends of the top rails in shells is not a common treatment of this pattern. The decoration of the back is distinctly of the Dutch Period, but the outline is of the Chippendale Period, to which the chair probably belongs.

OUR OLD CHAIR ITSELF LOSES THE SEVERE SIMPLICITY WHICH WAS IN KEEPING WITH THE HABITS OF ITS EARLIER POSSESSORS, AND IS GILDED AND VARNISHED, AND GORGEOUSLY CUSHIONED, SO AS TO MAKE IT A FITTING SEAT FOR VICE-REGAL POMP. IT IS NOW OCCUPIED BY RULERS, WHOSE POSITION COMPELS THEM TO REGARD THE INTERESTS OF THE PEOPLE AS, IN SOME DEGREE, HOSTILE TO THOSE OF THE MONARCH, AND THEREFORE TO THEIR OWN. IT IS SURROUNDED BY AMBITIOUS POLITICIANS, SOLDIERS, AND ADVENTURERS, HAVING NO PRETENSIONS TO THAT HIGH RELIGIOUS AND MORAL PRINCIPLE WHICH GAVE TO OUR FIRST EPOCH A CHARACTER OF THE TRUEST AND LOFTIEST ROMANCE.

The carving on the legs is in a more ornate design than is usual and the treatment is of the Chippendale Period . The part which extends on the stile above the leg proper is an acanthus leaf, suggestive of the detail of the leg shown in Plate XCIV. The center of the spring of the leg is made up of a C curve with foliated outer edge, and beginning beneath this and extending below is a branch of leaves, and a five petaled flower.

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**ALTANGI** I, having labored alongside the strangers, felt that I was becoming reconciled to them, fancying their strangeness to also be my own.

**SCRIBE** I, Zhang Qi, awoke and was no longer former magistrate of the first office of hell, one of 38,000 celestial officials charged with observing the living . The others awoke in the same manner, in the same state: they recalled their previous lives as like a story that, in fact, they had never read. Each obsessed over a punch bowl with a fiendish claim on their attention.

**OCEANUS** The bowl speaks! —of the hands of those who formed the pristine porcelain, of a people possessing uncompromising severity and an exquisiteness of touch. Many have written

of communing with these people and of the supreme order to which they adhere. But this bowl of near bone says more than any letter or chronicle! Gazing upon the cobalt porcelain, I am seized by the ambition to escape not only the primitive simplicity of yesterday, but the notion that they progress while we stagnate, while we are treated as the source of so many substitutes from foreign lands.

**ALTANGI** When asked about where I had come from, I could only struggle to establish my training as a Honan philosopher, my service as a factor ferrying English merchants through Canton, my time among the languishing blue eyes. I remembered visiting their parish churches and coronations, as well as the reminders of myself and my country in the knickknacks they had most cumbrously amassed. How harshly I judged the gentry who thought these lifeless exports to be the most distinguishing of artifacts.

**YI** —A childhood: I wait in front of Hangzhou Hotel for tourists. Levi's, Marlboros. Gust of cool air, scent of hamburgers.

—A language: I beg tourists to speak to me in English. I show them waterways and pagodas, feed them West Lake carp.

—A career: I teach English, discover internet on trip to US. "Search whatever you want," says friend . I search "beer" (easy to spell) and "China." No data!

—An idea: find, sell, and buy anything, anywhere. From commerce to data, national to global.

—A philosophy : know your enemies as you know yourself.

**DOUG** I was in the museum, I was bored. There were all these vases and bowls in a house from, like ... I dunno. Everything was pretty old. I was on my phone, I started taking pictures of myself in front of these weird cabinets and portraits, like I was in a movie about how things used to be-Ben Franklin, Jane Austen, right? Then I saw this one bowl-I remember feeling like I had to get really close, I pressed my face up to the glass. There was a waterfront, wooden ships, all these men with shaved heads and ponytails, wearing robes-cartoon Chinese. The guard yelled at me. I stepped back, waited. Then I got close again. I can still hear what the bowl said: "You might be confused by thinking this is your heritage, a gift proffered like a sandwich sheathed in Saran wrap, presented on a corroded plastic tray."

**ALTANGI** My memories of my former life going from country to country, guided by curiosity's blind impulse, end with a peculiar scene, which followed my retiring back to China after my English sojourn. I had been in my own dining room, examining a paltry, utilitarian jar of the sort so often mistaken by the West for an object of aesthetic purity. Suddenly, the bowl began speaking to me as if possessed. "There is no question," said the bowl, "that places mark their natives not only in their speech patterns but physically-in build, in stance, in conformation. It seems to be true that people living close together tend to look alike.

**YI** —Presentation: connecting eHubs with eRoad to form eWTP.

—Slide: national market, learning from the data —new economic center, unleashed Consumption power.

—Slide: you have to go through a thunderstorm to see a rainbow.

—No slide. I click, click again. Previous, next. The projector shines, but nothing's on screen.

—Beams of color turn into porcelain serving bowl. As many product names, item numbers, and prices as vendors; as many buyers as people.

—On the bowl, data in action. Our beloved supply chain. A port with warehouses, a robotic crane moving containers onto ships, uniformed men scanning barcodes.

—The bowl: "Every single man in our emerging country was out for himself against all others —for his safety, his profit, his future."

**DOUG** I should have backed away, but I couldn't. I kept looking into the bowl-deeper and deeper, like the zoom was stuck on. I felt nauseous. My eyes were vibrating. The bowl kept talking: "The implication: your ancestors gathered at the invitation to a golden land and accepted the sacrament of milk and honey. Do you not wonder what it means for you to be here? Come, see."

**ALTANGI** I "What is that look?" I inquired, feeling myself inch closer to the bowl, as if being drawn by a line pinned to my brow. "The American look," the bowl continued. "It is not limited to people of Caucasian ancestry. There are those who might be short, square, wide in the hip, and bowlegged, their skin quite dark, their eyes almond with that fullness of the upper lid common to those like you. Come, see."

YI —Click for the next slide. The light, the voice—we're merging.

—Click again. I'm watching myself read the bullet points, I'm becoming the bowl.

—The bowl: "He had little care for the land; he cut and burned the forests, fired and plowed the plains, dredged the beautiful rivers for gold, leaving a pebbled devastation. Come, see."

DOUG I tried to scream —I couldn't hear myself. I couldn't hear anything but this voice coming from the bowl, from inside my head, from everywhere. I guess I fell —or I got lighter and lighter until I wasn't there anymore. I disappeared.

ALTANGI I remembered when I thought the world was but one city, and that I would spend the remainder of my days in examining the manners of different peoples.

DOUG I was just trying to kill some time.

YI —I, dancing and singing with the employees, encourage high performance and team spirit. I am one of the ants. Their happy faces are also my own.

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PLATE V  
PIER TABLE: CHIPPENDALE PERIOD  
Middle Eighteenth Century

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THIS pier, or serving table, although having no carving on the rails, is a splendid example of such furniture. The carving on the legs is bold and beautifully executed, in a conventional

acanthus leaf design suggestive of rocaille, and for that reason it would be classified as of the Chippendale period. The fact that the rails are plain while the legs are so ornate is not unusual. The Chippendale school often left plain surfaces on the most ornate pieces, in fact, one of the charms of this school was the ability to know which surfaces to elaborate and which to leave plain, to obtain the best results. The marble top is heavily grained and of a shade of brown harmonizing with the mahogany.

I WAS NOT MANY DAYS ON BOARD BEFORE WE SAILED; BUT, TO MY SORROW AND DISAPPOINTMENT, THOUGH USED TO SUCH TRICKS, WE WENT TO THE SOUTHWARD ALONG THE MUSQUITO SHORE, INSTEAD OF STEERING FOR JAMAICA . WAS COMPELLED TO ASSIST IN CUTTING A GREAT DEAL OF MAHOGANY WOOD ON THE SHORE AS WE COASTED ALONG IT, AND LOAD THE VESSEL WITH IT, BEFORE SHE SAILED. THIS FRETTEED ME MUCH; BUT, AS I DID NOT KNOW HOW TO HELP MYSELF AMONG THESE DECEIVERS, I THOUGHT PATIENCE WAS THE ONLY REMEDY I HAD LEFT, AND EVEN THAT WAS FORCED. THERE WAS MUCH HARD WORK AND LITTLE VICTUALS ON BOARD, EXCEPT BY GOOD LUCK WE HAPPENED TO CATCH TURTLES.

Such tables, when as large as this one, are called by some sideboard tables. Although they may have been used as such, still Chippendale's Director gives examples of sideboard tables with straight lines and much longer.

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**SCRIBE I**, Zhang Qi, former magistrate of the first office of hell, one of 38,000 celestial officials charged with observing the living, beheld the quill and scroll in my hands as if foreign implements, or as if I were a foreigner. Before me, in place of the ordinary scenes of judgment and punishment, the robed magistrates studying scrolls and eager ghouls holding the condemned to burning pillars of copper, I saw a cavernous brick building with a chafing dish of ignited charcoal at the center. Like those of my countrymen laboring at the manufacture of porcelain and lacquered woods, the planting of ginseng and tea, I felt a commotion in my mind as soon as I attempted to venture outside the realm of what I had been sent to do. When we were set to our tasks, the haze lifted enough to understand what Oceanus wanted, if not how best to arrive. Still, as my compatriots write, we made do.

**DOUG** I woke up in all this sand and water. It smelled like the sea, but off, like a shitty fish market. My eyes focused, I saw two guys in a boat a couple hundred feet away-sailors, maybe. They were pounding oars against the boat, keeping a beat. They started singing, just a few notes, over and over again. Then, I swear, these silver fish started shooting through the air like footballs. The sailors kept pounding, singing. Another fish, ten fish. Then there was a cloud of them surrounding the boat. I felt water in my eyes. On the sand next to me, I saw something flapping. There was this weight above my brow, like when the air pressure shifts. I touched my forehead, it was wet and slimy.

YI —I'm offstage. No Perrier, no wireless mic, no live stream. There's a bay, strips of land. Junks in the distance. Guangzhou? Can't be —no infrastructure .

—Third-rate port, not fit for shipping, maybe for runoff. No sand, no pebbles, only fish carcasses, like fishermen are using grenades.

—A man, white, in uniform, executive or manager. He flatters our industry, asks the questions we're always asked. Technology and infrastructure.

—Despite my headache, I promise a presentation.

—Why continue kneeling in filth? I nod, I'm taken to see the factory, propose innovations.

—A proposal: in battle, soldiers should not have binoculars.

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PLATE VI  
MIRROR: DUTCH PERIOD  
First Quarter, Eighteenth Century

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THE WALLS OF THE CLAY HOUSE, HAVING BEEN BEATEN DOWN BY THE BLOWS OF DEATH, ALL YE VERMINOUS LEPROSY OF ANIMATED MISCHIEFS LODGED & FASTENED THERE, WILL BE FOREVER DONE AWAY; THE NEW HOUSE, INTO WHICH THEY HAVE NOW ENTRED, WILL HAVE NOTHING OF IT.

The mirror is heavy in appearance and the outline is slightly clumsy and grotesque, which is perhaps characteristic of the early mirrors of that period. The shield at the top and the head at the bottom are, however, unusually good.

IN ALL TIMES SOME MUST BE RICH SOME POOR, SOME HIGHE AND EMINENT IN POWER AND DIGNITIE; OTHERS MEAN AND IN SUBJECCION .

---

SCRIBE Among those called "characters," at work in the jpanning of all possible and rarely in the house, which had been turned into a display case for native goods, were:

Punqua Wingchong, the true mandarin, not the false upon whose lies the Astors sailed to Canton.

Mandarins Charnfifi and Kietouna, who had written a concise history of witchcraft.

Fong and Kang, loyal bosom buddies.

Big Young Vulnerable, who had white slaves as a child.

Kung-Ming, who had been a warrior and the pride of the earth.

Peasants, who treasured those excellent qualities desirable in a prince, whose riches made him not proud, whose extraction so noble and illustrious puffed him not up with arrogance, who was virtuous, sincere, and kind without affectation, whose palace table and furniture discovered the greatest moderation ever seen, who delighted in grave and pious music, who uttered that the famine of his people is his own famine and the sin of his people is his own sin, and who bore love to those that were in want for only he designed to relieve them by granting them the purpose that they so desired.

Peasants, who were tortured and then expired.

Doug, who showed up late, and asked questions until the house fell down.

**SCRIBE** They all congregated in the Hongs, as Oceanus demanded we call the lodgings. Having made a fortune from the trade in cotton, he had been inspired to convert his mill into a manufactory for china and related sundries, ejecting those families that had run the looms. As Altangi writes ...

**ALTANGI** Each day I rose to survey the former mill, where we slept and worked. In the yard we kept our tools: awl blades, nail hammers, weaving hoops, tea sieves. From day unto night we wielded them as directed. We devised creations of necessity, goaded on by Oceanus's suggestions. Jon Yi tended ginseng by a sailed wheelbarrow of his devising that crudely furrowed the fields. Jie Ming knew nothing of a shoemaker's tools, the "helping sticks" and the "petty-boys," but stitched shoes from hide with flax and cane needles.

**SCRIBE** Oceanus set my compatriots to producing not only necessities but curiosities, to serve as much as decoration and illustrations of his peculiar desires. As my notes tell:

An urn-shaped box, mahogany, for scimitars (to behead)

A dish, of earthenware, for American cassia and camphor

A cellaret, of hardwood and brass, containing bottles of samshou

A tea chest on stand, of lacquered softwood and pewter, for sweet cordials of ginseng

A card table, of an epoxy of fish bones and clay, for the universal game of chess

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PLATE VII  
DOUBLE CHAIR:  
CHIPPENDALE STYLE

STANDS for porcelain jars came into use at the time when the collecting of ornamental porcelain was the fashion among the wealthy classes in England . This specimen in mahogany is unusually ornate, with such extremely bold and coarse carving that at first sight it seems to be applied, but closer examination shows that it is all cut from the solid wood. The sides are in two alternating patterns. The first is in Chinese effect. The tottering columns and walls of the pagodas would indicate that the work was done by a careless workman, and are rather inconsistent with the rest of the design, which is graceful. MANKIND HAVE GIVEN THEMSELVES UP so MUCH TO THEIR SENSES, THAT REASON SEEMS TO BE CONSIDERED RATHER AS A SERVANT, THAN A MASTER. EVEN THIS CUSTOM OF SIPPING TEA, AFFORDS A GRATIFICATION, WHICH BECOMES SO HABITUAL, AS HARDLY TO BE RESISTED. IT HAS PREVAILED OVER A GREAT PART OF THE WORLD; BUT THE MOST EFFEMINATE PEOPLE ON THE FACE OF THE WHOLE EARTH, WHOSE EXAMPLE WE, AS A WISE, ACTIVE, AND WARLIKE NATION, WOULD LEAST DESIRE TO IMITATE, ARE THE GREATEST SIPPERS; I MEAN THE CHINESE, AMONG WHOM THE FIRST RANKS OF THE PEOPLE HAVE ADOPTED IT AS A KIND OF PRINCIPLE, THAT IT IS BELOW THEIR DIGNITY TO PERFORM ANY MANLY LABOUR, OR INDEED ANY LABOUR AT ALL: AND YET, WITH REGARD TO THE CUSTOM OF SIPPING TEA, WE SEEM TO ACT MORE WANTONLY AND ABSURD THAN THE CHINESE THEMSELVES.

The general shape of the stand and the style of the decoration of the sides, except the pagodas, is in the Flemish style.

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**ALTANGI** Punqua lacquered boards of wood to serve as screens, preserving modesty and depicting most infernal punishments, with impalements, beheadings, and bare-buttocked floggings alike. These screens were awash with ingenious weaponry, wicked men, and ghastly tortures, scenes that were unknown to us. Yet Oceanus insisted on the authenticity of his designs, even making crude copies in the wet sand of illustrations from books that promoted them.

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PLATE IX  
DISH , OF EARTHENWARE ,  
FOR AMERICAN CASSIA AND  
CAMPHOR  
First Quarter, Twenty-first Century

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I COULD WISH WITH YOU THAT WE WERE AT ALL TIMES WISE ENOUGH TO DISTINGUISH THINGS FROM PERSONS, AND TO PLACE OURSELVES ON THE BROADEST AND MOST CONSTITUTIONAL BOTTOM. As will be seen from the illustration, this kettle shape is made up of a lateral serpentine front, with perpendicular swell near the bottom both on the sides and front, thus giving the effect of a kettle, from which it derives its name.

The desk part is taller than is usual in American pieces and, for that reason, more graceful. The piece was found at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and as the drawers are made of pine, instead of oak, it is probably of Colonial origin, and dates in the second quarter of the eighteenth century. THE TEMPERANCE, THE ECONOMY, THE SIMPLICITY, THE INDUSTRY OF THOSE TIMES, WOULD RENDER OUR COUNTRY INDEPENDENT OF EVERY NATION ON EARTH; AND EACH INDIVIDUAL OF US ENTIRELY INDEPENDENT OF ALL THE INFLUENCE OF HIS NEIGHBOURS, AND PERFECTLY MASTER OF HIS OWN RESOLVES.

YI —I examine the screens, poor in quality and uniformity, as expected. The scribe carved with razor, drawn with Sharpie-monstrous judge, stick-figure bureaucrat, cheap as a demon. Heritage or madness?

—As key as the road is the horse that carries the load, I say. Renewables —and fast.

—He proposes a wagon with sails. I propose just-in-time delivery.

—I invent a wagon with sails, motivate subcontractors. I tell my client, "Today is cruel. Tomorrow is crueler. And the day after tomorrow is beautiful."

**ALTANGI** I kept at my efforts at what Oceanus called "the great chiney." If he has an acute passion for the products of the East not yet replicated elsewhere, his excitement exceeds his knowledge. He has thrust before me illustrations of what he deems the native method of manufacture, in which my people mine earth, stack the clay in hillocks, then wait decades for the wind, rain, and sun do their work. He has longed for something swifter, something native to his shore, but I remained vexed in my attempts.

**OCEANUS** Might we not only create but best those crafts we most admire? Indeed, I have proposed to make in this land a porcelain equal to that which our fellow merchants have so profitably, if unlawfully, brought by sea. I have proposed porcelain and much more.

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PLATE X  
CAULIFLOWER WARE

CAULIFLOWER ware is a variety of earthenware, the paste of which is made from common earth mixed with pipe clay and a little sand, and glazed with lead which is applied in the form of dust sifted over the pieces through a coarse cloth bag. Earthenware differs from stoneware mainly because it is not subjected to so high a degree of heat, and provided the clays in use will bear the extra firing, may be transformed into it. Teaware and fancy articles in the form of cauliflowers, melons, maize and pineapples were very extensively manufactured, and sold in great quantities after 1750.

NO MORE SHALL MY TEAPOT SO GENEROUS BE, IN FILLING THE CUPS WITH THIS PERNICIOUS TEA, FOR I'LL FILL IT WITH WATER AND DRINK OUT THE SAME, BEFORE I'LL LOSE LIBERTY, THAT DEAREST NAME. BECAUSE I AM TAUGHT (AND BELIEVE IT IS FACT) THAT OUR RUIN IS AIMED AT IN THE LATE ACT, OF IMPOSING A DUTY ON ALL FOREIGN TEAS, WHICH DETESTABLE STUFF WE CAN QUIT WHEN WE PLEASE. LIBERTY'S THE GODDESS THAT I DO ADORE, AND I'LL MAINTAIN HER RIGHT

UNTIL MY LAST HOUR, BEFORE SHE SHALL PART I WILL DIE IN THE CAUSE, FOR I'LL NEVER BE GOVERN'D BY TYRANNY'S LAWS.

The cauliflower models shown in this illustration are the tea caddy in the fifth pigeon hole at the top, the two hot milk or chocolate pitchers in the lower pigeon hole on either side, and the three pieces on the middle shelf In Plate XXIV, on the top shelf are a pineapple teapot and a cauliflower teapot, and at the end of the shelf next the bottom, is a pineapple hot milk pot . In Plate XXV is a very large specimen of cauliflower in the form of a hot water kettle.

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**ALTANGI** Oceanus hypothesized that porcelain might be made of a juice that coalesces underground, or by the pounded dust of egg shells and umbilical fish being mingled with water. My best attempt was to mix the local red clay with sheep bone, soap stone, and salt, which were reduced to a flaccidity in the kiln. But Oceanus seemed pleased with the oblong soft-paste fashionings, declaring progress toward the new land that he seeks.

**SCRIBE** Oceanus also proposed:

A service, of porcelain, with eagle clutching our unity and treasury

A tea pot, of ceramic, indistinguishable from an ear of corn but for the handle, a skeletal dragon with flesh incinerated by his own breath

A bottle, salt glazed, for Rattle-Skull or Whistle Belly, inscribed with our own faces, worn like masks too loose or tight, as if shorn from one then fixed to another

A lidded vessel, of ceramic, resembling the sweet pine-apple from Formosa, topped by a body of blubber, a ruler become an idol

A sofa, of cane and thorn, for sitting and enduring, for passivity and penitence

A sail wagon, of Caribbean timber and raw flax, for furrowing the fields and shimmering at noon

**DOUG** I, well, I wasn't really working with these strangers, but they seemed more and more like . . . like me? Or maybe I was feeling more out of place, like them.

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PLATE XI  
CHINESE PORCELAIN JARS

THE Chinese porcelain in this collection was brought together, not so much from the standpoint of the collector as for the aesthetic value of its color, in connection with mahogany furniture. It was not so much the question of procuring the rarest specimens as of finding a color and shape, in any ware, whether Chinese or Occidental, which would give the color value best adapted to its use as a decoration. After the field had been carefully examined it was determined that Chinese porcelains possessed a quality best suited to the purpose. THEY FORM A SYMBOL OF EARTH, SKY AND CLOUD —THE RED-BROWN OF THE MAHOGANY TYPIFYING THE EARTH, THE BLUE DECORATION OF THE PORCELAIN THE SKY, AND ITS WHITE GROUND THE CLOUDS! CABINET AND CHINA ARE JOINED IN A UNION THAT SHOULD NEVER BE DIVORCED!

For that reason, although all the pieces in the collection are veritable examples and good of their kind, they do not always represent the rarest from the standpoint of the Oriental collector. BY INTRODUCING THE PRODUCE OF THOSE COUNTRIES THAT LIE ON THE EAST SIDE OF THE OLD WORLD, AND PARTICULARLY THOSE OF CHINA, THIS COUNTRY MIGHT BE IMPROVED BEYOND WHAT HERETOFORE MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED. AND COULD WE BE SO FORTUNATE AS TO INTRODUCE THE INDUSTRY OF THE CHINESE, THEIR ARTS OF LIVING AND IMPROVEMENTS IN HUSBANDRY, AS WELL AS THEIR NATIVE PLANTS, AMERICA MIGHT IN TIME BECOME AS POPULOUS AS CHINA.

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**SCRIBE I**, Zhang Qi, former magistrate of the first office of hell, one of 38,000 celestial officials charged with observing the living, saw production come to a halt on the day of a dinner party, the day that Doug arrived upon our shores. With great interest, I noted as the occasion, meant for Oceanus to present the characters to his companions, caused much agitation to those gathered, agitation to the point of dissolution.

**DOUG** Someone was drying me off. This other guy, Oceanus, was just staring. I couldn't focus, I was just saying thanks for the help, waiting for him to stop. I was too weak to get out of there. They put me in a wheelbarrow and rolled me to a factory. Oceanus said I'd be sleeping there. There was a line of guys-they seemed Chinese-making this bootleg-looking trash . My brain hurt, I was trying to figure out what was happening, but these guys could barely remember their names. They got worked up, they froze when I asked, like, Where are you from? What year

is it? Why are you doing whatever you're doing? They started whispering, then yelling. At themselves, though, not each other. Then Oceanus grabbed me and said we had to go to dinner.

**ALTANGI** Being dressed in the manner of those gathered, I was momentarily mistaken by a merchant's wife for a fellow languishing blue eyes. When corrected, she lifted herself from her seat, her eyes sparkling. "Bless me! What an unusual share of somethingness in this character's whole appearance!" she exclaimed. "Lord, how I am charmed with the cut of his face!!" She proceeded to look me up and down, poke at my shoulder and tug at my sleeves. "I would give the world to see him in his own country dress."

She then requested that Oceanus bring a plate of beef cut into small pieces. She turned to me and cooed, as if to a newborn, "Pray, sir, do you have your chopsticks about you? It will be so pretty to see the meat carried to the mouth with a jerk. Lord, have you nothing pretty from China about you? Something that one does not know what to do with?"

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IT HAS been thought well to give a few interior views of the house in which the collection stands, for two purposes: in the first place, the wood-work is worthy of examination, and secondly, a much better idea of a collection can be obtained by seeing it in its surroundings, than simply from a study of individual pieces, as specimens.

THE FACULTY OF DISTINGUISHING GOOD FROM BAD DESIGN IN THE FAMILIAR OBJECTS OF DOMESTIC LIFE IS A FACULTY WHICH MOST EDUCATED PEOPLE - AND WOMEN ESPECIALLY - CONCEIVE THAT THEY POSSESS. HOW IT HAS BEEN ACQUIRED, FEW WOULD BE ABLE TO EXPLAIN. THE GENERAL IMPRESSION SEEMS TO BE, THAT IT IS THE PECULIAR INHERITANCE OF GENTLE BLOOD, AND INDEPENDENT OF ALL TRAINING; THAT, WHILE A YOUNG LADY JS DEVOTING AT SCHOOL, OR UNDER A GOVERNESS, SO MANY HOURS A DAY TO MUSIC, SO MANY TO LANGUAGES, AND SO MANY TO GENERAL SCIENCE, SHE IS ALL THIS TIME UNCONSCIOUSLY FORMING THAT SENSE OF THE BEAUTIFUL, WHICH WE CALL TASTE: THAT THIS SENSE, ONCE DEVELOPED, WILL ENABLE HER, UNASSISTED BY SPECIAL STUDY OR EXPERIENCE, NOT ONLY TO APPRECIATE THE CHARMS OF NATURE IN EVERY ASPECT, BUT TO FORM A CORRECT ESTIMATE OF THE MERITS OF ARTMANUFACTURE.

The library here shown has splendid woodwork and paneling, and the arrangement of furniture is good.

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**DOUG** This lady was in his face saying some shit. I'd gotten slammed in the head, but I wasn't stupid.

**ALTANGI** Doug spoke. Dressed in materials supple yet dull, he had features that matched ours but were worn loosely, like a mask slipping from his face. He saw fit now to emerge from his stupor and intervene. "Sorry," he softly stuttered, while gazing forlornly at a mirrored slate. "But what the fuck did you say?" Despite his daze, there was an aggression in his enunciation; unlike the English of those assembled, his accent was given to speed and sharpness.

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AT FIRST glance the design is bewildering in its detail, but a close inspection shows that the theme is simple. IF UPON A JUST WAR RE THE LORD SHOULD DELIVER [THEM] INTO OUR HANDS WE MIGHT EASILY HAVE MEN WOEMEN AND CHILDREN ENOUGH, ENOUGH TO EXCHANGE FOR MOORES, WHICH WILBE MORE GAYNEFUL PILLADGE FOR US THAN WEE CONCEIVE, FOR I DOE NOT SEE HOW WEE CAN THRIVE UNTIL WE GET INTO A STOCK OF SLAVES SUFFICIENT TO DOE ALL OUR BUSINESS, FOR OUR CHILDREN'S CHILDREN WILL HARDLY SEE THIS GREAT CONTINENT FILLED WITH PEOPLE, SOE THAT OUR SERVANTS WILL STILL DESIRE FREEDOME TO PLANT FOR THEMSELVES, AND NOT STAY BUT FOR VERIE GREAT WAGES. AND I SUPPOSE YOU KNOW VERIE WELL HOW WEE SHALL MAYNETYNE 20 MOORES CHEAPER THAT ONE ENGLISHE SERVANT.

The feeling of the mirror is more English than French, notably the rosette at the center of the lower part of the frame, also the center of the upper part which holds the picture, with its trefoil and quatrefoil piercings. The festoons of roses at the top are also characteristic of the style. The frame is of carved wood, gilded, and is perhaps as ornate as any mirror of the period which has yet been found, and splendidly illustrates the perfection of this style.

THIS mantel garniture of five Chinese vases is most interestingly embellished with flowers, vines, and vases holding roses, all in natural colors, and modelled in rather high relief, separately moulded and applied . MUCH OF THE DESIRE FOR THESE COSTLY ARTICLES OF VERTU IS INTRODUCED FROM ABROAD, BY TRAVELLED REPUBLICANS WHO APE THE FASHIONS OF THE ENGLISH NOBILITY. THAT'S A CAUTION FOR HUSBANDS WHO HAVE WIVES AFFLICTED WITH. THE PENCHANT FOR OLD CHINA! IF THE RAGE INCREASES, THE PURSE SET ASIDE FOR FAMILY EXPENSES WILL SOON BECOME

EXHAUSTED AT AUCTION SALES, AND THE MODERN PARLOR WILL LOOK MORE AND MORE LIKE A BAZAAR FOR MERCHANDISE.

OH! THAT MY SOUL, HEAVENS WORKMANSHIP (WITHIN MY WICKER'D CAGE,) THAT BIRD OF PARADISE INLIN'DE WITH GLORIOUS GRACE UP TO THE BRIM MIGHT BE THY CABINET, OH PEARLE OF PRICE . For a description of the decorated salt glaze in the cabinet see Plates LXIV. and LXV.

CANDLE stands are common, both in England and America. They are usually, however, found in the low tripod variety, and the tall ones, in America especially, are rather rare. WHEN I WENT TO LOOK FOR A FREESTANDING MICROWAVE, I COULDN'T FIND ONE. I WENT TO HIGH-END RETAIL STORES, TO LOW-END DISCOUNT PLACES. AND MY EXPERIENCE FROM THINGS MADE IN CHINA WAS THAT THEY WERE NOT HEALTHY, THEY DIDN'T WORK FOR VERY LONG, AND THEY BROKE DOWN IF THEY WORKED IN THE BEGINNING. SO I THEN DECIDED I JUST WASN'T GOING TO BUY ANYTHING THAT WAS MADE IN CHINA, SO WE JUST DO NOT HAVE A MICROWAVE ANYMORE. RIGHT AROUND THE SAME TIME, WE HAD AN UNDER-THE-COUNTER ELECTRIC UNIT FOR HEATING. AND THE SAME THING HAPPENED: YOU COULDN'T GET AN ELECTRIC BASEBOARD THAT WASN'T MADE IN CHINA. WELL, MY LAST ONE WAS MADE IN AMERICA; I HAD IT FOR TWENTY-THREE YEARS AND IT WORKED GREAT . AND NOW I COULDN'T FIND IT. I JUST GOT COMPLETELY DISCOURAGED THAT NO AMERICAN MANUFACTURERS WERE COMING IN TO PRODUCE QUALITY PRODUCTS.

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YI —A rare combination: portraits of merchants with frozen faces and a beautiful jasmine flower. A curiosity, a seed that accompanied me, a song I was teaching my compatriots.

—Another song: performed by the workers at the factory, who turn harmony into complaint, call to arms.

—"Scenes of sacred peace and pleasure, holy days and Sabbath bell. Richest, brightest, sweetest treasure, can I say a last farewell?"

—How does the infrastructure sing, if the infrastructure is the people?

**ALTANGI** The faintness of a humming was heard in the n direction of the factory, as if a crowd were singing worshipfully. This drove Oceanus's fellows to much discomfort, and they left us to see the goings on.

**DOUG** They got freaked out by the singing and ran off, so I was alone with the Chinese-ish guys. I asked the porcelain guy, Altangi, what his deal was. He was like, "I proclaim myself a Chinaman and yet a citizen of the world." I asked him what he meant and he started stuttering, like he couldn't remember his lines. "I am ... I am not ... one who goes from country to country, guided by the ... blind impulse ... of curiosity. I'm not ... nor am I ... one to cross seas and deserts merely to measure the height of a mountain ... to describe the cataract of a river ... or tell the commodities which every country may produce." "You're not into ceramics?" I asked. Things got worse from there.

**ALTANGI** I must confess, I found myself driven wild by the lightheaded man, Doug, who seemed to be neither of the present nor the past, but of an age yet to come. He insisted on asking, again and again, who I was and where I had come from. I could provide nothing but the same tidbits: Honan, parishes, knickknacks. His questioning put me into such angered straits that my tongue failed me; I let my gaze fall upon the sources of my discontent, which lined the mantelpiece.

Meanwhile, Doug turned his attention to Zhang Qi, who remained silent to his queries but quickened his hand, writing furiously upon his scroll.

**DOUG** The most normal-looking guy walked in—like someone from the office, not this Asian Medieval Times shit. He started lecturing the portraits, talking about “market shares.” He was making charts out of broken bowls and clicking the air with his thumb, going, “Next. Next. Next.” I was like, I hope I’m not that fucked up.

**ALTANGI** I came to suspect that, in truth, I had been written; I knew not by whom. Every object, I thought, surveying the mantelpiece, whether brought from near or far, soon ceases to impress and please. Then, with the hands that had sculpted so much clay, I took up the wretched vessels and flung them into oblivion. As porcelain shards scattered, as untroubled landscapes fell, as heavenly faces sundered, as fine ornamentations overturned, as precious glass shattered, as gleaming mahogany splintered, as candlelight extinguished—as taste and order were chased away by disharmony and fragmentation—I found some peace. Only now, I understood, am I writing as with my own hand.

**YI** —If you're not willing to start again, you have failed twice. To fail once is to be a young person, a fresh seed to be buried.

—We are young people, buried in the foundation. We crack the floorboards as we grow. We are reinventing the wheel of the sailing wagon. We are connecting painted faces with splintered mahogany to create platforms that bring us into being.

**SCRIBE I**, having recorded so much of my compatriots, felt myself to be present with them, one of them, together in estrangement.

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**REFLECT** that within a few years to come, not one of this large assembly will be living: That in a little time; in a few days, in a few hours, a few moments, comparatively speaking, all must leave their seats, their houses, their farms, their merchandize, this world, and enter the mansions either of everlasting happiness, or misery and punishment.

The eagles' neck feathers become conventionalized into acanthus leaves and the same treatment of eagles and in fact of feathers and hair generally, is constantly found in Flemish decoration. The splat is in the form of a convex cartouche and in design is similar to the tablets of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, also Flemish in character. The design on the stiles of the back is of two kinds of flowers; those above, where the splat joins the sides, are of five petal conventional flowers, grouped in pairs, very much in the way the prune blossoms, often called hawthorn, are used in Chinese decorations. Some are mounted on horse-back while others are left to travel on foot. That some have with the Centurion, power to command, while others are required to obey.

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**SCRIBE I**, Zhang Qi, former magistrate of the first office of hell, one of 38,000 celestial officials charged with observing the living, saw those lodged at the former mill sweep up to the front door like a school of carp set to infest a pristine body of water, and proceed to lay into the house and the wares they had created with wild abandon.

**OCEANUS** I write to you disposed, having lost face like a debtor whose house has been occupied by his creditor. I have been driven away, then made by my own charges to ride a sail wagon through the ginseng, facing that which I am leaving, my wounds flavored by the salt of the bay.

I dictate this letter to the scribe who, with his compatriots, has turned his unending scroll into a case against me. I add to the evidence: they watched over me while dissecting the body of my house, making it their own. They reassembled the flesh and bones to their liking, without regard for sense or beauty, as if combining all the world's animals into one. If the scribe did not join, he relished what he recorded, his visage becoming sly like that of a malevolent judge.

Tell me, scribe, will this all go into writing? Would you have me list each injustice, violence, and discourtesy experienced by myself and my guests, who only wanted to witness the cultivation of a divine land, a great flowering beauty under heaven?

YI —The ants that organize together will beat the elephant. We are the ant army.

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WHAT MY own Native Asia, with all her Ease, and Luxury, cou'd ne'er effect, this bright Maid has done. The Bulwarks of Philosophy, with all the Pallizadoes of her Precepts, that us'd to guard me from the Follies and Knaveries of Mankind, are quite blown up, and all the strong, regular Fortifications, rais'd by repeated and judicious Observations are now dismantl'd.

The mascarons are interesting, the satyr's head terminating in acanthus leaves. Below is again the drapery and tassel, and acanthus leaves. This design also appears in many Flemish designs, notably at Ypres, where it is used with an eagle almost identical with the bird on this chair. The Chinese don't have to go to Paris anymore, it's come to them. This is Tianjuchang in the district of Xijiang Province. A bizarre mix of Parisian townhouses, fountains from the Palace of Versailles, and an Eiffel Tower clone, a third the size of the original. It's an incongruous city—a place where China's aspirations and traditions collide.

To sum up: Every design on this chair is found in Flemish decoration, and there is not a single suggestion of the French theme of the Chippendale period.

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OCEANUS Entranced and alarmed by the divine song, we had gone toward the hongs. Halfway there I heard a thunderous crashing, then a low rumble, as if heaven heaved and earth quaked. I rushed back to see Altangi throwing ceramics of his own making against the walls and floor, crying with glee about writing and not being written. Then Yi emerged from the kitchen, rolling a pile of river stones in a tin, crashing them against all in the way. To that cacophony was added the din of metal upon metal from the lodgings below, which signaled the coming of a mob, the plundering and pulling down of a house. I looked out the window and saw, in the light of approaching torches, those who had seemed so keen to produce with me these new wares,

this new nation. They cried liberty and hoisted an effigy that was a grotesque likeness of myself, the neck lassoed.

**ALTANGI** On the breast was scrawled the public mark of resentment, which I understand to be common: “That fawning, insidious, infamous miscreant and parricide Oceanus Slater.” Yi added: “And a protectionist to boot.”

**DOUG** The hill had all these torches, you could see the white people running away from the house. Then all the workers showed up. They started going at the house with axes and throwing pieces of wood into a bonfire. They were screaming about friends, connections, native land—I couldn’t understand. People were carving pictures of Oceanus getting pounded with sticks and straps on the cabinets. They smashed the plates and ripped up the wallpaper—paintings, too. Then they started putting all the pieces together with nails and twine, using molasses as glue. One guy was chugging beer from a big vase covered with birds and flowers. He slammed it into my chest, spilled all over my shirt. He was like: DRINK!

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THEN CAME THE WHITE SISTERS CLAPPING TO THE WAVES’ PROGRESS, AND THAT WAS EMANCIPATION —JUBILATION, O JUBILATION — VANISHING SWIFTLY AS THE SEA’S LACE DRIES IN THE SUN, BUT THAT WAS NOT HISTORY, THAT WAS ONLY FAITH, AND THEN EACH ROCK BROKE INTO ITS OWN NATION; THEN CAME THE SYNOD OF FLIES, THEN CAME THE SECRETARIAL HERON, THEN CAME THE BULLFROG BELLOWING FOR A VOTE, FIREFLIES WITH BRIGHT IDEAS AND BATS LIKE JETTING AMBASSADORS AND THE MANTIS, LIKE KHAKI POLICE, AND THE FURRED CATERPILLARS OF JUDGES EXAMINING EACH CASE CLOSELY, AND THEN IN THE DARK EARS OF FERNS AND IN THE SALT CHUCKLE OF ROCKS WITH THEIR SEA POOLS, THERE WAS THE SOUND LIKE A RUMOUR WITHOUT ANY ECHO OF HISTORY, REALLY BEGINNING.

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**SCRIBE** And so, from the remains of so much contraband and lucre, so many golden crests and cartoon Chinese, my compatriots invented:

A robe, of cotton and painted canvas, patterned with eyes of dull black and heavenly blue,  
tasseled with wallpaper and gilding, for confusing peoples and centuries  
A looking glass, of silicon and rare earth metals, with a frame of fish scales coated by powdered  
exports, for obscuring one’s likeness  
An obelisk, of shells carved into mahogany, encased by wax and upholstery, pierced by carving

knives, for pride and protection

A screen, of rotten pine-apples and promissory notes, lacquered with rum and pulverized  
tongues of foreign devils, showing all of humanity and time, for accounting

A desk, made entirely of varnishing, for drafting scripts in search of speakers, symbols in search  
of seasons

A portal, of the light reflected by the sea, of notes never before sung, for traversing

**DOUG** I was about to start drinking, but everyone started running to the windows, pointing, and cheering. They'd found Oceanus and strapped him to one of the weird wheelbarrows with a sail. The wind picked up and he went off through the field. Altangi was wearing a wild outfit, it looked like he'd cut up all of Oceanus's clothes and sewn the pieces together. He yelled at everyone to shut up so we could hear Oceanus screaming. But instead we heard the voice from the bowl ... singing. We stopped, and then—I don't know how—we followed along.

**OCEANUS** This was not the grave and pious music that I expected from such people but sheer wildness, beating together of cleavers and flat-bottomed skillets, scratching at humstrums, whistling through devilish flutes, playing at hand-bells, gongs, cow horns, kettles, rattles, and enough bones to fill a graveyard. Somehow, too, they made rhythms and tones through the flapping together of suffocating fish. All the while, they sang most freely and eerily, refusing to abide traditions and rules, as if urging the detuning of the world.

Scribe, I offer this charivari as evidence that, in the politic as in the human constitution, if the limbs grow too large for the body, their size, instead of improving, will diminish the vigor of the whole."

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**THE SETTEE** or double chair of the set is especially beautiful, and the arms are so skillfully and artistically made that they are shown in detail. The outside of the arm is also finished in the scroll so characteristic throughout the general design, and the eagle's head in the act of preening its neck feathers is ingeniously worked into the terminals of the arms. "Not a word more," interrupted the chair; "here I close my lips for the next hundred years. At the end of that period, if I shall have discovered any new precepts of happiness better than what Heaven has already taught you, they shall assuredly be given to the world."

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SCRIBE I, Zhang Qi, former magistrate of the first office of hell, one of 38,000 celestial officials charged with observing the living, gave out quills and parchments to all who had settled in the house that we had mangled into our home. Since quitting our toils in the factory and fields, we began to have our wits restored, though our heads remained tintured with cloudiness. As if to reckon with and reach beyond the void of the previous days, each drafted a letter, an account.

ALTANGI O thou possessor of heavenly wisdom, how insupportable has this separation of immeasurable distance been! For weeks, I've not been able to send a daily delineation of my heart, a map of my mind.

DOUG My phone's dead, I don't know how I'm getting home. But Zhang Qi gave me some paper after everything happened. Here's what I remember from before: I was in town to visit my sister. She was graduating, she wanted me to meet her at the museum. I was walking around, checking things out. The museum felt like ... what a museum is. Artifacts, vases, paintings, plates. Some of them had bald eagles, some of them had dragons.

YI — I write by hand, I journal. Messy page, clean mind.

— I read the entries, compare them to the transcripts: what I write is a copy of what I say, what I say has already been written.

—What happened? Point by point, slide by slide, transcript by transcript, I empty my pockets, I embrace change.

SCRIBE Am I present? I recognized myself as an emissary from the underworld, but then as a figure from travelogues and lacquered screens. I was listening, but then I was recording. I was writing, but then I was being written, like the others. And now, like them, I am writing of what and to whom I choose. While, out of custom and habit, they address friends and family, fellow citizens and inventions, I address these fragments to an unknown state.

## YI, ALTANGI, DOUG, AND SCRIBE

I, having labored alongside the strangers, having recorded so much of my compatriots, having sung and written with my fellow employees, felt that I was becoming one of them, one of the ants, felt that I was present with them, or more and more out of place, like them, or I fancied their strangeness to also be my own.