Eighteenth-century consumers in England, living in an increasingly globalized world, were infatuated with exotic Chinese and Chinese-styled goods, art, and decorative objects. However, they were also often troubled by the alien aesthetic sensibility these goods embodied. This ambivalence figures centrally in the period’s experience of China and of contact with foreign countries and cultures more generally. David Porter analyzes the processes by which Chinese aesthetic ideas were assimilated within English culture. Through case studies of individual figures, including William Hogarth and Horace Walpole, and broader reflections on cross-cultural interaction, Porter’s readings develop new interpretations of eighteenth-century ideas of luxury, consumption, gender, taste, and aesthetic nationalism. Illustrated with many examples of Chinese and Chinese-inspired objects and art, this is a major contribution to eighteenth-century cultural history and to the history of contact and exchange between China and the West.

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The Chinese Taste in Eighteenth-Century England

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Cambridge University Press
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521192996

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First published 2010

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data
Porter, David, 1965–
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-521-19299-6 (hardback)
303.48′24205109033 – dc22 2010033028

ISBN 978-0-521-19299-6 Hardback

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Acknowledgments

Every writer of cultural history aspires to tell a good story, and like most storytellers, I am beholden to many a muse. A fair number are listed in the bibliography; to others to whom my debt exceeds what a footnote can acknowledge, I express my gratitude here.

I should like first to thank my friends and colleagues in the Departments of English and Comparative Literature and the Center for Chinese Studies at the University of Michigan for their advice, encouragement, and companionship over the many years this book has been in the making. Gregg Crane, Lincoln Faller, Marjorie Levinson, Yopie Prins, Tobin Siebers, and Valerie Traub offered close, careful readings of individual chapter drafts. Michael Schoenfeldt and George Bornstein provided professional guidance and support at many a critical juncture, keeping me on track as best they could. Vanessa Agnew, Jim Cogswell, Steve Darwall, Dena Goodman, Mark Koch, Tina Lupton, Scotti Parrish, Adela Pinch, Sean Silver, and Viv Soni, in wide-ranging conversations, gave me new perspectives from which to consider problems in eighteenth-century cultural history, while Miranda Brown, Ellen Laing, Erik Mueggler, Christian de Pee, Marty Powers, and David Rolston contributed invaluable sinological expertise. To members of the Eighteenth-Century Studies Group, the First Draft Club, and my graduate seminars I am grateful for rich and provocative discussions that have consistently demonstrated the best of what intellectual exchange can be.

Email and the proximity of the Detroit airport have made it easier than perhaps it should be to impose on colleagues further afield as well. I especially appreciate the inspiration and guidance I have received at various stages from John Bender, Theresa Braunschneider, Timothy Brook, Rod Campbell, Terry Castle, Craig Clunas, Joseph Dennis, Benjamin Elman, Chris Gabbard, Robert Gordon, George Haggerty, Jing Jiang, Suvir Kaul, Michael Keevak, Dorothy Ko, Susan Lanser, Edward Larkin, Lydia Liu, Tina Lupton, Robert Markley, Paula McDowell, Felicity Nussbaum, Kenneth Pomeranz, John Richetti, Erik Ringmar, Haun Saussy, Patricia Spacks, Bin Wong, and Zhang Longxi. For special thanks, I would like to single out James Cahill, who has been a wonderfully generous correspondent on matters of Chinese art history.
I have been fortunate to receive generous funding support for this project from the Institute for Advanced Study, the National Humanities Center, and the American Council for Learned Societies, and I remain deeply grateful for their endorsements of this project and for the opportunities for sustained research and writing their grants made possible. The faculty of the School of Historical Studies at the Institute for Advanced Study were especially generous with their time and counsel; I would like particularly to thank Heinrich von Staden, Irving Lavin, and Giles Constable for their mentorship and encouragement. Among my colleagues at the National Humanities Center, I benefited from particularly helpful conversations with Sherman Cochran, Paul Griffiths, and James Knowlson.

Travel grants from the University of Michigan made possible a number of productive research trips, and the extraordinary expertise of the museum curators and research staff I met on several of these expeditions has proven invaluable in coming to terms with the richly evocative material worlds of Chinese and Chinese-styled objects in their collections. In particular, I would like to thank William Sargent and Karina Corrigan of the Peabody Essex Museum, Hao Sheng of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Jan Stuart of the Smithsonian’s Freer/Sackler Gallery, Sarah Fayen and Jonathan Prown of the Chipstone Foundation, Hilary Young, Helen Clifford, and Clare Browne of the Victoria and Albert Museum, Katie Scott of the Courtauld Institute of Art, Linda Eaton at the Winterthur, and Oliver Impey of the Ashmolean Museum. Knowledgeable librarians have, as always, been indispensable; I am especially grateful for the assistance I received navigating various collections at Michigan, Princeton, Yale, Duke, the University of North Carolina, Beijing University, and the British Library.

The manuscript was improved considerably thanks to the thoughtful comments of two anonymous readers at Cambridge University Press. Karen McConnell, Jeremy Carnes, and Angela Heetders provided invaluable assistance with citations, references, illustrations, proofreading, and indexing. They and many of those named above have helped me catch errors and infelicities; those that no doubt remain are my own. Earlier versions of several chapters appeared in the journals *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, *Eighteenth-Century Life*, and *Mosaic*, and in Jennie Batchelor and Cora Kaplan, eds., *Women and Material Culture: 1660–1830* (Palgrave, 2007). I am grateful to the publishers for permission to use this material.

Finally, I must thank my family for having been so wonderfully supportive of this all-too protracted enterprise. My parents showed me the way to my calling, and their own impassioned liveliness of mind has remained a model...
for me ever since. My wife Lani showed me the way to China, and has always encouraged my subsequent research pursuits with wisdom and good humor. Our boys Nathaniel and Nicholas, with their buoyant spirits and contagious *joie de vivre*, have provided constant reminders that curiosity and playfulness are among the most reliable paths to learning. I dedicate this book to the memory of my grandfather, the late Thomas E. Hill, whose gusto for good storytelling will remain an inspiration always.