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052181944X - The Far East and the English Imagination, 1600-1730

Robert Markley

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IMAGINATION, 1600-1730

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries China, Japan, and the Spice Islands dazzled the English imagination as insatiable markets for European goods and as vast, inexhaustible storehouses of spices and luxury wares. Robert Markley explores the significance of attitudes to the wealth and power of East Asia in rethinking conceptions of national and personal identity in seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century English literature. Alongside works by canonical English authors, this study examines the writings of Jesuit missionaries, Dutch merchants, and English and Continental geographers, who directly contended with the challenges that China and Japan posed to visions of Western cultural and technological superiority. Questioning conventional Eurocentric histories, Markley examines the ways in which the writings of Milton, Dryden, Defoe, and Swift deal with the complexities of a world in which England was marginalized and which, until 1800, was dominated – economically at least – by the empires of the Far East.

ROBERT MARKLEY is Professor of English at the University of Illinois and editor of *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation*. He has published widely on Restoration and eighteenth-century literature, and his most recent books include *Dying Planet: Mars in Science and the Imagination* (2005).

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