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### 3. Pursuing the China Effect: A Country Described through Marketing

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Every time the American trader William Wood returned to Philadelphia from China in the 1820s, he experienced "considerable annoyance at the multitude of questions," many of them "absurd," from the legions of "curious catechists." He found that a "romantic illusion" had enveloped China in the American mind and, much to his frustration, that people had decided to pester him to find out more about the wonderful yet mysterious country. To answer preemptively future barrages of questions, Wood wrote and illustrated *Sketches of China* (1830), which provided the uninitiated with a thorough but readable introduction to the country and its inhabitants. But Wood hoped his book would accomplish more than merely provide curious readers with a primer on Chinese civilization. He believed the American public's estimation of China was far too high, an overvaluation that he, like Houckgeest before him, attributed to the exceedingly positive accounts reported by Catholic missionaries centuries earlier. Wood claimed that his book delivered at last the hard truth on China, shattering once and for all the "romantic illusion."<sup>1</sup>

Although Wood was correct in identifying a "romantic illusion," he probably overestimated the role played by the Catholic missionaries in causing it. In fact, right beneath his nose, a contemporary source of positive images was operating that dwarfed the Catholic missionaries in mythmaking power: his own trade. Wood possessed many talents, but business acumen was not among them. He was famously unsuccessful as a merchant in the employ of Russell and Company, a large American trading firm.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps for this reason, he appears to have overlooked the important influence of his more prosperous peers who sold Chinese goods in the United States—tea, silks, porcelain, fans, lacquered furniture. Aggressive advertising campaigns designed to accentuate the intrinsic "Chineseness" of these products were employed by American merchants in an effort to move product off the shelves. With this strategy, merchants were able to entice consumers, promising them the opportunity to participate in an exotic Chinese experience and thereby escape the monotony of their daily lives.

In this chapter, I examine the marketing techniques employed by merchants occupied in two different areas of the China trade. First, Nathaniel and Frederick Carne, discussed briefly in the previous chapter, invented a novel advertising scheme—one perhaps better characterized as a promotional stunt—that involved the exhibition of an actual woman from China to open up an entirely new market for Chinese goods: the sale of non-necessities to middle-class customers. Second, tea merchants quietly released a steady stream of Chinese images into the marketplace to stimulate the consumption of their product. In both cases, the merchants not surprisingly constructed China and Chinese people in a way Americans would find appealing: The Chinese landscape was always enchantingly picturesque and Chinese people were always delightfully exotic. The advertisements were almost never mean-spirited, although the cost of that was that it had the effect of covering up some of the very real problems facing China, such as poverty, famine, and opium addiction.<sup>3</sup>

#### The Chinese Lady

In 1830, Harriet Low, the niece of the China trader William Henry Low, strolled through the narrow streets of the foreign factories of Canton, in defiance of a Qing law forbidding the presence of Western women in China. Not surprisingly, she attracted quite a crowd of curious Chinese onlookers, most of whom had never before seen a Caucasian woman. In her journal, she commented on their behavior: "I think the Chinese are much more civil than either American or English people would have been if a Chinawoman with little feet had appeared in our streets, dressed in the costume of her country. Why, she would be mobbed and hooted at immediately!"<sup>4</sup> Four years later (and about fifteen years before the first Chinese gold prospectors reached California), Low's prediction was tested as a Chinese woman did appear in New York, and anyone willing to pay the price of admission could see her "little feet." Unlike other human beings put on display in antebellum America, the "Chinese Lady," as she was called, was not brought to the United States by a Barnumesque showman. Her story is interwoven in the larger tapestry of the commodity trade between the United States and China.<sup>5</sup>

Soon after the *Howard* returned to New York harbor from Canton in 1832, Nathaniel and Frederick Carne, the vessel's owners, placed the cargo of Chinese goods up for auction. The event was commonplace enough, but the Carne brothers were not China traders in the usual sense; in fact, the *Howard* represented one of their first forays into this market. They had previously specialized in imports from France, luxury goods intended for upper-class American consumers. However, a change in the economic climate had prompted the Carnes to toss their stake into the China trade. Before the Jacksonian era, the market for Chinese goods had only two tiers: luxury goods (along with fine teas) for wealthy Americans, and low grades of porcelain and cheaper teas for everyone else. However, starting in the 1830s, there began to emerge in the United States a middle class that possessed some disposable income, and efforts were made to coax its members into spending much of it.

Alert to this change in the economic landscape, the Carnes were among the first to detect the possibility for a third tier in the market for Chinese goods: fancy but affordable items for emerging middle-class consumers. As promising as this situation might have seemed, the brothers knew they could convert this untapped potential into profits only if two crucial assumptions proved correct. First, they assumed that middle-class Americans possessed a latent desire for non-necessities or fancy goods, a desire that would eventually conquer their deeply entrenched frugality and distaste for ostentation—so long as the new imports could be made affordable. Second, the Carnes assumed that, instead of importing expensive versions from France, as they had previously done, they could contract Chinese artisans to produce the fancy goods and thereby keep the prices low. Acting on the premise that the Chinese possessed a genius for imitation, the brothers sent samples of French luxury items to Canton and paid Chinese craftsmen to attempt replicas. <sup>6</sup> Satisfied with the results, they hired the Chinese to manufacture the same items in bulk. It was while working with the Chinese that the Carnes apparently also became enamored with genuine articles of Chinese finery. Convinced of the commercial potential of the latter, they had both kinds of goods shipped to New York. <sup>7</sup>

Since the auction catalog for the cargo of the *Howard* survives, we can view a list of the exact items the Carnes imported to New York. Absent from the catalog are many of the standard items that had come to characterize the China trade. One sees neither exquisite luxury items for the wealthy—such as fine porcelain, silver, and jade—nor the inexpensive ceramic wares used by lower-income American families. Instead, the catalog lists an assortment of goods that, though affordable, one would classify as fancy non-necessities: pongee handkerchiefs, crape shawls, colored window blinds, fireworks, silk boxes, lacquered backgammon boards, ivory chessmen, snuff boxes, feather dusters, colored paper, walking canes, lacquered furniture, baskets, and a variety of fans. <sup>8</sup> With products such as these, the Carne brothers endeavored to fill the new niche in the consumer market.

Though one cannot say for certain how the cargo of the *Howard* fared in the marketplace, we do know that the arrival in 1834 of a similarly laden vessel, the *Thomas Dickinson*, coincided with an economic slump. As a result, the Carne brothers were unable to collect a high return on their investment. In addition to the sorts of commodities brought in on the *Howard*, the Carnes were now also importing silks and watercolor paintings by Chinese artists. According to Walter Barrett, a clerk who later wrote a book about New York's merchants, the Chinese silk weavers had imitated European varieties "not only to perfection" but had actually "improved on the patterns." As for the paintings, Barrett reported that they came bound in silk albums, each containing about twelve pictures, and covered a wide array of Chinese subjects. The Carnes had invested a total of twelve dollars for one hundred of these albums and then sold each at auction for a single dollar, and so they were able to turn a "snug profit" on watercolors despite their disappointment with the cargo as a whole. <sup>9</sup>

Undeterred by the market downturn and buoyed by the success of Chinese watercolors, the Carnes brothers became determined not to experience with their next cargo, to be conveyed by the *Washington*, a repeat of the *Thomas Dickinson's* troubles. Toward this end, they developed a novel marketing strategy which would both attract attention to their goods and lend them an exotic aura that consumers would find appealing. Although the Carnes probably hoped only to tempt consumers enough so that they would loosen their purse strings and go shopping, their promotional stunt ended up creating a sensation in New York.

When the *Washington* sailed into New York harbor on October 17, 1834, it immediately generated excitement in the city. The cargo included some tea and the expected assortment of fancy non-necessities that had become the Carnes' stock and trade. <sup>10</sup> But what made this ship's arrival extraordinary were the unusual circumstances surrounding one of the passengers, who received mention in an announcement printed in the *New-York Daily Advertiser*:

The ship *Washington*, Capt. Obear, has brought out a beautiful Chinese Lady, called *Juila Foochee ching-chang king*, daughter of *Hong wang-tzang tzee king*. As she will see all who are disposed to pay twenty five cents. She will no doubt have many admirers. <sup>11</sup>

A similar announcement in the *New York Sun* added that the father was "a distinguished citizen" of China who was "residing in the suburbs of Canton," a detail that, whether or not it was true, placed her among China's elite. <sup>12</sup> A short article in the *New-York Commercial Advertiser* printed her name as "Miss Ching-Chang-foo" and provided a detailed description of the practice of footbinding, which caused a Chinese woman "to twaddle about all her life." <sup>13</sup> The new arrival from China had yet to appear before the public, but already the press was beginning to circle around her.

From the time of the *Washington's* arrival, the Carne brothers required only three weeks to secure an exhibition hall (No. 8 Park Place); ornament it with appropriate objects, furnishings, and wall hangings; and have the Chinese Lady ready to entertain visitors. During this period, odd stories and rumors involving the Chinese Lady appeared in the newspapers. For example, the *New York Journal of Commerce* recounted what transpired when the Chinese Lady encountered a person sewing with her left hand. Having "never before seen a left-handed person," she gazed for some time "to comprehend the mystery" and then "burst into an immediate fit of laughter." Apparently the Chinese Lady aroused such curiosity that editors deemed newsworthy even the most trivial incident. <sup>14</sup> Other newspapers, however, printed stories that were more sensational in content, with one even claiming that the Chinese Lady had been reported missing. According to the *Commercial Advertiser*, guns fired during a political rally had frightened her into running away. In the same issue, the paper reported the rumor that she had been removed to Boston, presumably by the Carne brothers. <sup>15</sup> Such rumors evidently lacked validity, however, as preparations were well underway for the first day of her exhibition.

On November 6, when the first of many lengthy advertisements began to appear in city newspapers, two changes were apparent. In addition to doubling the price of admission to fifty cents, the Carnes had also requested that the Chinese Lady drop her longer Chinese name and adopt instead the moniker Afong Moy. The advertisements also offered the first physical description of her. She was nineteen years of age, four feet ten inches in height, "dressed in her national costume," and her feet were "but four inches in length," the result of her having worn "iron shoes" throughout her childhood. Starting on November 10, advertisements announced, the general public would be able to see Afong Moy from the hours of 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., and then again from 5 until 9. <sup>16</sup>

When that day arrived, the doors to No. 8 Park Place opened, allowing in a crowd of curious ticket holders. Included in this group was a reporter dispatched by the *Commercial Advertiser* to cover the unique event. He provided an account of his experience in a rather lengthy article that, when it appeared several days later, stood out in a newspaper that ordinarily dispensed the news in small capsules of pithy text. At ten o'clock, he wrote, Afong Moy emerged from her quarters and discovered that "a number of ladies and gentlemen were already occupying her drawing rooms." The reporter described Moy as a "princess" who "resembles a healthy, bouncing girl of 14." Her complexion was "tinged with copper" but "sufficiently transparent" to reveal that "roses are blooming" beneath her skin. In addition, she wore a costume befitting a lady "of her rank" and had evidently spent four to five hours at her toilette. Though he found her overall appearance prepossessing, her "little feet" provided by far "the most novel and interesting feature of her appearance."

The reporter then proceeded to offer a detailed account of the various activities undertaken by Afong Moy that were intended to show off this most remarkable physical feature. At first, her performance consisted of little more than sitting on a "throne of rich and costly materials" and displaying her feet by elevating them on a cushion before the intrigued spectators. As women in the audience approached her to take a closer look, the seated Moy would bow her head approvingly and smile. However, when males made similar advances towards her feet, she was less accommodating. "We saw on her brow," the reporter observed, "a frown of indignant rebuke." One "professional gentleman" in the audience, perhaps a doctor, harbored a deep desire to examine "the anatomical distortions of the foot." However, since the removal of the Chinese Lady's shoes apparently was not a part of the show and the rules of civility forbade this individual from even uttering his special request, his wishes went unmet.

Though Afong Moy did not speak English, visitors could communicate with her because she was joined in the room by her interpreter, a Chinese man named Atung. Audience members undoubtedly wondered about her life in China, the practice of footbinding, her long voyage to America, and her impressions of New York, and so it was questions along those lines that Atung most likely fielded and translated into the Cantonese dialect for Moy. In addition, Atung issued commands for Moy to follow. Every few minutes, he would speak a few words to her, after which she would rise from her chair and hobble with difficulty two or three times across the room before returning to her seat. A few more moments would pass, and Atung would repeat the same command. The sight of a woman so "disabled in her physical structure" inspired the reporter to pen a small diatribe against the "cruel process to which she has been subjected." Chinese women lived in "vassalage to the lords of the other sex," he wrote, who "tortured and deformed" their bodies and simultaneously kept their minds "in a state of ignorance." The reporter expressed his sincerest hopes that missionaries bringing the gospel into China could effect the emancipation of the country's female population.

This burst of indignant outrage aside, the reporter was, on the whole, pleased and intrigued by the novel spectacle he had witnessed. He concluded his article by writing that he did not need to write any more to "induce our citizens to attend." As it was, Afong Moy was already "receiving more calls every day, than any other young lady of our acquaintance," and the reporter doubted that the public's curiosity would be sated during her sojourn in the city. <sup>17</sup> Despite his endorsement, not all New Yorkers flocked to see the Chinese Lady. Some viewed the public display of a woman, regardless of her country of origin, as a case of blatant exploitation. The *New-York Mirror* published an editorial explaining why the magazine had elected not to cover the Chinese Lady in its pages: "We have not been to see Miss Afong Moy, the Chinese lady with the little feet; nor do we intend to perform that universal ceremony, unless we should find the notoriety which the non-performance must occasion inconveniently burdensome. . . . The lovely creatures were made for anything but to be stared at, for half a dollar a head." <sup>18</sup> That this editor bothered to print his justification for *not attending* the exhibition suggests it succeeded in sparking a tremendous amount of public interest. <sup>19</sup>

Indeed, for most Americans, the chance to see a Chinese woman with bound feet was too novel an experience to pass up. One can best understand the rarity she posed by recognizing that even foreigners residing in China around this time seldom set their eyes upon a Chinese woman from the upper class. "A Chinese lady I have never seen," wrote John Latimer, an American trader living in Canton. "They never walk, indeed I believe they cannot owing to the barbarous custom of confining the feet while young." Latimer added that a Chinese friend had promised him a pair of shoes, 3\_ inches long, once worn by that man's wife. <sup>20</sup> Brantz Mayer, a travel writer who visited Canton in 1827, described the "well-born lady" in China as "a hot-house plant, grown under glass and watched as carefully as the choicest bud"; her "paleness" was a symptom of her "concealment" and "seclusion." At the time of writing, Mayer had successfully secured a pair of the greatly sought-after tiny shoes. <sup>21</sup> And according to Osmond Tiffany, foreigners' intense fascination with respect to this Chinese custom eventually reached the awareness of Chinese shopkeepers. Eager to profit from this curiosity, some of them began to sell clay models of "contracted feet, painted flesh color and set into shoes of the same size as those actually worn." <sup>22</sup> And so, quite ironically, while New Yorkers had access to a genuine Chinese lady with bound feet, Americans living in Canton settled for shoes placed on sculpted imitations formed from clay.

While the Carnes certainly profited off Afong Moy through ticket sales, the real gains were to be had elsewhere. The Carnes' entry into the China trade coincided with a fashion trend that favored articles of clothing or household objects decorated in the chinois fashion—Western in origin but modeled in a style perceived as Chinese. However, despite this fashion, most Americans were not in the habit of purchasing fancy items in stores; being both parsimonious and adept at household arts and crafts, they preferred to buy inexpensive items that they could embellish with ornaments themselves. In 1831, Godey's *Lady's Book*, a popular magazine that both reflected existing fads and initiated new ones, taught women how to decorate plain objects "in the Chinese style":

A variety of articles, such as work-boxes and baskets, screens, and small ornamental tables, may be procured at the fancy shops, made of a beautiful white wood, quite plain, for the purpose of being ornamented, by ladies, in the Chinese style. The subjects generally represented are Chinese figures and landscapes . . . or grotesque ornaments. Patterns on paper . . . are also supplied at the same places.

[23](#)

The article went on to explain how one could use tracing paper to transfer a desired pattern onto an object.

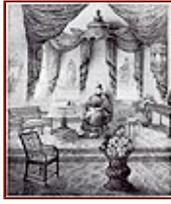
The Downs Collection at Winterthur Library owns a design book from this same period that had once belonged to an "H. Wrightson." Wrightson, who was probably a young woman, possessed an interest in the same Chinese styles that Godey's *Lady's Book* recommended. However, instead of purchasing "patterns on paper" in a shop, Wrightson drew Chinese scenes in her own hand and transferred them onto fabrics, wallets, screens, pouches, or boxes. Her design book is a valuable artifact not only because it provides evidence for the popularity of the Chinese style in this period but also because the sketches reveal the image of China lodged in the imagination of a young woman ([fig. 3.1](#)). Though her drawings are understandably somewhat amateur, one can see that the pastoral ideal found on porcelain animates her Chinese scenes; she drew landscapes that were filled with flowers, butterflies, streams, fishermen, and Chinese architecture. It was as if she were attempting a close-up of the willow pattern in order to explore the figures, architecture, and vegetation it depicted only from afar. [24](#)

Wrightson was precisely the kind of person the Carnes brothers hoped to entice with their fancy Chinese imports. They gambled that she would put down her pen, her tracing paper, and her needle and thread and instead open her purse. Of course, their hopes hinged on an American middle class that would actually go against deeply ingrained mores of frugality to purchase non-necessities from China, most of which served a purely decorative purpose. It was in this area that the Carnes probably hoped Afong Moy would play a crucial role. They believed her public display would stimulate consumer desire in the early stage of this commercial experiment. She could help create a vogue for the exact commodities the Carnes were attempting to introduce into the marketplace.



Toward this end, Moy appeared not in a sterile environment but rather before an elaborate backdrop, as the advertisement states: "At the same place are also to be seen various objects of Chinese curiosity, in themselves well worthy of the attention of the curious." [25](#) As a surviving lithographic print indicates ([fig. 3.2](#)), she was snugly ensconced in an opulent setting of fancy Chinese articles—lanterns, mirrors, curtains, wall hangings, paintings, vases, lacquer furniture, and ornamental boxes. These were exactly the sort of items that the Carnes were concurrently putting up for sale. In sum, although the brothers presented New York with a *text*, Afong Moy, that was ostensibly ethnographic in nature, their not so subtle *context* was strictly commercial. New Yorkers not only witnessed an upper-class Chinese woman and her supposed possessions, but they also discovered that they could transport this desirable oriental elegance into their own homes—if they were willing to pay the price.

### The Tea Trade



Louisa May Alcott, best known as the author *Little Women*, also wrote *Eight Cousins* (1875), a novel set in New England, the heart of the China trade. The main character, Rose, has an uncle Alec who is a merchant in the trade. In one telling moment, Rose sums up succinctly all that she knows about China: "No one explained anything to us, so all I remember is that tea . . . come[s] from there, and the women have little bits of feet." <sup>26</sup> Thus far, we have examined how Afong Moy and her diminutive feet were used to sell Chinese goods to the emerging middle class. It remains to be seen how the importers and retailers of tea used images of China to sell their product.

Robert Waln, a former supercargo in Canton, commented in the 1820s that in the United States tea had joined the list of "necessities," achieving an "importance almost equivalent to that of bread." Nearly all families, "however humble their situation," enjoyed "this exhilarating beverage." <sup>27</sup> For Americans of all classes, tea had become a fixture in everyday life. And perhaps more than any other import, Americans came to associate tea with its country of origin—in this case, China. In 1850, several classes of New York public-school children, mostly between the ages of nine and thirteen, were asked to write their responses to a series of questions related to China. When asked what they knew about China, 27 of 34 students included tea in their answer. In another classroom, children were asked to write down what they knew about tea and coffee; here, all 19 associated tea with China. And when a third group was asked to describe China, 9 of 14 remarked that China was famous for tea. <sup>28</sup>

How did such a strong mental linkage between tea and China develop? One could point to several sources, but certainly the aggressive marketing campaigns launched by American tea sellers taught consumers to make this association. In the nineteenth century, advertisements for tea were ubiquitous, and they appeared in large numbers for a good reason: Taken collectively, they formed the tea merchants' response to two serious crises that threatened the industry.

First, even though tea had become a staple in nearly every American home, the tea market was seldom stable; instead, it earned a reputation as being competitive, highly speculative, impossible to forecast, and susceptible to dramatic fluctuations. <sup>29</sup> A change in any number of conditions could precipitate a lower market price than expected and, therefore, a loss of profits for those involved. For example, in 1790, American traders imported more than 2 million pounds of tea, when consumer demand hovered only around 1 million pounds. When the market went bust, all the merchants in the trade, desperate to unload their cargoes, flooded the newspapers with advertisements announcing the sale of fresh tea "just received." <sup>30</sup> A similar glut in 1807 caused tea prices to drop through the floor; varieties of tea that had cost 63 cents per pound in Canton sold for 55 cents in the United States. <sup>31</sup> And in 1826, a foolish maneuver by a single merchant brought spectacular losses for all who traded in this commodity. Thomas Smith attempted to take advantage of a U.S. government regulation that allowed importers to delay paying duties on tea for as long as eighteen months. He unwisely took all of the money he owed U.S. Customs and invested it in tea, which he promptly released on the market all at once. The market quickly became saturated, and prices plummeted. As the result of this bold but ill-advised scheme, numerous traders incurred heavy losses, and Smith himself went bankrupt. <sup>32</sup> Merchants came to view advertising as the answer; by stimulating demand when supply surged, it could help them cope with the vicissitudes of their trade.

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Second, opium trafficking exerted indirect but constant pressure on merchants to sell more tea. For European and American merchants, the problem with the China trade had always been that, while their own countrymen demonstrated a strong demand for Chinese goods, Chinese consumers showed only a mild desire to purchase Western products and manufactures. This disparity compelled Western traders to purchase Chinese goods with silver, which resulted in a net flow of silver out of Europe and the United States and into the Chinese economy. <sup>33</sup> Looking to offset the trade imbalance and stem the flow of silver, the English began, in the late eighteenth century, to cultivate opium in India for sale on the Chinese market. In the decades that followed, the nefarious trade grew steadily until, by 1832, Chinese addicts were annually consuming 23,570 chests of opium brought by "country traders" licensed by the East India Company. The

introduction of this narcotic effected a reversal in the flow of silver such that, instead of enjoying a net gain, China began to hemorrhage the precious metal. [34](#)

Some American merchants also conducted the morally reprehensible trade. Yet they discovered to their chagrin that opium failed to provide the economic panacea for which they had been looking. By leveling off the trade imbalance, it solved the most immediate problem, but at the same time it created a disastrous long-term problem. As American mills and factories became more efficient and productive by the middle of the nineteenth century, traders increasingly entertained high hopes of one day selling surplus American manufactures in China. But now that the Chinese were spending their silver on opium, they possessed nothing with which they could purchase other imports. According to the American trader Robert Bennet Forbes, the sale of opium ultimately placed undue stress on the tea trade. "It appears to us," he wrote, "that we must materially increase the consumption of tea . . . in this country [the United States], before we can expect to enlarge materially our trade to China." Forbes believed that, if Americans would only drink more tea, the Chinese could sell more of it and thereby generate "more ready cash" with which to purchase American "manufactured goods." [35](#)

Confronting a challenging economic environment, American merchants responded by aggressively marketing tea to consumers. And almost without exception, their advertising involved deployment of attractive images of China. Such a tactic may seem obvious today, but tea merchants and shopkeepers in the nineteenth century certainly had alternatives. For example, they might have demonstrated to consumers the salutary effects of drinking tea. Although Americans consumed tea in large quantities, no one knew for sure whether it would improve health or harm it. In fact, the effect of tea drinking appears to have been a contentious issue. On the positive side of the argument, the China trader Gideon Nye wrote a treatise in which noted its benefits. Tea drove off drowsiness, cleansed the body of impurities, promoted digestion, stimulated the renal glands, and curbed the intemperate individual's craving for alcohol. [36](#) Likewise, the Pekin Tea Company celebrated the virtues of tea in its advertising by calling attention to the exemplary health and vigor of the Chinese people. The *Guide to Tea Drinking*, a pamphlet printed and distributed by the company, pointed out that the beneficial properties of tea "may be seen alike in the admitted superiority of the Chinese in personal strength and capacity of enduring fatigue over the people of western climes." In addition, the Chinese had somehow avoided the ravages of influenza and cholera despite their large population. In the pamphlet, their mysterious resistance to disease was attributed to voluminous tea consumption: Some Chinese imbibed as many as one hundred cups of tea every day! The guidebook even went so far as to credit tea with producing the "politeness" and "manners" of the Chinese people. [37](#)

On the negative side, dissenters insisted that tea could pose a health risk, especially if consumed in large quantities. As if on a moral crusade, William Alcott, a physician and reformer, compiled as much evidence as he could find to argue against the widespread consumption of tea. In his book *Tea and Coffee* (1839), he cited the laboratory experiments of a "Dr. Burdell" from New York who administered highly concentrated doses of the beverage to animals. Burdell found that a single drop of the potent liquid was enough to kill a yellow bird within a minute, and eight drops fed to a rabbit eventually yielded the same grim result: "In ten minutes it was dead. During the first three or four minutes, it was highly excited—exhilarated—it then lay down upon its side, moaning, as if suffering much pain, until it died. Its muscles were fixed, as in a spasmodic state." To Alcott, Burdell's findings could not have been more conclusive: "Now can any one receive these statements, and not find himself compelled to place tea on the same footing with other poisons?" [38](#)

Given the lack of consensus on this issue, tea companies might have channeled their advertising dollars into the effort to convince consumers of the positive effects to be enjoyed from tea drinking. That the vast majority opted instead to promote their product using images of China strongly suggests that their awareness that China, being distant, mysterious, idyllic, and exotic, occupied a special place in the American imagination. As such, it was the perfect destination for an escapist fantasy. Just as the Carne brothers understood that Afong Moy could stimulate consumption by starting a fad for things Chinese, so too did tea merchants realize that sales of their product would increase if Americans could be taught to perceive the daily tea-drinking ritual as a delightfully exotic Chinese experience.

To achieve this end, the merchants used advertising to disseminate a carefully constructed version of China designed to accelerate sales. As the goal was to encourage escapist fantasies, it was necessary that certain aspects of China be highlighted while others be suppressed entirely. Banished from the tea merchant's China was anything that might disturb the consumer or discourage flights of fancy—famine, blight, rebellion, xenophobia, poverty, opium addiction. In place of these arose a timeless and picturesque vision of the country that was free of turmoil: In a sylvan setting of pagoda-topped hills and charming tea fields, silk-clad merchants sip tea and direct the armies of happy workers as the latter blithely go about their business of preparing tea for export. In the place of reliable information, this sanitized and romanticized version of China acquired a high degree of credibility among Americans.

### Printed Advertisements

Before the advent of lithography in the 1830s, merchants relied primarily on metal print ornaments to replicate and disseminate a given image. Although the resulting black-and-white pictures were quite simple, even crude, by later standards, the print ornament nevertheless armed the merchant with a potent advertising tool, allowing him to use a picture at a time when visual images were scarce. In 1796, Binny and Ronaldson began producing metal ornaments in Philadelphia, and in 1809 the company issued the first American specimen book of print ornament types. Shortly thereafter, several foundries entered the business and produced specimen books of their own. <sup>39</sup> These trade catalogs offered anyone in need of a picture thousands of print ornaments from which to choose. The most common ornaments included farm animals, the American eagle, the Bible, a steamboat, a globe, George Washington, a ship at sea, a runaway slave with stick and bundle, the signs of the zodiac, and a mourner weeping beside a tomb. Ornaments designed specifically for tea merchants were also common, appearing in every specimen book.

Tea merchants who used print ornaments were operating under a single, fundamental principle: In a world dominated by the printed word, a picture would draw attention. Their print ornaments often depicted a crate of tea, a Chinese man, or a combination of the two; for further effect, some ornaments also included a background portrayal of a Chinese landscape complete with a pagoda. According to the missionary Samuel Wells Williams, pagodas were "so peculiar to China, that any views of that country are hardly complete without them." <sup>40</sup> A few ornaments depicted a trader selling the tea right on the wharf, with the tall ship that had presumably transported the tea stateside looming in the background ([fig. 3.3](#)). <sup>41</sup>

Newspapers provided one effective location for a picture printed with an ornament. Ranken's Tea Warehouse, for example, used an ornament that not only included nearly all of the usual elements but also provided a blank space for the company's name. The lavishly attired Chinese tea merchant in the picture directed the observer's attention to this convenient message board ([fig. 3.4](#)). Companies found for their ornaments other applications as well, such as on the company letterhead, on order forms for tea, and in advertisements placed in city directories ([fig. 3.5](#)). In short, the ornaments would have been ubiquitous as well as arresting. In an era dominated by text, these uncomplicated pictures proved to be an effective advertising tool for tea merchants.



With the advent of lithography in the 1840s, printed advertisements grew more sophisticated. Now a tea provider could either commission an artist to execute an attractive picture or adapt an existing painting by a Cantonese artist; next, he would use the lithographic technique to churn out hundreds or thousands of replicas. Merchants found lithography a particularly effective way to enhance the appearance of trade cards. Among the most common and potent advertising forms of the nineteenth century, the trade card combined an eye-catching picture with the name and address of a business. People enjoyed the pictures and so would pass the cards around to friends and even collect them for display at home.

Joseph Stiner and Co. of New York distributed a card that shows Chinese laborers loading tea crates onto the junks before an idyllic backdrop (fig. 3.6).<sup>42</sup> This sort of scene was quite common; a similar one was used by a Chinese immigrant who sold tea in the United States. Oong Ar-Showe of Boston offered a "View of Canton" in his trade card. In the foreground of the picture, laborers load tea crates onto a Chinese junk, the sail of which provides a convenient space for the company's name (fig. 3.7). In the background, pagodas embellish Canton's appealing cityscape.<sup>43</sup>



In printed advertising, the Great American Tea Company stood out as a particularly inventive company. In 1859, George Hartford took over his brother's tea business, which had consisted of driving a cart around what is now midtown Manhattan, peddling tea door to door. Hartford had the inspired idea to purchase an entire cargo of tea and sell it to people right on the dock for a modest markup. He succeeded for both an economic and a psychological reason. By eliminating middlemen, he could charge a price that was one third what the tea retailers were asking. Also, Hartford realized that, while standing on the wharf, surrounded by stacks of tea crates and tall ships, customers appreciated the process that brought tea all the way from the tea districts of China to American harbors. Purchasing tea straight off a ship appealed to consumers because this act connected them to the land that fascinated them.<sup>44</sup>



When Hartford moved his business off of the wharf and into a chain of stores, he held fast to this important principle: The pleasure involved in buying tea could be greatly enhanced if the customer could feel connected to China. Hartford employed several forms of advertising, but nearly all involved Chinese themes. His company issued several trade cards, including one that featured a Chinese laborer rushing several crates of tea to waiting vessels and using a wheelbarrow equipped with a sail (fig. 3.8). In the minds of Americans, wheelbarrows propelled by wind power had been a symbol of Chinese ingenuity since the late eighteenth century; Houckgeest had registered his astonishment on witnessing a fleet of these amazing devices.<sup>45</sup> On another card that was cut in the shape of a tea cup, a colorful Chinese tea merchant with flowing robes and a triangular hat points to the name of the company (fig. 3.9).<sup>46</sup>



Even more impressively, Great American published a monthly newspaper distributed free of charge at the company's several stores. If a rare surviving edition of the *Advocate* (June 1867) offers any indication, then the newspaper typically included tea prices, remarks on tea, poems about tea, and positive articles about Chinese people and their customs. Indeed, to promote tea by shining a flattering light on China appears to have been the paper's central function. Thus, while sipping a cup of Great American tea, one could simultaneously learn about the beverage and its country of origin.<sup>47</sup>



Great American also used lithography to print posters that it displayed in its several tea stores, gave away free of charge, or posted in various locations around New York. One poster in particular consolidated into a single view all the different stages of the tea-production process: from the harvesting of tea in the fertile fields, to the packing of tea in crates inside the mammoth tea hong (warehouse and packing center), to the loading of the boats that would transport the tea crates to a waiting American vessel (fig. 3.10). Interestingly, this intriguing picture was not created by Great American; rather, the company adapted an already existing watercolor by the Chinese painter Tingqua (fig. 2.5). By comparing the lithographic advertisement with the original watercolor, one can see that, though Great American left the original largely unchanged, it did superimpose its slogans onto available blank spaces. And, for a final touch, the company inserted into the background the single most indispensable feature of the Chinese landscape—a pagoda.

The poster succeeded by doing more than just showing the grandeur of the tea industry. It involved the viewer. Through the tripartite division of space—the background of the print, the foreground, and the viewer's own surroundings—it adroitly brought the viewer into the tea-production process. In the background, visible through the gaping aperture, the viewer can see the pastoral paradise where the tea is grown, harvested, and ferried to the colossal tea hong. In the foreground, Chinese laborers pack the tea in crates, weigh it, and prepare it for shipping. The immediate surroundings of the viewer constitute the third space. While examining the print inside of a Great American store, the viewer may have initially felt oceans apart from the wonderful Chinese scene that had captured his attention. If so, the advertisement would bridge that gap with the following claim: "THE GREAT AMERICAN TEA COMPANY Sell ALL their Teas in Original Packages." From these words, the viewer learned that the tea crates he has observed in all Great American outlets were the same crates shown in the poster. And so, if he chose to shop at Great American, the tea he purchased could connect him to that bucolic, pagoda-decorated landscape that beckoned to him through the massive doors of the great tea hong.



The poster was effective also because Tingqua's depiction of the tea process brilliantly fused realism with subtle hints of idealism that were almost impossible to detect. In fact, by comparing the painting with the traveler Osmond Tiffany's firsthand account of his visit to a tea hong, one can see that the print was ostensibly faithful to reality in every detail:

The hong's front upon the river, stretching back into the suburbs. Fancy a building twelve hundred feet long by . . . forty feet broad, and in some portions of it fifty feet high. . . . These hong's are of one story, in some places open to the sky, and so long that at the end of one of them the human form diminishes, and we see beings engaged in occupation, and we hear no noise, for they steal along like shadows . . . through the high door beyond, we see the lively river and chop boat waiting, ready for the cargo.

The stacks of crates that Tingqua included in his watercolor were also common sights; Tiffany described one tea hong as "crammed almost to suffocation, with big square chests . . . piled up to the ceiling."<sup>48</sup> One encounters difficulty finding any inaccuracy in the painting (except for the obvious fact that tea fields and tea hong's were never located in close proximity to one another). The people are lifelike, all of the different jobs are represented, and the tea fields as well as the architecture of the various structures appear realistic.

Despite this apparent fidelity to the real-life China, Tingqua subtly injected idealism into his work. The Cantonese watercolorist produced paintings solely for foreign consumption; as a result, he tended to take into consideration what he understood to be Western desires.<sup>49</sup> Although he paid attention to the details in reproducing individual elements of his subject, he simultaneously cast a romantic glow over it. Banished from the scene were the grueling realities—sweat, disputes, injuries, low wages, poverty, and harsh working conditions—faced by the laborers working in one of the world's largest industries. Hard work is represented in the painting, but it hardly looks like the backbreaking toil it must have been. Traders who spent years in China knew better. The American trader John Murray Forbes offered a bleak assessment of the laborer's struggle for existence; China is a country, he wrote, "where the hardest labor of strong men barely earns food and clothes enough to sustain life."<sup>50</sup>

Also absent is the latent animosity that many of China's working class harbored toward foreigners. Robert Forbes (John Murray's father) recounted an instance from 1830 in which he and his party were beset by "a collection of very rough coolies . . . armed with bamboos and brickbats." A "general mêlée" ensued that left one American trader "streaming with blood from head to foot."<sup>51</sup> Such attacks were apparently so common that when Benjamin Ticknor, a U.S. naval surgeon, visited Canton in 1831, he hoped for and fully expected one to occur: "I was disappointed in not meeting with rough treatment from the Chinese; for I had been frequently told that foreigners rarely escaped abusive treatment."<sup>52</sup> But in the poster, the Chinese conduct their myriad tasks under agreeable conditions in a sylvan setting replete with verdant fields, delightful boats and sampans, quaint cottages, a pagoda, a river, hills, and clouds. As a result, viewers received an

overall impression that tea was brought to market by contented workers in a Far Eastern agrarian utopia, and they judged this depiction to be true to life.

This Great American poster was not alone in subtly distorting reality. Nearly all the images discussed here, from the simple print ornaments to the more-sophisticated trade cards, romanticized their subjects to a degree. The Chinese laborers never seem disgruntled, fatigued, or exploited in any way. On the contrary, they come across as acquiescent, willing, even sprightly in performing their tasks. Instead of actual people, they become benevolent tea elves who live solely to cultivate this single crop and prepare it for export to the West. Were the beverage to go out of style, these laborers would quickly vanish into thin air, as if they had never existed. Although the advertisements could not be fairly characterized as pernicious, they did have the effect of transforming a living, breathing people into abstract symbols for the commodity they produced. And they covered up some of the real problems plaguing China, such as poverty, famine, rebellions, and opium trafficking. Nonetheless, as the aforementioned written responses of the New York schoolchildren demonstrate, China and Chinese people had become synonymous with tea.

### Tea-Store Displays

Great American's lithographic poster succeeded because it involved the viewer, using tea to connect him to a distant and exotic land. The company employed the same strategy when designing its stores, taking care to employ Chinese motifs. The fronts and interiors were painted in Chinese vermilion flaked with gold. And since no Chinese setting could be complete without a pagoda, facsimiles of the distinctive Chinese tower were installed around cashier cages. In this way, by transforming the otherwise dull chore of purchasing tea into an exotic Oriental experience, the company hoped to entice customers to enter the store. Shopping at Great American became the next best thing to buying tea in China itself. [53](#)

Great American was not the first company to embellish its stores with Chinese elements. By the 1840s, it had become common practice among tea retailers to attract customers with elaborate interiors and storefront displays. Since some proprietors featured their store façades in printed advertisements that have survived, we can examine the arrangements they used. From the lithographic advertisements of J. C. Jenkins and Company and the Pekin Tea Company (figs. [3.11](#) and [3.12](#)), we can recognize the display value of two types of objects: crates and statues.

Originally, Chinese crates had served only the practical purpose of providing merchants with a suitable container in which to transport tea. Tea arrived in



American stores in Chinese crates only because merchants believed that the process of unpacking tea and repackaging it in new containers would damage the fragile leaves. However, though originally implemented to ensure quality, this practice of shipping tea in the original Chinese crates presented merchants with an unanticipated advantage. From observing their customers, tea merchants realized the tremendous appeal of stacks of authentic Chinese crates on the tea-store floor. People seemed to harbor a curious fascination for these simple wooden boxes.



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In response, tea merchants often wrote to their agents, captains, and supercargoes in Canton, insisting both that the tea remain in its original Chinese crates, chests, or boxes and that these be attractive. In 1799, Ebenezer Townsend, supercargo of the Neptune, confirmed in his journal that the "fine teas are exported in the same chests that they are brought from the country in." [54](#)

In 1815, Thomas Butler in New York issued the following instructions to William Law, his supercargo in Canton: "A great part of the tea . . . I wish you to procure in the smallest & handsomest packages, as well as whole chests." [55](#) Similarly, in 1819, associates of Russell and Company expressed this same desire in requesting that Samuel Russell, stationed in Canton, obtain teas of "good passable quality in handsome Chests or boxes." [56](#) And in 1832, Thomas Perkins, writing from Boston, issued Captain Dumaresq in Canton the following directive: "You will have all the . . . chests of your cargo kept in their original packages or in chests in which they were brought from the country, not unpacked in Canton." [57](#)

After receiving their cargoes of tea, companies back in the United States like J. C. Jenkins and Pekin Tea would display the original tea crates, as the lithographs show. What was it about Chinese tea crates that made them so intriguing to the public? Consumers enjoyed knowing that actual Chinese people had picked the tea and packed the crates; the crates made the tea seemed more authentically Chinese. It was for this reason that Great American advertised its tea as sold in "original packages," and Redding and Company of Boston assured customers that "a Native Chinaman superintends the packing" of all of the company's tea. <sup>58</sup> Customers regarded a tea crate as a genuine artifact from China, something that provided them with a material link to a distant and enchanting land. (Any merchant who removed the teas from their original containers severed this vital link; in doing so, he diminished the pleasure customers could derive from the shopping experience.)

Moreover, the physical appearance of the crates also attracted the eyes of customers. Constructed out of a cheap, unfinished wood and possessing little intrinsic value, most tea crates have long since disappeared. However, by examining the few that remain, we can see that they were not mere boxes with six blank sides. On the contrary, they often carried colorful emblems or pictures that symbolized their country of origin. Some crates had Chinese characters that, in China, had served the practical purpose of identifying the kind of tea as well as the supplier (fig. 3.13). But when the context changed, so too did the function of the characters. Once the crates were on display in the United States, where Americans found Chinese calligraphy indecipherable but interesting nevertheless, these once meaningful characters became exotic hieroglyphs that signified China itself.

If Chinese characters were not exotic enough, some tea retailers doctored tea crates intended for display, artificially heightening their "Chineseness." They accomplished this by pasting attractive picture labels onto the sides of the crates. One retailer papered a display crate with lithographic reproductions of export watercolors originally executed by Chinese painters in Canton (fig. 3.14). Since each side presented a different stage of the tea-production process, the curious customer needed only to rotate the crate to understand how tea was planted, picked, prepared, and packed for export. <sup>59</sup>



Another retailer went further. Onto genuine Chinese tea crates, he affixed ersatz Chinese scenes depicting the lifestyle of a wealthy Cantonese merchant. In one view, the latter is sipping tea in his ornate robes before a background of hills, birds, tropical trees, and a pagoda (fig. 3.15); in another view, which is set in his garden, his adoring wife hands him a blossom. These labels are intended to appear Chinese, but we know they are



spurious because bogus Chinese calligraphy adorns the gold border that frames the scene. Although resembling written Chinese, the characters are completely nonsensical to anyone who can read the language. Clearly, retailers believed that picturesque crates could draw potential customers into the store.

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With tea crates on display, Americans took notice. Evidence suggests that people studied tea crates, seeing them as legitimate conveyors of ethnographical and topographical information. Brantz Mayer wrote that the simple tea crate was, astonishingly, one of the objects through which "this enlightened age has been . . . making its opinion of the Chinese nation!" <sup>60</sup> In D. P. Kidder's children's book *The Chinese; or, Conversations on the Country and People of China* (1846), a character acknowledges that he inspects tea chests: "When I see Chinese figures on tea-chests, they have almost always fans or umbrellas in their hands; and then there are sure to be two or three temples at no great distance." The "temples" to which he refers are almost certainly pagodas. <sup>61</sup> Another children's book, *Peter Piper's Tales about China*, instructed young readers to examine tea chests for accurate information on China. "You may form a good idea of the manner in which the Chinese dress upon ordinary occasions," the author advised, "by noticing the figures which they delineate upon their . . . tea-chests." <sup>62</sup> The narrator in *Uncle Oliver's Books for Children* described the crates as "all marked over with strange looking characters" that are as comprehensible to the Chinese as "A, B, C" are to "our people." "If you have never seen one of these boxes," he advised young readers, "if you ask Mr. Smith to let you look at one, the next time you go to his store, he will show you all about it." <sup>63</sup> Clearly, Americans regarded tea crates

as artifacts of an exotic nation whose image-bearing sides left indelible images in their minds.

Along with crates, statues also captured the attention of potential customers who passed by a tea store. Like the wooden Indian once positioned outside tobacco stores, the Chinese statue provided the public with an attractive and easily recognizable symbol for tea. Though once a common feature in American commercial districts, nearly all statues have vanished over time. Fortunately, a surviving pair owned by the Henry Ford Museum allows us to see how they looked ([fig. 3.16](#)).



According to the lithographic print of J. C. Jenkins and Company, the statue belonging to this company depicted a laborer in his characteristic position: carrying two chests of tea by balancing a bamboo pole across his shoulders. In the print, the Lincolnesque gentleman wearing the stovepipe hat strikes a pose of fascination; from his example, anyone viewing the print knew that the statue was an attraction worth seeing. The Pekin Tea Company appears to have included several statues, at least five, in its display (a tall one perched outside the second floor of the building and four smaller ones that seem to peer out the windows). In contrast to J. C. Jenkins's tea laborer, these statues represented Chinese from the upper crust, with their flowing garments indicating their higher status. In this way, they probably resembled the statues owned by the Henry Ford Museum. Like the print of J. C. Jenkins, this lithograph also includes fascinated pedestrians who are attracted to the store by the displays.

For another tea distributor, statues played a major role in its aggressive advertising campaign. Redding and Company of Boston promoted its statues as spectacles that were worthy of the public's interest and that the competition could not match. People might come to see the statues and, once inside the store they would, the company hoped, also purchase tea. To increase public awareness of the attraction, Redding and Company issued a trade card that carried a picture of one of the statues ([fig. 3.17](#)) and provided the following information about it:

The above engraving is by Hammatt Billings, Esq., and is taken from a statue of a Chinaman, of half life size, modeled by Ball Hughes, Esq., from an original done in China. Duplicates of this statue are to be seen at the Branch Tea Stores of REDDING & CO., at No. 78 Hanover Street, and No. 43 Beach Street. . . . These are COLORED; but the first copy, in STONE, may be seen at the Principal Tea Store, No. 198 Washington Street. The object of these statues is to adorn and designate these well-known Tea Depots, and at the same time to protect the public from imposition in cases where the style of Redding & Co.'s Stores, and their Signs, are used. [Emphasis added.] [64](#)

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Just as Great American modified a watercolor by Tingqua for its posters, so too did Redding and Company replicate an original Chinese statue to suit its marketing needs. It apparently purchased the prototype from a Chinese sculptor and then had copies made for display in its several stores. In addition, the company also claimed that, by providing consumers with a fail-safe method for identifying the genuine stores, its prominently displayed statues protected the public from being deceived by imitators. Regardless of whether impostors actually existed, the company probably did feature the statues in its advertising to help consumers distinguish Redding and Company from the competition. [65](#)

### Human Displays in Tea Stores

However, as the number of these statues increased, their usefulness in helping one tea shop stand out from the competition declined. The more shops that could boast of a statue, the less special or remarkable each statue became. Realizing that statues alone did not suffice, Redding and Company in the 1840s actually brought over from Canton "a Native Chinaman" named Achowe and gave him the responsibility of overseeing the packing of all teas. Of course, the presence of a living, breathing native of China enhanced the pleasurable illusion that shopping for tea was an exotic experience—the next best thing to an actual trip to China. For this reason, the company made Achowe very visible; an advertisement placed in the *Boston Post* announced that he "will be happy to have his friends call



on him.” [66](#)

Although Redding and Company probably hired Achowe as a marketing ploy, he did at least have real experience working in China’s tea industry (if we are to believe the advertisement) and did perform necessary services for the company. And since very few Chinese people lived in the United States in the 1840s, Redding and Company’s competitors must have regarded the hiring of a Cantonese man as a marketing coup not unlike the Carne brothers’ exhibition of Afong Moy in 1834. But over the course of the next quarter century, the ripples from a large-scale demographic shift would alter the face of tea advertising forever.

In the 1850s, Chinese immigrants began to arrive on the West Coast in large numbers, seeking either gold or opportunities for gainful employment. Some later migrated to eastern cities, and by 1870 New York possessed a sizeable population of Chinese people seeking work. Any tea-store proprietor who was observant quickly realized that, for a small amount of money, he could hire a Chinese man not to supervise the packing of tea, as Achowe had done, but rather to do little more than stand in front of the entrance in an exotic costume. Such an individual was paid solely to pose; he was a human statue.

In 1870, Mark Twain published in the *Galaxy* a letter sent to him by a correspondent who had observed this new phenomenon:

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As I passed along by one of those monster American tea stores in New York, I found a Chinaman sitting before it acting in the capacity of a sign. Everybody that passed by gave him a steady stare as long as their heads would twist over their shoulders without dislocating their necks, and a large group stopped to stare deliberately. [67](#)

Though the pedestrians’ reaction indicates that the owner’s strategy was having the desired effect, Twain’s correspondent took umbrage at the exploitation of a fellow human being for mere commercial purposes: “Is it not a shame that we who prate so much about civilization and humanity are content to degrade a fellow-being to such an office as this?” Although he censured the passing crowds for their shameful displays of curiosity, his detailed description of the human statue indicates that he too had taken a good long look: “Men calling themselves the superior race, the race of culture and of gentle blood, scanned his quaint Chinese hat, with peaked roof and ball on top; his long queue dangling down his back; his short silken blouse, curiously frogged and figured . . . and his clumsy, blunt-toed shoes with thick cork soles.”

Interestingly, the correspondent also described the Chinese man’s attire as “outlandish” as well as “dilapidated, and awkwardly put on,” descriptors that suggest the outfit was not only strange and exotic in the minds of pedestrians but was unnatural for the wearer himself. Furthermore, at the end of the letter, where the Chinese man is quoted, he actually gripes that his employer required that he purchase the garments himself (“the bloody furrin clothes that’s so expensive”). From these two points, we can establish that the Chinese man was not wearing his usual clothes but instead had on some kind of costume. His costume is important because it tells us that, in the mind of his employer, his being Chinese was not enough in the same sense that often a tea crate’s origin in China was not enough—ersatz Chinese labels had to be affixed. For if the man’s race had been all that mattered, the owner would have allowed him to pose in his ordinary clothes.

Instead, the job required that the Chinese man don a costume so that he could appear as a *specific kind of Chinese man*. More than just a flesh-and-blood human being posing as a wooden statue, he was a genuine Chinese man impersonating the generic tea “Chinaman”— the nationally recognized symbol for tea in the United States. After decades of print ornaments, trade cards, lithographs, and statues, the generic tea Chinaman had become so ingrained in the American consciousness that tea merchants believed they needed to perpetuate this image in order to sell their product.

After Twain’s correspondent finished scolding the store’s owner for wrongful exploitation and the onlookers for insensitive gawking, he showcased his own powers of sympathy to demonstrate that he was above the crowd. Through the use of his imagination, he attempted to enter the

Chinese man's thoughts as the latter supposedly dreamed about his homeland. The correspondent's intentions may have been noble, but his reverie reveals to what extent an idyllic vision of China was lodged in his mind:

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In my heart I pitied the friendless Mongol. I wondered what was passing behind his sad face, and what distant scene his vacant eye was dreaming of. Were his thoughts with his heart, ten thousand miles away . . . among the rice-fields and the plummy palms of China? under the shadows of remembered mountain-peaks, or in groves of blooming shrubs and strange forest trees unknown to climes like ours? . . . A cruel fate it is, I said, that is befallen this bronzed wanderer.

Oblivious to the rebellions, droughts, and various economic considerations that spurred many Chinese to seek new lives in America, the correspondent carried an idealized construction of China in his head. Convinced that no Chinese citizen would ever voluntarily leave this pastoral Asian paradise, the correspondent assumed that "cruel fate" must have somehow hurled the lonely "wanderer" onto the streets of New York. China, after all, was a place for Westerners to escape to, not for Chinese to escape from.

Certain of his logic, the correspondent approached the Chinese man, tapped him on the shoulder, and urged him to "cheer up" because help was on the way: "Americans are always ready to help the unfortunate. Money shall be raised—you shall go back to China." When he next inquired about the wages received for this demeaning work, the Chinese man's response delivered a rude awakening: "four dollars a week . . . but it's aisy." Discovering that the Chinese man cared little about his own exploitation, the correspondent decided to wash his hands of the entire affair: "The exile remains at his post. The New York tea merchants who need picturesque signs are not likely to run out of Chinamen." [68](#)

### **The End of the Romantic Era**

The New York tea merchants did not face a shortage of "Chinamen" because, by 1870, the diaspora that would bring tens of thousands of people from the southern provinces of China to American shores was well underway. One could argue that the presence of Chinese immigrants benefited tea merchants by providing them with a new advertising gimmick, but what is more likely is that they rued the day that Chinese people began immigrating to the United States. Whereas the Carnes in 1834 could publicize Afong Moy and in the 1840s a mere statue could draw a crowd, by 1870 the sighting of a Chinese person in New York would not have been uncommon. This new demographic shift threatened the efficacy of the tea industry's most basic marketing strategy: Sell more tea by encouraging consumers to associate the beverage with a distant land populated by an exotic people. After all, how could the tactic continue to be effective if the Chinese were visible on American streets and lacking in exotic costumes?

The tea store to which Twain's correspondent referred coped with the problem by masking it. By hiring this human being to stand in a place once occupied by a statue, the tea merchant was essentially paying a genuine Chinese American to impersonate Americans' imagined conception of a Chinese man in China. In other words, an individual who actually represented a new transnational Chinese identity posed here as an anachronism; the bewildering and ever changing present dissembled as the static and romantic past.

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More than either the transition from clipper ship to steamship or the forced opening of China by the Western powers, the arrival of Chinese immigrants brought about the end of the romantic era of the China trade. Twain's correspondent was not the first to comment on the sight of a Chinese man in the streets of New York. Fifteen years earlier, the presence of a Chinese man had so astonished a magazine contributor that he felt compelled to convey the significance of the event in verse:

Sits he by the dusty footway through the torrid day.  
Alas! What brought thee hither, poor native of Cathay?  
And thine olive, moveless features, transfixed as in a dream,  
Mid the crowd of busy faces like wooden features seem.

When our curious childhood marvelled at figures quaintly wrought  
 On the ancient heir-loom China—ah! me! We never thought  
 E'er to see their breathing image beside us on the path;  
 And what strange, discordant background the curious picture hath!

Not the tall Pagoda's summit, not the tea trees, stunted train,  
 Not the pointed roofs of Peking, not the flat, unvaried plain,  
 But the world's great heart pants round thee, a rushing progress sweeps  
 Thy vague, unspoken being along its sounding deeps. [69](#)

Having been introduced to China through commodities ("When our curious childhood marvelled at . . . the ancient heir-loom China"), the poet had grown accustomed to seeing Chinese figures set before idyllic backgrounds of pagodas, tea trees, and pointed roofs. Since he had conceived of Chinese people only in the context of the imagined landscape of Cathay, the sight of a Chinese man sitting before the cityscape of New York seemed "discordant" to him.

However, unlike Twain's correspondent, the poet understood the economic forces that might have propelled this individual to the New World: "How the wild Sierra gleameth, with gold in every cleft." With the promise of riches acting like a magnet, the Chinese man had embarked for California to seek his fortune and had somehow ended up in New York. Interestingly, the poet reacted to the novel sight not with passive resignation but with anxiety. He fervently desired that the Chinese man return to China and, in an effort to tempt the latter to depart, he invoked the image of China as an agrarian utopia. "Speed thee home!" he exclaimed, because "thy rice-fields still are pleasant, and the Tea Tree scents the air, / And the Central Flowery Kingdom doth still its beauty wear."

The urgency in the poet's tone initially strikes the reader as perplexing, but his desire to effect the departure of the Chinese man had nothing to do with racial prejudice. On the contrary, he assured the latter that, if he agreed to return home to China, the two countries would continue to enjoy frequent contact with one another through trade:

And us you lose not ever—we will be there anon—  
 Shall our sea-birds dip their pinions below thy walls, Canton?  
 We, the vanguard of the nations, we poise our wings for flight,  
 And we'll rest within thy shadow, oh! Starry Eastern night!

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In these stanzas lies the crux of the poet's mysterious and profound discontent. He interpreted the Chinese man as a harbinger of change whose presence in New York meant the end of an era. In the recent past, Americans had been the ones to traverse oceans in their mighty sailing vessels ("sea-birds") in search of wonderful Chinese goods that could be found only in Canton. Motion was strictly the provenance of Western nations, of whom the Americans could boast the highest proficiency: "We, the vanguard of the nations, we poise our wings for flight."

In stark contrast, the Chinese remained distant, passive, mysterious, exotic, and, most of all, immobile. A Chinese port provided a destination for others but never served as a point of departure for the Chinese themselves. [70](#) And so the presence of a Chinese man in New York threatened this status quo. For if the Chinese boarded ships and crossed the Pacific Ocean to pan for gold, how could Americans maintain their monopoly on this glamorized conception of themselves as a vigorous, rugged, hearty, seeking people who possessed a restless energy, an indomitable spirit, a willingness to take risks, and a thirst for adventure? In this way, the images of China that emerged out of the tea trade were necessary to sustain Americans' own idealized self-portrait.

The immigration of Chinese brought about no substantial material changes in the China trade in that American vessels continued to transport goods to the United States, as they had been doing since 1784. However, the romantic era of the trade effectively came to a close, because the romance had always existed not in the flow of commodities but in the American mind or, more specifically, in this self-congratulatory fiction based on the comparison of the two national identities involved: The Chinese were a wonderfully exotic faraway people, and Americans were a courageous seafaring folk. These opposite identities were mutually dependent. Neither could exist without being in juxtaposition to the other. The presence of the Chinese man in the New World

contradicted half of the idea, and, in doing so, precipitated the collapse of the whole construction. Although the poet probably did not realize the significance of his poem at the time, what he had composed was the epitaph for the romantic era of the China trade.

### Conclusion

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the China trade flooded the American imagination with idealized images of Chinese landscapes and people. Traders could have pointed out the multiple inaccuracies inherent in the images and thereby disabused their countrymen of their false notions of China, but for a variety of reasons they declined to do so. Instead, they allowed the images to pass through to their customers unchallenged, sometimes going so far as to develop and disseminate images of their own. As a result, the images were ubiquitous and therefore inescapable, reaching Americans through porcelain, watercolors, newspapers, trade cards, and tea stores. In the absence of accurate and accessible information on China, Americans exercised a sort of license to use the images creatively to construct China as they wished it could be. They did just that and, as a result, the enchanting kingdom of Cathay arose out of their collective imaginations.

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As has been explained, Chinese immigration in the latter half of the century would eventually deliver a decisive and fatal blow to this "romantic illusion." However, decades before that demographic development had begun, one American who had lived in China took it upon himself to dismantle this pleasurable but erroneous view of China by supplying Americans with factual information. Ironically, this individual was none other than a merchant.

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### Notes:

**Note 1:** William Wood, *Sketches of China* (Philadelphia: Carey and Lea, 1830), vi–vii, xi. [Back.](#)

**Note 2:** W. C. Hunter, *The Fan Kwei at Canton before Treaty Days, 1825–1844* (London: Kegan Paul, 1882; reprint, Taipei: Ch'eng-wen, 1965), 113. [Back.](#)

**Note 3:** In finding the image of China disseminated by American traders to be overwhelmingly positive, this chapter represents a departure from the conclusions drawn by Stuart Creighton Miller. Miller made extensive use of the journals and diaries of China traders to support his claim that these men contributed to a generally negative view of the Chinese people. Yet Miller placed too much importance on personal writings that reached only a limited readership, if they were published at all. He overlooked a far more influential venue at which merchants transmitted images to millions of people: the marketplace. In this locus of commercial activity, Americans were bombarded with positive images of China. And so, regardless of the opinions merchants may have held privately, they contributed heavily to the proliferation of images that were generally favorable, albeit unrealistic. See Stuart Creighton Miller, "The American Trader's Image, 1785–1840," chapter in *The Unwelcome Immigrant: The American Image of the Chinese, 1785–1882* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969). [Back.](#)

**Note 4:** Elma Loines, ed., *The China Trade Post-Bag of the Seth Low Family of Salem and New York* (Manchester, Maine: Falmouth Publishing House, 1953), 126. Evidently, the Chinese took this prohibition of Western women very seriously. One supercargo was advised by his superiors: "Should there be any females on board, they must be landed . . . at Macao, for to carry a woman into China would produce your ruin!!!!!!!!!" Sea Journal of supercargo of ship Confederacy (1804), fol. 153, Downs Collection, Winterthur Library. [Back.](#)

**Note 5:** While conducting research for her dissertation, Nancy Ellen Davis first came across the arrival of Afong Moy in a merchant ship. Nancy Ellen Davis, "The American China Trade, 1784–1844: Products for the Middle Class" (Ph.D. diss., George Washington University, 1987), 57–60. [Back.](#)

**Note 6:** Osmond Tiffany commented on this stereotype: "Some people, who know less about the Chinese than they profess to, say that they are not an inventive, but merely an imitative race. What nation have they imitated? Are they not the originators of almost every art they possess? Are they not adepts in some arts, that no other nation can attempt?" Osmond Tiffany Jr., *The Canton Chinese; or, The American's Sojourn in the Celestial Empire* (Boston: James Monroe,

1849), 86. [Back.](#)

**Note 7:** Walter Barrett, *The Old Merchants of New York City* (New York: Carleton, 1863, 40. [Back.](#)

**Note 8:** Mills, Brothers, and Co. (New York), *Catalogue of Canton Fans, Grass Cloths, and Fancy Goods Now Landing from the Ship "Howard," from Canton . . . June 5th, 1832*, auction catalog (reprint, Boston: Childs Gallery, 1968). [Back.](#)

**Note 9:** Barrett, 44–45. [Back.](#)

**Note 10:** See advertisements for "fresh teas" and "200 cases China silk goods" from the ship *Washington* in the *New York Evening Post* (17 and 23 October 1834). [Back.](#)

**Note 11:** *New-York Daily Advertiser* (20 October 1834). [Back.](#)

**Note 12:** *New York Sun* (18 and 19 October 1834). [Back.](#)

**Note 13:** *New-York Commercial Advertiser* (18 October 1834). The writer of this article noted that he learned about footbinding by examining the model of a Chinese woman's foot on display at the museum of the East India Marine Society in Salem, Massachusetts (now the Peabody Essex Museum). [Back.](#)

**Note 14:** *New York Journal of Commerce* (25 October 1834). [Back.](#)

**Note 15:** Both rumors were printed in the *New-York Commercial Advertiser* (28 October 1834). As for the gunfire, this pro-Whig newspaper reported on all the activities of the rival Democratic Party during the congressional elections of 1834. [Back.](#)

**Note 16:** See advertisements placed in the *New-York Daily Advertiser*, the *New York Sun*, the *New-York Commercial Advertiser*, and the *New York Evening Post* starting on November 6 and running through most of the month. We cannot be certain of Moy's age, as an undated broadside owned by the Library Company of Philadelphia lists her as seventeen years old, not nineteen. [Back.](#)

**Note 17:** *New-York Commercial Advertiser* (15 November 1834). [Back.](#)

**Note 18:** *New-York Mirror* (6 December 1834). [Back.](#)

**Note 19:** New York's other amusements at this time included the following: a thrower of Oriental daggers; Major Stevens who, being "the smallest man now living," appears to have been a precursor to General Tom Thumb; Major Jack Downing, "the celebrated monkey"; and two boa constrictors, an anaconda, "Gallipago turtles of great size," and a flamingo. See "Amusements," *New York Evening Post* (22 October 1834). [Back.](#)

**Note 20:** Joan Kerr Facey Thill, "A Delawarean in the Celestial Empire: John Richardson Latimer and the China Trade" (master's thesis, University of Delaware, 1973), 42. [Back.](#)

**Note 21:** Brantz Mayer, "China and the Chinese," *Southern Quarterly Review* 12, no. 23 (July 1847): 22–23. According to Osmond Tiffany, clay models of "contracted feet, painted flesh color and set into shoes of the same size as those actually worn," were sold in Canton to foreigners. Tiffany, 51. [Back.](#)

**Note 22:** Tiffany, 51. [Back.](#)

**Note 23:** "Chinese Painting," *Lady's Book* (April 1831), 177. [Back.](#)

**Note 24:** H. Wrightson, Design Book, doc. 528, Downs Collection, Winterthur Library. [Back.](#)

**Note 25:** Davis, 58. [Back.](#)

**Note 26:** Louisa May Alcott, *Eight Cousins; or, The Aunt-Hill* (Cleveland: World, 1948), 74. [Back.](#)

**Note 27:** Waln passed several months in Canton in 1819 and 1820. As supercargo, he served as a proxy for the ship's owner by keeping the books and handling the buying and selling in Canton. Margaret C. S. Christman, *Adventurous Pursuits: Americans and the China Trade* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1984), 25–26. According to statistics, Americans consumed 10

to 20 million pounds of tea annually from 1820 to 1850 (Gideon Nye, *Tea: And the Tea Trade* [New York: Geo. W. Wood, 1850], 23–24). [Back.](#)

**Note 28:** Beekman Papers, manuscripts, box 25, folder 2, New-York Historical Society. Stuart Creighton Miller cited this source in *The Unwelcome Immigrant*, 11. [Back.](#)

**Note 29:** *The Grocer's Companion and Merchant's Hand-Book* (Boston: New England Grocer Office, 1883), 154. [Back.](#)

**Note 30:** Carl Seaburg and Stanley Patterson, *Merchant Prince of Boston, Colonel T. H. Perkins, 1764–1854* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1971), 56. [Back.](#)

**Note 31:** *Ibid.*, 179. [Back.](#)

**Note 32:** Conrad Edick Wright, "Merchants and Mandarins: New York and the Early China Trade," in *New York and the China Trade*, ed. David Sanctuary Howard, (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1984), 30. [Back.](#)

**Note 33:** According to Charles Tyng, in 1815 the *Cordelia* used silver specie to purchase a cargo of tea. Charles Tyng, *Before the Wind: The Memoir of an American Sea Captain, 1808–1833*, ed. Susan Fels (New York: Viking Penguin, 1999), 16. [Back.](#)

**Note 34:** The standard chest contained 130 to 160 pounds of opium. Instead of involving itself directly in the opium trade, the East India Company sold licenses to Western merchants called "country traders," who then transported the narcotic from India to China. Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: Norton, 1990), 128–32. [Back.](#)

**Note 35:** Forbes believed that the best scenario, and one he did not believe would come to pass, was the abolition of the opium trade. Robert Bennet Forbes, *Remarks on China and the China Trade* (Boston: Samuel N. Dickinson, 1844), 24–25, 55–56. [Back.](#)

**Note 36:** Nye, 12, 40, 53. [Back.](#)

**Note 37:** *Guide to Tea Drinking* (New York: Pekin Tea Company, 1845), 6, 25, 28. Prints Room, New-York Historical Society,. [Back.](#)

**Note 38:** William Alcott was the cousin of Bronson Alcott, who was noteworthy for being a Transcendentalist, an education reformer, the founder of a utopian community, and the father of Louisa May Alcott. William Alcott, *Tea and Coffee* (Boston: George W. Light, 1839), 55–56. [Back.](#)

**Note 39:** Clarence P. Hornung and Fridolph Johnson, *Two Hundred Years of American Graphic Art: A Retrospective Survey of the Printing Arts and Advertising since the Colonial Period* (New York: George Braziller, 1976), 37. [Back.](#)

**Note 40:** See the account of Williams's lecture on China in Philadelphia. *Dollar Newspaper* (24 February 1847). [Back.](#)

**Note 41:** The print ornaments described here originate in the following specimen books, all of which can be found in the Rare Books division at Winterthur Library. L. Johnson, *Specimen of Printing Types and Ornaments Cast by L. Johnson* (Philadelphia, 1844), ornaments 61, 62, 84, 734, 1077; Hobart and Robbins (established 1824), *New England Type and Stereotype Foundry* (Boston, circa 1850), 86, 401, 595; Paul Howland, *Specimen Book of Printing Types* (New Bedford, 1884), 620; Farmer, Little, and Company, *The Later Specimens and Reduced Price List of Printing Types* (New York, 1879), 515; John T. White, *Specimen of Modern Printing Types at the Foundry of John T. White* (New York, 1839), 526, 575, 590; Alexander Robb, *Specimen of Printing-Types and Ornaments Cast by Alexander Robb* (Philadelphia, 1846), 61, 62, 84, 154; Greele and Willis, *Specimen of Printing Types and Metal Ornaments, Cast at the New England Type Foundry by Greele and Willis* (Boston, 1831), 32, 157, 279; A. S. Gilchrist, *Book of Specimens of Printing Types, Cuts, Ornaments, &c., Cast at the Knickerbocker Type Foundry of A. S. Gilchrist* (Albany, 1857), 93; James Connor and Sons, *Specimens of Printing Types and Ornaments, Cast by James Connor and Sons* (New York, 1855), 107, 323, 820, 1184, 1467, 1859; MacKellar, Smiths and Jordan, *Print Types, Borders, Ornaments and All Things Needful for Newspaper and Job Printing Offices Made by MacKellar, Smiths and Jordan* (Philadelphia, 1880), 2735; L. T. Wells, *Specimens from the Cincinnati Type Foundry* (Cincinnati, 1852), 314, 398. [Back.](#)

**Note 42:** Two archives possess excellent collections of trade cards related to tea: [Back](#), the Warshaw Collection of Business Americana (Archive Center, National Museum of American History, Behring Center, Smithsonian Institution) and the Downs Collection (Winterthur Library).

**Note 43:** Oong Ar-Showe left China in 1850 and immigrated to South Boston, where he operated a highly profitable tea-and-coffee store at 21 Union Street. In 1853, he married a woman named Louisa Hentz who, in 1854, bore him a son, William. That same year, the father and son were baptized together, with the father adopting the name Charles. In 1860, Charles Ar-Showe became a naturalized U.S. citizen. With his business success, Ar-Showe soon rose to become a highly visible figure in the city's social and political affairs. And in 1876, he regaled the city with a huge display of fireworks, paid for entirely by himself, to celebrate the Centennial. After his wife died in 1878, he gave her the largest funeral in the history of Maplewood, Massachusetts. In 1878, when Ar-Showe decided to return to China to live out his final years, a local newspaper praised his generosity, and a small delegation of important people escorted him to New York, his port of departure. Doris Chu, *Chinese in Massachusetts: Their Experiences and Contributions* (Boston: Chinese Culture Institute, 1987), 34. [Back](#).

**Note 44:** Victor Margolin, Ira Brichta, and Vivian Brichta, *The Promise and the Product: Two Hundred Years of American Advertising Posters* (New York: Macmillan, 1979), 27; William Walsh, *The Rise and Decline of the Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company* (Secaucus, N.J.: Lyle Stuart, 1986), 17–21. [Back](#).

**Note 45:** Numerous early travelers in China mentioned the device. Benjamin Franklin knew of it, and Charles Willson Peale's museum in Philadelphia possessed one. Owen Aldridge, *The Dragon and the Eagle: The Presence of China in the American Enlightenment* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), 81–82, 166–67. [Back](#).

**Note 46:** Both trade cards can be found in the Prints Department at the New-York Historical Society. [Back](#).

**Note 47:** Warshaw Collection of Business Americana, Archive Center, National Museum of American History, Behring Center, Smithsonian Institution. [Back](#).

**Note 48:** Tiffany, 112, 115. [Back](#).

**Note 49:** Craig Clunas, *Chinese Export Watercolours* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1984), 25–29. [Back](#).

**Note 50:** *Letters and Recollections of John Murray Forbes*, ed. Sarah Forbes Hughes (New York: Arno Press, 1981), 79–80. [Back](#).

**Note 51:** After the Opium War, antforeign mobs and riots occasionally broke out in the streets of Canton. Robert Bennet Forbes, *Personal Reminiscences* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1882), 376–77. [Back](#).

**Note 52:** *The Voyage of the Peacock: A Journal by Benjamin Ticknor, Naval Surgeon*, ed. Nan Hodges (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), 178. [Back](#).

**Note 53:** *Penrose Scull, From Peddlers to Merchant Princes: A History of Selling in America* (Chicago: Follett, 1967), 159–63. [Back](#).

**Note 54:** Thomas R. Trowbridge, ed., "The Diary of Mr. Ebenezer Townsend, Jr.," *Papers of the New Haven Historical Society* (New Haven, 1888), 4:94–95. [Back](#).

**Note 55:** Microfilm (mic. 107), Downs Collection, Winterthur Library. [Back](#).

**Note 56:** See Russell and Co. Papers, box 2, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. Quoted in Christman, 110. [Back](#).

**Note 57:** Philip Dumaresq, Letter book, 1831–1840 (doc. 753), Downs Collection, Winterthur Library. [Back](#).

**Note 58:** Advertisement for Redding and Company, in Coolidge and Wiley, *The Boston Almanac for the Year 1850* (Boston: B. B. Mussey, 1850), 184. [Back](#).

**Note 59:** For a complete series of twelve views, see Carl Crossman, *The Decorative Arts of the*

*China Trade: Paintings, Furnishings, and Exotic Curiosities* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, England: Antique Collectors' Club, 1991), 440–41. [Back.](#)

**Note 60:** Brantz Mayer, *A Nation in a Nutshell*, pamphlet, Department of Rare Books, Library of Congress (Philadelphia: Brown, Bicking, and Guilbert, 1841), 26. [Back.](#)

**Note 61:** D. P. Kidder, ed. *The Chinese; or, Conversations on the Country and People of China*, Department of Rare Books, Library of Congress (New York: G. Lane and C. B. Tippet, 1846), 13. [Back.](#)

**Note 62:** *Peter Piper's Tales about China* (Albany, N.Y.: R. H. Pease, n.d.), 4. [Back.](#)

**Note 63:** *People and Customs in Different Countries*. Uncle Oliver's Books for Children (Auburn, N.Y.: Oliphant and Skinner, 1837). [Back.](#)

**Note 64:** Warshaw Collection of Business Americana, Archive Center, National Museum of American History, Behring Center, Smithsonian Institution. [Back.](#)

**Note 65:** With no evidence to the contrary, we can only take this claim at face value. However, the invention of fictitious imitators has long been known as an effective advertising strategy. Quite simply, if consumers believe a particular brand has inspired imitations, they are apt to regard the original as of high quality. [Back.](#)

**Note 66:** *Boston Post* (17 November 1847). See also Coolidge and Wiley, *The Boston Almanac for the Year 1850* (Boston: B. B. Mussey, 1850), 184. [Back.](#)

**Note 67:** Letter to Mark Twain, "John Chinaman in New York," *Galaxy* (September 1870), 426. Although I refer to the author as "Twain's correspondent," the colorful language and the sophisticated social commentary suggest the letter might have been composed by Twain himself. [Back.](#)

**Note 68:** Twain, 426. [Back.](#)

**Note 69:** The poet is listed as "F.M." "On a Chinaman in Broadway," *United States Review* (May 1855). [Back.](#)

**Note 70:** A writer for *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser*, a business-oriented newspaper published in Philadelphia, explained the difference between the people of China and America, attributing it to the difference between their forms of government: "Compare the timid slave [of China] creeping through shallows in his clumsy junk, with the American Seaman; 'among the tumbling mountains of ice, of the arctic circle, penetrating to the antipodes, and engaged under the frozen serpent of the south. Yet we know he has not been squeezed into this hardy form, or inhaled this daring spirit; from the constraints of a watchful and suspicious government.'" (21 January 1820). [Back.](#)

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