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Bärbel Czennia and Greg Clingham, eds., *Oriental Networks: Culture, Commerce, and Communication in the Long Eighteenth Century*, Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2020. 328 pp. $44.95. ISBN: 978-1-684-48271-9.

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Oriental Networks: Culture, Commerce, and Communication in the Long Eighteenth Century contains eight essays that bear witness to the interconnectedness between the West and the East—be it tactile or intangible—during the long eighteenth century, a historical span that well precedes our digital era. Although we are enjoying ubiquitous convenience and effortless immediacy facilitated by virtual digitality, borderless hyperconnectivity at once silhouettes us as it induces trepidations toward a variety of inimical otherness—ranging from viruses of the nanoscale to nations of geographical adjacency. Now as then, Bärbel Czennia reminds us in "Introduction," that the long eighteenth century prefigures both benign visions and sullen undertones at the dawn of an interlaced world (3): on the one hand, merchants, diplomats, and adventurers advocated an ever-growing global reach that aspired to accelerate the circulation of objects and ideas under the economic ideal of mutual dependence. On the other hand, nonetheless, voices from the domestic domain remained skeptical to the beneficial call for unanimous connectivity, promulgating, for instance, the abolitionist movement that aimed at policing the enlightened mind from moral degradation.

For Czennia, networked connectivity, despite its determinism, enables hope to grow from despair, insofar as network-oriented methodology helps envision an ongoing relay of agents moving, circulating, and transforming objects and ideas that are too perplexing "for any single organizational unit to be solely and fully in control" (8). Negotiating with panoptical surveillance for a strategic space of miraculous alliance, network-oriented way of thinking forestalls any given form of dichotomy as it encourages exchanges and entanglements in flux. Moreover, "[n]or are the outcomes of such exchanges as predictable as they may seem," so that the term "transculturation," argues Czennia, can best evince the creative process across cultural contacts that is serendipitous and thought-provoking (10). I believe that this scholarly

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attention, as it welcomes unexpected outcomes by scrutinizing dots and lines in networked structures, paves path to the microscopic, the peripherical, and the untrodden.

In Richard Coulton's opening essay titled "Knowing and Growing Tea," tea—"the first modern global commodity"—stages itself as an unsettling conundrum that preserves exotic auras through its Chinese heritage, yet at once stimulates intellectual demystification that evokes Britain to fashion its national identity via tea consumption. Tea as a global commodity, as Coulton says, "has no immediate value for life" (35). Instead, tea serves as an ideological overload that underwrites a nation's desire to base taste, fashion, and sociability on tea infusion, around tea table, and in tea party. This domestic cultivation of the British self, as it mobilized tea from China to British mass market, fostered an imperial ambition to transplant and domesticate tea plant through intercontinental networks, which, according to Coulton, inevitably exposed latent anxieties of a growing empire in the face of Oriental elusiveness. By tracing networks established by local employees, traders, botanists, and consumers, Coulton details how tea was transformed from "the curious" (43) to a natural historical object that demanded taxonomical accuracy and horticultural care—a process, however, bombarded with experimental errors and incidental misunderstanding. The most noted episode, perhaps, is the belated epiphany that there was only one species of tea in China (50). Through Coulton's network-oriented lens, knowledge exchange is regarded as so volatile a mediation that a fledging empire finds it impeditive to hold. As British national identity is miniatured on tea consumption, it at the same time undermines the formation of the imperial self by revealing an unbalanced economy of loss and gain that coalesces the West and the East into a dialectical yet embroiled dynamic.

We can discern that, in Coulton's case study on tea consumption, the struggle between the Occidental and the Oriental is in itself gendered, insomuch as the domestication of the tea plant is an imperial project that gains impetus through its domestic consumption of the beverage that is effeminate in essence. Feminine ingestion of tea interrogated, if not overturned, the male-dominated ideology, for tea consumption made female presence an ambivalent one that shuttled between private and public spheres. Tea consumption, as Coulton demonstrates, "unsettled established homosocial conventions of alehouse and tavern drinking, while provocatively implying a potential to nurture scandal and

gossip" (39-40). This gendered uncertainty finds further explorations in Stephanie Howard-Smith's essay regarding pugs and porcelain. In "China-Pugs," Howard-Smith uncovers the metonymical affinity between pugs and porcelain that seduced female consumers: pugs were petted as lapdogs due to its unnatural deformity and misbestowed Oriental origin (65), while china-collecting prevailed due to its association with feminine delicacy. Clustered under the controversial aesthetics of chinoiseries, both pugs and porcelain were criticized for their consumerist libido for leisure, uselessness, and idleness that produced *nothing* merely to *produce nothing*—this paradoxical yet reproductive logic was later crystallized in the porcelain representation of pugs, which, as these two were serendipitously forged together, created a new fashionable artefact that called forth porcelain manufacturers in both Europe and China to intensify transcultural exchanges and mutual imitations (82). In other words, pugs *as* porcelain figure—at first glance diminutive but in depth singular—epitomize a cultural surprise as it upholds a tremendous network of intercultural entanglements that showcases the agency of feminine connoisseurship.

While tea, pugs, and porcelain are objects from which networks stretch into intercultural sophistication, a garden is laid as a nodal point of convergence where a great variety of objects and ideas flow in and collide with one another. In "Green Rubies from the Ganges," Czennia approaches British garden design, especially its artificialized biodiversity, by investigating "the influence of various types of networks on the exchange of plants, gardeners, garden concepts, and garden architecture between Britain and British India during the long eighteenth century" (83). Although British gardening emerged when professional networks between traveling botanists and institutional research centers were built up to satisfy the imperial reverie for universal classification, garden was a space of liminality that produced no fixed identity. Czennia shows that while British gardeners tried to impose their garden aesthetics upon Indian soil, it turned out to be so challenging to fight against tropical climate that British gardens in the Subcontinent ended up eclectic. On the other hand, as, for instance, official employees of the East India Company retired, their garden-building on British motherland was reminiscent of Indian ambiance. The most pertinent example is, as the author argues, Sezincote House by Samuel Pepys Cockerell, for Sezincote House expresses "a modulated taste" via its "[n]either quite Indian nor entirely British" style (117). As Czennia suggests, "Indian

gardens reminded their British owners and visitors that empire building was not a one-way road but a process that transformed people, poems, gardens as well as the garden aesthetics in both hemispheres" (107). On the whole, this stylish in-betweenness subverts given cultural authenticity as a performative process of mythmaking that effaces transformative connectivity.

As a garden situates a buffer zone that pertains to the inextricability between the self and the Other, this dynamic porousness does not guarantee democratic coexistence of the two. Instead, consumerism and its exploitative drive dominated and provoked responses of various kinds that embrace alternative networking, yet not for congenial reconciliations, but to ensue self-other antagonism of another scale. In "The Blood of Noble Martyrs," Samara Anne Cahill studies Penelope Aubin, a marginalized female novelist, together with her novelistic "network of reformed and reunified Christianity" articulated via what she calls "human 'nodes' of aristocratic martyr figures" (132). British fascination on foreign luxury holds true in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, whereas Aubin rivals against Defoe's "entrepreneurial projects" (133) by emphasizing that true treasure is stored in the blood of martyrdom. For Aubin, the Oriental, Muslim East in particular, is "an unassimilable temptation to Christian unity" (135), since it stands for "material wealth, consumerist pleasure, religious intolerance, abuse of political power, and sexual violence" (141-42). Yet ironically, Aubin's aristocratic characters are held in her martyrial constellations only if they are painfully enmeshed within Oriental hostilities. As the author puts it, Aubin "portrays an evangelical mission to the Far East as the only way for British identity to reorient itself toward self-sacrifice and to reject the materialism that has previously undermined Christian integrity" (148). On this score, Aubin's Christian identity—networked through martyred figures on a global scale—turns out to adumbrate a hybridized corporeality so contaminated by Oriental allurements that it might redeem itself unless its bodily dimension is entirely relinquished.

Although the East-West encounter retains competitive tensions, chances for mutual learning and cultural exchange also challenge imperialist hegemony and its unidirectional rapacity. In "Robert Morrison and the Dialogic Representation of Imperial China," Jennifer L. Hargrave rehabilitates British Protestant missionary Robert Morrison's postmortem fame from the complicit link between Protestant evangelism and imperialist expansion. Instead of producing colonial subjects by encouraging conversions among the Far East,

Morrison's didactic textbooks that informed British readers of Chinese history, language, and culture, as Hargrave observes, "develop[ed] mutually informative relationships with Chinese individuals that were not premised on conversion or grounded in imperial ideology" (155). As Hargrave argues, Morrison's didacticism in *Dialogues and Detached Sentences in the Chinese Language* and *China; A Dialogue, For the Use of Schools* "foster[ed] cultural exchange," from which Britons learned but also criticized China in their dialogic interactions with the Chinese. In doing so, China is depicted as "a complex and multifaceted" cultural entity "that is admirable yet flawed, civilized yet immoral, global yet isolated" (155). Championing dialogic forms, Morrison exhorts "a neutral approach to China that observes, questions, and reflects upon cultural differences without advocating an immediate recourse to imperial thought or action" (156). In Hargrave's essay, the East projects no Saidian mirror-image for the imperial West—be it an absolute alterity that ensures aesthetic distance, or a narcissistic reflection of ethnical purity and superiority. Instead, the West and the East stand in the dialogic foreground, enact introspective evaluation of their own and mutual improvement between the two, and together imagine coevolution toward a shared future of cosmopolitanism.

Networked connectivity by virtue of British global reach, nonetheless, is not necessarily promising as Morrison anticipates. Instead, Britain's imperial impulse to expand its territories initiates domestic colonialism of its own citizens. In "At Home with Empire?" James Watt analyzes Charles Lamb's essays and argues that Lamb's service at the Leadenhall Street headquarters of the East India Company severely inflicts his literary investment. Unlike Sir William Jones's and Thomas Love Peacock's sincere servilities to the empire, Lamb's essay-writing fashions a persona for him to ventriloquize his wish to recoil from bureaucratic labor, so much so that Lamb "presents commercial modernity as a fall from humankind's natural state" (173). Although Lamb's "anticosmopolitansim" (170) creates ironic detachment against imperialist mobilization, his escapist rhapsody might turn out to anchor the shameful reality; that is, imperialism had saturated everyday lives that Lamb's imaginary seclusion from metropolitan bustle was doomed to end up in vain: in his essay titled "The South Sea House," through his meditation on the relics of the South Sea House—the headquarters of the South Sea Company, Lamb's narrator Elia foretells an ominous downfall of the British empire by invoking a repressed

history of its infamous past. Nevertheless, as Watt suggests, Lamb's feverish yet anachronistic meditation upon the ruins, compared with his fellow Londoners' cold calculability and numbness, marks an ineluctable transition "from one phase of empire to another—where the former was in its own time contentious but the latter is seemingly uncontroversial" (181). "At home with empire" and thus nowhere out, Lamb's essay-writing symptomatizes a critical predicament that is not salubrious for such a cynical mind as Lamb's to "[think] very much about empire at all" (184).

Overwhelming as networked connectivity seems to be, its ever-growing complexity still invites scholars to salvage every nuance in transcultural dynamic that would at some points shatter our monolithic imagining of the East-West encounter. In "Commerce and Cosmology on Lord George Macartney's Embassy to China, 1792-1794," Greg Clingham redresses Macartney's embassy to China from its accusative reception as "a diplomatic failure" (190) resulting from the envoy's "ignorance or ethnocentricity" (196). Reading Macartney's unpublished manuscripts that detailed his meticulous preparation for the embassy, Clingham renews our understanding of Macartney's notorious refusal to kowtow to the Qianlong Emperor. In fact, Macartney regarded his kowtow as symbolic capitals that should have exchanged kneeling from one of the Chinese ministers toward the portrait of King George III. In doing so, "Qianlong and George III are equated with each other" (198). This diplomatic prudence corresponds to Macartney's painstaking enterprise of gift arrangement, which testifies to his gripping respect for the Chinese. Amongst Macartney's gifts, as Clingham observes, Macartney presented "instruments of dexterity and intrigue" such as planetariums, clocks, orreries, and telescopes that culminated in "the harmonies of astronomical understanding" (201, 202). Bereft of condescendence, Macartney intended to establish "a *cosmological* framework within which he wished the Chinese to *think about* the clocks and the astronomical instruments" (204-05). In order "to place the king of Great Britain and the emperor of China harmoniously together in a kind of universal center" (212), Macartney was eager to invite Qianlong to enter a universe of "flux and change" (202), to then discover, as Sir William Herschel discovered Uranus and its two satellites, an empire from the other side of the globe, and, ultimately, to enjoy an upcoming gravitational bond with Britain that welcomed commercial mobility, fluidity, and reciprocity.

Kevin L. Cope's last essay—"Extreme Networking"—switches our focus to Maria Graham, a nearly obliterated figure who embraces such multifarious roles as a traveler, a botanist, a geologist, an illustrator, and a writer. Scattering her footprints among "India, England, Italy, Brazil, Chile," Graham's writing is characteristic of a wide array of catachrestical pairs such as "[l]ow places with high mountain backdrops; buried potatoes and soaring palms; riotously colorful marketplaces and delicate high-country flowers; cavernous temples atop promontories; harbors barely deep enough to float a ship" (257). Through her swift perambulation and sojourn, Graham demonstrates her flourishing networks as enfolding an intense immanence, where sheer verticality collapses into vibrant horizontality. In doing so, Graham enacts a poetics of simultaneously "[z]ooming in and zooming out" (231); that is, the near and the minute no longer dominate our ocular foreground with seething details, whereas the distant and the protuberant are rendered "less daunting" (234) as it gives up encapsulating the multiple within panorama. Graham's authorial awareness deviates from the omniscient subjectivity that "monitor[s] an assortment of plots and subplots from an all-seeing position" (241). Instead, Graham ensures extreme motility in her meshy networks that facilitates her to flick "quick presentations of experiences laden with implications, insinuations, associations, and connections" (239-40). As Cope concludes, "Graham looks for the highest peaks on the grid of experience; on the other hand, Graham's is a burrowing description that bores down into details that reveal cultural treasures" (247). Nicely connecting the near and the far, Graham harbors nowhere and everywhere at the same time.

The eight articles in *Oriental Networks* fulfill potentials of network-oriented approach as they collectively recognize a complex apparatus of agency transition from either the circulation of nonhuman objects and its filamentary entanglement with human desires, or the enrichment of interpersonal networks that surges with voices of applause, instigation, and innuendo. Overall, *Oriental Networks* bears fruitful contributions to our given knowledge of the long eighteenth century—as network-oriented perspective furthers our understanding on familiar topics and figures like tea, porcelain, garden, Lamb, and Macartney, *Oriental Networks* also directs our focus to those ambushing in complex networks, such as pugs, Aubin, Morrison, and Graham. The most heartening lesson, I reckon, is the collection's endeavor to unearth as many transcultural surprises as possible, so much so that these transcultural

wonders—though minute and fragile—can survive historical stratification and come to nurture humanistic care.

I suggest that the only shortcoming of the collection lies in its partial indulgence in details and trivialities. This approach somewhat falls short of elevating the work to a more critical and holistic recapitulation of the historical survey. That is to say, literary texts, perhaps, should remain inside-out networked connectivity. Exploring networks indeed merits our attention since it opens up literary texts by introducing wider historical contexts, but literary texts are not mere representation that offers an objective cartography of networked agents. Instead, we might refresh network-oriented method by viewing literary texts as temporary congealment of networked velocity and intensity intervened by authors' subjective inputs, in order to better capture how authorial consciousness joins the rhythms of breakdown and rearticulation across networks. As we discern how networked undercurrents intersect with textual surfaces, we endow networked connectivity not only historical breadth but also psychological depth. In doing so, we come closer to the process where literati and virtuosi stop, contemplate, and harvest infinite inspirations for artistic creation within one precious instant of breath.

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