The Divergence and Convergence between the Told and the Untold

—Rethinking the historiography and history of the early modern East-West encounter, with Chinese export porcelain as case study

by

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I. Introduction:

The early modern East-West encounters and their aftermaths were extremely rich and complicated, consisting of various stages of multi-directional confrontations, dialogues, accommodations, and fusions, which involved and fostered different philosophies and religions, ideologies and cosmologies, the arts and sciences, production and consumption, and elite as well as popular cultures. It could be said that the encounter story was primarily enabled by two series of events and their subsequent chain reactions, the confrontation of ideologies and the confrontation of materials, which mainly took the institutional forms of Jesuit missions and the Indies Companies' trades.

This thesis is inspired by my particularly strong interests in Dutch and Chinese art histories, as well as the historical East-West encounters and exchanges during the early modern period. I want to start by explaining my understanding of the topic of early modern encounter, and three of my fundamental standpoints, which will naturally lead to my research question.

Firstly, I do not want to prioritize any direction of the exchange, but I want to start with a more egalitarian and impartial outlook so as to fully acknowledge the complexity of the situation, and more importantly, so as not to fall into the one-way logic of the original encounter. Both the European and Chinese sides had completely different historical trajectories and ideologies before the encounter, thus almost all the exchanges during the early modern age were fundamentally and inevitably dominated by ignorant, biased, or self-centered logics and mechanisms. Indeed, the inherent Eurocentric and self-interested mentality was imbued in the initiation of events like trade or cultural transmission, while in the meantime, the inherent Sinocentric and self-protective mentality was also embodied in the Chinese reaction upon these foreign interventions. Therefore, in order to gain new insights into the early modern East-West encounter, studies nowadays can not simply follow or continue the logic of the original encounter events because they would only lead to the replay of self-centered and biased standpoints on both sides.

My second standpoint is a continuation of the first one—given the inevitable and inherent partiality that both sides brought into the original encounter, this passage of history was never purely positive. That is to say, I am not content with telling happy stories of mutual inspiration, reciprocal exchange, and various prosperous aftermaths. These are not untrue, but they are far from the full picture. I want to be thoroughly honest with all the possible negative aspects involved in the early modern encounter, which in reality, might precede all those positive outcomes that scholars nowadays conceive. It seems that the discourse of early modern encounter tended to ignore the framework of colonization, but to a large extent, these two phases shared a similar pattern, where the encounter was initiated largely by egotism and desire, while the actual confrontation was imbued with anxiety, bias, and manipulation. Nevertheless, I want to clarify, and I will reiterate this again later on, that I do not intend to condemn or prosecute any side or any historical event. I emphasize the negative aspects from history as critique rather than criticism. Here it is necessary to explain

my purpose of studying this passage of history—I hope to penetrate into human anxieties and desires, which were particularly intensely revealed in early cross-cultural confrontations.

My third standpoint has already been involved through the first two, but I want to bring it to a more explicit level. The previous two standpoints indeed expressed my deeply critical and reflective attitude towards *history*—I hope to reveal the biased and depressing nature of this passage of history. To push this one step further, I thus hold an equally critical attitude towards *historiography*—given the discourse-serving nature of a considerable amount of history-writing up until now, numerous narratives and interpretations of the East-West encounter appear to be un-self-conscious of the limitation brought by the one-sidedness. My third standpoint is thus that, a critical inspection on how the historiography has fallen into the pitfalls by simply retelling the "historical facts" is much needed.

I thus want to pose my research question: what new insights into the encounter history could we gain through scrutinizing both history and historiography?

Section II and section III will further explain the necessity and significance of asking this question. As I shall expand in section II, the logic and shape of the original history have continued to haunt the interpretation of that very passage of history, which could disguise certain ingrained partiality and ignorance of the historical actors. Such inescapable disguising force can be theorized as cognitive pitfalls. I will identify three major cognitive pitfalls that have predominantly shaped the later people's perspectives and narrations of the original encounter: the fulfillment of certain cross-cultural exchange would be taken for granted by the initiating party, the cultural autonomy of the Other tended to be neglected, and finally, remarkable structural similarities between the historical China and Europe during the Sixteenteenth and Seventeenth centuries would further exaggerate the misunderstandings caused by the first two pitfalls.

Section III will take the initial observations in section II one step further by pointing out one particularly interesting phenomenon of historiography—different parties involved in the same historical encounter have customarily prioritized completely different events and outcomes of the original encounter, which gave birth to the local versions of stories told on the same passage of history. Such historiographical gap, as I will analyze, is far more complex than the superficial difference in contents, but the gap in content profoundly embodies the functioning of cognitive pitfalls. Their stories were deemed to be different from the moment of telling because of their inveterately different perspectives when understanding their Self, the Other, and their encounters. Therefore, not only will section II and section III fully expanded on why and how I shall address my initial question —the literatures I have selected to review and critique typify the flaws and limitations I have observed in cross-cultural research, moreover, the initial cognitive pitfalls and the subsequent historiographical gap I have theorized will also offer a solid structure to conduct a more specific case study, which will examine Chinese export porcelain during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries, and the scholarships on it produced in China and the Netherlands.

Section IV, thus, will start to experiment with the concepts I propose in II and III. With reference to the theory of cultural biography, I have identified one contesting field to examine the actual functioning of cognitive pitfalls, that is, the so-called cultural inherency of object. Through comparing the historical Chinese and Dutchmen's various conceptions of porcelain's materiality, one fundamental characteristic of development and discourses involved in cross-cultural encounters will be revealed, that is, fluidity. Or to say, neither similarity nor difference, neither favor nor resent, neither exportation nor reception could be predicted or taken for granted. It would be futile to conjecture on the chain effects without penetrating into the specific social dynamics of one particular encounter at a specific timing. One has to remain wary of how the divergent historical experience and trajectories of China and Europe before, during, and after the encounter had shaped each party's outlooks.

Section V, however, aims to respond to both section III and section IV. The historiographic gap as observed in section III offers another important inspiration. Given the omnipresent cognitive pitfalls, it seems that most existent narratives are unconsciously biased to some existent. I thus decide to alternate my focus to look at what has not been told in the canonized narratives. I have identified one forgotten subcategory under export porcelain, that is, amorous and erotic porcelain. This specific subcategory's not being narrated does not necessarily escape from the cognitive pitfalls of history either, and this might be why it was absent in the legitimate narratives. However, an examination of its absence functions in a way that deconstructs the existent narratives and also the underlying cognitive pitfalls. Therefore, to explain why this particular subcategory does not *fit,* V.i and V.ii will respectively deconstruct the national discourses on export porcelain in Chinese and Netherlandish scholarships.

Meanwhile, although amorous porcelain have not been canonized within the scholarship of export porcelain, now that we are aware of their presence in the original East-West exchanges, it might be possible to associate this under-represented category so with other contemporary socials trends and dynamics so as to provide better-informed and better-contextualized interpretations of the historical East-West encounters. Nevertheless, the fluidity of cross-cultural perceptions as I realized in IV will keep me alert of the specific direction and extent of certain relevance. I aim to identify in both European and Chinese contexts, the alternative presence of amorous porcelain, or to say, how this untold category might have resonated with, or converged with the told, thus offer a fuller picture of the Self, the Other, and the historical encounter.

II. Rethinking the early modern East-West encounter—the pitfall of history and how it shaped historiography

In Section II, some cross-cultural and comparative studies will be reviewed and analyzed to not only to show comprehensive awareness of various aspects before moving to the specific case of export porcelain, but these selected authors and studies also exemplify some typical approaches and historical views. The ultimate purpose of Section II is thus to theorize—as I have identified—the pitfalls and challenges the

history itself presented in front of us when we attempt to study the East-West encounter. These pitfalls and challenges could be briefly explained through three steps. Firstly, can we directly set off studying the so-called East-West encounter as it was? No, the first pitfall regards the rationality of the history itself. The *happening* of the East-West encounter should not be taken for granted. Secondly, now that we suddenly enter all these exciting cross-cultural situations like exchange, dialogue, interaction, etc., what should we ensure for each of these cultures? Individuality? Essentiality?[1] No, we need to fully establish the autonomy of each culture before examining cross-cultural situations. This is the second pitfall of history because the historical actors did not have a consciousness of cultural autonomy at all. Neither did most subsequent narrators until today.[2] Thirdly, more specifically with the Sino-Euro encounters during the Sixteenth to Eighteenth centuries, is it legitimate for us to call it an "early modern" encounter? No and Yes, and this is the biggest pitfall or challenge this passage of history carries. A direct adaption of the term "early modern" is problematic because the modernization narrative is basically a Western historical concept and is derived from the Western historical experience and trajectory. But the case of "early modern" encounter is particularly tricky because the Chinese society, though largely invisible in the Western modernization narrative for centuries, happened to exemplify considerate "early modern" conditions during the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth century, which presented as huge a cognitive pitfall to the historical actors as to us now. By the end of Section II, I hope it will become clear why I hold these skeptical attitudes towards history and historiography alike, and why I insist on scrutinizing history as well as historiographies from both parties so as to gain new insights into the encounter history as well as in the historical Chinese and European societies.

II.i. Do not take the happening of East-West encounter for granted—solution to the first pitfall

It is not difficult to understand the shaping force of the first pitfall as long as two yes and no questions are kept in mind: did there have to be cross-cultural exchange, and: was cross-cultural exchange necessarily a *good* thing? No. What I am appealing to here is to think beyond the Western positivist outlook, to think beyond the logic of the original initiators of encounter, and not to silence the accepting party any more. In short, do not take the happening and progressing of East-West encounter for granted. One branch of the encounter history that strongly typified this pitfall was undoubtedly the Jesuit mission. Purely initiated by the European side, the Jesuit mission intended to spread not only Christianity but also the European system of knowledge, which was deeply imbued with an egoistic worldview. The study of missionary history without any reflective or critical consciousness, can easily fall into an ignorant dead loop.

[1] By "individuality" I simply mean each culture is literally separate from one another. While the "essentiality" of culture is charged with the Hegelian belief in certain ultimate and unchanged spirit of each culture, which point of view I do not agree in this thesis. I want to emphasize a dynamic autonomy where the developmental trajectory and logic only makes sense locally, while parallels with other cultures also exist in abstract social dynamics.

[2] It is easier to understand that to misunderstand the Other surely fails to acknowledge the autonomy of the Other, but meanwhile, it should be born in mind that to overly appreciate the Self as the center of all civilizations also fails to acknowledge the autonomy of the Self. To establish true autonomy requires simultaneous self-reflection and critique on the Other, and this is also the standpoint I aspires to have in this thesis. In the end I could not deny the fact that I am a Chinese scholar who examines the issue of East-West Encounter. As we shall see, there have been few scholars who could escape from his or her national biases when it comes to cross-cultural research.

One of the best scholars of this topic nowadays, Nicolas Standaert, was a typical victim of this in his article “The Transmission of Renaissance Culture in Seventeenth-century China”.[3] The fundamental limitation of Standaert’s study is, that he seemed to be so deeply caught in the Eurocentric and positivist mindset of the 17th-century missionaries that he could not examine this passage of history critically from a more abstract viewpoint. More specifically, he not only analyzed the three phases of the transmission of European philosophical and intellectual tradition in the Seventeenth century China, but also he tried to explain *why* these transmissions were successful or not.[4] However, such logic is completely upside down, or Eurocentric, because his presumption was that the Chinese should have welcomed the transmission, and that he took cultural exchange *for granted*, which is exactly one of those long-lasting flaws I want to criticize. Many western scholars studying the early modern East-West exchange are increasingly aware of the fact that, in comparison with the prosperous cultural adaption and fusion that occurred in Europe, the contemporary Chinese were never as enthusiastic about cross-cultural exchange and fusion.[5] So for some of them, the absence of cross-cultural aftermaths on the Chinese stage means that there is little to study, as Standaert suggested in the conclusion of this article: “this article has paid only brief attention to the reception of the transmission that, as a whole, was very limited”.[6] Nevertheless, the absence of this reception is exactly what needs to be emphasized so as to penetrate into the more indigenous aspects of Chinese culture involved in this cross-cultural dialogue.[7] Although Standaert attempted to briefly explain the limited acceptance in China, he attributed it to some very general presumptions, saying for instance that “an essential characteristic of transmission is that during the first phase a given culture accepts only those elements of the other culture that in one way or another are suited to its pre-existing pattern”.[8] However, such an account itself appears to be self-contradictory—how would he explain the high level of acceptance in Japan or Latin America (which Standeart brought in as examples of successful transmission), where there also was little “pre-existing pattern”?

Standaert correctly pointed out that the institutional practice and philosophical sophistication in Chinese society were already highly developed in the 17th-century,[9] but it was problematic to go on to suggest that this was the reason why the Chinese did not welcome an input from European culture.[10] Anybody has to realize, for Chinese or Japanese or Latin American societies, that whatever the indigenous society and culture were like, and whether or not the fusion fostered the social or cultural development, the

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[3] Nicolas Standaert, “The Transmission of Renaissance Culture in Seventeenth-century China,” *Renaissance Studies* 17, no. 3 (2003): 367-391.
[4] The three phases are as follows, the early spontaneous diffusion typified by Matteo Ricci, a systematic knowledge transmission project initiated by Niccolò Longobardo, and finally, a failed attempt to introduce the Aristotelian philosophy as the basis of Chinese education system. Standaert, 367
[5] Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, “Scratching the Surface. On the Dutch in Taiwan and China,” in *Mediating Netherlandish Art and Material Culture in Asia*, edited by Michael North and Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, and Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 183-214.
[6] Standaert, 391.
[7] One party or the other tended to be “silenced” ever since the original encounter, and the silent reaction has been considered as uninteresting for research—this is indeed one crucial reason why I will later focus on what is absent from the canonic narrative.
[8] Standaert, 369
[9] The parallel “early modern” conditions in Chinese and European societies during this period will be expanded in II.iii.
[10] Standaert, 368-369.

Jesuit mission was first and foremost a situation of *unexpected* Eurocentric enforcement. No cultural transmission should be taken for granted with a Eurocentric mindset. I emphasize this as critique, but not as a condemnation of the history itself. Nevertheless, for scholars nowadays, it is highly important to hold such a critical viewpoint when looking at this passage of history, because if they do not, like Standeart, it seems that they are looking at the history completely from the perspective of the Seventeenth-century missionaries, but un-self-consciously.

For example, it is logically flawed to end up with a sorry and sad conclusion like Standaert's saying that "despite the efforts of the Jesuit missionaries at consciously or unconsciously introducing Renaissance culture, during this whole period the Chinese remained the principal actors: they ultimately decided whether they wanted to adopt it or not".[11] It is amazing to find this is the last sentence and the conclusion of Standaert's article, since this should have been the premise and not the conclusion—this has almost nothing to do with academic research, but this is a common sense, of course the acceptors decided whether they wanted to adopt or not. Why could such common sense suddenly become invalid when studying cross-cultural exchange? It is because Standaert fell into the pitfall of history—he was looking from the original Eurocentric and cultural-superior perspective of the 17th-century missionaries. There are multiple examples of this in his article, and I will analyze two more dominant negative results. The first disadvantage of such presumptions when studying the early modern East-West encounter is that certain reactions in it will not be explained by serious and specifically contextualized reasons. For example, when Standaert tries explain the failed attempt to introduce the Aristotelian philosophy as the basis of Chinese education system, he analyzed that "at that time, however, Aristotelian philosophy did not correspond to the main streams in Chinese thought and was not accepted. […] In the eyes of Chinese scholars, knowledge and memory were not located in the brains but in the heart, which was considered the ruler of intelligence. With this response, his project failed definitively".[12] I myself am not very familiar with the transmission of Aristotelian philosophy, but the confrontation of two philosophical systems involved profound traditions and complex contexts from both sides, so it is certainly too light-hearted to attribute the failure to a random and literal point. Standeart clearly presupposed acceptance rather than rejection, thus the limited reception was literally explained by some highly superficial reasons.

The second and more serious disadvantage is that the transmission would be automatically considered as a *good* thing for the acceptor. As Standaert explains how the 17th-century missionaries deployed and interpreted the Chinese philosophical tradition as connected with Christianity, he praised, "in short, Ricci discerned Stoicism in ancient Confucianism. […] He was the right person in the right place, who–due to his Renaissance background–was able to respond to the requests and questions that were raised by his Chinese interlocutors and thus to transmit Renaissance culture in interaction with them".[13] Looking at this encounter in 21st-century, Standaert did not feel necessary to critique it at all but instead only looked at

[11] Standaert, 391.
[12] Standaert, 387, 391.
[13] Ibid., 373.

the positive aspects and praised it. Standaert did mention the existence of missionaries' literal tricks—"some parts he [Matteo Ricci] translated, some he paraphrased, some were abbreviated, others were expanded, with modifications to adapt to Confucian or Christian thought"— but surprisingly, Standaert was highly mild and uncritical of such manipulative tricks.[14] It seems that after four centuries, Standeart still did not want to admit that such an interpretation of Confucianism was primarily a misunderstanding, distortion and manipulation. Worst of all, he seems to have this assumption that it was primarily a *good* thing that Renaissance culture was spread to China, even if this was done with certain manipulative tricks. I do not deny that clashes make culture more vibrant and plural, and that there did exist many Chinese acceptors interested to know more, but it is nonetheless Eurocentric to think that European culture was *needed* by Chinese culture, much as it will it be Sino-centric to think that Chinese porcelain was *needed* by European aesthetics.[15] No party or culture should be endowed with superiority. It is invalid to account any early modern encounter as a "right" thing in a "right" place. No culture had to be rescued or enlightened. Exchange can have enriching outcomes, but each indigenous tradition and society canalso develop prosperously on its own.

I want to reemphasize one key principal in prevention from falling into the first pitfall, which is that early the modern East-West encounter should not be taken for granted. It is true that Jesuit missions fostered the development of many natural sciences in China, but it is highly problematic to keep following the perspective of the historical missionaries as if they were doing an intrinsically "right" or "good" thing, since nobody in China expected or wanted this beforehand. To see whether the mission was well accepted or not, one must be wary of the historical missionaries' perspective as though people outside Europe were desperately waiting to be rescued and converted, and not regard the failure of transmission as unnatural or perplexing. Instead, the logic should be subtly turned over, where the un-acceptance was natural, while acceptance was unnatural and needs to be examined. This hosws that it sometimes involved violent enforcement, which has to look beyond the logic of the historical actors, be it either the missionaries or the Chinese acceptors, and be unequivocally critical with both parties' motivations and reactions.

Standaert's study is a typical example where I consider it insufficient to follow the original logic of history. He failed to provide cogent and new insights into the missionary history, and neither did he point out many inherent Eurocentric mentalities imbued in Jesuit missions that were profoundly connected with the later progress of East-West relations. Standaert only emphasized the cultural imperative strategy of China and how the Chinese side occupied the dominant position in the exchange. However, before stating this, it is crucial to acknowledge that the original mentality of the early modern Jesuit missions involved a strong Eurocentric sense of cultural superiority, as was also fully embodied in their encounters with Latin America and the Indies. Therefore, it is limited to only mention the Chinese-dominant situation of the

[14] Ibid., 376.
[15] A Sino-centric discourse on how Chinese export porcelain rescued European people from the horrible Baroque style will be critiqued in V.i.

missions in China, and only by realizing the inherent cultural superiority the European missionaries had before confronting China could the intensity of this clash be revealed.

II.ii. The unacknowledged cultural autonomies—the second pitfall

To follow up with a possible solution for the first pitfall: cross-cultural exchange should not be taken for granted. It was never automatically a right thing at a right time. What this deduction further suggests is that serious attention be paid to each culture, the different historical timelines and the development trajectories of each society. The autonomy of each cultural tradition must be emphasized in first place. As can be seen from the example of missionary studies, the significance of this principal could be easily neglected in cross-cultural studies, because most historical actors did not fully acknowledge or appreciate the autonomy or uniqueness of the other culture. In cross-cultural studies, the flawed or limited outcome will often not be instantly explicit because such studies seem to have followed the logic of the original history, as I have analyzed, while this repetition of the original logic continues to fall into the pitfall of history, and therefore cannot provide new insights.

I want to temporarily turn to another different but closely related field, comparative history, to better reveal the pitfall of the unacknowledged cultural autonomy.[16] Whether the autonomy and uniqueness of each tradition are taken into account or not will directly determine whether the comparison is legitimate or effective. Very often, comparative studies are done with a strongly one-sided standpoint. For example, Chinese tradition is often brought in to serve as a foil for the European tradition so as to make a particular study look more inclusive or global. However, the reference to Chinese history in these studies tends to remain on the surface with no inside-out recognition of its autonomy. These studies are primarily concerned with the European tradition, but want to look for something similar but exotic to broaden the scope. One typical example that falls into this unfruitful mode is the volume *Antiquarianism and Intellectual Life in Europe and China*, particularly the fourth chapter, "Comparing Antiquarianisms: A View from Europe", written by Peter Miller.[17]

Miller chose four moments and compared the status of antiquarianism studies in European and Chinese traditions—"its question is as much 'Why is the shape of European antiquarianism not like China's?' as it is 'Why is the shape of Chinese antiquarianism not like Europe's?'[18] However, as we read on, Miller tends to superficially check what the Chinese counterpart did or did not do without penetrating into its indigenous origin. It is difficult not to be skeptical about this article by Miller starting from the first pair

[16] In this thesis, I want to be very conscious with the difference between cross-cultural studies and comparative studies. The former examines the actual encounter and exchange that did happen between cultures, such as studies on trade or Jesuit missionaries. The later usually starts with a thematic concern and examine how it was embodied in different traditions and human societies, while there might not exist actual confrontation in regard to this theme.

[17] Peter N. Miller, "Comparing Antiquarianisms: A View from Europe," in *Antiquarianism and Intellectual Life in Europe and China, 1500-1800,* edited by Peter N. Miller and François Louis (University of Michigan Press, 2012), 103-148.

[18] Peter N. Miller and François Louis, "Introduction: Antiquarianism and Intellectual Life in Europe and China," in *Antiquarianism and Intellectual Life in Europe and China, 1500-1800,* edited by Peter N. Miller and François Louis (University of Michigan Press, 2012), 14.

of comparisons he presents. The first parallel tradition he points to is "the monograph tradition", which he starts by introducing the ancient Roman tradition of writing monographs. Then he introduces the Chinese counterpart in a way that I consider highly unserious; "but what if the Roman Empire had lasted for another 1000 years? Then Varro might today have the status of his near-contemporary, Sima Qian (145– 86 BCE), who gave Chinese dynastic history its lasting shape. Sima Qian's *Shiji* is a history of China from the mythical Yellow Emperor down to the author's own".[19] The timelines of Chinese and European histories up to this moment had been largely independent of one another with little direct communication, and the superficial contemporaneity of Varro and Sima Qian has little critical significance, so the incentive to choose these two to compare was already not well supported. And one can not blame history for having ended the Roman Empire 1000 years too early so that the historian's (Varro) otherwise high status was sacrificed. I regard it as unfruitful to make such romanticized and anachronistic connections without explicitly pointing out what the author actually wanted to say.

Meanwhile, the whole volume actually has one important mission to promote the study of European antiquarianism in Western scholarship, but sometimes, the Chinese counterpart and its historiography are manipulated and expropriated to help this promotion of antiquarianism as a whole. The strictly comparable antiquarianism tradition in China has a much smaller scope than in Europe, and early history and monograph writings belonged to a separate scholarly branch rather than antiquarianism. It could be inspiring to simply compare these two monograph-writing traditions in the light of their different contexts. Nevertheless, it is historiographically confused for Miller to go so far as to say:

> One reason why the Chinese antiquarian tradition may have escaped careful attention is that it was incorporated into a living mainstream practice of history from the very beginning. Unlike in Europe, where the success of Thucydides, Livy, and Tacitus, to choose only a few examples, emphasized the distinctiveness of Varro's antiquitates, in China both diachronic and synchronic studies were subsumed into "History" and thus excluded no separate practice that could be revived later.[20]

As I have critiqued Standeart's study on Jesuit missionaries early on, here Miller's logic is again upside-down, as if it is "wrong" and "sad" that China lacked an antiquarian tradition with similar scope and focus. He again took things for granted when it comes to a completely different tradition and culture. Even if one wants to point out how different the two traditions are, it is logically flawed to take too many presumptions when asking "why the Chinese antiquarian tradition may have escaped careful attention"—instead, one should set out by realizing that similar productions (like monographs) in Chinese did originally fall into a different set of traditions, and the antiquarian branch had a completely different origin, concern, form, and purpose. Then is there nothing worthwhile to be compared? No either, but the different contents should be locally contextualized without being *judged,* while the parallels in a higher dimension, that is, in intentions and patterns, need to be examined with a universal outlook. Also, when it comes to specific contents, it is acceptable to directly approximate the Other to the Self when writing for the general public,

[19] Miller, "Comparing Antiquarianisms: A View from Europe," 106.
[20] Ibid.

but in comparative research, it is misdirecting, irresponsible, and risks being Eurocentric by saying "the next important contribution to the development of a 'Varronian' tradition in China comes during the Song".[21] It was not until this sentence that I fully realized that Miller was basically trying to make sense of the Chinese counterpart by imposing the European framework. I can provide numerous quotations to support this critique, and I will analyze one more of them:

> We do not find this step from Petrarch to Poggio in China. From the giants of the later eleventh century, we have to wait until the later seventeenth for a comparable step "forward" from the imaginative to the analytical. […] To the Europeanist, the Ming attitude to antiquities—or at least what scholars assert of it—looks very close to what we might describe as a "neoclassicism". […] Indeed, if we compare Ming China with later seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe we indeed find a similar production of manuals and catalogs […].[22]

Miller's flawed logic cannot be more obvious—he was scratching on the surface to find the comparable "Poggio moment" in the Chinese context. Nothing was mentioned what happened in China between the 11th-century and 17th-century. Four different dynasties passed, and one of them was the non-Han Mongolian-ruled Yuan dynasty, which involved huge political and social transformations. Without acknowledging the indigenous philosophical, social, and ideological trajectories in China and Europe respectively, it makes little sense to happily point out that specific 17th-century Chinese attitude was close to "neoclassicism". Even if it seemed similar on the surface, it might be concerned with completely different things underneath.

I will refer more to the book *China and Historical Capitalism* again, but it is worthwhile to discuss the following expert from its "Introduction" now:

> By the last quarter of that century [18th-century], Western thinks were coming to perceive China in a new light that assumed Western secular as well as religious superiority. […] Adam Smith […] nevertheless considered [China] to have been 'long stationary' and to have changed little in terms of 'cultivation, industry, and populousness' since the time of Marco Polo. […] We cite him because Chinese historical stagnation became a cliché over the following century, a cliché that European social theory mobilized to develop its understanding of capitalism. […] Western thinkers were increasingly perceiving Asia as a whole, and China as a part of it, as historically static.[23]

This paragraph demonstrates some origins of Miller's mode of imposing, contrasting, and self-superiority. Miller's flaw here—to impose the European progressive mode onto the Other and to judge Chinese historical experience as non-progressive or unchanged—is nothing new. U typifies a long-lasting Eurocentric discourse on the changeless China that has emerged since the late 18th-century, which subsequently caused a generalizing tendency and hierarchic mentality when looking at China.[24] Miller has no excuse from being criticized for showing absolutely no interest or concern for what happened in China

[21] Ibid., 107.
[22] Ibid., 123.
[23] Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (New York: Random House, 1937), 55, quoted in Gregory Blue and Timothy Brook, "Introduction," in *China and Historical Capitalism: Genealogies of Sinological Knowledge*, edited by Timothy Brook and Gregory Blue (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 4.
[24] One of the purpose of my later case study, is thus to examine amorous export porcelain in this 18th-century context of misunderstanding "China".

during the whole six centuries when saying things like "from the giants of the later eleventh century, we have to wait until the later seventeenth for a comparable step 'forward' from the imaginative to the analytical".[25] It simply cannot be more Eurocentric to think the step from the imaginative to the analytical as a developmental progress. As Blue and Brook proposed, "to understand China better we must begin to see past the narrative of modern world history as the 'European miracle,' and so develop less Eurocentric ways of understanding the world."[26]

Nevertheless, what does this comparative study of antiquarianism ultimately aim for? We might want to go back to the "Introduction" of this book to inspect a bit more. The Introduction starts by stating how the study of European antiquarianism has lately become a respectful field of scholarly research. Rather than firstly explaining *why* a comparison between Europe and China is necessary and inspiring in regard to antiquarianism, it introduces the Chinese form of it like this,

> This dim recognition of the important and troubling proximity of the old antiquarian and the modern historian is made still more complicated when we turn from European antiquarianism, for which of course the term was "coined," to non-European antiquarianisms. In this volume we restrict ourselves to a comparison with Chinese antiquarianism, probably the most substantial of these traditions. […] In addition we need also to reflect on whether 'antiquarianism' is meaningfully applied to China at all. […] What was antiquarianism? It is a European word adapted for a European phenomenon.[27]

It seems that the authors started with a presumption that antiquarianism is a strictly European term, a European phenomenon, and a European concept. Starting with such a presumption, they looked into non-European cultures as if to make sense of non-European traditions with this European concept, and that is why they would have such need to "reflect on whether 'antiquarianism' is meaningfully applied to China at all".[28] Whether to start with a solidified local concept and to examine how a counterpart from another culture fit into this concept, or, to start with local trajectories in each culture and examine their differences and similarities on a higher level—these two attitudes differ in a very subtle way, but I think only the latter attitude leads to a legitimate and fruitful comparison. This volume clearly follows the former attitude, that it started with the concern for the European tradition and found a comparable Chinese counterpart—only because it is the most substantial among all the non-European specimens. Nevertheless, this does not mean that this study is not wary of Eurocentric standpoint. Indeed, this volume is in fact very self-conscious and careful to avoid such an accusation: "Is this not, the critic might object, just another form of insidious 'Orientalism,' reading the Other in "our" own language and thus inevitably a "colonizing" act?"[29]

It is very self-reflective to pose this question and show awareness of post-colonial discourse, but I feel confused when the authors go directly back to the colonial period and rely on an outdated and retrogressive ideology—

[25] Miller, "Comparing Antiquarianisms: A View from Europe," 107.
[26] Brook and Blue, 5.
[27] Miller and Louis, "Introduction: Antiquarianism and Intellectual Life in Europe and China," 1-2.
[28] Ibid., 2.
[29] Ibid., 8.

> Is this not, […] inevitably a "colonizing" act? Leibniz can help us here. In a letter of 1708 he characterized China as an "Oriental Europe." He meant by this that there was a community, or continuity, of interests and history binding together East and West. The Europeans had developed better solutions to some things, the Chinese to others. Hence his equally stunning phrase, describing contact between Europe and China as "un commerce de lumière." Leibniz believed that Europeans could learn from Chinese as much as Chinese could learn from Europeans. This is our view as well.[30]

Unfortunately, they are referring to Leibniz far too literally here. Saying this at the beginning of the 18th-century, Leibniz was deeply charged with the cultural politics of early modern East-West dynamics.[31] As I have analyzed with the Jesuit missionary case, it was typically early modern Eurocentric positivist wishful thinking to praise the East-West exchange as reciprocal—nobody in China expected these enforced transmissions, and no exchange should be taken for granted as automatically *good*. The authors of this volume still failed to recognize that to call China as an "Oriental Europe" is deeply charged with the early modern Eurocentric mentality. Why were any society and civilization with a considerable complexity to be perceived with Europe as this paradigm? Calling China an "Oriental Europe" might ensure the individuality of China, but definitely not the ontology or autonomy of China. The praise of the East-West contact as "un commerce de lumière" was also completely derived from the utilitarian wish of the European side. The early 18th-century Chinese court tried every single means, including raising taxation and prohibition of export to minimize European traders' profit, so as to prohibit the trade with Europe, as I will discuss in detail later with the case study of export porcelain.[32] Indeed, in our post-modern globalized world today, there definitely exists a commercially reciprocal East-West relationship, but it is ideologically anachronistic to directly borrow an early modern statement to endorse the now. Thus it is single-minded to declare "this is our view as well". You might be saying the same thing literally, but the underlying philosophical shapes of the age, power relationships, and world institutional orders are completely different and divergent. "Leibniz can help us here"—I am afraid not! Nevertheless, their flaw perfect exemplifies what I call to be trapped in the pitfall of history.

Despite the obvious ideological anachronism, the volume still makes every effort to obtain a thorough understanding of the Chinese part. The authors of the introduction were particularly conscious not to misunderstand either part by overly emphasizing parallels, but declares instead that the ultimate purpose is to better understand how the two were different from each other, and Max Weber is quoted to endorse this purpose:

> Such a comparative study would not aim at finding 'analogies' and 'parallels', as is done by those engrossed in the currently fashionable enterprise of constructing general schemes of development. The aim should, rather, be precisely the opposite: to identify and define the individuality of each development, the characteristics which made the one conclude in a manner so different from that of the other.[33]

[30] Ibid.
[31] John M. Hobson, The Eastern Origins of Western Civilisation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 7-10.
[32] This point will be expanded in V.ii.
[33] Max Weber, "Concluding Note on Method," The Agrarian Sociology of Ancient Civilizations, trans. R. I. Frank (London: Verso, 1998), 385, quoted in Miller and Louis, "Introduction: Antiquarianism and Intellectual Life in Europe and China," 1-2.

Writing this at the turn to 20th-century, Max Weber explicitly indicated here that he was responding to an earlier generation of generalized and romanticized parallels. It was reasonable for him to turn to focus more on the individuality of each party at that time point. It could be contextualized that Max Weber belonged to a period when the individuality of many non-western studies was frustratingly sought after among Western scholars. For example, in art history, Ludwig Bachhofer, Wölfflin's student, was among the first generation of European scholars to devote their full academic attention to Asian art.[34] His *Chinesische Kunst*, published in 1923, was one of the earliest monographs on Chinese art.[35] During the last century, numerous studies have been solely devoted to various non-Western cultures, and the individuality has indeed been established to a great extent. I feel thus surprised to see a 2012 publication automatically and fully borrowed Max Weber's attitudes without explaining the historiographical gap.

A true non-Eurocentric outlook would be able to acknowledge that East and West are the same on a more abstract level. To be highly cautious and afraid of talking about parallels means that one has not truly looked beyond the Eurocentric framework, while a deliberate emphasis on individuality under such circumstances would not provide real insights either, as part of this volume on antiquarianism more or less shows. As is seen in the "Introduction", the logic of these authors started with an unconscious presumption that antiquarianism is literally a European issue, while they consciously tried to avoid being Eurocentric or generalizing the Chinese part by declaring that "in fact, the pairing was designed to determine precisely what made the two 'unlike'".[36] The emphasis of the comparison thus turns into using the alternative performance of the Other to re-explain the Self, but I think this logic is partly flawed and too limited for a comparative study. For example, correctly observed that the Chinese antiquarian study in the 10th-century was mostly textually engaged, and not as engaged with material as the European tradition. However, it is problematic to say that "there might need a cross-cultural comparison to realize that the material turn cannot be taken for granted as in any way 'evolutionary' but was a move that must be explained".[37] Multiple other alternative situations in one culture were presented to point out things to be explained when studying the other's development, but I do not think this logic makes sense—the material turn is of course evolutionary in the European context, and it does need to be thoroughly explained, but what on earth is the function of the Chinese counterpart here? Why does one need to wait until seeing the alternative situation in the Chinese tradition before one realizes that the European material turn must be explained? Of course, not to take the Self for granted could be one positive outcome of comparison in general, but it is too cheap a function in a comparative study if the Chinese counterpart is simply a pool of alternative situations, vice versa.

It seems to me that this volume's attitude towards cultural parallels and divergences has been way too obscure: "we would be much closer to understanding what it meant to think like an early modern

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[34] Lillian Lan-ying Tseng, "Traditional Chinese Painting through the Modern European Eye—The Case of Ludwig Bachhofer," in *Tradition and Modernity: Comparative Perspective*, edited by Sun Kangyi and Meng Hua (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2007), 508.
[35] Ludwig Bachhofer, *Chinesische Kunst* (Breslau: F. Hirt, 1923), quoted in Tseng, 512.
[36] Miller and Louis, "Introduction: Antiquarianism and Intellectual Life in Europe and China," 10.
[37] Ibid., 8.

European. The still bigger provocation might then be to turn this same spotlight on China”.[38] It does not expand any parallels, but tries to ensure the “individuality” of each culture, to such an extent, that I do not see the necessity of comparison any more. Since the presumption that antiquarianism is European this volume opens with, it has not endowed true autonomy to either the European or the Chinese trajectories, where as, if this were properly done, there is no need to avoid parallels, and the two autonomic entities’ parallels on a higher level would provide new insights. This volume, instead, only ensures surface individuality.

I want to go on to argue that, after Western and non-Western studies have developed independently and prosperously for a century, the purpose of comparative studies nowadays should no longer be to promote the individuality of either party, but to honestly re-look at the parallels from various dimensions. The increasing understanding of the Self and the Other follows a gradual and circulative process. It is through a re-look at deeper parallels of two individual parties that certain abstract patterns could be revealed, in light of which the previously static concept of individuality could evolve into a more dynamic concept of autonomy. I think the new comparative study should aim for autonomy, not individuality, as I will discuss the works of Martin Powers, Craig Clunas, and Timothy Brook. Their similarity is that they are all western Chinese art historians or historians. They have studied the indigenous Chinese trajectories from inside out by reading original Chinese texts, while they also have western intellectual and cultural backgrounds, which makes their comparative studies particularly extensive, cogent, and effective.

II.iii. Establishing a dynamic autonomy for either East or West—solution to the second pitfall

In the article “Imitation and Reference in China’s Pictorial Tradition”, Powers introduced the Chinese tradition in comparative perspective with the European counterpart, and he contextualized the art historical concepts of imitation and reference in the broader tradition of antiquarianism and Classicism.[39] Powers observed the difference in content—scope and focus—between the Chinese and European traditions as well, but he presented the difference in a more egalitarian and effective manner than Miller,

> Of course archaism as a phenomenon occurs in Europe as well, but classicism as a higher-level cultural practice is usually reserved for the West while similar social practices in China are restricted to the category “archaism,” implying some fundamental fissure between Europe and China. This paper explores what might happen if we questioned that assumption and tried to theorize classicism, archaism, and antiquarianism as by-products of canon formation. This is not to deny interesting differences between Chinese and European classicism; indeed, those differences are the subject of this essay.[40]

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[38] Ibid., 13.
[39] Martin Powers, “Imitation and Reference in China’s Pictorial Tradition,” in *Reinventing the Past: Archaism and Antiquarianism in Chinese Art and Visual Culture*, edited by Wu Hung (Chicago: Center for the Art of East Asia, University of Chicago; and Art Media Resources, 2010), 103.
[40] Ibid.

The three sentences here exactly followed the three-step model I have early on suggested, inherent difference, common pattern, and dynamic autonomy. Firstly, one needs to locate the differences in the trajectories of each party, and to fully acknowledge that the different situations were deeply rooted in long-lasting indigenous traditions. The difference should not be discussed in Miller's way, where the alternative situation is unusual and the Other becomes the foil to foreground the Self—"comparison with China, where the supremacy of textual access to the past was unchallenged, helps us recognize the novelty of this material turn."[41] Yes, the material turn was novel within the European context, but the difference does not mean the European turn was more novel than the Chinese turn. As a progress of intellectual and social development, not having material turn is as complex as having material turn. Indeed, to be obsessed with the idea of progressive development is a typical flaw coming from the positivist and linear discourse of pre-modern Western historiography. Therefore, the difference of having a material turn or not does not mean one society progressed while the other did not, it simply suggests a "fundamental fissure between Europe and China", as Powers noted. Or, as Blue and Brook remarked at the beginning of *China and Historical Capitalism*, "the historical experience of the world has been as much the history of China as of the West. This modest fact has found recognition in the West only recently, and still only in certain circles".[42] This is the first step, to acknowledge the inherent difference and equal substantiality in historical experience.

Powers went on to suggest that rather than limiting the focus on the detailed difference between classicism, archaism, and antiquarianism, that is, rather than being concerned with the surface differences in scope and focus between these similar forms, it is crucial to acknowledge that these are all references to the past, and he coined these down to their common trigger in any human society, the formation of canons. This is the second step, to summarize the commonalties of the difference from a higher perspective: "although nationalist and Orientalist discourses have favored exclusionist narratives of European Classicism, it will become clear that what sinologists call *fugu* (returning to the ancients) is not significantly different from what historians of Euro-American art call Classicism, and I will treat the two as local instances of a single phenomenon".[43]

The third step is to establish the local autonomy under common human patterns that is totally different from the previous volume, where the authors started by declaring antiquarianism "is a European word adapted for a European phenomenon", and then looked at non-European situations by imposing the European frameworks on them by saying that "the next important contribution to the development of a "Varronian" tradition in China comes during the Song".[44] When comparing artistic references to the past, Powers rejected to directly use the English translation "imitation/reference" to discuss *fa*, but he first traced the Chinese character *fa*'s changing usage in Chinese language from the 5th-century BC ceremonial context,

[41] ibid.,127.
[42] Brook and Blue, 1.
[43] Powers, 104.
[44] Miller, "Comparing Antiquarianisms: A View from Europe", 2, 106.

to the 4th-century BC political context, and finally to the 9th-century art critical context.[45] This was a crucial step towards autonomy because it contextualized the concept of reference in Chinese art in a long-lasting and complex fabric of society and ideology. During the 10th to 11th-century, after several art critics had written on the history of painting and established a canon, *fa* started to designate the canonical styles of great masters.[46] Powers then points out how this phenomenon was both similar and different from the early modern European situation where authors like Vasari also started to establish canons. The early modern European ideal of imitation aimed at naturalism, or, elevation of naturalism, and the artistic idealism was more or less singular until the modernist movement in Western art. Nevertheless, Chinese painting already attained an art-historical pluralism during late 11th-century, each *fa* was linked to a particular historical moment and its value, and there started to emerge art historical art. Does this simply mean that Chinese art or history entered the so-call "modernity" way earlier? Powers particularly emphasized the importance to avoid "nationalistically-charged historiography", and not to impose the Western developmental timeline onto non-western trajectories.[47]

> Where similarities occur we shall take them as signaling the need for a higher-level category of analysis, privileging neither East nor West, but seeking instead a theory aimed at understanding the phenomenon at hand rather than ranking East and West in hierarchies of authentic meaning. […] So the pertinent question here is, under what sorts of social formations is it possible for art historical pluralism to develop, whether recently or not? […] This issue, however, is not modernity but social dynamics.[48]

Therefore, it is the underlying social formations or dynamics rather than the surface timeline or developmental stages that need to be compared. Powers than refers to Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the market for symbolic goods, and analyzed the new social dynamics during Northern Song (906-1127), including the religious pluralism, anti-aristocratic rhetoric, legal protection of egalitarian citizenship, and an open market. The dynamics of such a society were inherently open and competitive, under which circumstances, the emergence of art-historical pluralism, and also art-historical art, were necessary consequences. "It follows that Chinese 'archaism' and European 'Classicism' can both be analyzed under a common rubric and as developing within a similar kind of social dynamic. It is only by placing both developments on a level playing field that we can fully appreciate those interesting differences which separate 'imitation' on the one hand, and *fa* or *fang* on the other"[49]—this last concluding sentence from Powers' article exactly echoes with what I emphasized as the principals of comparative history, the search of dynamic local autonomy in light of a common human pattern.

Indeed, the Western terms of periodization (early modern, modern) are too misleading because they are too suggestive regarding the specific position on the historical timeline. "Modern" literally means recent in time, or even more specifically, late 19th to early 20th-century. Following this conventional periodization,

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[45] Powers, 104-109.
[46] Ibid., 108.
[47] Ibid., 120.
[48] Ibid., 107, 111, 119.
[49] Ibid., 124.

not only would non-Western cultures be misunderstood, but the deeper social dynamics of Western society might also be overlooked. As in seen from the previous case, although social dynamics behind the art-historical pluralism in 12th-century China shared some basic phenomena of the 19th-century Europe, such as the aristocracy's losing hegemony and a more open and competitive market. However, the deeper social and philosophical roots of the happening of these similar social dynamics were again, very different. For example, the 12th-century China was predominantly an agricultural civilization, while the late 19th-century Europe was to face the grand formations brought by the Industrial Revolution. These deeper differences further determined that at which *timing*, on what *scale*, and to what *extent*, certain similar basic forms of social dynamics would evolve in each society. These inherently similar dynamics, which took local forms, thus composed a historical timeline that would only make sense for one local trajectory. The open, plural, and self-reflective society in 12th-century China was not "modern" in the same sense as that of late 19th-century Europe—this is not to put them in a hierarchy in any sense, nor advocate any inherent national characteristic or spirit, but I only re-emphasize the importance to never impose one developmental logic, timeline, and causal relationships to another time and place without fully recognizing the complex historical circumstances.

However, the pitfall of the history is that the historical actors of the early modern East-West encounter, never had a viewpoint high and dynamic enough to perceive this fundamental fact. That is why, I think, most of the European missionaries and traders would come to China with a presumption that they were doing the *right* thing, as is fully represented in Standaert's study of Jesuit missionaries' transmission of Renaissance culture, in which Standaert completely continued the original logic of those practitioners in 16th and 17th-century. After I have taken effort to compare Miller and Powers's studies, it might well be clearer how important it is to acknowledge the dynamic autonomy of each local trajectory so as not to fall into the pitfall again in research nowadays. It was historically unavoidable that the original practitioners did not have such a profound consciousness, but it would be narrow-minded, regressive, and futile, if modern scholars still failed to acknowledge that each local trajectory is autonomous, while the early modern East-West encounter should not be taken for granted, but to be critiqued and reflected. Flawed logic like Standeart's, of course, never happened only in his perception and narrative of the encounter. Since the beginning of the encounter, each party's perception and narrative of the encounter has been haunted by the logic of its local ideology and interest. Up to now I have mainly critiqued examples from Western historiography, but the Chinese party was never immune from this either, as I will analyze later with the case study. The limitation of the local historiography is, of course, nothing unnatural, but I want to investigate and address in this thesis whether it would be possible that scholars nowadays could at least be fully aware of the possible manipulation of the nationally-charged historiographies and self-reflectively look beyond it, so as to provide new insights into that extremely interesting passage of human encounter during 16th to 18th-century.

II.iv The overlapping early modern conditions in China and Europe—the third pitfall

There is one more crucial pitfall when it comes to the early modern encounter, and the subsequent narrative of this passage of history from each party. That is, the East Asian society, especially China and Japan from 16th-century onwards, greatly approximated the so-called European early modernity in various social facets. For example, both Chinese and European societies embodied various symptoms of the so-called "early modernity", such as the evolving secular and urban culture, the prosperous material culture, the expanding open market, the emerging conspicuous consumption, etc. As I early on emphasized with the emergence of art historical pluralism in 12th-century China and 19th-century Europe, there might exist a resonance of similar basic social dynamics in different places, but their timing and appearance on the historical timeline only makes sense locally. Even after the increasingly intense and complex East-West encounter since the early modern period, the triggers of many social changes and transformations are still fundamentally based locally. In the same token, the early modern resonance is completely different from the mass historical convergence in the increasingly globalized world after 20th-century, where the modernization of many places in the world was predominantly enforced by the international dynamics and a dominant world order. It is crucial to realize that most parallels between "early modern" China and Europe started with inherent tendencies, while the contemporary East-West encounter mainly expanded some of the domestic trends, like the international trades' effect on local productions and markets.

One of the most representative parallels between these two "early modern" societies lay in material culture. In the article, "*Res et verba*: conspicuous consumption in the early modern world", Peter Burke made the important observation that, starting from the Sixteenth-century, there not only existed a parallel in the explosion of capital, goods, and material culture between East and West, as Fernard Braudel had shown, but there was also a more profound resonance in the mentalities, symbols and values attached to the material.[50] He thus compared the conspicuous consumption of interior decoration and furnishings in the elite classes of Europe, China, and Japan mainly by looking at not only material objects, but also at texts that could inform us of the significance of these objects, such as lifestyle guide books, novels, and historical romances.[51] He argued that upper classes in these societies shared an increasing preoccupation with the symbolic values of material culture.[52] Burke mostly looked at each of the three cases independently, and pointed out parallels in social dynamics when relevant.

By the end of his study, Burke acknowledged that although the parallel trends of conspicuous consumption coincided with the increasing commercial contact between East and West, the connections were not the driving factor for social transformation, while two similar but independent trends within the societies were, i.e. the increasing influence of courts, the rise of cities and the new rich.[53] This I fully

[50] Peter Burke, "*Res et verba*: conspicuous consumption in the early modern world," in *Consumption and the World of Goods,* edited by John Brewer and Roy Porter (London: Routledge, 2013), 148.
[51] Ibid., 150-157.
[52] Ibid., 157.
[53] Ibid.

agree—East and West were never completely isolated, but pre-modern encounters rarely had a deciding effect on the structural mechanisms of each society, but mainly enriched or accelerated some preceding trends, such as how Chinese export artifacts catered to the extravagant desire of many early modern European courts.

The above reviewed article by Peter Burke belonged to a huge project, "Culture and Consumption in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries" that was organized during 1989 to 1991, which represented a scholarly turn from the history of production towards the history of consumption.[54] In his review of all three volume resulting from this research project, Craig Clunas severely critiqued the explicit Eurocentric standpoint of the project—there is a "contrast between the constantly repeated global metaphor of a 'world' of goods and the rigorously localized context in which the discussion takes place"—40 out of the 75 essays concerned nothing beyond England without any self-legitimization as if the Anglo-American past dominated everything regarding terms like "consumer society", "early modern consumer revolution", and "mass consumption".[55] Clunas singled out for praise that the article by Peter Burke showed the rare consciousness to include non-Western cultures when considering the rising consumer society or the so-called capitalist sprouts of Western early modernity—his article is "the sole contribution to all three volumes that dares to look away from the dazzling spectacle of the constructed West".[56] Clunas went on to claim the importance to challenge the European exceptionalism by opening out in a truly global context when approaching developmental trajectories of human societies, like early modernity or modernity.[57] One might ask when juxtaposing the earlier discussion by Powers with Burke's observation—did Chinese society become "modern" in the 12th-century, only to return to "early modern" in the 16th-century? No, this is a perfect example to reinforce the point that, although basic social dynamics might resonate at various time points, the continuous developmental timeline only makes sense in the local trajectory. Moreover, the Western historical experience does not represent the norm of world-historical progress.

How to reform the previously Western-centered narrative of "modernization", how to fully acknowledge the autonomous trajectories of different societies, and how to reach an increasingly global explanation—these are indeed the questions that many historians nowadays are busy dealing with. Nevertheless, the historical participants of the early modern encounter had no consciousness of cultural autonomy, neither were they aware that the parallel "early modern" conditions were accidental. They would not have realized that "there is a need for seeing modernity as something other than a single condition with a preordained future".[58] What I am deeply concerned with is how the structural similarity of Chinese society

[54] Craig Cluna, "Modernity Global and Local: Consumption and the Rise of the West," *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 5 (Dec 1999):1497-1511.
[55] Ibid.,1499-1504.
[56] Ibid., 1504.
[57] Ibid.
[58] S. R. G., "Preface," *Daedalus: Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 127, no.3 (1998): vi, quoted in Clunas, "Modernity Global and Local: Consumption and the Rise of the West," 1509.

would add further cognitive difficulty for the European people who came and got to know their contemporary Chinese society, and this is the third pitfall.

To a great extent, similar social conditions on the other side of the globe would deepen the historical actors' tendency to take exchange *for granted*, and to suppose the two societies would want a similarly reciprocal and bright future. It is under this perspective pitfall that the 18th-century Leibniz's calling China "the Oriental Europe" and his positivist prospect of "un commerce de lumière" become particularly understandable.[59] As Standaert also mentioned, 17th-century Chinese society was completely different from other places Jesuit missionaries had successfully intervened in like Latin America. The missionaries encountered a society that was surprisingly similar to the contemporary European society, but it was somehow too civilized and developed for European institutions or ideologies to permeate, which troubled the original missionaries, and seems to continue to trouble Standaert.[60] In short, the history presented itself as a huge cognitive challenge for the historical actors of East-West encounter. Sixteenth to Eighteenth century China and Europe were two intrinsically different clocks that happened to be set at the same hour, a (un) happy coincidence.

Now that we have reviewed all three pitfalls that were imbued in the original encounter history, it could be seen that they are not neatly independent from each other, but involve and deepen each other. More important, they were fundamentally *cognitive pitfalls* that subsequently shaped historical actors' *perspectives* when narrating the encounter. The exchange could be taken for granted by the incoming Western missionaries and traders, the cultural autonomy of each party was not acknowledged before confronting it, and the parallel but independent early modern social conditions could further confuse these historical participants. These are my own summarizations, but in order not to seem completely unsupported by suggesting these so-called pitfalls, I want to refer to Clunas's article, "The art of global comparison", where he made similar observations.[61] In this article, Clunas reviewed occasions where Western art historians compared Western art with Chinese art from Joachim von Sandrart's 1675 survey, *Teutsche Academie der Bau- Bild- und Mahlery Kunst* to Ernst Gombrich's *Story of Art*. Thus, Clunas was also concerned with a form of East-West encounter, more specifically, an abstract and conceptual encounter in scholarly discussions. He ended up with observations and conclusions that echoed what I described as the three pitfalls. Firstly, Clunas analyzed the inclusion of Chinese art in art historical writings since the Seventeenth-century, and then he pointed out a continuous flaw —despite these Western art historians' small knowledge of Chinese art, they took an encounter or comparison between Western and Chinese art for granted. They never felt that Chinese art was too unfamiliar for them to say anything about; instead, they were so assured of their stereotypes that they dared to continue their presumptions of Chinese art:

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[59] Miller, "Comparing Antiquarianisms: A View from Europe," 8.
[60] Standaert, 369-370.
[61] Craig Clunas, "The Art of Global Comparisons," in *Writing the History of the Global: Challenges for the 21st Century*, edited by Maxine Berg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 165-176.

> The basis of the evidence is somewhat thin. But this does not matter, since the point in work like that of Wickhoff is not to investigate 'Chinese art'; rather it is to deploy it as a category which is already totally known prior to its investigation. […] 'Chinese art' begins as a known and a coherent entity—and this remains so whether we are talking about Sandrart or Wickhoff or Berenson or Ernst Gombrich. […] All of them were familiar with a pathetically small number of actual individuated works of Chinese art. And so it has remained.[62]

Similar to my appeal for establishing the cultural autonomy before a serious re-examination of the historical East-West encounter is possible, Clunas appealed that, before a really valid inclusion of Chinese and other non-Western cultures into the scope of Art History, there urgently required a profound confession among Westerners that they *do not* know about non-Western art. They have to acknowledge their ignorance before they can stop taking ignorant presumptions for granted.

> This fantasy is constructed from the long (very long, if we go back to Sandrart) history of repression expressed in Chinese art and, by extension, all the 'exotic arts' as simultaneously utterly inscrutable, unknowable, and at the same time totally known. […] Far from simply arguing for the inclusion in the art-historical canon of hitherto neglected or disregarded material, we need to lay down the discipline's claim that we already know everything about Chinese art (and by extension about Indian, African, Macedonian, 'world' art) if we wish to learn anything at all. But this conceit can perhaps be taken one step further. For although Chinese art is fully 'in place' as an object of art-historical knowledge, it has been one of the conditions of that knowledge's possibility that it needs to forget that it already knows everything.[63]

"The greatest obstacle to discovery is not ignorance—it is the illusion of knowledge." Said Daniel J. Boorstin (1914-2004) the historian. Indeed, what Clunas felt concerned regarding the inclusion of Chinese art in Art History echoes with what concerns me regarding the trendy survey of the early modern East-West encounter nowadays. Clunas observed the long-lasting invalid comparisons between Chinese and Western art. I also think the above-mentioned three pitfalls have long entered the subsequent perceptions and narrations of the original encounter, which caused the biased nature of the historiography of the East-West encounter until very recent. Both of us appeal for a moment of pause and introspection—it is meaningless to directly set out writing cross-cultural histories or comparative histories without a fundamental revision of scholarly ideologies, such as Orientalist and Eurocentric mentalities. I have used the slightly harsh term "Eurocentric" several times and I will need to use it more later on, but again, I want to legitimize myself with one of Clunas's accounts, "Kugler is of necessity imposing on his material a set of values that were deeply Eurocentric (using that term not as one of abuse but simply descriptively)".[64] I hope it has now become clear why I insist on scrutinizing history as well as historiographies from both parties so as to gain new insights into the encounter history as well as the historical Chinese and European societies.

[62] Ibid., 168, 171.
[63] Ibid., 174-175.
[64] Ibid.,167.

III. The discrepancies between historiographies—does it lie in content or perspective?

In Section II, I have analyzed the three cognitive pitfalls that were triggered by the original history of the cross-cultural encounter, and the subsequent challenges that have been imposed to later narrators and interpreters. These cognitive pitfalls had inevitable shaping forces on the local historiography, and I have emphasized the possible distortions of *perspectives* when the East-West encounter is re-looked at by each party—the cross-cultural transmission could be taken for granted as an inherently *good* thing, whereas the autonomy of each social trajectory tends not to be acknowledge, and the coinciding "early modern" conditions in China and Europe could trick the historical actors to perceive the Other within their own developmental logics. These cognitive pitfalls fundamentally disenabled either party to cogently perceive either the Self or the Other

The biased perspective, as originating from the pitfalls of history, further determined the discrepancies between the historiographies. Nevertheless, although the original biased perspectives fundamentally shaped the later interpretations, the partiality of *perspective* is not instantly visible when we directly review the historiography.

Instead, what we can observe on the surface is that different issues or topics that have been emphasized by each party, that is, the *content*. Indeed, narratives or studies of the East-West encounter have been mostly one-directional. Scholars from either side have exclusively focused on different segments of the "encounter story". For example, *Chinoiserie* is no new topic for western scholars or even the general public, and there have been extensive studies as well as exhibitions devoted to it, while this topic has not been given much attention in Chinese scholarship until recently. In the meantime, many European Jesuit painters enjoyed huge success and admiration in China during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries with their hybrid style paintings. Among them the most famous one was Giuseppe Castiglione (1688-1766), a pupil of Filippo Abbiati (1640-1715), who served the three High Qing period emperors, Kangxi (reign: 1661-1722), Yongzheng (reign: 1722-1735), and Qianlong (reign: 1735-1796). Unsurprisingly, Castiglione has been extensively canonized and studied in China, but is still little known or valued in the West.

These surface differences in *content* have lately attracted increasing scholarly attention. There have emerged attempts to juxtapose different parties' studies on different events or periods so as to compose a fuller picture. I want to reveal that a seemingly complementary effort to bridge the gap between the the different schools of research might not touch upon the crux of the historiographical discrepancy. The crux does not lie in the surface difference in research topics, but in the underlying discrepancies in inveterately biased perspectives. The surface difference in *content* has been largely (if not completely) shaped by the a priori difference in *perspectives*.

Then what would be the problem if we only pay attention to or even try to fix the surface difference in *content*? I will illustrate one dominant paradox with a specific example, the 2012 Beijing symposium "Qing Encounters: Artistic Exchanges between China and the West", which was sponsored by the "Connecting Art History" initiative of the Getty Foundation. I did not attend the symposium, thus my critique is mainly directed at the "Intellectual Context" article of this symposium.[65] This symposium looks broadly at different forms of artistic products that evolved under the Sino-West artistic exchanges during the Qing dynasty (1644-1912). Particularly, it was concerned with the historiographical fact that "there has been little contact between these two groups of scholars and each group has focused almost exclusively on the flow of artistic ideas and motifs in one direction (East to West or West to East)".[66] It aimed to bring together scholars from around the world so as to better represent the mutuality and reciprocity of the exchange. The focus therefore lay in the completion and the adding up of *content*.

Meanwhile, as the "Intellectual Context" article reads, the discrepancies in *perspective* were not completely overlooked. However, they were predominantly concerned with how scholars from each party have employed different methods to study the different topics:

> The methodological approaches to the hybrid artistic products of the encounters between China and Europe are different in East and West. Indeed, we were surprised to find that even the way these objects are valued is different. […] Dialogue about the valuation of different forms of hybridity, as well as about ways to analyze and understand artistic 'hybridity,' will, we expect, lead to a more profound understanding of cross-cultural artistic exchange in general, and of the artistic encounter between China and the West in particular. This, at least, is the goal of "Qing Encounters."[67]

This logic is very superficial. Of course the Western scholars' methods applied to valuing or studying Chinoiserie would differ from Chinese scholars' methods applied to Castiglione—there is nothing to be "surprised" about, the local ways of valuation were not determined by the form of a specific hybrid product like Chinoiserie, but it was to be understood as part of the complex tradition of art-historical writing in each tradition. I want to stress that this symposium's understanding of the discrepant perspectives between East and West is different from my understanding. I am concerned with the more primary stage of discrepant perspectives, but th symposium focused on the secondary stage of discrepant perspectives. It is true that the difference between East and West can always be demonstrated whichever stage of the discrepant perspective is examined, but a considerable amount of information could be lost without notice if we only compare the secondary stage because the *secondary perspectives* were embodied in *contents* that had already been shaped by the *primary perspectives*. For example, the difference between the Western scholars' methods applied to study Chinoiserie and Chinese scholars' methods applied to study Castiglione could, to some extent, refract the difference between their initial different perceptions of the Sino-Euro encounter—but this might be mere partial refraction, not direct reflection—because such secondary

[65] "Intellectual Context," *Qing Encounters: Artistic Exchanges between China and the West*, 2012, http://qingencounters.weebly.com/intellectual-context.html.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.

comparisons take the primary difference in *content* for granted, while the *content* was indeed charged with an even deeper difference in ideology.

Not only are the secondary perspectives unrepresentative for the initial discrepancy, but a direct juxtaposition of each party's different methods applied to their topics of interest could not enable a real "dialogue", because in this case, each party seems to continue to think within its own ideological framework without a self-reflective outlook. For example, the "Intellectual Context" article regards a juxtaposition of researches on Chinoiserie and Europėenerie could better demonstrate the "mutuality of the exchange"—I do not agree. A juxtaposition of Chinoiserie studies and Europėenerie studies is fundamentally a juxtaposition of what was cast in sunshine on each side, or to say, these are inherently Euro-centric and Sino-centric discourses, both of which were charged with the pitfalls of the original history. A direct clash of different issues that were cast in the local sunshine could hardly "lead to a more profound understanding of cross-cultural artistic exchange" because neither party has surpassed its self-centric ideology.

By the same token, some recent attempts by individual scholars to engage both the Self and the Other are also not very fruitful. For example, there have been a few attempts to write a grand narrative of the early modern East-West encounter or a global history, but many of them tend to include broader contents under a singular ideological framework. For example, John Wills' book published in 2001, *1688: A Global History,* appears to be an all-encompassing attempt to involve various continents and events during late 17th-century. However, the so-called global history was told from an un-self-consciously Western perspective. As I mentioned early on, it is unavoidable to have a biased outlook, but it is scholarly unfruitful if one is unaware of the limits of one's viewpoint and takes his or her perspectives for granted. Wills' book thus typified this flaw. As an attempt of writing a global history, Wills clearly demonstrated the awareness to involve *contents* about the Other, but since his perspective was completely limited within the Self, his outline seems to be deeply hierarchical regarding who deserved which *content*. More specifically, in Part I and II, Africa is represented as a hub of commodities, human and object alike. "The intensity of commerce connecting Europe, America and Africa" is praised rather than critically reflected, while Africa is merely muted as a destination for Europe-initiated trades and the rising capitalist companies.[68] Slightly paid more respect as individual civilizations are Russia, China and Japan, which are condensed in Part III and are colored as three exotic empires.[69] Wills introduced how Asian cultures were imagined by the early modern Europeans as the Utopian Other. However, it is shocking that, rather than critically reflecting on this passage of history, he was still deeply trapped in the ideology of the history itself:

> China, Japan, Russia—and India—all have been Great Others for European and American social thought at various times down to our own. The availability of knowledge of them and the use of them as examples and objects for comparison are an intellectual transformation that was just beginning in

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[68] John E. Wills, *1688: A Global History* (London: Granta Books, 2001), 9-94.Contents of Part I & II: Part I. A world of wooden ships; 1. The Empire of Silver; 2. Many Africas; 3. Slaves, Ships, and Frontiers; 4. Dampier and the Aborigines; Part II. The world of the great companies; 5. The Cape of Good Hope; 6. The Island World; 7. Phaulkon.

[69] Ibid., 95-166.Contents of Part III: Part III. Three Worlds apart: Russia, China and Japan; 8. Tsar Peter's Russia; 9. Survivors and Visionaries; 10. At the Court of Kangxi; 11. The Jesuits and China; 12. Kanazawa, Edo, Nagasaki; 13. Saikaku and Bashô.

> 1688. It continues today to open up to us one frontier after another of the possibilities of the human condition.[70]

It is narrow-minded for a 2001-published global history book to continue to openly and proudly take such early modern/colonial/imperial ideology for granted—the West is the center of the world, the West is the ultimate spokesman and decider of the so-called "human condition"—now and ever. Russia, China, Japan, and India, handy as important civilizations with manipulatable "knowledge" and "use", though deserved to be considered "great", but were merely "Great Others". To further dig into Wills' undertone—what about the vast non-Western world in addition to these four civilizations? Those are non-great Others that do not deserve a word. After an overview of social and political conditions in Europe in Part IV, Wills' old-fashioned Westerncentric ideology becomes more explicit in Part V, "Worlds of Words: Styles and Thought in Europe".[71] Although intellectual traditions of other cultures such as Chinese were already covered in Part III, they were integrated with introductions to various facets of the local society and customs. Wills' chapter layout coincided with the institutional shape of the Western world's interest in the non-western cultures until very recent.[72] The very fact that only "Styles and Thought in Europe" deserved a whole chapter announced Wills' undeniable standpoint that only Western intellectual tradition was the most orthodox, legitimate, and decent "Worlds of Words", while non-western intellectual traditions were not really intellectual, but were fancy foils and spices: "The Europe of 1688 differed from that of all previous centuries and from all its contemporary 'great others' in the commerce and culture of thought".[73] This statement is somehow ignorant—of course the 1688 Europe differed from the 1688 Russia, China, Japan, etc; but why only the 1688 Europe deserved to be praised and canonized? Indeed, what Wills actually implied by "different" was unique, or even superior. However, what Wills regarded as "different" with the European intellectual world, including the mass publication, the prosperous intellectual debates, and the rising secular engagement with knowledge, could find counterparts in at least East Asia ever since 10th-century. Moreover, we do not even need to find non-western counterparts to critique Wills' logic because his main problem is not only his ignorance of non-western traditions, but the fact that he was judging various human civilizations with Western developmental trajectory as the ultimate paradigm.

I hereby want to reiterate with Wills' so-called "global history" that, without a self-critical reflection of the inveterate self-centric or self-superior ideology, it is unfruitful to superficially bridge, and juxtapose different *contents.* The seemingly expanded and broadened *content* would be as narrow-minded as before if the fundamental discrepancy in cognitive perspectives between the East and the West could not be acknowledged from inside out. Meanwhile, some other scholars have alternatively focused on the seemingly

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[70] Ibid., 94.

[71] Ibid., 167-252.Contents of Part IV & V:Part IV. Versailles, London, Amsterdam; 14. The Sun Kind and the Ladies; 15. A Family Quarrel and a Glorious Revolution; 16. Echoes across the Oceans; 17. A Hundred Years of Freedom; Part V. Worlds of words: Styles and Thought in Europe; 18. In the Republic of Letters; 19. Aphra Behn; 20. Newton, Locke, and Leibniz.

[72] Subjects like Literature, History, and Philosophy always equals Western literature, Western history, and Western Philosophy, while the Other's traditions such as Chinese literature, Chinese history and Chinese philosophy could not be legitimately included in Literature, History or Philosophy subjects, but are all condensed in the all-encompassing and ambiguous umbrella called "Sinology".

[73] Ibid., 219.

parallel *contents* embodied by the two parties, which caused equal negligence of the deeper *perspectives*. A typical example that exemplifies the potential limits of overly emphasizing parallels between East and West is Grasskamp's 2013 dissertation "Cultivated curiosities: a comparative study of Chinese artifacts in European kunstkammern and European objects in Chinese elite collections".[74] Grasskamp presented a mechanically symmetrical juxtaposition of the most elite collecting practice in Chinese and European traditions, which established formal and conceptual parallels of these two traditions. Gasskamp looked into both artistic and scientific collections of the foreign and exotic, but she had a consistent problem of being constricted within the most canonized and visible contents. For example, with artistic collection, she paid attention to the clichéd practice of mounting Chinese porcelain with metal in Europe and the conventional practice of putting objects on a wooden stand in China. In that sense, she only paid attention to things cast in sunshine in each tradition, which already harmed the representativeness of the parallels she identified. In addition to the limited scope, she showed a strong tendency to connect the two parties by making connections, which resulted in some methodologically distorting forces. Grasskamp employed Derrida and Kant's theories of "Parergon" to not only the European metal mounting, but also the Chinese wooden stand; she introduced Kant's *parergon* example of the colonnades around Greek temples and then suggested, "if we like, we could therefore analyze our Chinese examples through Derrida's and Kant's models".[75] To apply the theory of *parergon* was a critical step for Grasskamp to establish conceptual parallels between the European and Chinese art collecting practices, but she missed out a crucial step to legitimize the applicability of this theory to the Chinese context. In addition to art collecting, Grasskamp also juxtaposed scientific collections, where a tendency to focus on the so-called parallels was more explicit. As she analyzed, she also consciously pushed towards a conclusion that emphasized on parallels, that coral display embodies an early modern tension and balance between foreign and indigenous, man-made and natural-made in both China and Europe.[76] In short, Grasskamp's study emphasized on parallels of the most canonized contents of Chinese and European sides, and then inferred broader and deeper parallels in social dynamics with these limited and special cases. Different from Wills' flaw of hierarchically alienating *contents* of the "Great Others", Grasskamp's overly inclusive tendency is equally problematic because her happy parallels still failed to touch upon the autonomy of each culture. Grasskamp's comparison and parallel remain on a surface level, while her method and analysis risk neglecting the inherent differences in fundamental ideologies of these two traditions. I want to reinforce with this example the importance to transcend a surface juxtaposition of canonized *contents*.

To further illustrate the possible limitations caused by paying attention to the visible *contents* without reflecting on the inherent biases, I will now move on to a more specific case study, Chinese export ceramics.

[74] Anna Grasskamp, "Cultivated Curiosities: A Comparative Study of Chinese Artifacts in European Kunstkammern and European Objects in Chinese Elite Collections," Ph.D. dissertation (Leiden: Leiden University, 2013).
[75] Ibid., 84-86.
[76] Ibid., 230-234.

I will compare the Chinese and European studies and discourses on export ceramics.[77] Chinese export ceramics shares the fate of a topic like "Chinoiserie"—it has been extensively studied by Western scholarship, but Chinese scholars and connoisseurs have long despised this category to be distasteful and unimportant. Although Chinese scholars have picked up this topic since the last three decades, I want to reveal that, the fundamental discrepancy between these two scholarly traditions is far more complex than the different amounts of time or publications devoted to this topic, but both parties are charged with completely different scales of value and ideology. Particularly with the new players of this topic, Chinese scholars, rather than providing new information or cogent insights into export porcelain, many China scholars' recently accumulating researches on export porcelain conveyed nationalist ideologies. Section IV will further contemplate the two parties' different scales of value, and to put the concepts of cognitive pitfalls into practice by looking at how porcelain's materiality has been perceived by each party.

It seems that I have come so far to suggest that, what has been said on the selected contents are always products charged with the pitfalls to centralize the Self while marginalizing the Other. Then where could we gain new insights into the East-West encounter? In Section V, I will propose that we look at what has been excluded from the ideologically charged discourses from either party, or to say, what has not yet been canonized. The fact that certain types of objects were produced and consumed, thus were a part of the exchange, but were excluded from narratives of both sides, might lead to insights into certain anxiety and desire imbued in this early modern encounter that could not be reflected from the existent happy narratives on the table. A cogent examination of something concealed by both parts would address the mutuality and reciprocity of the exchange in an alternative way, as different from a juxtaposition of things respectively canonized by either side. The specific case I have identified is also a follow-up of the larger topic of export ceramics, that is, export porcelain with amorous or erotic subject matters. As I will reveal, this specific subcategory's not being narrated does not necessarily escape from the cognitive pitfalls of history either, and this might be why it was absent in the legitimate narratives. Nevertheless, as different from the canonic discourses that were explicitly charged with biases, this forgotten content might better demonstrate how the pitfalls functioned, or, the mechanisms of the cognitive pitfalls as embodied by each party.

IV. Applying the concept of cognitive pitfalls to Chinese and Netherlandish discourses on export ceramics

As I reiterated in section III that, it was each party' different initial perceptions towards the cross-cultural encounter that determined the discrepancy in historiographies, I am thus interested to explore the two parties' different scales of value or ideology associated with porcelain. More specifically, I want to put the concept of cognitive pitfalls into practice by examining how porcelain has been perceived by each party.

[77] In this thesis, I am particularly interested in Netherlandish and British scholarship on export porcelain within European scholarship not only because the early modern Low Countries and England were among the first and largest traders of Chinese porcelain, but also because these two national schools are among the most active and productive schools in modern porcelain research. In section V.ii, I will consider to what extent the modern scholarly enthusiasm is relevant to the historical national success.

Due to Western readers' little awareness of the Chinese research on export ceramics, I will also deploy the beginning of this section as an opportunity to provide an overview of the status of this field in China, and I will make a preliminary observation that a strong but ineffective national discourse is visible since the beginning of Chinese scholars' research on export ceramics.[78] The logical flaw of this national discourse will be further deconstructed with the material culture theory of cultural biography. It is thus the concepts of cultural biography and cultural inherency that offered a theoretical starting point for me to contemplate the historical Chinese and Dutchmen's understandings of the so-called inherency of a cross-cultural object like porcelain. I have identified one contesting field to examine to what extent the cultural inherency of an object does exist, that is, porcelain's materiality, its visual appearance and physical texture. Historical actors and modern scholars' perceptions from both sides will be involved to enable multidirectional comparison, and suggest the fundamental fluidity of the so-called materiality.

IV.i. The need to distinguish the inherent origin and the accumulated biographies of export ceramic

Export ceramic and porcelain did not truly enter the academic consciousness of Chinese scholars until 1980s. Even until today, this category of objects is little known to the general public, while in the academia, it is also a relatively new and not-that-popular research field. I will start by introducing one early Chinese-published monograph, which typified some common methodological limitations of Chinese scholars' research, and the making of a national discourse. As I introduce this book, I will make expansions on the status of this field in China. I will also deconstruct Chinese scholars' discourse of national pride with reference to the theory of cultural biography of objects.

Ye Wencheng, a pioneer figure who started to be interested in this field in 1960s, expressed in the "Preface" of his *A Collection of Essays on Ancient Chinese Export Ceramics* published in 1988: "me and my colleagues' research is still highly preliminary, or have just barely set foot in this field. Nevertheless, we believe the publication of a monograph like this is completely unprecedented".[79] There does not need extra explanation to approve how novel and fresh this research field was in China back then. As Ye modestly suggested here, the research presented in this monograph was indeed preliminary. Notably, he attempted a broad and comprehensive coverage by touching upon almost all the important dynasties (from 10th-century onwards) and regions involved in production and trade, and various crucial types of ceramics. Most articles in this monograph are predominantly descriptive, including locations and distributions of kilns, quantity and origin of productions, chemical facts of different ceramic types, distinguishing different functions, patterns and shapes of wares, trade routes and conditions, recent excavation and wreck salvage findings, etc. His

[78] A further deconstruction of the national discourses in Chinese and Dutch historiographies respectively will be expanded in V.i and V.ii as important ideological backdrop to explain amorous porcelain's absence.

[79] Ye Wencheng, *A Collection of Essays on Ancient Chinese Export Ceramics* (Beijing: The Forbidden City Press, 1988), ii. Ye is a retired professor of History at Xiamen University. He was also once the president of The Ancient Chinese Ceramics Research Board, which was founded in 1980. I want to emphasize that he is a hallmark and authoritative figure of this field in China, which should be kept in mind when we later look at his methodological limitations.

approach was macroscopic, archival and factual. There are many analyses on social and economic relevance of the production of ceramics in the original Chinese context.[80]

Ye's study exemplifies three aspects of methodological limitations, which are shared by many researches on export porcelain published in China over the last three decades. The first aspect is more of a scholarly characteristics rather than limitation. Ye strictly followed the Chinese school of archival research of history. He mainly depended on domestic documentary materials and chronicles that were available in Chinese archives. Though called a monograph on export porcelain, the underlying foundation that frames Ye's study is the social history of Chinese ceramic industry—anyone familiar with the traditional Chinese history-writing could instantly recognize his strict training in archival research. Nevertheless, his work presents highly valuable foundational research for later scholars.

The second aspect of limitation is that Ye had little knowledge and viewing experience of major foreign collections of export wares. Only until very recently has this situation been improved.[81] Chinese scholars have increasingly travelled abroad to explore Chinese export porcelain and artefacts' conditions in overseas collections.[82] Meanwhile, thanks to exhibitions on loan from overseas collections,[83] private donations from foreign collectors,[84] and official acquisition of ancient export wares in recent auctions,[85]

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[80] For example, Ye analyzed how the Longquan blue ware gained prosperity thanks to being situated in an area that escaped the destructive influence of various domestic wars from late Song to early Yuan dynasty. Ibid., 45-47.

[81] Still, the scholarly awareness of the enormous existence of Chinese artifacts in foreign, especially European collections has not been widely established. For example, one authoritative archaeologist Han Wei (1937-2011), who was the head of Cultural Heritage Research Bureau of Shaan'xi province, expressed that, he went to British Museum to work on a cooperative exhibition in 1999, and his visit to the depot of British Museum was the first time he realized the huge quantity and variety of Ming & Qing export porcelains. During his short stay in England, the overwhelming presence of export porcelain in all kinds of museums and antique shops greatly impressed him.
Han Wei, "A First Impression of Chinese Export Porcelain from Ming and Qing dynasties," in *A Selection of Han Wei's Archaeological Research* (Beijing: Ke xue shu ban she, 2001), 353-355.

[82] There was one recent ambitious attempt to conduct a thorough ground survey of not only export porcelain, but the broader Chinese export artifacts in key European collections. The author Cheng Yong spent ten years travelling to thirty European countries and their major art collections. Despite the valuable gathering of primary sources for Chinese scholars, his discussions are largely un-informed of the methodological and historiographical status of this area, and provided little critical insights. The low scholarly acknowledgement and the lack of a scholarly circle of this topic in China directly caused Cheng to lack an up-to-date and critical awareness of the status of this field. Moreover, Cheng Yong typically risks a strongly Sino-centric discourse, as I will further introduce in V.i. Considering the fact that Cheng Yong's ten-year field research was completely self-funded, there might not exist much official research funding or nation-wide research project on this topic.
Cheng Yong, *The Westwards Progress of the Chinese Style: Three Hundred Years of Chinese Art's Influence on Europe* (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press, 2009).

[83] Two recent important exhibitions on loan are:
"Seventeenth-century Jingdezhen Porcelain from Shanghai Museum and the Butler Collection" (exhibition, Shanghai Museum, Shanghai, Dec 1, 2005-Feb 28, 2006).
"The Charm of Porcelain: Chinese Export Porcelains in the Collections of British Museum and the V&A Museum" (exhibition, National Museum of China, Beijing, June 22, 2012-Jan 6, 2013).

[84] One unprecedented private donation was from a Dutchman Henk B. Nieuwenhuys. Loving Chinese culture deeply, Nieuwenhuys not only brought a 97-piece family collection back to China, but he himself also moved to live in Shanghai thereafter. A special exhibition was held at Shanghai Museum in 2008 featuring this collection. In the "Preface" of the catalogue, Chen Xiejun, the director of Shanghai Museum, commented that research on export porcelain had progressed very slowly among Chinese scholars due to the lack of resources. This particular collection from the Nieuwenhuys family perfectly fills the gap of domestic collections in China, and many pieces are of good quality and rare decorations.
Interestingly, though a devoted scholarly amateur on Chinese porcelain Nieuwenhuys was, he knew almost nothing about Chinese imperial porcelain before he visited Shanghai Museum. A mutual recognition of centuries-long splits in collections, values, and ideologies between China and the West has been established among various groups of people involved in the appreciation and research of porcelain—this might be the greatest cultural significance of the increasing travel exhibitions, donations, and researches surrounding Chinese export porcelain.
Traces from the Trade: Ming and Qing Export Porcelains Donated by Henk B. Nieuwenhuys, edited by Lu Minghua (Shanghai: Shanghai Museum & Shanghai calligraphy and painting publisher, 2009), 8-13.

representative and quality collections of export wares started to be established in Chinese museums. These institutional innovations have greatly fostered domestic research on export Chinese, and a tendency towards object-oriented study has enriched the traditional archival research.

It seems that, the first two aspects of limitations—the Chinese-school archival method, and the limited access to overseas collections—should not have real fatal effect on the research. The result might be confined to a smaller scope, but given the available methods and sources, if cogently analysed, some important insights could be derived. This is not completely untrue, and I have acknowledged Ye's contribution of filling some historical gaps. However, as I have critiqued in section III, the different sets of *contents and methods* never only resulted in the limitations in *contents and methods*, but the underlying ideological limitation would make it very difficult to produce cogent discourses with the available contents and methods on the table. This is thus the third aspect of Ye's methodological limitations, a biased outlook on the cross-cultural process. If the first two limitations start to have been improved, the third one might still be very prominent in Chinese scholarship, and Western scholarship alike.

Specifically in Ye's case, there were few discussions on cross-cultural significance of ceramic export, and he mainly focused on the situation in Southeast Asia or the Islamic world. Though lists of objects from recent excavations and key overseas (mainly Southeast Asian) collections are included,[86] there lacked a detailed and critical analysis of aesthetic or cultural aftermaths. The image of the destinations where these export porcelains ended up is largely blurred and generalized—"porcelain connected China and the world, fostered the development of international friendship"[87]—clichéd accounts like this could be found at the beginning or ending of many articles. One article in this volume focused on Chinese export porcelain's influence on life and society in other countries. Ye emphasized how undeveloped the food culture in some regions was before Chinese ceramics were spread there. His analysis of overseas situation was largely harmed by his uncritical reference to accounts of foreign countries that were written and published in China

[85] Similar to the archaeologist Han Wei's discovery of Chinese export porcelain in 1999, the artist and scholar Yu Chunming went to Los Angeles as a visiting scholar, where he got to know about this category of objects in 2003 for the first time. Different from Han, Yu stayed in the States as a painter thereafter, during which period of time he started to read Western scholars' research and also started to collect himself. In 2010, Yu brought the hundreds of pieces of export wares back to China, and established the first museum specialized in Ming & Qing export porcelain in 2012 at Nanchang University, which is very close to Jingdezhen, the capital of Chinese ceramics. He has also arranged three international seminars on export porcelain in 2010, 2012, and 2014.
In V.i, I will critique how an uninformed national discourse harmed many Chinese scholarships. Here I want to emphasize that, partly due to Yu's direct engagement with collections in the West and western scholarships. His monograph is among the most cogent and best Chinese scholarship on export porcelain.
Yu Chunming, *A Name Card of China: Ming and Qing Export Porcelain and its Collection* (Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company, 2011), 4-9.

[86] For example, highlights from the collection of Museum of Fine Arts and Ceramics in Jakarta was described according to their display in the exhibit hall. Nevertheless, Ye was referring to another scholar's travelogue in Southeast Asia. Many other occasions when Ye referred to overseas collections in this book, he relied on secondary descriptions. It reveals a very realistic defect of his research that he had little first-hand viewing experience of Chinese export porcelains that were actually preserved in foreign collections.

[87] Ye, 45.

during ancient time.[88] This flaw was caused by his uncritical reliance on archival research, while he did not realize the historical manipulation and cultural politics involved in ancient accounts of the Other.

In addition to porcelain's legacy in overseas food culture, Ye also analysed the importance of porcelain in many ritualistic and artistic activities of many religions and nations. For example, he discussed extensively the practice of many indigenous religions in Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, Ye tended to confuse the ritualistic usage of wares in religious worship with a cult for Chinese culture:

> There widely existed a worshipping mentality for *Chinese* ceramics. Ceramics from *our country* is not only closely connected to various aspects of the local society, but also occupies a highly exalted position. The indigenous people regarded it a primary symbol of personal fortune and hierarchy to possess ceramics from *our country.* Ceramics from *our country* is not only the object of their worship, but is also a valuable wealth.[89]

However, it is highly doubtful that to what extent a local form of fetish is relevant to the national origin of a particular object. Here I want to refer to one important theory in material culture, the biographies of objects, as was proposed in Gosden and Marshall's widely quoted article "The cultural biography of objects".[90] Rather than the previously passive and silent image of objects in concepts like "use-life", they urged an alternative attention to be paid to the active and interactive capability and significance of objects in accumulating meanings for the life of both human society and the things themselves.[91] Thus, the concept of biography prioritizes the dynamic and mutual creation of values between people and things in a specific cultural context and perspective. Then is the meaning of things always transient? It seems that this is suggested by this theory. Meanwhile, Gosden and Marshall did not completely deny the existence of the so-called "inherent meaning", though it might be next to nothing in many contexts. More importantly, they stressed the distinction between the unchanged inherent meanings (if any) and the later accumulated biography of contextualized value.[92] That is to say, the later accumulated cultural legacy of an object, however rich and vibrant, does not necessarily *glorify* the inherent origin of it. This is exactly where Ye made a logical flaw. He actually provided a lot of detailed descriptions of porcelain wares' ceremonial function in many Southeast Asian religions and the supernatural belief that was attached to a particular porcelain ware—however, these later biographies of porcelain in Southeast Asia could not be directly deployed to blow up a nationalist pride of China. As least according to Ye's description of porcelain's ritualistic function in Southeast Asia, its being employed and exalted was not because of its Chinese origin, but was due to its suitable utility for the local ritualistic performance.[93]

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[88] Texts of this sort were plentiful, similar to European-published travelogues on China like Nieuhof's, while Ye's problem is that he still directly used them as credible sources.
Ye mainly referred to: Chau Ju-Kua's work on the Chinese and Arab trade in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, entitled *Chu-fan-chï* (1225), *Dong Xi Yang Kao/Research of the East and the West* (1617), *Ying Ya Sheng Lan/ The Overall Survey of the Ocean Shores* (1451).
[89] Ye, 276. Italic added by me.
[90] Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall, "The Cultural Biography of Objects," *World Archaeology* 31, no. 2 (1999):169-178.
[91] Ibid., 169-170.
[92] Ibid., 176.
[93] Ye, 277-279.

IV.ii. The same materiality and the disparate perceptions—the fluid cultural "inherency" of porcelain

Inspiring though the distinction between the inherent meaning and the accumulated biography is, Gosden and Marshall did not clearly define what they meant by the "inherent meaning", and in another sentence they simply alternated the expression to be "the meanings that reside in some sense in the objects themselves".[94] In the following discussion, I aim to reveal that, the cultural "inherence" of an object is a highly fluid concept. Particularly, I have observed that the European possessors' perception of inherency was largely determined by the physical and visible characteristics—which were fundamentally *the one and the same* wherever the porcelain wares were transported to. Or to say, Westerners and Chinese *saw and touched the same thing.* Does it mean, porcelain's later cultural biography in Europe should be predictable by Chinese scholars like Ye? As I will analyze, this is not the case. Even if the European fascination was directed at the most inherent physicality of porcelain, there could emerge completely alienated and fluid discourse in comparison with the perception it received back in its cultural origin. I want to further divide my discussion based on the two dominant physical characteristics of porcelain—fragility and shininess.

a. The fluid fragility

The first fluid physical characteristic of porcelain is its fragility, which largely shaped both the early modern and nowadays Western discourse on porcelain. In the early modern context, porcelain's crispiness was already acknowledged, and the associated discourse tended to be negative social criticism. Towards the end of 17th-century, the huge consuming fever directed at export ceramics as well as other exotic goods started to receive criticism against the material extravagance and indulgence, which was both embodied and triggered by something like porcelain. Meanwhile, the transience of its commodity value due to its material crispiness was also denounced. The 1701 book *De Gebaucheerde en betoverde Koffy en Thee wereld* warned against the pernicious economic effect of consuming porcelain, not only because it could not be used in economic traffic as currency, but also because its value would instantly disappear if the porcelain broke.[95] Considering the increasingly crowded and additive manner of displaying porcelain in the second half of Seventeenth century, this author's annoyed condemn might well come from a commonplace regretful scenarios during the porcelain mania, that is, the beloved beautiful wares could get easily smashed, while what evaporated together was a considerable amount of money spent on it. This critique on the crispy porcelain's high economic risk also conformed to the rising capitalist mind-set in the early modern Netherlands.

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[94] Gosden and Marshall, 176.

[95] *De gedebaucheerde en betiverde koffy- en theewereld behelzende een meenigte van aardige voorvallen, welke zich sedert weinig tijds te Amsterdam, Rotterdam, in Den Haag, te Utrech en de bijgelegene Plaatsen, op de Koffy- en Theegezelschapjes... hebben voorgedragen, met alle de debauches en ongeregeldheden, welke onder pretext van deeze laffe Dranken worden gepleegd: Beneevens een uitreekening van de jaarlikjse schade, welke door dit Koffy- en Theegebruik... word veroorzaakt, enz* (Amsterdam, 1701), 490-491, cited and translated in Jan Van Campen, "Chinese and Japanese Porcelain in the Interior," in *Chinese and Japanese porcelain for the Dutch Golden Age*, edited by Jan van Campen and T. Eliëns (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 2014), 205.

To associate porcelain's crispiness with its monetary value is indeed one cognitive pitfall that continues into the modern scholarship, but some modern scholars tended to misinterpret the historical Self and Other. For example, Jan de Vries furthered porcelain's social connotation of value—he proposed that the adoption of porcelain as a luxurious commodity was directly relevant to its material characteristic of "fragility", or to say, there was a craving for less durable commodities, while porcelain was indeed "a breakable item of fashion" that fell into this trend.[96] This fancy fast-fashion connotation of porcelain appears anachronistic. Moreover, what was deployed to support this point of view is porcelain's replacement of tin wares in the Seventeenth-century, he considered metal wares like tin were made to last, while the abandon of them reflected people's increasing enthusiasm for fleeting fashion, that is, porcelain the fast-fashion-commodity. Many scholars seem to be on the same page of the book. Maarten Prak quoted de Vries' theorization, and conceded its application to the situation in the Seventeenth-century Dutch Republic.[97] Jan van Campen made a very similar observation:

> Precious metal were partly replaced by maiolica; the production of which was an industry that had emerged very quickly in Antwerp at the end of 16th-century. This change fitted with the gradual exchange of well-known 'old luxuries' for the more *transient 'new luxuries'*. Southerners who established themselves in the north created the next step in this development by then moving from maiolica to Chinese porcelain.[98]

Although Simon Schama's *The Embarrassment of Riches* already resolved the misunderstanding of the Dutch frugality during the Golden Age.[99] It is also true porcelain consumption and collection exemplified a rising consciousness of self-fashioning, and women's particular involvement will be examined in section V.iv.c. Despite porcelain's association with fashion and personal taste in the early modern Europe, it is flawed for de Vries to deduce that porcelain belonged to a craving for un-durable fast-fashion commodities. Nor is it reasonable to attribute porcelain wares' replacement of tin merely to the changing consumer preference from lasting object to transient objects. It is partly because of de Vries' exclusive attention paid on dead data and economic analysis that he ignored the real-life context of using porcelain back in the Seventeenth-century.[100] Even for the original VOC officials, who were predominantly interested in profit-earning through the China trade, showed explicitly strong concern for the real-life convenience porcelain could bring about. It is clearly stated in a 1607 instruction from the VOC director that the merchant should get as many "butter saucers as possible even if it is 50 thousand", and plates in the size of shape of "*tin plates, the type we use daily* and also fruit dishes, clapmutsen (of all sorts)"; similar requests continued into 1614, "*plates, the same type as the tin ones we use daily*".[101] Rather than fulfilling the desire

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[96] Jan de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution: Consumer Demand and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 126-133.
[97] Maarten Prak, "The Dutch Golden Age: Growth, Innovation and Consumption," in *Chinese and Japanese porcelain for the Dutch Golden Age*, edited by Jan van Campen and T. Eliëns (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 2014), 13.
[98] Van Campen, "Chinese and Japanese Porcelain in the Interior," 192.
[99] Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987).
[100] De Vries, 126-133.
The actual using context is indeed, a sub-topic that has not been paid much attention among Western scholarship on export porcelain, The pivotal attention lies in the trade history, see V.ii.

[101] Christine Ketel, "The first Supplies of Chinese Export Porcelain to the Netherlands at the Beginning of the 17th-century,"

for "breakable fashion" as de Vries, what was revealed from these original trading requests is instead, how porcelain revolutionized Dutch people's repertoire of tableware. Indeed, before the arrival of porcelain wares, only the very rich upper class could use safe and hygiene wares made from silver and glass, while for the general public, the household shared tin and wood wares, which were neither healthy nor hygiene.[102]

Despite the anachronistic nature of de Vries' treating porcelain merely as a "breakable item of fashion", to perceive porcelain as fragile is not completely historically incorrect, which is already demonstrated in the above mentioned 1701 book's critique on porcelain's high economic risk. Another frequently mentioned discourse derived from porcelain's material fragility is indeed the idea of transience. Weststeijn suggested that porcelain's combined hardness and fragility catered to the 17th-century Dutch *vanitas* morality, as visible in the depiction of it in 17th-century Dutch still-life paintings.[103] Porcelain's transient nature was also acknowledged in literature. Early 18th-century English popular Romance, such as Alexander Pope's *Rape of the Lock*, often compared porcelain's material quality with women: both smooth and radiant, equally fragile, and easily get despised for any appearance of crack or flaw.[104]

Interestingly enough, as opposedto porcelain's symbolism of "transience" in the early modern Europe, porcelain has long been praised for its hardness, stability, and sustainability. In one important Chinese-published reference book on ancient Chinese ceramics (both domestic and export ceramics), *An Illustrated Companion to Chinese Ancient Ceramics*, the "Preface" opens like this: "In the cultural history of ancient China, ceramic and porcelain wares have important and unique significance. Thanks to their solid texture and stable property, they could be preserved for *tens of thousands of years*, which recorded abundant information concerning production, life, technology, and art of the ancient society".[105] As exactly opposite to the Western perception of fragility and transience, in the Chinese perception, porcelain was supposed to last. Of course, neither side was *wrong*, and both sides' perceptions were directly derived from the material characteristics of porcelain—porcelain does embody the characteristics of both hardness and crispiness. Then how come one single set of material characteristics could arouse completely opposite perceptions of the materiality? Did original Chinese users not know about the crispiness of porcelain? Of course not. Indeed, many ancient texts on porcelain fully acknowledged this characteristic. But in the meantime, they knew extremely well how to cleverly and fondly use porcelain wares.

During Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries in China, a great many of life-style guidebooks and treatises on tastes were published. The collection, preservation, appreciation, and valuation of artefacts and

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symposium paper, "Ming and Qing dynasty Export Ceramics" (Nanchang: Nanchang University, 2012), 8.

[102] Ibid., 2.

[103] Thijs Weststeijn, "Cultural Reflections of porcelain in the 17th-century Netherlands," in *Chinese and Japanese porcelain for the Dutch Golden Age*, edited by Jan van Campen and T. Eliëns (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 2014), 214.

[104] David Porter, *The Chinese Taste in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 86. Porcelain's feminine association in the early modern age will be expanded in V.iv.

[105] Feng Xianming, *An Illustrated Companion to Chinese Ancient Ceramics* (Beijing: Antique Press, 1998), 3.

objects featured in many of these literatures, which were mostly written by scholarly or artistic figures.[106] To publish and spread their unique taste and experience with objects was one crucial way for them to establish their intellectual and cultural identity. One landmark example is the 17th-century scholar and dramatist Li Yu's (1610-1680) *Xianqing Ouji* (*Sketches of Idle Pleasures*, first printed in 1671).[107] Li Yu intended with this book to distinguish his unique taste, as exemplified in his conscious attempt to set an elegant paradigm of daily life for the general public.

Different from above mentioned critique on porcelain's economic risk, and the satiric comment on the equally fragile female, Li Yu addressed the so-called *fragility* of porcelain with a completely different discourse:

> Porcelain is the most suitable material for vases because the water would not get easily turbid when growing flowers, and the coppery smell could also be gotten rid of. However, porcelain vases could easily crack without proper protection when water freezes in winter. We could thus place an inner layer into the vase so as to protect the outer layer of porcelain from cracking. This inner layer should be made from tin rather than copper because tin does not rust or smell so strongly as copper. Moreover, tin is more pliable than copper to be bent into the inner layer of vase, and tin is also cheaper than copper. Indeed, to place an inner layer into porcelain wares is widely known and practiced.[108]

I want to call particular attention to how Li Yu discussed copper, tin, and porcelain in a specific using context in contrast to de Vries' superficial distinction of tin and porcelain based on whether the material is crispy. Li Yu's primary concern was an aesthetic passion for growing flowers, and he selected materials completely based on the sensational and empirical experience—whether the smell of metal would harm the aura of flower, whether the rust of metal would make the water turbid, whether a particular metal material was pliable enough to fit into a porcelain vase, and which material is most economic. In various parts of *Sketches of Idle Pleasures*, Li Yu consciously expressed a sense of cultural superiority in terms of his individual taste. This did not come from material abundance, extravagant display or fast fashion, but was demonstrated through his smart insights into daily life, a sensible and economic life philosophy—how he improved the using experience, how he selected the right material for the right purpose, how he took care of and well preserved the object, and how he did not waste. The cherishing care for things was indeed one important ideological root of the Chinese perception of the sustainability of porcelain wares. We could find many other discussions regarding how to prevent porcelain from breaking or cracking.

I want to quote one more example from one important publications on porcelain in ancient China, Lan Pu and Zheng Tinggui's *Jinedezhen Taolu (The Potteries of China*, first printed in 1815*).*[109] This was a milestone publication that introduced the historical development of ceramic industry (both private and imperial branches), the professional management and division of labours, business and trade practice,

[106] Craig Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Social Status and Material Culture in Early Modern China* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 8-39.
[107] Li Yu (1611-1680), *Sketches of Idle Pleasures, an Illustrated Edition* (Jinan: Shandong Pictorial Press, 2003).
[108] Li, 251. Translated by me.
[109] Lan Pu and Zheng Tinggui (c. 1815), *The Ceramics Industry in Jingdezhen, an Illustrated Edition* (Jinan: Shandong Pictorial Press, 2004).

famous kilns, and various material and cultural aspects of ceramics. Lan and Zheng incorporated major previous publications on material culture as well as their first-hand interviews with craftsmen and businessmen. This book was one of the most important and comprehensive primary texts on Chinese ceramic. Indeed, this important primary source offers crucial evidence for why I regard export porcelain, not to mention amorous porcelain, as forgotten in Chinese narratives and excluded from canonization. Nevertheless, physical characteristics of various types of domestic ceramics and porcelains were surveyed. Many smart and practical "tips" from previous literature were also compiled. For example, from *Records of the Inky Lady*, an early Ming dynasty (1368-1644) text on techniques of agriculture, metallurgy, chemistry, and artefacts, Lan and Zheng quoted two unique tips of porcelain preservation, the first tip was similar to Li Yu's, which instructed on how to prevent porcelain from cracking.

> If porcelain wares of fine quality were used without some pre-treatment, the porcelain could easily get cracked and the enamel layer could easily get ruptured when touching boiling liquid. Thus firstly, gently stew the new ware in water where rice soaked. Take the ware out, smear some ginger juice and soy paste on its bottom, and then quickly roast it in fire. This piece will never crack upon boiling water after this treatment.[110]

While Li Yu was concerned with the damaging effect of freezing water in winter, here, the damaging effect of boiling water is also taken into consideration. Indeed, the radical difference in temperature is one major factor that threats the completeness of porcelain wares. Extreme situations on either pole of the temperature scale were kept in mind. Li Yu's method of putting a metal inner layer might not be difficult to come up with, while he still experimented in between the two mental materials, tin or copper. However, the above-quoted method must have gone through many rounds of experiments considering its peculiar recipe and process. According to my research, no study has been conducted to explain the chemical rationale behind this method, but this method has been widely quoted and practiced, it has been customarily called "to exercise the dish", a truly enlivened concept.[111] Nevertheless, all three ingredients used, rice water, ginger juice, and soy paste, were easily found in kitchen. It could be speculated that a perfect way of protecting the porcelain had been searched for and found in daily culinary practice.

It should have become clear that the Chinese perception of the so-called "fragility" was very subtle and delicate—of course the crispiness of the porcelain material was recognized, however, people loved the

[110] 《墨娥小录》("*Records of the Inky Lady*") (c. mid-14th-century), quoted in Lan and Zheng, 210. Translated by me.
The original Chinese text:凡用佳瓷，不先制之，过热汤水无有不损裂，必须先以米泔水温温渐煮，再以生姜汁及酱涂器底下，入火稍煨顿，可保。

[111] For example, this method was also quoted in *Manual of the Mustard Seed Garden*, one of the most important printed manuals of Chinese painting, the seven volumes of which started to be complied and published since late Seventeenth-century. Preparation of painting tools is thoroughly discussed in Volume I on landscape painting. Porcelain dishes were used as palette to mix paint in Chinese painting practice, and this was the context where this anti-cracking method was quoted. The wording here is much more precise than the above quotation from *Records of the Inky Lady*, and the context of painting is also specified.
The original Chinese text:
炼碟。凡颜色碟子，先以米泔水温温煮出，再以生姜汁及酱涂底下，入火煨顿，永保不裂。
My translation:
Exercise the dish: all porcelain palette dishes must be gently stewed in rice water, then smear some ginger juice and soy paste on its bottom, and then quickly roast it in fire. This practice could ensure the dish shall never crack.
Manual of the Mustard Seed Garden (1679), Volume I on landscape painting, edited by Wang Gai, Wang Shi, Wang Nie, and Zhu Sheng (Beijing: People's Fine Arts Press, 2004), 36.

object so attentively and knew about its nature so well that they developed ways to "exercise" their wares and modified their using habit according to the change of temperature conditions. Different from the rather annoying fragility as suggested by the primary sources in the European context, the fragile nature becomes a contesting field where literati could distinguish their unique treatment for the object. Objects were to be taken care of, and the processor's relationship with it was highly sensational, intimate, and enlivened—this is indeed one fundamental ideology of material culture in ancient China.[112]

Although I failed to identify, protective practices similar to Li Yu's might also exist in Europe. Nevertheless, this might not be a mainstream practice. For porcelain lovers, their individual collections often comprise hundreds or thousands of pieces, which casts doubt on how much care and attention they would like to endow to individual pieces. But in the meantime, recent archaeological findings have showed that, the broken pieces would still be kept in the household rather than being thrown away. Ostkamp analyzed excavations findings from various 17th-century cesspit spots across the Netherlands and concluded that, "any remaining porcelain was treasured. Broken objects were riveted, sometimes ending up in cesspits much later".[113] Notably, this cherishing attitude only applied to Chinese export wares, mainly Kraak and Transitional wares, but other categories like the Rijnland earthenware was more quickly disposed.[114] The considerable quantity of shards might point to their lack of methods to keep the wares intact, but the fact they were preserved also echoed with the great adoration for individual pieces as in the Chinese context. Therefore, by the end of the comparison between the original perceptions toward porcelain's fragility, we could realize that, discourses on the fragility was rather diverse within the European context; meanwhile, although there are observable difference from the Chinese perspective, the difference is not absolute. The partially parallel and partially divergent perspectives also made porcelain's definite fragility a rather fluid concept.

b. The obscure shininess

The second aspect of porcelain's materiality that was particularly appreciated by the early modern European was the visual allure of porcelain's texture, or to say, the shining and transparent optical effect. In his article "Cultural reflections on porcelain in the 17th-century Netherlands", Thijs Weststeijn introduced how the visual beauty of porcelain greatly fascinated European people before they had discovered the chemical mechanism of producing porcelain.[115] One most obvious demonstration of this obsession could be found in Dutch still-life paintings like Willem Kalf's, where porcelain, as defined in great detail together with various glamorous shapes, surfaces, and textures, embodied an early modern curiosity for the scientific

[112] Jonathan Hay extensively discussed the sensational engagement with material culture in the early modern Chinese practice of collection, display, and creative refinement of objects in *Sensuous Surface*. For example, Chapter 2 "The Object Thinks with Us" denotes the psychic intensity of the pleasure gained from the object and its decorative surface.
Jonathan Hay, *Sensuous Surfaces: the Decorative Object in Early Modern China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2010), 61-90.
[113] Sebastiaan Ostkamp, "The Dutch 17th-century Porcelain Trade from an Archaeological Perspective," in *Chinese and Japanese porcelain for the Dutch Golden Age*, edited by Jan van Campen and T. Eliëns (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 2014), 79.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Weststeijn, "Cultural Reflections of porcelain in the 17th-century Netherlands," 213-230.

and empirical realities of the world.[116] Meanwhile, to reproduce the optical allure of Chinese porcelain was also the main pursuit when developing Delftware, which fostered serious interest and research to discover the material secret of porcelain.[117] As the most advance chemical production early modern Europeans had ever seen, porcelain came to be associated with not only cultural imagination, but also scientific knowledge, or even magic, which involved a profusion of theories on the origin and manufacture of porcelain.[118] The obsession with porcelain's surface beauty also led people to believe porcelain wares had medical functions and food would taste better when served in porcelain.[119]

The Seventeenth and Eighteenth century fanatic admiration for porcelain's surface beauty and a superstitious belief in porcelain's magical function typically exemplified the historical actors' cognitive pitfalls, specifically in this case, they could not construct an autonomous image of porcelain because they were simply ignorant of the producing facts. In contrast, if we look at literatures on ceramics and porcelain in ancient China, for example, *Jingdezhen Taolu*, the appreciation of the surface beauty would always be tied to the regional origin of a specific ware, because the final texture was fundamentally determined by the type of clay available in that area.[120] Therefore, it could be said that, in the Chinese context, there did not exist a superficial appreciation of only the final texture. To push this point even further, clay was instead a starting point of their perception. An educated Chinese appreciation of porcelain's texture surpassed a static obsession with the optical allure, but was a highly dynamic appreciation of raw materials and producing process. For example, Weststeijn seemed to suggest the *Gaolin* clay was the major ingredient for all porcelain, but this was far from the authentic Chinese perception.[121] In the chapter called "The strategic planning of ceramic business" in *Jingdezhen Taolu*, Lan and Zheng expanded on this point:

> When producing ceramics in Jingdezhen, the final texture and refinement differ greatly from type to type. Some producers use *Guangudun,* some use *Shanggudun*, some use *Zhonggudun*, some use *Huashi*, some mix *Ciguo* with *Gaolin*, some mix *Huashi* with *Baishi*, some mix *Yugandun* with *Gaolin*, some use *Huangnidun*, some pick up disposed clay and use it—the employment of clay will all depend on what type of ware one wants to produce.[122]

The italic parts are all names of different kinds of local clay and stone, and *Gaolin* is only one of them. I quoted this sentence so as to show how complicated the choosing and composition of raw materials was for Chinese insiders. Also, when they appreciated a highly shining and transparent piece of porcelain, their reflections would be like this: "If the kiln, clay base, and firewood are all kept dry, then there would be

[116] Ibid., 213.
[117] Ibid.
[118] ibid., 214-217.
[119] Ibid., 222.
[120] Lan and Zheng, *The Ceramics Industry in Jingdezhen, an Illustrated Edition,* 117-156. A chronological introduction of famous types of porcelain from different kilns was given. Most introductions start with defining the characteristics of the local clay and stone.
[121] Weststeijn, "Cultural Reflections of porcelain in the 17th-century Netherlands," 222.
[122] Lan and Zheng, *The Ceramics Industry in Jingdezhen, an Illustrated Edition,* 107. My translation.

few cracking or dark color; if the clay, paint and craftsmanship are all refined, then the texture will not be coarse or dotted". [123]

The Chinese perception of the surface texture appeared quite different from the European perception. They knew that as long as every step of the producing process was taken care of, the final effect could not be bad. Therefore, the Chinese viewers would hardly have awe or amazement in the way the European viewers did. The Chinese perceived porcelain's shininess from inside out, while the European perceived porcelain's shininess from outside in, and this was an irreconcilable cognitive gap. Weststeijn emphasized that, despite European's possible mistaken understandings of Chinese society, culture, or image, "there was but one presence that was unmistakably Chinese: the material itself".[124] This was not untrue—one particular porcelain ware was *the same and the one* when it was transported from China to the Dutch republic—but the material *identicalness* might be *meaningless*, because in practice, the "unmistakably Chinese material" was to be conceptually reshaped from the first second of their contact with European possessors. The European subsequently built up new cultural biographies of porcelain—admirations for its beauty and beliefs in its magical functions—based on what they perceived as the "inherence" of porcelain, that is, the beautiful optical qualities. Certain partial understanding did further foster their more serious interest in the Chinese origin of porcelain, for example, a serious interest in Chinese medicine practice was aroused. Still, the whole process was ironic. Some partial and superficial appreciation of the materiality of an object from China aroused further interest in China, which indeed, led to another round of partially informed accounts and discourses on China.[125] Nevertheless, I would never deny that, the European's somewhat ignorant imagination and fantasy inspired by porcelain's materiality contributed to prosperous cultural and intellectual productions, and these were exactly what enriched the history of cross-cultural encounter and exchange. However, I want to call attention to the absolute fluidity of the so-called "inherence" of any events and objects involved in cross-cultural encounters.

The comparative study of how porcelain's materiality has been perceived by the two parities since the early modern East-West encounter offers a trifold conclusion. Firstly, we cannot extract, or there might not exist an absolute distinction between Chinese perspective and Dutch perspective, however, a general tendency could be observed that the historical Chinese tended to perspective porcelain's materiality from inside-out, while the historical Dutch tended to perceive it from outside-in. Secondly, the original historical actors' perceptions of porcelain's materiality seem to have continued to shape the modern scholar's discourse, which exemplifies the cognitive pitfalls of history. Thirdly, there does not exist a secured material

[123] Ibid., 111. My translation.
[124] Weststeijn, "Cultural Reflections of porcelain in the 17th-century Netherlands," 229.
[125] One important Dutch example was the study collection constructed by the 18th-century Den Haag lawyer Jean Theodore Royer (1737-1807). Through collecting, studying language, and compiling the dictionary, Royer intended to gain insights into how Chinese lived, especially the cultivated and elite Chinese people, such as the literati officials. This important example would be further expanded in V.ii.
Jan van Campen, *De Haagse jurist Jean Theodore Royer (1737-1807) en zijn verzameling Chinese voorwerpen* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2000).

inherency of a cross-cultural object like ceramics, or to say, it might be meaningless to talk about its material inherency because initial perceptions of the same material quality could lead to completely divergent discourses.

V. Rethinking history through the told and the untold: The absence/presence of amorous porcelain in Chinese and Netherlandish narratives of export ceramics

Through comparing how porcelain's materiality has been dealt with, section IV revealed a critical discrepancy between the Chinese and Western outlooks on export porcelain—Chinese viewers looked at it from inside-out, while the Western viewers looked at it from outside-in.[126] This difference appears to be rather self-evident, but it does have a strong shaping force on the discourse on export porcelain as produced by each party. Section V will go on to reveal how export porcelain and the historical encounter have been perceived from different perspectives. Meanwhile, I will point out a deeper parallel underlying this tremendous difference, that is, a tendency to construct a discourse of national pride, which is particularly visible in Chinese and Netherlandish scholarships on export porcelain. The identification of a national discourse in each scholarship, however, is inspired by a subcategory that has not been included in narratives of export porcelain produced by either party, that is, porcelain with amorous or exotic subject matters. I have analysed in section III that, it is extra difficult to realize or precisely locate the underlying ideological bias when only dealing with the existent happy narrative because the conventional discourse could be easily followed without noticed. Instead, if we alternatively look at the un-canonized contents, the starting point would be subtly different since one will start out by deconstructing the conventional discourse and examine why the absent content did not *fit*. Indeed, it is *the one and the same* ideological framework that determined certain contents to be canonized while others to be left out.

Therefore, though sections V.i and V.ii might appear to be normal reviews of scholarships, my starting point is subtly different—as I reflect and critique, I am always concerned with the absence of this subcategory, and I thus hold a consciously deconstructive attitudes towards the existent narratives and discourses of export porcelain produced by Chinese and Netherlandish scholars. I have identified and will focus on one of many possible reasons why indecent porcelain did not *fit*, that is, both Chinese and Netherlandish scholarships on export porcelain are deeply charged with a discourse of national pride, though this parallel discourse was achieved through completely different ideological mechanisms. Either party's underlying concerns for a national discourse will naturally invite us to reflect on the absence, or, alternative presence of amorous porcelain. Particularly, since narratives and interpretations on export porcelain have not appeared until recent decades in China, I will focus on modern scholarship in China in V.i. In contract, since representations and accounts of porcelain already started during the Dutchmen's original encounter with export porcelain, thus in V.ii, I am interested to trace back to the early modern period by looking broadly into visual, intellectual, and material engagement with export porcelain in Dutch society.

[126] This split is not absolute, but typified a general tendency in each party.

After this, in V.iii, I will introduce some representative amorous pieces I have identified, and my classification of the two main types. However, this is not a comprehensive ground searching of all existent amorous pieces, or to say, this thesis does not attempt to canonize this "forgotten" category within the narrative of export porcelain. Instead, I am interested to contemplate this superficially absent category's possible relation to other contemporary art-historical and social-historical progress. Specifically, in IV.iv.a & b, I will provide tentative explanations of why this category does not *fit* with reference to the national discourses I have identified in V.i and V.ii. Secondly, as my title of this section suggested, amorous porcelain might be *absent* from the legitimate narratives, but its *absence* exactly declares the *presence* of relevant cognitive pitfalls. This category is present in an alternative way. This category's *alternative presence* will be demonstrated through investigating how the reception or influence of this category might be present in other contemporary historical progressions. To identify its possible influence on circumjacent events or movements, thus, also helps to enrich the previous understanding of a particular passage of history.

V.i. Deconstructing the told: The national discourse of cultural exportation in the Chinese scholarship

As section IV revealed, the divergent messages imbued in different schools' current scholarships could, to some extent, be traced back to their original experience of porcelain's materiality the subsequently different conceptions of the idea of porcelain. Now that Chinese export porcelain was also a crucial channel through which the two cultures encountered and exchanged during the early modern age, the gap lying in between the Chinese and Netherlandish perceptions of porcelain would inevitably shape their understandings of the Self, the Other, and their encounter. During the original encounter, the mutual misunderstandings, or indeed, diverse modes of cognitions were inevitable, and were never harmful to either culture. Instead, the ideological gaps and cognitive pitfalls were what kept cross-cultural encounters exuberant. However, for scholars nowadays, it is essential to be fully aware of the historical misunderstandings in order to gain new insights into this passage of history because each party's fundamental desire and anxiety regarding the Self and the Other during the original encounter might be exactly concealed in these misunderstandings. Nevertheless, as I will expand in V.i and V.ii, neither Chinese nor Netherlandish scholarships have been critical enough towards the historical misunderstandings, which resulted in somewhat culture-centric discourses, though with different ideological mechanisms.

Particularly with Chinese scholarship, many scholarships embody a presumption that, through porcelain exportation, the sophisticated Chinese culture and aesthetics greatly benefited and enriched the Other. Or to say, a legacy of Chinese cultural exportation was imposed onto the narrative of export ceramics. I have already explained from the perspective of cultural biography why it is problematic to declare Chinese export porcelain as authentically *Chinese* in the sense of cultural essentialism—it is futile to declare a discourse of national pride based on a surface mania for porcelain considering the fundamental cognitive gaps. As I have critiqued with Ye's discussion of porcelain used in religious rituals in Southeast Asia, Chinese scholars should not confuse object's being valued in religious or social practices in another context

with a genuine admiration for its Chinese origin by that particular society. In addition to the excessive emphasis on the Chinese cultural essentialism imbued in export porcelain, there also lacked a thorough acknowledgement of the Other's autonomous cultural tradition. In some scholarships, there even existed a tendency to further misinterpret the Other to glorify the Self.

I want to firstly refer back to Ye's study. As I have pointed out, Ye's original training was in Chinese history. Even where he touched upon overseas connections, he paid major attention to Southeast Asia. He briefly mentioned the cultural aftermath of export porcelain in the Eighteenth-century Europe, but the discussion was seriously one-sided. He started by establishing a strong causal relationship between Chinese aesthetics and the rise of Rococo: "As porcelain wares from our country gradually penetrated into artistic appreciation of the European society, art of our country also subtly influenced European's aesthetic taste. Until late 18th-century, under the strong influence of art from our country, Rococo art started in France, and then widely spread all over Europe".[127] This general account was not completely untrue, but after this, Ye started to praise how the Chinese-inspired Rococo rescued European art from the previously horrible Baroque style, "the light was irrelatively dazzling, the lines were stiff and mechanical, the structures were symmetrical and boring. While the new Rococo style was completely different, the style was elegant, concise and vivid. It was concerned with delicate colour tone, gentle light, graceful curving and asymmetrical structures".[128] As someone who might know little about Western art history, clearly Ye could not automatically compose these art historically biased accounts. He referred to three foreign authors that have been translated into Chinese, Kobayashi Taichiro (1901-1963), Adolf Reichwein (1898-1944), and G. F. Hudson (1904-1974). I compared Ye's quotations and interpretations with Reichwein and Hudson's texts. How Ye selectively referred to them indeed reflected his making of a Sino-centric discourse regarding the Chinese root of Rococo.

What Ye quoted from Adolf Reichwein was only a short sentence on porcelain's relation with the color effect in Rococo art. However, if we look into the original source, the German scholar Adolf Reichwein's book *China und Europa. Geistige und kuenstlerische Beziehungen im 18. Jahrhundert*,[129] we will realize Reichwein actually provided art historically contextualized and substantial discussion of how Rococo primarily evolved from the European and Baroque tradition with some specific inspirations from Chinese aesthetics as embodied in porcelain, silk and gardening.[130] Particularly, Reichwein paid much attention to the visual and stylistic evolvement, and he traced to a wide variety of both Chinese and European objects and visual forms in order to comprehensively present a process of visual developmental.[131] Thus, Reichwein's discussion could have been further reviewed or quoted if Ye wanted to provide a fuller

[127] Ye, 283.
[128] Ibid.
[129] This book was firstly published in Berlin in 1923. Ye quoted from a Chinese translation based on the 1925 English translation from the original German version.
Adolf Reichwein, *China and Europe: Intellectual and Artistic Contacts in the Eighteenth Century*, translated by Zhu Jieqing (Beijing: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1962).
[130] Reichwein, 20-55.
[131] Ibid.

view of the aesthetic relationship between porcelain and Rococo. However, it seems that Ye preferred to simply set Baroque as a horrible past, while Rococo as an inspired transition enabled by the Chinese aesthetics. In that sense, Reichwein's standpoint was not strong enough, unlike Kobayashi Taichiro, who was uncritically borrowed by Ye to advocate Chinese porcelain's dominant and decisive influence on Rococo as a whole.[132]

Ye concluded his praise of porcelain's huge contribution to European society and art by referring to another quotation-out-of-context—"in conclusion, Chinese porcelain's exportation to Europe not only made the material life of the European society more convenient, but also had huge influence on its art, the elite form of spiritual culture. As Hudson said, 'it is agreed by art historians that the Rococo style was directly borrowed from China'".[133] G. F. Hudson was one early British author who wrote on the historical Sino-Euro encounter, his *Europe and China: A Survey of Their Relations from the Earliest Times to 1800* was firstly published in 1931.[134] Its ninth chapter is completely devoted to a discussion on Rococo, where Ye got the above quotation-out-of-context.[135] Different from Reichwein's emphasis on the aesthetic context and stylistic development, Hudson provided a highly cogent analysis of the social and ideological background of the Baroque-Rococo transition and the so-called Chinese inspiration.

At the beginning of his discussion, Hudson made it very clear that Rococo artists selected from Chinese traditions merely things that catered to their taste, while it was exactly because of their complete ignorance of Chinese heritage that made Chinese topics fantastic to them.[136] Most importantly, Hudson comprehensively analyzed that, although the Chinese style constituted one specific type of the Rococo style, the Chinese vogue could not directly reveal the fundamental essence of this historical transformation. Hudson contextualized the transition from Baroque to Rococo in the social background in France in particular—the rise of the Rococo fashion embodied the disillusion and indulgence after the former religious and political order and power were disrupted, while Baroque style was exactly the representational form of the previous institutional grandeur and glory.[137] Therefore, it was rather superficial and contextually uninformed for Ye to declare that it was the export Chinese commodities and aesthetics that shaped the new Rococo trend and even saved the European from the poorly tasted Baroque style. It was because of complex trends and transformations within the European society that the Baroque style could have triumphed for more than a century. Stylistically, it also combined the indigenous aesthetic tradition since the ancient Rome as well as its contemporary need for visual power and authority.

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[132] Ye quoted from Taichiro's article, "The Evolvement of the Rococo style": "During 18th-century, the only substantial paradigm of such curving lines were Chinese art crafts, especially the soft curves of porcelain wares, […] the so-called characteristics of Rococo art were completely as a direct support borrowed from Chinese art and craftsmanship".
Kobayashi Taichiro, "The Evolvement of the Rococo Style," translated by Rong Ke, *Meishu Chengcong* 3 (1982), cited in Ye, 283.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid.
[135] G. F. Hudson, *Europe and China—A Survey of Their Relations from the Earliest Times to 1800* (1931), translated by Wang Zunzhong, Li Shen, Zhang Yi (Beijing: Zhong hua shu ju, 1995), 246-266.
[136] Ibid., 249-250.
[137] Ibid. 251.

To Ye's Chinese eye, the Baroque style might be "vulgarly colorful, rigidly complicated, irrelatively dazzling, mechanically symmetric",[138] but it was problematic for him to comment in a way as if the European's taste was too bad before they had contact with Chinese art. To be noted, I regard *taste* as a futile and misleading concept when trying to understand cross-cultural artistic exchange; instead, historical backgrounds and social dynamics might offer a more effective starting point. Hudson also pointed out, rather than only talking about "the Rococo style", one should look into the "the Rococo era" and its profound internal conflict.[139] Indeed, European's seemingly leaning towards the Chinese aesthetics was predominantly because of their internal social dynamics rather than the aesthetic cultivation brought about by the external sources and inspirations. As Hudson summarized, different from the impelling order and belief that governed either the Baroque period or the later Neo-Classicism period, the principal dynamics of the in-between Rococo period was to question and disrupt faiths, orders, and institutions, the Rococo style was thus innovative yet iconoclastic, fantastic yet indulging.[140] It was because the Chinese style's being radically different from the European Classicism rather than *its being Chinese* that it could become a vogue at that particular timing. Or to say, the Rococo artists were predominantly driven by an anti-Classicism mentality rather than a genuine love for Chinese art. This gap seems subtle, but it is an essential issue to bear in mind when we look at the phenomenon of Chinoiserie nowadays. If not, one could easily fall into accounts like Ye's, which failed to distinguish the predominant internal motivations and external, and ignorantly followed sources. Rococo artists like Juste-Aurèle Meissonnier (1695-1750) increasingly and overly exaggerated and abused Chinoiserie ornamental elements without any penetration into the authentic Chinese art tradition or its serious aesthetic principals[141]—this art historical fact also reinforced the above mentioned gap between internal motivations and external sources.

This is, of course, not to deny or neglect the visible and substantial influence that Chinese aesthetic did have on the visual culture of Rococo. However, one could understand neither the European Rococo nor its Chinese inspiration by staying on the visual surface, and this is exactly Ye's problem. If we now juxtapose Ye's ignorant account on the relationship between export Chinese art and Rococo style together with Hudson's book Ye actually quoted, it seems that Ye failed to or deliberately denied to acknowledge Europe's internal social transformations that prepared for the vogue of Chinese aesthetics. Instead, he chose to stay on a superficial level and constructed the interpretation that Chinese porcelain and its aesthetics saved the Europeans from their horrible Baroque style so as to blow up a discourse of national pride. In the previous paragraph, I have already analyzed how such interpretation was historically as well as logically flawed. If referring to the concept I theorized in section II.ii, Ye was trapped in the second cognitive pitfall and could not acknowledge the social autonomy of the Other. In result, his discourse was so ignorant that it did not convincingly praise Chinese porcelain's influence at all. As I explained in the previous paragraph, it is historically complex that to what extent the European's Chinese vogue owed to Chinese

[138] Ye, 283.
[139] Hudson, 265.
[140] Ibid., 252.
[141] Ibid., 257-263.

art/object/thought's *being Chinese*—this sounds obscure, but I will expand more on how Chinese porcelain was not necessarily perceived as Chinese in the European conception in V.ii. Meanwhile, I want to demonstrate with Ye's case as a typical example that, instead of further misunderstanding the Other, only by fully acknowledging the historical and social autonomy of the Other could one precisely and effectively point out the influence from the Self, this is also the principle I will particularly follow in V.iv.d as I explore the cross-cultural resonance of *West Chamber* porcelain.

However, it is curious that, how come as a well-trained historian, Ye would provide such uninformed accounts on porcelain's influence on European art. Ye's deliberately superficial interpretation was partly because of his unfamiliarity with European history, but more importantly, maybe it was because he did not think high of export porcelain as a category, even though he was a leading authority in this field and was among the first to promote the research of export porcelain in China. Ye expressed in a 2013 interview that, "after all, export porcelain is a small subcategory of ancient porcelain in general, and this category is not very important".[142] Export porcelain was not a "small" subcategory at all in terms of the huge quantity. Based on current collections and shipwreck findings, as much as one hundred million pieces of Chinese porcelain were exported during Seventeenth century alone.[143] Ye's comment on this category's insignificance was indeed directed at its lower material and aesthetic value compared with the more exquisite imperial porcelains, especially according to a Chinese eye. Indeed, although research on export porcelain starts to accumulate in China, many scholars are not interested in individual objects or providing object-based analysis, nor have they fully acknowledged the social autonomy of the European acceptor. The strong conflict between the fundamental bias on export porcelain's low value as artwork and the wish to canonize this category might have led to a superficial praise of cultural exportation in some scholarships.

I will further review two recent scholarships that embodied the above-analyzed scholarly shortcomings. However, I will mainly point problems out rather than redundantly expanding all of them since the major logical and historical flaws have already been typified by Ye's case. The first example is Hu Yanxi's 2010 article, "They Once Conquered the World".[144] It is already observable from the title that Hu was concerned with a nationalist discourse of cultural exportation. His main argument is that, every single piece of export porcelain involved in the early modern East-West trade was a vehicle through which the then superior Chinese material and intellectual culture was transported to and benefited the West. A spontaneous sense of pride and ignorance haunted the whole article. What is particularly problematic is his interpretation of the intellectual exportation. Hu compared the European and Chinese histories during the Fifth to the Fifteenth Century, and he claimed that the church-governed millennium in Europe was antihuman, cruel, dark, and ignorant, while the Confucius-enlightened millennium in China was human, vigorous, and progressive—thus by the time porcelain trade was initiated in 16th-century, the more superior and

[142] Jiang Yuejun, "An interview of Ye Wencheng: The Export Porcelain could hardly become a leading collector's category," *Guangzhou Daily* (Dec 15, 2013).
[143] Eva Ströber, *Ming: Porcelain for a Globalised Trade* (Stuttgart: Arnoldsche Art Publisher, 2013), 191.
[144] Hu Yanxi is another leading authority of this field in China and has published extensively on export porcelain.

enlightened Chinese culture was naturally pursued by the Western people through porcelain.[145] I have already discussed in II.iii that, it is meaningless to directly compare the developmental timelines of different cultures so as to put them on a hierarchical order. The pre-modern cultures were conditioned by completely different environmental factors and gradually evolved to function with various internal social dynamics. There is no single legitimate scale of value to claim Chinese society's cultural superiority over the European society during 5th-15th centuries, not to say how problematic it is to generalize a whole millennium in Europe or in China with one umbrella judgment. "In short, the millennium of the Medieval Europe was a period that killed human's pursuit after earthly happiness, while its contemporary China advocated earthly happiness, which caused enormous gap in material and intellectual culture in between these two societies"—in order to construct this overarching cultural hierarchy between China and Europe, Hu completely neglected the complexity and diversity within these two societies during a whole millennium. Moreover, Hu made a very critical logic mistake that, even if the sensational expression was one aspect of Chinoiserie, for the majority of Chinoiserie followers and consumers, this interest did not come from serious investigation or in-depth understanding of the Confucius philosophy or Chinese moral ethics as Hu considered,[146] instead, it was mostly from a rather superficial imitation of the forms and styles as visible in decorations on porcelain or silk, which I have explained with reference to Hudson. Thus, it was historically flawed for Hu to over interpret the visually sensational elements of Chinoiserie so as to construct a discourse of intellectual exportation.

Nevertheless, Hu constructed the discourse that, what was exported through porcelain to the West was Chinese people's genuine passion and love for secular life and sentiments, a humanist spirit that was absent in its contemporary Europe. Hu thus classified the illustrations and symbols that have been identified on Ming & Qing export porcelains into ten major types of auspicious iconographies.[147] Again, it was extremely doubtful to what extent the original European audience could have insights into these sophisticated symbolisms and iconographies. Indeed, European viewers and scholars have seldom read into the specific stories or meanings of porcelain illustrations, and it is not until very recent have Western scholars like Eva Ströber devoted serious attention to symbolic language of auspicious signs on Chinese export porcelain.[148] Not only have Hu over estimated the original European audience's understanding of his so-called Chinese humanism and thus over interpreted the effect of cultural exportation involved in Ming & Qing export porcelain, but Hu further made a flawed judgment of history. By the end of his article, he claimed that, though both imperial porcelain and export porcelain could be found in Western collections nowadays, only export porcelain should be proud of while imperial porcelain should be ashamed of—imperial porcelain went into Western collections through European exploitation since late 19th-century,

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[145] Hu Yanxi, "They Once Conquered the World, II," *Chinese Literature and History,* no. 9 (2010): 136-140.
[146] Ibid., 141-142.
[147] These ten types of iconographies include: fortune, longevity, happiness, abundance, safety, beauty, fertility, success, promotion, and wealth.
Hu Yanxi, "They Once Conquered the World, II," *Chinese Literature and History*, no. 10 (2010): 109-110.
[148] Ströber's book was one of the first attempts among Western scholars to have seriously penetrated into the authentic Chinese meanings of auspicious decorations on ceramics that were for a long time merely visually appealing to the Westerners.
Eva Ströber, *Symbols on Chinese Porcelain: 10000 Times Happiness* (Stuttgart: Arnoldsche, 2011).

which only witnessed the corrupt and incapable late Qing court, as well as the shameful memory of the Imperial China's decline; while "only export porcelain was the world legacy that once honorably conquered the whole world as a carrier of Chinese culture".[149] Hu's hierarchical judgment of different passages of history was completely shaped by the current national value and political ideology, which is problematic as history scholarship.

Similar to Hu, Zeng Lingling's 2014 book *The Porcelain Story of China* also aims to tell a story of cultural exportation, while different from Hu's emphasis on the Chinese humanism imbued in porcelain decorations or Ye's emphasis on porcelain's significance in other religious rituals, Zeng selected the perspective of tea culture. Zeng started by tracing back to the close relation between tea drinking and ceramics in the indigenous Chinese tradition since as early as Tang dynasty,[150] she then emphasized how tea and porcelain were loaded and shipped together through the Indies Companies' trade.[151] It is true that during the initial stage of early modern East-West trade, tea and porcelain were two mutually promoting commodities. However, the later cultural aftermaths of porcelain in Europe greatly surpassed the framework of tea drinking and inspired fields including scientific explorations, artistic creations, the broader food culture, luxury consumption and display, etc. Not only was Zeng's framework of cultural exportation too narrow, but her construction of discussion also demonstrated her over-interpretation of Chinese porcelain's reception. Specifically, one subcategory Zeng prioritized was the Yixing pottery.[152] Yixing pottery has long been valued in the indigenous Chinese tea culture due its suitability for tea making. It was also traded to the West, but only in very small quantity compared to porcelain wares. In the case of the Netherlands, the VOC seems to have never shipped Yixing potteries, while most of the existent pieces should have arrived trough private trades. [153] Moreover, this subcategory has seldom been given equal scholarly attention compared to porcelain, it is also extremely doubtful whether the historical or modern Europeans were aware of its value for enhancing the flavor of tea.[154] Therefore, Zeng's canonization of Yixing pottery under the framework of tea culture might be far from the actual European reception and was a futile effort to construct a discourse of cultural exportation.

Indeed, such uninformed accounts on cultural exportation, and the subsequent ineffective national discourse might be a problem shared by many scholarships. However, I have selected Hu and Zeng's examples because the topics of their exportation narratives, including porcelain illustrations and tea drinking,

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[149] Hu Yanxi, "They Once Conquered the World, III," *Chinese Literature and History*, no. 10 (2010): 111-113.
[150] Zeng lingling, *The Porcelain Story of China: Chinese Porcelain Exported to the World* (Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2014), 17.
[151] Ibid., 20-21.
[152] Ibid., 23-28.
[153] Christiaan J.A. Jörg, "The Catalogue", *Chinese Ceramics in the Collection of the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam: The Ming and Qing Dynasties* (London: Philip Wilson, 1997), 247.
[154] This knowledge seems to be still unknown to many modern scholars, for example, Jörg and van Campen made a seriously flawed speculation that Yixing tea cups "were probably made for export only, as they were considered unsuitable for tea drinking by the Chinese because their dark red bodies made it impossible to appreciate the colour of the tea. For the domestic market teacups were glazed white inside".
Ibid., 247.
I am afraid they were simply imposing their European ignorance onto the historical Chinese, while in reality the "dark red mud", or *zisha* from Yixing and the tea pots and cups made from it were extremely high valued by the Chinese. *Zisha* pots could enhance the flavor of tea because there are tiny pores in this particular ceramic material while water would not permeate through it. This property is not shared by enameled porcelain. Thus, to apply white glaze inside would completely destroy its unique property.

are indeed critical aspects regarding export porcelain's participation in social dynamics in the contemporary Europe. However, since Hu and Zeng failed to acknowledge the social autonomy of the Other, they produced futile arguments due to their over estimation of the European viewers' understanding of Chinese symbolism and the authentic Chinese tea culture. Indeed, in this thesis, I have discussed extensively on concepts including cognitive pitfalls, fundamental gaps in perspectives, mutual misunderstandings, cultural biographies, fluidity of cultural inherency, etc. It seems that I am highly wary of or suspicious of cultural encounter or exchange, but this is not true. Instead, I want to be thoroughly aware of these concepts because I aim at a fair understanding of cross-cultural encounter, which, by its nature, was biased. V.iv.c & d will be experimental fields of these principals of mine.

V.ii. Reconstructing the told: The national discourse of trade success in the Netherlandish scholarship.

As expanded in V.i, what frames many recent Chinese scholarships on export porcelain is a discourse of the historical cultural exportation and the superiority of Chinese culture in various material and intellectual aspects. Some scholars' actual low regard for the export category, the limited accessibility to the major collections of export porcelain, the superficial knowledge of European history, and an ideological need to canonize Chinese porcelain are together responsible for the uninformed accounts of cultural exportation as well as the subsequent cheap national anthems. In the meantime, considering the greater accessibility to real objects and the longer tradition of research in this field, Western scholars' perspectives are broader while their accounts also appears more cogent. Still, Western scholarship on Chinese export porcelain might not be truly immune from a discourse of national pride. Particularly in Dutch scholarship of Chinese export porcelain, there could be observed a strong self-awareness and self-superiority in the historical profit-pursuit, or, the Dutch Republic's triumph in wealth. Interestingly, Chinese export porcelain has been perceived as "Chinese" only until very recent scholarship. Or to say, Chinese export porcelain has been predominantly associated with Dutch trade success rather than the Chinese cultural background. Due to European's longer intellectual and material engagement with export porcelain, I shall not be confined to modern scholarships, but will trace back to the original encounter through looking at paintings, collections as well as texts. Modern scholarship will also be briefly examined, but will not be as major a focus as in V.i.

During the initial stage of Dutch encounter with Chinese export porcelain in the 17th-century, it was not unquestionably perceived as "Chinese". Instead, Weststeijn observed that porcelain tended to be symbolically associated with Africa when it comes to its (conjectured) natural composition, or with Europe when it comes to its scientific sophistication.[155] Notably, in Jan van Kessel's (1626-1679) large series of the *Four Continents* (1664-1666), porcelain enjoyed a prominent position in the encyclopedic display of treasures from different continents. However, the abundant display of porcelain was set in a completed non-Asian context (fig. 1). Weststeijn analyzed that, porcelain's being placed with fancy glass goblets and

[155] Weststeijn, "Cultural Reflections of porcelain in the 17th-century Netherlands," 216-222.

beautiful seashells respectively symbolized the early modern European's two dominant conceptions of porcelain, porcelain as an refined scientific invention by mankind, and porcelain as a charming treasure from nature.[156] As visible in the painting, porcelain's scientific association was depicted with reference to the Western putto's experiments rather than its original Chinese inventors; while porcelain's natural association was denoted through juxtaposition with treasures from the African beach, a lion, and two African figures.

As a frequent subject matter in 17th-century Dutch painting, porcelain was most often depicted in a context of commodities rather than a scientific or Naturalia context, and it was also in the commodity context where Chinese export porcelain was thoroughly alienated to be non-Chinese. Weststeijn suggested that Chinese porcelain was associated with Africa rather than Asian in many still-life paintings considering the frequent pairing of porcelain and black slaves, for example, in Jurriaen van Streeck's (1632–1687) *Still Life with a Moor* (fig. 2)[157]—however, I do not agree with this point. Exotic specimens including exquisite silver wares, Turkish carpets, tropical fruits, Chinese porcelain, and African slaves were increasingly depicted in late 17th-century Dutch still-life. However, being painted together in one particular composition could hardly suggest different exotica's mutual national association. They are not attributed to each other but they were simply not themselves—the previous national origins of these out-of-context specimens tended to be greatly obscured.

As Westijsteijn correctly observed, despite the large quantity of Dutch paintings depicting porcelain, not a single one bothered to emphasize porcelain's "Chineseness" by depicting it next to Asian calligraphy or books, which were not unobtainable in the 17th-century Dutch Republic.[158] In contrast, the export porcelain was always well secured in a Dutch context in terms of both content and form. Chinese porcelain wares were already visible in early 17th-century Dutch still-life by painters like Floris van Dyck (1575-1651) and Nicolaes Gillis (1595-1632) (fig. 3). Although these so-called breakfast pieces were never painted after any real-life Dutch household's dining table, their compositions were overwhelmingly about the "domestic Dutch". The additive display of cheese, apples, and textiles together tells the national success since late 16th-century, that the land-bound agricultural and industrial tradition was transformed into new wealth through the rising commercial awareness.[159] Porcelain wares, as depicted to be holders of these domestic food/wealth, are also set as foils of the domestic success. In addition to content and composition, the visual style also tells the Dutch domestication of the Chinese porcelain. As already visible in early 17th-century still-life (fig. 3), porcelain is placed together with silver plates and glass goblets as an experimental field for Dutch masters' optical fascination with observing different shapes through various perspectives, as well as the sophisticated reflective effects on surfaces of different textures. As the style of Dutch still-life developed during the 17th-century, the representations of Chinese porcelain in paintings also exemplified the changing taste (fig. 4). Westijsteijn made an interesting observation in the above-mentioned still-life by Jurriaen van Streeck that

[156] Ibid., 216-217.
[157] Ibid., 225.
[158] Ibid., 227.
[159] Jonathan Irvine Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477-1806* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 111-112.

"the artist seems to have appreciated the visual contrast between the soft darkness of the black slave's skin and the porcelain's reflective sheen".[160] This observation conforms to the stylistic trend of late 17th-century Dutch still-life, which in turn, exactly contravenes with Westijsteijn's earlier suggestion that porcelain was associated with Africa here. In this painting of commodities, porcelain was not associated with Africa, nor was the Black people associated with Asia; instead, both commodities were associated with the Low Countries through both content and form—their prominent presence announced their contribution to Dutchmen's accumulating wealth through expedition and trade, while their beauty in this painting also celebrated the distinguished artistic achievement of the Dutch school. This porcelain ware's identity, if any, was Dutch.

Now that we have clarified this critical identity issue, it might help to understand one important phenomenon—despite porcelain's omnipresent presence in both high and low social layers in the 17th-century, meanwhile, despite a rising interest in knowledge about China among the learned community, seldom was export porcelain directly associated with research into the authentic Chinese language or culture.[161] Exported through the massive VOC trade and subsequently consumed on the Dutch market, commodity porcelain might not be considered as a serious source by intellectuals who intended to research into the authentic China, even though their initial interest in China might well be inspired by export porcelain.

In order to further elaborate on export porcelain's obscure "Chinese" identity as perceived by the intellectual community, I want to provide a mini case study of one early modern Dutch scholarly attempt to understand China, the Den Haag lawyer Jean Theodore Royer's (1737-1807) collection of Chinese objects. Royer was one of the earliest non-missionary European scholars to develop a sinological interest in Chinese language and culture. Royer's Chinese collection contains more than 800 objects, which have been split between Museum Volkenkunde in Leiden and the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. Not only did Royer collected a large quantity of Chinese export porcelain and lacquer wares, but he also managed to obtain domestic Chinese objects through his connections with VOC employers, including tabletop decorative pieces, furniture, scholars' stationary, musical instruments and entertaining artifacts, clothes and accessories, etc. Jan van Campen pointed out that, among proto-sinologists in Europe at that time, it was original and revolutionary of Royer to establish such a big collection with an ambition to compile a Chinese dictionary.[162] Royer employed a highly educated taxonomic system with his collection, which was consistent to early modern natural science and antiquarian study.[163] That means, through collecting, Royer

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[160] Weststeijn, "Cultural Reflections of porcelain in the 17th-century Netherlands," 225.
[161] The medical interest might be a rare case where the export porcelain directly aroused a serious interest in the authentic Chinese medicine, as mentioned in section IV.ii.
Weststeijn also discussed one important exception, Vossius, who held exceptional views regarding the enlightening possibility of Chinese culture.
Thijs Weststeijn, "Vossius' Chinese Utopia," in *Issac Vossius (1618-1689), between Science and Scholarship*, edited by Eric Jorink and Dirk van Miert (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 207-242.
[162] Van Campen, *De Haagse jurist Jean Theodore Royer,* 86-93.
[163] Ibid., 402.

consciously established a relatively comprehensive system of knowledge (comprehensive as supposed by him) regarding both Chinese language and how cultivated Chinese lived.

Therefore, in Royer's case, the process of acquiring objects and constructing the collection could be approached as a self-conscious and intellectual process. Then how could the obscure "Chineseness" of export porcelain be reflected in Royer's case? Royer never compiled a complete catalogue, but an inventory of Royer's house was made soon after his death.[164] It recorded how Royer displayed different sections of the collections in different rooms, which thus provided important insights into Royer's outlooks on the classification. Notably, Royer divided his collection into two rooms—he reserved a separate room for export porcelain, where they were displayed in a decorative manner on tables and pyramidal corner shelves,[165] while all other objects were preserved in the "Chinese Museum" room.[166] Jan van Campen, the specialist of Royer's collection, considered that it was not very clear why Royer decided to conduct this precise split of his collection.[167] However, I think Royer's two-part distribution could be understood from at least two perspectives. Firstly, to have a special cabinets and rooms that were only dedicated to display was an increasing fashion among elite and well-off European families since the late 17th-century, which became almost indispensible in 18th-century.[168] Despite Royer's amateur interest in Chinese language and culture, his primary social identity was a Den Haag lawyer, thus it might well be important for a middle-class professional like him to conform to the elitist social expectation of collection and display. Secondly, a small number of ceramics were included in the "study collection", including blanc de Chine and Yixing wares. Never massively imported into Dutch market through VOC,[169] these subcategories appeared less European-market-oriented, and were usually obtained through private traders, thus they were more of collector's pieces than mass consumer commodities.

To integrate the above-analyzed two aspects, I want to argue that Royer's two-part distribution of his collection symbolized his self-conscious construction of his identity as an early modern consumer who owned an abundant and beautiful collection of Chinese export porcelain, and his identity as a proto-sinologist who obtained "authentic" Chinese objects, which carried serious knowledge about Chinese culture and customs. By separating his "porcelain room" and his "Chinese museum", he was also consciously separating commodities he consumed from the Dutch market (which were visible and accessible to his social peers) and objects he privately ordered from VOC insiders or even the domestic Chinese society (which could not be recognized by his social peers). On the one hand, the "porcelain room" section might be

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[164] The inventory is reproduced in van Campen, "Bijlage 1: Beschrijving van de inboedel van de weduwe van Royer (1815)," in *De Haagse jurist Jean Theodore Royer*, 229-243.
[165] Jan van Campen, "History of the Collection," in *Chinese Ceramics in the Collection of the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam: The Ming and Qing Dynasties* (London: Philip Wilson, 1997), 11.
[166] Van Campen, *De Haagse jurist Jean Theodore Royer,* 114-115.
[167] Ibid., 115.
[168] Titus Eliëns, "A Major Gift," in *Traces from the Trade: Ming and Qing Export Porcelains Donated by Henk B. Nieuwenhuys,* edited by Lu Minghua (Shanghai: Shanghai Museum & Shanghai calligraphy and painting publisher, 2009), 46-47.
Jan van Campen, "Chinese and Japanese Porcelain in the Interior," in *Chinese and Japanese porcelain for the Dutch Golden Age*, edited by Jan van Campen and T. Eliëns (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 2014) 203-204, 209.
[169] Jörg, "The Catalogue", in *Chinese Ceramics in the Collection of the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam: The Ming and Qing Dynasties* (London: Philip Wilson, 1997), 238-239, 247.

considered by Royer as inadequate to provide authentic sinological knowledge in comparison with his "Chinese museum"; while on the other hand, the "Chinese museum" could not fulfill the conspicuous display function within the Dutch society as the "porcelain room". Therefore, this split was a mutually reasonable distribution. To recall my original purpose of this case study of Royer, it should now become clear how export porcelain's "Chineseness" was obscure as perceived by the intellectual community. Indeed, for an amateur scholar and a Den Haag lawyer like Royer, neither could the massively purchasable export porcelain provide serious knowledge for his sinological research, nor could he fully be detached from the social expectation of conspicuous consumption. Through separating his collections and his dual-identities, he also attributed different identities to these two sections—the "Chinese museum" was about the far-away and the authentic China, while the "porcelain room" was about the here and the Dutch prosperity, which is consistent to the above discussed "Dutch" discourse as embodied in the painted porcelains in the Seventeenth-century.

In addition to export porcelain's obscure "Chineseness", there is one more point I want to further emphasize with Royer's case. Despite the formal and symbolic split, Royer's mentality and practice as either a consumer or a scholar actually intertwined in these two deliberately separated collections. Jan van Campen already observed how Royer's "porcelain room" collection embodied his sinological interest by pointing out Royer's exceptionally strong interest in pieces illustrated with highly informative images or Chinese texts.[170] In the meantime, I have observed that, Royer's study collection tended to typify a European consumer's attitudes towards commodities rather than a Chinese scholar's engagement with material culture. I have already introduced through Li Yu's case in section IV.ii that the contemporary Chinese scholar was deeply concerned with the sensational interaction with objects, the creative experiments to improve the using experience, and the cherishing attitudes towards the limited but individualized pieces. Looking through Royer's "Chinese museum", he might have failed to penetrate into this cultural core. Moreover, he was collecting as if an early modern European consumer because of two dominant collecting behavior. Firstly, he attempted to collect multiple pieces of the same object, especially with intellectual objects like ink stone. Secondly, he attempted to cover as a wide range as possible, including clothing, entertainment, incense-burning, tableware, furniture, but he seldom went deep into one particular ritual or life scenario.[171] Instead, Royer exhibited a strong interest to superficially accumulate in terms of both quantity and variety. Therefore, Royer's "Chinese museum" was consciously established with his sinological interest but was unconsciously shaped by his consumer nature, and vice versa—this doubly twisted situation cast further shadow on the "Chineseness" of not only export porcelain, but also the early modern scholarly interest in China.

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[170] Van Campen, *De Haagse jurist Jean Theodore Royer,* 125-129.

[171] For example, he collected one incense burner, but omitted the accompany small tools to enact the practice. They are incense chopsticks and incense shovel. The incense shovel is used to move and even the incense powder, while the incense chopsticks are used to carry the charcoal; neither of these two tools is dispensable in the original Chinese practice of incense burning.
Li Yu, 249.

It will go too far to claim that Chinese export porcelain was already a national emblem for the Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth-century, but I mainly want to emphasize that, in visual representations and material engagement, it was not explicitly associated with the cultural origin or identity of China. For ambitious traders and the general public, export porcelain reminded them of the Dutch mercantile success rather than the Chinese civilization or aesthetic. Meanwhile, even for intellectuals who did have a serious interest in Chinese language and culture, export porcelain might not be a most favorable source, while the porcelain-consumer habit of accumulating further shaped the characteristics of early sinological research. Thijs Westesteijn realized the phenomenon that, despite the great prosperity of intellectual culture and publication industry in the Golden Age Dutch Republic, wrings on Chinese porcelain or its Chinese origin was rare: "porcelain was so omnipresent so early on that the 17th-century Dutch simply forgot to write about it".[172] I think this point could be pushed further, export porcelain's Otherness/"Chineseness" might be largely absent in the 17th-century Dutch national consciousness, instead, it was predominantly about the Self. Porcelain's later negative connotation of the Self, mainly the female party, would be expanded in V.iv.c.

After examining how export porcelain's "Chineseness" was perceived during Dutch's initial encounter with it, I will move on to a brief scanning of the modern scholarship, which continues the early modern national discourse to a large extent. It is essential to bear in mind that, as different from the above-reviewed Chinese scholarship, the modern Western scholarship's canonization of export porcelain has been largely accompanied, or indeed, promoted by major museums and national institutions' increasing interest to collect and display Chinese porcelain. Therefore, I shall not be confined to writings on Chinese porcelain, but also involve relevant projects of collecting and exhibitions. The beginning of 20th-century witnessed an increasing interest to collect Seventeenth and Eighteenth century export porcelain among both private collectors and national institutions. A scholarly interest to institutionalize and canonize Chinese porcelain also emerged with the quickly developing Sinology scholarship. Specifically with the Dutch situation, Titus Eliëns, former head of Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, pointed out that this canonization progress of export porcelain, which started mostly after 1910, symbolized a nostalgia discourse for Dutch Golden Age.[173] Eliëns' conclusion supported my view that the modern Western scholarship is still primarily concerned with the projection of the success of the Self onto an object or image from the Other.

The rise of modern scholarship the Netherlands as a nostalgia for the Golden Age might appear to be a too straightforward case, while the more interesting Belgium case could exemplify the modern scholarship's underlying concern more comprehensively. During the Dutch Golden Age, the South Netherlands was far less prosperous in trade or economics due to warfare turmoil, political restriction, and loss of talents in Northwards immigrations. However, after a peaceful prosperity was retained after being taken over by the Austrian Empire in 1713, the South Netherlands also got involved in the profitable trade with Asia—the Ostend East India Company, undertaken by some Antwerp merchants, was founded in 1722

[172] "Introduction," in *Chinese and Japanese Porcelain for the Dutch Golden Age,* edited by Jan van Campen and Titus M Eliëns (Wezep: Waanders & De Kunst, 2014), 7.
[173] Eliëns, 48

with important support from Charles VI.[174] Very soon after its foundation, thanks to the strict and centralized managing systems in comparison with Dutch and English company's corruption-friendly system, the Ostend Company earned a huge triumph in tea trade during 1725-1728 by taking over more than half of supply to the European market—"much to the chagrin and consternation of the Dutch and English Company directors".[175] However, Charles VI (1788-1808) soon terminated the Company due to certain royal and aristocratic politics in Europe.[176] I want to emphasize with this passage of history that, the mercantile connection with China was not completely absent in the South Netherlands' national memory of their historical success, or to say, to perceive China as a destination of wealth was also present in the South Netherlands' national consciousness.

Having said these, the South Netherlands' attempt to canonize Chinese porcelain at the beginning of the 20th-century could be better understood. Particularly, what they did was pioneer in an out-of-fashion way in comparison with the other European countries, thus I regard it a highly self-conscious movement. Two important efforts are worth attention. Firstly, since as early as 1845, the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels already started to establish a collection of Chinese porcelain through not only donations from private collections but also active purchase.[177] This action appeared "out of fashion" because mid-19th-century was a period when the mass consumer interest in Chinese porcelain was completely replaced by European manufacture, while it was also "pioneer" since the scholarly interest to establish institutional collections had not emerged in Europe: "there was barely any interest in Chinese ceramics as something of historical, art-historical or aesthetic value".[178] Thus, the early institutional acquisition by the Royal Museums was highly remarkable. Secondly, the way they physically housed and thus institutionalized the Chinese porcelain was also remarkable. A "Chinese Pavilion" was built in the 18th-century *chinoiserie* style in Brussels as an annex to the Royal Museum (fig. 5). Its former curator Chantal Kozyreff commented on its simultaneous outdatedness and originality, "it may seem curious that such an exotic building should have been constructed in Brussels between 1903 and 1909, when there appears to have been no sound reason for its being put up".[179] Remembering the huge but short-lived profit that South Netherlands once earned through China, what fundamentally stimulated this aesthetically outmoded while scholarly radical movement might be an abiding mercantile mindset and an unchanged aspiration for China as a rewarding land. Indeed, the Chinese Pavilion, and the acquisition of porcelain and a general Chinese collection belonged to King Leopold II's (1835-1928) project to increase knowledge of far-off civilizations, and more importantly, to promote the trading opportunities with China.[180]

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[174] Christiaan J.A. Jörg, *Chinese Export Porcelain: Chine de Commande from the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels* (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1989), 30.
[175] Ibid., 31.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Chantal Kozyreff, "The Chinese Pavilion in Brussels and its Collection," in *Chinese Export Porcelain: Chine de Commande from the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels* (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1989), 20.
[178] Jörg, *Chine de Commande from the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels,* 35.
[179] Kozyreff, 21.
[180] Ibid.

Through introducing the deeper concerns underlying the modern canonization of Chinese porcelain in South Netherlands, I want to make the suggestion that, the modern European scholarship's perception of Chinese export porcelain's so-called "Chineseness" might not be that different from the discourse and mentality involved in European's initial encounter with it during the early modern age, i.e., rather than the authentic Chinese aesthetics or ideology, they continued to see their own success through porcelain, as both a nostalgia for the past glory and an aspiration for the future profit. One of the most important Dutch-published categories, *Chinese Ceramics in Rijksmuseum Collection*, also openly announced that, "for centuries these ceramics have decorated the interior of the Dutch, and Chinese porcelain has become part of Dutch cultural history. It is therefore fitting that the museum's collection, largely kept in storage and known only to a few, is now being published as part of the Dutch heritage".[181]

The obscure existence of "Chineseness" in modern scholarship could get further confirmed through a quick scanning of the titles of major 20th-century Western scholarships on Chinese export porcelain: the idea of "China" was completely absent in some of them;[182] even when "China" is present, it was involved only as a trading destination.[183] Indeed, the 20th-century European scholarship on Chinese porcelain is more of a trade history rather than a cultural history. Never had Western scholars applied a framework of cultural exportation as Chinese scholars did. More specifically with the Dutch scholarship, many recent monographs on export porcelain have framed their narratives with the Dutch trade history: Volker conducted important archival research on the VOC's history,[184] Jörg provided economic analysis into detailed data of the scale and profit involved in the Sino-Dutch trade,[185] Ketel took an archaeological perspective, by exploring shards from recent shipwreck findings, she aimed to construct a fuller view of the subsequent orders and shipments.[186] Therefore, in both early modern and modern Netherlandish representations, narratives, and canonization of Chinese export porcelain, the idea of "China" might indeed be absent to a large extent, instead, many narratives of export porcelain are inherently narratives of the Asia-Dutch trade's glorious success.

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[181] Jörg, "Preface," *Chinese Ceramics in the Collection of the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam: The Ming and Qing Dynasties* (London: Philip Wilson, 1997), 8.
[182] For example：
T. Volker, *Porcelain and the Dutch East India Company, as recorded in the Dagh-registers of Batavia Castle, those of Hirado and Deshima, and other contemporary papers, 1602-1682* (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1954).
Michel Beurdeley, *Porcelaine de la Campagnie des Indies* (Fribourg: Office du Livre, 1962).
Geoffrey A. Godden, *Oriental Export Market Porcelain and its Influence on European Wares* (London: Granada, 1979).
Francois and N. Hervouët, *La porcelaine des Compagnies des Indes à décor Occidental* (Paris: Flammarion, 1986).
[183] For example:
Clare Le Corbeiller, *China Trade Porcelain: Patterns of Exchange* (New York: the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1974).
David S. Howard, and John Ayers, *China for the West. Chinese porcelain and other decorative arts for export* (London/New York: Sotheby Parke Bernet Pubns, 1978).
Christiaan J. A. Jörg, *Porcelain and the Dutch China Trade* (The Hague: Springer, 1982).
Jose Roberto Teixeira Leite, *As Companhias das Indias e a porcelana Chinesa de encomenda* (São Paulo, 1986).
Carl L Crossman, *The China Trade: Export Paintings, Furniture, Silver and other Objects* (Princeton: Pyne Press, 1972).
[184] T. Volker, *Porcelain and the Dutch East India Company, as recorded in the Dagh-registers of Batavia Castle, those of Hirado and Deshima, and other contemporary papers, 1602-1682* (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1954).
[185] Christiaan J. A. Jörg, *Porcelain and the Dutch China Trade* (The Hague: Springer, 1982).
[186] Christine Ketel, "Early 17th century Chinese Trade Ceramics for the Dutch Market: Distribution, Types and Consumption," in *Early 17th Century Chinese Trade Ceramics for the Dutch Market: Distribution, Types and Consumption*, edited by Cheng Pei-kai, Fan Mengyuan (Hong Kong: Chinese Civilisation Centre, City University of Hong Kong, 2012), 101-129.
"Shipments, Shapes and Shards: The identification and analysis of shipments of Chinese porcelain to the Netherlands from 1600 to 1644," PHD dissertation in progress (Leiden: Universiteit Leiden).

Without doubt, trade is an unavoidable aspect and a very useful starting point when investigating early modern export porcelain, it is also not incorrect to claim export ceramics to belong to the Dutch heritage. However, narratives with such discourse could be unconsciously harmed by a deep cognitive pitfall. As I deconstructed Chinese scholarship's discourse of cultural exportation in V.i, that they risked misunderstanding and over-interpreting the Other, the same problem holds true in the Dutch discourse. Largely due to Marco Polo's initial praise of China's material prosperity, the early modern Westerners perceived China as a destination of wealth, and they had always aspired to trade with China and exploit all profitable opportunities—this long-existing cliché exactly exemplified the misunderstanding I want to call attention to, that is, to take the cooperation with China for granted, which also belonged to the first major cognitive pitfall I theorized in II.i. In reality, the historical China was not always willing to cooperate. Meanwhile, as I mentioned in II.iv, although the Sixteenth and Seventeenth China already embodied—what we nowadays would call—an early modern capitalist social condition, it belonged to a completely different developmental trajectory. As a result, the different extent of priority endowed to commercial profit in each country inevitably led to conflict in cooperation and mutual misunderstandings. Indeed, the early modern Europeans' trade with Chinese was far from smooth.[187]

Scholars who looked into export porcelain and the Asia-Dutch trade history would customarily acknowledge the obstacles the Dutch traders faced in China. However, they seldom attempted to understand why the historical China did not welcome the seemingly profitable opportunities during the heyday of the porcelain trade. They took negative attitude and low cooperation from China for granted. Volker even added a sarcastic tone to the narrative: "had made themselves unpopular with the Chinese government, the Dutch build a fort on the Pescadores. […] The Chinese government was, however, still strong enough to expel them from the islands in 1625, which was no calamity for the Dutch who had in the meantime established themselves on Formosa outside Chinese jurisdiction in 1624".[188] Jörg's narrative is more restrained, but also somewhat indifferent towards what was actually happening within China, but is only concerned with its influence on the business: "As in previous years there arose misunderstandings and difficulties with Chinese authorities, especially when, in 1685, the Chinese government introduced a new scheme of tolls and taxes, so that profits were diminished still further".[189] When introducing the timeline of the porcelain trade, Jörg did not clearly distinguish various events within China that prevented the VOC from trading in various periods, but mainly mentioned when and where the company did manage to trade, and major changes of trade tended

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[187] Specifically in the Dutch case, the porcelain trade with China was never smooth. To briefly summarize the progress, as VOC was established at the beginning of the 17th-century, it failed to conduct direct contact with the Chinese producers or merchants, but had to import whatever is available in Bantam, Patani, Malacca and Batavia. After 1625, VOC occupied Formosa and managed to gain regular supply of porcelain, but a regular supply was not ensured due to the domestic war in China. Very soon, the newly established Qing court prohibited direct trade through ports during 1655-1684. Formosa was retrieved by Chinese in 1661. The Jingdezhen kilns were even destroyed once in 1675. VOC thus mainly traded through Batavia, or import from Japan. Trade with China was resumed after 1680. After this, a direct trade with Canton was successful achieved until 1735. Other European countries active in the early modern trade, including Portugal and England all encountered various restrictions and very limited extent of cooperation.
[188] Volker, 9.
[189] Jörg, *Porcelain and the Dutch China Trade,* 18.

to be narrated as initiated by the Dutch organizations.[190] Nor did he want to know why the historical Chinese did not cooperate.[191]

This attitude embodied in the history-writing is indeed, historically accurate, because the historical Dutch was also not interested to understand the Other's underlying concerns or motives. Volker concluded that, the Dutch did not concern themselves with the Asian countries' internal strife as long as it did not hamper their trade.[192] However, the English scholars Kerr and Mengoni more honestly pointed out that, EIC employers deeply "resented" the Chinese they dealt with because their tax regulation was vague and always changing, because their fiscal system was so entangled, because they prohibited a "free trade", and because they "traded on their own terms".[193] EIC employers kept writing damning reports, while they also lacked a willingness to genuinely understand the Other since almost no British traders was interested to learn Chinese.[194]

Different from Kerr and Mengoni's honest discussion of the English case, seldom has Dutch scholarship openly acknowledged Dutchmen's historical hatred towards the Chinese, but this might be far from absent. Walter Demel commented that,

> For the image of China, however, which dominated in large sections of the Dutch population, probably a decisive factor was that the brave military assistance which the VOC had given to the Ch'ing emperor was not rewarded by trading privileges to the extent they had hoped. In view of Dutch patriotism which had grown enormously during the war of liberation against Spain (1566/68-1648) and the idea of international law developed at the same time, such treatment had to have a particularly unfavorable effect on the reading public at home.[195]

An incident that confirmed and summarized the latent resentment was the Dutch massacre of Chinese in Batavia in 1740, which, despite its direct relevance to the VOC history, is rarely mentioned in Dutch scholarship on porcelain trade.[196] This does not mean that negative incidents like this are completely forgotten in Dutch scholarship.[197] However, I want to reiterate the point that, the topic of export porcelain and the porcelain trade was predominantly perceived as an anchor point to develop a positive narrative and a national discourse of the mercantile success of the Self, while negative or "irrelevant" aspects of the Other

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[190] For example, Jorg did not mention the dealing with Chinese during 1655-1684 when the emperor prohibited overseas trade, but merely alternated to introduce how VOC shifted to trading with Japan.
Ibid., 13-31.

[191] Anne Gerritsen, one of the first scholars who are interested to look deeper into the original Chinese context, suggested that, the Qing court's strict centralized bureaucratic control over mercantile trade was associated with the contemporary ideology to prevent from the temptation of wealth.
Anne Gerritsen, "Merchants in 17th-century China," in *Chinese and Japanese Porcelain for the Dutch Golden Age,* edited by Jan van Campen and Titus M Eliëns (Wezep: Waanders & De Kunst, 2014), 91.

[192] Volker, 13.

[193] Rose Kerr and Luisa E. Mengoni, *Chinese Export Ceramics* (London: V&A Publishing, 2011), 10-19.

[194] Ibid.

[195] Walter Demel, "The 'National' Images of China in Different European Countries, ca. 1550-1800," in *Images de la Chine: le Contexte Occidental de la Sinologie Naissante* (San Francisco: Ricci Institute for Chinese-Western Cultural History, 1995), 113-114.

[196] Jörg's landmark monograph on Dutch-China porcelain trade, for example, seems to have omitted this incident.

[197] Historians have shown awareness and reflection on this incident, for example:
Leonard Blussé, "Batavia, 1619–1740: The Rise and Fall of a Chinese Colonial Town," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 12, no.1 (1981): 159–178.

tended to be indifferently left out. Not only is the discourse primarily concerned with the trade-relevant success, but many modern scholars uncritically continued the original lack of interest in the Other's cultural autonomy, and only paid attention to the benefited Self in this seemingly overlapping passage of history.

V.iii. Relooking at the untold: One tentative classification of amorous porcelain

The deconstructions of both Chinese and Netherlandish national discourses on export porcelain provided in V.i and V.ii will become important ideological contexts when I analyze the absence of amorous porcelain in porcelain narratives in V.iii. Before that, I want to firstly clarify what I mean by its absence. Afterwards, I will also introduce several representative pieces, and propose one way of classifying them into two types. This tentative classification will also become critical reference when we contextualize amorous porcelain in the social-historical dynamics in Eighteenth-century Netherlands and England in V.iv.

I want to firstly clarify what I mean by amorous porcelain's absence in narratives of export porcelain. Indeed, individual pieces have been included in catalogues printed in the West, but merely under one specific conventional category, such as transitional wares, *chine de commande*, or enameled porcelain figures. However, amorous pieces from these conventional categories have not been put together and considered as a separate subject matter. Or to say, the fact that pieces from various subcategories shared the erotic topic has never been identified or investigated, while the social relevance of which could be highly profound. Indeed, export ceramics have mainly been categorized according to the period or type of trade through which they arrived (such as transitional wares, *chine de commande*), the place of their origin (such as Imari, Dehua, Yixing wares), and the shape and form (such as enameled ceramic figures, famille verte, Qing Blue and White). Very seldom have subject matters been emphasized as a primary criterion of classification. This phenomenon is again consistent to the historical facts, or, trapped in the cognitive pitfalls—in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth century shipping records, descriptions of export ceramics were always frustratingly vague, but only the quantity was precisely recorded; in the contemporary inventories of private households, there was also hardly any visual descriptions.[198] Modern scholars' studies on porcelain illustrations, however, have predominantly focused on decorative aspects. It is until very recent that the meanings of porcelain illustrations have received serious interest.[199] My attention paid to amorous pieces is also an attempt to surpass the conventional categories, and to identify specific subject matters. I will thus focus on representative amorous pieces from different conventional categories. In ceramic catalogues where amorous pieces were included, many authors suggested that porcelains illustrated with openly erotic scenes are very rare, but they were mostly commenting based on the subcategory they examined.[200] However, when juxtaposing examples from different subcategories, one would realize that this "rare" subject matter was

[198] William Sargent, *The Copeland Collection: Chinese and Japanese Ceramic Figures* (Salem: The Peabody Museum of Salem, 1991), 18.
[199] Ni Yibin, *Talking about Porcelains through the Illustrations* (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2008).
[200] Jörg, "The Catalogue", *Chinese Ceramics in the Collection of the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam,* 113.
Craig Clunas, "The *West Chamber*: a Literary Theme in China Porcelain Decorations," *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society*, vol. 46 (1981-82): 76.

indeed developed in highly diverse visual languages and forms, thus the actual quantity might not be that small.

Meanwhile, by grouping together amorous porcelain from different conventional subcategories, I attempt to endow an art historical autonomy to this subject matter by classifying them into two major types primarily according to the different viewing experience. With the first type, the erotic images tend to be disguised, or to say, a dynamic viewing experience is invited in order to *discover* the indecent images or ideas. However, the particular form to disguise it was quite diverse.

The first group of pieces are several pairs of enamelled ceramic figures. Two pairs that shared the same iconography could be found in Rijksmuseum (fig. 6) and the Copeland Collection (fig. 7).[201] The erotic connotation of these coupled figures is conveyed through this action of the woman attending to the man's bare foot, but is also enhanced with details such as the woman's bare leg and bounded foot exposed under her garment, and also the man's queue being wrapped around his head.[202] The Copeland Collection houses several other ceramic couples, which, when grouped together, could provide insights into how different stages of seduction were rendered (fig. 8, 9). For example, the *Music Lesson* piece was identified by Sargent to be "preliminary to sexual advances", considering the flute-playing metaphor as well as the man's seductive pose and expression.[203] I classify these several pairs of ceramic figures in the first type because the eroticism is rather veiled here, it is only through a second look that seductive undertone would be evoked in such seemingly daily activities. Moreover, the three-dimensional nature of these small-sized ceramic figures also allowed the viewers to rotate, which would also reveal different levels of eroticism and also a narrative development.

The second group could be typified by another piece from the Copeland collection. It is a highly delicate porcelain peach, which is reticulated in a honeycomb pattern on one side to reveal a couple in love on the bed (fig. 10). Though tiny in size, the domestic environment in the bedroom is very delicately delineated: under the bed we can find a urinal and a pair of shoes, on the table next to the bed there is candlestick. Honey, candle, and shoes all metaphorically pointed to the sexual connotation of this scene.[204] The bed is framed with green curtains that have been pulled to one side. This added another spacial threshold in addition to the honeycombs, which enhanced the visual pleasure of peaking into the interior and this couple's private life. Given its tiny size, exquisite craftsmanship, and indeed, rather poetic and aesthetic suggestion of sexuality, this object should have been a highly luxurious piece and went to the West through private channels. Sargent also argued that, this image and iconography might have inspired Rococo painters like Boucher to develop a similarly amorous annotations with the flute-playing scene.[205] Like the majority of

[201] The Copeland Collection features an extraordinary group of late Seventeenth and Eighteenth century Chinese and Japanese ceramics figures, which were intended for export to the West.
Sargent, 15.
[202] Ibid., 130.
[203] Ibid., 118, 130.
[204] Ibid., 42.
[205] Sargent, 118.

Seventeenth and Eighteenth-century enamelled ceramics figures for export, these exquisitely made pieces should have been acquired through private trade. I will expand in V.iv on some trading facts associated with this subcategory.

The third group of objects embodying a veiled eroticism includes sets of plates and saucers, while the indecent image would be put on a disguised position. For example, two sets of Chine de Commande teacup and saucer with the same design could be found in Rotterdam and Brussels. A peasant girl is depicted on both the cup and saucer, while this rather conventional image would be drastically reversed if one turns over the saucer, where the same girl pulls up her skirt and revealed her bottom (fig. 11, 12). A similar visual trick was played on another tea set in Brussels, but here the object of voyeur here was changed to be a Chinese woman lying alone in Chinese setting with the wooden bed as well as the garden scene outside of the window. If putting the cup on the saucer, the lying lady visible on the cup is well-dressed, while after the cup is removed, the same lady with her bare bottom and bounded feet would become visually exposed (fig. 13).[206]

The last group of objects I have identified to belong to amorous porcelain with a veiled eroticism comprises small boxes that enabled different views visible on the interior and exterior sides of the box. This small round box in the Rijksmuseum collection is a unique example (fig. 14).[207] The cover is elegantly decorated in underglaze blue with flowering plants and birds next to a rock, but this poetic aura would be reversed after opening the cover, where an indeed explicitly scene of intercourse is precisely delineated in comparison with the detailed cover decoration. Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum in Braunschweig housed an interesting collection of more than ten 18th-century wood boxes with hidden eroticism.[208] In this particular example, an outdoor scene of horse-riding is depicted, where the two protagonists became engaged in intercourse in an exposed indoors setting is boldly visibly in the interior panel (fig. 15). A curious and animated sense of narrative is evoked with the clever design of box, which also added a disguising layer onto the erotic motif. Although this group of objects are wood boxes, I regard it provided important context of the 18th-century European collectors' interest not only Chinese erotic boxes, but also erotic exoticism that enabled an animated viewing experience.

To conclude with the first major type, most of these pieces were designed to evoke a dynamic visual experience. The bold images are revealed in an implicit way, which appropriated the indecency to some extent, but must have also added to the viewing pleasure of the original audience. The intimacy involved in the viewing experience and the relatively small size also suggested that, pieces of this type were intended for individual and private engagement. This way of design could be contextualized in the original context of erotic imagery in East Asia, where an intended dynamic viewing experience is involved in many artefacts of

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[206] Jorg regarded this a European lady dressed in Chinese manner, but I do not agree considering the rather complete attire of hairstyle, dressing, bounded feet, setting, and the facial type.
Jörg, *Chine de Commande from the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels* (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1989), 194.
[207] Jörg, "The Catalogue", *Chinese Ceramics in the Collection of the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam,* 117.
[208] Eva Ströber, *Ostasiatika* (Braunschweig: Herzog-Anton-Ulrich-Museum, 2002), 300-307.

this type.[209] Through looking at these designs of erotic porcelain, we could also once again acknowledge porcelain ware's superb flexibility in shape, size, decoration, and function, which indeed enabled a variety of charming and clever designs and aesthetics. Nevertheless, in addition to the cleverness of design and the animated viewing experience, one point that should not be forgotten is that, the first type involves a sense of shame or concealing.

Different from the hidden eroticism of the first type, the second type, however, reveals the indecency on the surface does not attempt to hide it. Therefore the second type appears more honest and bold. More interestingly, based on the pieces I have identified, bold displays or indications of love and sex are predominantly found on porcelain illustrated with the story of the *West Chamber Romance* (fig. 16-19). As one of the most popular literatures as well as inspirations of visual culture on various media in ancient China, the story of *West Chamber* could be traced back to the Tang dynasty poet Yuan Zhen's (779-831) *Story of Yingying*, which depicted the tragic love story between a young scholar with humble origin and the beautiful lady Yingying.[210] After enjoying popularity for several centuries, in Jin dynasties (1115-1234), not only did *West Chamber* started to become a motif for drama performance and visual arts including porcelain, but Dong Jieyuan also enriched and re-writed the story to have a happy ending.[211] The Yuan dynasty (1279-1368) witnessed the maturity of drama art in ancient China. *West Chamber* was thus also re-written by Wang Shifu (active 1295-1307). The Wang version became the most successful and widely spread version: the poor but aspiring scholar Zhang Sheng is deeply attracted to the beautiful daughter Yingying of the former prime minister; later, during a local incident, Zhang bravely and cleverly solved the problem, and also happened to save Yingying; as a reward of the heroism, Madam Cui agreed to marry her daughter to Zhang, but she soon breaks her promise; Yingying's maid, Crimson Maiden, feeling sympathetic and helps to act as a messenger, also arranges secret meetings for them, when the lovers fully embraces each other emotionally and bodily; finally, Zhang successes in passing the Civil Examination and wins Madam Cui's permission to marry Yingying. The increasingly rich literature, drama, visual and material cultures in Ming (1368-1644) and Qing dynasties (1644-1912) also provided critical contexts for this motif's extraordinary rich legacy in various forms and schools of arts, which also involved the great adoration it earned across the ocean through export porcelain.

Strictly speaking, unlike the other types of indecent porcelain, *West Chamber* porcelain is not completely absent from the narrative. This literary subject matter would be acknowledged when *West Chamber* porcelain is included in catalogues, and there are also several articles especially devoted to *West Chamber* porcelain.[212] Nevertheless, porcelain with this subject matter exemplifies the "forgotten" amorous

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[209] Sargent, 42.
[210] Hsu Wen-Chin, "Illustrations of '*Romance of the Western Chamber*' on Chinese Porcelains: Iconography, Style, and Development," *Ars Orientalis* 40 (2011): 40-41. 39-107.
[211] Ibid.
[212] Hsu, "Illustrations of '*Romance of the Western Chamber*' on Chinese Porcelains" .
Lu Zhongmin, "Research of '*The Romance of the Western Chamber*' Ornamentations on Jingdezhen Porcelain in Late Ming and Early Qing Dynastym," Master's thesis (Hangzhou: Zhejiang University, 2013).

porcelain because illustrations featuring the boldest scenes of love affair have seldom been given special attention in connection to the other erotic porcelain from this period. I will explore in V.iv that what extent the highly bold love-pursuing scenes on *West Chamber* porcelain might have inspired the early modern viewers, particularly female viewers.

Now that we have had an overview of the two types of amorous porcelain, I want to further point out several other aspects of difference that could be associated with these two types, in addition to the criteria of artistic design and visual experience. Firstly, a larger quantity of highly exquisite, thus luxurious pieces is to be found within the first type. This naturally leads to the second aspect of difference that, indeed, pieces from the first group tended to belong to private and privileged orders, especially the ceramic figures.[213] While many of the *West Chamber Romance* porcelain plates are rather coarsely painted, and were intended as mass consumer object. Thirdly, the different viewing experience obviously pointed to the different intended functions. The first type embodies more explicit erotic purposes, while the second group, indeed, often belonged to a series of plates that illustrated this love story. For the convenience of indication, I will call the first type as erotic pieces, and the second type as love pieces in this thesis. Fourthly and mostly importantly, these two groups and the various differences in between invite us to consider the different customer groups they were intended to, or, the different oriented genders. With the first erotic type, I do not want to automatically suggest that they were definitely intended for male audience. The limited evidence I have suggested a primarily male audience: the visual languages of eroticism are mainly male-orientied, many of them should have been privately ordered by male officials, the above mentioned erotic wood box collection also once belonged to a Hamburg male collector.[214] With the second type, a definite gender of the customers could not be identified either, but I am more assured with the female audience's involvement in this group because the *West Chamber* plates were mainly intended for display and were often consumed in sets. Considering women collectors' contribution to creating the vogue of porcelain cabinets and their particular active engagement in displaying, it is highly probably that they were also consumers and viewers of such plates. Compared with men, women had more diverse spaces that were directly associated with her private life, including bathrooms, dressing rooms, closets, which were all important places to display porcelain.[215] This provided important conditions for female viewers to openly display the slightly indecent scenes. It would not be too radical and bold to display it together with many other pieces in these private spaces. These several aspects of different will become important poles of reference when I consider amorous porcelain's involvement in the gender politics as well as early modern women's self-liberation in V.iv.

Ni Yibin, "The Shunzhi Emperor and the Popularity of Scenes from *the Romance of the Western Wing* on Porcelain," in *Shunzhi Porcelain, 1644-1611: Treasures from an Unknown Reign*, edited by Michael Butler, Julia B. Curtis and Stephen Little (Alexandria: Art Services International, 2002), 68-81.

[213] Sargent, 15-16.

[214] Ströber, *Ostasiatika*, 300-307.

[215] Cordula Bischoff, "Women Collectors and the Rise of the Porcelain Cabinet," in *Chinese and Japanese Porcelain for the Dutch Golden Age,* edited by Jan van Campen and Titus M Eliëns (Wezep: Waanders & De Kunst, 2014), 171-190.

V.iv. The indecent, the forgotten, and the critical ones

In this section, I will firstly provide tentative explanations of why the amorous porcelain is absent in the Chinese and Netherlandish narratives with reference to the national discourses I have identified in V.i and V.ii. The highly purposeful deconstructions of the national discourses regarding why amorous porcelain did not *fit* will naturally point to the directions where the indecent porcelain could be contextualized. In the European side, I will bring in the situations in England as well, and contextualize amorous porcelain, particularly love story porcelain in the rising social debate on women and female liberation. In the Chinese case, I will focus more on the art-historical context, and compare love story illustrations with the domestic developmental track of porcelain illustration. Therefore, as to the writing sequence, I will move back and forth between the Chinese and European cases, but will try to reveal how the two sides might be historically connected through this subcategory of porcelain in the end.

Rather than proving very definite conclusions, this contextualization mainly aims to point out interesting connections that had hardly been realized before, and to make hypothesis regarding the deeper relationship. After all, the last bit of this thesis is intended to discover new *perspectives* when understanding either party as well as their historical encounter through an the inclusion of certain “forgotten” *contents*, but not yet an ultimate definition of the new *perspectives*.

a. Amorous porcelain’s absence in the modern Chinese scholarship

In V.i, I have deconstructed the national discourse involved in many Chinese scholarships on export porcelain—there is a strong tendency to over interpret the Other’s positive admiration and absorption of Chinese visual, material, and intellectual culture, which has been arbitrarily imposed onto export porcelain from the first place. More importantly, they tended to place different forms of cultures on a hierarchical scale, while various aspects of Chinese culture, as claimed to be embodied in export culture, was always praised to be the superior culture. Considering the urgent need to establish the glorious legacy of Chinese cultural exportation through export porcelain, the amorous and erotic porcelain might be too indecent to fit many scholars’ overly politically charged discourse. In the meantime, practical reasons could not be neglected. As I mentioned in IV.i, most Chinese scholars still have very limited accessibility to major European collections. It might well be possible that they have not realized the existence of this category. Notably, to recall Hu’s argument, he compared the Chinese embracing of earthly happiness and secular sensations with the ascetic Medieval Europe. In this particular case, the existence of amorous and erotic export porcelain could have perfectly served his argument of the exportation of the Chinese humanism and liberalism. Therefore, Chinese scholars’ considerably limited knowledge of export porcelain’s subcategories might also be responsible. To some extent, amorous porcelain is simply one of many subcategories that have not been touched upon by Chinese scholars. Indeed, as I already pointed out in V.i, many Chinese collectors and scholars do not genuinely appreciate the material and visual quality of export porcelain. This might also be why many scholars have applied a grand cultural framework onto the narrative of export porcelain.

Interestingly, despite a common wish to construct a nationalist discourse of cultural exportation, Chinese scholars have not come to a serious agreement regarding which aspect of culture had been exported. Not only are aspects including Chinese humanism and tea culture highly broad, but they are not closely relevant to export porcelain in particular. The fluidity of cultural exports as claimed by different scholars again confirmed a lack of attention paid to the actual objects.

It is not very difficult to explain the omission of amorous porcelain in the Chinese case. Indeed, there are more perspectives to be improved and more contents to be enriched in Chinese scholarship. More specifically, considering the low regard for the actual objects of export porcelain, and the absolute superiority of the relevant aspects of the indigenous Chinese culture as claimed by many scholars, it might not be surprising if export porcelain is not involved when domestic porcelain of the same period is studied. However, I want to illustrate with the "forgotten" amorous export porcelain that, a better acknowledgement of individual objects of export porcelain might in turn, enlighten an art-historical understanding of the domestic Chinese porcelain.

b. Concealing amorous porcelain in the early modern Netherlands

Before pointing out the possible connection between export *West Chamber* porcelain and the domestic one, I want to firstly shift to the Netherlandish case, and contemplate why amorous porcelain is absent in their narrative. Different from the more easily detectable discourse of cultural exportation in Chinese scholarship, the underlying concerns of the Dutch national discourse is more complicated to be deconstructed. By tracing back to the visual representations and material engagement with export porcelain during the early modern period, and the modern attempt to institutionalize and canonize export porcelain, one continuous fact is observable, that is, export porcelain's "Chineseness" is highly obscure, while the Dutch discourse on Chinese export porcelain has been predominantly about the Self, which is an enduing underlying concern since the original encounter. Therefore, different from my analysis of why this category is absent in modern Chinese scholarship, I will mainly investigate why amorous porcelain was excluded from the original documentation or narrative in the Dutch case. Or to say, how this subcategory went into shadow from the very beginning.

The first aspect from which we could understand the omission of amorous porcelain since the early modern period might be the early modern Dutchmen's exclusive focus on the mercantile goals, and the profit brought about by porcelain. Looking through the two types of amorous porcelain I have identified, it could be suggested that most amorous pieces could hardly contribute to the profit of the VOC company because they belong to the privately traded categories, including chine de commande, and the enameled ceramic figure. Particularly with the subcategory of ceramic figure, during 18th-century, very occasionally would VOC ship around 1000 figures in each cargo, which constitutes a very small proportion compared to the total amount of hundreds of thousands of porcelain wares in one cargo.[216] The company was

[216] Sargent, 18-19.

unenthusiastic with further bulk import of this small amount because of the little profits from ceramic figures and their "uselessness as ballast and flooring",[217] which were indeed critical functions that export porcelain were intended to fulfill during the trade. Therefore, most of these erotic ceramic figures of rather fine qualities should have arrived the Netherlands as VOC employers' private merchandise, or, through private trades conducted by and for company director.[218] Different from EIC's considerable allowance for private trades, VOC prohibited it, and became increasingly strict during 17th-century.[219] In 1634, private goods that were worth less than 100 florins were permitted, while in 1645, a new decree stated that "it is forbidden to bring along from the Indies merchandise…[including] porcelain. Contravention will be punished", this decree was repeated in 1681.[220] However, the strict decree merely encouraged smuggling, and this might be exactly how these erotic ceramic figures came into the Netherlands. In this sense, these erotic ceramic figures were indeed, indecent images involved in indecent transactions. To keep them in the shadow was thus not a surprising decision.

The second reason of absence I have identified is more complex, which was relevant to the gender politics associated with export porcelain. To privately own a great many of porcelains and to design separate rooms and furniture to display them was a new domestic practice as well as a social fashion that was predominantly spread out in Northwest Europe from princesses of the House of Orange during Seventeenth-century.[221] Rooms that were specially intended for an accumulating and show-off display of Chinese wares, such as grand kitchen and grand bathroom, came to be regarded as typically Dutch, and such porcelain rooms would be included when there was a desire to build in "a Dutch manner".[222] Meanwhile, largely due to the original fashion makers' female identity and these porcelain rooms' feminine association in domestic space, rooms housing porcelain were perceived to have strong female connotation. Before 1700, self-fashioning through porcelain collections was also considered to be suitable mainly for women.[223] However, the social discourse did not always conform to the actual social reality. Men were never excluded from consumption, collection, and self-fashioning through porcelain even during Seventeenth-century—in as early as 1618, Johan van Oldenbarnvelt (1547-1619), the Chief Minister of Holland, brought with him six porcelain dishes when he was imprisoned so as to declare his status in hope of pardon;[224] male elite such as Frederick Henry (1584-1647) and the young William III, were also involved in establishing porcelain and exotic rooms;[225] more extravagantly indulged in porcelain were the rich VOC employers, for example, Rijklof van Goens (1642-1687) owned 1,067 pieces, and Cornelis Speelman (1628-1684) owned at least 773

[217] Ibid., 18.
[218] Ibid., 19.
[219] Ibid.
[220] Ibid.
[221] Bischoff, 171-179.
David M. Mitchell, "The Influence of Tartary and the Indies on Social Attitudes and Material Culture in England and France, 1650-1730," in *A Taste for the Exotic: Foreign Influences on Early Eighteenth-Century Silk Designs*, edited by Anna Jolly (Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 2007), 26.
[222] Bischoff, 180-183.
[223] Ibid., 183.
[224] Van Campen, "Chinese and Japanese Porcelain in the Interior," 196.
[225] Ibid., 197.

pieces, notably, these two were rivals in the company and their porcelain collections were clearly involved in their competition.[226]

Despite the extensive participation from the male part, it was the Dutch women's extravagant collection and display that became the focal point of the social discourse associated with export ceramics at the turn of 18th-century. It is widely known that a moralist warning against earthly luxury, and a *vanitas* philosophy was expressed through visual and textual discourses during the Seventeenth-century. More specifically with the Dutch women and porcelain, the former was openly condemned to have excessively indulged in the latter. I already quoted the book *De Gedebaucheerde en betoverde Koffy en Thee wereld* from 1701 in IV.ii, the anonymous author condemned porcelain as a worthless waste because unlike silver, it could neither contribute to the currency, nor was its material value sustainable due to its fragility; moreover, he blamed women to have prodominantly initiated and indulged in this meaningless consumption—they "almost incessantly busy with their porcelain knick-knacks, with buying, swopping one thing when a new one comes out, improving and expanding".[227] The social criticism on the extravagant consumption and display of porcelain continued to be directed mainly at women in 18th-century. In 1735 Jan Willen Claus van Laar denounced it to be foolish that "the hobby of some citizen's wives, who ruin their husbands with the setting up of rooms with old porcelain".[228] Therefore, highly negative reprehension was directed at women's engagement with porcelain.

In 18th-century, the mania for porcelain prevailed despite these moralist warnings. Nor had men detached themselves from the material or social engagement with it. For example, Royer's porcelain room I introduced in V.ii typified a well-off professional's collection and display of porcelain. In the meantime, VOC completely stopped to conduct Asia-Dutch bulk porcelain trade after 1700, porcelain supply to the Dutch market was thus mainly satisfied through private trade, which reacted to change in fashion and desire more swiftly. Meanwhile, it was exactly through private trades that a large proportion of erotic porcelain entered the Netherlands, which thus, should have been meant to cater to the contemporary desire for objects of this type and function. Having introduced the gender politics involved in discourse on porcelain consumption around 1700, and its inconsistency with the actual consuming situation throughout Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries, the erotic porcelain's being *untold* not only conformed to this picture, but also provided extra insights. For both men and women, the private porcelain collection and the way it was

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[226] Ibid., 208-211.
[227] The original Dutch text:
Bijna gestagid besig sijn om hare pasteleine poppe-kraam, door 'taankopen, en 't verruilen van dit goedtje, als 'er een nieuw fatsoentje uitkomt, te verbeteren en te vergrooten.
De gedebaucheerde en betiverde koffy- en theewereld behelzende een meenigte van aardige voorvallen, welke zich sedert weinig tijds te Amsterdam, Rotterdam, in Den Haag, te Utrech en de bijgelegene Plaatsen, op de Koffy- en Theegezelschapjes... hebben voorgedragen, met alle de debauches en ongeregeldheden, welke onder pretext van deeze laffe Dranken worden gepleegd: Beneevens een uitreekening van de jaarlikjse schade, welke door dit Koffy- en Theegebruik... word veroorzaakt, enz (Amsterdam, 1701), 483-484, cited and translated in Van Campen, "Chinese and Japanese Porcelain in the Interior," 205.
[228] The riginal Dutch text:
Liefhebbrey van zommige Burgers Vrouwen, die hare mannen ruïneeren, door het oprechten van Cabinetten met Oud Porcelein.
Jan Claus Willem van Laar, *Het groot Ceremonie-boek der deschaafde zeeden* (Amsterdam, 1735), 415, cited and translated in van Campen, 205.

furnished and housed were intended to express the individual taste and to establish the social status. Openly erotic pieces, which clearly failed this purpose, would thus naturally be concealed under the table. Meanwhile, throughout Seventeenth-century, men never truly stayed aloof to porcelain consumption and the subsequent self-fashioning, but women were criticized as the primary culprit in this indulgence in *vanitas* temptation. Considering this flimsy moral criticism that was imposed onto women by men, men's corrupted desire for and indecent indulgence in erotic porcelain would naturally be further disguised. Indeed, remembering the highly animated viewing experience evoked by the design of many erotic pieces, men's visual entertainment gained through erotic porcelain even better echoed with Jan Luyken's (1649-1712) famous exhortation that, porcelains "serve only the pleasure,/of the eye's desire and ostentation".[229]

c. Contextualizing amorous porcelain in the early modern discourse of female liberation

Although men's concealment of their actual indulgence in erotic porcelain is explainable with reference to the moral reprehension that was mainly directed at women, it is still curious that why women were to be severely criticized as regard to their engagement with porcelain. This is the background where I would like to contextualize the second type of amorous porcelain, the love porcelain illustrated with Chinese figures and settings. I would like to propose that, some men's criticism that were directed at women's superficiality was indeed, driven by their anxiety with women's awakened self-consciousness embodied in their engagement with porcelain, and particularly the love porcelain. Interestingly, the same inconsistence between popular discourse and social reality existed in the 18th-century England as well, where porcelain was an unprecedentedly popular commodity that was not confined to any particular gender or social class,[230] but a moral questioning was exclusively associated with women.[231] Indeed, the historical Dutch and English societies paralleled and had mutual influence regarding the engagement with and discourse on porcelain around the turn of the Eighteenth century. Mary, Princess Royal of England (1662-1694), largely triggered the fashion of private porcelain cabinets and rooms with her return to England in 1689.[232] The VOC and EIC were the two leading European company forces in the trade with Asia. After VOC stopped bulk importation of porcelain, private English merchants largely controlled the porcelain supply to the Dutch market, thus had important shaping force on the 18th-century Dutch taste for porcelain.[233] To enrich and to inspiring the understanding the Dutch situation, I will thus bring in the contemporary England as I relate amorous porcelain to the Enlightenment social background, women's rising self-consciousness, and porcelain's feminine association and connotation.

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[229] Jan Luijken, *Het Leerzaam huisraad, vertoond in vyftig konstige figuuren, met doglyke spreuken en stichtelyke verzen* (Amsterdam, 1711), 118-119, cited and translated in van Campen, 205.

[230] Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects: Women, Shopping, and Business in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 54.

[231] This could be observed in Alexander Pope's *Rape of the Lock,* "the most important literary source for popular conceptions of female taste in the early eighteenth century", cited in David Porter, *The Chinese Taste in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 86,

[232] Bischoff, 180.

[233] Christiaan J.A. Jörg, "The Porcelain Trade of the Dutch East India Company," in *Interaction in Ceramics: Oriental Porcelain & Delftware,* edited by Christiaan J.A. Jörg (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Museum of Art, 1984), 17.

It is widely known that, thanks to the more substantial and serious knowledge regarding China that was brought back mainly by Jesuit missions, China was perceived as a Utopian Other by some early modern intellectual communities as they explore possibilities of political and philosophical possibilities of human society. In the Dutch case, Isaac Vossius (1618-1689) was a pivotal figure who held exceptional positive outlook on Chinese aesthetics, and who also perceived China as a utopian democratic empire.[234] I want to clarify one point before I investigate love porcelain in light of the changing feminine identity during the early Enlightenment. Firstly, it is very important to clarify the particular group in focus because the image of China greatly fractured in between different groups, and there was not single idea of image of "China" as perceived by the early modern Europeans. Particularly, my discussion considerably involves gender politics, but I want to clarify I do not intend a homogenizing description of all men's or women's viewpoints. For example, Vossius might not be involved in critiques on porcelain's corrupting effect on women. The male group that my discussion mainly concerns is the group that typified a conventional patriarchal masculinity. Meanwhile, although "China"'s inspiring possibilities for different groups of people echoed with each other, it should be realized that, the intellectuals' more systematic and purposeful learning about Chinese culture and language was absent in the case of women's engagement with porcelain. Therefore, I mainly interested to consider how the imagery on porcelain might resonate with their other engagement like reading Romance, and how these forms of exposure intertextually inspired some

Since late 17th-century, early Enlightenment intellectual debates already started to change the position of women in society: "the intellectual shift undoubtedly did erode traditional notions of virtue, family, and social roles, crucially challenging woman's existing subordinate status".[235] Porcelain consumption, its display in domestic space, and its use in social activities like tea ceremonies, all contributed to women's self-conscious construction of their identities. Elite women symbolically "controlled" their private spaces—they chose the designs of furnishing and porcelain display, they admit their personal guests, they selected forms of entertainment, they took personal responsibility for preparing tea, and they also decided the topics for discussion and literatures to be read.[236] The social connotation of this series of new practices was remarkable. Far from a superficial extravagance as criticized by the contemporary male writers, these porcelain-relevant activities also contributed to intellectual engagement. This was not only achieved by literary readings and discussions that took place in the same space, but was also inspired by, the porcelain illustrations.

In England in 1711, a visit to a wealthy widow's library was published in *Spectator*, what dominated this lady's book collection was indeed, literatures that were particularly directed at a female readership, including French romances, women's conduct manuals, and early French and British feminocentric fictions;

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[234] Thijs Weststeijn, "Vossius' Chinese Utopia," in *Issac Vossius (1618-1689), between Science and Scholarship*, edited by Eric Jorink and Dirk van Miert (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 207-242.
[235] Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2001), 83.
[236] Mitchell, 15.
Bischoff, 183.

moreover, the essay particularly described how the books were placed among "a thousand […] odd figures in China Ware".[237] French romance and Chinese porcelain were perceived to share "an aesthetic of strangeness and curiosity and a pointed lack of verisimilitude", thus both critiqued to be associated with "female extravagance and the morally suspect indulgence of a debased foreign taste".[238] Meanwhile, as typified by this particular case described in *Spectator*, these two forms of female entertainment happened in the same space. Porter further argued that, the messages conveyed must have also inspired each other. Romance fictions of this period have long been contextualized as women's fantasy machine, which enabled an imaginable "realm of freedom for women outside the constraints of male power."[239] In the same token, material artifacts like porcelain could also "transport their readers through richly evoked spaces and situations that can be perceived only dimly, if at all, in the contextual world of lived experience".[240] Porter further observed that, female figures illustrated on porcelain must have shocked the original European female viewers, because different from the omnipresent female nudes in the Western visual norms, the elegantly attired Chinese ladies at leisure looked particularly "asexual" or even "androgynous" with their slender body and loose robes.[241]

I agree with Porter that the flattened and concealed aesthetics of feminine body could greatly amaze the European female viewers (fig. 20). However, Porter's further deduction appears not very convincing because he was clearly not aware of the "forgotten" love porcelain. Not knowing about the liberated amorous interaction visible in *West Chamber* porcelain, Porter went as far as claiming that "the visual world of late Ming and early Qing Chinese porcelains would seem to be almost entirely free of those familiar emblems of impetuous, phallic masculinity that so dominate the Western iconographic tradition"; plus, scenes like groups of ladies in a garden could have functioned as a visual footnote for the rising representation of homosexual scenario in romance.[242] Porter's main argument regarding the correlation between romance and porcelain thus exclusively points to women's homosexual affair, "women imagined, read about, created, and drew sustenance from exclusively female communities that prospered within or along side traditional patriarchal structures".[243] In short, "Chinese iconography could function as a catalyst for the homosocial imagination".[244] This correlation was well contextualized and supported, however, I want to point out that it is far from the only way that women could appreciate porcelain and romance side by side. Despite the rising appearance, women's homosexual affair was far less widespread as women's enjoyment in porcelain and romance, thus Porter might have only identified one very special situation. Moreover, as he constructed his argument, Porter relied too heavily on a flawed observation that men was kicked out of the Chinese representation of secular women "the engaging scene of play and repose typically include no men at

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[237] Joseph Addison, *The Spectator* 37 (London: April 12, 1711), cited in Porter, 57.
[238] Porter, 58.
[239] Laurie Langbauer, *Women and Romance: The Consolations of Gender in the English Novel* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).
[240] Porter, 58.
[241] Ibid., 59.
[242] Ibid., 61.
[243] Ibid., 74.
[244] Ibid., 78.

all", and he was obsessed with the Chinese visuality's distinction from the sexual politics in many Western paintings featuring Old Testament and mythological stories where the man was always the "lovers or voyeurs".[245] Not only was Porter's definition of sexual politics in Renaissance and early modern Western paintings too restricted, remembering the 17th-century Dutch genre paintings; while the men-free representations were also not true if we involve the various *West Chambe*r porcelains into the narrative. Meanwhile, different from Porter's concern, that heterosexually engaged representations of Chinese women would not necessarily fall into the European masculine ideology. An important Seventeenth-century literature on art revealed to us the original European viewers' tendency to relate Chinese' women's bodily exposure to the Chinese social liberty: the German art historian Joachim von Sandrat's (1606-1688) *Teutsche Academie* (1675), commented by Michael Sullivan as "the first Western book on art to attempt an assessment of Chinese painting".[246] Sandrat provided very detailed description of several Chinese paintings featuring women, one depicting a concubines of an important noble, one depicting a woman nursing her child with breast exposed, and another depicting an actress, while the involved moral and custom appeared refreshingly liberal to Sandrat.[247]

Therefore, to bring in the forgotten love porcelain would rather enrich the current understanding than completely rebuke it. The story of *West Chamber Romance* should not be completely unknown to early modern collectors considering the great many traders and missionaries who went back and forth between China and Netherlands, and England alike. Though there lacked archival sources to confirm this, one important clue that actual objects contained also suggested that the early modern Europeans' knowledge of this story. Certain plots from *West Chamber Romance*, especially the plots relevant to courtship, must have been highly popular among collectors throughout the 18th-century. For example, with the scene where Zhang climbed over the wall to secretly meet with Yingying in the night, multiple rounds of copies must have been with ordered in varied compositions and decorative schemes (fig. 23, 24, 26-29).[248] Yu Chunming also looked into various *West Chamber* porcelain in private Western collections and concluded that, hardly did there exist any pieces feature the non-romantic scenes where, for example, Zhang passed the civil exam, but the preserved *West Chamber* porcelain in the west are mostly love scenes. The increasing popularity of romances written within Europe might also trigger an interest to explore the story of the Chinese romance as visible on the porcelain, which basically shared the same group of consumers. The story of *West Chamber* did well conform to the 18th-century norms of romance, "a wild, extravagant, fabulous story".[249]

After including heterosexual love porcelain such as *West Chamber* porcelain into the imagery repertoire visible to women collectors at the turn of 1800 in the Netherlands and England, Porter's

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[245] Ibid., 62.
[246] Michael Sullivan, *The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1989), 96.
[247] Joachim von Sandrat (1606-1688), *Teutsche Academie* (1675), I-I, 100-101, cited in Thijs Weststeijn, "Vossius' Chinese Utopia," in *Issac Vossius (1618-1689), between Science and Scholarship*, edited by Eric Jorink and Dirk van Miert (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 215.
[248] A detailed analysis of the changing composition, and the possible resonance between the domestic and export markets will be given in V.iv.d.
[249] Clara Reeve, *The Progress of Romance*, 2 vols. (London: 1785), I, cited in Porter, 58.

conclusion thus became too confined. However, he was on the right track. By proposing Chinese porcelain's inspiring effect on the Eighteenth-century women's homosocial community, Porter was ultimately concerned with porcelain's intellectual contribution to women's awakened self-consciousness, how "these Chinese designs conjure up a protected utopian space of female dignity, autonomy, intimate community, and pleasure".[250] As the new repertoire displays, they are elegantly and asexually (as in the Western eye) dressed, they hang out with female companions in the garden, and they bravely pursue love with young men against conventional social hierarchy—this more diverse representations of female figures on porcelain would rather enrich our understanding of the European women's enlightened "dignity" and "autonomy". Homosexual relations might indeed be suggested with some of these women-in-garden motifs considering the existence of lesbian novels in the contemporary China,[251] but "new possibilities of self-awareness and fulfillment" were not confined to homosexuality, the female body was equally liberated in a self-conscious heterosexual engagement such as *West Chamber Romance*. More importantly, the inspiration available to female viewers was never merely confined to conducts directly visible in the image, but it was the fantastic and bold imagery that might lead to a more profound and complex self-consciousness of bodily and mental liberation.

Porcelain, and particularly love porcelain's possible enlightenment effect on female liberation and probably, sexual freedom, could be certified by turning back to examine the contemporary male part's rather severe oppositions. I have already mentioned that the critique on women's material indulgence and extravagance was somehow self-conflicting because men were never detached from consumption of export Chinese goods. Moreover, the discourse of some critiques implied more than material obsession. Simon Mason's *The Good and Bad Effects of Tea Considered* (1701) confirmed that critique on tea-drinking far surpassed the problem of material waste: "tea drinking […] had impoverished many Families; not only from the Expense altogether, but by idle gossiping Meetings, which abound with Scandal, Reproach, Backbiting, and ill Advice; the Minds of too many vitiated and allured, to imitate evil Practices, occasion Discord, ad prevent that quite Harmony which ought to subsist between Man and Wife"; Mason also further fantasied an upside-down household where the women failed to conform to domestic disciplines, and even conspired to emasculate the husbands. Kowaleski-Wallace pointed out the underlying metaphor implied by Mason's sarcasm was how the tea-drinking women rendered their husbands impotent.[252] This deeply sexually charged discourse, nevertheless, revealed to us the early modern male anxiety with women's rapidly increasing access to information, ideas, and people thanks to porcelain and tea-drinking. As Kowaleski-Wallace interpreted, Mason narrated "strong women who assume the upper hand (or at least pretend to do so) and who enjoy the idea of sexual freedom while duping their spouses".[253] What men critiqued against might seem to lead to what they were afraid of—the power of female speech, and moreover, the female self-consciousness. The male anxiety over women's rising consciousness as cultivated on the tea table also

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[250] Porter, 62.
[251] For example:
Li Yu, *The Love of the Perfumed Partner* (1651).
[252] Simon Mason, *The Good and Bad Effects of Tea Considered* (1701) (London: M. Cooper, 1745), 44-46, cited in Kowaleski-Wallace, 34-36.
[253] Ibid.

tended to point back to porcelain as a material locale of evilness. In the 1710 engraving, *The Tea Table,* the by-then classic porcelain cabinet was prominently included to construct "the aesthetic context of the women's transgression".[254] A striking commentary on the reversed gender politics was made through the contrast of Justice' broken sword and the miraculously intact China teacup next to it (fig. 22).[255] Finally, to what extent men's anxiety over the enlightened women, their inspiring tea ceremonies, and their porcelain could have been more specifically directed at images, or even indecent images on the porcelain? One late 17th-century source seem to confirms the association in between. Wycherley was outspoken about the sexual corruption involved in porcelain in the *The Country Wife* (1677):

> first the clandestine obscenity in the very name of *Horner* [the anti-hero] ... he has quite taken away the reputation of poor china itself, and sullied the most innocent and pretty furniture of a lady's chamber ...
> 'tis now as unfit an ornament for a lady's chamber, as the pictures that come from Italy ... as appears by their nudities ... But *china*! Out upon't, filthy *china*, nasty, debauch'd *china*![256]

The male anxiety over women's enlightened experience with porcelain, and even amorous porcelain, again, invites us to rethink men's secret entertainment with erotic porcelain. The contrast between porcelain's entertaining function for men and its enlightening function for women indeed, could have further heightened the gender politics associated with porcelain, which was nevertheless, a predominantly masculist discourse. In addition to the critique on women's engagement with porcelain, porcelain was conceived as an emblem of women due to the parallel fragility, smoothness, and shininess. In the same token of the *vanitas* conception associated with porcelain, women were also rendered to be weak and superficially pretty.[257] The 1729 English poem "Tea, or Ladies into China-Cups" even sarcastically transformed women into their beloved porcelain vessels.[258] The metaphor of women's metamorphosis into porcelain could directly recall and provide extra contexts for the male-oriented erotic porcelain, where available women were visible on the tangible porcelain, which had been extensively associated with women visually and physically. The enduring popularity of this particular Chine de Commande design, which featured an European woman, also confirmed this association (fig. 11, 12). Jorg also made the observation that it was popular to use erotic European prints as models for erotic Chine de Commande porcelain during 1720-1770.[259] Despite the existence of erotic porcelain featuring Chinese figures, this fact of Chine de Commande reveals to us that, at least part of European men's desire and anxiety, as reconciled by these erotic porcelain, was specifically directed at the local European women.

[254] Porter, 89.
[255] Porter, 89-90.
[256] William Wycherley, *The Country-wife* (London 1675), Act II, cited in Mitchell, 24.
[257] Their parallel physical qualities are often compared in popular literatures like Pope's *Rape of the Lock*. Porter, 86.
[258] "Tea: A Poem; or, Ladies into China-Cups: A Metamorphosis" (London,1729), cited in Porter, 86.
[259] Jörg, "The Porcelain Trade of the Dutch East India Company," in *Interaction in Ceramics: Oriental Porcelain & Delftware*, 90.

The masculist discourse on porcelain also extended to the domain of art, and the conventional Western hierarchy of what is art, while what is not. In 1735, Jan Willem Claus van Laar already commented porcelain's unsuitability for art collecting, "it is a much more honourable pursuit to reflect art in a beautiful piece of painting, than in the scrawling of cockerel's feet of the Japanese and Chinese, on a few pieces of glazed earth, which is lost if it falls".[260] Over the Eighteenth-century, porcelain never elevated itself into the pantheon of art, while the belittling discourse on it seemed to have prevailed. When asked "have they no arts, Sir?" in the last quarter of 18th-century, Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) responded, "they have pottery".[261]

d. How could *West Chamber* porcelain be related back to its Chinese background?

The Chinese part of the story would be more briefly discussed, and will only provide preliminary hypothesis rather than confirmed findings. I am particularly interested to investigate the amorous export porcelain's relation and resounding with certain domestic contexts. I critiqued in IV and V.i that one should not abruptly relate an export commodity like porcelain directly back to its cultural or aesthetic origin so as to construct of national legacy across the ocean. Not only were the new owners hardly able to perceive the Chineseness-as-for-a-Chinese, but the European would also instantly domesticize the foreign object in terms of social discourse, using practices, as well as national identities of the Self, as I expanded in V.ii as well as V.iv.c. However, am I trying to eliminate any possible connection between porcelain's Chinese origin and its later reception in Europe? Not at all. Despite the absolute discrepancy lying in between the two parties' perceptions, and the subsequent ideologies, discourses, and narratives derive from them, I still regard it important to contextualize any cross-cultural event or object to each context it was associated with.

In the case of export porcelain, the indigenous history of porcelain production determined what would become available to be perceived by the Westerners at that particular timing, while a lack of knowledge regarding its "early life" could also lead to, or at least deepen certain partial understandings of porcelain's aftermaths within the European context. I will further elaborate on this point with the example of *West Chamber* porcelain. Earliest examples of *West Chamber* porcelain should have arrived European during the phase called Transitional Period (1619-1683).[262] It was also since this period when *West Chamber* porcelain became increasingly visible in European collections. I am thus interested to look back at the early domestic development of figural art on porcelain.[263]

Western export porcelain experts have customarily observed that Transitional wares were typically illustrated with a strong sense of narrative and story. Through examining Transitional export porcelain, Jörg

[260] The original Dutch text:
"Het is nog een veel Edeler Liefhebbery de Kunst in een schoon Stuk Schildery te bespiegelen, als het gekrabbel der Haanepooten van de Japoneezen en Chineezen, op eenige stukken verglaasde Aarden, hetgeen verlooren is als het valt."
Jan Claus Willem van Laar, *Het groot Ceremonie-boek der deschaafde zeeden* (Amsterdam, 1735), 415, cited and translated in van Campen, 205.
[261] Robert Finlay, *The Pilgrim Art: Cultures of Porcelain in World History* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2010), 288.
[262] China underwent domestic warfare and political turmoil during this period, which also had some damaging impact on the porcelain industry.
[263] Indeed, *West Chamber Romance* was one among many literary motifs and stories for porcelain illustrations, but due to its great popularity, this subcategory could inform some common trends of depicting figures and stories on porcelain.

made this remarkable observation that, usually placed in landscapes with buildings, mountains, and clouds, these porcelain figures appear to be "caught in an almost photographic way in a moment of spirited action" (fig. 21).[264] The "photographic" and spontaneous effect as observed by Jörg was indeed meant to be. His visual observation of export wares touched upon a critical domestic development of porcelain illustration ever since the Yuan dynasty—porcelain illustrated with literatures like *West Chamber* was immensely informed by the contemporary performing style and visual culture of drama.

As I early introduced, the Yuan dynasty version of *West Chamber* written by Wang Shifu became the most successful and widespread literature interpretation of this story. Notably, the Wang version was written in the form of drama, which unprecedentedly matured and prospered during Yuan dynasty in ancient China. Meanwhile, Jingdezhen is located in an area that had also been a capital of drama art since Song dynasty, and viewing drama was an indispensible life component for the local people.[265] The innovative comic-strip representational scheme visible on Yuan porcelain already started to echo with the performance style of Yuan drama.[266] Hsu thus argued that figural representations that emerged on Yuan porcelain should have been imitated from drama performance rather than scroll and paper paintings.[267] Hsu's argument conforms to ancient Chinese art literature's comment that, though both painted on two-dimensional surfaces, paper and silk painters traditionally belonged to a higher artistic hierarchy than porcelain painters: "those who paint on paper and silk do not concern with themselves with painting on porcelain; and those who are skilled at painting on porcelain are not usually skilled at paintings on paper or silk".[268] This art historical fact is crucial to bear in mind when exploring visual sources of porcelain illustration, and what media of visual culture we should compare it with.

Indeed, porcelain illustrations continued to be informed by drama performance in the Mind dynasty, and notably during the Jiangjing reign (1522-1566), the male protagonist Zhang Sheng appeared on porcelain for the first time, which demonstrated an increasing interest in representing more dramatic plots on porcelain illustrations.[269] During the subsequent Wanli reign (1537-1620), *West Chamber* started to become truly prevailing as a visual motif for not only porcelain but also other media like woodblock prints. Now we have come to the meeting point on the timeline, the Transitional period, thus the exportation of *West Chamber* porcelain happened at a time when this motif also flourished in the domestic visual culture. It is also essential to acknowledge that, due to the suspension of imperial kilns during this Transitional period, private kilns provided high-quality wares for imperial household, as well as domestic and export markets.[270] This production fact further heightened the parallel in visual characteristic between domestic and export *West Chamber* porcelains during the Transitional Period, that is, a highly dramatic narrative.

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[264] Jörg, "The Porcelain Trade of the Dutch East India Company," in *Interaction in Ceramics: Oriental Porcelain & Delftware,* 14.
[265] Hsu Wen-Chin, "*The Romance of the Western Chamber* and Chinese Porcelain—A Case Study of the Coalescence of Drama and Visual Art," *Kaohsiung Normal University Journal*, no. 26 (2009): 142.
[266] Ibid., 142.
[267] Ibid., 141-142.
[268] Sayer, T'ao Ya, 63, cited in Clunas, 74.
[269] Ibid., 145.
[270] Hsu, "Illustrations of '*Romance of the Western Chamber*' on Chinese Porcelains," 58.

This advantage of knowing about a cross-cultural object's "early development" is that, the otherwise partial deduction based on the limited range of objects one could access might be avoided. I want to recall Porter's argument regarding how porcelain images aroused female's self-liberation through homosexual engagement. I already critiqued, one particular flaw he had is that, he considered the figural depictions on porcelain to be purely feminine, where there was no male character, which thus also denied a male voyeur. Although it is true that the beautiful-lady motif (also called Long Elizas in the Netherlands) are widely visible on Transitional and later wares, it is far from dominating all figural representations on export porcelain. Porter's incomplete searching of collections might have caused his neglecting of the actual wide existence of *West Chamber* porcelain featuring heterosexual love scenes during the period he was concerned with. However, if knowing about the visual culture background where these porcelains came from, one might become more wary of an exclusive claim like "many characteristic designs include no male figures at all; when males do appear, they are typically either young boys or wizened old sages".[271] I think that the explicit courtship and love affair sceneries could not be overlooked if we are to talk about a resonance between porcelain and women's rising self-consciousness in the early modern European context. Meanwhile, it is intriguing to realize that, it was largely a historical coincidence that the love story Chinese porcelain would encounter the European Romance fiction in the same lady's collection and evoked ideas that mutually enriched each other.

Now that we have realized how the *West Chamber* porcelain's "early life" could inform its later aftermaths, I am thus also interested to think in reverse. Indeed, many scholars have inferred back regarding the production situation. Craig Clunas stated that "by the time these export pieces were painted, scenes from drama had disappeared from most ceramics on the domestic market".[272] Ni Yibin made a similar observation regarding the termination of *West Chamber* porcelain in the domestic market, "the Shunzhi emperor himself took a great interest in the play, and this may well have prompted a fashion for it in the 1660s and 1670s. After that, mass-produced copies of Romance of the Western Wing scenes were made, mainly for export".[273] Indeed, the early Qing court's increasingly severe domestic censorship over literatures containing explicit sexuality and the few remained domestic examples reasonably confirmed *West Chamber* porcelain's considerable shrinkage in the domestic domain after 18th-century.

However, I propose we rethink about the ideas of domestic and export, and contemplate to what extent the export examples could inform the domestic situations. It is interesting to realize that Kangxi reign (1662-1722) export pieces showed awareness of the domestic trend of drama performance. Specificaly, the orthodox Kun Opera during Ming dynasty declined since early Qing, when vernacular operas of different regions started to prosper. Rather than following the complete script, individual scenes started to be singled out and performed. A stronger sense of spontaneity and humor was also visible, subordinate figures like

[271] Porter, 61.
[272] Clunas, "The *West Chamber*: a Literary Theme in China Porcelain Decorations," 85.
[273] Ni, "The Shunzhi Emperor and the Popularity of Scenes from *the Romance of the Western Wing* on Porcelain," 79.

Yingying's maid was also paid much more attention to evoke an alternative narrative.[274] The increasing centralization of the maid is thus visible on export pieces. For example, with one particularly popular and repetitively made scene, "Zhang Sheng climbing over the wall in the night", where Yingying's maid helped to arrange a secret meeting for them during the night, but after he climbed over the wall, Yingying declined Zhang Sheng due to her still strong moral concerns by that point. In mid to late Seventeenth century examples, three figures are customarily depicted. As visible in these two domestic-oriented plates, Yingying's maid is receiving the climbing Zhang Sheng, while Yingying, sitting behind a rock, appears restrained and turns her back to them (fig. 23, 24). This design of composition could be traced back to the late-Ming woodblock print (fig. 25). However, some early 18th-century examples eliminated Yingying, while her maid received the central focus; looking up at Zhang Sheng, she was also gesturing to Yingying who was outside of the frame (fig. 26, 27).[275] It might not be a simplification of composition for export market because compositions that kept all three figures were still made and even varied throughout the 18th-century (fig. 28, 29). It is remarkable to realize that, this design of fig.26 & 27 was particulary popular in the Western market, and was retrieved in the late 19th-century after the porcelain mania and Chinese fever had been gone for more than century (fig. 30, 31).

Nevertheless, for the contemporary painters and craftsmen back in Jingdezhen, they were aware of this composition's resonance with the vernacular drama performance. Having realized the export *West Chamber* porcelain's subtle connection with its original social background, the existence of bold representations of love affair could also be reconsidered (fig.16-19). Yu Chunming observed that the love and seductive plots were predominantly visible on export pieces, but he considered this as catering to the European taste.[276] Clunas made a similar comment, "the passionate consummation of the affair, which might appear by European dramatic canons to be the climax of the work, […] is by Qing standards of morality flagrantly obscene".[277] However, the little possibility to show these scenes in the domestic domain should not prevent us from relating these examples back. Sargant commented the 18th-century erotic ceramic figures that, "because of the explicitness of these pieces it has been suggested that they were made exclusively for the export market, although there must have been some interest in these figures within the Chinese market".[278] Meanwhile, as different from media like woodblock prints, where the same design would be used for a long period, the hand-painted nature of every individual piece makes porcelain illustrations to have particularly fast and sensitive reaction to contemporary visual culture,[279] or indeed, to certain concerns and anxieties in the contemporary society. In the case of *West Chamber* porcelain with bold representations of love affair, in addition to the possible catering to the European taste, it might well be

[274] Hsu, "*The Romance of the Western Chamber* and Chinese Porcelain—A Case Study of the Coalescence of Drama and Visual Art," 14-15.
[275] This female figure should be the maid rather than Yingying because of her hairstyle and dressing.
Hsu, Illustrations of '*Romance of the Western Chamber*' on Chinese Porcelain," 61-62.
[276] Yu, 169.
[277] Clunas, "The *West Chamber*: a Literary Theme in China Porcelain Decorations," 76.
[278] Sargent, 130.
[279] Lu, 27-28.

possible that, the opportunity to create for the export market enabled the artists to depict plots and ideas which they would otherwise unable to express in the domestic domain. These plots, though indecent, indeed embodied the anti-patriarchy and freedom-pursuing motif that had sustained this story's prolonged popularity in ancient China. Most importantly, the division between "export" and "domestic" wares is not always absolute in terms of their social relevance.

VI. Conclusions

Meant to be theoretical preparations, section II-IV profoundly informed and structured my case study of export porcelain and amorous porcelain, while the conceptual observations of these early sections, including the enduing cognitive pitfalls, the inveterate perceptional discrepancies and historiographical gaps, and the fundamental fluidity of cross-cultural events' cultural inherency, have also been multidimensionally certified in the case study. As to the case study in section V, rather than repeating the main points with the same sequence, I would like to refer back to my title, and summarize how the "divergence and convergence between the told and the untold" have been revealed from multiple aspects and layers. Firstly, the historiographical gap, thus the divergence between different parties' canonic narratives of a shared passage of history, such as Chinese export porcelain, dissolves on a more abstract level after questioning the absence of amorous porcelain. The deconstruction of Chinese and Netherlandish national discourses on export porcelain exposed their underlying convergence—export porcelain appears to be a grey zone where both Chinese and Dutch scholars failed to address the Other's cultural autonomy, or the multi-directional and multi-stage complexity of cross-cultural exchanges, but either of them prioritized what they have always been primarily concerned with, and produced national discourses which resonated on an ideological level. Secondly, the involvement of the uncanonized amorous porcelain into the early modern social-historical context in Europe helps to expose the latent converge of various divergent discourses in a complex way. The masculist critique on women's indulgence with romance literatures and Chinese porcelain might have been fundamentally triggered by certain male group's intense anxiety towards some women's rising self-consciousness and increasing sexual liberation that have been partly inspired by amorous porcelain, which, curiously, was also a secret and indecent entertainment for the male party. Amorous porcelain thus became a focal point which aroused the masculist group's anxiety and desire alike. On the one hand, they condemned the nasty Chinese porcelain's corrupting effect on women; while on the other hand, they assimilated porcelain to female body in some writings, thus instantly legitimized their visual indulgence in erotic porcelain. Enlightening for some, while erotic for others, amorous porcelain converged the different gender groups' divergent anxiety and desire. Indeed, this forgotten subcategory tends also to touch upon some self-conflicting discourses and practices, including the actual possession and oral critique, the national pride discourse, and the feminine criticism discourse. However, both history and every individual's life experience are condensed with intense and irreconcilable conflicts. Thus, amorous porcelain's spontaneous connection with the masculist group's desire as well as anxiety presents a rare and profoundly realistic case. Thirdly,

although more details of the last case on *West Chamber* need to be further investigated, the current tentative observation is quite inspiring. Indeed, very seldom would scholars of Chinese art involve export art into the domestic domain of visual culture. Different from the situation across the ocean, export art had little observable influence on the domestic scenery. Nevertheless. I propose an alternative logic to consider how export art might embody certain domestic trends, particularly in case of amorous *West Chamber* plate, it probably embodied an otherwise impossible transgression of certain taboo in its domestic origin.

Having reviewed my theoretical and historiographical contemplation in section II-IV, and their applications in the case study in section V, one last thing I want to reiterate is my alternative attention paid to topics and objects that fell out of the orthodox canonization. It is not uncommon method in history or art history studies to bring in the so-called “forgotten” objects, figures, or events. However, in cross-cultural studies I hope it has been at least preliminarily revealed in my thesis that the particular significance and advantage to start with issues that have been cast in the shadow on both sides. To start with the concealed information functions in a way that identifies and deconstructs the fluid nature of the direction and extent of influence involved in the original encounter, as well as the biased nature of narratives and discourses produced by each involved party since or even before the original encounter. The contemplation of the untold thus scrutinized history and historiography simultaneously. I hope my contemplation has provided new insights, or at least pointed to new directions to understand the historical encounter, and the participating cultures and societies in a better-contextualized and unbiased way.

(Word count: 36,791)

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Illustrations

Fig. 1. Jan van Kessel (1626-1679), *The Continent of Africa*, 1672, Oil on canvas. Private collection.

Fig. 2. Juriaen van Streeck (1632-1687), *Still Life with a Moor.* Oil on canvas, 90.5 x 80 cm. Private collection.

Fig. 3. Floris van Dyck (1575-1651), *Still Life*, 1610, oil on oak panel, 74 x 114 cm. Private collection.

Fig. 4. Willem Kalf (1619-1693), *Still Life with Silver Jug and a Wanli Bowl*, Circa 1656, oil on canvas. 73.8 × 65.2 cm. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, Amsterdam.

Fig. 5. Alexandre Marcel (1860-1928), *The Chinese Pavilion*, 1903-1909. Brussels.

Fig. 6. *Chinese Couple*, 1750-1770, China, enameled porcelain, 16 x 19.1 cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Rijksmuseum has another identical piece.

Fig. 7. *Chinese Couple*, 1750-1770, China, enameled porcelain, 16 x 19.1 cm. Copeland Collection, The Peabody Museum of Salem, Salem.

Fig. 8. Pair of Figures, 1662-1722, China, enameled porcelain, female: 17.8 x 15.4 cm, male: 17.5 x 16 cm. Copeland Collection, The Peabody Museum of Salem, Salem.

Fig. 9. *The Music Lesson*, 1730-1750, China, enameled porcelain and ivory, 14 x 14.3 cm. Copeland Collection, The Peabody Museum of Salem, Salem.
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After Eva Ströber, *Ostasiatika* (Braunschweig: Herzog-Anton-Ulrich-Museum, 2002), kat.nr.677.

Fig. 16. Plate decorated with amorous scene from the *West Chamber Romance*, 1680-1710, China, porcelain painted with underglaze blue. Keramiekmuseum Princessehof, Leeuwarden.

Fig. 17. Three plates decorated with amorous scene from the *West Chamber Romance*, 1662-1722, China, blue-and-white porcelain, 2.4 x 15.7 x 9 cm. The Henk B. Niewwenhuys collection, Shanghai Museum, Shanghai.

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Yu Chunming, *A Name Card of China: Ming and Qing Export Porcelain and its Collection* (Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company, 2011), 130.

Fig. 20. Plate, late 17th-century, China, porcelain painted with underglaze blue, diam. 21 cm. Groninger Museum, Groningen.
Christiaan J.A. Jörg, *Interaction in Ceramics: Oriental Porcelain & Delftware* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Museum of Art, 1984), cat.30.

Fig. 21. Plate, c. 1700, China, porcelain painted with underglaze blue, diam. 36.7 cm, Keramiekmuseum Princessehof, Leeuwarden.
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Fig. 26. Plate with the night wall-climbing scene from *West Chamber Romance,* porcelain painted famille rose porcelain, 1720-1730, diam. 22.5 cm. Groninger Museum, Groningen.

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After Yu Chunming, *A Name Card of China: Ming and Qing Export Porcelain and its Collection*, 166.

Fig. 29. Saucer with the night wall-climbing scene from *West Chamber Romance,* Late Eighteenth-century, porcelain painted with enamels and gilt. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
After Craig Clunas, "The *West Chamber*: a Literary Theme in China Porcelain Decorations," *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society*, vol. 46 (1981-82): 84.

Fig. 30. Maastricht earthenware decorated with the night wall-climbing scene from *West Chamber Romance,* late 19th-century*,* Holland, *Petrus Regout Maastricht*. Groninger Museum, Groninger.
After Jörg, *Interaction in Ceramics: Oriental Porcelain & Delftware,* cat.162.

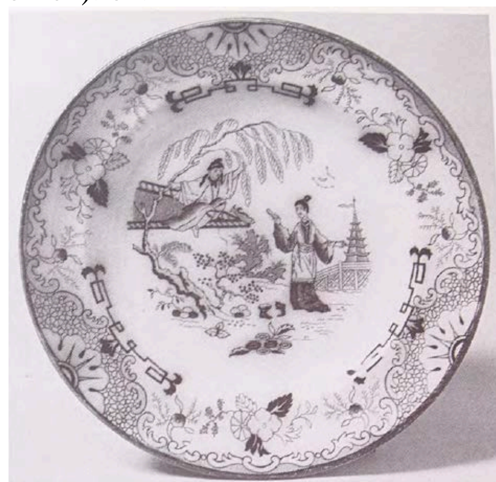

Fig. 31. Maastricht earthenware decorated with the night wall-climbing scene from *West Chamber Romance,* 1860-1880*,* Holland, *Petrus Regout Maastricht*. Keramiekmuseum Princessehof, Leeuwarden.
After Barbara Harrison, *Asian ceramics in the Princessehof: an introduction* (Leeuwarden : The Princessehof Museum, 1986), cat.123.