

Nineteenth-Century French Studies

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Chang, Ting. *Travel, Collecting, and Museums of Asian Art in Nineteenth-Century Paris*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2013. Pp. 197. ISBN: 978-1-4094-3776-5

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Ting Chang's erudite and intriguing study of travel and Asian art collections in nineteenth-century Paris offers a challenging re-examination of collections and objects. Chang's approach invites us to consider not just the objects, or the collector who shaped them into a collection, but also the physical demands of travel to the East, the shifting political frameworks, and the important influences of both military and economic power. Her examination of this complex interplay reveals how the interpretation of objects, the exotic, and perceptions of value shift and change. Chang engages with a broad range of scholarship from art history, cultural geography, and anthropology to literary criticism and collection studies. The richness of references and critical frameworks offers a nuanced discussion of preconceptions and presents new conclusions about the relationships between East and West and the complex structures at play in intercultural exchange and interpretation.

Broken into four chapters the book opens with a succinct overview of the history of the period—outlining the numerous treaties that defined political frameworks, cultural exchange, and providing a general history of object acquisition. Her approach differs from many in that it engages not just with the well-known European accounts of the East, but also with lesser-known accounts by Chinese and Japanese travellers to Europe, thus exposing a deeper history of cross-cultural encounter. This paints a picture of joint examination, curiosity, and flux, and establishes a series of themes that run throughout the argument as all sides of the exchange attempt to define, contain ideas of difference, and exert influence.

Chang's introduction underlines how her study is focused on the movement from one place to another. Her approach examines the points of crossing between cultures, and seeks to highlight the risks and challenges of intercultural exchange. The three main chapters are focused on three iconic collectors and their collections: Enrico (Henri) Cernuschi (1821-96) and the Musée Cernuschi founded in 1897, Émile Guimet (1836-1918), the founder of the Musée Guimet (initially displayed in Lyon but moved to Paris in 1883), and finally Edmond de Goncourt (1822-96) and the impressive collection he developed, documented, and then organised to dissolve in a posthumous sale. Each of these collectors is examined via a different frame to stress not just the roles they played in defining ideas of Asian art, but also to place them within a broader context of cultural engagement and understanding in order to reveal how knowledge can be produced via collecting and collectors.

In chapter two, "Gold, Silver and Bronze: Cernuschi's Collection and Reappraisals of Europe and Asia," discussion of Cernuschi introduces questions of value. His position as an authority on currency standards offers Chang a thought-provoking reading of wider notions of value and transnational exchange, suggesting how this collection of bronzes can be used to index "the unstable ground negotiated by individuals and countries in transnational, cross-cultural relations" (39).

The chapter on Guimet, "The Labor of Travel: Guimet and Régamey in Asia," is focused on this collector's travels and the illustrations produced by the artist Félix Régamey who accompanied him throughout East Asia. Travel here is considered as a messy process of intercultural exchange. Chang teases out new ways of considering this exchange, with clever close visual analysis of little-known illustrations and images to highlight the "inversion of power that

complicated the exchange between East and West” (102). A key stress in this chapter is how the somatic experience of travel and its visual legacy reveals new perspectives on collections that were “domesticated” (102) in European museums; this allows Chang to offer a fuller historiography.

The final chapter, “Equivalence and Inversion: France, Japan, and China in Goncourt’s Cabinet,” explores the multiple ways the writer narrated and interpreted his acquisitions to provide a complex understanding not only of the collection as a subject, but also of its role in shaping and shifting Goncourt’s own vision and thus its wider influence. Here the collection is considered as inspiration, a constantly shifting display, a point of social power, showing that the history of individual objects established a lineage of collectors and thus status. This opens a wide web of possibilities for interpreting collections and a variety of different models to see the collector/collection/object.

Published as part of the Ashgate series on the Histories of Material Culture and Collection (1700-1950), Chang’s study is an important contribution to the field, particularly as it challenges our ideas about collecting and how we interpret objects, which she suggests “have reached a point of diminishing returns” (39). The book offers a rich variety of approaches in its stress on political, economic, somatic, ideological, symbolic, and narrative models, which offer new ways to consider the history of material culture and our understanding of them.