# Introduction

## *Sympathy and Orientalism*

How do people grow to care about distant strangers? How do they overcome their own fear and ignorance to recognize affinities between themselves and foreigners far away? Can societies move beyond the cautious hospitality sometimes offered stranded transients to acknowledge full-fledged kinship? What beliefs encourage inherently suspicious people to drop their guard against aliens? What personal traits and cultural norms did Europeans perceive in Asians to be similar to their own? How did the intellectual regimes justifying sympathy shift in the face of internal critiques? Does sympathy for others persist even when the rationales for such a feeling change?

This book examines how Europeans first came to identify with Chinese figures to such an extent that they could readily discover similarities between themselves and East Asians. The establishment of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century information channels through transoceanic trade allowed missionary letters, theological treatises,

imperial histories, tragic dramas, moral philosophies, literary translations, and poetic cycles to portray correspondences between China and Europe. A succession of intellectual regimes, each professing to have no immediate alliance with any other—Jesuit missionaries, baroque encyclopedists, Enlightenment moralists, world literature translators—managed to refine textually mediated emotions to such an extent that they all could assert that the Chinese were fundamentally no different than themselves.

Early modern European sympathies for Chinese culture existed in a double sense of the word—as emotional responses to another person's condition (real or imaginary) and as unseen influences exerted between two bodies over a great distance. Both forms of sympathy depend on some form of communication. The discovery of an intellectual affinity requires a prior mediating connection that allows the correspondence to seem plausible. Whereas ancient cosmological beliefs in sympathetic relations presumed the existence of elemental media that allowed transmissions between planets and bodies on earth, the eighteenth century's moral psychology of sympathies depended upon the conveyances provided by scriptural and visual images.[1] The ability of informed Europeans to identify with people in China, based solely on their reading of missionary and travelers' reports, constituted the utmost test of David Hume's observation: "No quality of human nature is more remarkable, both in itself and its consequences, than that propensity we have to sympathize with others and to receive by communication their inclinations and sentiments."[2]

Before it became a word to designate shared emotions, sympathy was understood as an unseen cosmological affinity between two separate bodies. Johann Heinrich Zedler's *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste* (Universal lexicon of all sciences and arts) provides a definition from the early Enlightenment: "In natural philosophy a hidden accordance of two bodies and inclinations, the one to the other. . . . Philosophers of na-

1. For an expanded, environmental definition of media, see John Durham Peters, *The Marvelous Clouds: Toward a Philosophy of Elemental Media* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

2. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005), 244.

ture have provided countless examples of such sympathies in the wide world and have found them between certain plants, metals, stones, and the like." Saturn for example is supposed to have an influence on lions, pigs, asses, cats, rabbits, ostriches, cranes, ravens, owls, moles, toads, scorpions, flies, bugs, and other creatures that swarm about at night. A second meaning lies in medicine whereby one body part that is not diseased suffers along with another part that is, or whereby a cure has no visible cause for its unseen healing ability. Finally, a third definition addresses moral reason in the sense that sympathy describes the agreement and affection two bodies have toward one another, so that two people with the same natural character (choleric, sanguine) will also often share the same tastes or manner of speaking.[3]

Sympathy for Chinese culture has often been classified as Sinophilia, whereas disdain has been labeled Sinophobic. Curiously the latter term does not refer to a fear of China or of Chinese people invading or migrating so much as a liberal contempt for the place as a backward monarchy mired in archaic conventions. In either case, an unseen, difficult to define relationality exceeding ordinary bounds is called forth when characterizing Europeans relations to Chinese culture. Not confining themselves to silk, porcelain, and other commodities, historians have also turned to terms such as "fashion" or "enthusiasm" to characterize European motivations to understand or emulate Chinese culture. *Chinese Sympathies* invokes an older epistemology of resemblances as it appears in twenty-first century affect theory, which focuses on "visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other than* conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotions."[4] Another alternative to the Sinophobia/philia model would

3. Johann Heinrich Zedler, *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste* (Leipzig: Zedler, 1732–1754; online edition available at https://www.zedler-lexikon.de/index.html?c=startseite&l=de), 41:744: "In der Natur-lehre eine verborgene Uebereinstimmung zweyer Cörper und Neigung des einen zu dem andern. . . . Von solcher Sympathie geben die Naturkündiger unzählbare Exempel in der grossen Welt, und finden sie zwischen den Planeten und gewissen Gewächsen, Metallen, Steinen, u.d.g."

4. Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, "An Inventory of Shimmers," in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 1 (emphasis in original).

be to recollect the almost metaphysical sense of curiosity Europeans took in East Asia as an exotic location. In general, the presumption remains that some additional explanation needs to be provided to account for European interest in China. The attraction, along with its inevitable reversal, is never considered self-evident.

The layered meanings of "sympathy" in emotional and corporeal terms converges with erotic attraction. Enlightenment writers preserved some of the older cosmological resonances of the word when they wrote about desire. Thus, for example, Christoph Wieland described the emergence of sexuality as "a secret sympathy, which arises from the equal, harmonious condition of the bodies and spirits, whispering softly to the young lad and blossoming maiden that they were made for each other."[5] While Wieland portrays erotic sympathy in mutual terms, sentimental literature also recognized one-sided expressions of sympathy, without waiting for confirmation. As communications networks were slow to deliver responses to correspondence, the recipient's initial burst of emotion was itself sufficiently interesting. Sympathies in the eighteenth century no longer had to hang together with a cosmological order. The Renaissance formation of sympathy approached inclinations, actions, and states of mind from outside the subject as exterior forces rather than grounding them in a hidden interiority.[6] Personal affinities could be characterized as driven by an other. The cosmological understanding of sympathy was replaced slowly over the course of the early modern period and into the late eighteenth century by an internalized, subjective feeling, which appeared in its earliest form as personalized, Christian compassion and then became an individualized moral feeling and eventually an uncontrollable desire. The question of whether feelings emerge from within or outside the person con-

5. Christoph Martin Wieland, *Gesicht von einer Welt unschuldiger Menschen*, vol. 29 of *Sämmtliche Werke* (Leipzig: Göschen, 1857), 86. "Eine geheime Sympathie, die aus einer gleichgestimmten Beschaffenheit der Leiber und Gemüther entsteht, lispelt mit sanfter Stimme dem Jüngling und dem aufblühenden Mädchen ein, daß sie für einander geschaffen sind."

6. Leo Spitzer, "Classical and Christian Ideas of World Harmony: Prolegomena to an Interpretation of the Word 'Stimmung,'" *Traditio* 2 (1944): 409–64, 3 (1945): 307–65.

stitutes thereby an indeterminacy between thought and action—the zone of affect theory. One literary representation of this undecidable moment appears in both classical Chinese poetry as *yi jing* (idea-scape) and in German Romanticism as the aesthetics of *Stimmung* (mood or atmosphere).[7]

Sympathies require mediation, either through communication or some unseen cosmological force. The collective quality of emotions becomes more obvious when personal statements are understood as manifestations of media dynamics. This book argues that early modern affects about Asia were conditioned by the operation of information channels that sent and received news from abroad. Specifically, the ability to feel sympathy for distant people depends upon communication networks running between different locations. This book examines in particular how information channels create sympathy between people separated by great distances. While compassion is often described as a natural emotion, it requires training in how to generate and direct itself. Additionally, it usually comes into being within an informed and concerned community, which may well be distributed across wide spaces. How is it that modern readers can feel an emotional connection with distant people solely because they have read a news report about them? The history of European caring often begins with examples of crisis and suffering, wherein safe and untroubled humans developed the capacity to care about unseen, unknown victims, but eventually the emotional capacity to identify with strangers extended further, so that Europeans learned to care even about daily life on the other side of the world.

How did the history of reading media prepare people to think with foreigners, to share their perspectives, rather than rejecting them? This book focuses on early modern connections between China and Europe, but it serves as a prelude to the more modern question of how people care about distant suffering. Why are written reports about the oppression of ethnic minorities, the plight of

7. Louis Luixi Meng, "Idea-scape (*yijing*): Understanding Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition," *Comparative Literature: East & West* 23.1 (2015): 29–48; David Wellbery, "Stimmung," in *Aesthetische Grundbegriffe*, ed. Karlheinz Barck, Martin Fontius, Dieter Schlenstedt, Burkhart Steinwachs, and Friedrich Wolfzettel (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2010), 5:703–33.

refugees, and the destruction wrought by plagues, earthquakes and other disasters received with attention and care? Rather than stress all the reasons why sympathy is short-lived and politically ineffective, I want to examine how Europeans first learned to care at all. I will show that this focus on suffering is but the first stage in a more elaborate history whereby readers, some of them admittedly exceptional intellectuals, learned to identify with foreigners even when they were not victims, but rather were simply living only somewhat dramatic lives. The ultimate goal of my argument is to show how contemporary cosmopolitanism emerged out of a Christian and then Enlightenment morality of sympathy. In literary terms, I seek to show how both secular and Christian cosmopolitanism fostered the identificatory reading strategies underlying Goethe's world literature.

If we read Foucault's description of Renaissance sympathies, we recognize that his epistemology of analogies is itself built upon an analogy with communication technologies. "Sympathy can traverse the vastest spaces in an instant; it falls like a thunderbolt from the distant planet upon the man ruled by that planet; on the other hand, it can be brought into being by a simple contact."[8] Foucault continues: "It excites the things of the world to movement and can draw even the most distant of them together." Then a few pages later Foucault makes the analogy explicit: "Sympathy creates communication between our bodies and the heavens, and transmits the movement of the planets to the affairs of men."[9] You do not need to be a hard-boiled German media theorist to ask whether in fact it is communication that creates sympathies, not the other way around. The ability to draw analogies, to perceive parallels or even just similarities, requires communication. It is not enough for missionaries to posit similarities between Christianity and Buddhism or Confucianism; they must also be in a position to do so. Transportation and communication facilitate sympathetic identifications, though they by no means guarantee them.

8. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage 1973), 23.

9. Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 27–28.

Sympathy for China takes several routes. Initially it is directed towards the figure of the emperor and his supporting administrative culture. German intellectuals who perceived an idealized similarity between themselves and China came to adopt the notion that they too served as mandarins—poets, philosophers, but crucially also state administrators. In the Holy Roman Empire, the nexus between intellectuals and bureaucrats was not nearly as established as in China; thus German identifications with China included a certain utopian wishfulness. The first practitioners of this comparison were the Jesuit missionaries who quickly conformed themselves to the Chinese imperial administration so as to walk, talk, and write as though they were mandarins. The Jesuits' adaptation of Catholic teaching to the Confucian elite, referred to as "accommodation," set a standard that was followed in Germany by philosophers such as Leibniz and Wolff, princes such as August the Strong, and eventually poets such as Goethe.

*Chinese Sympathies* offers an analogy about analogical thinking with its claim that not only did the first missionaries perceive fundamental similarities between early Confucian texts and Christian revelation, but that the first European translators also discovered correspondences between Chinese fiction and European novels. For almost two centuries, Jesuit missionaries asserted their primacy as interpreters of Chinese culture based on their access to the ruling elite. No other European organization could claim to know how the inner circles of power operated in China. Europeans living within absolute monarchies understood that gaining admittance to the imperial palace and the houses of the administrative elite was a rare privilege. Mastery of Mandarin was central to the Jesuit's exclusive position, and European scholars often complained that the missionaries made little effort share their skills by publishing linguistic books. Their privileged position was challenged only with the appearance of Chinese novels translated by English and French scholars who had learned the necessary languages on their own. Translators relied heavily on Jesuit treatises to explain the society depicted in scholar-beauty romances, but they also argued that reading fiction written for native Chinese allowed Europeans insight into domestic settings and emotional dramas that Catholic priests

would never have witnessed or recounted. By 1800 reading translated novels was plausibly a more secure form of knowledge about Chinese manners than relying solely on reports from travelers. Chinese novels were not written for Europeans; they did not address the Western gaze; they showed no knowledge of their own strangeness. The earliest examples of Goethe's world literary readings in Persian, Chinese, and Serbian literature all shared that they were not written for the European cultural elite. They had come into being autonomously within parallel cultures that were not yet conditioned by the market forces that would later draw them together.

Inevitably though, any understanding of a translated novel depended on the information provided by Jesuit reports, so in the end they could not completely split away from the missionary information store. The techniques required to make translated novels intelligible to Europeans had also already been developed over the century of missionary writing. The ability to identify with foreign figures and to visualize scenes imaginatively, even though they included wholly unfamiliar elements, had already been taught to Catholic readers of Asian missives. The Catholic recipient of the missionary letter was not merely receiving information from a distant confidant, but rather was participating in a mutual relationship between sender and receiver as members of the global church. The missionary depended on the faithful to hear his message; his position within the community was defined not just by his possessing more knowledge, but also by sharing a common worldview with his audience back home. Missionaries frequently referred to themselves as belonging to a collective modeled on the life of Francis Xavier, founder of the Jesuit mission in Asia. This communal bond between souls connected by correspondences, epistolary and spiritual, served as a model for later sentimental forms of cosmopolitanism. The "rise of the novel" allowed these older, identificatory modes of reading to be readjusted for the sake of a secular relationship to the text. The image of the Asian martyr, suffering an inexpressibly painful death for the sake of his or her newly adopted Christian faith, was the starting point for a second, at first exclusively Catholic, identification. Here the strangers were made familiar through the shared Christian faith and then elevated to figures

of veneration through a death that replicates Christ's crucifixion. While rejecting martyrdom as theological fanaticism, Enlightenment moral philosophy turned the cultic figure into a more abstract victim—the tortured brother and the earthquake victim. If the Catholic world saw martyrs as witnesses to unwavering faith, the Enlightenment recast martyrs as victims succumbing to state oppression—a vision that still inspires political sympathies. From the beginning of Catholic globalism, the sight and thought of distant physical suffering was supposed to lift the barriers that separated Europeans from Asians. The legend of Spanish cruelty in the Americas, the exploitation of South Asians by Dutch and English merchants, and the suffering of the African slave also relied on psychological techniques and formal representations first elaborated in the late medieval church. Strikingly, such images of intense suffering elicited little sympathy within China itself. Confucian administrators would not have venerated images of executed prisoners, for they would have been seen as rebels or tricksters. Jesuits refrained from showing pictures of Christ's crucifixion or martyrs within China—a visual strategy that ultimately led to accusations that the mission was suppressing more than just the most central image in Christianity, but also its defining theological moment.[10]

Sympathies fluctuate. Moods are ever changing. Enlightenment philosophers well understood that an ethics based on sympathy was likely to be unstable, to wax and wane in its concern for others, in the intensity of its commitments. Accordingly, this book posits a model of mobilization and circulation, wherein knowledge about China lies dormant in German libraries for long stretches, forgotten, unrecognizable to most people who stumble across it, only to be mobilized, rediscovered, and brought back into circulation at striking moments of inspiration. My work provides a series of close readings concentrating on Jesuit missionary reports about China, baroque martyr dramas and compilations about Chinese converts, Adam Smith's sentimental thought experiment about China, and

10. *China und Europa: Chinaverständnis und Chinamode im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert*, *Ausstellung vom 16. September bis 11. November 1973 im Schloß Charlottenburg, Berlin* (Berlin: Verwaltung der Staatlichen Schlösser und Gärten, 1973), 132.

Goethe's espousal of Chinese literature as a source for world literature. These diverse texts converged as stimulants for Goethe's idea of world literature and his late poetic cycle "Chinesisch-Deutsche Jahres- und Tageszeiten" ("Chinese-German Book of Hours and Seasons")—probably the first German literary text with an Asian-German title intended to provoke nationalist Romantics. World literature, as Goethe proposes and as we shall examine in chapter 10, is driven by an inclination to recognize resemblances among disparate texts. As David Damrosch suggests, Goethe practiced an intensive mode of reading across an extensive range of literary texts by concentrating on analogies rather than on differences.[11] His attention was drawn to metaphors that translate between cultures, for suggesting underlying similarities.[12] Given that "analogy is nothing other than the deep love that binds together things that are remote, seemingly diverse or inimical,"[13] such epiphanies could obviously be based on a misunderstanding or misperception, so that the perceived similarity is technically incorrect even as it produces a complex comparison. Misunderstandings often emerge from the aspiration to communicate what has not yet been fully understood. The recognition of similarities between divergent cultures is often so suffused with utopian desires that it seems unintelligible to those who do not share these feelings. Jesuit accommodation in China—with all its misreadings of Confucianism—provides an early example of the search for resemblances between literary texts and traditions, a tendency that also guided Goethe's interpretation of foreign literature. He was not interested in organizing knowledge so much as stimulating his own ability to write poetry. Rather than positing and applying an overarching concept of humanity and po-

11. David Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 297–300.

12. "But the greatest thing by far is to have a command of metaphor. This alone cannot be imparted by another; it is the mark of genius, for to make good metaphors implies an eye for resemblances" (Aristotle, *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*, trans S. H. Butcher [New York: Dover, 1951], 87 [1459a]).

13. Filippo Marinetti, "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature," in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed., Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi, and Laura Wittman (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 120.

etry, his readings were focused on detecting resemblances between his own writing and that of others. To the extent that these similarities were then understood as reflecting a larger unity, Goethe did share in the premodern presumption of an organic wholeness to human existence. He was more concerned with how texts overlapped and intersected than in the application of an abstract concept to diverse forms of writing. These similarities could come into being without having to assert some complex causal connection between them, yet their recognition was greatly enhanced by the increased circulation of texts through expanding international media circuits.

Goethe's advocacy of world literature was motivated in part by the recognition that the translation of narratives provided a more subtle insight into the foreign society than the compilation of information. The novel's implicit bond between narrator and audience allowed Europeans to enter into private Chinese spaces that missionaries, merchants, and explorers could never reach. By reading translated novels, Europeans were eavesdropping on conversations and events to which they would otherwise never be privy and were allowed thereby to recognize similarities hidden behind exterior differences. Translation seemed to lift the linguistic barrier that confined Chinese-European mediation to a handful of learned missionaries during the early modern period.

World literature incorporates several readerly intentions that in isolation seem antithetical to one another. The inclination to approach writing about foreign countries with sympathy for the settings, characters, and events stands at odds with the drive to garner autonomous units of information that can be placed in a systematic relation to other information gathered from different sources. Nevertheless, the reading practices of world literature emerged from these early attempts to isolate information about foreign cultures. From the European reception of Marco Polo and Mandeville to the very first Portuguese seafarers' reports, humanist readers in Europe sought to isolate truthful and then later useful information from the narrative within which it was embedded. As this distinction became more explicit, the category of fiction, as an invented narrative with no immediate, direct correspondence to existing reality, also came into existence. While Jürgen Osterhammel is quite correct in arguing

that Enlightenment writing about China became increasingly focused on information as distinct from fables, he simplifies the relationship between the two terms. Well into the eighteenth century, most Europeans learned about China through Jesuit dramas, Italian operas, tea cups and porcelain miniatures, and long-winded baroque novels brimming with summary reports. The desire to learn about China was described as curiosity, not science. The seventeenth century saw different strategies for distinguishing between piety, edification, curiosity, learning, and entertainment. Jesuit reports from Asia were written with a clear understanding that their accounts would be compiled, revised, and republished into school dramas, sermons, prayers, meditations, and scholarly collections. While scientific information in the sense that moderns recognize was included in all these genres, Jesuits considered it completely within keeping of their primary mission to integrate piety with scholarship. As trained humanists, Jesuit writers were well versed in the methods and models of ancient historians and naturalists, yet the Enlightenment drive to isolate information from a larger context that included personal and communal salvation was antithetical to their purpose. Individual missionaries in China such as Martino Martini or Nicoló Longobardo might have written in a concise, informative style that echoed Thucydides or Herodotus, but they were always concerned to demonstrate how the Christian God was guiding the Jesuit mission. Martini provided a remarkably clear account of the Ming dynasty's fall, but he insisted on explaining this cataclysm as divine justice because the last emperor had refused to convert to Christianity. The theological interpretation implicit within his matter of fact narrative was revised and made more explicit for European audiences in Joost van den Vondel's tragic drama, *Zungchin*. The difference between observing and converting China emerges in seventeenth-century Jesuit reports, but these tendencies were stitched back together as those texts were revised and recirculated in Europe. Not until the eighteenth century, when scientific disciplines such as geography defined themselves as distinct from imperial, commercial, or theological regimes, was information perceived as a distinct entity that existed apart from the individuals and institutions engaged in its collection. Information was not merely about

some object; through its circulation in diverse networks, information became valuable as a thing that some people possessed and others lacked.

The discourse positing an autonomous world literature develops as forms of representing China become differentiated during and after the Enlightenment. For most of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, the scholarly or Protestant inclination to isolate scientific knowledge about China required a critical examination of Catholic missionary writing, as well as the introduction of new genres. For well over a century, the first Jesuit missionaries translated Confucian philosophical texts into Latin. Chinese dramas and narratives were excluded from their long-term translation projects. The many dramas Europeans saw about China were actually adapted from missionary narratives; they were not written by the Chinese for their own purposes. Historical scholarship has focused on what the Jesuits brought back from China, but just as important was the long list of objects and texts that the missionaries silently excluded from their transfer project. The formal qualities of Chinese art became visible to Europeans indirectly through the trade in textiles and porcelain, without any substantial Jesuit commentary. Stories and plays written by Chinese for their own audiences were not accessible to Europeans until the eighteenth century.

As I discuss in chapter 10 the first Chinese fictional narratives were translated by merchants living in Canton as part of their own language learning efforts. While Jesuits taught themselves Mandarin by translating Confucian classics, English and Portuguese traders tried their hand at poetry, drama, and narrative fiction. These translators still saw domestic literature as means of understanding Chinese culture in ways that the missionaries did not. Chinese stories had the advantage of depicting household scenes that had previously been outside the interest or purview of Jesuit missionaries. How did the Chinese get married? The question was better answered in a narrative written by a Chinese author for Chinese readers than by a European missionary or merchant. Initially, literature was another data source for curious Europeans. The missionary drive to organize all representations of China within the final aim of converting the emperor and his subjects to Christianity was being

replaced by a more mercantile desire to understand how the Chinese think and act. The Jesuits of course did not fail to have a response to later translations: Who better to describe China, a learned Christian priest or a profit-seeking merchant?

In the midst of these debates, certain continuities still held fast. The first translations of novels retained explicit parallels between literature and information, in that the narratives are interspersed with countless footnotes offering the European reader ethnographic explanations of every detail. If a character rides a horse or holds a dish, the early translations include a footnote to an earlier Jesuit report about domestic animals or porcelain. This encyclopedic approach to novels followed the earlier baroque tendency to compile knowledge in narrative form. The shift toward treating Chinese writings solely in aesthetic terms first appeared, predictably enough, in Weimar. In their correspondences about China and in their incomplete revisions of translated fiction, Goethe and Schiller did not treat Chinese literature as just another means of conveying ethnographic knowledge. Instead they focused on the internal forms of Chinese literature—anything from the moral character of a literary figure to the poetic mood of a natural landscape. These they perceived as distinctly Chinese, yet comparable to European fiction. Their motives were quite writerly. Goethe and Schiller read Chinese as well as Persian and Indian literature because they were looking for good material to adapt for their own writing. Their search to appropriate Asian literature focused on the translatability of aesthetic and ethical forms—the dramatic tension underlying a plot, the natural harmonies of a poem, the metaphysics implied by an event.

World literature emerged when Europeans attribute aesthetic autonomy to writing in other cultures. Readers such as Goethe presumed that foreign texts were fictions with a double-sided relationship to their own society—that the work constructed representations according to its own rules that were distinct from external reality and yet reflected the pressures and expectations regulating the society within which the text was first written. World literature constitutes itself as a second order reflection upon foreign texts. In projecting this wider framework on to foreign writing, readers presume that all imaginary writing is itself implicitly engaged in reflection about

the conditions that determine its own existence. A desire to understand, though not necessarily a drive to gather information, motivates this reading of foreign writing. Chinese novels were expected to reveal insights to foreigners even as their depictions address other members of the mandarin and merchant classes. Chapter 10 elucidates how Goethe extends just such an interpretation to the first European translations of Chinese fiction. His recognition of analogies between Chinese and European novels was not only focused on characters and social scenes, but also included a shared poetic indeterminacy in representing nature. As he isolated aesthetic qualities in Chinese romances, Goethe translated, or reinscribed, them into his own lyric poetry. The Chinese novels he read encourage such passages between genres, for like German novels around 1800, their prose narrative is often interrupted and analyzed self-reflectively by inserted poems.

The ongoing interest in China in the early modern period depended more upon the persistence of the Jesuit mission there than on any other European drive. Likewise, the end of European affirmations of Chinese society had more to do with the suppression of the Society of Jesus than with the supposed trivialization of high Chinese culture in courtly luxuries. Even within the period of Jesuit mediation between China and Europe (1582–1773), the flow of information varied dramatically. The Jesuits were remarkable for how each new generation of missionaries in China integrated its own reports with the previous ones, yet intellectuals in Protestant Europe often felt that acquisition of new knowledge about China was still a hodge-podge process, so that scholars and publishers were often compelled to recycle older, already established stories.

Sympathy may not suffice to establish a consistent and universal moral principle. Furthermore, it is open to self-interested manipulation. Yet the absence of sympathy, in the face of obvious reasons for it, is worse, a sign of real trouble and cruelty. From *Don Quixote* onward sympathetic readers have been mocked for their naïveté even as they have become a locus of fascination. Expanding the range of sympathy for Europeans does not mean that all people within that space are treated morally, but it does include them, for better or worse, as subjects of moral judgment. Sympathy is hardly

sufficient for moral action. For Adam Smith, the feeling served as the foundation of morality, yet he also insisted that secondary judgments of the critical spectator were necessary for producing stable moral evaluations.

This book traces the moral emotions emerging from and reinforcing the perception that Europe and China shared important parallels, in terms ranging from compassion-pity-sympathy-identification to later formulations such as empathy-solidarity-cathexis-authoritarian adoration. The French, German, and English traditions have formulated an entire range of philosophical emotions.[14] Likewise an array of skeptics emerged: Spinoza, Mandeville, Kant, Nietzsche, Brecht. In the early modern period, these feelings did not unfold in a linear sequence with one replacing the other; rather, they emerged periodically only to disappear again, with silences in between. While emotional responses to distant Chinese figures appeared in distinctly different forms, these were not necessarily the same as the sequence of emotional responses that audiences undergo during the course of a performance or reading. Hans Robert Jauß postulates that the reader or viewer of an aesthetic work experiences fluctuating dispositions toward a fictional character. "Astonishment, admiration, being shaken or touched, sympathetic tears and laughter, or estrangement constitute the scale of such primary levels of aesthetic experience which the performance or the reading of a text brings with it. The spectator or reader may enter into these states but also disengage himself at any moment, take up the attitude of aesthetic reflection, and start in on his own interpretation which presupposes a further, retrospective or prospective distancing."[15] The important point in both historical and individual processes remains the inherent mutability of sympathetic responses. Many different types of writing about China elicited identificatory responses. While aesthetic works were prominent, in the seventeenth century they were by no means distinct from religion. Furthermore, any number of travelogues, letters, trea-

14. Sigrid Weigel, "The Heterogeneity of Empathy: An Archeology of Multiple Meanings and Epistemic Implications," in *Empathy*, ed. Vanessa Lux and Sigrid Weigel, 1–23 (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017).

15. Hans Robert Jauß, *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 153.

tises, and histories offered opportunities for seeing the Chinese as similar to Europeans. China was not a constant presence in European discourses, but when curiosity led to a new rush of interest, old emotions were revived and revised to conform with new discourses. Sentimental moral sympathy may have shared qualities with Catholic compassion for Chinese and Japanese martyrs, but these emotions were articulated within fundamentally different metaphysical and epistemological frameworks. The object of these emotions shifted continuously, in that "China" was represented variously, depending on the medium, in terms of singular Christian martyrs, the emperor, the Confucian canon, the populace as a whole, the administrative elite, or by a few select literary characters, with considerable overlap in each case.

The historical examples presented in *Chinese Sympathies* show how subjects imagine their own relations within an extended information network. How does an individual perceive emotional relationships over distance and through media without ever having direct sensory contact with the object of their interest? What medial techniques enable, compel, and lure the subject to invest emotional interest in information that lacks any immediate embodiment? Why do people care about the humans that are not present, about whom they can only read or see in images? This book looks at the long-distance identifications that reading and viewing enable. How do Europeans transform news about foreigners into a personal concern for them? The genealogy of cosmopolitan interest in strangers in distance places moves from martyr dramas to world literature. How do information networks reconfigure subjective feelings? How does reading realign emotional investments beyond the individual's immediate environment? Do long-distance information networks simply broaden the range for the narcissistic subject to discover even more distant confirmations of itself, or does the extension of identification also transform the subject? Do expanding networks allow the recipient to assume different subject positions within a expanded range of identities? How can readers in Central Europe imagine that they are like a Buddhist monk in China? If we use spatial metaphors such as the horizon of expectations, then Chinese characters seemed to hover at the edge and even just beyond, at the

farthest extreme, positioned where they were both fascinating and a test for identification over a long distance. The sense of distance was itself an effect of weak and fluctuating media channels between the two societies. As media channels grew more stable into the eighteenth century, China seemed not as far away, while the South Pacific islands became the new boundary marking the "impossibly far away."

Most every study of baroque and Enlightenment representations of Asia ponders the question of its own relation to nineteenth-century colonialism. It is a mistake for German eighteenth-century scholars to imagine that their field remains immune from the dynamics of orientalism. The logistical aspirations and apparatuses of the early modern church preceded, enabled, and were later absorbed into colonial empires. Prior to the late nineteenth-century, when the German Reich took an active interest in colonization, German Enlightenment thinkers refined methodologies and techniques for interpreting Asian texts, including those that sought to understand them from an "inside" vantagepoint.[16] Edward Said unambiguously sees eighteenth-century "sympathetic identification" that exceeds comparative study as a cultural formation that preceded orientalism. He cites Herder's *Ideas on the Philosophy of Human History* as the pivotal work that calls on readers to engage Asian texts with *Einfühlung* (empathy) in order to recognize "the hidden elements of kinship between himself and the Orient."[17] Herder was by no means alone. Many German thinkers sought to find an underlying unity that joined East and West, whether it was a biblical origin as a lost tribe, or a scriptural origin in which Chinese characters were derived from hieroglyphs, or Leibniz's and Wolff's hunch that Christians and Confucians shared a rational natural theology, or Lessing's family genealogy that related the three monotheisms to each other, or Goethe's universal sense for poetry, or Friedrich Schlegel's insistence on a linguistic unity. As this book will show, early modern orientalism displayed different forms of sympathetic identification: first, a moment of fascination and fear regarding the Chinese

16. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979), 19.
17. Said, *Orientalism*, 118.

emperor as possessing and exceeding the qualities of Western monarchy, coupled with pity for the suffering Asian as victim. These extremes could be combined, as Walter Benjamin showed for the baroque drama, where absolute power and total abjection were often presented as different aspects of the same figure. Yet outside the theater they were more often isolated into ideal types. Each of these figures of sympathy was valued differently by Europeans depending on how they viewed monarchs or martyrs, as persons to venerate, admire, despise, or pity. These judgments were inevitably caught up with internal European conflicts over politics and religion that defined the limits of identification generally, whether across cultures or within them. For example, the Enlightenment's critique of Asian despotism had more to do with fears about European absolute monarchy than with the power structure of distant kingdoms.

Aside from Said's claim that "sympathetic Orientalism" lays the foundation for later more aggressive structures, we should not forget that advocates for early modern trade between Europe and China were already trying out the ideological terms that would later define nineteenth-century colonialism. Even if these mercantile discourses appear in minor, adumbrated forms, it would be a mistake to draw an absolute distinction between early modern approaches to the Orient and full-fledged, "technical colonialism." Well before colonialism became established, some of its basic ideas were in circulation. Already deep in the seventeenth century, Dutch and English East India traders were eager for China to open its ports to free trade. The 1655–1657 Dutch Embassy China urged the emperor to engage in "onderlingen Koophandel"—a term that the English translated as "free and mutual commerce."[18] By all accounts, the Chinese court understood commerce as the exchange of gifts with foreigners who arrived at regular intervals to pay homage to the emperor. Any economic relationship outside such ceremonies was

18. John Nieuhof, *Het Gezantschap der Neêrlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie aan den Grooten Taratarischen Cham, den tegenwoordigen Keizer van China* (Amsterdam: Jacob van Meurs, 1665), 4; John Nieuhoff, *An Embassy sent by the East India Company of the United Provinces to the Grand Tartar Cham or Emperor of China*, trans. John Ogilby (London: John Macock, 1669), 3.

viewed with suspicion. The Dutch, and later the English, notions of free trade were clearly thus a challenge to imperial channels of exchange, which remained firmly in operation under Kangxi and Qianlong emperors. Even Immanuel Kant, who was no great admirer of Asian practices, considered it prudent for Japanese and Chinese rulers not to offer hospitality to all Europeans who arrived on their shores. While there is no comparison between seventeenth-century merchants' appeals and British strategies in the Opium Wars, the possibilities were apparent to all long before they became historical reality. The Dutch blamed Jesuits advising the emperor for the rejection of their trade proposal. At stake was the European reliance upon the imperial center for access to China in general. Even without such input, it would have been clear that the Dutch proposal sought to circumvent imperial channels in commerce. The Jesuits held a privileged access to the imperial circles while the Dutch and English had no entrée. "Free trade" became a slogan for the nineteenth-century British, but in the early modern era, it simply signified a failed attempt to bypass inter-imperial relations. Before orientalism, Asian-European relations involved a more symmetrical monarchical balance of power. Missionaries were more concerned with conversion than trade. Catholic priests near the emperor counseled against offering entry to Protestant merchants. No European courtiers questioned the authority of the emperor in Beijing; rather they saw his office as a confirmation of their own monarchical order. *Chinese Sympathies* concentrates on these multiple, imperial and missionary channels between China and Europe in establishing diplomatic, religious, scholarly, and emotional bonds. Ultimately my approach to the early modern period seeks to demonstrate that Michel Foucault's genealogy of early modern discourses confirms Walter Benjamin's claim that the baroque has a vital relevance for the modern era.[19] This book concentrates on the particular example of the baroque fascination with China and its transformations (*Funkstionswandel*) during the eighteenth century. While I eschew Benjamin's faith in origins as revealing

19. Peter Bürger, *Theorie der Avant-Garde* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1982), 114n20.

essential truths, I also insist that genealogies are not defined by epistemic ruptures so much as slowly shifting continuities. In particular, seventeenth-century formulations of a cosmological sympathy between Asia and Europe were secularized as moral psychology within the Enlightenment and then popped back up again, almost full-fledged, as subjective speculations in German Romanticism and idealist *Naturphilosophie*.

In summary, the book's genealogical argument, leading up to the final, tenth chapter on world literature and Chinese novels, runs as follows. In the first chapter, I explain how Marco Polo was the first European to establish a recognized allegiance with the Emperor of China. His travel memoir set the model for centuries of later readers who imagined an ideal relationship with a parallel civilization, but one in which all things were grander and more intelligent. Polo's *Travels* also underscores the interdependence of Chinese sympathies and logistical networks of travel and communication between the two ends of the continent. Polo's writing commences my long history of information channels and their ability to sustain intercultural affinities. Generations of German writers wrote oriental fables based on Polo's narrative. Christoph Wieland and Franz Kafka offer examples of how Polo's account was incorporated through the modern trope that the Habsburg Empire was the China of Europe.

Chapter 2 explains how starting in the late sixteenth century, Jesuit missionaries in China and Japan began to send reports about those kingdoms to Europe. They circulated widely in scholarly, aristocratic, ecclesiastical, and lay formats. With the establishment of Asian Catholic institutions, German Catholics were first encouraged to pray for the success of missionaries in East Asia. They concentrated their spiritual efforts in support of prominent figures such as Francis Xavier, who was soon canonized, and then on the other missionaries who sent back letters reporting on their work to convert Chinese and Japanese to Christianity. Increasingly Catholics in Europe received stories about Asian converts who displayed pious steadfastness in the face of heathen rulers who demanded that they renounce their new faith. Missionaries provided the most reliable information about Asia. The report of one missionary, Antonio Almeida,

reveals the transformation Europeans underwent as they gave up their own identities to learn the local language and manners, to become, in their own understanding, Chinese.

Chapter 3 explains that Catholic information channels formed a spiritual circuit to strengthen the resolve of all participants: missionaries sent letters to Europeans who in return sent their prayers beseeching God's support for the missionaries and their converts. Catholics in Europe were strengthened in their resolve by the example of the faithful working far off in the distance. The church defined itself in global terms. As Catholics read about Chinese and Japanese converts, they were encouraged to consider not just the narrow plot of events but also the wider context within which these stories took place. Curiosity about Asia was encouraged. Readers were supposed to feel compassion for individual missionaries and martyrs by meditating on the society within which their suffering and passion occurred. This method of paying attention to historical details in order to foster a more complete spiritual union with the distant pious figure emerged from late medieval monastic techniques of contemplating the life of Christ. This meditative attentiveness was extended in the seventeenth century to all matters related to the Jesuit mission in Asia. Pious Europeans were encouraged to emulate the examples of Asian missionaries and converts. Many did so enthusiastically.

All the chapters dealing with the Jesuit missionaries emphasize how they tried to integrate themselves in imperial administrative circles by accommodating Christian teachings to their interpretation of the earliest Confucian writings. This attempt to reconcile the two religions implicitly followed the medieval church adaptation of Greek philosophy. Unlike Christian confrontations with Islam and Judaism, Jesuits did not try to refute Confucianism; instead they sought to distribute their own writings within Confucian channels of communication, thereby reinforcing the compatibility between them.

Chapter 4 analyzes Martino Martini's account of the Ming dynasty's defeat by Manchu invaders from the north. His work is more than just a missionary report in that it provided a political history of Asia through a range of figures in whom Europeans could take an interest. Martini's history recapitulates the broader larger Jesuit

tendency to describe China as an ideal moral society in which the emperor and his magistrates professed an ancient teaching that shared an original understanding of the divine similar to Christianity. The emperor played a central role in this new appreciation for Chinese society as he was also the object of Jesuit efforts to convert the country. Particular emperors were represented as sympathetic to Christian teaching, perhaps even almost ready to convert.

Chapter 5 explicates one of the first European plays written about a Chinese emperor, Joost van den Vondel's tragic drama, *Zungchin*. As Europeans began to write tragic dramas based on reading missionary reports, the Chinese emperor and the Christian converts around him became the focus of audience identification. Rather than present the emperor as a stereotypical hostile pagan ruler, the play depicts him as a well-intentioned but weak monarch who failed to convert to Christianity. Writers and dramaturges tried to bring plays about China into line with their understanding of Aristotle's account of tragedy. Within philosophical circles, Chinese figures such as Confucius were identified as near saints, comparable to leading moral figures in the Western tradition.

Contrary to church teachings, radical Enlightenment thinkers adapted Jesuit accounts of Chinese thought and politics to claim that a nation could be ethical and civilized while ruled by atheists. Rationalist thinkers revised Christian forms of compassion by eliminating the attention to martyrs, who held steadfast to dogma. Enlightenment writers sought to extend audience sympathies to all include all virtuous individuals, regardless of their religion.

Chapter 6 uses the writings of Christoph Wieland to show how friendship rather than martyrdom became the basis for a new mode of identification. Sympathizing with a foreigner as a potential friend constituted a secular parallel to Christian compassion grounded in faith. By the middle of the eighteenth century, missionary reports from Asia were treated with increased skepticism because the Jesuits were increasingly criticized for their political positions in Europe. In an effort to detach from church teachings, Enlightenment moralists removed all references to martyrs in their dramatical writings, preferring instead to extend the range of tragic identification to include more ordinary people. This chapter explains further how

the Enlightenment mobilized the ideal of friendship as an emotional framework for interpreting foreign texts and information. The chapter supports the book's larger argument about how the missionary channels that inspired Catholic connections to Asia were replaced by sentimental identifications that enabled world literature. Wieland's cosmopolitan sentimentalism elaborates the aesthetic preconditions for Goethe's claim that Chinese novels belong to world literature. Wieland's invention of the term *Weltliteratur* reflects the eighteenth century's awareness that postal systems not only created new forms of writing but also brought translated texts into circulation within Europe.

Chapter 7 builds on the thesis that sentimental cosmopolitanism was an international movement built on global communication channels by focusing closely on an important passage in Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* in which he asks: How would a European respond to news of a cataclysmic earthquake in China? His choice was not random for Smith had read the major eighteenth-century sources of information on China and had come see the kingdom as a parallel civilization, whose economic success challenged the universality of his theories on free trade. His query raised the central concern of a morality based on sympathy: Do feelings of compassion extend over great distances to include foreigners? Smith contemplated the response on a European-wide level, not merely as a British concern. Smith's thought experiment constituted a nonreligious, psychological adaptation of the compassion Christians were supposed to feel at the sight of the suffering martyr. While Jesuit missionaries deployed images of Chinese martyrs to mobilize Catholic identification with Asian converts, Smith offered an Enlightenment adaptation in which Chinese suffering was caused by a natural event rather than a pagan tyrant. He also made two implicit points: first, that the communication channels between Asia and Europe were so steady that it was plausible for such news to reach an ordinary person, and second, that sentimental feelings were readily extended to China based on the older martyr model. His affirming the possibility that Europeans could feel meaningful sympathy for Chinese earthquake victims sets up the later possibility of world literature. In this sense Smith's thought experiment is a

forerunner of Goethe's world literature idea. When Goethe told Johann Peter Eckermann that the age of world literature was approaching because international channels of communication within Europe and the world had revived after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, he was referring to the media condition described in Smith's media-sympathy postulation.

The cosmopolitan possibility that sympathetic bonds could develop between people throughout the world and at different times in history became an increasingly common assumption among sentimental readers. Accordingly, sympathy for Chinese people grew independent of religion. Asian works of fiction that shared similarities with European genres were slowly being translated into German, French, and English, allowing educated readers to compare foreign figures in these works with other more familiar literary characters and themselves.

Chapters 8 and 9 analyze Goethe's assertion that the basic positions taken during a sixteenth-century Jesuit disputation with a Buddhist monk in Nanjing were analogous to the epistemological debates in Weimar between Kantians and Idealists. What happens in China happens in Germany, too. Added to the philosophical nuance of Goethe's comparison was that he cautiously disguised his own identification with the Buddhist position because of the emerging atheism controversy involving accusations made against Fichte's teaching in Jena. Goethe's inclination to perceive analogies between philosophy in China and in Germany anticipates his later comments about the similarities between Chinese and European novels that served as the basis for his pronouncements about *Weltliteratur*. A careful reading of Goethe's and Schiller's correspondence shows that as a heretical thinker, Goethe was inclined to identify with the Buddhist disregard for Christian theism, even as he cautiously avoided entering into yet another Enlightenment debate over religion.

At the end of this genealogy, my book will have demonstrated how Germans first came to discover similarities between themselves and East Asians to such an extent that they could identify with the Chinese. Such sympathies manifested themselves in a wide range of genres, each with its own intended purpose and manner of addressing readers. All of them depended upon the sporadic flow of news

from Asia provided by missionaries communicating through trading vessels. Long after the Jesuits' initial goal of converting China by accommodating Christianity to Confucian teaching had been supplanted, the belief that the two cultures shared fundamental similarities continued to guide European perceptions of East Asia. Although world literature and Enlightenment cosmopolitanism were radically opposed to theological creeds, these idealized networks repurposed many of the intercultural strategies and presumptions deployed by missionaries. Without the global Catholic Church, world literature would never have emerged as it did.