

This is an extract from:

Theme Park Landscapes: Antecedents and Variations

edited by Terence Young and Robert Riley

Published by

Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection

Washington, D.C.

as volume 20 in the series

Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium on the History of Landscape Architecture

© 2002 Dumbarton Oaks

Trustees for Harvard University

Washington, D.C.

Printed in the United States of America

www.doaks.org/etexts.html

*Toward Distinguishing among Theme Park Publics:
William Chambers's Landscape Theory
vs. His Kew Practice*

Richard Quaintance

What is so new about today's theme parks? Material toward that inquiry awaits us in the prominently published theories and oddly divergent practical work of one budding architect, Sir William Chambers, during two bustling decades in mid-eighteenth-century England. To advance his theories' sorting and dramatization of ways that a landscape designer might evoke and vary the responses of not just his landowner-client but a transient and indefinite public as well, Chambers studied a sophisticated *affekt*-agenda as closely as might the promoter of a commercial park. On the other hand, the twenty-three buildings, almost all from his own designs, with which Chambers ornamented Princess Augusta's new Kew Park near London between 1757 and 1763 addressed clearly distinguishable landscaping agendas. Rather than stimulating private surrender to a generic gamut of sublime, or gutsy emotions essentially self-refined, this layout recruited public, focused, and "civic" engagement in contemporary British political and economic life. Observing Chambers's work in these two readily contrasted arenas may help clarify some of the motives and means that our theme parks commingle.

A commercial theme park needs to sell memorable sensations—at least enough roller coasterish recollections to impress oneself and friends that one has "been somewhere." But in order to attract and hold public attention across space and time, theme parks need their logos—focal imagery easily reduced to formula: a Mickey eager to put an arm around your child and smile for your camera, a Main Street or Epcot that architecturally embodies reassurance of past or future communities for the clientele to accept as its own. The rollercoaster-type of theme park "product" succeeds best when we *forget* that even Adventureland respects the forces of gravity and a bull market; but the park themed for history or prophecy wins the plausibility *it* requires through conspicuous regard for "commonsense." At one extreme we are so engrossed in the present instant that any passing glimpse of a life before or beyond this one only stresses how isolated this joyride is. At the other extreme, we apprehend *continuities*: "This really connects me with my larger poten-

tial.” These diverse agendas or claims on their public are likely to blend together in the execution or experience of a theme park. But the contrast (oddly unappreciated) between Chambers’s theoretical writings and his simultaneous work at Kew sorts them out for us. Particularly apt in its anticipation of Disney’s “imagineers” is Chambers’s early but overt concern with susceptibilities among a consuming public for the landscaped terrain, closer in breadth to those of today’s day-trippers than to those of an eighteenth-century patron-family needing to think well of itself.¹

“Chinese” Gardens as Exercise Circuits for the Emotions

In each of three essays published between 1757 and 1773, Chambers formulated as established “Chinese” practice certain initiatives that he keenly sought for English landscaping. (He knew enough of actual Chinese landscaping to know well, and privately admit, how fictional these descriptions were.) Any reader’s puzzlement as to how seriously to take this strategic polemical dodge is further complicated by Chambers’s passing, yet harshly snobbish mockery of the “insipid” dearth of circumstantial interest he found in Capability Brown’s work, then reaching the peak of its popularity. (The Brownian features that Chambers found artless or uneventful, a dispassionate landscape historian might today term *abstract* or *musical*, perhaps noting their match in features around Kew’s artificial lake!)² Since he had visited China in the 1740s while serving in the Swedish East India Company and with his 1757 essay was publishing authoritatively on China’s arts and architecture, Chambers could pretend to fob off as sober truth his deliberately—sometimes luridly—overstated program of how Chinese designers made the earth move for their garden visitors. This sinophilic pretext, pseudodocumentary, if often ineptly fantastic, distracted English readers such as Horace Walpole from Chambers’s positive aims, although translations secured him favorable response in Germany and France. For our present purposes, what

¹ My modeling of Chambers’s works assumes, of course, no consciousness of him on the part of current theme park planners. His Kew designs and his polemical feintings about “Chinese gardens,” although widely admired and followed on the Continent and by connoisseurs such as Lord Kames and Edmund Burke, were in England openly disparaged by anti-Tory poets William Mason and William Wordsworth. A dozen years after his Kew was completed, its merger with Richmond Park and new work there by Capability Brown would discompose the imperial logo I describe. See John and Eileen Harris, *Sir William Chambers, Knight of the Polar Star* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University, 1970), and Ray Desmond, *Kew: The History of the Royal Botanic Gardens* (London: Harville Press, 1995), 30–84; admirably comprehensive as both works are, the readings here of Kew’s early hype are my own.

² Derek Clifford, *A History of Garden Design* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), 138–39 and 153–60. Chambers termed Brown’s style “insipid and vulgar” in the preface to the second and longest of his 3 landscaping studies, *A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (London, 1772), vii. His earliest, “Of the Art of Laying Out Gardens Among the Chinese,” in *Designs of Chinese Buildings, Furniture, Dresses, Machines, and Utensils* (London, 1757), 14–19, is reprinted in *The Genius of the Place*, ed. John Dixon Hunt and Peter Willis (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988), 283–88. His pseudonymous last, “An Explanatory Discourse, by Tan Chet-qua, of Quang-Chew-fu, Gent. FRSS, . . .” is appended as pp. 109–63 to the 2d ed. of his *Dissertation* (London, 1773). Chambers’s posturings clearly parallel the mode of the artfully satirical “Chinese letters” Oliver Goldsmith published in 1760–61 in *The Citizen of the World*.

emerges from behind Chambers's "screen" or "mask" of pretending to describe what he had never seen may be the first concerted effort to publish, mostly in practical terms, *which designed phenomena produce what shifts of mood*—thereupon challenging designers to organize landscape for its widest attainable range of responses.³

An opening observation "Of the Gardens of the Chinese" fairly epitomizes Chambers's analysis: "Nature is their pattern, and their aim is to imitate her in all her beautiful irregularities" (1757, virtually repeated in 1772). That master aim of variegation channels his discriminating among "three different species of scenes," which "they" call "pleasing, horrid, and enchanted." "Pleasing" is what most backyard gardens try to be; by "enchanted," he soon clarifies, he means phenomena of odor, sound, or sight that a stroller finds surprising or inexplicable: exotic flora or fauna, complex echoes, mysterious windsong. Once such otherness has begun to seem violently life-threatening we have crossed "disenchanted" into the domain of the "horrid" or "terrible": trees blasted by lightning, buildings "half-consumed by fire," the "howl of ferocious animals," dark rivers down which "you" are "furiously impelled."⁴ Yet, in turn, this last category is refined by distinctions between, on the one hand, such traditional monitions as "cabalistical sentences, inscribed on tables of brass," lit by "a constant flame," and, on the other, startlingly up-to-date "repeated shocks of electrical impulse"—or accounts that bring the Industrial Revolution into focus as just another Sublime Trip: "to add both to the horror and sublimity of these scenes, they sometimes conceal in cavities, on the summits of the highest mountains, founderies, lime-kilns, and glass-works; which send forth large volumes of flame, and continued columns of thick smoke, that give to these mountains the appearance of volcanoes." It may be clear by now that Chambers's three categories of "scene" match quite neatly Joseph Addison's "beautiful," "uncommon," and "great" from early in Chambers's century, or Edmund Burke's dichotomy of Beautiful and Sublime, between which others would wedge the Picturesque.⁵ What Chambers adds to their analyses is his persuasion that the landscaped park might be instrumented purposefully to treat the responsive stroller to a micro-chaos, evoking, perhaps, the very spectrum of emotions from which a traditional *hortus conclusus* would shelter its refugees. This motif parallels a model then well known, with interesting theme park foreshadowings: the mile-square town, a miniature "Pekin" named "Yven-MingYven," in the midst of China's imperial

³ Chambers's words for it: *An Explanatory Discourse by Tan Chet-qua . . .* (1773), ed. in facsimile Richard Quaintance (Los Angeles: Clark Memorial Library, 1978), 112–13; his letters confessing his hoax are quoted in Harris and Harris, *Chambers*, 158, 192. The ideal readership targeted by Chambers's stylistic extravagances might be inferred from his letter conveying a copy of the 1772 *Dissertation* to Voltaire: "[I]t contains besides a great deal of nonsense, two very pretty prints engraved by the Celebrated Bartolozzi; which prints, and the View with which the book was published are its only recommendation" (*Sir William Chambers' Letter Books*, vol. 2, fol. 1, British Museum MS. ADD. 41134).

⁴ Chambers, *Designs* (London, 1757), 15; *Dissertation*, 12, 35, 39, 69. Of course, *horrid* here meant no more nor less than *horrifying*.

⁵ Chambers, *Dissertation*, 39, 37; Addison, *Spectator Papers*, 411–21, on the "Pleasures of the Imagination" (1712); and Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into . . . the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757). On the latter congeniality, see Eileen Harris, "Burke and Chambers on the Sublime and Beautiful," *Essays in the History of Architecture Presented to Rudolf Wittkower*, ed. Douglas Fraser et al. (London: Phaidon, 1967), 207–13.

palace grounds, “to procure the Emperor the Pleasure of seeing all the Bustle and Hurry of a great City in little, whenever he might have a Mind for that sort of Diversion.”⁶ Otherwise quite cut off from his people, the emperor then was understood to enjoy this boisterous substitute, including the plying of crime, rewarded or punished, among the other trades of his “Garden of Gardens.” Impurity likewise calculated stains the comprehensiveness of Chambers’s inventory of Nature “in *all* her beautiful irregularities.”

Yet only the most sensational passages in Chambers’s theories (totaling one hundred seventy pages published over a period of sixteen years) focus on the darkly suggestible energies of *human* nature. Another passage fairly represents the balance he strikes between these more socially charged stimuli and others more objectively concerned with optics—always attending to how the landscaper’s opportunistic manipulations exercise the stroller’s resources:

The Chinese artists, knowing how powerfully contrast operates on the mind, constantly practise sudden transitions, and a striking opposition of forms, colours, and shades. Thus they conduct you from limited prospects to extensive views; from objects of horror to scenes of delight; from lakes and rivers to plains, hills, and woods; to dark and gloomy colours they oppose such as are brilliant, and to complicated forms simple ones; distributing, by a judicious arrangement, the different masses of light and shade, in such a manner as to render the composition at once distinct in it’s parts, and striking in the whole.⁷

For such challenging and sequential control over terrained contrast, Chambers easily enough might have found both ideological and practical precedent. During the 1750s Jonathan Tyers, the accomplished manager of Vauxhall, London’s leading pleasure-garden, would often leave his house on those grounds to spend his sabbaths at another home twenty miles south across Surrey. Here he might school his soul with journeying through the labyrinthine eight-acre wood *Penseroso* (its walks “in some places easy, smooth, and level, in others rugged and uneven: *A proper emblem of human life!*”) to his gothic *Temple of Death*, where funerary monuments, graveyard poetry, and a clock chiming every minute reminded him that his days were, like the leaves, subject to Time.⁸ The sophisticated professionals who helped Tyers with this estate were the same who painted lighthearted scenes for his Vauxhall supper boxes and sculpted there his Handel and Milton. It is hardly unusual, or even strikingly morbid, for a layout of these years in England to purport to chasten its owner and visitors in so emblematic a fashion. Another widespread cultural movement of the day, eloquent in the language of landscaping, was freemasonry, with its own “cabalistical

⁶ Jean-Denis Attiret, *A Particular Account of the Emperor of China’s Gardens near Peking*, trans. “Sir Harry Beaumont” [Joseph Spence] (London, 1752), 25; the passage is paraphrased in *Dissertation*, 32–33. Eileen Harris notes further indebtedness to Attiret in *Chambers*, 151.

⁷ Chambers, *Designs*, 15–16.

⁸ *The Scots Magazine* 29 (1767), 456. For richer detail, see Brian Allen, “Jonathan Tyers’ Other Garden,” *Journal of Garden History* 1 (1981), 215–38, and compare Stourhead’s grottoes, or autumnal “mementoes,” in *Dissertation*, 34–35.

sentences” and imagery of journeying through fire, water, and air toward initiation and transcendence; several of Chambers’s friends and fellow architects belonged to its Parisian lodges.⁹ Chambers was only the first, I believe, to publish a formula for programming into the landscaped terrain such inward exercises for its strollers.

So, centuries ago our thrill rides were anticipated by the notion (half-seriously maintained, at heart) that a “garden” is a place to go to have your equanimity checked—safely. In the context of general landscaping history this solicitude directly counters that “sweeping away” so routinely associated with Capability Brown’s work. Essentially conservative of on-site water and plant resources, Chambers’s concern for diversity prompts his subtle responses to the coloration and growth-habit of many trees and flowers.¹⁰ He argues that a wider witness to human work upon the land—turnip fields, cottages, abandoned quarries as well as fountains—can be “more picturesque than lawns the most curiously dotted with [Brown’s characteristic tree-] clumps.”¹¹ Just when country-house tourism was establishing itself as a growth leisure industry, an egalitarian condescension—noteworthy in our theme park context—informs Chambers’s frequent nudges toward *that* public to be addressed by his wealthier readers and clients: “[T]he owner is not the only person to be entertained [since] at a treat, there should be meats for every palate.” Indeed, a landscape may display so “many surprising phenomena, and extraordinary effects [that each layout] may be considered as a collection of philosophical [i.e., “scientific”] experiments, exhibited . . . upon a larger scale, and more forcibly than is common”—from which (gently implied) even the patron-proprietor may learn something.¹² Both exhaustive entertainment and what our current euphemism calls “discovery” are in store for Chambers’s ideal English-park public.

What did Chambers’s contemporaries make of his manifesto? Deconstructed as an apology for officious monarchical control far beyond the garden’s walls by William Mason’s satire of 1773, it was ridiculed famously.¹³ Yet within five years a mood-conscious guide-

⁹ Anthony Vidler, “The Architecture of the Lodges: Rituals and Symbols of Freemasonry,” in his *Writing of the Walls: Architectural Theory in the Late Enlightenment* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1987), 83–102. James Curl suggests loose Masonic parallels to William Shenstone’s Leasowes and later 18th-century European gardens in *The Art and Architecture of Freemasonry* (Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook Press, 1993), 169–204; John Harris lists Chambers’s Parisian colleagues, e.g., *Chambers*, 14; and for recent work, see David Hayes, “Carmontelle’s Design for the Jardin de Monceau: A Freemason’s Garden in Late 18th-Century France,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32 (1998–99), 446–62.

¹⁰ *Dissertation*, x, 75–91.

¹¹ *Discourse*, 128, 132.

¹² *Discourse*, 155–56, 157; further on the issues of public access, see 125, 142–43, and the hospitality to “Holy-day folks” in Chambers’s 1773 letter: Harris and Harris, *Chambers*, 192. Although quite the courtier in his professional life, Chambers may not have forgotten his humbler origins as the son of a sutler to the Swedish army, and the “philosophical” showcase does reach toward a function at Kew Park discussed below. For today’s “discovery” parks, consult not only zoos and aquariums but also Hong Kong’s Sung Village (1979) and Middle Kingdom (1990), Singapore’s Tang Dynasty City, and Hawaii’s Polynesian Cultural Center, for example, in Anthony Wylson and Patricia Wylson, *Theme Parks, Leisure Centres, Zoos and Aquaria* (London: Longman’s, 1994).

¹³ Martin Day, “The Influence of Mason’s *Heroic Epistle*,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 14 (1953), 235–52; further to Chambers’s side see Isabel Chase, “William Mason and Sir William Chambers’s *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening*,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 35 (1936), 517–29.

book to the hilly West Midlands estate of Envil had (probably quite casually) compressed Chambers's three desired emotional modes into one sentence transfiguring for its writer one moment, on "a single plank . . . thrown across the stream" where:

turning to the cascade behind you, and then to its troubled water below, you have other feelings [than "admiration of its beauty"]—it is true, nothing was ever better formed to create surprize, and pleasure; but at the same time one cannot help being affected with a sort of terror, standing in the very midst of an incessant roar of water, and seeing it break with such resistless fury—I declare I considered myself as a *victim devoted to* [emphasis mine] its rage, and expected every moment, upon some sudden burst, to be washed, without any kind of ceremony, down the torrent, into the dreary hollow below.¹⁴

That final personal declaration embodies just the associative subjectivism that Chambers's "Chinese" theories desiderated.

Prince Frederick's Presence in the Original Kew Design

Quite other styles of "devotion" are summoned up by the layout that Chambers executed at Kew during these very years. In 1757 the Princess of Wales commissioned him to convert a dull defile of three or four flood-plain meadows receding southward from her palace—all contiguous to her mother-in-law's celebrated improvements at Richmond Park—into a demesne powerfully articulating the royal personhood of her late husband, her son the heir apparent, and herself. The results (as legible up to Augusta's death in 1772) resemble much more closely the coordinated emblematic promptings of Lord Cobham's Stowe a generation earlier than they do Richmond, Brown's work, or Chambers's prose rebuttals to Brown. Although completed in an efficient seven summers once begun, this layout had had a gestation period of some twenty-five years, a fact relevant to our study of theme parks inasmuch as it predicated that *prior to other functions* Kew Park would:

1. Enshrine the memory of Frederick, Prince of Wales, who died in 1751 before effectuating his botanical and architectural plans for this property, which he had been leasing since 1731.¹⁵

¹⁴ Joseph Heely, *Letters on the Beauties of Hagley, Envil, and the Leasowes* (London, 1777), 2:40–41. Christopher Hussey long ago proposed some ways Chambers's views prevailed, unacknowledged, in the Picturesque enterprise of Richard Payne Knight and Uvedale Price as well as (through translation and illustration in Georges Louis, *Le Rouge: Détail des nouveaux jardins à la mode* [Paris, 1776–88]) on the Continent: *The Picturesque* (London: Putnam's, 1927), 160, 169, 206.

¹⁵ Witness (a) the overt landscaping iconography of George Knapton's portrait of Frederick's family executed months after his death: Oliver Millar, *The Tudor, Stuart, and Early Georgian Pictures in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen* (London: Phaidon, 1963), 1:189; (b) Chambers's designs for his Theatre of Augusta and Gallery of Antiques, scaled to accommodate Frederick's purchase of 13 lifesize or larger statues strikingly apt for garden siting: A. H. Scott-Elliot, "The Statues by Francavilla in the Royal Collection," *Burlington Magazine* 98 (1956), 77–84; (c) Chambers's drawings in the Yale Center for British Art, Sir John Soane's Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the Huntington Library, linking British literary figures and others to Frederick's concept of a "Mount Parnassus" never executed. (Chambers had met Frederick and designed for him a

2. Reflect the current grief of his widow, Princess Augusta.¹⁶

3. Enact the sophisticated botanical interests of John Stuart, third earl of Bute, who had been Frederick's friend, became Prince George's surrogate father, and (by the time the lad was crowned George III, and Kew park nearing completion) had served him as prime minister.

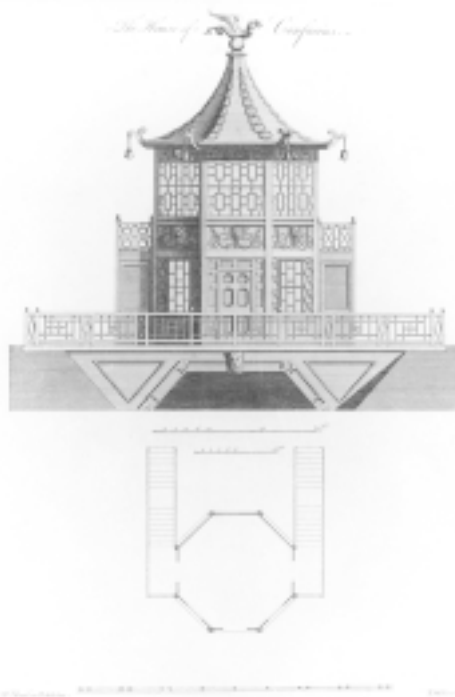
4. Honor Frederick's interest in chinoiserie by leaving prominent the House of Confucius he had seen installed there by 1749, designed either by Joseph Goupy or Chambers. In approaching this vitally political salute to Frederick as one potential "theme" for the original Kew Park, one must bear in mind that all such expressions occupied no more than a third of Kew's then total area, the Temple of Solitude and the floral-botanic material commanding no generous vistas; this third was restricted moreover to the palace's vicinity.

The "Chineseness" of the house of Confucius had discernible focus that we might not find today in a Disney replica. Removed in 1758 to stand on a strikingly "nonoriental" bridge that Chambers designed for it as a belvedere over Kew's artificial lake (Fig. 1), it straddled a stream raised by John Smeaton's pump (on which more presently). Most Chinese structures during this period of English landscaping were routinely sited over water: Stowe's Chinese House, two at Shugborough, the one up the Thames by Twickenham's Radnor House, Cumberland's yacht *Mandarin* at Virginia Water. But it was not conventional to prepare for them a *botanical* "natural habitat" pretending to authenticity—and here significantly Chambers respected English custom. In Canton he had seen and accurately drawn the courtyard of a merchant's home accoutred with its bamboo, prize rocks, and potted plants (Fig. 2), all of which might have been easily reassembled through the botanical resources at Kew. But that "Disneyfied" ambiance was not the goal, so the best engraved image of the environs of this House of Confucius (Fig. 3) shows us a shoreline bare except for English sheep, a Roman Temple of Aeolus on the hilltop; afloat on the lake is an English swanboat—a rare carnivalesque touch—seating ten passengers and outside my detail to the left, three fishermen in a rowboat flying the Union Jack! In view of recent exaggerations of Kew's Chinese trappings (noting also five parks in Russia, Germany, and France that between 1754 and 1787 *did* assemble two or more oriental structures as "villages" and the cultural overload typical of theme parks now), it is worth stressing that none of Kew's three Chinese buildings was visible from the others.¹⁷ What was the point then of this severely isolated House of Confucius? With its privileged vistas from the second-story balconies, it

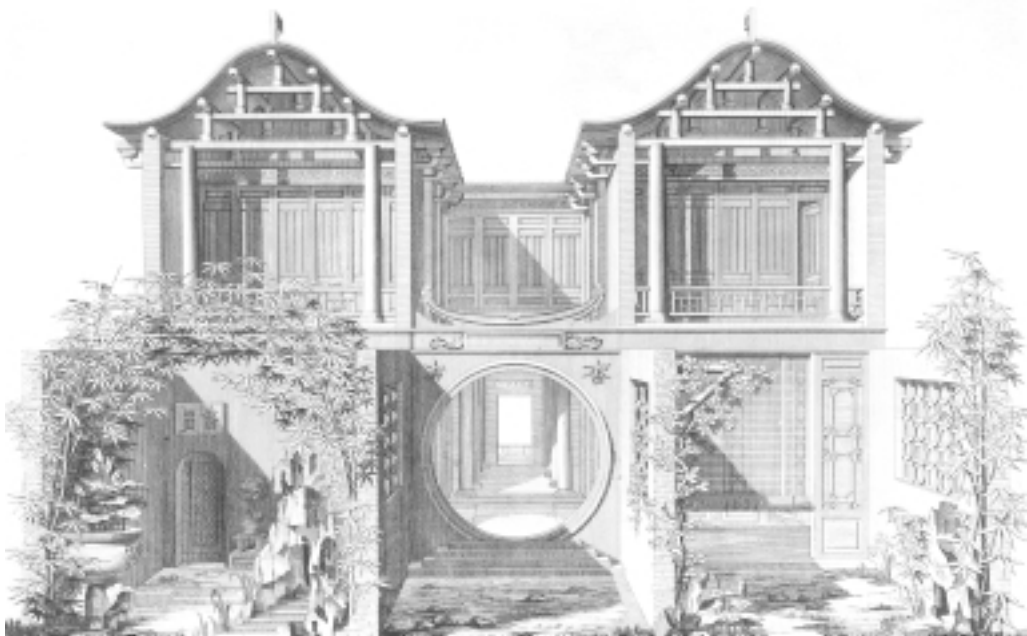
mausoleum, also unexecuted.) The detail and energy of Frederick's plans for Kew are summarized in Kimerly Rorschach, "Frederick, Prince of Wales (1707–51), as Collector and Patron," *The Walpole Society* 55 (1989/90), 27–31, or more fully in her Ph.D. dissertation (Yale University, 1985), "Frederick, Prince of Wales (1707–1751), as a Patron of the Visual Arts: Princely Patriotism and Political Propaganda."

¹⁶ Abreast of the palace, in this narrow, mile-long park, Chambers sited Augusta's Temple of Solitude, and honoring generously Frederick's botanical interests, the Orangery, Great Stove, Flower, Exotic, and Physic gardens, and Temple of the Sun. This concern for living plants seems to have taken the place of any more solid monument to Frederick, except for the resiting of his House of Confucius.

¹⁷ In regard to "villages" like Tsarkoie Selo, Rheinsberg, Potsdam's Sans-Souci, the Désert de Retz, and Steinfort, see P. Conner, *Oriental Architecture in the West* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979).



1. Sir William Chambers or Joseph Goupy, *The House of Confucius*, Engr. Miller, 1763



2. Chambers, *A Canton Merchant's House*, in section, with perspective, Engr. Rooker, in *Designs of Chinese Buildings*, 1757 (courtesy of the Pierpont Morgan Library, PML 53028.2, New York)

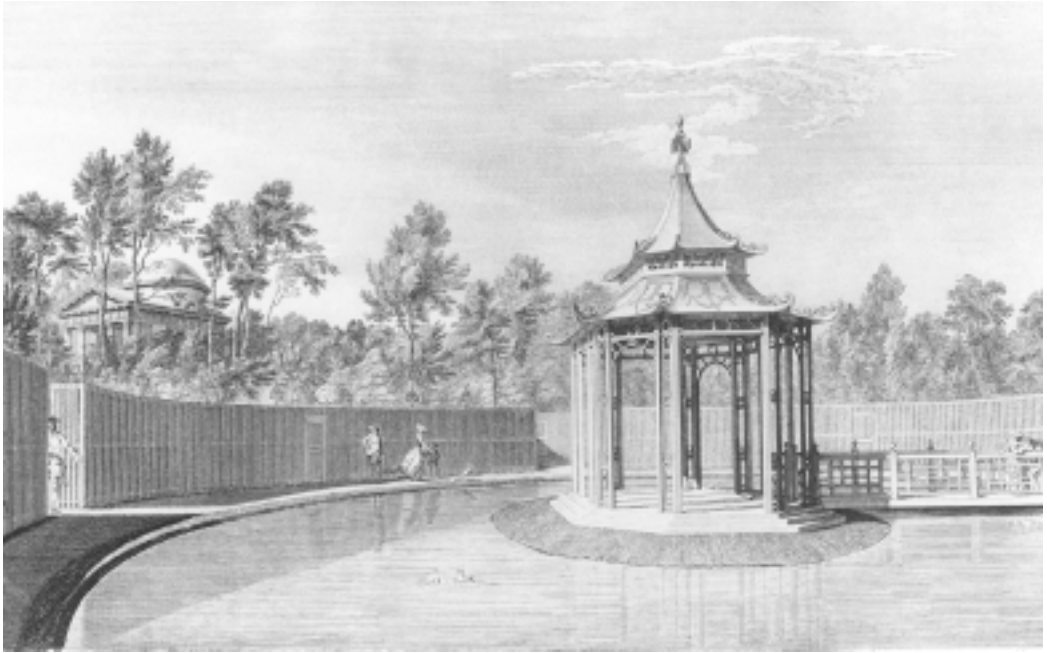


3. Peter Canot, after William Woollett, *A View of the Palace from the South Side of the Lake with the Temples of Bellona and Eolus and the House of Confucius in the Royal Gardens at Kew*, detail of a hand-colored etching, ca. 1760 (courtesy of Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, B1977.14.14583)

embodies the elitist cult of the oriental sage, its interior walls and ceilings ornamented, as Chambers noted, with “little historical subjects relating to Confucius, with several transactions of the Christian Missions in China.” Even those French Jesuits had acknowledged the just and temperate morality they thought Confucianism brought to Chinese public affairs; in an age seeking secularization and universality for its value system, Leibniz, Voltaire, and the Deists had pointed Frederick’s tastes this way.¹⁸ Beyond its beckoning exoticism, this temple stood as a logo for the enlightened vision of the late Prince of Wales.

In order to appreciate the differing symbolic value of Kew’s pagoda in its original context it will be convenient to reckon next with the Pavilion—the Chinese structure Chambers worked on next (Fig. 4). Encircled by a pond of goldfish, then by runways and cages for Tartarean and Chinese pheasants, it is aptly delicate, barely affording shelter from

¹⁸ Hugh Honour, *Chinoiserie: The Vision of Cathay* (New York: Dutton, 1962), 21–26. Chambers is quoted from his *Plans, Elevations, Sections and Perspective Views of the Gardens and Buildings at Kew in Surry* (London, 1763), 4—whence also my Figs. 1, 4, 6–10, and 12.



4. *Thomas Sandby, A View of the Menagerie, and its Pavillion [sic], at Kew, Engr. Grignion, 1763*

rain or sun. Approached from the palace by way of an English flower garden and neighbored by the Temple of Bellona shouldering its Doric way through the foliage to the engraving's left, the exotic is again domesticated to the point where it seems mainly emblematic of the fragility of domestic arts contrasted to the sturdiness of the bellicose. Or, as Disney might set them chanting, "It's a small world after all."

The Original Kew Park as Patriotic "Discovery" Experience

Another theme no visitor could miss builds on several aspects of the vistas opening beyond those pheasant-cages and trees. The main view southward from the palace (or southwestward from Bellona, Confucius, or Aeolus) crossed a flat lawn, then an enisled lake, to survey two sheepsmeadows enclosed by ha-has (Fig. 5). These flocks may have provided more than animation to the eye. Encircled by the only paths toward and away from the pagoda, their pastures had to form one side of each stroller's forward vista; across them one or another of Chambers's tiny temples pocketed in verdure would pop in and out of view as one walked along—a progressive visual ambushade. Yet through the aesthetics of these changing stage-sets in narrative sequence, Chambers and whoever else designed the original Kew, honor a royal myth: Prince George's interest in sheep-breeding is well known.¹⁹ This herd, enriched at Kew

¹⁹ Precise data seems to be lacking on Kew's original design features, but Lord Bute and Robert Greening surely share credit with Chambers for them; see Desmond, *Kew*, 34, 57–8. On p. 48 of his *Dissertation*, Chambers scorned a circuit path "round the extremities of a piece of ground" which—as here—leaves "the

with merinos smuggled from Spain, would contribute after his coronation in 1760 to his affectionate sobriquet of “Farmer George.” The ingenuity driving Britain’s wool industry expressed itself in other ways: the water required for the greenhouses, gardens, livestock and that stream beneath the House of Confucius came from “the Water Engine” designed by England’s leading engineer, John Smeaton (Fig. 6). Its “Archimedes screw,” powered by two horses hitched to the horizontal bar, “raises three hundred hogsheads of Water in an hour,” as both the print and Chambers’s text brag, in his elegant elephant folio *Plans, Elevations, Sections and Perspective Views of the Gardens and Buildings at Kew in Surry*, subsidized by and dedicated to Princess Augusta when the job was finished.²⁰ Amidst the *Plans*’ superbly evocative panoramic prints by Thomas (or Joseph) Sandby, William Marlow, and Joseph Kirby, the dry schematic idiom of this engraving certifies Chambers’s concern to validate Kew as a patriotic *ferme ornée* advertising Britain’s eminence in botanical and general-agricultural technology. The resemblance of this image (and Chambers’s section of his Great Stove, also in this celebratory volume) to the illustrations for Diderot’s *Encyclopédie*, appearing during these same years, suggests hope that some readers will want to adapt these devices to their own needs.²¹ During a visit in 1786, Thomas Jefferson read this message, taking home a diagram of “Archimedes screw.”²² Acclimatizing tropical plants through English winters required Chambers’s large Orangery—and the heating-flues tunneling the walls of his Great Stove in that other illustration. The advanced technology that could turn winter to summer and make water flow upward through Smeaton’s pump radically yet favorably altered nature, as the British wool trade altered global economy. A still potent gust from the Book of Isaiah stirs the last words of Chambers’s homage to his patroness and the botanist-prime minister, Lord Bute, in this praise from his *Plans*:

The gardens of Kew are not very large. Nor is their situation by any means advantageous; as it is low, and commands no prospects. Originally the ground was one continued dead flat: the soil was in general barren, and without either wood or water. With so many disadvantages it was not easy to produce any thing even tolerable in gardening: but princely munificence, guided by a director, equally skilled in cultivating the earth, and in the politer arts, overcame all difficulties. What was once a Desart is now an Eden.²³

middle entirely open.” The remedy effectuated at Kew that he proceeds to recommend is “a good depth of thicket” frequently projecting into the open space to hide, then reveal to the passerby, the sights and seats along this fringe (49–50; neglected by Desmond, *Kew*, 58). Fig. 5 confirms that Pan is only the most deeply “pocketed” of the dozen structures obscured from view from most angles.

²⁰ Chambers, *Plans*, 4.

²¹ The Great Stove is conveniently illustrated in Desmond, *Kew*, 146.

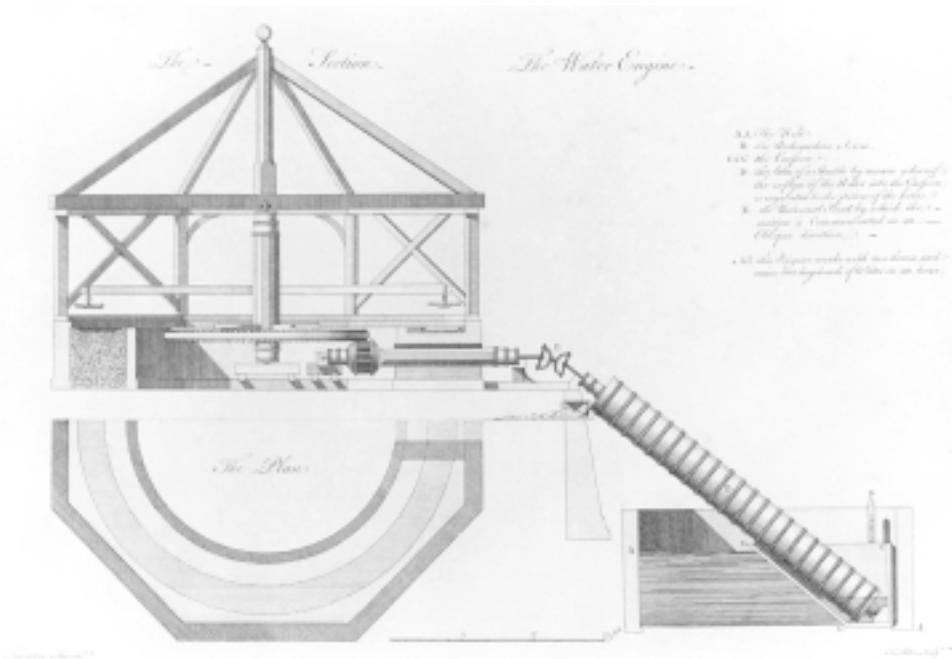
²² *Thomas Jefferson's Garden Book*, ed. Edwin Betts (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1944), 114. This pump worked for some 90 years; see Desmond, *Kew*, 406–7.

²³ *Plans* (London, 1763), 2; see the Bible, Isaiah 51:3: “[H]e will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like a garden of the Lord.” Note, too, how the Francavilla statues (though still crated then) and 4 of Chambers’s temples mythologize an invocation that Nature bless British enterprise: overlooking the lake, temples to Arethusa and Pan would seem to invoke natural forces of water and fertility, while Aeolus’s Temple was mounted high, where its swiveling seat might catch the breezes; the Temple of the Sun fetched its archi-

Key to Figure 5

1. Temple of Solitude
2. Princess Augusta's Palace
3. Orangery
4. Temple of the Sun
5. Great Stove
6. Temple of Bellona
7. Menagerie encircling Chinese Pavilion
8. Temple of Pan
9. Temple of Eolus
10. Smeaton's Pump
11. House of Confucius
12. Artificial lake with island
13. Temple of Arethusa
14. Theatre of Augusta
15. Circuit path
16. Temple of Victory
17. Ha-has surrounding sheepsmeadows
18. Roman Arch
19. Gothic Cathedral
20. Alhambra
21. Wilderness
22. Pagoda
23. Turkish Mosque
24. Kew Foot Lane, or Love Lane
25. Richmond Gardens

5. *Thomas Richardson, A drawn plan of the Royal Gardens of Richmond and Kew with the Hamlet of Kew and part of the Royal Manor of Richmond taken under the direction of Peter Burrell Esq., detail of manuscript on vellum, ca. 1771, keyed by the author (courtesy of the British Library, K.Top.41.16.k.2.Tab.)*



6. John Smeaton, *The Water Engine*, *Engr. Patten*, 1763

Before a nation already revolutionizing the planet's industrial and agricultural technology, this middle or second-phase sector of Kew flourishes itself as an Eden self-consciously man-made, a prototypal Enlightenment artifact.

The accessibility of a park such as Kew to a broad middle-class public needs to be clear as we proceed. From Frederick's montparnassian plans, through the improvements so far effectuated, a royal showcase for the nation was plainly foreseen.²⁴ Engravings, often showing *staffage* with parasols at ease or staff at work in the park, would publicize it in London and Paris. Guidebooks would address a public visiting Kew and other private parks open at set times. During Kew's first decades—those that most concern us—its one-day-a-week openings were announced in London newspapers; entrance was free, although presteam transportation up the Thames or by coach over a toll bridge was not cheap, so the most frequent visitors probably lived nearby. Those prompted by botanical curiosity would likely expect to tip an attendant, but available memoirs of these early years respond keenly to its other attractions.²⁵

tectural inspiration from a Baalbek ruin to oversee Kew's botanical research area. Finally, see Erasmus Darwin's praise of "Imperial Kew" in his *Botanic Garden* (1790) quoted, for example, in *The Oxford Book of Garden Verse*, ed. John Dixon Hunt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 131–32.

²⁴ Regarding Parnassian plans, see note 15 sect. c above.

²⁵ See Desmond, *Kew*, 167–8, 388, 437, and indexed entries under *Gilpin* and *Parnell*.

Imperial Emblems in the Original Kew

What about the architectural signals that Chambers set out farthest—yet still barely visible—from the palace? Not the buildings alone, but their siting beyond the artificial lake and mounds, along the path circling the narrow one hundred ten acres of Kew Park? Can we find the commemorative and celebratory gestures noted so far “personally emblematic” in manners befitting a rising heir to the throne and his widowed mother, conscious of distinctive qualities in Prince Frederick’s legacy, Prince George’s agricultural hobbies, Lord Bute’s well-informed amateur botanizing, Chambers’s neoclassicism and travels—and beyond all that proffering Britain’s leadership in botanical research and general technology? The signals remaining to be interpreted are emblematic of an idea of a nation at once less focused on court or royal family, more proudly “outward-looking,” and even more topical and timely.

The years of Kew’s laying-out, 1757 to 1763, bracket precisely that first truly global conflict, the Seven Years’ War that American schoolbooks call “the French and Indian War” and British, sometimes, the elder William “Pitt’s Great War for Empire.” No available records of Kew’s planning stages explicitly relate landscaping decisions to events or goals in that war, but circumstantial evidence of such encodings should help demonstrate that, like Stowe’s, Kew’s ornamentation was not just “busy,” *nor* its vistas merely “inward-looking.”²⁶

Kew’s most obvious and self-conscious response to current military events was the erection in 1759, atop its artificial mound, of the Temple of Victory at Minden.²⁷ Contemporary drawings support Chambers’s claim in 1763 that this round temple stood higher than Fig. 7 may suggest, yet readily accessible from the circuit path.²⁸ Fig. 5 shows how it offered vistas toward other features: dead north back to Bellona’s Temple, for instance, wherein by 1760 garlands and medallions honored the names of regiments that had seen combat; or dead west across the Thames, squarely to the east front of Syon House.²⁹ Rising about equidistant from the Temple of Bellona and the pagoda, this Temple of Victory served as hub-belvedere of Kew Park, the only vantage point from which visitors could see both the palace front and the entire pagoda until they had climbed to the latter’s third or fourth story.

Two other eye-catchers in the circle around this hub clarify how Kew enlisted and

²⁶ Harris and Harris (as above, note 1), *Chambers*, 35.

²⁷ Bute and George had almost immediate cause to regret this trumpeting of the Westphalian victory during that autumn of Hanoverians led by Augusta’s brother, since a close friend of theirs who they probably hoped thus to honor was condemned by court-martial for cowardice at the head of British troops there. See Piers Mackesy, *The Coward of Minden: The Affair of Lord George Sackville* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1979). Sometimes even a landscape feature can be a bit too topical, but more important victories that year at Quebec, Quiberon Bay, or Pondicherry had not been won by court favorites.

²⁸ The drawings are conveniently assembled in Desmond’s superbly exhaustive *Kew*, 60, 62, 73, 74. Medallions within Victory for later naval heroes such as Nelson attest to the continuing iconic power of these structures (*ibid.*, 361). For Müntz’s Alhambra design (1750) and Chambers’s as built, see *ibid.*, 52 and pl. 4.

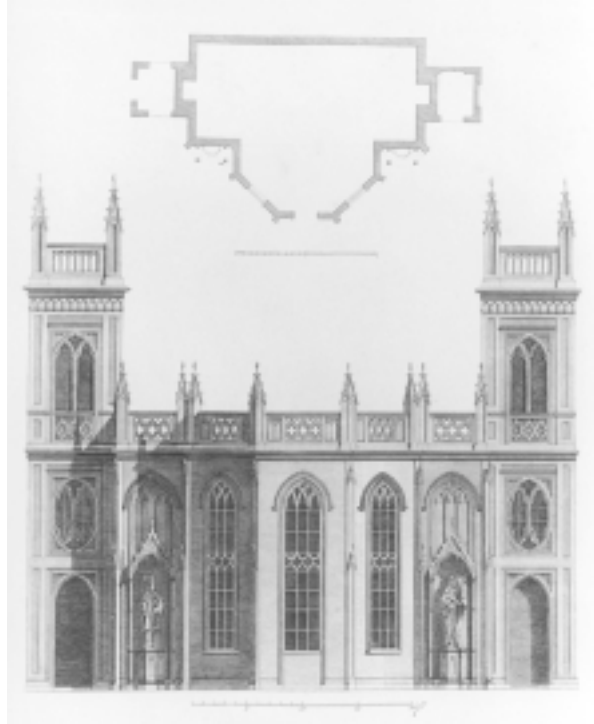
²⁹ Regarding honoring those in combat, see Desmond, *Kew*, 361. On the location, it was not quite the vista drawn by George III (*ibid.*, 68), but another compass accurately oriented: see Mavis Batey et al., *Arcadian Thames: The River Landscape from Hampton to Kew* (London: Barn Elms, 1994), 114–16.



7. *William Marlow, A View of the Lake and Island at Kew, seen from the Lawn, in front of the palace, with the Temple of Victory at far left, the Pagoda and the Temple of Arethusa, Engr. Paul Sandby, 1763*

trained the kind of responses that we associate with visits in theme parks. Beyond the sheepsmeadow to the southwest—probably also in 1759—rose to view the “Gothic Cathedral” designed by Johann Henry Müntz (Fig. 8). If approached from the circuit path behind it, the cathedral’s slimmness and cardboard flimsiness might leave it resembling scenery for the stage, but from the angle and distance of the Victory-Temple belvedere, or from elsewhere across the meadow, it might presume architecturally to embody a style and spirit already a bit exotic yet once pan-European. Directly across from it, at the same range from the belvedere, rose the (pre-)ruined “Roman Arch” (Fig. 9) with its fragments of statuary (and the concealed overpass conducting sheep from the main London road into their pasturage beyond the ha-ha). Once we note how for the palace-bound stroller this arch frames like a gunsight the Temple of Victory built in the same year, we have to wonder what relationship the designer sought to imply among these three structures. The Roman Empire, the Holy Roman Empire, and the power of the papacy no longer dominated England or Europe as they once had. Rising in their place even as this terrain is being laid out, and flourishing Enlightened policies of proselytizing, trade, and government, is another transcontinental hegemony—seated, it might fairly be claimed, in this very spot. “Gothic Cathedral” and “Roman Arch”—especially if we think of triumphal arches like those at Orange on the Rhone or Trier on the Mosel—must prompt both pride in the current imperial success and concern for its permanence.

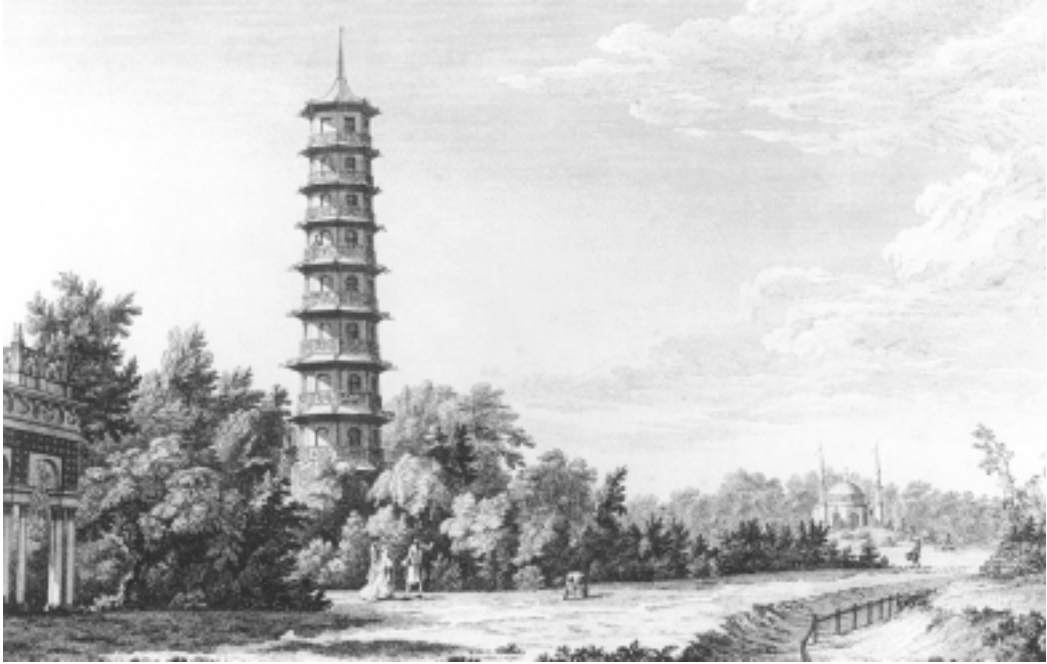
Yet to the southwest from Victory’s hilltop—the highest ground in this original Kew



8. *Johann Henry Müntz, The Gothic Cathedral, Engr. Noval, 1763*



9. *Joseph Kirby, A View of the South Side of the Ruins at Kew, with the Temple of Victory in perspective, Engr. Woollett, 1763*



10. *William Marlow, A View of the Wilderness, with the Alhambra, the Pagoda and the Mosque, Engr. Rooker, 1763*

Park—cathedral and arch framed the view beyond them of three buildings at the end of Augusta’s property furthest from the palace (Fig. 10), foregrounded by the thoroughly English sheepsmeadow within its ha-ha, and backed by newly laid-out, thoroughly English “wilderness.” What their architectural idioms clearly “planted” in this English habitat were three cultures at the ends of the earth from Britain: on the left, a bright red, yellow, and blue Moorish Alhambra from designs that Chambers had had Müntz develop, then “changed to a more fanciful rococo Gothic design laced with eastern motifs”³⁰; in the center, the pagoda straight from Chambers’s imagination, unmatched by anything he might have seen in China; and at far right a Turkish mosque with two minarets, based on designs Fischer von Erlach had published in 1725. Clearly the mosque and Alhambra signaled the Mediterranean trading arena’s eastern and western ends (Fig. 11), the latter under Gibraltar’s thumb in British control since 1704. At fifty meters this pagoda’s height rivaled the Porcelain Tower of Nanking, known in English translation and engraving since 1669. But it had a tall set of tasks to perform. Until about 1830, as a publicly accessible mother of all mounts (or Ferris wheels), on a clear day its tenth story surveyed, over the varicolored wingspread of those eighty dragons (Fig. 12), a radius of up to forty miles across the Thames plain, Chambers claimed. As a marker visible from the palace, it signaled back the ultimate verge of the estate. As emblem of a complex ancient civilization—the remotest from England’s yet accessible to its trade for tea, silk, and porcelain—the pagoda promised mercantile opportu-

³⁰ Harris, *Chambers*, 37.



11. Rudolph Ackermann, *The Alhambra and Pagoda* (lithograph, 1813)

nity and, among Western powers, Britain's dominance in that far arena for most of the next two centuries. Hence the "inward" vistas across those meadows sighted emblems to prompt pride in current enterprise both peaceful and military; the actual "outward" vistas that you enjoyed once you had reached any balcony of the pagoda solidly validated the spreading imperial power signaled in this exotic quintet of buildings beyond the Temple of Victory. In a theme never set to Disney music, "It's a big and variegated world after all; may the sun never set upon our grip on it."

Chambers's published *Plans* for Kew discuss and illustrate one other small building whose circumstances support this reading of an imperial theme for its nethermost third. A Temple of Peace, it was most carefully designed (at least four of his drawings, differing from the published engraving, survive) but was quite certainly never executed. The peace treaty negotiated under Bute's ministry between 1762 and 1763 was too controversial a political achievement, perhaps, to warrant celebration at Kew: Pitt's partisans thought that it surrendered hard-won gains of the war. Besides, at Stowe the opposition to Bute and the court had already used landscape-language to claim credit for the way the war was ending. To honor Pitt's maintenance of the victorious alliance, his brother-in-law Earl Temple (lord privy seal in the war-time cabinet) had in 1762 renamed Stowe's Grecian Temple the "Temple of Concord and Victory." On its interior walls, sixteen plaster medallions modeled on commemorative medals of the war years heralded Pitt's victories.³¹ Among other gestures to claim the war's glories for

the Stowe faction, Peter Scheemakers's sculpture of Britannia receiving the tribute of the world was removed from Stowe's Palladian bridge to grace Concord's pediment. With Stowe's architectural co-option of the credit for everything worth celebrating, Kew's overhasty preening for Minden, and the fall of Bute's ministry—precipitated by the unpopularity of the Peace of Paris—just at temple-building time during that spring of 1763, it may well have seemed by that autumn that the proprietors of Kew need not invite further embarrassment with the completion of this Temple of Peace. In the teeth of Chambers's heralding it that year as “now erecting,” this temple's very absence attests to the pressures of *pro*-court propaganda in the actual layout of Kew's southern extreme.³²

No surviving writings of Augusta, Bute, or Chambers appear to offer a rationale for Kew's layout that would support this formulation of three distinct themes it enunciates: commemorative of Frederick's independent wit, sanguine in boosting British engineering, herding, and botanical enterprise, jubilantly prophetic regarding the new imperial dimensions of life. Yet since that third theme is rarer for a landscaped park to essay, the well-established imperial landscape model that Chambers had in mind all this while deserves notice. During his four-year residence in Rome and friendship with Giovanni Battista Piranesi, he must have visited the ruins of the emperor Hadrian's villa in Tivoli. Hence, two years after his return and establishment in London under royal patronage, in his first published work, *Designs of Chinese Buildings*, appears this gentle pretext for placing “some” exemplars of Chinese architecture “in extensive parks and gardens, where a great variety of scenes are required”:

Variety is always delightful; and novelty, attended with nothing inconsistent or disagreeable, sometimes takes place of beauty. History informs us that Hadrian, who was himself an architect, at a time when the Grecian architecture was in the highest esteem among the Romans, erected at his Villa, at Tivoli, certain buildings after the manner of the Egyptians and of other nations.³³

One such complex was Hadrian's pool and dining pavilion, embellished with statues of crocodile and sphinx, which—named *Canopus* after a body of water in Egypt—has from Chambers's time until recently been taken for emblem of an Orient dominated by Roman power. Whether “a great variety of scenes” landscaped from 1757 to 1763 might likewise betoken a *later* empire's dominance is left to readers of the *Designs* that Chambers dedicated

³¹ “The Gardens of the British Isles in the Diary of the Austrian Count Karl von Zinzendorf in the Year 1768,” ed. Géza Hajós, *Journal of Garden History* 9 (1989), 46–47. Of Kew, Zinzendorf reported, “Le jardin n'a aucune point de vue extérieur” (ibid., 42), since he had not climbed the pagoda.

³² Later guidebooks merely echo Chambers's description of Kew's Temple of Peace, but its location is conspicuously unnoted on even the finest of later plans of Kew, such as the royally commissioned work that is Fig. 5. For evidence of public perception of Kew's landscape as politically wired, see the lengths that an ultra-Whig goes, observing its completion, to deplore this court's “pedantry” and tastelessness: “Horace Walpole's Journals of Visits to Country Seats, &c.,” *The Walpole Society* 12 (1928), 23–24, 38–39.

³³ Chambers, *Designs*, preface, ii. For arguments clearing the “Scenic Triclinium and Canal” of Egyptian associations, see William MacDonald and John Pinto, *Hadrian's Villa and Its Legacy* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995), 6–7, 108–11, 115–16.



12. *Chambers, detail of the Elevation of The Great Pagoda as first Intended, Engr. Miller, 1763*

to Prince George in May of the year he undertook his first work at Kew—including the resiting of the House of Confucius over moving water.

Let us glance at an adjacent cultural development that likewise reached a public excited about the boldness during these years of British arms in exotic places. The combination projected in this other medium—of stunning geographical features unmatched at home, dominated by current British warriors of heroic dimension, formatted for domestic display—might today have made the fortune of a theme park manager. On Guy Fawkes Day of 1760, within a year of the news of General James Wolfe’s victory and death at Quebec, and two months after Montreal capitulated to Lord Amherst, London saw the publication of the first six of some eighteen prints of the Canadian and Caribbean marine and land sites of imperial conquest. These are the work of England’s premier topographical engravers, after drawings on-the-spot by various military officers. A fair sample is Fig. 13 (its engraver had worked on some Kew vistas among others), after a drawing by General Wolfe’s aide-de-camp. It depicts an unsuccessful amphibious landing off the St. Lawrence River seven miles downstream from the capital city of Quebec (shrouded by its cannons’ smoke, beyond the right-hand gunboat), six weeks before the luckier predawn effort upstream from the city. Like others among these eighteen engravings, this one couples the numerically keyed details of the recent military operation—cueing us that “you are *there!*”—with images of a promising harbor and a sensational geographical “attraction”: the cataract almost three hundred feet high.³⁴ This combination lets one take home experience topical and timeless, exotic and



13. *William Elliott, after Capt. Hervey Smyth, A View of the Fall of Montmorenci, and the Attack Made by General Wolfe on the French Intrenchments . . . July 31, 1759; engraving from Scenographica Americana (London, 1768), in the Spencer Collection, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, New York Public Library (photo by Robert Rubic)*

familiar, comparable to what I have been suggesting the original Kew Park gave its visitors. English landscaping had honored conquest through sculptured architectural monuments to individual heroes such as the duke of Marlborough or Wolfe, or victories such as Culloden, and was long thought to have set plantings at Blenheim to suggest battle-lines.³⁵ But beyond honoring the heroes, surely the timely appearance of such engravings, dedicated to familiarizations on a continental scale, addresses a public readiness to read the global expansion of imperial power in the precise spatial organization of Kew Park outlined here.³⁶

Once Kew's features are heard in such dialogue with one another as I have suggested,

³⁴ Thus a caption would guide purchasers to recognize the ship firing at left as the *Centurion*, which had sailed around the globe under Admiral Anson, by this drawing's date first lord of the admiralty. Cf. H.H. Miles, *The History of Canada under the French Regime* (Montreal: Dawson, 1881), 381. The 18 engravings and others I discuss are illustrated in Sigmund Samuel, *The Seven Years War in Canada* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1934).

³⁵ See David Coffin, *The English Garden: Meditation and Memorial* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 175, 184–85, 209–9, 219.

³⁶ The 18 topographical views of Havana, Guadaloupe, and Roseau harbor, together with those of formerly French Canada, were republished with another 10 of Boston Harbor, the Passaic Falls of New Jersey, Tappan Zee on the Hudson, and other peaceful vistas in the 13 colonies, in *Scenographica Americana* (London: Thomas Jefferys, 1768).

what Chambers's *Dissertation* proceeded in 1772 to claim for the stimulus of *ruins*, for instance, assumes a timbre that can help distinguish one kind of theme park responsiveness from another. Ruins belong to that category of landscape Chambers called "autumnal":

[Among] the buildings with which these scenes are decorated, are generally such as indicate decay, being intended as mementos to the passenger. Some are . . . half buried triumphal arches and mausoleums, with mutilated inscriptions, that once commemorated the heroes of ancient times; [now they] serve to indicate the debility, the disappointments, and the dissolution of humanity; which by co-operating with the dreary aspect of autumnal nature . . . fill the mind with melancholy, and incline it to serious reflections.³⁷

Chambers might here be quite accurately describing the effect of his Roman arch at Kew upon a visitor approaching it for the first time and from the north. But once such a "passenger" has noted the practicality of its overpass for Kew's flocks, and how it twists the path to focus a northward gaze through its arch to the gleaming Temple of Victory beyond, crowning its hilltop, to walk on in a generalized "melancholy" seems irrelevant self-indulgence.

Over two and a quarter centuries ago, this architect and those he worked with appear to have understood the breadth of susceptibilities that might be addressed by a public park designed to embody a medley of themes. A visitor may be content with a largely visceral stock response to generic stimuli contrived to entertain. But the same person may also welcome emblematic signals awakening and informing responses more specifically memorable, to matters more rooted in the visitor's "real world."

In both his "Chinese" theory and his work at Kew, Chambers wanted to evoke, in a general public, interactive responses more specific than he thought Brown's style could touch. The salient distinctions we have noted under "theory" and "Kew" lie in their publics' relative degrees of self-referral and initiative. The ideal visitor in what Chambers calls a "Chinese" landscape is alert to every sense but that "common" one which most abidingly harnesses him to work, home, prosaic decisions. An essentially passive subject, he rejoices in sensations of strenuous if meaningless incongruity. By contrast a visitor to any of the three zones of the original Kew would encounter architectural, botanical, and topographical promptings to reconcile his private experience with cues clearly from beyond it: a prince to be mourned, practical national energies to challenge his own, a spatial transcription of empire to infuse his awe with pride.

³⁷ Chambers, *Dissertation*, 34–35.