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THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF TASTE: THE STATE AND THE PORCELAIN INDUSTRY IN FRANCE, 1682–1815

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Abstract

This dissertation uses the French porcelain industry from the late seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries as a case study on the importance of consumer demand in the transition from commercial to industrial capitalism. Based on research in over a dozen archives and museums across France and drawing equally on institutional economics and material culture studies, it explains how the French learned to become consumers and how France became the global leader in luxury goods by examining the variety of ways merchants, manufacturers, and officials worked to create and communicate information about the material and aesthetic qualities of new goods to consumers. In doing so, it highlights the shift in institutional focus from merchants and retailers selling and altering imported porcelain at the beginning of this period to massive manufactories producing and marketing domestic porcelain at the end of this period. Throughout, it emphasizes the crucial role of the state in establishing a reputation for the quality and tastefulness of French porcelain in both domestic and international marketplaces as a tool of economic development and dynastic legitimation. Ultimately, this dissertation reveals how these actions paved the way for the emergence of a consumer society that could sustain industrialization and that led to a distinctive French path toward economic growth rooted in the consumer valuation of luxury goods.

This dissertation makes five primary contributions to our understanding of the history of capitalism in early modern Europe. First, it argues for the importance of demand in the early modern economy by showing the intense focus that economic and political actors in this period gave to the problems of consumers and uses material culture studies to unravel what symbolic and physical properties mattered to

consumers. Second, this dissertation draws on Old and New Institutional Economics to argue that information about the physical and symbolic qualities of porcelain was difficult to transmit and obtain and that economic actors and policymakers alike considered this a serious impediment to economic growth. Third, this dissertation underscores the crucial role of the state in every stage of the industrialization process: indemnifying and supporting technological development; building an international reputation for taste and quality; and reassuring consumers about the provenance and worth of their purchases. Fourth, this dissertation looks at account books and advertising documents from merchants and retailers and internal records and correspondence from both publicly and privately owned porcelain manufactures to demonstrate changing patterns of business organization, accounting practices, and labor management during this period, particularly noting the vertical integration of porcelain firms in the eighteenth century. Finally, this dissertation combines these elements to depict the shifting center of gravity in institutions involving consumer information from retailers and merchants in the seventeenth century to large industrial manufacturers in the nineteenth century. By doing so, this dissertation reveals the centrality of the qualities of goods, their social uses and meanings, and practices of consumption in the transition from commercial to industrial capitalism.

Abbreviations and Archival Sources

Archives de Paris (AdP)

Series D—Bankruptcy records and account books, 18th and 19th centuries

Archives de la Manufacture Nationale de Sèvres (AMNS)

Series A—Administration and privileges, 18th century

Series B—Internal administration, 18th century

Series C—Technique, 18th century

Series H—Correspondence, 18th century

Series I—Diverse documents, 18th century

Series L—Ministerial decisions and regulations, 19th century

Series M—Internal administration, 19th century

Series U—Expositions, 19th century

Series Y—Laboratory records, 18th and 19th centuries

Archives Nationales (AN)

Series F^{12}—Industry and privileges, 17th and 18th centuries

Series MC/ET—Paris notarial records, 18th century

Series O^1 2059–2062—Royal administration concerning porcelain, 18th century

Series O^2 913–929—Imperial administration concerning porcelain, 19th century

Archives Départementales du Bas-Rhin (ADBR)

Archives Départementales de Calvados (ADC)

Archives Départementales de la Haute Vienne (ADHV)

Series C 2989–3011—Fonds Alluaud, 18th and 19th centuries

Series L 1200–1248—Fonds Alluaud, 18th and 19th centuries

Archives Départementales de la Nièvre (ADNi)

Archives Départementales du Nord (ADNo)

Archives Départementales de la Seine Maritime (ADSM)

Archives Municipales de Lille (AMLille)

Archives Municipales de Limoges (AMLimoges)

Archives Municipales de Strasbourg (AMS)

Introduction:

The Institutional Foundations of Consumer Society

In 1784, Parisian porcelain manufacturers filed a letter with the government asking permission to produce pieces of whatever size, in whatever color, and with whatever degree of ornamentation they wished. Only a century had passed since in 1682 a potter in Rouen had been granted the first French privilege to produce a mixture of ground glass and white soil that, when heated to precisely the right temperature, passably resembled the exotic and expensive Chinese porcelain just beginning to make its appearance on French tables.[1] Now, with twelve manufactures operating within Paris, nearly a dozen more in its suburbs, and at least twelve more scattered around the French countryside, these petitioners moved to declare that the French porcelain industry had arrived.[2] Their letter acknowledged the state as the indispensable origin of the French porcelain industry, as having founded a Royal Porcelain Manufacture whose investments in new technologies and creation of a French decorative style had spilled over into the private sector until this moment, when the "entrepreneurs of these establishments" had at last gained "enough intelligence and taste" to succeed against competitors around the world.[3] Twenty years earlier, in a meeting between Louis XV and his Controller General of Finances, the king outlined his hope for precisely this outcome, his plan to sponsor a state-run porcelain manufacture but only so that private

[1] Archives Nationales (hereafter AN) G/7/491/349 Letter le Blanc to [Colbert] (5 April 1682).

[2] AN F^{12} 1493^{1} "Extrait de registre du Conseil d'État" ([Summer] 1784).

[3] AN F^{12} 1494^{1} "Mémoire sur les manufactures de porcelaines," [1784]. [entrepreneurs des établissements] [assez d'intelligence et de goût]

manufactures "could perfect themselves."[4] And it appeared, at long last, like that moment had come. But in their petition, the porcelain manufacturers of Paris did not only claim that they had completed their apprenticeship in how to produce porcelain. They knew their success was not just a matter of supply. "The taste of the consumer," they argued, "has grown in proportion to the ease it has found to satisfy it." It was these consumers' own apprenticeship in how to consume porcelain, the manufacturers concluded, that had made Paris the capital of the empire of fashion, the "city where good taste by its nature resides."[5] It was the creation of a consumer market that had made the success of the porcelain industry possible.

The eighteenth century was a time of momentous changes in France. In the realm of the economy, historians have depicted this as a period of burgeoning global trade, the onset of industrialization, and the beginning of a consumer society.[6] But they have not adequately explained the relationship between these three intertwined aspects of early modern economic growth. In what could be described as a *doux commerce* version of the early modern economy, each of these facets naturally and ineluctably facilitated the others: growing colonial trade provided new goods that drew consumers into the market; as consumers demanded more, new industries sprung up to meet diversifying desires; and as the country grew wealthier it sent more ships in search of commerce

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[4] Archives de la Manufacture Nationale de Sèvres (hereafter AMNS) B3 Letter Bertin to Lauragais (6 November 1764).

[5] AN F[12] 1494[1] "Mémoire sur les manufactures de porcelaines," [1784]. [le goût du consommateur s'est accru en proportion de la facilité qu'il a trouvé à le satisfaire] [Paris ville dans laquelle réside essentiellement le bon goût]

[6] On these three categories, see: Guillaume Daudin, *Commerce et prospérité : la France au XVIIIe siècle*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2011); Denis Woronoff, *Histoire de l'industrie en France, du XVIe siècle à nos jours* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1998) 13–181; Daniel Roche, *A History of Everyday Things: The Birth of Consumption in France, 1600–1800*, trans. Brian Pearce (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

around the world. There is an assumption baked into this cycle, however, that when presented with new global and industrial goods consumers knew how to buy them, knew what they meant, and knew that they wanted them.

This dissertation uses the French porcelain industry in the eighteenth century to show that globalizing trade and industrializing production presented challenges for consumers that businesspeople and bureaucrats had to work together to resolve. As this dissertation shows, the ability of consumers to confidently navigate the market, to unconsciously read the meanings of various goods, and to want to consume them in ever growing quantities was not the organic outcome of economic growth but a necessary precondition to it. Even as globalization and industrialization presented opportunities for individual profits and national wealth, the expanded scope and scale of exchange made it more difficult for consumers to know how, what, or why to buy the new goods they encountered. Creating these skills, knowledges, and desires would require a century-long effort in France to overcome the obstacles caused by the expanding market by focusing on the perplexity of consumption. This dissertation shows how merchants, manufacturers, and bureaucrats worked together to teach the French how to become consumers. Indeed, the very notion that consumers could act autonomously in the market was the consequence of decades of deliberate effort to address the fact that as the scope and scale of exchange increased in the early modern period they could not. Through this process, however, the producers, retailers, and regulators of porcelain in eighteenth-century France laid the foundations not only of a modern luxury economy, but of a consumer society that could sustain continuous economic growth.

Consumer Demand, Material Culture, and Institutional Economics in the History of Industrialization

There used to be a unifying orthodoxy in economic history: The Industrial Revolution was an epoch-making transformation; it began in the eighteenth century; it was driven by mechanizing technologies; it was led by unencumbered capitalists; and it was distinctively British.[7] Emphatically, this orthodoxy discounted any possibility of consumer demand having helped industrialization take root.[8] Over the last half century, however, each pillar of this orthodoxy has come under criticism by revisionist historians, and the old edifice has subsequently collapsed. Revised statistical analyses have shown that rates of industrial growth were less impressive and came much later in the nineteenth century than was once thought.[9] In the absence of widespread mechanization, the eighteenth century has become variously described an "advanced organic economy," the "age of manufactures," or a period of "Smithian industrialization," marked by evolving patterns and scales of manufacturing rather

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[7] For the canonical version of this argument, see: David S Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus: Technological Change and Industrial Development in Western Europe from 1750 to the Present* (Cambridge University Press, 1972) 1–2. The power of this orthodox view was so strong that even heterodox histories of industrialization, from Karl Marx to Karl Polanyi, accepted these basic precepts. See, Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin, 1990) 90, 497; Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957) 40.

[8] Joel Mokyr, "Demand vs Supply in the Industrial Revolution," *Journal of Economic History* 37, no. 4 (December 1977) 981–1008.

[9]; N Crafts and CK Harley, "Output Growth and the British Industrial Revolution: a Restatement of the Crafts– Harley View', *Economic History Review*, XLV (1992), pp. 703–30; Nicholas Crafts, "Understanding Productivity Growth in the Industrial Revolution," *Economic History Review* 74, no. 2 (May 2021) 309–38. This is not yet, however, a consensus view, and rates of relative productivity growth, rates of industrialization, and levels of gross domestic product continue to be debated.

than a revolution of steam power and factories.[10] Historians have shown that Britain was just part of a broader pattern of industrialization taking place across Western Europe.[11] Furthermore, European industrialization has been revealed to be not an isolated event but necessarily connected to global patterns of trade.[12] And the role of the heroic entrepreneur has been downplayed in favor of studies recognizing the crucial aid of the state in fostering economic growth.[13] Perhaps the biggest shift in our understanding of early modern industrialization, however, has been a newfound emphasis on the consumers whose demand for new goods created new industries and permitted continuous growth. Yet exactly how consumer demand came about remains to be fully explained.

In the 1980s, a series of innovative studies making use of probate inventories opened a new way of studying early modern industrialization. Looking at notarial

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[10] EA Wrigley, *Continuity, Chance, & Change: The Character of the Industrial Revolution in England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 34–67; Maxine Berg, *The Age of Manufactures, 1700–1820: Industry, Innovation and Work in Britain*, 2nd ed (New York: Routledge, 1994); Patrick Verley, *L'échelle du monde : Essai sur l'industrialisation de l'Occident* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997) 81–109.

[11] For studies comparing England and France, see: Patrick O'Brien and Caglar Keyder, *Economic Growth in Britain and France, 1780–1914: Two Paths to the Twentieth Century* (Boston: George Allen & Unwin, 1978) 146–200; NFR Crafts, "Industrial Revolution in England and France: Some Thoughts on the Question, "Why Was England First?" *Economic History Review* 30, no. 3 (August 1977) 429–41; François Crouzet, "The Historiography of French Economic Growth in the Nineteenth Century," *Economic History Review* 56, no. 2 (2003) 215–42.

[12] The most influential argument here is: Kenneth Pommeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000) 111–297.

[13] Lars Magnusson, *Nation, State, and the Industrial Revolution: The Visible Hand* (New York: Routledge, 2009); William J Ashworth, *The Industrial Revolution: The State, Knowledge, and Global Trade* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017) 105–44. Important recent works linking military power to European economic growth include: Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2014) 29–82; Ronald Findlay and Kevin H O'Rourke, *Power and Plenty: Trade, War, and the World Economy in the Second Millennium* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007) 227–62, 330–64.

records documenting material possessions of the recently deceased, historians discovered that during the eighteenth century western Europeans began consuming more manufactured goods.[14] Across the Atlantic World, people's possessions suddenly became more varied, more extensive, less durable, and more attuned to the flows of fashion. Manufactured consumer goods—dresses and sheets, dishes and spices, trinkets and lighting from around the world—were observed filtering into the daily lives of every stratum in society. Rather than just studying the history of industrialization by asking what and how much was produced, these studies approached the question by asking what and how much was consumed.

The initial result of these studies was an enthusiastic declaration that the eighteenth century had seen a "consumer revolution."[15] In response, historians began

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[14] Ad van der Woude and Anton Schuurman, eds. *Probate Inventories: A New Source for the Historical Study of Wealth, Material Culture, and Agricultural Development* (Utrecht: H&S Publishers, 1980); Daniel Roche, *The People of Paris: An Essay in Popular Culture in the 18th Century*, trans. Marie Evans with Gwynne Lewis (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behavior and Material Culture in Britain, 1660–1760* (New York: Routledge, 1987); Joël Cornette, "La révolution des objets. Le Paris des inventaires après décès (XVIIe–XVIIIe siècles)," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 36, no. 3 (July–September 1989); Carole Shammas, *The Pre-Industrial Consumer in England and America* (New York: Clarendon, 1990); Annik Pardailhé-Galabrun, *The Birth of Intimacy: Privacy and Domestic Life in Early Modern Paris*, trans. Jocelyn Phelps (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991); Daniel Roche, *A History of Everyday Things: The Birth of Consumption in France, 1600–1800*, trans. Brian Pearce (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000). See also: Cissie Fairchilds, "Consumption in Early Modern Europe: A Review Essay," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35, no. 4 (October 1993) 850–8.

[15] Neil McKendrick, "The Consumer Revolution of Eighteenth-Century England," in *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England*, eds. Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and JH Plumb (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982) 9–33. For a recent overview of scholarship surrounding this argument, see: Michael Kwass, *The Consumer Revolution, 1650–1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022) 16–45. This was not the first time such an argument was advanced, however. In the 1930s Elizabeth Gilboy had argued "that the factory could not become typical until demand had been extended and had become sufficiently flexible throughout the entire population to consume the products of large-scale industry. In other words, the Industrial Revolution presupposes a concomitant development and

studying the emergence of a consumer society in early modern Europe, adopting a range of methods to better understand what things people were consuming, where they came from, and what they meant.[16] Yet the increase in consumption of manufactured goods, these studies revealed, took place despite stagnant real wages for the working population. People in the eighteenth century did not have more money to spend, it seemed, but they spent what money they had on more things.

Attempting to resolve this paradox, economic historian Jan de Vries advanced the concept of an "industrious revolution"—a term he borrowed from historian Akira Hayami. According to this theory, working families in the eighteenth century increasingly chose to engage in market-oriented work to purchase market goods.[17] De Vries's argument had the virtue of connecting the observed growth in consumption with growing industrial production. Subsequent investigations have largely failed, however, to find empirical evidence for de Vries's core assumption that workers in this

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extension of consumption." It was, in fact, this argument in its essay form that Mokyr feared, nearly a half century later, was corrupting historians' focus on the supply-side origins of industrialization. Gilboy would later reduce her emphasis on from the desire to consume to the real wages that made demand effective. Elizabeth Waterman Gilboy, "Demand as a Factor in the Industrial Revolution," in *Facts and Factors in Economic History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932) 620–39; *ibid., Wages in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934) 228–44.

[16] Perhaps the most influential collection of work on this topic is: John Brewer and Roy Porter, eds. *Consumption and the World of Goods* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

[17] Jan de Vries, "Between Purchasing Power and the World of Goods: Understanding the Household Economy in Early Modern Europe," in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, eds. John Brewer and Roy Porter (New York: Routledge, 1993) 85–132; *idem.*, "The Industrial Revolution and the Industrious Revolution," *Journal of Economic History* 54, no. 2 (June 1994) 249–70; *The Industrious Revolution: Consumer Behavior and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008). Another explanation for increased productivity could be employer coercion. See: Gregory Clark, "Factory Discipline," *Journal of Economic History* 54, no. 1 (March 1994) 128–63.

period chose to work more.[18] More importantly for the present study, as Jean-Yves Grenier notes, de Vries's theory simply takes for granted that eighteenth-century consumers wanted to consume more manufactured goods without explaining what they wanted to consume or why.[19] Indeed, for de Vries, the social shifts that must take place for demand to increase and allow for expanded production could only come from changing desires among consumers. Manufacturers, merchants, and bureaucrats alike, he argues, were too bound by archaic notions of static and fixed demand to bother attempting to change it.[20]

Drawing from the same historiographical well, Maxine Berg has presented a compatible yet distinct argument on the relationship between increasing consumption and increasing production in this period. Whereas de Vries had argued that demand had led consumers to work more, Berg asserted that demand had led producers to produce more and more varied goods. Connecting the story of British industrialization to global networks of trade, she answered the question of what people wanted to consume by highlighting the fashion for the imported goods pouring into European markets from around the world. As these goods arrived in Europe, she concluded, consumers' insatiable demand for the new and the exotic prompted domestic manufacturers to develop new techniques and technologies to compete with these

[18] Gérard Béaur, "Introduction : La révolution industrieuse introuvable," *Revue d'histoire moderne & contemporaine* 64, no. 4 (October–December 2017) 7–24. And it leaves entirely unexplored whether workers may have been forced to work more by conditions or coercion.

[19] Jean-Yves Grenier, "Travailler plus pour consommer plus : Désir de consommer et essor du capitalisme, du XVIIe siècle à nos jours," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 65, no. 3 (May–June 2010) 787–98.

[20] Jan de Vries, *Economy of Europe in an Age of Crisis, 1600–1750* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976) 176–82.

imports.[21] Berg's work has prompted a renewed emphasis on the international context of British industrialization, highlighted the existence of product as well as process innovation, and elevated the consumer to a prominent role in the origins of industrial growth.[22] Yet while this approach has drawn strength from its attention to what people were consuming, it has largely taken for granted that people were consuming these things without asking why these people were choosing to do so.

The traditional history of consumption in this period emphasized the centrality of royal and aristocratic authority in shaping consumption patterns in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[23] Since Norbert Elias's pathbreaking work on court society, historians have seen absolutism as a heliocentric monarchy: politics, society, economy, and culture revolved around the body of the king. For Elias, the character of court society was that it created a social structure within which people sought status in abiding by evolving rules of interaction and presentation. The consumption and display of material objects were central to this structure because it was in the minutiae of its

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[21] Maxine Berg, "From Imitation to Invention: Creating Commodities in Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Economic History Review* 55, no. 1 (2002) 1–30; *idem., Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); *idem.*, "Consumption in Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century Britain," in *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain,* vol. 1 *Industrialisation, 1700–1860*, eds. Roderick Floud and Paul Johnson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008) 357–87.

[22] Maxine Berg, "Product Innovation in Core Consumer Industries in Eighteenth-Century Britain," in *Technological Revolutions in Europe: Historical Perspectives,* eds. Maxine Berg and Kristine Bruland (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 1998) 138–57; *Idem*., "The British Product Revolution of the Eighteenth Century," in *Reconceptualizing the Industrial Revolution*, eds. Jeff Horn, Leonard N Rosenband, and Merritt Roe Smith (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010) 47–64. John Styles has made particularly important contributions to the idea of product innovation as a key feature of early industrialization John Styles, "Product Innovation in Early Modern London," *Past & Present* 168 (August 2000) 124–69.

[23] Sheryl Kroen, "A Political History of the Consumer," *Historical Journal* 47, no. 3 (September 2004) 712–7.

symbolic practices that the social system recreated itself and individuals asserted their place in it. And the gravity that held the entire system together and gave it its characteristic shape was the authority of the monarch, his glory and his power, upon which the stability and strength of the nation depended. Chaos would be the consequence if the sun at the center of society waned.[24] Subsequent historians have meticulously recreated the ceremonies and spectacles of early modern court life and revealed the inner workings of court society. They have painstakingly described the precise patterns of display and mechanisms of authority in order to reveal the meanings of material goods and daily ceremonies in court like Versailles as they shaped the meaning and practice of authority from the king downward.[25]

Nonetheless, studies of elite consumer culture often leave unexplained the mechanisms through which these meanings were communicated, leaving emulation and downward transmission of style to act as natural forces. More importantly, these studies frequently treat the logic of courtly style as distinct from and even antagonistic to the logic of early capitalism. As William Beik reminds us, however, absolutist political power was never absolute. It depended on the pragmatic articulation of traditional systems and collaboration with other sources of authority to pursue its

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[24] Norbert Elias, *The Court Society*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2014).

[25] See, for example: Jean-Marie Apostolidès, *Le roi-machine : Spectacle et politique au temps de Louis XIV* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1981); Thomas E Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985); Michèle Fogel, *Les cérémonies de l'information dans la France du XVIe au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 1989); Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992); Jeroen Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles: The Courts of Europe's Dynastic Rivals, 1550–1780* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

mission of centralized power.[26] Similarly, absolutist cultural authority depended on the ability of the monarch to set the standards of taste, but the Crown was never able to dictate those standards. Taste was never a simple matter of distinction and emulation. Rather, the monarchy attempted to influence and guide prevailing styles in order to reinforce its prestige. And to do so it had to collaborate with guilds, bureaucrats, merchants, and individual artisans in a complex ballet of production, distribution, and consumption.[27] As Leora Auslander has demonstrated, it is at the level of the everyday problems of production, distribution, and consumption that the abstract qualities of style and the power relations of taste find concrete expression as people navigate their meanings.[28] The political and the economic were not opposing forces here, but complimentary ones.

In the last decade, political economy has moved to the forefront of the intellectual history of the eighteenth century.[29] In place of whiggish narratives of liberalism ineluctably replacing mercantilism and the "new science of political economy" cleansing the stale remnants of an archaic regime, these recent studies have depicted a broad range of participants working to make sense of a changing economic landscape.[30] As Paul Cheney has shown, writers concerned with commercial issues in the eighteenth century were deeply attuned to the tensions raised between a globalizing

[26] William Beik, "Review: The Absolutism of Louis XIV as Social Collaboration," *Past & Present* 188 (August 20050 195–224.

[27] *Ibid.*, 29–109.

[28] Leora Auslander, *Taste and Power: Furnishing Modern France* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996) 2.

[29] Michael Kwass, "Capitalism, Political Economy, and Inequality in Eighteenth-Century France: Writing History after the Great Recession," *French History* 33, no. 4 (2019) 612–6.

[30] See, for instance: Stephen L Kaplan and Sophus A Reinert, *The Economic Turn: Recasting Political Economy in Enlightenment Europe* (New York: Anthem Press, 2019).

economy and the inherited institutions of absolutist society. They wrestled with the ramifications of imperial connections and what it meant for monarchy and metropole.[31] Yet political economy was at its heart a tool of the reason of state.[32] And given the incessant warfare of the early modern period, reason of state revolved around international rivalry, both military and commercial. Conflict in one arena blended into conflict in the other, but the ambition of economic policy was the success of one's own country in the global struggle of silver and steel.[33] There was no divergence between the logic of capitalism and that of court society, but rather a "field of compatibility."[34] The capitalism of the Old Regime emerged within its inherited structures and bore its marks. But it also created new opportunities for the absolutist regime to reassert itself, to replenish its coffers and carry its iconography directly into consumers' homes, even while doing so would ultimately obviate its own position economically and socially. Political economy in the eighteenth century dealt largely with the problem of how to work within the existing social order to develop a country's economic resources to

[31] Paul Cheney, *Revolutionary Commerce: Globalization and the French Monarchy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

[32] Arnault Skornicki, *L'économiste, la cour et la patrie* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2011).

[33] Istvan Hont, *Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Sophus A Reinert. *Translating Empire: Emulation and the Origins of Political Economy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011); John Shovlin, "War and Peace: Trade, International Competition, and Political Economy," in *Mercantilism Reimagined: Political Economy in Early Modern Britain and Its Empire*, eds. Philip J Stern and Carl Wennerlind (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014) 305–27; Sophus A Reinert, "Rivalry: Greatness in Early Modern Political Economy," in *idem.*, 348–70; Arnaud Orain, *La politique du merveilleux : Une autre histoire du Système de Law (1695–1795)* (Paris: Fayard, 2018) 79–172. This is not to argue that power was the ultimate end of economic policy. Rather, power and wealth were seen as mutually reinforcing and harmonious interests. Contrast: Eli F Hecksher, *Mercantilism*, trans. Mendel Shapiro (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1935) 2:13–30; Jacob Viner, *Essays on the Intellectual History of Economics*, ed. Douglas A Irwin (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991) 128–53.

[34] Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (New York: Verso, 2013) 41.

achieve predominance within a transnational marketplace of goods. And doing this required attending to the problems of the consumer and working to create, shape, and eventually cater to consumer demand.

If earlier histories of early modern consumption focused on the social patterns of courtly style and elite emulation, more recent studies have instead focused on the emergence of popular forms of consumption. Many of these studies have suggested a relationship between the rise of popular consumption during the eighteenth century and the emergence of revolutionary politics by examining the quotidian act of consumption—both in the purchase and use of material objects—and the political meanings that emerged from these practices. Together these studies reveal the growth of popular patterns of consumption outside the control of the monarchy.[35] In the broadest argument about the emergence of a consumer culture and the erosion of monarchical authority leading up to the French Revolution, Bill Sewell has recently highlighted the role of capitalism in fostering a culture of public consumption. According to Sewell, it was capitalist manufacturers and merchants who made shopping a public spectacle and pushed new fashions on consumers. They presented a rapidly changing series of designs for goods like silk, releasing new styles on a regular schedule to convince consumers to spend money to keep up with the latest fashions.[36]

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[35] TH Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Leora Auslander, "Regeneration through the Everyday? Clothing, Architecture and Furniture in Revolutionary Paris," *Art History* 28, no. 2 (April 2005) 227–47; Michael Kwass, "Big Hair: A Wig History of Consumption in Eighteenth-Century France," *American Historical Review* 111, no. 3 (June 2006) 631–59; Leora Auslander, *Cultural Revolutions: Everyday Life and Politics in Britain, North America, and France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

[36] William H Sewell, jr. "The Empire of Fashion and the Rise of Capitalism in Eighteenth-Century France," *Past & Present* 206 (February 2010) 81–120.

And people did so in new public spaces far from the palaces of court society, where anyone with money to spend could participate in this culture of consumption.[37] It was because of these efforts, Sewell concludes, that the public sphere and the ideal of civic equality first emerged and challenged the political authority of the monarchy.[38]

Whereas both de Vries and Berg took consumer desire as an endogenous factor and sought to explain how it led to increased production, Sewell demonstrates how the meanings of and desire for consumer goods were themselves variables that could be and were manipulated to create outlets for increased production. It was capitalist manufacturers and merchants eager to inflate their profits who pushed the fashion cycle to gin up their sales. Sewell's argument thus provides at least a partial answer for why consumers in this period demanded more goods while also explicitly introducing the concept of capitalism. Yet underlying Sewell's argument is a specific type of capitalism in which surplus value can only come from the exploitation of labor. Thus, he explains the operations of this system of consumption through the unpaid work of consumers as they struggle to ride the wave of fashion. And the architects of his fashion system are private capitalists playing on the social logic of elite society.[39] Sewell's study and others assume the existence of a consuming public capable of following the trends of fashion and possessing all the information they needed to make purchasing decisions that expressed their social identity. But conveying meaning and demand to consumers

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[37] *Idem.*, "Connecting Capitalism to the French Revolution: The Parisian Promenade and the Origins of Civic Equality in Eighteenth-Century France," *Critical Historical Studies* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2014) 5–46.

[38] These arguments are recapitulated and their political and social consequences elaborated in: *Idem.*, *Capitalism and the Emergence of Civic Equality in Eighteenth-Century France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021).

[39] *Idem.*, "Empire of Fashion," 103–5.

required deliberate and expensive effort on behalf of both private capitalists and government bureaucrats. It required an economic strategy at the levels of the firm and the state to convey information to consumers. Before a consuming public could come into its own, the tools that make widespread consumption possible had to be both invented and implemented. What Sewell, like so many other historians, ignores are the mechanisms through which early modern Europeans could become consumers in the first place.

Explaining how consumers learned to consume new products requires a study of how information about such objects is communicated in an expanding market economy. The New Institutional Economics (NIE) can provide tools to do precisely that. From its founding, NIE attempted to explain the rise of Western European economic predominance in the early modern period by identifying aspects of the market that made economic transactions more efficient and brought individual and social gains into alignment.[40] Institutions represent the framework of rules governing interpersonal interaction—ranging between informal customs established and enforced culturally to formal laws established and enforced politically—that structure and guide the actions of individuals within it.[41] What differentiates NIE from neoclassical economics is a recognition of uncertainty in human affairs. Building on the concept of transaction costs first developed by Ronald Coase, NIE asserts that within any economic exchange individuals face uncertainty caused by imperfect and often unequal information about

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[40] Douglass C North and Robert Paul Thomas, *The Rise of the Western World: A New Economic History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1973) 1–3, 8.

[41] Douglass C North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 3–4, 36–53; Sue ES Crawford and Elinor Ostrom, “A Grammar of Institutions,” *American Political Science Review* 89, no. 3 (September 1995) 582–600.

the object of exchange and whether the other party will uphold their end of the agreement.[42] Crucially, it recognizes that obtaining information and enforcing contracts entail costs on behalf of both parties, costs carried in every transaction that cause friction and slow or impede economic exchange. To minimize these transaction costs, participants develop institutions, with more efficient institutions enabling cheaper, quicker, and more extensive exchange and the benefits from trade and specialization that follow. NIE thus allows for explanations of gradual economic growth without exogenous shocks.[43] Furthermore, this approach emphasizes that effective institutional solutions to economic problems can take a variety of forms and be located at multiple levels of society, often concurrently.[44] By studying the institutions that shape economic activity and the varying degrees of efficiency created by different institutional frameworks, NIE offers a lens through which to examine the underlying causes of economic growth and conduct comparative analysis over time.

With the expansion of the early modern market in both breadth and depth, interpersonal and ongoing economic relationships gave way to impersonal market exchanges. As producer and consumer drifted farther apart in space and time, new

[42] RH Coase, "The Nature of the Firm," *Economica* 4, no. 16 (November 1937) 386–405; *idem.*, "The Problem of Social Cost," *Journal of Law and Economics* 3 (October 1960) 1–44; Oliver E Williamson, *The Economic Institutions of Capitalism: Firms, Markets, Relational Contracting* (Free Press: New York, 1985)15–22, 44–52; *idem.*, *The Mechanisms of Governance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) 3–10, 54–61.

[43] Guillaume Daudin, "Coûts de transaction et croissance : un modèle à partir de la situation de la France du XVIIIe siècle," *Revue française d'économie* 17, no. 2 (2002) 3–36.

[44] Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 13–5. This also makes possible the conception of coexisting a variety of capitalisms. See: Peter Hall and David Soskice, eds. *Varieties of Capitalism: The Institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

institutions had to emerge to communicate trust and confidence between them.[45] As Philippe Minard has demonstrated, the difficulties consumers faced in obtaining product information in expanding early modern markets engendered a range of institutions designed to reassure consumers about the quality of various goods and prevent abuses. This problem was particularly acute, at least from the standpoint of policymakers, in the international market for exports. In response, countries like Britain and France developed systems of regulation and inspection in order to overcome the high transaction costs of a disjointed market, drawing on existing institutions of guilds and trade associations and constructing a bureaucratic apparatus as necessary to smooth the flow of goods and information and facilitate economic growth.[46] For Minard, the interventionist state policies of mercantilism in its various designs was a response to the limits imposed by high transaction costs in the early modern economy, and by the end of the eighteenth century mounting political and ideological pressure had relocated these institutions from the state to the market.[47] Felicia Gottman has extended these considerations of the role of state regulation in fostering domestic production by highlighting the importance of fashion and style in the adoption of

[45] James Carrier, *Gifts and Commodities: Exchange and Western Capitalism since 1700* (New York: Routledge, 1995) 84–105.

[46] Philippe Minard, *La fortune du colbertisme : État et industrie dans la France des Lumières* (Paris: Fayard, 1998) 15–31; *idem.*, "Réputation, normes et qualité dans l'industrie textile française au XVIIIe siècle," in *La qualité des produits en France (XVIIIe–XXe siècles)*, ed. Alessandro Stanziani (Paris: Belin, 2003) 69–89; *idem.*, "Le Bureau d'essai de Birmingham, ou la fabrique de la réputation au XVIIIe siècle," *Annales. Histoire, Science Sociales* 65, no. 5 (September–October 2010) 1117–46; *idem.*, "Facing Uncertainty: Markets, Norms and Conventions in the Eighteenth Century," in *Regulating the British Economy, 1660–1850*, ed. Perry Gauci (New York: Routledge, 2011) 177–94.

[47] *Idem.*, *Fortune du colbertisme*, 363–72.

global goods. Here, it was the challenge presented by imports that spurred efforts to regulate and promote industrial activity.[48]

While Minard's and Gottman's work offer tremendous insight into the problems confronting consumers in the early modern economy and reveal a range of responses to these problems, their studies concentrate on material qualities such as fibers or dyes that could be objectively ascertained and evaluated. As a result, they restrict their studies to formal institutions designed to regulate material qualities. Yet consumers do not purchase goods only for their material qualities, they also purchase them for their aesthetic and symbolic qualities. And as Jean-Yves Grenier has carefully outlined, such qualities in the Old Regime were not a straightforward matter. Beyond considerations of material quality—whether the colorfastness of textiles, durability of ceramics, or oxidation of wine—consumer goods were embedded within a hierarchical society in which the social status of producers, consumers, and objects alike were mutually determining.[49] For Grenier, the result was that the use value of any particular good represented a shifting mixture of material qualities and social meanings that at any point in time could both be evaluated individually and communicated socially.[50] And it is here that we see the importance of studies for determining what information needed to be communicated, what information mattered to consumers. To transmit such information in the marketplace required not only institutions that could carry precise

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[48] Felicia Gottman, *Global Trade, Smuggling, and the Making of Economic Liberalism in France, 1680–1760* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

[49] Jean-Yves Grenier, "Consommation et marché au XVIIIe siècle," *Histoire & Mesure* 10, no. 3–4 (1995) 371–80; *idem.*, "Une économie de l'identification : Juste prix et ordre des marchandises dans l'Ancien Régime," in *Qualité des Produits*, 25–53.

[50] *Idem.*, *L'économie d'Ancien Régime : Un monde de l'échange et de l'incertitude* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1996) 60–78.

reassurances of material quality, but also those that could convey social meaning and status; institutions that could provide information in the act of purchase but also in deciding what to purchase. As Alessandro Stanziani has argued, communicating this second type of information required the construction of an informal framework of norms and systems of belief about quality that coexisted with the structure of laws and regulations and served the same purpose of enabling consumers to overcome asymmetries of information.[51] By drawing attention to the importance of norms, codes, and customs operating at local, national, and international levels, Stanziani is able to reveal a continuity in institutions that developed gradually over the course of centuries.[52]

If the New Institutional Economics provides a framework through which to examine the institutions that facilitate consumers' ability to gauge quality and price in the market, we must turn to what has been retroactively named the Old Institutional Economics (OIE) to understand the institutions that forged the tastes and preferences that drove people to consume. From its founding, OIE emphasized that "The wants and desires, the end and aim, the ways and means, the amplitude and drift of the individual's conduct are functions of an institutional variable" that is the product of historical development.[53] In doing so, it also drew attention toward the meaning and

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[51] Alessandro Stanziani, "Introduction," in *Qualité des produits en France*, 5–22; *idem.*, "Information économique et institutions : Analyses historiques et modèles économiques," in *L'information économique, XVIe–XIXe siècle. Journées d'études du 21 Juin et du 25 avril 2006*, eds. Dominique Margairaz and Philippe Minard (Paris: Comité pour l'histoire économique et financière de la France, 2008) 17–35; *idem.*, *Rules of Exchange: French Capitalism in Comparative Perspective, Eighteenth to Early Twentieth Centuries* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012) 115–20.

[52] Stanziani, *Rules of Exchange.*, 1–14.

[53] Thorstein Veblen, "Why Is Economics Not an Evolutionary Science?" *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 12, no. 4 (July 1898) 389; *idem.*, "The Limitations of Marginal Utility,"

process of consumption and its development over time.[54] It was Hazel Kyrk who developed the most comprehensive theory of consumption within OIE, one that transcended the maximizing selection between goods to reveal the underlying social determinants of choice itself.[55] For Kyrk, the process of consumption consisted of a series of three distinct phases: choosing, buying, and using goods.[56] She held that the ultimate end of consumption was the use of a particular good or service and pointed to the measurement of social welfare through such use.[57] In order to obtain the use of a good or service within a "pecuniary" market society shaped by property rights and driven by capitalistic motivation, she argued, consumers select among the options and prices of various goods offered by the existing state of production and technology. Within the purchasing process, however, Kyrk anticipated key caveats of NIE by drawing attention to the asymmetries of information and power when "The individual,

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Journal of Political Economy 17 (1909) 629; John R Commons, "Institutional Economics," *American Economic Review* 21 (December 1931) 648–57.

[54] Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (New York: Modern Library, 1934) 68–114; Wesley Mitchell, "The Backward Art of Spending Money," *American Economic Review* 2, no. 2 (June 1912) 269–81. It is difficult to paint accurately with a broad brush, and as Malcolm Rutherford has argued there are important congruities between OIE and NIE as well as incongruities within each. However, as concerns this dissertation, OIE appears to have taken much more seriously the question of consumption as an exogenous rather than endogenous factor. On the relationship between the two approaches, see: Malcolm Rutherford, *Institutions in Economics: The Old and New Institutionalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[55] Frank Trentmann, "The Modern Genealogy of the Consumer: Meanings, Identities, and Political Synapses," in *Consuming Cultures, Global Perspectives: Historical Trajectories, Transnational Exchanges*, eds. John Brewer and Frank Trentmann (New York: Berg, 2006) 48–50.

[56] Hazel Kyrk, *A Theory of Consumption* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1923) 6.

[57] *Ibid.*, 279–94.

as consumer, is brought into touch with the whole industrial and business world."[58] It is precisely out of this imbalance, she held, that the institutions of marketing and retailing emerged to provide information about product quality to consumers, to rationalize and structure the act of individualized consumption in a system of industrialized production.[59]

Here Kyrk proposed a revolutionary new consideration: "The consumer's function as chooser of goods involves not only the practical activities of expenditure and marketing," she argued, "but also a selective, choice-making process, by which the values which are reflected in market choices come to be. The student of consumption must consider not only the fact that the individual buys and how he buys, but what he buys and why he buys what he does."[60] The underlying question was thus not one of *value*, but the imprint of *values*. For this Kyrk looked toward the institutions that determine the ends consumers seek through the act of purchasing, the pre-market determination of the hierarchy of values after which point the market activity of buying becomes merely a technical problem.[61] This dissertation draws on Kyrk's model to explicate the importance of institutions for facilitating the transfer of information about the quality of goods on the market as well as underlying conceptions of taste. It argues that an analysis of the deliberate development of institutions at both levels is needed to explain the patterns of growing consumption in the early stages of industrialization.

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[58] *Ibid.*, 85.

[59] *Ibid.*, 85–109.

[60] *Ibid.*, 131.

[61] *Ibid.*, 147–71. Marina Bianchi has arrived at similar conclusions from a different direction by adapting theories of entrepreneurship, discovery, and alertness from Austrian economics to the problems of the consumer: Marina Bianchi, "Introduction," in *The Active Consumer: Novelty and Surprise in Consumer Choice* ed. Marina Bianchi (New York: Routledge, 1998) 1–18.

Object and Method of Study

This dissertation reveals how early modern Europeans learned to become consumers by studying the actions of merchants, manufacturers, and bureaucrats as they endeavored to endow goods with meaning, communicate them to consumers, and kindle their desires. It uses the French porcelain industry in the eighteenth century as a case study to reconstruct the business strategies and economic policies that would make a particularly French version of a consumer society possible. It draws on material culture studies as well as Old and New Institutional Economics to chart the difficult process by which France domesticated porcelain production, established a global reputation for the taste and quality of its wares, and then supported a flourishing industry in luxury consumer goods.

In recent decades, studies of material culture have broadened our understanding of the place of things in society. Rather than treating artefacts as passive embodiments or vessels of abstract meaning, scholars working within this approach have attended to the physical and interactive presence of objects in everyday life. Core to this conceptualization is the question of how people have engaged with various objects and what this can teach us about the past.[62] As historians such as Leora Auslander and Giorgio Riello have argued, the power of incorporating material culture into historical narratives is that it enables us to not just append material evidence into existing stories, but to reconceptualize our understanding of history by moving beyond written works

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[62] Colin Campbell, "The Meaning of Objects and the Meaning of Actions: A Critical Note on the Sociology of Consumption and Theories of Clothing," *Journal of Material Culture* 1, no. 1 (1996) 93–105; Bill Brown, "Thing Theory," *Critical Inquiry* 28, no. 1 (Autumn 2001) 1–22; Richard Grassby, "Material Culture and Cultural History," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 35, no. 4 (Spring 2005) 591–603; Ewa Domanska, "The Material Presence of the Past," *History and Theory* 45, no. 3 (October 2006) 337–48; Harvey Green, "Cultural History and the Material(s) Turn," *Cultural History* 1, no. 1 (2012) 61–82.

and into the lived experience of the past.[63] Furthermore, as Alfred Gell has suggested, an approach that incorporates material objects can reveal dense networks of agency in which artist, object, meaning, and recipient all interact with and shape one another.[64]

Historians of material culture have contributed to our understanding of economic growth in the early modern period in its global and local contexts. At the global level, they have traced the exchange of goods around the world to describe the global dynamics of consumption. The story these studies tell is one of globalization and interconnection as new objects filtered into the daily lives of consumers and found new meanings and uses across the globe.[65] Such studies have served as an important corrective to older historical narratives in two ways. First, they have challenged the Eurocentrism of perspectives that have championed the primacy of Europe in the early modern period and replaced it with ones that situate subsequent European economic

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[63] Leora Auslander, "Beyond Words," *American Historical Review* 110, no. 4 (October 2005) 1015–45; Giorgio Riello, "Things that Shape History: Material Culture and Historical Narratives," in *History and Material Culture: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources,* ed. Karen Harvey (New York: Routledge, 2009) 24–46.

[64] Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) 28–65.

[65] For prominent recent examples of this work, see: Anne EC McCants, "Exotic Goods, Popular Consumption, and the Standard of Living: Thinking about Globalization in the Early Modern World," *Journal of World History* 18, no. 4 (December 2007) 433–62; Timothy Brook, *Vermeer's Hat: The Seventeenth Century and the Dawn of the Global World* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2008); Frank Trentmann, "Crossing Divides: Consumption and Globalization in History," *Journal of Consumer Culture* 9, no. 2 (2009) 191–7; Paula Findlen, ed. *Early Modern Things: Objects and their Histories, 1500–1800* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Giorgio Riello, *Cotton: The Fabric that Made the Modern World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Maxine Berg, ed. *Goods from the East, 1600–1800: Trading Eurasia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Robert S DuPlessis, *The Material Atlantic: Clothing, Commerce, and Colonization in the Atlantic World, 1650–1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Frank Trentmann, *Empire of Things: How We Became a World of Consumers, from the Fifteenth Century to the Twenty-First* (New York: HarperCollins, 2016) 21–118; Beverly Lemire, *Global Trade and the Transformation of Consumer Cultures: The Material World Remade, c. 1500–1820* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

growth within a global context. Second, they draw our attention away from the abstract data and impersonal forces common to much economic historical writing and instead center it on the personal practices and meanings of everyday acts.

Each of these advances simultaneously presents a challenge, however. Pushed too far, an overemphasis on interconnection flattens the world. Focusing on the transmission of objects around the globe reveals lines of connection between cultures and societies, but it can obscure the particular motivations of the actors and states engaged in this exchange. Too narrow a focus on the transfer and adoption of new objects can cause us to lose sight of the conditions within which such transfer occurs, the specific challenges these conditions present, and the intentions of the people who worked to overcome them. In short, a history solely of transference is a history of transfer succeeded that belies the difficulties and failures such transfers often entail.

Another approach to material culture history has offered a solution to some of these problems by focusing on the meanings and uses of goods in specific contexts and for specific groups. Studies within this perspective attempt to uncover the semiotic qualities of things for the people who used them and the cultures within which they were interpreted. As Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood argued, consumption is part of a language of social meaning within which individuals choose strategies of social engagement and self-identity.[66] The goods available create a network within which every object develops referential meaning, and it is these meanings that consumers choose between and that constitute a material culture.[67]

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[66] Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood, *The World of Goods* (New York: Basic Books, 1979), esp 15–94.

[67] *Ibid.*, 71–4.

Just as NIE developed within a modern consumer society and so has taken the problems of consumers for granted, however, so too have many studies of material culture. In his influential work on social patterns of consumption, for instance, sociologist Pierre Bourdieu argued that individual choices and practices of consumption operate on various axes conditioned by economic possibilities to locate a precise social identity.[68] For Bourdieu, *habitus* both creates this social matrix and allows people to perceive its meanings. Yet even as he acknowledges the labor consumers put into "identifying and decoding" the objects they consume, Bourdieu asserts that consumers gain the knowledge to do so naturally, "without any deliberative pursuit…without any conscious concertation."[69] While this may have been true for France in the late twentieth century, it was certainly not true for France in the eighteenth century. Indeed, this change was only made possible through the deliberate efforts of early modern actors to furnish consumers with the information and skills they would need to make such decisions. While material culture studies provide a necessary precondition to understanding the exchange of consumer goods, they need to be combined with other methods that can show how information about meanings and uses is communicated and how those meanings are shaped. And the unfolding of this process in early modern Europe needs to be set within the context of the emergence of capitalism.

As the older model of economic history in which an Industrial Revolution in Britain marked a sudden increase in economic growth has faded, historians have instead come to describe the eighteenth century as a period of evolution in which the disjointed and dysfunctional conditions of the early modern economy were ironed out

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[68] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984) esp 99–167.

[69] *Ibid.*, 100, 169–73.

and the sustained economic growth of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was made possible. Within this process can be seen a series of forms of capitalism, each developing within the context of its age yet generating new conditions that would eventually make a new form possible. This dissertation charts this evolutionary process through a series of stages beginning with the merchant capitalism of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. As Fernand Braudel described, merchant capitalism brought a certain "coherence" to several centuries of European economic history during which merchant "strategies" reduced the risks of long-distance and uncertain trade via the control they could assert over markets, including credit markets.[70] Through proto-industrial networks of production, furthermore, merchants brought this same coherence and control to the production of manufactured goods.[71] As Cissie Fairchilds has highlighted, merchant organization of production was crucial for connecting proto-industrial output with the nascent consumer market of this period.[72] And, as Grenier has shown, this merchant capitalism existed within the social and political hierarchy of the Old Regime in which the importance of personal connections, the decentralization

[70] Fernand Braudel, "Histoire et sciences sociales : La longue durée," *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 13, no. 4 (1958) 733; *ibid.*, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds (New York: Harper & Row, 1972) 1:443–4.

[71] Franklin F Mendels, "Proto-Industrialization: The First Phase of the Industrialization Process," *Journal of Economic History* 32, no. 1 (March 1972) 241–61; Peter Kriedte, Hans Medick, and Jürgen Schlumbohm, eds., *Industrialization before Proto-Industrialization: Rural Industry in the Genesis of Capitalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Geoff Eley, "The Social History of Industrialization: 'Proto-Industry' and the Origins of Capitalism," *Economy and Society* 13, no. 4 (November 1984) 519–39.

[72] Cissie Fairchilds, "The Production and Marketing of Populuxe Goods in Eighteenth-Century Paris," in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, eds. John Brewer and Roy Porter (New York: Routledge, 1993) 228–48.

of capital, and the fragmentation of markets reinforced the crucial role of merchants in knitting this economic world together.[73]

More recently, Pierre Gervais has revealed how merchant capitalists resolved these impediments by creating markets, connecting markets, concentrating capital, and ultimately controlling production directly. As they did so, however, they generated a new form of industrial capitalism that oversaw both production and distribution, allowing industrialists to replace merchant capitalists as the dominant economic force.[74] Patrick Verley, meanwhile, has highlighted the importance of consumer demand in making this transition possible, with merchants playing the crucial initial role in circulating products and information and structuring the market for what would eventually become an industrial economy.[75]

This dissertation follows this chronology from merchant to industrial capitalism but differs in two key ways. First, it emphasizes the indispensable role of the absolutist state in making this transition possible. While merchant capitalism was well adapted to managing risks and concentrating sufficient capital for specific ventures, it was less adept at coalescing sufficient capital for establishing new industries. It was here that the state had to intervene to indemnify risks and invest directly in the product and process innovations on which import substitution industrialization depended. Furthermore,

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[73] Grenier, *Économie d'Ancien Régime*, 79–104; Fernand Braudel, *The Wheels of Commerce*, vol. 2 of *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th–18th Century*, trans. Siân Reynolds (New York: Harper & Row, 1982) 138–53.

[74] Pierre Gervais, *Les origines de la révolution industrielle aux États-Unis : Entre économie marchande et capitalisme industriel, 1800–1850* (Paris : Éditions de l'École des hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2004). On the importance of marketing in this transition, see: Glenn Porter and Harold C Livesay, *Merchants and Manufacturers: Studies in the Changing Structure of Nineteenth-Century Marketing* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971).

[75] Verley, *Échelle du monde*, 121–282.

while merchant retailers built their reputations around their ability to advise customers on making tasteful purchases, the stylistic regime to which taste made reference in this period was still set by the monarchy. Second, just as merchant capitalism developed in a symbiotic relationship with absolutist monarchy in France, so too did industrial capitalism develop in a symbiotic relationship with a consumer society. The widespread availability of industrial goods depended on the existence of consumer outlets for them while simultaneously making possible a culture in which identity could be expressed through individual choices of consumption. Yet even as early modern manufacturers worked to create just such a consumer society—an outcome that would not be accomplished for at least another century—they were simultaneously heeled by the market power of consumers. The rationalization of business practices and control over labor here was not the byproduct of mechanization or the manifestation of capitalist will but stemmed from the competition to meet the products demanded and prices set by consumers.[76] Harnessing this raw force would again require state intervention.

This dissertation traces the long-term transition from merchant to industrial capitalism at two levels. Beginning with the question of uncertainty raised by NIE and the importance of values suggested by OIE, it looks at the level of the individual merchant and company to see how they attempted to establish reputations of trust and expertise among consumers. While porcelain was still an expensive foreign import, this process took place among a group of elite retailers who forged relations with aristocratic customers and advertised their knowledge and authority to consumers. Yet as a domestic porcelain industry took root in France, the scale of production and

[76] Contrast with: Stephen A Marglin, "What Do Bosses Do? The Origins and Functions of Hierarchy in Capitalist Production," *Review of Radical Political Economics* 6, no. 2 (Summer 1974) 60–112; Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974) 59–69.

consumption expanded rapidly. In response, new structures of the firm, new forms of labor organization, and new accounting practices had to be invented. Of particular interest here are the vertical organization and management practices described by business historians such as Alfred Chandler and Sidney Pollard, but with the emphasis placed on their relationship to consumer demand.[77]

As these individual firms charted new business models adapted to a growing consumer society, they made their decisions within a framework of formal and informal institutions. This dissertation brings NIE and OIE perspectives about the problem of consumption and institutional responses to it to the study of economic policy in the early modern period. It situates business practices within the state's efforts to industrialize the country by substituting domestically manufactured goods for imported ones. And it reveals that bureaucrats and policymakers alike saw their economic fates tied to the vagaries of a consumer market. Yet it also reveals that they both recognized consumer demand as malleable, manipulable, and responsive to the model set by the monarch. They thus endeavored together on a path toward industrialization that sought to develop the skills and technologies necessary to produce French porcelain and create an international reputation for its material and stylistic qualities.

Economic history is inherently comparative history. To assess the success of an economic model is to compare it to other possibilities. To chart its trajectory is to acknowledge that at every juncture it could have taken a different direction. To

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[77] Alfred Chandler, *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1977); Sidney Pollard, *The Genesis of Modern Management: A Study of the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965).

understand how one country's economy fit into a global marketplace is to identify its distinctive comparative advantage while recognizing that other countries had their own trajectories and pursued their own comparative advantages. While the archival work for this dissertation was conducted in France, it has been written in reference to the secondary literature concerning the global porcelain market and the domestic porcelain industries of France's competitor states. Particular attention has been given to those as they developed in China, German states, the Netherlands, and Great Britain to situate the paths taken in light of a shared market yet unique social and political conditions.

This task has been made easier by the fact that, with the turn toward global history and material culture studies, several important porcelain studies have been written in recent years. The first of these, beginning with Robert Finlay, emphasized the global transmission and reception of Chinese porcelain throughout the early modern period.[78] For these studies, porcelain is a useful subject because of its capacity to illuminate reciprocal cultural transfer. Chinese porcelain design was influenced by traditional Chinese designs as well as forms and styles incorporated from places as far as Indonesia and Persia. As early modern trade networks began carrying Chinese porcelain around the world, it developed new meanings and uses in the cultures that received it and sparked efforts to emulate it both aesthetically and materially.[79] Within

[78] Robert Finlay, "The Pilgrim Art: The Culture of Porcelain in World History," *Journal of World History* 9, no. 2 (1998) 141–87; *idem., The Pilgrim Art: Cultures of Porcelain in World History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010).

[79] Luke Clossey, "Merchants, Migrants, Missionaries, and Globalization in the Early-Modern Pacific," *Journal of Global History* 1, no. 1 (2006) 44–5; Stacey Pierson, "The Movement of Chinese Ceramics: Appropriation in Global History," *Journal of World History* 23, no. 1 (March 2012) 9–39; Ellen C Huang, "From the Imperial Court to the International Art Market: Jingdezhen Porcelain Production as Global Visual Culture," *Journal of World History* 23, no. 1 (March 2012) 115–45; Edmund de Waal, *The White Road: Journey into an Obsession* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015).

these works, porcelain truly is a “pilgrim art” with the capacity to reveal the emergence of an interconnected world.

More recent studies of porcelain, however, have instead emphasized national distinctions in its history. As optimism about the capacity of globalization to promote peace, prosperity, and mutual understanding has faded in recent years, historians have turned toward porcelain as a symbol not of global unification but of national competition.[80] For Suzanne Marchand, in the early modern German territories, porcelain was an object of dynastic distinction. As monarchs aspiring to absolutism worked to establish court societies, they turned to porcelain as a marker of status. Not content to simply import the expensive wares, Marchand shows, these princes, kings, and emperors sought to produce their own porcelain and develop their own court styles. Yet this competition, for Marchand, was specifically political and directly at odds with the logic of a consumer-oriented industrial capitalism that would replace it in the early nineteenth century.[81] Tristram Hunt’s recent biography of Josiah Wedgwood, meanwhile, depicts the development of porcelain production in England as a triumph of the capitalist entrepreneur catering to a consumer market in the absence of state intervention. While Wedgwood in this view may have played off the prestige of European courts, he did so in pursuit of profits and with an eye toward the common consumer.[82] For both Marchand and Hunt, the logics of absolutism and capitalism were

[80] This shift in perspective echoed a similar one in the early modern world: Anne Gerritsen and Stephen McDowall, “Material Culture and the Other: European Encounters with Chinese Porcelain, ca. 1650–1800,” *Journal of World History* 23, no. 1 (March 2012) 87–113.

[81] Suzanne Marchand, *Porcelain: A History from the Heart of Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020) 8–193.

[82] Tristram Hunt, *The Radical Potter: The Life and Times of Josiah Wedgwood* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2021). See also: Neil McKendrick, “Josiah Wedgwood: An

distinct and, in many ways, mutually exclusive. A country could pursue either one or the other, but not both.

Anne Gerritsen's work on the development of large-scale porcelain manufacturing in Jingdezhen, China, rejects the separation of economic and political motivations. As she shows, the imperial household oversaw a large and complex porcelain manufacturing system in the city throughout the early modern period. Yet this state-run manufacture coexisted symbiotically with a range of private manufactures. The state-run manufacture provided a steady demand for the high-quality wares and new techniques and materials necessary for imperial ceremonies in Beijing, but the skills and styles developed here bled over into the many private manufactures also located in the city. Reversing the flow, the private manufactures were able to fulfill any shortages at the imperial manufacture and, by selling vast quantities of porcelain around the world, were able to make Jingdezhen and by extension China a wealthy global icon.[83] In the Chinese model, political motivations blended seamlessly with economic ones.

This dissertation draws on these recent histories of porcelain but does so to reveal the conditions that made a consumer society and industrialization possible. As with the global histories of porcelain cultures, it pays close attention to shifting meanings and uses of porcelain. Consumers were willing to spend fortunes acquiring porcelain because of the meanings it carried and the uses it enabled. As Susan Gal, Christine Jones, and others have shown, the meanings and uses of porcelain in early

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Eighteenth-Century Entrepreneur in Salesmanship and Marketing Techniques," *Economic History Review* 12, no. 3 (1960) 408–33.

[83] Anne Gerritsen, *The City of Blue and White: Chinese Porcelain and the Early Modern World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

modern Europe were not fixed or universal, but shifted over time, between places, between spaces, and between groups.[84] The first step in understanding the history of porcelain in this period must thus be to decode what meanings it would have held in specific contexts, what different materials, colors, designs, and national origins would have meant to those who viewed, displayed, or used porcelain. These represent what anthropologist Sidney Mintz described as "inside" meanings, or those semiotic aspects of a thing that are recognized and valued within a group.[85] At the same time, this dissertation argues that inside meanings are not transmitted automatically. Consumers are uncertain about the precise meanings, uses, and qualities of the goods they encounter. And this is especially true for new objects trading on a global level.

Inside meanings, furthermore, do not develop solely within a group. For Mintz, inside meanings must be understood in connection to their "outside" meanings, or the way those inside meanings fit within the broader societal context.[86] Understanding this context demands that we examine power. It is a central assertion of this dissertation that capitalism in early modern Europe emerged from within the Old Regime, that capitalism was not at odds with the logics of absolutist monarchy and court society but congruent with them. Changing patterns of production and exchange made possible new relations between consumers and goods, but the meanings they carried were shaped by the cultural authority of the monarchy in a sharply hierarchical society. As

[84] Susan Gal, "Qualia as Values and Knowledge: Histories of European Porcelain," *Signs & Society* 5, no. S1 (Supplement 2017) S128–53; Christine A Jones, *Shapely Bodies: The Image of Porcelain in Eighteenth-Century France* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2013); Alden Cavanaugh and Michael E Yonan, eds., *The Cultural Aesthetics of Eighteenth-Century Porcelain* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010).

[85] Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Viking, 1985) 151.

[86] *Ibid.*, 178.

anthropologist Arjun Appadurai has argued, the exchange value of a good depends on how much it is valued, which in turn depends on the context within which it is exchanged.[87] Because this context is a social one, those with cultural authority can vouch for the meanings of goods, but they can also influence those meanings.[88] By affecting the demand for and thus exchange value of these goods, cultural authority directly influences the economy.

A luxury good like porcelain may seem an incongruous subject through which to understand the early modern economy. Considered from the standpoint of an economy that remained overwhelmingly agrarian, in which most manufacturing was practiced on an artisanal scale, and in which a consumer society did not and could not yet exist, luxury industries like porcelain were the exception. But they attracted an inordinate focus from officials because they were seen as bellwethers for the entire economy, as specific nodes at which big questions of global commerce, technological development, dynastic competition, royal legitimation, industrial advancement, and a consumer society were first discussed. What porcelain lacked in relative size it made up for in the density of attention dedicated to overcoming whatever impediments its development encountered.

Approaching the early modern economy through a specific luxury industry immediately raises the problem of defining what is and is not luxury. It is precisely the ambiguity and flexibility of the meaning of luxury that makes it a useful category through which to analyze consumption in the eighteenth century, as the flood of recent

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[87] Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986) 3–5.

[88] *Ibid.*, 31–3, 41–5.

works on luxury can attest.[89] It is perhaps this very same ambiguity that made the topic of luxury a mainstay in eighteenth-century political and moral discourse. Authors across Western Europe worried deeply about the effects a rise in luxury spending would have on people and transitively on a people. Whether luxury consumption corrupted private virtue or cultivated public taste, sank the nation into foreign debt or spurred the wheels of industry, effeminized and undermined the monarchy or maintained the social order depended in large part on one's definition of what exactly luxury was or was not.[90] But this dissertation is only incidentally concerned with the discursive meanings of luxury as a category in this period. Rather, it seeks to uncover the contextual shifts in production, distribution, and consumption to which contemporary commentators were reacting. What is at issue here is not so much what observers thought about changing patterns of consumption and meanings of luxury,

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[89] Recent histories of luxury include: Philippe Perrot, *Le luxe : Une richesse entre faste et confort, XVIIIe–XIXe siècle* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1995); Louis Bergeron, *Les Industries de luxe en France* (Paris: Éditions Odile Jacob, 1998); Robert Fox and Anthony Turner, eds. *Luxury Trades and Consumerism in* Ancien Régime *Paris: Studies in the History of the Skilled Workforce* (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1998); Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford, eds. *Consumers and Luxury: Consumer Culture in Europe, 1650–1850* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1999); Jacques Marseille, ed. *Le luxe en France du siècle des Lumières à nos jours* (Paris: Association pour le développement de l'histoire économique, 1999); Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger, eds. *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Natacha Coquery and Alain Bonnet, eds. *Le commerce du luxe : Production, exposition et circulation des objets précieux du moyen âge à nos jours* (Paris: Mare & Martin, 2015); Peter McNeil and Giorgio Riello, *Luxury: A Rich History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[90] For discussion of these debates, see: Christopher J Berry, *The Idea of Luxury: A Conceptual and Historical Investigation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 101–98; Michael Kwass, "Ordering the World of Goods: Consumer Revolution and the Classification of Objects in Eighteenth-Century France," *Representations* 82, no. 1 (Spring 2003) 87–117; John Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue: Luxury, Patriotism, and the Origins of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006); Audrey Provost, *Le luxe, les Lumières et la Révolution* (Seyssel, France: Champ Vallon, 2014).

but the churning tectonics that shaped patterns of consumption and meanings of luxury across this period.

Structurally, luxury goods offer a trenchant opening into the most important transformations affecting the early modern economy. First, as Maxine Berg and Kenneth Pomeranz have shown, one of the most important catalysts for luxury consumption in this period was the arrival of vast amounts of Asian manufactured goods imported by European East India Companies.[91] This had two major effects on the formation of luxury markets. On the one hand, the very fact that these goods were manufactured in East Asia, passed along by innumerable middlemen, transported around the world, and sold across Europe before being used and displayed in homes meant that the traditional links of trust between producer and consumer were stretched beyond their breaking point. Luxury goods travelled farther and faster than information. And it was as a hedge against this uncertainty that institutionalized expertise at the site of retail became essential. On the other hand, the importation of expensive goods in exchange for specie was anathema to the most basic interests of mercantilist political economy. And so European countries undertook an extensive process of import substitution industrialization to replace Asian imports with domestic products. Yet the transnational marketplace that had introduced those goods in the first place continued to exist. It was not enough to merely substitute imports with domestic products, the tide had to be reversed and new outlets for them conquered. This necessitated new institutions for information that could be introduced at the site of

[91] Pomeranz, *Great Divergence*, 114–65; Maxine Berg, "In Pursuit of Luxury: Global History and British Consumer Goods in the Eighteenth Century," *Past & Present* 182 (February 2004) 85–142.

production and inhered into the products themselves as they moved beyond the borders and into foreign markets.

Second, the luxury industry shaped the patterns of early modern industrialization because of the period's overwhelming levels of inequality.[92] Eighteenth-century Europe was a place scarred by deep poverty. Most people lived hand-to-mouth, scraping their survival directly from the land. This was not an economy within which mass consumerism was possible. But in cities and salons, in ports and courts, wealth was increasingly making its presence felt. For Werner Sombart, inequality of wealth and the new patterns of consumption it made possible meant that luxury production was the first to industrialize.[93] It is within the luxury industry, therefore, that we can first discover the transition from commercial to industrial capitalism and the institutions that made it possible.

Analytically, luxury goods possess specific attributes that make them effective markers through which to analyze the role and development of consumer institutions. First, as Kyrk noted, what makes something a luxury is that it is on the cutting edge of demand.[94] Far from the routinized consumption of staples and necessities that rational choice theorists point to as models of frictionless markets, a luxury is by definition an uncommon purchase, or at least one that has not yet become commonplace. As a result, consumers of luxuries need to rely more on outside sources of information to guide

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[92] Christian Morrisson and Wayne Snyder, "The Income Inequality of France in Historical Perspective," *European Review of Economic History* 4 (2000) 59–83; Walter Scheidel, *The Great Leveler: Violence and the History of Inequality from the Stone Age to the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017) 83–5, 232–8.

[93] Werner Sombart, *Luxury and Capitalism*, trans. WR Dittmar (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1967); Roche, *History of Everyday Things*, 54–80.

[94] Kyrk, *Theory of Consumption*, 238–40.

their purchases and are most susceptible to being cheated, and so it is here that institutions should be most evident and rapidly evolving. Second, this is not to consider luxury consumption superfluous. As Elias and Gell note, a luxury may be a necessity for one whose standing and position depend on possessing it; displaying that standing is an essential function of luxury goods, not an excess.[95] Rather, luxury consumption brings into much sharper relief both the material qualities and symbolic meanings of the object. If luxury is a relative term, its meaning is relational to other available goods.[96] As a result, minute differences in material and symbolic qualities between luxury goods gain greater salience, and as the social consequences of consumption heighten institutions to note and convey information about differences become more important. Finally, and relatedly, if luxury is at the cutting edge of consumption and if it is where small distinctions make big differences, the question of temporality emerges. By accelerating changes in the meanings of various goods, the fashion cycle (at whatever speed) makes it increasingly laborious for consumers to follow along while rendering knowledge of outdated fashions a sunk cost. As a result, it is in luxury industries that institutions to furnish consumers with up-to-date information would need to be at their most efficient.

Sources

This dissertation draws on a range of sources found in dozens of museums and archives. The most important source for understanding early modern porcelain is, of course, porcelain itself. Unfortunately, the pieces of porcelain that are most readily

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[95] Elias, *Court Society*, 70; Gell, *Art and Agency*, 74.

[96] Douglas and Isherwood, *World of Goods*, 144–5.

available to the historian are those that exist in museums. Due to the missions of these museums and the interests of their donors and curatorial staff, the porcelain objects that are most widely available to study have been salvaged from the sands of time and set aside for enduring appreciation because they are exceptional, because they are seen as art. Yet most porcelain in the early modern period was manufactured to be used, and at least half of it was undecorated and common. Furthermore, porcelain is infamously fragile. Pieces that were used were liable to break, and most of what was used would now be seen as plain and unremarkable. There is thus immediately a problem of representation between the exceptional pieces of porcelain preserved in museums and the pieces that made up the bulk of the early modern porcelain market. And yet both types were related. For anthropologist Igor Kopytoff, within its life a thing can move into and out of phases of "commoditization" when it is available to be exchanged and "singularization" when it is not available to be exchanged.[97] Within this cycle, however, there remains a conceptual relationship between the two. Even the thing in a singularization phase—such as while in a museum collection—relates to and reveals something about its existence in a commoditization phase—such as while being manufactured, sold, and purchased.[98] As this dissertation shows, when united by common origin either of nation or manufacture, even objects produced to be and retained as singular (such as display pieces or gifts not intended for the market) were considered to be in a relationship with that nation's or manufacture's goods produced as a commodity (everything intended for sale). The display piece was separate from the common piece, but the meanings the display piece was meant to convey was

[97] Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," in *Social Life of Things*, 65.

[98] *Ibid.*, 68–77.

understood to be carried in the piece intended for sale. Thus, in reading these objects, the emphasis in this dissertation is not on the specific meanings or individual biography of any particular piece of porcelain, but how it was intended to convey information about each nation's or manufacture' porcelain production as a whole.

Assessing these intentions is made possible for this project by the unparalleled Archives of the National Porcelain Manufacture in Sèvres. The French government's deep interest in creating and sustaining a domestic porcelain industry has resulted in the preservation of internal records for its state-run manufactures that simply do not exist for other companies in this era. From board minutes to laboratory journals, from sales records to labor regulations, from financial statements to artistic designs, tens of thousands of documents cataloguing every aspect of the formation and operation of these manufactures from their establishment in 1745 through the end of this dissertation in 1815 (and through to the present day) are available to the historian. Of particular relevance to this project have been: Series A and L relating company management to royal officials; Series B and M concerning the internal organization and management of the company; Series H holding correspondence with legislators, regulators, police, suppliers, and others; and Series Y containing scientific and technological documentation. Collectively, these sources allow this dissertation to reconstruct the motivations and rationale behind every major business decision undertaken by this porcelain manufacture throughout the period of study.

To broaden these arguments beyond a single state-run and exceptional manufacture, this dissertation seeks corroboration from private manufactures and merchants in a range of archives. In the Archives of Paris, account books and financial reports preserved as documents related to bankruptcy proceedings reveal what these companies were selling and with whom they engaged in business. The notarial records

of the National Archives shed further light on business organization and contracts and the possessions of several prominent retailers and manufacturers. Finally, the Fonds Alluaud (C2995–3010 and L1246–1248) in the Departmental Archives of the Haute Vienne contain internal records from the porcelain manufacture established in Limoges. More importantly, however, they also contain notebooks in which a manager of that manufacture and owner of a kaolin quarry transcribed his correspondence, revealing ongoing discussions of business strategy between private porcelain manufacturers throughout France and beyond. Scattered archival traces in various municipal and departmental archives have also been incorporated wherever possible to extend this analysis.

The intense interest of the state in supporting the porcelain industry also means the early modern bureaucracy was directly involved in managing it at the national level. At the National Archives, Series F^{12} (especially 1493–1496) contains petitions and decisions relating to the granting of privileges for private porcelain manufacturers throughout the Old Regime. Because much of the oversight of the French porcelain industry was undertaken from within the royal household, further documentation has been compiled in Series O^{1} (2059–2063) for the eighteenth century and O^{2} (913–929) for the early nineteenth century. In the thousands of documents contained in these collections, every aspect of the state effort to create a French porcelain industry is detailed in bureaucratic correspondence, regulations, investigations, purchasing decisions, exhibitions, diplomatic gifts, tariffs, investments, and financial statements that connect the state-run manufacture to private manufactures and establish both under the auspices of a national economic strategy. These documents reveal the extent to which the absolutist state and private capitalists were not opposed but worked hand-in-glove toward their common interests.

Chapter Outline

This dissertation is divided into five chapters that follow the French porcelain industry from the first major commercial and diplomatic imports of porcelain under Louis XIV in the late eighteenth century to the emergence of a new form of luxury capitalism under Napoleon in the early nineteenth century. Though arranged roughly chronologically, each chapter addresses a different problem that characterized the porcelain industry in each period.

The first chapter explores how porcelain was sold at the end of the seventeenth and in the first half of the eighteenth centuries at a time when most porcelain in France was imported from China. Beginning with annual fairs and moving through the establishment of stationary luxury boutiques in Paris, it shows how changes to retailing made possible a broad and public culture of conspicuous consumption. By looking at merchant advertising practices for porcelain in this period, this chapter demonstrates that retailers attempted to establish reputations for taste and knowledge and that they believed their economic prospects depended on their success in conveying that information to consumers.

The second chapter follows the French effort to discover the process for making porcelain from the late seventeenth to the mid eighteenth century. It follows the letters of Jesuits and prisoners of war, the privilege applications of private entrepreneurs, the research of state-sponsored scientists, and ultimately the industrial espionage that made available to consumers a whole range of porcelain materials. This chapter reveals the extent to which the development of French industry took place within inherited structures of the Old Regime and brought the Church, the state, aristocratic patrons, professional scientists, artisanal workers, and private entrepreneurs together in a shared

effort to discover the recipe for porcelain. In doing so, it shows how crucial material qualities and product innovation were to early modern industrialization.

The third chapter takes up this story from the discovery of suitable porcelain recipes in the middle of the eighteenth century to show how the state attempted to establish a reputation for the artistic qualities of French porcelain. By creating a state-run Royal Porcelain Manufacture and infusing its wares with the cultural authority of the king, officials sought to build a model of artistic achievement and establish an official French style of porcelain. To do so required investing in a large and complex manufactory that necessitated new forms of business organization, including vertical integration to replace the role of retailer expertise in reassuring consumers and to assure access to raw materials. As this chapter shows, however, this state-run factory was created and protected specifically so that its reputation would allow private manufactures to flourish.

The fourth chapter opens with a paradox: under the logic of Old Regime institutions, to engender a French porcelain style the Royal Porcelain Manufacture had to have a monopoly on producing within that style, yet the purpose of doing so was so that private producers working within the style would attract customers. At one level, resolving this paradox led to a renegotiation of the role of the state in the economy in the decades surrounding the French Revolution. At a deeper level, however, these arguments led to a new theory of value stemming not from the social hierarchy but from the subjective desires of autonomous consumers. This chapter shows how, with the early emergence of a consumer society that had been made possible by the efforts detailed in the first three chapters, this new concept of value proceeded to reshape how business was conducted.

The final chapter points to the development of a new economic model in the early nineteenth century. In many ways, the Napoleonic approach to the porcelain industry represented a return to Old Regime dirigisme, with the emperor using his cultural authority and courtly and diplomatic spending to create a new style revolving around the iconography of his reign. At the same time, however, these efforts bore the marks of the new ideas of value that had developed during the Revolutionary era. Furthermore, private manufactures now embraced the model the Imperial Porcelain Manufacture provided and adhered to its stylistic authority. As this chapter reveals, while the efforts of merchants, manufacturers, and bureaucrats to facilitate consumption in the eighteenth century had made possible the idea of an autonomous consumer in the Revolution, what was unique to the nineteenth century was the blend of centralized control over style with the dynamic temporality of a consumer society: the controlled luxury market of modern capitalism.

Chapter One

Buying Luxury: Credit, Value, and Reputation in Retail Shopping, c.1660–c.1760

The act of shopping was a rare and personal experience in early modern France. With around 90 percent of the population living in rural areas and 70 percent engaged directly in agricultural production in 1700, and with labor plentiful relative to capital, much of what the average family consumed was grown or made at home.[1] Over the course of the eighteenth century, however, the French increasingly turned to the market to sell the things they made and buy the things they needed.

As the act of shopping became more common and economic transactions more impersonal over the course of the eighteenth century, new institutions had to be imagined to facilitate exchange and draw consumers into the market. While periodic fairs might have met these needs in an earlier era, it was the marchands merciers with their settled boutiques and sterling reputations who made shopping part of everyday life, who assured wary consumers of the symbolic and material qualities of their wares, and who reinforced the necessity of consumption as a social act. Even as these retailers expanded into the field of proto-industrial production and alteration and became icons of taste across Europe, however, they revealed the limits of a merchant economy.

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[1] Jan de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution: Consumer Behavior and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008) 73–82; E Anthony Wrigley, "Urban Growth and Agricultural Change: England and the Continent in the Early Modern Period," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 15, no. 4 (Spring 1985) 718; Robert C Allen, "Economic Structure and Agricultural Productivity in Europe, 1300–1800," *European Review of Economic History* 4, no. 1 (2000) 9.

Expanding Markets and the Need for Marketing

As Philip Hoffman has demonstrated, despite the myth of self-sufficiency, the French were no strangers to exchange. Yet their economic interactions were mostly locally focused and embedded within a network of social relationships forged by ongoing connections built on bonds of trust and reciprocity. Buying and selling directly with someone you knew, and had likely known all your life, was made necessary by the high cost of transportation, scarcity of money, and reliance on credit for even the most modest exchanges.[2] For the minority of the population living in urban areas and dependent on food and other materials carted or floated in from further afield, economic connections were more complex but essentially the same. Credit relationships rested on mutual knowledge of a lender's facilities and borrower's character and were reinforced by continual relations between creditor and debtor that reduced risk and uncertainty.[3] For those fortunate few in the market for goods beyond immediate necessity, a byzantine web of regulations policed both by guilds and the state bolstered trade by assuring consumers of the quality of goods: if you were uncertain whether you could trust the seller, you could hopefully trust the officials who inspected their wares

[2] Philip T Hoffman, *Growth in a Traditional Society: The French Countryside, 1450–1815* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996) 35–49, 69–80. The rural labor market described by Hoffman differed from the more dynamic labor market for urban artisans described by Michael Sonenscher. However, the short-term, frequent, and often combative negotiations Sonenscher points to underscore the efficiency of long-term personal connections in the market. Furthermore, ongoing relationships do not necessitate a reliance on fixed wages but can actually smooth the establishment of market prices. Michael Sonenscher, *Work and Wages: Natural Law, Politics and the Eighteenth-Century French Trades* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 130–209.

[3] Philip T Hoffman, Gilles Postel-Vinay, and Jean-Laurent Rosenthal, *Priceless Markets: The Political Economy of Credit in Paris, 1660–1870* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000) 62–8; Steven Laurence Kaplan, *Provisioning Paris: Merchants and Millers in the Grain and Flour Trade during the Eighteenth Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984) 145–53.

regularly.[4] Of course, the ideal of an orderly and reliable market was always circumscribed. Those offering personal credit and enforcing formal regulation excluded much if not most of the population from their ambit both *de facto* and *de jure*. The remainders—women and children, paupers and prostitutes, brigands and gleaners, moonlighters and mendicants—had always operated between the gaps of the official economy. But throughout the early modern period, familiarity between buyer and seller and the recourse of regulation facilitated transactions by reducing the risk of cheating and fraud. When somebody did need to purchase an item, it was likely either from someone with whom they had long-standing ties or took place under the watchful eyes of the inspectorate.

By the turn of the eighteenth century, however, the boundaries of the economic landscape had expanded to encompass much larger territories populated by unknown economic actors. Within France, though still two centuries shy of forming a truly national market, the economic activity of large regions already revolved around the demand of major urban centers. Throughout the seventeenth century, the combined effects of the Little Ice Age, the Fronde, and frequent warfare blocked many of the channels through which the products of vast agricultural hinterlands flowed into cities like Paris and Lyon.[5] With the turn of the eighteenth century, though, improved climatic

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[4] Eli F Heckscher, *Mercantilism*, trans. Mendel Shapiro (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1935) 1:137–212; Charles Woolsey Cole, *Colbert and a Century of French Mercantilism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939) 2:363–457; Steven L Kaplan, *Bread, Politics and Political Economy in the Reign of Louis XV* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976) 1:1–96; Philippe Minard, *La fortune du colbertisme : État et industrie dans la France des Lumières* (Paris: Fayard, 1998) 151–71.

[5] Jean-Michel Chevet, "National and Regional Corn Markets in France from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of European Economic History* 25, no. 3 (Winter 1996) 681–96; Reynald Abad, *Le grand marché : L'approvisionnement alimentaire de Paris sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris: Fayard, 2002) 15–25; Cormac Ó Gráda and Jean-Michel Chevet, "Famine and Market in *Ancien Régime* France," *Journal of Economic History* 62,

and political conditions and the concerted efforts of Colbertist officials brought a renewed vigor to domestic market integration.[6] Similarly, after the dislocations and disconnections of the seventeenth century, international trade within Europe increasingly intertwined distant producers and consumers across the eighteenth century.[7]

On a far more stunning scale, it was the increase in intercontinental trade that would redefine economic life in the eighteenth century. Following the establishment of maritime trade routes between Europe, Asia, and the Americas at the turn of the sixteenth century, the influx of global goods into European markets increased unabated

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no. 3 (September 2002) 714–8; Geoffrey Parker, *Global Crisis: War, Climate Change and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013) 291–323.

[6] Jean-Michel Chevet and Pascal Saint-Amour, "L'intégration des marchés du blé en France aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles," *Cahiers d'économie et sociologie rurales* 22 (1992) 152–75; Guillaume Daudin, "Domestic Trade and Market Size in Late-Eighteenth-Century France," *Journal of Economic History* 70, no. 3 (September 2010) 716–43; Victoria N Bateman, "The Evolution of Markets in Early Modern Europe, 1350–1800: A Study of Wheat Prices," *Economic History Review* 64, no.2 (2011) 461, 463. For an especially optimistic view, see: Louise A Tilly, "The Food Riot as a Form of Political Conflict in France," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 2, no. 1 (Summer 1971) 35–45. For a pessimistic view, see: David R Weir, "Markets and Mortality in France, 1600–1789," in *Famine, Disease and the Social Order in Early Modern Society*, eds. John Walter and Roger Schofield (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 201–12.

[7] Bateman, "Evolution of Markets," 447–71; Rafael Dobado-González, Alfredo García-Hiernaux and David E Guerrero, "The Integration of Grain Markets in the Eighteenth-Century: Early Rise of Globalization in the West," *Journal of Economic History* 72, no. 3 (September 2012) 671–707; Giovanni Federico, Max-Stephan Schulze and Oliver Volckart, "European Goods Market Integration in the Very Long Run: From the Black Death to the First World War," *Journal of Economic History* 81, no. 1 (March 2021) 276–308. Evidence in favor of European market integration has largely been found by comparing prices for major goods such as wheat or silver in different cities in search of price convergence. Other studies using more diverse baskets of market goods, however, have found weaker evidence for integration prior to the nineteenth century. See: Süleyman Özmucur and Şevket Pamuk, "Did European Commodity Prices Converge during 1500–1800?" in *The New Comparative Economic History: Essays in Honor of Jeffrey G Williamson*, eds. Timothy J Hatton, Kevin H O'Rourke, and Alan M Taylor (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007) 59–85.

throughout the early modern period. Imports from Asia increased twenty-five-fold, accelerating markedly after 1700 (figure 1.1). Had they been distributed evenly among Europe's inhabitants, by the end of the eighteenth century European merchants would have delivered one pound of Asian goods (such as pepper, porcelain, silk, and tea) to every man, woman, and child in Europe every year.[8] Imports from American colonies increased at an even more prodigious rate, with European sugar imports alone quintupling during the eighteenth century to 286,000 tons annually on the eve of the French Revolution.[9] At its peak in 1770, France was consuming 42,000 tons of sugar annually, with the average French person eating two pounds per year while Parisians ate or drank somewhere between a half and one pound of sugar each week.[10] As Sidney Mintz has demonstrated for sugar consumption in early modern Britain, however, simply delivering new commodities to the European market was not enough to ensure consumption. Europeans had to learn to want it.[11]

Wherever these goods came from, the growth of global commerce in this period remade the patterns of economic life. Two key factors determined the shape of market expansion in this period. First, it was driven by the demand of European consumers for

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[8] Jan de Vries, "The Limits of Globalization in the Early Modern World," *Economic History Review* 63, no. 3 (August 2010) 718.

[9] Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492–1800* (New York: Verso, 1997) 403.

[10] Robert Louis Stein, "The French Sugar Business in the Eighteenth Century: A Quantitative Study," *Business History* 22, no. 1 (January 1980) 13; *idem*., *The French Sugar Business in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1988) 163–4. See also: Maud Villeret, *Le goût de l'or blanc : Le sucre en France au XVIIIe siècle* (Rennes, France: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2017).

[11] Sidney W Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Viking, 1985) esp 3–18.

Figure 1.1. Tonnage of goods shipped from Asia to Europe, 1500–1790. Source: Jan de Vries, "Connecting Europe and Asia: A Quantitative Analysis of the Cape-Route Trade, 1497–1795," in *Global Connections and Monetary History, 1470–1800*, eds. Dennis O Flynn, Arturo Giraldez, and Richard von Glahn (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003) 61.

new goods rather than any newfound efficiencies in transportation.[12] Second, it began with elite demand for precious cargo such as silk or silver before transforming the consumption patterns of Europeans of more modest means. For many economic historians, these facts collectively point to the early modern period as the beginning of at least a "soft" globalization as the interdependence and integration of global economic interaction intensified.[13] Another way of conveying what this meant for the French

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[12] Kevin H O'Rourke and Jeffrey G Williamson, "After Columbus: Explaining Europe's Overseas Trade Boom, 1500–1800," *Journal of Economic History* 62, no. 2 (June 2002) 417–56.

[13] The term "soft globalization" was coined by Jan de Vries to describe global connection as a process visible in patterns of interaction in contrast to a "hard globalization" that is already established and manifest in price data: de Vries, "Limits of Globalization," 710–33. For supporters of the eighteenth century as a period of soft globalization, see: Dennis O Flynn and Arturo Giráldez, "Path Dependence, Time Lags and the Birth of Globalisation: A Critique of O'Rourke and Williamson," *European Review of Economic*

economy is that over the course of the eighteenth century, the proportion of gross domestic product directly involved in international trade doubled to around 12 percent—which is to say that one livre in eight was now spent on a something grown or made for or in a different country.[14]

For an economy whose transactions had been long been localized and whose production was mired in tradition, the expansion of the market to include new people and new goods revolutionized how people traded. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, the earliest political economists had already recognized the difficulties this upheaval would pose for consumers, producers, merchants, and by extension the fortunes of France itself. In his 1615 *Treatise on Political Economy*, Antoine de Montchrétien described the problem French consumers faced in a globalizing market as one of information. The value of any good, he argued, is determined by the uses to which it is put. But when encountering an imported good on the market, a consumer could only assess its external "form," "they could not tell by eye" what its true composition was.[15] French consumers of imported goods were "people without knowledge."[16] To stanch the inundation of "counterfeit" products by which foreigners "cheat" and "defraud" French consumers, Montchrétien advised that the king forbid

History 8, no. 1 (April 2004) 81–108; Pim de Zwart, "Globalization in the Early Modern Era: New Evidence from the Dutch-Asiatic Trade, c. 1600–1800," *Journal of Economic History* 76, no. 2 (June 2016) 520–58. For supporters of the nineteenth century as the beginning of hard globalization, see: Kevin H O'Rourke and Geoffrey G Williamson, "When Did Globalisation Begin?" *European Review of Economic History* 6, no. 1 (April 2002) 23–50.

[14] Guillaume Daudin, *Commerce et prospérité : La France au XVIIIe siècle*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2011) 191–2.

[15] Antoine de Montchrestien, *Traicté de l'économie politique, dedié en 1615 au Roy et à la Reyne mère du Roy* (Paris: E Plon, Nourrit et cie, 1889) 54. [forme] [on ne les peut discerner à l'œil]

[16] *Ibid*., 55. [des gens sans connaissance]

the importation of foreign goods and erect a framework of regulations to guide manufacturing and commerce to the benefit of the people and their prince.[17] Indeed, it was this same concern that had led Henry IV's Controller General of Commerce, Barthélemy de Laffemas, to "police" domestic manufacturing and reduce foreign imports.[18] Ultimately, the twin pillars of mercantilism (protectionism and regulation) in France had their origins not in bullionism or the balance of trade, but a concern for the plight of French consumers and producers in the face of globalization.[19] Yet these early political economists also pointed to the crucial role of merchants who at fairs and boutiques served as "people of knowledge," those with the information to accurately evaluate the true quality and value of goods. For both Montchrétien and Laffemas,

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[17] *Ibid*., 53–8, 69–72. [contrefaits] [tromper] [frauder]

[18] Barthélémy de Laffemas, *L'incrédulité, ou l'ignorance de ceux qui ne veulent cognoistre le bien et repos de l'Estat et veoir renaistre la vie heureuse des François* (Paris: Lamet et Pierre Mettayer, 1600) 2–9; *idem*., *Les discours d'une liberté générale, & vie heureuse pour le bien du peuple* (Paris: Guillaume Binet, 1601); *idem*., "Recueil présenté au Roy, de ce qui se passe en l'Assemblée du Commerce," in *Archives curieuses de l'histoire de France depuis Louis XI jusqu'à Louis XVIII*, eds. ML Cimber and F Danjou (Paris: Beauvais and Delloye, 1837) 14:219–33.

[19] The concept of mercantilism inherited from Adam Smith's critique of the "mercantile system" (that it conflated money with wealth, sought to increase money and thus wealth through a favorable balance of trade, and through government intervention obtain this balance of trade) has been largely abandoned by historians of economic thought in recent decades. In its place, these historians have sought to explain early modern political economy as a pragmatic response to early modern economic conditions. What I draw attention to here is the underrecognized centrality of consumption in early modern French economic thinking. On critiques of "mercantilism" as a concept and as a pragmatic reaction, see: Alain Guery, "Industrie et colbertisme : Origines de la forme française de la politique industrielle ?" *Histoire, Économie et Société* 8, no. 3 (1989) 297–312; Lars Magnusson, *Mercantilism: The Shaping of an Economic Language* (New York: Routledge, 1994) 21–59; *idem., The Political Economy of Mercantilism* (New York: Routledge, 2015); Philippe Minard, "Économie de marché et État en France : Mythes et légendes du colbertisme." *L'économie politique* 37 (January 2008) 77–94; Philip J Stern and Carl Wennerlind, eds. *Mercantilism Reimagined: Political Economy in Early Modern Britain and Its Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014) 3–22.

rescuing the French economy would require elevating retailers to a position of trust, using their reputations to reestablish confidence in the market.[20]

The problem Montchrétien and Laffemas identified was how to communicate information about goods to consumers: their material qualities, their symbolic meanings, their uses, their values. Facilitating the flow of such information in an era of increasing trade and early industrialization would require a range of efforts by diverse actors in the French economy and government. But with the early appearance of global goods in the French marketplace, it was the elite merchants who were first poised to position themselves as bastions of knowledge and to sell this expertise to consumers.

Fairs and Transaction Costs

Fairs were perfectly suited to the kind of exchange that prevailed in France before the eighteenth century. Everywhere the volume of trade was insufficient to support retailers year round, periodic fairs offered all the benefits of commerce at a level that could be sustained by diffuse and localized demand.[21] Since the Middle Ages, towns and lords had constructed a complex calendar of frequent local markets where people could purchase the necessities of daily life punctuated by seasonal fairs that gathered the economic community of an entire region together for a single event at which buyers and sellers could meet and benefit from full knowledge of prices, quantities, and competition.

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[20] Montchrétien, *Traicté de l'économie politique*, 129–41; Barthélémy de Laffemas, *Les trésors et richesses pour mettre l'Estat en splendeur, & monstrer au vray la ruyne des François par le traffic & negoce des estrangers* (Paris: Estienne Preousteau, 1598) 11–20.

[21] Paolo Malanima, *Pre-Modern European Economy: One Thousand Years (10th–19th Centuries)* (Boston: Brill, 2009) 185–7.

Fernand Braudel described the activities that took place at these fairs as a pyramid.[22] At the peak of his pyramid was the rarified financial market where an international network of merchants met to settle its accounts.[23] Money remained scarce in early modern Europe, what money did exist was made in countless mints recognized by different kingdoms, and overland travel with any quantity of specie was dangerous to the point of foolhardiness. Rather than let such impediments slow their business, European merchants established extensive credit networks using letters of exchange. Unbound from the confines of hard currency, merchants could trade freely with each other through these promissory notes and simply balance their accounts at the big annual fairs. As with any form of credit, however, the functioning of these financial instruments depended on trust between parties and, by extension, on their information about each other. Fairs facilitated such trust by providing public meeting points where partners could resolve issues, pay debts, and negotiate the exchange rates that would underpin their commercial relations for the ensuing year.[24]

At the base of Braudel's pyramid were the thousands of commodity fairs throughout France at which the agricultural and manufacturing output of dispersed

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[22] Fernand Braudel, *The Wheels of Commerce*, vol. 2 of *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th–18th Century*, trans. Siân Reynolds (New York: Harper & Row, 1982) 91.

[23] On financial activity at fairs, see: Robert-Henri Bautier, "The Fairs of Champagne," in *Essays in French Economic History*, ed. Rondo Cameron (Homewood, IL: Richard D Irwin, 1970) 57–8; Paul Butel, *L'économie française au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: SEDES, 1993) 156–60; Laurence Fontaine, *History of Pedlars in Europe*, trans. Vicki Whittaker (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996) 121–39.

[24] Lucien Gillard, "Un cas de construction sociale de la confiance : les lettres de change dans les foires de Lyon au XVIe siècle," in *La construction sociale de la confiance*, eds. Philippe Bernoux and Jean-Michel Servet (Paris: Association d'Économie Financière, 1997) 151–60; Henri Dubois, "Les foires dans la France médiévale," in *Genèse des marchés*, eds. François Gayard, Patrick Fridenson, and Albert Rigaudière (Paris: Institut de la Gestion Publique et du Développement Économique, 2015) 37–48.

producers was sold to wholesale merchants. Commodity fairs were crucial for the integration of regional and transnational markets because they provided spaces where the products of each locale could meet the collective purchasing power of distant consumers through these wholesaling intermediaries.[25] Furthermore, the extension of the market created opportunities for farmers and manufacturers to begin specializing in whatever goods they excelled at producing without running up against the sharp limits of local demand.[26] Given the disjointed and opaque nature of production in the early modern period, however, attempts at such exchanges would have quickly confronted the same problems of mistrust and ignorance that dogged all early modern transactions. According to the future Controller General of Finances Anne Robert Jacques Turgot, commodity fairs (he used the term "markets") made exchange more efficient because they brought buyers and sellers together and ensured competition in their dealings. Buyers would come in large numbers knowing that the many sellers there would be forced by competition to sell at a fair price; sellers would come in large numbers knowing that they would find enough buyers competing to pay the market rate.[27] These fairs also ensured transparency for participants, with buyers able to inspect samples before purchase and everyone sharing an interest in rooting out the counterfeits and frauds that threatened to jam up the smooth functioning of the fair.[28] Following

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[25] On wholesale fairs, see: Dominique Margairaz, *Foires et marchés dans la France préindustrielle* (Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1988) 101–68.

[26] On the importance of demand for this type of "Smithian industrialization," see: Patrick Verley, *L'échelle du monde : Essai sur l'industrialisation de l'Occident* (Paris: Gallimard, 2013) .

[27] Anne Robert Jacques Turgot, "Foire," in *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une société des gens de lettres*, eds. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert (Paris: Briasson, 1757) 7:39–41. [marchés]

[28] Margairaz, *Foires et marchés*, 215–30.

Laffemas's recommendations, by the eighteenth century a cadre of state inspectors also examined the merchandise to uncover any evidence of misdealing and reinforce public faith in the market.[29]

For economic historians, such fairs are an example of an economic institution. Following the New Institutional Economics developed in the late twentieth century, many economic historians have become attuned to the problem of uncertainty in markets. Drawing on the concept of transaction costs first developed by Ronald Coase, they highlight the many frictions caused by uncertainty that can slow or stop economic exchange.[30] At their core, transactions costs are a problem of information: What goods are available? At what price? At what quality? Who has them? Can I trust the other person to deliver them? Can I trust the other person to pay for them? Resolving these questions is costly in terms of the time and money that must go into finding answers, and it almost always leaves a residual risk in what is simply unknowable. According to these economists, institutions are developed—some formal and top-down such as laws, others informal and bottom-up such as codes of honor—to mitigate the impact of transaction costs on the economy by facilitating the flow of information and offering assurances that contracts will be fulfilled.[31] Economies with efficient institutions,

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[29] Philippe Minard, "Réputation, normes et qualité dans l'industrie textile française au XVIIIe siècle," in *La qualité des produits en France (XVIIIe–XXe siècles)*, ed. Alessandro Stanziani (Paris: Belin, 2003) 69–89.

[30] RH Coase, "The Nature of the Firm," *Economica* 4, no. 16 (November 1937) 386–405; *idem*., "The Problem of Social Cost," *Journal of Law and Economics* 3 (October 1960) 1–44.

[31] Oliver E Williamson, *The Economic Institutions of Capitalism: Firms, Markets, Relational Contracting* (New York: Free Press, 1985) 15–22, 44–52; Douglass C North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 3–4, 36–53; Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 13–5; Sue ES Crawford and Elinor Ostrom, "A Grammar of Institutions," *American Political Science Review* 89,

historians adopting this position argue, are able to develop expanded exchange and thus production and consumption, which is to say that these institutions generate faster economic growth.[32] From this perspective, by enabling merchants at the top of Braudel's pyramid to resolve credit accounts and set rates for the coming year and, at the bottom, by providing a space where wholesale buyers and sellers could inspect each other's wares within sight of observers and with complete knowledge of all transacted prices, quantities, and qualities, fairs were an institution that fostered efficient transactions and engendered economic growth given the existing forms of exchange and frictions of the early modern economy.[33]

There remained, however, the middle band of Braudel's pyramid: retail shopping. On the one hand, fairs were places for serious business, a

> gathering of Merchants, of Manufacturers, of artisans, of workers, & of many other people of every status, & of every profession, countrymen or foreigners, who come together each year in a certain place on certain days; the ones to bring, sell, and deliver there their materials, manufactures, works, merchandise, and commodities; and the others to buy them there.[34]

no. 3 (September 1995) 582–600; Oliver E Williamson, *The Mechanisms of Governance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) 3–10, 54–61.

[32] Douglass C North and Robert Paul Thomas, *The Rise of the Western World: A New Economic History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1973) 1–3, 8.

[33] On early modern fairs as an economic institution, see: Guillaume Daudin, "Coûts de transaction et croissance : un modèle à partir de la situation de la France du XVIIIe siècle," *Revue Française d'Économie* 17, no. 2 (2002) 3–36; SR Epstein, *Freedom and Growth: The Rise of States and Markets in Europe, 1300–1750* (New York: Routledge, 2000) 73–88; Sheilagh Ogilvie, *Institutions and European Trade: Merchant Guilds, 1000–1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011) 344–90.

[34] Jacques Savary des Bruslons, *Dictionnaire universel de commerce : Contenant tout ce qui concerne le commerce qui se fait dans les quatre parties du monde, par terre, par mer, de proche en proche, & par des voyages de long cours, tant en gros qu'en détail* (Paris: Veuve Estienne, 1741) 2:1275. [concours de Marchands, de Manufacturiers, d'artisans, d'ouvriers, & de plusieurs autres personnes de tout état, & de toute profession, regnicoles ou étrangers, qui se trouvent chaque année dans certain lieu à certains jours ; les uns pour y apporter, vendre & débiter leurs étoffes, manufactures, ouvrages, marchandises, & denrées ; et les autres pour les y acheter.]

But these fairs were also part of the social fabric of the entire community. Having evolved out of pilgrimages and festivals, they marked turning points in the religious and agricultural calendars and offered a place where people came to socialize, "just out of curiosity, & to take part in the entertainments there, that ordinarily accompany these sorts of assemblies."[35] Just as farmers and artisans brought the products of their labor to fairs because they knew they would find plenty of willing buyers, so too would retailers of consumer goods have come to fairs because they knew they would find plenty of eager customers. It was at these fairs where French consumers would have first encountered the exotic goods of global trade.[36]

Most fairs were fleeting events, a single day of harried haggling packed up and moved out by the next morning. But a few fairs were mammoth events, drawing tens of thousands of people from distant homes for weeks at a time, impromptu cities of commerce and spectacle where crowds ranging in status from the highest nobility to the lowest paupers mingled in the shade of endless rows of merchant tents. At the pinnacle were the fairs found adjacent to Paris, where luxury took center stage.

The Saint-Germain Fair traced its roots back to the fifteenth century and, from February 3 through 17 every year, welcomed high-end merchants from Paris, the cities of northern France, and urban centers beyond to sell their wares tax free on the city's Left Bank. For many, the Saint-Germain Fair was the social spectacle of the year. Crowds came to see "comedians, acrobats, tumblers, puppeteers, & other such people who contribute to the entertainment of the Public." As Inspector General of

[35] Savary des Bruslons, *Dictionnaire universel*, 2:1275. Laurence Fontaine, *Le marché : histoire et usages d'une conquête sociale* (Paris: Gallimard, 2014) 49–53; Margairaz, *Foires et marchés*, 193–214. [seulement par curiosité, & pour y prendre part aux divertissemens, qui accompagnent ordinairement ces sortes d'assemblées]

[36] Butel, *L'économie française*, 153–6; Daudin, *Commerce et prosperité*, 100–2.

Manufactures Jacques Savary des Bruslons ventured, "that's maybe one of the things that contributes more to the big business, that's done here," bringing together

> The Nobility, the wealthiest people, & the most well accommodated from the Provinces, [who] regard the Fairs as parties and pleasures, & flooding there in crowds, less to make purchases of things, that they might find, & more conveniently, & more cheaply in their neighborhood, than to take part in the entertainments, that they know they will find there.[37]

With attractions such as the Comédie Française and the Opéra set up alongside elephants and brothels, the Saint-Germain Fair was a magnet of entertainment that pulled the royal family, street urchins, and everyone in between together for a shared social event, one where libidinal pleasures and drunken delights were granted free reign.[38] But, above all else, the Fair was a marketplace, one that could continue to attract crowds with such elaborate extravaganzas because doing so drew in customers. As one critic described the relationship between spectacle and sales:

> We will be able to amuse ourselves there;
> It's the place of gluttony,
> The place for affairs,
> Where the time can pass well
> If you want to spend the money.[39]

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[37] Savary des Bruslons, *Dictionnaire universel*, 2:1277. [des Comédiens, des Danseurs de corde, des Batteleurs, des Joueurs de marionnettes, & autres tels gens qui contribue au divertissement du Public] [c'est peut-être une des choses qui contribue davantage au grand commerce, qui s'y fait] [La Noblesse, les personnes les plus riches, & les plus accommodées des Provinces, [qui] regardant les Foires comme des parties des plaisirs, & y courant en foule, moins pour y faire des emplettes des choses, qu'elles y trouveroient peut-être, & plus commodément, & à meilleur marché dans leur voisinage, que pour prendre part aux divertissemens, qu'ils sçavent qu'elles y trouveront.]

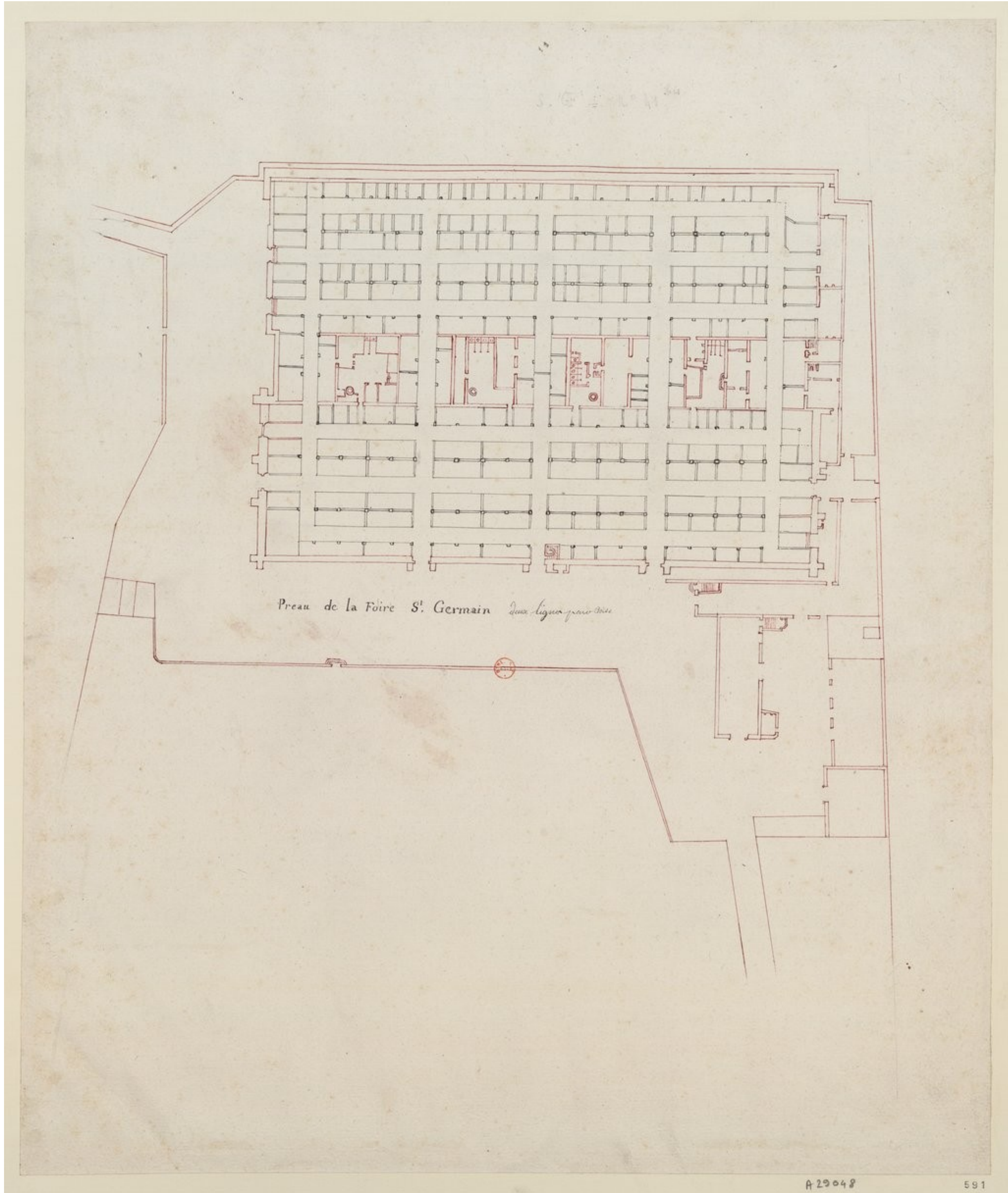
[38] Stéphane Castelluccio, *Le prince et le marchand : Le commerce de luxe chez les marchands merciers parisiens pendant le règne de Louis XIV* (Paris: Kronos, 2014) 160–3.

[39] François Colletet, *Le Tracas de Paris, ou la seconde partie de la ville de Paris* (Paris: Antoine de Rafflé, 1680) 2. [Nous y pourrons nous divertir ;/C'est le lieu de la goinfrerie,/Le lieu de la galanterie,/Où le temps se peut bien passer/Si l'on veut argent débourser.]

The continued success of the fair suggests that while Parisians may have appreciated the opportunity for gluttony and affairs, they were even more eager to spend the money.

One of the fair's greatest sights was the smorgasbord of exotic goods imported from around the world. At the center of the Saint-Germain Fair sat a grand hall of thirteen thousand square feet apportioned into row after row of individual stalls.[40] In 1810, Parisian architect Hippolyte Destailleur depicted the central courtyard of the fair as hosting 220 stalls, some as small as a stairwell and others many times larger, with narrow alleys running between them that would have channeled the flood of customers through the maze of offerings and toward eight large central shops, each of which offered its clients secluded internal rooms (figure 1.2). Radiating out of this central hub like spokes on a tire were seven roads lined on both sides with even more merchant shops.[41] In an engraving depicting the fair as it may have looked in the seventeenth century (figure 1.3), past the stages of acrobats and actors and beyond the carriages of France's wealthiest citizens, sit scores of stalls representing all the finest products of France and the world. Around the perimeter are grouped more common goods such as fine linens and faïence, while toward the center a visitor could find some of the most accomplished jewelers, sculptors, clockmakers, wigmakers, and perfumers in France, with plenty of Spanish wine and strong beer to lubricate the wheels of commerce and even a smattering of surgeons should the need arise. But within this exposition of French industry, visitors would have also encountered foreign goods in sections housing merchants from places like Germany, Britain, and the Netherlands. Indeed,

[40] Savary des Bruslons, *Dictionnaire universel*, 2:1286.
[41] *Ibid*.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 1.2. Hippolyte Destailleur, *Paris* (1810) 4:591. Ink drawing of the central courtyard of the Saint-Germain Fair. Courtesy Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 1.3. *La foire Saint Germain au XVIIe siècle*. Courtesy Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

itinerant merchants flocked to the Saint-Germain Fair each year "in order to drop off a large flux of these foreign goods" directly to Europe's largest luxury market without having to pay the customary taxes required to do so.[42] And right at the entrance, visitors would have found "Merchandise from China."

In addition to the items one would expect to find at such a large shopping center, the Saint-Germain Fair was also a place for the unexpected. It was here in 1672 that

[42] *Ibid*., 2:1285. [pour laisser un grand débit à ces marchandises étrangers]

Parisians were first introduced to their future obsession, coffee.[43] It was also here where we find the first instances of porcelain being sold to the public. A poem from 1664, for instance, included porcelain among the rare luxuries found at the fair:

> You see there on all sides,
> A hundred pleasant diversities...
> Beautiful ribbons, fine handkerchiefs
> Porcelains, Mirrors...
> In short the seven wonders of the world,
> Which quite surprise the eyes,
> And that you see at a just price.[44]

By 1669, Louis XIV was buying his porcelain at the fair.[45] And throughout the eighteenth century, porcelain remained a fixture of the fair's offerings that highlighted the diversity of its products and the dignity of its clients.[46] The frontispiece for renowned dramatist Jean-François Regnard's 1695 comedy *La Foire Saint-Germain* (figure 1.4) captures this relationship between the fair as site of exoticism and exclusivity. In the engraving's foreground appears a crowd of elite Parisians surrounding a man in fine foreign clothing being served what appears to be coffee, likely in porcelain cups. All around them wait limitless luxuries and attentive merchants. Displayed at the center of these wonders as the only concrete form

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[43] Joan DeJean, *The Essence of Style: How the French Invented High Fashion, Fine Food, Chic Cafés, Style, Sophistication, and Glamour* (New York: Free Press, 2005) 238–44; Castelluccio, *Prince et le marchand*, 156–60.

[44] Claude Parfaict, *Mémoires pour servir l'histoire des spectacles de la foire* (Paris: Briasson, 1743) 1:l–li. [Qu'on y voit de tous les côtez,/Cent plaisantes diversités.../Les beaux rubans, les fins mouchoirs/Les porcelaines, les miroirs.../Bref les sept merveilles du monde,/Dont très-bien des yeux font surpris,/Et que l'on voit à juste-prix.]

[45] Castelluccio, *Prince et le marchand*, 148.

[46] Henri Sauval, *Histoire et recherches des antiquités de la ville de Paris* (Paris: Charles Moette, 1724) 1:665; *La folie du jour ou Promenade à la Foire Saint-Germain* (Paris: Valade, 1770) 7–8.

Figure 1.4. Evaristo Gherardi, ed., *Le théâtre italien de Gherardi, ou Le recueil général de toutes les Comédies & Sçenes Françoises joüées par les Comédiens Italiens du Roy, pendant tout le temps qu'ils ont été au service de sa Majesté*, 5th ed. (Amsterdam, Michel Charles le Cene, 1721) 6: 100. Courtesy Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

embodying the otherwise undifferentiated mass of commodities offered for sale, sits a porcelain vase.

What this frontispiece and descriptions of the Saint-Germain Fair reveal is the socialization of consumption. As the act of shopping itself became a public spectacle it drew more visitors to the fair who were eager to participate in this social event, as observers but also as consumers. Whereas for Savary des Bruslons it was the presence of other entertainments that lured people who spent money while they were there, other commentators noted a trend of the show of spending money itself being the main attraction. Each of the hundreds of shops and stalls contributed to this display, trying to top their neighbors in an effort "to use contrasts, & to strike a picturesque style that pleases the eye, & that can amuse the imagination of frivolous men."[47] A guidebook commented that "the shops here are very clean, well-lit at night, & full of rich merchandise, & a lot of curiosities, which is why people flock here in crowds."[48] It was at night that the fair really came to life. In an era where darkness still dominated, the nightly illumination of merchandise in the shops captivated the public and drew them like moths to a flame.[49] For Savary des Bruslons, it was "when the day is just about to end, which is when the elite, especially the Ladies, usually enter, the fair never being

[47] Jacques-François Blondel, *Cours d'architecture, ou Traité de la décoration, distribution et construction des bâtiments* (Paris: Desaint, 1771?) 2:433. [user des contrastes, & saisir un genre pittoresque qui flatte l'œil, & qui puisse égayer l'imagination des hommes frivoles.]

[48] Louis Liger, *Le voyageur fidèle, ou le guide des étrangers dans la ville de Paris* (Paris: Pierre Ribou, 1715) 161. [les boutiques y sont très propres, beaucoup illuminées le soir, & remplies de riches marchandises, & de quantité de curiositez, ce qui fait qu'on y vient en foule.]

[49] Daniel Roche, *A History of Everyday Things: The Birth of Consumption in France, 1600–1800*, trans. Brian Pearce (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 110–23.

more beautiful than under the candlelight" flickering from the shops.[50] Another guidebook advised that it was only after the closing of the day's other performances, when shopping was the sole remaining attraction, that the fair put on its greatest show:

> The biggest crowd of people doesn't arrive until 8 in the evening, when the performances and acrobatics are finished. All the shops are lit up by candles lined up very neatly, & then the throng is so big, that you can hardly split it, in order to pass...Everything there is pell-mell...Those who don't have a companion, or anything else to do, post themselves in a boutique, from where they review the passersby. But others who are in a group, especially with Ladies, sit in a shop, & buy something from there to play with. Whoever gets the thing plays with it, holds on to it, or sometimes presents it to one of the Ladies who are there, if he is interested in her...10 o'clock sounds, each retires to their own part of town, & they close up all the shops.[51]

For these flaneurs *avant la lettre*, the person, the crowd, the shops, and the merchandise were all wound up in a single irresistible experience.

While the exotic and expensive goods available for sale made the fair worth visiting, the opposite was also true. People came to fairs like those at Saint-Germain because they knew they would be able to purchase all manner of goods easily and confidently there, which is to say that as an institution these fairs reduced the transaction costs of consumers. At the same time, the presence of these goods within the

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[50] Savary des Bruslons, *Dictionnaire universel*, 2:1286–7. [lorsque le jour est sur le point de finir, qui est le tems que les personnes de qualité, particulièrement les Dames, ont coutume d'y entrer, la foire n'étant jamais plus belle qu'aux flambeaux].

[51] Joachim Christoph Nemeitz, *Séjour de Paris, c'est à dire instructions fidèles pour les Voiageurs de condition, comment ils se doivent conduire, s'ils veulent faire un bon usage de leur tems & argent, durant leur séjour à Paris* (Leide, Netherlands: Jean Van Abcoude, 1727) 1:171–2. [La plus grande affluence du monde ne commence que sur les 8 heures du soir, quand les spectacles & les danses de corde sont finies. Toutes les boutiques sont illuminées de chandelles très bien rangées, & alors la presse est si grande, qu'on a peine à la fendre, pour passer...Tout y est pêle-mêle...Ceux qui n'ont point de compagnon, ni d'autre occupation, se postent dans une boutique, d'où ils font la revuë des passins. Mais d'autres qui sont en compagnie, principalement avec des Dames, s'asseint dans une boutique, & y achètent quelque chose de quoi jouër. Celui qui gagne la chose mise au jeu, la retient, ou il en fait quelquefois présent à une des Dames qui y sont présentes, s'il a de la complaisance pour elle...Les 10 heures étant sonnées, chacun se retire à quartier, & on ferme toutes les boutiques.]

social spectacle of the fair created new information about them by investing the prestige and excitement of the fair into the things found there.

Although the behavioral models deployed by the New Institutional Economics differ in key respects from those of neoclassical economics, they nonetheless inherited a conception of rationality that limits its analysis of consumption to maximizing utility within given constraints. From its founding in the late nineteenth century, neoclassical economics declared the maximization of pleasure, particularly through the consumption of commodities, to be *the* central problem of economics.[52] At the same time, neoclassical economists recognized that pleasure itself is not an observable or quantifiable fact. But prices are.[53] In an effort to establish mathematical and scientific rigor, neoclassical economics developed a theory of demand in which the consumer sought to maximize his or her utility within a set of preexisting preferences and constraints.[54] By the time neoclassical economics attained hegemony within the discipline following the Second World War, it treated acts of consumption as a "revealed preference" of "*a priori*" constraints.[55] Tastes could cease to matter entirely; there were only relative prices and information.[56] The introduction of transaction costs

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[52] Stanley W Jevons, *The Theory of Political Economy*, 4th ed. (London: Macmillan & Co, 1924) 37.

[53] Alfred Marshall, *Principles of Economics: An Introductory Volume*, 8th ed. (New York: Macmillan Co, 1948) 15.

[54] On the development of neoclassical utility theory, see: George J Stigler, *Essays in the History of Economics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965) 66–154.

[55] Paul A Samuelson, "Consumption Theory in Terms of Revealed Preference," *Economica* 15, no. 60 (November 1948) 243–53; Gerard Debreu, *Theory of Value: An Axiomatic Analysis of Economic Equilibrium* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1959) 50.

[56] George J Stigler and Gary S Becker, "De Gustibus Non Est Disputandum," *American Economic Review* 67, no. 2 (March 1977) 76–90. North rejected this last view, arguing that many historical developments can only be explained by changing tastes, although he did not develop a theory of how tastes may change: North, *Institutions*, 84–6.

to neoclassical utility theory emphasizes that information about the suitability of a particular commodity to satisfy a desire is costly, but it takes the desire itself as fixed, preexistent, assumed. As Alfred Marshall warned, however, the method of neoclassical economics is mechanical, its scope is limited to the study of individual actions within narrow constraints. To explain economic change over time these actions must be situated within their historical context.[57]

As Alessandro Stanziani has argued, the difficulty institutional economics faces when applied to premodern economies is that it reifies the very categories it seeks to explain. Information, in particular, becomes both a self-evident and correspondingly ambiguous category. Information about what? What would a consumer want to know about a commodity? Such meaning cannot be assumed but is the question the economic historian must ask.[58] In other words, while New Institutional Economics offers a method for identifying the existence of and responses to the frictions and impediments involved in the process of economic exchange, the content of these categories remains outside the scope of its analysis.

Nearly a century before the development of the New Institutional Economics and its focus on how transaction costs are mitigated in economies, there was already an Institutional Economics interested in economic behavior within society more broadly

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[57] Marshall, *Principles* 762–80. Coase expressed a similar concern: Ronald Coase, "The New Institutional Economics," *American Economic Review* 88, no. 2 (May 1998) 72–4.

[58] Alessandro Stanziani, "Information, institutions et temporalité : Quelques remarques critiques sur l'usage de la nouvelle économie de l'information en histoire," *Revue de synthèse* 4, no. 1–2 (January–June 2000) 117–55; *ibid.*, "Information économique et institutions : Analyses historiques et modèles économiques," in *L'information économique, XVIe–XIXe siècle*, eds. Dominique Margairaz and Philippe Minard (Paris: Comité pour l'Histoire Économique et Financière de la France, 2006) 17–35.

construed.[59] Although the division between these two schools can be overstated, Malcolm Rutherford has argued that taken together the Old and the New Institutionalist Economics can complement and balance each other.[60] If the New Institutional Economics can show us *how* information is communicated and *why* institutions are created to facilitate it, the Old Institutional Economics can show us *what* information is communicated and *who* creates it.

In perhaps the most famous concept from the Old Institutional Economics, Thorstein Veblen suggested it was conspicuous consumption—the demonstration of one's social standing through the public display of luxury goods—that was responsible for much of the utility and thus value of a commodity.[61] Although Veblen and his male students fleetingly raised the question of how consumers were supposed to learn which goods conveyed what social meanings, such issues remained outside the proper interests of male economists in the twentieth century.[62] Instead, further development of a theory of the institutional framework of consumption fell to a cohort of female economists.[63] For these authors, the question of what to consume was not so simple as determining the value of a particular quality of a particular good, but of the values that

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[59] For a statement of principles, see: John R Commons, "Institutional Economics," *American Economic Review* 21 (December 1931) 648–57; *idem.*, *Institutional Economics: It's Place in Political Economy* (New York: Macmillan, 1934) 1–12.

[60] Malcolm Rutherford, *Institutions in Economics: The Old and the New Institutionalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 173–81.

[61] Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (New York: Modern Library, 1934) 68–114.

[62] *Ibid.*, 50; Wesley Mitchell, "The Backward Art of Spending Money," *American Economic Review* 2, no. 2 (1912) 269–81.

[63] Attilio Trezzini, "Early Contributions to the Economics of Consumption as a Social Phenomenon," *European Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 23, no. 2 (2016) 272–96; Malcolm Rutherford, *The Institutionalist Movement in American Economics, 1918–1947: Science and Social Control* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011) 47.

determined what qualities matter, what they mean, and how a consumer must learn these underlying motivations before he or she ever sets foot in the marketplace.[64]

For one of these economists, Hazel Kyrk, the problem of deciding what to consume was a problem that only emerged with the development of a consumer economy. She held that there are three levels of decisions consumers must make and separate institutions that serve to facilitate each. At the most routine and visible level, consumers enter a market with a set budget and ideas about what ends they are seeking. From this point, shopping is simply a matter of constrained utility maximization in which individual consumers weigh the various qualities and prices of available goods to decide on their optimum market basket. Institutions can make this type of decision more efficient by making information about quality and price readily available to consumers. But for Kyrk this was the least interesting aspect of a modern consumer society.[65] Far more important, she argued, are the social influences that shape what ends a consumer seeks and to what uses they put their purchased goods. Framing the question this way introduces a whole range of social influences on practices of consumption, some visible (such as advertising or fashion magazines) and some invisible (such as habit or social influence). For Kyrk, the central focus of economists thus ought to be the dynamic social process by which consumers seek meaning and identity through commodities, the valuation that is attached to those commodities as a

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[64] Theresa S McMahon, *Social and Economic Standards of Living* (Boston: DC Heath, 1925); Elizabeth Ellis Hoyt, *Consumption in Our Society* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1938); Margaret G Reid, *Consumers and the Market* (New York: FS Crofts, 1938); Elizabeth W Gilboy, *A Primer on the Economics of Consumption* (New York: Random House, 1968).

[65] Thorstein Veblen shared this critique of the scope of neoclassical economics. See: Thorstein Veblen, "Why Is Economics Not an Evolutionary Science?" *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 12, no. 4 (July 1898) 389; *idem*., "The Limitations of Marginal Utility," *Journal of Political Economy* 17 (1909) 629.

result, and the economic system that emerges from this interaction between consumers and goods.[66]

From Kyrk's perspective, the true importance of the fair as a site of consumption would not be the way competition and regulation reassured consumers about the origins, material quality, and prices of the goods sold there. It would be the way this social event communicated what goods were available, what meanings they carried, and how and by whom they were used. If the spectacle of these goods is what drew crowds in the first place, it was the spectacle of the crowd that gave value to these goods. The ephemerality and exclusivity of the fair bestowed its cultural value on the objects sold there.

The importance of this sense of ephemerality and exclusivity can be seen by comparing the Saint-Germain Fair to Paris's other great annual fair, the Saint-Laurent Fair. Located in a tree-speckled field just northwest of the city, the Saint-Laurent Fair offered the same tax exemptions to foreign merchants, the same theatrical and acrobatic spectacles, the same opportunities for chemical and sexual excess, and the same dense clustering of exotic consumption as the Saint-Germain Fair.[67] Despite these similarities, however, the Saint-Laurent Fair suffered in part from its distance from the more fashionable part of Paris, but also from the fact that it began each June 28 and continued for at least six weeks, sometimes stretching into October.[68] Lacking the ephemerality of

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[66] Hazel Kyrk, *A Theory of Consumption* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1923).

[67] Castelluccio, *Prince et le marchand*, 170–6.

[68] Robert de Hesseln, *Dictionnaire universel de la France, contenant la description géographique & historique du Royaume ; l'état de sa population actuelle, de son clergé, de ses troupes, de sa marine, de ses finances, de ses tribunaux, & de ses autres parties du Gouvernement* (Paris: Desaint, 1771) 5:153.

Saint-Germain, its allure as an exclusive destination flagged proportionally as its duration dragged into months. Saint-Laurent suffered progressive decline throughout the eighteenth century with the increasing presence of spectacle as a daily element of urban life: "the Boulevards have entirely destroyed this Fair, because they have permitted these little spectacles, to settle there permanently, while previously they could only appear at the Fairs." With luxury shopping increasingly woven into the tapestry of Parisian life, the Saint-Germain Fair also saw its fortunes decline in the face of "diverse boutiques of different types, independent of those of the outside Merchants, who all together are unable to get an interested glance."[69] Both fairs ultimately succumbed to the same malady: they had helped instantiate social consumption and became victims of their own success as such consumption became commonplace.

The growth of consumer demand and continuous commerce made what had once been a rare and brief moment of consumption a quotidian occurrence. The result was that the fair lost both of its functions as a method of bringing together enough people to make a market and as a social event esteemed enough to confer respectability on the luxuries sold there. As luxury commerce became a permanent and centralized fixture in Parisian life, the new site for both functions would be the permanent boutiques of the marchands merciers.

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[69] Blondel, *Cours d'architecture*, 2:431–2. [les Boulevards ont détruit entièrement cette Foire, parce qu'on à permis à ces petits spectacles, de s'y établir à demeure, pendant qu'anciennement ils ne pouvoient représenter qu'aux Foires] [diverses boutiques de différens genres, indépendamment de celles des Marchands de dehors, qui tout ensemble ne laissent pas de procurer un coup-d 'œil assez intéressant]

Social Shopping and the Marchands Merciers

France's system of fairs had sufficed to satisfy consumer demand in an era when most commerce was for well-known staples while conspicuous consumption was a rarity reserved for the elite. Outside of these events, however, most purchasing of manufactured goods was conducted locally and directly with artisans. In part, this reflected the continuing force of the guild system, which among other things provided assurances to consumers that their goods would be made according to the highest standards using tried-and-true techniques. But, by definition, guild regulations (or state regulations, for that matter) designed to establish standards of production could only exist for goods whose production had been standardized. The eighteenth century was host to three changes that forced a complete revision in how goods would have to be sold. First, what was being made changed as new consumer goods unimagined by medieval manufacturers entered the market faster than guilds or bureaucrats could regulate them. Second, where it was being made changed both domestically as production shifted away from the cities and toward a diffuse network of rural, semi-rural, and suburban workers linked by merchants and internationally as global goods flooded the French market. Third, who was buying the goods changed as broader swaths of the population began to take part in consumer society. Although, as Natacha Coquery has argued, it would be an overstatement to call these changes a revolution in commerce, the eighteenth century was nevertheless a crucial period of transition between the commercial practices of the Old Regime and the mass consumer culture of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries in which key institutions were pioneered

and established.[70] And at the center of this transition were Paris's famed marchands merciers.

The marchands merciers had dominated the Parisian luxury market since at least the fourteenth century, owing in part to the fact that their unique guild privileges allowed them to sell a whole range of luxury goods such as master paintings, fashionable clothing, and fine jewelry. As the competition for courtly favor became the control mechanism of absolutist social policy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, courtiers engaged in an arms race of luxury consumption. These aristocrats channeled the wealth of their demesnes directly into the boutiques of Paris and Versailles—often signing a quarter of their total incomes over to the marchands merciers.[71] These retailers' fixed locations provided a permanent address where buyers knew they could always come to peruse collections of curios and discover the newest novelties when doing so was crucial for their social standing.

The fashionable districts of Paris slowly shifted south across the Seine between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, from the Marais to Saint-Germain, although each of the privileged merchant guilds retained its own traditional center in the city.[72]

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[70] Natacha Coquery, "L'essor d'une culture de consommation à l'époque des Lumières et ses répercussions sur le commerce de détail," in *Les révolutions du commerce. France, XVIIIe–XXIe siècle*, ed. Jean-Claude Daumas (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2020) 31–51.

[71] Natacha Coquery, "L'art de consommer : La mentalité économique des courtisans parisiens à la fin de l'Ancien Régime," in *La Cour comme institution économique : Douzième congrès international d'histoire économique, Seville-Madrid, 24–28 août 1998*, eds. Marice Aymard and Marzio A Romani (Paris: Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1998) 183–90.

[72] Natacha Coquery, *L'hôtel aristocratique : Le marché du luxe à Paris au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1998) 31–86, 181–212; *idem.*, "Shopping Streets in Eighteenth-Century Paris: A Landscape Shaped by Historical, Economic and Social Forces," in *The Landscape of Consumption: Shopping Streets and Cultures in Western Europe, 1600–1900*, eds. Jan Hein Furnée and Clé Lesger (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) 57–77; Castelluccio, *Prince et le marchand*, 122–45.

But in the eighteenth century, it was the string of luxury boutiques of the marchands merciers clustered around the fabled rue Saint-Honoré and the Palais Royal that attracted the largest throngs of elite consumers. This centralized luxury shopping district benefitted from its location next to the urban palaces of the aristocracy's highest ranks, drawing prestige from the proximity. Yet the connection between luxury living and luxury shopping went both ways, and part of the appeal of being in this district was that it made it easier and more pleasant to participate in consumer society.

As Bill Sewell has recently written, the transformation of shopping into a pleasurable pastime was a key transition in eighteenth-century France, with commercial, cultural, and political consequences.[73] And just as fairs had created social spectacles to draw in crowds of consumers, so too did the marchands merciers create spectacular displays and make shopping a social event to escalate consumer spending and convert shopping from labor to leisure.[74] Evidence of this shift in how people thought about the activity of shopping is made visible in paintings from across the eighteenth century. In Jean-Antoine Watteau's 1721 painting of the Parisian merchant Edme-François Gersaint's boutique (figure 1.5), we see shopping as a mixture of refinement, leisure, and small-scale sociability within an environment of material wealth. The scene focuses on several well-dressed socialites enjoying a visit to Gersaint's shop: a woman reclining on the right of the image sees herself at ease as she

[73] William H Sewell, Jr., *Capitalism and the Emergence of Civic Equality in Eighteenth-Century France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021) 129–50; *idem*., "Connecting Capitalism to the French Revolution: The Parisian Promenade and the Origins of Civic Equality in Eighteenth-Century France," *Critical Historical Studies* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2014) 5–46.

[74] Sophie Descat, "La boutique magnifiée : Commerce de détail et embellissement à Paris et à Londres dans la seconde moitié du XVIIIe siècle," *Histoire Urbaine* no. 6 (December 2002) 69–86.

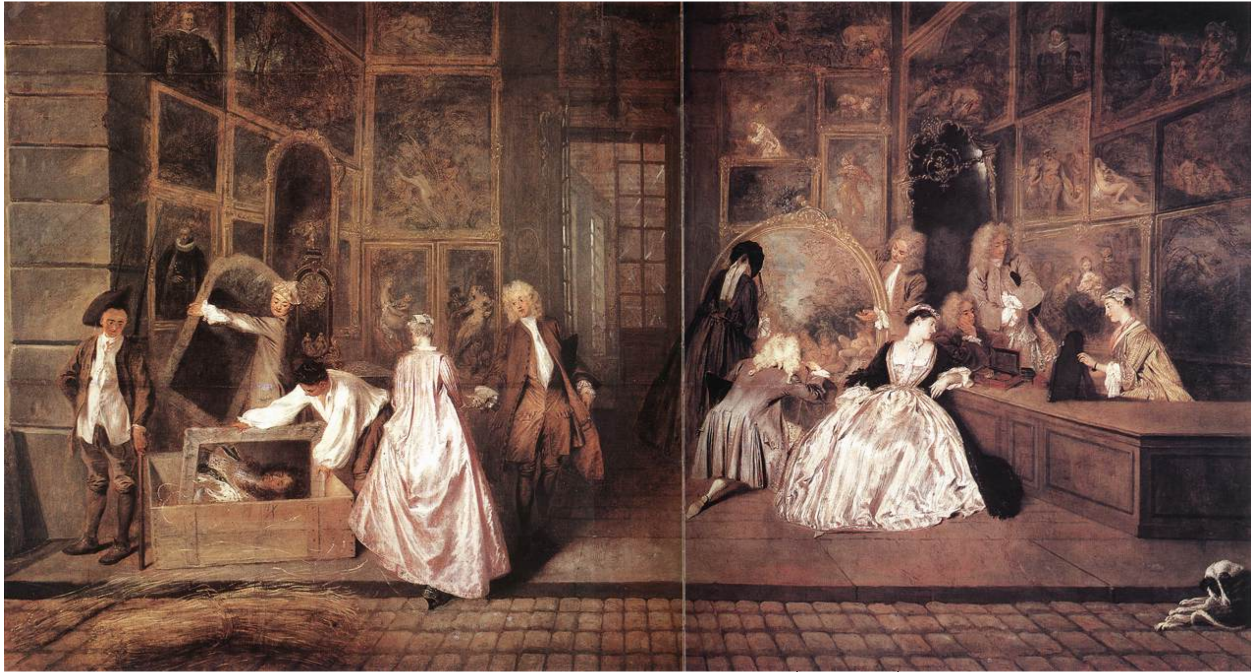
Figure 1.5. Jean-Antoine Watteau, *L'enseigne de Gersaint* (1720–1).

gazes into a mirror; four men casting critical looks give off a discerning air, highlighting the public demonstration of knowledge and taste that luxury consumption was meant to exhibit; the artist's removal of the shop's front wall reinforces that this is a public space, that the act of shopping is itself public; the shop itself is small, yet a door at the back opens to further rooms (a case of artistic license given that Gersaint's actual shop was quite small and perched on Notre-Dame Bridge) and hints at a world of goods beyond just that which is immediately visible; young boys to the left pack several paintings—including one of the recently deceased Louis XIV, emphasizing the fleeting nature of style and its connection to political regimes—either for delivery or storage, while a well-to-do couple hurries by these unavailable goods and into the waiting shop. By contrasting this painting from the early eighteenth century to Claude-Louis Desrais's painting of the Palais Royal at the end of the century (figure 1.6), we get the sense of just how much changed in the intervening years. Here, the scale expands from a single boutique to an entire shopping mall, rows of shops in the newly constructed gallery

Figure 1.6. Philbert-Louis Debucourt after Claude-Louis Desrais, *Promenade de la Gallérie du Palais Royal* (1787). Courtesy National Gallery of Art.

bristling with all manner of goods in one convenient location. In the foreground, the haute couture of the figures emphasizes that this is a site of elite sociability where one comes to be seen and to present oneself in the latest fashion. The very title of the painting—*Promenade of the Gallery of the Royal Palace*—reinforces that a shopping center is where walking becomes both a leisure and a social act. Finally, the young boy at the front center of the painting, wearing a bright new hat and carrying the haberdasher's box it came in, again reminds the viewer that this is where one goes to be seen purchasing the latest fashions. For Natacha Coquery, it was precisely this critical mass

of accessibility and visibility that helped drive consumer culture in the eighteenth century.[75]

Within the luxury shops of the marchands merciers and the fantasies of their customers, it was porcelain that held pride of place. As a recent introduction to the French market, porcelain was exempted from the byzantine restrictions that governed how and by whom most other objects could be sold. Beginning in the 1660s and lasting until at least the middle of the eighteenth century, many retailers sought to cash in on the craze for Asian imports by specializing in a range of these "curiosities" and other exotic knick-knacks such as lacquer furniture, crystal figures, and Chinese and Japanese porcelain of all shapes, sizes, and colors.[76] A Dutch painting from the end of the seventeenth century (figure 1.7) conveys the European fantasy of an entrepot of Asian goods in this period. Originally intended to be attached to a fan (itself a consumer object associated with Asia), the painting depicts a room packed to the brim with exotic goods from the East: lacquer, ivory, paintings, textiles, furniture, and of course the obligatory heaps of blue-and-white porcelain covering every horizontal surface. This painting conveys at once the ascribed exoticism of Asia, every detail in the artwork and the characters peculiar to European eyes, and a sense of its magnificence, the scene being of an enormous shop of wonders in contrast to the relatively miniscule boutiques of European merchants. But what is most crucial for the European vision is that the

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[75] Natacha Coquery, *Tenir boutique à Paris au XVIIIe siècle : Luxe et demi-luxe* (Paris: Éditions du Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques, 2011).

[76] Nicolas de Blégny, *Le livre commode contenant les Adresses de la ville de Paris, et le Tresor des almanachs pour l'année bisextile 1692* (Paris: Veuve Denis Nion, 1692) 68; Liger, *Voyageur fidèle*, 369–70; [Claude-Marin Saugrain], *Les Curiositez de Paris, de Versailles, de Marly, de Vincennes, de Saint Cloud, et des environs ; avec les antiquitez justes et précises sur chaque sujet : et les adresses pour trouver facilement tour ce que ces lieux renferment d'agréable et d'utile. Ouvrage enrichi d'un grand nombre de figures en taille-douce*, new edition (Paris: Saugrain Père, 1742) 1:162; Castelluccio, *Prince et le marchand*, 42.

Figure 1.7. Interior of a Chinese Shop (Netherlands, 1680–1700). Courtesy Victoria & Albert Museum, P.35–1926.

exoticism of Asia is embodied in commodities, a wealth of material objects that exist in a shop and are all for sale. As this painting conveys, for Europeans the East was accessible through shopping.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, almost every single marchand mercier in Paris sold at least some porcelain as part of their offerings, even if it remained a small fraction of their total assets, perhaps less than 1 percent.[77] Yet by the middle of the eighteenth century, porcelain had grown to become the single largest commodity in marchands merciers' shops—varying between 20 and 40 percent of total assets—and dwarfed all other genres of goods like furniture or jewelry by orders of

[77] Castelluccio, *Prince et le marchand*, 286–7.

magnitude.[78] Inventories of marchands merciers' possessions conducted following their deaths reveal a broad range of porcelain wares on offer ranging from the everyday to the exceptional. The most common wares were the small items that cost less than one livre each, such as cups, saucers, and small plates that were presumably sold in sets sufficient to outfit a formal dining party for a several course meal. At the other end of the spectrum were prestige pieces, typically large vases, that were sold alone or occasionally in a matching pair for several hundred livres. What is most striking in these inventories, however, is the disconnect between the scale of each individual entry and the magnitude of the entirety. Carefully recorded and assigned a price by an expert in a ceremony that lasted several days, thousands of pieces of porcelain were identified by size, style, and quality and listed according to their distinguishing attributes. In its totality, the porcelain in each marchand mercier's holdings was worth more than a working family might make in several lifetimes. Yet the precise details make each vase and dessert service seems tangible, accessible. Porcelain represented an enormous economy of luxury parceled out and made tantalizingly accessible to those strolling by their boutiques.[79]

Bankruptcy records reveal a similar pattern and scale of porcelain sales. Merchants wishing to declare bankruptcy were first required to submit their account books to the courts to prove the propriety of their business practices. These account

[78] Carolyn Sargentson, *Merchants and Luxury Markets: The Marchands Merciers of Eighteenth-Century Paris* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1996) 24.

[79] AN MC/ET XXXIX/271 Étienne Périchon (26 September 1713); AN MC/ET XXXIX/353 Étienne Périchon (7 December 1736); AN MC/ET XI/571 César Brelut de la Grange (14 March 1750); AN MC/ET XCIV/290 Augustin l'Héritier (29 November 1758); AN MC/ET X/540 Jacques Macquer (20 March 1760); AN MC/ET XIII/321 Jacques Le Noir (31 December 1761); AN MC/ET XXIII/654 Pierre Louis Laideguive (26 August 1763); AN MC/ET CXVI/439 Jacques Le Noir (23 December 1768); AN MC/ET XLII/521 Guillaume Angot (24 October 1770).

books show that by the middle of the eighteenth century, some merchants had begun to specialize exclusively in porcelain retail.[80] Others who carried a range of goods found novel ways to incorporate porcelain into their offerings. For example, in the 1740s an enterprising jeweler shifted his business away from traditional European products like belt buckles and corkscrews and toward a thriving trade in gilded snuffboxes made of Asian porcelain for American tobacco.[81] A coffee shop in the 1760s, meanwhile, struck upon the idea of bundling Caribbean coffee, "moka," and sugar that sold for just a couple livres per pound with a set of all the porcelain cups, saucers, and pots one would need to serve the hot beverages to a party for twenty livres.[82] Another merchant took advantage of the vogue for Enlightenment thought by selling matching pairs of porcelain busts of Rousseau and Voltaire at a lively pace.[83]

By 1740, Gersaint (whose shop selling paintings had been immortalized by Watteau) had converted his boutique into an entrepot of exotic goods, renaming his store in the process from "Au Grand Monarque" to "À la Pagode."[84] As a trade card advertising his store conveyed (figure 1.8), Gersaint's "À la Pagode" gave an address where consumers could go to purchase all manner of exotic imports, listing specific objects such as coral, lacquer, and porcelain, while also sparking the imagination for "all sorts of new and tasteful knick-knacks...and generally all curious and foreign merchandise." The image underneath this list similarly conveyed a mix of the specific

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[80] AdP D^4B^6 9 dos 416 (7 February 1750); AdP D^4B^6 11 dos 542 (7 February 1753).

[81] AdP D^5B^6 2076 (31 August 1736–9 March 1746).

[82] AdP D^5B^6 809 (31 October 1765–30 September 1771); AdP D^5B^6 587 (20 February 1767–30 June 1770).

[83] AdP D^5B^6 1924 (1762–1769).

[84] Andrew McClellan, "Watteau's Dealer: Gersaint and the Marketing of Art in Eighteenth-Century Paris," *Art Bulletin* 78, no. 3 (September 1996) 439–53.

Figure 1.8. François Boucher, *Trade Card of Edme Gersaint, Jeweller, À la Pagode* (1740). Courtesy Waddesdon (National Trust).

and the fantastic that both gave concrete substance to the objects carried there while also creating an elusive atmosphere. There are several natural objects such as varieties of coral and shells bound for curiosity cabinets, a large lacquer box ornamented with an Asian landscape, and scattered porcelain figurines with a porcelain tea set in the foreground. And overlooking the entire scene is an exoticized Asian character, lending a mysterious sense of the foreign to entice consumers.

Such a mix of intentions was characteristic of trade cards in the eighteenth century in that they served two distinct and potentially contradictory ends. On the one hand, they did not alert the viewer to new products, but rather told them where they could find already known categories of products. This would seem to assume a certain level of consumer sovereignty, the idea that consumers came to the market with at least some knowledge of what they wanted. On the other hand, trade cards were intended to advertise the knowledge and credit of the merchant to guide the customer in what they did not know, to build a bond of trust between the retailer and their customer through the trade card as a physical souvenir of their relationship.[85] Trade cards for two Parisian merchants specializing in pottery in this period convey a similar mix of motivations. Bailly (figure 1.9), for instance, provides his address on the Rue St Honoré in Paris, which is practical logistically but also alludes to the exclusivity of his boutique as a luxury destination, and offers a list of goods such as faïence, crystal, and glassware customers could find there. But he also emphasizes that he is "Renowned" for his collection of goods and that "He has as well the finest store of new porcelain,

[85] Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford, "Selling Consumption in the Eighteenth Century: Advertising and the Trade Card in Britain and France," *Cultural and Social History* 4, no. 2 (2007) 145–70; Philippa Hubbard, "Trade Cards in 18th-Century Consumer Culture: Movement, Circulation, and Exchange in Commercial and Collecting Spaces," *Material Culture Review* 74/75 (March 2012) 30–46.

Figure 1.9. *Trade Card of Bailly, Jeweller and Potter, Au Roy de France* (1740–60). Courtesy Waddesdon (National Trust).

fire-proof, [a reference to methods of testing porcelain for material quality by subjecting it to thermal shock], at the same price they are sold in the Manufactures." And Lachat (figure 1.10) likewise provides an address for her shop and lists the products such as faïence, crystal, and glassware that can be found there. And she highlights that her wares are "beautiful and only of the finest selection" coming from France and abroad. Both retailers attempt to establish their prestige and that of their merchandise—whether

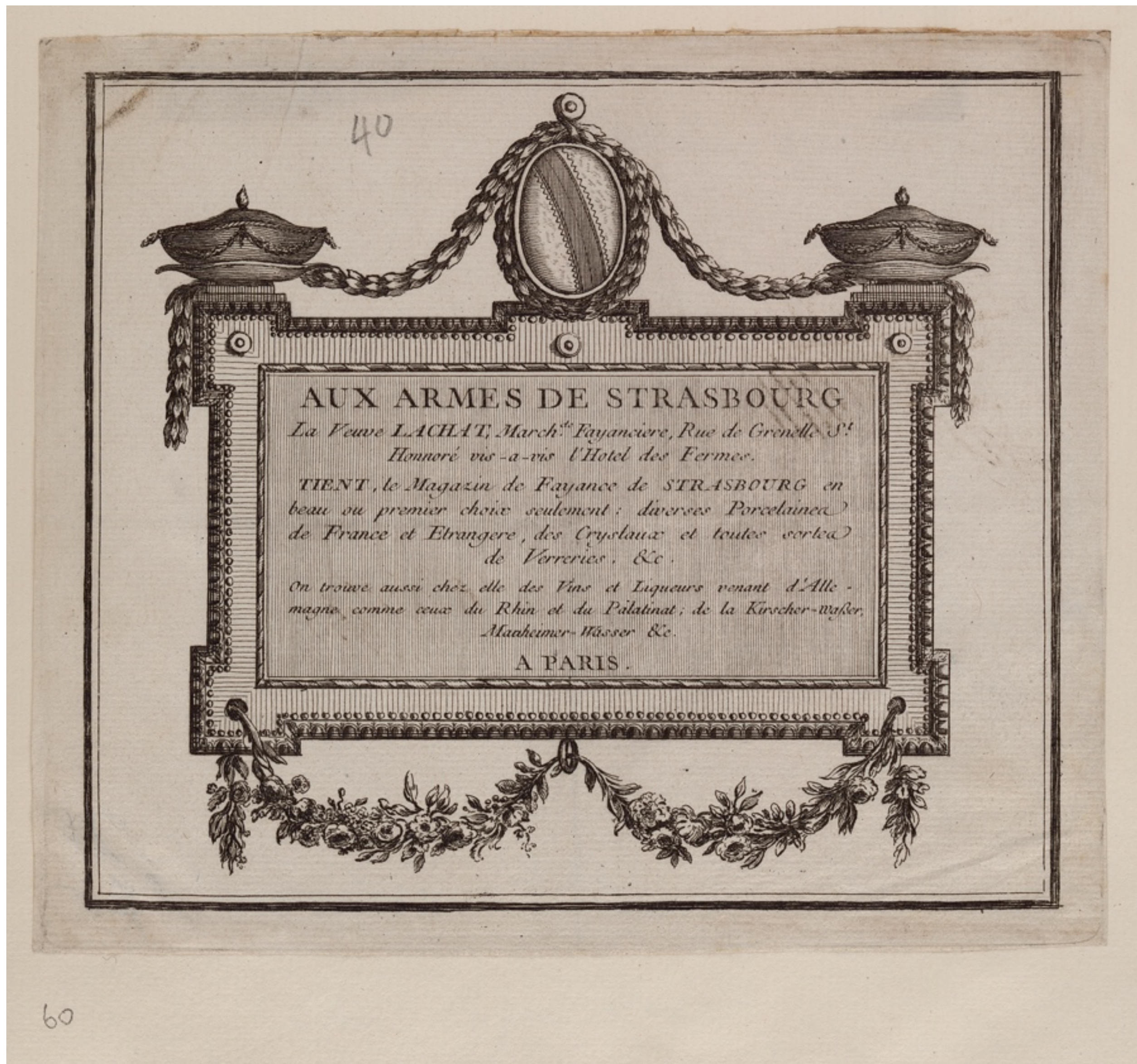

Figure 1.10. *Trade Card of the Widow Lachat, Crockery Merchant, Aux Armes de Strasbourg* (1770–90). Courtesy Waddesdon (National Trust).

explicitly by describing their reputation or the quality of their goods or implicitly in reference to the location of their shops and rarity of their wares—and to bind the two together. In each case, they use the known to vouch for the unknown: they are prestigious therefore they must sell quality goods; their goods are exclusive therefore they must be as well; they are found in Paris while their goods come from around the world. As with Gersaint, these merchants simultaneously conveyed specificity alongside ambiguity, certainty against uncertainty, a local contact with a global connection, and in doing so they opened a space in which they could insert themselves as guides for their customers and cathect their amorphous desires and wants onto a specific thing. And then sell it to them for a profit.

Credit, Reputation, and Value in Retailing

In recent years, Jan de Vries's concept of an "industrious revolution" laying the foundation for the Industrial Revolution has helped move the issue of consumption to the forefront of economic history. According to his model, it was Europeans' desire to consume more that led them to work more in order to earn money with which to purchase manufactured and imported goods.[86] Subsequent research has, however, largely failed to find strong evidence to support de Vries's central assertion that workers in the eighteenth century worked more to boost their purchasing power,

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[86] Jan de Vries, "Between Purchasing Power and the World of Goods: Understanding the Household Economy in Early Modern Europe," in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, eds. John Brewer and Roy Porter (New York: Routledge, 1993) 85–132; *idem.*, "The Industrial Revolution and the Industrious Revolution," *Journal of Economic History* 54, no. 2 (June 1994) 249–70; *idem.*, *The Industrious Revolution: Consumer Behavior and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Hans-Joachim Voth, "Time and Work in Eighteenth-Century London," *Journal of Economic History* 58, no. 1 (March 1998) 29–58.

especially outside of Britain and the Netherlands.[87] Furthermore, as Jean-Yves Grenier has argued, de Vries's model leaves unexplained why consumers suddenly wanted to consume more market goods in the first place. For Grenier, what is remarkable about this period is not just how much was consumed but what was consumed, the growth of consumption quantitatively and qualitatively, in scale and scope.[88] Indeed, evidence drawn from after-death inventories in both urban and rural France reveals that across the socioeconomic spectrum people in the eighteenth century were consuming more and more varied market goods at a faster pace.[89] Consequentially, economic historians are left struggling to explain how, without working more and in many cases without earning more, people in the eighteenth century were able to consume more. For Guillaume Daudin, the answer to this question might lay in the changes to retailing practices that reduced transaction costs for consumers and made shopping more efficient.[90]

The theoretical underpinning for de Vries's argument comes from work on family consumption practices conducted by economist Gary Becker and others in the 1960s. True to form for the Chicago School of this era and its belief that everything could be reduced to economics, Becker suggested conceptualizing all the activities of a family as a budget—whose frontier he labeled z-commodities—within which the family

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[87] Gérard Béaur, "Introduction : La révolution industrieuse introuvable," *Revue d'histoire moderne & contemporaine* 64, no. 4 (October–December 2017) 7–24; Sheilagh Ogilvie, "Consumption, Social Capital, and the 'Industrious Revolution' in Early Modern Germany," *Journal of Economic History* 70, no. 2 (June 2010) 287–325.

[88] Jean-Yves Grenier, "Travailler plus pour consommer plus : Désir de consommer et essor du capitalisme, du XVIIe siècle à nos jours," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 65, no. 3 (May–June 2010) 787–98, esp 793.

[89] Béaur, "Introduction," 13–7.

[90] Daudin, "Coûts de transaction et croissance."

sought to maximize its utility by choosing the most efficient allocation of its members' time. Becker posited a trade-off between time spent working in the home and time spent working in the market (for instance, the amount of time it might take to shop for and prepare a meal versus the time it might take to work for a sufficient wage to purchase a comparable meal at a restaurant), with the family finding whatever balance of market versus non-market labor best suited its desires.[91] As his fellow Nobel laureates George Stigler and George Akerlof independently asserted, however, the information consumers need to make these purchasing and time allocation decisions is "expensive" in the sense that it requires effort to discover. Therefore, they argued, retailers develop institutions to facilitate the flow of information to consumers and find profit in the efforts saved for the consumer.[92]

Ironically, Becker's theory of z-commodities had its roots in the work of his colleague at the University of Chicago, Margaret Reid, whose doctoral advisor had been Hazel Kyrk.[93] Influenced by the work of Kyrk and other Old Institutional Economists, Reid's model explicitly accounted not only for the labor of shopping, but of learning what to shop for in the first place.[94] And, as Bill Sewell has observed for the eighteenth

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[91] Gary Becker, "A Theory of the Allocation of Time," *Economic Journal* 75, no. 299 (September 1965) 493–517. See also: Stephen Hymer and Stephen Resnick, "A Model of an Agrarian Economy with Nonagricultural Activities," *American Economic Review* 59, no. 4 (September 1969) 493–506.

[92] George J Stigler, "The Economics of Information," *Journal of Political Economy* 69, no. 3 (June 1961) 213–25; George A Akerlof, "The Market for 'Lemons': Quality Uncertainty and the Market Mechanism," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 84, no. 3 (August 1970) 488–500.

[93] Yun-Ae Yi, "Margaret G Reid: Life and Achievements," *Feminist Economics* 2, no. 3 (1996) 20–2.

[94] Margaret G Reid, *Economics of Household Production* (New York: J Wiley & Sons, 1934).

century, knowing what to consume took a lot of work.[95] For Reid, in response to the difficulties consumers face in determining what to shop for, where to shop for it, and how much to pay for it, retailing and regulatory institutions are created to minimize these difficulties and facilitate consumption. These institutions are necessary, she argued, for the efficient functioning of a consumer economy.[96] Assumed within the economic understanding of consumer transactions and the desire for efficiency, however, was a hidden history of philosophical and material changes that had created the "consumer" in the first place.[97]

Beyond debates over whether there was an industrious revolution in the eighteenth century, the desire and ability of consumers to confidently navigate expanding markets in search of more and newer goods depended on the creation of institutions that could teach them what they should want and facilitate the acts of purchasing it and using it. Such institutions would have increased the amount of market-oriented goods a family could consume given the existence of time constraints on shopping as implied in the theory of z-commodities, but they also determined whether a family would want those market goods in the first place.

In a manual written for merchants at the end of the eighteenth century, the art dealer François-Charles Joullain declared that the economics of luxury goods were obvious: "There is no one who doesn't know that all the products of the arts and sciences are not subject to an intrinsic value, and that their higher or lower price

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[95] William H Sewell, jr., "The Empire of Fashion and the Rise of Capitalism in Eighteenth-Century France," *Past & Present*, no. 206 (February 2010) 103–5.

[96] Margaret G Reid, *Consumers and the Market*, 3rd ed (New York: FS Crofts & Co, 1947).

[97] *Ibid.*, 8–10.

depends on the competition of connoisseurs and the distinction of the object."[98] But if what drove the competition of connoisseurs was the distinction of the object, what were the sources of desire and distinction? Joullain replied: "The commerce of art demands taste and knowledge. Of taste, every man is capable; but if he is not guided in his first flight, this taste can cause him more damages and remorse than benefits and satisfaction. Of knowledge, this is another difference; it can only be acquired by study and much experience."[99] The merchant's role, according to Joullain, was to sell just such knowledge and taste.

Perhaps the biggest hurdle would-be luxury consumers faced was the difficulty of knowing exactly what they were buying. Separating a genuine article from a counterfeit, discerning the material quality of a particular piece, or even knowing where or when a product was made became impossible tasks for consumers as the pace of exchange quickened and the scope of the market expanded beyond personal connections. But at least such information was straight-forward, constant, and something a well-connected merchant such as a marchand mercier could be expected to reasonably know. More imprecise and unstable, yet perhaps even more important, were the semiotics of luxury goods, the social meanings slight differences in color, material,

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[98] François-Charles Joullain, *Réflexions sur la peinture et la gravure, accompagnées d'une courte dissertation sur le commerce de la curiosité et les ventes en général* (Metz, France: Demonville and Mousier, 1786) 190. [Il n'est personne qui ne sache que toutes les productions des arts et des sciences ne sont assujetties à une valeur intrensèque, et que leur plus ou moins de prix dépend de la concurrence des amateurs et de la distinction de l'objet.]

[99] *Ibid*., 127–8. [Le commerce des arts demande du goût et des connoissances. Du goût, tout homme est susceptible ; mais s'il n'est pas dirigé dans son premier essor, ce goût peut lui causer plus de dommages et de repentir que d'avantages et de satisfactions. Des connoissances, c'est une autre différance ; elles ne peuvent s'acquérir que par l'étude et la grande pratique.]

or design they conveyed in reference to conceptions of style. And it was here the marchands merciers truly excelled at their craft.

A marchand mercier's success or failure in business depended on his or her reputation for both taste and knowledge. As Joullain wrote, "the merchant, I say, worked more and more to improve and enlarge his store, to broaden the scope of collectors' desires, to find more ways to awaken and to satisfy them, and he endeavored to maintain a reputation which is the base of his fortune."[100] Ultimately, this reputation was relational. Economic goods in the Old Regime were ascribed value in relation to their degree of "distinction," which was itself the product of a complicated arithmetic. On the one hand, the equation accounted for objective factors such as the labor and materials embodied in a good, as well as its degree of "perfection." On the other hand, it also accounted for social factors such as the social estimation of both manufacturer and consumer.[101] As a result, the patterns of consumption set by the aristocracy and especially the royal family directly influenced the price of a good by defining the degree of social distinction it held. For Asian imports such as porcelain, part of a particular object's value might have depended on its material composition, the skill of its craftsmanship, and the expense of its manufacture and transportation around the world. But the rest of its value stemmed from its relation to the consumption patterns of the aristocracy, its reflection of the styles they established. In other words, fine porcelain

[100] *Ibid*., 102–3. Compare with Stigler: "'Reputation' is a word which denotes the persistence of quality, and reputation commands a price (or exacts a penalty) because it economizes on search." Stigler, "Economics of Information," 224. [le marchand, dis-je, travailloit de plus en plus à améliorer et à augmenter son magasin, pour donner plus d'étendue aux désirs des curieux, pour trouver plus de moyens de les faire naître de les satisfair, et il s'efforçoit à maintenir une réputation qui étoit la base de sa fortune.]

[101] Jean-Yves Grenier, *L'économie d'Ancien Régime : Un monde de l'échange et de l'incertitude* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1996) 63–78; *idem*., "Une économie de l'identification : Juste prix et ordre des marchandises dans l'Ancien Régime," in *Qualité des produits en France*, 25–53.

was expensive both because it originated in Jingdezhen and because it ended up in Versailles. A successful merchant had to have knowledge of both worlds, and it was on this that his or her reputation depended. And establishing one's reputation could take a variety of forms.

Goods in the eighteenth century held a dual existence as both possessed object and vendible commodity.[102] As a result, an object simultaneously held latent social and financial attributes that both influenced its valuation. When first placed on the market, the exchange value of a consumer good reflected the anticipated use value of its consumption, including its suitability for conspicuous consumption. While possessed as an object, that good retained the latent value of its potential future exchange. Given the absence of commercial banking and the shortage of cash alongside the perpetual existence of a thriving market for secondhand goods, consumer objects were often used to store and preserve wealth. This was especially true for those objects that stayed fashionable enough to maintain their market value. For the wealthy, access to the secondhand market helped offset the expense of staying at the forefront of the fashion cycle by enabling them to sell outdated clothes and unwanted furniture or art either directly to retailers or through small, one-off auctions.[103] For those living a more

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[102] Natacha Coquery, "The Language of Success: Marketing and Distributing Semi-Luxury Goods in Eighteenth-Century Paris," *Journal of Design History* 17, no. 1 (2004) 71–89. On the lifecycle of commodities, see: Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as a Process," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986) 64–91.

[103] Castelluccio, *Prince et le marchand*, 206–16; Daniel Roche, *The People of Paris: An Essay in Popular Culture in the 18th Century*, trans. Marie Evans and Gwynne Lewis (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987) 183–5. It appears that such transactions were often conducted anonymously or through intermediaries to protect the aristocratic seller's reputation. While the catalogues for such auctions generally withhold the owner's name, often replacing it with a placeholder such as "M. C***," those who frequented auctions would sometimes scribble the suspected owner's name

precarious existence, access to the secondhand market offered a way to hedge against future economic disaster by investing in consumer goods that could be sold should the need ever arise.[104]

Yet while the presence of secondhand markets allowed common objects to retain or at least slow the decay of their potential exchange value, luxury goods accumulated value like dust while sitting in the homes of the high nobility. Through their conspicuous consumption, the aristocracy bestowed their status on the objects they owned. The possession of a luxury object by an esteemed collector both vouched for the value of the object and added to it, so that when the item returned to the market it did so as a commodity identified by name with the previous owner at auction, usually following his or her death, although occasionally due to infirmity or indigence.[105] To establish tastefulness, the merchants who wrote catalogues advertising upcoming auctions almost invariably began with a "eulogy" emphasizing the taste and knowledge of its previous owner. In practice, this first meant highlighting their social rank. This

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onto the auction book. See, for instance, the Bibliothèque National de France's copy of: Pierre Rémy, *Notice des Tableaux, Figures, Bustes de marbre, Laques, Ouvrages en marquèterie de* Boule*, Porcelaines du Japon, & autres effets curieux* (Paris: Didot, 1772).

[104] Laurence Fontaine, "The Exchange of Secondhand Goods between Survival Strategies and 'Business' in Eighteenth-Century Paris," in *Alternative Exchanges: Second-Hand Circulations from the Sixteenth Century to the Present*, trans. James Turpin and Sheila Oakley (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008) 97–114.

[105] Castelluccio, *Prince et le marchand*, 216–26; Valérie Pietri, "Uses of the Used: The Conventions of Renewing and Exchanging Goods in French Provincial Aristocracy," in *Alternative Exchanges*, 115–26; Sargentson, *Merchants and Luxury Markets*, 32–3. A form of elite auction that drew particular public attention was those of the mistresses of the aristocracy, whose consumption was partially an extended display of their lover's prestige, but was also further imbued with their own sexual capital: Kathryn Norberg, "Goddesses of Taste: Courtesans and their Furniture in Late-Eighteenth-Century Paris," in *Furnishing the Eighteenth Century: What European Furniture Can Tell Us about the European and American Past*, eds. Dena Goodman and Kathryn Norberg (New York: Routledge, 2007) 97–114; Nina Kushner, *Erotic Exchanges: The World of Elite Prostitution in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013) 191–218.

could be accomplished most subtly yet immediately by including their aristocratic title in the catalogue title, but also by emphasizing their professional accomplishments and personal virtues in ways that reinforced their nobility. Gersaint, for instance, dwelled on a client's "civility, affluence...[and] noble manners worthy of his birth."[106] For collectors slightly removed from the upper circles of the aristocracy, however, asserting one's status often meant working through degrees of connection, such as by mentioning that an unnamed cabinetmaker had studied under the Duke of Orléans—"Here the origin of [his] taste"[107]—and had become his trusted artistic advisor; or that the artist Jacques Aved had been commissioned to paint portraits of many members of the royal family, including the King himself—"one can count among this number [of friends] many people renowned by their birth and by their rank."[108] In highlighting the noble birth or connections of these collectors, merchants asserted the presence of an innate sense of taste. They emphasized, therefore, "this taste that nature had given to M. Boucher for all that is nice," "a taste which few people can claim,"[109] or that "M. de Julienne, from his most tender youth, had for [porcelain] a particular inclination, which

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[106] Edme-François Gersaint, *Catalogue raisonné, des Bijoux, Porcelaines, Bronzes, Lacqs, lustres de Cristal de roche et de porcelaine, pendules de goût, & autres Meubles curieux ou composés ; Tableaux, Desseins, Estampes, Coquilles, & autres Effets de curiosité, provenan de la Succession de M. Angran, Vicomte de Fonspertuis* (Paris: Pierre Prault & Jacques Barrois, 1747) iv. [l'urbanité, l'aisance...les manières nobles & dignes de sa naissance.]

[107] *Catalogue des Différens Effets curieux de Sieur Cressent Ebeniste, des palais de Feu S.A.R. Monseigneur le Duc d'Orléans* (Paris: Brunet, 1756) 5. [Voici l'origine du goût]

[108] Pierre Rémy, *Catalogue raisonné de Tableaux, de différens bons Maîtres des Trois Écoles, de Figures, Bustes, & autres Effets qui composent le Cabinet de Feu M. Aved, Peintre du Roi & de son Académie* (Paris: Didot, 1766) iv, ix. [l'on peut mettre dans ce nombre [des amis] beaucoup de personnes illustres par leur naissance & par leur rang]

[109] *Catalogue raisonné des Tableaux, Desseins, Estampes, Bronzes, Terres cuites, Lacques, Porcelaines de différentes sortes, montées & non montées* (Paris: Musier, 1771). [ce goût que la nature avoit donnée à M. Boucher pour tout ce qui est agréable] [goût auquel peu de gens peuvent prétendre]

led him to make a selection of it of the highest distinction; he knew how to strike the flattering look that a Cabinet demands."[110] Thus, by connecting a good going up for sale to a previous owner whose recognized authority in taste was rooted in his or her social status, marchands merciers sought to raise the distinction and thus price of the good, essentially monetizing the cultural capital of their clients.

As Joullain noted, though, taste was personal, variable, and insufficient to establish the distinction of a commodity. Individual taste had to be accompanied by knowledge of style. What was sought was "a natural taste, informed by the wisdom & labors of the most distinguished artists."[111] Assembling a proper collection meant possessing "as much taste as intelligence," and so the esteemed collectors educated themselves in the canons of style.[112] Pierre Paul Louis Randon de Boisset, the Receiver General of Finances in Lyon and a famous collector, for example, had studied under the artists of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture to "perfect each day his taste."[113] Similarly, the catalogue for the painter Aved emphasized that he had traveled Europe

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[110] Pierre Rémy, *Catalogue raisonné des Tableaux, Desseins & Estampes, et autres effets curieux, après la Décès de M. de Julienne* (Paris: Vente, 1767) 6. [M. de Julienne, dès sa plus tendre jeunesse, eut pour elles [porcelaines] une inclination particulière, qui l'a porté à en faire un choix de la plus grande distinction ; il savoit saisir le coup d'œil flatteur qu'exigent un Cabinet.]

[111] Pierre-François Julliot and Alexandre-Joseph Paillet, *Catalogue Des Vases, Colonnes, Tables de Marbres rares, Figures de bronze, Porcelaines de choix, Lacques, Meubles précieux, Pendules, Lustres, Bras & Lanternes de bronze doré d'or mat : Bijoux & autres Effets importants qui composent le Cabinet de Feu M. le Duc d'Aumont* (Paris: PF Julliot & AJ Paillet, 1782) 3. [un goût naturel, éclairé par les lumières & les travaux des Artistes les plus distingués]

[112] Pierre Rémy and Jean-Baptiste Glomy, *Catalogue raisonné des Tableaux, Sculptures, tant de Marbre que de Bronze, Desseins et Estampes des plus grands Maîtres, Porcelaines anciennes, Meubles précieux, Bijoux, et autres effets Qui composent le cabinet de feu Monsieur le Duc de Tallard* (Paris: Didot, 1756) iv. [autant de goût que d'intelligence]

[113] Pierre Rémy and Charles-François Julliot, *Catalogue de Tableaux & Desseins précieux, Figures & Vases de marbres & de bronze, Porcelaines du premier choix, Ouvrages du célèbre Boule & autres effets de conséquence qui composent le Cabinet de feu M. Randon de Boisset* (Paris: Musier, 1777) viii. [perfectionnoient chaque jour son goût]

studying masterpieces and had been trained at the Royal Academy.[114] And in the frontispiece of the auction catalogue for the noted collector Pierre-Jean Mariette (figure 1.11), this connection is made visually as a collection of angelic figures huddles together under the smiling bust of Mariette. In the background looms the collected knowledge of his library and, as evidence of his taste, a row of porcelain vases. The muses draw inspiration from the academic study of the French and Italian Schools to create their works of genius. Indeed, the title of the engraving was *History of the Spirit of Drawing, the God of Taste and Study*.

In the same way the merchants writing these catalogues assured potential customers of the quality of the goods that would be available at the auction through the authority of the collector, they also sought to assure potential customers of the quality of goods in their shops through their own reputations. Here as well, reputation depended on personal knowledge alongside aristocratic connections. As Clare Crowston has demonstrated, the eighteenth-century economy was one of credit in multiple senses of the term. At the most literal level, the same shortages of hard currency that drove the poor to rely on credit and turned fairs into financial markets applied equally to the wealthy consumers who frequented luxury markets and to merchants themselves. Credit was the lifeblood of the Old Regime economy. Financial records from eighteenth-century porcelain dealers reveal balance sheets in which expansive webs of credit and debt mounted to astronomical sums. Retailers would often have accounts outstanding of tens of thousands of livres, having accepted their merchandise on credit from wholesalers and then sold it to their customers on credit as

[114] Rémy, *Catalogue raisonné...Aved*, iv. It appears that the emphasis on education became more important for burnishing a collector's bona fides when they were not a member of the aristocracy.

Figure 1.11. Charles-Nicolas Cochin, fils, *History of the Spirit of Drawing, the God of Taste and Study, assembled at the feet of the bust of Mariette,* frontispiece to the *Pierre-Jean Mariette Collection Sale Catalogue* (1775). Courtesy Waddesdon (National Trust).

well.[115] Such bonds of credit depended in turn on relationships of trust that extended beyond simple exchange and were embedded within the social system itself.[116] In this sense, one's credit also meant one's creditworthiness as revealed by their social standing. This meant that personal reputation, aristocratic connections, and even a sense of fashion that revealed one to have the appropriate status and therefore credit.[117]

Thus, value, credit, and reputation in eighteenth-century France were all imbricated in a reciprocal framework of status and relationships. The value of a good was determined, at least in part, by the status of those who made, sold, and consumed it. The movement of that good through each stage of the economic circuit depended on the availability of credit, which was in turn granted based on each actor's perceived creditworthiness. This creditworthiness was seen in part as a reflection of social contacts, which meant that even as an aristocrat's status made them worthy of a merchant's credit, the merchant's credit relationship to that aristocrat elevated their own status and thus creditworthiness to their suppliers. Finally, because consumption

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[115] Coquery, *Hôtel aristocratique*, 147–78. Particularly clear examples of the size and ratio of assets and debt can be seen in bankruptcy filings. The nature of this type of document can distort our view of economic activity because, by definition, they reveal only the practices of failed businesses. However, they offer a glimpse into the internal practices of businesses that is otherwise impossible to see, and though the outcome for these individual businesses may have been unfortunate, there is nothing to indicate that the use or even extent of credit itself was unusual. For examples, see: AdP D^4B^6 9 dos 416 (7 February 1750); AdP D^4B^6 11 dos 542 (7 February 1753); AN XIII/321 Jacques Le Noir (31 December 1761); AN XXVIII/473 Nicolas Lardin (26 February 1779).

[116] John Brewer and Laurence Fontaine, "*Homo creditus* et construction de la confiance au XVIIIe siècle," in *Construction sociale de la confiance*, 161–76; Pierre Gervais, "Crédit et filières marchandes au XVIIIe siècle," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 67, no. 4 (2012) 1011–48.

[117] Clare Haru Crowston, *Credit, Fashion, Sex: Economies of Regard in Old Regime France* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013) 21–55, 96–138; Laurence Fontaine, *L'économie morale : Pauvreté, crédit et confiance dans l'Europe préindustrielle* (Paris: Gallimard, 2008) 280–94; *idem*., "Antonio and Shylock: Credit and Trust in France, c.1680–c.1780," *Economic History Review* 54, no. 1 (February 2001) 39–57.

patterns were considered valid proof of one's creditworthiness, that aristocrat could ascribe at least some of their creditworthiness to the goods they consumed, goods whose value equally stemmed from the fact they were consumed by the aristocrat, and both of which redounded on the merchant who sold that good to the aristocrat on credit. This was, ultimately, the source of a retailer's reputation: it vouched for the value of the goods in his or her shop and, by extension, the status of those who bought them. As Joullain said of the merchant, "reputation...is the base of his fortune."[118]

But reputation itself does not amass fortune. It is only lucrative to the extent that it can be wielded to obtain an economic profit. And profits for marchands merciers show that such reputations must have been invested wisely in this period. Calculating rates of profit for Old Regime business is both technically difficult and risks an anachronistic understanding of contemporary economic meanings and practices. Social and political gain motivated activity as much as economic gain, and investors were frequently willing to accept lower profit rates for the benefits an investment might provide in these other arenas. Nonetheless, Carolyn Sargentson has calculated that marchands merciers in the eighteenth century averaged between 10 and 20 percent profit on the wares they sold, which with an average yearly turnover of about 40 percent of their goods would lead to an annualized profit on their investment in luxury goods of between 4 and 8 percent.[119] By contrast, annualized profits on investments in international trade (buoyed by monopolistic practices and extreme risk) likely varied between 6 and 10 percent, profits for large financiers on loans to the State were set at 5 percent for much of this period (although they afforded political leverage as well), and

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[118] Joullain, *Réflexions*, 103.

[119] Sargentson, *Merchants and Luxury Markets*, 33–5.

profits on landed investments were around 4 percent (although these investments also bought social prestige).[120]

Ultimately, a retailer's reputation was valuable to the extent it brought him or her profitable business. And the business he or she provided was to serve as a guide for wealthy clients through the vicissitudes of the luxury market. Like that market, the marchands merciers themselves reflected the duality of consumer culture in the Old Regime. On the one hand, collecting luxury goods was an individualistic act in the sense that it displayed the individual's taste through his or her choices of consumption and display. On the other hand, such choices only developed meaning in reference to an established social framework of style through which they could be interpreted and understood. As Joullain described it, "Without taste, the auctions will only furnish them [consumers] with a mass of prints without esteem...Without knowledge, their choice will hardly be in line with the general taste."[121] The marchand mercier was to guide consumers, offering their taste and knowledge to help their customers select the right goods to express their position in society: "People who love the arts, and who are guided by an enlightened taste, always prefer the most distinguished and the rarest objects. It is primarily on these articles that it is essential to refresh their memory...enough for their desires."[122]

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[120] Guillaume Daudin, "Profitability of Slave and Long-Distance Trading in Context: The Case of Eighteenth-Century France," *Journal of Economic History* 64, no. 1 (March 2004) 144–71.

[121] Joullain, *Réflexions*, 128. [Sans goût, les ventes ne leur founrissoient qu'une foule d'estampes sans considération...Sans connoissances, leur choix n'étoit point analogue au goût général.]

[122] *Ibid*., 228. [Les personnes qui aiment les arts, et qui sont guidées par un goût éclairé, préfèrent toujours les objets les plus distingués et les plus rares. C'est principalement sur ces articles qu'il est essentiel de leur rafraîchir la mémoire...suffisante à leurs désirs.]

Auction catalogues reveal the pedagogical role of the merchants themselves as instructors in taste. Most of the text in these catalogues offered knowledge in the form of detailed descriptions of each lot of goods to be sold. But the authors also included frequent interjections intended to teach potential customers about the relevant dictates of style. These interjections almost universally stressed the importance of porcelain as a necessity for tying together the paintings, marble, and bronze of any collection, the role of porcelain as the indispensable accoutrement for any fashionable home. But they also explained which colors, shapes, designs, and national origins were rare or particularly desired. Gersaint took his role as educator so seriously that in one catalogue he appended nearly a hundred pages describing the history and science of porcelain production country by country—no light undertaking given how expensive printing was.[123] Another view of the marchands merciers as educators of taste appears on the frontispieces of their auction catalogues. Gersaint (figure 1.12) and fellow art dealers Pierre Rémy (figure 1.13) and Augustin de Saint-Aubin (figure 1.14), for example, all included engravings at the front of their catalogues depicting crowded auction scenes. Within the bustle of collectors busily rummaging through all manner of artistic objects, we see at the center of each image a man of status, clearly identifiable by his fashionable appearance, waiting while a dealer personally and gently explains the merits of a particular print or painting. Amid the chaos and uncertainty of the auction scene, the merchant offers tranquility and surety to discerning customers. These merchants presented themselves as honest guides for elite consumers: "We will indicate with the same sincerity and the same candor the perfections...as the doubts....We will

[123] Gersaint, *Catalogue raisonné...Fonspertius*.

Figure 1.12. Edme-François Gersaint, *Catalogue raisonné, des Bijoux, Porcelaines, Bronzes, Lacqs, Lustres de Cristal de Roche et de Porcelaine, Pendules de goût, & autres Meubles curieux ou composés ; Tableaux, Desseings, Estampes, Coquilles, & autres Effets de Curiosité, provenans de la Succession de M. Angran, Vicomte de Fonspertuis* (Paris: Pierre Prault and Jacques Barrois, 1747). Courtesy Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Figure 1.13. Pierre Rémy, *Catalogue des Tableaux, Miniatures, Bronzes, Vases de marbre, figures de la Chine, et Porcelaines, du Cabinet de M. ***[de Caylus]* (Paris: Didot, 1773). Courtesy Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Figure 1.14. Augustin de Saint-Aubin, *Vignette-Frontispiece to Sale Catalogue of Heineiken Collection "Catalogue Raisonné de Tableaux, Dessins et Estampes des meilleures maîtres"* (Paris, 1757). Courtesy Waddesdon (National Trust).

scrupulously report the faults and the mistakes...we will serve with discretion and fidelity the diverse commissions with which one would want to charge us."[124]

Merchants and Capital

Marchands merciers also facilitated the circuits of commerce in another, more immediately tangible way. Unlike most luxury goods sold in early eighteenth-century France, porcelain was a very recent arrival and had not yet become widely manufactured in Europe. This had two consequences. First, there was no established production of porcelain that could create works directly for European tastes. This began to change in the middle of the eighteenth century when the French Compagnie des Indes expanded its presence in Asian trade from India to China and purchased porcelain works directly from Chinese manufacturers (figure 1.15).[125] The resulting "porcelaine de la Compagnie des Indes" was frequently commissioned according to European designs and intended for European customers. A plate (figure 1.16) manufactured in China for the Compagnie des Indes in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, for instance, converts a French engraving of musicians into the blue and white of Chinese porcelain. While the instruments, headdresses, and clothing are distinctly European, the surrounding landscape portraits situate them in a Chinese

[124] Alexandre-Joseph Paillet, *Catalogue des Tableaux précieux des Écoles d'Italie, de Flandres, de Hollande et de France* (Paris: Journal de Paris, 1793) vi. [Nous indiquerons avec la même sincérité & la même franchise les perfections...comme les doutes....Nous déclarerons avec scrupule les défauts & les irrégularités...nous servirions avec discrétion & fidélité les diverses commissions dont on voudra bien nous charger.]

[125] Michel Beurdeley, *Porcelaine de la compagnie des Indes* (Fribourg, Switzerland: Office du Livre, 1962); Philippe Haudrère, *La Compagnie française de Indes au XVIIIe siècle (1719–1795)* (Paris: Librairie de l'Inde, 1989) 2: 417–9; Catherine Manning, *Fortunes à Faire: The French in Asian Trade, 1719–48* (Aldershot, VT: Variorum, 1996) 41–2.

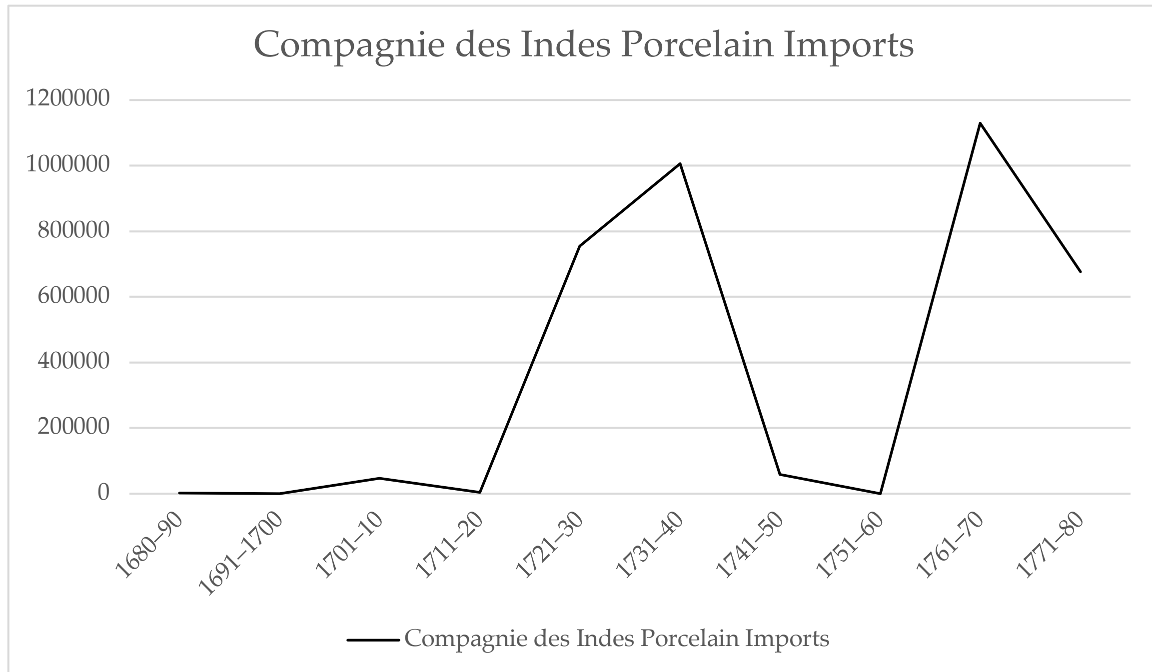

Figure 1.15. Porcelain imported by the Compagnie des Indes, 1680–1780. Source: Donald C Wellington, *French east India Companies: A Historical Account and Record of Trade* (Lanham, MD: Hamilton Books, 2006) 190–3.

environment of banyan trees, bamboo rafts, and pagodas. In another striking example of the cross-cultural exchange of Chinese export porcelain (figure 1.17), Louis XIV and his second wife are sculpted in porcelain. Here the hairstyles, accessories, and forms of the clothing are recognizably European, but the color and design of the clothing and the facial features are evidently Chinese. In both objects, we see a sequence of translations of an original European image into a Chinese object intended to be sold back to Europe. Each of these objects would have appeared familiar to European consumers, but exoticized by being recast in a foreign style. The process of commissioning Chinese export porcelain took the familiar and made it foreign.

But there was another way to bring European styles into Asian goods: To take the foreign and make it familiar. The second consequence of the late arrival of porcelain into Europe was that its manufacture was not protected by guild regulations. It was

Figure 1.16. Dish with Europeans Playing Musical Instruments. Porcelain painted in underglaze blue. China, 1661–1722. Courtesy Art Institute of Chicago, 1941.787.

here that the marchands merciers were able to make a crucial entry into the porcelain market. Under the guild regulations that controlled the marchands merciers activities, they were entitled to "*enjoliver* things that are already made and manufactured."[126] It

[126] Savary des Bruslons, *Dictionnaire universel de commerce,* 3:359. [enjoliver les choses qui sont déjà faites et fabriquées]

Figure 1.17. Figure of Louis XIV and Madame de Maintenon. Porcelain painted with overglaze enamel. Jingdezhen, China, c. 1700. Courtesy Victoria & Albert Museum, C.1320-1910.

was this privilege that led the authors of the *Encyclopédie* to brusquely dismiss the marchand mercier as "a trader of everything and maker of nothing."[127] In the strictest sense, the privilege to *enjoliver* referred only to minor alterations made to pre-fabricated goods, such as attaching ribbons or other little garnishes to an item before sale or on commission. In practice, however, this provision gave the marchands merciers a unique and unparalleled ability to cross the boundaries of guild distinctions and involve themselves directly in the production process. The fierce feuds that flared up between

[127] "Mercerie," in *Encylopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers par une société des gens de lettres*, eds. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert (Neufchastel, France: Samuel Faulche & co., 1765) 10:369. [un marchand de tous & faiseur de rien]

the marchands merciers and other guilds throughout this period attest to the readiness with which they used their consumer connections and knowledge of fashion to supply the luxury market with fresh and tasteful products.[128]

Until the widespread diffusion of European manufactured porcelain in the second half of the eighteenth century, the colors, styles, and designs of Asian porcelain established the semiotic framework for meaning of porcelain. Collectors distinguished between attributes such as color schemes in the cobalt blue of classic Chinese porcelain, the celadon green that hinted at ancient origins, and the polychrome of the recent trend for Japanese products; styles of Chinese pattern and Japanese asymmetry; and designs such as gentle curvature, light latticework, and carved statuary.[129] But these objects also had to fit within the European interior, to blend the exotic with the familiar, to safely bring fantasies of foreign lands into the home. And finding the balance between these two poles required an intimate knowledge of consumer tastes and a fluctuating system of fashion, both of which the marchands merciers were perfectly situated to provide.

Invoking their privilege to *enjoliver*, marchands merciers purchased pieces of Asian porcelain and altered them to suit European tastes and uses. One common method of alteration involved using diamond files to saw the tops off vases to open them up for use as a potpourri dish, spice cellar, or snuff box.[130] In one example from

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[128] Castelluccio, *Prince et le marchand*, 69–90; Carolyn Sargentson, "L'histoire, les statuts et l'organisation de la corporation des marchands merciers à Paris" and "Le rôle des marchands merciers dans la création des objets de luxe," in *La fabrique du Luxe : Les marchands merciers parisiens au XVIIIe siècle*, ed. Rose-Marie Herda-Mousseaux (Sant'Egidio all Vibrata, Italy: Auria, 2018) 32, 132–6.

[129] Stéphane Castelluccio, *Collecting Chinese and Japanese Porcelain in Pre-Revolutionary Paris*, trans. Sharon Grevet (Los Angeles: J Paul Getty Museum, 2013).

[130] Kristel Smentek, *Rococo Exotic: French Mounted Porcelains and the Allure of the East* (New York: Frick Collection).

the late 1740s (figure 1.18), we see two Japanese lidded vases mounted in gilt bronze garnitures to form a pair of receptacles for the potpourri popular in early modern France. Here the exotic material of porcelain and Japanese color and design is ensconced in a gold scrolling design that would have blended into a French interior, appropriated for a use that elite consumers would have readily recognized, and packaged in a matching set they would have appreciated. In an even more striking example from the same period (figure 1.19), a porcelain vase in the shape of two pieces of bamboo is set atop a gilt bronze pedestal. The obvious exoticism of the bamboo, glazed in celadon, is accentuated by the flowing designs of the garniture, which resemble a tempestuous shoreline, yet is grounded in place by the repeating patterns around the lip and the familiar materials of the base. In both cases, the exotic is encased in the familiar and allowed to add a splash of the unexpected to French design.

Figure 1.18. Potpourri bowls with cover. Porcelain with gilt bronze mounts. Japan, late 17th century; France, 1745–9. Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1979.396.2a,b.

Figure 1.19. Vase. Porcelain with gilt bronze mounts. China, 1700–1720; France, 1740–1760. Courtesy Victoria & Albert Museum, 820A-1882.

The marchands merciers who oversaw the purchase of Asian porcelain, its alteration by varied artisans, and its subsequent resale to elite consumers were capitalists directing a proto-industrial system of production. As after-death inventories, account books, and auction catalogues reveal, this type of altered porcelain represented a large proportion of the total porcelain marchands merciers sold. Most of the pieces in their shops were small, relatively inexpensive items of functional tableware without embellishment or garniture. And the most expensive pieces in their collection were the prestige pieces of large, imported vases that were left unadorned to preserve the sweeping lines and majestic appearance of these already exceptional and rare imports reserved for the wealthiest customers. The intermediate pieces, however, those destined for display and presentation, were commonly mounted and often arranged in elaborate settings that blended porcelain vases, figures, and flowers with everything from a splash of silver accent along the rim to a functioning clock bedecked in rococo gold scrollwork. It was in this middle stratum where the merchants found the greatest potential to make something unique and profitable out of otherwise impressive but unremarkable wares.

Much of this work was conducted by the merchant him or herself, such as a jeweler who found a niche in the 1740s making silver and gold garnitures for snuffboxes, or others who specialized in making small porcelain knickknacks like cane tops and cutlery handles.[131] For the larger dealers, however, fitting such wares into their collections required assembling an extensive network of varied artisans and providing enough circulating capital to move the goods through the entire alteration process and

[131] AdP D^5B^6 2076 (31 August 1736–9, March 1746); AN MC/ET IX/657 François Langloix (4 October 1742).

carry them until the costs could be recouped in sales. In addition to furnishing these workers with the materials and money necessary to make these alterations, the marchands merciers would have likely guided them in what styles or designs to use to suit the preferences of their customers.

Economic historians have termed such activity proto-industrialization. According to proponents of this theory, proto-industrialization represented a necessary intermediate stage between traditional artisanal production and modern industrial production, a stage in which merchant capitalists mobilized their financial resources to purchase raw materials, deliver them to workers at their homes for processing, and then carry them through this system of delivery and production until they held a finished product that could be sold to consumers. In contrast to de Vries's model of growing labor force participation in which the desire to purchase market goods drove peasants to embrace market labor, most supporters of the proto-industrialization theory argue that a mix of agricultural poverty and burgeoning capitalist social control account for the reliance of these peasants on market labor for sustenance.[132] As Cissie Fairchilds has argued, however, much of what has been termed proto-industrialization was driven by

[132] While the work on proto-industrialization is expansive, for an introduction see: Franklin F Mendels, "Proto-Industrialization: The First Phase of the Industrialization Process," *Journal of Economic History* 32, no. 1 (March 1972) 241–61; Peter Kriedte, Hans Medick, and Jürgen Schlumbohm, eds., *Industrialization before Proto-Industrialization: Rural Industry in the Genesis of Capitalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Gay L Gullickson, "Agriculture and Cottage Industry: Redefining the Causes of Proto-Industrialization," *Journal of Economic History* 43, no. 4 (December 1983) 831–50; Geoff Eley, "The Social History of Industrialization: 'Proto-Industry' and the Origins of Capitalism," *Economy and Society* 13, no. 4 (November 1984) 519–39; and Sheilagh Ogilvie and Markus Cerma, eds. *European Proto-Industrialization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996). For arguments against the theory of proto-industrialization theory, see: DC Coleman, "Proto-Industrialization: A Concept Too Many," *Economic History Review* 36, no. 3 (August 1983) 435–48; and Sheilagh Ogilvie, *State Corporatism and Proto-Industry: The Württemberg Black Forest, 1580–1797* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

consumer demand for new and varied fashionable goods such as stockings, umbrellas, and fans. By distributing production to dispersed workers, she writes, merchants were able to respond to their customers' desires by quickly manufacturing goods that suited their tastes.[133] What the capitalists of proto-industrialization reveal, therefore, is how economic and cultural capital were invested to unite supply and demand.

Evidence for the place of merchants in this proto-industrial system can be found in bankruptcy records. Late in the eighteenth century, as the production of plain white porcelain became more common, many Parisian merchants built widespread networks of artisans to decorate and garnish pieces for sale in their shops. The address book of one such producer spanning much of the second half of the eighteenth century includes the names and addresses of twenty-eight porcelain painters and two gilders alongside dozens of other luxury artisans and merchants.[134] A bankruptcy file for the wholesaler Cerf Bodenheim from 1790 reveals him to have accumulated debts of over twenty-two thousand livres in owed wages to sixty artisans, including thirty-three painters and two *garnisseurs*.[135] Both of these documents show the artisan workforces to be scattered throughout Paris and belonging to a range of trades. The porcelain merchants Madame Lapique and Monsieur Vassal, upon declaring bankruptcy in 1806, revealed nearly thirty thousand livres in debt, most of it owed to gilders, a smelter, and a clock maker.[136] And when the craze for porcelain bouquets took off in the middle of the eighteenth century, another enterprising merchant managed to assemble a team of fifty women

[133] Cissie Fairchilds, "The Production and Marketing of Populuxe Goods in Eighteenth-Century Paris," in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, eds. John Brewer and Roy Porter (New York: Routledge, 1993) 228–48.

[134] AdP D^{5}B^{6} 5770 [c. 1760–1789].

[135] AdP D^{4}B^{6} 110 dos 7848 (3 August 1790).

[136] AdP D^{11}U^{3} 33 dos 2173 (10 February 1806).

around Paris to artfully arrange porcelain flowers into bouquets that might be sold alone, coupled with a porcelain vase, or attached to a centerpiece such as a statue or clock.[137] Beyond the confines of the capital, these putting-out networks spilled over into the provinces and further integrated the national economy. In 1787, for instance, the intendant in Lille described his city as a hub of proto-industrial porcelain decoration in which merchants brought plain white pieces in from all over o be decorated and resold in their shops. This outwork had become so prevalent, he claimed, that the painters had abandoned their day jobs at the local porcelain manufacture and forced it to shut down. One of the merchants was soon held responsible for the mess and fined three thousand livres alongside the workers.[138] As these examples demonstrate, in the early modern period production, retailing, and consumption were bound together in the economic circuit.

Conclusion: Paris—Capital of the Empire of Fashion

Just as luxury consumption was simultaneously an act of individual presentation that collectively established a social canon of style, so too was each retailer's work an effort to establish their own reputation that increasingly created new forms of shopping. Established boutiques offered the same assurances of product quality and taste medieval fairs had but did so on a permanent basis capable of reducing the uncertainties surrounding consumption taking place on a globalized scope and at a proto-industrialized scale. The retailers advertised their business as offering specialized

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[137] Rose-Marie Herda-Mousseaux, "Enjoliver : l'exemple du fleurissement," in *Fabrique du luxe*, 40.

[138] AN F^{12} 1494^2 Letter [Gabriel Sénac de Meilhan] (8 September 1787); AN F^{12} 1494^2 Letter Sénac de Meilhan (2 December 1787).

knowledge about the objects they sold and their relationship to the stylistic regime. They offered credit to customers and increasingly managed expansive networks of subcontracted manufacturing as the linchpin holding together production and consumption. In this process, they each sought to build their reputation and convert it to profit. The ability of merchants like the marchands merciers to fill this economic role depended on the existence of sufficient trade and industry to furnish their shops and willing consumers to frequent them. In this sense, each individual retailer reacted to and sought to gain from these conditions by lubricating the flow of economic circuit. In the framework advanced by the New Institutional Economists and Becker, Stigler, and Akerlof, they were here essential for bringing efficiencies and growth to the early modern economy.

But continued economic circulation needs a catalyst that sets the whole system in motion. It was not enough that commodities around the world arrived in Europe in this period or that manufacturers began producing new goods, people had to want them. People had to learn to want them. As the Old Institutional Economists like Reid, Kyrk, and others showed, information about what to consume is never enough. It needs to be joined to a social motivation for why and how to consume. And here the combined efforts of the individual retailers to establish themselves as experts in luxury simultaneously established French retailers *en toto* as luxury embodied. Linking the social status of the French aristocracy with the material culture of their consumption served to mediate status through commodities. As the gatekeepers of these goods, Parisian merchants soon taught Europeans everywhere what to consume. In a scene depicting a stall at a fair produced by the Ludwigsburg Porcelain Manufactory (figure 1.20), between the gilt countertop of the entrance and the assortment of textiles, hats, and fans lining the back wall, two French Merchants of Fashion stand ready to furnish

their customers with the *right* products of taste. Even in the luxury products of rival kingdoms, the cultural authority of the French merchant was absolute.

At the same time, however, the economic capacity of these merchants was limited. The sprawling networks of proto-industrial production and alteration overseen by the marchands merciers and revealed in bankruptcy records were significant by eighteenth-century standards: the tens of thousands of livres of capital tied up in these circuits and the dozens of workers coordinated by the proto-capitalist merchants were substantial. Furthermore, they highlight the extent to which this early form of industrial production was shaped by the interplay of supply and demand. Yet it also reveals the limitations to economic growth in this period.

With their privilege to *enjoliver* goods and deep ties to the tastemakers of early modern society, the marchands merciers were able to invest their social and economic capital in the alteration of goods for a consumer market. But their capital was circulating, not fixed. They lacked the wealth and the technological knowledge to produce porcelain itself. And without this capacity, France would remain dependent on imports and incapable of competing with the growing industrial capacity of its rivals. Establishing a domestic porcelain industry would require an act of state to overcome the high economic and technical hurdles it would face. But it would also have to face the same issues of consumer information and desire the marchands merciers had confronted as they brought public consumption to France. While their capacities would have been insufficient to generate a new industry, their efforts were nonetheless indispensable for establishing an industry oriented around the emerging consumer class.

Figure 1.20. *"Venetian Fair" Shop with Two Figures.* Porcelain. Ludwigsburg Porcelain Manufacture, Germany, c. 1765. Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, 50.211.226–.228.

Chapter Two

Patronage, Privilege, and Private Investment: Paths to Product Innovation in the French Porcelain Industry, 1682–1768

As French consumption of imported luxuries grew during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it collided with the ambitions of French policymakers. The foreign goods filling elite dining rooms and luxury boutiques may have contributed to the early efflorescence of public consumption, but it sapped the nation of the prestige and profits produced by domestic industry. For individual industrialists, acquiring the profits promised by discovering how to manufacture these goods first required overcoming the high costs of learning how to make them. For bureaucratic policymakers, compensating and providing such technical research would be a necessary precondition if France were to have any hope of orienting local and global trade around French goods. For those involved in the effort to domesticate porcelain production at all levels, however, the issue was not how to produce abstract goods. It was how to make actual things. Creating a French porcelain industry required strategies that bridged the supply-side problems of research and development with the demand for specific material attributes. France would adopt and adapt a range of existing institutions to develop and distribute scientific knowledge, to compensate and encourage private investment, and to provide patronage and public investment in the pursuit of national industrial growth. But at every level of this process, those involved had to attend first and foremost to the physical qualities of porcelain production. Only then could France make a product consumers would want; only then could they make consumers want French products.

Material Quality and Import Substitution Industrialization

Bringing global goods to French consumers took an act of national determination. The same transaction costs that impeded market exchange in early modern Europe became even more pronounced as trade spread around the globe. As Douglass North has argued, it was in response to these transaction costs that European nations established privileged trading companies as institutions designed to facilitate the global flow of capital, disperse risk among a larger pool of shareholders, and lower the cost of information.[1] As European merchants plied Asian ports in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they confronted vast distances, long delays, and high costs while attempting to link the quality and quantity of goods offered there to the often fickle tastes of European consumers. Both the Dutch and English East India Companies established comprehensive and centralized systems for producing and distributing information about market conditions, including patterns of European demand and the qualities of Asian goods.[2]

For historians like Ann Carlos, the novel organizational structure of the early modern trading companies was a direct response to the unique challenges of efficiently

[1] Douglass C North, "Institutions, Transaction Costs, and the Rise of Merchant Empires," in *The Political Economy of Merchant Empires*, ed. James D Tracy (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 22–40.

[2] KN Chaudhuri, *The Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company, 1660–1760* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978) 37–8; Ann M Carlos and Stephen Nicholas, "'Giants of an Earlier Capitalism': The Chartered Trading Companies as Modern Multinationals," *Business History Review* 62, no. 3 (Autumn 1988) 409; Jan de Vries and Ad van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy: Success, Failure, and Perseverance of the Dutch Economy, 1500–1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 147–50; HV Bowen, *The Business of Empire: The East India Company and Imperial Britain, 1756–1833* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 234–46; Harold J Cook, *Matters of Exchange: Commerce, Medicine, and Science in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007) 42–81; Oscar Gelderblom, *Cities of Commerce: The Institutional Foundations of International Trade in the Low Countries, 1250–1650* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013) 44–88.

acquiring and rapidly circulating market information at an unprecedented scope and scale.[3] For other historians, meanwhile, large formal institutions for the transmission of information were unnecessary—or became so over time—because private traders hazarding their own fortunes would seek relevant information through decentralized networks.[4] Without the rationale of reducing transaction costs within these trading companies, some of these historians have gone so far as to claim, the only explanation for the diffusion of the joint-stock model across early modern Europe was their ability to garner monopolistic rents for shareholders and the state.[5] At the core of this disagreement is a question about the way early modern bureaucrats conceptualized the interests of the nation and the economic conditions to which they responded.

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[3] Carlos and Nicholas, "Giants of an Earlier Capitalism," 398–419; idem., "Theory and History: Seventeenth-Century Joint-Stock Chartered Trading Companies," *Journal of Economic History* 56, no. 4 (December 1996) 916–24; Ann M Carlos and Santhi Hejeebu, "Specific Information and the English Chartered Companies, 1650–1750," in *Information Flows: New Approaches in the Historical Study of Business Information*, eds. Leos Müller and Jari Ojala (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2007) 139–68; Gary Anderson, Robert McCormick, and Robert Tollison, "The Organization of the English East India Company," *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization* 4 (1983) 221–38; Klas Rönnbäck, "Transaction Costs of Early Modern Multinational Enterprises: Measuring the Transatlantic Information Lag of the British Royal African Company and Its Successor, 1680–1818," *Business History* 58, no. 8 (2016) 1147–63. On the intense intellectual interest in commodity qualities, see: Frank Perlin, "The Other 'Species' World: Speciation of Commodities and Moneys, and the Knowledge-Base of Commerce, 1500–1900," in *Merchants, Companies and Trade: Europe and Asia in the Early Modern Era*, eds. Sushil Chaudhury and Michel Morineau (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 145–62.

[4] Jacob M Price, "Transaction Costs: A Note on Merchant Credit and the Organization of Private Trade," in *Political Economy of Merchant Empires*, 276–97; Emily Erikson, *Between Monopoly and Free Trade: The English East India Company, 1600–1757* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014) 77–153; Emily Erikson and Sampsa Samila, "Networks, Institutions, and Uncertainty: Information Exchange in Early-Modern Markets," *Journal of Economic History* 78, no. 4 (December 2018) 1034–67.

[5] SRH Jones and Simon P Ville, "Efficient Transactors or Rent-Seeking Monopolists? The Rationale for Early Chartered Trading Companies," *Journal of Economic History* 56, no. 4 (December 1996) 898–915.

There was, of course, a more prosaic cause for the trading-company approach to global commerce: war. Given the fierce competition between European states in the early modern period, access to and control of global markets was largely a matter of which nation could conquer and defend them for its merchants by force of arms. And this in turn forged a bond between each nation's economic and military might in which commercial success garnered wealth that could be invested in naval force to capture more wealth to obtain more martial strength. From this perspective, trade was not and could not be a matter of private commerce, it was an extension of the state.[6] Thus, the success of the Dutch and English East India Companies depended, at least to a large measure, on their ability to bring military force to bear in Asian waters.[7]

The experience of the French reveals just how difficult establishing a global presence could be. As latecomers to Asian waters, French merchants lacked the knowledge of goods, qualities, and prices that were necessary to strike a shrewd and profitable deal and were slow to develop the deep relationships of trust with local traders necessary to establish a successful long-term enterprise.[8] Furthermore, despite

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[6] Ronald Findlay and Kevin H O'Rourke, *Power and Plenty: Trade, War, and the World Economy in the Second Millennium* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007) 227–61). For a conflicting perspective, see: John Shovlin, *Trading with the Enemy: Britain, France, and the 18th-Century Quest for a Peaceful World Order* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2021).

[7] De Vries and van der Woude, *First Modern Economy*, 382–411; Larry Neal, "The Dutch and English East India Companies Compared: Evidence from the Stock and Foreign Exchange Markets," in *The Rise of Merchant Empires: Long-Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350–1750*, ed. James D Tracy (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 195–223; Philip J Stern, *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) 61–82, 121–41; David Onnekink and Gijs Rommelse, *The Dutch in the Early Modern World: A History of a Global Power* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

[8] Catherine Manning, *Fortunes à Faire: The French in Asian Trade, 1719–48* (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 1996) 130; Glenn Ames, *Colbert, Mercantilism and the French Quest for Asian Trade* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University, 1996) 41–2; Philippe Haudrère, "The French India Company and Its Trade in the Eighteenth Century," in *Merchants,*

repeated attempts to establish a military hegemony in the region, the French struggled to gain access to ports dominated by their European rivals, to supplant them in their alliances with Asian empires, or to protect their ships and factories from the navies and armies of both.[9] This military weakness condemned French Asian commerce to partial and intermittent access to the commodities it desired. This was most pronounced in the major port at Canton, gateway to the esteemed products of China.[10] It was thus only after the Seven Years War that French porcelain shipments really increased.[11] The characteristic of French commercial imperialism in Asia that most distinguished its development, however, was the degree of interconnection between economic development and royal prestige. From its beginnings as a pet project of Jean-Baptiste Colbert, the French Compagnie des Indes sought to appropriate the profits of the Dutch and English East India Companies for itself, but also to elevate the glory of the Crown.[12]

As Eli Heckscher, perhaps the most influential historian of early modern political economy, has argued, the European approach to economic policy in this period was all about power. For Heckscher, mercantilism was an approach to building the military

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Companies, and Trade: Europe and Asia in the Early Modern Era, eds. Sushil Chaudhury and Michel Morineau (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 209.

[9] Manning, *Fortunes à Faire*, 195–218; Ames, *Colbert*, 126–85.

[10] Manning, *Fortunes à Faire*, 182–8.

[11] Philippe Haudrère, *La Compagnie française des Indes au XVIIIe siècle (1719–1795)* (Paris: Librairie de l'Inde, 1989) 2:417–9; Paul Butel, "France, the Antilles, and Europe in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Renewals of Foreign Trade," in *The Rise of Merchant Empires: Long-Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350–1750*, ed. James D Tracy (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 169–70.

[12] Charles Woolsey Cole, *Colbert and a Century of French Mercantilism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939) 1:475–532; *idem*., *French Mercantilism, 1683–1700* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943) 32–59; Pierre Boulle, "French Mercantilism, Commercial Companies and Colonial Profitability," in *Companies and Trade: Essays on Overseas Trading Companies during the Ancien Régime*, eds. L Blussé and F Gaastra (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 1981) 97–117.

and political power of the state, generating the wealth that was necessary to defend a monarchy against its dynastic rivals, and unifying a national polity that could support the grandeur and glory of the monarch.[13] "It is natural to consider mercantilism as the economic system of nationalism," he argued, one that made the pursuit of state power "an *end in itself*."[14] This was, however, a nationalism that faced both inward and outward. The nationalism of mercantilist political economy sought to order domestic society under the aegis of the Crown, but it was also conceived in rivalry with other polities pursuing similar ends.[15] As Paul Cheney has argued, this means that early modern political economy must be understood within the context of colonialism and globalization, that the purview of early modern political economy did not stop at fortified borders but formed the idea of the nation within an interconnected world.[16]

In an important revision of Heckscher's thesis, however, Jacob Viner argued that mercantilism was a policy that sought both power *and* plenty as concurrent and

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[13] Eli F Heckscher, *Mercantilism*, trans. Mendel Shapiro (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1935) esp. 1:19–30, 1:326–30, and 2:13–49. On France, see: 1:78–109 and 1:137–220. See also: Gustav Schmoller, *The Mercantile System and Its Historical Significance* (New York: Macmillan & Co, 1902).

[14] *Ibid*., 2:13 and 2:16.

[15] Istvan Hont, *Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2005); and Sophus A Reinert, "Rivalry: Greatness in Early Modern Political Economy," in *Mercantilism Reimagined: Political Economy in Early Modern Britain and Its Empire*, eds. Philip J Stern and Carl Wennerlind (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014) 348–70. On this link between internal and external power, see: Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, and Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); and *idem.*, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

[16] Paul Cheney, *Revolutionary Commerce: Globalization and the French Monarchy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); and *idem*., "The Political Economy of Colonization: From Composite Monarchy to Nation," in *The Economic Turn: Recasting Political Economy in Enlightenment Europe*, eds. Sophus A Reinert and Steven L Kaplan (New York: Anthem Press, 2019) 71–88.

intertwined goals of political economy.[17] Indeed, with the emergence of French political economy at the turn of the seventeenth century, its proponents spoke frequently of wealth as source of both national strength and public wellbeing. Henry IV's Controller General of Commerce Barthélemy de Laffemas, for instance, advised his king that "the wellbeing and utility of your subjects" and the "public utility" ought to be the guiding principles of his policies.[18] Similarly, after Henry IV's assassination, Antoine de Montchrétien wrote to a young Louis XIII and his regent Marie de Medici advocating a political economy that would promote the "happiness" and "utility of the people" by providing them with "a happy abundance of all things." Clarifying his point, Montchrétien explained that "It is hardly the abundance of gold and silver, the quantity of pearls and diamonds, that makes States rich and opulent; it is the accommodation of the things necessary for life and suitable for clothing; who has more of them, has more *bien*."[19] This concern for the material prosperity of common citizens would in fact be a hallmark of political economic thinking throughout the early modern period.

While historians have often followed Adam Smith's criticism of the "mercantile system" in painting it as a zero-sum philosophy that conflated money with wealth and the balance of trade, more recent work has emphasized the importance of greater

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[17] Jacob Viner, "Power versus plenty as Objectives of Foreign Policy in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in *Essays on the Intellectual History of Economics*, ed. Douglas A Irwin (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991) 128–53.

[18] Barthélemy de Laffemas, *Les trésors et richesses pour mettre l'Estat en splendeur, & monstrer au vray la ruyne des François par le trafic & negoce des estrangers ; & empescher facilement les petits procez en toute vacation ; voir comme la ustice des Consuls doit estre supprimée, & autres belles raisons. Le tout pour le bien de ce Royaume* (Paris: Estienne Preuosteau, 1598); *idem.*, *Les discours d'une liberté générale, & vie heureuse pour le bien du peuple* (Paris: Guillaume Binet, 1601).

[19] Antoine de Montchrestien, *Traicté de l'œconomie politique, dedié en 1615 au Roy et à la Reyne mère du Roy* (Paris: E Plon, Nourrit et Cie, 1889) 241.

production and thus material wellbeing in French political economy.[20] From this perspective, the French brand of mercantilism was an approach to industrialization that sought to increase France's manufacturing capacity by intervening when individuals on their own would not or could not meet national ambitions for development and growth. Philippe Minard has perhaps been most successful in resuscitating the image of Colbertism as a consistent and pragmatic response to economic and political conditions in early modern France. From Minard's perspective, the crucial role of the state in early modern French economic development was in using short-term subsidies, regulations, and investments to prop up infant industries that could then supply domestic needs and compete in foreign markets.[21] Underneath such arguments, however, rest questions of material culture, patterns of consumption, and public utility. To regulate production as a matter of economic policy is to enforce a specific material quality in anticipation of consumer utility and demand; to subsidize or support a particular industry is to attempt to balance the supply of a specific product with demand for it; to intervene in the market for manufactured goods is to determine not only what consumers want (or should want) in the abstract, but in its concrete and tangible qualities. It was not just a question of furnishing necessities or clothes, as Montchrétien believed, but determining what foods and what clothes would be available. Such intervention links political

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[20] Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. RH Campbell and AS Skinner (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1981) 1:429–51.

[21] Philippe Minard, *La fortune du colbertisme : État et industrie dans la France des Lumières* (Paris: Fayard, 1998); *idem.*, "Colbertisme Continued? The Inspectorate of Manufactures and Strategies of Exchange in Eighteenth-Century France," *French Historical Studies* 23, no. 3 (Summer 2000) 477–96; and *idem.*, "Économie de marché et État en France : Mythes et légendes du colbertisme," *L'économie politique* 37 (January 2008) 77–94. See also: Cole, *Colbert*, 1:278–474; Alain Guery, "Industrie et colbertisme : Origines de la forme française de la politique industrielle ?" *Histoire, Économie et Société* 8, no. 3 (1989) 297–312; JKJ Thomson, *Clermont-de-Lodève, 1633–1789: Fluctuations in the Prosperity of a Languedocian Cloth-Making Town* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

economy's twin goals of power and plenty by connecting the potential of production with the shape of consumption.

It is here that the globalization of trade in the early modern world must be further incorporated into the history of French economic development. The arrival of exotic goods in the French market refashioned patterns of consumption and redefined what constituted the happiness and wellbeing of the public. Recent historical work has shown how the global exchange of goods in the early modern world percolated through European society.[22] In France, by the eighteenth century these goods and ideas had brought even the most rural areas of the country into contact with global networks of consumption and information.[23] As colonial foods and foreign products entered the material culture of France, their procuration became a guiding element of French imperial strategy. As Felicia Gottman has argued, however, historians have only just

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[22] The burgeoning literature in this field is too vast to include, but for important contributions see: Anne EC McCants, "Exotic Goods, Popular Consumption, and the Standard of Living: Thinking about Globalization in the Early Modern World," *Journal of World History* 18, no. 4 (December 2007) 433–62; Paula Findlen, ed., *Early Modern Things: Objects and their Histories, 1500–1800* (New York, Routledge, 2013); Maxine Berg, ed. *Goods from the East, 1600–1800: Trading Eurasia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Robert s DuPlessis, *The Material Atlantic: Clothing, Commerce, and Colonization in the Atlantic World, 1650–1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello, eds., *The Global Lives of Things: The Material Culture of Connections in the Early Modern World* (New York: Routledge, 2016); and Beverly Lemire, *Global Trade and the Transformation of Consumer Cultures: The Material World Remade, c.1500–1820* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

[23] Michael Kwass, *Louis Mandrin and the Making of a Global Underground* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014) esp 15–40; Emma Rothschild, "Isolation and Economic Life in Eighteenth-Century France," *American Historical Review* 119, no. 4 (October 2014) 1055–82; Felicia Gottman, *Global Trade, Smuggling, and the Making of Economic Liberalism: Asian Textiles in France, 1680–1760* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); James Livesey, *Provincializing Global History: Money, Ideas, and Things in the Languedoc, 1680–1830* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020).

begun examining the ways global goods and connections remade the metropole in the early modern period.[24]

Perhaps one source of conflicting evaluations of French political economy in the early modern period is an apparent contradiction between state approaches to different industries: some trade was prohibited, other trade was subjected to tariffs, other trade was subsidized, and still other trade was facilitated through military force; some industries were regulated, other industries were nationalized, other industries received various encouragements, and still other industries were ignored; some forms of agriculture benefitted from state support, other forms of agriculture were subjected to strict controls, and still other forms of agriculture were left alone. In the abstract, such inconsistencies may seem to suggest an incoherence in state policy that can only be explained by rent-seeking and monopolistic self-interest. And the motivations behind any individual policy were undoubtedly complex. But by attending to the materiality of abstract commercial goods, a coherence can be brought to the range of policies pursued in support of different industries. It can ground economic policy in divergent access to raw materials and technologies. It can explain why, despite the strong desire for printed calicoes among French consumers, the state maintained a prohibition on their importation or wear because France lacked steady access to Indian cotton markets or the technology to successfully weave or dye the materials domestically.[25] Following a

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[24] Felicia Gottman, "French-Asian Connections: The Compagnie des Indes, France's Eastern Trade, and New Directions in Historical Scholarship," *Historical Journal* 56, no. 2 (June 2013) 537–52.

[25] Gottman, *Global Trade*; George Bryan Souza, "The French Connection: Indian Cottons and Their Early Modern Technology," in *How India Clothed the World: The World of South Asian Textiles, 1500–1850*, eds. Giorgio Riello and Tirthankar Roy (London: Brill, 2009) 347–63; Giorgio Riello, *Cotton: The Fabric that Made the Modern World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 87–134, 160–85. On efforts to "domesticate" cotton supply, see: Joseph Horan, "King Cotton on the Middle Sea: Acclimatization Projects and the

state-led project to domesticate the cultivation of mulberry and silkworms under Laffemas's impetus in the seventeenth century, on the other hand, French silk production became a jewel in the crown of French industry under the direction of independent manufacturers competing on quality and design with luxury consumers.[26] And the establishment of sugar refineries across western France followed the formation of a plantation economy under the colonial control of France that could supply sugar to the metropole for further processing to meet the demand for varying qualities of sugar by French and European consumers. For Jan de Vries, the key factor determining political economic responses to global goods in early modern Europe was the interaction between demand and supply. In cases where demand was strong and supply limited, the logic of mercantilist political economy favored efforts to domesticate production through a process of import substitution industrialization.[27]

For Maxine Berg, among others, it was the desire to replace expensive (primarily Asian) imports with domestically manufactured goods that provided a key impetus for

French Links to the Early Modern Mediterranean," *French History* 29, no. 1 (March 2015) 93–108.

[26] Carlo Poni, "Fashion as Flexible Production: The Strategies of the Lyons Silk Merchants in the Eighteenth Century," in *World of Possibilities: Flexibility and Mass Production in Western Industrialization*, ed. Charles F Sabel and Jonathan Zeitlin (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Lesley Ellis Miller, "Paris—Lyon—Paris: Dialogue in the Design and Distribution of Patterned Silks in the 18th Century," in *Luxury Trades and Consumerism in* Ancien Régime *Paris: Studies in the History of the Skilled Workforce*, eds. Robert Fox and Anthony Turner (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1998) 139–67; William H Sewell, jr. "The Empire of Fashion and the Rise of Capitalism in Eighteenth-Century France," *Past & Present* 206 (February 2010) 81–120; and Junko Thérèse Takeda, "French Mercantilism and the Early Modern Mediterranean: A Case Study of Marseille's Silk Industry," *French History* 29, no. 1 (2015) 12–7.

[27] Jan de Vries, "Understanding Eurasian Trade in the Era of the Trading Companies," in *Goods from the East*, 7–39.

British industrialization.[28] To understand eighteenth-century industrialization, Berg and John Styles argue, we must pay attention to the revolution in products offered, which is to say to the physical qualities of manufactured goods and the ability to produce them.[29] Their approach to the manufacturing of specific products coincides with recent developments in material culture studies. For Bill Brown and others, the objects we consume are not disembodied receptacles of meaning, but physical things that humans interact with. These things exist both in and outside of their relationships with people, their status and meanings changing with time even as their material form persists.[30] Making sense of early modern attempts at import substitution industrialization requires us to connect the symbolic meanings and social uses such goods carried with the material substance of the things themselves.

As the experience of porcelain reveals, commercial goods, whether imported or domestically produced, mattered not in the abstract but in the tactile and material qualities. Bureaucrats, manufacturers, and scientists alike recognized that the allure of porcelain consisted of "two types of beauties." The most readily apparent were those visible on the surface, "a dazzling whiteness; a clear, uniform, and brilliant glaze; bright, fresh, and well applied colors; elegant and correct paintings; and well-

[28] Maxine Berg, "From Imitation to Invention: Creating Commodities in Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Economic History Review* 55, no. 1 (2002) 1–30; *idem*., "In Pursuit of Luxury: Global History and British Consumer Goods in the Eighteenth Century," *Past & Present* 182 (February 2004) 85–142.

[29] *Idem*., "The British Product Revolution of the Eighteenth Century," in *Reconceptualizing the Industrial Revoluton*, eds. Jeff Horn, Leonard N Rosenband, and Merritt Roe Smith (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010) 47–64; John Styles "Product Innovation in Early Modern London," *Past & Present* 168 (August 2000) 124–69.

[30] Bill Brown, "Thing Theory," *Critical Inquiry* 28, no. 1 (Autumn 2001) 1–22; Ewa Domanska, "The Material Presence of the Past," *History and Theory* 45, no. 3 (October 2006) 337–48.

proportioned and agreeably varied high-quality forms." But beneath these extrinsic qualities lay several "intrinsic qualities" of the material itself, its unique blend of "gentleness and solidness," its ability "to resist the most violent fire, and that can pass from cold to hot and from hot to cold without breaking" while retaining "just as much the look of earth or plaster, as the appearance of melted glass."[31]

There were many efforts to imitate Chinese porcelain in early modern Europe. Perhaps the most widespread attempt at import substitution came with the discovery of a white ceramic known variously as majolica or faïence. Indeed, the application of a tin-lead glaze to common earthenware allowed manufacturers to mimic the color and design of Chinese porcelain and even adapt it to European styles at a fraction of the cost of imported porcelain, as is visible in this faïence plate from Rouen (figure 2.1). But as is evident in this example, the thickness of both the ceramic material and the glaze often lacked the elegance and sheen of well-made porcelain; the two-stage application and firing process left the bond between ceramic and glaze fragile and prone to chipping; and the finished product was poorly suited to use with the hot liquids that were rapidly becoming central to French dining practices. Variations of faïence such as Delftware or Creamware were developed as well that were capable of finer execution and a similar porcelain-inspired appearance (figure 2.2), but as the back of this object (figure 2.3) reveals the application of a metallic glaze to an earthen base produced inherent problems at a physical level. What none of these early attempts to reproduce porcelain

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[31] Nicolas-Christiern de Thy de Milly, *L'art de la porcelaine* (Paris: Saillant & Nyon and Desaint, 1771), xxiii. [deux espèces de beauté] [une blancheur éclatante ; une couverture nette, uniforme, & brillante ; des couleurs vives, fraîches, & bien fondues ; des peintures élégantes & correctes ; des formes nobles bien proportionnées, & agréablement variées] [qualités intrinseques] [à la bonté & à la solidité] [pour résister au feu le plus violent, & qui pourra passer du fraud au chaud & du chaud au froid sans se casser] [autant du coup d'œil terreux ou plâtreux, que l'apparence de verre fondu]

Figure 2.1. Plate with arms of the Poterat family. Faïence. Rouen, c. 1710. Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, 17.190.1778.

from domestic materials could replicate was the fineness of form, the precision of imagery, the bond between glaze and substrate, the translucent sheen, and the resistance to thermal shock that made porcelain so desired by consumers (figures 2.4 and 2.5). If European states could hope to replace their expensive imports of Asian porcelain with domestically manufactured versions, they would have to attend first and foremost to the material qualities that made porcelain into porcelain and made it so desirable. They would have to develop a strategy for industrialization that dealt with consumer utility and happiness not in the abstract, but in the concrete. They would then have to convince consumers of the merits of French products.

Figure 2.2. Plate (front). Tin-glazed earthenware with cobalt blue decoration. Delft, ca.1685–1715. Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, 08.107.3.

In short, as consumers gained access to global goods and became more sophisticated in assessing the qualities of objects, attempts to replace imports with knockoff imitations proved insufficient. To truly replace these imports, domestic producers would need to attend to the material qualities consumers desired. The first step toward achieving the absolutist monarchy's economic and cultural goals of establishing a French porcelain industry thus necessitated discovering the four material secrets of porcelain production: what it was made of, where to find the materials, how to decorate and glaze it, and how to fire it. Doing so required mobilizing France's intellectual and economic resources and harnessing the existing institutions and frameworks of Old Regime society to bring the disparate goals of diverse actors into

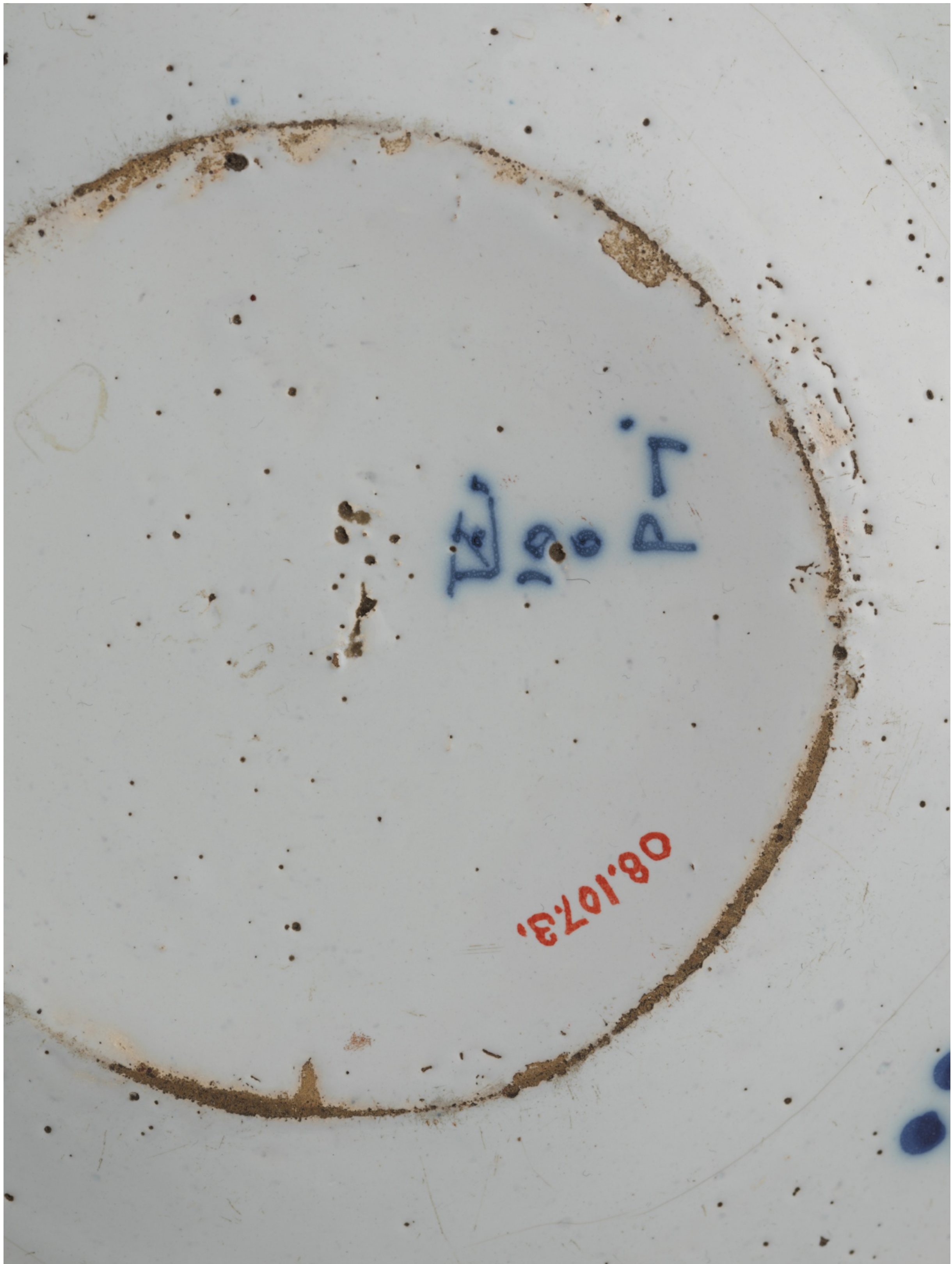

Figure 2.3. Plate (inverse). Tin-glazed earthenware with cobalt blue decoration. Delft, ca.1685–1715. Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, 08.107.3.

Figure 2.4. Plate with figures in a garden (front). Porcelain painted in underglaze cobalt blue. Jingdezhen, late 17th–early 18th century. Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, 79.2.369.

Figure 2.5. Plate with figures in a garden (inverse). Porcelain painted in underglaze cobalt blue. Jingdezhen, late 17th–early 18th century. Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, 79.2.369.

harmony. Success in this endeavor was a necessary precondition if France were to have any hope of establishing itself as the epicenter of porcelain production.

Missionaries, Prisoners of War, and Itinerant Workers: Industrial Espionage in the Early Modern World

A simple fact shaping French efforts to produce porcelain was that the technical knowledge for doing so already existed, but it existed only outside French borders.[32] Porcelain had been produced in China for global trade for a millennium before it reached European consumers in the seventeenth century, with Japanese and Korean manufacture having entered this thriving market by this period as well.[33] Saxon scientists working for Augustus II subsequently discovered the secret in 1708. Because this technological knowledge already existed elsewhere, the easiest way for France to obtain the secret was simply to steal it.

An early ally in this quest was the Society of Jesus, whose army of educated missionaries and network of direct communications gave it the ability to circulate information from every corner of the globe and frequently formed the vanguard of Enlightenment expeditions for knowledge.[34] Though forbidden from joining the

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[32] On exchanges of industrial information, see: Guillaume Carnino, Liliane Hilaire-Pérez, and Aleksandra Kobiljski, eds. *Histoire des techniques : Mondes, sociétés, cultures, XVI³–XVIIIᵉ siècle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2016).

[33] For the pre-European history of porcelain, see: Robert Finlay, *The Pilgrim Art: Cultures of Porcelain in World History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010) esp 81–252.

[34] Luke Clossey, "Merchants, Migrants, Missionaries, and Globalization in the Early-Modern Pacific," *Journal of Global History* 1 (2006) 41–58; Markus Friedrich, "Government and Information-Management in Early Modern Europe. The Case of the Society of Jesus (1540–1773)," *Journal of Early Modern History* 12 (2008) 539–63; Antonello Romano, "Les savoirs de la mission," in *De la Renaissance aux Lumières*," ed. Stéphane van Damme (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2015) 347–67; Pierre-Yves Beaurepaire, *Les Lumières et le monde : Voyager, explorer, collectionner* (Paris: Belin, 2019); Pierre Huard and

Academy of Sciences, from the founding of this royal institution Jesuits offered it their services in the circulation of scientific knowledge.[35] In dedicating to Louis XIV a compendium of Jesuit discoveries conducted across a range of fields in conjunction with

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Ming Wong, "Les enquêtes scientifiques françaises et l'exploration du monde exotique aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles," *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient* 52, no. 1 (1964) 143–55. Recently, historians have begun emphasizing the importance of the transfer of Asian technical knowledge for the development of European industrial production. For example, see: Ghulam A Nadiri, "The Indigo Trade of the English East India Company in the Seventeenth Century: Challenges and Opportunities," in *Goods from the East, 1600–1800: Trading Eurasia*, ed. Maxine Berg (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) 61–76; Giorgio Riello, "Asian Knowledge and the Development of Calico Printing in Europe in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *Journal of Global History* 5 (2010) 1–28; Chao Huang, "Metallurgical Knowledge Transfer from Asia to Europe: Retrospect of Chinese Paktong and its Influence on Sweden and Austria," *Artefact. Techniques, histoire et sciences humaines* 8 (2018) 89–110. Far from being a unidirectional transfer, knowledge was circulated in a way that frequently led to reciprocal developments. Enamel technology from places like the Limoges faïence industry, for example, was transferred early in the eighteenth century to Chinese porcelain producers who adapted it to their own wares, which were in turn transferred back to places like Limoges later in the eighteenth century once porcelain production was established there: Xu Xiaodong, "Europe-China-Europe: The Transmission of the Craft of Painted Enamel in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in *Goods from the East*, 92–106; Hui Tang, "'The Finest of the Earth,': The English East India Company's Enameled Porcelain Trade at Canton during the Eighteenth Century," *Artefact. Techniques, histoire et sciences humaines* 8 (2018) 69–88; Philippe Colomban, Yizheng Zhang, and Bing Zhao, "Chinese *Huafalang* and Related Porcelain Wares. Searching for Evidence for Innovative Pigment Technologies," *Ceramics International* 43, no. 15 (October 2017) 12079–12088. Such two-way transfers are particularly important for understanding the special role of Jesuits in bringing foreign technologies to Europe because their success in introducing useful European technologies to China is what earned them the trust and prestige to be allowed to observe Chinese technologies firsthand: Benjamin A Elman, *On Their Own Terms: Science in China, 1550–1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005) 61–221; Chicheng Ma, "Knowledge Diffusion and Intellectual Change: When Chinese Literati Met European Jesuits," *Journal of Economic History* 81, no. 4 (December 2021) 1052–97.

[35] Roger Hahn, *The Anatomy of a Scientific Institution: The Paris Academy of Sciences, 1666–1803* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971) 15, 18; Alice Stroup, *A Company of Scientists: Botany, Patronage, and Community at the Seventeenth-Century Parisian Royal Academy of Sciences* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990) 58, 208, 212; James E McClellan III, *Colonialism and Science: Saint Domingue in the Old Regime* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992) 111–6; Isabelle Landry-Deron, *La preuve par la Chine : La "Description" de J.-B. Du Halde, jésuite, 1735* (Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2002).

the Academy of Sciences, the author emphasized that "these Fathers...render their work as advantageous to all the nations of Europe, as glorious to your Reign." These missionaries were instructed to seek information "that can be useful to navigation, to commerce, to the security and the instruction of your Subjects, but much more still as means to procure Glory" for God and King.[36] This was certainly the case for the most important missionary observer of porcelain, Father d'Entrecolles, whose minutely detailed letter describing Chinese porcelain production was first published by the Jesuits in 1717 in the hopes that "the detail into which he enters on this subject, may even be of some use in Europe."[37]

Previous accounts of Chinese porcelain manufacturing processes sent back by European travelers were limited in detail, providing just enough information to determine that it was made of some manner of dirt or rock and not fish bones or egg shells as had been previously rumored.[38] What distinguished d'Entrecolles from these other travelers, who as outsiders were intentionally excluded from witnessing too

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[36] Thomas Goüye, *Observations physiques et mathématiques pour servir à l'histoire naturelle, & à la Perfection de l'Astronomie & de la Géographie* (Paris: Veuve d'Edme Martin, Jean Boudot, and Estienne Martin, 1688). On the publication of these works, see: Landry-Deron, *Preuve par la Chine*, 11–78, 143–68. [ces Pères...rendront leur travail aussi avantageux à toutes les nations de l'Europe, que glorieux à vostre Règne.] [qui peuvent être utiles à la navigation, au commerce, à la seureté & à l'instruction de vos Sujets, mais beaucoup plus encore comme des moyens de procurer la Gloire]

[37] "Lettres édifiantes et curieuses écrites des Missions étrangères, par quelques Missionnaires de la Compagnie de Jésus (Review)," *Journal des Sçavans* 14 (5 April 1717) 219; "Lettre du P. Dentrecolles au P. Orry," in *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses, écrites des Missions Étrangères, par quelques Missionnaires de la Compagnie de Jésus* (Paris: Le Mercier & Boudet and Marc Bordelet, 1741) 12:253–365. [le déttail où il entre sur ce sujet, pourra même être de quelque utilité en Europe]

[38] "Relations de divers voyages curieux (Review)," *Journal des Sçavans* 32 (9 August 1666) 372–3; "Ambassades mémorables de la Compagnie des Indes Orientales des Provinces-Unies vers les Empereurs de japon (Review)," *Journal des Sçavans* 11 (6 May 1680) 129–30; Louis le Comte, *Nouveaux mémoires sur l'état présent de la Chine* (Paris: Jean Anisson, 1696) 1:328–30.

closely the manufacturing process, was the depth of his immersion into Chinese society.[39] He learned how to read and speak Chinese fluently and gained the trust of several porcelain workers and merchants whom he had converted to Catholicism. The results of his inquiries into porcelain production, he hoped, "would be of some usefulness in Europe."[40] In his lengthy letter, d'Entrecolles walked step by step through the entire production process, from the preparation of the clay to the shaping and decorating of the ceramic pieces to the application of glaze to the final firing, offering precise technical information on all the most important aspects, such as the composition of various colors of underglaze and the design of the enormous kilns.[41] A decade after his first letter, d'Entrecolles submitted a second that offered more precise technical information on a range of decoration practices such as gilding, silvering, underglazing in numerous colors, and glazing.[42] His most crucial contribution to the French quest to

[39] Jean-Baptiste du Halde, *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique, et physique de l'empire de la Chine et le la Tartarie chinoise, enrichie de la Carte générale & des Cartes particulières du Thibet, & de la Corée ; ornée d'un grand nombre de Figures & de Vignettes gravées en Taille-douce* (The Hague: Henri Scheurleer, 1736) 2:213–4.

[40] "Lettre du Père d'Entrecolles, Missionnaire de la Compagnie de Jésus, sur la Porcelaine, au Père Orry de la même Compagnie," *Recueil de voyages au nord. Contenant divers Mémoires très-utiles au Commerce & à la Navigation* (Amsterdam: Jean Frederic Bernard, 1738) 10:306. On the importance of d'Entrecolles's letters for the European porcelain industry, see: Yves de Thomaz de Bossierre, *François-Xavier Dentrecolles et l'apport de la Chine à l'Europe du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1982) 75; NJG Pounds, "The Discovery of China Clay," *Economic History Review*, new series 1, no. 1 (1948) 21–3, 28. [seroit de quelque utilité en Europe]

[41] *Ibid.*, 10:306–58.

[42] "Lettre du P. Dentrecolles," in *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses, écrites des Missions Étrangères, par quelques Missionnaires de la Compagnie de Jésus* (Paris: Nicolas le Clerc, 1724) 16:320–67.

transfer the secret of porcelain production to its own manufactures, however, was to identify, describe, and deliver samples of its two key ingredients: *petuntze* and *kao-lin*.[43]

In the competitive game of international industrial espionage, most spies wore less conspicuous garments than the priest's frock. One perhaps unexpected source of stolen information was French prisoners of war who continued to serve their country from captivity. Once such prisoner, the Swiss chemist Broillet, had worked as a laboratory assistant to Academy of Sciences member Jean Hellot before moving to Canada. While there he became embroiled in the Seven Years War and was captured by the British at the Siege of Louisbourg in 1758. Because of his fluency in several languages, Broillet was able to pass himself off to his captors as a German and secure himself a job as a gilder in a Chelsea porcelain factory. From there he was able to enlist another worker, Martin, to help him send technical information on potters' wheels, copper stencils, and the ceramic cases used to protect porcelain in the kiln back to Hellot in France.[44]

Another French prisoner of war, Villehaut, was captured by Saxon troops (presumably during the same war) and forced to work in the Meissen factory for several years before being allowed to return home. Upon his return to the tiny town of Tressac just to the west of Montpelier, however, he encountered some unspecified family situation that prevented him from realizing his dream of moving to Paris and contributing his hard-earned porcelain skills at the center of French luxury manufacture. In the following two decades, Villehaut established a ceramics

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[43] "Lettre édifiantes et curieuses, écrites des Missions étrangères, par quelques Missionnaires de la Compagnie de Jésus (Review)," *Journal des Sçavans* (August 1724) 522–3.

[44] AMNS H1 Letter Hellot to Boileau (3 February 1759).

manufacture in Tressac and applied his knowledge of porcelain to discovering local clays suitable for its production. By 1784 he had achieved renown that stretched beyond his rural home and into the highest strata of French society, with members of the Academy of Sciences admiring both the material and artistic quality of his wares, particularly a two-foot bust that Madame Necker displayed prominently in her famous salon. With his mysterious family obligations finally resolved, Villehaut was set to accept a position at the royal manufacture in Sèvres in exchange for the technical information he had garnered as a prisoner of war when the arrangement suddenly evaporated for no discernable reason.[45]

A much more common form of industrial espionage involved the international sale of secrets by workers or manufacturers seeking a preferential deal from a foreign government.[46] Economic historians have tended to emphasize the transfer of British technology to French producers eager to acquire mechanized manufacturing methods from their more advanced neighbors across the Channel.[47] In the porcelain industry,

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[45] AN O^1 2061^1 Letter Buffon to d'Angiviller (7 March 1784); AN O^1 2061^1 Letter d'Arcet to d'Angiviller (10 April 1784); AN O^1 2061^1 Letter d'Arcet to d'Angiviller (22 May 1784); AN O^1 2061^1 Letter d'Angiviller to Abbé de Tressac [Spring 1784].

[46] Carlo M Cipolla, "The Diffusion of Innovations in Early Modern Europe," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 14, no. 1 (January 1972) 46–52; Adrian Johns, *Piracy: The Intellectual Property Wars from Gutenberg to Gates* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009) 17–144; and Carlo Marco Belfanti and Fabio Giusberti, "Introduction: Institutions and Technical Change in Early Modern Europe," *History and Technology* 16 (2000) 217–5. For case studies dealing with the importance and difficulties of industrial espionage for French industries, see: Warren C Scoville, "Technology and the French Glass Industry, 1640–1740," *Journal of Economic History* 1, no. 2 (November 1941) 153–67; Edward A Allen, "Business Mentality and Technology Transfer in Eighteenth-Century France: The Calandre Anglaise at Nîmes, 1752–1792," *History and Technology* 8, no. 1 (1990) 9–23; Olivier Raveux, "The Orient and the Dawn of Western Industrialization: Armenian Calico Printers from Constantinople in Marseilles (1669–1686), in *Goods from the East*, 77–91.

[47] John Harris, *Industrial Espionage and Technology Transfer: Britain and France in the Eighteenth Century* (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1998); *idem., Essays in Industry and Technology in the Eighteenth Century: England and France* (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1992).

however, British offers to import technologies were few, were unique neither in origin nor in application, came only late in the century, and consisted of minor technological improvements in things like enamels, printing, and kilns.[48] Given the early lead taken by Saxony in European porcelain production and the subsequent spread of this technology through the German-speaking world, the much more fundamental and crucial knowledge transfers came westward across the Rhine. As will be seen, the purchase of German porcelain technology in the 1760s proved to be the crucial turning point in the development of the French porcelain industry.

But if vital technological information could be smuggled into the country, it could also be smuggled out. Manufacturers attempted to protect their trade secrets by giving each worker only the knowledge necessary to complete their specific job, otherwise storing the information in a series of fireproof safes or with a trusted notary.[49] The reality of producing such advanced artisanal goods meant, however, that ultimately workers developed an intimate knowledge of the production process, not just of straightforward information like what proportions to mix ingredients or how long to dry them, but of tactile sensations and skills like how to feel when the clay was

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Paola Bertucci has contested Harris's portrayal of "industrial espionage," arguing that early modern ideas about information transfer were more open, less secretive, and somewhat expected. Indeed, especially at the level of established scientists, there was for porcelain a regular exchange of publications across national boundaries. However, given the consistent use of policing to prevent transfer of knowledge about porcelain production and the degree of subterfuge it required do imply that what was taking place in this industry was akin to espionage. Paola Bertucci, "Enlightened Secrets: Silk, Intelligent Travel, and Industrial Espionage in Eighteenth-Century France," *Technology and Culture* 54, no. 4 (October 2013) 820–52.

[48] AMNS C3 "Extrait d'un mémoire envoyé au Conseil," Jars [1765?]; AMNS C3 "Verres colorés du Sr Godfrey 1769," de Montigny (9 April 1769); AMNS C3 Letter Boileau (17 June 1770); AN F[12] 107 pg 835 (25 June 1789); AN F[12] 1494[1] "Rapport sur la méthode d'imprimer les dessins sur les poteries," (22 July 1789).

[49] AMNS A1 "Brevet du Sieur Helot," Hellot (1 November 1753).

ready to be molded or when the porcelain had been heated enough to complete its chemical transformation in an era before high-temperature thermometers existed. Such tacit or embodied knowledge was potentially the most crucial element of industrial know-how and, by its very nature, could only be transmitted by artisans themselves in person.[50] This was the type of knowledge that France sought to import; this was the type of knowledge that competitors sought to protect.

To retain the intellectual property transferred to the workers through countless repetitions of the production process, French manufacturers and the state worked together to lock these men up as tightly as the documents in their safes. A privilege contained in the Arrêt du Conseil establishing what would become the royal manufacture, as well as several subsequent royal proclamations, forbade workers to leave for employment elsewhere without permission upon pain of imprisonment for them and a hefty fine for whoever hired them.[51] To enforce these dictates, the royal manufacture hired a police inspector from 1754 onward specifically to monitor its workers and any foreigners who might be lurking around the area as potential spies.[52] The arm of the law was long, tracking suspected industrial spies before they could flee the country. Such was the case of Barry, a Frenchman who had spent eighteen months in London before coming back to France and convincing three workers from the royal

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[50] Pamela H Smith, *The Body of the Artisan: Art and Experience in the Scientific Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009) 1–25; Liliane Hilaire-Pérez, "Technology as a Public Culture in the Eighteenth Century: The Artisans' Legacy," *History of Science* 45, no. 2 (2007) 135–53.

[51] AN O[1] 2059[1] "Arrest du Conseil d'État du Roy" (24 July 1745); AN O[1] 2059[1] "Arrest du Conseil d'État du Roy" (19 August 1747); AMNS A1 "Lettres patentes sur arrest" (2 January 1749).

[52] AMNS B5 "Mémoire" to Buhon [1764]; AMNS B2 "Mémoire," Buhon (29 November 1765).

manufacture to defect alongside him. Despite an extensive manhunt stretching from Paris to Rouen, Barry and his secreted entourage appears to have slipped through the dragnet and disappeared to the west.[53]

The Academy and Scientific Patronage

When the Academy of Sciences was founded under Colbert's direction in 1666, it served two simultaneous purposes: to generate useful scientific information and reflect glory on the king.[54] Both of these purposes were readily evident in the quest to discover the secrets of porcelain. Throughout the eighteenth century, members of the Academy working on porcelain emphasized its usefulness, highlighting the material utility of the product itself and their desire to make it more readily available to the public.[55] One of the Academy's most famous eighteenth-century members, René Antoine Ferchault de Réaumur, was emblematic of this utilitarian approach to science. Arguing in favor of continued state financial support for the Academy, he emphasized that "Beyond this

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[53] Archives Départementales de la Seine Maritime (hereafter ADSM) M C15 Letter Berryer to [Rapier] (12 January 1751); ADSM C15 Letter Rapier to Berryer (28 January 1751); ADSM C15 Letter Berryer to [Rapier] (26 January 1751); Letter [Berryer] to de Bellmenil, Plainpel, Jollin, Magin, Chevalier, and de Caubon (15 January 1751).

[54] Hahn, *Anatomy of a Scientific Institution* 10–1; Stroup, *Company of Scientists*, 3; Alice Stroup, "The Political Theory and Practice of Technology under Louis XIV," in *Patronage and Institutions: Science, Technology, and Medicine at the European Court, 1500–1750*, ed. Bruce T Moran (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1991) 211–34; Paolo Bertucci and Olivier Courcelle, "Artisanal Knowledge, Expertise, and Patronage in Early Eighteenth-Century Paris: The *Société des Arts* (1728–36)," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 48, no. 2 (Winter 2015) 159–79. For contrary accounts, see: Robin Briggs, "The Académie Royale des Sciences and the Pursuit of Utility," *Past & Present* 131 (May 1991) 38–88; David S Lux, *Patronage and Royal Science in Seventeenth-Century France: The Académie de Physique in Caen* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989).

[55] "Regiæ Scientarum Academiæ Historia (Review)," *Journal des Savans* 4 (26 January 1699) 40; "Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Sciences, année 1727 (Review)," *Journal des Sçavans* (November 1730) 647; "Traité des couleurs pour la peinture en email & sur la Porcelaine (Review)," *Journal des Sçavans* (February 1766) 114.

general utility that a kingdom draws from the flourishing state of the sciences, the arts and the belles-lettres, there are sciences and arts that extend even more directly to its particular good. These are the sciences that are the object of the Academy."[56] As Réaumur became increasingly interested in the problem of porcelain in the 1720s, he stressed its practical and commercial benefits. Compared to glass, which could already be produced domestically, porcelain had the advantages of being much more suitable for the consumption of hot beverages.[57] But because porcelain had to be imported from overseas, its consumption led to large flows of wealth out of the country. Large-scale state investment in science and manufacturing to replace these imports with domestic production would, Réaumur believed, ultimately pay for itself.[58] His goal, therefore, was to create a porcelain as good or better than that of the Chinese, measuring his success ultimately by the high beauty and low price of his product.[59]

To discover how to make porcelain, Réaumur drew on his background as an entomologist to establish a taxonomy of ceramics and minerals. The reigning scientific

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[56] René Antoine Ferchault de Réaumur, "Réflexions sur l'utilité dont l'Académie des sciences pourroit être au Royaume, si le Royaume luy donnoit les Secours dont elle a besoin," in *L'Académie des Sciences : Histoire de l'Académie, fondation de l'Institut national*, ed. Ernest Maindron (Paris: F Alcan, 1888) 103. [Outre cette utilité générale qu'un royaume tire de l'état fleurissant des sciences, des arts et des belles-lettres, il y a des sciences et des arts qui tendent encore plus directement à son bien particulier. Telles sont les sciences qui font l'objet de l'Académie]

[57] "Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Sciences, année 1727 (Review)," *Journal des Sçavans* (November 1730) 645.

[58] René Antoine Ferchault de Réaumur, "Idée générale des différentes manières dont on peut faire la Porcelaine & quelles sont les véritables manières de celle de la Chine," *Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Sciences, année 1727* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1729) 202–3.

[59] René Antoine Ferchault de Réaumur, "Seconde mémoire sur la Porcelaine ; ou suite des principes qui doivent conduire dans la composition des Porcelaines de différentes genres ; Et qui établissent le caractère des Matières fondantes qu'on peut choisir pour tenir lieu de celles qu'on y employe à la Chine," *Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Sciences, année 1729* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1731) 325–6, 333.

paradigm in France throughout most of the eighteenth century revolved around attempts to classify natural matter, whether biological species or mineral deposits, according to its relationship to identifiable categories. Within this paradigm, minerals were believed to form from combinations of a few basic earths in various configurations and then lie in timeless geographical deposits.[60] Scientific analysis mostly meant applying an experimental method that, by subjecting materials to a variety of stimuli, could reveal the hidden properties of these materials and thus permit a more accurate classification.[61] Developing a concrete taxonomy necessitated first establishing a conceptual taxonomy that was based in underlying assumptions about what characteristics of minerals did and did not matter.

The European reinvention of porcelain had its roots in the alchemical community of seventeenth-century central Europe. Alchemy in this period had moved past its earlier connotations of charlatans obsessed with transmuting base metals to gold and had begun instead utilizing scientific processes of experimentation to distill materials down to their base elements.[62] Among the most influential practitioners of late seventeenth-century alchemy was the German Johann Joachim Becher. Like Réaumur,

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[60] Rachel Laudan, *From Mineralogy to Geology: The Foundations of a Science, 1650–1830* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) 20–86; Martin JS Rudwick, *Bursting the Limits of Time: The Reconstruction of Geohistory in the Age of Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005) 59–98. On scientific paradigms, see: Thomas S Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) esp 10–2.

[61] Ursula Klein and Wolfgang Lefèvre, *Materials in Eighteenth-Century Science: A Historical Ontology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007) 7–79; Claire Salomon-Bayet, *L'institution de la science et l'expérience du vivant : Méthode et expérience à l'Académie royale des sciences, 1666–1793*, 2nd ed (Paris: Flammarion, 1978) 16–54.

[62] Bruce T Moran, *Distilling Knowledge: Alchemy, Chemistry, and the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005) 8–36, 132–54; Ferdinando Abri, "Alchemy and Chemistry: Chemical Discourses in the Seventeenth Century," *Early Science and Medicine* 5, no. 2 (2000) 214–26.

Becher believed that the value of science lay in its ability to both generate knowledge and create material goods—particularly consumer goods—that would promote the utility and wealth of the nation.[63] As in France, the promise of practical knowledge and commercial profits won Becher and his acolytes the support of German monarchs in Prussia and Saxony to experiment on materials that might benefit their national industries. Also as in France, the logics of political economy and court culture combined to ensure that cracking the code of porcelain production would be a priority for state-sponsored scientists. It was in this environment that porcelain was first reproduced in Europe in 1708 in a Meissen laboratory run by Ehrenfried Walther von Tschirnhaus and Johann Friedrich Böttger.[64] Whether resulting from porcelain's alchemical origins or from the pragmatic interest in creating industrial materials, in the first half of the eighteenth century the dominant mineralogical taxonomies included as a basic factor how a material reacted to fire, and in particular whether it melted under heat.[65]

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[63] Pamela H Smith, *The Business of Alchemy: Science and Culture in the Holy Roman Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994) 14–55, 121, 173–227; Tara E Nummedal, "Practical Alchemy and Commercial Exchange in the Holy Roman Empire," in *Merchants and Marvels: Commerce, Science, and Art in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Pamela H Smith and Paula Findlen (New York: Routledge, 2002) 201–22; Philipp Wilhelm von Hörnigk, *Austria Supreme (If It So Wishes) (1684): A Strategy for European Economic Supremacy*, ed. Philipp Robinson Rössner, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Anthem Press, 2018) 171.

[64] Martin Schönfeld, "Was There a Western Inventor of Porcelain?" *Technology and Culture* 39, no. 4 (October 1998) 716–27; Nicholas Zumbulyadis, "Böttger's Eureka!: New Insights into the European Reinvention of Porcelain," *Bulletin for the History of Chemistry* 35, no. 1 (2010) 24–32; Moran, *Distilling Knowledge*, 148. As would later be the case in France, state support of Meissen and its research laboratory would prove crucial in transforming a scientific discovery into a large-scale industrial venture. See: Ursula Klein, "Chemical Experts at the Royal Prussian Porcelain Manufactory," *Ambix* 60, no. 2 (May 2013) 99–121.

[65] Cyril Stanley Smith, "Porcelain and Plutonism," in *Toward a History of Geology*, ed. Cecil J Schneer (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1969) 317–38; Laudan, *Mineralogy to Geology*, 23–4.

Applying this taxonomy to ceramics, Réaumur believed that earthenware, porcelain, and glass existed on a continuum in which the first was solid, the final vitrified (glass), and porcelain somewhere in between, or half-vitrified (somewhere between solid and glass).[66] Given this orientation, he set out to classify minerals in relation to their ability to vitrify (turn into glass).[67] According to this conception, there were two ways to make a half-vitrified product such as porcelain. One could either heat a vitrifiable material only halfway through the vitrification process (mix the materials for glass but only heat them halfway) or mix a vitrifiable material with a non-vitrifiable material (adulterate the materials for glass with other materials) and heat them fully.[68] Réaumur used as his guide the letters and mineral samples sent back by d'Entrecolles. They led Réaumur to conclude that the Chinese method of porcelain production consisted of using kaolin clay as the non-vitrifiable component that gave porcelain its characteristic color and *petuntze* or feldspar with quartz in it as the vitrifiable component that gave porcelain its glassy and translucent appearance.[69] Réaumur already recognized that the precise materials used in Chinese porcelain had yet to be discovered in France. Instead he experimented on French soft-paste porcelain, which was manufactured by grinding glass into a fine powder and mixing it with white clay until when fired it replicated both the texture and color of true porcelain, before he

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[66] René Antoine Ferchault de Réaumur, "Sur la nature et la formation des cailloux," *Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Sciences, année 1721* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1723) 259.

[67] "Sur la formation des cailloux," *Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Sciences, année 1721* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1723) 12–4; René Antoine Ferchault de Réaumur, "Sur la rondeur que semblent affecter certaines espèces de pierres, & entr'autres sur celle qu'affectent les cailloux," *Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Sciences, année 1723* (Paris: Durand, 1753) 273–6.

[68] Réaumur, "Idée générale," 185–9.

[69] "Histoire de l'Académie...1727," 645–6.

ultimately had to conclude that this was but an inferior imitation of true porcelain.[70] Faced with this difficulty, Réaumur concluded his experiments on porcelain with a bizarre claim that he had discovered a way to reverse the vitrification process and could now convert glass back into porcelain through a process he called "transmutation" or "revivification" while retaining the original shape of the glass object.[71] His colleagues were politely skeptical of this claim.[72]

While Réaumur's efforts to uncover the secrets of porcelain were ultimately unsuccessful, they do reveal the collaborative nature of science across social categories within Old Regime society. First, Réaumur began his examination by building upon the information and materials sent from China by Jesuit missionaries.[73] Second, he depended on the patronage of aristocrats who were engaged in the same research. The Count of Clermont, for example, readily shared the results of his own porcelain research with Réaumur; and the Duke of Orléans, who had founded a porcelain manufacture at Chantilly, used his position to pressure intendants from across France to send Réaumur hundreds of samples of the minerals and clays found in their regions to aid his search for a French source of kaolin.[74]

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[70] Réaumur, "Seconde mémoire," 331–40; "Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Sciences, année 1729," *Journal des Sçavans* (March 1732) 165–7.

[71] René Antoine Ferchault de Réaumur, "Art de faire une nouvelle espèce de Porcelaine, par des moyens extrêmement simples & faciles, ou de transformer le Verre en Porcelaine. Premier Mémoire," *Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Sciences, année 1739* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1741) 370–88; "Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Sciences, année 1739 (Review)," *Journal des Sçavans* (December 1743) 722–3.

[72] "Sur une nouvelle espèce de Porcelaine," *Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Sciences, année 1740* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1742) 56–8.

[73] Réaumur, "Idée générale," 192–8.

[74] *Ibid.,* 199; *idem.,* "Seconde Mémoire," 338.

Aristocrats were not the only ones so forthcoming about their experiments in this period. A scientist working on glass in the early eighteenth century, for example, regularly exchanged the results of his experiments with the owner of the porcelain manufacture in St Cloud.[75] And, far from seeing science as an elite occupation, Réaumur routinely emphasized the importance of workers as his partners in discovery. He went to the porcelain manufactures in St Cloud, St Antoine, and St Honoré to learn from the workers there and to share his own discoveries with them, trusting the workers to figure out how to best harmonize traditional skills with new information.[76] In fact, Réaumur believed, French science would be best served if the state were to fund "a grand and magnificent laboratory, where workers of different professions would be continually occupied working on new experiments to design rare and useful machines, and test new machines being proposed," and to reward the workers with prizes for their successes.[77] Such recommendations became an important part of technological development in the French porcelain industry, with appointed scientists working closely with skilled workers to develop new techniques and machinery, such as when the head of the royal manufacture collaborated with his machinists to develop an automated mold.[78]

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[75] "L'art de la peinture sur verre et de la vitrerie (Review)," *Journal des Sçavans* (October 1774) 671.

[76] Réaumur, "Seconde Mémoire," 336–7.

[77] Réaumur, "Réflexions sur l'utilité," 108–9. Contrast Réaumur's view with Mokyr's influential view of elite scientific enterprise: Joel Mokyr, *The Enlightened Economy: An Economic History of Britain, 1700–1850* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009). [un grand et magnifique laboratoire, ou des ouvriers de différentes professions seroient continuellement occupés à travailler aux nouvelles expériences à faire des modèles des machines rares et utiles, et des essays des machines nouvelles qui sont proposés]

[78] AN O[1] 2059[1] "Mémoire," [Late 1750s]. Liliane Hilaire-Pérez, "L'artisans, les sciences et les techniques (XVIe–XVIIIe siècle)." In *L'Europe des sciences et des techniques, XVe–XVIIIe siècle : Un dialogue des savoirs*, eds. Liliane Hilaire-Pérez, Fabien Simon, and Marie

There were limits to this collaboration across class lines, however. While Réaumur drew readily on the knowledge of artisans and sought to recreate their skill-based knowledge of the material world, he was not alone in retaining a distinction between artisanal knowledge and that of scientists such as himself.[79] Offering a similar sentiment, Pierre-Joseph Macquer—chemist, Académicien, and lead scientist at the Royal Porcelain Manufacture—introduced his *Dictionary of Chemistry* with a paean to the artisan in the history of science: "we should regard them as the most powerful geniuses of their age," "the first man who knew how to forge iron & melt down bronze...[was] a great man, who deserves our praise as much as the most learned & most profound chemists."[80] But these early artisans were, he continued, products of their time and lacked the ability to write and thus to reason. The invention of writing, however, had enabled "the growth of human knowledge, and the birth of the sciences; and there thus came a real distinction between the true scholars or philosophers, and simple artisans. These latter, always obeying the imprint of the same motivations...the former on the contrary carefully gather all the knowledge that can extend & embellish the human spirit."[81]

Thébaud-Sorger (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2016) 103–10; Patrice Bret and Catherine Lanoë, "Laboratoires et ateliers, des espaces de travail entre sciences et arts et métiers, XVIe–XVIIIe siècle," in *Ibid.*, 149–55.

[79] Paola Bertucci, *Artisanal Enlightenment: Science and the Mechanical Arts in Old Regime France* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017) 53–7, 72–5.

[80] Pierre-Joseph Macquer, *Dictionnaire de Chimie, contenant la théorie et la pratiqu de cette science, son application à la physique, à l'histoire naturelle, à la médecine, et aux arts dépendans de la chimie*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Imprimerie de Monsieur, 1778) 1:xv–xvi. [on doit les regarder comme les plus puissans génies de leur siècle] [le premier homme qui sut forger le fer & fondre l'airain...[étoit] un grand homme, qui mérite autant nos éloges que les chimistes les plus sacans & les plus profonds.]

[81] *Ibid.* xvi; Wilda C Anderson, *Between the Library and the Laboratory: The Language of Chemistry in Eighteenth-Century France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984) 19–34. [l'accroissement des connoissances humaines, & la naissance des sciences ; c'est

Historians have noted a similar tension between artisanal and scientific knowledge in the writing of the *Encylcopédie.* On the one hand, the project was conceived with a practical utility in mind, one that sought to enlighten society but also to disseminate the specific knowledges and skills held by artisans to a public that might put them to more determined and industrial uses. And in this there was a distinction between the tacit knowledge of artisans and the written knowledge of the scientist.[82] As Diderot wrote of artisans in the "Preliminary Discourse" to the *Encyclopédie*, "Among a thousand you would hardly find a dozen in a position to express themselves with some clarity about the instruments they use and the works they make."[83] For Cynthia Koepp and Bill Sewell, comments like these and the plates used to depict different types of manufacturing reveal a shifting perspective on artisanal labor in the middle of the

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alors que se fit une distinction réelle des vrais savans ou philosophes, d'avec les simples artisans. Ces derniers, obéissant toujours à l'impression du même ressort...les premiers au contraire recueillirent avec soin toutes les connoissances qui pouvoient étendre & orner l'esprit humain]

[82] Cynthia J Koepp, "Making Money: Artisans and Entrepreneurs in Diderot's *Encylopédie*," in *Using the* Encyclopédie*: Ways of Knowing, Ways of Reading*," eds. Daniel Brewer and Julie Chandler Hayes (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2002) 119–42. On this topic, see also: Robert Shackelton, "The Enlightenment and the Artisan," in *Transactions on the Fifthe International Congress on the Enlightenment* (Banbury, Great Britain: Cheney & Sons, 1980) 53–62; Daniel Brewer, *The Discourse of Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century France: Diderot and the Art of Philosophizing* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 13–24, 92–131; Cynthia J Koepp, "The Alphabetical Order: Work in Diderot's *Encyclopédie*," in *Work in France: Representations, Meaning, Organization, and Practice*, eds. Stephen Laurence Kaplan and Cynthia J Koepp (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986) 229–57; Valérie Nègre, "Craft Knowledge in the Age of Encyclopedism," in *Crafting Enlightenment: Artisanal Histories and Transnational Networks*, eds. Lauren R Cannady and Jennifer Ferng (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2021) 303–334.

[83] Jean le Rond d'Alembert and Denis Diderot, "Discours préliminaire des Éditeurs," in *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une société de gens de lettres* (Paris: Briasson, David, Le Breton, and Durand, 1751) 1:xxxix; Bertucci *Artisanal Enlightenment*, 7–9. [À peine entre mille en trouve-t-on une douzaine en état de s'exprimer avec quelque clarté sur les instrumens qu'ils employent & sur les ouvrages qu'ils fabriquent]

eighteenth century. Artisans retained on the one hand their prestige as source of knowledge, but on the other hand that knowledge was rapidly becoming downgraded, instrumentalized, and submitted to the logic of capitalist production.[84]

This tension is on full display in the *Encyclopédie* article on porcelain. Written at a time before European manufacturing of true porcelain was widespread, the article dwells on the precise details of Chinese porcelain manufacture: the materials, preparation, shaping, decoration, firing, and even distribution and marketing.[85] In its exhaustive description of the porcelain production process from raw material to vendible product and in its invocation of the Chinese terms for various materials and tasks, this article at first glance appears to admire the tacit skills and technical knowledge of Chinese artisans that were needed to create such a commercially desirable product. Yet for the author, the workers at every level of production are, with rare exceptions, "miserable outcasts." The problem is that "The whole science of these...Chinese is not founded on any principle, & consists only of a certain routine, aided by a fairly restrained circuit of the imagination. They know none of the beautiful rules of this art."[86] In contrast to an ancient past, "the workers are less skillful than they were in these previous times."[87] His only praise for the workers comes when they are presented in large numbers, in the "troops of workers working at the same time": "A piece of *porcelain*...passes through the hands of more than twenty people, & this without confusion"; "It is surprising to see the speed with which these vases pass through so

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[84] Koepp, "Making Money"; William H Sewell, jr, "Visions of Labor: Illustrations of the Mechanical Arts before, in, and after Diderot's *Encyclopédie*," in *Work in France* 268–79.

[85] Didier-François d'Arclais de Montamy, "Porcelaine de la Chine [Poterie]," in *Encyclopédie*, 13:106–17.

[86] *Ibid.*, 110.

[87] *Ibid.*, 116.

many hands. It is said that a piece of fired *porcelain* passes through the hands of seventy workers."[88] It seems as if there is a disconnect between the magnificence of porcelain production and the routine and even base knowledge of those who do the work. And this disconnect is only bridged when the workers are brought to order in industrial production. Whether in France or in China, the relationship between worker and scientific knowledge was fraught at best.

The domestic exchange of information between artisans and scientists was thus supplemented by international communication between scientists. Given the early lead taken by German-speaking Europe in porcelain technology, it is unsurprising that the most important early French publications in this field were translations of Germanic scientific works. One such tract was published anonymously by a Germanic scientist disgusted with "the great number of swindlers who have roamed the different Courts of Europe, to give back to the Princes so distrustful, that they have closed all access to the true Artists and possessors of secrets. These are the motives that have caused me to expose to the eyes of the whole universe a secret that has been ignored, in order to suppress pride and charlatanry."[89] In the name of science, this author made available precise descriptions of the materials and processes necessary to produce Chinese and Saxon porcelain, how to concoct glazes and over a dozen different colors of underglazes, and how to properly fire the pieces in a kiln.[90]

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[88] *Ibid.*, 109–10.

[89] "Secret des vraies Porcelaines de la Chine & de Saxe," in *Art de la Verrerie* (Paris: Durand and Pissot, 1752) 603. [le grand nombre de fourbes qui ont parcouru différentes Cours de l'Europe, a rendu les Princes si defians, qu'ils ont fermé tout accès aux vrais Artistes & possesseurs de secrets. Ce sont ces motifs qui m'ont déterminé à exposer aux yeux de tout l'univers un secret qu'on avoit ignoré, afin de reprimer l'orgeuil & la charlatanerie]

[90] *Ibid.*, 602–14.

More directly influential were a pair of books published by Johann Heinrich Pott of the Royal Academy of Sciences in Berlin working under the direction of Frederick II of Prussia. As Réaumur had done decades before, Pott set out to discover a method for reproducing porcelain by first creating a mineralogical taxonomy—this time using the four categories of alkaline, gypsum, clay, and vitrifiable—and engaging in painstaking experiments to combine the various elements into hundreds of combinations and then fire them each in a kiln to see what would happen.[91] The major breakthrough offered by Pott's work was that, contrary to the suppositions of the vitrifiable/non-vitrifiable binary, combining two non-vitrifiable minerals such as feldspar and quartz with kaolin clay would together half-vitrify in a kiln (which is to say that two materials that independently would not become glass when heated could nevertheless partially do so when combined).[92] In response to this book, French Royal Academy of Science members Pierre-Joseph Macquer and Jean d'Arcet, both of whom were attached to the royal porcelain manufacture, conducted more targeted experiments drawing on Pott's conclusions. Macquer tested over eight hundred minerals found in France and was able to narrow down his examinations to around fifty potentially suitable materials, while d'Arcet was able to confirm that feldspar and quartz, neither of which independently

[91] Johann Heinrich Pott, *Lithogéognosie, ou examen chymique des Pierres et des Terres en général, et du Talc, de la Topaze & de la Stéatite en particulier, avec une dissertation sur le Feu & sur la Lumière* (Paris: Jean-Thomas Hérissant, 1753); *idem., Continuation de la Lithogéognosie pyrothechnique, Où l'on traite plus particulièrement de la connoissance des Terres & des Pierres, & de la manière d'en faire l'examen* (Paris: Jean-Thomas Hérissant, 1753).

[92] "Lithogéognosie, ou examen chymique des Pierres & des Terres en général, & Continuation de la lithogéognosie pyrothechnique (Review)," *Journal des Sçavans* (October 1753) 659–64.

reacted to heat, could nonetheless be combined with clay in the kiln to form a single substance.[93]

As the sheer scale of the experiments carried out by those like Réamur and Macquer implies, science in the eighteenth century was an enormously expensive undertaking. In the absence of modern chemical knowledge, these early scientists had to proceed by formulating general models of interactions, testing every conceivable combination of materials and conditions, and scrutinizing the results in an interminable cycle.[94] Paying for the labor time of these highly skilled scientists as well as the materials and equipment necessary for such testing to be carried out over decades required patronage. Thus, perhaps the most important scientific institution in the French arsenal was the royal manufacture itself.[95] Here, with continuous state support, a stable working environment, and advanced equipment and materials, scientists and artisans could work together to conduct long-term series of experiments in which they made very slight and incremental adjustments to known recipes and techniques over

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[93] Pierre-Joseph Macquer, "Mémoire sur les Argiles, & sur la fusibilité de cette espèce de terre, avec les terres calcaires," *Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Sciences, année 1758* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1763) 155–76; "Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Sciences, année 1763 (Review)," *Journal des Sçavans* (February 1765) 90–1; "Observations chimiques," *Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Sciences, année 1768* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1769) 75–9.

[94] On shifting methods of experimentation, see: Claire Salomon-Bayet, *L'institution de la science et l'expérience du vivant : Méthode et expérience à l'Académie royale des sciences, 1666–1793*, revised ed. (Paris: Flammarion, 2008).

[95] Pierre Deyon and Philippe Guignet, "The Royal Manufactures and Economic and Technological Progress in France before the Industrial Revolution," *Journal of European Economic History* 9 (1980) 611–32. For examples on the importance of royal manufactures and state policy for other industries, see: Warren C Scoville, "State Policy and the French Glass Industry, 1640–1789," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 56, no. 3 (1942) 430–55; Henry Guerlac, "Some French Antecedents of the Chemical Revolution," *Chymia* 5 (1959) 73–112; and John J Beer, "Eighteenth-Century Theories on the Process of Dyeing," *Isis* 51, no. 1 (March 1960) 21–30.

and over again.[96] One gets a sense of the dogged determination such experimentation required in reading their laboratory notebooks. One such collection, for instance, shows a scientist working at the royal manufacture from 1766–1780 testing thirty-six glaze recipes, ninety-six distinct underglaze colors, 126 different variations of a single blue glaze, and 203 slightly different modifications of hard-paste porcelain.[97] Yet even these impressive efforts pale in comparison to the 331 experiments Claude-Humbert Gérin ran from 1738–1750 to settle on six types of soft-paste and five types of glaze for what became the royal manufacture, or the combined 1134 experiments Macquer conducted on hard-paste at the royal manufacture from 1757–1777.[98]

Royal patronage, whether of the Academy of Sciences or the royal manufacture, was not the only source of funding for scientific and industrial research. Local governments could provide targeted funds to overcome specific technical problems, as when the city of Lille invested 7500 florins between 1712 and 1716 to develop a more reliable kiln (although they took five thousand florins worth of merchandise as

[96] Until late in the eighteenth century, prior to the institutionalization of science as a profession, the lines between scientist and artisan were blurred, as Macquer and Hellot evidence, and royal manufactures offered one of the few spaces where either could dedicate themselves to full-time research. See: Christine Lehman, "Pierre-Joseph Macquer and Eighteenth-Century Artisanal-Scientific Expert," *Annals of Science* 69, no. 3 (July 2012) 307–33; Agustí Nieto-Galan, "Between Craft Routines and Academic Rules: Natural Dyestuffs and the "Art" of Dyeing in the Eighteenth Century," in *Materials and Expertise in Early Modern Europe: Between Market and Laboratory*, eds. Ursula Klein and EC Spary (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010) 321–54; and Roger Hahn, "Scientific Research as an Occupation in Eighteenth-Century Paris," *Minerva* 13, no. 4 (Winter 1975) 501–13.

[97] AMNS C2 "Essais de couverte pour la porcelaine dure faite à la manufacture du Roy établie à Seve" [1766–1780]; AMNS C2 "Essais de couleurs propres à peindre sur la porcelaine faite à la manufacture du Roy établie à Seve" [1766–1780]; AMNS C2 "Essais de fonds bleus pour la porcelaine dure faite à la manufacture du Roy établie à Seve" [1766–1780]; AMNS C2 "Essais de pâte de porcelaine dure faite à la manufacture du Roy établie à Seve" [1766–1780].

[98] AMNS Y40; AMNS Y41; AMNS Y57; AMNS Y58.

collateral).[99] Many high-ranking aristocrats, in particular the Duke of Villeroy, Duke of Bourbon, Prince of Condé, and above all the Duke of Orléans, extended their patronage to various porcelain manufactures in the first half of the eighteenth century to fund scientific research and establish manufactures. This practice of patronage continued in the second half of the eighteenth century under the new Duke of Orléans, Marie-Antoinette, the future Louis XVIII, and others.[100] As with all relationships of patronage, these efforts provided support for the fledgling manufactures, but through the bonds of reciprocity also reflected the magnificence of their production onto their benefactors as glory.[101]

The pursuit of such incessant experimentation shows how commercially important the material aspects of industrial production were. When it came to reproducing the traditional blue-and-white of Chinese porcelain, for instance, French porcelain manufacturers appear to have quickly discovered recipes that would work at the lower firing temperatures of the soft-paste porcelain that prevailed until the 1760s. But by the early eighteenth century this simpler aesthetic had become common, its symbolic prestige washed away by the countless variations of the theme in imported Chinese porcelain but also domestic soft-paste porcelain and cheaper substitutes such

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[99] Archives Municipales de Lille (hereafter AMLille) AG 1153/4 Letter Doret to Conseil de Lille (15 November 1712).

[100] The enthusiastic participation of the highest levels of the aristocracy in founding the French porcelain industry emphasizes the compatibility of capitalist economic development and Old Regime social orders, minimizing the distinction between the two. Especially given the prestige generated for the patron by such investments, it offers an inverted look at Taylor's seminal take on the relationship between aristocracy and bourgeoisie in this period. See: George V Taylor, "Non-Capitalist Wealth and the Origins of the French Revolution," *American Historical Review* 72, no. 2 (January 1967) 469–96.

[101] On patronage, see: Sharon Kettering, *Patrons, Brokers, and Clients in Seventeenth-Century France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) 13–8.

as Delftware and faïence. In their place, the vogue for porcelain shifted to rarer Japanese styles that made use of asymmetrical prints and multiple colors. And the desire to imitate these more complex designs is evident in early eighteenth-century products from places like the Prince of Condé's manufacture in Chantilly.[102] In this tea set (figure 2.6) produced in the first few years of that manufacture's existence, for instance, six distinct colors are brought together in a European interpretation of Japanese style. The central image of a squirrel as well as accent flowers around the rim of the plates is colored yellow and detailed with black. The bamboo shoots and surrounding leaves are in a teal green while flowing ribbons and other leaves are in a light blue (distinct from

Figure 2.6. Tea service. Soft-paste porcelain with polychrome enamel. Chantilly Porcelain Manufacture, 1730–1735. Courtesy J Paul Getty Museum, 82.DE.167.

[102] On the history of Chantilly, see: Geneviève Le Duc, *Porcelaine tendre de Chantilly au XVIIIe siècle : Héritages des manufactures de Rouen, Saint-Cloud et Paris, et influences sur les autres manufactures du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Hazan, 1996).

the deeper cobalt blue of Chinese porcelain), both detailed in black. And the berries the squirrel eats are of a bright red outlined in a deeper red, which is also used for the grasses toward the bottom of the central images replicated on each piece.

As will be seen, however, simply mimicking imported styles had a limited commercial outlook. True success would depend on developing new styles rather than recycling old ones. And this would require new colors that could keep at the forefront of fashion. In an inkstand (figure 2.7) manufactured at Chantilly shortly after the tea set, we can see many of these same colors reappropriated from Japanese *kakiemon* to French

Figure 2.7. Inkstand in the form of a pomegranate. Soft-paste porcelain with polychrome enamel in a gilded bronze mount. Chantilly Porcelain Manufacture, c.1735. Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2019.283.55a,b.

rococo. Here the yellow of the flowers and the teal of the bamboo are used for the leaves and husk of a pomegranate, joined with a new green for shading. The characteristic red seeds of the pomegranate, meanwhile, use the same bright red of the tea service's berries. And a new deep purple color is added to color the twig against which the pomegranate rests. Together, these hues lend an eye-catching exoticism and realism to the object, while also purposing it for the domestic use of writing, with the gilt bronze mount being added later. In an even more elaborate example of rococo design (figure 2.8), these same colors of purple, red, green, and yellow as well as a brown shade are used to create a clock mount featuring a monkey, duck, and howling dragon whose long blue tail wraps around the clock face, with the brightly colored flowers and vines blending into the gilt leaves at the clock's border.

The same desire to develop new colors for new decorative styles is apparent in a pair of cups produced in Vincennes as color samples for what would later become the Royal Porcelain Manufacture. In one of them manufactured in 1749 (figure 2.9), we can see forty-five different colors presented in a palette, with each one painted in gradations to demonstrate the range of shades each color could produce. What is noticeable with this palette is how somber and subdued the colors are, even the lone blue tending toward gray and the yellows tingeing brown. A similar use of color is evident in another sample cup manufactured in 1748 (figure 2.10). Here too the general tone is subdued and somber, although with a few standouts in the one yellow, two blue, and three green segments. There are two notable aspects, though. First, the different shades are used for painting monochromatic vignettes of specifically European subjects: an arched aqueduct, bridge, and gate; a sailing ship; a windmill; a ballroom. Second, along the top edge of this sample cup (figure 2.10), easily overlooked in light of the intricate and captivating details below, is a pink fill around the rim. And here we get a first hint

Figure 2.8. Wall clock. Soft-paste porcelain with polychrome enamel, gilt bronze, enameled metal, glass. Chantilly Porcelain Manufacture, clock by Charles Voisin, c. 1740. Courtesy J Paul Getty Museum, 81.DB.81.

Figure 2.9. Gobelet-Palette. Soft-paste porcelain with underglaze enamel. Louis-Denis Armond, 1749. Courtesy Manufacture et Musée Nationaux de Sèvres. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY.

of what would become a hallmark style of the Royal Manufacture: the use of a solid pastel ground to frame monochromatic or polychromatic portraits. This was not a style directly imported from either Chinese or Japanese porcelain. It was this mixture of portraits surrounded by ground areas in a single contrasting color that would soon form the basis for the new French style of porcelain developed at the Royal Porcelain Manufacture.

The porcelain produced there in the 1750s shows the gradual development of this new style. In this dish (figure 2.11) produced at Vincennes shortly after the sample

Figure 2.10. Gobelet-Palette. Soft-paste porcelain with underglaze enamel. Pierre-Antoine-Henry Taunay, 1748. Courtesy Manufacture et Musée Nationaux de Sèvres. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY.

cups, we can see one of the deep purples brought to stunning effect to depict a set of musical instruments. In contrast to the Chinese plate shown earlier depicting musicians (figure 2.4), here the entire scene is distinctly European, the difference underlined with the use of red instead of blue against the white background. The use of the same pink border and many of the other colors from the second palette cup (figure 2.10), meanwhile, is visible in this set of cups (figure 2.12) produced at the Sèvres Porcelain Manufacture shortly after its relocation from Vincennes. As these examples

Figure 2.11. Plateau d'écuelle. Soft-paste porcelain with enamel and gilding. Vincennes Porcelain Manufacture, 1751–1752. Courtesy of the Victoria & Albert Museum, C.371-1909.

demonstrate, it was not just a matter of having different colors available, but the precisely right colors for the precisely right purposes. And the subtle variations on display in these sample cups shows how much attention was directed to continuously discovering new colors that could accomplish the artistic and commercial goals of porcelain manufacturers.

The economic problems that patronage responded to were the high fixed costs of scientific research (marked as it was by trial and error) and the risk that these experiments were unlikely to yield directly applicable technologies. For modern economists such as Kenneth Arrow and Paul Romer, the need for public investment in scientific research stems from the fact that the social benefits of innovation outweigh

Figure 2.12. Pair of Cups and Saucers. Soft-paste porcelain with polychrome enamel and gilding. Sèvres Porcelain Manufacture, 1760. Courtesy J Paul Getty Museum, 72.DE.74.

the private returns on investment. In their model, private actors will only invest in technological innovation to the point that it equals their expected return. But society as a whole also benefits from these new technologies, and so public investment is necessary to achieve the optimal pace of innovation and growth.[103] And through the role of the Church carrying information from overseas, the place of artisans in the development of practical science, and the patronage of Crown and Nobility in funding scientific research, the fundamental social orders of Old Regime society all worked in concert to build the French porcelain industry. In the absence of an explicit theory of

[103] Kenneth J Arrow, "Economic Welfare and the Allocation of Resources for Invention," in *The Rate and Direction of Inventive Activity: Economic and Social Factors* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962) 623; Paul M Romer, "Increasing Returns and Long-Run Growth," *Journal of Political Economy* 94, no. 5 (1986) 1023, 1026; *idem*., "Endogenous Technological Change," *Journal of Political Economy* 98, no. 5 pt. 2 (1990) S70–S102.

public investment, Old Regime institutions nonetheless offered both glory and profit to attract a range of investors from throughout society.

Privilege as Patent Protection for Private Investment

Unlike the porcelain industry in Saxony and other continental European countries, however, the French model was never solely dependent upon public investment. Instead, France also sought to use existing institutions to encourage private entrepreneurs to develop the techniques and capacity to produce their own porcelain. Such entrepreneurs would have faced the same information costs and technological barriers as the Royal Manufacture or Academy members. Yet institutional capacity for indemnifying or even enabling their efforts was limited by a juridical system inherited from the medieval period. The policy problem facing the state was how to find ways to turn traditional institutions toward the development of new industries by encouraging private enterprise.

The granting of commercial privileges was a royal prerogative that reflected the absolutist monarchy's interests in balancing individual rights with economic growth.[104] France's first forays into porcelain production were conducted by private entrepreneurs, typically faïence manufacturers hoping to move into the more lucrative luxury market. The first such instance came when Louis XIV granted the merchant Claude Rembaud a fifty-year monopoly on porcelain according to "an admirable and curious secret" that he received from Holland, although no rationale behind this

[104] Liliane Hilaire-Pérez, *L'invention technique au siècle des Lumières* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2000) 70–82, 113–42, 241–88.

decision is expressed and the privilege appears to have been quickly forgotten.[105] In 1682, word reached Paris about a faïence manufacturer in Rouen who "claims to have found the true secret of porcelain." In his letter to Colbert requesting an exclusive privilege for the manufacturer, the intendant of Normandy argued that "his work deserves the privilege he asks for."[106] State officials must have agreed with this assessment, because they soon granted this privilege, although the manufacturer in question disappears from the historical record soon after. Several years later a faïence worker near Rouen, Nicolas de Massolay, discovered another way to make porcelain, and officials declared that "it is just to compensate his time, his labor and his industry" by granting him a privilege.[107]

This was the justification advanced by the Count de Lauraguais in his pursuit of a privilege for his porcelain manufacture around 1770. He had invested in scientific research into the manufacture of porcelain in the late 1760s—research that subsequently bore fruit by producing a true hard-paste porcelain approved by the Academy of Sciences—and requested a forty-year privilege in recognition of this accomplishment. There was an "essential difference," he argued, between "the products of the human spirit like contemplative philosophy and the man to whom society owes a new art...In general there is a very important distinction to grasp between the arts and the sciences. In the sciences we do not know what we know, everything remains in the empire of the spirit. In the arts we only know what we have done." It was therefore science that for

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105 AN O^{1} 6 fol 239 "Permission de fabriquer à Paris la Fayence et d'y contrefaire la Porcelaine des Indes" (1664). [un secret admirable et curieuse]

106 AN G/7/491/349 Letter le Blanc to [Colbert] (5 April 1682). [prétend avoir trouvé le secret des véritables porcelaines] [son travail mérite le privilège qu'il demande]

107 AN G/7/1694/197 Letter Dagusseau [1708]. [il est juste de récompenser son temps, son travail et son industrie]

Lauraguais had the potential to render abstract ideas useful to society. Encouraging such innovation required affording permanent protections to innovators, comparing the British patent system favorably to the French privilege system in this regard. But, he also argued, while such privileges were necessary to overcome technological obstacles, ultimately "we must liberate commerce" by not using privileges to destroy other manufactures, but rather use the privilege to make them compete on new technologies that would benefit "the interest of the public" and "the interest of the arts."[108]

At the same time, bureaucrats deciding whether to grant privileges were tasked with shepherding the economy toward growth and development. In determining whether to grant an exclusive privilege to produce porcelain to a faïence maker from Tours, Jean Baptiste Roussin, they apparently agreed with the intendant of Touraine that "it could be very useful" and voted unanimously to grant it.[109] Similarly, as late as the 1770s a porcelain manufacture near Melun was granted privileges in recognition that "this establishment can only be useful" and was "an advantageous establishment, and useful to the public."[110] This was the justification for granting an exclusive privilege to Charles Adam in 1745 for what would eventually become the royal manufacture. In

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[108] AMNS B2 Letter Lauraguais [c. 1770]; AMNS B2 "Porcelaine de Mr le Comte de Lauraguais" [c. 1770]; AMNS B2 "Mémoire sur la Porcelaine," to Duc de Choiseul [c. 1770]; AMNS B2 "Observations sur les propositions," Lauraguais [c. 1770]; AMNS B2 Letter Lauraguais [c. 1770]. [différence essentielle] [les produits de l'esprit humaine comme de philosophie contemplatif [et] l'homme à qui la société devra un nouvel art....En général il y a une distinction très importante à saisir entre les arts et les sciences. Dans les sciences on ne sait ce qu'on connoit, tout reste dans l'empire de l'esprit. Dans les arts on ne sait que ce qu'on a fait] [il faut rendre le commerce libre] [l'intérêt public] [l'intérêt des arts]

[109] AN F^{12} 74 pg 374–5 (12 May 1727). [il pourroit estre très utile]

[110] AN F^{12} 1494^{1} "Requête et pièces des Srs Vermonnet" (11 October 1777); AN F^{12} 1494^{1} "Sur la Requête présenté au Roy" (2 January 1778). [cet établissement ne peut être qu'utile] [un établissement avantageux, et *util* au public]

reviewing the petition, officials hoped that his manufacture would be able to replace expensive imports with sufficient production "to supply in the kingdom stores where the public can find everything they could desire" while exporting to consumers abroad. The enormous expense of establishing such an enterprise would be potentially ruinous, they recognized, and so they granted the company an exclusive privilege for twenty years and free space at the royal chateau in Vincennes to "favor the establishment."[111]

These bureaucrats had a wide range of policy tools at their disposal made possible by the flexibility of the privilege system. They could grant a variety of specific privileges such as exemptions from the *corvée* or import taxes, vary the geographic expanse of the exclusive privilege anywhere from two leagues to the entire country (though around twenty leagues was most common), and alter the length of the privilege between ten and fifty years (though fifteen or twenty was most common).[112] But in other circumstances the conflict between individual merit and economic interest was less easily navigated. In these cases, the bureaucracy almost invariably sided in favor of a broadly construed public utility. When François Barbin, manager of the porcelain manufacture operating under the Duke of Villeroy's protection in Villeroy, requested permission to move to the Faubourg St Antoine in order to more easily attract skilled

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[111] AN F[12] 92 pgs 441–6 (1 July 1745); AN O[1] 89 fol 346 (9 November 1745). [pour approvisionner dans le Royaume des magasins où le public pût s'assortir de tout ce qu'il pourra désirer] [favoriser l'établissement]

[112] In addition to footnotes 49–53, see also: AN F[12] 65 pgs 144–5 (20 May 1719). While holding a privilege within a twenty-league radius may seem small, it would equate to seventy miles in any direction, which was a two- or three-day ride, and encompass over fifteen thousand square miles, or the equivalent of about one twelfth of the entire country. Especially in the more densely populated north, holding such a privilege for decades was tantamount to holding an exclusive monopoly over a large consumer market. Of course, in the absence of competing privileges elsewhere, the privilege holder could have also sold their wares in other markets. The privilege thus guaranteed a minimum market size for the manufacturer without restricting their maximum market size.

painters, for example, despite arguments that this move would offer "an advantage for the public by the ease it will have to sell its works at a lower price," the council felt that it was more important to maintain Vincennes's privilege that extended to Paris's faubourgs and so denied it.[113] Similarly, when the manufacturers at Chantilly asked in 1750 to renew their privilege, the council seemed to acknowledge "that this establishment will not only be an important object in terms of commerce, as for the consumption it will permit for the subjects" by creating competition between manufactures. Yet they concluded that such competition could undercut the efforts underway to build the royal manufacture and so denied the request.[114] Similar justifications were used to turn down the request from a Marseille manufacturer to export his goods.[115]

While individual privilege requests could thus be rejected because of their indirect impact on the overall market, they could also be granted for the exact same reason. This is what happened to Jean Baptiste Cardon, a crystal manufacturer from near Rouen who formed a partnership with Massolay's widow in 1729 because she claimed to still hold her husband's privilege—a privilege that had in fact expired twelve years earlier—to reopen Massolay's old manufacture. After investing more than seventeen thousand livres over five years, only to realize that the privilege had lapsed and that there was no hope of opening a successful manufacture there, Cardon

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[113] AN F[12] 95 pgs 434–6 (15 May 1748). [un avantage pour le public par la facilité qu'il auroit de donner ses ouvrages à meilleur compte]

[114] AN O[1] 79 fol 445 (25 October 1735); AMNS A2 "Observations sur le renouvellement du privilège demandé pour la manufacture de porcelaine établie à Chantilly," [c. 1750]. [que cet établissement sera non seulement un objet important comme tenant au commerce, tant pour la consommation que feront les sujets...]

[115] AMNS A2 Letter Savy (24 November 1765); AMNS A2 Letter Safon (30 December 1765).

abandoned the partnership. Just weeks later another glassmaker claimed to have been given the privilege by Massolay's widow shortly before her death and successfully requested its renewal for another twenty years. Glassmakers from Rouen immediately protested and had the privilege revoked. Upon learning of this exchange, Cardon petitioned to receive the privilege instead. The council determined that ultimately Cardon possessed a rare skill for high-quality crystal production, and so decided to grant him the privilege covering porcelain to encourage his efforts in both industries.[116]

The complicated history of the privileges held by the manufacture at St Cloud, one of the first and most prestigious porcelain manufactures in France, offers a useful case study in the intentions of the privilege system and the difficulties in realizing them. The manufacture appears to have been founded in the early 1690s to produce faïence and a newly invented soft-paste porcelain.[117] Soft-paste porcelain owed much to the logic that Réaumur had devised about porcelain being a half-vitrified—that is to say half earth and half glass—material. The precise recipe varied between manufactures and within each for different applications, but in every case it was an attempt to mix materials that together would achieve the desirable attributes of imported porcelain. The base of soft-paste porcelain came from white clay, which provided both the color and the solidity necessary for imitation porcelain. To add translucency and lightness, manufacturers depended on *fritte*, typically either glass ground into a fine powder or sand and ash that when heated would mix to form a glass network within the clay. Different manufacturers might add other elements such as lime or bone to achieve a

[116] AN F[12] 32 pgs 12–4 (13 January 1735); AN F[12] 83 pgs 537–42 (6 September 1736); AN F[12] pgs 675–6 (29 November 1736).

[117] On the history of Saint-Cloud, see: Christine Lahaussois, *Porcelaines de Saint-Cloud* (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1997); Bertrand Rondot, ed. *The Saint-Cloud Manufactory, ca. 1690–1766* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999).

texture, color, or gloss closer to that of hard-paste porcelain, but at its core soft-paste porcelain was an amalgamation of clay and glass (in a material sense thus half-vitrified) cooked at a relatively low temperature to yield a finished ceramic that mimicked the appearance of true porcelain.

Notebooks from what would eventually become the Royal Manufacture attest to the variety of soft pastes that could be made. They contain dozens of new recipes labeled as "hard," "soft," "beautiful," or "harder." The basis of all of them (about half of the total material) was a standard *fritte* mixture, to which were added differing amounts of clay, potash, salt, lead, crystal, soda, saltpeter, and other materials. The glaze, for its part, was much more akin to glass, consisting of sand, soda, salt, and often lead and tin like for faïence. The sand in particular seems to have been an important material for creating different types of objects, with recipes specifying whether it come from Fontainebleau (prized for being white and nearly pure silica), Nevers, Le Mortaray, "a mountain," or abroad, although similar specificity was given to the type and origin of salt used as well. Further description here was devoted to the proper preparation of the materials, with the reduction of the raw ingredients to powder, their thorough mixing, and cleansing important parts of the process for producing a uniform, white clay-like material.[118] Altogether, the chemists working here tested over three hundred variations of soft-paste between 1745 and 1751. In the end, however, they settled on the following recipe as the base for the Royal Manufacture's soft-paste porcelain:

Sand from Fontainebleau.........606 parts

Mineral crystal...........................220 parts

Sea salt...73 parts

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[118] AMNS Y40, Y41, Y42, Y46bis, and Y47.

Soda from Alicante [Spain]......37 parts

Rock alum..................................37 parts

Burned and cleaned gypsum...37 parts

These materials were to be milled into powder, mixed and fired in a slow kiln for about two days until the material reached a "lemon red" color—it had to be just hot enough to purify the material until it was white but not so hot that it would begin to vitrify. At this point the cooled material would be ground to a fine and even consistency, washed to remove excess salt, combined six parts *fritte* to one part soaked and washed marl from Argenteuil and one part washed white chalk, mixed with water and left in a mill for about ten days until it was perfectly mixed, dried thoroughly until it reached the consistency of "the most beautiful flour," and finally mixed with water until it reached the consistency of pastry dough.[119]

This description reveals many things about the scientific aspects of soft-paste porcelain in the eighteenth century. First, the extensiveness of the required research is evident in the specificity not only of materials, but in their geographical sources, exact proportions, and the complex processing needed to achieve the desired product. The sand had to be from Fontainebleau, the soda from Spain, the marl from Argenteuil. Without a compendium of the chemical attributes of these materials, every detail contained in the finished recipe had to come from exhaustive trial and error. Second, the amount of effort put into making this product reveals how important the physical qualities of porcelain were for producers and thus for consumers. There was a precise physical material they sought to create, one that varied depending on the use to which it would be put, but that had a physical existence and use in mind. Finally, the

[119] AMNS Y60.

importance of artisans and tacit knowledge in this process is evident in the descriptions needed to convey the production process. The “lemon red color,” the consistency of “the most beautiful flour,” or the feel of “pastry dough” were all ways of conveying specific chemical and mechanical stages in the absence of scientific tools or languages to measure temperature, grain size, or water content, and to do so for the workers who would bring the product to perfection.

Objects produced by the St Cloud Porcelain factory at the turn of the eighteenth century reveal just how much of an improvement soft-paste porcelain was over earlier European attempts to recreate porcelain. In this vase produced at St Cloud in the late 1690s (figure 2.13) shows, the color produced was a stunning milky white, which unlike tin-glazed earthenware stays white even when the object is chipped (as on the top right lip) or scuffed (as on the bottom edge). Furthermore, as the top rim shows, this soft-paste material was also finer than the earthenware used in most faïence, and without the need for a thick glaze it could be made into more delicate forms. There are impurities present in the material, however, in the form of black, gray, and red inclusions visible both in the glaze (as at the bottom) and in the clay (as in the chip at the top right). In a cup and saucer manufactured a few decades later (figure 2.14), similar deficiencies are visible, both in the yellowish or ivory hue caused by the clay used and in the presence of dark inclusions and discolorations. At the same time, the reflection of light off the top of the cup and in the center of the saucer shows how this production process was able to replicate the luster of true porcelain.

Another breakthrough of soft-paste porcelain was that it allowed for much more delicate and intricate sculpture. Initially, such sculpture was simply an imitation of that manufacture in Asia, copying both its imagery as well as its shiny glazed finish, albeit

Figure 2.13. Vase. Soft-paste porcelain with cobalt pigment under transparent glaze. Saint Cloud Factory, France, c.1695–1700. Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, 17.190.1913.

Figure 2.14. Cup and saucer. Soft-paste porcelain with underglaze blue decoration. Saint Cloud Porcelain Manufacture, France, c.1730. Courtesy Art Institute of Chicago, 1913.257a-b.

with the same problems of color and impurities that marred their other wares. In this early sculpture (figure 2.15), for instance, we see a somewhat yellowed but glazed sculpture of a Chinese figure seated with crossed legs. As French porcelain manufacturers soon realized, however, the fact that their soft-paste product was fired in two stages soon led to a new type of sculpture called *biscuit*. By simply foregoing the second stage in which glaze was added and fired, French manufacturers realized they could produce a sculpture with heightened detail and an appearance similar to unpolished marble. In this grotesque sculpture of a seated figure (figure 2.16), the

Figure 2.15. Seated Chinese Man. Soft-paste porcelain with yellowish glaze. Saint Cloud Porcelain Manufacture, France, c. 1725. Courtesy Victoria & Albert Museum, C.437-1918.

precise details of the wrinkles in his forehead and emaciated stomach, even teeth and fingernails, distinguish the look of French soft-paste porcelain sculpture from that possible with any other material. So distinctive was it, in fact, that long after soft-paste production had been otherwise abandoned in France, it would remain in use for the most important sculptures at the Royal Manufacture.

Despite its successes, however, soft-paste porcelain in this era had a number of material problems that would mar its ability to compete with true hard-paste porcelain imports. First, it was not real porcelain. This was not an abstract consideration, but one related to the molecular structure of the material itself. Soft-paste porcelain was, as its name suggests, softer than hard-paste porcelain. This meant that it was ill-suited for

Figure 2.16. Seated Figure. Soft-paste porcelain. Saint Cloud Porcelain Manufacture, France, c. 1725. Courtesy Art Institute of Chicago, 1997.332.

many of the uses for which consumers would have sought it, especially using it as a plate where metal utensils could easily damage its surface and undo the careful glazing and painting. The material difference also meant that soft-paste porcelain did not react

to heat in the same way as hard-paste porcelain, which again would have confronted consumers' desire to use the porcelain for hot beverages.

The composition of soft-paste porcelain also presented problems in the production process for manufacturers and artisans alike. First, the material itself was difficult to work with—it was, after all, ground glass. This may have been less noticeable in smaller pieces and with variations of the recipe that were firm enough for sculpting. In larger pieces and with variations of the recipe that were soft enough for molding, however, this inadequacy became much more pronounced and set an upper limit on the size of product that could be manufactured. Furthermore, even once formed the fragile material had a high rate of destruction in the kiln, with some producers noting without surprise that often over half of the objects in a kiln would shatter or crumble during firing. As can be noted observing the rightward list of the vase (figure 2.13) or following the lip of the cup (figure 2.14) discussed above, even slight overheating or overexposure in the kiln could tilt the balance toward vitrification and lead to uneven or warped edges. In a dramatic manifestation of this problem, two identical cups fired in the early years of the St Cloud manufacture (figure 2.17) show the difference between a soft-paste cup fired at the proper temperature (right) and one that had been allowed to overheat and thus melt into itself (left). The curvature on the lip, body, and base of the melted cup all remind us that soft-paste porcelain really was more glass than ceramic. And all of this further emphasizes just how valuable knowledge of the materials and process of producing a workable, usable, solid, and consistent porcelain could be.

Following the death of the founder of St Cloud Porcelain, Barbe Coudray, Jean Baptiste, and Jean Chicanneau received a twenty-year privilege to manufacture

Figure 2.17. Tasses. Soft-paste porcelain. Saint Cloud Porcelain Manufacture, c. 1700. Courtesy Musée National Adrien-Dubouché, Limoges. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY.

porcelain and an exclusion from inspections by members of the faïence guild.[120] A decade later the privilege was reaffirmed, specifying that the king grants such privileges to "accord favors to different manufactures in order to establish in our kingdom having excited our subjects to conduct research and to furnish by their diligence knowledge of the most hidden arts." To this end, the privilege was granted so that the ensuing profits would compensate "damages from the large expenses they have

[120] AN G/7/1686/79 "Mémoire sur la manufacture de porcelaine et de fayance établie à St Cloud" (27 July 1701); AN O[1] 46 fol 63 (16 May 1702).

had to make in order to acquire this knowledge."[121] With Chicanneau and Coudray both dead, the privilege was passed on to each of their widows, Coudray's son, and five of Chicanneau's children.[122] In 1722, the privilege was extended for yet another decade in recognition of "the satisfaction and the utility that the public has received from this establishment" and "the advantage that the public gains from their labor"; to compensate the manufacturers for expenses incurred in a recent expansion; to enable them to continue to "carry [their production] to its perfection"; and to reward them for having "refused to sell their secrets to foreigners." The privilege was also expanded to include more descendants.[123]

The first challenges to this privilege came in 1726, when a rival faïence manufacturer from Neuilly-sur-Marne, Gilles de Laage, petitioned for the privilege to produce his own porcelain. In reviewing the case, officials concluded that while the St Cloud privilege had been granted "to improve and perfect in France the art of making porcelain...an exclusive privilege for this factory for such a large number of years is strongly opposed" to this goal. They thus allowed de Laage an exemption from the privilege "so that by these efforts we can judge the utility of his work."[124]

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[121] AN F[12] 1494[2] Lettre Patente (12 April 1713). [accordois en faveurs des différentes manufactures pour en procurer l'établissement dans notre royaume ayant excité nos sujets à faire des recherches et à fournir par leur application à la connoisans des arts les plus cachés] [dommages des grandes dépenses qu'ils ont esté obligé de faire pour acquérir la connoissance]

[122] AN O[1] 57 fol 259 (13 March 1713); AN/G/7/1701/44 (23 May 1713); AN/G/7/1701/45 (16 May 1713).

[123] AN O[1] 66 fol 318–9 (15 September 1722); AN F[12] 1494[2] Lettre Patente (8 October 1722). [la satisfaction et l'utilité que la public à reçue de cet établissement] [l'avantage que le public retire de leur travail] [porte à sa perfection" their production; and to reward them for having "refusé de vendre leur secret aux étrangers]

[124] AN F[12] 73 pgs 94–6 (24 January 1726). [pour augmenter et perfectionner en France l'art de faire de la porcelaine...un privilège exclusif pour cette fabrique pour un si grand

A more direct threat emerged in 1740 with the death of Jean Chicanneau, at which point his will specified that the secret recipe for St Cloud soft-paste porcelain was supposed to pass on to several descendants. The government, afraid that with so many people now knowing the secret it would become public knowledge and find its way out of the country, stepped in to temporarily block the will.[125] This decision sparked a contest between the two remaining families of the original manufacture, the Chicanneaus and the Trous, in which each accused the other of using the privilege to pursue its personal interest at the expense of the public interest. According to Trou, passing the secret on to six descendants would indeed expose the secret to the public and thus to foreign competitors.[126] He was supported in his claims by others who believed that the inheritors "imagine that the secret...should produce for them some utility," but that because most of them were incapable of using it to start their own manufacture, such utility could only come from its sale.[127] The Chicanneaus countered that what motivated Trou was "less the public interest than his own," because Trou "will thus find himself able to sell his porcelain works at the price he judges appropriate, but that the private interest should not outweigh the public good that demands a multiplicity of manufactures."[128] In response to these arguments, the royal

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nombre d'années est fort contraire] [afin que par ces essais on puisse juger de l'utilité de son travail]

[125] AN O^1 84 fol 749 (1 December 1740); AN F^{12} 87 pgs 396–8 (24 November 1740); AN F^{12} 87 pgs 438–41 (9 December 1740).

[126] AN F^{12} 88 pgs 92–4 (13 April 1741).

[127] AN F^{12} 1494^2 Letter Marville to Fagon (19 August 1742). [se sont imaginés que le secret...devoit leur produire quelque utilité]

[128] AN F^{12} 88 pgs 92–4 (13 April 1741); AN F^{12} 88 pgs 524–32 (14 September 1741). [c'est moins l'intérêt public que le sien propre] [se trouvera alors le maître de vendre ses ouvrages de porcelaine au prix qu'il jugera à propos, mais que l'intérêt particulier ne doit pas l'emporter sur le bien public qui exige la multiplicité des manufactures]

council decided to split the privilege in two, one half going to the Chicanneaus at St Cloud and the other half to Trou at St Honoré.[129] Subsequently, the privilege would not pass automatically to descendants, but each inheritor would have to apply for individual approval.[130]

The use of privileges to promote innovation in the porcelain industry offers a fruitful vantage point from which to reconsider the place of privilege in eighteenth-century French society and, by extension, the institutions that shaped the process of industrialization. At issue is the relationship between French absolutism and the feudal regime at the advent of capitalism. One way that historians have considered the shape of French absolutism has been to see it as driven by the self-interest of entrenched feudal elites. For many economic historians, the consequence of using privileges drawn from systems of feudal domination to foster industrial production was that they led to rent-seeking behavior that curtailed public welfare in favor of private gains.[131] The problem with applying such approaches to the eighteenth-century French economy as a whole is that the empirical work demonstrating rent-seeking behavior has been conducted within the most sclerotic sectors of the economy. It is little surprise that in

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[129] AN F^{12} 1494^{2} Arrest du Conseil d'Estat du Roy (25 July 1741); AN F^{12} 1494^{2} Lettre Patente [27 July and 18 September 1742].

[130] AN F^{12} 1494^{2} Letter Dominique François Chicanneau to Controller General (1 April 1743); AN F^{12} 1494^{2} "Request au Roy" [c. 1750]; AN MC/ET XXIV/709 Damien Louis Dupont (25 September 1747).

[131] Much of this scholarship comes from New Institutionalist Economics and applies Public Choice theory (often unreflectively) to historical contexts. Robert B Ekelund jr and Robert D Tollison, *Mercantilism as a Rent-Seeking Society: Economic Regulation in Historical Perspective* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1981); Douglass C North, "A Framework for Analyzing the State in Economic History," *Explorations in Economic History* 16 (1979) 249–59; Anne O Krueger, "The Political Economy of the Rent-Seeking Society," *American Economic Review* 64, no. 3 (June 1974) 291–303; Gordon Tullock, *The Rent-Seeking Society*, ed. Charles K Rowley, vol 5 of *The Selected Works of Gordon Tullock* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2005) esp 3–82, 103–200.

these sectors historians readily find sclerosis pinching shut the arteries of economic circulation.[132] Yet many sectors of the eighteenth-century French economy were also dynamic centers of innovation and growth that existed within the same juridical, social, and economic conditions as their stagnant counterparts. Here they worked to bring capital to new industries, particularly ones that demanded high fixed costs to establish or that presented large risks to the investors, such as porcelain. Thus, the very same system of privileges in dynamic sectors played not the role of rent-seeking retardant, but rather of developmental catalyst.

At its core, an economic privilege granted its holder a monopoly over a specific product, in a specific place, for a specific period of time. However, a monopoly in eighteenth-century France was only granted when doing so could be deemed to be in the national interest. The monopoly rents that would accrue to the privilege holder were calibrated by bureaucrats to promote infant industries or useful innovations by assuring sufficient returns to justify expenses in research and development—including for the improvement of reputation and quality—and attract sufficient capital to establish manufacturing, but only if a public welfare argument could be made following official inspection.[133] Indeed, while rents were certainly sought by privilege applicants,

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[132] Hilton L Root, *The Fountain of Privilege: Political Foundations of Markets in Old Regime France and England* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994); David Parker, "Absolutism, Feudalism, and Property Rights in the France of Louis XIV," *Past & Present* 179 (May 2003) 60–96; and Sheilagh Ogilvie, "The Economics of Guilds," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 28, no. 4 (Fall 2014) 169–92. On similar issues, see: RB Grassby, "Social Status and Commercial Enterprise under Louis XIV," *Economic History Review*, new series 13, no. 1 (1960) 19–38; Nancy Fitch, "'Entrepreneurial Nobles' or 'Aristocratic Serfs': Reconsidering Feudalism in Old Regime Central France," *French Historical Studies* 39, no. 1 (February 2016) 105–43.

[133] Paul-M Bondois, "L'organisation industrielle et commerciale sous l'Ancien Régime : Le privilège exclusif au XVIIIe siècle," *Revue d'histoire économique et sociale* 21, no. 2/3 (1933) 140–89; Alain Guery, "Industrie et colbertisme : Origines de la forme française de la politique industrielle ?" *Histoire, Économie et Société* 8, no. 3 (1989) 297–312; Liliane

recent studies suggest that such efforts were rarely fruitful in the face of a professional bureaucracy determined to promote the general welfare.[134] Overall, the granting of intellectual property rights—whether in the form of French privileges or the British patents so lauded by many historians of industrialization—served as a useful mechanism for the state to encourage technical innovation and industrial development by granting the property holder a limited monopoly that would protect and compensate private investments.[135]

By contrasting the uses of privileges in traditional economic activities—where power was deeply embedded and wielded privilege to defend its position—and in cutting-edge industries—where institutionalized opposition was absent, as in the porcelain industry—the usefulness of privileges as a tool of political economy becomes apparent. As William Beik has argued, the practice of absolutism was one of "social collaboration" between the king and his subjects necessitated by the king's dependence on the acquiescence and obedience of his subjects, particularly the aristocracy.[136] To

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Hilaire-Pérez, "Invention and the State in 18th-Century France," *Technology and Culture* 32, no. 4 (October 1991) 911–31; Harold T Parker, *An Administrative Bureau during the Old Regime: The Bureau of Commerce and Its Relations to French Industry from May 1781 to November 1783* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1993) 49–87.

[134] Jean Beuve, Eric Brousseau, and Jérôme Sgard, "Mercantilism and Bureaucratic Modernization in Early Eighteenth-Century France," *Economic History Review* 70, no. 2 (2017) 529–58; *Idem.*, "Why Are Modern Bureaucracies Special? State Support to Private Firms in Early Eighteenth-Century France," *Journal of Economic History* 77, no. 4 (December 2017) 1144–76; Nuala Zahedieh, "Regulation, Rent-Seeking, and the Glorious Revolution in the English Atlantic Economy," *Economic History Review* 63, no. 4 (2010) 865–90.

[135] Liliane Hilaire-Pérez, *L'invention technique au siècle des Lumières* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2000) 39–142.

[136] William Beik, *Absolutism and Society in Eighteenth-Century France: State Power and Provincial Aristocracy in Languedoc* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988); *Idem.*, "Review: The Absolutism of Louis XIV as Social Collaboration," *Past & Present* 188 (August 2005) 195–224.

obtain this acquiescence and obedience the king relied on privileges that linked the economic interests of the monarchy to those of various groups, whether municipalities, the Church, guilds, or individuals. The contradictions within this system were legion: efforts to raise money from taxes and to purchase allegiance with exemptions conflicted and often raised public opprobrium; the short-term exigencies of raising revenues from towns or guilds generated conflict between them and the state when their economic or political interests diverged; and as privileges became entrenched and people became accustomed to them, efforts to resolve tensions were taken as an attack on one's patrimony.[137] As the state modernized and centralized its bureaucratic decision-making powers over the course of the eighteenth century, it increasingly confronted the intransigent defenders of privileges and sparked fierce political conflicts.

Within industry and commerce, the tensions between Crown and capitalists ultimately revolved around what Jean-Pierre Hirsch called the "two dreams of commerce": that regulations might prevent others from competing with you, but that you would remain free from regulation.[138] Every merchant and manufacturer wanted to monopolize their market but chafed whenever they ran up against restrictions within it. Whether in glass manufacturing, cloth making, the Levantine trade, or the Asian trade, investors whose very market had been founded by the state ultimately turned against its continued encroachment on their aspired profits; it was the adolescent rebellion of

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[137] Michael Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth-Century France: Liberté, Égalité, Fiscalité* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 23–61; Gail Bossenga, *The Politics of Privilege: Old Regime and Revolution in Lille* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); David Parker, *The Making of French Absolutism* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1983) 118–45.

[138] Jean-Pierre Hirsch, *Les deux rêves du Commerce : Entreprise et institution dans la région lilloise (1780–1860)* (Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1991).

infant industries.[139] A similar pattern can be found with luxury manufacturers like the marchands merciers. As proto-industrial capitalists, these merchants simultaneously benefitted from guild restrictions on the urban workforce and bristled at restrictions that prevented them from accessing the rural workforce that assembled many of their wares.[140]

As each of these examples shows, there was no simple relationship between privilege and economic development. As Jeff Horn has recently argued, there was a transformation in the practice of granting economic privileges over the course of the eighteenth century, which he describes as a transition from the "liberty of privilege" to the "privilege of liberty." As he demonstrates for a range of commercial and industrial pursuits, there was a shift from granting monopoly privileges within which a company was protected from competition to granting a company exemptions from the patchwork of existing privileges. Ultimately, he concludes, the stickiness of the institutional form of privileges meant that even efforts to liberalize the economy had to take place within the

[139] Claude Pris, "La Glace en France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles : Monopole et liberté d'entreprise dans une industrie de pointe sous l'Ancien Régime," *Revue d'histoire économique et sociale* 55, no. 1/2 (1977) 5–23; JKJ Thomson, *Clermont-de-Lodève, 1633–1789: Fluctuations in the Prosperity of a Languedocian Cloth-Making Town* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Junko Thérèse Takeda, *Between Crown and Commerce: Marseille and the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011); Kenneth Margerison, "The Shareholders' Revolt at the Compagnie des Indes: Commerce and Political Culture in Old Regime France," *French History* 20, no. 1 (March 2006) 25–51.

[140] Gail Bossenga, "Protecting Merchants: Guilds and Commercial Capitalism in Eighteenth-Century France," *French Historical Studies* 15, no. 4 (fall 1988) 693–703; *idem.*, "Capitalism and Corporations in Eighteenth-Century France," in *Naissance des libertés économiques. Liberté du travail et liberté d'entreprendre : le décret d'Allarde et la loi Le Chapelier, leurs conséquences, 1791–fin XIX*e *siècle,* ed. Alain Plessis (Paris: Institut d'Histoire de l'Industrie, 1993) 13–31.

conceptual framework of privileges from the time of Colbert through the Napoleonic period.[141]

But there is another way of thinking about changes to the granting of privileges, not over the lifespan of the Old Regime but over the lifespan of each company or industry. It was not just a matter of new ideas about forms of economic intervention, as Horn describes, but the changing economic conditions to which those interventions responded. At this level it is apparent how many of the new privileges granted were explicitly intended to be temporary, limited, and purposeful. As the numerous privileges granted to different porcelain manufactures attest, they were signed for a specific period of time (although they were renewable), they were explicitly restricted to particular markets (whether defined geographically or stylistically), and they were granted either to help recompense large fixed-cost investments or to encourage the production of items that would benefit the public (whether through novelty or quality). When the costs of scientific innovation, the risks of establishing a new industry, the scarcity of private capital, and the widespread ease of industrial espionage are accounted for, it is hard to imagine a porcelain industry being established in France without some legal protections. And, as will be seen, once a porcelain industry had been established in France, these privileges were readily dispensed with. In this case, the privileges granted to the porcelain industry were no different than any other intellectual property right, either in consequence or intent.

[141] Jeff Horn, *Economic Development in Early Modern France: The Privilege of Liberty, 1650–1820* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

Buying Innovation

Another, more direct method to compensate people for the costs incurred in developing new technologies was to simply purchase the information from them.[142] This was, in fact, the primary strategy adopted by what would become the Royal Porcelain Manufacture in its early years. As this manufacture first began to take shape at the chateau in Vincennes, its investors formed partnerships with the powerful Intendant of Finances, Jean-Louis Henri Orry de Fulvy, to secure a soft-paste recipe from the scientist Louis François Gravant in 1746 in exchange for six hundred livres per year for the first decade of the company's existence, followed by a lump sum of ten thousand livres ten years later—if the company survived that long.[143] Two years later the contract was renegotiated, presumably out of concerns over the exclusivity of the secret. Now only Orry de Fulvy and Gravant were to possess copies of the recipe, and Gravant was forbidden from providing either the recipe or clay made from it to any other manufacture. In exchange, Gravant's contract was more than doubled to twelve hundred livres per year and twenty-four thousand livres after a decade, and he would be kept on as both company scientist and contracted supplier.[144] From this position Gravant continued to experiment on the base recipe by testing dozens of slight alterations, such as changing the regional source of the sand or salt used in it.[145] As the

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[142] A similar method for encouraging private investment in research and promoting public scientific engagement was to offer prizes to inventors. See: Jeremy L Caradonna, *The Enlightenment in Practice: Academic Prize Contests and Intellectual Culture in France, 1670–1794* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012).

[143] AMNS Y1 (26 January 1746); AMNS C1 "Projet de délibération" [1746].

[144] AMNS Y1 (12 March 1748); AMNS Y1 (11 April 1748); AMNS C1 Contract, Bouron (27 December 1748).

[145] AMNS C2 "État des épreuves que je fais par les ordres de Monsieur de Fulvy," [Gravant] [c. 1750].

state began investing directly in the company in the early 1750s, much of the testing and experimentation was shifted to representatives of the Academy of Sciences.[146]

Such purchases of intellectual property from independent scientists formed the basis of many of the early advances by the royal manufacture. The original method for gilding porcelain, for example, came from the Count of Egmont, who had developed a mix of gums and honey to form a glue over which gold powder could be sprinkled before firing.[147] This method was replaced in 1748 by one purchased from Brother Hypolite, a Benedictine monk at St Martin des Champs, in exchange for three thousand livres up front, six hundred livres per year over the next decade, and a contract to furnish the manufacture with his self-adhesive powdered mixture of gold leaf and gum.[148] This recipe was finally replaced in 1771 by a new method of gilding developed by Academy member Jean-Sylvain Bailly, who was to receive an annual gratification of around seven hundred livres for his work, while Hypolite's contract was bought out with a pension of three hundred livres per year.[149] Similarly, the independent enamellist Pierre Antoine Henri Taunay sold three variants of purple and crimson enamels to the royal manufacture in 1754 for six thousand livres up front, six hundred livres per year after that, and an exclusive contract to provide these colors to the manufacture.[150] Taunay continued to develop new colors in the ensuing decades before being bought

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[146] AMNS C2 "Réponse aux observations à moi remise le 24 Xbre 1752," Hellot [end December 1752].

[147] AMNS C1 "Pour dorer la porcelaine," Comte d'Egmont (24 April 1741).

[148] AMNS C1 "Acquisition du secret d'appliquer l'or sur la Porcelaine" (20 November 1748); AMNS Y1 (20 November 1748); AMNS C1 "Secret pour appliquer l'or sur la porcelaine," [Hypolite] (15 February 1749).

[149] AMNS C1 Letter Bertin (11 May 1771); AMNS C1 "Mémoire" (21 August 1771).

[150] AMNS C1 "Mémoire" (15 January 1754); AMNS C1 "Décision du Roy" (5 May 1754); AMNS Y2 (11 June 1754).

out with a permanent annual pension of six hundred livres after twenty-five years of service when the manufacture transitioned to more advanced underglazes developed by Bailly.[151]

Far more important for the long-term prospects of both the Royal Porcelain Manufacture and the French porcelain industry as a whole was the ongoing effort to discover the recipe for hard-paste porcelain. The story of how the secret of hard-paste porcelain reached France ultimately begins with a Strasbourg faïence maker named Paul-Antoine Hannong. At some point in the late 1740s, Paul Hannong came into possession of the recipe for hard-paste porcelain—likely as the result of a German-speaking worker migrating—and began producing small amounts of porcelain at his manufacture. By 1755, this had attracted the attention of state officials, who initially offered to purchase the secret from him for an apparently large sum, but who began threatening to use the Royal Porcelain Manufacture's privilege to shutter Hannong's company when he balked at the offer in hopes of a larger payout. In response to this threat Hannong moved the porcelain side of his manufacture to Frankenthal, where he gained the protection and patronage of the Elector of Palatinate.[152] Having lost this potential source of the recipe, the Royal Manufacture instead hired one of Hannong's workers from Frankenthal, the painter Busch, to come to Vincennnes to share the secret.

[151] AMNS C1 "Traité des couleurs pour peindre sur la porcelaine et l'émail," Taunay (1771); AMNS C1 "Finance M. Taunay," Louis XVI (15 November 1779); AMNS C1 "Traité de mes couleurs," Taunay [1784]; AMNS C1 "Procédés de différentes couleurs pour la porcelaine tendre," Bailly [1785].

[152] AMNS C1 "Mémoire sur la manufacture de porcelaine de Franckenthal," Hannong (25 December 1760); AMNS C1 "Mémoire" [c. 1760].

After months of experiments and costs mounting to over 11,500 livres, however, and with nothing to show for the effort, Busch was dismissed.[153]

Around the turn of 1760, eager to domesticate porcelain production, Madame de Pompadour partnered with the minister Dominique-Jacques Barberie de Courteille to float a message to Paul Hannong's son, Pierre-Antoine Hannong, through the French minister to Hohenlohe.[154] Having found Pierre Hannong receptive to their entreaties, representatives of the Royal Manufacture started asking him for details about a series of potential problems. Their concerns generally revolved around issues of the quality of the hard-paste, how easy it was to shape, what color underglazes existed for it, and similarly technical questions. But central among these concerns was where to locate the materials that Pierre Hannong was importing from several locations on the other side of the Rhine. Given the high expenses of conducting experiments, developing new underglazes, and constructing hotter kilns, before agreeing to a contract with Hannong the officials first needed to know whether production would be feasible and stable, which was largely a matter of whether the raw materials could be found in France.[155] Hannong responded to their concerns point by point, and regarding the issue of finding domestic supplies of raw materials wrote: "Do not lose hope of finding it near the royal manufacture, but surely within the expanse of the Kingdom."[156]

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[153] AMNS C3 "État des dépenses faites pour l'épreuve de la porcelaine façon de Saxe," [Bouillard] (29 March 1756).

[154] AMNS C1 "Mémoire," Carens (28 August 1768); AMNS C2 "Mémoire" [1768].

[155] AMNS C1 "Mémoire," Boileau (21 March 1760); AMNS C1 "Mémoire," Boileau [early 1760].

[156] AMNS C1 "Mémoire," [Hannong] [April 1760]; AMNS C1 "Mémoire," [Boileau] (1 May 1760). [Il ne désespère pas en trouver pêu éloignés de la manufacture royale, mais seurement dans l'étendue du Royaume]

But Pierre Hannong was not the only person who knew the secrets of hard-paste porcelain. Apparently catching wind of the pending deal, Busch wrote to the director of the royal manufacture promising to deliver the secret faster and cheaper than Hannong and guaranteeing a product that would be at least as beautiful. Busch further claimed that "I have some good soil that I provided and will bring along, I will take the rest of these materials into your cantons in France because I know where to find them...I will find in your country most of the materials that I know."[157] With this offer passed over, the bigger threat to Pierre Hannong's plans was his brother, Joseph Hannong, who ran the family porcelain manufacture in Frankenthal. In the summer of 1760, Pierre Hannong wrote to convince his potential employers that "I possess, without doubt...better secrets than my brother...my brother doesn't know anything."[158] These assurances did not prevent Boileau himself from traveling to Frankenthal to observe the porcelain factory there, and the following month the two brothers signed a contract giving Joseph the sole right to sell the family recipe.[159]

Despite this contract, in the summer of 1761 Pierre Hannong committed to sell all the secrets of hard-paste production: its materials, their locations, its production, underglaze recipes, and kiln construction and operation. In exchange, he was to receive three thousand livres up front, three thousand livres after successful reproduction in

[157] AMNS C3 Letter Busch to Boileau (1 December 1760). [j'ai de la bonne terre à laquelle j'ai pourvû et que j'apporterai, je prendrai le surplus des matières dans vos cantons en France parce que je scais ou les trouver....je trouverai dans votre pays la pluspart des matières que je scai]

[158] AMNS C1 Letter Hannong to Hébert (13 July 1760). [Je possède sans doute...des meilleurs secrets que mon frère...mon frère n'a aucune connoissance]

[159] AMNS C1 Letter Bertin to Boileau (17 November 1760); AMNS C1 "Conventions et articles convenus entre Joseph Hannong et Pierre Hannong" (30 December 1760).

Sèvres, and an annual pension of three thousand livres after that.[160] While Hannong did follow through on his promises to transfer the recipe and demonstrate its production, ultimately the effort was a failure.[161] As the director of the Royal Porcelain Manufacture concluded, "it is almost impossible to establish a Royal manufacture on these principles" due to the unavailability of the raw materials in France. "It hardly seems prudent to introduce this work into the Royal manufacture without being already sure of finding within the Kingdom the same materials that it would [otherwise] be necessary to bring from very far away."[162] The commercial unfeasibility of importing such materials is evidenced by the expense records from Hannong's experiments, with costs of importing clay from Strasbourg reaching over 4500 livres in just three months, while Hannong himself accrued another nearly three thousand livres in expenses during that time as he (and his servant) scoured the north of France searching for elusive domestic sources of the necessary components.[163] To conclude the issue, the royal manufacture decided to let Pierre Hannong keep the initial three thousand livres that had already been advanced and to reduce the annual pension from three thousand livres to twelve hundred livres in recognition that "if the information that he has given, and the experiments that he has done, have hardly produced everything that we had

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160 AN MC/ET IX/710 Jean-Baptiste Vivien (29 July 1761); AMNS C1 "Vente d'un secret au Roy par le S. Hannong," Vivien (29 July 1761).

161 AMNS C2 "Secrets de la porcelaine de Franckthal," Hannong [1761]; AMNS C1 "Première composition faite par M. Hannong en présence de M. Boileau" (15 February 1762).

162 AMNS C1 "Observations sur la porcelaine de Mr Hannong" [c. 1762]. [il est presqu'impossible d'établir la manufacture du Roy sur ses principes] [Il ne paroitroit point prudent d'établir ce travail dans la manufacture du Roy sans être sur au paravant de trouver dans le Royaume les mêmes terres qu'il faudroit sans ce la tirer de fort loin]

163 AMNS C1 "Mémoire," Hannong [1765]; AMNS C1 "Mémoire," Boileau [26 January 1765].

planned…he has nonetheless fulfilled his commitments."[164] Following this episode, the Hannongs appear to have abandoned their manufacture in Strasbourg only to refound it and then abandon it again.[165] Pierre Hannong, nevertheless, would protest for the rest of his life that he had been cheated as the victim of the cruel monarchy—an accusation that spawned repeated inquiries yet only momentarily found a sympathetic audience with republican legislators during the Terror.

Just a couple of years later, with still no further progress on cracking the porcelain code, the royal manufacture again returned to Busch. In June of 1764, word arrived from Busch, now director of the newly founded porcelain manufacture in Kelsterbach, that he knew how to find the elusive raw materials for porcelain in France.[166] Despite skepticism about his claims, the royal manufacture agreed to bring him to Sèvres to see if he could finally solve the mystery. They must have been quickly disappointed, however, to discover that Busch had brought with him only small samples of the materials and that he instead immediately ordered nearly two thousand pounds of various clays and minerals to be shipped in from Lunéville, Frankfurt, and Coblentz at enormous cost.[167] Over the next ten months Busch racked up mounting expenses for his personal upkeep, the construction of new kilns, and support for his wife and daughter before the manufacture finally decided "that it would be more

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[164] AMNS C1 "Mémoire," Bertin (14 May 1765). [si les connoissances qu'il a données, et les expériences qu'il a faites, n'ont point produit tout ce qui avoit été envisagé…il n'en a pas moins rempli ses engagemens]

[165] Archives Départementales du Bas-Rhin 17 J 81 "Extractus Regierungs Protocolle" (12 March 1765); Archives Municipales de Strasbourg VII 26 70 "Decretum" (18 January 1783).

[166] AMNS C3 Letter d'Aigremont to Duc de Praslin (10 June 1764).

[167] AMNS C3 Letter Boileau (23 October 1764); AMNS C3 Letter Boileau (9 November 1764); Letter [Boileau to de Courteille] [26 November 1764]; Letter [Boileau] to d'Aigremont (November 1764).

advantageous to sacrifice whatever amount to send this man back to his Country; sooner than to continue to keep him here...without appearing to get from it the least utility."[168]

Busch would not be the last foreigner to offer to sell the secrets of porcelain production to France. In April 1767, word arrived from the French minister in Bavaria that a porcelain manufacturer from Munich was willing to sell the secret of manufacture and to provide information on where to find the materials in France. Officials rejected out of hand the idea that this foreigner could guarantee the ability to make it solely out of materials found in France, the only remaining reason to make such an agreement.[169] They were slightly more welcoming to an offer from the porcelain manufacturer from Wesp, just outside of Amsterdam, but after months of testing they found themselves once again in the position of having spent large sums without it getting them any closer to establishing the production of domestic porcelain from domestic materials.[170] What these episodes collectively demonstrate is that there were limits to the information that could be imported from abroad. Because porcelain is a physical object, its successful commercial production could ultimately only take place with stable supplies of the raw materials that go into it. Given the expenses of trade and the uncertainties of war in the eighteenth century, this meant that continuous production of French porcelain could

[168] AMNS C3 Letter to Bertin [early 1765]; AMNS C3 Letter to Bertin [mid 1765]; AMNS "Mémoire," Boileau [April 1765]. [qu'il seroit plus avantageux de sacrifier une somme quelle conque pour envoyer cet homme dans son Pays ; plustôts que de continuer à le conserver icy...sans aucun apparence d'en tirer la moindre utilité]

[169] AMNS C3 Letter Vilhelof to Courteill (19 April 1767); AMNS C3 "Mémoire pour la porcelaine de Munich" (April 1767); AMNS C3 "Mémoire" (June 1767).

[170] AMNS C3 "Observations jointes à la lettre de Mr. Desrivaux," Montigny (19 June 1767); AMNS C3 Letter Desrivaux to Bertin (5 August 1767); AMNS C3 Letter Bertin to [Boileau] (1 September 1767); AMNS C3 Letter Macquer, de Montigny, and Boileau to Parent (19 March 1768).

only be founded on the sure supply of raw materials inside French borders. And the location of such materials was not a secret that could be purchased or imported from abroad, it could only come from a search within France itself.

Although Hannong and Busch were unable to directly provide such information, they did leave important clues in the samples they brought with them to Sèvres, samples that were quickly passed on to members of the Academy working diligently to resolve the mystery.[171] Armed with these samples, a search was set in motion that encompassed all of France. In Sèvres, Academy members under the guidance of Macquer set up a central headquarters to test samples pouring in from around the country.[172] A team of naturalists was then dispatched "into all of our provinces with samples of the soil for which we are searching."[173] Meanwhile, two letters were sent to every intendant. The first contained a memoire about kaolin from the Academy of Sciences to be distributed to every locality and ceramics manufacture in France. The second was a copy of the 1766 Arrêt du Conseil lifting the royal manufacture's privilege on porcelain production and permitting everyone to produce it.[174] As Macquer later

[171] AMNS C3 Letter Boileau (29 October 1764); AMNS C3 "Observations," Boileau [late 1764]; AMNS C1 Letter Boileau (4 February 1765).

[172] "Mémoire lu par M. Macquer, de l'académie royale des sciences, le 17 juin dernier, dans l'assemblée de cette académie, sur une nouvelle porcelaine qui réunit les qualités les plus désirables, tant pour la solidité que pour la beauté," *Mercure de France* (Paris: Lacombe, July 1769) 2:192.

[173] AMNS C3 "Réponse au mémoire envoyé de Munich par Mr Folard," Montigny (2 June 1767). [dans toutes nos provinces avec des échantillons de la terre qu'on cherche]

[174] AMNS A2 "Circulaire à M. les Intendants" (24 April 1766). Circulating new technological developments was one of the most important functions of the Old Regime industrial bureaucracy. See: Philippe Minard, *La fortune du colbertisme : État et industries dans la France des Lumières* (Paris: Fayard, 1998) 211–40.

recounted, the purpose of this action had been for "general liberty" to excite "competition...from all sides."[175]

Among those who must have seen these letters was Vilaris, an apothecary from Bordeaux and member of the Bordeaux Academy of Sciences. At some point in 1767, he came across a strange white clay in St Yrieix-la-Perche to the west of Limoges. Intrigued, he passed a small sample of it on to the Archbishop of Bordeaux, who shared his fascination with science and quickly forwarded it to Sèvres. After running a series of tests on the material, Macquer set out with a trusted worker to Bordeaux, where they met with Vilaris, who then led them to the original site of his discovery on August 8, 1768. Over the next twelve days, the trio conducted a series of field tests before arranging to purchase the land from Madame Montet for three thousand livres in the name of the King.[176] France now had a domestic source of porcelain.

Before French porcelain could be released to the public, it needed official verification that this was, in fact, true porcelain. The Academy of Sciences quickly conducted a series of tests: they submerged a piece of porcelain in boiling water to prove its resistance to thermal shock; they set a porcelain saucer atop a stove and cooked an egg in butter and vinegar on it to prove its durability; and they even set a porcelain cup on a bed of hot coals, filled it with sand and lead, and melted them into glass inside the cup to prove its strength.[177] Conducting such rigorous tests on new

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[175] "Mémoire lu par M. Macquer," 2:194. [la liberté générale] [l'émulation...de tous les côtés]

[176] *Ibid.*, 2:193; AMNS C2 Letter Macquer (10 February 1768); AN O[1] 2062[1] "Mémoire" (6 August 1770).

[177] "Mémoire lu par M. Macquer," 2:199–200. Testing new inventions to generate public assurances of their quality was one of the most important responsibilities of the Academy of Sciences. See: Liliane Hilaire-Pérez, "La négociation de la qualité dans les

inventions was a central responsibility of the Academy in the eighteenth century. Given the high cost of information about products in the Old Regime, public expertise worked alongside merchant reputation to assure consumers of the quality of products. Traditional methods for doing so included guild regulations and state inspections. With new products being rapidly invented, however, policymakers faced the problem of how to establish the quality of a product for the public without recourse to long-established standards against which to compare them. The Academy of Sciences increasingly positioned itself as the ultimate arbiter of quality for new inventions and as repository of expertise.[178] The fact that a series of similar organizations emerged in Britain at the same time demonstrates that objective sources of expertise served an important role in reassuring consumers about the quality of new products.[179] What set the French Academy apart was, first, its unique ability to wield the authority of the state with the

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examens académiques d'inventions au XVIIIe siècle," in *La qualité des produits en France (XVIIIe–XXe siècles)*, ed. Alessandro Stanziani (Paris: Belin, 2003) 55–68.

[178] Liliane Hilaire-Pérez, "La négociation de la qualité dans les examens académiques d'inventions au XVIIIe siècle," in *La qualité des produits en France (XVIIIe–XXe siècles)*, ed. Alessandro Stanziani (Paris: Belin, 2003) 55–68; Eric H Ash, "Introduction: Expertise and the Early Modern State," *Osiris* 25, no. 1 (2010) 1–24; EC Spary, Liqueurs and the Luxury marketplace in Eighteenth-Century Paris,) in *Materials and Expertise*, 225–55; Sarah Lowengard, "Color Quality and Production: Testing Colour in Eighteenth-Century France," *Journal of Design History* 14, no. 2 (2001) 91–103. The conflict between the state, scientists, and private individuals over claims to expert status continued throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. See: Alessandro Stanziani: *Rules of Exchange: French Capitalism in Comparative Perspective, Eighteenth to Early Twentieth Centuries* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012) 168–92.

[179] Philippe Minard, "Facing Uncertainty: Markets, Norms and Conventions in the Eighteenth Century," in *Regulating the British Economy, 1660–1850*, ed. Perry Gauci (New York: Routledge, 2011) 177–94; Philippe Minard, "Le Bureau d'essai de Birmingham, ou la fabrique de la réputation au XVIIIe siècle," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 65, no. 5 (September –October 2010) 1117–46; William J Ashworth, "'Between the Trader and the Public': British Alcohol Standards and the Proof of Good Governance," *Technology and Culture* 42, no. 1 (January 2001) 27–50; and William J Ashworth, "Quality and the Roots of Manufacturing 'Expertise' in Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Osiris* 25, no. 1 (2010) 231–54.

objectivity of science in establishing its claims to expertise and, second, its determination to use this authority to reduce uncertainty in consumer markets.

Assured that they had finally discovered the recipe for hard-paste porcelain, the academy approved the publication and circulation of the Count de Milly's book, *L'art de la porcelaine*, which included extensive and precise instructions on every stage of the porcelain manufacturing process tested and verified by Macquer and two other Academy members so that every producer in France could make their own hard-paste porcelain using domestic materials.[180] Henceforth, no requests for special privileges for porcelain manufacture would be recognized. In rejecting one such request in 1769, an official told the applicant: "monsieur knows perfectly well that the discovery of the clay...has been made due to orders from the royal manufacture."[181] In other words, once the expensive process of discovering the recipe for hard-paste porcelain was complete, there was no longer any need to use the privilege as a tool to encourage investment in scientific research. French manufacturers were now free to produce as much porcelain as they could. The only remaining instruction was that, as other manufactures began producing their own porcelain, they always keep in mind that "it will always be to the King that one must always give the first acknowledgement."[182]

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[180] Nicolas-Christiern de Thy de Milly, *L'art de la porcelaine* (Paris: Saillant & Nyon and Desaint, 1771); "Art de la porcelaine (Review)," *Journal des Sçavans* (June 1772) 447.

[181] AMNS A2 "Mémoire," [Bertin] ([August] 1769). [monsieur sait parfaitement que la découverte de la terre...a été faite d'après ses ordres par la Manufacture royale]

[182] "Mémoire lu par M. Macquer," 2:195. [ce sera toujours à celle du Roi qu'on devra rapporter la première connoissance]

Coal-Fired Kilns: A Case Study in Old Regime Innovation

A final case study shows that this multifaceted method of encouraging technological development continued until the eve of the Revolution. A major impediment facing the porcelain industry late in the eighteenth century was its insatiable demand for timber to fire kilns so large and so hot for so long. Of course, this was an endemic problem in an era when the finite (albeit slowly renewable) resources of wood and the charcoal made from it were confronting rapidly increasing demand for domestic and industrial consumption. And it was felt particularly acutely around Paris, where forests were being rapidly denuded to fuel a growing population and where over half of French porcelain manufactures could be found. In the early 1780s, officials began to express interest in discovering methods to construct coal-fired kilns.[183] The first successful attempt was carried out by Bourdon des Planches, director of the manufacture in St Denis, which operated under the patronage of the Count of Artois. His primary innovation was to create a system of adjustable grates that would allow the operators to adjust the rate at which they introduced coal and air into the kiln, and thus accurately control its temperature.[184] To mark this success, the manufacture produced an elaborately decorated vase fired by coal to present to the king.[185] Shortly thereafter, however, St Denis began to encounter coal supply and quality problems that shuttered the manufacture for three straight months. Meanwhile, consumer and merchant

[183] On French scientific policy in this period, see: Charles Coulston Gillispie, *Science and Polity in France at the End of the Old Regime* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980); Harold T Parker: *An Administrative Bureau during the Old Regime: The Bureau of Commerce and Its Relations to French Industry from May 1781 to November 1783* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1993).

[184] AN F[12] 1494[1] "Procès verbal de visite du four à porcelaine de M Bourdon des Planches" (13 December 1782).

[185] AN F[12] 1494[1] "Sur la requête présentée au Roy" [1787].

skepticism over the quality of coal-fired porcelain cut into their sales.[186] In recognition of this sacrifice, the state granted the manufacture a gratification of two thousand livres per year as an "encouragement" and "indemnity."[187]

Other manufactures, meanwhile, continued to work on their own designs, propelled in part by a 1784 Arrêt du Conseil that required manufactures in the Paris area to switch to coal kilns. Christophe Dihl, the chemist and director of the Duke of Angoulême's porcelain factory, struggled to overcome the problem of excessive breakage, while Pierre Cloosterman, chemist and director of a Limoges manufacture, conducted extensive experiments of his own.[188] In order to assist these efforts, the state brought in an English faïence manufacturer named Sturgeon and offered him a gratification of ten thousand livres over five years in exchange for constructing a functional coal kiln and training five Frenchmen how to build and operate it. There remained doubts about the feasibility of this project, however, as officials calculated that offering guaranteed coal deliveries, lowering coal prices, and helping manufactures make the transition could cost the state up to one hundred thousand livres.[189]

Meanwhile, in the northern city of Lille, Le Perre, director of a porcelain manufacture operating under the patronage of the Dauphin, was also experimenting on a coal kiln with assistance from the French government in the form of tax exemptions and the municipal government in the form of thousands of florins in direct

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[186] AN F^{12} 1494^1 "Extrait des réclamations du S Bourdon les Planches" [1784]; AN F^{12} 1494^1 Letter Bourdon des Planches (22 March 1784); AN F^{12} 1494^1 Letter Bourdon des Planches to Controller General [July 1785].

[187] AN F^{12} 1494^1 Letter Calonne to Bourdon les Planches (11 July 1786). [encouragement] [indemnité]

[188] AN O^1 2062^2 Letter Grellet to d'Angiviller (19 April 1785); AN F^{12} 1494^1 "Mémoire," Dihl [1785].

[189] AMNS C1 Dossier [1785]; AN O^1 2061^2 Hettlinger to d'Angiviller (15 February 1785).

investment.[190] As soon as his designs—which included vents for controlling airflow and pre-drying the coal to prevent smoke that would stain porcelain—had been proven successful, he was brought to Clignancourt near Paris along with his manager and four best workers to build a kiln there. Over the next nineteen months they worked diligently on this project, even though it meant temporarily shuttering his own manufacture in Lille to do so. When the task had finally been accomplished, the new design was spread to all of the nation's manufactures and Le Perre offered a sizeable gratification in recognition of his contribution to French industry.[191]

Conclusion: Porcelain as Scientific Marvel

Establishing a French porcelain industry in the eighteenth century required a monumental mobilization of resources. The state's primary goal in supporting the scientific and technological advancements that would make this new industry possible was to use whatever means were at its disposal to encourage innovation and spread it throughout French industry. To do so, it had to rely on the existing systems and institutions of the Old Regime. These included using privileges and gratifications to encourage private entrepreneurs to develop new technologies; granting state patronage of the Academy of Sciences, royal patronage of the manufacture at Vincennes and then Sèvres, and aristocratic patronage of other scientists and manufactures; and using

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[190] AMLille AG 1153/16 Letter le Perre to Esmaugars (1 May 1784), Letter Esmaugars (11 May 1784), Letter Leperre-Durot to Conseil de Lille (26 May 1784), Letter Chateau de Villequauz[?] to des Aunsains[?] (2 June 1784); AG 1153/14 "Extrait des registres du Conseil d'État" (13 January 1784).

[191] AN F[12] 1494[1] "Tableau des moyens proposés pour la cuisson de la porcelaine au seul feu de charbon de terre" (18 January 1786); AN F[12] 1494[1] Letter Le Perre to Calonne (4 July 1786); AN F[12] 1494[1] Letter Le Perre to Calonne (25 May 1786); AN F[12] 107 pp 504–5 (23 October 1788).

international scientific and religious networks alongside industrial espionage and bribery to import knowledge from abroad. This effort was ultimately successful in generating both the technological skills necessary to create domestic porcelain, the artisanal skills necessary to manufacture it, and the organizational capacity to produce it on an industrial scale.[192]

The innovation that underlay the domestication of porcelain production supports recent historical work challenging traditional descriptions of the Industrial Revolution that project future economic developments backward into the eighteenth century. The escape from Malthusian checks on productivity and population growth has justly attracted more attention from economic historians than perhaps any other subject.[193] In the traditional framing of this fundamental shift, historians have emphasized that the decisive turning point came in late eighteenth-century Britain when and where "there was a substitution of mechanical devices for human skill [and] inanimate power—in particular, steam—took the place of human and animal strength," and thus opened the possibility of limitless growth.[194] Following this work, recent economic historians investigating the origins of the Industrial Revolution have focused their inquiries on

[192] On the broad success of eighteenth-century French technology, see: Shelby T McCloy, *French Inventions of the Eighteenth Century* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1952); and Liliane Hilaire-Pérez, Fabien Simon, and Marie Thébaud-Sorger, eds., *L'Europe des sciences et des techniques, XVe–XVIIIe siècle : Un dialogue des savoirs* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2016).

[193] For recent views on this transition, see: EA Wrigley, *Continuity, Chance and Change: The Character of the Industrial Revolution in England* (New York: Cambridge, 1988) 34–97; and Robert William Fogel, *The Escape from Hunger and Premature Death, 1700–2100: Europe, America, and the Third World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 1–20.

[194] David S Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus: Technological Change and Industrial Development in Western Europe from 1750 to the Present* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1969) 1.

economic and cultural determinants of the shift toward mechanization in Britain during the eighteenth century.[195]

In recent decades, however, a revisionist wave in economic history has challenged some of the core assumptions underlying these narratives. First, historians have revised estimations of British economic growth downward for most of this period and, by doing so, have postponed the arrival of widespread mechanization in Britain until the 1830s.[196] Second, they have revised estimations of continental economies' growth upward for most of this period and, by doing so, have minimized the distinctiveness of British industrial development.[197] Neither of these revisions negates the fact that important structural economic and social shifts were taking place that laid the foundation for future sustained growth. But they do prompt a reevaluation of what precisely is meant by "innovation." In particular, they allow us to see how process

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[195] For economic shifts, see: Robert C Allen, *The British Industrial Revolution in Global Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009). For cultural shifts, see: Margaret C Jacob, *Scientific Culture and the Making of the Industrial West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); *idem., The First Knowledge Economy: Human Capital and the European Economy, 1750–1850* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); *idem.,* "The Cultural Foundations of Early Industrialization: A Project," in *Technological Revolutions in Europe: Historical Perspectives,* eds. Maxine Berg and Kristine Bruland (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 1998) 67–83; Joel Mokyr, *The Gifts of Athena: Historical Origins of the Knowledge Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002); *idem., The Enlightened Economy: An Economic History of Britain, 1700–1850* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009); *idem.,* "The European Enlightenment and the Origins of Modern Economic Growth, in *Reconceptualizing the Industrial Revolution*, eds. Jeff Horn, Leonard R Rosenband, and Merritt Roe Smith (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010) 65–86; and Otto Mayr, *Authority, Liberty, and Automatic Machinery in Early Modern Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986). On the political milieu of much of this scholarship, see: William J Ashworth, "The Ghost of Rostow: Science, Culture and the British Industrial Revolution," *History of Science* 46 (September 2008) 249–74; and *idem.,* "The British Industrial Revolution and the Ideological Revolution: Science, Neoliberalism and History," *History of Science* 52, no. 2 (2014) 178–99.

[196] NFR Crafts and CK Harley, "Output Growth and the British Industrial Revolution: A Restatement of the Crafts-Harley View," *Economic History Review* 65, no. 4 (1992) 703–30.

[197] For literature review, see Introduction.

innovation and product innovation worked together to create industrial development and growth in eighteenth-century Britain, France, and elsewhere.[198] It was a matter of making the goods that were desired and making them more desirable as well as making them in greater number and making them less expensive. As this chapter has demonstrated, both product and process innovation blended the contributions of artisans, bureaucrats, and scientists toward a common goal; they both drew on the global circulation of tacit and codified knowledge; and they ultimately sought to meet consumer demand, whether by replicating imported goods, improving the quality of domestic ones, or selling both more cheaply. Furthermore, all of this took place within the existing institutions of Old Regime society and harnessed them toward industrial growth. At the same time, however, the success of these methods allowed the state to transcend the limitations of the very institutions they employed in their quest to domesticate porcelain production. Bureaucrats appear to have recognized when restrictions were necessary to encourage investment and when they impeded it. Crucially, what caused the shift between the two in this case was not the emergence of new ideas, but changes in economic conditions.

This ongoing scientific struggle captured the popular imagination. In a pair of large panels painted in 1731 by French artist Jean-Siméon Chardin, the viewer is invited to marvel at the state of both the arts and the sciences. Chardin presents on one side the

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[198] For the literature on product innovation, see: Maxine Berg, "The Genesis of 'Useful Knowledge,'" *History of Science* 45, no. 2 (2007) 123–33; *idem.*, "Product Innovation in Core Consumer Industries in Eighteenth-Century Britain," in *Technological Revolutions in Europe*, 138–57; *idem.*, "From Imitation to Invention"; *idem.*, "The British Product Revolution"; Liliane Hilaire-Pérez, *La pièce et le geste : Artisans, marchands et savoir technique à Londres au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2013); Styles, "Product Innovation"; and *idem.*, "Fashion, Textiles and the Origins of Industrial Revolution," *East Asian Journal of British History* 5 (2016) 161–89.

arts (figure 2.18), represented by a marble bust, a bas-relief, brushes, and a pallet. In an apparent rebuke of the stature of the arts, Chardin depicts here a monkey mimicking the achievements of French art. He presents on the other side the sciences (figure 2.19), represented by a globe, microscope, books, and a few exotic goods. It is here, among the marvels of modern science, that the viewer finds a tall porcelain vase. In fact, much of the consumer allure of porcelain in the early eighteenth century was its mystical aura, pure and elusive, the subject of science.[199]

Figure 2.18. Jean-Siméon Chardin, *Les attributs des arts*, 1731.

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[199] Christine A Jones, *Shapely Bodies: The Image of Porcelain in Eighteenth-Century France* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2013) 71–104; Natacha Coquery, "French Court Society and Advertising Art: The Reputation of Parisian Merchants at the End of the Eighteenth Century," in *Advertising and the European City: Historical Perspectives*, eds. Clemens Wischermann and Elliott Shore (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2000) 103; Glenn Adamson, "Rethinking the Arcanum: Porcelain, Secrecy, and the Eighteenth-Century Culture of Invention," in *The Cultural Aesthetics of Eighteenth-Century Porcelain*, eds. Alden Cavanaugh and Michael E Yonan (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010) 19–38; Susan Gal, "Qualia as Value and Knowledge: Histories of European Porcelain," *Signs and Society* 5, no. S1 (Supplement 2017) S144–7.

Figure 2.19. Jean-Siméon Chardin, *Les attributs des sciences*, 1731.

Having conquered the technical challenge of producing porcelain was not enough to establish a successful porcelain industry, however. Consumers were drawn to luxury objects only in part due to their material attributes. With the "intrinsic qualities" of porcelain now mastered, French manufacturers could now focus on the second of its two beauties: "bright, fresh, and well applied colors; elegant and correct paintings; and well-proportioned and agreeably varied high-quality forms."[200] In other words, they would now have to attend to the symbolic value and cultural resonance of their goods. And to accomplish this, bureaucrats, aristocrats, and entrepreneurs alike

[200] Milly, *L'art de la porcelaine*, xxiii. [des couleurs vives, fraîches, & bien fondues ; des peintures élégantes & correctes ; des formes nobles bien proportionnées, & agréablement variées]

would have to draw on the same institutions they had to develop a recipe for porcelain in the first place.

Chapter Three

The Taste of France:

Establishing a Reputation for French Porcelain under Louis XV, 1750–1780

Throughout the eighteenth century, porcelain remained a luxury in Europe. Its material composition may have made it well suited for the acts of social consumption and display prevalent in elite milieu, but much of its allure continued to reflect its exclusivity and aesthetics. Like any luxury good, porcelain's value stemmed primarily from how its possession conveyed meanings about the object and its owner in relation to a socially determined framework of style. For the French porcelain industry to flourish, it could not simply produce porcelain objects, it had to produce their meanings as well.

French porcelain manufacturers would have to discover ways to establish reputations for taste, to indissolubly embed these reputations into their objects, and convey knowledge about it to their consumers. Ultimately, this would entail a battle to replace retailers as the indispensable authority on quality and taste and shift the locus of institutions designed to convey information to consumers from merchants to industrialists. It would also entail developing novel forms of business organization to inhere reputations for taste and quality into porcelain at every stage of production, distribution, and consumption.

A reputation for taste only had meaning, however, in reference to the canons of style, which were themselves flexible, mutable, even manipulable. To establish a reputation for the tastefulness of French porcelain would require first establishing a French porcelain style. And the only figure capable of exerting an influence on the framework of style in the early modern period was the king. Using the trusted tools of

patronage and privilege honed in his quest to discover the recipe for porcelain, Louis XV would attempt to instantiate a new porcelain style built on the cultural authority of the Crown. This was the mission of the Royal Porcelain Manufacture.

Royal Style, Political Power, and Economic Plenty

The 1750s were a difficult decade for Louis XV. For nearly thirty years after his accession to the throne, Louis XV remained in the shadows while first his regent the Duke of Orléans and then his chief minister André-Hercule de Fleury ruled France in his name. Beneath the stable surface of this period, however, churned a series of political crises caused by the permanent problem of financing the state while wrestling with the parlements for political power.[1] These crises converged in the 1740s during the War of Austrian Succession when aristocrats and commoners incensed over Fleury's treatment of the Jansenists rallied together against the imposition of a new tax intended to fund the war.[2] Soon after finally coming into his own as King of France, Louis XV was mired in these ongoing conflicts. At the outbreak of the Seven Years War in 1756, early French military successes gave initial cause for optimism. But as the war dragged on, France found itself unable to support fighting around the globe, and its forces were soon overstretched and undersupplied while the financial burden on the state mounted.[3] For the second time in a decade, Louis XV confronted an aristocratic and

[1] Peter R Campbell, *Power and Politics in Old Regime France, 1720–1745* (New York: Routledge, 1996) 39–190.

[2] John Rogister, *Louis XV and the* Parlement *of Paris, 1737–1755* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[3] Daniel Baugh, *The Global Seven Years War, 1754–1763*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2021) 237–80; James C Reilly, *The Seven Years War and the Old Regime in France: The Economic and Financial Toll* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986) 72–192.

popular opposition galvanized by religion and resistance to taxation.[4] Underlying this tumultuous period was a question of legitimacy, one that reflected the twin ambitions of power and plenty in French politics.

Louis XV was certainly not the first French monarch to face this problem. Over a century earlier, during the regency of Louis XIV, a similar alliance between the aristocratic parlements and the common people against monarchical authority and taxation had culminated in the Fronde, a deadly rebellion and civil war that gripped France for four years.[5] Here too, the primary issue was one of political legitimacy and authority. As William Beik has argued, authority under absolutism was always a matter of social collaboration between the monarchy, the aristocracy, and the people.[6] To successfully rule required bringing the interests of these classes into alignment with those of the Crown and increasing the capacity of the state to accomplish the designs of the monarch. As the political economic expression of Louis XIV's reign, the work of Colbert simultaneously sought both goals.

The economics of Colbertism relied on state investment in, protection for, and management of industries deemed crucial to national wealth. Throughout Louis XIV's reign his government championed cutting-edge industries such as glassmaking by providing financial support for technological research (or industrial espionage) and the

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[4] Jean Egret, *Louis XV et l'opposition parlementaire, 1715–1774* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1970) 50–132; Dale K van Kley, *The Damiens Affair and the Unraveling of the* Ancien Régime, *1750–1770* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984) 99–165; Julian Swann, *Politics and the Parlement of Paris under Louis XV, 1754–1774* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 87–192.

[5] Orest Ranum, *The Fronde: A French Revolution, 1648–1652* (New York: WW Norton, 1993) 51–146.

[6] William Beik, "Review: The Absolutism of Louis XIV as Social Collaboration," *Past & Present* 188 (August 2005) 195–224.

establishment of manufacturers, raising tariffs and privileges that would shift domestic demand toward these domestic manufacturers, and building a royal manufacture that could develop skills and quality under the patronage of the king and his boundless spending long enough for economies of scale to emerge that would allow French glassmakers to compete internationally.[7] But there was more to Colbert's support of glass manufacturing than cold economic calculation. Glass was an object of refinement and visibility. As a window it let light into dark rooms, as tableware it let one see the wine in their cup, and as a mirror it made spaces seem bigger and allowed the viewer to witness themselves in a place of grandeur. As the famous Hall of Mirrors at Versailles attests, glass was a symbolic object of power and greatness.[8]

In a now classic text, Norbert Elias described Louis XIV's Court as an essentially political project. Having come of age during the Fronde and its aftermath, the young king sought to cement his reign by centralizing its relationships around himself. At the new chateau he was building in Versailles, Louis XIV could create a social environment where one's position and standing—and thus hopes for advancement and enrichment—

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[7] Claude Pris, "La glace en France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles : Monopole et liberté dans une industrie de pointe sous l'Ancien Régime," *Revue d'histoire économique et sociale* 55, no. 1/2 (1977) 5–23; *idem.*, *Une grande entreprise sous l'Ancien Régime : La Manufacture Royale des Glaces de Saint-Gobain (1665–1830)* (New York: Arno Press, 1981); Warren C Scoville, "Technology and the French Glass Industry, 1640–1740," *Journal of Economic History* 1, no. 2 (November 1941) 153–67; *idem.*, "State Policy and the French Glass Industry, 1640–1789," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 56, no. 3 (1942) 430–55; Maurice Hamon, *Du soleil à la terre : Une histoire de Saint-Gobain* (Malesherbes, France: JC Lattès, 1988) 12–39.

[8] Sabine Melchior-Bonnet, *The Mirror: A History*, trans. Katharine H Jewett (New York: Routledge, 2001) 9–69; Jean-François Belhoste, "La glace dans la galerie et le décor français," in *La galerie des glaces après sa restauration : Contexte et restitution* (Paris: École du Louvre, 2003) 145–67; Joan DeJean, *The Essence of Style: How the French Invented High Fashion, Fine Food, Chic Cafés, Style, Sophistication, and Glamour* (New York: Free Press, 2005) 177–200. On the limits of this approach, see Hall Bjørnstad, *The Dream of Absolutism: Louis XIV and the Logic of Modernity* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2021) 93–115.

were determined by how they performed the proper etiquette, fulfilled ceremonial roles, and reflected the conspicuous consumption of the king. The genius of this system for Louis XIV's political authority was that he himself determined what etiquettes were proper, who fulfilled which ceremonial roles, and what the preferred patterns of public consumption were. Such practices were at one level abstractions from courtiers' personal ambitions of power and wealth. But through the court society Louis XIV created a system in which individual standing had to be pursued through concrete practices that instantiated the hierarchy of his rule in daily life. Every moment at Versailles revolved around the schedule of the king and ceremonies that were at once domestic and public. For Elias, this system was made possible by the growth of a money economy that was expansive enough to allow for the permanent material excesses at the palace and the relocation of the landed aristocracy to its gardens while at the same time centralized enough to allow royal control of the finances and taxation with which the king could reward his courtiers or punish holdouts. But Elias also highlighted that this was a fragile society, one in which the aspirations of aristocrats within the system forced them to support a hierarchy that kept the king on top, but in which the king himself depended on this support and ultimately his control of the ceremonial and consumptive practices he engendered.[9]

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[9] Norbert Elias, *The Court Society*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2014), esp 39–229. For more recent ratifications of this view, see: Jean-Marie Apostolidès, *Le Roi-machine : Spectacle et politique au temps de Louis XIV* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1981); Jean-François Solnon, *La cour de France* (Paris: Fayard, 1987) 252–417; Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992); TCW Blanning, *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture: Old Regime Europe, 1660–1789* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) 29–52; Jeroen Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles: The Courts of Europe's Dynastic Rivals, 1550–1780* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Giora Sternberg, *Status Interaction during the Reign of Louis XIV* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

One of the key sites of court society was the dining room. This space perfectly encapsulated the rhythms of life at Versailles, nourishment being a regular physical requirement that could be repurposed to become a choreographed social event. It included status competition over who held prized roles overseeing food service and who was permitted to stand in the room while the king ate; it reinforced the royal hierarchy when the king and queen ate comfortably while others waited on wooden stools at public feasts; it provided a public opportunity to demonstrate respect for the king by bowing as his dinner passed under armed procession; and involving the physical processes of the body it was one of the most important sites of etiquette, where participants displayed their mastery of manners for everyone to see.[10] Beyond when, how, and with whom one ate was the question of what one ate at court. The drift away from medieval roasts and toward increasingly refined and elaborate dishes was driven from the top down, with the meals at Versailles gradually becoming the standard of *haute cuisine* across Europe. Here, public eating led to a competition of conspicuous culinary consumption among aristocrats jockeying to display their social position by dint of what was on their plate. Sauces, aspics, and pastries became exclamation points in their claims to status. In doing so they elevated the prestige of a cuisine that became internationally identifiable as both essentially French and the essence of luxury, binding the two irrevocably together.[11] These meals simultaneously offered an opportunity for

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[10] Elias *Court Society*, 51–2; Solnon, *Cour de France*, 325–6; Sternberg, *Status Interaction*, 116, 173; Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2012) 72–7, 96–109; Barbara Ketcham Wheaton, *Savoring the Past: The French Kitchen and Table from 1300 to 1789* (New York: Scribner, 1983) 129–48.

[11] Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present* New York: Basil Blackwell, 1985) 60–83, 108–27; Jean-Robert Pitte, *French Gastronomy: The History and Geography of a Passion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991) 84–100; Joan Dejean, *Essence of Style*, 105–32; Jean-Louis

prestige consumption in the room and with the utensils: the tablecloths, napkins, silverware, chandeliers, tables, chairs, wallpaper, and plates on and in which one dined. And the embrace of the *service à la française* at Court, with its requirements for dozens of specialized and serialized serving dishes, placed new demands on the uses and styles of tableware.

Central to the king's ability to control court society was his authority over matters of style and taste. As Leora Auslander has argued, what the king had direct control over was style, which is to say that through his personal and public consumption he could define the terms of what comprised good style. In this sense, style became an external social reference. Taste, on the other hand, was a personal matter that positioned the individual in relation to society through their accordance with the elements of the prevailing style.[12] To know that style enough to express good judgement about it was understood to be both an innate and a learned quality, a matter of *esprit* and of education (see Chapter One).[13] Whether in art, literature, consumer goods, or cuisine, the eighteenth century saw the growing individualization of taste as an expression of one's place in the social whole; taste became a public judgment *of* style rather than a judgment of accordance *with* style.[14] But this style itself remained the

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Flandrin, *Arranging the Meal: A History of Table Service in France*, trans. Julie E Johnson with Sylvie and Antionio Roeder (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007) 72–89; Susan Pinkard, *A Revolution in Taste: The Rise of French Cuisine* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 95–151.

[12] Leora Auslander, *Taste and Power: Furnishing Modern France* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996) 141–6.

[13] Michael Moriarty, *Taste and Ideology in Seventeenth-Century France* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 59–75.

[14] Thomas E Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985) 79–133; Elena Russo, *Styles of Enlightenment: Taste, Politics, and Authorship in Eighteenth-Century France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007); Michael Kwass, "Big Hair: A Wig History of Consumption in Eighteenth-Century

prerogative of the monarch throughout the Old Regime in France, even if it was only a guiding spirit that was mediated through the actions of artisans and consumers, including the king himself.[15]

It was this very flexibility in the relationship between taste and style that made the production of luxury goods such a lucrative business. If the canon of style that came ultimately from the king established the language in which individual objects spoke, it was through the mastery of the artisan in applying this language elegantly in his or her products and the judicious selection of the consumer in purchasing them that each proved their own taste. For the producer, this required navigating established standards of style while incorporating novelty and variations that would attract consumers. Budding stars of the culinary profession, for instance, established reputations for their ability to prepare the new *haute cuisine*, but also to innovate new recipes or presentations that used the basic elements of its established repertoire and brought them to new heights of ostentation and perfection.[16] In furniture manufacturing, the stylistic regimes emanating from the monarchy passed through the artisans in Paris and its surrounding faubourgs. Each worked within the established idiom but added their own distinctive interpretations to it and thus developed the style over time.[17] Similarly, as Lesley Miller has shown, silk weavers in Lyon engaged in a reciprocal relationship with the French Court throughout the eighteenth century in

France," *American Historical Review* 111, no. 3 (June 2006) 631–59; EC Spary, *Eating the Enlightenment: Food and the Sciences in Paris* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

[15] Auslander, *Taste and Power*, 29–32.

[16] Wheaton, *Savoring the Past*, 160–93; Jennifer J Davis, *Defining Culinary Authority: The Transformation of Cooking in France, 1650–1830* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2013) 41–87.

[17] Auslander, *Taste and Power*, 120–2.

which they responded to the stylistic patterns set there but systematically introduced minor variations within its themes.[18] Furthermore, as Carlo Poni and Bill Sewell have argued, it was this process of continuous design innovation within an elite style that created new opportunities for profit-making in the Old Regime economy.[19] For the manufacturers to reap these profits, however, they would first have to overcome the market authority of the merchants standing between them and their consumers. They would need, in other words, to seize the cultural authority of taste for themselves and embed it in their goods at the site of production.

Asian imports fit strangely into the system of courtly style. In the seventeenth century, they remained rare objects whose prestige directly reflected their exclusivity and expense. During Louis XIV's reign, imported porcelain was still a remarkable part of the king's collection in the literal sense that its presence was frequently remarked upon. The growing obsession with porcelain as an object of grandeur can be seen in the construction of the Trianon de Porcelaine (figure 3.1) on the grounds at Versailles. In 1670, the king ordered a new lodge to be constructed that would provide a space to consort with his mistresses and stroll through a garden of exotic flowers. This lodge

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[18] Lesley Ellis Miller, "Paris–Lyon–Paris: Dialogue in the Design and Distribution of Patterned Silks in the 18th Century," in *Luxury Trades and Consumerism in* Ancien Régime *Paris: Studies in the History of the Skilled Workforce*, eds. Robert Fox and Anthony Turner (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1998) 139–67; *idem*., "The Marriage of Art and Commerce: Philippe de Lasalle's Success in Silk," *Art History* 28, no. 2 (April 2005) 200–26; *idem*., "From Design Studio to Marketplace: Products, Agents, and Methods of Distribution in the Lyons Silk Manufactures, 1660–1789," in *Threads of Global Desire: Silk in the Pre-Modern World*, eds. Dagmar Schäfer, Giorgio Riello, and Luca Molà (New York: Boydell Press, 2018) 225–50.

[19] Carlo Poni, "Fashion as Flexible Production: The Strategies of the Lyons Silk Merchants in the Eighteenth Century," in *World of Possibilities: Flexibility and Mass Production in Western Industrialization*, trans. Patrick Leech, eds. Charles F Sabel and Jonathan Zeitlin (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 37–74; William H Sewell, jr. "The Empire of Fashion and the Rise of Capitalism in Eighteenth-Century France," *Past & Present* 206 (February 2010) 81–120.

Figure 3.1. "Vue de Trianon de porcelaine côté cour." Engraving, 17th century. Courtesy Chateaux de Versailles et de Trianon. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY.

was to be built in blue-and-white faïence mimicking Chinese porcelain and was inspired by the 260-foot-tall Porcelain Tower in Nanjing, engravings of which were circulating widely in France at the time as a miraculous image of the wealth of China. For nearly two decades the Trianon de Porcelaine remained one of the most luxurious sites in Versailles, filled with the scent of exotic flowers, its roof a brilliant blue beacon in the countryside and dotted with ceramic birds and figures that brought a wide world to earth in the residence of the king. Ironically, in 1687 the Trianon de Porcelaine was

dismantled, the costs of maintaining faïence outdoors exceeding the dividends of glory it paid.[20]

The public allure of porcelain and its royal connotations can also be seen in depictions of the Siamese Embassy of 1686. The arrival of the embassy was one of the most spectacular events in Louis XIV's long reign. The enormous contingent of Siamese brought with them to Versailles several ships worth of gifts presented to the French king in elaborate ceremonies that captured the imagination of the French public.[21] A widely distributed engraving of the event (figure 3.2) show Louis XIV at the top center of the image in front of his courtiers and countryman, emphasizing his role the embodiment and representation of France. In front of the king are the arriving supplicants from Siam, bowing before him in a sign of respect and humility. And with them are the gifts intended to demonstrate their good will, including 1500 pieces of porcelain that are placed at the very front of the engraving where they cannot be missed and detailed at the bottom of the page. Tough captured in different views and from different angles, the same basic motif of Louis XIV on his throne at the top of the frame looking down on bowing emissaries surrounded by porcelain vases was represented in other engravings and even a medal minted to commemorate the occasion. If these

[20] Guy Walton, *Louis XIV's Versailles* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986) 43, 151; Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, *Orientalism in Early Modern France: Eurasian Trade, Exoticism, and the Ancien Régime* (New York: Berg, 2008) 214–9; Christine A Jones, *Shapely Bodies: The Image of Porcelain in Eighteenth-Century France* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2013) 35–70; Marie-Laure de Rochebrune, "Du Trianon de porcelaine au Cabinet doré de Marie-Antoinette : La Chine à Versailles," in *La Chine à Versailles : Art et diplomatie au XVIII*e *siècle* (Paris: Somogy Éditions d'Art, 2014) 30–5.

[21] Dirk Van der Cruysse, *Louis XIV et le Siam* (Paris: Fayard, 1991) 392–3; Giorgio Riello, "'With Great Pomp and Magnificence': Royal Gifts and the Embassies between Siam and France in the Late Seventeenth Century," in *Global Gifts: The Material Culture of Diplomacy in Early Modern Eurasia*, eds. Zoltán Biedermann, Anne Gerritsen, and Giorgio Riello (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018) 235–47.

Figure 3.2. "Louis XIV reçoit à Versailles les ambassadeurs du roi de Siam le 1 septembre 1686," 1687. Courtesy Musée du Louvre. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY.

images were meant to portray the glory of the king to the French public, they did so through the material gifts—and most conspicuously the gift of porcelain—that mediated his relationship with the world.[22]

Just how incredible so much porcelain must have seemed can be glimpsed in an inventory of the Dauphin's possessions taken just three years later. Here, the entirety of his porcelain possessions amount to just 380 pieces of mixed wares, of which one in six were gifts from the Siamese delegation.[23] As the pace of global exchange quickened, however, the exclusivity and expense of Asian porcelain diminished. While in the 1680s only a few thousand pieces of porcelain reached French ports each year, by the mid eighteenth century hundreds of thousands of pieces arrived each year.[24] When combined with the countless European imitations of Asian porcelain available on the market, blue and white had become commonplace.

Perhaps even more disastrous for the French royal style, however, was the discovery of the process for making porcelain by scientists in Meissen in 1708. Like Louis XIV, Augustus II of Saxony was obsessed with porcelain and had ordered the construction of his own lodge covered with porcelain, largely to store his growing collection of the precious objects. So single-mindedly focused on acquiring more and more porcelain had Augustus become that, in 1715, he traded a regiment of six hundred

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[22] Ronald S Love, "Rituals of Majesty: France, Siam, and Court Spectacle in Royal Image-Building at Versailles in 1685 and 1686," *Canadian Journal of History* 31 (August 1996) 171–98; Meredith Martin, "Mirror Reflections: Louis XIV, Phra Narai, and the Material Culture of Kingship," *Art History* 38, no. 4 (September 2015) 652–67.

[23] Francis Watson and John Whitehead, "An Inventory Dated 1689 of the Chinese Porcelain in the Collection of the Grand Dauphin, Son of Louis XIV, at Versailles," *Journal of the History of Collections* 3, no. 1 (1991) 13–52.

[24] Louis Dermigny, *La Chine et l'Occident : Le commerce à Canton au XVIIIe siècle, 1719–1833* (Paris: École Pratique des Hautes Études, 1964) 1:388–92.

elite dragoons to Frederick William I of Prussia in exchange for a collection of 151 blue-and-white vases.[25] Yet once he had his own porcelain factory, August moved away from Asian motifs and began to develop ones that reflected the styles of his own absolutist court.[26] From the Royal Porcelain Manufacture in Meissen came a stream of rococo porcelain: tureens in the shape of cabbages, figurines of rural frauleins and playful cherubs, plates with monochromatic and later polychromatic portraits, and tea services that moved farther and farther away from their kakiemon inspiration to polychromatic and asymmetrical flowers on a smooth white backdrop. By the middle of the eighteenth century, Meissen porcelain bearing the tastes of the Saxon court could be found in the grandest courts in Europe and the most exclusive shops in Paris.[27]

In Versailles, meanwhile, Louis XV was attempting to reinvent his reign. Already during the War of Austrian Succession, the king had begun to burnish his image as monarch by using the war as a source of glory expressed through his control over information about its progress.[28] And by the 1750s he was expanding on this campaign through monumental public projects in cities throughout France that established a new

[25] Robert Finlay, *The Pilgrim Art: Cultures of Porcelain in World History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010) 60–3.

[26] *Ibid*., 281–4; Suzanne Marchand, *Porcelain: A History from the Heart of Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020) 44–8.

[27] AN MC/ET XXXIX/353 Étienne Périchon (7 December 1736); AdP D^5B^6 2076 (31 August 1736–9 March 1746); AN MC/ET XI/571 César Brelut de la Grange (14 March 1750); AN MC/ET XXXVI/468 François Touvenot (5 January 1751); AdP D^4B^6 XIII/321 Jacques Le Noir (31 December 1761); AN MC/ET XCIV/290 Augustin l'Héritier (29 November 1758); and XIII/321 Jacques Le Noir (31 December 1761); Maureen Cassidy-Geiger, ed. *Fragile Diplomacy: Meissen Porcelain for European Courts ca. 1710–63* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007).

[28] Michèle Fogel, *Les cérémonies de l'information dans la France du XVIe au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 1989) 247–91, 327–67; Julian Swann, "Roi de Guerre ou Roi de Paix? Louis XV and the French Monarchy, 1740–1748," *French History* 34, no. 2 (June 2020) 161–90.

style of architecture and ornamentation for the public to see. But Louis XV also adopted from his predecessor a focus on the grandeur of chateaux, and particularly that at Versailles, to cement the relationship between Court and country. But he differed from Louis XIV in turning the physical spaces inward toward a more intimate and domestic setting. In place of grand hallways would come private apartments, in place of large and publicly displayed objects such as statues or vases would come more petit and personal objects of daily consumption.[29]

This was just part of the trend blurring the lines between public and private spaces in elite French society during the eighteenth century. As Natacha Coquery has argued, the distinction between the private *hôtel* and the public office eroded in this period as these offices moved into the households of aristocratic officials, which were of course much more lavishly decorated than the bureaucrat's cloister.[30] Much of the impetus for the same domestication of public space at Versailles has been pinned on the consumption habits of Louis XV's most important mistress, Jean-Antoinette de Pompadour.[31] But, as Michel Antoine has argued, the ultimate architect of this shift at Versailles was Louis XV himself, and it was undertaken in conjunction with his broader

[29] Michel Antoine, *Louis XV* (Paris: Fayard, 1989) 511–63; Sophie Mouquin, *Le style Louis XV* (Paris: Éditions de l'Amateur, 2003); Bernard Hours, *Louis XV et sa Cour : Le roi, l'étiquette et le courtisan* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2002) 78–141; Colin Jones, *The Great Nation: France from Louis XV to Napoleon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002) 125–32, 159–70.

[30] Natacha Coquery, *L'espace du pouvoir : De la demeure privée à l'édifice public. Paris 1700–1790* (Paris: Seli Arslan, 2000), esp 123–6.

[31] On Pompadour's influence on decorative arts, see: Evelyne Lever, *Madame de Pompadour: A Life*, trans. Catherine Temerson (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2002) 180–9; Katie Scott, "Framing Ambition: The Interior Politics of Mme de Pompadour," *Art History* 28, no. 2 (April 2005) 248–90; Mary Sheriff, "Decorating Knowledge: The Ornamental Book, the Philosophic Image and the Naked Truth," *Art History* 28, no. 2 (April 2005) 151–73.

projects seeking political legitimacy and national wealth.[32] In both Paris and Versailles, public and private spaces—and thus their decorative styles—melded. Ironically, the outcome of this process contributed to the erosion of Louis XV's social authority as accusations of feminization and luxury mounted, particularly those heaped upon Madame Pompadour. Nonetheless, the surge in consumption to outfit rooms like the *toilette* and the salon helped fuel a renaissance in the French luxury trades by spurring demand for little pieces of domestic luxury made to fit these private-yet-public settings.[33]

Louis XV's efforts to use his authority over style to bolster his flagging political authority in the middle of the eighteenth century was thus neither new to France nor unique in Europe. Such was the fragile logic of absolutism everywhere. Nor was Louis XV unique in either France or Europe to turn to porcelain or to royal manufactures in support of these efforts. Indeed, by 1750 royal porcelain manufactures had been established throughout central Europe to promote the political ambitions of various monarchs, each attempting to establish their own porcelain style. As Suzanne Marchand has shown, however, these other royal porcelain manufactures placed royal prestige above commercial profits, a tendency exacerbated by the monopolies established to retain sole authority over courtly style.[34] What made Louis XV's strategy unique was that he would attempt to bridge his political and economic aspirations. Through the Royal Porcelain Manufacture he would establish a French porcelain style, but he would use this to build a national industry of private and profitable manufactures. Louis XV

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[32] Antoine, *Louis XV*, 563–6.

[33] Natacha Coquery, *L'hôtel aristocratique : Le marché du luxe à Paris au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1998) 119–46.

[34] Marchand, *Porcelain*, 44–55.

sought to wield the stylistic prerogatives of an absolutist monarchy to establish a capitalist industry, one that could supply the domestic market and capture the foreign. By creating a royal porcelain manufacture that could go directly against European competitors like Meissen, he sought to supplant them in the minds of elite consumers and create a space where all French manufacturers could flourish.

False Starts and a New Approach: The Manufacture at Vincennes

In 1745, a group of private investors purchased the Charles Adam Porcelain Company with the explicit intention of emulating Saxon-style porcelain. Their strategy was to leave the replication of common Asian styles to other manufacturers in order to compete directly with the style and quality of Meissen products that were becoming increasingly sought after. What distinguished Saxon porcelain from Asian porcelain was not its physical qualities—they were materially identical—but its stylistic qualities. Even as investment in scientific experimentation on clays and glazes and kilns continued, this new manufacture sought to elevate the artistic status of French porcelain. As one of the first directors of the manufacture emphasized, "After the beauty of the clay, the elegance of the forms is the primary virtue of a manufacture of this type."[35]

Competing with the large and well-established state-run enterprise in Meissen, however, would require enormous investments in training artisans, acquiring intellectual property, and constructing a manufactory that could churn out high-quality products for an international market at an industrial scale. As time went on, these

[35] AMNS B1 "Mémoire," Boileau [mid 1750s]. See also: AMNS Y1 (9 August 1745); AMNS Y1 (17 March 1746). [Après la beauté de la pâte, l'élégance des formes faisant le premier méritte d'une manufacture de cette espèce]

expenses became only more apparent. Whereas the investors in the initial porcelain manufacture in Vincennes had been able to buy out a partner's shares for a mere 3300 livres, and Charles Adam had sold his entire company to the new body that retained his name on their masthead for 58,914 livres, the new company launched with an initial capital of 113,400 livres that had to be divided between twenty-one shares.[36]

From the founding of the new company, Louis XV took a direct interest in its success as both private patron and public figurehead. To reduce the investment required in constructing such a manufactory and to demonstrate the "greatest gesture of his wishes," the king donated to the company the use of his chateau in Vincennes, which included a courtyard, workshop space, stables, and housing for the workers.[37] To provide mentorship to the fledgling firm and "inspire confidence," the King appointed his Intendant of Finances, Jean-Louis Henri Orry de Fulvy, as an investor, advisor, and diligent inspector of the manufacturing process tasked with ensuring the consistently high quality of its wares.[38] And to establish a market space for it to flourish, the King awarded the Charles Adam Company a privilege granting it a monopoly on the production of Saxon-style porcelain within France and dispatched authorities to enforce it.[39]

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[36] AN MC/ET XIX/729 Charles Louis Quentin (19 September 1745); and AMNS Y1 (20 August 1745).

[37] AN O^1 2059^1 "Mémoire" (28 September 1745); AMNS Y1 (30 August 1745); AN O^1 2059^1 "Extrait du registre du secretarial de la Direction générale" (18 October 1745); and AN O^1 2059^1 "Extrait du registre des brevets du Roy" (9 November 1745). [plus grande marque de sa volonté]

[38] AMNS Y1 (20 March 1746); AMNS B1 "Mémoire" (16 January 1759); AN O^1 2059^1 "Manufacture Royale de porcelaine établit à Vincennnes : Règlemens et instructions pour les ateliers et magasins" (11 April 1748). [donner confiance]

[39] AN O^1 2059^1 "Arrest du conseil d'état du Roy" (6 August 1748); AMNS A1 and AN O^1 2059^1 "Extrait du registre du conseil d'état" (29 April 1749).

Despite these displays of royal interest in and goodwill toward the company, the expenses of running a major manufacture quickly outstripped the ability of its private investors to support its ambitious aspirations. During the first five years of operation, the board of shareholders voted six times to raise further capital from among themselves, nearly tripling the cost of each share from 5600 livres in 1745 to fourteen thousand livres by 1750. Furthermore, financial donations made by Louis XV contributed an additional one hundred thousand livres over this same period, raising total capital investment to nearly four hundred thousand livres.[40] Yet it was already becoming clear that the company was in decline. Efforts to raise further capital by offering new shares and dividing them into cheaper fractions that would be more affordable for potential investors—even as the king himself purchased over one-eighth of the company and made clear his "intention...to accord his Royal protection to this manufacture and to give it all the assistance it would need"—existing investors sold off or simply abandoned their shares, and half of the newly issued shares failed to find buyers.[41] By the end of 1752, insolvent and unable to raise further capital, the Charles Adam Company was liquidated, ordered to sell off all remaining inventory to repay its investors, and had its privilege officially revoked.[42] As a final act of *noblesse oblige* toward the company by its royal patron, Louis XV contributed sufficient funding to

[40] AMNS Y1 (12 January 1746), (27 September 1746), (4 January 1747), (24 April 1748), (19 January 1749), (8 October 1749), (29 April 1750).

[41] AMNS Y1 (29 April 1750), (19 June 1750), (9 December 1750), (4 August 1751), (3 August 1751); AN MC/ET LXXXVII/1010 Thomas Duval (2 December 1751). [intention...d'accorder sa protection Royale à cette manufacture et de lui donner tous les secours dont elle auroit besoin]

[42] AMNS A1 "Rapport," Verdun (February 1752); AN O[1] 2059[1] "Extrait des registres du conseil d'état" (8 October 1752); AMNS Y1 (14 October 1752).

ensure that the manufacture's shareholders were reimbursed the 485,000 livres they had invested—along with a 5 percent profit.[43]

The second iteration of the manufacture, now renamed the Eloy Brichard Company, followed a pattern very similar to that of its unsuccessful predecessor. Once again a group of investors formed a company and raised capital by issuing shares in exchange for a proportional stakeholder vote and claim on profits.[44] Once again the king invested money in the firm and appointed his Intendant of Finances, now Jacques Barberie de Courteille, to serve as official state advisor.[45] Once again the king granted the company the privilege of calling itself a royal manufacture and endowed it with a monopoly on Saxon-style porcelain.[46] Yet once again the company quickly exhausted its initial investment, this time of six hundred thousand livres, and had to solicit further investments from its shareholders and the king and take on private loans at interest in order to sustain operations.[47] Beyond the privilege, investment, and advice, Louis XV attempted to buoy the floundering firm by granting it the tax farm over the inspection of gold and silver and on Parisian Jews—together worth over seven hundred thousand livres, though extremely slow and costly to recover—and by imposing a heavy tariff on imported porcelain.[48] These various efforts to support the company through often

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[43] AN F^{12} 1494^{2} "Intéressés de la manufacture de Vincennes" [1752]; AMNS Y1 (5 May 1753).

[44] AMNS B1 "Copie de l'acte de société entre les cautions de Brichard" (9 January 1754).

[45] AMNS Y2 (14 August 1753).

[46] AN O^{1} 2059^{1} "Extrait des registres du conseil d'état" (19 August 1753), "Extrait des registres du conseil d'état (7 December 1753).

[47] AMNS Y2 (27 May 1755), (18 November 1755), (19 February 1756), (8 April 1756), (12 February 1757), (15 April 1758), (18 November 1758).

[48] AMNS Y2 (17 October 1755); AN O^{1} 2059^{1} "Arrest du conseil d'état du Roi" (29 March 1757).

unrelated privileges were similar to those undertaken to support other crucial industries such as the royal monopoly on tobacco, and they speak to the strong interest of the state not only in establishing *a* porcelain manufacture, but one that could compete directly with the porcelain of Meissen (which in 1760 had been conquered by Louis XV's rival Frederick II of Prussia, who invaded along with the Porcelain Regiment his father had bought from Augustus II and subsequently looted the Meissen Manufacture's stores in a pointed statement on the relationship between power and plenty).[49] But they also speak to the limits of the state's capacity to invest directly in the fledgling industry and the creative accounting that was necessary just to shore up its bottom line.

By 1759 the manufacture once again found itself buried under a mountain of debt: it owed 320,000 livres to creditors, 171,506 livres for construction costs incurred by the moves to Sèvres, and 96,458 livres to its raw material suppliers, totaling 587,958 livres in debts. Furthermore, the director estimated he would need another 160,000 livres just to meet that year's operating costs and an additional seventy thousand livres to construct a desperately needed new mill. All of this came after having blown through the six-hundred-thousand-livre initial investment, two-hundred-thousand-livre royal grant, and the 210,736 livres in assets it had inherited from the Charles Adam Company. In other words, over the course of just six years the Eloy Brichard Company had run nearly 1.6 million livres in the red and, with costs fixed, workers unpaid for months, and suppliers refusing to deliver further materials, would require an infusion

[49] On the tobacco monopoly, see: George T Matthews, *The Royal General Farms in Eighteenth-Century France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958); 117–44. On the Saxon-Prussian conflict, see: Finlay, *Pilgrim Art*, 283; Marchand, *Porcelain*, 47.

of an additional 260,000 livres just to limp into 1760.[50] Collectively, these figures reveal how expensive it was to create a new industry, especially one known for taste and quality. Other French porcelain manufacturers had succeeded without direct state investment and with much more limited privileges, but they were only competing in the market by imitating cheaper, simpler, and more common styles. To be the best, however, evidently required vast sums to be expended over years as the manufacture gradually established its own style, market, and reputation.

Faced with this crisis, the state opted not for a bailout, but for a total buyout. The government advanced a total of 1.4 million livres to purchase the company outright, including six hundred thousand livres to reimburse the shareholders' original investments as well as another 210,000 livres to afford them a 5 percent annual interest on their investments for the seven years the company had survived. In exchange, the state took possession of the manufacture; all its tools, materials, and buildings; and its workforce.[51] The Eloy Brichard Company ceased to exist. In its place stood a state-run enterprise, the Royal Porcelain Manufacture at Sèvres.

As the scale of state involvement in the Royal Porcelain Manufacture expanded, so too did the scope of its ambitions. Both the Charles Adam and Eloy Brichard Companies had operated with direct state support and royal funding, but they were ultimately private firms existing to produce returns for their individual investors and operating within a broad and variegated market. Royal officials had initially hoped that

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[50] AMNS B1 "Prospectus de la situation de la manufacture royale des porcelaines de France" (31 May 1759); Mémoire," Boileau [16 June 1759]; Mémoire (17 July 1759); Mémoire" (26 August 1759); "2me Mémoire," Boileau [Late 1759]; "Demande faite par la compagnie à M Boileau" (19 March 1759).

[51] AMNS B1 "Mémoire" (16 October 1759), "4me Mémoire, Boileau [Late 1759], "Observations" [Early 1760]; AMNS Y2 (19 November 1759), AMNS Y2 (17 October 1761); AN MC/ET XC/408 Charles Garcenand (5 December 1761).

these companies would establish one manufacture in France that could compete directly with Meissen on both material and artistic qualities for a corner of that market. The new state-run manufacture, however, sought to engender an entire industry in France that could surpass not just Meissen but any manufacture in the world by redefining the canons of taste and orienting them around its own court style.[52]

The officials granting privileges to these previous companies had justified them by appealing to the high quality of their wares and the commercial prospects of the manufacture itself, saying that its achievement merited protection. And when royal officials drafted a new privilege for the Royal Manufacture in 1760 and strengthened it in 1766, they continued to reference the merit of this particular manufacture for receiving such a privilege. If these earlier companies had achieved any success, they argued, it had been in establishing a reputation for quality both domestically and internationally. By 1759, champions of the manufacture could claim that it "has become an object of curiosity, and commerce will sustain it, above all abroad," and that at long last its "works are reaching the point of fixing the appreciation of collectors."[53] Maintaining the Royal Manufacture's hard-won position as "an establishment of brilliance" had all along required steady investment by the King.[54] But the privileges of the Charles Adam and Eloy Brichard Companies had been drafted according to a mode

[52] For background discussions on the shape of these privileges, see: AMNS A1 "Privilège de la Manufacture" (17 February 1760), "Arrêt du Roi qui révoque le privilège" (17 February 1760); AN F[12] 1493[1] "Extrait des registres du conseil d'état" (17 February 1760); AMNS A2 Letter Bertin to Courteille (30 November 1765), Letter Bertin to Courteille (24 April 1766), Letter Courteille to Bertin (26 April 1766).

[53] AMNS B1 "Mémoire," Boileau [Late 1759]; AN F[12] 1493[1] "Projet d'arrêt" [Late 1759]. [est devenu un objet de curiosité, et le commerce le soutiendra, surtout chez l'étranger] [ouvrages parvenir au point de fixer la satisfaction des curieux]

[54] AMNS B3 "Mémoire" (1766). [un établissement d'éclat]

of economic encouragement that granted monopolies in order to ensure the profitability of the protected firms. As with the privileges granted to other French porcelain manufactures earlier in the eighteenth century, the intent with both privileges was thus to reward prior achievement and indemnify investors for prior expenses.

The privileges that were invoked for the Royal Porcelain Manufacture in Sèvres were something altogether different. Though the manufacture had until then proven to be a source of expenses as bottomless as Loki's drinking horn, the new privileges no longer sought to recoup these expenses within the manufacture itself. State strategy now wielded a particular monopoly privilege to first "preserve this part of commerce in its Kingdom" and to then "see this branch of commerce strengthen and expand throughout the Kingdom."[55] As the architect of this new strategy, Controller General of Finances Henri Bertin, explained, the goal was to use temporary privileges to restrict the industry in order to benefit the industry: "the Council has judged that the time was favorable to stimulate the industry of the nation by permitting, first, with some caution and some restrictions the fabrication of porcelains."[56]

What was unique about this new privilege was that it did not restrict the production of porcelain itself. The monopoly granted to Sèvres did not cover the manufacturing of porcelain materials nor did it create a geographical commercial monopoly, the two tools of privileges that had been granted to porcelain manufacturers in the first half of the century to protect and encourage private producers. Indeed, as the

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[55] AN O[1] 2059[1] "Arrest du conseil d'état du Roi" (17 February 1760); AMNS A2 "Projet d'arrêt" (3 December 1765). [conserve cette partie de commerce dans son royaume] [voir cette branche de commerce fortifier et s'étendre dans le Royaume]

[56] AMNS A2 Letter Bertin to Intendant of Provence (24 April 1766). [le Conseil a jugé que le moment était favorable pour favoriser l'industrie de la nation en permettant, d'abord, avec quelques précautions et quelques restrictions la fabrication de porcelaines]

publication of instructions for making porcelain in 1768 would demonstrate, the state was interested in having as many manufactures as possible produce porcelain across France. The new privilege instead only restricted the types of decoration that private manufactures could utilize in their wares. While any manufacture could produce pure white porcelain or employ monochromatic designs, they were forbidden from painting with multiple colors, gilding their pieces, sculpting, or making flowers.

These decorative traits were not chosen at random but stemmed from the understanding of the luxury economy held by the absolutist state. At its core, the new industrialization strategy sought to create a hierarchical market of distinct yet interrelated segments. At the lowest end of the ceramics market were earthenwares, dark-colored ceramics fired at a low temperature and lacking ornamentation that were produced for local markets throughout France and could be found surrounding the hearths of any peasant or working-class household. At the next level of the ceramic market was faïence, an earthenware ceramic coated in a tin glaze that turned white when fired. Having been imported or adapted from similar Italian, Iberian, and Persian products by the sixteenth century, faïence had from its founding replicated the appearance of porcelain imports and was often highly decorated, generally in monochromatic blue but frequently in polychrome as well. In an era where imported Asian porcelain remained a rarity reserved for the highest royalty, faïence made a similar aesthetic accessible to a range of aristocratic and bourgeois consumers, with its production becoming concentrated in a few major domestic and international centers such as Rouen, Nevers, Limoges, and Delft. When Chinese and later Japanese porcelain flowed into French ports in ever-larger amounts in the early eighteenth century, their material and aesthetic superiority quickly placed them at the highest level of the ceramics market. But as long as Asian motifs dominated the stylistic regime within

which these different ceramics existed, the mounting wave of imports and the efflorescence of cheap domestic imitations undermined the exclusivity and prestige that style bestowed on the owners of those products. Blue-and-white granted no special distinction once it became common, accessible, and affordable in its many incarnations.

With the arrival of Saxon porcelain, however, the market changed. The designs coming out of Meissen featured multi-colored paintings of European scenes and subjects, tabletop statues of European characters and couples, delicate copies of European flowers that never wilted, and glittering gilt accents that enriched all the above. Meissen porcelain was a product from a European court and fit for a European court. Subsequently, Asian porcelain was demoted to an intermediate status "between the porcelain of the King and faïence" whose most notable characteristic was the comparatively modest price at which it could be purchased.[57]

The privileges assigned in 1760 seized on this porcelain market bifurcated along the lines of national origin to establish a hierarchy of production within France. By forbidding French porcelain manufactures other than the Royal Manufacture to paint in polychrome, to gild, to sculpt, or to make flowers, they implicitly left "incidentally everyone having the liberty to work on porcelain in white and blue" and to perfect their skills in that genre.[58] As the 1766 privilege made explicit, the intent was to have French manufactures produce, "their porcelains in white, and to paint them in blue Chinese styles," to make "porcelains in imitation of China" in contrast to the wares produced at

[57] AMNS A3 Note, Demouroy (1779); AMNS B3 Letter Lauragais to Bertin (18 July 1764). [entre le porcelaine du Roy et la fayance]

[58] AMNS B3 Letter Bertin to Lauragais (6 November 1764). [d'ailleurs tout le monde ayant la liberté de travailler à la porcelaine en blanc et bleu]

the Royal Manufacture in Sèvres.[59] Under this market structure, any manufacture could "produce in France porcelain in white and white and blue in the taste of the porcelain from China" because "it is moreover very natural to leave the public the satisfaction of having porcelains of lower quality and lower price." In fact, the entire purpose of the privilege was to "encourage" these private manufactures, but to do so while ensuring that they "will always be very inferior to" the Royal Manufacture.[60]

This strategy presents a paradox when taken at the level of the individual firm. As the many complaints from French firms readily demonstrate, a monopoly privilege for the Royal Manufacture that confined private producers to low-price markets and imitations of Asian imports appeared counterproductive if the goal was to improve the quality of French manufactured porcelain to the point that it could rival its European competitors. But there was a peculiar mix of strategy and theory at work here. As exists in any approach to economic policy, there was an underlying tension between the overarching objective of increasing wealth for the nation and the recognition that the production of such wealth cannot be decreed directly by the state. Rather, policymakers confronted a society of individuals who made economic decisions in response to the conditions they encountered. Political economists in this period saw an opportunity for the state to cultivate economic growth and thereby increase national wealth—and thus the amount that could be received in taxes—by tending to the conditions within which individuals made their decisions and coaxing them toward the greater good. Political

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[59] AMNS A2 "Arrest du conseil" (15 February 1766). [leurs porcelaines en blanc, et de les peindre en bleu façon de Chine] [des porcelaines à l'imitation de la Chine]

[60] AMNS A1 "Arrest du Roi" (15 February 1766); AMNS A2 "Mémoire" [January 1766]. [fabriquer en France de la porcelaine en blanc et blanc et bleu dans le goût de la porcelaine du Chine] [il est d'ailleurs fort naturel de laisser au public la satisfaction d'avoir des porcelaines de moindre qualité et de moindre prix] [encourage] [sera toujours fort inférieur à]

economy in the period thus revolved around not the direct but the indirect consequences of state policy. To explain the policies he had put in place with the privileges of 1760 and 1766, Bertin said that

> the intention of the King is that we encourage them [private manufactures]; but that it is not to the sovereign to undertake this commerce, nor any type of commerce, it is to the industrious people to dedicate themselves to it, and the prince can only encourage it. This point of view is a basis from which we must never part, and it is such that even if the King could claim to furnish from his manufactures all the porcelain of Europe, he must leave this branch of commerce to his subjects like all the others.[61]

What was specific about the French strategy for its porcelain industry was that it was predicated on that industry's existence as a luxury industry, and in such an industry value depended on the reputation an object held as paragon of quality and proof of taste. In order to encourage private manufactures, the role of the Royal Manufacture would be to establish first for itself a reputation for quality and taste among consumers that could subsequently spill over to the benefit of other manufactures, which would thus justify and recompense the state's investment through the increased tax revenues culled from the flourishing private manufactures. The tensions inherent within this approach would become manifest in subsequent decades when private manufacturers questioned how long these restrictions were supposed to last and at what point they repressed the very industry they were intended to foster. But in the early years, there was no apparent opposition to the state's efforts to privilege the state-owned manufacture for the eventual benefit of private manufactures. For this

[61] AMNS A2 "Mémoire," de Laborde, Bertin's Response (4 September 1770). [l'intention du Roy est qu'on les [private manufactures] encourage ; mais ce n'est pas au souverain à entreprendre ce commerce, ni aucune espèce de commerce, c'est au peuple industrieux à s'y adonner, et le prince ne peut que l'encourager. Ce point de vue est une base dont il ne faut jamais partir, et elle est telle que quand même le Roy pourrait se flatter de fournir de ses manufactures toute la porcelaine de l'Europe, il devoir laisser cette branche de commerce à ses sujets comme toutes les autres]

strategy to succeed, however, the Royal Manufacture would have to build an unparalleled reputation throughout Europe as the greatest porcelain manufacture on Earth. And the privileges of 1760 and 1766 were the first step in this process.

How a King Makes a Reputation

The industrial strategy Bertin crafted was conceived at a pivotal period in the reign of Louis XV. With parlements and people united against wartime taxes and the cultural image of the king weakened by ongoing political conflicts and courtly affairs, Louis XV turned to projects of style and state investment to rebuild his cultural authority.[62] Amidst a wave of public spending in fine art, grandiose architecture, and public ceremonies intended to burnish the king's reputation in front of the French people, the inordinate attention bestowed on the Royal Porcelain Manufacture might at first seem odd. Porcelain appears to have been, however, taken as an important front in the battle to restore royal cultural prestige. And control over the Royal Manufacture offered a particularly useful weapon in this battle. Through it Louis XV was able to embody the imagery and ceremony of the monarchy within tangible porcelain objects.[63] By the end of the Old Regime, for instance, over 90 percent of porcelain on display in the royal household originated from Sèvres.[64] Furthermore, the monarchy rewarded the fealty of its most ardent supporters at court by granting annual gifts of Sèvres porcelain to favored members of the household, primarily service workers but also more

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[62] Antoine, *Louis XV*, 511–63; Colin Jones, *Great Nation*, 125–32, 159–70.

[63] Christine A Jones, *Shapely Bodies: The Image of Porcelain in Eighteenth-Century France* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2013) 185–236; John Whitehead, *Sèvres at the Time of Louis XV: Birth of the Legend* (Paris: Gallimard, 2010).

[64] AN O[1] 3510.

illustrious members.[65] Doing so did entail a tension, however, between the fact that while bestowing royal porcelain on courtiers as a symbol of royal goodwill raised the esteem toward the recipient, by rendering these goods less exclusive the gifts also diminished their prestige as symbols of royalty.[66]

At the international level, dynastic competition continued to rive Europe. As each successive continental war throughout the eighteenth century made clear, the balance of power was as unstable as the peace it was intended to engender was elusive. The shifting pattern of alliances, allegiances, envies, and aspirations that kept Europe at war as often as not in the eighteenth century played itself out on battlefields across the globe, but equally in aristocratic society across Europe. Belligerence and beaux arts were the Janus faces of European diplomacy, and the competition for superiority in both attracted intense royal interest in France and beyond. Displays of "soft power," including the artistic and technical mastery of luxury manufacturing, represented a new front in the struggle for continental dominance if not control.[67]

Diplomatic gifts offered a particularly capable tool in the struggle for continental soft power. As Marcel Mauss and others have argued, the giving of gifts creates a relationship between the giver and receiver through mutual obligation.[68] In doing so, it also defines the nature of that relationship, as was evident in early modern French

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[65] AN O[1] 2062[1] "Historique de l'origine et des formes pour la distribution des etrennes en porcelaine" [c. 1780].

[66] AN K/506/21 "Lettre d'office" (December 1787).

[67] Rahul Markovits, *Civiliser l'Europe : Politiques du théâtre français au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2014).

[68] Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. WD Halls (New York: WW Norton, 1990); James Carrier, *Gifts and Commodities: Exchange and Western Capitalism since 1700* (New York: Routledge, 1995) 18–38.

practices of gift-giving undertaken to reinforce hierarchical social relations.[69] Because of the exclusivity of porcelain production technology and its connection to the monarch as simultaneously stylist and industrialist, porcelain quickly replaced more universally manufactured luxury goods like gold and jewelry as the eighteenth-century gift of choice.[70] Not only could a gift of fine, French porcelain instantiate a relationship of mutual obligation between Louis XV and the receiving monarch, it would make perfectly clear which was the superior party.

Of course, the first step the Royal Manufacture had to take to earn a reputation for quality and taste was to produce products of quality and taste. As described in Chapter Two, responsibility for the material quality of the Manufacture's goods fell on the teams of professional scientists and skilled artisans working in the laboratories and raw materials workshops that had been trained with State assistance over the preceding decades. Building a workforce that could consistently maintain the high standard for goods produced by the Royal Manufacture proved to be a slightly more difficult challenge by virtue of the simple fact that, while scientific testing could claim to objectively prove a good's intrinsic quality, the subjective evaluation of its extrinsic quality was far more nebulous.

While the predecessors of the Royal Manufacture sought to compete with the styles established by the Meissen manufacture and the Saxon court, they did not want to simply mimic its forms in the same way they wanted other manufactures to do with

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[69] Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Zoltán Biedermann, Anne Gerritsen, and Giorgio Riello, "Global Gifts and the Material Culture of Diplomacy in Early Modern Eurasia," in *Global Gifts*, 1–33.

[70] Guy Walton, "Diplomatic Gifts of Porcelain: Objects of Prestige," in *Along the Royal Road: Berlin and Potsdam in KPM Porcelain and Painting, 1815–1848*, ed. Derek E Ostergard (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993) 99–104.

Asian porcelain. Instead, they worked to create a distinctively French style within the European artistic framework.[71] As the artistic director of the Charles Adam Company, Hendrik van Hulst, described

> The diversity of tastes is the guardian angel of a manufacture that runs on luxury objects [*objets d'agrément*]. That which doesn't please one pleases others. Especially in porcelain, the most bizarre and fanciful designs often prevail over the most elegant and well thought out designs. That one would be heavy and the other trivial, that one gives some lightness, some flimsy, some novelty and some variety. Success is assured...Gentleness, novelty, variety, must be the motto of [the manufacture]. Who speaks of gentleness speaks of trivial things...similar to those of a pretty woman, that is to say [rich?] and pleasing.

For van Hulst, design ought to vary in often whimsical ways, but it must do so within a framework of style. He spoke of a set of principles that established taste, but also defined taste as a quality held by the individual. Which is to say that while there were eternal principles of taste, applying them tastefully required the work of a gifted and trained artist.[72] And training a cadre of such artists who could conduct this new taste in porcelain was precisely the task of the Royal Manufacture.[73]

Replicating the role of the Academy of Sciences in supporting research and development at the Royal Manufacture, leading sculptors and painters from the Academy of Fine Arts were appointed to direct workshops in Sèvres. From this respected position they would have the authority to shape the new styles emerging

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[71] AMNS A2 "Mémoire sur la poterie," [Pierre-François Hugues] d'Hancarville [c. 1760s–1780s]. [La diversité des goûts et [sic] l'ange tutélaire d'une manufacture qui roule sur les objets d'agrément. Ce qui ne plaît pas aux uns plaît aux autres. En fait de porcelaine surtout, les desseins les plus bisarres et les plus chimériques l'emportent souvent sur les desseins les plus elegans et les mieux raisonnés. Que l'on soie le lourd et le trivial, qu'on donne du léger, du fin, du neuf et du varié. Le succès est assuré....Gentillesse, nouveauté, variété, doit être la devise de [la manufacture]. Qui dit gentillesse dit choses légers...semblables à ceux d'une jolie femme, c'est à dire [riches?] et agréables]

[72] AMNS H1 Letter Hulst to Boileau (21 September 1751).

[73] AMNS B1 "Mémoire," Boileau [Late 1750s].

from the manufacture.[74] They were also increasingly given access to many of the finest pieces in the royal collection and founded a museum of ceramics from around the globe destined to serve as a source of inspiration and method of instruction for artists working at the manufacture.[75] In both cases, the underlying motivation was the conviction that there existed principles of taste, represented in France by the Academy and evidenced historically by the great ceramic-producing cultures of the world, that could be accessed and imparted into the manufacture's products.

This system soon led to a novel hierarchy in the workplace.[76] While the artistic directors brought in from the Academy would contribute to a few masterpieces that set the direction for the Royal Porcelain Manufacture's style, the overwhelming majority of the pieces produced there would be made by workers who were somewhere between artist and artisan: accomplished craftsmen expected to achieve perfection of performance within the prescribed styles, but to remain within the limits of the forms radiating downward from the artistic directors. Nonetheless, given the sustained expense of training skilled workers and the importance of their work for the reputation

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[74] Leading members of the Academy petitioned to receive positions in Sèvres: AMNS B2 Letter Caffieri (13 December 1766); AN O[1] 2061[2bis] Letter d'Angiviller to Régnier (2 March 1785). Other leading artists came to Sèvres to study: AN O[1] 2061[3] Letter d'Angiviller to Lafayette (31 January 1786), Letter de Spinola to d'Angiviller (2 September 1786).

[75] AN O[1] 2061[2] Letter d'Arcet to d'Angiviller (19 February 1785), Letter d'Angiviller to Calonne (22 March 1785), Letter d'Arcet to d'Angiviller (16 March 1785), Letter Valade to d'Angiviller (25 December 1785); AN O[1] 2061[3] Letter d'Angiviller to Denon (24 May 1786), Letter Danon to d'Angiviller (7 June 1786), Letter Hettlinger to d'Angiviller (9 June 1786). See also: Michael Vickers, "Value and Simplicity: Eighteenth-Century Taste and the Study of Greek Vases," *Past & Present* 116 (August 1987) 98–137; Anne Puetz, "Design Instruction for Artisans in Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Journal of Design History* 12, no. 3 (1999) 217–39.

[76] Adrian Forty, *Objects of Desire: Design and Society from Wedgwood to IBM* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986).

of the manufacture, management paid close attention to the professional progress and personal needs of these workers. Throughout this period the shareholders and workshop managers conducted nearly continuous inspections of the workers and maintained detailed records of their training, talent, and output in order to chart development of their artistic skills. A secret file was to be created for each worker hired by the manufacture including such basic information as their age and a physical description, but to which would be added reports on their conduct, attendance, the prices of their products, evaluations of their work, and "anything that could pertain to the manufacture."[77] The information collected by this system of workplace surveillance was necessary in the early years of the manufacture because, as a means of encouraging quality work, the workers were paid piece rates on their products. This meant that each good produced had to be individually evaluated and the worker paid accordingly.[78] With the nationalization of the Royal Manufacture in 1760, however, management moved away from paying piece rates as a way of encouraging the workers and instead accorded them fixed salaries in the belief that providing the skilled workers with a stable living would enable them to concentrate on the higher quality of their work without the pressure to produce a higher quantity of cheaper pieces. Under this new salary system, the practice of paying high-level management bonuses as a way of rewarding their successes was eventually extended to workers of all levels, even kitchen

[77] AMNS Y1 (17 April 1748); AMNS B3 "Plan proposé pour la tenüe des registres servant à la manutention générale de la manufacture royale des porcelaines de la France" (12 April 1760), "Règlement pour les travaux de la manufacture" [1768–1772], Report, Parent (2 April 1773). [tout ce qui peut être relatif à la manufacture]

[78] AMNS B1 "Observations" [1746]; AN O[1] 2059[2] "Extrait du registre des délibérations des messieurs les intéressés en la manufacture royale de porcelaine à Vincennes" (15 March 1748); AMNS Y1 (15 March 1748).

assistants, when their work was considered worthy of special recognition.[79] With extensive training, stable salaries, and the potential of bonuses, the worker unrest that had plagued the early years of the Companies faded away and subsequent worker complaints were resolved quickly and favorably.[80]

With a skilled workforce coalescing in and reputable products emerging from the workshops, the next task facing management was how to establish their reputation for taste among elite consumers. As described in Chapter One, commodities in this period were believed to possess an internal value formed in relation to the social status of the producer, vender, and consumer.[81] Through the mid eighteenth century, elite urban merchants like the marchands merciers held a dominant position of cultural authority over knowledge of each commodity's value both by virtue of the information their position granted them about those commodities and the legitimacy invested in them by their relationship to elite aristocratic clients. Given the high costs of information and the non-standardized nature of manufactured goods in this period, merchants served a crucial economic function in the market as acknowledged experts. While the reputation of these merchants served as a substitute for direct consumer knowledge of available goods, the position each merchant held was limited by the geographical extent of their market and thus highly localized. As large enterprises such as the Royal Porcelain

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[79] AMNS B2 "Mémoire," Courteille (9 March 1763); AMNS A1 "Minute du Roy" (23 January 1772), "Mémoire" (30 January 1772); AMNS B6 "Procès verbal," Mauroy and Bertin (5 July 1779); AN O[1] 2062[1] Letter Mauroy do d'Angevillier (23 December 1780), "État de distribution des présents aux officiers et employés" [Late 1781], "État des étrennes en porcelaines proposées à sa Majesté" [Late 1781]; AMNS A3 Règlement du Comte d'Angevilliers pour la manufacture" (23 March 1787).

[80] AMNS B2 "Mémoire" (2 July 1763), "Mémoire," Freit? (1774).

[81] [Jean-Yves Grenier, *L'économie d'Ancien Régime : Un monde de l'échange et de l'incertitude* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1996) 63–78; *idem.*, "Modèles de la demande sous l'Ancien Régime," *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 42, no. 3 (1987) 497–527.

Manufacture sought to expand to an international marketplace, they would have to establish for themselves the same level of prestige and reputation then possessed by merchants but on an exponentially larger scale. Doing so was crucial for the long-term success of the firm and the industry. The result was an inversion of the merchant-manufacturer relationship that amounted to a process of vertical integration as producers increasingly internalized the roles of distributor and advertiser to better support the prestige of the underlying manufacture.

At the very first substantive board meeting after the founding of the Charles Adam Company, shareholders discussed the difficulty of getting their products into fashionable Parisian shops. It appears to have been easy to receive commissions from luxury merchants to manufacture porcelain of the merchants' designs in which they would create a model of the desired product and send it to the manufacturer to be realized for a specific customer. The difficulty was in getting them to start carrying the manufacture's own designs and styles, which the shareholders hoped the retailers would introduce to the elite Parisian market. In order to get its products into the boutiques and in front of consumers, the Company agreed to offer the merchants a 10 percent remittance on its goods, but only for pieces designed by the manufacture.[82] Just a year later, the merchants flexed their market power to demand that the Company increase their remittance to 12 percent and accept payments of one-third at the time of delivery, one-third three months later, and one-third three months after that. Utterly dependent on the merchants' goodwill to reach consumers, the manufacture was forced to accept this stipulation.[83] More important than gaining access to the Parisian market,

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[82] AMNS Y1 (26 January 1746).

[83] AMNS Y1 (8 March 1747). The Charles Adam Company attempted to use these delayed bills of sale as a futures contract with brokers when it began running out of

however, was gaining access to the spendthrift courtiers in Versailles. And the only way to gain access to Europe's most elite market was to work through Europe's most elite merchants. To accomplish this, the Eloy Brichard Company granted a trio of renowned luxury merchants in Versailles even more favorable terms, maintaining the 12 percent remittance but offering its products on credit for nine months, naming them its sole suppliers in Versailles, and granting the merchant with the closest connections to the court priority of selection from among all of its wares.[84] As the Charles Adam Company teetered toward bankruptcy, it moved to reassure and retain its merchants by acquiescing to their demands and essentially removing all risk: provisioning merchandise without collateral, requiring repayment only for merchandise actually sold, and only requiring this repayment at quarterly intervals, although reducing the remittance to 9 percent in exchange. The Company's goals were explicit: "it would be able by these means to multiply the deliveries and increase equally the manufacture's success," which depended on the continued interest of elite merchants in selling their wares.[85]

Even as it plunged into bankruptcy, however, the Charles Adam Company was charting a new path toward the elite market, one that would obviate the powerful luxury merchants. During the first years of its existence, the manufacture had stayed within the bounds of its original strategy to compete directly with imported Meissen wares by replicating their styles. In this vase (figure 3.3) from around 1750, for instance,

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money, although the amounts were so small that they had to be bundled and transferred at a 2 percent monthly charge: AMNS Y1 (3 December 1749), (11 December 1749).

[84] AMNS Y2 (10 January 1754).

[85] AMNS Y2 (22 January 1759). [elle pourroit par ce moyen multiplier le débit et accroitre d'autant plus le succès de la manufacture]

Figure 3.3. Vase. Designed by Jean-Claude Duplessis. Soft-paste porcelain with polychrome enamels and gilding. Vincennes, 1749–1752. Courtesy Art Institute of Chicago, 1959.474b.

several hallmarks of the Meissen style are employed simultaneously: the body of the vase itself is left largely white but accentuated with asymmetrical floral patterns; the top and bottom rim of the vase are highlighted with a deep purple color, which is also joined with greens, blues, and yellows common on Meissen ware; the handles and rims are lightly gilded; and sticking out from the handles are three-dimensional flowers. These later were especially popular in France during the middle of the eighteenth century, with bouquets of porcelain flowers filling vases or trailing from chandeliers. These flowers fit within the increasingly delicate and domestic aesthetic of Louis XV's reign, offering intimacy, femininity, elegance, and luxury.[86]

At the same time, simply copying these styles did little to reinforce the prestige of Vincennes porcelain either against its Saxon competitor or its merchant intermediaries. And porcelain flowers were particularly ill-suited to do so. In this elaborate bouquet (figure 3.4), for instance, we can see the intentions of the manufacture in copying the Saxon trend. This was one of the most ornate collections of porcelain flowers assembled in France, consisting of nearly one hundred individual flowers, while the sunflower clock in the center is an allusion to the Sun King, Louis XIV. Each flower was mounted on its own lifelike stem complete with buds and arranged in a large vase featuring a bucolic painting. But the soft-paste vase appears to have been overcooked and melted toward one side, while the heavy gilded base drew attention away from the flowers themselves.

On the one hand, producing these popular luxury ornaments domestically did favor the French balance of trade with Saxony and direct elite demand to supporting domestic manufacture. But there was nothing distinctive about the porcelain flowers

[86] Scott, "Framing Ambition," 266–7, 274–5; Jones, *Shapely Bodies*, 165–84.

Figure 3.4. Sunflower Clock, 1752. Soft-paste porcelain vase and flowers with underglaze and gilding, lacquered brass wire stems, gilt bronze base, and bronze clock. Vincennes Porcelain Manufacture, France, c. 1752. Clock by Jean Benoît Gérard. Base by Jean-Claude Duplessis. Courtesy Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2022.

produced in France, nor could there be. French porcelain flowers might physically replace those from Meissen, but they did not symbolically replace them. As the various privilege restrictions regarding flowers make clear, this was taken as a key category of competition with Meissen, and from the foundation of the Charles Adam Company production of porcelain flowers was restricted to it alone and subjected to strict quality controls.[87] Following the nationalization of the Royal Manufacture with the 1760 privilege, this restriction was upheld against "a fraudulent commerce that has been introduced for counterfeit flowers," "the said false fabrications [being] as detrimental to the public as harmful to the King's manufacture," being "infinitely inferior in quality."[88] But at the same time flowers were the only category of product explicitly removed from the requirement that all porcelain be marked with the logo of its manufacturer.[89] To protect the counterfeits of the Royal manufacture, in other words, counterfeiting would be restricted to the Royal Manufacture.

Thus, though porcelain flowers were a highly sought-after product, they were also of secondary importance to the main object of decoration. This is made clear in another assemblage of Sèvres porcelain flowers (figure 3.5). On this clock topped with Vincennes flowers, we see the focus being a Meissen figurine featuring a court jester (a common motif in Meissen porcelain) looking on as a prince kisses the hand of a princess. The princess's dress is particularly remarkable for its vibrant colors and

[87] AN O^2 2059^1 "Arrest du Conseil d'État du Roy" (24 July 1745); "Arrest du Conseil d'État du Roy" (6 August 1748); "Manufacture Royale de Porcelaine établit à Vincennes : Reglemens et instructions pour les Ateliers et Magasins" (22 May 1748).

[88] AN F^{12} 1494^1 Mémoire, Directeur de Sèvres [c.1760]. [un commerce frauduleux qui s'était introduit des fleurs contrefaites] [Les dites fausses fabrications aussi préjudiciables au public que nuisible à la manufacture du Roy] [infiniment inférieures in qualité]

[89] AN O^1 2059^1 "Extrait des Registres du Conseil d'État" (19 August 1753).

Figure 3.5. Mantle clock. Clock and mount gilded bronze with white enamel face, Paul Gudin le Jeune, Paris, c.1750. Figures hard-paste porcelain and glaze, Meissen c.1735. Flowers soft-paste porcelain and enamel, Vincennes c. 1750. Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1974.356.411.

detailed patterns, while the prince's sleeves, presence of the jester, and markings on the throne emphasize that this is a wealthy court scene. At the same time, the presence of the small dog on the princess's lap and the cat balanced atop the clock show this to be simultaneously a domestic space, blurring the line between the two in rococo style.

What brought both collections of flowers, clock, and figurine together was the work of a marchand mercier. Even as the manufacture in Vincennes worked to bring French porcelain to the market, the artistic qualities and expression of taste in this object remained that of the merchants who selected the figurine, mounted it on a gilt bronze base, attached a clock to it, and selected and arranged the flowers that would surround it. There was nothing in this piece that spoke to the porcelain manufacture; given the absence of brand markings on the flowers, there was no way for the consumer to even know they had been made in Vincennes, or even in France for that matter. The porcelain manufacture, struggling to establish itself, was at this point still just a supplier of raw materials for the artistic expressions of the marchand mercier, who thus remained the crucial and powerful intermediary between production and consumption.

Fit for a King: Creating a French Style in Porcelain

Toward the later years of the Charles Adam Company the managers embarked on a new commercial strategy. They were determined to no longer be subordinate to the market power of the marchands merciers and they would no longer seek to imitate and replace Meissen porcelain in elite households. Instead, they set out supplant it with a new style, one that was connected directly to Versailles and could come only from the Royal Manufacture. It was toward this end that the company undertook such crushing debts, ones that would ultimately doom it and its successor, the Eloy Brichard

Company. Yet there was no other way forward than to invent new colors, new designs, new forms, and new ties between their products and the two most famous porcelain consumers in France: Louis XV and Madame de Pompadour.

The 1750s were a transitional period between stylistic regimes. Meissen porcelain with its polychrome designs and European figures were becoming increasingly common in French shops and salons, but Chinese porcelain was still quite widespread and Japanese porcelain was at the peak of its fortunes. Many of the Charles Adam Company's first forays into establishing their own style came from a blend of these different forms. Some of the first efforts were copies of Saxon camaïeu. A dish (figure 3.6) produced in Meissen around 1745 presents a series of European figures in European landscapes, each done in a purple camaïeu and separated by gilt borders and set within a gilt scalloped edge. The similarity between this and the blue camaïeu of Jingdezhen porcelain is clear, but Meissen now offered a new take on the established style. A dish (figure 3.7) produced in Vincennes around 1751, meanwhile, uses a very similar purple camaïeu color that had recently been developed to paint a similarly European scene surrounded by a gilt scalloped edge. The similarity in both color and form between the two is obvious.

The same year the Charles Adam Company was releasing its purple camaïeu, however, it also started releasing pieces in a green camaïeu. In this sugar bowl (figure 3.8), we see a similar white background and gilt edges with a monochromatic and rustic European landscape, but now in a deep green color. Subsequent years saw the release of similar sets in blue, violet, and brown. Each featured rounded or scalloped gilt edges and pastoral scenes painted in camaïeu and was destined for use in a dinner service, but with each subsequent release the color was changed. This was not a cheap strategy;

Figure 3.6. Tea bowl. Hard-paste porcelain, painted and gilded. Meissen, c. 1745. Courtesy Victoria & Albert Museum, C.80:1 to 3-2006.

Figure 3.7. Plateau d'écuelle. Soft-paste porcelain with enamel and gilding. Vincennes, 1751–1752. Courtesy Victoria & Albert Museum, C.371-1909.

Figure 3.8. Pot à sucre. Soft-paste porcelain with enamel and gilding. Vincennes, c. 1751. Courtesy Victoria & Albert Museum, C47&A-1955.

much of the company's red ink flowed from the scientific experiments necessary to discover these colors. But the annual renewal of the designs into something recognizable yet distinctive clearly offered a way to continuously put out new products for the elite market.

In its final year the Charles Adam Company put out a new product with a distinctive style. Painting in either monochromatic or polychromatic colors was by this time common practice in both Asian and European porcelain. And Chinese, Japanese, and Saxon manufacturers had made some pieces with fields of solid color. But given the lower firing temperature of French soft-paste porcelain, efforts to create a color that could be applied evenly over large areas without leaving a residue proved difficult. But in 1752 they produced a lapis blue color that could be used to cover large portions of each object and form a ground color, with white now set off as the relief. There were shortcomings of the new technique. As the stand in this set (figure 3.9) shows, the new blue color was an opaque cover over the porcelain that was difficult to apply evenly and left a marbled appearance with white streaks where the glaze was too and black marks where impurities burned away in the kiln. But the color was striking
thin and the style completely new.[90]

With the creation of the Eloy Brichard Company in 1753, the process of annual renewal the Charles Adam Company had applied to camaïeu was now brought to the ground colors. Following lapis blue came a pale-yellow ground color that was often used to frame portraits made in blue camaïeu. As this saucer (figure 3.10) shows, there was here a mix of the old and the new. The use of new ground colors was intermingled

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[90] Tamara Préaud and Antoine d'Albis, *La porcelaine de Vincennes* (Paris: Éditions Adam Biro, 1991) 217–8.

Figure 3.9. Sugar bowl and stand. Soft-paste porcelain with underglaze blue and gilding. Vincennes, 1753. Courtesy Art Institute of Chicago, 1986.3450a-c.

with traditional portraiture for established uses. But in subsequent years a steady stream of new colors was produced: celestial blue, violet, new blue, green, pink. And then as technologies for delineating the glazes were developed multiple colors became intertwined and now surrounded polychromatic portraits of all manner of subjects.[91] Meanwhile the forms used continued to develop as well. Designs became increasingly ornate, scrollwork became common, gilding became more extensive, reliefs gave the surfaces more depth, paintings became more elaborate, and the models became larger. All of this can be seen in a terrine (figure 3.11) produced at the recently relocated

[91] Whitehead, *Sèvres*, 71–84.

Figure 3.10. Saucer. Soft-paste porcelain with underglaze color and gilding. Vincennes, c. 1753. Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, 52.2.1.

manufacture in Sèvres as a gift from Louis XV to Frederick V of Denmark in 1758. The terrine itself is wide and lidded and part of a large matching service, emphasizing the use of seriality and the embrace of the service à la française. The handle is a fruit, with the recreation of natural objects in porcelain a common theme in rococo style. The feet and handles blend together and are both united by delicate scrolling and leaves whose

Figure 3.11. Terrine du roi. Soft-paste porcelain with enamel and gilding. Vincennes, 1758. Courtesy Cleveland Museum of Art, 1949.15.

gilded edges carry onto the ground. The ground itself is a teal color, while the white reliefs feature polychromatic portraits on each side of the terrine of cherubs playing and on the lid symbols of exploration and peace. This piece represents the culmination of French porcelain style in the 1750s, encapsulating each of the artistic and scientific developments as the Royal Manufacture established its own presence. But it also speaks to the commercial motivations that underlay these developments because it was an updated copy of a piece manufactured for Louis XV's own service from 1754 (figure 3.12). The mold was the same, the basic stylistic elements on par, but the French King's featured a ground of the cutting-edge celestial blue around reliefs of polychromatic

Figure 3.12. Terrine du service Bleu Céleste de Louis XV. Soft-paste porcelain with enamel and gilding. Designed by Jean-Claude Duplessis. Vincennes, 1754. Courtesy Chateaux de Versailles et de Trianon. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY.

flowers while the Danish King's featured the new green color and images that both fit the time and the occasion. Similarly, the citrus fruit at the top could be colored like an orange, or a lemon, or a lime, and the body left white and covered with polychromatic flowers, as in these versions (figures 3.13 and 3.14). Though it required the creation of a new model, once a successful design such as this terrine had been created it could be adapted to a variety of sizes or given subtle changes to fit new uses and environments.

Figure 3.13. Covered terrine and underplate. Soft-paste porcelain with enamel and gilding. Designed by Jean-Claude Duplessis, painted by Pierre-Joseph Rosset. Vincennes, 1754–1755. Courtesy Minneapolis Institute of Art, 91.138a-c.

Figure 3.14. Covered terrine and underplate. Soft-paste porcelain with enamel and gilding. Designed by Jean-Claude Duplessis, painted by Pierre-Joseph Rosset. Vincennes, 1754–1755. Courtesy New Orleans Museum of Art, Museum Purchase, William McDonald Boles and Eva Carol Boles Fund, 2000.53.a-.c.

The terrine above was also offered in a smaller variation with the finial on top swapped out with an artichoke and piece of garlic while keeping with the year's color scheme (figure 3.15). And as styles changed the leaves that joined the legs to the body could be pared away for a simpler design and even used with new hard-paste porcelain materials (figure 3.16). In a version of this terrine presented as an exceptionally expensive gift to Maria Theresa in 1758 (figure 3.17), we can see the way different motifs could be brought together to create something distinctive. By using the same design

Figure 3.15. Terrine. Soft-paste porcelain with enamel and gilding. Sèvres, 1758. Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004.361.5a,b.

Figure 3.16. Plateau de pot à oille. Hard-paste porcelain with enamel and gilding. Sèvres, 1778. Courtesy Victoria & Albert Museum, C.28&A-1922.

created for Louis XV's service (figure 3.12) and the same green used in Frederik V's service (figure 3.11) but interlacing it over floral prints similar to those used in other contemporary wares (figures 3.13 and 3.14), something entirely unique and magisterial could be combined from elements already at hand in the manufacture's workshops. What these terrines collectively reveal is the way all those expenses in technical and aesthetic products were brought together to adapt to the tastes of different elite consumers and meet their demand for novelty while bringing them all together in a cohesive style that originated with the king of France.

Figure 3.17. Service mit den grünen Bändern; Olioterrine mit Untersatz, Butterdose Porzellan. Vincennes and Sèvres, France, 1757–1758. Courtesy Sisi Museum, ©Bundesmobilienverwaltung, Silberkammer-Hofburg Wien.

The commercial success of these terrines reveals an aspect of porcelain that differentiated it from other luxury goods: it was infinitely replicable. Within the tenets of rococo design, repeating patterns and serial forms were emphasized, as were small and personal domestic objects.[92] For masculine aristocratic collectors, it was possible to have figurines of hunting and violence, as with this early sculpture (figure 3.18) produced at Vincennes depicting a dog hunting and killing a boar. But the overall trend

[92] Mimi Hellman, "The Joy of Sets: The Uses of Seriality in the French Interior," in *Furnishing the Eighteenth Century: What Furniture Can Tell Us about the European and*

Figure 3.18. The Boar Hunt. Model by Jean Chabry. Soft-paste porcelain with glaze. Vincennes, c. 1751. Courtesy Detroit Institute of Arts, 1993.64.

was increasingly toward softer objects of seduction, beauty, childhood, and femininity. This artistic trend combined with two developments at the Royal Manufacture to help engender a new artistic style unique to there. First, because soft-paste porcelain used a two-stage firing process for the base material and then the glaze, the different temperatures and materials used caused imperfections that made details difficult to capture even if they imparted the characteristic sheen of hard-paste porcelain. In the sculpture of the boar hunt, for instance, the ridges in the boar's fur are sometimes smoothed over and details lost. But the chemist Hellot soon discovered that if the

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American Past, eds. Dena Goodman and Kathryn Norberg (New York: Routledge, 2007) 129–54.

second firing was simply omitted, a sateen look reminiscent of unpolished marble could be achieved that would retain all the details cast onto the porcelain. This enabled a new genre of sculpture called *biscuit* that was soft, intricate, and perfect for capturing a genteel domestic style. Second, in 1757 the famed sculptor Étienne Maurice Falconet was appointed to head the sculpting department at Sèvres.[93] Falconet had won his laurels competing in the annual salons so central to the French artistic scene with a series of marble statues depicting cherubs and women in various states of undress. But at Sèvres he was able to reproduce these in miniature again and again. With *La Baigneuse* (figure 3.19) for instance, Falconet began reproducing in 1758 his award-winning marble sculpture from the previous year's Salon at about half size. The fine detail of the *biscuit* porcelain is visible in the folds of her robe and the strands of her hair, as well as her innocent smile. And the soft depth of the unglazed porcelain is visible on the figure as well. But what is invisible in seeing this image is that it was reproduced over and over for almost a decade, sometimes plain and sometimes mounted on a gilt pedestal. Similar series would be produced for each of Falconet's major sculptures as well as smaller ones custom made for the Royal Porcelain Manufacture featuring children and lovers, both wearing more clothes as time went on. In these sculptures wealthy consumers could bring masterpieces from the Salons into their homes. If the 1750s were a period when artistic taste at the Salons was contested between the monarchy and the bourgeois public, as Thomas Crow has convincingly argued, then here at least was a mode where the king could sell his style from the Salon

[93] *Falconet à Sèvres 1757–1766, ou l'Art de plaire* (Paris: Éditions des Réunions des musées nationaux, 2001) 61–7, 82–7.

Figure 3.19. La Baigneuse. Model by Étienne Maurice Falconet. Soft-paste *biscuit* porcelain with gilt bronze mount. Sèvres, 1758–1766. Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, 50.211.138a, b.

to that public and thus instantiate the cultural force of his regime on countless private mantles.[94]

With these dishes, terrines, and figurines we can see the logic of a luxury industry playing out. These objects were, on the one hand, exceptional in the quality of their materials, artistry, and provenance. They were expensive, rare, and the product of specialized and highly skilled artisans and scientists working together in a factory that was enormous and capital-intensive by the standards of the eighteenth (and even much of the nineteenth) century. Yet while these pieces were exclusive, they were still accessible to the wealthy, whether French or foreign, aristocrat or bourgeois. They were expensive but reproducible, rare but available, each one an artistic accomplishment but made as consistent as possible by the training and supervision of an artisanal workforce laboring in an assembly line of interconnected and collectively managed workshops. Every piece manufactured in Vincennes simultaneously appeared bespoke yet replicable, an uncommon item that nonetheless carried the cultural and commercial value of the series of which it was a part. This was the balancing act all luxury goods play between being exclusive enough to command distinction and a high price yet numerous enough to recover the costs of its creation.[95]

As Susan Gal has argued, however, which aspects of porcelain matter from a symbolic and economic standpoint depend upon the specific context in which they circulate.[96] For the manufacture in Vincennes and then Sèvres, the attribute of their

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[94] Crow, *Painters and Public Life*, 126–33.

[95] Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood, *The World of Goods* (New York: Basic Books, 1979) 144–6.

[96] Susan Gal, "Qualia as Value and Knowledge: Histories of European Porcelain," *Signs and Society* 5, no. S1 (2017) S128–53.

porcelain that mattered most was its connection to the cultural authority of the monarchy. And this connection was consciously cultivated to link its products to the Crown before making replications and variations of them available to aristocratic consumers, in essence monetizing royal prestige for profit. Evidence of this can be found in the early approaches from the Charles Adam Company to Pompadour. As early as 1747, when the manufacture had begun creating porcelain flowers it hoped would replace those being imported for the Court from Meissen, they sent a small bouquet worth forty-eight livres to the queen but an enormous collection worth 270 livres to Pompadour.[97] The first table service they produced also went to her, followed by a range of other wares. Then the manufacture began producing a style of Pompadour urns and Pompadour potpourris, in 1756 and 1757 selling a bright color named Pompadour pink.[98] Naming its products after the influential courtesan was an obvious way to express gratitude to the patron who first brought the manufacture to the attention of Louis XV. But it also attached her name to a specific style, connecting it to the prestige and power of the royal mistress.

This link between elite patron and wares was even more important in the case of the king. With the transition from the Charles Adam Company to the Eloy Brichard Company in 1753, the manufacture found the opportunity to inaugurate itself with a massive service for the king. Consisting of 120 pieces and selling for the enormous sum of eighty thousand livres, the "king's service" included a whole range of new products, such as the "king's terrine," and was all colored in the "king's blue" (figure 3.12 above). And as soon as the service was publicly delivered to Louis XV, the new color and the

[97] Préaud and d'Albis, *Porcelaine de Vincennes*, 28.
[98] Lever, *Madame de Pompadour*, 172.

new designs were sold to the public, becoming central to the manufacture's offerings for decades.[99]

With the manufacture's transfer to Sèvres shortly after the outbreak of the Seven Years War, a new product was created to cement the firm's connection to the Crown during this moment of national conflict. Led by the manufacturer's head artist Duplessis, the meticulously crafted potpourri vase featured a naval ship representing France. The ship itself conveyed a sense of the nation, each end of the vessel featuring a lion's head with a bowsprit sticking out of its mouth in clear reference to strength in war. Wrapped around the intricate latticework of the mast that would carry the ship forward is a long ribbon, white in the color of the Bourbon dynasty and festooned with gold fleur-de-lys, the king carrying the country forward. As the war progressed, the colors and imagery presented on the face changed. In the earliest examples from 1758, the front depicts playing cherubs and the ground is a feminine Pompadour pink (figure 3.20). Two years later, as the war turned against France, the Pompadour pink had been mixed with green in accordance with that year's fashion while the portrait on the front offers a sentimental view of a French wife and children back at home (figure 3.21). Tellingly, the different versions of this vase produced around the year 1760 alternately featured rustic images of family life and domesticity or exotic images of Asian motifs and environments, both surrounded in extensive gilding. They linked France and its empire, wealth and glory, in a product that represented each of them during a war fought for all of them. As military conditions continued to deteriorate, in 1762 the king's blue was invoked and the portrait shows French soldiers on the attack in active battle (figure 3.22). And after the war had ended, in the final year the vase was made, the

[99] Préaud and d'Albis, *Porcelaine de Vincennes*, 217.

Figure 3.20. Pot-pourri à vaisseau. Soft-paste porcelain with enamel and gilding. Designed by Jean-Claude Duplessis. Sèvres, 1758. Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, 58.75.89a,b.

Figure 3.21. Pot-pourri vaisseau à mât. Soft-paste porcelain with enamel and gilding. Painting by Charles-Nicolas Dodin. Sèvres, 1760. Courtesy J Paul Getty Museum, 75.DE.11.

Figure 3.22. Pot-pourri à vaisseau. Soft-paste porcelain with enamel and gilding. Designed by Jean-Claude Duplessis. Sèvres, 1762. Courtesy Waddesdon/National Trust, 2315.

Figure 3.23. Pot-pourri à vaisseau. Soft-paste porcelain with enamel and gilding. Designed by Jean-Claude Duplessis, painted by Jean-Louis Morin. Sèvres, 1764. Courtesy Walters Art Museum, 48.599.

ship's color had turned a deeper blue and come home to port, where the portrait shows a small group of fishermen on the dock's edge with their daily catch (figure 3.23). These vases were designed for intimate settings and for only the wealthiest, with Pompadour the greatest collector but joined by the king, prince de Condé, and a few others able to buy the dozen examples made. They brought the war and all its aspects into the home

where it served as a centerpiece. And the vase itself was functional, a repository for that French invention of potpourri, that filled the room with the sweet scent of flowers. But they also served as only part of a larger set and spoke to the manufacturer's wider product line, the same colors and same themes presented in their grandest version in the kingdom's most exclusive showrooms.

With the nationalization of the Royal Manufacture in 1760, the balance of power between the merchants and manufacture began to slowly tilt toward the latter. Bolstered by the cultural authority bestowed on the firm by the King's direct ownership of it, the management team at the Royal Porcelain Manufacture in Sèvres was now able to renegotiate its contracts with merchants. They retained the 9 percent remittance on goods sold and continued to advance them on credit, but now created formal contracts requiring each merchant to put up collateral equivalent to the amount of Sèvres porcelain they would carry and limited their contracts to the merchant's ability to cover it.[100] More importantly, they steadily increased the number of shops in Paris carrying their products from five at the end of 1759 to eleven in 1760 and sixteen by 1765, of which almost half were elite boutiques lining rue St Honoré, with the rest scattered throughout other fashionable shopping districts.[101] Furthermore, they soon extended this system to merchants operating in foreign capitals.[102]

The next step in the process of supplanting the market power of the merchants with that of the manufacture was to control the attribution of price. Accounting for

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[100] AMNS B6 "Modèle de cautionnement" [Late 1759]; AN MC/ET XC/405 Charles Garcerand (2 January 1761).

[101] AMNS B6 "Cautionnements" (20 November 1766).

[102] AMNS B2 "Mémoire" (18 February 1763), "Mémoire," Bonnet to Boileau (20 March 1765).

price in the eighteenth century required navigating intermingled regimes of value. On the one hand, manufactured goods in this period possessed a market price that was an evaluation of the value of a particular piece. This value simultaneously reflected its component costs and was independent from them. For example, adding more labor or materials to a piece could increase its market price by increasing its value. But at the same time, two pieces containing the same amounts of labor and material could be priced differently according to the degree of success in their completion. To a certain extent, the price of a piece of porcelain encompassed the costs of its production, while that piece of porcelain simultaneously held an individual value determined independently of those costs.[103] As will be seen in Chapter Five, the difficulty for the manufacturer thus lay in trying to reconcile these two distinct prices through their accounting practices if the firm was to balance its expenses and receipts.

With the nationalization of the manufacture in 1760, the new managers shifted the firm's approach to pricing. As the Eloy Brichard Company faltered before its bankruptcy, it attempted to save itself by lowering the prices of its products to stimulate consumer purchasing, even if it came at the cost of the manufacture's income.[104] The conundrum they faced was that a product's price was taken to reflect its quality and social esteem—within the bounds of a market revealed by competition between merchants at differing prices. To lower a good's price was to lower its perceived quality. In the first half of the eighteenth century, merchants served as experts invested with the trust of consumers to set prices in relation to the inherent quality of a good

[103] AN O[1] 2062[1] "Historique de l'origine et des formes pour la distribution des Etrennes en porcelaine" [1780]; ADHV C 2995 Letter Grellet to Ferradon fils and Co (23 November 1784), Letter Grellet to Ferradon fils and Co (30 December 1784), Letter Grellet to Pernet (3 January 1785).

[104] AMNS B1 "3me mémoire," Boileau [Late 1750s].

while tacitly acknowledging the limits of the market's ability to bear that price in a competitive environment.

Under the nationalized Royal Manufacture, this relationship between merchant and manufacturer was reversed. From this point forward, the manufacture would evaluate each piece individually upon its completion and assign it a price, and the merchant was forced by its contract to sell that piece at its assigned price without variation.[105] The problem the manufacture was responding to was essentially a matter of consumer confidence. Because merchants competed with each other by varying the quality of goods they offered as well as the price, similar products could end up at very different prices in the course of this process. As a result, consumers might encounter two pieces of Sèvres porcelain in the same or in different boutiques, one superior in quality yet inferior in price to the other. This was a particular concern when the merchants marked down pieces of an older design from the manufacture, which implied that the ascribed value was not timeless and therefore not intrinsic, a slight on the manufacture that could also serve as a caution against using the piece as an investment.[106] The solution was for the manufacture itself "in order to establish a just appreciation of the porcelains for sale...[each piece marked] with its sales price, price that must be invariable and by that inspire the confidence of the consumer."[107]

The balance of power shifted more firmly in favor of the Royal Manufacture beginning in the 1770s. By 1774, the manufacture had eleven merchants in Paris and

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[105] AMNS B6 "Modèle de cautionnement" [1759].

[106] AN F^{12} 1493^{1} "Police pour les magazines de ventes" [1781].

[107] AN O^{1} 2061^{2bis} "État des fonctions du garde général des magasins de la manufacture royale des porcelaines de France" [1 April 1785]. [pour établir une juste appréciation des porcelaines en vente...[each piece marked] de son prix de vent, prix qui doit être invariable et par là d'inspirer la confiance de l'acheteur]

another in Versailles contracted to sell its products. Under the leadership of the new director, Antoine Regnier, it canceled all but two or three of these contracts. Meanwhile, a new flagship store was established at the factory itself. The old rundown show room was given a luxury makeover, with high-end furnishing brought in to display the products, "everything being arranged with an enormous room at the top to serve as a depot of the year's precious pieces destined for exhibitions...in order to interest the collectors and consumers, and to signal to them...order and organization that had just been established at the manufacture."[108] The Royal Manufacture could thus avoid the "obscurity" and "confusion" of the system of merchant pricing, and instead itself set the price: "This price must not vary, the certainty that there is no bargaining, gives confidence, and is a vehicle to shape the decision of those who desire to buy it."[109]

But the Royal Manufacture's ambitions stretched beyond reinforcing the king's domestic standing; its purpose was to establish the reputation of French porcelain as the finest in Europe. To this end Regnier oversaw a strategy of exporting the Royal Manufacture's wares out into the courts of Europe, both as diplomatic gifts and as sold merchandise.[110] While such exports fulfilled important foreign policy objectives, they also served the direct economic interests of the manufacture by connecting Sèvres

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[108] AN O[2] 920 "Nottes du C[en] Regnier," Regnier [c. 1800]. [tout étant arrangé avec une énorme pièce en haut pour servir de dépôt de pièces précieuses de l'année destinés aux expositions...pour intéresser tous les curieux et acheteurs, et leurs annoncer...l'ordre et l'arrangement qui venoit d'être établi à la manufacture]

[109] AMNS A1 "Police pour les magazines de ventes" (4 December 1779). [obscurité] [confusion] [Ce prix ne doit point varier, la certitude qu'il n'y a point à marchander, donne de la confiance, et est un véhicule pour déterminer la volonté de celui qui a désire d'acheter]

[110] AMNS B2 "État des travaux de la manufacture de porcelaines du Roy" (July 1773); AMNS B6 "Sommes payées à compte par le Prince Baristinski," Roger (4 December 1778).

porcelain with Europe's most luxurious courts, attaching itself to the presence of Europe's monarchs and presenting itself as a royal symbol before Europe's luxury consumer class. Regnier explained that he undertook this policy of diplomatic gifting "because the market follows the ambassadors [and they] will go to the manufacture and buy a lot, and promise to only place their orders and [?] with the manufacture."[111]

Perhaps the most successful implementation of Regnier's strategy came during the 1781 visit of the future Paul I of Russia and his wife Maria Feodorovna, known affectionately as the Count and Countess of the North during their stay in Versailles. Working in secret to replace the royal gift that had been planned for the future Emperor and Empress of Russia, Regnier created a toiletry set of fine porcelain with gilt accents on a lapis lazuli background and accented with large, visually stunning pieces such as a pair of six-foot vases, all "rich, interesting...[and] in the most modern taste." Recognizing the marketing value of such a masterpiece, Regnier then displayed the gift at the Royal Manufacture's factory store, drawing thousands of visitors out past the bend of the Seine each day to view it.[112] Enamored with this elaborate gift—and subsequently ordering a massive dinner service worth over 250,000 livres for the Russian Imperial Palace as a result—these esteemed visitors came and toured the Royal Manufacture for hours, a pilgrimage that monarchs like Holy Roman Emperor Joseph

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[111] AN O[2] 920 "Nottes du C[en] Regnier," Regnier [c. 1800]. [car le marché suivant les ambassadeurs [et] tieront à la manufacture et achèteront beaucoup, et promissent de ne faire leur commandes et [?] qu'à la manufacture]

[112] AN O[2] 920 "Nottes du C[en] Regnier," Regnier [c. 1800]. [riches, curieux...[et]dans le goût le plus moderne]

II, Swedish King Gustav III, and high-level aristocrats and ambassadors from throughout Europe and across the globe would each make in turn.[113]

The collective result of these marketing strategies was that the manufacture itself became a destination in France and a symbol of prestige across Europe. As such, it no longer had to rely on merchants to establish consumer trust on its behalf. Thus, by 1780 the Royal Manufacture was able to terminate its agreements with most of its Parisian merchants and recover its wares.[114] In their place, it established a flagship store right on rue St Honoré to furnish the Parisian elite in the conspicuous environment of the headquarters of luxury shopping, although some still questioned the wisdom of such vertical integration.[115] Henceforth, the Royal Manufacture might continue to arrange individual sales with a merchant, but whereas merchants had once dominated their commercial relationship with the manufacture, Sèvres emphasized that their role was now simply to interact with the consumer "in order to facilitate and guide the choice."[116] Just two decades after the Eloy Brichard Company had bent over backwards to convince fashionable merchants to carry its wares, when one such merchant petitioned to sell Sèvres porcelain in her boutique, the manufacture curtly replied: "The administration has no interest in multiplying these sorts of depots."[117]

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[113] AMNS B4 "Mémoire historique sur la manufacture royale de porcelaine de Sèvres," Regnier (September 1792), "Mémoire historique de la manufacture que l'Empereur de Chine est sourvenir," Regnier (22 September 1792).

[114] AN O[2] 920 Letter Barrau to d'Angiviller (14 May 1781).

[115] AN F[12] 1493[1] Letter Joly de Fleury to d'Angiviller (15 August 1781).

[116] AMNS B5 "Mémoire," [Schonen] [c. 1770]. [pour faciliter de déterminer le choix]

[117] AMNS B3 "Mémoire" (September 1782). [L'administration n'a aucun intérêt de multiplier ces sortes de dépôt]

As the French porcelain industry developed, a similar pattern unfolded elsewhere as manufacturers surpassed merchants as gatekeepers of the luxury market and increasingly integrated marketing and retailing into their business models. By the 1780s, the porcelain manufactures in St Denis, Clignancourt, and Thiroux had all established company stores around Paris.[118] Similarly, the manufacture in Villeroy worked through a merchant who, while independent, operated almost exclusively as a storefront for it in Paris.[119]

Drawing on the lessons learned at Sèvres, management there directed the floundering manufacture in Limoges to stop selling directly to the public and only sell through trusted merchants: "The manufacture of Limoges can only rise...by means of these very merchants," and must work to keep their "attachment" and "loyalty."[120] Indeed, within a year of adopting this merchant-friendly policy, requests poured into Limoges from throughout provincial France offering to sell—in many cases exclusively—its porcelain in their shops.[121] Thus, by the end of the Old Regime, manufacturers had surpassed merchants as mediator of consumer information and established themselves as the primary repository of cultural authority in the luxury goods market.

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[118] AN MC/ET XCI 1250 Pierre Henri Péan (28 March 1788); AMNS A4 Letter de Mauroy to Lieutenant General of Police (15 February 1780); ANMS A3 Letter Jollivet to de Mauroy (10 November [1780]).

[119] AdP D^5B^6 1924 (1762–1769), 3091 (July 1762–January 1769); AdP D^4B^6 36 dos 1980 (31 January 1770).

[120] AN O^1 2062^2 Letter [d'Arcet] to [d'Angiviller] [Late 1788]. [La manufacture de Limoges ne peut s'élever...qu'au moyen de ces mêmes marchands] [attachement] [fidélité]

[121] ADHV C 3004 Letter Denis to Alluaud (29 July 1788), Letter Laurens to Alluaud (9 June 1789), Letter Duclou to Alluaud (28 May 1789), Contract Duclous and Alluaud (23 June 1789); ADHV C 3006 Letter Bonafous, Bourg and Co to Alluaud (8 December 1788).

Vertical Integration in Limoges

While the Royal Manufacture integrated vertically upwards in order to control the distribution and marketing of its products, it simultaneously integrated vertically downwards to control its supply of raw materials. With the transition to hard-paste porcelain production and the discovery of kaolin deposits outside of Limoges in 1768, the Royal Porcelain Manufacture was finally able to replicate the material quality of its European and Asian competitors. The quality of the raw materials would be of paramount importance if Sèvres was to be able to build an international reputation for the quality of the finished product, and the supply lines from deep in the Limousin countryside to Paris were scarce when existent at all. With these constraints in mind, the directors of the Royal Manufacture decided to bypass private networks of quarrying and distribution in order to directly control the entire process from shovel to store.

The manufacture's interest in the source of its raw materials came down to accessibility, price, and quality. The initial push to open a state-owned kaolin quarry in Saint-Yrieix-la-Perche, the small town outside of Limoges where kaolin was first discovered in France, was a pragmatic response to the exigencies of production. Opening a working quarry, especially one that could produce high-grade raw materials, required an enormous outlay of time and money. Turning its products into a workable material entailed a further investment in cleaning and purifying and preparing the material before shipping it to the site of production and then aging it there. Given how recently kaolin was discovered here, Saint-Yrieix-la-Perche's relatively isolated location, and the absence of an existing demand for hard-paste porcelain among French manufacturers, if the Royal Manufacture wanted access to quality raw materials it would have to take charge of both opening and operating a quarry and converting mills

to clay production.[122] Furthermore, the disconnect between the seasonal rhythms of the kaolin extraction and refining processes and the demands of a year-round manufacturing process forced a sustained investment. On the supply side, opening a new quarry took a minimum of two years to dig far enough to reach deposits of pure kaolin clay and, once opened, could only operate for a few dry months each summer before the quarry flooded under winter rains and had to be bailed out the next spring.[123] Once porcelain clay was delivered to the manufacture, it had to be aged under controlled conditions for at least two more years to allow the material to thoroughly and evenly hydrate in order to achieve the proper degree of elasticity and durability necessary for manufacturing.[124] Finally, the demand for porcelain, as a luxury good, was itself elastic depending on the health of the economy. Because a manufacture was forced by the aging process to stockpile years' worth of material, at the first sign of economic decline it could easily cut costs by refusing new shipments and drawing on its existing stores.[125] The results of such actions by the manufacture were devastating for the quarries.

Arguments in favor of vertically integrating the production of porcelain clay also focused on dependable materials. For the directors at Sèvres, direct engagement in the production of raw materials was a matter of cost-efficiency.[126] Given the manufacture's

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[122] AN O^{1} 2062^{1} "Mémoire" (12 November 1771); AN F^{12} 1494^{1} Letter Grellet to Trudaine (19 February 1776); ADHV C 3010 Contract Grellet and Naurissard (1 January 1784).

[123] ADHV C 2995 Letter Grellet to d'Angiviller (19 July 1785); ADHV L 1200 Letter Panckouke to Alluaud (5 Vendémiaire an IV).

[124] ADHV C 2995 Letter Grellet to Vanieu (22 July 1785).

[125] AN O^{1} 2063 Letter Alluaud to d'Angiviller (26 December 1788); ADHV C 3006 Letter d'Angiviller to Alluaud (19 December 1788), Letter Hettlinger to Alluaud (19 January 1789).

[126] AN O^{1} 2062^{1} "Mémoire" [1777]. Efforts to attract investments from the Royal Manufacture thus emphasized the cost savings of vertical integration of raw material

ambitions to produce the world's finest porcelain, however, arguments about quality frequently took precedence. Each category of porcelain product—such as vases, sculptures, or tableware—used its own proprietary mixture of kaolin, quartz, and feldspar to achieve different results, and each mixture required its own treatment and firing to be properly worked and cooked. Changing suppliers could thus ruin entire production runs as the manufacturer attempted to adapt.[127] More importantly, kaolin harvested from different quarries and even different parts of the same quarry produced different quality porcelain: feldspar that had not fully decomposed into kaolin might produce a yellowish tint in the finished product, kaolin that had not broken down into a perfectly uniform paste would mix unevenly, and inclusions not washed thoroughly from the clay would leave black marks breaking up the desired white sheen. For most private producers, there was a tradeoff between cost and quality of the material, and they made supply decisions based on the balance of these two factors.[128] What distinguished the Royal Manufacture, however, was its insistence on quality first and foremost.

By investing state resources into opening a kaolin quarry and constructing a processing plant for porcelain, the Royal Manufacture played a pivotal role in providing raw materials to the French porcelain industry at the critical moment of the

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production: AN O[1] 2062[1] "Mémoire," Grellet (28 November 1783); ADHV C 2995 Letter Grellet to de Mauroy (20 August 1784).

[127] Letter Alluaud to Fauvet (6 Prairial an IV).

[128] ADHV C 3003 Letter [Alluaud] to Locré (25 May 1787); ADHV L 1246 Letter Bertrand to Alluaud (24 Prairial an IV), Letter Belliard to Vve Alluaud (17 Fructidor an VII), Letter Belliard to Vve Alluaud (3 Vendémiaire an VIII); ADHV L 1247 Letter Hubert, Langlois, Le Marois and co to Alluaud (13 Messidor an VII). Some producers were much more persnickety about quality and more quickly aggrieved about price than others: ADHV L 1200 Letter Nast to Alluaud (10 Fructidor an IV), Letter Nast to Alluaud (8 Thermidor an IV), Letter Nast to Alluaud (22 Thermidor [an IV]).

transition from soft- to hard-paste production. Within a year, the state-owned quarry in Saint-Yrieix-la-Perche exhausted its resources, was abandoned, and fell into disrepair.[129] Yet even within this short time, a large enough market had emerged that private investors followed the state-run project and opened their own quarries and improved the quality of their products enough to start supplying the Royal Manufacture as well as other manufactures. Soon, the owners of these kaolin quarries expanded their businesses to encompass the entire range of raw material provision for porcelain production: they produced and distributed a range of clay compositions at various price points and for various applications, they offered technical and commercial advise to their customers, and even extended loans to manufacturers during economic downturns.[130] Once these private suppliers were established and began churning out porcelain clay of sufficient quality to maintain the reputation of French porcelain, the state was content to turn the industry over to them, although it continued to mill its own raw material on-site in Sèvres. In other words, in the provision of raw materials the state acted just as it had in the quest for the technological development of porcelain and the establishment of a reputation for quality and taste by granting privileges and investing directly to encourage the development of the national industry as a whole.

Yet the precise form of these interventions, particularly the monopoly privilege, created tension between means and ends. It was a tool deployed for the public good by policymakers, but one that operated through the unalloyed self-interest of individuals.

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[129] ADHV L 1244 "Mémoire relatif à la situation où se trouve la manufacture de porcelaine de Limoges" (5 June 1791).

[130] ADHV C 3005 Letter Vannier to Alluaud (25 March 1788), Letter Vannier to Alluaud (15 November 1788), Letter Vannier to Alluaud (21 February 1789); ADHV C 3003 Letter Cloostermans to Alluaud (23 January 1790); ADHV C 3006 Letter Maubie to Alluaud (19 November 1791); ADHV L 1200 Letter Menauteau to Alluaud (9 Floréal an IV), Letter Antoine to Alluaud (15 Fructidor an VI).

As private entrepreneurs established kaolin quarries and clay-processing mills in the 1780s, the Royal Manufacture recommended a range of measures "in order to avoid the smuggling that is done daily by several people circulating the [materials]...under the name of porcelain clays." As remedy, management suggested on the one hand using a privilege and duties that would ensure the supply of quality materials to French manufacturers, including the Royal Manufacture.[131] The trick in invoking such measures would be to apply just enough pressure to discourage the "continuous confusion" that resulted from the circulation of materials "under a false denomination" while at the same time limiting this pressure so as to prevent harm "to wholesalers of good faith" and "to encourage the discovery of similar quarries by giving the owners complete liberty to exploit them and to obtain the sale of the materials they extract."[132] On the other hand they suggested repairing and reopening the state-owned quarry in order to improve access to high-quality and low-cost materials, although the inspector on the ground believed that the private market was already meeting these goals as well as could be done.[133] In short, to protect the national porcelain industry, they recommended the traditional practice of granting privileges to establish monopolies, guarding them with tariffs, and then regulating the market within the established terrain until such time as the private sector could manage the industry on its own.

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[131] AN O[1] 2061[2] Letter Hettlinger to d'Angiviller (24 October 1785). [pour éviter la contrebande qui se fait journellement plusieurs personnes faisant circuler les [matières]...sous la dénomination de terres à porcelaine]

[132] AN O[1] 2062[2] Note on quarries [1785]. [embarras continuel] [sous de fausse dénomination] [au négociants de bonne foy] [d'encourager les découvertes de semblables carrières en laissant une pleine liberté aux propriétaires de les faire exploiter et de se procurer la vente des matières qu'ils fairient extraire]

[133] AN O[1] 2061[2] Letter d'Arcet to d'Angiviller (7 July 1785), Letter Hettlinger to d'Angiviller (27 July 1785); AN O[1] 2061[2bis] Letter d'Angiviller to d'Arcet (16 June 1785), Letter d'Angiviller to Régnier (5 July 1785), Letter d'Angiviller to Grellet (7 July 1785).

But this approach also opened the avenue for potential abuses by actors following the logic of the system while perverting the intended outcome. As the State determined to act to reassure buyers of the quality of French kaolin, Gabriel Grellet, recently named manager of the Royal Porcelain Manufacture in Limoges, proposed an expansion of the royal quarry to be continued under his management.[134] The vein of kaolin running through the royal quarry, he argued, “passes through a bit of land alongside the cemetery of the said parish and belonging to the community.” Believing that the kaolin in this site was of superior quality, he recommended that the king order the local bishop to cede control of this land that “adjoins the cemetery,” and force the community to accept an annual payment in exchange.[135]

As debates over the move continued into the next year, however, it became increasingly obvious that Grellet’s proposal was not to commandeer a piece of land that “adjoins” the cemetery; he wanted to quarry the cemetery itself. The bishop in Limoges emphasized his desire to be accommodating to the Crown, but stressed that he was constrained by the bounds “the sanctity of the terrain...would be able to permit.”[136] Faced with desecrating a cemetery against the opposition of the bishop, royal representatives backed away from Grellet’s plan by saying that the existing quarry was sufficient for the Royal Porcelain Manufacture’s needs, that expanding it would be

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[134] AN O[1] 2062[2] Letter Grellet to d’Angiviller (22 February 1785).

[135] ADHV C 2995 Letter Grellet to d’Angiviller (23 August 1785). [passoient dans un morceau de terrain joignant le cimetière de la dite paroisse et appartenant à la communauté] [il joint au cimetière]

[136] AN O[1] 2062[2] Letter [d’Angiviller] to Bishop of Limoges (5 May 1786), Letter Bishop of Limoges to d’Angiviller (16 May 1786). [joindre] [la sainteté du terrein...pourra le permettre]

much more expensive than worthwhile, and that it was already in "religious use."[137] None of this, however, seems to have dissuaded Grellet from his campaign to use the state's authority and finances to expand his own personal power and wealth.[138] The same tensions inherent in using state policy for the public good by motivating the pursuit of individual self-interest was to come to a head in the twilight of the Old Regime.

Conclusion: The French Style Takes Root

The Royal Porcelain Manufacture was not the only porcelain manufacture to connect itself to royal cultural authority. Despite the privilege restrictions on polychrome, gilding, or sculpture, many French porcelain manufactures created these forbidden works throughout the second half of the eighteenth century. There were occasional crackdowns and confiscations, although more commonly directed against privately owned companies than those operating under the patronage of members of the royal family. Yet these infrequent efforts to enforce the privileges of 1760 and 1766 only came about when the directors of the Royal Porcelain Manufacture feared that other producers were putting out wares that were both inferior in quality and too similar to those being manufactured in Sèvres. For the most part, as long as low-quality wares were made in simple monochrome and those with more elaborate polychromatic designs or gilding were made at a sufficiently high quality, the regulators were content to look the other way. Their motivation was simply to protect the reputation of the

[137] AN O^1 2062^2 Letter d'Angiviller to Grellet (22 May 1786); AN F^{12} 1493^2 Letter Montucla to Grellet (25 July 1786), Letter d'Angiviller to Grellet (17 June 1787). [un usage religieux]

[138] AN F^{12} 1493^2 Letter Grellet to d'Angiviller (15 May 1787).

royal style in a market where consumers lacked reliable information and were susceptible to buying counterfeits that would undermine the domestic and foreign esteem for French luxury goods.

In the thirty years between the privilege of 1760 and its revocation during the Revolution, examples of porcelain that violated its strictures suggest that the inspectors were willing to look the other way when the manufactured goods adhered to the official style. For the private manufacturers springing up in Paris and beyond during this period, there were obvious reasons to fit within this style. As long as the royal court continued to set the patterns of consumption, the official style would be that which appealed to the largest market. And working within an established stylistic idiom was certainly easier, cheaper, safer than attempting to create a new one from scratch. Perhaps more importantly, while addressing oneself to the king as the font of cultural authority might gain the goodwill of the Crown, it also helped to elevate the status of the manufacture by connecting it to the king.

A series of busts of Louis XV produced by private manufactures in the middle of the eighteenth century demonstrate just how keen these companies were to prove their bonafides. A bust of Louis XV (figure 3.24) produced by the Chantilly Porcelain Manufacture during the War of Austrian Succession, for instance, shows the determined king looking into the distance, perched above a collection of arms, armor, and armorial flags, all the trappings of martial glory. Another bust (figure 3.25) produced by the Mennecy Porcelain Manufacture around 1750 similarly presents the king atop a mound of military equipment (cannon, cannonballs, shield, helmet, flags, axe, and drum) with the wings of victory behind it. But on this bust we also see the crown with flowers beside it for a king of war and peace. And a final bust (figure 3.26) made around the outbreak of the Seven Years War shows Louis XV wearing more

Figure 3.24. Bust of Louis XV. Soft-paste porcelain. Chantilly Porcelain Manufacture, 1745–1750. Courtesy Minneapolis Institute of Art, 83.140.

Figure 3.25. Bust of Louis XV. Soft-paste porcelain. Mennecy Porcelain Manufacture, 1750–1755. Courtesy J Paul Getty Museum, 84.DE.46.

Figure 3.26. Louis XV. Soft-paste porcelain. Tournai Porcelain Manufacture, c. 1756. Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1977.216.5a,b.

subtle regalia in the form of a sash and armored sleeves yet wrapped in a whirlwind of cloth as he looks ahead, a symbol of dynamism and determination at a difficult time in his reign. This bust is all the more intriguing for having been produced in the Austrian Netherlands. What makes these busts most remarkable is their size and detail. Each of them is over a foot tall, a difficult feat to accomplish given the physical limits of soft-paste porcelain. And each of them displays a unique artistic achievement, both in conception and in execution. Collectively, these features reveal that these busts were expensive to make. Given the high failure rate of soft-paste porcelain, they would each have likely been produced multiple times to make a successful model. These would not seem to have been made in large numbers over which the costs of production could be spread. They were prestige pieces, an expense for the manufacture, but one that could be justified if it elevated the status of the manufacture and brought new customers for its other wares. What is crucial here, however, is that when these manufactures sought to elevate their own status, they did so by producing the king. And this was precisely the end Louis XV's government had sought for both economic and political reasons.

By the time Louis XVI took the throne in 1774, however, conditions had changed. Even as the luxury consumption of the Court eroded public confidence in the monarchy, a new elite consumer society untethered from the royal style was emerging in Paris. And the dozens of private porcelain manufactures that had grown up under the aegis of the Royal Porcelain Manufacture now believed they were ready to step into their own. As royal cultural authority broke down, these manufacturers began to address themselves to a new market and demanded the liberty to do so without restriction. To do so, they would create point to a new sovereign authority over taste and value: the consumer.

Chapter Four

The Consumer Revolution:

Accounting for Demand in the French Porcelain Industry, 1780–1800

The last two decades of the eighteenth century were a turning point in the development of the French porcelain industry. After a century of state intervention and investment in import substitution industrialization, French porcelain manufactures were rapidly multiplying in number and increasing the quality of their wares to the point they could now compete with other European manufacturers. With so much European porcelain entering the market each year, the Dutch and British East India Companies had given up trying to import Asian porcelain to European consumers whose tastes had moved on.[1] It would seem that French efforts to create a domestic industry that could sell abroad and replace Asian imports had been successful.

Yet even at this moment of triumph, the unexpected consequences of the French strategy were making themselves apparent. As has been seen, the arrival of porcelain as a new product from distant sources into French markets had necessitated the development of new institutions to convey reliable information to consumers. Luxury merchants had been the first to fill this role and by the second half of the century had made shopping in Paris a pleasurable and public leisure activity. Meanwhile, through a range of institutions the government had labored to supplant these merchants by building a reputation for both material and aesthetic quality in French porcelain and attaching it to the manufactures themselves. The goal had been nothing short of

[1] Robert Finlay, *The Pilgrim Art: Cultures of Porcelain in World History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010) 277.

economic and cultural hegemony, with the Royal Porcelain Manufacture attempting to define the stylistic regime, align private manufacturers with it, and orient consumer preferences around it.

A funny thing happened on the way to this hegemony, however. The very institutions the state had been at such pains to create had resulted in a flourishing domestic industry of private producers and a public that now felt confident not only to shop for itself, but to express itself by choosing what to purchase. Efforts to address the perennial problem of consumer information within an Old Regime system of authority and value had created the conditions for an antithetical environment in which the sources of that authority and value came to be seen as superfluous and even an impediment to the continued functioning of the market. A new era had arrived, one in which the idea of an independent and individualized consumer rebelled against the very system that had made it possible. This revolution in the idea of the consumer would fatefully overlap with a more widespread revolution against all the authority and values of the Old Regime. Out of this clash emerged a new theory of the market and new business practices of bookkeeping and cost accounting that took their cue from the sovereign consumer.

Private Manufactures Rise, Royal Exceptionalism Falls, and the Consumer Appears

Examining products made by the French porcelain industry in the 1770s reveals the extent to which the French strategy had succeeded both in increasing the quality of French porcelain and orienting it around a style that originated with the king. By the time Louis XV died in 1774, his quarter-century quest to instantiate a Louis XV style of porcelain could claim great success. In a plate manufactured in 1771 (figure 4.1), for instance, we can see many of the hallmarks of the Louis XV style and the exceptional

Figure 4.1. Plate. Soft-paste porcelain with underglaze and gilding. Edme François Bouillat père, Sèvres Porcelain Manufacture, 1771. Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art. 64.174.14.

skill employed at Sèvres. The plate itself was part of a larger dinner service, which reflected the adoption of the *service à la française* in elite dining. The deep blue color around the rim of the plate, the flowing scrollwork repeating itself periodically around the edge, and the delicate but prominent gilding all fit within the Sèvres style as it had developed in the 1750s and 1760s. Furthermore, the delicately painted bouquets of multicolored flowers set off against the white background was another common element of this style.

Figure 4.2. Cup and saucer. Hard-paste porcelain with enamels and gilding. Queen's Porcelain Manufacture rue Thiroux, Paris, 1778–1793. Courtesy Victoria & Albert Museum, C679&A-1917.

A cup and saucer (figure 4.2) manufactured by the porcelain manufacture on rue Thiroux in Paris, whose patron was Marie Antoinette, show similar stylistic elements. On the one hand, it is much more restrained than many of the more elaborate sets being produced by the manufacture in this period, which often featured extensive intricate gilding and polychromatic repeating designs. This set has a simple pattern of scalloped gilding around the rim, but the smooth white surface sets off asymmetrical bouquets of brightly colored and carefully painted flowers. Less ornate than other wares from rue Thiroux and thus likely destined for private consumers, it still displays a high degree of craftsmanship and fits within the official style. The Clignancourt Porcelain Manufacture, which operated under the patronage of the future Louis XVIII, also

Figure 4.3. Inkwell. Hard-paste porcelain painted and gilded. Clignancourt Porcelain Manufacture, 1775–1791. Courtesy Victoria & Albert Museum, C.542&A-1921.

produced wares within the official style. In this inkstand (figure 4.3), for instance, one can see the familiar gilded rococo scrollwork on the handles and multicolored floral garlands wrapping around the exterior. In neither case is it surprising that manufactures producing for and operating under the patronage and prestige of members of the royal family would hew so closely to the official style that had been established by Louis XV.

What is more indicative of the success of the Royal Porcelain Manufacture in establishing a French stylistic regime is the adherence of private porcelain manufactures to the very same elements. This tobacco jar manufactured in Faubourg Saint-Denis (figure 4.4) for instance, looks very similar to the cup and saucer from rue Thiroux. Here

Figure 4.4. Covered jar (pot de tabac). Hard-paste porcelain with enamel and gilding, metal mount. Faubourg Saint-Denis, c.1779–1789. Courtesy Cleveland Museum of Art, 1964.517.2.

too we see a plain white background with scalloped gilding around the rims and with the main visual element being the multicolored floral bouquets. In another cup and saucer manufactured by an unknown producer in Paris around this time (figure 4.5), brightly colored flowers repeat themselves at regular intervals around the cup while the

Figure 4.5. Cup and saucer. Hard-paste porcelain with painting and gilding. Possibly Paris, c. 1780. Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, 41.1291, .3.

Figure 4.6. Ewer. Hard-paste porcelain with painting and gilding. La Courteille, France, 1775–1780. Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, 06.323.

rims are coated with a smooth gold. An ewer made in La Courteille (figure 4.6) similarly displays a range of the stylistic elements common to the period, including: multicolored floral garlands; scalloped gilding around the rim as well as more intricate patterns of gilding incorporated into the design; and a purple camaïeu cherub playing with sword, helmet, and shield on the front. Nor was this stylistic adherence reserved to Paris and its environs. New manufactures being established in places like Lille, Marseilles, and Strasbourg in this period all orbited around the gravitational pull of the court at Versailles. A tureen manufactured in Niderviller (figure 4.7) bears a striking resemblance to the tureens manufactured at Sèvres in the 1750s and explored in Chapter Three (figures 3.11–3.17). Of particular note here is the bouquet in purple camaïeu on the front of the object and matching smaller flowers asymmetrically spread

Figure 4.7. Tureen and Cover. Hard-paste porcelain with painting and gilding. Niderviller Porcelain Manufacture, c. 1770. Courtesy Victoria & Albert Museum, C.307&A-1921.

throughout, the realistically colored vegetables on the handle to denote the intended contents of the vessel at a dinner served *à la française*, and the scrollwork on the base and handles with gilding on the ridges.

Collectively, these pieces reveal that, by 1780, the French strategy of supporting the Royal Porcelain Manufacture at Sèvres in order to elevate the entire French porcelain industry was finally bearing fruit in several ways. First, not only had the state-run manufacture become the envy of Europe, but dozens of private companies in Paris and beyond were now flourishing thanks to the material techniques and decorative styles pioneered in Sèvres. By the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789, there were at least twelve companies operating within Paris, eleven more in its environs, and another twelve throughout the country.[2] Second, each of these objects was manufactured in France out of hard-paste porcelain, the scientific research for which had been conducted under state sponsorship and then distributed freely to private manufacturers around the country. And these wares would have almost certainly been made with domestically sourced materials, mostly though not exclusively from near Limoges, where the state had invested both in research and run quarrying operations until private companies were capable of supplying French kaolin demand. Third, the stylistic regime established under Louis XV had clearly become the industry standard. Each of these pieces is unique, combining a range of artistic elements in novel ways to create products that would appeal to consumers. Yet the elements they drew from all came from the same stylistic idiom, they all spoke in the same language, even if what distinguished them was that they drew on this shared language to say

[2] AN F[12] 1493[1] "Extrait de registre du Conseil d'État" ([Summer] 1784).

something different. Fourth, each of these objects displays the high degree of artisanal skill and tacit knowledge necessary to produce high-quality pieces of porcelain. These workers matched the elite artisans of Sèvres neither in the mastery of their craft nor in the ambition of their works. None of them is as intricately designed or as richly ornamented as the products of the Royal Porcelain manufacture (contrast the feet of the Niderviller tureen with those of its Sèvres inspiration), and many of them reveal defects in manufacturing (such as the apparent list of the La Courteille ewer or the bulkiness of the anonymously made saucer). Nonetheless, overall, they are all well-made and expertly designed, reflecting the solid establishment of an industrial porcelain workforce in France by this time.

Yet at the heart of this success story lay a paradox. The plan to develop the French porcelain industry was based on using the Royal Manufacture to establish a distinctly French porcelain style that would build the international reputation for French porcelain products but doing so through a monopoly privilege that prevented other manufacturers from invoking the same stylistic modes. Thus, the strategy was to generate business for French manufactures by inventing a category of and reputation for French style, but then forbid French manufactures from using it. The fifth thing that all these objects share in common is that each of them was the product of a criminal act. Under the restrictions of the 1760 and 1766 privileges, no manufacture other than the Royal Manufacture was permitted to paint in multiple colors or to gild their pieces. Every one of these objects, as well as countless more manufactured by dozens of French producers in this period, broke the law by incorporating the polychromatic design and luxurious gilding so central to the style created at Sèvres.

In practice, this paradox seems to have been fairly easy to reconcile before 1780. Most of the larger private manufactures operated under the patronage of members of

the royal family and had acquired sufficient material quality and artistic skill to compete in the domestic and international market. And the express purpose of the Royal Porcelain Manufacture's privilege was to prevent low-quality products from undermining its hard-won reputation. Because the manufactures supported by royalty had developed enough to not threaten the reputation of French porcelain, the Royal Manufacture was largely content, through selective enforcement of the privilege, to allow them to continue their work unimpeded.

By 1780, however, two developments now challenged this system. First, as the growing number of private manufactures smaller producers took root, they bristled at the restrictions placed on their businesses by the privileges of 1760 and 1766 and resented the selective enforcement of them that had prevailed until then. Having developed their skills and techniques to a degree of perfection they believed was sufficient to compete in luxury markets, they would now demand the freedom to do so. Second, the Royal Porcelain Manufacture itself was coming under increasing financial pressure. As French involvement in the American War of Independence grew, so too did its already enormous debts. Since its nationalization in 1760, the Royal Manufacture had enjoyed an annual contribution from the king intended to cover any losses and to keep the company solvent, an expense justified by the role the manufacture played in elevating the rest of the industry. But with royal finances now squeezed by mounting debts, supporting a company that many thought should be able to cover its own costs appeared to be an unnecessary extravagance. At the same time, an economic downturn dramatically reduced sales, which plummeted nearly 60 percent from a high of 522,128 livres in 1779 to a near all-time low of 210,882 livres in 1780 before gradually

recovering.[3] Furthermore, a problem in the manufacture's account books had led to an enormous budget shortfall and forced a restructuring of how the company handled its finances. By the middle of 1780, the Royal Porcelain Manufacture found itself facing spiraling debts of nearly a quarter million livres.[4] In response to these substantial deficits and the threatened withdrawal of royal funding, the directors at Sèvres decided to use their privilege as a tool not to support the national industry but to salvage their own company. As the burgeoning private manufactures bumped up against the strictures of renewed enforcement of the privilege, they lobbied for the government to change its industrial policy by invoking a new conception of how markets for consumer goods ought to operate. Whereas what existed in 1780 was a segmented industry in which the king's delegates in Sèvres shaped the canons of taste for porcelain, these businessmen now argued for a market unified under the rule of a new sovereign: the consumer.

It seems that space for these claims had been made by the French monarchy's abdication of its role as the sovereign authority over style. Just as the Louis XV style gained prominence, the death of its namesake meant the new king would have an opportunity to create his own style. Yet whereas both of his predecessors had, for over a century, carefully and deliberately invested their authority to create their own styles, Louis XVI does not appear to have been motivated to do so. Instead, from the beginning of his reign the new king gravitated toward the growing vogue for neoclassical styles.[5] Louis XVI was so interested in making classical design the future of Sèvres that in 1786

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[3] AMNS Vy 7 and 8.

[4] AMNS B3 "Mémoire" to Le Noir (November 1779), "Mémoire," Dut (3 April 1780).

[5] John Whitehead, *Sèvres at the Time of Louis XVI and the Revolution: A Meteoric Rise* (Paris: Éditions Courtes et Longues, 2010) 33–49.

he ordered a collection of 525 Etruscan vases, “pieces of antiquity,” to serve as models for the new Sèvres style.[6]

The trouble the neoclassical style presented for the logic of stylistic control that had underpinned the absolutism of Louis XIV and Louis XV was that it did not originate with the monarch, was not exclusive to France, and followed rather than led the social canon of style. The first of these is evident simply by the fact the neoclassical style appealed to the artistic idiom of a distant time and place, and while the communication of its symbolic content was mediated by the receiving culture, it nonetheless carried its own meanings that were absorbed in ways anathema to French monarchical authority. For Kristel Smentek, the late eighteenth-century artistic interest in classical styles had developed as an outgrowth of a discourse of classical style among collectors who included Greek and Roman objects in their cabinets of curiosities. Within this discourse had emerged the idea that there existed distinct national tastes that revealed themselves in objects such as ceramics, with the Greek and Roman taste being fundamentally distinct from the French.[7] Furthermore, as Thomas Crow has shown, in the French artistic world of the 1770s and 1780s, classical style became a weapon against the aging authority of the established order, one that appealed to ancient virtues and linked them with a contemporary public.[8] In a telling episode of this clash, while the old director of Sèvres Jean-Jacques Hettlinger dismissed the Etruscan vases recently

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[6] O^{1} 2061^{3} Letter d’Angiviller to Denon (24 May 1786), Letter Denon to d’Angiviller (7 June 1786). [morceaux d’antiquité]

[7] Kristel Smentek, *Mariette and the Science of the Connoisseur in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014) 199–212; Krzysztof Pomian, *Collectors and Curiosities: Paris and Venice, 1500–1800* (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 1990) 174–84.

[8] Thomas Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985) 211–54.

delivered to Sèvres as beautiful "neither in shape nor ornamentation," the young painter Jacques-Louis David, fresh off the critical and popular success of his neoclassical masterpiece *Oath of the Horatii*, immediately requested the opportunity to visit Sèvres to study the collection.[9]

The second problem neoclassicism presented for the French monarchy was that it was not exclusive to France. Following the rediscovery of Pompeii and Herculaneum in the middle of the eighteenth century, the vogue for all things antiquity spread across Europe. In France, enthusiasts for the neoclassical style included the young queen Marie Antoinette, who quickly embraced a classical aesthetic in both public dress and domestic decoration.[10] But she was not the only monarch to make classical styles a presence in a late eighteenth-century court. In 1776, Empress Catherine II of Russia commissioned an enormous and elaborately decorated service from the Royal Porcelain Manufacture in Sèvres costing 62,433 livres.[11] While securing such a commission may have appeared to be a coup for the French manufacture and its reputation as the premier source of porcelain in Europe, it also moved the company back toward the same position it had been in at its founding when it struggled to assert its own style while fulfilling the designs of others. As is evident on a plate from Catherine's service (figure 4.8), there were distinctively French components to the service, most notably the floral bouquets around the rim and the use of floral garlands to form an "E" at the

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[9] O^1 2061^3 Letter Hettlinger to d'Angiviller (9 June 1786), Letter Spinola to d'Angiviller (2 September 1786).

[10] Caroline Weber, *Queen of Fashion: What Marie Antoinette Wore to the Revolution* (New York: Picador, 2006) 150–1; Kimberly Chrisman-Campbell, *Fashion Victims: Dress at the Court of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015) 172–99.

[11] AMNS B6 "Sommes payées à compte par le Prince Baristinski," Roger (4 December 1778).

Figure 4.8. Plate. Soft-paste porcelain with polychrome enamels and gilding. Royal Porcelain Manufacture, Sèvres, 1778. Courtesy Art Institute of Chicago, 1995.256.

middle of the plate for "Ekaterina." And the blue color used in the ground around the center of the plate was familiar from French soft-paste production in the 1750s. But in comparing this plate with one made in Sèvres just a few years earlier (figure 4.9) the novelty of the Russian service becomes clear. Here too we see the use of a "celestial

Figure 4.9. Plate. Soft-paste porcelain with polychrome enamels and gilding. Royal Porcelain Manufacture, Sèvres, 1771. Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1976.155.62.

blue" ground surrounding a white center where garlands of leaves surround the initials of the royalty for whom the service was destined (in this case the Prince of Rohan). And in both plates we find small frames around the rim within which painters could depict scenes. But here we can also start to see the differences, with the older Sèvres plate

displaying natural scenes of birds while the plate destined for Catherine II instead depicts images of personages and scenes from antiquity in a white-on-red, cameo-style, faux relief drawn from Roman design. Furthermore, the older plate is in the *assiette à palmes* style, notable for the lobed curvature around the edge that compliments the flowing nature of the gilded garlands within the blue ground (this is the same model as in figure 4.1). The Catherine plate, meanwhile, has smooth edges, no cupping on the center of the ground, uses geometric rather than garland designs for the gilding, and has the concentric rings of flowers drawn in regimented lines rather than flowing as garland. Thus, while there remain distinctively French components, the service made on Catherine's orders also introduced a number of neoclassical elements. While the Royal Porcelain Manufacture would continue to use the more natural, flowing, and curved rococo style right up until the end of the Old Regime, it also increasingly created sets and services strictly within the neoclassical style. As it did, the manufacture stopped trying to define a French style as the dominant style and instead adapted itself to a style popular in courts around Europe.

This led to the third problem neoclassicism presented, that it followed styles not just present in other courts but set by a popular market. Perhaps the most notable example of this comes from Josiah Wedgwood, whose English pottery quickly became a major European competitor. Operating as an independent manufacturer without the cultural or financial patronage of a monarch, Wedgwood often published advertisements linking himself to important royal customers as a way of establishing a reputation for quality and taste with consumers.[12] At the same time, he took his cue

[12] Tristram Hunt, *The Radical Potter: The Life and Times of Josiah Wedgwood* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2021) 87–95, 155–8.

from popular tastes and sought to furnish them profitably. In neoclassical style Wedgwood found the perfect combination of a style that was both widely popular and could be mass produced efficiently.[13] Perhaps no other product captures this motivation better than Wedgwood's renowned Jasperware. This material, a new and delicate ceramic he had invented over thousands of experiments in the early 1770s, was suitable for mass manufacturing (at his factory tellingly named "Etruria") for a range of consumer uses from buttons to punch bowls. But what united the line was the use of a pastel background with white relief sculpture of neoclassical subjects.[14] The neoclassical style of jasperware can be seen clearly in this plaque produced by Wedgwood (figure 4.10). Eager to compete with Wedgwood on all fronts, the Royal Porcelain Manufacture soon devised a way to replicate the appearance of Jasperware by painting the background of biscuit porcelain medallions in a light blue color and replicating the

Figure 4.10. Plaque. Jasperware. Josiah Wedgwood and Sons, Stoke-on-Trent, England, c.1785–90. Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, 94.4.366.

[13] Adrian Forty, *Objects of Desire: Design & Society from Wedgwood to IBM* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986) 11–41.

[14] Hunt, *Radical Potter*, 159–70.

Figure 4.11. Plaque. Hard-paste porcelain with colored slip. Royal Porcelain Manufacture, Sèvres, c. 1786. Courtesy British Museum, 1909,1201.218. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

classical imagery. As can be seen in this plaque manufactured at Sèvres shortly before the French Revolution (figure 4.11), the same visual aesthetic of white bas relief on a light blue background unique to Jasperware yet drawn from Roman cameo objects is reproduced in hard-paste biscuit porcelain, as is the obviously classically inspired content: Roman robes, classical pillars, braziers, and cherubs. Here, the Royal Manufacture was attempting to imitate a foreign product, just as it had done with Asian and Saxon porcelain at its founding. In doing so it appealed to the tastes defined by a popular market. The Royal Porcelain Manufacture's embrace of the neoclassical style

thus simultaneously abandoned its own claims to French distinctiveness in Europe and the royal authority over style in France.

These developments in the porcelain industry represented a broader period of transition for the French economy. In the 1980s, historians turned to archival records of after-death inventories conducted in the eighteenth century in an effort to recreate the patterns of material life. What they discovered was that consumer goods in this period increasingly permeated the daily lives of every class of society.[15] There were limits to this increased consumption, particularly caused by structures of geography and class, with widespread poverty preventing mass consumption.[16] The initial enthusiasm that followed the declaration of a "birth of consumer society" in the eighteenth century has been tempered by more recent studies on the fragmented and limited patterns of consumption in this period, particularly their restriction to the few key areas of clothing, drug foods, and accessories.[17] Furthermore, as Leora Auslander has argued, the arrival of a consumer society was slowed by the material temporalities of

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[15] Ad van der Woude and Anton Schuurman, eds. *Probate Inventories: A New Source for the Historical Study of Wealth, Material Culture, and Agricultural Development* (Utrecht: H&S Publishers, 1980); Joël Cornette, "La révolution des objets. Le Paris des inventaires après décès (XVIIe–XVIIIe siècles)," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 36, no. 3 (July–September 1989); Annik Pardailhé-Galabrun, *The Birth of Intimacy: Privacy and Domestic Life in Early Modern Paris*, trans. Jocelyn Phelps (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991); Daniel Roche, *The People of Paris: An Essay in Popular Culture in the 18th Century*, trans Marie Evans with Gwynne Lewis (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 97–196; *idem., A History of Everyday Things: The Birth of Consumption in France, 1600–1800*, trans Brian Pearce (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 54–80, 166–92.

[16] Gérard Béaur, "La révolution industrieuse introuvable," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 64, no. 4 (October–December 2017) 13–7.

[17] Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and JH Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Europa Publications, 1982); Michael Kwass, *The Consumer Revolution, 1650–1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022) 17–32.

production, distribution, and consumption, particularly of durable goods.[18]

Writing in 1913, the economist Werner Sombart argued that the emergence of capitalism could be traced back to the creation of markets for luxury goods to provide objects of distinction to Europe's aristocratic elite.[19] And recent work, particularly by Natacha Coquery, has reinforced the crucial economic role of aristocratic consumption as seeding the future growth of commerce and manufacturing in France.[20] Yet such arguments, while the posit an eventual transition from aristocratic luxury consumption to widespread popular consumption do not explain how this transition took place. They leave unasked and unanswered what changes to business practices and economic policies would be necessary to make this transition possible.

Historians have recently studied a number of ways the broadening of the consumer class impacted late eighteenth-century France. One thread of these studies has focused on the social and symbolic changes brought by the spread of consumption throughout French society. As the pursuit of luxury and fashion spread beyond the halls of Versailles and into the salons of Paris in the second half of the eighteenth century, the monarchy's exclusive control over the material markers of status waned

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[18] Leora Auslander, "Regeneration through the Everyday? Clothing, Architecture, and Furniture in Revolutionary Paris," *Art History* 28, no. 2 (April 2005) 227–47, esp 245–6.

[19] Werner Sombart, *Luxury and Capitalism*, trans. WR Dittmar (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1967).

[20] Natacha Coquery, "Hôtel, luxe et société de cour : Le marché aristocratique parisien au XVIIIe siècle," *Histoire & Mesure* 10, no. 3–4 (1995) 339–69; *idem.*, "L'art de consommer : La mentalité économique des courtisans parisiens à la fin de l'Ancien Régime," in *La cour comme institution économique*, eds. Maurice Aymard and Marzio A Romani (Paris: Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1998) 183–90; François Cruzet, "Some Remarks on the *Métiers d'Art*," in *Luxury Trades and Consumerism in* Ancien Régime *Paris: Studies in the History of the Skilled Workforce*, eds. Robert Fox and Anthony Turner (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1998) 263–86. For similar arguments in Britain, see: Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

and was eclipsed by the rising star of bourgeois society.[21] Another thread has examined the political consequences of these symbolic and social changes by showing how this transition quickly politicized access to commodities as people asserted their rights as both citizens and consumers. Given the gravity of the French Revolution in the historiography of France, it is little surprise that much of this work has drawn direct lines between popular consumption and the Revolution.[22]

Meanwhile, as political economy has begun to emerge in recent historiography as the quintessential Enlightenment science, the ideation of a public constitutive of both political and economic order has gained recognition as a contributing factor to the French Revolution.[23] One thread of this research has examined the economic, social, and

[21] Sheryl Kroen, "A Political History of the Consumer," *Historical Journal* 47, no. 3 (September 2004) 712–7; Leora Auslander, *Taste and Power: Furnishing Modern France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996) 51–74, 147–85; *idem., Cultural Revolutions: Everyday Life and Politics in Britain, North America, and France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009) 113–48; Philip Mansel, *The Court of France, 1789–1830* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 3–47; Daniel Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the 'Ancien Régime,'* trans. Jean Birrell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 86–150.

[22] For recent work connecting consumer culture to the French Revolution, see: Colin Jones, "The Great Chain of Buying: Medical Advertisement, the Bourgeois Public Sphere, and the Origins of the French Revolution," *American Historical Review* 101, no. 1 (February 1996) 13–40; Colin Jones and Rebecca Spang, *"Sans-culottes, sans café, sans tabac*: Shifting Realms of Necessity and Luxury in Eighteenth-Century France," in *Consumers and Luxury: Consumer Culture in Europe, 1650–1850*, eds. Maxine Berg and Helen Cllifford (New York: Manchester University Press, 1999) 37–62; William H Sewell, jr., "The Empire of Fashion and the Rise of Capitalism in Eighteenth-Century France," *Past & Present* no. 206 (February 2010) 81–120; Michael Kwass, *Louis Mandrin and the Making of a Global Underground* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014) 318–53; Rebecca L Spang, *Stuff and Money in the Time of the French Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015); Katie Jarvis, *Politics in the Marketplace: Work, Gender, and Citizenship in Revolutionary France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019); William H Sewell, jr., *Capitalism and the Emergence of Civic Equality in Eighteenth-Century France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021).

[23] Emma Rothschild, *Economic Sentiments: Adam Smith, Condorcet, and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001) 157–94; Michael Sonenscher, *Before*

political ramifications of shifting patterns of consumption in the late eighteenth century through the debate over luxury. As these historians have demonstrated, the concept of luxury gradually changed over the course of the eighteenth century from being a moral category to a being a political critique and potential source of economic growth. In the process, as luxury became increasingly accessible to the broader public, it gave the people a rhetorical platform from which to shape political and even national identity.[24]

Collectively, this work has emphasized the historical connections between the growth of consumer culture and the combined social, political, and intellectual origins of the French Revolution. In doing so, it has explored the various ways consumers and intellectuals in the late eighteenth century responded to the effects of increased consumption by rethinking long-held conceptual categories. This chapter builds on this body of scholarship by considering how changing conceptions of demand came to restructure business practices, both at the level of state policy and at the level of the firm. For manufacturers to profit within a more open consumer society, they had to adapt their inherited conceptions of value, methods of accounting, and labor relations to a new reality in which prices set by consumer demand had to be internalized into the process of industrial production. As they did, they invoked consumer demand to both justify economic liberalism and necessitate labor controls as they developed a self-

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the Deluge: Public Debt, Inequality, and the Intellectual Origins of the French Revolution (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

[24] Christopher J Berry, *The Idea of Luxury: A Conceptual and Historical Investigation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Michael Kwass, "Ordering the World of Goods: Consumer Revolution and the Classification of Objects in Eighteenth-Century France," *Representations* 82, no. 1 (Spring 2003) 87–117; Serge Latouche, *L'invention de l'économie* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2005) 175–91; John Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue: Luxury, Patriotism, and the Origins of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006); Clare Haru Crowston, *Credit, Fashion, Sex: Economies of Regard in Old Regime France* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013) 246–82; Audrey Provost, *Le luxe, les Lumières et la Révolution* (Seyssel, France: Champ Vallon, 2014).

consciously capitalistic approach to business. By examining consumer demand as a unifying thread between market-based economic policies, cost accounting, and nascent capitalism, this chapter shows how the emergence of a consumer society changed the way business was conducted.

Conceiving the Consumer

The catalyst for the debate over the future of the French porcelain industry came at the turn of 1780 when the directors of the Royal Porcelain Manufacture ordered the police to raid several manufactures in the Paris basin for violating its monopoly privileges in the hopes that doing so would leave Sèvres as the sole remaining provider in the luxury market.[25] Under the penalties enumerated by the 1766 privilege, this would be a crushing blow: all manufactures found guilty of violating the Royal Porcelain Manufacture's monopoly by sculpting, gilding, or painting with multiple colors faced immediate seizure of all their goods, a three thousand-livre fine, the razing of their kilns, and a lifetime ban on the owners from manufacturing porcelain ever again. In early spring, a series of police raids on manufactures and boutiques discovered stores of contraband porcelain manufactured by the producers at Clignancourt, St Denis, rue Thiroux, rue Fontaine au Roy, bourg la Reine, and Sceaux and confiscated every last piece of merchandise found on site.[26]

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[25] AMNS A4 Letter [de Mauroy] to Lieutenant General of Police (14 December 1779); AMNS B3 "Affaires de la manufacture royale" (1780).

[26] AMNS A4 "Procès verbal de saisie sur le Sieur Le Bœuf" (28 January 1780), Letter de Mauroy to Lieutenant General of Police (15 February 1780), Letter to Lieutenant General of Police (28 February 1780), Letter to Lieutenant General of Police (8 March 1780), Letter de Mauroy to Lieutenant General of Police (11 March 1780), "Procès verbal de saisie sur le Sieur Jaquetes" (20 March 1780), "Procès verbal de saisie sur le Sieur Glot" (20 March 1780), Letter Cousin to Lieutenant General of Police (11 April 1780), Letter de

The targeted manufacturers' immediate reaction to the crackdown was to plead for leniency. After all, the manufacturers argued, many of these companies predated both the 1760 privilege and even the Royal Porcelain Manufacture itself and had always gilded and painted in multiple colors without problem.[27] Government officials accepted this defense and urged leniency. After all, the officials responded, the purpose of the privilege had been to establish the Royal Manufacture "as a point of emulation and a support for the industry" designed to share with it "everything that is about taste and invention," "not as the enemy" of the industry.[28] This was an about face for these bureaucrats, who just five years earlier had refused requests to allow manufacturers to gild and paint in multiple colors because "the king's intention is not to grant [this exception] to any establishment."[29] Now they recommended discretely conveying to inquiring manufacturers the "little concession" that they be permitted to continue operating in violation of the privilege.[30] But to the directors at the Royal Porcelain Manufacture trying to stanch its financial losses, such tacit permission to violate its monopoly was tantamount to renouncing the system of privilege entirely.[31] Thus, they

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Mauroy to Buffenoux (20 April 1780), Letter de Mauroy to Lieutenant General of Police (15 August 1780).

[27] AMNS A3 Letter Glot to Régnier [1780], Letter owners of the manufacture at Rue Thiroux [1780]; AMNS A4 Letter de Mauroy to Jurien (13 March 1780).

[28] AN O[1] 2059[1] Letter Bertin to Inspector General of Police (7 May 1780); AMNS A3 Letter Bertin to Le Noir (7 May 1780). [comme un point d'émulation et un secours pour l'industrie] [tout ce qui est du goût et de l'invention] [non comme l'ennemie]

[29] AN O[1] 2062[1] Letter Beaupoil and St Aulaire to Bertin (15 January 1775), Letter Bertin to Beaupoil and St Aulaire (8 March 1775), Letter Bertin to Trudaine (18 March 1775). [l'intention du roy n'est pas de l'accorder plutôt à aucun établissement]

[30] AMNS A3 Letter de Clerigny to Régnier [10 May 1780], Letter Bertin to Le Noir (12 May 1780), Letter Le Noir to Bertin (14 May 1780).

[31] AMNS A3 "Réponse au mémoire du propriétaire de la manufacture de porcelaine établie à Sceaux" [Spring 1780], "Observation sur la porcelaine de Monsieur le Normand," Boileau [c. 1780].

pressed the issue and sparked a debate over the relationship between industry and state that would continue for two decades. As the director of the Royal Manufacture had presciently predicted just months before the entire affair started, private manufacturers had been holding their tongues about their liberal opinions in the hopes of avoiding attention so that they might "hide their impertinence."[32] But, once outed, they no longer had reason to remain silent.

The first protestations against the spring raids came, unsurprisingly, from the royal patrons of many of the targeted manufactures. The king's brother had extended his "eminent protection" to the manufacture in Clignancourt, the Marquis of la Salle had extended his to the manufacture in St Denis, and the queen had extended hers to the manufacture on rue Thiroux in order to "protect, and also encourage the industry of her subjects."[33] This meant that the initial response to the Royal Manufacture's efforts to defend its privileges was simply to assert counterbalancing privileges granted by other members of the royal family.

The Royal Manufacture, seeking to retain both its privilege and annual royal contribution, first responded at this superficial level. The Royal Porcelain Manufacture, its management argued, "is not simply a Royal Manufacture, but the King's Manufacture, managed for and on behalf of his majesty...to furnish for the service of his majesty and of his royal family, porcelains of every type" as well as to supply

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[32] AMNS A3 Letter Régnier to Lieutenant General of Police (25 July 1779). [ils cachent leurs impertinence]

[33] AMNS A3 Letter de Mauroy to Le Noir (13 May 1780), Letter Jolivet to de Mauroy (10 November [1780]); AMNS A4 Letter Barreau to Regnier (29 April 1780), Letter de Mauroy to Demilly (23 May 1780). [protection éminente] [protéger, et même encourager l'industrie de ses sujets]

diplomatic gifts.[34] Furthermore, by providing exemplary training and stable employment for highly skilled workers that might otherwise emigrate, Sèvres helped retain the skills on which France's international reputation for taste and quality depended. Because in the absence of a Royal Porcelain Manufacture these needs would be met by imported goods, sustaining the Royal Manufacture through a monopoly privilege and annual contributions was the cheapest option and one that "concerns the magnificence of the Prince, commerce, national industry and humanity."[35] These arguments quickly backfired. In an unexpected rift with his own advisors, officials, and company, Louis XVI responded that in the future the Royal Manufacture must pursue these laudable goals at lower cost and with a smaller annual contribution from the Crown. If their arguments were true, he reasoned, the monopoly ought to at least be able to cover its own expenses.[36] Arguments in favor of the system of privileges would henceforth have to justify themselves not with the wellbeing of the privileged company, but with the ramifications for the industry as a whole.

As the debate intensified, private manufacturers broadened their critique. Rather than arguing about individual privileges, they now denounced the 1780 crackdown and the whole system of privileges it represented as an "astonishing contradiction!"[37] They acknowledged readily that the Royal Manufacture had served a crucial role in

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[34] AMNS A3 Note (20 July 1782). [n'est pas simplement une Manufacture Royale, mais une Manufacture du Roi, régie pour et au compte de sa majesté...à fournir pour le service de sa majesté et de sa famille royale, des porcelaines en tout genre]

[35] AMNS A1 "Mémoire régie pour et au [...] du Roi" [c. 1780]; AMNS A3 "Mémoire," de Mauroy [c. 1780]; AN F^{12} 1493^{1} "Mémoire" (7 July 1780); AN O^{1} 2061^{2bis} "Compte rendu," d'Ormesson to d'Angiviller (15 September 1783). [intéresse la magnificence du Prince, le commerce, l'industrie nationale et l'humanité]

[36] AMNS A3 "Régie pour et au compte du Roy" [1780].

[37] AMNS A3 Letter Renard to Necker (3 August 1780). [étonnante contradiction !]

supporting the French porcelain industry by promoting its technological and artistic development. The 1760 and 1766 privileges had been successful in the sense that they had enabled dozens of private manufactures to establish themselves under the umbrella of Sèvres's reputation for quality and taste. But now these private manufactures had attained a "degree of taste and perfection" sufficient to enable them to compete not just with Asian imports, but with those from Saxony as well. "The French," they reminded their bureaucratic interlocutors, "are ingenious and have a distinctive taste unknown to other nations" that would captivate foreign consumers and conquer foreign markets if they were only permitted to do so.[38] Such arguments embraced the long-held belief in French superiority in issues of luxury and taste, but both naturalized them and essentialized them on behalf of the free-market claims of French manufacturers. As French manufacturers, of course they could compete internationally on the basis of the quality of their wares. Yet just as they were finally in a position to conquer the French and European luxury markets, the directors of these manufactures lamented, the assertion of the royal privilege threatened to reduce their market to the cheapest dregs where quality had to be abandoned in favor of cost. If the intent of French industrial strategy had been to raise the quality of French porcelain to the point where it could compete with the finest manufactures in the world on material mastery and artistic excellence, they asked, why would it now subvert this strategy at the very moment it had succeeded?[39] Whatever utility the Royal Porcelain Manufacture's privilege may have once served, it was now past time to abolish it.

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[38] AMNS A3 "Mémoire concernant les défences de peindre et dorer sur la porcelaine" [1780]; AN F[12] 1494[1] "Mémoire sur les manufactures de porcelaines" [c. 1784]. [degré de goût et de perfection] [Les français] [sont ingénieux et ont un goût particulier inconnu aux autres nations]

[39] AMNS B3 "Mémoire," Dut (3 April 1780); AN F[12] "Consultation" (10 April 1785).

Underlying the private manufacturers' arguments about their capacity to supply the market was a deeper argument about the role of demand in the economy. While the luxury market had once been the preserve of the court aristocracy, the emergence of an urban bourgeoisie and the shifting of elite society from Versailles to Paris had created a concentrated and educated consumer market. In a collective rebuff of a recalibrated set of privileges being considered by royal officials, the owners of several Parisian manufactures argued that Paris had become a "city in which primarily resides good taste." "The taste of the consumer," they continued, "has grown in proportion to the ease it has found to satisfy it."[40] With the emergence of a consumer class, according to a group of lawyers representing Parisian porcelain manufacturers, there now existed a public to be considered: "The public, whose utility should be the end and the measure of all the government's plans." There was nothing new in political economy about the desire to increase the public welfare, but now it was being argued that only consumers could decide what would bring them the greatest utility. And the public's utility apparently included its ability to access the luxury goods to which it had grown accustomed. "The public interest" thus now demanded access to a range of products without the arbitrary restriction that inflated monopoly prices imposed. In place of monopoly privileges that raised prices, competition should now serve as "the protection or the remedy."[41]

These private porcelain manufacturers were not the only ones advocating for the

[40] AN F[12] 1494[1] "Mémoire sur les manufactures de porcelaines" [c. 1784]. [ville dans laquelle réside essentiellement le bon goût] [Le goût du consommateur] [s'est accru en proportion de la facilité qu'il a trouvé à le satisfaire]

[41] AN F[12] 1494[1] "Consultation" (10 April 1785). [Le public, dont l'utilité doit être le but et le mesure de toutes les spéculations du gouvernement] [L'intérêt publique] [le préservatif ou le remède]

relaxation of market regulations in this period. In response to changes in economic thought in the second half of the eighteenth century, government officials proved increasingly willing to turn market operations over to market forces, albeit in fits and starts over several decades.[42] Underlying this liberalizing push was a new conception about the economic equilibrium and systemic balance produced by individuals pursuing their own interests.[43] And at the center of this conception lay a novel view of the consumer that had first emerged in political economy during the eighteenth century, according to which consumers seek a "utility" by purchasing goods and services and thus generate a market price. When it came to understanding their own subjective utility, these manufacturers were telling the king, it was the consumer who was sovereign.

The idea that consumers' use value helped determine market prices had been

[42] On the loosening of economic regulations in this period, see: Steven L Kaplan, *Bread, Politics and Political Economy in the Reign of Louis XV* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhof, 1976); Harold T Parker, *The Bureau of Commerce in 1781 and Its Policies with Respect to French Industry* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 1979); *idem., An Administrative Bureau under the Old Regime: The Bureau of Commerce and Its Relations to French Industry from May 1781 to November 1783* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1993); Jean-Pierre Hirsch, *Les deux rêves du Commerce : Entreprise et institution dans la région lilloise (1780–1860)* (Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1991); Paul Butel, *L'économie française au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Sedes, 1993) 266–76; Alain Plessis, ed. *Naissance des libertés économiques. Liberté du travail et liberté d'entreprendre : le décret d'Allarde et la loi Le Chapelier, leurs conséquences, 1791–fin XIXe siècle* (Paris: Institut d'Histoire de l'Industrie, 1993); Philippe Minard, *La Fortune du Colbertisme : État et industrie dans la France des Lumières* (Paris: Fayard, 1998) 263–374; Judith A Miller, *Mastering the Market: The State and the Grain Trade in Northern France, 1700–1860* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Felicia Gottman, *Global Trade, Smuggling, and the Making of Economic Liberalism: Asian Textiles in France, 1680–1760* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

[43] Albert O Hirschsman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before its Triumph* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977); Simone Meysonnier, *La balance et l'horloge : La genèse de la pensée libérale en France au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Éditions de la Passion, 1989); Jean-Claude Perrot, *Une Histoire Intellectuelle de l'économie politique, XVIIe–XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1992) 195–286.

present in French economic thinking since the Middle Ages. Following the interpretations of Aristotle by medieval authors such as Thomas Aquinas, Jean Buridan, and Nicolas Oresme, there was understood to be a distinction between market price and normal price.[44] It was readily acknowledged that the specific balance of supply and demand in any given transaction led to a unique market price, but this price was considered and evaluated in relation to the normal price for that good. Crucial to this understanding of a normal price was its social context: the social esteem of the producer, the social status of the consumer, the socially determined patterns of demand, and the perfection of the product in relation to top-down social conventions.[45]

By the late eighteenth century, however, the hierarchy that had been so important for earlier determinations of value was being replaced by a new, more open social order. Meanwhile, there was also a reconceptualization of value taking place within political economy. Visible in the writings of Ferdinando Galiani, Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, and Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot, a new idea was emerging about consumer utility.[46] While use value had for centuries been understood to shape demand

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[44] Barry Gordon, *Economic Analysis before Adam Smith: Hesiod to Lessius* (New York: Macmillan, 1975) 53–69, 174–86, 218–43; Diana Wood, *Medieval Economic Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 132-155; Lianna Farber, *An Anatomy of Trade in Medieval Writing: Value, Consent, and Community* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006) 28–68; Nicholas J Theocarakis, "'Nichomachean Ethics' in Political Economy: The Trajectory of the Problem of Value," *History of Economic Ideas* 14, no. 1 (2006) 18–22; Odd Langholm, "Buridan on Value and Economic Measurement," *History of Political Economy* 38, no. 2 (Summer 2006) 269–89.

[45] Jean-Yves Grenier, "Modèles de la demande sous l'Ancien Régime," *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 42, no. 3 (1987) 497–527; *idem.*, "Consommation et marché au XVIIIe siècle," *Histoire & Mesure* 10, no. 3–4 (1995) 371–80; *idem.*, *L'économie d'Ancien Régime : Un monde de l'échange et de l'incertitude* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1996) 63–78, 299–302.

[46] A Dubois, "Les théories psychologiques de la valeur au XVIIIe siècle," *Revue d'économie politique* 11, no. 8/9 (1897) 849–64; Hannah R Sewall, *The Theory of Value before*

and thus price, emphasis was placed on the way use value was derived from objective social and biological factors. Now, however, use value was argued to be individual and subjective. This did not mean there were not social factors that influenced use value, only that utility could not be understood directly from these social factors, only through the actions of individuals. While at one level this argument was an intellectual debate over the epistemological foundations of political economy, it also had direct ramifications on the practice of economic policy. If you could not know what the value of goods would be, you could not communicate what they should be.

This same conceptualization of consumers' subjective use values determining prices was embedded within the Parisian porcelain manufacturers' legal argument. According to their lawyers, the problem of monopoly pricing in the absence of competition was that it "gives an *arbitrary value*."[47] But arbitrary compared to what? In modern economics, the definition of a monopolistic firm is one that has the ability to act as a price maker, while a competitive firm has to act as a price taker. Taking a price entails the existence of an external market whose forces of supply and demand operate so as to generate a given price for a given commodity that, in order to remain competitive, the firm must accept. For neoclassical economists in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the mechanics of consumer demand operate out of an impenetrable black box and are revealed through market actions that demand specific quantities at specific prices within the market.[48] Neoclassical economics would thus assume the

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Adam Smith (New York: Macmillan, 1901) 91–112; Émile Morand *La théorie psychologique de la valeur jusqu'en 1776* (Bordeaux: Imprimerie de l'Université, 1912) 149–314.

[47] AN F[12] 1494[1] "Consultation" (10 April 1785). Italics added. [donner une valeur arbitraire]

[48] Alfred Marshall, *Principles of Economics: An Introductory Volume*, 8th ed. (New York: Macmillan Company, 1948) 15–6; Paul A Samuelson, "A Note on the Pure Theory of Consumers' Behavior," *Economica*, new series 5, no. 17 (February 1938) 61–71; *idem*.,

preexistence of sufficient consumer demand to compel the market mechanism into action. Following a similar logic, by promoting competition as a remedy that would improve public utility by removing monopoly and its "arbitrary values," opponents of the privilege system implicitly asserted the preexistence of a consumer market cohesive enough to effectively set prices for firms to take.

The owners of the Parisian porcelain manufactures believed that, domestically and internationally, consumers "prefer our forms and our designs." All they asked for was the opportunity to meet this existing demand.[49] Their legal representatives acknowledged the interest of the state in balancing the supply of porcelain with its demand in order to prevent a speculative glut that could topple the entire industry. But, they maintained, the manufactures would "only make that which they are...certain to be able to sell: and the government has an infallible guarantee to assure that the harm, if it exists, will soon stop. This is also the interest of the entrepreneurs."[50] In other words, they argued, the consumer had become the determinant force in the market, and competition and self-interest would be sufficient to ensure an orderly economy.

The defenders of the royal privilege were not yet convinced of the wisdom or power of the consumer class, however. The Minister of Finances Jacques Necker was brought in to mediate the initial complaints in 1780 and did so by maintaining much of

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"Consumption Theory in Terms of Revealed Preference," *Economica*, new series 15, no. 60 (November 1948) 243–53; George J Stigler and Gary S Becker, "De Gustibus Non Est Disputandum," *American Economic Review* 67, no. 2 (March 1977) 76–90.

[49] AN F[12] 1494[1] "Mémoire sur les manufactures de porcelaines" [c. 1784]. [préférant nos formes et nos desseins]

[50] AN F[12] 1494[1] "Consultation" (10 April 1785). [ne fabriquent plus que ce qu'ils sont...certains de pouvoir vendre : et le gouvernement a un garant infaillible pour s'assurer que le mal, s'il existe, ne tardera pas à cesser. C'est l'intérêt même des entrepreneurs]

the existing privilege, though permitting private manufactures to now gild the edges of their pieces and to produce small vases.[51] Underlying his decision were two beliefs related to the strength of the consumer marketplace. First, Necker implicitly recognized limitations to consumer knowledge about the quality of manufactured goods. For Necker, consumers in this period relied on the reputation of manufacturers to gauge the quality of their products. He believed this was especially true for international consumers far removed from the product's place of origin.[52]

Necker's concerns aligned with those of the defenders of the Royal Porcelain Manufacture's privilege who worried about the impact of counterfeits on the market. With the opening of new decorative and stylistic opportunities to private manufactures through the relaxation of the privilege, officials feared that these private manufacturers would use the opportunity "to imitate, or to speak more accurately to counterfeit" the products from Sèvres.[53] They were concerned not that these private producers would only mimic Sèvres's styles, but that they would "aspire to make absolutely the same things as the King's [manufacture]."[54] The ramifications of such actions would be twofold. First, it would lead private manufactures to poach workers trained at the Royal Manufacture's expense in order to appropriate their valuable skills and stolen designs

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[51] AMNS A3 Letter Necker (7 September 1780), "Proposition des manufactures particulières," [Necker] [1780].

[52] AMNS A3 "Observations pour Monsieur le lieutenant général de police," [Necker] [1780].

[53] AN O^1 2059^1 Letter Fleury to d'Angiviller (4 July 1782). [a imiter, ou pour parler plus correctement à contrefaire]

[54] AN O^1 2061^{2bis} Letter d'Angiviller to Calonne (24 August 1785); AN O^1 2060^1 Letter d'Angiviller to Calonne (24 December 1783). [aspirent à faire absolument les mêmes choses que [la manufacture] du Roy]

for the purpose of counterfeiting them.[55] More importantly, however, it was feared that even with these workers the manufacturers themselves "who have...neither the taste, not the goodness of that of the royal manufacture, will tend to discredit [the royal] manufacture in the mind of foreign nations who until now have admired it."[56]

The emphasis in these arguments on the importance of reputation in the international market reveals a changing understanding of the consumer market and its limitations. The defenders of privilege did ostensibly worry that domestic consumers would be "cheated" by counterfeit goods.[57] But they also believed that the burgeoning domestic market was primarily oriented toward products much more affordable than those produced by the Royal Porcelain Manufacture or counterfeited by its rivals. Though opposed to the swindling of consumers, this concern was not sufficient to drive industrial policy. Rather, the overriding fear was that the exportation of "defective and poorly painted porcelains under the name of porcelain from France" would "discredit French porcelain."[58] Thus, whereas the opponents of privilege argued that the luxury market within Paris had grown sufficiently large to produce a consumer class educated enough on both quality and taste to be entrusted with making purchasing decisions, proponents of privilege argued that over vast distances such knowledge could not be

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[55] AN F^{12} 1493^{1} "Projet d'arrêt" [early 1784], "Projet d'arrêt" (January 1784).

[56] AN O^{1} 2059^{1} "Exposition et réfutation des raisons alléguées contre le privilège exclusif de la manufacture royale de Sèvres de fabriquer des porcelaines dorées, peintes, etc." [c. 1780]. [qui n'ayant...ni le goût, ni la bonté de celle de la manufacture royale, tendra à discréditer cette manufacture dans l'esprit des nations étrangères qui jusqu'ici l'ont admirée]

[57] AMNS A3 "Observations pour Monsieur le Lieutenant Général de Police," [Necker] [1780], Letter Joly de Fleury to d'Angiviller (3 July 1782); AN O^{1} 2059^{1} Letter Fleury to d'Angiviller (4 July 1782). [trompé]

[58] AN F^{12} 1493^{1} "Projet d'arrêt" [early 1784]; AN O^{1} 2060^{1} Letter d'Angiviller [to Calonne?] [Late 1783]. [les porcelaines défectueux et mal peintes sous le nom de porcelaine de France] [discréditer la porcelaine de France]

assumed and that regulations were therefore required to protect the reputation of French porcelain as a whole in international markets. Whereas the opponents of privilege argued that freedom of industry was necessary to meet the demands of the consumer, the proponents of privilege argued that transmitting reliable knowledge to the consumer remained a necessary step for protecting industry.

Necker's second disagreement with the private manufacturers' position dealt with the ability of suppliers to accurately assess demand and their capacity adapt to it collectively. In their arguments against the Royal Porcelain Manufacture's privilege on certain types of decorations, private producers claimed that they were bound by what they could sell and would thus only produce what consumers would purchase. But for Necker there remained a difference between the functioning of the market as a whole and the motivations for individual producers to seek the most *potentially* profitable market niche for themselves. He feared that if private manufacturers were all granted permission to enter the highest luxury markets where prices and thus profits were expected to be astronomical, they would all do so. To compete in this market with the Royal Porcelain Manufacture (as well as foreign royal manufacturers), however, they would first have to invest enormous sums in the advanced skills and techniques and expensive materials and equipment needed to meet the high expectations of material and artistic quality in elite markets. Given the already high quality of the Royal Porcelain Manufacture's products following the substantial investments it had made over decades, Necker believed the private manufacturers would never be able to catch up with the quality of its wares and so would have to beat it by selling at prices much lower than those that would cover their investments: "What results, if the buyers are cheated, the sellers are equally [cheated because they] spent money in order to create the illusion that their porcelains were equal to those of the King." To make their

investments the private manufacturers would all take out loans, and when the bubble of "speculations" granted in anticipation of imagined profits met with the disappointments of reality and burst it would cause a glut that could take down the entire industry with it.[59] What Necker feared, in a sense, was a tragedy of the commons in the market for the uncommon. He seems to have assumed the existence of a highly informed and discerning consumer class, but only at the very highest stratum of the market and too small to support numerous interloping producers. Necker's decision to grant only a very limited relaxation of the Royal Manufacture's privilege reveals, therefore, a lingering doubt in the mind of officials about the power of consumer demand to effectively discipline suppliers, about the strength and spread of its sovereignty.

Necker's opinion was echoed by a range of officials who worried the balance between supply and demand was not inherently stable. By their estimation, demand for common porcelains accounted for 90 percent of the domestic porcelain market and should have offered enough opportunity to occupy the private manufacturers.[60] But rather than compete within this broad consumer market, these officials believed, each private manufacturer would try to break into the more lucrative luxury market, "always wanting to attempt the best...rather than sure or real profit."[61] Within the

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[59] AMNS A3 "Observations pour Monsieur le Lieutenant Général de Police," [Necker] [1780]; AN F[12] 1493[1] "Projet d'arrêt" (5 September 1780). [Qu'en résulte, si les acheteurs sont trompés, les vendeurs le sont également [because they made] de dépense pour établir l'illusion de l'assimilation de leurs porcelaines aux celles du Roy] [spéculations]

[60] AN O[1] 2059[1] "Exposition et réfutation des raisons alléguées contre le privilège exclusif de la manufacture royale de Sèvres de fabriquer des porcelaines dorées, peintes, etc." [c. 1780].

[61] AMNS A3 "Note sur la situation à la manufacture en 1783" [1783]. [qu'à de voulais toujours tenter le mieux...qu'à profit sûr ou réel]

luxury market, therefore, private producers were producing a "quantity of porcelain that...greatly exceeds the output that can be made," a situation "equally damaging" for the common consumers deprived of products as for the manufacturers who would bankrupt themselves chasing after an elusive elite consumer class.[62]

As the defenders of the Royal Manufacture's privilege saw it, the porcelain market was segmented. Since its founding, the French porcelain industry had been framed in relation to its foreign competitors. With the establishment of European manufactures and their conquest of the luxury market, the distinction between Asian and European styles became the dividing line between the market for luxury goods and the market for common goods. In markets for everyday goods comprised of homogeneous commodities, price competition drove down costs and benefitted the consumer because the market was unified and transparent, quality being relatively fixed and price the only variable.[63] In the market for common goods, therefore, officials were increasingly willing to accept demand as a positive market force. In the market for everyday porcelain, their policies sought to encourage "abundance in the fabrication [of] simple and practical forms, easily made, a simply agreeable appearance and a price that everyone can approach." In the eyes of royal officials, this "everyone" was comprised of "those of ignorance, of bad taste or of the greed of the greatest number of buyers."[64] By restricting private manufactures to this market for everyday porcelain,

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[62] AN F[12] 1493[1] "Projet d'arrêt" (28 April 1784). [quantité de porcelaine qui...excède de beaucoup le débit qui peut s'en faire] [également nuisible]

[63] AMNS A3 Letter Joly de Fleury to d'Angiviller (12 October 1782).

[64] AN F[12] 1494[1] "Observations sur les demandes des petites manufactures," [d'Angiviller] [1787], "Petites manufactures de porcelaine," d'Angiviller [1786]; AN K/909/28 "Observations sur les demandes des petites manufactures de porcelaines contre la manufacture royale," d'Ancer (29 December 1786). Interestingly, both d'Angiviller and d'Ancer use the phrases "d'ignorance" and "du mauvais goût" to describe common consumers. [l'abondance dans la fabrication [of] des formes

continuing the Royal Porcelain Manufacture's privilege would ensure that they would continue to lower their prices and "subjugate themselves strictly to the taste and aptitude of the greatest number of consumers."[65]

The market for luxury goods, however, followed its own logic. Here the defining characteristic was that each object was unique. The principles of competition that operated in everyday markets did not function in luxury markets, royal officials argued, because luxury was not an everyday commodity.[66] Luxury was art. As art, "luxury demands equally meticulousness on the side of taste and richness in the work and in the execution....all the delicacy and the resources of art and an exquisite taste."[67] And, as art, the size of the public who could both afford and appreciate luxury was limited and had to be limited: "superfluity diminishes all of its magnificence."[68] Yes, the Royal Porcelain Manufacture ought to serve a didactic role for the public in demonstrating

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commodes et simples, un travail facile, un coup d'œil simplement agréable et un prix dont tout le monde puisse approcher] [tout le monde] [ceux de l'ignorance, du mauvais goût ou de l'avarice du plus grand nombre d'acheteurs]

[65] AN O[1] 2060[1] "Compte rendu au Comité des finances concernant la manufacture royale des porcelaines de la France," d'Angiviller (28 August 1783). [s'assujettir strictement au goût et aux facilités du plus grand nombre des consommateurs]

[66] AN F[12] 1494[1] Letter d'Angiviller to Calonne (12 January 1787).

[67] AN K/909/28 "Observations sur les demandes des petites manufactures de porcelaines contre la manufacture royale," d'Ancer (29 December 1786); AMNS A3 Letter de Mauroy to [d'Angiviller] [Late 1783]. [ce luxe demande également la recherche du côté du goût et la richesse dans le travail et dans l'exécution....toutes les finesses et les ressources de l'art et un goût exquis]

[68] AN F[12] 1494[1] "Observations sur les demandes des petites manufactures," [d'Angiviller] [1787], "Petites manufactures de porcelaine," d'Angiviller [1786]; AMNS A2 "Mémoire" (1777); AN K/909/28 "Observations sur les demandes des petites manufactures de porcelaines contre la manufacture royale," d'Ancer (29 December 1786). Interestingly, both d'Angiviller and d'Ancer also use the phrase "étale toute sa magnificence" here. [le superflu étale toute sa magnificence]

perfection in technique and taste.[69] But, much like the princess who could not sleep atop a single pea no matter how many mattresses lay in between her and it, ultimately only "the man of a distinguished rank in society...or more often the wealthy man of exquisite taste" would be able to appreciate the mastery of Sèvres. "It is only a matter of the greatness and the majesty of the monarch who gives, of the importance of the person who receives, and always of the glory of the nation; here the [royal] manufacture has no rival."[70] The royal position was therefore to uphold that there were various strata in the market, and that while the demand of the masses may be capable of positively guiding the markets for common products, they were categorically incapable of shaping the market for luxury items, a market whose demand must be reserved for the aristocracy.

As may be expected, private manufacturers did not particularly agree with these assessments. In their eyes, there was but one market with countless gradations of quality and price from which all consumers made decisions. While the new privilege implemented in 1780 permitted private manufactures to expand their product lines by painting in multiple colors and gilding around the edges, the follow-up privilege passed in 1784 and strengthened in 1787 restructured the market in a new way. Citing the desire to both ensure an adequate supply of porcelain products for the public and protect against counterfeiting and speculation, these privileges did away with much of the segmented market structure. In place of two markets divided between the ornate

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[69] AN O[1] 2060[1] "Compte rendu au Comité des finances concernant la manufacture royale des porcelaines de France," d'Angiviller (28 August 1783).

[70] AN K/909/28 "Observations sur les demandes des petites manufactures de porcelaines contre la manufacture royale," d'Ancer (29 December 1786). [l'homme d'un rang distingué dans la société...ou plus souvent encore qu'à l'homme opulent et d'un gout exquis] [Il ne s'agit que de la grandeur et de la majesté du monarque qui donne, de l'importance du personnage qui reçoit, et toujours de la gloire de la nation ; ici la manufacture [royale] n'a point de rivale]

and the affordable, the new unified market would promote "the competition of several manufactures who make porcelains at different prices." Private manufactures would still be prohibited from undertaking large decorative pieces, and the direct "counterfeit" of Sèvres designs would remain illegal, but otherwise they would be permitted to produce at will. The one caveat was that henceforth all porcelain manufactures would have to register a distinctive *marque*—literally a mark or imprint and subsequently the word for "brand"—with the state and print it on the bottom of all their products.[71]

Requiring manufactures to brand their products ushered in a new era for the French porcelain industry. The system inaugurated with the creation of the Royal Porcelain Manufacture in 1760 and the privileges of 1760 and 1766 reserved for it alone the right to produce all but the most basic pieces of porcelain in order to establish a reputation for taste and quality for all French porcelain. Such a policy made sense in an era when consumer access to information was frequently limited to country of origin, especially in the international marketplace. In this situation, a privilege ensuring that all decorated porcelain originated from the Royal Manufacture in Sèvres was a simple and effective method of introducing quality controls because every piece of porcelain that reached luxury boutiques and foreign courts had its taste and quality assured by its provenance in an esteemed and reputable manufacture tied to the French Crown. Two changes in the marketplace allowed this model to be replaced by the system of *marques* in the 1780s. First, on the supply side, the establishment of dozens of private producers and the demonstrated ability of many of them to create tasteful, high-quality porcelain

[71] AMNS A1 "Arrêt du Conseil d'État du Roi" (16 May 1784); AN F^{12} 1494^{1} "Projet d'arrêt," Montarou and d'Angiviller [1787]; AN F^{12} 1493^{1} "Arrêst du Conseil" (17 January 1787). [la concurrence de plusieurs manufactures qui les fabriquent [porcelaines] à différens prix] [contrefaire] [marque]

eased officials' fears that a flood of cheap products made in France would undermine the reputation for French porcelain that had been established at such considerable effort and expense. Second, on the demand side, the burgeoning consumer culture of the late eighteenth century convinced many that there existed (at least in Paris) a consumer class sufficiently well-informed to weigh quality and price for itself and make its own purchasing decisions. This was coupled with the shift in cultural authority from merchants to manufacturers that allowed product information to spread further and more cheaply, diminishing the information costs that consumers faced in assessing products. With the invention of the system of *marques*, consumers no longer had to evaluate the merits of each individual piece of porcelain for themselves, rely on the superior knowledge of merchants for assurance, or fall back on vague ascriptions of nation of origin. Instead, the *marque* offered a middle ground that was at once general enough to cover a collection of products yet specific enough to prevent free-rider problems.

Private porcelain manufacturers immediately embraced this new system. They expressed their support for the system of *marques* and called on the police to enforce its strictures by inspecting all manufactures to ensure that they were adhering to it.[72] In the short term, this offered them a mechanism through which to move against competition from small-scale producers working out of their own homes, who frequently decorated discarded wares from large manufactures and attempted to pass them off on consumers either without a *marque* or with a counterfeit *marque*.[73]

In the longer term, however, having a system of *marques* cemented a new

[72] AN F^{12} 106 pgs 769–73 (24 and 31 January 1788); AN F^{12} 107 pg 91 (3 April 1788).

[73] AN F^{12} 106 782–3 (14 February 1788); AN F^{12} 1494^{2} "Jugement," Senac de Meilhan (2 December 1787).

business model in the porcelain industry. With the emergence of a discerning consumer class for decorative goods outside the rarified and affluent corridors of Versailles, the relationship between price and quality became more complex. On the consumer market, "It is as much by the beauty, the abundance, and the assortment of its works as by the price" that a manufacture attracted consumers.[74] And attracting consumers meant sparking their imaginations with visions of luxury and esteem that required a broad palette of glittering design for which "Monochromatic painting is a style too narrow and too monotonous for one to hope to draw the taste of the public for a luxury good, so subject to the vagaries of fashion and the variations [of] taste."[75] Instead, they needed something magnificent enough to be "capable of fixing the attention" of consumers.[76] But there was a tradeoff here, because decoration fantastic enough to lure consumers' eyes was typically too expensive to open their purses, while the simple wares that lay within their reach also sat beneath their notice. With the introduction of the *marque*, however, this circle could be squared. By producing a few items of elaborate decoration intended more for display than sale and bearing the *marque* of the producer, a manufacture could build public demand for its goods. By then producing a range of simpler, more affordable wares bearing the same *marque*, the manufacture could reassure the consumer that despite the lower price these cheaper pieces flowed from the same reservoir of taste and quality that had drawn their attention to the more ornate

[74] AMNS A2 Letter Beyerlé to Bertin (18 February 1768). [C'est autant par la beauté, l'abondance, et l'assortiment de ses ouvrages que par le prix]

[75] AMNS A3 Letter Owners of Manufacture de la Reine to Le Noir [1780]. [La peinture en camayeux est un genre trop borné et trop monotone pour que l'on puisse espérer de fixer par le goût du publique pour une marchandise de luxe, si sujette au caprice de la mode et aux variations [du] goût]

[76] AN F[12] 1494[1] "Mémoire," Dihl and Guerhard [1786]. [capable de fixer l'attention]

piece. In short, the same relationship between a set of masterpieces designed to build a reputation for quality and taste that would then inspire public trust in and demand for plainer pieces that had driven French industrial policy since 1760 could now be internalized within each individual firm.

In the decade following the introduction of the marque, this is precisely what private manufactures began to do. In a series of proposals written by private porcelain manufacturers and merchants in the late 1790s to advise a restructuring of the (recently renamed) National Porcelain Manufacture, this new relationship becomes clear. First, it was imperative for a manufacture to "create these masterpieces of art," with "all the brilliance and charm of novelty," capable of creating "a spectacle of the most enticing styles" that would kindle desire among the well-to-do.[77] But demand "among the rich, the collectors and the connoisseurs of fashion," they cautioned, could not sustain a manufacture. It had to be converted into mass demand by convincing "everyone to spend their wealth when they can do so cheaply."[78] Thus, ultimately the successful manufacture had to "put [their porcelain] into the hands of the greatest number" "at a modest price to have sales and profits."[79] As one manufacturer summarized: "Beautiful things excite admiration, but few people are able to buy them." "It is the sale that gives

[77] AN O[2] 914 "Courtes observations sur la manufacture nationale des porcelaines de Seves," Bosc (9 Floréal VI); AN O[2] 916 "Projet de dépôt des manufactures nationales" [X]. [créant ces chefs d'œuvre de l'art][tout le brillant et le charme de la nouveauté] [un spectacle sous des formes plus séduisantes]

[78] AN O[2] 916 "Projet de dépôt des manufactures nationales" [X]. [entre les riches, les curieux et les amateurs de la mode] [tout le monde de renter la fortune lorsqu'on peut se faire à peu de fraise]

[79] AN O[2] 914 "Courtes observations sur la manufacture nationale des porcelaines de Seves," Bosc (9 Floréal VI); AN O[2] 916 "Pétition au citoyen Ministre de l'Intérieur," Deruelle (24 Floréal VIII). [mettant à la portée du plus grand nombre] [à un prix modique pour avoir débit et profit]

birth to the product."[80]

Demand-Side Pricing and Supply-Side Accounting

The extensive ramifications of the conception of consumer demand vocalized by private manufactures in the mid 1780s now became clear. If the consumer was in fact the determiner of prices in the market, the success and survival of the producer depended on their ability to calculate and control costs in response to the prices set by consumers. This marked a fundamental upheaval of the relationship between prices, producers, and consumers that necessitated new practices for how businesses were monitored and managed. Under the Old Regime conception of pricing that had been employed by the Royal Manufacture, value was an inherent quality of an object.[81] The first step in establishing the price of a product lay in the materials that went into it, materials that varied in quality and thus in price. Material costs were seen as contributing very little to a product's value.[82] Labor costs were seen as contributing much more of a product's value.[83] But while this may have set a reference point for the price that could be charged for a product, together manufacturing labor and materials

[80] AN O² 915 Letter Blancheron to Bonaparte (c. 17 Pluviôse VIII). [Le beau excite l'admiration, mais peu de personnes sont en état de l'acheter] [C'est la vente qui enfante le produit]

[81] On the Old Regime conception of value, see: Jean-Yves Grenier, *L'économie d'Ancien Régime,* 60–78. I use the word "inherent" to distinguish this conception of value from "intrinsic value," according to which, while individual prices may fluctuate, in the aggregate the intrinsic value of products reflects their cost of production. *Ibid.,* 20–35; Richard Cantillon, *Essai sur la nature du commerce en général* (Paris: Institut Coppet, 2015) 29–36. See also: Jean-Yves Grenier, "Modèles de la demande sous l'Ancien Régime," *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 42, no. 3 (1987) 497–527.

[82] AN F¹² 1495² "Rapport au Comité d'agriculture et des arts de la Convention nationale" (Germinal III).

[83] ADHV C 3005 Letter Vannier to Alluaud (13 September 1788).

only accounted for about half of its value. Ultimately, "Porcelain is just a white ceramic, it pulls all of its value from the beauty of its forms."[84] And because this beauty resulted from the work of artisans who, however skilled, were still humans working by hand with difficult materials and processes, it was impossible to assign blanket prices to products, especially before their completion.[85] Thus, the crucial role of the *Garde des Magasins* was to "establish a just valuation of the porcelains put up for sale, on each of which should be attached a label indicating its sale price, a price that should be invariable and thus inspire the confidence of the buyer." Any defective pieces were to be clearly marked, priced accordingly, and sold on site to prevent merchants from attempting to pass off defective pieces at a higher price than they were truly worth.[86] As discussed in Chapter Three, this insistence on setting and maintaining prices at the manufacture stemmed in part from an effort to build enduring consumer trust in the value of its products. Yet it also reflected the belief that each individual piece of porcelain had its own value, one that was related to the value of the labor and materials that went into it, but that ultimately belonged to each piece inherently and eternally. This is why the directors of the Royal Manufacture steadfastly refused to auction off unsold pieces, no matter how old, because to do so would be to admit to the consumer that the porcelain was not in fact worth what it had been valued at. And with that, all the dominoes of reputation so painstakingly put in place over the preceding half

[84] AN F[12] 1493[1] "Mémoire" (7 July 1780). [La porcelaine n'est qu'une poterie blanche, elle tire toute sa valeur de la beauté de ses formes]

[85] AN O[1] 2061[2] "Du tems passé à décorer la pièce," Hettlinger (31 January 1785).

[86] AN O[2] 915 "État des fonctions du garde générale des magasins," d'Angiviller (1 April 1785). [établir une juste appréciation des porcelaines mises en vente, sur chacune desquelles doit être collée la marque indicative de son prix de vente, prix qui doit être invariable et par là inspirer la confiance de l'acheteur]

century would fall one after the other.

The concept of inherent value can best be demonstrated with a case study. On what would have been, by the Gregorian calendar, New Year's Eve, 1797, a merchant named Honein was touring the Sèvres factory store when he accidentally toppled and shattered an enormous vase bedecked with intricate painting and extensive gilding. Under the you-break-it-you-buy-it rules of the factory store, this unfortunate head of a large family would have to pay the cost of the broken vase. The question sent to the Minister of the Interior to decide was what should this cost be? The listed price of the vase was a staggering 1200 francs, while the manufacturing cost of the vase was only 500 francs. But the breaking of the vase revealed that it had "a critical fault, that of a hairline crack where it was attached to its base," which had remained hidden at the time of its initial valuation of 1200 francs. For the directors of the manufacture steeped in the Old Regime conception of inherent value, now that this fault was known, to persist in valuing it at its original price would be to "conduct a fraud on the buyer," and thus "cheat the buyer, which is repugnant to justice and to good faith." Thus, they suggested that the true value of the piece had it remained unbroken yet the crack known, and thus its fair price, would actually be only 300 francs, less even than it had cost to make.[87] The Minister of the Interior, a stranger to such accounting and under immense pressure to right the manufacture's finances, decided to charge poor Honein 600 francs for the shattered vase—one half what it had been valued at, twice what it was revalued at, and probably most importantly a little bit more than it had cost to

[87] AN O[2] 914 Letter Hettlinger to Dubois (11 Nivôse VI), "Rapport présenté au Ministre de l'intérieur" (16 Nivôse VI). [un défaut capital, celui d'une fêlure arrivée lorsqu'on la fixa sur son pied] [user de supercherie envers l'acheteur] [tromper l'acheteur, ce qui répugne à la justice ou à la bonne foi]

produce.[88] What this shattering of the vase ultimately revealed was a fissure between the inherent conception of value and the relationship between cost and profit that had hobbled the manufacture since its founding. Somewhere in the space between the determined price, the cost of production, and the growing pressure for the former to cover the latter was gestating a new approach to business. The full implications of this unfortunate incident, however, would only become evident two years later when an economic crisis forced the National Porcelain Manufacture to revisit how it determined its prices and how it managed its costs.

We can further see how the inherent conception of value shaped business practices in the approaches to pay and accounting used by the Royal Porcelain Manufacture since its founding. As mentioned in Chapter Three, the shift from piece rates to salaries for artisans and artists was an important development when the Eloy Brichard Company was nationalized and became the Royal Manufacture. It also meant that any potential link between cost of production and market price was obscured. Sèvres used two distinct accounting systems. On the cost side, every expense encountered by the manufacture from buildings to salaries, to bonuses, to clays, to candles, were all calculated by department and tallied to form an annual expense report. On the income side, after each individual piece had been marked with a price, each sale was written down along with a brief description of the item, the name of the purchaser, and whether it had been sold for cash or on credit. At the end of the year these sales were added up along with any recovered credit, any royal gratifications, and any sums remaining from the previous year and then compared against the

[88] AN O^2 914 Letter Dubois to Salmon and Hettlinger (18 Nivôse VI).

manufacture's expenses to determine whether there was a surplus or a deficit.[89] What is crucial is that this was not a statement of profit or loss, nor could it be.

As historians of accounting have documented, this type of account keeping was standard in the eighteenth century. The combined weight of experience, law, and education operated to create a consensus within companies of this type to determine how accounts should be kept. First, unlike in industries like textiles that were dominated by merchants with experience of double-entry bookkeeping, the porcelain industry was more akin to metallurgical and mining industries in that it was dominated by aristocrats whose experience was with the types of charge-discharge accounting used in running their demesnes.[90] Second, the *Ordinance pour le Commerce* implemented by Colbert in 1673 continued to legally require merchants and manufactures to keep specific types of account books throughout this period.[91] Perhaps most importantly, however, ever since the publication of the first edition of Jacques Savary's *Le parfait négociant* in 1675 and its many subsequent editions, his comprehensive system of nine separate account books continued to be influential.[92] In fact, even at the dawn of the Revolution over a century later, the directors of the Royal Porcelain Manufacture in

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[89] AMNS F 1–36, Vf 1–65, Vy 1–24.

[90] Yannick Lemarchand, "Double Entry versus Charge and Discharge Accounting in Eighteenth-Century France," *Accounting, Business & Financial History* 4, no. 1 (1994) 119–45; *idem., Du dépérissement à l'amortissement : Enquête sur l'histoire d'un concept et de sa traduction comptable* (Nantes: Ouest Éditions, 1993) 70–80, 142–60.

[91] *Ordonnance de Louis XIV, Roy de France et de Navarre, Pour le Commerce*, new ed. (Paris: 1709) 12–7; Stanley E Howard, "Public Rules for Private Accounting in France, 1673–1807," *Accounting Review* 7, no. 2 (1932) 91–102; Richard C Baker and Bertrand P Quéré, "Historical Innovations in the Regulation of Business and Accounting Practices: A Comparison of Absolutism and Liberal Democracy," *Accounting History* 20, no. 3 (2015) 250–65.

[92] Jacques Savary, *Le parfait négociant, ou instruction générale pour ce qui regarde le commerce des marchandises de France, & des Pays Étrangers* (Paris: Frères Estienne, 1777) I:272–307.

Limoges followed his model for account books to the letter.[93] And the surviving account books of the Duke of Orléans's porcelain manufactures also used several of the categories suggested by Savary and kept separate ledgers for money spent and money received.[94]

Although much has been made about the importance of double-entry bookkeeping for the rationalization of capitalist business practices and their centrality in the calculation of profit, such calculations were not really a factor for eighteenth-century businesses regardless of which accounting methods they used. While double-entry bookkeeping does make possible profit calculations, it does not make such calculations automatically. Indeed, most merchants who kept double-entry accounts did not routinely balance them, nor did they use them to evaluate gain against capital. Rather, these accounts served as ledgers of credit, both financial and personal, that expressed the position of the merchant externally rather than providing a tool of analysis of his or her condition internally.[95] As Mary Poovey has argued, early modern bookkeeping was a rhetorical form, one that created facts and established expertise about them. But it did so only self-referentially, without making any claim to the

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[93] ADHV C 2991–3001.

[94] AdP D[5]B[6] 126 (26 June 1786–6 March 1789), 433 (11 July 1786–31 March 1789), 3298 (1786–1789), 762 [1786–1789].

[95] Basil S Yamey, "Scientific Bookkeeping and the Rise of Capitalism," *Economic History Review*, new series 1, no. 2/3 (1949) 99–113; *idem.*, "The 'Particular Gain or Loss upon Each Article We Deal In': An Aspect of Mercantile Accounting," *Accounting, Business & Financial History* 10, no. 1 (March 2000) 1–12; Pierre Jeannin, *Marchands d'Europe : Pratiques et savoirs à l'époque moderne* (Paris: Éditions ENS, 2002) 4-5–18; Yannick Lemarchand, Cheryl McWatters, and Laure Pineau-Defois, "The Current Account as Cognitive Artefact: Stories and Accounts of *La Maison Chaurand*," in *Merchants and Profit in the Age of Commerce, 1680–1830*, eds. Pierre Gervais, Yannick Lemarchand, and Dominique Margairaz, trans. Darla-Rudy Gervais (Brookfield, VY: Pickering & Chatto, 2014) 13–31; Pierre Gervais, "Why Profit and Loss Didn't Matter: The Historicized Rationality of Early Modern Merchant Accounting," in *Merchants and Profit*, 33–52.

relationship between the figures and the merchandise and prices they supposedly reflected.[96] In other words, value in this system was determined by merchants following their own purposes regardless of what prices consumers might actually pay.

Accountants at Sèvres saw their system of accounting as akin to that employed by merchants: the presence of overlapping circulations of various durations meant that "each day it sells, each day it pays and buys."[97] Thus, the purpose of their accounting was to keep track of money coming in and money going out to ensure that there was always enough to meet ongoing expenses. Indeed, under a concept of inherent value, this is all that could be done. Just as with their valuation of the destroyed vase, managers at the National Porcelain Manufacture took each price and each cost as given but had no method to connect the two effectively or to make profitable business decisions on the basis of them.

Under the neoclassical economic model, markets tend toward an equilibrium point at which the market will clear, which is to say that buyers and sellers will settle on a price at which all goods are sold. But this model specifies different temporalities, ranging from the immediate to the very long run, with the distinguishing characteristic of each time period being the ability of producers to adjust supply to best meet the demand price at the highest point of profit. In the short run the quantity of supply is fixed, and sellers vary price in order to clear the market. In the long run, producers can adjust the quantity supplied in response to the market price to ensure their costs are

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[96] Mary Poovey, *A History of the Modern Fact: Problems of Knowledge in the Sciences of Wealth and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) 29–65.

[97] AN O[2] 914 Letter Salmon and Hettlinger to Dubois (20 Frimaire IV). [chaque jour elle vend, chaque jour elle paye et achète]

balanced by their returns.[98]

Under the ideas about value in place at the Royal Porcelain Manufacture, however, such adjustments were not possible. Each piece of porcelain was assayed at its inherent and fixed value. To reduce its price would be to deny that value. And without such short-term adjustments, the manufacture had no referent by which to adjust its long-term output. They would update the designs each year but do not seem to have seriously altered the quantity made, while the unsold difference sat in storehouses. This left room for efforts to convince consumers that the listed price was in fact a fair reflection of that value, but not to lower price as a method of luring them in. Thus, whether during booms or busts in consumer demand, the price of Sèvres porcelain stayed the same. What changed was quantity sold, something that again could be remedied by marketing and distribution, but not by adjusting price.[99]

Similarly, on the expenses side of the equation, production cost what it cost. Workers were paid what they were worth as a reflection of their skill and seniority, the materials used were necessary and similarly came at their fair price, and management was paid what it deserved. In any case, the costs of these inputs did not directly determine the value of the finished product, which was independent and individual even if partially related in the abstract. Expenses were therefore fixed and ongoing while income fluctuated according to the willingness of consumers to pay the products' inherent values. Thus, an annual comparison of income and outflow that aimed above

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[98] Alfred Marshall, *Principles of Economics*, 323–80. This portrayal emphasizes the conception of consumer demand as a necessary precondition for the distinctive temporality of capitalism. See: William H Sewell, jr, "The Temporalities of Capitalism," *Socio-Economic Review* 6 (2008) 517–37; Jonathan Levy, "Accounting for Profit and the History of Capital," *Critical Historical Studies* 1, no. 2 (Fall 2014) 171–214.

[99] On the relation between business cycles and sales, see: Jean-Yves Grenier, "Modèles de la demande sous l'Ancien Régime."

all to assess solvency was all that could be done.

The financial challenges that began in 1780 put pressure on the Royal Porcelain Manufacture's management to change this accounting system, however. Since its founding, the company had struggled to "establish order" in accounting for expenses in such a complex firm operating with hundreds of employees in multiple workshops as pieces transferred from one to the other on their way to completion.[100] Yet despite these efforts, audits revealed that few records were systematically saved in these early years and that miscalculations bedeviled the bottom line as some workers were occasionally paid double and others not paid at all—even the director once missed a whole year's paycheck.[101] In a sense, this all came to a head in 1780 when Roger, the accountant at Sèvres, was imprisoned to atone for the Royal Manufacture's losses. Roger's defense was that he had inherited from his predecessor a mess of incomplete records and that he had merely kept the accounts and followed orders as management spent substantially more than it brought in, culminating in a 240,000-livre budget shortfall by the end of 1779.[102] The court judgment, however, was that "as the result of his accounting there is a gap in his accounts, he has been reasonably condemned to repay it."[103] Lacking access to such an enormous sum, Roger languished in prison for three years before his family could sell their home and convince the king to accept a sixty

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[100] AMNS B1 "Projet de régie" [1746]. [établir l'ordre]

[101] AMNS B5 "Procès verbal de la vérification de la caisse," de Mauroy and Boileau (24 September 1770), "Procès verbaux," Guyot and Bahot (4 June 1774); AMNS B3 Letter d'Angivillers to de Mauroy (December 1781), Letter d'Angiviller (7 May 1782).

[102] AMNS B6 Letter Roger [1780].

[103] AMNS B6 "Mémoire," Roger [mid 1780]. [par le résultat de sa comptabilité se trouvant un vuide dans sa caisse, il a été condamné valablement à l'y rétablir]

thousand-livre settlement to secure his release.[104]

As this saga demonstrates, proper accounting was seen as the key to fiscal viability for a company. Yet given the use of running accounts for tracking expenses and income and the belief in inherent value, efforts to right the ship could only founder. Even the most meticulous tracking of costs and prices is purely observational if the sources of those figures are understood to exist outside the realm of managerial intervention. These accounts allowed the management team to understand what was happening to the company financially but left them powerless to do anything about it as long as both costs and prices were taken as independent and immutable. The care that went into these accounts resembled the attention and detail that went into scientific observations of natural phenomena in this period, creating here a taxonomy of price facts and monitoring their changes. But managers at the porcelain manufacture were as unable to alter the objects of their studies as the Enlightenment ornithologist, geologist, and astronomer were theirs. The apparent futility of these accounting efforts only became clearer following the economic disaster of the Revolution. Now, with the National Porcelain Manufacture hemorrhaging red ink and the state intent on covering its losses, plan after plan came forward to bring "good order, savings, and the greatest prospects."[105] The hope was to transform the National Porcelain Manufacture from a drain on the Republic's coffers into a font of profit. But how was this to be done?

The answer embraced by the manufacture's managers and the nation's ministers

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[104] AMNS B6 "Projet d'acte" (August 1783), Letter d'Ancy to [de Mauroy] (30 August 1783), "Pardevant" to d'Angiviller [October 1784], Letter d'Angiviller to de Mauroy (20 January 1785).

[105] ADHV C 3010 "Règlement provisoire pour la manufacture royale des porcelaines de Limoges et instructions sur sa direction" (20 April 1788). [le bon ordre, l'économie et la plus grande débouché]

was that proper supervision and accounting would convert loss to profit. According to the would-be reformers, the problem was that Sèvres had been established at a time when it did not need to "calculate expenses."[106] But that time had passed. Now, the faith that "a more economical and better directed administration" would magically produce profits was waved like a talisman in front of the project.[107]

The new organizational system reinforced and further divided the existing hierarchy at the manufacture. Under the watchwords of "administration," "order," and "savings," the workforce was divided into fourteen units: "separate the masses and divide them up, to bring light and order."[108] Each unit would be headed by a workshop chief responsible for maintaining detailed daily records and reports on expenses, consumption, production, prices, labor—any and everything that could be measured was to be measured.[109] At the top, a new managerial triumvirate would conduct this lumbering orchestra: "In a word there will be inspection and general surveillance of the manufacture, reporting to the higher authority who will approve any expense whatever, and that alone will be able to authorize any type of change, and to approve the various requests."[110] The apparent intent of this system was to reduce expenses by

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[106] AN F[12] 1460 Letter Gillet to Minister of Interior (23 Nivôse II). [calculer les dépenses]

[107] AN F[12] 1460 "Observations sur les dépenses rélatives à l'ordre des batimens nationaux et à l'administration des établissements" [II]; AN O[1] 2061[2] Letter Hettlinger to d'Angiviller (22 July 1785); AMNS A1 "Arrêt d'Angivillers" (31 December 1782). [une administration plus économique et mieux diriger]

[108] AN F[12] 1460 Letter Minister of Interior to Gillet (Nivôse II). [administration] [ordre] [économie] [diviser des masses et les amonceler, pour y porter la lumière et l'ordre]

[109] AN F[12] 1495[1] "Plan d'organisation intérieur de la manufacture nationale des porcelaines" [Ventôse III].

[110] AN F[12] 1495[1] "Le directeur, ses fonctions, ses pouvoirs," Salmon (15 Brumaire III), "Arrêt du Comité d'agriculture et des arts" (13 Pluviôse III). [Il auroit en un mot l'inspection et la surveillance générale de la manufacture, en rendant compte à l'autorité

reducing waste through closer supervision of the production process, with detailed accounts providing a microscopic lens through which to identify and target waste and fraud.

An important element of this organizational system was a changed relationship between the manufacture and its workforce. To close the gap between costs and income, management directed its scrupulous attention toward the workers themselves. "Order" and "subordination" were the keys.[111] Every worker would be tracked, every effort tallied, every cost noted, and every bit of training or venting of frustration diligently entered into his record. The goal? "The acceleration of labor and savings in the costs of production."[112] And it was explicitly to this end that a rigid time structure was implemented, its indefatigable march to be marked by the sound of a new clock erected at the manufacture, its insistent ringing a warning that the gates were about to be locked and laggards to lose a day's pay.[113] Meanwhile, the workdays and the

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supérieure qui ordonnoit toutes dépense quelconques, et pouroit seule autoriser toute espèce de changement, et valider les diverses demandes]

[111] AN O[1] 2062[2] "Plan pour l'administration de la manufacture" (13 October 1787). [ordre] [subordination]

[112] AMNS A5 "Règlement pour la manufacture nationale des porcelaines de Sèvres" (14 Prairial III). Accounting historian Rob Bryer in particular has emphasized the connections between cost accounting and labor control during the transition to capitalism from a Marxist perspective. See: Rob Bryer, "The History of Accounting and the Transition to Capitalism in England. Part One: Theory," *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 25 (2000) 131–62; *idem.,* "The History of Accounting and the Transition to Capitalism in England. Part Two: Evidence," *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 25 (2000) 327–81; *idem.,* "Capitalist Accountability and the British Industrial Revolution: The Carron Company, 1759–circa. 1850," *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 31 (2006) 687–734; *idem.,* "Accounting and Control of the Labour Process," *Critical Perspectives on Accounting* 17 (2006) 551–98. [L'accélération du travail et à l'économie des frais d'exécution]

[113] AN O[1] 2061[2bis] "Mémoire de Grémond pour réparations à l'horloge de Sèvres" (1785); AMNS B4 "Règlement des ateliers des fours" [III], "Règlement pour les ateliers de la manufacture nationale des porcelaines de Sèvres" (28 Brumaire VIII).

workweeks grew longer and longer even as wages fell further and further behind inflation.

In the proposals submitted to the National Manufacture by private producers, we see that cost accounting was directly linked to labor control. They counseled not only for the need to sell its products at the price consumers were willing to pay, but to adjust the costs of production in response to that price. This meant paying workers piece rates based on the market value of what they made and "firing the workers without talent nor intelligence."[114] Looking admiringly to Wedgwood—whose efforts at cost accounting and labor control Neil McKendrick has documented—one manufacturer wrote: "It's by the division of labor and the wise use of time that great manufactures prosper."[115]

The National Manufacture's experiment in cost accounting fit within a broader shift in how business was conducted. The practice of cost accounting itself only emerged with the vertical integration of industry as managers have to find ways to assign prices to internally exchanged products.[116] As vertically integrated firms started to become more common in Britain and France during the final decades of the eighteenth century as businesses grew larger and more complex, managers here reacted

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[114] AN O[2] 916 "Pétition au Citoyen Ministre de l'Intérieur," Deruelle (24 Floréal VIII); AN O[2] 915 Letter Blancheron to Bonaparte (c. 17 Pluviôse an VIII). [supprimer les ouvriers sans talent n'y intelligence]

[115] AN O[2] 914 "Courtes observations sur la manufacture nationale des porcelaines de Seves," Bosc (9 Floréal VI). [C'est par la division du travail et le sage emploi du tems que les grandes manufactures prospèrent] Neil McKendrick, "Josiah Wedgwood and Cost Accounting in the Industrial Revolution," *Economic History Review* 23, no. 1 (April 1970) 45–67.

[116] H Thomas Johnson and Robert S Kaplan, *Relevance Lost: The Rise and Fall of Management Accounting* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1987) 1–46; Margaret Levenstein, *Accounting for Growth: Information Systems and the Creation of the Large Corporation* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998) 20–39.

to a range of financial pressures by attempting to calculate and minimize their internal costs, although these early efforts were ad hoc practices adopted and abandoned following the fortunes of the market.[117] The earliest publications on and systematic implementations of cost accounting quickly followed.[118]

Yet despite its early efforts at cost accounting, the Royal Porcelain Manufacture could not stop losing money, much less turn a profit. And observers found the cause for this in the manufacture's determination of price. In a memoire written to the manufacture as early as 1780, a critic agreed with contemporary wisdom that "The [administration's] errors, the administration's vices and the accounting abuses, are the sole causes of the enormous expenses of the porcelain manufacture of Sèvres." For the memoire's author, however, the failure of accounting did not stem from an insufficient number of records or a lack of worker controls. The true problem lay in *how* the accounting was done: "There is no process to record the intrinsic value of the objects manufactured, so their valuation is made at random. One piece ends up less than it cost, while others are assessed at twenty times their real value, which causes the greatest

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[117] McKendrick, "Josiah Wedgwood and Cost Accounting"; Haydn Jones, *Accounting, Costing and Cost Estimation. Welsh Industry: 1700–1830* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1985); John Richard Edwards, "Industrial Cost Accounting Developments in Britain to 1830: A Review Article," *Accounting and Business Research* 19, no. 76 (1989) 305–17; John Richard Edwards and Edmund Newell, "The Development of Industrial Cost and Management Accounting before 1850: A Survey of the Evidence," *Business History* 33, no. 1 (1991) 33–57; Sidney Pollard, *The Genesis of Modern Management: A Study of the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 1993) 209–49; Richard K Fleischman and Thomas N Tyson, "Cost Accounting during the Industrial Revolution: The Present State of Historical Knowledge," *Economic History Review*, new series 46, no. 3 (August 1993) 503–17.

[118] RS Edwards, "A Survey of French Contributions to the Study of Cost Accounting during the 19th Century," *The Accountant*, supp. (June 1937) 1–36; Marc Nikitin, "Setting Up an Industrial Accounting System at Saint-Gobin (1820–1880)," *Accounting Historians Journal* 17, no. 2 (1990) 73–93; Trevor Boyns, John Richard Edwards, and Marc Nikitin, "Comptabilité et révolution industrielle : une comparaison Grande-Bretagne/France," *Comptabilité. Contrôle. Audit* 2, no. 1 (March 1996) 5–20.

harm to consumption."[119] In this sentence the author revealed precisely what he meant by "the real value." Having already rejected the notion of an inherent value that existed without direct reference to the cost of production, he states that a product not at its "real value" is one that fails to sell. Implicitly, in place of a value asserted by officials at the manufacture, "the real value" would be the one asserted by the willingness of consumers to pay it. In contrast to earlier systems of accounting, "real value" was now the price consumers set.

This same argument would later appear in the collection of proposals submitted by private merchants and manufacturers to salvage Sèvres at the end of the Revolutionary decade. The prices listed by the National Manufacture, they said, were simply out of step with those being charged by their competition or willing to be paid by consumers. According to one merchant, the failure to sell reflected the truth that the manufacture had "put between this and other [manufactures] such a large difference in price that it drives away buyers and completely paralyzes sales."[120] One manufacturer suggested that it "should offer [its porcelain] at the same price as the other manufactures if it doesn't offer them cheaper," and that even if this entailed a loss it would be a "useful speculation" because "it would be enough to have tidy and visible merchandise, and that it was cheap."[121] Another manufacturer went even further,

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[119] AMNS B3 "Mémoire," Le Champ (6 August 1780). [Les erreurs [de l'administration], les vices de l'administration et les abus de la comptabilité, sont les seules causes des dépenses énormes de la manufacture de porcelaine de Sèvres] [Aucun ordre ne constate la valeur intrinsèque des objets manufacturés, aussi leur estimation est-elle faite au hasard. Telle pièce est venue moins qu'elle n'a coûté, tandis que d'autres sont évaluées vingt fois leur valeur réelle, ce qui fait le plus grand tort à la consommation]

[120] AN O[2] 916 "Projet de dépôt des manufactures nationales" [X]. [mettre entre celle c'y et les autres [manufactures] une si grande différence de prix qu'elle éloigne les acquéreurs et paralyse tout à fait les ventes]

[121] AN O[2] 915 Letter Blancheron to Bonaparte (c. 17 Pluviôse VIII). [doit donner [sa porcelaine] au même prix que les autres manufactures si elle ne donne à meilleur

suggesting that anything that did not sell immediately should have its price cut in half, "and above all not neglecting to manufacture and decorate with taste at a modest price to have turnover and profit."[122] Thus, if the National Manufacture was to survive, it would have to adapt itself to the realities of the market by selling what consumers were willing to buy and at the price they were willing to buy it. In short, it was time for the National Porcelain Manufacture to recognize the authority of the consumer.

To do so would be to renounce the Old Regime principle of value that had underpinned the manufacture since its founding. Yet even by the time these private citizens made their recommendations, this is exactly what Sèvres had started to do. Under immense pressure from the Revolutionary economy and the unwillingness of the state to continue shouldering the burden of a manufacture whose very existence was anathema to the principles of the Republic, as early as 1793 the directors considered a new course of action.

As the Royal Porcelain Manufacture in Limoges tottered toward collapse at the beginning of the Revolution, reports came in from various merchants that it was no longer tenable to maintain the established prices. In order to clear the few items remaining in the boutiques, the merchants would have to mark down prices by 50 or even 60 percent and even then feared that some would be "objects that remain maybe forever."[123] Within months the Royal Manufacture in Sèvres was forced to follow suit.

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compte] [spéculation utile] [il suffiroit d'avoir de la marchandise soignée et bien apparente, et qu'elle fut à bon marché]

[122] AN O[2] 916 "Pétition au Citoyen Ministre de l'Intérieur," Deruelle (24 Floréal VIII). [et surtout en ne négligeant point de fabriquer et décorer avec goût à un prix modique pour avoir débit et profit]

[123] ADHV C 3004 Letter Mme Denis to Alluaud (6 September 1792). [bien désassorti] [objets qui restent peut-être toujours]

Working through a prestigious merchant on rue St Honoré in Paris, management agreed to allow a one-time auction to clear out some of the mounting backstock overwhelming the manufacture's warehouses. Yet this was still a limited relaxation of the idea of inherent value, with the auction confined to "rejects," old, and mismatched pieces that prevented "the possibility of a placement equal to the price that they have been [marked] at for many years."[124] The results were less spectacular than had been hoped and make plain the problems of the Old Regime conception of value. In total, the pieces sold at auction went for half the price they had been valued at.[125] By offloading these wares at the price they could sell at and thus clearing the market for the first time, the manufacture did take a first step toward redefining its pricing model in response to the dictates of the consumer market. Yet even here some of the pieces raked a profit, some sold at a minor loss, and others went for only a fraction of their manufacturing cost.[126] There continued to be, in other words, little if any correlation between marked price, market price, and manufacturing cost.

Management at Sèvres resisted further auctions out of fear that doing so would undermine the manufacture's reputation and create an expectation of future deals among consumers. But by the end of the Revolutionary decade the National Manufacture was still drowning in an ocean of red ink as debts mounted and sales languished. Thus, the new director determined, it was finally time to accept the realities of consumer-determined pricing. Henceforth, the National Manufacture would adjust

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[124] AN O[2] 913 Letter Regnier to Minister of Interior (25 April 1793). [rebut] [la possibilité d'un placement égal aux prix auxquels elle était [marked] depuis nombres d'années]

[125] AN O[2] 913 "Bordereau de la vente des porcelaines de la manufacture nationale de Sèvres," Barrau (19 April 1793), "Porcelaines retirés du magasin Laguerre et Lignereaux pour être vendues par huissier" (25 April 1793).

[126] AN O[2] 913 Letter Regnier to Minister of Interior (7 April 1793).

its prices every six months "according to the flow of the porcelains. I am convinced like all merchants that the commerce of a manufacture cannot gain with eternally fixed prices."[127] Furthermore, such revaluation would now be done not just for rejected or old pieces, but for anything that failed to sell at the marked price.[128]

"The Best Capitalist": Cost Accounting and Class Conflict

During the 1790s, a new structure began to emerge within the porcelain industry. It had previously been divided between those manufactures producing for the luxury market and those producing for the mass market. But with the ending of the royal privilege and the opening of the consumer market to all during the Revolution, the more salient division came to be between those manufactures that provided sustenance for workers and those that produced profits for capitalists.

The lasting economic downturn that both precipitated and followed the Revolution revealed a range of approaches to the porcelain business. On the one hand were those manufactures run with a commitment to the wellbeing of their workers. Personal and professional letters between François Alluaud, the director of the Royal Porcelain Manufacture in Limoges, and several private porcelain manufacturers reveal a deep commitment to providing for their workers in these difficult times. Alluaud personally spent over sixty-four thousand livres to keep the manufacture in Limoges from shuttering under his watch, lent forty-five thousand livres more to one competitor running a factory in Paris, and advanced the raw materials necessary to keep another

[127] AN O^2 916 Letter Brongniart to Minister of Interior (6 Brumaire IX). [selon le courant des porcelaines. Je suis convaincu comme tout les négociants que le commerce d'une manufacture ne peut se concilier avec des prix éternellement fixes]

[128] AN O^2 916 Letter Brongniart to Minister of Interior (21 Ventôse X).

Parisian manufacture operating as well.[129] The express purpose of these loans was to answer the workers' just demands for bread because "the workers must be kept from suffering."[130] At the same time, Alluaud partnered with the two other largest porcelain producers in Limoges to put together a public subscription from the city's well-to-do to purchase grain for the public granary and together oversee the secure purchase of and delivery of grain for it.[131]

As the situation for the National Manufacture in Limoges continued to deteriorate and the potential of any future profitability was cast in doubt, the workers there revived the possibility that they simply run the factory themselves.[132] Nor were they the only workers to propose such a solution amidst the malaise in manufacturing. At the porcelain manufacture in Lille, which had been fêted just a few years earlier for its successful establishment of a coal-fired kiln, "some honest and wealthy private individuals" had to step in to support the factory's workers after the previous owner was "forced to abandon" it. In the absence of sales, however, they soon had to request a loan from the government to keep it operating.[133] At Sèvres as well the workers

[129] ADHV L 1200 "Reçu du Citoyen Chevailler" [25 Floréal III], Letter Bernard, Lefebvre, Hebert and Co to Alluaud (11 Brumaire IV).

[130] ADHV L 1200 Letter Chevailler to Alluaud (28 Thermidor III), Letter Alluaud to Chevailler (12 Messidor III). [il faudra bien empêche les ouvriers de souffrir]

[131] AMLimoges ID 3 Délibérations du Conseil Municipal (14 March 1792), (24 March 1792); AM Limoges ID 4 Délibérations du Conseil Municipal (27 August 1792).

[132] AN F[12] 1496[2] Letter Préat to Minister of Interior (2 July 1793); AN O[1] 2063 Letter Workers to Administration de Département de la Haute Vienne (22 Prairial IV).

[133] Archives Départementales du Nord (ADNo) L 1499 Letter to Delessart (16 April 1791), "Observations additionnelles sur la demande en encouragement faite par les propriétaires et entrepreneurs de la manufacture de porcelaine de Lille," Gaborrie [January 1791], Letter Municipal Officers of Lille to District Directors of Lille (24 December 1790), "Extrait du registre aux délibérations du Directoire du District de Lille" (27 January 1791).

attempted to assert greater control over the manufacturing process. Already possessing the tacit knowledge of porcelain manufacture won through years of dedicated labor, in 1792 they temporarily seized a vault they believed held notebooks containing the scientific secrets of porcelain production.[134] This was intended as more of a symbolic move meant to assert their place rather than one that sought any practical gain.[135] Two years later, inspired in part by Jacobin sympathies, workers there demanded the right to form a representative body and elect from within their own ranks the manufacture's management.[136] It is little surprise that the radical Assemblyman Jean-César Battelier attempted at the same time to remove the company's entire administration, calling the position of accountant in particular "an object of luxury."[137]

The tensions between workers and owners in this period is evident in a satirical print depicting the shareholders of the porcelain manufacture in Caen (figure 4.12). Presumably produced during the Revolution, the image shows the shareholders gathered together in a room. On the wall behind them are collections of porcelain on shelves, some in a style reminiscent of Louis XV porcelain and others of neoclassical inspiration. The fourteen capitalist shareholders are mostly depicted in powdered wigs and wearing the breeches that would mark them as enemies of the *sans culottes*; one shareholder is drawn as a goat, another as a devil, one being sodomized with a plunger,

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[134] AN F^{12} 1496^1 Letter Caron to Faipoult (2 February 1793), Letter Regnier to [Faipoult] (11 February 1793), Letter Hettlinger to [Faipoult] (13 February 1793), "Extrait du procès verbal de levé des scellés et triage des papiers" (3 April 1793).

[135] AN F^{12} 1496^1 Letter Caron to [Faipoult] (17 February 1793).

[136] AN F^{12} 1496^1 Letter Le Riche and Gerard to Commission d'Agriculture, Arts et Manufactures (18 Vendémiaire III); AN F^{12} 1495^1 Letter Chalot to Comité d'Agriculture et des Arts (25 Thermidor III).

[137] AN O^2 913 Letter Barrau to Minister of Interior (18 October 1793). [un objet de luxe]

Figure 4.12. "Les actionnaires de la manufacture de porcelaine de Caen." [Late 18th century]. Archives Départementales de Calvados 1 Fi 59.

and a female shareholder is shown controlling two of the men; all around the floor are sacks of money; and perhaps revealing a contestation over workplace authority, at the center of the image is a large vase with a quill sticking out that says "I ask to speak." Meanwhile, outside, the city burns.

While attempts at worker control were not unique to the porcelain industry in this period, they ran counter to the economic ideology of laissez-faire that characterized much of the era. At the heart of the issue was the distinction between businesses run for workers and those run for profit. The prefect of the Vendée, for instance, elaborated on his repeated efforts to found a porcelain industry within his department throughout the

Revolution. He had succeeded in creating several small ceramics manufactures—manufactures that, given his description, would likely have been workshops run by artisans. He had failed, however, to "interest any capitalists in this enterprise; the trade of money offers them a more lucrative employment of their funds."[138] Here we see several implicit assumptions being made. First, that the path to industrial success lay in attracting investments from "capitalists." Second, that capitalist investments flowed to wherever profits were highest—whether Parisian money markets or Vendéen pottery production—without regard for personal ties to any particular industry or place. Third, that capitalist enterprises were defined in contradistinction to what they were not: workshops run by workers. The differentiation drawn between capitalists and workers is evident in a letter written by the owner of a Bordeaux porcelain manufacture who had liquidated his holdings and shifted them into a different industry: "I consider that these enterprises should only be done by workers who work for themselves and who make use of everything, whereas they would ruin the best capitalist."[139]

For the Revolutionary government, production by capitalists was always preferable to that undertaken by workers. Thus, despite departmental approval of the plan to turn the National Porcelain Manufacture in Limoges over to its workers, the government in Paris insisted that it be instead sold to a private buyer.[140] "The only way

[138] AN O[2] 916 Letter Secretary General of Prefecture of Vendée to Minister of Interior (29 Thermidor X). [intéresser des capitalistes à cette entreprise ; le commerce de l'argent leur offrait un emploi plus lucratif de leur fonds] [Je regarde que ces entreprises ne doivent être faite que par des ouvriers qui travaillent eux mêmes et qui tirent parti de tout, tandis qu'ils ruineroient le meilleur capitaliste]

[139] ADHV L 1246 Letter Bertrand to Alluaud (3 Pluviôse V).

[140] AN O[1] 2063 "Rapport au Ministre de l'Intérieur," Meyer (9 Ventôse IV), Letter Minister of Interior to Central Administration of Département de la Haute Vienne (26 Messidor IV). In fact, multiple offers to buy or rent the manufacture had already been

to revive the manufacture of Limoges," they concluded, "was to turn it over to industry and to private interest."[141] Parallel to this opposition to worker ownership was opposition to state ownership. In decisions sent from the Bureau of Arts in Paris, Revolutionary bureaucrats stated that "It is well demonstrated by experience that the government should no longer think of administrating the national manufactures for its own account. The administrator will never put into his job the zeal and the energy that the private interest of the owner and the operator demands of him."[142] In fact, they argued, "the administration [of the state...] is an irremediable obstacle to the progress of the manufactures."[143]

A similar logic was extended to the National Manufacture in Sèvres as well. In 1792, the manufacture was both nationalized and stripped of its monopoly privileges. Arguments continued to come from its directors about the unique function the state-owned factory filled in the national porcelain industry, an argument not entirely lost on its bureaucratic benefactors. But this function was increasingly separated out from its operation as a business. As the director of the manufacture wrote in 1793, there were three paths forward for Sèvres. The first would be to turn control over to the workers

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made: AN O[1] 2063 Letter Deruelle to Commission des Arts et Manufacture (21 Brumaire III), Letter Meyer to Minister of Interior (16 Nivôse IV).

[141] AN O[1] 2063 Letter Minister of Interior to Guineau (3 Thermidor IV), Recommendation of Conseil des Arts et Manufactures (26 Floréal IV). [Le seul moyen de relever la manufacture de Limoges] [était de la livrer à l'industrie et à l'intérêt particulière]

[142] AN O[1] 2063 Letter Bureau des Arts to Meyer (Pluviôse IV). [Il est bien démontré par l'expérience que le gouvernement ne doit plus songer à faire administrer pour son compte les manufactures nationales. L'administrateur ne mettra jamais dans ses fonctions le zèle et l'activité que l'intérêt particulier du propriétaire et du fermier commande de lui]

[143] AN O[1] 2063 Letter Bureau des Arts to Minister of Finances (4 Floréal IV). [les administrations [of the State...] font un obstacle irrémédiable au progrès des manufactures]

themselves, though he left little doubt that their leadership could never attain prosperity. The second would be to render it a profitable enterprise, but he believed that given the absence of a functioning luxury market this would require moving to a place with cheap labor and producing modest pieces for a mass market, primarily exports. Third, the manufacture could reestablish itself as "the academy of art, and the nursery of good workers" by refashioning itself along the lines of a museum or state school to train only the best artists, aiming to cover its own costs but at a much smaller scale.[144] What is notable here is that each of these three paths was presented as distinct from the others: the National Manufacture could either be run by and for the workers, it could become profitable by pursuing a lower market, or it could train artists as an academy, but it could not do all three or even any two of these.

The liberalizing bent of the government here conflicted with its populist roots. It was politically untenable to deprive the manufacture's three hundred workers of their jobs or leave their fates up to the vagaries of the market. Thus, until well into the period of the Consulate the workers were kept fully employed even as the warehouses filled, and even if their pay was frequently in arrears by months, if not years, they were assured a daily ration of bread and meat for themselves and their families.[145] Such ongoing aid could be further justified by the manufacture's new position in the porcelain industry. Henceforth, while theoretically expected to cover its own costs although in practice granted regular state assistance, "it becomes a national school of

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[144] AN F[12] 1496[1] "Notes sur la manufacture nationale de Sèvres," Hettlinger (24 May 1793). [l'académie de l'art, et la pépinière des bons ouvriers]

[145] AMNS A5 "Extrait du registre des arrêts du Comité de Salut Publique de la Convention Nationale" (24 Messidor III), "Extrait des registres du Directoire Exécutif" (3 Thermidor IV), "Arrêté du Comité du Salut Publique" (1 Brumaire IV); AN O[2] 913 Letter Salmon and Hettlinger to Dubois (10 Germinal V).

porcelain...where taste will be preserved in all of its purity...[and where it would train artists] who would spread into the other manufactures, bringing their precious knowledge and skills."[146]

As a member of the National Manufacture's management summed up its new role, "we should consider the manufacture and its commercial role...not as market-oriented and self-interested...that its goal was not profit...but general utility." He described a direct opposition between the manufacture as an institute of artistic education and the merchant driven by "speculation" who has "no other goal but profit, no other orientation but [self] interest."[147] For proponents of liberalization, however, the private manufacturers' pursuit of profit through cost savings and obedience to consumer demand was the real success; the National Manufacture's lofty aspirations of shaping the industry were the "speculation."[148] The best capitalist, therefore, was the one that took prices, managed costs, and made profits.

Conclusion: Capitalist Rationality and the Consumer

The importance of cost accounting has long been recognized as central to capitalist profit-making. In the earliest two manuals of cost accounting written in

[146] AN F^{12} 1495^{1} "Rapport au Comité d'Agriculture et des Arts de la Convention Nationale" (7 Pluviôse III); AN O^{2} 914 "Aperçu des fonds nécessaires au Bureau des Arts et Manufactures pour les dépenses de l'an sept" (12 Floréal VI). [il devient une école nationale de porcelaine...ou le goût y soit conservé dans toute sa pureté...[and where it would train artists] qui se répandent dans les autres manufactures, y portent des connaissances et des pratiques précieuses]

[147] AN F^{12} 1495^{1} Letter Salmon to Besson (1 Frimaire III). [on doit considérer la manufacture et son œuvre commercial...non en marchands et mercantile....que son but ne fut pas le profit...mais l'utilité générale] [spéculation] [d'autre but que le profit, d'autre tendance que l'intérêt]

[148] AN O^{1} 2061^{8} "Mémoire sur l'arrangement financier" (February 1791).

France, it is clear that it is the difference between income received and amount spent that forms profit. In this sense, profit can only be realized by taking the outcome of market sales and accounting for the internal costs of production.[149] And such eminent luminaries of economic history as Max Weber, Werner Sombart, and Joseph Schumpeter have long presented accounting as a key indicator of the rationalization of production and thus as central to narratives of capitalist growth.[150] Yet a subtle and perhaps obvious element of Weber's original argument has been subsequently lost, that rational capitalist activity presupposes the existence of a consumer market. Rational decisions about production, according to Weber, require first a "budget" set by the anticipated market price.[151] This means that "profitability depends on the prices which the 'consumers'...can and will pay," and that "rational money-accounting presupposes the existence of effective prices and not merely of fictitious prices."[152] For Weber, without consumers setting the prices there could be no capitalism.

The significance of consumption for industrial production was not lost on

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[149] MS Boulard, *Le manuel de l'imprimeur, ouvrage utile à tous ceux qui veulent connaître les détails des ustensiles des prix, de la manutention de cet Art intéressant, & à quiconque veut lever une imprimerie* (Paris: Boulard, 1791), 70–80, 94; Payen, *Essai sur la tenue des livres d'un manufacturier* (Paris: Johanneau, Bailleul, & Payen, 1817) esp 35.

[150] Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, trans. Ephraim Fischoff et al (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968) I:82–108; *idem.*, *General Economic History*, trans. Frank H Knight (New York: Greenberg Press, 1927) esp 275–8; Werner Sombart, "Medieval and Modern Commercial Enterprise," in *Enterprise and Secular Change: Readings in Economic History*, eds. Frederic C Lane and Jelle C Riemersma (Homewood, IL: Richard D Irwin, 1953) 37–40; Joseph A Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1942) 122–4. For recent reconsiderations of these works, see: Bruce G Carruthers and Wendy Nelson Espeland, "Accounting for Rationality: Double-Entry Bookkeeping and the Rhetoric of Economic Rationality," *American Journal of Sociology* 97, no. 1 (July 1991) 31–69; Eve Chiapello, "Accounting and the Birth of the Notion of Capitalism," *Critical Perspectives on Accounting* 18 (2007) 263–96.

[151] Weber, *Economy and Society*, 87–8.

[152] *Ibid.*, 93.

commentators of the late eighteenth century. It is no coincidence that the very first French manual on cost accounting began with an impassioned speech in favor of the liberty of commerce.[153] This is because, as state inspector and future Girondist leader Roland de la Platière put it: "The merchant's demand, the samples he presents, the price he offers: *voilà* the rule of the producer. The business of the first is to study the taste of the consumer; that of the latter, to conform to it," because all "consumption depends on the subjection of [the products of industry] to the tastes, the fantasies, the whims of [the consumer]."[154] These authors both argued in favor political change in order to enable economic growth, but in doing so they invoked a new cultural order.[155]

As an intermezzo in the long-run development of business practices in the French porcelain industry, the short-lived flirtation with worker-owned enterprise was confined to the heady early days of the Revolution when a new world seemed possible. Yet this episode reveals both the continuities and changes between the French porcelain industry of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The arguments in favor of worker cooperatives distinguished their motivations from both the preceding and succeeding organization of the industry. If the cooperatives or state-run enterprises during the Revolution were supported for the palliative effects they would have on poor and starving (and potentially politically mobilized) workers, both the previous and

[153] Boulard, *Manuel de l'imprimeur*, 1–8.

[154] Jean-Marie Roland de la Platière, *Encyclopédie méthodique. Manufactures, arts et métiers* (Paris: Pancoucke, 1785) 290–1. [La demande du marchand, l'échantillon qu'il présente, le prix qu'il offre :voilà la règle du fabricant. L'affaire du premier est d'étudier le goût du consommateur ; celle du dernier, de s'y conformer] [consommation dépend de l'assujettissement de [produits de l'industrie] aux goûts, aux fantaisies, aux caprices d[u consommateur]

[155] On the culture of capitalism, see: DR Scott, *The Cultural Significance of Accounts* (New York: H Holt, 1931) 20–61; William H Reddy, *The Rise of Market Culture: The Textile Trade and French Society, 1750–1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984) esp 1–18.

subsequent emphases were on the profits the French porcelain industry could generate. Furthermore, as will be seen, under both monarchical and imperial governance the purpose of the Royal/Imperial Porcelain Manufacture was not to generate profits directly for state coffers, but to create conditions in which private firms could prosper and ultimately repay the state's investments out of their own profits. In each of these conditions, we thus find a continuity across the Revolutionary divide.

During both the Old Regime and the new, there was an expectation that the state-run manufacture should at least cover its own costs. And it is here that the profound rupture between the two periods becomes visible. The exclusive privilege to manufacture high-quality and elaborately ornamented products had been granted to the Royal Porcelain Manufacture in the 1760s in order to build the capacity and reputation of the nation's private manufacturers so they could eventually compete successfully in an international marketplace. And, by the 1780s, as these private manufacturer's appeals demonstrate, this project was largely taken to have been successful. French private porcelain manufacturers were by then churning out large quantities of high-quality goods and believed themselves ready to enter Europe's luxury markets. And the growing market for consumer goods and the ability of consumers to confidently navigate seemed to obviate the need for continued regulation. The private manufacturers' petitions had laid bare the tensions that had thus become latent in the whole program of privileges: how long can you use a monopoly to encourage an industry?

At the same time, the French government's looming debt crisis in the 1780s led to increasing pressure for the Royal Porcelain Manufacture to itself become profitable, or at least revenue neutral. Yet the very same conception of inherent value that had underpinned the manufacture's success in building a reputation for quality now

weighed against it. The company lacked the conceptual and practical tools to reform its practices in ways that could effectively balance its expenses and revenues. Instead, desperate to make up for annual deficits, company managers and their bureaucratic supporters increasingly leaned on their monopoly privilege as a tool not for industrial encouragement, but individual profitability. At the collapse of the Old Regime, this continued to be an unresolved paradox at the center of the French porcelain industry. With the emergence of methods of effective cost accounting and the necessary precondition of a market price generated by consumers and responded to by producers, however, a new industrial strategy became possible. The Imperial Porcelain Manufacture would still seek to promote the French porcelain industry as a whole but would now be able to cover its own costs by rationalizing the production process around market prices. More importantly, it would be able to guide the development of a new, more dynamic, and more lucrative type of luxury industry.

Chapter Five

A Taste of Empire:

Cultivating the Porcelain Industry under Napoleon

There was a dialectical process of development in the French porcelain industry. The arrival of novel and distant goods in France led to the creation of new institutions to carry information about them to consumers. As state-sponsored efforts to domesticate porcelain production took hold, the Royal Porcelain Manufacture used its cultural and economic authority not just to provide neutral information to consumers, but to shape what such information meant and what information mattered. Even as this strategy succeeded, however, it created the conditions for its own downfall both in an accomplished range of private manufacturers and a competent community of private consumers. As the internal contradictions of the Old Regime economy became manifest in the ensuing debate over value and regulation, it had led to new business practices and state policies rooted in a belief of the sovereign consumer.

Once placed under pressure by the arrival of the French Revolution, however, the tensions latent in this new order were quickly revealed. The individual consumer may make his or her own decisions about what to consume and at what price, but they do so in reference to social frameworks of meaning and value. The individual producer may demand the freedom to make his or her own decisions about what to produce and at what price, but they are swept along by fashions and economic conditions beyond their control. The new Napoleonic political regime subsequently sought to both legitimate its rule and create the economic foundation for territorial expansion. The solution to all these problems was found in a renewed effort of state intervention—through the Imperial Porcelain Manufacture—to lead the French porcelain industry

back to glory and establish a French porcelain style centered on the culture of a new court society. In many ways, these efforts appear as a return to the dirigisme of the Old Regime. But it was, in fact, a new model founded on a new conception of the economy. It was a synthesis of the hierarchies and interventions of the Old Regime coupled with the economic liberties and consumer-derived value that had emerged in the decades surrounding the Revolution. And it would pave the way for a modern luxury economy.

The Collapse of the Porcelain Industry and the Autonomous Consumer

The Revolution was a bleak time for French industry. Foreign and civil war interrupted access to markets, conscripted and killed workers, and commandeered the draft animals needed to transport raw materials and manufactured goods; blockade and revolution severed France from its lucrative colonies, its enslaved workers, and the commodities they furnished; hyperinflation eroded wages, sparked unrest, and encouraged financial speculation over industrial investment; and emigration, decapitation, and vertical deportation rid the country of the most stalwart consumers of the Old Regime. Between 1789 and 1800, industrial output declined 40 percent.[1]

Meanwhile, the embrace of laissez-faire policies prevented the state from helping businesses weather the storm. In the early years of the Revolution, at least a half dozen porcelain manufactures appealed to the government for emergency assistance of money or materials. In each case they were rebuffed in the name of "liberty of commerce."[2]

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[1] Guy Lemarchand, *L'économie en France de 1770 à 1830 : De la crise de l'Ancien Régime à la révolution industrielle* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2008) 218.

[2] AN F^{12} 1496^{2} Letter Bourdon du Saussey (13 September 1791); Projet d'Arrêt to Committee of Agriculture and Arts [year III]; Letter Russinger to Commission of Agriculture and Arts (29 Thermidor II); Letter Russinger to Commission of Agriculture and Arts (2 Vendémiaire III); Letter Russinger to Committee of Public Safety (19 Ventose III); Letter Committee of Public Safety to Russinger (23 Ventôse III) [la liberté

Absolving the state of any responsibility for economic assistance, the Minister of the Interior explained in one such rejection letter that "the National Treasury cannot be responsible for either the mistaken speculation of individuals, or of events."[3] Even the National Manufacture in Sèvres was given paltry support, primarily in the form of rations of meat and bread delivered to unpaid workers, who in turn threatened strikes and violence.

Luxury industries were particularly hard hit by the Revolution. Beyond the strong cyclical nature of the luxury market and its dependence on easy access to wealthy domestic and foreign consumers, the allure of luxury goods relied on the social meanings they carried and the canons of taste they referenced. Domestically, the fervor of the revolutionaries increasingly abolished reminders of royal decadence in favor of patriotic imagery on common material, culminating in the Jacobin rejection of luxury and the simple style of the sans culottes.[4] As a result, the first four years of the Revolution witnessed as many Parisian porcelain manufacturers and merchants declare bankruptcy as had in the previous seven decades combined. Meanwhile, not a single faïence manufacturer declared bankruptcy under the Revolution after having averaged one bankruptcy a year for the preceding half century.[5] Popular disinterest in porcelain was such that, according to Mercier, when mobs ransacked the Tuileries palace in 1792

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de commerce]; Letter Russinger to Minister of Interior (12 Thermidor IV); Letter Pétry to Minister of Interior (9 Fructidor IV); Letter Nicolet and Gredr to Directory (2 Ventôse [VII]. [la liberté de commerce]

[3] AN F^{12} 1496^2 Letter Minister of Interior to Directors of Loiret (25 February 1792). [le trésor public ne peut être responsable ni de la fausse spéculation des individus, ni des évènements]

[4] Leora Auslander, *Cultural Revolutions: The Politics of Everyday Life in Britain, North America, and France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009) 113–48.

[5] AdP D^4B^6 and D^5B^6.

they pocketed whatever valuables they could find—cloth, clothes, candles, silverware, books, and bottles of alcohol—but simply smashed priceless porcelain vases to get at the gilt garnitures.[6] For French consumers caught in the whirlwind of revolution, porcelain just did not speak to the republican aspirations of the people.

Records from the National Porcelain Manufacture, however, reveal a different force responsible for restraining foreign sales. As long as the regicide Republic reigned in France, the monarchs who controlled Europe's luxury markets refused to trade even raw materials with French porcelain manufactures. The king of Sweden, for instance, though more than happy to have supplied Louis XVI with the cobalt responsible for porcelain's stunning blues, avoided renewing delivery contracts with the new government. As the French Minister of Foreign Relations diplomatically described this situation, the era of reciprocal interests between the two powers had come to an end and "the King of Sweden shows us less enthusiasm."[7] As the Minister of the Interior opaquely echoed that conclusion, "The Revolution has established some modifications in our exports with this power."[8] In a more striking reflection of deteriorated international relations, the Count of Barcelona chose to close down his entire porcelain manufacture rather than import kaolin clay from France. The French manager of the manufacture explained to his former clay supplier as he prepared to flee Spain, "this is a people so offended, that everything that has merely the name French is unbearable to

[6] Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Le nouveau Paris* (Brunswick: Principaux Librairies, 1800) 1:197.

[7] AN O[2] 916 Letter Minister of Foreign Relations to Minister of Interior (13 Floréal X). [le Roi de Suède nous montre moins d'empressement]

[8] AN O[2] 916 Letter Minister of Interior to Brongniart (15 Thermidor X). [La Révolution a établi quelques modifications dans nos exports avec cette puissance]

them....I believe I will leave this factory...because in this country a Frenchman is not safe."[9]

At the same time, foreign consumers did appear to be interested in purchasing at least some French porcelain. When the government failed to repay a pair of American wholesalers, they graciously offered to accept as payment porcelain from the National Manufacture, stipulating in particular that they sought "all the objects difficult to get rid of and of the old taste."[10] And when the management at Sèvres finally consented to auction off the mounting backstock from their warehouse at market rates, they expected to raise only twenty thousand francs.[11] Whether from resignation or a lack of salesmanship, the manufacture advertised the auction in less than exciting terms: "The National Manufacture of PORCELAIN AT SÈVRES, working to renew the forms and models of all the objects that make up its stocks; Gives notice that it will SELL AT AUCTION...all the PORCELAIN of old styles...that still exist in its warehouses."[12] The logistical correspondence surrounding the auctions emphasized that this was "old porcelain" from "many years" ago, made "scraps due to the oldness of their forms," that they were "of an outdated form or of a taste that is no longer in fashion" and thus "could not be sold in Paris." Yet the auction ended up netting nearly forty thousand francs, double their highest hopes. Explaining this unexpected success to the Minister of

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[9] ADHV C 3003 Letter Cloostermans to Alluaud (28 July 1792). [c'est ici un peuple si indigne, que tout ce qui a seulement le nom français leur est odieuse.... Je crois que je quittera cette fabrique...car dans ce pays un français n'y est pas en sureté]

[10] AN F^{12} 1496^2 Letter Minister of Finances to Minister of Interior (29 Frimaire V). [tous les objets de peu de défaite et d'ancien goût]

[11] AN O^2 916 "Rapport présenté au Ministre de l'Intérieur" (26 Fructidor VIII).

[12] *Journal de Paris* (25 Thermidor VIII). [La Manufacture Nationale de PORCELAINE DE SÈVRES, s'occupand de renouveler les formes & modèles de tous les objets qui composent ses magasins ; Donne avis qu'elle sera VENDRE À L'ENCHÈRE...toutes les PORCELAINES de formes anciennes...qui existent encore dans ses magasins]

the Interior, the director of the National Manufacture could only say "that some wholesalers took [them to sell] abroad."[13] By contrast, an auction planned for the following year, directed toward domestic consumers, and comprised less of "porcelain of old style, old decorations," brought in barely a third as much.[14]

Collectively, these experiences reveal the crucial importance of symbolic meaning for luxury goods. Domestically, the new Jacobin austerity rejected aristocratic ostentation. Existing stocks and styles of porcelain failed to find buyers, who had in the meantime embraced wares more appropriate for a patriotic ethos. Internationally, the spirit of the Revolution inhered in the raw materials of industry, and monarchs as in Sweden and Spain refused to trade even these lest they carry the contagion of republicanism to their kingdoms. Yet the enthusiasm of foreign wholesalers for holdovers from the Old Regime reveals that it was not France itself they rejected, but the French Revolution. Indeed, it appears that in contrast to the threat of Jacobinism, sympathy or nostalgia for the Bourbons drove demand for the remnants of its material culture—the enemy of my enemy is my interior decorator, it seemed. If the French porcelain industry were to recover, it would need to reestablish itself as the arbiter of taste. And to do this it would need to attach itself to a cultural authority that could orient internal and external markets around the same stylistic regime.

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[13] AN O^2 915 "Rapport demandé par le Ministre de l'Intérieur" (17 Fructidor VIII); AN O^2 916 Letter Brongniart to Minister of Interior (6 Brumaire IX); "Rapport au Ministre de l'Intérieur" (27 Brumaire IX). [vieilles porcelaines] [un grand nombre d'années] [rebut par l'ancienneté de leurs formes] [de forme gothique ou d'un goût qui n'étoit plus de mode] [n'auroient pu être vendues à Paris] que des négociants [les] ont pris pour l'étranger]

[14] AN O^2 916 Letter Brongniart to Minister of Interior (21 Ventose X); Letter Brongniart to Minister of Interior (7 Prairial X). [porcelaines d'anciennes formes, d'anciens décors]

As became apparent during the Directory, however, wealth and conspicuous consumption alone were nowhere near sufficient to establish such authority. Following the Thermidorian reaction, the Directory sought to reestablish calm in the country by pacifying radicals and reactionaries alike in favor of a moderate center. A necessary precondition to domestic tranquility was an end to the rapid inflation of the *assignat* in favor of the new *mandat*, which would be similarly backed by public land sales and a burdensome series of taxes. Overall, the economic reforms did little to stimulate renewed agricultural or industrial growth, but the efflorescence of financial opportunities fostered the rise of a wealthy elite rooted in capitalist speculation on land and currency.[15] The youthful members of this new economic elite, the *jeunesse dorée*, self-consciously rejected the restrained consumption patterns that had marked their Jacobin enemies, freeing themselves from the dictates of republican patriotism and collective identity in favor of garish declarations of individualism and affluence.[16]

Yet despite revivifying patterns of public consumption that recalled those of the Old Regime, these wealthy Parisians drew little but contempt from their compatriots, inspiring more ridicule than emulation. As discussed in Chapter One, Claude-Louis Desrais's 1787 depiction of a crowd shopping at the Palais Royal (figure 5.1) encapsulated the dawn of popular consumerism. In front of glass-fronted boutiques

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[15] Denis Woronoff, *The Thermidorean Regime and the Directory, 1794–1799*, trans. Julian Jackson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984) ch 4.

[16] Richard Wrigley, *The Politics of Appearances: Representations of Dress in Revolutionary France* (New York: Berg, 2002) 265–7; *Au temps des merveilleuses : la société parisienne sous le Directoire et le Consulat* (Paris: Paris Musées, 2005); Elizabeth Amann, *Dandyism in the Age of Revolution: The Art of the Cut* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015) 56–133; François Gendron, *The Gilded Youth of Thermidor*, trans. James Cookson (Buffalo, NY: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993); Lynn Hunt, "Freedom of Dress in Revolutionary France," in *From the Royal to the Republican Body: Incorporating the Political in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century France*, eds. Sara E Melzer and Kathryn Norberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) 224–50.

Figure 5.1. Philibert-Louis Debucourt after Claude-Louis Desrais, *The Palais Royal-Gallery's Walk*, 1787. Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington.

teeming with goods, well-dressed and well-heeled Parisians join in a spectacle of social consumption, each earning their place in the mass through the objects they wear and display. While some of the figures appear as caricatures, the overall atmosphere is one of bustling joviality, a cohesive and orderly society of splendor in, quite literally, the Royal Palace. By contrast, in Jean-Baptiste Isabey's 1797 depiction of Le Petit Coblentz (figure 5.2), a different atmosphere is shown. Here, in the shadow of the Directory, grotesque caricatures preen and pose and present themselves for display. Postures, whether puffed, bowed, or slouched, emphasize the individual rather than the ensemble. And while in Desrais's image everyone is in movement, at the center of

Figure 5.2. Jean-Baptiste Isabey, *Le petit Coblentz*, 1797. Courtesy Paris Musées and the Musée Carnavalet.

Isabey's recline figures lost in what Mercier termed "the reign of idleness."[17] For Mercier, these *incroyables* and *merveilleuses* embodied the worst of the Old Regime, enemies of the people overcome with material excess in gold and diamonds.[18] "Here the temple where stockjobbing devours the public fortune, and condemns to starvation

[17] Mercier, *Le nouveau Paris,* 3:120–1. [le règne de l'oisivité]

[18] *Ibid.*, 84–100, 125–7.

entire families, reduced to the most atrocious deprivation by a pompous and murderous traffic! Here these audacious expropriators of our last resources!"[19] Here was ostentation absent authority, an object of curiosity perhaps, but without the standing to cement a new stylistic regime. In fact, in the decades following the Revolution the ascendant bourgeoisie as a whole proved itself incapable of establishing a new system of taste, instead recycling the monarchical heritage in an endless loop.[20]

In an allegorical dialogue published in the daily *Journal de Paris*, the weakness of consumer culture in this period was portrayed as the absence of taste within the empire of fashion. Within this allegory, Fashion appears as the recalcitrant child of Luxury and Vanity that has lost its respect, judgment, and sense. Over the course of the dialogue, as Fashion debates its own merits with its parent, Luxury, it gradually accepts that there is a fine distinction between the two of them. Both luxury and fashion, Fashion comes to acknowledge, produce a salutary effect on the economy by stimulating circulation. But whereas fashion ultimately leads to "poverty," Luxury lectures, "The difference between you and me is that you look out on all individuals, and that I exercise over them an empire proportioned to their means...and that I let myself be guided by an enlightened government that constrains me to what is useful to the interests of the country. For example, it places me in the arts...[like] porcelain...I provide work internally and I export abroad." The crucial distinction here is one of social order, not as the outcome of individuals each striving for greatness, but as each knowing and living

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[19] *Ibid.*, 85. [Voilà le temple où l'agiotage dévore la fortune publique, et condamne à la faim des familles entières, réduites au plus affreux dénuement par un trafic solennel et meurtrier ! les voilà, ces audacieux spoliateurs de nos dernières ressources !]

[20] Leora Auslander, "After the Revolution: Recycling Ancien Régime Style in the Nineteenth Century," in *Re-Creating Authority in Revolutionary France*, eds. Bryant T Ragan, jr. and Elizabeth A Williams (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992) 144–74.

according to their place in the social hierarchy. And the government here plays the role of benevolent guide, harnessing luxury in the interest of society. True luxury, according to its embodiment, creates jobs, "preserves its price," and "gains the admiration of all Europe." In the end, Fashion acquiesces to these arguments and vows to abandon fleeting fantasies in favor of "the splendor of the state and the relative happiness of individuals" as manifested in an official style.[21]

Such arguments were not unique to the Revolutionary era. Throughout the eighteenth century, debates over the moral and economic consequences of luxury consumption had split between those who opposed the immorality and wastefulness of luxury and those who supported its salutary effects on production. And these debates had only intensified in the half century leading up to the Revolution.[22] In his *Encyclopédie* article on luxury, Jean-François de Saint-Lambert had presented in similar terms a distinction between the "luxury of decorum" and its perversion into a mania of

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[21] "Le Luxe & la Mode," *Journal de Paris* (18 Brumaire XIII). [la misère] [La différence qu'il y a entre vous & moi, c'est que vous donnez également sur tous les individus, & que j'exerce sur eux un empire proportionné à leurs moyens...& que je me laisse diriger par un gouvernement éclairé qui fait me borner à ce que j'ai d'utile aux intérêts du pays. Par exemple, il me place dans les arts...les porcelaines...j'occupe à l'intérieur & j'exporte à l'étranger] [conserve son prix] [font l'admiration de toute l'Europe] [la splendeur de l'état & le bonheur relatif des individus]

[22] John Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue: Luxury, Patriotism, and the Origins of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006); Jeremy Jennings, "The Debate about Luxury in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century French Political Thought," *History of Ideas* 68, no. 1 (January 2007) 79–105; Anoush Fraser Terjanian, *Commerce and Its Discontents in Eighteenth-Century French Political Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013) 26–67; Michael Kwass, "'Le superflu, chose très nécessaire': Physiocracy and Its Discontents in the Eighteenth-Century Luxury Debate," in *The Economic Turn" Recasting Political Economy in Enlightenment Europe*, eds. Sophus A Reinert and Stephen L Kaplan (New York: Anthem Press, 2019) 117–38. On the contemporaneous debate in Britain, see: Christopher J Berry, *The Idea of Luxury: A Conceptual and Historical Investigation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 126–76.

feverish desire for more.[23] But amidst the social upheaval of the 1790s, the issue was less about how fashion and excessive consumption corrupted morals or stimulated industry and more about how a social order embodied in seemly luxury might uphold both society and economy.

This difference becomes manifest in interior decorating publications of the era. According to architect Charles Normand, good taste followed nature, embracing a simplicity of line and subject evident in the designs of Antiquity. Although France had lost its path since the time of Louis XIV, he believed, the state now had an opportunity to work with artists and entrepreneurs to return to these principles and usher in an era of good taste.[24] Expanding on this argument, imperial architects Charles Percier and Pierre Fontaine emphasized the eternal reign of general laws of taste, but also held that these laws manifested "the spirit and the taste of each period, in the details of domestic utensils, of objects of luxury or of necessity."[25] Since the Revolution, however, the dictates of fashion had loosed French manufacturing from the moors of taste. Fashion itself, they believed, was a natural effect of "the love of change," habits of social interaction, and the commercial interest "to make luxury objects *outmoded*, in order to

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[23] Jean-François de Saint-Lambert, "Luxe," in *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, etc.*, eds. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert (Paris: Briasson, 1764) 9:767.

[24] Charles Normand, *Nouveau recueil en divers genres d'ornemens et autres objets propres à la décoration* (Paris: Joubert, 1803).

[25] Charles Percier and Pierre François Léonard Fontaine, *Recueil de décorations intérieures, comprenant tout ce qui a rapport à l'ameublement, comme vases, trépides, candélabres, cassolettes, lustres, girandoles, lampes, chandeliers, cheminées, feux, poêles, pendules, tables, secrétaires, lits, canapés, fauteuils, tabourets, miroirs, écrans, etc. etc. etc.* (Paris: Percier & Fontaine, 1812) 2. [de l'esprit et du goût de chaque période, par les détails des ustensiles domestiques, des objets de luxe ou de nécessité]

renew more frequently the products, and increase their sales."[26] Yet in the post-Revolutionary period, "the character of taste" had become one of "an incredible obsession with change."[27]

> The manner of being and the custom of modern societies, which places all individuals as a spectacle in the places of promenade, of conversation, of games, and of pleasure, have awoken at the highest level the longing to please on the one hand, and the desire to distinguish themselves from others. From here this empire of fashion in everything that controls the manner of clothing, finery, and behavior; from this action continuously reborn that brings the many to imitate the few who set the tone, and the few to abandon the custom as soon as it becomes general. Ridicule is the weapon of fashion; and this weapon has as much force, as the number of spectators grows.[28]

Once this empire of fashion takes hold, Percier and Fontaine continued, competition among manufacturers would lead to cheaper and cheaper counterfeits until "All sorts of forgeries spoil their value...they depreciate rapidly in [public] opinion, of things suddenly prostituted to the most vulgar uses" until the prevalence of products and counterfeits "promptly discredits the entire genre."[29] In this sense, they concluded, "the spirit of fashion...is the natural enemy of all the arts...the ideas of order and rule

[26] *Ibid.*, 7–8. [l'amour du changement] [de faire *vieillir* les objets de luxe, pour en renouveler plus souvent les produits, et augmenter leur débit]

[27] *Ibid.*, 8. [le caractère du goût] [une incroyable manie de changement]

[28] *Ibid.*, 12. [La manière d'être et l'habitude des sociétés modernes, qui mettent tous les individus en spectacle dans les lieux de promenade, de conversation, de jeux, et de plaisir, ont éveillé au plus haut point l'envie de plaire d'une part, et le désir de se distinguer de l'autres. De là cet empire de la mode dans tout ce qui tient à l'habillement, à la parure, et aux manières ; de là cette action toujours renaissante qui porte le grand nombre à imiter le petit nombre qui donne le ton, et le petit nombre de quitter l'usage dès qu'il devient général. Le ridicule est l'arme de la mode ; et cette arme a d'autant plus de force, que le nombre des spectateurs est plus considérable]

[29] *Ibid.*, 13. [Toutes les sortes de falsifications dénaturent leur valeur...c'est de déprécier rapidement dans l'opinion, des choses que l'ont trouvé prostituées aux emplois les plus vulgaires] [jette promptement le discrédit sur le genre même]

disappear; the anarchy of whim reigns."[30] Their solution was to teach producers true taste, to purify and preserve its principles. Who else but the state could fulfill such a role?

In 1797, the porcelain manufacture Dihl and Guerhard produced a pair of vases that can be read as a statement on the condition of the porcelain industry after nearly a decade of Revolutionary upheaval. Both vases are in an Etruscan style, large at over eighteen inches, with a rare bright yellow enamel and extensive gilding. Just a decade earlier they would have been illegal under the old privilege protections of the Royal Porcelain Manufacture. But what really distinguishes them are the two monochromatic scenes wrapping all the way around each. The first vase (figure 5.3) depicts a tempest-tossed sea from the shoreline. Waves crash against the rocky coast, ships list dangerously in the distance, heavy clouds empty their contents from above, and several figures straining against the wind scramble for safety. The second vase (figure 5.4) depicts a storm on land. Wind has stripped the leaves from gnarled and bent trees, dark clouds dump rain on the countryside, the sanctuary of a distant church is barely visible through the gloom, and what appear to be the same people escaping the storm on the sea are still searching for respite. Whether as an allegory for the nation or the industry, these vases show relentless chaos and the perilous course between the Scylla of revolution and the Charybdis of recession.[31] Through it all, though, the manufacture was still producing and was still navigating its way through a new world.

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[30] *Ibid.*, 14. [l'esprit de la mode...est l'ennemi naturel de tous les arts...les idées d'ordre et de règle disparaissent ; l'anarchie du caprice régit]

[31] The change in attitude is especially evident comparing these vases to another created by Dihl and Guérhard during the military campaigns of 1793. That vase features the same yellow ground and decoration, but the monochromatic scene instead depicts a victorious Roman battle in a clear allusion to the martial fortunes of the French Republic and the republican enthusiasm of the young manufacture.

Figure 5.3. Vase with scenes of storm at sea. Hard-paste porcelain with polychrome enamel and gilding. Dihl and Guérhard, Paris, c. 1797–98. Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2014.68.1.

Figure 5.4. Vase with scenes of storm on land. Hard-paste porcelain with polychrome enamel and gilding. Dihl and Guérhard, Paris, c. 1797–98. Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2014.68.2.

Rebuilding the Porcelain Industry

Porcelain production was a complicated orchestra, its conductor striving to maintain harmony among many competing forces. Running a factory required overseeing often hundreds of workers divided between dozens of specializations, operating an advanced chemical laboratory, drawing enormous quantities of raw materials from far-flung lands, anticipating consumer demand, pushing the boundaries of artistic achievement, and somehow turning a profit while doing so. As the directors of the National Porcelain Manufacture recognized, maintaining this balance of science, commerce, and art could either be accomplished through unitary power or by a triumvirate of specialists. While readily acknowledging that a board of directors lacked cohesion and direction, they concluded, the apparent impossibility of finding a single person with mastery over each of these fields meant that divided management was the only feasible path forward.[32] During the tumultuous middle years of the Revolution, frequent administrative turnover would have made even this appear impossible.[33] Given the anemic state of the industry and the refusal of the government to offer anything more substantive than (rotten) rations to quiet worker unrest, it scarcely seemed to matter.

Following the Coup of 18 Brumaire, however, interventionist economic policy quickly regained favor. With Lucien Bonaparte installed as Minister of the Interior, plans were drawn to recover from the economic crisis by investing directly in industrial production. A dour report submitted to Lucien Bonaparte shortly after his appointment

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[32] AN F[12] 1496[1] Letter Saumon [III].

[33] AMNS A5 Letter Commission of Agriculture and Arts to Directors of National Manufacture (17 Thermidor III); "Arrête du Comité d'Agriculture et des Arts" (7 Vendémiaire IV); AN F[12] 1496[2] Letter Minister of Interior to Gazeran (Germinal IV).

depicted the National Manufacture at Sèvres as having outlived its usefulness. Whatever role it may have played in establishing porcelain production in France, it had become a "hospice for the disabled," making no progress in a decade, while private manufacturers had "eclipsed the glory of this establishment." The author recommended cutting the workforce by three-fourths and shifting its focus to the fledgling fields of pottery and glass production. "It will continue producing the porcelain that can still contribute to the progress of this art," the author concluded, but "This production will in truth be very little." Nonetheless, such drastic cuts could save the manufacture and, he hoped, caution other manufacturers against resting on their laurels.[34]

What Lucien Bonaparte read into this report was that the National Manufacture had indeed fallen from its previous heights, but that there remained a crucial role for it in the economic renaissance to come. This was no time to downsize but to reorganize and rebuild: "In reorganizing the manufacture, I did not only intend to make it less of a charge on the Public Treasury; I rather had the intention to make it recover its old prosperity."[35] More than a business, the National Manufacture was to serve as a national center for training and research: "In reorganizing it, I not only proposed to reduce its expenses; I rather had in mind to transform it into a school of art" and

[34] AN O² 915 "Rapport présenté au Ministre de l'Intérieur," [Cortaz] (9 Floréal VIII). [hospice d'invalides] [éclipser la gloire de cet établissement] [Il maintient la fabrication de la porcelaine pourtant ce qui peut rendre aux progrès de cet art] [Cette fabrication sera à la vérité peu considérable.]

[35] AMNS L1 Letter Minister of Interior to Directors of National Manufacture (25 Floréal VIII). [En réorganisant la manufacture, je ne suis pas seulement de la rendre moins à charge du trésor public ; j'ai encore eu l'intention de lui faire recouvre son ancienne prospérité.]

science.[36] The crucial acknowledgment, however, was that by this time the private porcelain industry was already well established. Lucien Bonaparte's goal was not to supplant it, but to use the National Manufacture to push private industrialists to new heights of artistic, scientific, and commercial achievement: "In maintaining it in Sèvres, I had above all in mind to make it an object of education for private establishments."[37] In short, the new government would invest in the National Manufacture as a means to renew national manufacturing: "I rather had the intention to make it recover its old ~~glory~~ ~~perfection~~ splendor...I had above all in mind to make it an object of emulation for private establishments." And not just for porcelain, but for all ceramics and glass production in France.[38]

The man entrusted to lead this new venture was uniquely qualified for the position. Alexandre Brongniart had trained first as an architect and artist as a child, then studied and served as a doctor and pharmacist in a military hospital early in the Revolution, and finally had worked as a natural history teacher and a mining engineer by his thirtieth birthday.[39] In this final position, he had argued for government intervention in the mining industry. The state should, he wrote, directly operate a range of mines in order "to offer models for the perfection of the art of mining and metallurgy in France...[because] we need the example of well managed establishments, to train

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[36] AN O^2 915 Letter Minister of Interior to Brongniart (25 Floréal VIII). [En la réorganisant, je ne me fais seulement proposé de réduire ses dépenses ; j'ai encore eu en vue de la transformer en un école d'art]

[37] AMNS L1 Letter Minister of Interior to Directors of National Manufacture (25 Floréal VIII). [En la maintenant à Sèvres, j'ai eu surtout en vue d'en faire un objet d'éducation pour les établissements particuliers]

[38] AN O^2 915 Letter Minister of Interior to Salmon and Hettlinger (25 Floréal VIII). [j'ai encore l'intention de lui faire recouvrer son ancienne ~~gloire~~ ~~perfection~~ splendeur...j'ai eu surtout en vue d'en faire un objet d'émulation pour les établissements particuliers]

[39] AN 668 AP 1 [Fonds Brongniart].

artists and workers."[40] Uniting expertise in art, chemistry, and geology with an eagerness to use the state to guide industry, Brongniart was recommended for the post by famed chemist and powerful senator Claude-Louis Berthollet and quickly gained support from Lucien Bonaparte for the post.[41]

Immediately upon his appointment as Director of the National Manufacture at Sèvres, Brongniart set forth an ambitious series of reforms. The most pressing among these reforms was to preserve the manufacture's disappearing workforce. By the time Brongniart took the helm in Sèvres, the manufacture had become something of a ghost town. In the weeks before 18 Brumaire, merchants had ceased delivering rations of bread and meat to the workers as the government debt owed them topped five thousand francs, the workers found their personal credit cut off as they approached a year without receiving wages, and so many desperate workers had gone elsewhere in search of food that the manufacture was able to save on heating costs by condensing the remaining workers into just a few workshops.[42] In the ensuing months conditions deteriorated further as over 130 workers were laid off (while still owed fifteen months of backpay), reducing the manufacture's workforce from its Old Regime high of over

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[40] Lefebvre, Silvestre, and Brongniart, "Considérations sur les avantages que le Gouvernement français pourrait assurer au commerce et aux diverses parties du service public, par l'exploitation de quelques mines dont la République est en possession tant dans les pays conquis et réunis, que dans son ancien territoire," *Journal des Mines* 6, no. 33 (Prairial V) 723–34. [offrir des modèles pour le perfectionnement de l'art des mines et de métallurgie en France....il faut l'exemple d'établissemens bien conduits, pour former des artistes et des ouvriers]

[41] AN O^2 915 Letter [Cortaz] to Berthollet (16 Germinal VIII).

[42] AN O^2 915 Letter Salmon and Hettlinger to Workshop Heads (28 Fructidor VII); Letter Membres Composant la Commission Nommée par la Manufacture to Minister of Interior (3 Brumaire VIII); "Rapport présenté au Ministre de l'Intérieur," [Dubois] (14 Brumaire VIII).

three hundred to a paltry sixty-six.[43] As Brongniart was acutely aware, the manufacture would never recover if it could not retain its skilled workforce, and as long as the workers' wages remained in arrears there would be no loyalty between them and the manufacture.[44] Brongniart ordered that now even temporary workers would be "definitively attached to the manufacture" with full benefits.[45] And when Brongniart ordered the end of soft-paste production, rather than lay off the workers from that department he promised to retrain them to work with hard-paste and keep them at the same status and pay.[46] In order to encourage "the zeal that most people attach to the manufacture," Brongniart introduced a system of bonuses and gratifications regardless of position.[47]

These moves were undertaken out of the belief that a manufacture "where one makes objects of taste" depends on the care and enthusiasm that comes from workers secure in their job and able to focus more on the quality than quantity of their output. Granting fixed contracts and job security, however, raised the concern that as these workers aged the manufacture would soon be filled with those who "do not want to or

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[43] AN O[2] 915 Letter Workers to Minister of Interior (8 Prairial VIII); AN O[2] 916 "Quelques renseignements sur la manufacture," [Brongniart] [Messidor X].

[44] AN O[2] 915 "Rapport demandé par le Ministre de l'Intérieur," Cortaz (18 Messidor VIII); AN O[2] 916 Letter Brongniart to Minister of Interior (6 Germinal IX); "Rapport présenté au Ministre de l'Intérieur" (24 Nivôse X).

[45] AMNS M1 "Autorisation," Brongniart (4th Complementary Day IX). [les attachent définitivement à la manufacture]

[46] AMNS M1 "Décision," Brongniart (21 Nivôse IX); Note, Brongniart (1 Germinal IX).

[47] AN O[2] 914 "Aperçu des fonds nécessaires au Bureau des Arts et Manufactures pour les dépenses de l'an sept" (21 Nivôse IX); AMNS M1 "Avis de l'administration sur les gratifications," Brongniart [X]; Note, [Brongniart] [XIII]. [le zèle que la plupart des personnes attachent à la manufacture] [petits travaux extraordinaires] [constamment beau]

cannot adapt to modern taste."[48] To resolve this tension, Brongniart introduced a new system of retirement in which workers over the age of sixty who had been with the manufacture for at least twenty years could retire with a somewhat reduced stipend, but get to keep their employer-provided lodging and garden.[49] As Chaptal explained, "the housing granted to these workers is hardly a favor; it is part of their compensation."[50] Other initiatives to support the manufacture's workers in ensuing years included hiring a company physician to provide free medical care to the workers and their families; distributing rations of things like furniture, wood, candles, and tools equally to the workers; and building a public bathhouse that would be free for low-paid workers, pro-rated for skilled workers, and inexpensive for wives and children ordered to bathe for their health. The explicit motivation behind each of these expensive undertakings was "to make their stays at the manufacture more enjoyable," and thus "to excite the zeal and the emulation of the workers."[51]

There was to be no such thing as a free bath, however. These reforms were the realization of a project the manufacture had initiated earlier in the Revolution, in which plans for pensions and worker regulations showed that "the Direction cares for their well-being and has only *paternal* views to attach each individual by personal interest to

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[48] AN O² 916 "Rapport présenté au Ministre de l'Intérieur" (7 Prairial X). [où l'on fabrique des objets du goût] [ils ne veulent ou ne peuvent se mettre au courant du goût moderne]

[49] AN O² 915 "Rapport présenté au Ministre de l'Intérieur," [Cortaz] (18 Floréal VIII); "Rapport présenté au Ministre de l'Intérieur," [Dubois] (19 Fructidor VIII).

[50] AN O² 916 Letter Minister of Interior to Minister of War [Brumaire X]. [le logement accordé aux ouvriers n'est point un faveur ; il fait partie de leur traitement]

[51] AN O² 920 Letter Minister of Interior to Brongniart (11 April 1807); AMNS M2 "Règlement," Brongniart (12 June 1812); "Extrait des règlements relatifs au concierge," (12 June 1812). [de rendre leurs séjours dans la manufacture plus agréables] [d'exciter le zèle et l'émulation des ouvriers]

the glory and the prosperity of the manufacture."[52] This paternalism sought to simultaneously discipline the workforce and encourage its allegiance to the manufacture. The central clock recently installed at the manufacture was supplemented with a system of locking gates to prevent workers from leaving during working hours or local children and "vagabonds" from accessing the central fountain.[53] Just enough flexibility was to be allowed to ensure—in a phrase used repeatedly—*l'amour propre*. Their invocation of personal dignity seems to have gone beyond a sense of pride in work and position. It suggested instead the subordination of the workers' sense of self to their position in and obedience to the manufacture. Regulations stressed the mutual obligations between workers and management, the former offering "personal dignity" through obedience and the latter "earning their trust."[54] In following years, the bonus system was reformed to specify that workers would be paid not primarily on their "talent," but on their behavior: "The respect which the manufacture enjoys should be founded as much on good morals and the regularity of conduct, as on the talent of the people."[55] This was a reconceptualization of employee relations along explicitly paternalistic lines designed to ensure order in industry.[56]

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[52] AMNS B4 "Organisation intérieur de la Manufacture Nationale des Porcelaines de France" [11 Floréal III]. Italics added. [la Direction s'occupe de leur bien-être et n'a que des vues *paternelles* d'attacher chaque individu par l'intérêt personnel à la gloire et à la prospérité de la manufacture]

[53] AMNS B4 "Règlements et arrêtés de la Direction" (1 Prairial–20 Thermidor VIII).

[54] AMNS B4 "Réflections préliminaires sur l'organisation intérieur de la manufacture" [VIII]. [mériter leur confiance]

[55] AMNS M2 "Gratifications" (1806); Communication from Chef des Ateliers de Peinture [1810]. [La considération dont jouir la manufacture soit fondée autant sur les bonnes mœurs et la régularité de la conduite, que sur les talents de toutes les personnes]

[56] The use of paternalism to control labor would become common in the late nineteenth century. What is telling here is its presence in one of the earliest large-scale manufactories and reemergence only decades later when such concentrated sites of production became standard in other industries. See: Michael Stephen Smith, *The*

Compared to the frequent redesign and revision of the manufacture's internal organization, the training of new workers—the didactic mission that ostensibly justified the manufacture's existence—received little interest. A system was put in place to oversee the admission of apprentices to the manufacture that began with searches for those with existing talents who could be quickly trained.[57] Over time the admissions system was formalized to include an admissions test in which aspiring applicants would be given a piece to paint and then rated by judges, with only the highest scores gaining entrance.[58] At each stage of their training, apprentices would undergo a similar examination to determine whether they would advance in their candidacy toward the ultimate prospect of becoming a regular employee of the manufacture.[59]

The conflicting missions of the Imperial Porcelain Manufacture are evident here. On the one hand, its official mission was to train highly skilled workers for the Sèvres as well as the French porcelain industry as a whole. On the other hand, it was still expected to compete in the market and balance its revenues against its costs. As Brongniart made clear from the beginning, part of his guiding motivation in managing the apprentice system was less to train a new generation of French artisans than to introduce cost-saving measures: "there is a bunch of work that can be done by children or women" at lower wages.[60] This was, after all, how they "make English manufactures

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Emergence of Modern Business Enterprise in France, 1800–1930 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006) 303–10.

[57] AN O[2] 915 "Rapport présenté au Ministre de l'Intérieur," [Dubois] (9 Brumaire VII).

[58] AMNS M2 "extrait du registre des décisions de l'administration" (18 January 1810).

[59] AMNS M3 "Règlement pour les apprentises élèves" (25 January 1814).

[60] AN O[2] 915 "Rapport demandé par le Ministre" (23 Thermidor VIII). [il est une foule de travaux qui peuvent être exécutés par des enfants ou des femmes]

flourish."[61] In other words, by a "school of art" Brongniart did not always have in mind a school for artists; the manufacture's training was at least partially intended to produce obedient and cost-effective workers. Rather, the manufacture was to be itself a school for art, and the French ceramics industry as a whole was to be its pupil. Labor controls and low-wage apprentices were necessary to running a successful and estimable enterprise, and the success and esteem of that enterprise were necessary to gain the appreciation and thus emulation of private manufacturers. Teaching those manufacturers what a luxury business should look like thus sometimes required sacrificing the artistic training of its workers to the economic rationale of the business, but both senses could be and were included in making the Imperial Porcelain Manufacture a "school of art."

But while official company documents are nearly silent on the direct educational aspects of the National Porcelain Manufacture, personal letters from a student do reveal the existence of a rigorous educational system. In the Year VIII of the Republic, the former manager of the Royal Porcelain Manufacture in Limoges and current owner of the finest kaolin quarries in the Limousin, François Alluaud, passed away. In recognition of his service to the French porcelain industry, the directors of the National Porcelain Manufacture in Sèvres agreed to take in his son (also François Alluaud) as a student with a path toward employment.[62] Whereas promising young recruits received a small stipend while studying at the manufacture, paying students like Alluaud were charged nearly fifteen hundred livres annually to cover tuition, room and board,

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[61] AN O^2 915 Letter Brongniart to Minister of Interior (17 Thermidor VIII). [faire fleurir les manufactures anglaises]

[62] AN O^2 915 Letter Alluaud fils to Salmon and Hettlinger (6 Pluviôse VIII); Letter Salmon and Hettlinger to Dubois (11 Pluviôse VIII).

clothing, and books. Their education was well rounded, with a priority placed on the drawing classes that would develop artistic skills, supplemented with an education in the classics and geometry as well as clarinet lessons.[63] It would seem that this education succeeded in its aims, because Alluaud would eventually return to Limoges to rebuild his father's porcelain manufacture and serve the Department as a renowned geologist. In a final twist of fate, the family of Gabriel Grellet was called to sign off on allowing the young Alluaud to restart the manufactory in Limoges.[64] The irony was that Grellet had been ousted from his position as director of the Royal Porcelain Manufacture in Sèvres due to incompetence and replaced by the elder Alluaud. Grellet seems to have nursed a grudge over his replacement, especially during the Revolution when he was arrested amidst public protest while Alluaud gained widespread admiration for his charity works.[65]

When Lucien Bonaparte, early in his stint as Interior Minister, had outlined his plan for the National Porcelain Manufacture at Sèvres, his first article declared that "The manufacture at Sèvres is a national school intended to spread in France and to perfect the art of manufacturing porcelain. Its administration and its works should contribute equally to this objective." In contrast to the schools established in this period to train professionals for other fields, however, the National Porcelain Manufacture was not intended primarily to form an educated class prepared to work elsewhere. The

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[63] ADHV L 1247 "Compte des avances pour le Citoïen Alluaud" (29 Brumaire VIII); Letter Bret and Neperel to Mme Alluaud (2 Frimaire VIII); "Compte pour le Citoïen Alluaud" (29 Floréal VIII); Letter Bret and Neperel (12 Fructidor VIII).

[64] ADHV 9 M 29 "Procès verbal d'information de commode et incommode" (10 April 1816).

[65] AMLimoges ID3 Délibérations du Conseil Municipal (24 March 1792); ID4 (16 December 1792), (20 December 1792), (27 December 1792), (31 December 1792), (4 January 1793), (18 Messidor an II).

second article of Lucien Bonaparte's plan specified that "It should consequently bring to the composition of its clay, the choice of its forms, the analysis of its ornamentation and the richness of its decoration, all the care and all the perfection that can characterize the products made to serve as a model."[66] It was this last instruction, "to serve as a model," that was so distinctive about the new political economy being crafted under the Napoleonic era.

The political economy of taste under the Old Regime had sought to support private manufacturing through regulation, carefully protecting the reputation of French porcelain as a way of communicating information about material and artistic quality to consumers. But it did so within the confines of a conception of inherent value and through the institutional tool of privilege. The Royal Porcelain Manufacture had been the incarnation of both conditions, a privileged company serving as a bastion of quality. A new conception of value as the aggregated reflection of subjective individual utility and the unique ability of private manufactures to meet consumer demand had taken hold during the Revolution. Privileges were abolished and consumers made sovereign over value. With Napoleon's ascension, however, a new synthesis was established in policy. The collective desire of consumers was acknowledged to determine value and private enterprise was seen as the most effective means of meeting consumer demand. But neither was any longer taken as given. Without impeding on the free operations of private producers—which is to say without any longer using privileges to restrict

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[66] AN O² 915 "De la Direction," [Minister of Interior] [VIII]. [La manufacture de Sèvres est une école nationale destiné à répandre en France et à perfectionner l'art de fabriquer la porcelaine. Son administration et ses travaux doivent également concourir à ce but] [Elle doit en conséquence apporter dans la composition des pâtes, dans le choix des formes, dans l'explication des ornemens et la richesse du décor, tous les soins et toute la perfection qui peuvent caractériser les produits faits pour servir de modèle]

them—a new role for the National Porcelain Manufacture was created. In Lucien Bonaparte's terms, it would now "serve as a model" to guide the interests and efforts of producers and consumers alike.

With the workforce returning and production steadily increasing in Sèvres, Brongniart next had to figure out how to start moving porcelain again. Under the Directory, the National Porcelain Manufacture's commercial footprint had receded largely to the flagship store at the manufacture itself. There, directors Salmon and Hettlinger would personally greet the occasional visitor or tourist, offer them refreshments, and make recommendations. In exchange, they split a commission of 2–6 percent of the sale price.[67] The problem was that the location of Sèvres had originally been chosen to lie right along the path of aristocrats traveling between Paris and Versailles. With the collapse of the monarchy and the definitive relocation of cultural authority to Paris, this route of courtly pilgrimage fell into disuse and disrepair. Especially during the winter months, which were the height of the selling season, few were willing to make the "the always unpleasant and expensive trip" to Sèvres.[68] As a result, "The sale of porcelain at Sèv[r]es languishes," as customers turned to the brands they could access from the comfort of Parisian and provincial centers.[69]

Its cultural capital having eroded over the course of the Revolution, the National Porcelain Manufacture found itself back at the commercial disadvantage it had been in at its founding. And it sought the same remedy. It was readily recognized within

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[67] AN O[2] 914 "Rapport présenté au Ministre de l'Intérieur," [Dubois] (19 Thermidor VI).

[68] AN O[2] 916 Letter Minister of Interior to Brongniart (2 Brumaire IX); Letter Minister of Interior to Minister of Finances (2 Frimaire IX); Letter Minister of Interior to Minister of Finances (19 Frimaire IX). [déplacement toujours désagréables et onéreux]

[69] AN O[2] 915 Letter Brassat to Minister of Interior (9 Frimaire VII). [La vente des porcelaines de Seves [sic] languit]

management and the government that to increase sales they would need to reestablish a presence in Paris. With economic devastation undermining luxury consumption, however, the costs of establishing such a store were seen as prohibitive.[70] So Brongniart sought out an established retailer "that is situated in the center of Paris and attracts rich people and foreigners...an entrepot where the consumer and foreigners can at any moment of the day, see the product of French industry and make purchases." The store needed to have "furniture of the best taste and the greatest richness."[71] And within the store the products from Sèvres would have to have their own display so that they "will be recognized as coming from the manufacture at Sèvres," although the incorporation of Sèvres porcelain into custom furniture was also encouraged as a collaboration provided it was "of the best taste" and not "of an old style."[72] The official goal was "to entrust sales...to an established and advantageously known retailer."[73] Essentially, the National Porcelain Manufacture once again needed the reputation of a retailer whose standing and position offered access to elite consumers in Paris, whether French or foreign. And such access was expensive. Ultimately, their chosen retailer was offered a 10 percent commission on all pieces sold, which was much higher than that offered at the manufacture itself (2–6 percent) or to other aspiring retailers (5–10 percent),

[70] AN O[2] 915 "Rapport présenté au Ministre de l'Intérieur," [Dubois] (19 Prairial VII).

[71] AN O[2] 916 "Rapport présenté au Ministre de l'Intérieur" (27 Germinal IX). [qu'il est situé dans le centre de Paris et attire les gens riches et les étrangers...un entrepôt où le consommateur et les étrangers puissent à chaque instant du jour, voir le produit de l'industrie et faire des emplettes] [les meubles de meilleur goût et de la plus grande richesse]

[72] AN O[2] 916 "Conventions entre l'administration de la manufacture nationale des porcelaines de Sèvres et le Citoyen Liguereux" [c. Germinal IX]; "Rapport présenté au Ministre de l'Intérieur" (7 Frimaire X). [seront reconnues comme dépendantes de la manufacture de Sèvres] [du meilleur goût] [d'une forme ancienne]

[73] AN O[2] 917 Letter Minister of Interior to Brongniart (18 Floréal XII). [de confier la vente...à un négociant établi et connu avantageusement]

although still less than the outpost in Amsterdam (8–20 percent).[74] Despite his misgivings about what he considered to be an "enormous commission," Brongniart concluded that "it seems to me that there will be less expense, more connoisseurs and more sales, than if we decided to rent a private location."[75]

Within just two years, however, the manufacture found that its "orders and sales multiply as much at Sèvres as in Paris."[76] And when their Parisian retailer moved to a less affluent part of town, Brongniart took the opportunity to reestablish a company store. "It is urgent to select in the most frequented part of Paris a store...conveniently placed, and vast enough to contain most of the works it manufactures," he wrote. And "we must not neglect anything nor spare any expense to achieve this goal."[77] Meanwhile, the flagship store at the manufacture would now be allowed to take private orders.[78] These stores would serve two purposes. On the one hand, they would be retail sites where the manufacture could sell goods at "the prices given by commerce," "determined by the empire of fashion, by the more or less complete success of the

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[74] AMNS M1 "Détermination des remises accordés aux négociants, marchands, et employées," [Brongniart] (1 Messidor IX).

[75] AN O[2] 916 "Rapport présenté au Ministre de l'Intérieur" (27 Germinal IX). [l'énorme commission] [il me semble qu'il y aura moins de frais à faire, plus d'amateurs et plus de ventes, que si on prenoit le parti de louer un emplacement particulier]

[76] AN O[2] 917 "Rapport présenté au Ministre de l'Intérieur" (16 Frimaire XI). [des commandes et des ventes qui se multiplient tant à Sèvres qu'à Paris]

[77] AN O[2] 917 "Rapport présenté au Ministre de l'Intérieur" (11 Floréal XII). [il est urgent de prendre dans le quartier le plus fréquenté de Paris un magasin....placé convenablement, et assez vaste pour contenir la majeure partie des ouvrages qu'elle fabrique] [il ne faut rien négliger ni épargner pour attendre ce but]

[78] AMNS M1 "Décision," Brongniart (4th Complementary Day XII).

pieces, by their newness, rarity, etc."[79] On the other hand, they would be sites of spectacle that could enhance the estimation and thus value of the goods.

Letters from private retailers in this period demonstrate a keen appreciation of the importance of display in building public appreciation of and desire for their goods. The leading French porcelain producer in this period, Dihl and Guérhard, had argued that large statues and other focal pieces were necessary "to fix the attention" of consumers.[80] They had even gone so far as to petition the Directory to permit a special importation of Bohemian glass necessary for "the upkeep of their warehouse and the cabinets in their stores."[81] A Parisian painter had proposed that the National Manufactures create a traveling sales display to visit all of the largest fairs in Europe and that the workers wear specially designed uniforms to engender public trust.[82] And another private citizen clearly familiar with the industry developed a detailed plan for the National Manufactures to establish a store in the center of Paris that would offer customers "all the brilliance and the charm of novelty." It would be a place where "they would find at hand what they are obliged to go search for, they would satisfy their fantasy, and the porcelain of Sèvres would in this way find an advantageous outlet." It would be a site of "spectacle," a place where people came to socialize at night, to see and be seen "under the style more appealing for the better sex and the partisans of society." It was not simply a question of the perfection of the products being sold, but

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[79] AN O^2 918 Letter Brongniart to Intendant General of the House of the Emperor (9 Nivôse XIV); AN O^2 916 "Rapport présenté au Ministre de l'Intérieur" (Prairial IX). [les prix [qui] sont ceux que le commerce donneroit," "déterminées par l'empire de la mode, par la réussite plus ou moins complette des pièces, par leur nouveauté, leur rareté, &ce]

[80] AN F^{12} 1494^1 Mémoire, Dihl and Guérhard [1786]. [de fixer l'attention]

[81] AN F^{12} 1966^R Letter Guérhard and Dihl (14 Pluviôse IV). [l'entretien de leur magasin et des armoires de leurs magasins]

[82] AN F^{12} 1460 Letter Lemonnier to Minister of Interior (8 Fructidor V).

the atmosphere as a whole. The author repeatedly emphasized that the furnishings must be arranged "in order and taste," "taste and order," "order and taste."[83] But such insights were nothing new for the directors at Sèvres. Shortly before the Coup of 18 Brumaire, the Directory had sought to confiscate all the furnishings and glass from the flagship store in Sèvres and sell them off to cover its debts. The management successfully resisted this attempt by arguing that maintaining sales depended on sustaining "the reputation" of the manufacture "by the inimitable perfection of its products," which in turn depended on its "exposition" alongside "the richest products of French industry." Without such display, they feared the "disenchantment" of their consumers.[84]

But the author of this proposal had something more in mind. It was not just a question of increasing the sales of the National Porcelain Manufacture, although that was part of it. It was a matter of how to inspire among "the inhabitants of Paris this emulation," "the emulation that establishes itself between the wealthy, the curious and the lovers of fashion, and finally the natural taste of everyone to spend a fortune." It was not just about making a sale but sparking an entire culture of public luxury consumption through "emulation." In many ways this author's comments modeled those made in the Old Regime. But under the absolutist monarchy it was taken as self-evident that when the king consumed the people would follow in his footsteps. Now

[83] AN O² 916 "Projet de dépôt des manufactures nationales" [X]. [tout le brillant et le charme de la nouveauté] [ils trouvoient sous la main ce qu'ils sont obligés d'aller chercher, ils satisferoient leur fantaisie, et la porcelaine de Sèvres trouveroient ainsi un débouché avantageux] [sous des formes plus séduisante pour le beau sexe et les partisans de la société] [dans l'ordre et le goût] [le goût et l'ordre] [l'ordre et le goût]

[84] AN O² 915 Letter Salmon and Hettlinger to Dubois (4 Prairial VII); Letter Minister of Interior to Minister of Finances [Prairial VII]. [la réputation] [par la perfection inimitable de ses produits] [exposition] [les plus riches produits de l'industrie française] [désenchantement]

the people were seen as lost and in need of someone to lead them. Thus, the author advised, at the center of the shop should be biscuit busts of France's great generals, the focal point of this new society and "a sure trick for the greatest sales [if] one can judge by the enthusiasm with which all the good citizens have bought the bust of the First Consul in every material and in every size."[85]

Emulation and the Empire

For policymakers in this period, the market operated simultaneously at two distinct yet interconnected levels. Inheriting the tradition established in the years surrounding the outbreak of the Revolution, the concrete operation of commerce and industry was taken to revolve around the actions of individuals—both producers and consumers—pursuing their own self-interest. These beliefs were the cornerstone of laissez-faire economic policies because only producers and consumers liberated from government encroachment could make the decisions that would be best for them and, through the providential properties of the market, would therefore be best for all. Meanwhile, drawing on the traditions of the Old Regime, such atomized actions were increasingly understood to take place within a broader framework of cultural institutions that shaped what consumers in the market demanded and what producers could technically and artistically accomplish.

The tension between these two approaches is apparent in an 1806 debate about the role of regulations in the porcelain industry. That year, the Prefect of Police

[85] AN O² 916 "Projet de dépôt des manufactures nationales" [X]. [les habitants de Paris cette émulation] [l'émulation qui s'établit entre les riches, les curieux et les amateurs et la mode, et enfin le goût naturel à tout le monde de renter la fortune] [un coup sûr du plus grand débit [si] on peut en juger par l'empressement avec lequel tous les bons citoyens ont acheté le buste du 1er consul de toute matière comme de tout grandeur]

requested that the government reintroduce the Arrêt of 1787, which forbade private manufactures from decorating porcelain in particular ways. His concern was that individual boutiques were purchasing plain white porcelain and having it decorated (poorly) by individual artisans working at home. "This practice clearly destroys the honor of French industry in a branch that as luxury, should always display perfection." As the Minister of the Interior scrawled across the bottom of the Prefect's petition, however, "Commerce makes no mistakes against its own interest...They [the manufactures] follow the public's taste."[86] Expanding on the Minister of the Interior's hasty response, his Consultative Bureau for Arts and Manufactures argued that the Prefect's misunderstanding was the product of a linguistic fault: "The goods that one calls luxury should not be confused without distinction in the same class. One is intended exclusively for sovereigns and a small number of extremely rich private individuals, the other is for use by every man who has the money." But while the former was far too few in number to sustain "a lucrative commerce," it was responsible for sustaining "the honor of our arts." And meanwhile the latter was able to generate enormous wealth selling to a broader market but could only do so at the expense of quality. The success of the French porcelain industry as a whole depended on its international reputation for quality, "but this honor hardly depends on all the works, it rests on a few masterpieces." And meanwhile "The genius of the fine arts can only flourish under the auspices of total liberty." The proposed solution sustained the guiding role the Royal Porcelain Manufacture had held since its founding while

[86] AN O^2 919 Letter Prefect of Police to Minister of Interior (16 May 1806). [Cette pratique détruit évidement l'honneur de l'industrie française dans une branche qui toute de luxe, doit toujours présenter la perfection] [Le commerce fait aucun des fautes contre son propre intérêt....Ils [les manufactures] suivent le goût du public]

simultaneously allowing a free market between producers and consumers to exist. The government would allow private manufactures to produce as they pleased while simultaneously "offering models for the emulation of all those who decorate porcelain."[87]

In Sèvres, Brongniart's task was to realize both approaches within the same manufacture. Napoleon's marching orders were quite explicit:

> The National Manufacture "should have only one object: to always be the 1st in Europe in every account. It is not in a spirit of speculation that the Emperor has taken this manufacture under his special protection. It must not be costly to him; it does not really matter if it produces a few thousand francs of profit; but it is essential that it be always an object of emulation in striving ceaselessly toward the perfection of its products. It can and it must, because its administration is not obliged to seek profits. It can result that the Emperor hardly makes any profit from it; but the commerce of France will profit."[88]

Brongniart's solution was to divide the manufacture in two. In one part, artisans would produce "ordinary products" for sale to the general public at a market price that would cover the costs of production and keep the manufacture operating. Meanwhile, a smaller "workshop of perfection" staffed by the two dozen most accomplished artists

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[87] AN O² 919 Bureau Consultatif des Arts et Manufactures Séance (24 June [1806]); Letter Minister of Interior to Prefect of Police (4 July 1806). [Les marchandises qu'on nomme de luxe ne doivent être confondues sans distinction dans le même class. Les unes sont destinées exclusivement aux souverains et à un petit nombre des particuliers extrêmement riches, les autres sont à l'usage de tout homme qui a de la fortune] [un commerce lucratif] [l'honneur de nos arts] [mais cet honneur ne dépend point de tous les ouvrages, il repose sur quelques chefs-d'œuvre] [La génie des beaux arts ne peut prendre son essor que sous les auspices d'une entière liberté] [offrir des modèles à l'émulation de tous ceux qui décorent la porcelaine]

[88] Letter [Minister of Interior?] to Brongniart (21 Frimaire XIV). [ne doit avoir qu'un objet : celui d'être constamment la 1ere de l'Europe sous tous les rapports. Ce n'est pas dans un esprit de spéculation que l'empereur a pris cette manufacture sous sa protection spéciale. Il ne faut pas qu'elle lui soit onéreuse ; n'importe assez peu qu'elle produise quelques mille francs de bénéfices ; mais il est essentiel qu'elle soit toujours un objet d'émulation en tendant sans cesse à la perfection des produits. Elle le peut et elle le doit, puisque son administration n'est pas obligée de chercher ses bénéfices. Il pourra en résulter que l'Empereur n'en retirera que peu de profit ; mais le commerce de France y gagnera]

and artisans would create "extraordinary products."[89] Crucially, within the "workshop of perfection," the prices charged to the state would be accounting costs, sometimes above "but much more often below" market prices.[90] For Brongniart, "The object of the manufacture is to provide the models of taste and perfection and to thereby support the reputation of French factories."[91] "The definitive character of the manufacture would be to execute pieces that no other factory could make," and to serve as "the model or the object of emulation."[92] Sèvres was to be organized, in other words, as a microcosm of the French porcelain industry as a whole.

This was, in many ways, a return to the policies of the Old Regime. But now they were adapted to a new view of the place of consumers and producers in the economy. The underlying problem for the porcelain market in its early years had been that consumers by themselves lacked the knowledge necessary to confidently navigate the porcelain market, to distinguish genuine articles from counterfeits, or to assess the value of various wares. The Royal Porcelain Manufacture had used restrictions and regulations both to protect consumers but also to establish a reputation for French porcelain that would eventually allow private manufacturers to flourish. At the same time, policymakers had believed that unless they were restrained private manufacturers would only exacerbate these problems. In other words, they feared that without the

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[89] AN O[2] 917 "Rapport présenté au Ministre de l'Intérieur" (12 Pluviôse XI). [produits ordinaires] [attelier de perfectionnement] [produits extraordinaires]

[90] AN O[2] 917 Letter Brongniart to Minister of Interior (10 Fructidor X). [mais bien plus souvent au dessous]

[91] AN O[2] 918 Letter Brongniart to Intendant Général de la Maison de l'Empereur (17 Ventôse XIII). [L'objet de la Manufacture est de donner des modèles de goût et de perfection et de soutenir ainsi la réputation des fabriques françaises]

[92] AN O[2] 916 "Rapport," [Brongniart] (16 Messidor X). [Le caractère définitif de la manufacture étoit d'exécuter des pièces qu'aucun autre fabrique ne pouroit faire] [le modèle ou l'objet d'émulation]

intervention of the state consumers could not trust the quality of the goods they bought, and producers could not be trusted to provide them with quality goods. But now those fears were gone. Consumers were savvy enough to judge for themselves; indeed, nobody else could determine their subjective values for them. And producers were capable of meeting their demand; indeed, only through a free market of competing firms could shifting demand be fulfilled. All that was needed now was for the state to maximize awareness: consumers' awareness of what goods were available and what goods were desirable and producers' awareness of what goods could be made and what consumers would want. The trick for those devising economic policies in this new era would be how to "encourage" industry without restricting it.

In support of these aims, successive Ministers of the Interior inaugurated a series of industrial expositions designed to present the crowning achievements of French industry before the eyes of the public and the world. Explaining the purpose of the first exposition, held in the Year VII, the official catalogue declared the need for the government to promote emulation as the only means for France to escape the "slavery" and "servitude" brought by being industrially underdeveloped relative to its (presumably British) rivals.[93] Under the direction of Chaptal, the Industrial Expositions were given even greater impulsion. As publications from these events made clear, the intention was explicitly to "foment the emulation of the manufacturers; it increases their instruction; it shapes the taste of consumers, in introducing them to beauty; that is to say that it develops the surest and most energetic causes of the progress of the arts."[94]

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[93] *Exposition publique des produits de l'industrie française. Catalogue des produits industriels* (Paris: Imprimerie de la République, VII) 24–5. [esclavage] [servitude]

[94] *Seconde Exposition Publique des Produits de l'industrie française. Procès verbal* (Paris: Imprimerie de la République, X) 38. [fomente l'émulation des fabricans ; elle augmente leur instruction ; elle forme le goût des consommateurs, en leur donnant la connaissance

On the one hand, by hosting a public exhibition of each manufacture's masterpieces and awarding medals of official recognition to those with exemplary products, the government hoped to "increase the reputation [of each manufacture] and the demands of consumers."[95] As a result, these awards were "particularly and almost exclusively fixed on the productions that can become an object of commerce."[96] On the other hand, by juxtaposing these private manufactures alongside the national manufactures, the government hoped for "the emulation that they can excite among the private manufacturers that endeavor to match them."[97]

Emulation was thus a key tool of industrial policy in two ways.[98] First, emulation reflected a somewhat pessimistic view of private industry. For Chaptal, for instance, "It is certain that without the competition of [the National Porcelain Manufacture], the private manufactures would ease up on their efforts and end up only producing pieces of a mediocre execution."[99] In this sense, emulation was a device to prompt private

du beau ; c'est-à-dire qu'elle développe les causes les plus sûres et les plus énergétiques du progrès des arts]

[95] *Exposition publique des produits de l'Industrie française. Procès verbal* (Paris: Imprimerie de la République, XI) 10. [augmenter sa réputation [of each manufacture] et les demandes des consommateurs]

[96] *Rapport du Jury sur les produits de l'industrie française* (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1806) ix. [particulièrement et presque exclusivement fixée sur les productions qui peuvent devenir un objet de commerce]

[97] *Ibid.*, 220. [l'émulation qu'elles excitent parmi les fabricans particuliers qui s'efforcent de les égaler]

[98] On the differences between emulation in the Old Regime and in this period, compare: John Shovlin, "Emulation in Eighteenth-Century French Economic Thought," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 36, no. 2 (Winter 2003) 224–30; Thomas Crow, *Emulation: David, Drouais, and Girodet in the Art of Revolutionary France* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006).

[99] AN O^2 917 Letter Minister of Interior to Minister of Finance (10 Brumaire XII). [il est certaine que sans la concurrence de [la Manufacture Nationale], les manufactures particulières se relacheroient et finiroient par ne produire que des morceaux d'une exécution médiocre]

industry to continuously improve the quality of their materials and the scope of their constructions. By pushing the boundaries of technical achievement, the National Porcelain Manufacture would pioneer new techniques and prompt private porcelain manufactures to follow suit. Second, emulation addressed the intangible aspects of aesthetic quality. It was one thing to begin producing six-foot vases, life-size busts, or expansive tables, it was another for the subjects depicted in each to adhere to a system of taste. This is where what soon became the Imperial Manufacture played the critical role. The lessons from the Revolution were that sustaining a luxury industry required an appetite for luxury consumption and a cultural authority that could legitimize a specific aesthetic style. By drawing the artistic choices of private porcelain manufactures into the orbit of taste as defined by the Imperial Court and its manufacture, emulation would serve as the tool to reestablish a unitary style that was irrefutably French. The goals for such a project would be equally political and economic.

In the Year VIII, the young general and close Napoleonic ally Barthélemy Joubert was killed while leading the French army at Novi. While the nation mourned his death, the National Porcelain Manufacture created a bust of Joubert. At first, they sent just a few copies of the biscuit bust to the government for official display.[100] But public interest was strong, and requests soon came into the manufacture for copies of the bust. One man, claiming to have been "like a second father" to Joubert and having seen the bust given to his first family, requested two more copies for himself and his hometown as well as busts of Napoleon, seeking "the model of the virtues of courage of these two

[100] AN O[2] 915 Letter Salmon and Hettlinger to Dubois (13 Nivôse VIII).

great men, and above all the First Consul who brings happiness to France, and will I hope to the whole world."[101]

Shortly after taking charge, Brongniart announced: "I believed that it was the duty of the National Porcelain Manufacture of Sèvres to execute in porcelain the busts of useful men and above all commendable warriors that the motherland has recently lost." Compared to other materials like marble or metal, porcelain had the benefits of being inalterable and timeless, "a more certain means...to pass along to the most distant posterity" the memory of great men. Perhaps more importantly, however, compared to these other materials, porcelain was "easier to multiply." Once a plaster mold had been made, it could be filled with a porcelain slip and countless copies of the same bust churned out. Soon, Brongniart had commissioned busts of generals Jean-Baptiste Kléber, Louis Desaix, and Henri de La Tour d'Auvergne, sending copies of each to Napoleon.[102] The First Consul was enamored with the project and ordered that more copies of all the generals be distributed in order "transmit to posterity the traits of those who are devoted to assuring the happiness [of France]."[103] A new era of porcelain as propaganda had begun.

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[101] AN O[2] 916 Letter Déydier to Minister of Interior (3 Germinal VIII). [comme un second père] [le modèle des vertus du courage de ces deux grands hommes, et surtout du premier consul qui fait le bonheur de la France, et fera j'espère celui du monde entier]

[102] AN O[2] 916 Letter Brongniart to Minister of Interior (21 Ventôse IX). [J'ai cru qu'il étoit du devoir de la manufacture nationale des porcelaines de Sèvres de faire exécuter en porcelaine les bustes des hommes utiles et surtout des guerriers recommandables que la patrie a perdus depuis peu] [un moyen plus certain...de faire passer à la postérité la plus reculée] [plus aisée à multiplier]

[103] AN O[2] 916 Letter Minister of Interior to Brongniart (27 Ventôse IX). [transmettre à la postérité les traits de ceux qui se sont dévoués pour affirmer son bonheur [de la France]

The use of porcelain as an element of constructing Napoleonic prestige and legitimizing the New Regime was effective because it was able to operate on multiple registers simultaneously. One of the earlier avenues of legitimation Napoleon pursued was building up a network of highly decorated palaces. In places like St Cloud, Fontainebleau, and the Tuileries, he set about compiling an enormous collection of the finest objects France had to offer. Within just a few years he had amassed ninety-seven large vases in Fontainebleau alone, and as his appetite for ostentation expanded, so too did the size and number of orders.[104] As the orders came in, the government demanded that "the First Consul must have that which is the most beautiful," and the Empress "the most beautiful and the most appropriate objects."[105]

This was just the material aspect of a complete reconfiguration of the French court society. What had been a central pillar of absolutist rule, and what had subsequently been rejected and abandoned by the Revolution, was piece by piece being reestablished in the Empire. A new Court was being consciously created to legitimize the Napoleonic regime. All the defining characteristics of the old court were reintroduced: an aristocracy centered on the court and dependent on the sovereign for political and social status; a minutely prescribed regimen of ceremonial actions dictating every facet of daily life from the *lever* to the *coucher*; balls and fêtes to provide a focal point of courtly social life, with a quick conversation with Napoleon himself the elusive reward; and above all an amplified return to the grandeur and prestige of court

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[104] AN O^2 918 Letter Brongniart to Intendant Général de la Maison de l'Empereur (24 Brumaire XIV).

[105] AN O^2 916 Letter Minister of Interior to Brongniart (30 Vendémiaire X); AN O^2 918 Letter [Lister?] to Brongniart (10 Nivôse [XIV]). [le premier consul doit avoir ce qu'il y a de plus beau] [les objets les plus beaux et les plus convenables]

living, the unalloyed luxury in every opulent detail that elevated palace life as a beacon of exceptionalism.[106]

But the new court society was not just a return to the old. Every aspect was reconceptualized to both reconnect with French monarchical history and demonstrate novelty and rupture. In a burst of public spending fueled by the new civil list, Napoleon ordered every palace refurnished with all manner of decorative arts.[107] At the symbolic level, these objects firmly set Napoleon within a lineage of greatness that stretched back to antiquity. Under the guidance of the official architects of the regime, classical models of line and form were directly mimicked in everything from the pillars supporting imperial edifices to the low-slung, backless chairs that seated the court. While neoclassical style had emerged under Louis XVI, been popular across Europe, and achieved stylistic dominance in France during the Revolution, it was now appropriated by Napoleon as he bridged Republic and Empire and applied systematically and exclusively throughout interior design. In a cup and saucer manufactured by Sèvres in 1804 or 1805 (figure 5.5), for instance, ancient Etruscan style is directly reproduced in porcelain. In addition to the juxtaposition of gentle curves with stark lines characteristic of the style, this set also reproduces the appearance of red marble. At the same time, however, the material itself was thoroughly modern. And—like everything else in the official style—it was embellished with gold as a way of elevating its status. In this way,

[106] Philip Mansel, *The Eagle in Splendour: Inside the Court of Napoleon* (New York: IB Tauris, 2015); *Idem., The Court of France, 1789–1830* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 48–89; Isser Woloch, *Napoleon and His Collaborators: The Making of a Dictatorship* (New York: WW Norton, 2001) 156–85; *Étiquette du Palais Impérial* (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1806).

[107] Pierre Branda, *Le prix de la gloire : Napoléon et l'argent* (Paris: Fayard, 2007) 46–50; Bernard Chevallier, *Empire Splendor: French Taste in the Age of Napoleon,* trans. David H Wilson (New York: Vendome Press, 2008); *Napoléon 1er ou la Légende des arts, 1800–1815* (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 2015).

Figure 5.5. Cup and saucer. Hard-paste porcelain with underglaze and gilding. Sèvres Porcelain Manufacture, 1804–5. Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989.295.1,.2.

the material culture of the Napoleonic court combined an appeal to the ancient with the luxury of the modern, thus linking the Empire to a lineage of past greatness even as it exemplified its current exceptionalism.

A similar approach is evident in what was perhaps the most famous porcelain project of the era, the Egyptian Service. Completed over the course of three years and ultimately presented to Czar Alexander in 1808, the Egyptian Service was one of the largest and most ambitious projects ever undertaken by the National Manufacture, consisting of 152 matched pieces, costing nearly fifty thousand francs and requiring

thirty-two crates to ship.[108] The Egyptian Service comprised a complete dinner service for dozens of guests, with each piece also depicting a unique image of Egypt. As is visible in this plate (figure 5.6), Ancient Egyptian motifs were used to decorate the rim of the pieces in the service and tie the set together aesthetically. In the center of the plate, we see a depiction of several naked Egyptians reclining in a vast desert landscape interrupted only by an exotic dwelling. In the middle of the group, one Egyptian stands and shields his eyes as he gazes off toward the viewer. As with the Etruscan cup and

Figure 5.6. Plate from the First Egyptian Service. Hard-paste porcelain with underglaze and gilding. Sèvres Porcelain Manufacture, 1804. Courtesy Smithsonian National Museum of American History, P-662.

[108] AN O² 922 "État du service dit Égyptien" (1 October 1808); "État des caisses contenant le service Égyptien" (3 October 1808) Letter Minister of Interior to Minister of Foreign Relations (1 November 1808).

saucer, this plate again mixes classical motifs with modern gold embellishments. But here there is also a specific historical conjuncture at play: the Egyptian expedition. Though ultimately a disastrous failure, Napoleon's venture into Europe captured the imagination of the French public—if nothing else—and became a pillar of his early reputation and subsequent legend. The early ethnographic elements of the expedition and the popular publications of the scientific reports and sketches they produced brought to life the glory of Ancient Egypt but subjected it to modern French conquest. In this service we see adventure, glory, history, knowledge, and luxury all brought to the dinner table.

At the symbolic level, the Imperial style was nothing if not blatant in its intent. Napoleon's palaces were decked out in a rich red color distinctive to his reign, everything that could be gilt was, and Napoleon "N"s and Bonaparte bees were omnipresent, lest the guest forget whose house, whose country it was. In this inkwell (figure 5.7), for instance, the gilt "N" at the center of the object serves as the visual focal point. The gilding, meanwhile, enforces the luxury and prestige of the inkwell, and the green color might have been unique to the particular palace it was destined for. In quotidian objects of material culture such as this, political rule was made concrete, became part of the lived experience of those who saw and interacted with it.

On a grander scale, porcelain offered a canvas on which to convey the greatness of Napoleon and France. Writing to the imperial household, Brongniart declared that "The manufacture should execute as promptly as possible pieces of a remarkable volume and of a good style, on which to transmit to posterity the memory of astonishing events that have just happened." Directly aligning himself with the

Figure 5.7. Inkwell with Napoleonic "N." Hard-paste porcelain with underglaze and gilding. Sèvres Porcelain Manufacture, c. 1800. Courtesy Rijkmuseum, BK-14651.

propagandistic efforts of the regime, Brongniart proposed massive pieces carried out "in a rich, monumental and historic manner" depicting scenes "relative to the history of modern France, that is to say that of the Emperor."[109] He directed the creation of pieces linking Napoleon to a lineage of greatness and establishing him as an exemplary figure.

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[109] AN O^2 918 Letter Brongniart to Intendant Général de la Maison de l'Empereur (6 Nivôse XIV); AN O^2 920 Letter Brongniart to Intendant Général de la Maison de l'Empereur (9 July 1807). [La manufacture devoit exécuter aussi promptement qu'il est possible des pièces d'une volume remarquable et d'un bon style, sur lesquelles on transmit à la postérité la mémoire des évènements étonnants qui viennent de se passer] [d'une manière riche, monumentale et historique" depicting scenes "relatifs à l'histoire de la France moderne, c'est à dire celle de l'Empereur]

A pair of porcelain tables was commissioned in 1806, for instance, each costing around twenty thousand francs. One was to depict classical generals like Hannibal, Alexander, and Pericles, the other Napoleon surrounded by his generals. A series of busts was ordered at the same time to depict such illustrious military leaders such as William the Conqueror, Gustavus Adolphus, and Prince Eugene.[110] Other allegorical pieces were designed such as "a triumphal march of the Emperor" and "the Emperor followed by victory," both noted for their particularly intensive use of gold.[111]

Later in Napoleon's reign, especially following his divorce from Josephine and marriage to Marie-Louise and the concurrent establishment of family members as kings of his vassal states, the subject of these objects increasingly included the entire imperial family. Around 1806, the subject of the grand vases shied away from military victories and famous generals and instead increasingly conveyed images of the Emperor and Empress.[112] Clarifying the shift, Napoleon soon ordered that the National Manufacture halt its focus on great battles and great men, but "on the contrary that the subjects offer only very indirect allusions that awaken pleasant memories." These were pieces still depicting the glory of the Empire, but rather than showing Napoleon conquering foreign capitals they would show his conquests at peace: Alexandria, Gaza, Milan, Vienna.[113] As the Empire matured, Napoleonic iconography no longer needed the feats

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[110] AN O^2 919 "Rapport sur l'exécution des commandes particulières faites par Sa Majesté l'Empereur et Roi" [1806].

[111] AN O^2 919 "Rapport à Sa Majesté l'Empereur et Roi" (2 July 1806); AN O^2 920 Letter Brongniart to Intendant Général de la Maison de l'Empereur" (19 August 1807). [une marche triomphale de l'Empereur] [l'Empereur suivi par la victoire]

[112] AN O^2 919 "Aperçu des principaux travaux" (1 October 1806).

[113] AN O^2 920 Letter Minister of Interior to Brongniart (4 October 1807). [au contraire que les sujets n'offrent que des allusions très indirectes qui réveillent des souvenirs agréables]

of victory to legitimize his rule; images of the stability and the expanse of his rule now legitimized it.[114] Generals as artistic subjects increasingly gave way to artists and philosophers, great men to great women, bloody battlefields to gentle panoramas, and a lone Napoleon to an extended family. The fact that this trend peaked immediately after his disastrous retreat from Russia may reveal more about the motivations behind this shift than simple maturation of the regime. Yet it nonetheless fit within a broader shift in imperial iconography away from the military glory that had characterized Napoleon's rise to power and toward the dynastic rule he was now attempting to concretize.[115]

The purposes of such propaganda pieces were threefold. First, given that the majority of the largest and most elaborate pieces were destined for the imperial palaces, they served as a marker of distinction and grandeur. They added to the sense of luxury, wealth, and power of the court and ensured that such ostentation was stylistically and symbolically tied to the reign and person of Napoleon. They legitimized his rule by placing it within a historical lineage of greatness and by monumentalizing its own moments of victory. And they did so while evidencing the material wealth, the artistic and industrial greatness of France under Napoleon's rule.

Second, they were periodically revealed to the general public in a way that promised to give an awestruck nation a peak into the inner sanctum of the emperor.

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[114] This might have been comforting to the soldiers of the *Grande Armée* on their march home from Russia.

[115] AN O^2 923 Letter Brongniart to Intendant Général de la Maison de l'Empereur (21 December 1809); AN O^2 925 Letter Brongniart to Intendant Général de la Maison de l'Empereur (9 June 1811); AN O^2 926 Letter Intendant Général de la Maison de l'Empereur to Brongniart (3 January 1812); AN O^2 927 "État des porcelaines livrées au Palais des Tuileries et données en présent" (27 February 1813); "Rapport sur les travaux fait en 1813" (6 December 1813); "Projet de présens pour le premier jour de l'an 1814" (6 December 1813).

Objects or collections destined for Napoleon's palaces or foreign monarchs were opened up for short-term display and described in detail in newspapers.[116] When the Minister of the Interior presented Napoleon with a large porcelain painting of the Battle of Marengo he had commissioned from the National Manufacture in the Year XII, the *Journal de Paris* meticulously described each detail, lingering on Napoleon with his Mameluke and generals: "He is calm, and orders the movements of the army" amidst a cavalry charge. At the same time, the article reported, "The execution of this painting demonstrates the grandeur and the perfection of the processes currently employed in the Manufacture at Sèvres...to give a great idea of the current state of these arts in France."[117] What was unique about porcelain as a medium of propaganda was its ability to combine lessons about France under Napoleon with a sample of its industrial capabilities, to mingle martial glory with material wealth, artistic achievement with productive prowess.

Third, porcelain had long been a diplomatic gift par excellence. Louis XV had initiated the French practice of giving gifts of Sèvres porcelain to foreign leaders, and Louis XVI had accelerated it. But Napoleon now deployed it with an unparalleled iconographic insistence on the glory of the giver. In 1806, when Napoleon decreed that the Ministry of Foreign relations would no longer offer common objects like diamonds as gifts but only manufactured goods like Sèvres porcelain and Gobelins tapestries, he included instructions to "In all of these presents, place portraits, views of Paris and the

[116] *Journal de Paris*, 1 Pluviôse XI; *idem.*, 4 Messidor XI; *idem.*, 30 Ventôse XIII; *idem.*, 13 Germinal XIII.

[117] *Idem.*, 29 Vendémiaire XII. [Il est calme, & ordonnes les movemens de l'armée]. [L'exécution de ce tableau prouve la grandeur & la perfection des procédés actuellement employées dans la Manufacture de Sèvres...pour donner une grande idée de l'état actuel des arts en France]

different imperial palaces."[118] A concurrent order for a service destined for Italy, for instance, included iconic views of France and Napoleon's palaces.[119] Brongniart, on the same wavelength as usual, had recently sent out large gifts of porcelain to several monarchs across Europe of "the most beautiful or the richest pieces" depicting "features of our modern history," which is to say of France in the age of Napoleon.[120]

The meaning behind such gifts surpassed those of the Old Regime in clarity. On the one hand, gifts were intended to serve symbolically as "gestures of the benevolence of the Emperor."[121] In this sense they conveyed Napoleon's sentiments through the act of gift giving and built a reciprocal bond between giver and receiver embodied in the gift itself. On the other hand, these gifts literally conveyed Napoleon, or at least his likeness. The ubiquitous inclusion in every diplomatic gift was a series of highly decorated busts of Napoleon, sometimes including other illustrious personages in smaller size or more modest appointment, but always with Napoleon over all. The Egyptian Service, for instance, was given to Alexander with three porcelain busts of himself, but also a crowning bust of his host.[122] And what better way to celebrate Jerome Bonaparte's wedding to Catherine de Wurttemberg than to send its aristocratic witnesses from across Europe home with thirty-two thousand francs worth of parting

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[118] AN O[2] 919 Letter Duroc to Intendant Général de la Maison de l'Empereur (22 April 1806). [Dans tous ces présents, mettre des portraits, des vues de Paris et des différents palais impériaux]

[119] AN O[2] 919 "Apperçu des principaux travaux en train" (1 April 1806).

[120] AN O[2] 918 Letter Brongniart to Intendant Général de la Maison de l'Empereur (28 January 1806). [les pièces les plus belles ou les plus riches] [des traits de notre histoire moderne]

[121] AN O[2] 919 Letter Intendant Général de la Maison de l'Empereur to Brongniart (6 June 1806). [marques de la bienveillance de l'Empereur]

[122] AN O[2] 922 "Porcelaines données en présent" (20 August 1808).

gifts from the Imperial Porcelain Manufacture, at least one if not more large busts of Napoleon included in each set.[123] The Old Regime kings may have delivered gifts in the royal style, but Napoleon delivered the Emperor himself.

The purpose of these gifts was an unveiled attempt to establish the superiority of Napoleonic France over its continental allies. While traveling, Napoleon insisted on hosting elaborate courts even in other countries; while attending summits in Austria or Prussia it was not Austria or Prussia who hosted, it was always France, and it was always French. Napoleon established himself as the host of Europe and the rest of Europe as his tributaries. Giving the finest porcelain services and ornamental pieces colonized the continent's courts as outposts in his cultural empire because it meant that every courtier in every country was confronted daily with the artefacts of its French metropole. This was empire carried into the accoutrements of the everyday.

Beyond the evident political motivations underlying the gifting of porcelain was also an economic one. Giving French porcelain to foreign monarchs was a relatively inexpensive way of advertising French porcelain in foreign courts. Correspondence sent by Brongniart shows that he was intent upon using ambassadors as travelling salesmen. Ambassadors had occasionally worked as couriers and ad hoc merchants for the manufacture under the Old Regime, but Brongniart now made it official policy. He worked to extend a 25-percent gratification to ambassadors for porcelain they sold while abroad, although only for "decorated pieces," which is to say those that were distinctively from Sèvres.[124] Brongniart's intention was "without doubt to engage the ambassadors to introduce in foreign countries the masterpieces of French industry and

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[123] AN O² 920 "État des porcelaines" (30 September 1807).

[124] AN O² 918 Rapport (3 Frimaire XIII). [pièces décorées]

to give birth there to the taste for the products of our industry." Thus, any expenses involved would produce a gain, not a loss.[125] He dreamed about "the advantage that France can find in sending the beautiful products of its manufactures to other countries."[126] In pursuit of these goals, he oversaw the distribution of porcelain to ambassadors across Europe, whether sixty thousand francs of porcelain to the ambassador in Russia or busts of Napoleon to the consul general in Holland.[127] And this political economy apparently worked. Whereas just a decade earlier Europeans had balked at French porcelain created at any point after the collapse of the Bourbon monarchy, now Brongniart eagerly reported that "rich foreigners" were traveling to Paris in greater and greater numbers to buy it at the source.[128]

A New Economy Takes Shape

In the latter days of the Old Regime, private porcelain manufactures had objected to the intrusion of the state into the market. They demanded freedom to produce and sell whatever they believed consumers would buy and to do so without the heavy hand of regulation impeding their efforts. After nearly a decade being tossed on the rough seas of the Revolutionary economy, however, they were now clamoring to return to port. During the Directory at least five private manufactures wrote to the government

[125] AN O[2] 918 Rapport [XIII]. [sans doute d'engager les ambassadeurs à introduire dans les pays étrangers les chefs d'œuvre de l'industrie française à y faire naître le goût des produits de notre industrie]

[126] AN O[2] 918 Letter Brongniart to Intendant Général de la maison de l'Empereur (18 Nivôse XIII). [l'avantage que peut trouver la France à envoyer de beaux produits de ses manufactures chez les étrangers]

[127] AN O[2] 920 Letter Deschamps to Brongniart (9 July 1807); "Extrait des minutes de la Secrétaire d'État" (11 November 1807).

[128] AN O[2] 920 Letter Brongniart to Intendant Général de la Maison de l'Empereur (16 September 1807). [étrangers riches]

expressing plans for reestablishing the prestige of the National Manufacture and, through it, of French porcelain. Their motivations were mixed—some wanted jobs, others to borrow the title, others to save their own company—but they all agreed that a National Manufacture was crucial to the health of the French porcelain industry. What is most surprising in these requests in not only that private manufacturers were asking for a state-sponsored competitor, but that they were giving hard-won advice on how to make it succeed.

A merchant named Martin lamented the restrictions the National Porcelain Manufacture had imposed under the leadership of d'Angivillier and argued that the industry had since developed enough that private manufactures ought to be left the liberty to compete. But, he maintained, the industry needed government leadership. He wrote on behalf of a consortium of wholesalers willing to donate five hundred thousand livres to the state as an investment in the National Manufacture. In exchange, they asked to run it for twelve years, albeit with close government supervision and annual exhibitions to display the mounting quality of its wares.[129]

The son of the owner of the porcelain manufacture at Mennecy-Villeroy, Julien, decried many of the same developments as Martin. As Royal Manufacture Sèvres had catered only to an out-of-touch aristocracy, and since the "revolutionary crises" had not "put forward any new idea." Yet, he held, "It's in the moment when revolutionary chaos unfolds that men and things return to the places that the social and natural order assigns them, that the depositaries of authority...who come with them to reestablish the glory and the reputation that the French people have acquired." He called on the

[129] AN O[1] 2061[8] "Mémoire et Propositions sur la Manufacture de Porcelaine établie à Sèvres," Martin (24 Thermidor V).

"republican government" to rebuild the National Manufacture to be "worthy of a great republic," to lead the nation's porcelain manufactures forward into "glory" through "taste."[130]

Another author named Bosc, presumably a private manufacture but described only as a patriot and "a man familiar with the details of administration," submitted a similar plan for the National Manufacture.[131] He believed that "it is of the dignity of the great nation to support and encourage it" as "the school of the fine arts, and the model of taste." It ought to provide space for the perfection of artistic excellence. "From this point of view," he concluded, "this manufacture is and should remain inimitable in creating these artistic masterpieces, that it alone can attempt."[132]

The porcelain manufacturer Blancheron, meanwhile, recognized this as "a moment when the government looks to the arts and the means to improve all the branches of commerce." He suggested that the National Manufacture establish a company store in the center of Paris and keep some of its finest masterpieces there where the public could see them. After all, "Beautiful things stimulate admiration, but few people are in a position to buy them." "In fact, reputation shouldn't take anything

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[130] AN O[1] 2061[8] "Mémoire sur la Manufacture Nationale des Porcelaines de Sèvres," Julien (7 Vendémiaire [c. V?]). [crises révolutionnaires] [mise en avant aucun idée neuve] [C'est dans le moment ou la chaos révolutionnaire se débrouille que les hommes et les choses reprennent les places que l'ordre social et naturel leur assignent, qu'il faut que les dépositaires de l'autorité...qui couvrirent avec eux à rétablis la gloire et la réputation que le peuple français avait acquis] [gouvernement républicaine] [digne d'une grande république] [la gloire] [le goût]

[131] AN O[2] 914 Letter Dubois to Bosc (Floréal VI). [un homme familier avec les détails de l'administration]

[132] AN O[2] 914 "Courtes observations sur la manufacture nationale des porcelaines de Seves," Bosc (9 Floréal VI). [il est de la dignité de la grande nation de le soutenir et l'encourager] [l'école des beaux arts, & le modèle du goût] [Sous ce point de vue] [cette manufacture est et doit rester inimitable en créant ces chefs d'œuvre de l'art, que la seul on peut tenter]

from a national manufacture. It should for its honor and so that its arts be the best in the Republic." Blancheron recommended, in other words, that the National Porcelain Manufacture make finer pieces than his own manufacture could manage and that it place them in the public eye as a way to cast its reputation on the French porcelain industry as a whole.[133]

Similarly, the plans that had been submitted calling for a store for the National Manufactures to be established in Paris as a social site and revolving around statues of generals clearly came from someone well versed in the intricacies of luxury retail—that is to say a competitor. He or she cited all these same considerations about the need to demonstrate a recognizable authority on matters of taste and to stimulate spending by the wealthy.[134] In each of these cases, those most familiar with the intricacies of the luxury market whether as manufacturers or retailers urged the state to return to its former role at the head of the porcelain industry. They unanimously recognized that the wellbeing of the industry depended on the cultural authority manifested in its products. Even if it was the consumer who through their purchasing decisions determined fashion and price, they believed, ultimately consumers reacted to the styles and meanings that could only be set by the state and the sovereign.

No sooner had Napoleon, his policymakers Chaptal and Daru, and his director Brongniart created just such a system than the private manufacturers fell in line behind the new stylistic regime. The leading manufactures all drew themselves into the orbit of

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[133] AN O[2] 915 Letter Blancheron to Bonaparte (c. 17 Pluviôse VIII); "Rapport présenté au Ministre de l'Intérieur," [Cortaz] (29 Germinal VIII). [un moment ou le gouvernement jette un coup sur les arts et sur le moyens d'arriver toutes les branches du commerce] [Le beau excite l'admiration, mais peu de personnes sont en état de l'acheter] [En fait, la réputation rien ne doit l'emporter sur une manufacture nationale. Elle doit pour son honneur et pour celui des arts être la première de la République]

[134] AN O[2] 916 "Projet de dépôt des manufactures nationales" [X].

the new court system, hewing close to its official style and radiating outward from there. It was also an effective way to ingratiate themselves with the Emperor and Empress.

Roundly recognized as the leading French porcelain manufacture during the Directory, Dihl and Guérhard participated in each of the industrial expositions, regularly winning awards for their wares. And, as seen in a bust of Napoleon (figure 5.8), they were early to embrace the new style. This life-size biscuit bust depicts a young Napoleon, while he was still First Consul and dressed in the style of the time, peering off to the side as if into the future. It also includes the subject's last name, "Bonaparte," at the bottom of the bust in contemporary font rather than his first name, "Napoleon," in Roman font as would become commonplace later. On a saucer made at the beginning of the nineteenth century (figure 5.9), the influence of the neoclassical style is clearly visible. Around the interior of the saucer are vases adhering to the classical style being popularized at the time depicted in a stark black-and-white reminiscent of Etruscan patterns, while the gilding in the center and around the edges firmly situates the piece as belonging to the world of modern luxury. Dihl and Guérhard's combination of technical mastery and artistic adherence to the official style likely both played a role in the manufacture being granted a commission to submit a service in celebration of the Peace of Tilsit sent by Napoleon and Josephine to Russian Prince Lobanov in 1808.[135] And after her divorce, Josephine turned to Dihl and Guérhard for her incredibly elaborate personal service.

[135] *Journal de Paris*, 24 February 1808.

Figure 5.8. Bust of First Consul Bonaparte. Hard-paste porcelain. Dihl and Guérhard Porcelain Manufacture, c. 1800. Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1991.209.

Figure 5.9. Saucer painted with ewers. Hard-paste porcelain with underglaze and gilding. Dihl and Guérhard Porcelain Manufacture, early 19th century. Courtesy Victoria and Albert Museum, C.410-1918.

Perhaps no private manufacture, however, was able ingratiate itself with the New Regime quite as successfully as Dagoty.[136] Before the famous Sèvres Egyptian Service had even been conceived, Dagoty produced "a magnificent porcelain service" as a gift for Josephine. Each piece in the service presented a different view from the Egyptian expedition copied from Dominique-Vivant Devon's popular sketches and was surrounded with a border of hieroglyphics copied from the ruins of Thebes and the Dendera temple complex. It also included several vases and statues of Egyptian figures to accompany the table setting. The gift was so well received that it earned the

[136] Régine de Plinval de Guillebon, *Dagoty à Paris : La manufacture de porcelaine de l'impératrice* (Paris: Somogy éditions d'art, 2006).

manufacture a position as the official Porcelain Manufacture of the Empress.[137] From this exalted position, Dagoty fulfilled many of the same roles as the Imperial Manufacture. As visible in a cup and saucer (figure 5.10), it embraced the neoclassical style. Here it employed the orange-and-black palette of Etruscan pottery in a slightly stylized version of the litron-style cup popular at the time. It also invoked images of classical characters alongside the elegantly curved handle and gilding that demonstrated luxury, while the white interior reminded the user of modernity and porcelain. The manufacture was also commissioned to produce propaganda pieces in

Figure 5.10. Cup and saucer. Hard-paste porcelain with underglaze and gilding. Dagoty Porcelain Manufacture, c. 1810. Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, 02.6.76, .77.

[137] *Journal de Paris*, 5 Frimaire XIII. [une magnifique service de porcelaine]

support of specific events and to create display pieces featuring members of the imperial family.

These manufactures were not the only ones who aspired to government contracts in this period—such work was lucrative and stable, especially during frequent recessions and blockades. And none of these manufactures depended on government contracts—most of their production was intended for the private market. But within the luxury business model the two were connected. When the manufacturer Neppel sent a (presumably) expensive porcelain chimney piece as a gift to Napoleon he did so "to pay homage, without any remuneration; but only in order to introduce the products of his manufacture."[138] Just as it had been for the porcelain manufactures who had created busts of Louis XV during his reign (see Chapter Three), for Neppel and other manufactures it was worthwhile to lose money on individual pieces if doing so elevated the value of their products by connecting them to the new arbiters of taste. What the private manufactures craved was not a return to the restrictions and regulations of the Old Regime, but the rebirth of a cultural authority that could bring order and a steady definition of taste to the market. As they had demanded for decades, they wanted a to be free to meet the demand of the consuming public without state intervention in their business. But in their petitions and letter of unsolicited advice it is apparent that they also yearned for the existence of a manufacture that could create a stylistic standard for the industry. And in their adherence to the style of the new regime as manifested through the Imperial Porcelain Manufacture, we can see how rapidly they fell into line

[138] AN O[2] 920 Letter Minister of Interior to Brongniart (3 May 1807). [faire hommage, sans aucun rétribution ; mais seulement pour faire connaitre les produits de sa manufacture]

to produce that style not just for state commissions, but for a public whose tastes were coalescing around those of the Napoleonic Empire.

The Old Regime sought to cultivate a luxury economy by erecting institutions to assure consumers that the price of the goods they purchased was in accordance with their fixed inherent value, material, artistic, and cultural. Once the frictions of market information had smoothed enough for consumers to make such determinations for themselves, the luxury economy churned on the market prices of goods as determined by individual utility and a competitive marketplace. For manufacturers, while the former had proven too static and constraining, the latter had proven too dynamic and unpredictable. What emerged from the synthesis of the two was a modern luxury political economy, one that allowed for the free fluctuation of market prices as a means to realize profit coupled with a mechanism of social control to discipline the market and subordinate it to conscious manipulation and management of taste and hence patterns of demand.

Evidence of a controlled fashion cycle first appeared in the porcelain industry in this period for just this reason. With General Bonaparte fresh from military glory and on his way to lead the expedition to Egypt as the nation watched with excitement, the Minister of the Interior ordered the National Manufacture "to reproduce, in a manner as serviceable as lovely, the traits of a citizen who has rendered such great services to the Republic and that the Executive Directory honors with its trust" by producing a ten-inch bust of the young general. The bust was to be offered in two models, one at forty-two francs in all white and the other at sixty francs with a blue-and-gold pedestal, as well as reproduced on a medallion for six francs. He ordered copies of the busts to be first sent to the members of the Directory and Napoleon, presumably for display, before

being released to stores for sale.[139] As the directors of the National Manufacture ramped up production of the bust and medallion in "a quantity sufficient to satisfy the connoisseurs," they began advertising it in newspapers, specifying that they could be found in the National Manufacture's stores.[140] Less than two years later, however, the National Manufacture released a new bust of First Consul Bonaparte only to discover that the older bust of General Bonaparte was no longer selling. At this point, an unknown entrepreneur offered to buy up a half dozen of the older model, but at twenty-four francs each instead of the advertised forty-two. After some discussion, the manufacture's directors agreed to counter at thirty francs.[141]

As the logic of this deal played out it became incorporated into the business model of the National Manufacture. At the highest level of the market, they began periodically introducing new busts of Napoleon and, to a lesser extent, other members of the new aristocracy and imperial family. As Brongniart had noted, a unique aspect of porcelain as a material was that it permitted something approaching mass production of a fixed model. Thus, when renowned sculptor Antoine-Denis Chaudet created a marble bust of Napoleon to celebrate his coronation as Emperor, the Imperial Manufacture quickly moved to make a mold of it and create porcelain copies (figure 5.11).[142] This bust adhered closely to the neoclassical style, depicting Napoleon as a modern-day Caesar, both in image and the first name in Roman text at the bottom. They

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[139] AN O^2 914 Letter Minister of Interior to Directors of National Manufacture (15 Germinal VI); Avis, Minister of Interior (Germinal VI). [de reproduire, d'une manière aussi utile et aussi agréable, les traits d'un citoyen qui a rendu si grands services à la République et que le Directoire exécutif honore de toute sa confiance]

[140] AN O^2 914 Letter Salmon and Hettlinger to Dubois (16 Germinal VI). [une quantité suffisante pour satisfaire les amateurs]

[141] AN O^2 916 Letter Salmon and Hettlinger to Dubois (8 Pluviôse VIII).

[142] AMNS M1 Letter Brongniart (11 Fructidor XII).

Figure 5.11. Bust of Napoleon modeled on Chaudet in large size. Hard-paste porcelain. Sèvres Porcelain Manufacture, c. 1810. Courtesy Detroit Institute of Arts, 1997.8.

began by releasing a life-size version of the bust, being careful to present the first successful model to Josephine. With this done, they quickly created a smaller version (figure 5.12) and ramped up production "in order to establish a large enough number of copies."[143] Once this bust had become outdated, another was issued (figure 5.13) in a more modern style that emphasized Napoleon's status as mature (read pudgy) military leader. As time went on, the National Manufacture took advantage of the adaptability of the porcelain manufacturing process to add a laurel crown and Roman toga to an altered and reissued version of the Chaudet bust (figure 5.14), creating a new product that could revivify sales at the higher price while the older model had its price decreased accordingly.[144]

Since the 1750s the Royal Porcelain Manufacture had regularly introduced new designs and colors to its products as a way of drumming up sales (see Chapter Three). But under the conception of value that had held until the Revolution, once a product had been evaluated its price was taken as fixed. New products might have sold better because they attracted consumers desirous of distinction, but old products were taken to be just as valuable even if they no longer sold; new products were priced no higher and old products no lower despite the obvious differences in demand. With the new regime of value, however, price was a reflection of how much consumers wanted an object. What was new about the system introduced in the 1800s was that as products became older and demand for them diminished their price decreased accordingly. Through this process—in contrast to the overflowing storehouses of the Old Regime—

[143] AN O[2] 917 "Apperçu des principaux travaux des atteliers de perfectionnement" [c. Vendémiaire XIII]; AN O[2] 918 Letter Brongniart to Intendant Général de la Maison de l'Empereur (7 Pluviôse XIII). [d'en faire établir un assez grand nombre d'exemplaires]

[144] AN O[2] 924 "Tableaux des principaux travaux," Brongniart (c. 28 February 1811).

Figure 5.12. Bust of Napoleon modeled on Chaudet in medium size. Hard-paste porcelain. Sèvres Porcelain Manufacture, c. 1805. ©Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales.

Figure 5.13. Bust of Napoleon. Hard-paste porcelain. Sèvres Porcelain Manufacture, 1805. Courtesy Rijksmuseum, BK-15530.

Figure 5.14. Bust of Napoleon modeled on Chaudet. Hard-paste porcelain. Sèvres Porcelain Manufacture, 1811. Courtesy Musée du Louvre. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY.

the market would clear and the old products would be sold, albeit at a lower price. But the inverse was now also true: the newest products attracted the most demand, and thus their price could be raised accordingly. It was in this subtle distinction that the logic of the modern luxury industry became apparent. Now product management could increase not only the number of sales but also the profits realized from each sale. The porcelain industry was not the first to do this, and Carlo Poni, Bill Sewell, and Lesley Miller have all shown this practice to have existed in the eighteenth-century French silk industry. But here we see this practice making its way into the official economic policy of the French state, which was crucial for the development of the French luxury industry going forward.[145]

What the National Manufacture had created was a complex scale of products and prices. At the top were the largest and newest, the finest and most luxurious busts of Napoleon that sold for between eight hundred and twelve hundred francs apiece, generally given as gifts to foreign dignitaries or loyal servants. Simpler and sometimes deformed copies of this size and style could in turn be had for as low as one-tenth of that price, at which they seem to have been purchased largely by high-ranking

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[145] Lesley Ellis Miller, "Paris–Lyon–Paris: Dialogue in the Design and Distribution of Patterned Silks in the 18th Century," in *Luxury Trades and Consumerism in* Ancien Régime *Paris: Studies in the History of the Skilled Workforce*, eds. Robert Fox and Anthony Turner (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1998) 139–67; *idem*., "The Marriage of Art and Commerce: Philippe de Lasalle's Success in Silk," *Art History* 28, no. 2 (April 2005) 200–26; *idem*., "From Design Studio to Marketplace: Products, Agents, and Methods of Distribution in the Lyons Silk Manufactures, 1660–1789," in *Threads of Global Desire: Silk in the Pre-Modern World*, eds. Dagmar Schäfer, Giorgio Riello, and Luca Molà (New York: Boydell Press, 2018) 225–50; Carlo Poni, "Fashion as Flexible Production: The Strategies of the Lyons Silk Merchants in the Eighteenth Century," in *World of Possibilities: Flexibility and Mass Production in Western Industrialization*, trans. Patrick Leech, eds. Charles F Sabel and Jonathan Zeitlin (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 37–74; William H Sewell, jr. "The Empire of Fashion and the Rise of Capitalism in Eighteenth-Century France," *Past & Present* 206 (February 2010) 81–120.

members of the aristocracy, perhaps to display their allegiance as well as wealth. Below this were one or two smaller versions of the same model, each in turn available in more or less ornate variants and priced accordingly. This entire hierarchy was also kept available in one, two, or more older models whose prices were reduced relative to their age and the number of newer models for sale in a predictable pattern.

Even the oldest, smallest, and plainest busts remained an expensive investment, however. The ability to produce porcelain in quantity meant that it could be used to replicate otherwise individual images of imperial propaganda created by the most prestigious artists, whether putting a painting of Napoleon by François Gerard on vases or portraits of Marie-Louise by Jean-Baptiste Isabey on snuffboxes and cups.[146] Each of these objects was *kitsch*, "elaborately aestheticized commodities produced in the name of large institutions...for middle-class home use. Kitsch is short-order charisma, charisma that has obviously been recently manufactured...it is the miniature attempting to signify something gigantic by compressing the public sphere into the narrow compass of small objects designed for private consumption."[147] And the most effective form of Napoleonic *kitsch* was the medallion.

Carved in relief to commemorate an official event or just renew the market, medallions could be produced by the hundreds and thus sold at an affordable price. They were easy enough to design that new models could be issued promptly, simple enough to be quickly and cheaply mass-produced, and through their provenance in the Imperial Porcelain Manufacture an accessible miniaturization of the Emperor himself.

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[146] AN O^2 922 Letter Brongniart to Intendant Général de la Maison de l'Empereur (4 February 1808); *Journal de Paris,* 5 August 1810.

[147] Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851–1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990) 88.

By 1812, no fewer than eighty-seven unique medallions of Napoleon had been pressed in bronze, with many of them duplicated by the National Manufacture in porcelain as well.[148] A medallion released in 1811 (figure 5.15) celebrating the birth of Napoleon's son highlights the style. First, it was manufactured to commemorate an important

Figure 5.15. Medallion with Napoleon, Marie-Louise, and son. Hard-paste porcelain. Sèvres Porcelain Manufacture, 1811. Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, 14.102.403.

[148] AN O² 928 "Facture des médailles en bronze historiques du règne de Sa Majesté l'Empereur et Roi" (30 December 1812).

event, a souvenir tied to a specific time and place and linking its value to that proximity. It marked that moment of time by elevating the personages of the imperial family itself, here shown as a family, as was becoming more common in this period. It was also small, only two-and-a-half inches in diameter, and inexpensive, probably costing only one-and-a-half francs when first issued. Its cost was directly related to its quality, as is evident in the roughness of the exterior disc, the simplistic carving of the central figures, the sloppy application of white slip, and the near total obscurity of the child. It was, in short, a product designed to give mass consumers a little taste of exaltation and luxury at an affordable price.

Sales records from the manufacture reveal the role these medallions played in the market. First, just as with the busts, they were priced according to a framework based on size, ornamentation, and age. A large plain medallion might be released at three francs, but also made available in gilt versions with or without a presentation case for up to seven francs. Smaller versions of some models might also be made available for fifty or as little as twenty-five centimes. They were often released in sets, with a new model of the Emperor and Empress or other members of the family all put out at the same time. And each time a new model was released, the preceding models were each lowered in price accordingly, though there seems to have been a floor of around one franc for most. These sales records also reveal that medallions were typically bought as an addendum to a purchase from Sèvres. Occasionally visitors would purchase a single medallion of Napoleon or a pair of the Emperor and Empress, perhaps to commemorate a trip to the manufacture. But most of them were sold individually or in pairs as part of a larger purchase of decorative pieces or a tableware service, an add-on highlighting the imperial origins of their purchase. A few private merchants also bought large collections of medallions at wholesale prices for resale elsewhere. While only a handful

of the more expensive busts were sold each year, the manufacture was moving hundreds of medallions annually.[149] Collectively, these sales show that within just a few years the French porcelain industry had developed all the telltale hallmarks of modern luxury: social authority, branding, flexible pricing, and the fashion cycle. The emergence of these aspects of modern luxury marketing, in turn, reveal in turn the connection between social authority and economic strategy that made it possible.

Conclusion: Fashion, Value, and the Temporality of Capitalism

By the end of the Napoleonic era, a new form of luxury industry had been created. It drew directly on developments of the preceding century that had established France as the premier porcelain manufacturer in Europe: creating institutions that could convey reliable information about luxury goods to consumers; using existing tools of privilege and patronage to encourage private investment in porcelain production; building a state-sponsored manufacture to establish a cohesive style and reputation for quality and invest them into manufactured goods at the site of production; and then turning the nation's economic hopes over to private manufacturer's attendant to consumer demand. As a synthesis of these earlier stages, the porcelain industry of the early nineteenth century bore their marks. Yet it was also something new. It was possessed of a new temporality, one that forced a reconciliation of centralized style with

[149] AN O[2] 923 "Inventaire général des matières et pièces fabriquées" (1 January 1809); AN O[2] 924 "Inventaire général des matières et pièces fabriquées" (1 January 1810); AN O[2] 925 "Inventaire des matières et pièces fabriquées existans" (1 January 1811); "Inventaire des matières et pièces fabriquées existans" (1 January 1812); AN O[2] 928 "Vente au comptant" (monthly through 1809); "Vente au comptant" (monthly through 1811); AN O[2] 929 "Vente au comptant" [early 1806]; "Vente au comptant" (monthly through 1807); "Vente au comptant," (monthly through 1810); "Facture du montant des recouvrements" [early 1810]; "Facture du montant des recouvrements" (26 August 1811); "Vente au comptant" (monthly 1812).

decentralized tastes, the interests of the state with those of private producers. Prices and thus profits became fleeting and time-dependent, following fashion. Managing such a system required that the stylistic guidance of the state be equally nimble. Making the fashion cycle official policy meant that even as he set waves of taste in motion the sovereign had to *surfer sur la vague*.

Jean-Yves Grenier has argued that the Old Regime economy had many coexisting, connected, and contradictory temporalities embedded within a social order. The economic world he describes is one that was steady yet changing.[150] For Bill Sewell, meanwhile, modern capitalism has its own temporal logic that restructures social life around it. The economic world he describes is one that is dynamic yet static.[151] A lineage of historians beginning with EP Thompson have studied the imposition of time discipline on the workforce as a pivotal historical moment in the ordering of industrial capitalism.[152] And this historical development coincided with the demands placed on producers by the emergence of the fashion cycle even as they propelled it.[153] The young economics student Caroline Foley wrote in 1893 that the rapidity of the fashion cycle is caused by its intersubjectivity, that because individual tastes shape and are shaped by everyone else's they must constantly be in flux.[154] Perhaps, to extend her argument, the

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[150] Jean-Yves Grenier, *L'économie d'Ancien Régime : Un monde de l'échange et de l'incertitude* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1996) 363–428.

[151] William H Sewell, jr. "The Temporalities of Capitalism," *Socio-Economic Review* 6, no. 3 (2008) 517–37.

[152] EP Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism," *Past & Present* 38 (December 1967) 56–97. For a critical overview, see: Vanessa Ogle, "Time, Temporality and the History of Capitalism," *Past & Present* 243 (May 2019) 312–27.

[153] See footnote 144 above.

[154] Caroline A Foley, "Fashion," *The Economic Journal* 3, no. 11 (September 1893) 458–74. See also: Edward Fullbrook, "Caroline Foley and the Theory of Intersubjective Demand," *Journal of Economic Issues* 32, no. 3 (September 1998) 709–15.

greater the extent of economic interaction the greater the velocity of economic life, just as the greater the velocity of economic life means the greater the extent of economic interaction. As impediments to economic interactions were overcome, economic life sped up. And as economic life churned ever faster, economic interactions had to change to keep pace.

Conclusion

Luxury, Value, and Capitalism

In 1816, two brothers named Pouyat endeavored to establish a porcelain manufacture in Fours, a tiny hamlet along the Loire about thirty miles southeast of Nevers. The enterprising Pouyat brothers founded the company with fifty shares sold at ten thousand francs each, lined up support from the Minister of the Interior, arranged royal patronage that let them advertise themselves as "the manufacturers of His Highness the Duke of Berry," and (after some disagreement) had the factory manager named an "Artist certified by the King."[1] Taking advantage of low labor costs in this remote region, low transportation costs courtesy of the Loire, and bountiful forests, they declared that "The principal purpose of this establishment is to give porcelain all the perfection and extension of which this branch of commerce is capable, property of French industry and soil, to be in a position to favor commerce internally and externally and to increase exports through low prices...beauty and goodness." And to meet this goal the brothers planned to build a self-contained town with company-owned housing for all eight hundred anticipated workers.[2] The workers themselves would be taken on as apprentices once they were judged to be of a "good constitution"; they would be

[1] Archives Départementales de la Nièvre (ADNi) 8U/S/8 Notary Jean-Marie Charpin (20 November 1818); M 6383 Letter Pouyat brothers to Prefect (19 April 1816), Letter Pouyat brothers and Lebourgeois to Prefect (9 April 1816), Letter Vaublanc to Pouyat brothers (11 April 1816), Letter Pouyat brothers and Lebourgeois to Prefect (24 May 1816).

[2] ADNi M 6383 "Analyse de l'Établissement d'une Manufacture de Porcelaine, Fondée à Fours" [c. February 1816]. [Le but principal de cet établissement est de donner à la partie de la porcelaine toute la perfection et l'étendue dont cette branche de commerce est susceptible, propriété de l'industrie et du sol français, d'être dans le cas de parvenir à favoriser le commerce du dedans et du dehors et à enforcer l'exportation par la douceur du prix...par la beauté et bonté.]

monitored by workshop managers who regularly reported to the owners; they would be provided free on-site housing; their wages would be limited to one franc per day for the first year, increased to half pay for a year once their work was deemed acceptable, and then advanced to full pay; their paychecks would have 5 percent automatically deducted to fund a company-run insurance program.[3] The brothers Pouyat requested municipal, departmental, and national support to build roads, establish weekly markets and a biannual fair where workers could shop for consumer goods, and cover other expenses. In all this, the Pouyat porcelain manufacture echoed Old Regime practices of royal and aristocratic patronage coupled with private investment, bolstered by state funds, and dedicated to profitability through perfection—though now using paternalist labor practices and access to natural resources to woo customers with low prices.

At the very same time the Pouyat brothers were busy arranging all these layers of support for their enterprise, however, another capitalist named Neppel was petitioning to establish a porcelain manufacture in Nevers. He requested neither patronage nor privilege, just permission to start his company.[4] According to the civil code, industrial buildings had to receive approval from all nearby property owners attesting that the manufacture would not be "harmful" to neighbors. Given the long tradition of faïence manufacture in Nevers, it is little surprise that several of the ten surrounding property owners were proprietors of faïence manufactories. What may be surprising is the enthusiasm with which they unanimously not only approved the establishment of a competing industry but actively encouraged it. As one faïence manufacturer wrote: "he considers Mr Neppel's manufacture, as very advantageous to

[3] ADNi M 6383 "Conditions obligatoires pour tous les élèves admis dans l'établissement" (19 January 1818); 8U/S/8 (20 November 1818).

[4] ADNi M 6380 Letter Neppel to Prefect (13 May 1816).

the city and as able to contribute to perfecting, under the *rapport* of the art, other manufactures whose production can approach it in different ways."[5]

There are different possible ways to read this statement. At one level, the author of this endorsement could have had in mind direct transfers of technological or artistic skills. Given the advanced technology of porcelain manufacturing, especially kilns, and the fact that because it sold at a higher price than common faïence it both could cover and was expected to contain a higher degree of artistic achievement in its design, production, and decoration, the author could have been hoping that some of these skills would percolate through the Nevers ceramic workforce and into his own factory. In this sense, the "*rapport* of the art" could have referred to a tangible *link* between the two ceramics industries. It is worth noting, however, that the author specifies that the benefits would spill over to the "other manufactures" plural. Even at this surface level, then, the author was clearly thinking about the benefits a porcelain manufacture could bring to the technical and artistic capabilities of the Nevers faïence industry as a whole. And he seems to have linked his own economic wellbeing to that of the rest of the city's manufacturers.

This opens up a second possible level of meaning, one that I think here is more likely. Although becoming more accessible in this period, porcelain remained either a luxury or semi-luxury good. This imbued it with a certain status and prestige, even when manufactured without the attestation of elite patrons and at a small scale in a small city like Nevers. This was a status and prestige that even the grandest pieces of

[5] ADNi M 6380 Letter Mayor of Nevers to Prefect (10 October 1816), "Procès-verbal de commode et incommode" (8 September 1816). [il considère la manufacture de Mr Neppel, comme très avantageux à la ville et comme pouvant contribuer à perfectionner, sous le rapport de l'art, les autres manufactures dont la fabrication peut l'en rapprocher dans différentes combinations]

faïence lacked. In this sense, the author may have had something intangible in mind when he talked about the benefits the "*rapport* of the art" porcelain could bring to the local faïence industry. This *rapport* could have been the *relationship* or *connection* between Nevers porcelain and Nevers faïence established not between workers or even manufacturers, but in the mind of the consumer. This would have been a connection that would spill over to the local faïence industry as a whole, raising public estimation of and demand for all of its goods. Just as porcelain from the (once-again) Royal Porcelain Manufacture was intended to exemplify the best of French porcelain so that consumers would trust, admire, and buy the products of private porcelain manufactures at a more accessible level, so too might this author have hoped that a Nevers porcelain manufacture could exemplify the best of Nevers ceramics so that consumers would trust, admire, and buy the products of its faïence manufactures at a more accessible level. If this interpretation is correct, it reveals the early permutation of the luxury logic throughout the French economy.

Historians—echoing the observations of French commentators since the eighteenth century—have long noted that French manufacturing developed with a focus on high-quality and correspondingly high-value goods. Indeed, to the present day France remains the world's uncontested leader in luxury production.[6] These historians, however, have tended to emphasize the factors that prevented France from following the same trajectory as Britain, showing what was distinctive about class relations in France that kept it from mirroring developments across the Channel.[7] Ultimately, such

[6] "Le luxe : Le seul secteur qui résiste à toutes les crises?" *Capital* 16 (December 2017–February 2018) 1–12.

[7] Whitney Walton, *France at the Crystal Palace: Bourgeois Taste and Artisan Manufacture in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992); Tessie Liu, *The Weaver's Knot: The Contradictions of Class Struggle and Family Solidarity in Western*

narratives naturalize the British experience of industrialization and define other varieties of capitalism as alterations of that formula if not aberrations from it. And they betray a debt to Marxist historiographical frameworks that emphasize class conflict in shaping economic orders, even if to highlight an optimistic case of different possible futures.

Yet Marx himself was reacting to and working within the theoretical framework of Classical economics in the context of the British Industrial Revolution of the mid nineteenth century. Among the assumptions built into the Classical School of economics was the belief that consumer demand was constant and that in an integrated and liberated marketplace producers would meet the patterns of consumer demand at the lowest possible price. The first time Adam Smith introduced his "invisible hand" metaphor in 1759, he did so to emphasize how consumer demand sets in motion a whole chain of events that benefits society as a whole.[8] The second time Smith invoked the metaphor, however, he did so to show that it was producers striving to meet preexisting demand put this chain of events in motion.[9] The key to understanding economic growth, as Jean-Baptiste Say argued, could only be found by studying

France, 1750–1914 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994); Jeff Horn, *The Path Not Taken: French Industrialization in the Age of Revolution, 1750–1830* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006). These arguments all bear a resemblance to Robert Brenner's classic argument about the persistence of peasant agriculture in France as the result of successful class struggle: Robert Brenner, "Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe," in *The Brenner Debate: Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985) 10–63.

[8] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, eds. DD Raphael and AL Macfie (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1982) 183–4.

[9] Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. RH Campbell and AS Skinner (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1981) 1:456.

supply.[10] This single-minded focus on supply depended on a new idea of value, one that took consumer demand and its impact on price as given and argued that in a competitive market producers would be driven to produce what was demanded and sell it at the lowest price permitted by the costs of capital, rent, and above all labor. The logic of capitalism described here is one in which producers are driven by the competition for consumers on the axis of price to relentlessly cut costs, whether through the invention of machines or the exploitation of workers. In exposing the fetishism of the commodity, Marx sought to lay bare the underlying social system embodied in the products of industry, to draw our attention past the surface appearance of the world of goods and to the relationships and labor that make them.[11] This came at the expense, however, of remembering that it is the surface appearance of the goods themselves that made consumers demand them in the first place.

In the aftermath of the Great Recession and inspired by Thomas Piketty's powerful description of resurgent inequality as a return to form following the historically unusual economic equality of the mid twentieth century, social scientists have reexamined inherited definitions of value and sought to better understand how social conditions make different economic logics possible.[12] This has led some to double down on the logic of capitalism elucidated by Marx and the rest of the Classical

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[10] Jean-Baptiste Say, *Traité d'économie politique, ou simple expression de la manière dont se forment, se distribuent et se consomment les richesses*, eds. Emmanuel Blanc et al. (Paris: Economica, 2006) 2:688–92.

[11] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin, 1990) 163–77.

[12] Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2014). For the impact of this on early modern French history, see: Michael Kwass, "Capitalism, Political Economy and Inequality in Eighteenth-Century France: Writing History after the Great Recession," *French History* 33, no. 4 (2019) 608–16.

economists, albeit with considerably more complexity and nuance.[13] But it has pressed others to explicate different modes through which the underlying logic of capitalism can express itself. In a direct refutation of neoclassical and classical economics, economist André Orléan has argued for a definition of value that is simultaneously economic and social.[14] For him, utility and scarcity are not the sources of value but products of a marketplace driven by social mores.[15] Value, he concludes, is the economic manifestation of society expressed through the governmentality of institutions.[16]

In an even more provocative argument, sociologists Luc Boltanski and Arnaud Esquerre have described an "economy of enrichment." They believe—like Orléan, Douglas, Appadurai, Kopytoff, and others—that the economic value of a good is socially determined by "structures of commodities" that establish what can be sold and at what prices.[17] Where they differ is in their emphasis on the way those structures can be manipulated and those commodities "enriched."[18] Enrichment, for Boltanski and Esquerre, occurs when a vendible commodity is linked to an intangible sense of time, place, or scale. The past cannot be sold, for instance, but goods can be invested with nostalgia and sold as a patrimonial inheritance—as with antiques. A region cannot be

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[13] For instance, see: David Graeber, *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value: The False Coin of Our Own Dreams* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

[14] André Orléan, *L'empire de la valeur : Refonder l'économie* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2011).

[15] *Ibid.*, 12–4, 19–144, 186. Jean Baudrillard has made a similar argument: Jean Baudrillard, *Pour une critique de l'économie politique du signe* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976) esp 59–94, 144–99.

[16] Orléan, *Empire de la valeur*, 313–29.

[17] Luc Boltanski and Arnaud Esquerre, *Enrichissement : Une critique de la merchandise* (Paris: Gallimard, 2017) 12–3.

[18] *Ibid.*, 11.

sold, but it can be made to represent an ideal and used to denominate a class of products as embodiments of that ideal—as with champagne.[19] A systematic and complete collection cannot be sold, but as an aspiration it gives the component pieces of that mythical collection an economic value—as with the cabinet of curiosities.[20] For Boltanski and Esquerre, such forms of enrichment make possible a distinct form of capitalism, one whose core logic is not about reducing costs to increase profits but investing constructed meaning into commodities in order to increase their value and thus profits. They argue that just such an economy defines France today—with its outsize dependence on tourism and luxury—but that its roots date back to the nineteenth century and even earlier, driven in part by the transformation from merchant to industrial capitalism.[21]

Whereas Boltanski and Esquerre look backwards to find antecedents to the modern-day economy of enrichment, however, this dissertation has shown how merchants, manufacturers, and bureaucrats from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries charted their own path toward profitability. They did so without imagining what the twenty-first-century world would look like, but with a series of pragmatic steps to address the economic problems of their own pre-industrial world. Historians describing the French path toward industrialization have tried to explain why France

[19] *Ibid*., 404–40; Kolleen M Guy, *When Champagne Became French: Wine and the Making of a National Identity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

[20] Boltanski and Esquerre, *Enrichissement*, 243–26. On the early modern curiosities trade, see: Harold J Cook, *Matters of Exchange: Commerce, Medicine, and Science in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007); Dániel Margócsy, *Commercial Visions: Science, Trade, and Visual Culture in the Dutch Golden Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014); Pierre-Yves Beaurepaire, *Les Lumières et le monde : Voyager, explorer, collectionner* (Paris: Belin, 2019).

[21] Boltanski and Esquerre, *Enrichissement*, 21–66, 225–35, 375–502.

did not take the same path as Britain, but they have not explained why the French path worked then and continues to work now. Doing so requires abandoning generalizations of the economic logic of the Industrial Revolution and Classical conceptions of value and embracing a multiplicity of capitalisms, each unfolding through their own logics of profit making and wealth creation. There is a specificity in each of these capitalisms historically, contextually, and theoretically. But there is also a unifying coherence, a shared dynamic that only becomes visible when viewed collectively. By showing what the French variety of capitalism responded to, what it aspired to, and how it succeeded, this dissertation has sought to peel back another layer to reveal the hidden mechanism of capitalism that has shaped and continues to shape our world.

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