

The Garden of Perfect Brightness—3

Destruction, Looting, and Memory (1860-present)

by Lillian M. Li

Opium War:
The Final Act

Plundering
Paradise

Collecting
Loot

Relics &
Controversy

Ruins &
Memory

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LINKS

["The Garden of Perfect Brightness: A Life in Ruins," Geremie R. Barmé's pioneer study of the Yuanmingyuan over the decades that followed its destruction.](#)
(Click here to view short article)

["Gong Xiaogong and the Sacking of the Garden of Perfect Brightness"](#)

["European palaces within ruins of Yuanmingyuan, Beijing," photos by Druh Scoff on Flickr](#)

NOTES

1. This account of events follows Hevia, James L., *English Lessons: The Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century China* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), Chapter 2.
2. On October 18th, Montauban expressed shock and regret at the incineration. "I've just been informed...that all the magnificent pagodas, whose marvelous workmanship I had admired are at this moment the victim of flames: a vengeance unworthy of a civilized nation because it destroys the admirable objects that have been respected for several centuries." Quoted in Thomas, Greg M, "The Looting of Yuanming and the Translation of Chinese Art in Europe," *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide: A Journal of Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture*, Vol 7, Issue 2 (Autumn 2008), p. 19.
3. Hevia, Chapter 2. The above account is taken from Li, Lillian M., Alison J. Dray-Novey, and Haili Kong, *Beijing: From Imperial Capital to Olympic City* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 107-111., which in turn is based on Hevia, Chapter 2.
4. Stephenson, Frederick, *At Home and On the Battlefield* (London, 1915), pp. 272-273, quoted in Hevia, p. 79.
5. Wolseley, Viscount Garnet, *The Story of a Soldier*, Vol. 2 (A. Constable & Co., Ltd., 1903), p. 77.
6. Boulger, D. C., *The Life of Gordon* (London, 1897), pp. 45-46, as quoted in Malone, Carroll Brown, *History of the Summer Palaces under the Ch'ing Dynasty* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1934), pp. 187-88.
7. Hevia , Chapter 4, provides a detailed account of the looting.
8. Hevia, pp. 94-95.
9. Greg M Thomas provides an outstanding discussion of the multiple cultural meanings of this nineteenth-century European Orientalism in "The Looting of Yuanming and the Translation of Chinese Art in Europe," *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide: A Journal of Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture*, Vol 7, Issue 2, Autumn 2008.
10. The website of the Poly Art Museum states: "Poly Art Museum was founded in December 1998 with the approval of State Administration of Cultural Heritage of China and Beijing Cultural Relics Bureau and opened to public in December 1999. It is the first museum operated by a state-owned enterprise in the Chinese mainland. The aim of the museum is to develop and display traditional national culture and art, and to rescue and protect Chinese cultural relics lost abroad."

11. Part 7 of the CCTV documentary "Yuanmingyuan: 150 Years after the Fire" provides many details of extensive looting of stone and wood—for the raw materials, rather than for art—by local residents and public institutions.
12. Wong, Young-tsu, *A Paradise Lost: The Imperial Garden Yuanming Yuan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), p. 115.
13. Thiriez, Régine, *Barbarian Lenses: Western Photographers of the Qianlong Emperor's European Palaces* (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach, 1998).
14. On Piry, see Thiriez, pp. 93-101.
15. Extensively documented and photographed in *Yuanmingyuan Changchungyuan Hangjingtang yizhi fajue baogao* 圓明園長春園含經堂遺址發掘報告 (Report on the excavation of the Hangjingtang ruins at the Changchungyuan of the Yuanmingyuan), edited by Wenwu Yanjiuso (Beijing: 2006).

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