

No. 34 Greeting the Crane in the Prefectural Garden

In the westernmost part of the prefectural *Yamen* of Tai'an, there were several *mu* of spare land. When my father¹ assumed office and moved in, he weeded the grass and constructed paths, rockeries in the shape of hills and built a gallery of three bays facing directly towards Mount Tai. He composed a couplet for this gallery:

First I planted the mulberry and flax,²
 now I tend to my flowerbeds and paths;
 Returning from the hills of Tiantai and Yandang,
 I pay homage to the clouds of the Eastern Peak.

In the summer of the year *bingzi* (1816), my father composed four poems to record the beauties of the garden:

I

A small shelter built in the vicinity
 of the cavern of clouds,
 Its luminous casement receives much of
 the Mountain's glory.
 When I return from the *yamen*,
 the drum of duty is quiet,
 And in the mild warmth of the evening,
 a gentle breeze blows.
 'Silver pots' are collected
 in the stone paths,³
 Jade bridles congregate
 in the highways of the metropolis.⁴

¹Linqing belonged to the Wanggiyan 完顏 clan, and he was directly descended from the fifth Emperor of the Jurchen Jin dynasty. During the Manchu dynasty, his family belonged to the Imperial Household Bond-servant Division of the Manchu Bordered Yellow Banner. His father was the official Tinglu 廷鑾 (1772–1820).

²Mulberry for sericulture, flax for textiles.

³According to the *Ruiyingtu* 瑞應圖, if during royal feasts the sagacious ruler never indulges in drinking to excess, then the 'silver pot' manifests itself, as a propitious omen.

⁴Reins and bridles ornamented with jade, used by rich aristocrats.

Abundant harvest goes with
 the laudable mores of the people,
 Everywhere we hear the jubilant
 Rice Shoot Songs.⁵

II

I hoe these few *gong*
 of moonlit land,⁶
 And enjoy flowers a-plenty
 in the four seasons.
 The pure white are taken
 for flying snowflakes,
 The crimson rival the splendour
 of sunset clouds.
 Wild vegetables
 provide the repast,
 And mountain berries
 serve for tea.
 To welcome in
 the living fragrance
 Push back the green gauze
 from the ornamented windows.

III

Favoured with
 the blessings of the immortals,
 I bring my family to this
 mountain verdure.
 My wife and children frequently
 gather and converse,
 Friends are invited
 to assemble here.
 My head on the pillow,

⁵Peasant folk songs to wish for and celebrate the *cornucopia*.

⁶*Gong* 弓 is a term of measurement varying in length from five feet to eight.

I listen to the gushing spring;
 The wine cup put away,
 the night scene stretches afar.
 The mountain genius
 favours me
 With a myriad spectacles
 of alpine illusion.

IV

Dare I be so derelict as to indulge
 in lute and crane?
 May the floating clouds
 see into my heart!
 Though these few rooms
 are my transient lodging,
 Yet the three paths
 are my garden and grove.
 I remind the domestics
 to weed the rank grass,
 And bid my sons
 compose short songs.
 My short stay here
 of a few years
 Is no less bliss than
 retreating to a mountain hermitage.

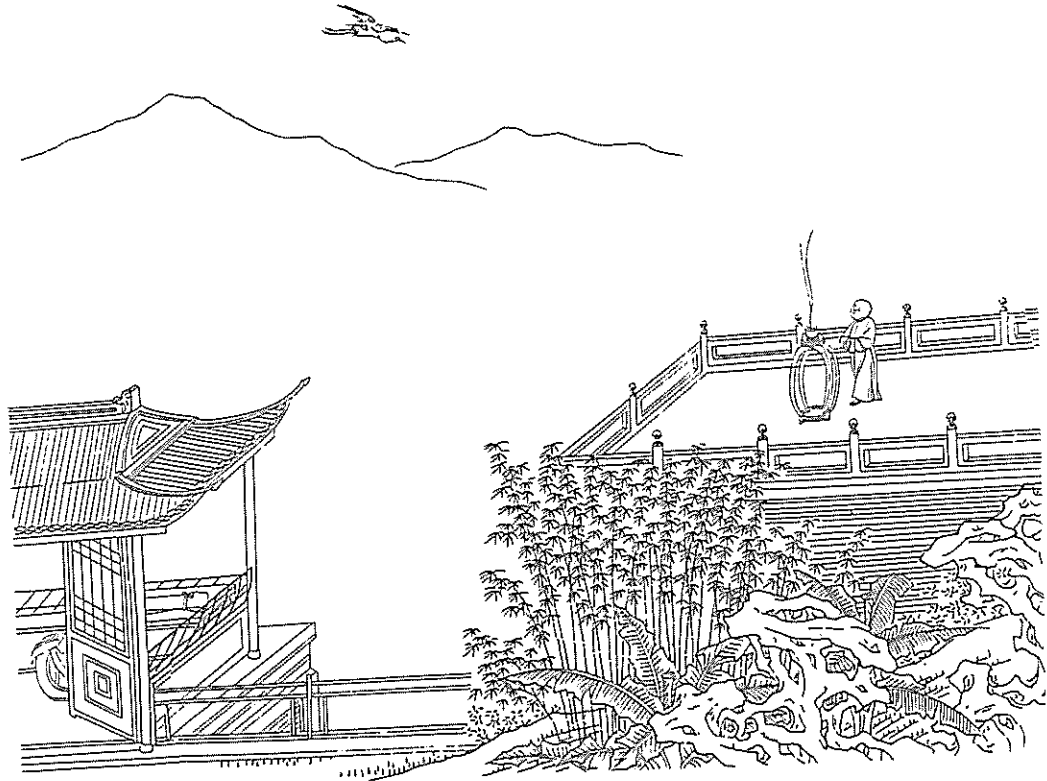
My mother and I both wrote poems in response to my father's.

I stayed in the side room of the gallery,⁷ and finding myself in such close proximity to the Fairy Mount, I would regularly perform my obeisance to it from a distance every morning and evening, burning incense and supplicating the *genius loci* to bless my parents with perennial health and youth.

On the thirteenth of the seventh month, I had just ascended the terrace, set out a small table and lit the incense, when a red-crowned

⁷He is trying to say that he did not dare to stay as a guest in the room of honour, but as a dutiful and reverent son, in the side or humbler room.

鶴名園郡



crane with black skirt-feathers rose soaring serenely into the clouds. Was this a reincarnation of the Taoist Ding Lingwei,⁸ I wondered, or of the Buddhist monk Zhang Caizhi?⁹

I had this picture made to commemorate this unusual and wonderful occasion.

⁸A Taoist monk of the Han dynasty who became an immortal and transformed himself into a crane, in order to fly back and hover over his native place. Having exhorted the people to follow his example and become Taoist devotees, he soared up into the heavens. See *Soushenji* 搜神記.

⁹The translator acknowledges his inability to identify this person.