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John Minford

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# *The Chinese garden: death of a symbol*

JOHN MINFORD

In many modern Chinese cities, it is customary to give large high-rise blocks of flats flowery names. 'The Garden of a Hundred Virtues' is in actual fact a complex of apartments perched on a mountainside in Hong Kong, overlooking a new town down in a valley where fifteen years ago there were little more than a few villages and paddy-fields. The area at the foot of the mountain — now an industrial estate — still bears traces of its humble origins in its name, Charcoal Burners.<sup>1</sup> Up above, behind the Garden of a Hundred Virtues, stands a vast quarry cut into the side of the mountain. One side of my apartment looks out onto this quarry: the rock face rises sheer into the sky, like a mighty Song dynasty scroll. The other side looks down into the red (?black) dust of warehouses and workshops of Charcoal Burners.

A few weeks after arriving at this 'garden' I had occasion to discuss with some students the many ways of reading and translating the Tang-dynasty poet Wang Wei's famous lines describing 'The Deer Enclosure', one of the nooks in his Wheel River estate:

On the empty mountain  
no one is seen;  
Only the echo  
of human voices.<sup>2</sup>

Returning that evening to the apartment, I was struck anew by the polarity of my dwelling-place: on one side the empty mountain, on the other factory rooftops and echoes of noisy human activity. Yet another reading of Wang Wei. I decided to call the apartment the Studio of the Empty Mountain. I was making a Chinese gesture, indulging in a piece of chinoiserie: but it was also just a simple statement of being in that place at that time. In China the

building and naming of gardens or parts of gardens, and of studios, the taking of a new sobriquet, the carving of a seal, were all ways of signalling something more, a new connection or insight, a new stage in one's life. Gardens (as ideas) were part of a larger scheme, just as they were in physical reality the setting for the harmonizing of man and the larger scheme of nature. As in life, so in literature too they acquired an intensely symbolic quality. In the great eighteenth-century novel *The Story of the Stone*, Prospect Garden, so lovingly described in chapters 17 and 18, and the various little cottages, hermitages, studios, even rooms provided for its young inhabitants all reflect the inner life of the novel. One learns as much about a character from the visual design and from the naming of a studio as one does from that character's words and deeds.<sup>3</sup> In a similar fashion one learns about the workings of a personality from the description of a visiting physician's diagnosis and prescription — because Chinese medicine was also part of a holistic system of correspondences.

One of the finest and most succinct expressions of the traditional Chinese aesthetic conception of the garden is the essay by the late Ming writer Chen Jiru (1558–1639) entitled 'On One's Place of Dwelling':

Inside the gate there is a footpath and the footpath must be winding. At the turning of the footpath there is an outdoor screen and the screen must be small. Behind the screen there is a terrace and the terrace must be level. On the banks of the terrace there are flowers and the flowers must be fresh. Beyond the flowers is a wall and the wall must be low. By the side of the wall, there is a pine tree and the pine tree must be old. At the foot of the pine tree there are rocks and the rocks must be strange. Over the rocks there is a pavilion and the pavilion must be simple. Behind the pavilion are bamboos and the bamboos



FIGURE 1. *Prospect Garden. Late nineteenth-century illustration. From Zengping butu Shitouji.*

must be thin and sparse. At the end of the bamboos there is a house and the house must be secluded. By the side of the house there is a road and the road must branch off. At the point where several roads come together, there is a bridge and the bridge must contain a sense of danger. At the end of the bridge there are trees and the trees must be tall. In the shade of the trees there is grass and the grass must be green. Above the grass there is a ditch and the ditch must be slender. At the end of the ditch there is a spring and the water of the spring must splash. Above the spring there is a hill and the hill must have depth. Below the hill there is a hall and the hall must be square. At the corner of the hall there is a vegetable garden and the vegetable garden must be large. In the vegetable garden there is a stork and the stork must dance. The stork announces the arrival of a guest and the guest must not be vulgar. When the guest arrives there is wine and the wine must not be declined. The wine is passed round and there is drunkenness and the drunken guest must not want to return home.<sup>4</sup>

The symbolism which was part of every level of traditional Chinese culture, and which permeates Chinese literature from the *Book of Changes* through to *The Story of the Stone*, is all but dead today.<sup>5</sup> That is why it is so strange to walk round one of the marvelous gardens of Suzhou. In order to be there at all, one has to reassemble the entire universe of which it was once a part, and which has been so thoroughly dismantled, in the name of progress of one sort or another. An entire system of symbols and spiritual values has gone.

\* \* \*

There is a particularly poignant moment in chapter 81 of the *Stone*, when Jia Baoyu, the sensitive adolescent protagonist of the novel, the incarnation of the Stone, has just been told that his newly married cousin, the gentle Yingchun, is suffering greatly in her new home. He speaks first to his mother, who lectures him on the subject of a young girl's obligations; then 'choking with frustration, he makes his way back to the Garden' and goes straight to the Naiad's House, to visit Lin Daiyu, his soul-mate and cousin. He pours his heart out to her: 'Our band of kindred spirits is being broken up, everything is being spoiled! . . . You only have to look around you! Our Garden's altered so much in such a short time. What could become of it in the next few years just doesn't bear thinking about.'<sup>6</sup> He returns to his own residence, Green Delights, and lounges around reading for a bit, leafing through (among other things) an anthology of Jin dynasty prose, and quoting one brief phrase from the famous 'Orchid Pavilion Preface', written by the great calligrapher Wang



FIGURE 2. *Jia Baoyu reading in the garden. Early nineteenth-century illustration. From Gai Qi, Hongloumeng tuyong.*

Xizhi (321–379). His maid Aroma (ever practical in her approach to her master's moods) suggests tactfully: "If you don't feel like reading, why not go for a walk in the Garden?" 'Baoyu mumbled something in reply and walked abstractedly out of the room. He soon came to Drenched Blossoms Pavilion,

and gazed out over the lake. All around him he saw nothing but dereliction and decay.<sup>7</sup>

I have written elsewhere at some length on the significance of Baoyu's brief reference to the Orchid Pavilion Preface (and in particular the problems it poses for the translator).<sup>7</sup> If I return to this same passage, which does in a sense seem to haunt me, it is because it presents us with a classic representation of the Garden in Chinese literature. The destiny of the Garden and of its occupants are inextricably linked. The topography of Prospect Garden charts the spiritual odyssey of Baoyu, the Passionate Monk.

Jia Baoyu's encounter with his mother in chapter 81 takes place in her apartment in the main *inner part of the house*, as part of his early morning ritual of greeting; then he goes out again *into the Garden*, first to share his grief with his closest friend, then to retreat into his thoughts, to take refuge in his residence *within the Garden*; and thence, when his pent up feelings become too much for him again, he goes out yet again *into the Garden*, and is eventually granted a brief respite from his gloom by the bright spectacle of the four girls fishing (though even that ends ominously with his line snapping when he makes a futile attempt at Taoist fishing. . .).

Here and throughout the *Stone* (and indeed throughout Chinese culture) we are aware of the Garden as a spiritual space. The whole novel chronicles Baoyu's progress towards maturity as an individual, which culminates in his 'leaving home', *chujia*, and entering into the open space of the void. 'There, up on deck, standing in the very entrance to his cabin and silhouetted dimly against the snow, was the figure of a man with shaven head and bare feet, wrapped in a large cape made of crimson felt.' (chapter 120, p. 359) This is the vision of Baoyu experienced towards the end of the novel by his ageing father, Jia Zheng. This is the boy whose 'earthly karma is complete', and who strides off into the snow, singing:

In the Cosmic Void  
I roam.  
Who will pass over,  
Who will go with me,  
Who will explore  
The supremely ineffable  
Vastly mysterious  
Wilderness  
To which I return! (p. 360)

The traditional expression *chujia* signifies literally abandonment of home for entry into the Buddhist *sangha*, but in the novel it functions as a metaphor for the achievement of individuality.<sup>8</sup> The home/house (*jia*) is the ritualistically structured Confucian scheme of things, including family and family obligations, the morning and evening salutation, the stifling world of ancestral portraits and tablets, of career and intrigue, against which both Baoyu and Daiyu rebel. It is their privilege to move as adolescents into their little studios in Prospect Garden (in another sense, the Garden of Contemplation). The symbolism of Baoyu's compound, Green Delights, has been well described by H. C. Chang: '[its] labyrinthine interior reflecting tortuousness of thought and tangled feelings, the whole dwelling suggesting an artfully contrived trap for the Stone's original nature; mirror on door with spring, i.e. illusion leading to sudden final release.'<sup>9</sup> The Naiad's House reflects Lin Daiyu's more reclusive nature: 'I love all those bamboos and the little winding, half-hidden walk. It's so quiet and peaceful there.' (chapter 23)

The garden is a halfway house on their pilgrimage. It is the setting for their dreams. It is also the site of ruin and desolation.

\* \* \*

The symbolism of the Chinese garden cannot be separated from the symbolism of its architectural and ornamental elements — walls, gateways, windows, pavilions, walkways, bridges, grottoes, swings, rocks, artificial mountains.<sup>10</sup> In another masterpiece of early Qing dynasty literature, the more than five hundred stories of the collection *Liaozhai zhiyi* by Pu Songling (1640–1715), we become aware that the garden in its various forms is again a halfway house: it is here that characters encounter the strange, the supernatural, the erotic (leaping over the wall has always been a common Chinese expression for illicit assignations). Within the house normality prevails, but once out in an open space, down a walkway or an overgrown temple cloister, and the transition can all too easily be made.<sup>11</sup> Things begin to change.

In the delightful story 'The Girl in Green',<sup>12</sup> a captivating young girl comes to haunt (and seduce) a young scholar studying in his temple retreat in the hills (as so often, excess of scholarly zeal renders him more than usually susceptible to this kind of thing). One day, overwhelmed by some terrible premonition, she brings their idyllic liaison to an end and takes her leave, saying:



FIGURE 3. *The Woman in Green*. Late nineteenth-century illustration. From Xiangzhu *Liaozhai zhiyi tuyong*.

'Stay there and watch me. Do not go in again until I am beyond that wall.' He watched her walk silently down the cloister and round the corner, until she was out of sight. He was on his way back to bed, when he heard a desperate cry for help. It was her voice. He hurried out again, gazed all around him but could see

no trace of her. The voice seemed to be coming from above him, from the eaves over the door. Looking up he saw a huge spider, like a big black bolus, holding in its clutches a little creature that was making the most pitiful noise: it was a green hornet, in the throes of death.

The architectural details (wall, cloister, eaves) are an intrinsic part of the movement of the story between the natural and supernatural planes.

Another interstice, between house and garden, is the upper room, with its view beyond the precincts of the 'house'. In an exquisite miniature from the *Liaozhai* collection, 'Dragon Dormant',<sup>13</sup> we see the transformation of a tiny creature into a great roaring dragon take place in that crepuscular zone, 'under the eaves of an upper room'.

Commissioner Qu of Wuling County was reading in an upper room, when a heavy rain began to fall. In the deepening gloom he saw a little creature, bright as a glow-worm, wriggle its way onto his reading table. . . . Donning full mandarin hat and girdle, he made a deep bow and carried it once more to the door. He stood beneath the eaves, and finally the creature reared its head, stretched and took off into the air. . .

The contemporary writer Zhao Yiheng, in his fake-*Liaozhai* story 'The Woman in Crimson',<sup>14</sup> attempts to recreate the timeless world of the classical tale of the supernatural, with its constantly shifting levels of reality. He instinctively uses the walkway and the studio as passages from one world to another: 'Meanwhile one of Uncle Gu's servants led him down the winding walkways of the mansion to the study where a bed had been made up for him.' Here young Li is left to confront his seduction by the 'woman in crimson', who is — what? Figment of his own tortured imagination? Ghost of his Uncle's mistress? Creature of the ancestral family consciousness? The story takes on a modernistic twist — but the basic symbolism is that of the Chinese tradition.

We find the same in the *Stone*. Unexpected turns of events often begin at turns in the Garden. In chapter 11, 'Peppercorn' Wang Xifeng encounters Jia Rui (and begins the course of seduction and destruction of this unfortunate wretch) at a turn in All Scents Garden (precursor of Prospect Garden): 'Xifeng was making her way through the garden, admiring the view as she went, when a figure suddenly stepped out from behind an artificial hill of rock and made its way towards her.'



FIGURE 4. Releasing the 'dormant dragon' from the upper room. Late nineteenth-century illustration. From Xiangzhu Liaozhai zhiyi tuyong.

In chapter 101, it is on a visit to the sadly decaying Prospect Garden that Wang Xifeng encounters the ghost of Qin Keqing, her young cousin Jia Rong's wife, whose death early on in the book foreshadows the family's decline: 'Xifeng continued towards the Garden, accompanied now only by Felicity. The gate had been left ajar and mistress and maid were able to push it slightly open and walk in. Within the Garden the moonlight seemed even brighter, and the trees cast deep pools of shadow. The intense silence created an atmosphere of extreme solitude and desolation.'

In chapter 108, Baoyu too experiences the desolation of the haunted Garden: 'As Baoyu entered the Garden, a scene of utter desolation greeted his eyes whichever way he turned. The flowers and trees seemed every one to be wilting, to be more dead than alive, and the paint had long since started to peel from the walls of many of the buildings. In the distance he espied a thicket of bamboo, an isolated patch of brilliant green foliage.'

In the two great dreams or visions that form the pillars on which the architecture of the *Stone* is based (in chapters 5 and 116) it is the archways, the *pailou*, that indicate the shift from one plane to another. The inscriptions are cinematic, like credits from some MGM epic:

But Baoyu's spirit had already quit its mortal frame. . . . The monk hurriedly rose to his feet, grasped the spirit by the hand and set off. Baoyu (spirit) followed, light as a leaf drifting in the breeze. They made their way out not by the main entrance but by a route he failed to recognize, and presently they reached an open space, a wilderness, whence in the far distance he spied a strangely familiar monumental archway. . .

On the lintel of the arch were inscribed in large characters the words:  
*The Paradise Of Truth*

A couplet in smaller character ran down on either side:

*When Fiction departs and Truth appears, Truth prevails;  
Though Not-real was once Real, the Real is never unreal.*

Having negotiated the archway, they presently came to the gate of a palace, above which ran a horizontal inscription:

*Blessing for the Virtuous; Misfortune for the Wicked*

whilst the following words were inscribed vertically on the two sides:

*Human Wit can ne'er unveil the Mysteries of Time;  
Nor Closest Kin defy the Stern Decrees of Fate.*

'So,' thought Baoyu to himself. 'It is time I began to learn more of the operation of fate.' Even as this thought was passing through his mind, he saw

(of all people) Faithful [his grandmother's maid, who had committed suicide] standing a little way off, beckoning and calling to him.

'All this time and I'm still at home in the Garden!' he reflected in astonishment. (chapter 116, pp. 284-5)

The Garden is the map of a pilgrimage; it is also a mirror, its ruin reflecting the destiny of a family.

\* \* \*

One of the best records of the traditional Chinese garden-sensibility, of the sense of symbolism, the sense that being in the garden heightens the poetry of the moment, is the little-known mid-nineteenth-century autobiographical memoir of the Manchu nobleman Linqing (1791-1846), *Hongxue yinyuan tuji*.<sup>15</sup> Linqing, during his career as a Water Conservancy official, visited many of the most famous Chinese gardens. He was steeped in the culture of the Manchu bannermen of his time, and knew to perfection how to 'read' the Chinese garden. He commissioned distinguished artists to illustrate his memoirs with woodblocks of a high quality. Of the many garden episodes in the book, one will have to suffice:

*Enjoying the Cool in the Lotus Pavilion*

In the pond of the Garden of Clear Tranquillity (the residence of the Director of Southern River Conservancy, at Huai'an, Jiangsu) there is a pavilion which catches the first rays of the moon, with a serpentine bridge meandering to the left of it, like a 'thirsty rainbow' — I dubbed it 'companion of the rainbow and catcher of the moon'. Thirty-odd large willow-trees are dotted round the pond at pleasing intervals, and the entire pond is planted with lotuses. It reminds one of the Nine Degrees of the Lotus Terraces. I composed a 'pillar couplet' as follows:

Green shade on every side is nurtured by the spring;

Red rain in the pond is a composition in water.

In the hot summer months I always bring some volumes of poetry and official documents with me and sit in the pavilion, to soothe away the unrest and purge the impurity.

In the summer of the year *bingshen* (1836), when I looked through the archives and found a host of unresolved cases, I decided to set up a schedule for myself — to read and resolve two cases each day; from the summer to the autumn I have succeeded in dispatching two hundred and sixty-six such cases, and the same number of cases in the ensuing winter. . . .

In the sixth month of the year *wuxu* (1838), I was sitting in the pavilion, when I received this special communication from the Board; instantly I felt every vulgar dusty feeling vanish. I leant on the balustrade to gaze at the water in the pond, ruffled by a slight breeze, and watched the bubbles emerging from below and popping continuously like flying stars chasing each other. My younger daughter Fobao threw some flower-petals into the pond, and they performed a butterfly-dance — the red tumbling and fluttering with the green.

At that time my eldest daughter Miaolianbao, in respectful fulfillment of my mother's wish, had completed the continuation volume to my mother's *Anthology of Women Poets Compiled on Orthodox Principles*, and had also obtained two prefaces to the second volume, one by Aunt Pan Xubo and another by Miss Weng Xiujun. She came to see me with the manuscripts and prefaces for my comments, and as she crossed the bridge with a leisurely step, accompanied by her maid, she pointed to the cranes and the deer, and seemed to breathe in the poetry of the moment.

Now when I recall this scene, I realize how very precious such moments are — and how hard to come by!<sup>16</sup>

Linqing's own Peking garden, the 'Half Acre Garden', one of the masterpieces of the great designer Li Yu (1611-1680), having passed into the hands of the Catholic Verbiest Academy in 1947, was raided by the communist secret police on July 25, 1951. The Hall to Receive Happiness was divided by wooden partitions into cubicles seven feet by four, each of which was assigned to one of the foreign missionaries. The courtyard before the building known as the Fairy Chamber of the Flying Waves was used for hanging and beating the prisoners.<sup>17</sup> The scenario of the garden as place of ruin was being played out again.

\* \* \*

The contemporary poet Gu Cheng, whose favourite reading included both the *Stone* and the *Liaozhai* stories, was acutely aware of the destruction of the Chinese symbolic environment:

Chinese culture has its overt aspect, and its hidden aspect. This hidden aspect lies within Nature, it ceaselessly provides the nourishment for the overt aspect of the culture, provides the serene philosophy, that enables humans to confront this cruel world and survive within it. . . [He goes on to talk of writers such as Li Bo, Su Dongpo, Wang Wei, Han Shan, Cao Xueqin]. But the Communist Party has destroyed the very fabric of life 'with nature', it has destroyed the



FIGURE 5. 'Enjoying the Cool in the Lotus Pavilion'. Woodblock illustration. From *Hongxue yinyuan tuji* (c. 1850).

countryside and the texture of rural life, it has destroyed the idyllic poetic realm of the temple and the Peach Blossom Spring. Chinese culture has lost its inner core of peace, its roots. We have moved away from traditional life and the natural ethos, and we thrash around frantically like fish out of water. This I find

so very hard to accept, the streets full of blind people, dust that can be blown along by the slightest gust of wind.

In order to find a piece of land of my own, a home among the trees, I came to New Zealand. Not far from Auckland I found the place I needed. It is a piece

of primeval forest, and on it stands a broken down old house. Not many people live on the island — some of them are Europeans, some are Maoris. And on those parts of the island where there are no people, there are sheep. The first day I went there I said to my wife: I have spent 20 years of my life preparing for this. Now at last I have made the leap, left behind that wretched world, and come to the place where I wanted to be. Now my life can begin.

At that moment I had such faith in nature, such faith in my own inner self. Now that I had arrived in the world of nature, I would have no further need for fantasy; there, in the world of nature, the natural beauty of my life could manifest itself, just as I had once written in a poem:

grass gone to seed  
wind blowing blades  
we stand, silent:—  
it is all so fine

*December 1992, Germany*<sup>18</sup>

Gu Cheng arrived in New Zealand in early 1987, having chosen with some urgency an exile from the country that had treated him so harshly during the various ideological campaigns of the 1980s.<sup>19</sup> He was searching for a place that he could call home, a place where he could be himself. In order to do so he was (in another sense) leaving home — abandoning the precinct of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat for an island in the Pacific Ocean.

In yet another sense, both home and garden are all in the mind. As Liang Shiqiu wrote in the 1940s:

I don't own the cottage. I am merely one of its tenants. Considering that we are all transients in the universe, and that life is but transient, so long as I

occupy a part of the cottage that part may be said to be mine. While I cannot claim ownership of the cottage, all the bitter-sweet experiences that I went through in the cottage are mine. As the [Song dynasty] poet Lin Kezhuang so well put it: 'Being a transient is like being at home; even at home, life is still transient.'<sup>20</sup>

Gu Cheng found what he was looking for in an old wooden 'bach' (New Zealand expression for a simple seaside house) on the island of Waiheke (he gave the island the Chinese name *Jiliudao*, Island of Fast-flowing Waters). Here he tried to fashion an environment in which he could, in the time-honoured tradition of the Chinese poet, be at one with nature and himself. It was certainly not the traditional Chinese scholar-gentleman's estate, but a rough place, a cabin with a plot of hillside attached to it. Even the traditional literatus could invest the humblest space with philosophical and symbolic qualities, as the famous eighteenth-century 'eccentric' Zheng Xie observed:

In front of my tiny room is a small yard in which stand several bamboos and a few ornamental rocks. It is not large. It cost little. It has the sound of the wind and the rain, the shadows thrown by the sun and the moon. It provides a cordial atmosphere in which to drink or write poetry. In it my friends can keep me company when I am relaxing or feeling low. Not only do I take pleasure in bamboos and rocks. They too take pleasure in me. Some people spend vast amounts building gardens and pavilions, but then travel far and wide as officials and can never return to enjoy them. I cannot afford the time to travel to the great mountains and rivers. I would rather know the happiness of living in this small room, which will last for many years and will always be stimulating. Contemplating these picturesque surroundings, it is not difficult for me to condense everything and hide it away in some secret place, or to expand it to fill the whole world.<sup>21</sup>

Gu Cheng worked on his home slowly, moving stones, building a terrace and a wall, growing closer to the spirit of the place. He and his wife Xie Ye solved problems with dogged peasant ingenuity. In need of material with which to bind the clay around their chimney flue, they resorted to an old Shandong country formula, cut off some of her long hair and mixed it in with the clay. And all the time he wrote poetry, evolving a style that seemed, even to his friends and longtime readers, ever more obscure, trying to 'find the words', in the tradition of the fourth-fifth-century poet Tao Yuanming (one of his favourite writers):



FIGURE 6. Sketch by Gu Cheng of his home at Rocky Bay, Waiheke Island. 1989.

I pluck chrysanthemums under the eastern hedge,  
 And gaze afar towards the southern mountains.  
 The mountain air is fine at evening of the day  
 And flying birds return together homewards.  
 Within these things there is a hint of Truth  
 But when I start to tell it, I cannot find the words.<sup>22</sup>

On his piece of hillside Gu Cheng wrote inscriptions in the manner of the Tang eccentric Cold Mountain. It was the fulfillment of an age-old dream. He had written years before of his dream:

**Door**

I have such hopes; a door,  
 morning, sunlight on the grass

We stand  
 leaning by the door  
 the door is low, but the sunlight bright

grass gone to seed  
 wind blowing blades  
 we stand, silent:—  
 it is all so fine

There is a door, no need to open it  
 it is ours, it is all so fine  
*August, 1982*<sup>23</sup>

The tragic ending of this dream in late 1994 — Gu Cheng's murder of his wife, and subsequent suicide, on the island where they had sought to build their world in accordance with their own sensibility — brings to mind an earlier tragedy, and one of the most famous gardens in all of Chinese history:

I own a villa on the outskirts of Henan prefecture, by Golden Valley Creek, near Luoyang, with some high and some low ground. There are clear springs and verdant woods, fruit trees, bamboos, cypresses, and various kinds of medicinal herbs, all in great abundance. In addition there are watermills, fish ponds, grottoes, and all things to please the eye and delight the heart. . . . Each one [of my guests] composed a poem to express the sentiments in his heart. Whenever anyone could not do so, he had to pay a forfeit by drinking three dipperfuls of wine. Moved by the impermanence of our lives, and dreading the unappointed hour of falling leaves, I have duly recorded below the offices, names, and ages of those who were present.<sup>24</sup>

Shi Chong (249–300), whose estate at Golden Valley was legendary for its extravagant parties, was put to death as a result of political intrigue. His favourite concubine, the beautiful Green Pearl, threw herself to her death from an upper storey. Among the many later poets to recall this event was Du Mu, of the Late Tang:

***Shi Chong's Golden Valley Garden***

Scattered pomp has fallen to the scented dust.  
 The streaming waters know no care,  
 the weeds claim spring for their own.  
 In the East wind at sunset the plaintive birds cry:  
 Petals on the ground are her likeness still  
 beneath the tower where she fell.<sup>25</sup>

\* \* \*

William Morris, in his novel *News from Nowhere*, sets before his troubled fellow men of the late 19th century, 'engaged in making others live lives which are not their own, while they themselves care nothing for their own lives', a vision of 'fellowship, rest and happiness'. He describes, at 'Journey's End', an idyllic riverside house and garden, clearly modelled on his own home at Kelmscott on the 'stripling Thames':

We crossed the road and again almost without my will my hand raised the latch of a door in the wall, and we stood presently on a stone path which led up to the old house to which fate in the shape of Dick had so strangely brought me in this new world of men. My companion gave a sigh of pleased surprise and enjoyment; nor did I wonder, for the garden between the wall and the house was redolent of the June flowers, and the roses were rolling over one another with that delicious super-abundance of small well-tended gardens which at first sight takes away all thought from the beholder save that of beauty. The blackbirds were singing their loudest, the doves were cooing on the roof-ridge, the rooks in the high elm-trees beyond were garrulous among the young leaves, and the swifts wheeled whining about the gables. And the house itself was a fit guardian for all the beauty of this heat of summer.<sup>26</sup>

Carl Gustav Jung, during the latter part of a life spent searching for the means to heal modern man's soul, himself sought to find 'repose and renewal' in the house and garden that he built for himself at Bollingen:

Words and paper, however, did not seem real enough to me; something more was needed. I had to achieve a kind of representation in stone of my innermost

thoughts and of the knowledge I had acquired. Or, to put it another way, I had to make a confession of faith in stone. That was the beginning of the 'Tower'...

In 1935, the desire arose in me for a piece of fenced-in land. I needed a larger space that would stand open to the sky and to nature. And so — once again after an interval of four years — I added a courtyard and a loggia by the lake...

From the beginning I felt the Tower as in some way a place of maturation — a maternal womb or a maternal figure in which I could become what I was, what I am and will be. It gave me a feeling as if I were being reborn in stone. It is thus a concretization of the individuation process, a memorial *aere perennius*. During the building work, of course, I never considered these matters. I built the house in sections, always following the concrete needs of the moment. It might also be said that I built it in a kind of dream. Only afterward did I see how all the parts fitted together and that a meaningful form had resulted: a symbol of psychic wholeness.<sup>27</sup>

Again and again in Chinese culture and literature, the garden has been the symbol and the setting for the endlessly repeated quest for self-knowledge, self-containment, self-transcendence. Its ruin has been a symbol of the failure of that quest.

This symbolic garden world has been destroyed, along with so much else of value in the traditional cultures of both East and West. At the Garden of a Hundred Virtues, the resident moves not from Green Delights to the Naiad's House, but from Block A to Block B, not down a covered walkway, with vistas of a moon-gate, a miniature mountain and a bridge leading over a lake, but up a lift shaft, in a metal cage with floors numbered 1 to 14. In the classic gardens of Suzhou, as Maggie Keswick has so well written:

Chinese and foreigners, old and young, swarm over the Immortal's rocks, photograph each other on the bridges and litter the lakes with a film of orange peel and cigarette ends. Public lavatories and cafés occupy some of the pavilions, and the earth is stamped dry and lifeless by a thousand feet...

With so many people it is hard to know how best to preserve the balance between man and nature, already irreparably altered on our planet. And perhaps the shattered tranquility of these gardens is no more than a reflection of this. At any rate for the moment, the world of men has breached the lime-washed walls. Ji Cheng, I think, would have bowed his head in sadness.<sup>28</sup>

Hong Kong Polytechnic University

#### NOTES

1. For the origins of Fo Tan, see QIU DONG, *Xinjie fengwu yu mingqing* (Hong Kong: Sanlian, 1992).
2. See ELIOT WEINBERGER and OCTAVIO PAZ, *Nineteen Ways of Looking At Wang Wei* (Wakefield, Rhode Island: Moyer Bell, 1987).
3. For an introduction to the *Stone*, see DAVID HAWKES, 'The Story of the Stone: A Symbolist Novel', in *Classical, Modern and Humane: Essays in Chinese Literature* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1989). For the garden in the novel, see also ANDREW PLAKS, *Archetype and Allegory in Dream of the Red Chamber* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), and MARY SCOTT, 'The Image of the Garden in *Jin Ping Mei* and *Hongloumeng*', *CLEAR*, 8 (1986).
4. Translation adapted from LIN YUTANG's in *The Importance of Understanding* (London: Heinemann, 1961). Chen's essay uses many of the traditional terms in the traditional Chinese aesthetic vocabulary. For an introduction to this vocabulary, see the appendix to LIN's *The Importance of Living* (London: Heinemann, 1938). The autobiographical memoir *Six Chapters of a Floating Life* by SHEN FU (born 1762) contains another exquisite evocation of the traditional garden. See Lin Yutang's translation, included in several of his anthologies.
5. 'There is virtually nothing in the whole of nature, organic or inorganic, no artefact, which the Oriental artist does not see as imbued with symbolic meaning.' EMIL PRETORIUS, *Catalogue of the Pretorius Collection*, Munich, 1958, quoted in WOLFGANG EBERHARD, *A Dictionary of Chinese Symbols* (London: Routledge, 1986).
6. All references are to CAO XUEQIN and GAO E, *The Story of the Stone*, 5 vols., trans. DAVID HAWKES and JOHN MINFORD (Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 1973–1986).
7. See my article 'Pieces of Eight', in the proceedings of the First Taipei Translation Conference, *Translating Chinese Literature*, edited by EUGENE EOYANG and LIN YAO-FU for Indiana University Press, 1995.
8. I treated this idea at greater length in 1988, in my (unpublished) Inaugural Lecture at the University of Auckland, 'Leaving Home: The Chinese Outsider.'
9. H. C. Chang, *Chinese Literature: Popular Fiction and Drama* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973), p. 402.
10. And of course the symbolism of its plants — but I must refrain from embarking on a discussion of this vast topic. For a simple introduction, see

- SHAO CHANG LEE, 'The Chinese Love of Home and Symbolism', in INN and LEE (eds), *Chinese Houses and Gardens* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1940). See also A. KOEHN, 'Chinese Flower Symbolism', *Monumenta Nipponica*, Series 8, 1952; and W. PERCEVAL YETTS, 'Notes on Chinese Flower Symbolism', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, (January 1941). I was struck by the following dictionary entry for the tree growing outside my front door in Canberra, the Chinese Silk-tree, or *Albizia julibrissia*: 'It is considered to be an auspicious tree, promoting agreement and affection, promoting joy, assuaging sorrow, brightening the eye and giving the desires of the heart (this latter the medicine)...'
11. The expression used by KEITH MCMAHON in his excellent study of the erotic fiction of this period, is 'interstice': 'In all of these examples an architectural opening is the site of an accidental but inevitable encounter.' *Causality and Containment in Seventeenth Century Chinese Fiction* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), p. 20.
  12. Story no. 196 in the standard variorum edition. See ZHU QIKAI (ed.), *Quanben xinzhu Liaozhai zhiyi* (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1989), 2, pp. 675-6.
  13. Story no. 90, pp. 302-3. Full translations of both of these stories, and of five others, have appeared in the first issue of the Melbourne quarterly *Meanjin* for 1995.
  14. For a translation of this, see ZHAO YIHENG and JOHN CAYLEY (eds), *Under-Sky Underground: Chinese Writing TODAY: 1*, (London: Wellsweep, 1994), pp. 33-38.
  15. For a fuller introduction to this work, and an annotated translation of the first ten episodes, see *East Asian History*, 6 (December 1993).
  16. This translation is based on the draft by the late Professor Yang Tsung-han. For the original, see LINQING, *Hongxue yinyuan tuji* (Reprint Beijing: Guji chubanshe, 1984), vol. 2, no. 145, 'Heting naliang'.
  17. See J. L. VAN HECKEN and W. A. GROOTAERS, 'The Half Acre Garden', *Monumenta Serica*, 18 (1959).
  18. This is translated from lecture-notes sent to me by Gu Cheng in March 1993.
  19. See BARMÉ and MINFORD (eds), *Seeds of Fire* (revised edition, New York: Hill & Wang, 1989).
  20. The translation is based on SHI ZHAOYING's, in LIANG SHIQIU, *Yashe xiaopin* (Taipei: Yuandongtushu gongsi, 1987).
  21. The translation is based on SONG SHOUQUAN's, in *Poetry and Prose of the Ming and Qing* (Beijing: Panda Books, 1986), p. 192.
  22. WILLIAM ACKER's translation, in *T'ao the Hermit: Sixty Poems by T'ao Ch'ien* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1952). When Gu Cheng lectured on classical Chinese poetry to students at Auckland University, he devoted a lot of time to discussing the work of Tao Yuanming.
  23. This is my translation. See also SEAN GOLDEN (ed.), *Gu Cheng: Selected Poems* (Hong Kong: Renditions Paperbacks, 1990).
  24. SHI CHONG, 'Preface to the Golden Valley Poems'. Translation based on RICHARD MATHER, in *A New Account of Tales of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976), pp. 264-5.
  25. *Poems of the Late T'ang*, translated by A. C. GRAHAM (Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 1965), p. 136.
  26. WILLIAM MORRIS, *News from Nowhere, or An Epoch of Rest, Being Some Chapters from a Utopian Romance* (1890; reprint London: Nelson, 1941), pp. 274-5. ROBERT VAN GULIK makes an interesting comparison between Morris and Li Yu: 'In his zeal to beautify especially daily life and man's ordinary surroundings, he [Li Yu] forcibly reminds one of William Morris: both aimed at the achievement of a simple, natural beauty, both had, although along different ways, come to the conclusion that those forms of applied art come nearest to perfection that are in closest harmony with nature.' *Chinese Pictorial Art as Viewed by the Connoisseur* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1958).
  27. C. G. JUNG, recorded and edited by ANIELE JAFFÉ, trans. RICHARD and CLARA WINSTON, *Memories, Dreams and Reflections* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), pp. 223-225.
  28. 'Foreword', in JI CHENG, *The Craft of Gardens*, trans. ALISON HARDIE (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 25.