

## Beijing, a garden of violence

Geremie R. Barmé

To cite this article: Geremie R. Barmé (2008) Beijing, a garden of violence, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 9:4, 612-639, DOI: [10.1080/14649370802386552](https://doi.org/10.1080/14649370802386552)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649370802386552>



Published online: 15 Nov 2008.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 263



View related articles [↗](#)



Citing articles: 1 View citing articles [↗](#)

## Beijing, a garden of violence

Geremie R. BARMÉ

**ABSTRACT** *This paper examines the history of Beijing in relation to gardens—imperial, princely, public and private—and the impetus of the ‘gardener’, in particular in the twentieth-century. Engaging with the theme of ‘violence in the garden’ as articulated by such scholars as Zygmunt Bauman and Martin Jay, I reflect on Beijing as a ‘garden of violence’, both before the rise of the socialist state in 1949, and during the years leading up to the 2008 Olympics.*

**KEYWORDS:** gardens, violence, party culture, Chinese history, Chinese politics, cultivation, revolution

### The gardening impulse

This paper offers a brief examination of the history of Beijing in relation to gardens—imperial, princely, socialist, public and private—and the impetus of the ‘gardener’, in particular during the twentieth century. The following remarks constitute an extension of the work I have done concerning the cultural landscape and history of modern Beijing, in which I trace the history of the Garden of Perfect Brightness (Yuanming Yuan) from its creation in 1710 to the present day (*China Heritage Quarterly* 2006).<sup>1</sup> In particular, my reflections are framed by observations made both by Zygmunt Bauman and by Martin Jay in relationship to the garden and the metaphors of gardening in the context of modernity.

Bauman in particular has written of the baleful impact of the ‘gardening impulse’ in the context of Europe, and he has spoken of the modernizing elite as ‘gamekeepers turned gardeners’. In his eloquent 2004 Power Lecture, ‘No State of Grace: Violence in the Garden’, Martin Jay quotes Bauman to the effect that: ‘The power presiding over modernity (the pastoral power of the state) is molded on the role of the gardener. The pre-modern ruling class was, in a sense a collective gamekeeper’ (Bauman 1987: 52, quoted in Jay 2004). Elsewhere he says, ‘Gardening and medicine are functionally distinct forms of the same activity of *separating and setting apart useful elements destined to live and thrive, from harmful and morbid ones, which ought to be exterminated*’ (Bauman 1989: 70, quoted in Jay 2004, emphasis in original).

While questioning the valence of Bauman’s view of the gardening impulse in discussing the causes of, say, the Holocaust—that grotesque Nazi project of weeding out ‘racial blights’ and ‘social misfits’—Jay does nonetheless note that Bauman’s arguments find echoes in the works of some writers on the former Soviet Union who point out that the Soviets pursued a ‘utopian goal of radical improvement of the species and reliance on impersonal bureaucratic means’ (Jay 2004, citing in particular Weiner 1999: 1116 and Holquist 1997: 417). I would argue that similar goals of social engineering, which featured an admixture of Lysenkoism with the discourse of class, emerged in China where they were melded

with certain late-dynastic practices and habits of mind to inform the pursuit of state socialism after 1949 (see Dikötter 1992, 1999). Simply put, the 'gardening impulse' would also run through the bio-ethical reconstructive projects of that country, as well as the various articulations of why and how the physical environment was to be re-engineered, just as were certain strata within the society.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, a metaphor of gardens (in their various forms) can prove useful in discussions of a number of interwoven aspects of twentieth-century Chinese history, modernity, urbanism and culture. This is true not only when considering the history of Beijing under Maoist rule, but also in regard to that city as an urban environment and cultural exemplar in recent decades. The metaphor of gardens also suggests a number of fruitful ways to discuss certain styles of rural-urban transformation in China. In particular, it offers some alternative insights into the socio-politics of class struggle under Maoism, as well as in regard to the articulation of status and domestic sequestration in that country's present era of aggravated economic nationalism.

In the European context, the gardening impulse expressed itself in the activities of orderly and regimented minds, finding form in the painstaking symmetry of renaissance and later gardens (and urban design). A similar, although particular, gardening impulse in East Asia achieved expression in the revelatory and ambulatory nature of early-modern gardens (be they of the scholar-official or merchants) and late-dynastic garden palaces. The gardens of Beijing—regardless of whether they were the enclosed domains of political power and leisure, or the places converted on the basis of appropriated imperial sites which became spaces that were reconfigured for new institutions, as well as choreographed public celebration—reflect and influence the city itself, and by extension cities throughout the People's Republic. They can also be seen as a material correlate to the types of social and bio-ethical remakings and orchestrated civilizing ethos of Chinese society and the party-state over the past 55 years.

In the following, therefore, I would like to venture some observations on the gardening impulse and its attendant violence in twentieth-century China, in particular during the history of the People's Republic. I will also reflect on the city of Beijing as a place where this impulse was both enacted and from which it emanated during the Maoist era (c.1948–1978), and how perhaps when considering that history some light can be shed on aspects of Chinese urban imaginaries as they are realized or offer promise in this new millennium.

### A garden with a prospect

It is not only the style of formal European gardens with their vast panoramas and view corridors, layered parterres and carefully delineated segregations of plants, trees and open spaces that offer a metaphor for the modernizing impulse. The sequestered gardens of China and Japan found in temples, private residences or palaces with their serpentine paths wending a way through miniature vistas or 'borrowed landscapes', have also been sites for careful, macro- and micro-management, incursive prunings, energetic rearrangements and the marshalling of natural effects created by canny artifice and careful design (Riley 1990: 62, referred to in Jay 2004).

In 1938, the Communist Party leader Mao Zedong told a group of progressive writers and journalists that they should regard China as being like Prospect Garden (*Daguan Yuan*). That sprawling garden was part of the Jia family mansion, which is the *mis-en-scène* for the famous and popular late-dynastic novel, *The Dream of the Red Chamber* (or *The Story of the Stone*, *Hongloumeng*), written by Cao Xueqin in the eighteenth century. The novel is a veritable encyclopedia of late-traditional Chinese life and culture, as well as being a beguiling story of predestination, love, wealth and stately decline. For social critics and progressive historians in the twentieth century this most detailed, albeit fictional, account of Qing life

was seen as a story, or parable, about social decay and an indictment of the very world that it depicts. The fact that studies of the novel came to be known as ‘Redology’ (*Hongxue*)—as a would-be textual genre in its own right—reflects something of the importance it is accorded in Chinese scholarship.

Mao had just led the party forces to complete the Long March, yet he chose to turn to a novel and its famous fictitious garden to provide a metaphor for the writers and agit-prop journalists who were gathered at the party base in Yan’an in northwest China as they prepared a new phase in the propaganda offensive against the invading Japanese and the recalcitrant Nationalist (KMT) forces of Chiang Kai-shek (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Mao Zedong in Yan’an, talking to peasants from Yangjia Ling (Mao Zedong zai Yan’an he Yangjialing nongmin jiaotan) (*People’s Pictorial* 1976).

Fascinated by the book for many years, Mao would claim that he had read *The Dream of the Red Chamber* five times (and his wife, the latter-day cultural activist Jiang Qing, would go so far as to declare herself to be ‘half a Redologist’ [*bange Hongxuejia*]). Mao would suggest that the story of family intrigue and personal rivalries depicted in the book and its vast Prospect Garden should be seen as a decoction and artistic refraction of the decadence of late-imperial Chinese society and its class conflicts. He frequently commented on the book and, after coming to power, he would use the novel and conflicting interpretations of its meaning to orchestrate the first nationwide cultural purge that would develop into an attack on liberal democracy and its Chinese champions (Sun 2003). The purge of that particular garden was part of the first major ‘weeding out’ of opinion, both popular and scholastic, that would no longer be tolerated under party rule.

However, on that late April day in 1938, when he was addressing the future writers and propagandists of the party who were studying at the Lu Xun Arts Academy in Yan’an, Mao had the following to say, ‘You are young artists and the world in all of its complex variety belongs to you. This is the garden in which you work...’ He continued,

For you the whole of China is like the Prospect Garden. You must live in it and be as familiar with it as [the novel’s characters] Jia Baoyu and Lin Daiyu. You can’t just be journalists. That’s because such work is done by ‘passers-by’ [that is, superficially]. There’s a saying that goes: ‘Looking at the flowers from horseback is not as good as looking at the flowers while

the horse is standing still. But it is even better to get off the horse and look at the flowers [up close]'. (Mao 1938 [1993])

Mao admonished his audience to observe closely the flowers in the garden that was China. Only then, he told them, could they understand the complex socio-political topography of the Prospect Garden, and gain thereby a true appreciation of the tortuous relationships among the inhabitants of that garden. They would then be equipped to delve into the restive, unsettled and iniquitous garden that was China itself.

For Mao, the garden of China, however, was not merely a place to visit, study or report on. More critically, it was a realm in which productive struggle and titanic transformation must take place. He addressed the writers and journalists of Yan'an at a time when the communist base was already being starved by a blockade imposed by the Nationalists. In 1939, the situation would grow so dire that Mao issued a call for everyone in the base areas to participate in manual production by working in the fields, factories and workshops. It was an 'exhortation to agriculture' (*quan nong*), similar in style and substance to the kind of admonition issue by traditional rulers, about which more will be said below.

Mao would repeat his call many times in the early 1940s during the 'big production' (*da shengchan*) campaign launched by the communist forces so that, in tandem with the army and the farmers of the party-controlled areas in western China, enough grain and cotton could be produced to satisfy the pressing needs of the population regardless of the continuing Nationalist embargo. Mao's appeal, which would become an oft-repeated slogan during later periods of politically induced deprivation right up to the end of the leader's life, was:

Self-reliance will satisfy the need for food and clothing (*ziji dong shou, feng yi zu shi*). (Mao 1943 [1966])<sup>3</sup>

In his own particularly 'physiocratic vision' of China as a productive land, a garden, Mao would continue to use agronomic metaphors to speak of the nation and the people, while also pursuing policies that would transform the landscape and agricultural practices that had given rise to the very metaphors that he employed.

### The war on Beijing

Long before the energies required for the constant maintenance and improvement of a garden are unleashed, the prospective site often undergoes total devastation. By design, the topography of the area to be put under cultivation is rearranged: trees are uprooted, the course of waterways is altered, hills are leveled and garden beds are created by scarring the earth. As Tuan Yi-fu has observed, 'Landscaping, as a utopian venture, requires a clean slate. Whatever exists must first be removed. Feats of preparatory destruction, sometimes on a large scale, occur whenever and wherever landscape gardening has become a mania with the powerful and the rich' (Tuan 1984: 19–20).

If China itself was, to recall Mao's metaphor, like Prospect Garden before the revolution, with the establishment of state socialism in the 1950s, the nation would become a place for radical redesign. Mao would now speak of China as being something of a *tabula rasa*. '[T]he outstanding thing about China's 600 million people', he averred, 'is that they are "poor [*qiong*] and blank [*bai*]".'

This may seem a bad thing, but in reality it is a good thing. Poverty gives rise to the desire for changes, the desire for action and the desire for revolution. On a blank sheet of paper free from any mark, the freshest and most beautiful characters can be written; the freshest and most beautiful pictures can be painted. (Mao 1958)

As part of this particular landscape—one that was itself, in part, the result of Mao's evocations—the new capital of Beijing and its people would become a focal point for social and political experimentation.

When the People's Liberation Army occupied the city in early 1948, Mao admonished his comrades not to repeat the errors of Li Zicheng. Li had been the leader of a peasant rebellion who, after having taken the city by force of arms in 1644, was ousted by the Manchu armies from outside the Great Wall after only 100 days. During the years before the communist advance on the former imperial capital, Mao's army had often been likened to the 'peasant bandits' under Li Zicheng (Barmé 2008: chapter 7). While Li's troops had taken the city by force, and left it in ruins, the People's Liberation Army entered the city peaceably following protracted negotiations with the Nationalist general, Fu Zuoyi (Dai 2007 [2008]). This time around, plunder and devastation were not immediately visited on the city by an invading peasant horde. Long years of social dislocation, economic deprivation and political neglect had already done their work on the place, leaving it under-populated, disheveled and impoverished.

Initially, the reconstructive energies of the new rulers were expended on reshaping the city along the lines of a basic agri-industrial site; life was reordered according to the rural model of Yan'an. The pursuit of self-sufficiency and a subsistence economy had evolved during the years of the military blockade and its resultant scarcity during the war years. The regulation of working hours, the introduction of the midday siesta, the political study sessions, imposed periods of manual labor now demanded of China's urban citizenry (either in the city, or eventually by being mobilized to participate in seasonal agricultural labor in the villages and communes surrounding Beijing), all mirrored the habits and mindset of farmers in the service of the party.

The city as a whole became the site for the envisioning of the new socialist metropolis, not only for Beijing itself, but for cities and towns throughout the People's Republic. Its role as model for urban renewal, reconstruction and destruction, then as now, would figure in the fashioning of cityscapes nationwide. The city's former imperial precincts, many of which had already been turned into public spaces during the Republican era, were now made into socialist leisure grounds and educational sites filled on occasion with the paraphernalia of patriotism and anti-feudal propaganda.<sup>4</sup> All that pertained to the decadent and feudal past was to be actively transformed. A cleansing war was declared on a city that had nurtured a lifestyle of leisure, culture and consumption, a city that was the epicenter of Manchu decadence and the supine betrayal of the national interest. The ethos of the productive countryside was introduced to change the sloth and torpor of the abandoned dynastic capital and, as the party established itself in the revived capital, their avowed aim was to turn it from being a city that consumed resources to one that was productive (*Renmin ribao*, 17 March 1949; *Zhonggong dangshi cankao ziliao* 6: 491-492).

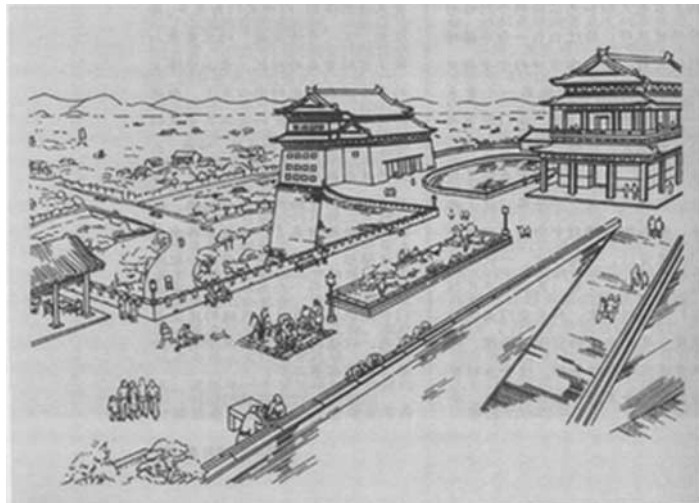
The pre-modern era that saw the particular intermingling of urban and rural touched on earlier, found expression in Chinese cities throughout the Maoist era (1949-1978). Craig Clunas has noted the paradox between the stability provided by land in the kinship world of Confucian-ordered China, and the rise of the non- or semi-productive garden as an aesthetic object for display of luxury and competition in the late Ming (sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries) (Clunas 1996: 21-22). In the Maoist era, we see the tensions over the productive land, frugality and collective wealth relate to urban decadence in new ways. It was also a time that saw the refashioning of the old princely garden mansions (*wangfu*) of Beijing, places that represented a politics and culture of elite self-indulgence (*China Heritage Quarterly* 2007).

Many of these run-down compounds of the defunct nobility and wealthy, with their high walls, numerous interconnected buildings, capacious gardens, lakes and ponds, were taken over by military personnel and civilian cadres who had spent long years in the wilds or the countryside fighting a guerrilla war, as well as by underground party functionaries and cultural loyalists from the former 'white zones' under Nationalist control.<sup>5</sup> The mansions had long been subject to neglect. Some had been plundered in the mayhem resulting from the Boxer Rebellion of 1900; while with the establishment of the Republic and the end of

official careers, emoluments and privileges, many nobles and their families had been forced to sell off family treasures or drastically reduce their extravagant lifestyles and quarters originally built to accommodate large extended families which were supported by tithes. Some of these sprawling garden palaces were also made into offices for key government bodies.<sup>6</sup>

Beijing, like many Chinese cities, was re-designed in ways that reflect the formula of *rus in urbe* (creating the impression of the countryside in a cityscape) familiar to us from the European tradition, but with that formula turned on its head, for what was created was a city that followed the rhythms of the countryside. This commingling of productive and cultural realms fitted in neatly with the revolutionary strategy articulated by Mao in his January 1930 letter, 'A single spark can start a prairie fire' (Mao 1930 [1968]). In it he outlined policies that would eventually be formulated as the strategy of using 'the countryside to surround the cities' (*nongcun baowei chengshi*), a shorthand for an agrarian-based revolution set to seize power in urban centers by relying on a coalition of rural and urban workers supporting their vanguard, the Communist Party.

Yet from the time that the communist forces occupied Beijing city, plans to preserve the old city by creating a garden promenade on the walls that encircled it were mooted (Figure 2). The hope of the proponents of this '49 plan' as it was known was that the traditional design of the place could be preserved; it was thought that such a proposal would also resonate with the party's rhetoric of peaceful reconstruction, enabling the venerable city to become both a site of cultural heritage and an urban modern habitat for the public. This design appeared in sharp relief to the harsh language and pitiless policies aimed at the punitive reordering of society, which included the suppression of the party's enemies and the thought reform of the intelligentsia, in the early 1950s. As these movements of social re-engineering unfolded, and were joined by the mobilized masses, the hopes to preserve the old city were dashed. By the mid-1950s, it was decided that, while the Forbidden City at the heart of the crenulated medieval city would be spared, the walls of Beijing (as well as any thought of a floating garden), and the majestic gateways that gave access to the city, were to be razed and replaced by a ring road. Over the following years, this flattening of the old city through the destruction of the walls was carried out enthusiastically by an



**Figure 2.** Liang Sicheng's 1950s plan for the Beijing City Wall Garden (Liang Sichengde Beijing chengqiang gongyuan shexiang tu) (Liang Sicheng wenji 1986 [2003]).

expanded (and imported) population mobilized and passionate about making the world anew, and about rebuilding Beijing as the centre of that new world (Barmé 2007, 2008).

Mao famously declared to a comrade while standing on the podium of Tiananmen Gate, the symbolic centre of socialist China, that he hoped one day to look out and see a vista of factory chimneys spread out before him. While the factories did not appear, Mao would maintain his purchase on that vista, both literally and figurative (his portrait does, after all, still dominate Tiananmen Square). The square itself was created as an open space for spectacle—a garden, or an open field really, for the display of the seasonal political movements that marked life in the nation. From the vantage point on Tiananmen—an ideological summit from which one could see far and wide (*gao zhan yuan zhu*)—Mao and his comrades would enjoy a unique perspective on the spectacles orchestrated at Tiananmen, which were to be an idealized version of the realities of the country as a whole. The place where the new crops of the productive masses gathered was in the parade grounds and squares of China's socialist cities, overseen by party leaders who were themselves on display, the hierarchical placement of them, a true pecking order, duly noted in the media; the physical placement in the line-up of power-holders being a crucial indication of the changing mood of political campaigns and the seasonal changes in the ideological climate.

### Flowers and weeds

After spending a period in the old imperial hunting grounds at Shuangqing Villa in the Western Hills (now Fragrant Mountains Park) outside Beijing, safe from both the political and health risks of a precipitous move into the malarial old city, Mao and his staff occupied the Lake Palaces, or Zhongnan Hai. This former imperial 'forbidden zone' (*jindi*), was quite



**Figure 3.** 'Chairman Mao Zedong reading the news of the liberation of Nanjing' at Shuangqing Villa, the Western Hills outside Beijing, 1949 (Mao zhuxi kan jiefang Nanjingde shengli jiebao) (*Renmin huabao* 1976b).



literally part of the many ‘secret gardens’ at the heart of late-imperial politics and symbolic power (Figure 3).

From 1949 until the official launch of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, Mao Zedong occupied a multiple courtyard and garden compound on the South Lake of the Lake Palaces (Figure 4 and 5). The Garden of Abundant Nourishment (Fengze Yuan) contained the Hall for Extended Longevity (Yinian Tang), the site of many crucial meetings during the early years of the People’s Republic. More of an elaborate complex of courtyard studios, pavilions, studies, living quarters, covered galleries and gardens, both for viewing and agricultural production, the Garden of Abundant Nourishment would be at the centre of political power, intrigue and elite familial infighting in the early decades of Communist Party rule. The garden and its buildings were constructed by the Kangxi Emperor (r. 1662–1722), and it had also frequently been used by Kangxi’s grandson, the Qianlong Emperor, and the last effective dynastic ruler of China, the Empress Dowager Cixi. In the 1950s, it would resemble, in miniature, nothing so much as the Prospect Garden of which Mao had spoken to the aspiring engineers of human souls in Yan’an in 1938.

The Garden of Abundant Nourishment consists of a number of traditional courtyard houses and large tracts of garden (some 10 Chinese acres or *mu*, equivalent to about 3 acres). Mao’s personal quarters were in a courtyard to the east of the complex called the ‘Study of Fragrant Chrysanthemums’ (Juxiang Shuwu) (Figure 6).<sup>7</sup> This garden residence had been used from the time of the Kangxi Emperor to emphasize the crucial role of agriculture and sericulture in the life of China; Kangxi had also experimented with high-yield rice crops there.

In dynastic times, rulers repeatedly emphasized the importance of producing food and clothing (*zhong nongsang*, literally ‘emphasize agriculture and sericulture’) for the wellbeing of the people and the stability of their rule. In the time of Kangxi, the Garden of Abundant Nourishment was, in particular, used for the annual ‘performative planting’ (*yan geng*)



**Figure 4.** The Sea Palaces (Zhongnan Hai) and Xinhua Men (Zhong Nan Hai, Beijing—*Political Centre of a Country of One Billion* 1981).



**Figure 5.** The Garden of Abundant Nourishment (Fengze Yuan) at the Sea Palaces (*Zhong Nan Hai, Beijing—Political Centre of a Country of One Billion* 1981).



**Figure 6.** The Study of Fragrant Chrysanthemums (Juxiang Shuwu), Mao Zedong's residence in the Sea Palaces from 1949 to 1966 (*Zhong Nan Hai, Beijing—Political Centre of a Country of One Billion* 1981).

ceremony in the early spring during which the emperor and select court officials planted rice and other crops in the capacious agricultural beds as a symbolic and exhortative ritual (Qinggui *et al.* 1994: 557–568, esp. 560, 567). Following this, the major state ritual of the first planting would be performed at the Altar of the First Farmer (Xiannong Tan) in the south city. Signaling the harmony between the will of heaven and the benefit of humanity as mediated by imperial action, ‘exhortations to agriculture’ issued by the throne dated back to the Han dynasty (second century BCE); they were also calls for farmers to produce so that the state could collect taxes (for example, Sima 1973: 423, 428).

Another one of the many historical palimpsests to be found in the evolution of Beijing and its rulers, reveals a connection between the agricultural concerns of both the Kangxi Emperor and Mao Zedong. In his ‘Sacred Edict’ (*shengyu*), a rescript addressed to the whole empire, Kangxi had said that all should,

Honour agriculture and sericulture, for thereby the needs for clothing and food are satisfied (*zhong nong sang yi zu yi shi*) (E’ertai *et al.* 1987: 511).

His son and successor the Yongzheng Emperor (r. 1723–1735), explained the maxim in the following way,

Of old time the emperors themselves ploughed, and their empresses cultivated the mulberry tree. Though supremely honorable, they disdained not to labor, in order that, by their example, they might excite the millions of the people to lay due stress on the essential principles of political economy. (Carus and Suzuki 1904: 741)

As we have seen earlier, it was also a maxim that Mao had reformulated during the war years to encourage the communist forces to overcome the blockade imposed by the enemy. After 1949, too, Mao would frequently employ agricultural and horticultural metaphors to frame major political and ideological issues. Years earlier he had remarked to one of his colleagues that, ‘Executing people is not the same as cutting garlic chives. Chives grow back after you’ve cut them, people’s heads can’t be put back on once they’ve been lopped off’ (Mao 1935). Now more than ever his metaphorical messages worked in tandem with the party’s evolving view of class struggle and the revolutionary goal of effecting a bio-ethical transformation of the country’s human landscape. There was an underlying anxiety that the party, which had grown to strength in the countryside, would be endangered by ‘entering the cities’, and that as it extended its rule over the mainland of China it could well be corrupted by city ways and ‘forget its roots’ (*wang ben*), that is, become divorced from its origins. Mao’s repeated admonishments to his colleagues and the nation, and the formulation of policies that supported these admonitions, often revolved around remaining faithful to the soil, to productive labor and to the core agricultural values of the revolution.

While concerned with the grass-roots origins of the party’s power, Mao Zedong was also exercised by the question of how to encourage an efflorescence of thought, a blossoming and contending of ideas, while maintaining party unity and its traditions. His ideas evolved over a number of years, but they found particular articulation in two horticultural slogans: ‘Let a hundred schools of thought contend and a hundred flowers blossom’ (*baihua qifang, baijia zhengming*),<sup>8</sup> and ‘weed out the old so that the new may flourish’ (*tui chen chu xin*). In particular, he spoke of the importance for the party and its enterprise of distinguishing between what he called ‘fragrant flowers’ (*xianghua*) and ‘poisonous weeds’ (*ducao*). He formulated his views in a key speech during the 1956–1957 Hundred Flowers Campaign (they were subsequently heavily re-worked for publication). In that address he said,

Marxism developed as a result of constant struggles with its opponents. Nearly all the fragrant flowers of history started out as poisonous weeds, while many poisonous weeds

were for long periods regarded as fragrant flowers. It's hard to distinguish between the poisonous and the fragrant: Marx, Lenin, Darwin, Copernicus, Galileo, Jesus, Luther, Confucius, Sun Yat-sen, the Communist Party, the Monkey King, Xue Rengui.<sup>9</sup>

However, in socialist China, there was a constant need to distinguish poisonous weeds from fragrant flowers, although the difficulty of doing this with any certainty was the stuff of every political movement. All words, deeds and, indeed, individual motives were required to nurture the socialist garden; they would have to contribute to the creation of a vista of a hundred healthy flowers as opposed to a disheveled plot full of unruly weeds. There had to be a regularization of society, its participants and their activities. Order, standardization and appropriate cultivation, in which the flower and the weed, the friend and the enemy were distinguished and policed (and, in the context of practical politics, often interposed), were required (Figure 7).<sup>10</sup>



**Figure 7.** 'Thoughts on Pruning' (Jian dong lianxiang), by TK (Feng Zikai) (Feng 1996: n. 65).

The party itself would become the gardener, working the field of China and constantly on the lookout for new weeds that sprouted up to threaten the revolutionary enterprise. However, as Mao had said, poisonous weeds, once recognized as such, could be dug up and made into fertilizer for the benefit of the socialist enterprise (Mao 1957 [1977]a). Just as these ideas were being articulated, a far more ambitious undertaking was being launched. The Great Leap Forward aimed at giving China a bumper harvest in both production and ideological achievement by creating an idealized countryside and rural industry through a politics of inspiration and radical exhortation (Figure 8).



**Figure 8.** Mao Zedong during the Great Leap Forward (Boston: Long Bow Archive).

### **Blossoms of the motherland<sup>11</sup>**

At the height of the Great Leap, Mao revisited his hometown of Shaoshan, Hunan province, which he had left in the late 1920s. In a famous poem recording the event he compared the spectral armies of revolutionary martyrs to the farmers returning from the productive fields of the new socialist China:

Like a dim dream recalled, I curse the long-fled past—  
My native soil two and thirty years gone by...  
Happy, I see wave upon wave of paddy and beans,  
And all around heroes home-bound in the evening mist. (Mao 1959 [1976]b: 36)

Thirty years before the momentous events of the Great Leap engulfed China, its people and its politicians, Mao had written a poem in which he used the chrysanthemum (traditionally associated with the reclusive fourth-century poet Tao Yuanming, who was also the author of the most celebrated Chinese vision of utopia, 'Record of the Land of Peach Blossoms') to symbolize the bodies of fallen Red Army soldiers in the autumn of war (Mao wrote that, 'The yellow blooms on the battlefield smell sweeter') (Mao 1929 [1976]: 6).<sup>12</sup> Now, as agrarian chaos enveloped China, the resident of the Study of the Fragrant Chrysanthemums cast Tao Yuanming, the chrysanthemum hermit, in a different guise. In another poem written shortly after his 1959 trip to Shaoshan, the chairman declared that China was in the process of creating the ideal realm of which Tao and his ilk had only ever dreamt. He chided the ancient writer for being unwilling to work in a real Land of Peach Blossoms:

Who knows whither Prefect Tao Yuanming is gone  
 Now that he can till fields in the Land of Peach Blossoms? (Mao 1959 [1976]a: 37)<sup>13</sup>

The mass famine created by the agricultural dislocation of the Great Leap Forward resulted, among other things, in what is colloquially referred to as a time when ‘flower pots were broken and veggies planted’ (*za huapen’r, zhong shucai*).<sup>14</sup> In an act that reflected his appreciation of the disaster his policies had visited on the country, in his own backyard Mao ordered the digging up of the plants and trees at the Garden of Abundant Nourishment, many of which dated from the Qing era, and in particular the days of the Empress Dowager, the last effective imperial resident of the Lake Palaces.

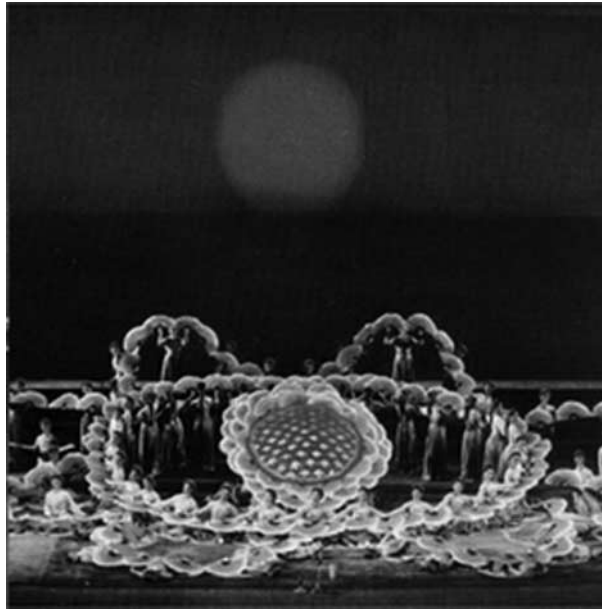
By the early 1960s, the courtyard gardens where Kangxi had carried out his experiments in rice cultivation were producing corn, sorghum, tomatoes and chilies. As the Cultural Revolution approached, Mao enjoined the other central leaders to follow his example and give up flowers and non-productive vegetation in their compounds in favor of vegetables. Even the gardens of the state guest house, the Fishing Terrace (*Diaoyu Tai*), the detached imperial residence to the west of the city, were dug up and replanted (Li *et al.* 1992: 138–139; Li 2005: 14; Wu 2002: 117).

In contrast to Mao’s increasing disdain for non-productive flora, Deng Xiaoping, the man who would be denounced as the ‘second in command of the bourgeois headquarters’ of counterrevolution during the Cultural Revolution, displayed a penchant for real fragrant flowers. As his daughter Deng Rong would recall: ‘[At the time] you could only plant crops and vegetables at the Lake Palaces, like cabbage and corn. Flowers and suchlike were regarded as reeking of petit-bourgeois sentimentality. And what was it about my old man? Everyone else was enjoined to plant crops, but he only planted flowers in our courtyard.’ Her brother Deng Pufang added that the four garden beds in their compound were crammed with every kind of flower available (Zhang 2004: 23).

It was at the height of the Great Leap Forward that the utopian vision of the rural transformation of the city promised a complete undoing of the vexatious urban–rural dichotomy. This is because, as Mao declared that ‘People’s Communes are Good’ (*renmin gongshe hao*), city planners, architects and propagandists bent their energies to giving concrete expression to the ‘anti-urbanism’ of Maoist thought. ‘Urban communes’ (*chengshi gongshe*) were propounded as a way to bring the rural revolution into the cities and, despite the undeniable (yet secret) disaster of the Great Leap, at an enlarged meeting of the Communist Party’s politburo held in Shanghai in January 1960, a new slogan was promulgated calling on the nation to ‘continue the Leap’ (*chixu Yuejin*) (Gao 2005).

While the country reintroduced measures to encourage limited individual farming—the so-called ‘individual plots’ (*ziliudi*)—to deal with the disaster of the Great Leap, by 1964 new attempts were being made by Mao and his colleagues to pursue his agrarian policies in the form of the Socialist Education Campaign. This would lead into the Cultural Revolution of 1966–1978 during which the cult of Mao as the parhelic life-giver reached unprecedented heights. The chairman, who had first been depicted as a celestial ‘savior star’ (*jiuxing*) of the people in the party anthem ‘The East is Red’ (the tune of which was based on that of an old peasant love ditty<sup>15</sup>) (Figures 9 and 10), now became the sun itself, to whom the masses, now figuratively spoken of as ‘sunflowers’, turned for guidance and nurture. The relationship between the life-giver, the gardener and his crops was complete.<sup>16</sup> It was one celebrated in the Cultural Revolution anthem, ‘Sailing the Seas Depends on the Helmsman’:

Sailing the seas depends on the helmsman,  
 All life depends on the sun to grow.  
 Rain and dew nourish the crops,  
 To make revolution, we depend on Mao Zedong Thought.  
 Fish cannot live without water,



**Figure 9.** Opening scene from *The East is Red* (*Dongfang hong*), 1964. (Film still, Boston: Long Bow Archive).



**Figure 10.** The Parhelic Leader in *Petit Point* (Boston: Long Bow Archive).

Melons can't grow off the vine.  
 The revolutionary masses can't exist without the Communist Party.  
 Mao Zedong Thought is the never-setting sun.<sup>17</sup>

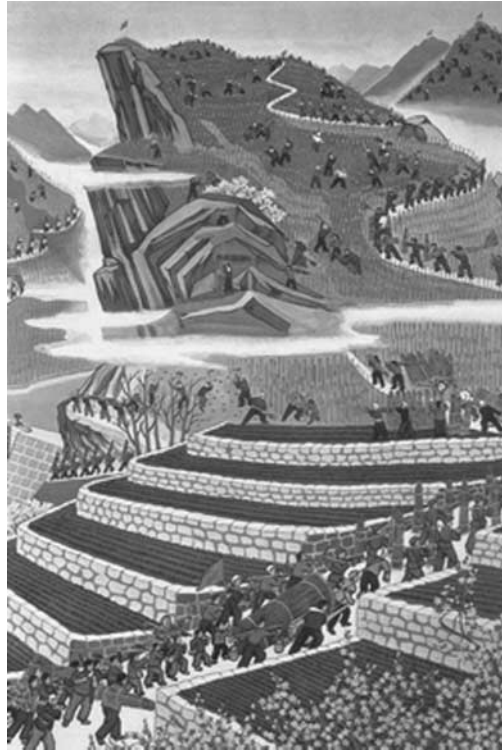
When Tiananmen Gate, the podium from which the Chairman and his colleagues watched the mass parades celebrating the Cultural Revolution, was rebuilt to prevent the ancient building from collapsing, the golden *liuli*-tiles with their dragon decorations were surreptitiously replaced with sunflower designs (Barmé 2008: chapter 8). Amidst this symbolic victory of the gardening impulse, the rhetoric of flowers and weeds was constantly employed to identify social, political and cultural difference. The violence in the city—one imitated throughout China—unfolded through purges, extra-judicial murders, ransacking and the continued evisceration of the city itself. The old symbolic centre of China, the Altar of Soil and Grain (Sheji Tan), in what is now Zhongshan Park on the western flank of Tiananmen Gate, was itself planted with productive fruit bearing trees and Chinese medicinal plants (Figure 11).



**Figure 11.** Entrance to the Altar of Soil and Grain, Zhongshan Park, during the late Cultural Revolution showing fruit trees (*Architectural digest* 1974: back cover).

The agri-business of revolution found quintessential treatment in the factory farm, the Maoist-era model commune of Dazhai in Xiyang county, Shaanxi province. Favored by Mao, the commune was embroiled in the political contestation between various groups at the end of the Cultural Revolution (Teiwes and Sun 2007: 348–363). Jiang Qing made a show of her concern for the place by taking a present of sweets ‘from Chairman Mao’ to the peasants (Teiwes and Sun 2007: 354); she also famously donned peasant garb and ‘performed agricultural tasks’ there as a sign of the party leader’s solidarity with the progressive peasantry. Her gardening, or at least, harvesting impulse stayed with her to the final moments of her power. Among the last pictures taken of Jiang before her arrest in early October 1976 shows her picking apples at night at Jingshan Park in central Beijing, a former imperial park long closed to the public. Following this modest harvest she returned to her residence at the Fishing Terrace, where she was subsequently detained, as were the other members of what became known as the ‘Gang of Four’ (Figures 12–15).





**Figure 12.** ‘Spring Comes to Qin Ridge’ (Qin Ling chunyi nong), a Huxian peasant painting (*Renmin huabao* 1976a).

While real agriculture, and performative farming, were used to exhort the nation to ‘learn from Dazhai’ (*xue Dazhai*), it was the paper floral tributes marking the death of the seemingly moderate Premier Zhou Enlai, who passed away in January 1976, that were the real climacteric for revolutionary China. Later that year, the square would also be the site of opposition to state-orchestrated reality when protesters laid a mountain of floral wreaths commemorating the dead premier at the Monument for the People’s Heroes in the heart of Tiananmen Square (Figure 16).

The blooming of these countless homemade flowers marked the end of Mao’s life and his enterprise; the chairman died less than six months later. Although it would be years after his death that substantial change came to the country, seasonal metaphors and the claiming of Mao’s language of blooming and blossoming during the ‘Beijing Spring’ (*Beijing zhi chun*) would be used by dissidents to mark their own sporadic flourishing from the late 1970s. This was even so as Mao’s successor, the ‘wise leader’ Chairman Hua Guofeng, continued to pursue agricultural reform (something he had been involved in since the early 1970s), and was featured in the media performing the ritualistic activity of encouraging agriculture during his short-lived interregnum (Figure 17).

### The quality of the crop

In traditional China, autumn was a season of great moment. At the Autumn Assizes, for instance, condemned prisoners would have their death sentences confirmed or reduced. It was also in the autumn and winter months, the seasons of decay and death, that major legal



**Figure 13.** Dazhai People's Commune (*Renmin huabao* 1977b).



**Figure 14.** Jiang Qing's 'performative agricultural labour' at Dazhai People's Commune, 1975 (Boston: Long Bow Archive).



**Figure 15.** Jiang Qing picking apples at Jingshan Park, central Beijing, on the night of her arrest, 6 October 1976 (Boston: Long Bow Archive).



**Figure 16.** Paper floral tributes to Mao Zedong amassed around the Monument to the Peoples' Heroes, Tiananmen Square, on the first anniversary of his death September 1977. Similar tributes had appeared as a sign of public mourning for Zhou Enlai in March–April 1976, and would appear again for the ousted Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang in April 1989 (*Renmin huabao* 1977c).

proceedings were undertaken and executions carried out. For farmers, the autumn was harvest time, after which came the annual reckoning when outstanding accounts were settled.<sup>18</sup> Throughout the history of the People's Republic, hopes and trepidations for the spring in Beijing always built up in the preceding autumn and winter.

There have been repeated political and cultural thaws on mainland China since the new economy-oriented policies of 'opening and reform' were launched in late 1978. Presaged by some shift in central government policy or factional realignment, and burgeoning amid an outpouring of controversial cultural activity, ideological lobbying, and sometimes even public protest, each 'spring' in the past had waxed in tandem with political need or



**Figure 17.** Mao's successor, the 'wise leader' Chairman Hua Guofeng, 'performs agricultural activities' (*Renmin huabao* 1977a).

economic bullishness and waned as the situation deteriorated. Every spring blossoming had invariably been followed by a harsh winter of Central Committee discontent. These waves of change, hesitation and renewed frenzy have also rippled through the fabric of China's cities, none more than Beijing.

The metaphors of the seasons would be a feature of the early decades of the reform era just as they had been during Mao's heyday. Yearly rituals were marked still by the seasons of party meetings, but anniversaries that signified critical junctures in the history of the People's Republic would also mark annual purges. Some of these would coincide with the spectral calendar created by the events of 1989, or since. Particular dates, such as 15 April (the day Hu Yaobang died in 1989), 13 May (birthday of the Falun Gong founder Li Hongzhi), 4 June (the day of the 1989 Beijing massacre), among others would see heightened security, increased house detentions or the removal of troublesome writers and activists to villas outside the city.

The discourse of cropping, weeding, tending and nurturing would change too as the agronomic worldview of Maoist-era socialism gave way to a more urban-centered, consumerist social model. Terms such as 'poisonous weed' and 'fragrant flower' had been employed so many times and in so many contradictory contexts that they lost all metaphoric power. Now they had little more than a quaint historic and, for many, comic resonance. In the countryside, after the disbanding of communes, the reinstatement of individual production followed by the rise of corporate farming, the private plot was increasingly seen as a dated and unnecessary artifact of the past. Deracinated individuals were leaving the land to find work instead in the cities.

From the early 1990s, as a virulent second wave of reformist policies ushered in by Deng Xiaoping and his leadership took shape, or rather made its impact felt, Beijing (and the 'ancillary capital' Shanghai) soon experienced unprecedented urban reconstruction and reconfiguration. As new highways were built, and the cities became car capitals (Barmé

2002: 177ff), massive infrastructure, commercial and residential building projects reshaped the urban landscape beyond recognition. The plans for Beijing, which have altered over many years, were revised once more as the economic boom then the success of the 2001 Olympic bid took effect. Under Mao, the metaphors of power were often expressed in horticultural terms; Mao himself even having been figured as the life-giving sun. By contrast, the new era was spoken of as being the work of the grand designer (*zong shejishi*), Deng Xiaoping, the ultimate engineer. In a sense, the move was away from the earlier garden of mass violence to the realm of global-oriented policed agribusiness.

In the reform-era city, the signs of petit-bourgeois production that were fleetingly allowed under high socialism—the small vegetable patches outside apartment compounds, balcony/terrace gardens and pots, or even chicken coops—would come to indicate not a thrifty, self-sufficient means to improve a life impoverished by communalism and ill-managed state planning, but evidence rather of dated poverty socialism. What had been a sign of the individual, indeed bourgeois, struggle to create a measure of small-scale productive independence in the face of state monopolies, would now be the tell-tale sign of socialist want, evidence that their owners were ideologically resistant (or incapable) of becoming active modern consumers. The shared space and practices of rural and urban which had figured in Chinese history and throughout socialist construction, also began to be transmogrified as village enterprises and factory conurbations proliferated, consuming in their wake fertile agricultural land in the prosperous provinces of the south and east.

However, from the 1980s and the rise of the discourse of ‘spiritual civilization’ (*jingshen wenming*), human quality (*suzhi*), not only in eugenic terms but also as a bio-ethical matrix continued to evolve and gain ever-new inflections, and transformative power (Figure 18).<sup>19</sup>



Figure 18. ‘Thoughts Inspired by a Bonsai’, by TK (Feng Zikai) (Feng 1996: n.64).

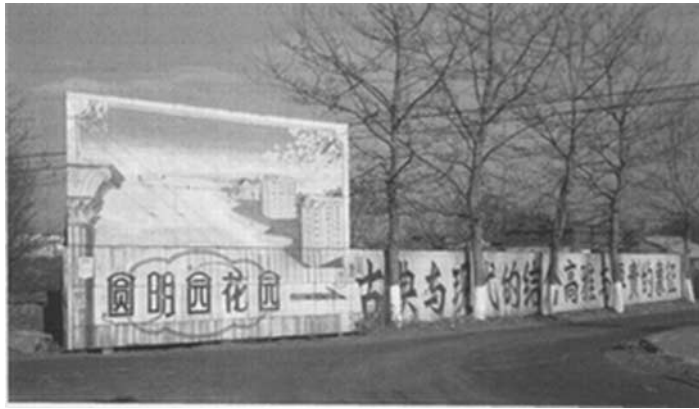
During the height of Maoism, the discourse of class struggle was underpinned by individual and collective credentials of dispossession, manual labor and poverty, the 'quality' sought after in reformist-era China was to do with social stratum, locale, education, appearance, acquisition, managerial oversight and wealth.<sup>20</sup> But more was afoot. The new semi-rural estates around Beijing and other cities were not merely isolated homes, rather they were complexes and compounds, residential estates consisting of many houses or townhouses that were developed as virtual or real gated communities (*shequ*). The *shequ* abrogated to itself many of the original, and to its inhabitants reassuring, elements of the socialist-era work unit (*danwei*) to create the mechanisms for new kinds of modulated social organization (Bray 2005: 181–193, esp. 192). The '*suzhi*' of their occupants constantly enhanced through education, consumption and compliance (Figure 19).



**Figure 19.** A villa at Yuanming Yuan Gardens Estate, north of Yuanming Yuan, November 1996 (photograph by the author).

As the economic reforms created an individuated consumer society, Beijing itself was again seen not primarily as a 'city of production', but once more as a city of leisure, and now consumption. This was particularly true from the early 1990s, and the manufactured and commercial nostalgia that welled up (in Beijing and other cities, towns and areas in China) reintroduced people to the tropes of personal indulgence, familial consumption and late-dynastic and Republican-era lifestyles, elements of which were translated into the burgeoning shoppers' market (Figure 20).

Nonetheless, one could argue that the garden as a trope, and the violent engineering that is required to create and maintain that gardener's urban landscape in reality, is still not far from lived experience in the Beijing of today. As propaganda (*xuanchuan*) was increasingly recast in terms of PR (*gongguan*), the nation itself was now spoken of in terms of a productive living-leisure space, as a 'home-garden', or *jiayuan* in which everyone had a stake. The old term *jiayuan*, which has a positive connotation of 'homeland' as opposed to the Maoist era '*guojia*' or state, was first re-popularized in the campaign for victims of the 1991 floods in southern China, when the key slogan was 'We're all in the same boat, let's rebuild our homeland' (*fengyu tongzhou, chongjian jiayuan*). A Beijing-designed T-shirt produced for the occasion carried the words 'It's everybody's home' (*gongyoude jiayuan*). Since then, home-garden has been an important focus of the collective responsibility to participate in charity; where



**Figure 20.** Billboard advertisement for Yuanming Yuan Gardens Estate: 'The classical meets the modern, a symbol of elegance and refinement' (Gudian yu xiandaide jiehe Gaoya yu zunguide xiangzheng), November 1996 (photograph by the author).



**Figure 21.** 'Brocade Garden' (Jinxiu Yuan), by Lois Conner (Conner 2000, reproduced with permission).

the state withdraws, the home-garden is encouraged to flourish (Barmé 1999: 169, 431, n.120) (Figure 21). More recently, during the spate of natural disasters in 2005, the premier Wen Jiabao promoted the slogan 'we're all in the same boat and should take care of each other; rebuild our beautiful home-gardens' (*tongzhou gongji, chongjian meihao jiayuan*).

In terms of the bricks-and-mortar *jiayuan* of Beijing, the language of the personal dwelling as modulated by marketing practices introduced in particular from Japan, Taiwan and Hong Kong has flourished and influenced realtors throughout the city, and nationwide. The rapid development of commercial housing has led marketers to feed avariciously on the language of style and luxury common not only to the international marketplace but also drawn from China's dynastic past, in particular the Qing era. The new real-estate market would feed on the language and cultural tropes prepared by years of socialist era counter-propaganda; advertisers would promote their developments by speaking of the luxurious possibilities of a new *rus in urbe*. Even dwellers in high-rise urban areas would be seduced

by the promotion of tower blocks as vertical villages. For the upwardly mobile dweller, the vocabulary of the ultra-modern mixes with that of the imperial, the scholar-gentry and the late-dynastic wealthy merchants. The garden palaces and garden mansions of the rulers and the prosperous—which had themselves been the objects of mutual imitation, inspiration and competition—have provided a rich vein of terms and imaginative elements in the new commercial housing market. As a result, ‘estates’ (*zhuangyuan*, *zhaiyuan*), ‘villas’ (*bieshu*), ‘gardens’ (*huayuan*), ‘lavish demesnes’ (*haoyuan*) and even ‘palaces’ (*gong*) have proliferated. These new gardens will invariably foster different varieties of weed and flower, to be managed, uprooted, tended or obliterated by those who presume to tend the garden that is China (Figure 22).



**Figure 22.** ‘No Honking, Beijing’, by Lois Conner (Conner 2000, reproduced with permission).

People with the capital and imagination could now emulate the exclusive and reclusive lifestyles of the high-socialist power-holders who had secreted themselves in the gardens of old Beijing—the villas, mansions and imperial gardens—after they occupied the city. A new ‘garden of violence’ is cultivated in Beijing and China’s other cities, one not raked over by political movements and ideological whim, but rather one that is constantly fashioned and refashioned by the busy hand of a modernity that Maoism had resisted and modulated to suit the conditions of the country’s native soil and the vision of its gardener.

### Acknowledgments

I am grateful to Meaghan Morris and Caroline Turner for inviting me to participate in the ‘Asian Cities and Cultural Change’ conference, 1–2 July 2005—an Australian Research Council-funded symposium—at the Humanities Research Centre, The Australian National University. This essay is based on the paper I presented at that gathering. I would also like to thank Meaghan for her patience as I turned those notes into something publishable. My thanks, also, to Sang Ye for his many suggestions in regard to sources and for his guidance, as well as to Gloria Davies for her comments on the final draft. I am, as ever, indebted to Nora Chang of the Long Bow Group in Boston for helping me locate illustrative material.

### Notes

1. For more on this, see Issue Number 8 of the e-journal *China Heritage Quarterly* (2006), which takes as its focus the Garden of Perfect Brightness. My first encounters with Beijing gardens in the mid 1970s were,



- like so many others, frustrated as some of the most important garden parks were closed by the fiat of party rulers. Later, Ye Xiangzhen (Ling Zi), the daughter of the army leader and Politburo member Ye Jianying, would help me appreciate the role both of productive and of ornamental gardens in the lives of the party elite. She would share fruit with me from her father's orchard at party central's retreat at Yuquan Shan, northwest Beijing. During my years in Kyoto, Jamie Schwentker, who was studying Japanese garden design, introduced me to the intricacies and delights of that subject, one that has informed his own work in Los Angeles as he has styled gardens for Madonna, Rachel Welch and other entertainment luminaries.
2. See, for example, Mao (1956 [1977]: 267–288, esp. 268–269); also the discussions regarding Chinese modernity in Wang (1998: 14); as well as the interrogation of that piece by Davies (2007: 77–80).
  3. This was a party exhortation repeated in Mao's speeches and then written in his own hand as a slogan for an army brigade in 1943. See Mao (1943 [1966]: 866).
  4. For details of the transformation of the imperial precinct of Beijing, see Wu (2006: 18–19ff); and, Barmé (2008: chapters 1 and 7).
  5. The party fellow traveler Soong Ch'ing-ling (Song Qingling), widow of the 'father of the Republic' Sun Yat-sen, for example, was allocated part of the Qiye Fu (Mansion of the Seventh Prince, also known as 'Bei Fu', the 'northern mansion') on Hou Hai lake, the place where the last emperor, Aisin Gioro Puyi (Xuantong), was born. Guo Moruo, the party's leading cultural handmaiden, would live in the spacious courtyard compound near Qian Hai lake, previously part of the stables of Prince Gong's Mansion (see the following note).
  6. For details of the most famous of these, Prince Gong's Mansion (*Gong wangfu*), see Barmé (2006: 246–248).
  7. A description of these is given by Li Zhisui in his often unreliable memoir (Li 1994: 67–80).
  8. The expression 'a hundred schools contend' (*baijia zhengming*) dates back to the Warring States period; the 'hundred flowers [blossom]' (*baihua qi fang*) is a literary trope of more recent provenance. Mao combined the expressions in an inscription he wrote in 1951 for the newly established Chinese Theatre Research Institute. 'Weed out the old so that the new may flourish' (*tui chen chu xin*) was part of an inscription he wrote for the Beijing Opera (*Ping ju*) Research Institute of Yan'an in 1942.
  9. The draft outline of this speech formed the basis of 'The Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People (27 February 1957)' (Mao 1957 [1977]b: 388–395).
  10. In this context, it is fruitful to consider Michael Dutton's discussion of the political, as well as friends and enemies (Dutton 2005: 27ff).
  11. 'Blossoms of the Motherland' (*Zuguode huaduo*) was the name of a 1955 children's film about socialist Young Pioneers. Much of the action takes place in the garden-parks of Beijing. The generation of young people represented in the film went on to become the Red Guards of the Cultural Revolution era.
  12. Written a few months after his famous letter 'A single spark can start a prairie fire', the poem expresses a certain optimism for the future of the revolution. The relevant lines read: 'Man ages all too easily, not Nature:/ Year by year the Double Ninth returns./ On this Double Ninth,/ The yellow blooms on the battlefield smell sweeter.'
  13. Given the modern history of the chrysanthemum and its involvement with metaphors of death and utopia, it is worth noting that Zhang Yimou's 2006 film, *The Curse of the Golden Flower*, a story of imperial family intrigue and murder, uses the flower as its *leitmotif*.
  14. For a harrowing account of the effects of the Great Leap, both in the countryside, and the cities, see the oral history interviews by Sang Ye in Barmé (Sang 2007).
  15. For the texts and translations of three versions of what became the song 'The East is Red' (*Dongfang hong*), see 'the transformation of a love song' in the website for the film *Morning Sun* (Hinton *et al.* 2003) at [www.morningsun.org/east/index.html](http://www.morningsun.org/east/index.html).
  16. Mao was frequently celebrated as a savior, as well as being a provider of munificence. One example of this was the hysteria surrounding his making a present of mangoes to workers at the height of Cultural Revolution factional violence. This particular episode is the subject both of a heady culturo-political analysis (see Dutton 2004: 161–188), and of an exhibition by Freda Murck (Murck 2006).
  17. Yu Wen (lyrics) and Wang Shuangyin (score), 'Sailing the seas depends on the helmsman' (*Dahai hangxing kao duoshou*). For the Chinese original and a sung version of this song, see [www.morningsun.org/multimedia/music.html](http://www.morningsun.org/multimedia/music.html). A dramatic depiction of the relationship between the solar Mao and the sunflowers of China, see 'Dawn in the East', the opening scene of the song-and-dance extravaganza 'The East is Red' (*Dongfang hong*) at [www.morningsun.org/east/index.html](http://www.morningsun.org/east/index.html).
  18. Mao led his first peasant rebellion on 9 September 1927. It is known as the 'Autumn Harvest Uprising' (*Qiushou qiyi*). The saying 'to settle accounts/scores after the autumn [harvest]' (*qiuhou suanzhang*) was used frequently in the Mao era, usually to indicate that the overthrown landlords and bourgeoisie were biding their time so they could get even with the revolutionary masses.

19. *Suzhi* appeared, for example, as a feature of debates about racial strength and social promise long before this more recent iteration. In the mid-1930s, for example, following China's disastrous participation in the 1936 Berlin Olympics, Zhang Junjun wrote his *An examination of the quality of the Chinese race* (*Huazu suzhi zhi jiantao*) (Zhang 1944: 5–6). For a discussion of this, see Sun (2005: 135).
20. Børge Bakken has written of the rise of 'quality' or 'human quality' in Chinese socio-political debates since the 1980s (Bakken 2000: 59f). See also Anagnost (1997: chapter 3 and 2004: 189–208).

## References

- Anagnost, Ann (1997) *National Past-times: Narrative, Representation, and Power in Modern China*, Durham & London: Duke University Press.
- Anagnost, Ann (2004) 'The corporeal politics of quality (Suzhi)', *Public Culture* 16(2): 189–208.
- Barmé, Geremie R. (1999) *In the Red, on Contemporary Chinese Culture*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Barmé, Geremie R. (2002) 'Engines of revolution: car cultures in China'. In Peter Wollen and Joe Kerr (eds) *Autopia, Cars and Culture*, London: Reaktion Books, 177–190.
- Barmé, Geremie R. (2006) 'Prince Gong's folly'. In Claire Roberts and Geremie R. Barmé (eds) *The Great Wall of China*, Sydney: Powerhouse Publishing, 240–248.
- Barmé, Geremie R. (2007) 'Beijing reoriented, an Olympic undertaking'. Opening address of the Chinese Studies Association of Australia biennial conference, Brisbane, 27 June.
- Barmé, Geremie R. (2008) *The Forbidden City*, London: Profile Books/Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bauman, Zygmunt (1987) *Legislators and Interpreters: On Modernity, Post-modernity and Intellectuals*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bauman, Zygmunt (1989) *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bakken, Børge (2000) *The Exemplary Society: Human Improvement, Social Control, and the Dangers of Modernity in China*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bray, David (2005) *Social Space and Governance in Urban China: The Danwei System from Origins to Reform*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Carus, Paul and Suzuki, D.T. (trans.) (1904) 'The "Holy Edict" of K'ang-hi', *The Monist* XIV: 733–746.
- China Heritage Quarterly* (2006) 'Focus on the Garden of Perfect Brightness', issue 8, December, [www.china-heritagequarterly.org](http://www.china-heritagequarterly.org).
- China Heritage Quarterly* (2007) 'Focus on Princely Mansions (*wangfu*)', issue 12, December, [www.chinaheritagequarterly.org](http://www.chinaheritagequarterly.org).
- Clunas, Craig (1996) *Fruitful Sites: Garden Culture in Ming dynasty China*, Durham: Duke University Press.
- Dai, Qing (2007 [2008]) '1948: how peaceful was the liberation of Beijing?'. The 68th Morrison Lecture, The Australian National University, 5 September, carried in English and Chinese in *China Heritage Quarterly*, issue 14, June, [www.chinaheritagequarterly.org](http://www.chinaheritagequarterly.org)
- Davies, Gloria (2007) *Worrying About China: The Language of Chinese Critical Inquiry*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Dikötter, Frank (1992) *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Dikötter, Frank (1999) *Imperfect Conceptions: Medical Knowledge, Birth Defects, and Eugenics in China*, London: Hurst & Co.
- Dutton, Michael (2004) 'Mango Mao: inflections of the sacred', *Public Culture* 16(2): 161–188.
- Dutton, Michael (2005) *Policing Chinese Politics: A History*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- E'ertai, Zhang Tingyu et al. (eds.) (1987) 'Shuji er, Shengxun, Shengyu guangxun yibu', *Guochao gongshi*, Beijing: Beijing guji chubanshe, 511.
- Gao, Hua (2005) '1960 "Chixu Yuejin" zhongde Jiangsusheng renmin gongshe yundong', posted online on 23 February, [www.peacehall.com/news/gb/z\\_special/2005/02/200502231811.shtml](http://www.peacehall.com/news/gb/z_special/2005/02/200502231811.shtml).
- Hinton, Carma, Barmé, Geremie R. and Gordon, Richard (dir.) (2003) *Morning Sun*, Boston: Longbow Group, [www.morningsun.org](http://www.morningsun.org)
- Holquist, Peter (1997) "'Information is the alpha and omega of our work": Bolshevik surveillance in its pan-European context', *The Journal of Modern History* 69(3), September: 415–450.
- Jay, Martin (2004) 'No state of grace: violence in the garden', 2004 Power Lecture in Contemporary Visual Culture, Power Institute, Sydney, 12 August.
- Li, Yinqiao et al. (1992) *Hongse jingwei*, Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 138–139.
- Li, Zhisui (1994) *The Private Life of Chairman Mao, the Memoirs of Mao's Personal Physician Dr. Li Shisui*, Tai Hung-chao with Anne F. Thurston (trans.), New York: Random House.

- Li, Zhuowei (2005) 'Mao zhuxide Juxiang shuwu—Li Yingqiao tongzhi jiangshu Zhongnanhai shenghuo', *Fenghuang weishi congkan* 2005(1): 14.
- Mao, Zedong (1929 [1976]) 'The double ninth—to the tune of *Tsai Sang Tzu*, October 1929', *Poems*, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 6.
- Mao, Zedong (1930 [1968]) 'Xingxing zhi huo keyi liao yuan (1930 nian 1 yue 5 ri)', *Mao Zedong xuanji vol. 1*, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 94–104.
- Mao, Zedong (1935) 'Comments addressed to Wang Shoudao et al.' 'Sha tou buxiang ge jiucai', October, [www.pladaily.com.cn/item/mzd/zzndys/61.htm](http://www.pladaily.com.cn/item/mzd/zzndys/61.htm).
- Mao, Zedong (1938 [1993]) 'Zai Lu Xun yishu xueyuande jianghua (1938 nian 4 yue 28 ri)', *Mao Zedong wenji vol. 2*, Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 87.
- Mao, Zedong (1943 [1966]) 'Kaizhan genjudide jianzu, shengchan he yongzheng aimin yundong (1943 nian 10 yue 1 ri)', *Mao Zedong xuanji vol. 3*, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 866.
- Mao, Zedong (1956 [1977]) 'On the ten great relationships (5 March 1956)' 'Lun shi daguanxi', *Mao Zedong xuanji vol. 5*, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 267–288.
- Mao, Zedong (1957 [1977]a) 'Datui zichanjieji youpaide jingong (1957 nian 7 yue 9 ri)', *Mao Zedong xuanji vol. 5*, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 447.
- Mao, Zedong (1957 [1977]b) 'The correct handling of contradictions among the people (27 February 1957)' 'Guanyu zhengque chuli renmin neibu maodunde wenti', *Mao Zedong xuanji vol. 5*, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 363–402.
- Mao, Zedong (1958) 'Introducing a co-operative (15 April 1958)' 'Jieshao yige hezuoshe', *Hongqi zazhi* 1(1).
- Mao, Zedong (1959 [1976]a) 'Ascent of Lushan—a *lü shih*, July 1, 1959', *Poems*, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 37.
- Mao, Zedong (1959 [1976]b) 'Shaoshan revisited—a *lü shih*, June 1959', *Poems*, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 36.
- Murck, Freda (2006) 'Chairman Mao's golden mangoes'. Exhibition in Asia Gallery Spencer Museum of Art, from 19 September.
- Quinggui, Jie, Wang, Ji, Dong, Gui, Zhu, Yuanrui, Peng and Yun, Ji (1994) *Guochao gongshi xubian*, Beijing: Beijing guji chubanshe, 557–568.
- Riley, Robert B. (1990) 'Flowers, power and sex'. In Robert B. Riley and Randolph T. Hester, Jr. (eds) *The Meaning of Gardens: Idea, Place and Action*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Sang, Ye (2007) Interviews by. In Geremie R. Barmé (ed.) 'New years past: other spring festivals', 21 February, [www.danwei.org/guest\\_contributor/new\\_years\\_past\\_other\\_spring\\_fe\\_1.php](http://www.danwei.org/guest_contributor/new_years_past_other_spring_fe_1.php).
- Sima, Qian (1973) 'Biography of Wendi (Liu Heng)' 'Xiao Wendi benji', *Records of the Grand Historian (Shi ji) vol. 2*, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju.
- Sun, Longji (Lung-kee Sun) (2005) *Lishixuejiade jingxian—lishi xinli wenji*, Hong Kong: Huaqianshu chubanyouxian gongsi, 135.
- Sun, Yuming (2003) *Redology: 1954 (Hongxue: 1954)*, Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe.
- Teiwes, Frederick C. and Sun, Warren (2007) *The End of the Maoist Era: Chinese Politics During the Twilight of the Cultural Revolution, 1972–1976*, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.
- Tuan, Yi-fu (1984) *Dominance and Affection, the Making of Pets*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Wang, Hui (1998) 'Contemporary Chinese thought and the question of modernity', Rebecca E. Karl (trans.), *Social Text* 55(Summer): 9–44.
- Weiner, Amir (1999) 'Nature, nurture, and memory in a socialist utopia: delineating the Soviet socio-ethnic body in the age of socialism', *The American Historical Review* 104(4), October: 1114–1155.
- Wu, Liangdeng (2002) 'Wo yanzhongde Mao Zedong'. In Zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi (ed.) *Jinian Mao Zedong danchen 110 zhounian*, Beijing: Dangshi chubanshe, 117.
- Wu, Hung (2006) *Remaking Beijing: Tiananmen Square and the Creation of a Political Space*, London: Reaktion Books.
- Zhang, Junjun (1944) *An Examination of the Quality of the Chinese Race (Huazu suzhi zhi jiantao)*, Chongqing: Shangwu yinshuguan.
- Zhang, Yaoming (ed.) (2004) *Jinian Deng Xiaoping danchen 100 zhounian*, digested in *Xinhua wenzhai banyuekan* 8: 23.
- Zhonggong dangshi cankao ziliao* Vol. 6, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 491–492.

## Photo references

- Architectural digest (Jianzhu xuebao)* (1974) Issue 6: back cover.
- Zhong Nan Hai, Beijing—Political Centre of a Country of One Billion* (1981) Beijing: China Pictorial.

- Conner, Lois (2000) *China: the Photographs of Lois Conner*, New York: Calloway, 87. Reproduced with permission.
- Feng, Zikai (1996) *Husheng huaji quanji* vol. 3, Fujian Putian Guanhuasi.
- Liang Sicheng wenji (1986 [2003]) Vol. 4, reproduced in Wang Jun's *Recording the City (Cheng ji)*, Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 110.
- People's Pictorial (*Renmin huabao*) (1976) Issue 11: 31.
- Renmin huabao* (1976a) Issue 6: 20.
- Renmin huabao* (1976b) Issue 11: 36.
- Renmin huabao* (1977a) Issue 2-3: 5.
- Renmin huabao* (1977b) Issue 3: back cover.
- Renmin huabao* (1977c) Issue 12: 5.
- The East is Red (Dongfang hong)* (1964) Film still, Boston: Long Bow Archive, <http://www.morningsun.org/east/index.html>.

### Special terms

- bai* 白
- baihua qifang, baijia zhengming* 百花齊放, 百家爭鳴
- bange Hongxuejia* 半個紅學家
- Beijing zhi chun* 北京之春
- Beiping 北平
- bieshu* 別墅
- Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹
- chengshi gongshe* 城市公社
- chixu Yuejin* 持續躍進
- Cixi 慈禧
- Daguan Yuan* 大觀園
- dantwei* 單位
- da shengchan* 大生產
- Diaoyu Tai 釣魚台
- ducao* 毒草
- fengyu tongzhou, chongjian jiayuan* 風雨同舟, 重建家園
- Fengze Yuan 豐澤園
- Fragrant Mountains Park 香山公園
- Fu Zuoyi 傅作義
- gao zhan yuan zhu* 高瞻遠矚
- gong* 宮
- gongguan* 公關
- gongyoude jiayuan* 共有的家園
- guojia* 國家
- haoyuan* 豪園
- Hongloumeng* 紅樓夢 / 石頭記
- Hongxue* 紅學
- huayuan* 花園
- Jia 賈
- Jiang Qing 江青
- jiayuan* 家園
- jindi* 禁地
- Jingshan Park 景山公園
- jingshen wenming* 精神文明
- jiuxing* 救星
- Juxiang Shuwu 菊香書屋
- Kangxi 康熙
- Li Zicheng 李自成
- Lu Xun Arts Academy 魯迅藝術學院
- nongcun baowei chengshi* 農村包圍城市
- Ping ju* 平劇
- Qianlong 乾隆
- qiong* 窮
- quan nong* 勸農
- Record of the Land of Peach Blossoms 桃花源記
- renmin gongshe hao* 人民公社好
- Sailing the Seas Depends on the Helmsman 大海航行靠舵手
- commune of Dazhai in Xiyang County, Shaanxi province 陝西省昔陽縣大寨人民公社
- Shaoshan 韶山
- Sheji Tan 社稷壇
- shengyu* 聖諭
- shequ* 社區
- Shuangqing Villa 雙清別墅
- suzhi* 素質
- Tao Yuanming 陶淵明
- tongzhou gongji, chongjian meihao jiayuan* 同舟共濟, 重建美好家園
- tui chen chu xin* 推陳出新
- wang ben* 忘本
- wangfu* 王府
- xianghua* 香花
- Xiannong Tan 先農壇
- xuanchuan* 宣傳
- xue Dazhai* 學大寨
- Yan'an 延安
- yan geng* 演耕

Yinian Tang 頤年堂  
Yuanming Yuan 圓明園  
za huapen'r, zhong shucai 砸花盆兒, 種蔬菜  
zhaiyuan 宅園  
Zhongnan Hai 中南海  
zhong nongsang 重農桑  
zhong nong sang yi zu yi shi 重農桑以足衣食

Zhongshan Park 中山公園  
zhuangyuan 莊園  
ziji dong shou, feng yi zu shi 自己動手, 豐衣足食  
ziliudi 自留地  
zong shejishi 總設計師

### Author's biography

Geremie R. Barmé is professor of Chinese history in the Division of Pacific and Asian History, Research School of Pacific & Asian Studies, The Australian National University. His research work in Chinese culture and intellectual history has been interspersed with film, website and writing projects in the United States, China and Hong Kong. Professor Barmé's research interests include twentieth century Chinese intellectual and cultural history; contemporary Chinese cultural and intellectual debates; modern historiography; Ming-Qing literature and aesthetics; Cultural Revolution history (1950s–1970s) and Beijing, its history and reconstruction. His recent publications include: *In the Red: On Contemporary Chinese Culture* (1999); *An Artistic Exile: A life of Feng Zikai (1898-1975)* (2002); *China Candid: The People on the People's Republic* (by Sang Ye, ed. with Miriam Lang), *The Great Wall of China* (2006, ed. with Claire Roberts) and *The Forbidden City* (2008). He also worked on the documentary *Morning Sun* (2003, co-directed and co-produced with Carma Hinton and Richard Gordon; co-written with Carma Hinton).

**Contact address:** Research School of Pacific & Asian Studies, Australian National University, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, Australia 0200.