

## **TRANSPLANTED PECULIARITY: THE GARDEN OF THE MASTER OF THE FISHING NETS**

*DUNCAN CAMPBELL*<sup>1</sup>  
*Victoria University of Wellington*

Magnolia petals fall, pale, fragrant, brown,  
Resting on moss within a square of white;  
Courtyard of quietness, of intimate stone  
And latticed shadow. Outside, low at night,  
Three moons—of water, mirror, sky—define  
Pine and old cypress struggling against the stars,  
And jasmine and gardenia combine  
Their scent with that of closed magnolias.  
(Vikram Seth, 'The Master-of-Nets Garden' [1981])<sup>2</sup>

Our King at Kew & the Emperor of China at Jehol solace themselves  
under the shade of the same trees & admire the elegance of many of  
the same flowers in their respective gardens. (Joseph Banks, Letter to  
Sir George Staunton, January, 1796)<sup>3</sup>

---

I am grateful to James Beattie for encouraging me to contribute this paper to his project, and to my colleague Huang Xiaoming 黃小明 for mentioning that it is to the Garden of the Master of the Fishing Nets (Wangshiyuan 網師園, hereafter, Master of the Nets), in particular, that he returns each time he finds himself back at home in Suzhou, best enjoyed, he believes, during the course of a light spring shower. As so often in the past, I am also grateful to Brian Moloughney for his close reading of various earlier versions of this paper. Maggie Keswick, in the first section ('Western Reactions') of her *The Chinese Garden: History, Art and Architecture*, Cambridge, Mass, 2003, 24-37, introduces her treatment of the topic with a delightful verbal tour of Master of the Nets, accompanied by photographs and a plan (25) of the garden as it is today. Unless otherwise noted, all translations that follow are my own.

<sup>1</sup> Duncan Campbell (Duncan.Campbell@vuw.ac.nz) teaches Chinese language and literature, modern and classical, in the School of Asian and European Languages and Cultures of Victoria University of Wellington. His research focuses on the literary and material culture of the late imperial period in China.

<sup>2</sup> *The Collected Poems*, New Delhi, 1990, 80.

<sup>3</sup> In Ray Desmond, *Kew: The History of the Royal Botanic Gardens*, London, 1995, 98.

Building a garden is akin to writing an essay or composing a poem in that it can only be called well designed to the extent that its twists and turns accord to a pattern, that its beginning and end respond to each other, and that it avoids, above all else, both the supererogatory and the disorderly. Once the garden is completed, it can only be called famous to the extent to which its Master is fit to the task and its site is appropriate to the design, and neither the simpleton nor the vulgar are ever permitted a foothold within its walls. (造園如作詩文必使曲折有法前後呼應最忌堆砌最忌錯雜方稱佳構園既成矣而又要主人之相配位置之得宜不可使庸夫俗子駐足其中方稱名園) (Qian Yong 錢泳, 1759-1844, 'Zaoyuan' 造園 [On Building Gardens])<sup>4</sup>

'It is indeed true that novelty and variety may both be attained by transplanting the peculiarities of one country to another', declared William Chambers (1723-96) in his *A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (1772).<sup>5</sup> Such has been the way that the world has changed shape in the past 200 years, however, that to some people the particular mode of transplanted peculiarity Chambers was especially concerned with, 'The Chinese Garden', can now engender the opposite effect—something by way of a renewed sense of the familiar. Becoming weary on a visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York during her tour of the United States of America in the winter of 1981, in the same year that the Indian novelist Vikram Seth had found himself in the gardens of the southern Chinese city of Suzhou 蘇州, the elderly Chinese novelist Ding Ling 丁玲 (Jiang Bingzhi 蔣冰之; 1904-1986), retreated to the museum's Chinese Garden Court, accompanied by the expatriate novelist Nieh Hua-ling 聶華苓 (1926-):

<sup>4</sup> Qian Yong, *Luyuan conghua* 履園叢話 [Conversations from Within Footsteps Garden] (1838; rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, n.d.), 2:545.

<sup>5</sup> *A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening*, 11<sup>th</sup> edn., Dublin, 1773, 13. On Chambers, see John Harris, ed., *Sir William Chambers: Knight of the Polar Star*, University Park & London, 1970; R. C. Bald, 'Sir William Chambers and the Chinese Garden', in Julia Ching and Willard G. Oxtoby, eds., *Discovering China: European Interpretations in the Enlightenment*, Rochester, 1992, 142-75; and David Porter. 'Beyond the Bounds of Truth: Cultural Translation and William Chambers's Chinese Garden', *Mosaic*, 37, 2 (2004), 41-58. In an attempt to move beyond the three familiar terms in which cross-cultural encounters are usually understood (imaginary projection, imitation and influence), Porter reads Chambers's *Dissertation* 'not as a more-or-less accurate rendering of 'authentic' Chinese practice than as a narrative mapping of the lived experience of Chinese difference' (51) and suggests that: 'If the Chinese garden, for Chambers, embodies the essence of his impressions of China in its genius, variety, and wondrous indecipherability, the dream of transforming the kingdom into a garden represents the transposition of an enthralling imaginative response to foreignness back to his more immediate surroundings. The dream is Chinese not in its specific content, in other words, but in the derivation of its aesthetic vision from a subjective confrontation with Chinese difference' (56).

As soon as we were past the screen, a Suzhou garden appeared before our eyes, like a Chinese painting—in its entirety, the very embodiment of simple elegance and tranquility . . . . It was as if I was seeing the garden art of our motherland for the first time, so dignified, so beautiful in an understated and harmonious manner. We stood transfixed within the garden, neither worshipping its splendour nor surprised by its exquisiteness, simply intoxicated by the carefree and joyous atmosphere of its capacious interior.<sup>6</sup>

However essentialised and anachronistic Ding Ling's response to this garden seems, her identification of its provenance was nonetheless precise.<sup>7</sup> In the 1970s when Chen Congzhou 陳從周 (1918-2000), the late doyen of contemporary Chinese garden historians, was consulted about the best design for the Metropolitan's proposed Astor Court Chinese garden, he suggested that one particular section of one particular Suzhou garden, the Late Spring Abode (Dianchunyi 殿春簃) in the western section of Master of the Nets, be chosen for recreation in New York.<sup>8</sup> Chen Congzhou, whose earliest major publication was the first post-'49 monograph on the gardens of Suzhou,<sup>9</sup> was especially familiar with Master of the Nets, having been a frequent visitor to

---

<sup>6</sup> 'Niuyue de Suzhou tingyuan' 紐約的蘇州亭園 [New York's Suzhou Garden], in Wang Zongshi 王宗拭, ed., *Wo shuo Suzhou* 我說蘇州 [Speaking of Suzhou], Suzhou, 1997, 127-28.

<sup>7</sup> In 'Beyond Suzhou: Region and Memory in the Gardens of Sichuan', *The Art Bulletin*, 86, 2 (2004), 207-29, an article occasioned by the proposal to build a Sichuan-style garden in Seattle, Jerome Silbergeld discusses the extent to which both Western and Chinese scholarship on gardens has been 'focused almost exclusively on two geographic regions: the private scholar gardens centered around Suzhou and the grand imperial gardens of Beijing' (214). In keeping with the cultural and economic importance of the city of Suzhou, we are now excellently served in terms of the English language scholarship on its history, for which, see F. W. Mote, 'A Millennium of Chinese Urban History: Form, Time, and Space Concepts in Soochow', *Rice University Studies*, 59, 4 (1973), 35-65; Michael Marmé, 'Heaven on Earth: The Rise of Suzhou, 1127-1550', and Paolo Santangelo, 'Urban Society in Late Imperial Suzhou', both in Linda Cooke Johnson, ed., *Cities of Jiangnan in Late Imperial China*, Albany, 1993, 17-45 and 81-116 respectively; Yinong Xu, *The Chinese City in Space and Time: The Development of Urban Form in Suzhou*, Honolulu, 2000; and, most recently, Michael Marmé, *Suzhou: Where the Goods of All the Provinces Converge*, Stanford, 2005.

<sup>8</sup> For an account of the process of this 'transplantation', see Alfreda Murck and Wen Fong, 'A Chinese Garden Court: The Astor Court at the Metropolitan Museum of Art', *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, 38, 3 (1980-81), 2-64.

<sup>9</sup> *Suzhou yuanlin* 蘇州園林 [The Gardens of Suzhou], Shanghai, 1956. For Chen's later account of the writing of this book, see his 'Wode diyiben shu—*Suzhou yuanlin*' 我的第一本書—蘇州園林 [My First Book—The Gardens of Suzhou], in *Yuanlin qingyi* 園林清議 [Garden Discourses], Nanjing, 2005, 298-99. For an insightful discussion of aspects of Chen's work, with a particular focus on this book, see Stanislaus Fung, 'Longing and Belonging in Chinese Garden History', in Michel Conan, ed., *Perspectives on Garden Histories*, Washington, D.C., 1999, 205-19.

the garden during the 1930s. Indeed, after the garden had been made over to the state in 1950 and, occupied for a while by the military, had fallen into such a state of dilapidation that it was threatened with conversion into a factory, it had been Chen Congzhou who had argued for the restoration of the garden so that it could be opened to the general public, as eventually happened in 1958.<sup>10</sup> Ignoring the earlier eighteenth-century English craze for ‘The Chinese Garden’,<sup>11</sup> Chen Congzhou was to say of the completion of the replica Late Spring Abode in New York that it: ‘inaugurated the project of the export of the classical Chinese garden and served to promote the ever deepening trend towards the intermingling of the garden cultures of China and the rest of the world’.<sup>12</sup>

The most important traditional account of Master of the Nets is that written by the eminent Qing dynasty (1644-1911) scholar and official Qian Daxin 錢大昕 (1728-1804, figure 1), entitled: ‘Wangshiyuan ji’ 網師園記 [A Record of the Garden of the Master of the Fishing Nets] (hereafter, ‘Master of the Nets’) and dated 1795, translated below.<sup>13</sup> Although not himself a native of Suzhou, Qian Daxin’s associations with the town and, it seems, the garden, were of long-standing. Born in Jiading County (present-day Shanghai), at the age of twenty-one Qian Daxin had been chosen to study at the Purple Light Academy (Ziyang shuyuan 紫陽書院) in Suzhou, established in 1713 by Zhang Boxing 張伯行 (1652-1725; ECCP, 51-52). In

<sup>10</sup> For this, see Shao Zhong 邵忠, ‘Chongxiu wangshiyuan ji’ 重修網師園記 [A Record of the Restoration of the Garden of the Master of the Fishing Nets], in Shao Zhong and Li Jin 李瑾, eds., *Suzhou lidai mingyuan ji: Suzhou yuanlin chongxiu ji* 蘇州曆代名園記：蘇州園林重修記 [Records of the Famous Gardens of Suzhou Down Through the Ages: Records of the Restoration of the Gardens of Suzhou], Beijing, 2004, 325.

<sup>11</sup> On which, see Ch’en Shou-yi, ‘The Chinese Garden in Eighteenth-Century England’, *T’ien Hsia Monthly*, 2 (1936), 321-39; this essay has subsequently been republished, in Adrian Hsia, ed., *The Vision of China in the English Literature of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, Hong Kong, 1998, 339-55.

<sup>12</sup> Chen Congzhou, *Zhongguo yuanlin jianshang cidian* 中國園林鑒賞辭典 [A Dictionary for the Appreciation of the Gardens of China], Shanghai, 2001, 37. Keswick, however, concludes the ‘Western Reactions’ section of her book on the following note: ‘Indeed, in the end, obscure hills and valleys in Yunnan and Sichuan did more to transform the horticultural traditions of the West than the designs of all the great pleasure gardens of China—and their underlying philosophy—put together’ (*The Chinese Garden: History, Art and Architecture*, 37). Addressing the issue of the creation of ‘authentic’ Chinese gardens elsewhere, Craig Clunas, *Fruitful Sites: Garden Culture in Ming Dynasty China*, Durham, N.C., 1996, comments: ‘From the National Museum, Taipei, to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, a ‘Chinese garden’ is now a key site of ‘Chineseness’, replacing in America at least the temple interiors that fulfilled the same role sixty or seventy years ago’ (12).

<sup>13</sup> On Qian Daxin (zi Xiaozheng 曉徵, Jizhi 及之; hao Xinmei 辛楣, Zhuting 竹汀), see the short English-language biography of him (by Tu Lien-che) in A. W. Hummel, ed., *Eminent Chinese of the Ch’ing Period (1644-1912)*, (hereafter, ECCP), Washington, D.C., 1943, 152-55.

1789, after a full and largely successful official career, Qian was appointed Director of this Academy and he remained there until his death, during which time he is reported as having taught over 2000 students, including, notably, Pan Shien 潘世恩 (1770-1854; ECCP, 607-8), Li Rui 李銳 (1765-1814) and Tao Liang 陶樑 (1772-1857). The Academy was sited behind the Pavilion for Revering the Canon 尊經閣 and within the Prefectural School in the south of the city, just a short walk away from Master of the Nets, and one can assume from his account of the garden that Qian spent many hours there. One of Qian Daxin's sons-in-law and scholarly collaborators was named Qu Zhongrong 瞿中溶 (1769-1842); I am unsure whether he was related to Qu Yuancun 瞿遠村 (1741-1808), the owner of the garden during Qian's time in Suzhou, also a native of Jiading County and described in all the sources as being a 'rich merchant' (*fushang* 富商).

The history of this site, as a garden, as found in part narrated in Qian Daxin's record, is lengthy but full of lacunae, characterised, as far as can now be known, by frequent changes of both ownership and name, and by the unceasing and asymmetrical processes of inevitable deterioration and fitful repair.<sup>14</sup> We know the name that was given it by its putative first owner during the Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279), 'Yuyin' 漁隱 [Fisherman's Retreat], but although we know also that the garden then contained a remarkable private library and that it could be entered by boat by way of Rape-turnip Stream (Fengxi 葑溪), we have no description of the garden itself.

The various associations of the image of the fisherman of the originally-named garden—that quintessential symbol of the wisdom and rectitude of the recluse—are returned to throughout its history. They are invoked, for instance, in its present name, first given it by Song Zongyuan 宋宗元 (1710-79) when he restored the garden sometime during the 1760s and embodied in the net-like lattice work of the windows of the garden as it is today. It is from this period too, the second phase of the development of the garden, that it begins to acquire the literary representations so critical to its lasting reputation. One such account, entitled 'Wangshiyuan shuo' 網師園說 [An Explanation of the Garden of the Master of the Fishing Nets] and written by Song's brother-in-law, Peng Qifeng 彭啟豐 (1701-84), informs us that the garden was designed in order that Song could retire from office and care for his elderly mother but that: 'Once she had died and he had completed his

---

<sup>14</sup> Apart from the traditional sources specifically cited below, this account of the garden is based on the following works: Tong Jun 童寯, *Jiangnan yuanlin zhi* 江南園林志 [A Record of the Gardens of Jiangnan], 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Beijing, 1984; Chen Congzhou, ed., *Zhongguo yuanlin jianshang cidian*; and Dai Qingyu 戴慶鈺, ed., *Wangshiyuan* 網師園 [The Garden of the Master of the Fishing Nets], Suzhou, 1998.

mourning period, he returned to the capital, to be appointed to the Tianjin Circuit; thus ensnared again in the conduct of the Emperor's affairs, he became neglectful of the joys of field and garden (田園之樂荒矣)!<sup>15</sup> It is also from this period, apparently, that the garden begins to acquire that other vital form of representation, the pictorial, as we can see from the account of the garden by another frequent visitor, the eminent official and poet Shen Deqian's 沈德潛 (1673-1769) 'Wangshiyuan tuji' 網師園圖記 [Record of the Painting of the Garden of the Master of the Fishing Nets].<sup>16</sup> Although the painting commissioned by Song Zongyuan, as noted in this record, appears not to have survived, the record itself provides us with a glimpse of both the garden itself and its Master:

Before he had reached his fiftieth year, however, because the age of his mother weighed upon his mind, he drifted home. Sometime earlier, whilst he was still serving in office, he had ordered his family to build chambers and construct halls on the site of the Potage of the Master of the Fishing Nets of old. With its tower and its belvedere, its terraces and its pavilion, its pool and embankment and pond and barge, the site was now named Retreat of the Master of the Garden of the Fishing Nets (Wangshi xiaozhu 網師小筑) and poems were composed about its Twelve Scenes (*shier jing* 十二景), all in readiness for the banqueting and entertainment of his mother. Now, finally, reality tallied with his fondest wishes, and once he had returned home he would spend his days 'strolling the terraces and plucking the orchids' (*xungai cai lan* 循陔采蘭)<sup>17</sup> and crossing the waves to trap the carp (*lingbo bu li* 凌波捕鯉), all in order to provide for his mother's morning meals and evening suppers. Whenever the day happened to dawn bright and clear, he would accompany her to Fishing Studio, and the two of them, she leaning upon her staff, would circumambulate the twisting paths to their mutual enjoyment. Occasionally he would summon his good friends to a banquet of wine and poetry.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Peng Qifeng, 'Wangshiyuan shuo', in Shao Zhong and Li Jin, eds, *Suzhou lidai mingyuan ji: Suzhou yuanlin chongxiu ji*, 194.

<sup>16</sup> On Shen Deqian's literary and official achievements, see ECCP, 645-46. Shen was posthumously disgraced by the Qianlong emperor (r. 1736-96) for having written a biography of Xu Shukui 徐述夔 whose poetry collection was held to contain 'seditious utterances'.

<sup>17</sup> A reference to one of the six songs (entitled 'Nangai' 南陔) traditionally believed to have been lost from the *Shi jing* 詩經 [Book of Songs]; Legge provides the following note: 'According to "the Little Preface," the subject of the *Nan-kae* was—"Filial sons admonishing one another on the duty of supporting their parents", for which see, James Legge, trans., *The Chinese Classics: The She King or The Book of Poetry*, 1871; rpt., vol. 4, Hong Kong, 1960, 267.

<sup>18</sup> Shen Deqian, 'Wangshiyuan tuji', in Shao Zhong and Li Jin, eds., *Suzhou lidai mingyuan ji: Suzhou yuanlin chongxiu ji*, 197.

Another visitor to the garden was the local man-of-letters Qian Yong 錢泳 (1759-1844), author of the third epigraph to this paper, and he offers the following glimpse into the garden:

Qu's Garden 瞿園: Qu's Garden occupies the former site of Master Song's 宋氏 Garden of the Master of the Fishing Nets, as expanded by Qu Yuancun 瞿遠村 of Jiading County, being only several dozen paces away to the east from the old mansion of Shen Deqian 沈德潛, the former Chief Minister of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices. During the 4<sup>th</sup> month of the *wuyin* year of the reign of the Jiaqing Emperor [1818], I visited the garden along with Fan Laizong 范來宗 [Metropolitan Graduate of 1775], Pan Yijun 潘弈雋 [1740-1830], and Wu Xionggang 吳熊光 [1750-1833] in order to view the blooming herbaceous peonies.<sup>19</sup> So splendid proved the flowers that they could

---

<sup>19</sup> The 'Shaoyao' 芍藥 (*Paeonia albiflora*). For an authoritative traditional treatment of this flower, see Chen Haozi 陳淏子, *Huajing* 花鏡 [A Mirror of Flowers] (1688; rpt. Beijing: Nongye chubanshe, 1962), 305-10, wherein he states: 'Only those that grow in Yangzhou can be considered the best varieties'. See also, Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China: Volume VI: i: Biology and Biological Technology: Part 1: Botany*, Cambridge, 1986, 394-409. Recounting his attendance at a 'garden-party given by Prince Pu-Ru in April, 1934' in Peking, Osbert Sitwell provides the following insight into the sort of occasion spoken of above: 'The gardens seemed immense, as we got out of our rickshaws, and began to walk. Inside the boundaries of their walls, crowned with yellow tiles, were groves of old cypresses, the frond-like arrangement of their leaves lying upon the air as though they were layers of blue-green smoke, there were eighteenth-century water-gardens, now dry but full of wild flowers, and there were sunk gardens, wherein flourished, with gnarled, rough trunks, the crooked and ancient fruit trees which constituted the chief pride of their owner . . . . T]he guests, after greeting their host and hostess, passed on, beyond the pavilions, towards the orchards. Perhaps they could scarcely be termed orchards. Because the trees, being grown for their blossom rather than their fruit, were irregularly dispersed, and were fewer to the given area than is our custom. Bent, contorted with age, as the old men who were now on their way to inspect them, they must have been planted some two centuries before . . . . Perfect in their balance and grotesque pose, some inclined, at the precise angle best to display their unexpected and singular grace, while one tree, even, lay on its side, and blossomed on the ground. Slowly, painfully, the old men hobbled along the crooked, paved paths, that zig-zagged to these trees. When they reached them they were conducted up small flights of stone steps, the tops of which were level with the tops of the trees, and so fashioned that, saving where the steps showed, they seemed natural rocks that had cropped up or had fallen from the sky. These flights, indeed, constitute a feature of Chinese gardens, and are thus placed near flowering trees so that the connoisseur can obtain a perfect view of the blossoms . . . . In consequence, the old gentlemen persevered—for it was difficult for them to ascend these crags . . . . Once there, they would remain a long time, matching in their minds the complexion and fragrance of the blossom of previous years with that before them. Then, after the general examination of the crop came the more intimate tallying of one branch, one flower, one bud, with another, and finally it was necessary once more to consider the entire grouping and design . . . . Critical appreciation of this high order took time', for which, see his 'Old Worlds for New', *Life and Letters Today*, 33 (April, 1942), 19-31.

rival those of the Five Foot Tower (Chiwulou 尺五樓) of Yangzhou. Fan Laizong wrote a poem on the occasion that included the couplet:

“A flurry of carriages of those come here to view the flowers,  
Who now, one asks, bothers to visit the Chief Minister’s former  
home?”

The garden has now reverted to a Master Wu 吳氏 of Tiandu.<sup>20</sup>

In brief, the life of the garden after Qu Yuancun’s death was as marked by frequent changes of ownership and design (and occasionally, of name) as had been the case previously. By 1818, as noted by Qian Yong above, the garden had been acquired by Wu Jiadao 吳嘉道; fifty years later, it was in the possession of Li Hongyi 李鴻裔 (1831-1885) and had been renamed Sudonglin 蘇東鄰 [Neighbouring Su in the East], in reference to the first owner of another famous nearby garden. Another fifty years later, in 1907, the garden was acquired by the Bannerman Dagui 達桂 (b. 1860). A decade later again and it was bought by the ‘Mukden Tiger’, General Zhang Zuolin 張作霖 (1873-1928), to present as a gift to his teacher, Zhang Xiluan 張錫鑾 (1843-1922), although he was never to live there. During the 1930s, the garden and its attached residence was rented out to Ye Gongchuo 葉恭綽 (1881-1968), the calligrapher and educator, and bore the name Garden of Idleness (Yiyuan 逸園). Living there too, for several years before the encroaching war forced them to flee, were the famous painter of tigers, Zhang Shanzi 張善孖, and his even more famous artist brother, Chang Dai-chien (Zhang Daqian) 張大千 (1899-1983),<sup>21</sup> along with their pet tiger. In 1940, the garden was acquired by its last private owner, the eminent collector He Cheng 何澄 (1880-1946), before, finally, when his descendants proved unable to maintain the property, it was made over into the care of the municipal authorities.

Quite apart from its account of the history of Master of the Nets and the description of its various features, Qian Daxin’s ‘Master of the Nets’ is both statement of and, in itself, embodies the extent to which, just as the garden in China has been the site of quite extraordinary expenditures of resources by scholar, rich merchant and emperor alike down through the ages, the garden has also occasioned, on the part of China’s scholar-gentry elite

<sup>20</sup> Qian Yong, *Luyuan conghua*, 2: 526.

<sup>21</sup> On whom see, for instance, *Lion Among Painters: Chinese Master: Chang Dai Chien*, Sydney, 1998.



and in a ‘mutually generating’ manner,<sup>22</sup> an equally remarkably rich tradition of literary and artistic representations of the gardens, both real and imaginary. Discussing the engagement of the famous Ming dynasty (1368-1644) painter and calligrapher Wen Zhengming 文徵明 (1470-1559)<sup>23</sup> with another of Suzhou’s famous gardens, the Garden of the Artless Official (Zhuozhengyuan 拙政園), Qian Yong captures something of this understanding of the relationship between owner, text and garden:

I would argue that the decay and flourishing of a garden is allied to that of its owner. If the person is remembered, then even though it [i.e. the garden] decays it will rise again. If the person is not commemorated, then even though it flourishes it will eventually decay. The literary productions of brush and ink are more lasting than are gardens, since the former cannot decay away. Now when I study Wen Zhenming’s paintings, read his record and his poems, I suddenly see the splendours of the towers and terraces, the flowers and trees, and more than three hundred years of decay and restoration, recovery and loss, scattered like cloud and blown by the wind, seems to appear before my astonished eyes.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> This expression is that of Stanislaus Fung, ‘Word and Garden in Chinese Essays of the Ming Dynasty: Notes on Matters of Approach’, *Interfaces: Image, Texte, Language*, 11-12 (1997), 77-90. Traditionally, this ideal circumstance of beautiful garden and immortal text was recognised as being extremely rare. In a letter to his friend Qi Biaoja 祁彪佳 (1602-45) discussing the naming of the sites of Qi’s recently constructed garden (Yushan 寓山 [Allegory Mountain] in Shanyin), the late Ming historian and essayist Zhang Dai 張岱 (1597-?1689), himself the owner of some much celebrated gardens, has this to say: ‘The real difficulty in constructing gardens and pavilions lies in the overall conception of their layout. Even more difficult however is the allocation of appropriate names. If the names given are vulgar, then the garden itself will lose whatever elegance it can lay claim to, while the writings inspired by the garden too will in turn be less than marvelous. Apart from those of the Wheel River Estate once owned by the Tang poet Wang Wei, all those various scenes in all those famous gardens fail to combine both beauty of scene and of name . . . . From this we can know that superior scenes and famous poems cannot be gathered in one and the same place’, for which, see Yu Qi Shipei 與祁世培 [To Qi Biaoja], in Zhang Dai’s *Langhuan wenji* 琅嬛文集, Changsha, 1985, 139-40.

<sup>23</sup> For a short biography of whom, see L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang, eds., *Dictionary of Ming Biography, 1368-1644*, vol. 2, New York and London, 1970, 1471-74; see also Clunas, *Elegant Debts: The Social Art of Wen Zhengming, 1470-1559*, London, 2004.

<sup>24</sup> This is Craig Clunas’s translation of Qian Yong’s colophon (dated 1833) to Wen Zhengming’s album entitled *The Garden of the Artless Official (Zhuozhengyuan tuce 拙政園圖冊)*, reproduced in Kate Kerby, *An Old Chinese Garden: A Three-fold Masterpiece of Poetry, Calligraphy and Painting*, by Wen Chen Ming, *Famous Landscape Artist of the Ming Dynasty. Studies Written by Kate Kerby, Translations by Mo Zung Chung*, Shanghai, 1922, for which, see Clunas, *Fruitful Sites*, 38. Amusingly, Qian Yong elsewhere suggests that one can save oneself a great deal of trouble (and expense) by simply making use of the gardens of others: ‘A friend of mine bought a garden and proved quite assiduous, night and day, in its management and its restoration. One day it suddenly

In his *Gardens of China*, Osvald Siren, cites ‘an old Suchou poet’ to the effect that when visiting a garden:

One should have knowledge of the historical background; one should enter [the garden] in a peaceful and receptive mood, one should use one’s observation to note the plan and pattern of the garden, for the different parts have not been arbitrarily assembled, but carefully weighted against each other like the pairs of inscribed tablets [adorned with parallel quotations corresponding with each other in respect to tone-values and content] placed in the pavilions. And when one has thoroughly comprehended the tangible forms of objects one should endeavor to attain to an inner communion with the soul of the garden, and try to understand the mysterious forces governing the landscape and making it cohere’.<sup>25</sup>

This ‘inner communion with the soul of the garden’ required visitors to both ‘read’ the garden itself, its various features and the symbolism associated with them,<sup>26</sup> but also to be familiar with the texts and paintings that over time the garden had produced, this being the only way in which the garden could live on despite repeated changes of ownership, of name and of design and in the face of the inevitable vicissitudes of time. As a garden in Suzhou, during its various phases of development, Master of the Nets has been ‘the symbol and the setting for the endlessly repeated quest for self-knowledge, self-containment, self-transcendence’;<sup>27</sup> it has also provided the archetype for ‘The Chinese Garden’ exported elsewhere, including one soon to be found in its most southerly guise, in Dunedin, New Zealand. The following translation is offered in the hope that it may facilitate access to the soul of this garden.

---

occurred to me to opine to him: “One doesn’t really need to build one’s own garden at all; whenever one swaggers around in the garden of another, even if it possesses but a single flower and a solitary rock, it nonetheless becomes one’s own—isn’t this a most expedient way of going about things!””, for which, see *Luyuan conghua*, 2: 546. Qian goes on to tell of a man who was both obsessed with gardens but exceedingly poor and who proceeded to write a *Record of My Non-Existent Garden* (Wushi yuan 無是園) to satisfy his urgings.

<sup>25</sup> New York, 1949, 94.

<sup>26</sup> On this point, however, John Minford has argued: ‘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. That is why it is so strange to walk round one of the marvellous 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’, ‘The Chinese Garden: Death of a Symbol’, *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes*, 18, 3 (1998), 257-68.

<sup>27</sup> Minford, ‘The Chinese Garden’, 267.

### ‘A Record of the Garden of the Master of the Fishing Nets’

Qian Daxin<sup>28</sup>  
[1795]

The ancients built gardens (*yuan* 園) as places to grow their fruit trees, established potages (*pu* 圃) in order to plant their vegetables.<sup>29</sup> Thus, wherever a ‘garden’ is mentioned in the 300 poems of the *Book of Songs*, the context is of ‘the peach trees in the garden’ (園有桃), ‘the jujube trees in the garden’ (園有棘) and ‘Do not come leaping into my garden;/ Do not break my sandal trees’ (無踰我園無折我樹檀).<sup>30</sup> Such gardens were certainly not designed simply to provide beauty for the enjoyment of visitors. From the Han [206 BCE-221 CE] and Wei [221-265] dynasties onwards, however, stately tours of the Western Garden (Xiyuan 西園) became all the rage as constituting the very grandest of affairs.<sup>31</sup>

At the same time, the gentry too began to develop their own family gardens, within which they displayed the flowers and the rocks that they had collected, forever competing with each other in the extravagance of their predilections. By the Song dynasty [960-1279], the first account of such

---

<sup>28</sup> This translation of Qian Daxin’s ‘Wangshiyuan ji’ 網師園記 [A Record of the Garden of the Master of the Fishing Nets] is of the version of the text found in Chen Wenhe 陳文和, ed., *Jiading Qian Daxin quanji* 嘉定錢大昕全集 [Complete Works of Qian Daxin of Jiading], vol. 10, Nanjing, 1997, 4-5. Reference has also been made to the annotated version of the text in Chen Zhi 陳植 and Zhang Gongchi 張公弛, eds., *Zhongguo lidai mingyuan ji xuanzhu* 中國歷代名園記選注 [Famous Chinese Garden Records Down Through the Ages: Selected and Annotated], Hefei, 1983, 420-22.

<sup>29</sup> For his etymological definitions of these two characters, Qian Daxin is indebted to Xu Shen’s 許慎 (c. 55-c. 149) *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 [Explanations of Simple and Complex Characters].

<sup>30</sup> *Shi jing* 詩經 [Book of Songs], Poems # 109 (‘Yuan you tao’ 園有桃) and # 76 (‘Jiang Zhongzi’ 將仲子), for which, see Legge, trans., *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 4, 165-67 and vol. 4, 125-27, respectively.

<sup>31</sup> A Western Garden in Luoyang 洛陽 is mentioned in Zhang Heng’s 張衡 (78-139) ‘Dongdu fu’ 東都賦 [Eastern Metropolis Rhapsody]; an annotation to which reads: ‘This being the Imperial Forest Park (Shanglinyuan 上林苑): for which, see *Wenxuan* 文選, vol. 1, Shanghai, 1986, 93-149. For a translation of this rhapsody, see David R. Knechtges, trans., *Wen xuan, or Selections of Refined Literature: Volume One: Rhapsodies on Metropolises and Capitals*, Princeton, 1982, 243-310. Poems by both Cao Pi 曹丕 (187-226) and Cao Zhi 曹植 (192-232), entitled ‘Furongchi zuo’ 芙蓉池作 [On Lotus Pond] (‘At leisure, we stroll through Western Garden’ 逍遙步西園) and ‘Gong yan’ 公讌 [My Lord’s Feast] (‘On a clear evening we tour Western Garden,/ Our flying canopies chasing each other’ 清夜遊西園 / 飛蓋相追隨), respectively, both included in the *Wenxuan* as well, mention this garden, for which see *Wenxuan*, vol. 3, 1031-32 and vol. 3, 942-43.

gardens was written, this being Li Gefei's 李格非 [c. 1041-1101] *Record of the Famous Gardens of Luoyang* (*Luoyang mingyuan ji* 洛陽名園記), a book that circulated widely within the world of letters.<sup>32</sup> From this circumstance, we can see that the splendours of pavilions and terraces, trees and rocks all need to await the relaxed appreciation of famous men as they banquet amidst them, before they are embodied in the poems and essays produced on such occasions and thus passed on from one age to another. If this were not in fact the case, then it would be as if that story about Gu Pijiang 顧辟疆 expelling guests was simply intended to provide later men with the occasion for scorn.<sup>33</sup>

Suzhou 蘇州 is a large town and within its walls the mansions stand closely packed together, as if rubbing shoulders with each other and all but tripping over one another. Only in the south-eastern corner of the town, nestled against the wall and overlooking the river, do the trees grow dense. Here one is struck by the half-rustic air of the place. Just to the south of City Belt Bridge (Daichengqiao 帶城橋) stands the former site of the Hall of the Ten Thousand Fascicles (Wanjuantang 萬卷堂)<sup>34</sup> once owned by Master Shi

---

<sup>32</sup> For a translation of, and brief introduction to, this work, see Philip Watson, trans., 'Famous Gardens of Luoyang, by Li Gefei', *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes*, 24, 1 (2004), 38-54.

<sup>33</sup> The 'Rudeness and Contempt' chapter of the *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 [New Account of Tales of the World] contains the following story: 'Once when Wang Xianzhi was passing through Wu Commandery on his way from Guiji (Zhejiang), he heard that Gu Pijiang had a famous garden there. Although he had previously never been acquainted with the owner, he went directly to his house. It happened that Gu was just then entertaining guests and friends with food and drink, but Wang wandered about at will through the garden, and, when he had finished, pointed around to indicate its good and bad features, just as if no one else were present. Gu, suddenly losing his patience, said, "To be inconsiderate of one's host is impolite, but to presume on one's noble birth to be insolent toward others is downright immoral. Anyone who fails on both counts isn't even fit to be classified as a northern boor (*cang* 儻)!" And with that he drove Wang's attendants out the gate. Wang, alone in the sedan chair, was turning this way and that (looking for his attendants). Gu, observing that the attendants after a long time had still not returned, later ordered someone to escort Wang outside the gate. Through it all Wang remained carefree and unconcerned', for which, see Richard B. Mather, trans., *Shih-shuo Hsin-yu: A New Account of Tales of the World*, Minneapolis, 1976 (romanisation altered and Chinese character added).

<sup>34</sup> According to an account of this garden given by the Yuan dynasty scholar Lu Youren 陸友仁 in his *Wuzhong jiushi* 吳中舊事 [Former Happenings in Wu], this library comprised forty-two large bookcases, arranged in a circle, the majority of which contained manuscripts that had been acquired initially by weight as scrap paper, for which, see *Ducheng jisheng: Wai ba zhong* 都城紀勝外八種 [A Record of the Splendours of the Capital and Eight Other Works], Shanghai, 1993, 450. The garden became noted once again for the book collection it housed under the proprietorship of Li Hongyi, for which see Wei Li 韋力 *Shulou xunzong* 書樓尋蹤 [Searching for the Traces of Private Libraries], Shijiazhuang, 2004, 88-89.

Zhengzhi 史正志 [Metropolitan Graduate of 1151] of the Song,<sup>35</sup> within sight of both South Garden (Nanyuan 南園)<sup>36</sup> and Surging Waves Pavilion (Canglangting 滄浪亭).<sup>37</sup> The lane that leads to this site is called Master of the Fishing Nets (Wangshi 網師) but its original name had been the close homophone Wishing Debts (Wangsi 王思).

Thirty years ago now the site was acquired by Master Song Zongyuan to build his villa, with a view to retiring here. He took the name Master of the Fishing Nets both for himself and for his garden, thus giving expression of his desire for rustic reclusion and picking up also upon the sound of the original name of the lane along which his garden was found. After his death his garden daily fell into rack and ruin and more than half of its once fine trees and ancient rocks either disappeared or were damaged. Only the pond remained, as clear and as pure as it had been at an earlier age.

Master Qu Yuancun happened by the site one day and, anxious lest the garden become completely overgrown, he heaved a deep sigh. Upon enquiry

---

<sup>35</sup> Shi Zhengzhi, who served as Governor of Nanjing and Admiral of the Yangtze River, was the author of a work on the chrysanthemum, dated 1175 and entitled *Shilao pu ju pu* 史老圃菊譜 [Old Master Shi's Catalogue of Cultivated Chrysanthemums], the text of which was preserved in Tao Zongyi's 陶宗儀, *Shuofu* 說郛 (fourteenth century), for which, see *Shuofu sanzong* 說郛三種, vol. 2, Shanghai, 1988, 1040-4. For a brief discussion of this and other related texts, see Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China: Volume VI*, 414-15.

<sup>36</sup> A South Garden (Nanyuan 南園) is shown as abutting the Prefectural School in a map included in Yinong Xu, 'Boundaries, Centres and Peripheries in Chinese Gardens: A Case Study of Suzhou in the Eleventh Century', *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes* 24, 1 (2004), 21-37 (Figs 3, 26), this being an enhanced section of the 'Pingjiang tu' 平江圖 of 1229. In his *Fusheng liuji* 浮生六記 [Six Records of a Floating Life], Shen Fu 沈復 (b. 1763; on whom, see ECCP, 641-42), provides a delightful account of a visit to South Garden: 'There were two places in Soochow, called the South Garden and the North Garden. We wanted to go there once when the rape flowers were in bloom . . . After lunch we went off to the South Garden, carrying cushions and mats with us. We picked a place in the shade of a willow tree and sat down. First we made tea, and when we had finished it, we warmed the wine and cooked the food. The wind and sun were exquisite. The earth was golden, and the blue clothes and red sleeves of strollers filled the paths between the fields, while butterflies and bees flew all around us. The scene was so intoxicating one hardly needed to drink. After a while the wine and food were ready, and everyone sat down on the ground to feast. The man who had helped us out [with a small stove] was not an ordinary sort, so we persuaded him to come and join us in our drinking. The strollers who saw us all envied our clever idea. By the end of the afternoon cups and plates were scattered around and all of us were very jolly, some sitting and some lying down, some singing and some whistling. As the red sun set I felt like eating some rice porridge, so our helper quickly bought some rice and cooked it, and we all went home well satisfied', for which, see Leonard Pratt and Chiang Su-hui, trans., *Six Records of a Floating Life*, Harmondsworth, 1983, 66-67. For the original, see Luo Zongyang 羅宗陽, ed., *Fusheng liuji*, Nanchang, 1980, 23-24.

<sup>37</sup> On the Surging Waves Pavilion, see Yinong Xu, 'Interplay of Image and Fact: The Pavilion of Surging Waves, Suzhou', *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes* 19, 3 (1999): 288-92.

at the neighbouring property, he discovered that the then owner of the garden just happened to be seeking a buyer for it, whereupon Qu immediately acquired it. Working in accordance with the garden's original design but creating also new structures, Qu piled up the rocks to form artificial mountains and planted out some trees, all in an appropriate manner, increasing the number of pavilions and kiosks, and thus transforming the old into the new.<sup>38</sup> Once the work had been completed, he summoned four or five of us fellow scholars to join him for an all-day banquet.

The stone-paved paths twist and turn, as if leading elsewhere but actually turning back upon themselves; the rippling surface of the pond seems so vast as to stretch beyond the furthest horizon. Here are to be found two halls one of which is named 'Mountain Hut of the Prunus and the Iron Stone' (Meihua tieshi shanfang 梅花鐵石山房) and the other 'Study of the Recluse's Cassia Woods' (Xiaoshan congguai xuan 小山叢桂軒);<sup>39</sup> a belvedere named 'Waterside Belvedere for Washing One's Cap Strings' (Zhuoying shuige 濯纓水閣);<sup>40</sup> and a chamber for idle sitting named 'Lodge

---

<sup>38</sup> Writing during the first wave of the transplantation of 'The Chinese Garden' westward, in a passage that soon became controversial and which immediately precedes the quotation given at the beginning of this paper, William Chambers essayed this insight into the process undertaken by Qu Yuancun: 'Though the Chinese artists have nature for their general model, yet are they not so attached to her, as to exclude all appearance of art; on the contrary, they think it, on many occasions, necessary to make an ostentatious show of their labour. Nature, say they, affords us but few materials to work with. Plants, ground and water, are her only productions: and though both the forms and the arrangements of these may be varied to an incredible degree, yet have they but few striking varieties, the rest being of the nature of changes rung upon bells, which, though in reality different, still produce the same uniform kind of jingling; the variation being too minute to be easily perceived. Art must therefore supply the scantiness of nature; and not only be employed to produce variety, but also novelty and effect: for the simple arrangements of nature are met with in every common field, to a certain degree of perfection; and are therefore too familiar to excite any strong sensations in the mind of the beholder, or to produce any uncommon degree of pleasure', *A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening*, 13; spelling regularised.

<sup>39</sup> This name alludes to some lines from Liu An's 劉安 (d. 122 BCE) (also known as the Prince of Huainan and Xiaoshan 小山 [Little Mountain]) poem 'Summons for a Recluse' ('Zhao yinshi' 招隱士): 'The cassia trees grow thick/ In the mountain's recesses,/ Twisting and snaking,/ Their branches interlacing', for which see David Hawkes, trans., *The Songs of the South: An Anthology of Chinese Poems by Qu Yuan and Other Poets* (Penguin, 1985), 244. Yu Xin 庾信 (513-81), in his 'Kushu fu' 枯樹賦 [Rhapsody on the Barren Tree], writes: 'in Xiaoshan[']s poem, 'The Summons to the Recluse', in the *Chuci* groves of cassia could make one linger', for which, see Stephen Owen, 'Deadwood: The Barren Tree from Yu Hsin to Han Yu', *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews*, 1, 2 (1979), 157-79 (romanisation altered).

<sup>40</sup> The name of this belvedere derives from the poem 'Yufu' 漁父 [The Fisherman] which, in David Hawkes's translation, reads: 'After Qu Yuan was banished, he wandered, sometimes along the river banks, sometimes along the marsh's edge, singing as he went. His expression was dejected and his features emaciated. A fisherman caught sight of him. "Are you not the Lord of the Three Wards?" said the fisherman. "What has brought you

for Treading Upon Harmony' (Daoheguan 蹈和館). In the middle of the pond stands a pavilion named 'The Moon Rises as the Wind Stirs' (Yuedao fenglai 月到風來)<sup>41</sup> and another upon the cliff, named 'Ridge of Cloud' (Yungang 雲崗). An obliquely-angled study named 'Bamboo Branch Beyond' (Zhuwai yizhi 竹外一枝)<sup>42</sup> and a studio named 'Emptiness Gathered' (Jixu 集虛),<sup>43</sup> too, have been constructed. Every single one of

---

to this pass?" "Because all the world is muddy and I alone am clear", said Qu Yuan, "and because all men are drunk and I alone am sober, I have been sent into exile." "The Wise Man is not chained to material circumstances," said the fisherman, "but can move as the world moves. If all the world is muddy, why not help them to stir up the mud and beat up the waves? And if all men are drunk, why not sup their dregs and swill their lees? Why get yourself exiled because of your deep thoughts and your fine aspirations?" Qu Yuan replied, "I have heard it said: 'He who has just washed his hair should brush his hat; and he who has just bathed should shake his clothes.' How can I submit my spotless purity to the dirt of others? I would rather cast myself into the waters of the river and be buried in the bowels of fishes, than hide my shining light in the dark and dust of the world." The fisherman, with a faint smile, stuck his paddle in the water and made off. And as he went he sang: "When the Cang-lang's waters are clear,/ I can wash my hat-strings in them;/ When the Cang-lang's waters are muddy,/ I can wash my feet in them." With that he was gone, and did not speak again', for which, see David Hawkes, *The Songs of the South: An Ancient Chinese Anthology of Poems by Qu Yuan and Other Poets*, Harmondsworth, 1985, 206-7. Hawkes provides the following annotation: 'Tasselled hat-strings were a badge of official rank. The meaning of the song is that you should seek official employment in good times and retire gracefully when times are troubled'. As Hawkes also notes, exactly the same song appears in the *Mengzi* 孟子 [Mencius], but in that case, on the lips of a child, after which, the text continues: 'Confucius said, "Listen to this, my little ones. When clear the water washes the chin-strap, when muddy it washes the feet. The water brings this difference in treatment upon itself." Only when a man invites insult will others destroy it. Only when a family invites destruction will others destroy it. Only when a state invites invasion will others invade it', for which, see D. C. Lau, trans., *Mencius*, Harmondsworth, 1970, 121. Note also that the name Cang-lang in this song is the name used for that of the famous nearby garden mentioned earlier in Qian's record, translated above as Surging Waves Pavilion.

<sup>41</sup> The name given this pavilion appears to derive from a couplet in a poem by the Tang dynasty scholar Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824), entitled: 'Fenghe Guozhou Liu jishi shijun santang xinti ershiyi yong bingxu: Beilou' 奉和虢州劉給事使君三堂新題二十一詠 [Twenty-one Poems Presented to Supervising Secretary Liu, Prefect of Guo Prefecture, to Rhyme with the Newly Written Poems on the Three Halls, with attached preface: North Tower]: 'As the hue of the evening brings with it the autumn,/ A strong wind speeds on the moon' (晚色將秋至 / 長風送月來), for which, see Qu Shouyuan 屈守元 and Chang Sichun 常思元, eds., *Han Yu quanji jiaozhu* 韓愈全集校注 [Complete Works of Han Yu: Collated and Annotated], vol. 2, Chengdu, 1996, 619.

<sup>42</sup> A couplet from a poem entitled 'He Qin Taixu meihua' 和秦太虛梅花 [Rhyming with Qin Guan's Poem on the Flowering Apricot] by the Song dynasty poet Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101) goes: 'Upon river bank, in a thousand trees, spring begins to darken,/ Beyond the bamboos a single branch sticks out, more beautiful for its slant' (江頭千樹春欲闌 / 竹外一枝斜更好), for which, see *Su Dongpo quanji* 蘇東坡全集 [Complete Works of Su Shi], vol. 1, Beijing, 1986, 189.

<sup>43</sup> This name alludes to a section from the 'In the World of Men' (人間世) chapter of the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 [Book of Master Zhuang]: 'Confucius said, "Make your will one! Don't

these structures was fashioned by the eye (*muying* 目營) and drawn by the hand (*shouhua* 手畫) of Qu Yuancun himself, and he named each and every one of them himself as well.<sup>44</sup> The land area of the garden is no more than a couple of *mu*<sup>45</sup> but nonetheless the garden seems to embody the delight of an endless circularity (*yuhui bujin zhi zhi* 紆回不盡之致), and although the dwelling stands close to the marketplace it manages yet to convey a sense of the forgetful pleasures of the clouds and the rivers (*yunshui xiangwang zhi le* 雲水相忘之樂).<sup>46</sup> It is as if this garden contains, therefore, both the ‘expansive vistas’ (*kuangru* 曠如) and the ‘hidden mysteries’ (*aoru* 奧如) spoken of by the Tang man-of-letters Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 [773-819] as constituting the two modes of travel.<sup>47</sup> At the same time, although the garden is no longer as it was in the past, by retaining the name ‘Master of the Fishing Nets’, its present Master has attended appropriately to the past of the site.

I remember once, when reading the rhapsody on Master Ren Hui’s 任晦 garden in Lu Guimeng’s 陸龜蒙 [d. c. 881] *Pine Ridge Collection* (*Songling ji* 松陵集), coming across the lines:

The pond’s visage appears both bland and ancient,  
And the atmosphere of the trees is luxuriant and secluded.  
If you wish to know where is found the best scenery,  
Here within Ren’s estate you will find it gathered.

I was so overwhelmed by what I had read that I found myself wandering, in spirit, through the garden itself. Today, within this present garden, I have actually encountered that scene as described in the poem. Although I cannot lay claim to the poetical talents of either a Lu Guimeng or

listen with your ears, listen with your spirit. Listening stops with the ears, the mind stops with recognition, but spirit is empty and waits on all things. The Way gathers in emptiness alone. Emptiness is the fasting of the mind”, for which, see Burton Watson, trans., *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, New York, 1968, 57-58.

<sup>44</sup> Here, Qian Daxin employs the first half of a locution found in Li Gefei’s description of the garden of Fu Bi 富弼 (1004-83), Duke of Zheng, in his *Record of the Famous Gardens of Luoyang*, translated by Philip Watson as: ‘fashioned by his eye and molded by his mind (*muying xinjiang* 目營心匠)’ (*Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes*, 24, 1, [2004], 42).

<sup>45</sup> One *mu* is the equivalent of about one sixth of an acre.

<sup>46</sup> As it exists today, Master of the Nets covers an area of approximately one acre.

<sup>47</sup> Liu Zongyuan’s celebrated ‘Yongzhou longxingsi dongqiu ji’ 永州龍興寺東丘記 [Record of the East Mound of the Dragon Rising Temple of Yong Prefecture] begins: ‘In general terms, the modes of travels are twofold—expansive vistas or hidden mysteries—and that is all’ (游之適大率有二曠如也奧如也如斯而已), for which, see *Liu Zongyuan ji* 柳宗元集 [Works of Liu Zongyuan], vol. 3, Beijing, 1979, 748. For a translation of this record in its entirety, see H. C. Chang, trans., *Chinese Literature 2: Nature Poetry*, Edinburgh, 1977, 123-24.



a Pi Rixiu 皮日休 [c. 834-883], yet both Qu Yuancun's afflatus and his refined tastes seem superior even to those of Ren Hui, and thus have I felt compelled to make this record of his garden, as a continuation of their 'Two Tours' (*eryou* 二游) in order that contemporaries be not over-anxious that they are not the equal of the ancients.<sup>48</sup>



Figure 1. Qian Daxin 錢大昕 (1728-1804).

---

<sup>48</sup> Having visited the gardens of both Ren Hui and Xu Xiuju 徐修矩, Pi Rixiu wrote poems to thank his hosts, these poems becoming known collectively as the 'Two Tours'. When Lu Guimeng came across copies of these poems, he responded to them with a set of his own poems, one of which is cited above.