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BAMBOO IN THE CHINESE GARDEN

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Abstract

It seems inconceivable for a garden in China (or a Chinese garden elsewhere) not to feature bamboo, serving a variety of aesthetic, practical, and metaphoric purposes. This paper offers both a translation of a set of some of the most famous celebrations of the bamboo, in prose and poetry, from the *Book of Odes* (*Shijing* 詩經) down to the late imperial period, and a discussion of the role of this particular plant in the design and life of the Chinese garden and the levels of symbolic meaning it brings to these gardens.¹

Introduction

In terms of affect, what is it that the bamboo lends to one's experience of a garden? I offer below something by way of an idiosyncratic florilegium that might help us re-enter the mind of an educated Chinese person who happened to live during the late imperial or early Republican period as he or she strolled through a lush Jiangnan garden, pausing occasionally to appreciate a particularly fine vista. Do these various texts (some remembered, others long-memorised) and the physical presence of the bamboo tug in opposite directions, the one inward the other outward? Or rather, is it the case that just as the bamboo screen or trellis may serve simultaneously to both cut off and to connect, so too is it true that the magic of the garden is such that it allows a duality of movement akin to the manner in which reading can at once both connect us with others (across both time and space) and separate us from them?

1 This essay was originally intended for inclusion in a catalogue associated with an exhibition on the bamboo and its multifarious usages and representations that was to be curated in Hong Kong. Circumstances have prevented both the holding of the exhibition and, thus, the production of the catalogue. It was written at the height of the student protests against the brutal dismantling of a once unique way of life. It struck me powerfully as I worked on it that certain of the moral properties long associated with the bamboo were finding daily expression in the courage and integrity of the young people who had taken to the streets. I would like to thank the two anonymous readers of my essay for the care with which they have read it; in their different ways, their reports have served both (I trust) to sharpen the focus of my essay and (certainly) to demand of me a better understanding of what I had written. I thank also the co-editors of the journal, Rick Weiss and Paola Voci, for the capaciousness of their vision of the purposes of the journal. Belatedly, I was reminded of James Dyer Ball's remarkable entry on the bamboo in his *Things Chinese*; "China would not be the China we know, were the bamboo wanting," he begins. If I had turned first to this invaluable reference work, as I should have, I suspect that I would not have persisted with what follows here.

Look at those recesses in the banks of the K'e,
 With their green bamboos, so fresh and luxuriant!
 There is our elegant and accomplished prince,—
 瞻彼淇奥綠竹猗猗有匪君子

“The Banks of the K'e,” *Book of Odes*²

Amongst the category of plants,	植類之中
One there is called ‘bamboo,’	有物曰竹
Not hard, not soft,	不剛不柔
Neither grass nor tree.	非草非木

They differ slightly in degrees of hollowness,	小異空實
But all alike have joints.	大同節目
Some flourish in sand and in water,	或茂沙水
Others rise from cliff and from soil.	或挺巖陸

Dai Kaizhi, “Manual on the Bamboo”³

On one occasion, when Wang Huizhi 王徽之 was housesitting another man's empty house, he ordered that bamboos be planted. Someone taxed him on the effort: “Since you're only to be living here for a short while, why bother having bamboos planted?” Wang whistled away and chanted poems for a good while; then, abruptly, pointing to the bamboos, he replied, “How could I possibly live a single day without these gentlemen?”

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- 2 “Qi ao” 淇奥 (Mao # 55), in the *Shijing* 詩經 [Book of Odes], for which, see James Legge (trans.), *The Chinese Classics: Volume IV: The She King, or The Book of Poetry* (1871; rpt. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960), Vol. 4, p. 91. This poem is cited in both the “Great Learning” (“Daxue” 大學), one of the Four Books (*Sishu* 四書) of Confucianism, and during course of the naming of the various features of the most famous of literary gardens in China, Prospect Garden (*Daguan yuan* 大觀園) in the *Dream of the Red Chamber* (*Honglou meng* 紅樓夢), for which, see Chapter 17, David Hawkes (trans.), *The Story of the Stone: Volume 1: The Golden Days* (Penguin, 1973), p. 331. Hawkes's translation of the first two lines of the poem reads: “See in the nook where bends the Qi, / The green bamboos, how graceful grown.” Please note that unless otherwise noted, all further translations of the Chinese sources cited in this essay are by the author.
 - 3 Dated around 460, Dai Kaizhi's 戴凱之, “Manual on the Bamboo” (*Zhu pu* 竹譜), a poetical treatment of the plant, with extensive authorial commentary, is the earliest Chinese botanical monograph. Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China: Volume 6: Biology and Biological Technology: Part 1: Botany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 377–394, provides an extensive treatment of this and subsequent Chinese treatments of the topic; Peter Valder, *The Garden Plants of China* (New South Wales: Florilegium, 1999), pp. 89–99 offers a brief and useful discussion of the place of bamboo in the gardens of China. Michael J. Hagerty, “Tai K'ai-chih's *Chu-p'u*: A Fifth Century Monograph of Bamboos Written in Rhyme with Commentary,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 11 (1948): 372–440, presents a complete translation of the monograph and an extensive discussion of it.

王子猷嘗暫寄人空宅住便令種竹或問暫住何煩爾王嘯詠良久直指竹曰何可一日無此君

Liu Yiqing, *A New Account of Tales of the World*⁴

Ruan Ji of Chenliu, Xi Kang of the Principality of Jiao, and Shan Tao of Henei were all about the same age, with Xi Kang being the youngest of the three. Joining them later on were Liu Ling of the Principality of Pei, Ruan Xian of Chenliu, Xiang Xiu of Henei, and Wang Rong of Langye. The seven of them would frequently gather within a bamboo grove, there to drink and carouse to their heart's content. And so it was that contemporaries labelled them the "Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove."

陳留阮籍譙國嵇康河內山濤三人年皆相比康年少亞預此契者沛國劉伶陳留阮咸河內向秀琅邪王戎七人常集於竹林之下肆意酣暢故世謂竹林七賢

Liu Yiqing, *A New Account of Tales of the World*⁵

Self-protectively it grows within the deep blue shade,	青冥亦自守
Pliant and weak it struggles to hold itself up.	軟弱強扶持
Bitter of taste, even the summer insects shun it,	味苦夏蟲避
Too low to the ground to earn the trust of spring bird.	叢卑春鳥疑
Unwanted for the gardens of palace or mansion,	軒墀曾不重
Neither does it utter a word of protest when harvested.	翦伐亦無辭
Only when fortunate enough to grow beside a hermit's hut,	幸近幽人屋
Do its frost-covered roots really begin to find purchase.	霜根結在茲

Du Fu, "Bitter Bamboo"⁶

Newly demoted, I'm badly out of sorts,	佐邑意不適
Closing my door, I let the autumnal grasses grow.	閉門秋草生
What better way to amuse my wanderer's nature,	何以娛野生
Than to plant a hundred-odd bamboo shoots.	種竹百餘莖
The hue that now plays across the surface of the creek,	見此溪上色

4 "Rendan" 任誕, in Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403–444), *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1982), Vol. 1, n.p.

5 "Rendan" 任誕, in Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403–444), *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1982), Vol. 1, n.p. For a complete translation of this work, including various tales about this group of men, both individually and collectively, see Richard B. Mather (trans.), *Shih-shuo Hsin-yü: A New Account of Tales of the World* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan, 2002). Mather translates the chapter title as "The Free and Unrestrained."

6 Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770), "Ku zhu" 苦竹, in Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 (1582–1664) (ed.), *Qian zhu Du shi* 錢注杜詩 [Poems of Du Fu Annotated by Qian Qianyi] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2009), Vol. 1, p. 352. In the sixth line of the poem, I accept the suggested alternative of 亦 for the 欲 found in the standard editions of the poetry of Du Fu.

Reminds me of feelings I had when living in the mountains.	憶得山中情
And when perchance official duties allow me the ease,	有時公事暇
I spend my days wandering up and down the row of stakes.	盡日繞欄行
Don't tell me that their roots are not yet firm,	勿言根未固
Or that they do not yet cast their shade about.	勿言陰未成
Already I feel that here within my courtyard,	已覺庭宇內
A lingering chillness has slowly begun to gather.	稍稍有餘清
Most of all, I love lying beneath my window,	最愛近窗臥
Listening to the music of the branches in the autumn breeze.	秋風枝有聲

Bai Juyi, "Bamboos, Newly Planted"⁷

Whereas one may eat a meal without meat,	可使食無肉
One cannot live at a place without bamboo.	不可居無竹
Without meat, one grows thin,	無肉令人瘦
Without bamboo, one becomes vulgar.	無竹令人俗
A thin man may yet become fat,	人瘦尚可肥
A vulgar man is quite beyond cure.	俗士不可醫

Su Shi, "Studio of the Green Culm of the Monk of Yuqian"⁸

In forest and in marsh one can linger long, for there is to be found a
whispering grove of bamboo trees.

林臯延竚相緣竹樹蕭森

Ji Cheng, *The Craft of Gardens* (1635)⁹

Unwilling to flower, never parading meretricious beauty,
They cast their rustling shadows into the pool of one's inkstone.
Do not look down upon this spindly branch here, that leaf there,
For they live upon famous mountains and boast of their Seven Sages.

不肯開花不趁妍 蕭蕭影落硯池邊 一枝片葉休輕看 曾住名山傲七賢

Liu Rushi, "In Praise of the Bamboo"¹⁰

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- 7 Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846), "Xin zai zhu" 新栽竹, in Gu Xuejie 顧學頤 (ed.), *Bai Juyi ji* 白居易集 [A Collection of the Writings of Bai Juyi] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988), Vol. 1, p. 168.
- 8 Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101), "Yuqian seng lüyunxuan" 於潛僧綠筠軒, in *Su Dongpo quanji* 蘇東坡全集 [A Complete Collection of the Writings of Su Shi] (Beijing: Zhongguo shudian, 1986), Vol. 1, p. 83.
- 9 Ji Cheng 計成 (b. 1579), "Jie jing" 借景 [Borrowing Scenery], *Yuan ye* 園冶 (Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe, 1981), p. 233.
- 10 Liu Rushi 柳如是 (1618–1664), "Yong zhu" 咏竹, in Liu Yanyuan 劉燕遠 (ed.), *Liu Rushi shici pingzhu* 柳如是詩詞評注 [Poems by Liu Rushi: Annotated] (Beijing: Beijing guji chubanshe, 2000), pp. 270–271. For a short English-language biography of Liu Rushi, see Arthur W. Hummel (ed.), *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period (1644–1912)* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1943), pp. 529–530.

Memorably, one particular engagement with bamboo may well have served to alter fundamentally the trajectory of late imperial Chinese thought. As the influential thinker Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472–1529) later told a friend, in 1492 whilst he was pursuing the injunction found in “The Great Learning” to “investigate things” (*gewu* 格物) in search of knowledge, he fell sick after having meditated on the principle (*li* 理) of the bamboo for seven days on end, day and night. His efforts, he realised, needed to focus inwards rather than outwards, taking as the object of his attention his own heart/mind (*xin* 心) rather than anything external and in the world around him such as a stand of bamboo.¹¹

Chinese painters, by contrast, and garden designers too, many of whom had started life as painters, as did, notably, Ji Cheng, now the most celebrated of them, had long been accustomed to close and intense observation of bamboo without apparently ever having suffered any of the deleterious effects experienced by Wang Yangming. In the late imperial period, Shitao 石濤 (Zhu Ruoji 朱若極; 1642–1707), for instance, likened “...painting bamboos to conversing with a guest” (寫竹猶如對客談).¹² On a leaf from an album entitled “Wilderness Colours” (“Yese” 野色), dated sometime between 1697–1700, whilst the artist was living in Yangzhou, he depicts a swaying branch of bamboo, adding the colophon:

Battered leaves and spare branches, best drawn from life,
Some brushed high, others below, all as if in a fit of passion.
One must sit facing the bamboo for a full ten years, with cup in hand,
Before your clump will begin to rustle the moment it leaves your brush.

敗葉疏枝貴寫生高之下之若惟情只須對竹十年飲筆倒根叢自有聲¹³

Zheng Xie 鄭燮 (1693–1765), better known by his sobriquet Zheng Banqiao 鄭板橋, also a denizen of Yangzhou but at a later date, too, appeared to have been afflicted by a particular obsession for the plant. The colophon he added to a painting entitled “Bamboo and Rock” (“Zhu shi tu” 竹石圖), executed in the very last year of his life, provides the following inventory of the sensory dimensions of the bamboo’s ubiquitous presence in the gardens of China.

11 See Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 689.

12 For which, see Li Wancai 李萬才, *Shitao* 石濤 (Changchun: Jilin meishu chubanshe, 1996), p. 248.

13 See Marilyn Fu and Wen Fong, *The Wilderness Colors of Tao-chi* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1973), n.p. The full title of the album appears to have been *An Album of Mountains, Rivers, Vegetables, Fruits, Flowers and Plants* (山水蔬果花卉冊). Richard Strassberg (trans.), *Enlightening Remarks on Painting by Shih-T'ao* (Pasadena: Pacific Asian Museum, 1989), pp. 52–53, offers an insightful discussion of this leaf from the album. On Shitao, see both Jonathan Spence, “A Painter’s Circle,” *Chinese Roundabout: Essays in History and Culture* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1992), pp. 109–123; and Jonathan Hay, *Shitao: Painting and Modernity in Early Qing China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

A thatched studio just ten-*hu*-wide; a single square Heaven's Well courtyard. A tall bamboo or two; a solitary stone bamboo shoot some several *chi* high. A spot not large; nor an expenditure too great. But here it is that music is to be heard whenever a zephyr gets up or the rain begins to fall;¹⁴ shadows dance under the light of either passing sun or rising moon; passions surge when waxing lyrical or in one's cups; and a companion is forever to be found, whether one is idle or in a funk. This is not just a case of me loving the bamboo and the rocks, for they too, for their part, love me. Men there are who spend tens of thousands on building a fine garden, only to find that, travelling here and there on official business, they die without ever having been able to return home to enjoy its delights. For men such as myself who, by contrast, can only dream of visiting the famous mountains and great rivers if at all then very infrequently, what is better than a single room with a miniature vista, replete with emotion and with taste and which, over the passage of time, will constantly renew itself? Facing this scene, and having crafted such a realm, no difficulty is to be encountered when one either "rolls it up and withdraws into it in order to hide away in mysteriousness," or "unrolls it and thus extends oneself throughout the Six Realms of Heaven and Earth and all Four Quarters."

Fourth month of the *yiyou* year (1765) of the reign of the Qianlong emperor, painted by Zheng Xie (Banqiao).

十笏茅齋一方天井修竹數竿石筍數尺其地無多其費亦無多也而風中雨中有聲日中月中有影詩中酒中有情閒中悶中有伴非唯我愛竹石即竹石亦愛我也彼千金萬金造園亭或遊園四方終其身不能歸享而吾輩欲遊名山大川又一時不得即往何如一室小景有情有味歷久彌新乎對此畫構此境何難斂之則退藏於密亦復放之可彌六合也乾隆乙酉清和月板橋鄭燮畫¹⁵

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- 14 Perhaps the best evocation of the music of the bamboo in wind and rain is found in the early Ming scholar Zhang Yu's 張羽 (1333–1385) "Record of the Pavilion Deep Among Bamboos" ("Zhu shen ting ji" 竹深亭記), as discussed (and in part, translated) in Stanislaus Fung, "Word and Garden in Chinese Essays of the Ming Dynasty: Notes on Matters of Approach," *Interfaces: Image, Texte Langage*, No. 11–12 (1997): 77–90. For an annotated version of Zhang Yu's original, see Yang Jiansheng 楊鑒生 and Zhao Houjun 趙厚均 (eds.), *Zhongguo lidai yuanlin tu wen jingxuan* 中國歷代園林圖文精選 [A Selection of Chinese Gardens Down Through the Ages in Text and Illustration] (Shanghai: Tongji daxue chubanshe, 2005), Vol. 3, pp. 220–221.
- 15 For which, see *Zheng Banqiao ji* 鄭板橋集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1962), pp. 168–169. The internal quotations come from the beginning of Zhu Xi's 朱熹 (1130–1200) commentary to the "Doctrine of the Mean" ("Zhongyong" 中庸), for which, see *Sishu zhangju jizhu* 四書章句集注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), p. 17. As Daniel Gardner points out, later traditions read Zhu Xi's commentary as constituting part of the classic itself, for which, see his *The Four Books: The Basic Teachings of the Later Confucian Tradition* (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 2007), p. 107. In another colophon, Zheng Banqiao details his method as a painter of bamboo. "My home includes a two-bayed

In his practice as a painter of bamboo, Zheng Banqiao occasionally admits the early influence of Shitao (“In painting bamboo, I once modelled myself on Shitao,/ Of late, this old brush of mine has begun to turn of its own accord” 畫竹曾學石濤近來老筆轉蕭蕭);¹⁶ more distantly, both men alike frequently engaged intensively with the most authoritative discussion of the art of painting bamboo, that conducted between Su Shi 蘇軾 (Dongpo 東坡; 1037–1101) and his distant older cousin Wen Tong 文同 (Yuke 興可; 1019–1079).¹⁷ Wen Tong’s paintings and calligraphy bulked large in the art collection that Su Shi gathered around him, and in his account of Wen Tong’s studio, “Record of the Hall of the Ink Gentleman” (“Mojun tang ji” 墨君堂記), Su Shi says of him that although everyone under heaven calls the bamboo worthy, “Only Yuke truly knows this gentleman in a profound way, understands why it is that he is worthy” (然與可獨能得君之深而知君之所以賢).¹⁸ The conversation between the two men about

15. – *ctd.* thatched studio, to the south of which I had bamboos planted. When the first thickets of the summer months begin to cast their green shadow, I have a small bed placed in the studio, affording me the most pleasing manner of staying cool. During the autumn and winter, I have a bamboo trellis built surrounding the studio, but leaving the two ends of the trellis empty, into which space I install horizontal window frames. These frames are then papered over evenly with thin, pure white paper. As the room heats up, as a result of the gentle zephyr and the warm sun, the freezing flies beat drum-like on the paper windows as they try to make their way inside. Every now and then, I catch sight of the disorderly shadow cast by a branch or other of the bamboo, this approximating in my mind, surely, a ‘Natural Painting.’ Whenever I paint bamboo, I follow no master, but obtain my images from their shadows cast on my whitewashed walls or paper windows in the light of the day or under the rays of the moon (余家有茅屋二間南面種竹夏日新篁初放綠陰照人置一小榻其中甚涼適也秋冬之際取圍屏骨子斷去兩頭橫安以為窗櫺用勻薄潔白之紙糊之風和日暖凍蠅觸窗紙上冬冬作小鼓聲於時一片竹影零亂豈非天然畫乎凡吾畫竹無所師承多得於紙窗粉壁日光月影中耳), for which, see *Zheng Banqiao ji*, p. 154.

16 See Zhou Jiyin 周積寅, *Zheng Banqiao* 鄭板橋 (Changchun: Jilin meishu chubanshe), p. 160. In a short essay entitled “Jin Qiutian Asks Me for a Painting” (“Jin Qiutian suo hua” 靳秋田索畫), Zheng Banqiao offers the following comparison between himself and Shitao in terms of the art of painting bamboos: “Shitao was a master of painting, in a myriad of genres, orchids and bamboos being only supernumerary to his art. I, by contrast, specialise in painting orchids and bamboo, and for more than fifty years now I have painted no other thing apart from orchids and bamboo. He devotes himself to broadness, whereas I devote myself to specialisation, and how could it be thought that specialisation is inferior to broadness?” (石濤善畫蓋有萬種蘭竹其餘事也板橋專畫蘭竹五十餘年不畫他物彼務博我務專安見專之不如博乎), for which, see *Zheng Banqiao ji*, p. 165.

17 Shitao, for instance, pays Wen Tong a somewhat back-handed complement when he entitles a long horizontal scroll depicting bamboo “Surpassing Yuke” (“Gaohu Yuke” 高呼興可), for which see Richard Strassberg (trans.), *Enlightening Remarks on Painting by Shih-T’ao*, pp. 43–44 (and Fig. 6), whilst Zheng Xie’s colophons to his bamboo paintings make frequent mention of Wen Tong, and in a letter discussing the history of bamboo painting (“In Reply to My Brother Wen, From the Guesthouse in Yizhen” 儀真客邸覆文弟) he labels Wen Tong the “Sagely Master” (*Shengshou* 聖手) of the genre, for which, see Zhou Jiyin, *Zheng Banqiao*, p. 158.

18 *Su Dongpo quanji*, Vol. 1, p. 381. For a complete translation of this essay, see Ronald C. Egan, *Word, Image, and Deed in the Life of Su Shi* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 287.

ink bamboo or *mozhu* 墨竹 (conducted by means of “Poems on Paintings,” colophons, essays and so on) lasted almost thirty years, having continued long after the older man’s death whenever Su Shi had occasion to view an ink bamboo (*mozhu* 墨竹) by him.¹⁹ To Su Shi’s mind, Wen Tong and his bamboos became indistinguishable, the one from the other, particularly in terms of their moral character. Su captures this understanding in the first of a set of poems entitled “Three Poems Written on the Painting of Bamboo by Yuke Owned by Chao Buzhi” (“Shu Chao Buzhi suocang Yuke hua zhu sanshou” 晝晁補之所藏與可畫竹三首):

Whenever Yuke paints a bamboo,	與可畫竹時
He sees the bamboo but never himself.	見竹不見人
Not only does he never see himself,	豈獨不見人
His body and the bamboo merge into one,	其身與竹化
Producing an endless array of pure newness.	無窮出清新
This age of ours is without its Master Zhuang,	莊周世無有
And so who now understands this level of afflatus?	誰知此凝神 ²⁰

19 There existed also a tradition of red bamboo (*zhuzhu* 朱竹) that has been variously attributed. In his book *Anecdotes About Painting from the Studio of Bitter Practice* (*Xikuzhai huaxu* 習苦齋畫絮), the Qing painter Dai Xi 戴熙 (1801–1860) relates a story about an occasion when, after having painted a red bamboo, Su Shi is taxed with the question: “How could the world possibly contain red bamboos?”, to which his reply was: “And how could the world possibly contain ink bamboos?” For this anecdote, and the reproduction of red bamboo painted in 1945 by Ye Congqi 葉恩奇 (b. 1904), see Ye Yang 葉揚, *Splendours of Brush and Ink* (*Hanmo fengliu* 翰墨風流) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014), Illustration 29.

20 *Su Dongpo quanji*, Vol. 1, p. 229. For an alternative translation of this poem, and an extensive discussion of Su Shi’s understanding of the nature of the “Literati Painting” (*wenren hua* 文人畫) tradition that he was developing, see Susan Bush, *The Chinese Literati on Painting: Su Shih (1037–1101) to Tung Ch’i-ch’ang (1555–1636)* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012), p. 41. As one of the anonymous reviewers of this essay has pointed out, “afflatus” is a rather forced translation for Su Shi’s *ningshen* 凝神. The *locus classicus* for the expression, in the “Mastering Life” chapter of the *Book of Master Zhuang*, suggests a concentration of the spirit rather than an externally generated inspiration. It occurs in a conversation between Confucius and a hunchback catching cicadas. When asked how he is able to do so with such ease, he replies (in Burton Watson’s translation: “I have a way... For the first five or six months I practice balancing two balls on top of each other on the end of a pole and, if they don’t fall off, I know I will lose very few cicadas. Then I balance three balls and, if they don’t fall off, I know I’ll lose only one cicada in ten. Then I balance five balls and, if they don’t fall off, I know it will be as easy as grabbing them with my hand. I hold my body like a stiff tree trunk and use my arm like an old dry limb. No matter how huge heaven and earth, or how numerous the ten thousand things, I’m aware of nothing but cicada wings. Not wavering, not tipping, not letting any of the other ten thousand things take the place of those cicada wings—how can I help but succeed?” At this point, Confucius turns to his disciples to say: “He keeps his will undivided and concentrates his spirit—that would serve to describe our hunchback gentleman here, would it not?” See Burton Watson (trans.), *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), pp. 199–200. This anonymous reviewer was particularly insightful about the ambivalent nature of the bamboo; if it represents steadfastness of the self in the face of adversity, it also offers extinction of that self through (as with Wen Tong) total identification with it, and just as it both nourishes the body and offers tools for other forms of nourishment, so too does it both rustle and resound as wind passes through it, whilst it can be fashioned in a variety of manmade instruments.

As it so happens, the most famous written record of the exchange between Su Shi and Wen Tong on the topic of the painting of bamboo, an essay entitled “Record of Wen Tong’s Painting of the Bent Bamboos of the Valley of the Tall Bamboos” (“Wen Yuke hua yundangu yan zhu ji” 文與可畫筴簞谷偃竹記), is included as a colophon to Shitao’s painting in homage to Wen Tong that is referred to above. It is in this essay that, famously, Su Shi argues that “Anyone painting bamboo must have a completed bamboo already in his chest” (故畫竹必先心得成竹於胸中) before they take up their brush.²¹ And as it happened, also, this essay then lent its name to a late Ming dynasty garden in which the obsession with bamboo achieves something of its apotheosis. In 1601, having with great difficulty extracted himself from office and finding himself ill and back at home in Gong’an 公安 in Huguang, the late Ming dynasty scholar Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道 (1568–1610) built himself a beautiful garden which he named his Studio of the Billowing Willows (Liulang guan 柳浪館).²² His devoted younger brother, Yuan Zhongdao 袁中道 (1570–1624), proceeded to build himself a garden in order to be close by, Yuan Hongdao naming this garden the Valley of the Tall Bamboo (Yundangu 簞簞谷). Yuan Zhongdao wrote the following account of the creation of this garden and the beauty of the bamboos it enclosed:

“A Record of the Valley of the Tall Bamboos”

The Valley of the Tall Bamboos is about thirty *mu* in circumference and was completely covered in fine bamboo. Just within the gate a rectangular patch of land ten *zhang* long and half as wide has been cleared of bamboo. Here, at the entrance, I have had Banksia roses trained to form a hedge and stones from Brocade River placed at intervals of several *zhang*, shaded by plantains. Two sweet olive trees grow here, both of which are thick of trunk. When in flower, their fragrance pervades the air as far as a good ten *li* away. There, too, stand a couple of gardenia trees, along with both a yellow and a white flowering apricot tree. A pavilion bears the inscription: “Assorted Blossoms.” A chamber is sited besides the grove and is named: “Gallery of the Flowering Apricot.” A bamboo fence surrounds the whole and beyond this fence, to both front and back, left and right, there is found

21 For a translation of this essay, see Susan Bush, *The Chinese Literati on Painting: Su Shih (1037–1101) to Tung Ch’i-ch’ang (1555–1636)*, p. 37. Verisimilitude was not always the desideratum when depicting bamboo. We are told that on one occasion late at night, when working under candlelight, the Yuan dynasty artist Ni Zan 倪瓚 (1301–1374), another man obsessed with the plant, was very pleased with a painting of a bamboo that he had completed. Upon awaking the next morning and viewing his painting, he discovered that it “doesn’t look at all like a bamboo” (全不似竹). With a laugh, he declared: “No easy task, achieving something that doesn’t look at all like the subject depicted!” (全不似處不容易到耳), for which, see Shen Hao 沈顗, *Notes on Painters (Huazhu 畫塵)*, in Huang Binhong 黃賓虹 and Deng Shi 鄧實 (eds.), *Meishu congshu* 美術叢書 (Yangzhou: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1986), Vol. 1, p. 318.

22 On the tortuous process whereby Yuan Hongdao managed to extract himself from office, see Duncan Campbell, “The Epistolary World of a Reluctant 17th Century Chinese Magistrate: Yuan Hongdao in Suzhou,” *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies*, 4, 1 (June, 2002): 159–193.

nothing apart from bamboo. To the west of the fence, behind the “Grove of Assorted Blossoms,” a path winds its way through the bamboo for some fifty paces or so. Here, too, a rectangular area has been cleared of bamboo, some thirty *zhang* in length and a third as wide. Here I have had built a three-bay pavilion, named: “Pure Greenness.” Behind this is sited a hall, also of three-bays, bearing the name: “Sheathed Dragon.” Behind this again there is a small chamber for quiet repose. A wall surrounds this in turn and again, beyond the wall to both front and back, left and right, there is found nothing but bamboo. To the west, behind the “Pure Greenness Pavilion,” yet another rectangular patch of land, some ten *zhang* long and half as wide, has been cleared of bamboo. Four thick trunked yellow oranges have been planted here. At year’s end, these trees produce several catties of fruit of exceptional sweetness and quality. A pavilion called “Joy of the Orange” stands there, this too being surrounded by a bamboo fence. Bamboo alone grows both to the front and back of the fence, and to its left and right.

The upright man loves the bamboo, but none, I’d venture, has planted as many thousand as have I. The rustle of their leaves is forever in my ears, the sight of their colour always before my eyes, their scent assails my nose constantly and the taste of their shoots lingers long in my mouth. I feel the green chill of their shade upon my body and my mood is affected by their gentle sighing, for nobody can compare with me in my enjoyment of the bamboo. I eat and sleep surrounded by them.

I bought this land from Master Wang in exchange for several hundred *mu* of rich and fertile field and I designed the garden with my brother Hongdao. Within a couple of years, it has become the fine garden of today. It was Hongdao, too, who gave my garden its present name: “Valley of the Tall Bamboo.”

簕簕谷遇遭可三十畝皆美竹門以內芟去竹一方縱可十丈橫半之前以木香編籬植錦川石數丈者一芟蕉覆之有木樨二株皆合抱開時香聞十餘里蘂葡萄黃白梅各二株有亭顏曰雜華林旁有室曰梅花廊總以竹籬絡之而籬外之前後左右皆竹也於籬之西雜華林之後有竹徑百武又芟去竹一方縱可三十丈橫三之一有亭三楹顏曰淨綠後有堂三楹名曰籬龍其後為燕居小室總以牆絡之而牆外之前後左右皆竹也於牆之西淨綠亭之後又芟去竹一方縱可十丈橫半之種黃柑四株皆合抱歲下柑實數石甘美異他柑有亭曰橘樂亦以籬絡之而籬之前後左右皆竹也竹為清士所愛然未有植之幾數萬箇如予竹之多者予耳常聆其聲日常攬其色鼻常嗅其香口常食其筍身常親其冷翠意常領其瀟遠則天下之受享此竹亦未有如予若飲食衣服纖毫不相離者予既以腴田數百畝易之王氏稍與中郎相視點綴數年間遂成佳園而中郎總名之曰簕簕谷云²³

- 23 “Yundang gu ji” 簕簕谷記, in Qian Bochong 錢伯城 (ed.), *Kexuezhai ji* 珂雪齋集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1989), Vol. 2, p. 546. This variety of bamboo is thin skinned, has long internodes, and grows up to thirty feet tall. It is commonly found growing along waterways. My friend Pania Yanjie Mu alerts me to the use of the Water Bamboo (*shuizhu* 水竹) (*Phyllostachys heteroclada* Oliver) for hydrological purposes in southern China, planted in valleys and along embankments as a way of protecting the topsoil and helping to turn wetlands into cultivable fields. When pressed, the Water Bamboo also produced a fragrant oil that was used in certain cosmetics, whilst, when ground, it was used for medicinal purposes.

China is home to some 620 varieties of bamboo (in Mandarin, *zhu* 竹; *Bambuseae*),²⁴ more than half of the varieties that have so far been identified, and the bamboo bulks large in the vegetative matter of most Chinese gardens, as it does also in the poems, paintings, and essays produced in those gardens. Very frequently, the bamboo features in the names of the gardens, and in the names of the structures or scenes within those gardens.²⁵ “Nothing could be more deeply characteristic of the Chinese scene than they,” Joseph Needham claims in his discussion of Dai Kaizhi’s monograph on the plant, “or more prominent in Chinese art and technology through the ages.”²⁶ “Bamboo is an essential component of any Chinese garden,” Peter Valder argues: as fence or railing (*zhuli* 竹籬 or *bali* 笆籬) or trellis (*zhuping*

24 Of bamboo, *Hobson-Jobson* says: “This word, one of the commonest in Anglo-Indian daily use, and thoroughly naturalised in English, is of exceedingly obscure origin,” for which, see Henry Yule and A.C. Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson* (1886; rept. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 75. As a radical (*bushou* 部首) (No. 118 in the listing established in the *Kangxi Dictionary* (*Kangxi zidian* 康熙字典) of 1716), apart from occurring as part of the range of objects mentioned below, delightfully, it is also a component part of the Chinese character for “laughter” or “smile” (*xiao* 笑), explained etymologically as depicting a person doubled over in laughter. Does the character also capture something of the joyful rustle of bamboo in a breeze? Describing Tao Qian 陶潛 (ca. 365–427) in his “Matching Tao Yuanming’s ‘Drinking Wine’: Third of Twenty Poems” (“He Tao Yuanming yin jiu ershishou qi san” 和陶淵明飲酒二十首其三), Su Shi writes: “Only Yuanming remained pure and authentic,/ Chatting and chortling his way through life./ Like bamboo buffeted by the wind,/ His every leaf set aquiver as it brushes by./ With equanimity he faced all his ups and downs./ And his poems wrote themselves whenever he had a cup in hand” (淵明獨清真談笑得此生身如受風竹掩冉眾葉驚俯仰個有態得酒詩自成).

25 Bamboo Garden (*Zhuyuan* 竹園) in Peking, once owned by the prominent Ming official Zhou Jing 周經 (1440–1510), is an example. A party held in this garden in 1499, on the occasion of Zhou’s sixtieth birthday and at which he was joined by nine equally prominent friends, was immortalised in a series of woodblock illustrations of the event produced by the calligrapher Wu Kuan 吳寬 (1436–1504) and entitled “Scenes of a Birthday Gathering in Bamboo Garden” (“Zhuyuan shouji tu” 竹園壽集圖), with the birds drawn by Lü Ji 呂紀 and the human figures by Lü Wenying 呂文英. This title was later reproduced in the 1560s under the title *Gatherings in Two Gardens* (*Er yuan ji* 二園集), a copy of which is held in the Library on Congress, Washington D.C. and an electronic version of which is available online at the World Digital Library (<https://www.wdl.org/en/item/296/>). The Bamboo Garden hotel in present-day Peking, not far from the Drum Tower (鼓樓), was said to have once belonged to the important late-Qing dynasty reformer Sheng Xuanhuai 盛宣懷 (1844–1916); later on, during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), it became the residence of Kang Sheng 康生 (ca. 1898–1975), sometime chief of internal Communist Party intelligence and security and a man who, over the course of his post-49 career, amassed (through appropriation) an extraordinary collection of paintings, calligraphy, and antiques, especially inkstones. He was posthumously disgraced. The important Ming dynasty scholar Fang Xiaoru 方孝孺 (1357–1402), for instance, executed by the Yongle emperor (1360–1424; r. 1402–1424) for refusing to draft a rescript legitimising the emperor’s usurpation of the throne, named his studio the “Studio for Forming Friendships with the Green Culms” (*Youyunxuan* 友筠軒).

26 Joseph Needham, *Science & Civilisation in China: Volume 6: Biology and Biological Technology: Part I: Botany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 377. Needham also discusses an important later Chinese monograph on the bamboo, Li Kan’s 李衍 (1245–1320) *Detailed Manual of the Bamboo* (*Zhu pu xianglu* 竹譜詳錄), in which the distinction between the two types of rhizomes (*zhugen erzong* 竹根二種), the spreading (*san* 散) and the clumping (*cong* 叢), is both established and depicted, for which, see, pp. 387–388.

竹屏) bamboo serves to divide and to screen,²⁷ as poles they provide the scaffolding for the structures of the garden, when worked, they serve to supply the tools of the garden (rakes and brooms, stakes, rainhats, walking sticks, fishing poles, fish traps, baskets, bridges, and so on), the tools of the study and bedroom (brushes, brush pots and holders, wrist rests, fans, blinds, various items of furniture and types of musical instrument,²⁸ floor mats, book trunks, bookmarks or index-labels, bamboo (or Dutch) wives (*zhufuren* 竹夫人), paper, combs),²⁹ and both the tools of the

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- 27 On which, see Jung Woo-Jin, “Changes in the uses and meanings of the bamboo screen (*zhuping*: 竹屏) in traditional Chinese gardens,” *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes: An International Quarterly* (2014). Making use of some available pictorial evidence, Jung suggests that by the late Ming period the use and meaning of the bamboo screen had shifted from function to focus, from being a means to screen off a section of one’s garden and create a sense of aloofness, to an object of conspicuous display and attention.
- 28 “The sound of the bamboo overflows like water,” states the “Record of Music” (“Yue ji” 樂記) chapter of the *Book of Rites* (*Li ji* 禮記), “overflowing it establishes assembly, and assembly in turn serves to bring together the multitudes” (竹聲濫濫以立會會以聚眾). Famously, when the calligrapher and musician Cai Yong 蔡邕 (132–192) was fleeing the chaos of the collapse of the Han dynasty, he happened to look up at the bamboo rafters of the inn that he was putting up in and spotted a piece of bamboo that he had fashioned into a transverse flute (*di* 笛), the sound of which was unparalleled. In an item in the “Contempt and Insults” (輕詆) chapter of the *Shishuo xinyu*, we are told that this flute, then in the possession of Sun Chuo 孫綽 (fl. 330–365), was broken when he allowed one of his female dancers to use it as a prop, to the very great consternation of the calligrapher (and father of Wang Huizhi) Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (309–ca. 365), for which, see Richard B. Mather (trans.), *Shih-shuo Hsin-yü: A New Account of Tales of the World*, p. 471. When questioning Ziqi of Southwall about the “Piping of Heaven” (*tianlai* 天籟) in the “Discussion on Making All Things Equal” (“Qiwu lun” 齊物論) chapter of the *Book of Master Zhuang*, Yancheng Ziyou suggests that the “...piping of man is merely the sound of bamboo bound together” (人籟則比竹是已), for which, see *Daode zhen jing: Nanhua zhen jing* 道德真經南華真經 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1993), p. 33. In his commentary, Guo Xiang 郭象 (252–312) suggests that this refers to the sound of “...panpipes and flutes and suchlike things” (簫管之類).
- 29 Such objects were often of exquisite design. In his *Dream Memories*, the late-Ming essayist and historian Zhang Dai 張岱 (1597–?1684) tells of one particular fashioner of such things: “Pu Zhongqian of Nanjing is a man both ancient of appearance and ancient of heart; ‘deferential and seemingly with no ability,’ the ingenuity of his workmanship is such however as to partake of the genius of nature itself. Of his bamboo objects, his brooms or his brushes, it may be said that in his hands, with a slice or two of his knife, the smallest piece of bamboo immediately commands a price of a *tael* or so of silver. And yet, what brings him most pleasure is when he can produce some marvellous object from a twisted and contorted piece of bamboo without a single slice of his knife—it is hard to understand why it is that having passed through his hands, with a scrape here or a polish there, his products become worth so very much. His reputation spread and any object carrying his name became immediately extremely expensive, the livelihoods of several dozen of the shopkeepers along Three Mountains Street 三山街 almost entirely dependent upon his art. Meanwhile, Pu Zhongqian himself remained, quite contentedly, dirt poor. Sitting in the house of a friend, if a fine piece of bamboo or rhinoceros horn happened to catch his eye, he would grab it and set to work upon it. If the product of his labours happened not to please him overmuch however, he would refuse to allow it to fall into the hands of another, however important they might be and however much he was offered for it,” for which, see “Pu Zhongqian’s Carvings” (“Pu Zhongqian diaoke” 濮仲謙雕刻) in Xia Xianchun 夏咸淳 and Cheng Weirong 程維榮 (eds.), *Taoan mengyi: Xihu mengxun* 陶庵夢憶：西湖夢尋 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2001), p. 20.

kitchen (chopsticks,³⁰ steamers, sieves, hampers, kindling and charcoal) and a vital ingredient of Chinese cuisine. The Qing dynasty connoisseur Li Yu 李漁 (1610–1680), for instance, declared bamboo shoots to be “the best of all the vegetables” (*shushi diyi pin ye* 蔬食第一品也).³¹

As captured most outstandingly in the various texts cited at the start of this essay, chronologically arranged,³² the Chinese engagement with the bamboo down through the ages has also been a profoundly intellectual and emotional one; the bamboo plays a vital role in the powerful but restricted and highly moralised plant-based symbolic language and its associated iconography that the gardens of China sought to embody, what Jonathan Hay calls the “...established iconography of moral achievement in the form of imagery of plants, flowers, fruit, and vegetables.”³³ Like bamboo buffeted by

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- 30 Both the classical (*zhu* 箸 and *zhu* 筴) and modern (*kuaizi* 筷子) Chinese words for chopsticks contain the bamboo radical. On the chopstick, see Q. Edward Wang, *Chopsticks: A Cultural and Culinary History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
- 31 *Occasional Notes of Idle Emotions* (*Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶寄) (Taipei: Chang'an chubanshe, 1979), p. 255. The early Jesuit missionaries to China made note of the prevalence of bamboo in Chinese gardens (and its “very pleasant aspect”), as well as the variety of its usage (“...mats, cabinets, little vases, combs”). In his *Novus atlas Sinensis* (1655), Martino Martini remarks on the culinary use of the shoots which: “...are eaten with meat, like turnips or cardoons and cooked artichokes; when marinated in vinegar, they can be preserved throughout the year as a condiment or companion for foods that are tasty and refined,” for which, see Bianca Maria Rinaldi, *The “Chinese Garden in Good Taste: Jesuits and Europe’s Knowledge of Chinese Flora and Art of the Garden in the 17th and 18th Centuries* (München: Martin Meidenbauer, 2006), p. 110. The Yuan brothers’ associate Jiang Yingke 江盈科 (1553–1605) named the garden that he established in Chang’an in 1599 the “Pavilion of the Two Gentlemen” (*Liang junzi ting* 兩君子亭). In his account of this garden, he lists the varieties of both bamboo and lotus that it contains, these two plants (of the “innumerable categories of plants and trees” [*fu caomu zhi bu bu ke shuji* 夫草木之部不可數計]) being the only ones worthy of being accorded the epithet “gentlemen,” making note of both the various physical usages to which the plants can be put, and the extent to which “...their virtues can be compared to those of the gentleman” (*qi bi de yu junzi er* 其比德於君子爾), for which, see his “Record of the Pavilion of the Two Gentlemen” (“*Liang junzi ting ji*” 兩君子亭記), in Huang Rensheng 黃仁生 (ed.), *Jiang Yingke ji* 江盈科集 (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1997), Vol. 1, pp. 368–370.
- 32 In life, of course, the jumble of one’s memory serves to scramble the chronology of text recalled to mind, and to fuse the meaning of these texts to personal memories of person and place.
- 33 Jonathan Hay, *Shitao: Painting and Modernity in Early Qing China*, p. 182. Hay makes the point that for all Shitao’s inventiveness in other ways as a painter, with respect to this plant-based symbolic system, his practice proved consistent throughout his life. An early treatment of the topic is Alfred Koehn, “Chinese Flower Symbolism,” *Monumenta Nipponica*, 8 (1952): 121–146. In a review of Jessica Rawson, *The Lotus and the Dragon*, David L. McMullen talks about how “remarkably small” the repertory was in the Chinese case: “To the lotus, peony, bamboo, pine, and prunus should be added the peach, the chrysanthemum and the orchid. In the literary tradition, these flowers provided the topics for countless compositions in many genres over many centuries. They were indeed symbols; their appeal was many sided, and not, like typical flower symbols in the Western tradition, based on a simple one to one correlation with a single virtue or moral value. Meaning was read into their habitats, their shape, and from the season of the year in which they flowered or were most conspicuous. Their ability to withstand the weather, their medicinal properties and the meaning of characters homophonous with their names were also given significance. Their

the wind, in the face of powerful adversaries the gentleman may bend but he does not break; his modesty can be likened to the bamboo's hollow heart (*xuxin* 虛心), his integrity to its joints (*jie* 節), and his humility to the fact that the leaves of the bamboo droop downwards as if bowing in respect.³⁴ In association with the pine (*song*

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33. – *ctd.* appeal as auspicious symbols was reaffirmed time and again by their use in given names...,” for which, see *Modern Asian Studies*, 21 (1987): 198–200. In the chapter on the gardens of China, “The Chinese Garden and the collaboration of the Arts,” in his *A World of Gardens* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), pp. 202–220, John Dixon Hunt discusses the extent to which “...gardens, both real and ‘on the ground’ and imaginary in poem or painting, were always mediated: texts were fundamental in designing and understanding gardens, and mediatization of cultural traditions was essential” (pp. 202–203). This applies equally to the plants growing within these gardens. For a melancholic view of the extent to which this symbolic system is still at play (or not) in contemporary China, see John Minford, “The Chinese Garden: Death of a Symbol,” in Stanislaus Fung and John Makeham (eds.), *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (1998): 257–268.
34. In his *Mirror of Flowers* (*Huajing* 花鏡), preface dated 1688, Chen Haozi 陳淏子 says of the bamboo that: “The attribution of meaning to this plant on the part of the ancients proved uniquely detailed and one notes that the excellence of the bamboo is be found in its modesty and its profound sense of integrity, in the extent to which, in both character and physical form, it is both tough and resolute, such that it does not wilt whenever it encounters either dew or snow but rather remains luxuriant throughout all four seasons, never wanton in its beauty but appreciated alike by both common and refined” (古人取義獨詳按竹之妙虛心密節性體堅剛值霜雪而不凋歷四時而常茂頗無天艷雅俗共賞), for which, see *Huajing* (Beijing: Nongye chubanshe, 1985), p. 239. Here, Chen Haozi perhaps has the Tang poet Bo Juyi 白居易 (772–846) in mind; in his “Record of Raising Bamboo” (“Yang zhu ji” 養竹記), Bai provides the following enumeration of the virtues of the bamboo: “The bamboo appears wise and worthy. How so? Its roots are firm, and being firm it establishes its virtue, such that, upon seeing such roots, the gentleman thinks immediately of establishing some good that is permanent; its nature is staunch, and being staunch it takes its stand, such that seeing that its nature is such, the gentleman thinks immediately of being impartial and above bias; its heart is hollow, and being hollow it may embody the Way, such that seeing that its heart is thus, the gentleman thinks immediately that he should be modest and receptive; its joints are steadfast, and being steadfast it can maintain its will, such that, upon seeing its joints, the gentleman thinks immediately of striving valiantly to be moral and correct. Such is the case, whatever are the vicissitudes of life. It is for reasons such as these that very many gentlemen plant bamboos, as adornments for their courtyards” (竹似賢何哉竹本固固以樹德君子見其本則思善建不拔者竹性直直以立身君子見其性則思中立不倚者竹心空空以體道君子見其心則思應用虛受者竹節貞貞以立志君子見其節則思砥礪名行夷險一致者夫如是故君子大多樹之為庭實焉), for which, see Gu Xuejie 顧學頤 (ed.), *Bai Juyi ji* 白居易集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju chubanshe, 1988), Vol. 3, pp. 936–937. Later, Su Shi, in his “Record of the Hall of the Ink Gentleman,” was to write of his friend Wen Tong that like the bamboo: “He flourishes in propitious circumstances without ever becoming arrogant, whereas in less than propitious circumstances he withers away without ever losing his dignity; when in a group, he never leans on those beside him, but when standing alone he is never fearful” (得志遂茂而不驕不得志瘁瘠而不辱群居不倚獨立不懼), for which, see *Su Dongpo quanji*, Vol. 1, p. 381. When she entered into the male domain of painting bamboos, the Yuan dynasty artist Guan Daosheng 管道昇 (1262–1319) seems to have been aware of the extent to which she was transgressing, for which, see Marsha Weidner et al. (eds.), *Views from Jade Terrace: Chinese Women Artists, 1300–1912* (New York: Indianapolis Museum of Art and Rizzoli, 1988), p. 67. She is sometimes traditionally attributed with the development of painting bamboos with red ink (朱筆畫竹), although this is elsewhere attributed to Su Shi, for which, see Yu Jianhua 俞劍華 (ed.), *Zhongguo hualun leibian* 中國畫論類編 (Beijing: Renmin meishu

松) and the *prunus mume* or flowering apricot (*mei* 梅), bamboo's steadfastness in the face of adversity saw it labelled, in poetry, since the Tang dynasty, and depicted in painting since the Song, as one of the "Three Friends of the Winter" (*suihan sanyou* 歲寒三友). Somewhat more prosaically, either placed in a vase alongside or depicted together with a spring of flowering apricot, the bamboo symbolised a husband and wife. For traditionally educated Chinese, these understandings of the moral and aesthetic properties of the bamboo, either simply present in a garden as a component of its plantings, or explicitly conjured up by means of name or quotation, serve as a form of mental or remembered paratext that lends meaning to whatever garden it is that they might find themselves within.³⁵ A late and much cited expression of this dimension of the gardens of late imperial China is found in the novel *The Dream of the Red Chamber/The Story of the Stone* where, faced with the taxing task of conjuring into existence through the naming of its features the garden built to commemorate his daughter's brief return to her parental home, having become a concubine to the Emperor, the woefully inadequate patriarch of the Jia family, Jia Zheng 賈政, declares: "All those prospects and pavilions—even the rocks and trees and flowers will seem somehow incomplete without that touch of poetry which only the written word can lend a scene" (若大景緻若干亭榭無字標題也覺寥落無趣任有花柳山水也斷不能生色).³⁶ In a resonant treatment of the play of cultural memory in the experience of the gardens of China, Stanislaus Fung

34. – *ctd.* chubanshe, 1986), Vol. 2, p. 1189. In a poem discussing the techniques required of an artist seeking to depict the bamboo, Guan's husband Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254–1322) writes: "They need to understand that painting and calligraphy are actually one and the same thing" (須知書畫本來同), for which, see Yu Jianhua (ed.), *Zhongguo hualun leibian*, Vol. 2, p. 1063.

35 If it is the paratext that "...enables a text to become a book," as Gerard Genette has argued, then one could say that the various paratexts, both present and recalled, enable a plot of land to become a garden. On paratexts, see Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, Jane E. Lewin (trans.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). "More than a boundary or a sealed border," Genette suggests, "the paratext is, rather, a threshold, or—a word Borges used apropos of a preface—a 'vestibule' that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back" (pp. 1–2). The architectural metaphor is significant; Genette's discussion of the various functions of the epigraph (pp. 156–160) seem particularly useful in thinking about the role of text (and remembered text) in the manner in which in China gardens sought to generate legible meaning.

36 David Hawkes (trans.), *The Story of the Stone: Volume I: The Golden Days* (Penguin, 1973), pp. 324–325; *Hongloumeng (sanjia pingben)* 紅樓夢 (三家評本) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1988), Vol. 1, p. 249. Working on his translation of Chapter 17 ("The inspection of the new garden becomes a test of talent/ And Rong-guo House makes itself ready for an important visitor") during the spring of 1971, David Hawkes appears to have recourse to Osvald Sirén's *Gardens of China*, Andrew Boyd's *Chinese Architecture*, and Gin Dihj Sü's *Chinese Architecture, Past and Contemporary*, for which, see David Hawkes, *The Story of the Stone: A Translator's Notebooks* (Hong Kong: Centre for Literature and Translation, Lingnan University, 2000) p. 15. On the role of the garden in the novel, see Dore J. Levy, "The Garden and Garden Culture in *The Story of the Stone*," in Andrew Schonebaum and Tina Lu (eds.), *Approaches to Teaching The Story of the Stone (Dream of the Red Chamber)* (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2012), pp. 115–132; in the same volume, pp. 91–94, see also Charlotte Furth's discussion of the nature of this fictional garden. For an illustrated catalogue of the role of plants in the novel, see Pan Fujun 潘富俊, *Hongloumeng zhiwu tujian* 紅樓夢植物圖鑑 (Taipei: Maotouying chubanshe, 2004).

identifies two levels at which this dimension can be understood, the first constituting an established body of exemplary texts, and the other the extent to which the quoted texts may become “loosened from their original contexts” and the garden visitor be “... allowed to shuttle between prescription, suggestion, and evocation.”³⁷ “From the late Ming dynasty onward, these two layers of cultural memory operated together. The first maintains the specificity of historical orientation as allusion to exemplary events and personages that are integral to discourse on gardens. The second opened the tradition of ‘things said’ to the scenarios of self-cultivation and social distinction. The crux is not simply remembering ‘who said what,’ but tuning oneself to a tradition and making one’s way in a world of commodified knowledges in a social setting” (p. 132). In these terms, and thinking now finally of the bamboo that may be both physically present and conjured up in one’s mind as one makes one’s way through a garden, one’s outward movement is accompanied by an inward movement of recall and imagination. It is this movement that serves to reanimate the exemplary moments of intense engagement with bamboo captured for all time in texts such as those cited above. This is a twinned process that mirrors, in a remarkable way, the apparent paradox captured in the quotation that Zheng Banqiao employs to explicate the process of viewing a painting, whereby one “rolls it up and withdraws into it in order to hide away in mysteriousness” (斂之則退藏於密) as one also (亦復) “unrolls it and thus extends oneself throughout the Six Realms of Heaven and Earth and all Four Quarters” (放之可彌六合). It is a twinned process that also mirrors the underlying conceit of the late imperial Chinese garden—the extent to which it is both metaphorical condensation (the manner in which the garden is a miniaturised cosmos) and metonymical extension (the manner in which the garden itself partakes of the grandeur of that cosmos).

Biographical Note

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37 Stanislaus Fung, “The Language of Cultural Memory in Chinese Gardens,” in Tony Atkin and Joseph Rykwert (eds.), *Structure & Meaning in Human Settlements* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2005), pp. 123–134.