Introduction

This book does not present a history of 'the Chinese garden'. It is written out of a distrust that such a thing exists. What I attempt to do is give an account of some of the discursive practices surrounding the idea of a garden among the ruling society of China, in a restricted geographical area between c. 1450 and 1650. These practices are expressed in textual visual representations, in the form of maps, paintings and illustrations to books. They almost entirely emanate from one part of China, the lower Yangtze valley region known as Jiangnan, which by the Ming period (1368-1644), enjoyed pre-eminence both economically and culturally. Some additional evidence comes from accounts of the imperial capital of Peking.

It seems to me useful and necessary to put into circulation in English some small part of the very large quantity of writing about gardens that exists in the Chinese literature of the period. Much of this is in the form of *bi ji* or 'Note-form literature', in which any mention of gardens may be tiny in proportion to the purposes of the total text, and skimming through it to make notes only when the word 'garden' is spotted is an unsound procedure I have found is hard to break away from. However, we have to have a better understanding at the level of who owned what, where, when. I have by no means read all this literature, but I feel I have read enough to sustain an argument about changes in the way the concept of 'garden' was deployable over the period covered in this book, and to make a case that written and pictorial constructions of this category in 1600 were not what they had been in 1500.

My account begins relatively abruptly. There is no examination of the philological roots of the various terms translated as 'garden', nor are there citations of instances of those words in classical Chinese texts of the Bronze Age. This is a conscious strategy of reading, a refusal to make the equation of origins with essences, which is one of the central practices of orientalism. Instead, I have sought to remain alert to what was written about gardens in Ming China as discursive statements in their own right, as 'constituting serious propositions about the world rather than simply as dead bits of evidence'. I make an equally conscious attempt to manoeuvre the idea of the garden into proximity with other discourses, such as that of landed property, which have been neglected in the existing English language secondary literature. Although there is a willingness, even an
eagerness, to talk about the ‘holistic’ nature of the Chinese world view, in which things are interconnected and intertwined, in practice there remains a taboo on speaking about the economic implications of cultural practices in China, a reticence that is not entirely explained by the admittedly often scanty evidence. Bringing some of these implications into the foreground in this case is done not in the spirit of revealing the ‘true’ nature of ‘the Chinese garden’, of arguing in a reductive way that Chinese gardens are ‘really about’ the economics of property owning. Rather, this book is offered as a partial ‘alternative history’, in the spirit of James Cahill’s innovative *Three Alternative Histories of Chinese Painting*, and with its viewpoint that ‘art history can be validly written in a diversity of ways or modes, depending on which aspects of art and its circumstances we choose as our focus of concentration’.  

One incident may foreground the kind of approach this book is written against. In the spring of 1934, the American landscape architect Fletcher Steele (1885–1971) took a three-month trip to the Far East.  

The modernized itinerary of the Grand Tour, by which the inter-war years was becoming a regular indulgence for wealthy Europeans and Americans, took Steele to a number of sites in North China, and provided him with material that he subsequently presented to his professional peers, in a lecture to the Boston Society of Landscape Architects in 1946. The published version of this lecture bears the uncompromising title ‘China Teaches: Ideas and Moods from Landscape of the Celestial Empire’. Its opening section is further titled ‘Race and Design – China’, and begins with a sentence whose rhetorical crispness allows of no contradiction: ‘The Chinese garden is the sanctuary of the introvert.’ Steele’s purpose, as he insisted in a footnote, was ‘not to write about China, but to use China as an illustration for my propaganda for certain ideas and moods of gardens and garden designers. This was my purpose, not mere description’.  

In his writing, he proceeds by means of statements that circumscribe an entire discourse of what ‘the Chinese’ do, think and mean, all of it extrapolated from the single site of ‘the Chinese garden’.

Steele incorporated the text of this lecture as a chapter of a book published in 1934, though modifying the title, so that China no longer teaches. Now it was simply the case that ‘China Knows’, just as ‘Englishmen Care’, ‘The French Must Calculate’, ‘The Italian Feels’ and ‘Spain Endures’.  

The text of ‘China Knows’ contains one significant modification. A sentence that in the earlier version had read ‘After seeing everything from Newport mansions to whole cities torn down just to make room for the latest novelty, it is soothing to feel the timelessness of a design idea in China’, now substitutes for ‘in China’ the words ‘in a less volatile civilisation’. The thirty years separating these words from Steele’s trip might justifiably be considered as years that were in fact quite volatile for the Chinese who lived through them, encompassing as they did civil war, the eight years onslaught of and resistance to Japanese imperialism, another civil war of massive proportions, the upheaval of the socialist transformation of China, the Great Leap Forward and its attendant famine. In 1964, Steele’s ‘less volatile civilisation’ was poised on the brink of the ten years of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.

This may seem like an easy, even a trivial, target – a once fashionable landscape architect’s ignorance of international politics. However, it is a blindness which it is now impossible to see as not being a product of the whole complex of ideas we have come to know as ‘Orientalism’. Even if I am tempted to say especially a history of gardens that takes no account of this, which asserts the complete separateness of garden writing from other structures of knowing the East, can no longer be seen as self-evidently correct.

Links between ‘the Chinese garden’ and ‘the Chinese character’ were being made well back in the nineteenth century, in a context that was explicitly derogatory of both:

Chinese taste in gardening, it thus appears, partakes of the general character of the people, and is characterised by their leading feature, peculiarity. The love of the grotesque and of monstrosities is seldom accompanied in individuals of any country with enlightened views and liberal sentiments, which are almost always combined with simplicity. An early nineteenth-century author may have disliked Chinese gardens as vigorously as Steele appreciated them, but in both cases it is equally only the authenticating gaze of the Western observer that can authorize statements about them at all. It is not China that ‘knows’ but ‘the West’, here embodied in the person of the three-months sojourner Fletcher Steele. He is who has understood the essential, invariant characteristics that link the formal features of specific landscape sites he has visited to ideas about ‘the race’. The race will never change, just as ‘the Chinese garden’ will never change, and so war, revolution and famine are in this scheme trivial events, the narration of which would involve a descent into ‘mere description’.
that rely on ascribed essences intrinsic to the Chinese garden and the Chinese race, but also to the very concept of 'Chinese society' and 'Chinese culture' as historically coherent and stable objects. I am convinced by the argument that 'because our notion of "society" as the main category of analysis itself entails the displacement of agency on to essences, we should replace the notion of society with the idea of a polity'.

The idea of an authentic culture as an inherently coherent, self-sufficient affair of essence has not, in my view, survived the critique expressed by James Clifford among others, and now developed by Edward Said in his recent analysis of the articulation of imperialist discourse in cultural forms. I have therefore tried in what follows to challenge the presumption of the essential alterity of something called 'Chinese culture', where differences between historical practices in western Europe and China are maximized and differences between practices in China at different historical or geographical points are minimized. It is my contention that accounts of the garden have been more than usually complicit in the manufacture and sustenance of China's otherness. They have done this through invoking timeless relationships between 'the Chinese' and 'nature', stereotypes that, in the words of Homi Bhaba, are 'a form of knowledge and identification that oscillates between what is always "in place", already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated ...' The Chinese garden is, in the accounts of Fletcher Steele, Dorothy Graham and many others, always the same, but we have to keep on saying so.

As a manifestation of material culture, a garden is an artefact of a particular kind. Philosophical arguments over whether a garden is a work of art are not a central concern here, predicated as they are on the concept of a work of art as a type of thing, a pre-existent category, rather than as a fluctuating manner of categorizing that is historically and socially specific and contested. Gardens do not innately present themselves for examination. This study cannot be situated outside the nascent academic discipline of garden history, a set of practices clustered round the institutional enabling structures of scholarly journals, international conferences and centres of research.

These practices themselves have a history, of the separation of garden history from architectural history, with the concomitant interest in the integrity of individual objects, often focused on their 'original appearance'. This has sometimes acted to privilege early representations of gardens in a rather naive manner, with less attention given to the problems of representation. Far more sophis-
ticated has been the cultural history approach of John Dixon Hunt, who has sought to ground garden history in the widest possible reading of sources, both within and beyond the traditional canon of literature. An alternative approach has sought to minimize the separateness of the garden from the practices of managing the wider landscape, whether it be the American vernacular landscape studied by J. R. Jackson or the plains of early modern North India, manipulated by the early Mughals in ways that had both aesthetic and economic implications. This landscape history is often practiced by scholars who have a background in historical geography, and who initially at least saw their project in opposition to the architectural and art-historical roots of ‘garden history’. In a particularly fine and subtle example of this approach, that of Denis Cosgrove in his recent The Palladian Landscape, there is however a recognition that all aspects of a complex set of procedures involving Palladio’s reshaping of the Venetian ‘tetrasteche’ for his aristocratic clients must be taken into account if a satisfactorily rich reading is to be achieved. The example of Cosgrove’s study is very much in my mind, although I am conscious that the types of material at his disposal are not available for the parts of China and the period of Chinese history about which I write.

Another challenge, since this book, like most books, is written in response to what has already been written, is that posed by Thomas Reinstate’s stimulating Geography of Power in Medieval Japan, which takes the institution of the ‘estate’ (shoen), long recognized as the central economic formation of medieval Japan, and successfully reads it as also a ‘social space’ a cultural system capable of organizing meaning for both estate holders and peasants. Reinstate is dealing with an artefact that has been the exclusive province of economic and social historians. I am dealing with one that has been worked on, if at all, only by art historians. I believe Reinstate and I are working towards a common project from different ends, trying to understand the ‘basic conditions of possibility’ of a given system, rather than providing a typology or a narrative that starts from the premise of the estate’s or garden’s pre-ordained existence. This has involved a process of trying to make what we all know we know seem less familiar.

In an earlier book, entitled Superbous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China, I essayed a partial account of attitudes to property, and the creation of meaning through those parts of property that were categorizable as moveable luxuries. However, I excluded the most important kind of property in pre-modern China, that of property in land. The present work attempts to take up that theme again. The question of the nature of property relations in land is of course far from being an unexplored one. Rather the reverse, there is a daunting literature in Chinese, Japanese, English and other languages on systems of land tenure, property rights and tenancy relations, which I should confess to at the outset I have in no sense mastered. Similarly, there is an equally extensive literature on ‘landscape’ as cultural category, focusing on its role as one of the major divisions of subject-matter in Chinese painting. Economic historians and art historians, however, have historically not been very good at taking each other’s work seriously. Accounts of land tenure say little about how land was represented as a social fact in writing or in pictures and maps, while histories of painting give correspondingly scanty attention to the fact that the objects represented in landscape painting – be they mountains, gardens or bodies of water – were all of them capable in the Ming and Qing periods of being owned, and therefore bought, sold, even gambled away. What makes gardens so interesting is that they are not restricted to a single sphere. They were expensive pieces of real estate, but they were also consciously constructed and aesthetically perceived artefacts. They overlap intriguingly the boundaries of several Chinese categories, and have a power to illuminate the border regions they traverse.

This study therefore begins with discussion of some specific gardens in China, in the major urban centre of Suzhou. It uses this discussion as a way of interpreting less well-documented types of owned landscape, what was said about them, and how they were represented at the time of their creation. I have tried not to see visual representations of landscape as constituting the main field of inquiry, or as the main objects requiring explanation, a criticism that has been levelled (rightly in my view) at even the radical ‘social art historians’ of T. J. Clark and John Barrell. I do not wish to see – paintings of gardens discussed as objects, with actual gardens reduced to their ‘background’, any more than I wish to see the gardens situated ‘in their context’, be it social or economic. Rather I would like to try to produce an open-ended investigation. The inconsistencies present in this account will serve to emphasize the over-determination of the complex phenomenon that has perhaps been too often subsumed into ‘the Chinese garden’. 
1 The Fruitful Garden

Suzhou in the Middle-Ming

Some time early in the third quarter of the fifteenth century, a wealthy textiles merchant named Wu Yong (1350–1457) laid out within the walls of his home city of Suzhou an extensive property to which he gave the name Eastern Estate (Dong zhong). For much of the late imperial period, Suzhou, just west of modern Shanghai, was the most populous non-capital city of the empire, housing half a million people by the sixteenth century within an area of at least 45.8 square kilometres. It was a byword for both the production of luxury goods (alimentary being the most important) and for their consumption by a rich and cultured elite, with a more than usually high proportion of either expectant or retired government officials.

It was in no sense a static urban landscape. Suzhou had been the power base of one of the unsuccessful pretenders for power as the Mongol Yuan dynasty (1279–1368) crumbled, and the city had been sacked in October 1367 after enduring a ten-month siege. Large numbers of its elite families were forcibly transported to other parts of the empire, and a new elite loyal to the Ming founder, Zhu Yuanzhang (1328–98), was installed. Suzhou experienced a major flood in 1440, and serious famine in 1454. However, by the end of the fifteenth century, and in particular during the reign of the Hongwu emperor (1368–1398), there was a sense among contemporaries that Suzhou was regaining some of its former glory. Despite the recovery of urban life, in 1500 it was a city where a considerable amount of productive horticultural land remained within its walls, as was absolutely standard among major Chinese cities at this time. But Suzhou was also starting to lose its population from its intra-mural area during the sixteenth century, as the elite abandoned its eastern half (administratively part of Changzhou county) to workers in the textiles industry, moving themselves and their families to the western (Wu county) side, or outside the city walls altogether to suburbs stretching north-west along the canal connecting Suzhou to the resort spot of Tiger Hill (Hu qi). When Wu Yong was laying out his property, these social and demographic changes lay in the future. An account of the Eastern Estate written by the high official and famous literary figure Li Dongyang (1447–1516, 1508–87, 91) gives us some sense of the major dispositions of the landscape it contained.

The land of Su is rich in water-courses. The Eastern Estate of Old Sir Wu within the Fu Gate lies upon (one of) these, with the Chestnut Moat to its east and the West Stream girdling it to the west. Two creeks touch it at the sides, both of which can be reached by boat. Entering from the Beech Bridge you encounter the Rice Pile. Turning and going south, there lies the Mulberry Orchard, going west again is the Fruit Orchard, then to the south is the Vegetable Patch, to the east the Clothes-shaking Terrace, to the south-west the Breaking Cassia Bridge. Entering from the Pum Rock is the Wheat Mound. Entering from the Lotus Flower Bend is the Bamboo Field, laid out in a chequer-board pattern. The whole covers 60 mu. There is a hall called the Hall of the Continuation of Antiquity, a hermaphrodite called the Hermitage of Artless Cultivation, and a studio called the Studio of Rest from Fouligrant. He also made a pavilion on the Southern Pond, called the Pavilion for the Appreciation of Delight. With the finishing of the pavilion the affairs of the estate were first completed, with the whole thing being named Eastern Estate, from which he took his secondary name (yao) of Old Man of the Eastern Estate (Dong zhong yao). As the text goes on to make clear, the nine acres of the Eastern Estate form a veritable model of rural self-sufficiency, where philosophical ideals of nurturing an antique simplicity and a rustic clumsiness are combined with a complete inventory of the types of land management necessary for the support of an idealized family of kin and servants: rice, vegetables, fruit, and mulberry trees for silk spinning. It further stresses that this property, unlike so many others in the region, remained in the hands of the same family through Suzhou’s turbulent fourteenth century and early fifteenth. Thus the maintenance of property within the Wu family over this violent political transition was a matter worthy of record.

‘From the end of the Yuan through to the beginning of our dynasty, eight- or nine-tenths of the neighbours died or migrated, and the Wu alone remained.’ Li Dongyang goes on to cite a long statement made to him by Wu Kuan (1437–1504, 1508, 1587–9), the son of Wu Yong, creator of the Eastern Estate, in which Wu Kuan praises his father for ‘following the Way [de] and fearing the Laws’, and for ‘preserving his property’ (bao qi yao). He continues with an encomium on the notion of ‘property’ (ye), which is all the more to the point in that what he is describing either is, or is very shortly about to become, his own property. Li Dongyang’s prose ‘Record’ (lou) of the estate is dated 1471, the year in which Wu Yong died. The property would then have been divided equally among his three sons, Wu Kuan being the middle one. It was perfectly possible (though as we shall see, far from inevitable) for sons to keep a property together physically, particularly if it
involved a highly visible piece of urban real estate like the Eastern Estate. In view of the stress on the relationship between continuity of property and continuity of family that is contained in the text, it seems plausible that this is what happened in this individual case.

There is, however, an irony embodied in Li Dongyang’s account that lies at the heart of the object of this present book. Not only was this synecdoche of rural self-sufficiency physically embodied in one of the most populous cities of the empire, it was embodied in a city which at that very period was beginning to lose the ability to feed itself from the agriculture of its immediate hinterland, and was rather dependent on the products of its manufactures (the real source of Wu Yong’s wealth) to support its huge population. The profits made from the silks and other manufactures of the city enabled grain to be purchased from distant areas of the empire, as, for the first time, Suzhou entered a situation where, ‘dependent on its markets rather than its fields’, it ‘could afford to regard nature as an object of aesthetic appreciation’ (DA 572). The Eastern Estate was not a real rural estate, but one of the sights of Suzhou for members of the elite who passed through, taking advantage of the city’s reputation as a centre of cultural production and luxury consumption: ‘Those court scholars who travelled with Wu Kuan heard of the Aged Sir’s virtue, and wrote many poems on the Eastern Estate, which augmented the estate’s fame.’

The source from which I have taken the account of the Eastern Estate by Li Dongyang is a gazetteer, a type of local history combining information on the administrative geography, famous sights, typical products and notable inhabitants of a given region. The particular gazetteer in question, the Cusu zhi of 1506, was initially compiled by the very Wu Kuan whose contacts in the higher reaches of the bureaucracy ensured the property’s fame (though Wu Kuan died in 1504, and the finished book appeared under the editorship of an even more important member of the Suzhou elite, Wang Ao [1450-1536]; DM 2343-7). This is not entirely surprising that the account of the Eastern Estate is given added prominence within this text by its positioning at the very end of the book’s thirty-second chapter, entitled Yuan zhi (‘Gardens and Ponds’). Such a text is not an innocent primary source for the study of Ming dynasty Suzhou (which is the way gazetteers are sometimes read), but a prescriptive text with its own agenda, in this case arguably an agenda for establishing certain familiars and certain networks of connections as hegemonic within the social landscape of the city. There were gardens in the area that are not mentioned in the text.19 There were also prominent cultural figures for whom no garden is listed. The Eastern Estate is presented to us as the culmination of a long tradition of the creation of ‘Gardens and Ponds’ in the Suzhou area, and indeed it bears the name of a much earlier Eastern Estate, the property of the son of Yuan Liao, Prince of Guangling, a magnate active in the area in the fourth century AD.

What is also presented to us is the claim that Wu Yong’s actions in building an urban property of this kind are in some sense a novelty. Conventional accounts in Western secondary literature typically see the practice of garden culture as a constant of ‘traditional China’, but there is a clear sense in contemporary sources of a rhythm of building and decay, of periods when fewer major gardens were constructed and of others when they were relatively more numerous. This was the case with regard particularly to urban garden sites in Suzhou between the twelfth century and the mid-fifteenth, at least in the picture presented by the gazetteer of 1506. It lists fifty-two sites in the chapter on ‘Gardens and Ponds’, dating from the Eastern Jin dynasty (AD 317-420) down to the Eastern Estate. Each of these sites is accompanied by a varying number of literary citations of prose and verse, enabling us to construct a rough league-table of the fame they enjoyed in the mid-Ming period (remembering that this is as likely to be a factor of the fame of the authors involved, as it is of the sites themselves).14 The famous gardens are associated primarily with the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and their fame is not matched by those of sites created in the subsequent two hundred and fifty years.

One famous urban site of the Song dynasty, the ‘Pleasure Patch’, was described in the gazetteer as being partially rebuilt in the period 1246-35 by a major figure of the Suzhou elite, Du Qing [1296-1474]; DM 325-6, whose father had been one of the victims of the forced population migration initiated by the Ming founder. The garden had been laid out and named in the Song period by Zhu Changwen (1032-98) on the site of a yet more ancient property, the Golden Valley Garden of the Qian family.15 However, there were only four completely new gardens worthy of inclusion in the gazetteer that had been laid out in Suzhou predating the period from the creation of the dynasty in 1127 to the time of publication, 1506:

The Xia Family Garden was in Xunshan, and was the place of recreation of Xia Chang [1384-1420]; DM 325-6, Chief Minister of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices, on his retirement.

Little Dongping was created by Assistant Consul Liu Ju [1430-77, 1453]; DM 325-6 on his return from his post in Shansi. At his old dwelling outside the Qi gate he piled up stones to make a mountain. There were ten ‘views'
(jing), with names such as the ‘Moustache Fingering Pavilion’ (Nuan zhi ding) and the ‘Lotus Flower Island’ (Yue hua zhou). Xu Youzhen (1407-73; DMB 612-5) wrote a preface on it.
The ‘Thoughts Hermitage’ (Si gu) is a suburban garden outside the Guo gate at Kunshan, built by the Censor-in-Chief Master Wu. When Zhou Chen (1581-1643; DMB 318) was Grand Coordinator he wrote a poem on it.

The fourth, and final, site to be mentioned in the gazetteer is the Eastern Estate itself. Only one of these four properties was therefore within the walls of Suzhou, with another on the city’s outskirts, while the other two were, respectively, inside and outside the walls of Kunshan, a smaller and administratively subordinate city to the east. The prose and verse works that mention these four sites allow us to compile a list of twelve men recorded by the gazetteer as being involved in the practice of garden culture in fifteenth-century Suzhou, either as owners or celebrants.

What is striking about this group is the number of connections that bind it together into a cohesive in-group, linked together in numerous ways. Eight of its twelve members had major official careers, almost all of them with Peking connections in the most prestigious parts of the bureaucracy, such as the Hanlin Academy or the Censorate. Furthermore, eight of the twelve (though not the same eight) had major reputations as artists, either as calligraphers or painters or both: Xia Chang, Du Qiong, Xu Youzhen, Liu jie, Shen Zhou, Wu Kuan, Liu Daxia, and Li Dongyang. Some, like Xia Chang and Wu Kuan, combined high office with contemporary and subsequent artistic fame. The number of this group who find a place in the modern, and necessarily highly selective, reference book, the *Dictionary of Ming Biography* of 1976, gives some idea of how prominent they mostly were, a constellation of wealth, culture and political power that placed them close to the very apex of the social order.

To give some examples of the type of networking involved within the members of this group, Du Qiong, the reviver of the Pleasure Patch, was the teacher of both Wu Kuan, who augmented the fame of his father’s [and his own] Eastern Estate and who drafted the gazetteer that set the seal on its canonical status, and of Shen Zhou (1427-1506; DMB 1175-7), the wealthy landlord and artist who was particularly close to the Wu family and who is known to have immortalized the Estate both in verse and in an album of paintings. Both Wu Kuan and Shen Zhou were in their turn the teachers of the writer and artist Wen Zhengming (1470-1559; DMB 1471-4), who will be a recurrent presence in my account. Wen’s family had links through several generations with the putative group of ‘garden founders’ outlined above. The retirement from office of Wen Hong, Wen Zhengming’s grandfather, was commemorated by a pictorial scroll to which both Li Dongyang and Wu Kuan provided calligraphies. Wen Zhengming attests to the continuing existence of the Eastern Estate of his teacher, Wu Kuan, and to the continuing vitality of the theme of the celebration of family property, in a poem of 1509 entitled ‘Visiting the Wu Family’s Eastern Estate and Inscribing a Presentation of Inherited Property’.

There is a clear sense in the sources that what these twelve men considered themselves to be doing involved an element of novelty. The gazetteer’s poem on the Eastern Estate by the high official Liu Daxia includes the couplet ‘The garden groves of Suzhou once rivalled those of Loyang,’ Over the past hundred years all that can be seen is the Eastern Estate.’ The claim that something special, something new, is happening in Suzhou in the attitude to landscape at the end of the fifteenth century is supported by the complaint [written in 1444] of an author who, despite his critical attitude to his contemporaries, was himself within the charmed circle of the Suzhou elite:

Suzhou and Hangzhou are equally renowned as the famous prefectures of Jiangnan. However, the wealth of Suzhou city and its county cities generally enjoy the splendours of pavilions, lodgings, flowers and trees. Nowadays there are none of these in Hangzhou city. This is because the frugality of customs in Hangzhou is superior to that of Suzhou.

There is a gap here between the rhetoric of the gazetteer account of the Eastern Estate, with its morally enabling rice-fields, mulberry trees, fruits and vegetables, and its eschewal on the stability of family property, and the complaint about the ‘splendours of pavilions, lodgings, flowers and trees’, which violate the equally desirable elite norm of frugality. It is this gap, this area of unease generated in Ming China by the very possibility that land, which both formally and ideally underwritten and stabilized the social order, could potentially enter into the de-stabilizing realm of inappropriate lavish consumption, which forms one of the themes of this book. If we look at the phenomenon of gardens in China from c. 1500 to c. 1600, it is possible to argue that there is a major shift in what is signified by the very concept of a ‘garden’ at this period, which ultimately tilts the balance of understanding of this particular artefact entirely away from the ‘good’ realm of production, of natural
increase and natural profit through the ownership of land, and towards the problematic realm of consumption, excess, and luxury.

Although I have concentrated so far on the great urban centre of Suzhou, the phenomenon of change in the sixteenth century is one that can be ascribed in other parts of the empire. John Dardess has shown how the regional elite of the small city of Taihe in Jiangxi province shifted the focus of their interest in land from production to consumption over the same period. Though in no sense renowned for its gardens, Taihe was wrapped in an envelope of horticulture, which ranged from small plots of mixed vegetables to large-scale commercial market-gardening. In the fifteenth century it was standard for members of the elite to participate in a little genteel horticulture, a horticulture still directed towards edible crops, and in cognate activities like wood-gathering and fishing. For the Taihe elite, the word yuan still maintained the meaning of a productive space which it had held since time immemorial, and which it would continue to have for the majority of China's population throughout the imperial period.

In what I have said so far there is a silent collapse of the Eastern Estate to the category yuan, conventionally translated as 'garden', but this should not be allowed to pass without comment. It has been done largely on the strength of its inclusion, indeed its glorification, in the compendium of the gazetteer entitled 'Gardens and Ponds'. This could equally well have been translated as 'Orchards and Ponds'. The total split between the aesthetic and the economic in horticulture is of very recent vintage, as we shall see, but it makes it difficult to employ words in a way that speaks of sites included in completely different fields of discourse. I intend to continue to refuse to provide a definition of 'garden' in the Ming period, preferring to avoid a search for essences in what was a complex, over-determined set of practices.

Rather I would seek to draw out some of the ways in which the category yuan was deployed in Ming systems of ordering, while accepting that these systems were signifying practices capable of contestation and refusal.

**The Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician**

The miniature rice-fields and vegetable patches of the Eastern Estate do not coincide at all with the stereotype of the timeless 'Chinese garden', an excessively aestheticized, ascetic space of elaborate rockwork and pavilions. However, its concentration on the mimesis of productive resources was not at all unusual in Suzhou around the turn of the fifteenth century. This can be revealed by an analysis of the contents of an extremely famous Suzhou site called the *Zhuo zheng yuan*, or 'Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician'.

The city of Suzhou today is one of China's most important tourist destinations, and its gardens are one of the main sights on any visitor's itinerary. A modern Chinese survey of 'classical Chinese gardens' describes the currently most famous of them in these terms:

Representative of a traditional Suzhou garden, Zhuo Zhong Yuan, or Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician, is located at the Northeast Street of Lou Men, Suzhou. It was built in the Jiajing period of the Ming Dynasty by Wang Xianchen, Censor of the Throne. The name comes from a line in the 'Xian Ju [An Idle Life]' rhyme-prose composed by the famous scholar official Pan Yue of the Jin Dynasty. Once when Pan was disappointed in his political life, he retired to live in a farmhouse and led an idle life planting trees and growing vegetables. In the 'Xian Ju' rhyme-prose he writes 'This is the way of ruling for an unsuccessful politician.' The garden frequently changed in its owners and with each new owner, much reconstruction was done.

If we start to unpack some of the implications of this bland guidebook language, things begin to appear rather more complicated. Wang Xianchen is someone about whom it is possible to know quite a lot, although unfortunately the exact dates of his birth and death are not recorded. He was registered in Wu county, the western of the two counties between which the Suzhou urban area was divided. His early career can be mapped out on the basis of his biography in the standard dynastic history of the Ming, the *Ming shi*; and of two documents relating to his family found in the writings of Wen Zhourang. One of these documents is an epistle for Wang Xianchen's father, Wang Jin, who died in 1510 holding the position of Investigator Censor (*jian cha yuan shi*), a relatively junior if prestigious post in the supervisory bureaucracy. Wang Xianchen himself entered the bureaucracy at some unspecified date with the post of Messenger (*Xing zhen*), subsequently being promoted to the Censorate. In 1499, following an accusation that he had improperly interfered with military affairs on the frontier, he was given a thirty strokes beating and transferred to serve as vice-magistrate of Shanghang county in Fujian province. While passing through his native Suzhou he was warmly treated by the local elite, who provided him with a body of poems consoling him in his misfortune. The preface to this was supplied by Wen Zhourang, then just twenty-one years old by Chinese reckoning, in his first piece of 'public' writing. We do not know on what terms this relationship between the two men was formed, and cannot tease out precisely the nexus of
patron-client, elder-younger, official-commoner as it operated in this particular case. We can infer only that Wang Xianchen was older than Wen Zhengming, by at least ten years.21

Wang Xianchen obtained the highest level jinshi degree in 1507, and at some point over the next decade left the provincial bureaucracy to return to the Censorate, where a poem of 1508 by Wen Zhengming addresses him by the title 'censor'.24 This second career as a 'speaking official' stalled in 1504, when he was again arrested in connection with what his biography refers to as the 'Zhong Tingxiang affair'. This complex imbroglio, which claimed other careers as well as his own, pitted the civilian bureaucracy against the hereditary military elite and the eunuch-run Eastern Depot in a series of claims and counterclaims arising out of an incident in which a peaceable tribal group had been attacked and their attackers then slain in turn by a different faction within the Ming military. Wang Xianchen ended up by being demoted in 1504 to Postal Intendant for Guangdong province. In 1506, on the accession of the Zhengde emperor, he was promoted to be magistrate of Yongjia county in Zhejiang province, a post that again brought him into connection with the Wen family, since Wen Lin had been prefect of Wenzhou (the prefecture in which Yongjia was situated) at the time of his death in 1499. He was still at this post in 1508, when he was the recipient of another poem by Wen Zhengming.25 The death of his father in 1520 necessitated the standard twenty-five months of mourning, however, and it seems to have been at this point that he gave up an official career in favour of the life of a landed proprietor and the persona of a gentleman of leisure.26 These two aims were completely compatible in the creation of the large garden known by the title Zhou zheng yuan, the Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician.

The site was that of the defunct Dahong Temple, which according to the gazetteer of 1506 had burned down in the Ming conquest of Suzhou, and remained 'a total wasteland' at the time of writing.27 The exact date of the garden's construction is unknown. The modern garden historian Liu Dunzhen argues for a date somewhere between 1509 and 1513, on the basis of a statement made by Wang Xianchen in 1530 that he had been 'mourning his lack of success for nearly thirty years', and of Wen Zhengming's reference in 1533 to 'twenty years ago' as the date of Wang's retirement.28 Wang certainly possessed a garden by 1514, for it is the subject of a Wen Zhengming poem of that year, though it is not until 1537 that one of the same author's poems incorporates the current title - the Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician.29 This is the earliest absolute proof we have
2. Wen Zhengming, Thoughts of Aftar Terrace (Yi yuan tai).

3. Wen Zhengming, Angling Rock (Diao zhu).

of the existence of a garden of this name. Relations between Wang Xianchen and Wen Zhengming, as evidenced by the latter's poems, are steady over the next decade or so. We have poems from 1515 (alluding to time spent in a garden), 1518 (acknowledging a gift of transplanted bamboo) and 1519 (recording a visit to the main architectural structure in the garden, the Tower for Dreaming of Seclusion). There is then a gap of some years (from 1535 to 1537) when Wen was away from Suzhou, before poems in 1537 (recording a visit with Wang Xianchen to Tiger Hill) and 1539 (opening with the line 'A lofty scholar in a famous garden among ten thousand bamboo'). At some point Wen Zhengming acted as sponsor at the coming-of-age, or 'keeping' ceremony for Wang Xianchen's son, a service for which he would receive a gratuity, and not necessarily a purely formalistic one. Then in 1535 came the intervention by Wen Zhengming that has ensured the Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician its place in China's cultural history. This takes the form of an album containing a lengthy prose 'Record' of the garden, which accompanies thirty-one paintings and poems on specific spots within it (illus. 1-3). Wen produced a second album of eight leaves showing sites in the garden in 1535, with different views but the same poems as had appeared in 1533 (illus. 6-11). In addition to these, there are a number of extant or recorded scrolls showing the garden and which are attributed to Wen's brush.

Liu Dunzheng has traced the turbulent history of the garden in later centuries. Several points concerning this tangled history should be noted. The garden has not survived from the Ming period in the same sense as Chanting cathedral has survived since the Middle Ages. None of the plant-matter we see today in the Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician has been growing continuously in the same spot for those nearly five centuries. The Garden's very boundaries have not been constant within this century, never mind for over five hundred years. None of the architectural structures we see is of any great antiquity. Perhaps more surprisingly, only a very few of them share the names of features that we know to have been in the garden in 1533. Thirty-two pavilions, towers and other structures can be counted in the garden as it stands today. Of these, only four correspond in name to features on the list of thirty-one given by Wen Zhengming. This is in no way a unique history of transience, but could be repeated for any of the great historic garden sites of modern China. The names now given to individual features in Suzhou's 'Lion Grove' (Shishi hu) do not correspond with those known from historic sources.

Modern authors, particularly Liu Dunzheng, have noted the number of changes of owner of the Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician and have stressed the numerous changes in its physical appearance from the time of its creation to the present. Liu for example stresses that the original garden had a very much more natural and open aspect, included none of the artificial hills that are such a striking part of the present layout, and had far fewer structures. His conclusion is modest: the arrangement of the rocks and water in the ponds of the central third may have its origins in the early Qing (over a century and a half after the time of building). The western third retains the late nineteenth-century layout, while the eastern third, totally ruinous by 1949, has been worked over in a modern landscape style suitable for large crowds of visitors, with open lawns and teahouses. Even this seems unreasonably optimistic. Yet there remains a sense in Liu's writing (present yet more strongly in other works of secondary literature), that, despite the vicissitudes of history, there is continuity at the much more important level of essence. Despite changes, there is a certain quintessence of the garden that can survive changes of layout, of planting and of name, never mind the trivial level of ownership, and which can sustain a 'Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician' as some sort of reality behind the temporary veil of 'people's dwellings' or the office of a general (the function of the property in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries). For the author of the most widely read modern work on English on a Chinese garden, the Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician is another garden in Suzhou dating from the early Ming period...

Whence comes this fame then, that makes the Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician 'the representative type of the Jiangnan classic garden', if it does not stem from enduring intrinsic features of the site? To the acute early nineteenth-century writer Qian Yong, intrinsic features were not important. For him there was another explanation, one that was socially rather than aesthetically grounded:

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6 Wen Zhengming, Many Fragrances Hank (Fan xiang hua).

7 Wen Zhengming, Little Surging Waves (Xiao Canglang).

6-31 Leaves from the album The Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician (Zhou zheng yuan tu zai), version dated 1553, ink on paper. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
8 Wen Zhengming, *Xiang Bamboo Bank (Xiang yun wei).*

9 Wen Zhengming, *Scholar-tree Rain Pavilion (Hua yu ting).*
10, 11 Wen Zhengming, *Arriving Rins Park* (Lai qin yu), with accompanying inscription.
I would argue that the decay and flourishing of a garden is allied to that of its owner. If the person is remembered, then 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 Zhengming'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. Yet the biographical literature is silent about the identity or activities of the great majority of the individual owners of portions of the site in the Qing period. By and large they were not famous as writers or painters, or as actors on the political scene. Although Qian pays obeisance to the idea of the famous owner, in this particular instance it is in fact the much more famous figure of Wen Zhengming who creates the garden anew for him. The garden now exists as an adjunct to the works of art that surrounded its early existence; to a degree it is they that produce the garden, not the other way around. This is done so with particular potency in that the person doing the recording and depicting is Wen Zhengming, by Qian Yong's day in the Qing period the unassailable epitome of the scholar-amateur ideal.

THE FRUITFUL GARDEN

The paradigm of the garden as essentially an object of pure aesthetic significance is hard to escape, but we may make the effort to break free of its gravitational field and by doing so prise the Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician from its exclusively pictorial associations. One way of complicating the picture, and of introducing a dimension that is rigorously excluded from most modern discussion of Chinese garden history, is to read Wen Zhengming's 'Record of the Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician' in a native and simplistic manner for the information it contains on the agronomy of the garden in 1533. Let us pretend we have never heard of the rich associative aesthetics of 'the Chinese garden'. To do so involves a risky reading strategy that privileges agronomic texts as neutral descriptions, instead of the prescriptive and socially rooted phenomena they were. They were a phenomenon whose production expanded greatly in the Ming period, particularly after the mid-sixteenth century, as part of a larger picture of the commodification of knowledge at this period. It is not suggested that a purely agronomic reading is a justifiable way of getting at the truth about 'the Chinese garden'. However, in an attempt to de-centre the primacy of aesthetic discourse in writing about garden culture, a reductive, even crude, reading against the grain of a highly revered literary text may serve well enough.

What does Wen Zhengming say was growing in the Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician in 1533? In the order in which the plants are encountered in the 'Record', the list is as follows: lotus, bamboo, willow, oranges, pines, juniper, peaches, sophora, elms, flowering plum, tree peony, herbaceous peony, orange osmanthus, crab apples, zizyphus, apples, rugosa roses, plum, roses, cypress, calamus, privet, plantain and hibiscus. Of course, a bald rectal like this gives no sense of the degree of impact the various species might have had on a visitor to the Garden. Fortunately the 'Record' does contain a certain number of more or less impressionistic quantifications of at least some of them. Bamboos are mentioned as being present at six specific sites in the garden. There are 'many' pines, while sophora, cypress and elm trees are 'numerous'. There are 'several tens' of orange trees, and what may also be a significant number of peach trees, the blossom being described as 'like a red cloud'. We know that there is only one plum (Prunus domestica), brought specifically from Peking, in whose climate it flourished more readily. By contrast, the number of flowering plum trees (Prunus mume) is described as 'a hundred' in the 'Record', and as 'several hundreds' in the relevant accompanying poem. The number of apple trees is also given as 'several hundred', which according to the accompanying poem covered an area of ten mu. Arbitrarily assuming that 'several hundred' flowering plums take up about the same space as 'several hundred' apple trees (i.e. ten mu), we arrive at the figure of twenty mu, or very nearly three acres, devoted to two compact groves of fruit-bearing trees. This is a fairly high proportion of the total of sixty-two mu that Liu Dunzhen assigns to the original, as well as to the present, layout of the garden, particularly when it is remembered that ponds make up about one-third of the total land area. Even allowing for the difference between a Ming mu and a modern one, this puts practically half the land area of the garden under a combination of flowering plums and apples in 1533. Trees, and in particular fruit trees, must also have been the dominating presence in the other half, since the majority of the more ornamental shrubs were concentrated at only one site in the garden, on Fan xiang mu, 'Many Fragrances Bank' (illus. 1, 6), which bore both kinds of peony, the orange osmanthus, crab apple and zizyphus. This is very different visually from any garden visible in China today.

Let us look in more detail at the role played by fruit in the world of
goods in Ming Suzhou, and in particular at the fruit trees specified in the Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician. By the Ming, all major cities and even county seats were surrounded by zones of horticulture. In terms of the total land area of the Jiangnan region the amount under fruit trees was probably not very large, but in such a fertile area with a benign climate a relatively small plot could be enough to supply the needs of a household. A fourteenth-century agricultural treatise, ‘Wang Zhen’s Book of Agriculture’ (Wang Zhen nong shu), begins its section on horticulture thus: Plot fields (gu tian) are fields for planting vegetables or fruit. The ‘Rites of Zhou’ says ‘employ horticultural land (xuan di) in plot fields (gu tian).’ The annotation reads ‘A plot is such things as tree fruits and vine fruits.’ Such fields are surrounded by a wall and bounded by a hedge and ditch. Only to mu with its back to a city wall is sufficient to flood several mouths. If it is rather farther from the city then the amount of fields can be increased up to a maximum of half a qing (50 mu).’

We are dealing here with a context where the average size of landholdings was not of itself very large. Really large estates were not common in Ming Jiangnan. Another agronomic writer of the late Ming, this time a small landlord from Jiuxing, asserted that ten mu was the upper limit which a ‘top-class farmer’ could manage on his own, while in the early Qing a retired grandee could boast of living comfortably on twenty mu, and supporting a household of ten persons to boot. The climate and fertility of Europe and North America encourage perceptions of landed wealth as being inseparable from the idea of ‘broad acres’, of lots of land, but there are a number of other historical contexts where the input of skill is a much more important variable than sheer quantity of land. Sixteenth-century China was in this respect less like contemporary Europe than it was like sixteenth-century Mexico, where it was calculated that one man could work between 0.5 and 0.75 hectares of the highly fertile lakeside chiamu land, only one hectare of which was sufficient to feed fifteen to twenty people. The notion of wealth in land being dependent on quantity is not always applicable in a context where inputs of skilled labour to very productive soils may be a more decisive factor.

Viewed in this light, Wang Xianchou’s 62 mu, the majority of which was under fruit trees, comes to look potentially like a powerful economic resource, a piece of real estate that was not only relatively large by contemporary standards but which was planted with lucrative, market oriented cash crops. The profitability of citrus fruit trees, of which Wang had ‘several tens’, in particular was proverbial. They had been grown commercially since the Warring States period (475-221 BC), from when the term ‘wooden slaves’ can be traced. By the Song period (960-1279) the Lake Tai region was the centre of the orange industry, from where oranges were widely exported (unlike, say, apples, oranges will travel well, and retain their value over a considerable distance).

The largest single blocks of trees were those I have been translating as ‘apple’ and ‘flowering plum’. In Chinese the former are lajin, ‘bringing birds’, or lijin, ‘wood birds’, after the supposed attractiveness of the fruit to bird life. This is really a small, sour sweet apple, mentioned in literature as early as the Han period rhyme-poses on the imperial parks, and identified by one modern scholar as identical to the small shu guo apples sold candied on sticks across northern China (illus. 13). They were never eaten raw off the tree, but always after further treatment (which presumably could only enhance their market value). According to the early seventeenth-century ‘Complete Book of the Administration of Agriculture’ (Nong cheng quan shu), the lijin flowered the blossom was red in the second month, the fruit being ripe in the sixth or seventh month. The fruits were often dried and ground to make lijin foush, a food similar to the Tibetan tsambo, which could be reconstituted in water. They were also candied in honey, in which form they were particularly recommended to be eaten as an accompaniment to wine, and preserved with their original colour by a process of pickling in vinegar and alum.

The flowering plum (Prunus mume Sieb. et Zucc.) is a plant with even more possibilities (illus. 14). Here, however, the historically attested Chinese aesthetic appreciation of the plant’s blossom has rather crowded out the fact that it produces fruit. There can be no disputing the fact of the ubiquity of the flowering plum (botanically closer to Prunus armeniaca, the apricot, than it is to Prunus domestica, the plum) as symbol and metaphor in Chinese poetry, painting and in the decoration of luxury artefacts. This usage has been excellently catalogued in the recent publication. Bones of jade, Soul of Ice: The Flowering Plum in Chinese Art. Here we learn that as early as the Song period flowering plum blossoms were a cash crop, sold door to door by vendors who used elaborate forcing techniques to get their produce on the market first. We learn too that the groove of ten mu of the trees (a groove the same size as that of Wang Xianchou) planted on the shores of the West Lake by Zhang Xi was one of the sights of Southern Song Hangzhou. He was also firmly told, in Mei Huaz: A Botanical Note by the distinguished Chinese botanist Hui-Lin...
Li, that ‘the fruit is scarcely edible’. We are left with the clear impression that aesthetic consideration alone could lead to the planting of large groves of a tree with scarcely edible fruit. Such an assertion becomes puzzling if one takes even a cursory look at the agronomic literature, where the fruit of the flowering plum is presented as a highly significant item of the Ming diet. Certainly the fruit is unpalatable in its raw state, but it had been for millennia one of the principal forms of relish making the consumption of bulk carbohydrate in the form of rice, millet or wheat breads palatable.

The Nong zheng quan shu again gives a number of specific recipes for dealing with the fruit, which ripened in the fifth month (the very month of Wen Zhenhui's description of the Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician). Flowering plums pickled in brine were called bat mei, but they were also candied, dried, honeyed and used to make a sour plum sauce that was diluted with water and drunk as a refreshing summer beverage. One of the most popular ways of treating them was by making tang cuo mei, ‘Sugar crispy flowering plums’, pickled in sugar and vinegar. Flowering plums were also pickled when half-yellow and smoked to form wu mei, or ‘black plums’. Nong zheng quan shu asserts that these are to be eaten as a medicine, rather than as a foodstuff, though the distinction between these two categories was in the Ming period scarcely a meaningful one. Early Western observers of Chinese life remarked in general on the riches of the orchards of China available in the market-place.

Gasper da Cruz, writing in 1555, mentioned another kind of plum which we have not, with long, wide stones, sharp at both ends, and of these they make prunes. Nor have the fruits of Prunus mume vanished entirely from the Chinese diet to the present day, something that can be empirically verified by a trip to any Chinese supermarket, where a jar of saus mei, or flowering plums pickled in brine, is always available at the relish shelf.

How then have we come to a situation where the fruit of the flowering plum has become ‘scarcely edible’? One explanation is that fruit-based side relishes are much less prominent in the Chinese diet now than they were before the adoption of New World food plants, a process which began with the introduction of the peanut some time before the first reliable reference to it, in 1538. One has only to imagine eating millet or rice porridge for breakfast without salted peanuts, or imagine Chinese cuisine in general without the equally American chilli pepper, to realize that early Ming food must have relied much more heavily on highly flavoured relishes from indigenous sources. Significantly, in Japan, where American food
crops made no significant inroads until this century, the unehoshii, or salted flowering plum, remains to this day a mainstay of the table. Even so, I would prefer to see the oblivion of the flowering plum’s celebrity as being at least as much grounded in the larger trend towards an exclusively aestheticized understanding of Chinese garden culture. Salted flowering plums become unthinkable, on the way to becoming ‘uncatable.’

To press home this point, let us look at the economic value of the other plants in the Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician. A single plum tree is unlikely to have made much impact on its owner’s wealth. However crab apples [kai tang] were eaten after various types of preparation, while the peach trees [their blossom like a red cloud] gave fruit that had from very ancient times been used to make a luxury fruit vinegar. Other foodstuffs were provided by trees that we might not immediately associate with the kitchen. Of course there are bamboo shoots, but pine kernels were also eaten in the Ming, as were the young shoots of elm trees; ‘elm sauce’ was used as medicine for chest complaints. The soft shoots of the Sophora tree were boiled in water to rid them of bitterness, then dipped in vinegar and ginger as an aperitif. They were also dried and used to make a herbal tea. The same trees had numerous other economic uses, which are prominent in the agronomic literature. Elm is described as only worth planting by those who live near cities, where its high-value timber can be cut for sale only ten years after planting. This quick growth cycle led to the saying that if you planted twenty elms at the birth of a child then the value of the timber would pay for that child’s wedding. The Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician contained ‘numerous’ elms. Pines, described by the great botanist Li Shihchen (1518-93), in his Shih pen ts’u (1580-62) as ‘the chief of all trees,’ did not provide good timber, but the resin was used in all kinds of aromatics, while the soot from burned pine wood was the chief ingredient in the manufacture of ink (illus. 14). The garden contained ‘many’ pines. The timber of willows was used in building, and Wang cheng quan shou gives the same kind of calculations of the rate of return on investment as it does in the case of elms. Cypress and juniper were grown commercially, their branches cut and marketed for use in flower arrangements. Finally, there were trees in the garden that played a major role in the textiles industry, the industry on which the wealth of Suzhou as an urban centre largely rested. The flowers of the crab apple were used in the creation of dyestuffs, while it was the flowers of the Sophora tree (once more, ‘numerous’) that were the main source of yellow dye for silk textiles (illus. 15).
There is yet one more feature of the Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician that at the very least has the possibility of playing an economic role, and that is the large area of water that currently takes up about a third of the area, and which was clearly an equally prominent part of the total scene in 1533. The raising of fish for the market was not only an activity with a long pedigree, it was an activity seen as extremely profitable. In *Nong zheng quan shu* the author quotes an ancient adage to the effect that 'There are five methods of livelihood, and water livestock is the best'. 'Water livestock' means *fish*. He cites calculations of the rate of return on investment, and gives a great deal of conventional wisdom, some of it of great antiquity, on fish rearing. The ponds must not be too deep, as this makes the water too cold and inhibits growth. Some of these saws have a surprising bearing on what might look at first sight like purely aesthetic decisions regarding ponds. For example, the placing of islands in the middle of ponds will encourage the fish to exercise, causing them to grow. Lilies should be planted around the edge of ponds as a means of discouraging predatory otters. While we cannot be sure, there is certainly an implication that the pond in the Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician contained fish. The tenth painting and poem in the Wen Zhengming sequence together cover 'The Angling Rock' ([Illus. 5]), and while the former shows an individual daintily dangling a rod in the water, the poem proclaims that 'You must know that the one who now casts the line/is not a true lover of fishing'.

The suggestion is that there are no fish in the pond, rather that the disinterested angler does not care whether he catches one or not. Ming fish-management procedures did not in fact rely on gentlemen with rods, but rather on periodic emptying of the ponds, something that the record suggests would have been perfectly possible given the hydrology of the garden's water supplies. If the pond did contain fish, it was all the more valuable in that it was a pond protected by a wall.

Song estate management literature is full of anecdotes stressing the importance of maintaining surveillance on valuable property, even to the point of going out and camping in a hut by the side of the pond to prevent the fish being poached.

At one level, then, what we have in the Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician can be read as productive capacity behind a wall. It was also a particular kind of productive capacity, and one not available to all, in that a great deal of initial investment was required. Land reclamation, and in particular the digging and dredging of large-scale ponds, was very expensive. Similarly, the planting of trees implied a willingness to see capital tied up in productive capacity that might
not see a return for a number of years. However, there is evidence that, prior to the tax reforms associated with the name of Zhang Juzheng [1525-82, DM 5: 53-61], which began to be put in place from the 1560s, many members of the Jiangnan elite preferred to invest in almost any form of productive capacity rather than fields producing staple grains. Francesca Bray has pointed out, in a long overview of the post-Song situation, that

One did not make a fortune through being a landlord, one became a landlord through making a fortune. Land was safe, land was respectable, but profits on trade, moneylending, or commercial plantations of sugar, fruit or timber, were all much higher, and many wealthy families preferred to invest in these other sources of income. 79

She cites a study of the tenure by Hai Rui [1515-87, DM 8: 474-9] of the magistracy of Chün-an, which supports the view that the fiscal regime of the early and mid-Ming penalized ownership of rice-fields in a manner that increased the attractiveness of the exploitation of marginal land. 80 Joseph McDermott has made the same point, remarking that ‘very heavy land taxes drove many gentry landlords to invest their wealth outside of agriculture’. While it may seem strange to consider a sixty-two mu block of real estate set within the walls of the richest city in Jiangnan as in any way relating to the category of ‘marginal land’, it probably was so in that it was marginal to the main categories of taxable land. It is even worth speculating at this point whether the contemporary association of Suzhou with gardens was in some way due to the existence within the walls of large quantities of unused or under-used land, the result of a shrinkage of the urban population. In this respect Suzhou around 1550 resembled contemporary Rome, where there were large amounts of productive horticultural space within the walls. In Rome too, this productive space was becoming a subject of an aesthetic discourse, as the vigne, real working vineyards, of the fifteenth century gave way to the self-consciously non-productive practice of villeggiatura. 81

In laying so much stress on the productive potential of the garden landscape, I may be overstating the case, as a way of correcting an equally imbalanced concentration on aesthetics in the study of Chinese garden practices. However, I do so in the knowledge that scholars of early modern Europe are also engaged in a process of unbundling from seemingly serene and highly finished artefacts like the ‘Renaissance garden’ and the ‘English landscape garden’ a much more complex nexus of interactions of the aesthetic, the social and
the economic. Claudia Lazzar6 has observed that no Italian garden, up to and including the Villa d’Este, which was famous for its grapes and salad greens, failed to produce foodstuffs, and has in fact found most of the material for her large-scale study of the Italian Renaissance garden in the literature of agriculture and estate management.74 Robert Williams has focused specifically on the intertwining of moral and economic discourses in the eighteenth-century English landscape park. He has shown that it makes no sense to oppose ‘the garden’ to productive agricultural land as ‘mutually exclusive environments’, arguing instead that the economic framework in reality underpins such estates … suggests that histories of the landscape garden have paid insufficient attention to their economic base, preferring instead to share the pastoral perspective.75

He shows in particular the political and commercial considerations underlying the increased attention paid to estate silviculture in the early eighteenth century. This was not just ‘a cultural manifestation almost wholly aesthetic and intellectual in purpose’ (which is how it has generally been described), rather it was a reaction close to panic to the depletion of timber stocks, on which the British navy, and hence the nation’s very existence, was believed to depend. Private woodlands were massive investments, and had been explicitly so viewed since Elizabethan times; they were ‘stored capital to be extirpated and realized at some future date’. Williams shows too how the cutting of rides through woodlands, something which began to appear in the eighteenth century, is a practice determined by the needs of hunting. The park was for English aristocrats what it had been for their Anglo-Saxon predecessors – a store of living, huntable, edible animals. Similarly, and despite the structures of landscape architecture theories, productive fishponds remained in England as an important part of decorative schemes at least until the early nineteenth century.76

There are many points in Lazzaro’s and in Williams’s analyses (which have not seriously been disputed) of the economic aspects of the early modern European garden that are suggestive for students of China. At this point I would like to follow up just one of them, the idea of the garden as a place not simply of economic resources but of stored economic resources, realizable at some point in the future. Modern scholarship agrees that Ming China was rather poorly supplied with mechanisms for accumulating economic resources, and for transferring them easily as the demands of individual or family strategy dictated. I have argued elsewhere that, at least by the sixteenth century, antiquities and works of art functioned partly in this way. A bronze vessel or a scroll – easy to store, to transport – could yet embody large sums of cash, realizable at short notice on the open art market (at least in major urban centres).77 The other major way of storing economic capital was in the form of land, but this was subject to claims of the wider kin group with regard to its disposal, and so had distinct drawbacks. As we shall see, fewer such constraints seem to have existed with regard to gardens. A piece of urban or suburban real estate, covered with fruit trees and with valuable timber clustering around a pond stocked with fish, was a piece of disposable wealth on a grand scale. At one level of reading, this is what the Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician was.

How legitimate is it, in fact, to read Wang Xianchen’s property in this agronomic light, against the grain of almost everything that has been written about it? Two additional points give me confidence in doing so. One is an argument a silentio, and correspondingly weaker for that. This revolves around the exclusion of the category yuan [garden], from the purview of the otherwise very extensive pattern of Ming sumptuary legislation.78 This sumptuary legislation encompassed every aspect of material culture that it was possible to view as an object of consumption, from garments and dwellings to furniture and tableware. Its prescriptions are detailed and specific. For example, an edict of Hongwu 26 (1393) laid down that the houses of commoners were to be no more than three spans [jian] wide, a rule that was repeated in 1447. Nowhere do we see any reference to the category of ‘gardens’, which suggests that the early Ming legislators viewed a garden as being something conceptually allied to production, rather than as an object of luxury consumption, like silver tableware or vermilion lacquered gateways. Here again we have the attractive liminality of the concept, in an artefact that was too much an object of consumption to be taxed like a rice-field, and too much of a productive space to be subject to the control of the sumptuary legislation.

My second point about the legitimacy of reading the Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician as part of a broader economic framework is rather more firmly grounded, and revolves around the literary allusions giving rise to the very name Zhao zheng yuan. In his ‘Record’ of 1533 of the garden, Wen Zhengming puts these words into the mouth of its owner, Wang Xianchen: Of old, Master Pan Yue’s official career did not advance, therefore he built living-rooms and planted trees, irrigated a garden and sold
vegetables, claiming that this was also administration (zheng), but of the unsuccessful (zhao). From the time I was first appointed an official down to the present, forty years have passed. Some of my contemporaries have raised their status to the highest offices, climbed to the topmost ranks, while I have retired in old age as a Sub-prefect. My administration is even more unsuccessful than that of Yue, and the garden is an acknowledgment of this.

Wen Zhengming actually goes on to quibble with Wang's choice of Pan Yue as a role-model, on the grounds that this third-century magistrate was an arch-hypocrite, whose poetry might invoke the delights of 'Dwelling at Leisure' (the title of the poem from which the allusion comes), but who spent his entire life in the practice of court intrigue, 'swooning on the influential' of his day. Wen goes on to praise by contrast the sterling moral qualities of Wang Xianchen, 'who has cast aside office and been living among his family, so to speak, building living-rooms and planting trees, irrigating a garden and selling vegetables, unfettered and at ease, enjoying the delights of dwelling at leisure in this place for twenty years.'

It is always far easier to find the locus classicus of a Chinese literary allusion than it is to map the way that allusion may have been used across a long period of time. However, the allusion to Pan Yue's poem 'Dwelling at Leisure' does surface in one very intriguing context not previously noted, and that is precisely the content of the agronomic treatise. The section on pu tian, 'plot fields,' the basic unit of horticulture, in the 'Book of Agriculture' (Nong shu) of the fourteenth-century writer Wang Zhen, immediately following the claim that horticulture can of itself provide 'an annual profit' several times that of ordinary fields, says this:

As for those gentlemen nurturing the original constitution, it can act as a site of retirement while also providing sustenance. Or again, persons seeking an official post, if they have no detached villa, can base themselves there temporarily. Just as the man of Hanyang watered his beds with his own strength, or Heyang lived at leisure and peddled vegetables, what obstruction is there here to fulfilling the Dao?^19

The first allusion, to the 'man of Hanyang,' refers to the 'Heaven and Earth' chapter of the classic work Zhanzang, and to the tale of the man who refused to use a well-sweep to water his fields for fear of the 'machine heart' such a mechanical contrivance would bring with it. However, 'Heyang' here refers to Pan Yue. We therefore have the situation that the very classical allusion explicitly employed by Wang Xianchen in naming his garden is one found prominently in an agronomic context, and specifically in a discussion of the advantages of horticulture in terms of its ability to unify profitability with fulfilling the Dao. It is of course impossible to prove a direct influence of the agronomic treatise on Wang Xianchen's choice of name for his garden. But it can be shown by its subsequent publishing history that Wang Zhen's 'Book of Agriculture' was in circulation in the Ming period. The earliest surviving edition is one of 1550, just three years prior to the 'Record of the Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician.' And the prestige of the text is shown by the fact that Xu Guangqi chose to copy the passage verbatim into his 'Complete Book of the Regulation of Agriculture' in the early seventeenth century (illus. 16).^20

It would be wrong to argue that this reference exhausts, or even approaches exhausting, everything that is signified by the choice of name Zhao zheng yuan. It has within it numerous other connotations, most of which centre on the word zhao — 'unsuccessful,' 'chummy,' 'arrestless.' It was at one level an everyday word of polite language in the Ming period, used in a deprecatory way to mean 'little more than "my."'^21 It was a common element in the 'styles' (zhi) or 'by-names' (hao) of Ming gentlemen. But there was a whole area of moral reference as well, by which zhao came to mean 'arrestless,' 'guileless' and 'unsophisticated' in the sense of free from any hint of trickery or deceit. The opposite of zhao in the standard classical dictionaries was qiao — 'skillful,' 'intricate,' 'trickly,' a word with very dubious moral overtones. A Qiao zheng yuan ('Garden of the Cunning Politician') would have clearly been an anathema. The phrase shou zhao, 'preserving one's arrestlessness,' was forever associated in the educated mind with the figure of Yao Yuanming (365-427), the archetype of the man of noble mind who abandons office for a life of self-sufficiency and reclusion. One of the pavilions in the Wu family's Eastern Estate, established some fifty years before Wang Xianchen built his garden, is named Zhao xiu, 'Arrestless Cultivation' (in the Confucian sense of cultivation of the self, not of the soil).^22

Although this type of connection seems to have been lost sight of, there is really nothing surprising in the transference of allusions from the texts of agronomy to those of horticulture, conceived as an aesthetic object. The overlap is present in some of the earliest texts that praise the ordered and owned landscape. One of these is the Jin gu yuan shi zu, 'Preface to the Poems on the Golden Valley Garden,' by the third-century magistrate Shi Chung. Shi was an extremely close associate of Pan Yue (originator of the zhao zheng allusion), and the two perished on the same execution block in A.D. 300. Pan's is the only
poem to survive, along with Shi’s own prose preface, from those written at a literary gathering at the latter’s Golden Valley Garden in AD 296.65 Shi’s description of his property (in Richard Wilhelm’s translation) stresses its bucolic charms, which arise from its clearly productive capacities:

Both high and low ground had clear springs, and an abundance of fruit trees, bamboos and pines. There were medical herbs, ten ch’ing [−1,000 em] of cultivated land, 100 head of sheep, and chickens, pigs, geese and ducks were also provided. Furthermore there were water-mills, fish ponds and caves and everything that would delight the eye and satisfy the mind.

While the idea that sheep and water-wheels could ‘delight the eye and satisfy the mind’ might be alien to the modern stereotype of the Chinese garden, it would have posed no problems, once again, for Wang Xianchen’s European contemporaries. Here too there was a continuous seepage of ideas from the discourse of agronomy to that of aesthetics. In fifteenth-century Italy the Vigna di Napoli (later better known as the Villa Capra) was decorated with quotations from the Roman agricultural writers Columella and Varro. A hundred years later, the landscapes that Andrea Palladio modelled for his wealthy clients in the Veneto drew their force from the prestige accorded to ‘holy agriculture’, purely decorative gardens were of little import.66 Ralph Austen’s seventeenth-century treatise, The Spiritual Use of an Orchard, is saturated with the idea that ‘pleasure’ and ‘profit’ are conjoined in the raising of fruit trees.

One could go further and demonstrate overlaps of language and theme between the sequence of Wen Zhengming poems on this site and the long poem that takes up half of the section on ‘plot fields’ in Weng’s Book of Agriculture. The overwhelming moral authority accorded to agricultural production as the ben, the ‘roots’, of society in the traditional order of political economy is too widely recognized to need further discussion. I will instead go on to argue that it is this ability to act as a hinge between profit and purity, between economic power and cultural/moral authority within the Confucian cosmic order, which gives the practice of garden culture its force in Ming society. To try to understand one without the other, beguiled by the very explicit nature of one part of the total meaning set against the obscured, even deliberately obscured, meaning of the other, is to impoverish our understanding. I shall further go on to argue that the creation of the garden as a pure object of luxury consumption, a process I would associate with the latter half of the sixteenth century.
and the opening decades of the seventeenth, is incomprehensible without an awareness of the practices involved in the aesthetic consumption of still essentially productive landscape. Distinction, as Pierre Bourdieu has demonstrated, must be exercised most rigorously against that thing which an artefact or a practice is closest to, and hence in greatest danger of being mistaken for. If we accept that any Ming garden was in constant peril of being mistaken for a wealth-producing and wealth-reproducing chunk of high-value real estate, this gives us a way of apprehending some of the necessity of stressing its ‘otherness’. The garden must, in Foucault’s terms, be made into a ‘heterotopia’, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted. Places of this kind are to be found outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality.27

The ‘Orchard of the Unsuccessful Politician’ would not be a heterotopia.28 The ‘Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician’, as recreated in verse and painted image by Wen Zhengming, is well on the way to becoming one.

The Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician’s balancing act between economic riches and cultural wealth could be signified by its major cash crop, fruit. I have already pointed out the high market value there was for fruit, and the economic attractiveness of growing it: A slightly facetious explanation for the aesthetic attractiveness of fruit, as opposed to other crops, was that since fruit grows in the garden, was the fact that (unlike vegetables or rice) Ming fruit trees were not extensively manured with human excrement, and that when they were pruned it was in the winter, when even in Jiangnan low temperatures are rare outside.29 Fruit, however, had an addition rich, old and still vigorous symbolic associations: Vegetables and fruit were not only an essential part of the Chinese diet, they also symbolised purity and sobriety. They were the food not only of the common people unable to afford meat, but also of human sacrifice, and scholars living in rustic seclusion, they signalled the renunciation of worldly values.30

An important, but very rare Ming text that deals with the same sort of juxtaposition of the philosophical and spiritual delights of eremitism with the practical details of agronomy, is the Qu xian shen yin shu, ‘Book of Divine Eremits of the Enamoured Immortal’, by the aristocrat Zhu Qian, Prince of Ning (1379-1448, DMB 305-7).

seventeenth son of the founder of the Ming dynasty. This polymath author had a wide range of interests in the spiritual dimension of what are to us, though they were not to the Ming technical subjects—astronomy, medicine, agronomy, the pharmacopoeia. He was also a poet and dramatist, a writer on geomancy and alchemy, as well as being involved in the overtly religious traditions of Daoism and Buddhism. This did not of itself prevent him from having a wide array of friends and connections in the scholarly and bureaucratic elite, which was at this date much more sympathetic to Daoism than it was to be later in the dynasty. His undated ‘Book of Divine Eremits’, in four chapters, is described by a modern bibliographer as being ‘concerned with the trivia of daily life for so-called “eccentrics cultivating the Way”’. Its chapter on ‘Strategies for Returning to the Fields’ includes a calendar of monthly tasks in the area of cultivating trees, flowers, fruits and vegetables, largely abstracted from an earlier agronomic treatise of the Yuan dynasty.31 It was this kind of highly prestigious linkage of the eremitic tradition with the practicalities of raising certain kinds of crops (note that it contains nothing about staple grain crops like rice) which provided part of the background familiar to educated readers of the landscape management practices in the Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician.

The onic concept operative here is that of ging guo, ‘pure and lofty’. It is a concept that links man with the natural world, and is equally applicable to both, though not to manufactured artefacts of any kind. The Nung zhong quan shu, quoting a much earlier source, describes the fruits of the ‘green calyx flowering plum’ as ‘particularly rare and lofty’. Many of the mentions of fruit in the literature surrounding Ming horticulture are to do with establishing it as a commodity somehow distant from the market. Partly this is done by associating fruit with the idea of religious sacrifice, and with the obligation of mutual gift-giving as a crucial element of elite sociability. The classical statement of this set of ideas is in the Ritae of Zhou, where fruit trees are said to ‘provide for sacrifices, and for entertaining guests and relatives’. In the case of the Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician, Wen Zhengming’s preface to his poem on ‘Awaiting the Feast Pavilion’ makes allusion to the text of the famous ‘Offering Oranges Letter’ [Feng ju zai] by Wang Xizhi [321-96], not only one of the most famous calligraphic masterpieces in Chinese history, but a document, known to every educated person, embodying the ideals of upper-class reciprocity through the presentation of gifts of fruit. The poem [ll. 101 accompanying the ‘Arriving Birds Park’ (i.e. the grove of ten mu of apple trees) makes similar reference to this set of ideas.
growing things. The 'natural' increase of horticulture was a sanctioned, even sanctified, form of profit, at a time when the notion of profit derived from trade was becoming an increasingly problematic one. Just as with contemporary Europe, the actual configurations of land and labour, and in particular the practices of tenancy and rent, were generally expressed in conceptions of the land itself as the producer of commodities, rent is, as a consequence, not treated as the payment made on the basis of organised social production using land, but rather as a natural product, a 'gift of Nature'. In the sixteenth century as the years passed, this problem would develop to the degree where the aesthetic consumption of productive space was too easily confused with simple raising of crops for profit. At that point, the orange trees would have to go, and the garden be refocused in a more purely aesthetic direction.

Summer boughs give pure (qing) shade to ten mu.
In this extensive grove the fruit are just beginning to ripen.
In the place where the precious, heavy pomegranates are divided up as gifts,
At a small window he personally copies the writing of the General of the Right [i.e. Wang Xizhi].

This 'enclave' of fruit as a commodity discussed as if it were withdrawn from the market-place is similar to some of the ways of talking about works of art in the Ming period, and can also bear comparison with the role of fresh-water fish as a high-status gift in early modern England: along with meat from game animals, the ability to distribute gifts of these high-ranking foodstuffs acted to signify a place in the English social hierarchy that was far greater than that conferred by the more commercial value of the present. My reading of the Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician here is not designed to prove that Wang Xianchen was a major figure in the pickled plum industry. It is very unlikely that he derived any major part of his income from this property. And it is likely that all sorts of other allusions could be read by his guests into the name of his garden, and of the features within it. The names of features, explicated in Wen Zhengming's prose introductions to the poems, allude to the Tang owner of the site, Lu Luwang, as well as to Su Shunqin (1068-49), builder of the Suzong Waves Pavilion (Gangliang ting) in Suzhou, and to the Tang poet Du Fu (712-70). Clearly there are references to the owner's political career, to the stereotype of the righteous official wronged by malicious enemies. There are allusions to Peking, the seat of imperial power, in the form of the plum tree transplanted from that northern climate, and in the shape of the 'Jade Spring', Yu qun. This well is described thus in Wen Zhengming's prose introduction to the relevant poem:

In the capital, at Xiangshan, there is a Jade Spring, and the owner [Wang Xianchen] often dipped and enjoyed it, hence his style of Jade Spring Hermit. Here he has obtained a spring in the garden's south-east corner, the sweetness and coldness of which is suitable for tea. It is not inferior to the Jade Spring, and so he gave it this name to show he had not forgotten.

No one type of allusion is sufficient to explain the programme of the garden. But the agronomic references of the Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician, like those of the Eastern Estate, are both numerous and obvious, perhaps so obvious to contemporaries that they escaped comment. No one, in 1500, supposed that a yuanz, whether translated as 'garden' or as 'orchard', could be anything other than a space for
2 The Aesthetic Garden

Gardens of the Emperor

If, as I have argued in the preceding chapter, there was a significant revival of garden culture in Suzhou towards the end of the fifteenth century, what possible sources did its practitioners and commentators have for their ideas? Obviously there was the literary record of Suzhou's own past splendours in this field. Although a site like that of the Surfing Waves Pavilion (Ganglang ting) might be a total ruin in the mid-Ming, it was available, even down to details of its topography, to a writer like Wen Zhengming through records of it in verse and prose. However, there was another currently existing model available, in the form of the imperial garden complex in Peking. There is a presumption that any borrowings either of broad landscape concepts or of detailed formal features of layout that took place between Suzhou and Peking must have been from the form of the latter, and that in general Peking enjoyed relatively little prestige as a centre of culture and taste. This may not, in fact, have been the case. It can certainly be demonstrated that borrowings took place in a northwards direction in the eighteenth century, when emperors returning from tours of inspection to the south deliberately recreated the sights of that region in several imperial parks to the north-west of the capital. But the possibility exists that in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the borrowing flowed the other way. In this tentative chronology, the revitalization of the imperial gardens in Peking acted as an inspiration to a relatively small but very prestigious group of the Suzhou elite, whose activities as garden creators, patrons and describers were then imitated more widely in the immediate Jiangnan area, and then through the wider empire as the sixteenth century went on.

Parks and gardens had long been associated with the dwelling complexes of rulers, and were an expected adjunct to them. A Directorate of the Imperial Forest Park (Shang lin yuan fuan) was set up by the first Ming emperor at some unspecified point in the Hongwu era (1368-69), but abolished in the same reign on the grounds that it had harmed the people's property (or livelihood, fang min ye). This establishment was initially at Nanjing, the first Ming capital. The Directorate was reformed in 1407 (before the move of the capital to the north), and had its establishment trimmed somewhat in 1425, by which time it was presumably established at Peking (although it was not until 1441 that offices to accommodate it were completed there). It originally had ten sections. Six of these were responsible respectively for the rearing of large livestock (cattle, sheep, goats and pigs), for birds (goose, ducks and chickens), for vegetables, for fruit and flowers (note the linkage), for fish and for ponds, and for tea. The remaining four had accounting and supervisory functions. In this original establishment, the role of supplying foodstuffs for the huge needs of the imperial court was prominent, something that was carried out by extensive estates on the outskirts of the capital. However, it did from the start go hand in hand with aesthetic endeavours, centred around the Western Park (Xi yuan), situated to the west of the palace buildings. This was the subject of building works in the Xuande reign (1426-35), and again in the Tianzhuang reign (1433-35). The throne was informed in 1460 that the small-scale pavilions were completed, and the larger palaces were extensively restored in 1530. There was a flurry of further building work over the next decade: the Hailing emperor used the garden as a setting for Daoist religious observances, and new structures were built to accommodate them. Most of the work took place on the Island of Jasper Flowers (Qing hua dao), in the centre of the long lake, stretching north to south, which was the garden's main feature. The site of these great precipices was announced to sixteenth-century European readers in the writing of Gaspar da Cruz, who had never set eyes on them himself, but presumably had absorbed from Chinese opinion the idea that

Within his gates he [the emperor] hath very great enclosures with very great lodgings, great kitchen and pleasure gardens, orchards, and many fish-ponds in which are great stores of fish.

The imperial gardens were an important site of ideas about the good landscape in the Ming. One of the important early texts here is the 'Record of the Grant of an Excursion in the Western Park' (Ci you Xi yuan ji) by Li Xian (1408-67), DMB 819-22, detailing a visit that took place during his tenure as Grand Secretary between 1454 and 1467, i.e. shortly after the gardens were first completely renovated. Such a visit was received as a special mark of imperial favour, worthy of permanent record in elaborate prose. There are similar accounts in the collected writings of a number of high Ming officials, including Yang Shou (1365-1444), DMB 1355-56 and Han Yong (1428-58, DMB 496-97). Li's 'Record' lists the features of the garden in a manner that was to become standard for garden descriptions in the Ming and was employed by Wen Zhengming in his 'Record of the Garden of the
Unsuccessful Politician'. In its descriptions of thick stands of timber and dense groves of fruit trees, interspersed with relatively few structures, it also provides a model for some of the formal features of that and other Suzhou gardens. For example, the source of the ponds in the north-east corner of the site is explicitly compared to 'the Jade Spring in the Western Hills', a beauty spot that was to be replicated at least once in Suzhou.69 Several of the pavilion names draw on the same sort of corpus of allusions as would be employed in the southern gardens around fifty years later, and some at this period were still roofed with thatch, giving a rustic air even to these imperial precincts. Wheat fields provided grains for sacrificial meals, as well as a link with an agronomic garden like Wu Kuan's Eastern Estate.70 There were also some distinctive features, such as enclosures for birds and beasts.

Li Xian, the author of the 'Record of the Grant of an Excursion in the Western Park', was a particular friend of Wang Ao, a man also of high rank and with similarly privileged access, who forms a plausible link between the gardens of the imperial capital and those of his native Suzhou. Although as we have seen, Wang did not include his own properties in the Suzhou gazetteer of 1506 which he edited, there is no doubt he owned some of the most celebrated gardens in the Lake Tai region. His own 'Western Garden' [Xi yuan], but with a different character from the yuan of the imperial 'Western Park'68 was at Xiajia Lake, while his even grander 'Truly Apt Garden' [Zhen shi yuan] was at East Dongtingshan, the scenic peninsula (famed for its oranges) that juts out into Lake Tai to the west of the city.71 Here it was adjacent to the property of his younger brother. Both sites were celebrated in verse by his client, Wen Zhengming. The Truly Apt Garden is the subject of a set of poems by Wen dated 1511 and entitled 'Sixteen Odes on the Truly Apt Garden of Master Wang, Pillar of State' (Zhu guo Wang xian sheng Zhen shi yuan shi bu yao).72 These poems memorialize individual features of the garden, some of which are very close in name to features in the Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician he was later to write about. While Wang Ao had a 'Lotus Bank' [Fengrong an] and an 'Apple Patch' [Laijita pu], Wang Xianchen had a 'Lotus Bend' [Fengrong we] and an 'Apple Park' [Laijita yu]. The names may simply have been generic, with no specific individual reference intended. In the following year, 1512, Wen provided a poem recording his attendance on Wang Ao at an outing and party in his other property, the Western Garden.73

In addition to literary records, Wang probably commissioned pictorial memorials of his property from the Suzhou artist Tang Yin (1470–1524), an exact contemporary of Wen Zhengming and like him very much in the orbit of the now-retired grandee. Although the original in neither case survives, Anne de Courcy Clapp has identified two Tang Yin compositions as being essentially topographical studies of Wang Ao’s properties at Dongtingshan.74 The imperial gardens seem to have become rather more accessible to low-ranking members of the Peking bureaucracy by the early sixteenth century. They were certainly visited on more than one occasion during 1523 by Wen Zhengming himself, in the course of his brief career as an official of the Hanlin Academy. His collected works contain poems entitled 'Touring the Western Park', 'Again Visiting the Western Park on an Autumn Day', and a sequence with a prose postface called 'Ten Poems on the Western Park'.75 He was accompanied on the last occasion (which in fact took place in the spring) by three friends and colleagues, Chen Yi [1469–1538], Ma Cang [1480-1535], and Wang Tonggu [1497–1551], and according to his own account, this was no signal mark of imperial favour – indeed the emperor would have had no idea they were in his garden.76 Chen Yi had taught in the palace school, and had come to know a certain Wang Man, an official of the Directorate of the Imperial Forest Park, who conducted the four of them on a tour. According to Wen: 'On my return, and following what I had noted and remembered, I made these ten poems.' The imperial park is compared to a heavenly realm, 'something which could not be spied in the world of men'. (It is still a piece of great good fortune to be admitted to this closely guarded precinct.) As with the earlier account of Wang Ao's garden, the whole is dealt with in discrete units, listed as ten 'views' (jing). These are: Longevity Hill [Wang sui shan], the Great Pond [Tai ye chi], the Island of Jasper Flowers [Qing hua dao], the Hall of Radiation Received [Cheng guang dian], Dragon Boat Harbour [Long zhou pu], the Plantain Garden [Ru jiao yuan], the Hall of Joy Received [Le cheng dian], the Southern Terrace [Nan tan], Hare Garden [Tu yuan] and the Level Terrace [Ping tan]. A short prose preface is provided for each poem, the one on Longevity Hill reading: Longevity Hill is to the north-east of the imperial city beyond the Xiaowin Gate, and is the protecting hill which guards the Great Within. On it groves of trees extend their shade. It is particularly rich in rare fruits, another name of it being Garden of a Hundred Fruits.77

Wen's visit to the garden may have been fortuitous, but it was not necessarily unique. It seems plausible that, just as Wen had visited
the imperial park, and written about it a sequence of poems with topographical prose comments before he did the same for Wang Xianchen’s Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician, so grander personages like Wu Kuan, Wang Ao and Wang Xianchen himself may well have had the model of the imperial gardens before them when they set out to remodel or build from scratch their own properties.

THE ROLE OF THE ARISTOCRACY

The gardens of Peking, other than those of the imperial court, had played a role as centres of elite sociability in the fifteenth century. The most renowned gathering of this type is the ‘Elegant Gathering in the Apricot Garden’ (Xing yuan yu ji) held on the property of Grand Secretary Yang Rong (1374-1440), DMB 1519-21, in April 1437. Nine men, all of high rank, were present, including Grand Secretary Yang Shiqi, who as we have seen was familiar with the imperial gardens, and who provided the prose ‘Record’ of this particular get-together. It was further commemorated by a painting from the brush of the court painter Xie Huan (illus. 20). A second famous gathering of this type was held in the Bamboo Garden of Zhou Jing (1440-1510), DMB 397-9, in 1499, the participants this time including Wu Kuan, owner of the Suzhou Eastern Estate. It was recorded too by painters who were present, and both this and the earlier painting were reproduced around 1560 in a book entitled Er yuan ji, Two Garden Records (illus. 17, 18). This published version of the poems and pictures relating to these two celebrated Peking events coincided with a great expansion of interest in garden culture and its history among a wider elite across the empire. However, in Peking itself it was not the bureaucratic elite that was to dominate the landscape as the sixteenth century wore on, but the aristocracy of imperial relatives, and the descendants of those military supporters of the early emperors who had been rewarded with hereditary titles and the large estates necessary to support them in style.

THE EXPANSION OF GARDEN CULTURE

In the southern capital of Nanjing, at the heart of Jiangnan, where ‘literati’ ideals were most fully realized, the aristocracy too dominated the social landscape of the city, and it was their gardens that were celebrated. This is shown in the list of properties in the city contained in a famous essay by Wang Shizhen, his ‘Record of Visiting the Gardens of Jiangning’ (You jingning zhu yuan ji). Jiangning is an alternative name for Nanjing. He lists fifteen sites, no fewer than
ten of which are attached to the residences of various members of the family of the dukes of Weigao, the descendants of Xu Da (1332-85) (294, 602-8), original companion in arms of the founder of the dynasty. None of these sites predates the beginning of the sixteenth century. Of the remaining five gardens Wang records, two are the creation of other members of the imperial aristocracy (the marquises of Wuding, resident in Peking, and the decayed clan of the princes of Qi), with only three being ascribed to the class of scholar-bureaucrats to which Wang himself belonged.

Wang's essay is paraphrased in a work on the history, topography and customs of Nanking published in 1617 by a native of the city, Gu Qiyuan (1565-1628). In a subsequent passage on 'Ancient Gardens', he lists a number of long-lost parks and gardens, mostly dating from the period of the Northern and Southern Dynasties, when Nanking was a capital almost continuously. He comments that Nanking was in the past rather poorly provided with the private gardens of the scholar-gentry (shi de fu), and explains this fact in the following way:

At the beginning of the dynasty, regulations were established on the basis of ancient precedents, and orders forbade the civil and military officials from occupying too much marginal land, thus obstructing the dwellings of the people. Nor were they allowed to dig ponds for rearing fish, lest they damage the vital breath (jing) of the earth. Thus at that time the great families rarely constructed gardens and parks, and those gardens recorded by Wang Shizhen were mostly created since the Zhengde (1506-21) and Jiajing (1522-66) eras.11

Contemporary sources are unanimous in seeing this period from about 1520 as one in which the category of gardens diversified from ideas about productive property expanded greatly, and one in which the number of people involved in the practices of aesthetic horticulture greatly increased. The situation in Suzhou itself will be looked at in greater detail below, but the same time frame can be extended to other areas. The garden of the Qin family at Wuxi, known originally as Peng gu xing wo, and surviving to receive imperial visits in the eighteenth century under the name Qichang Garden, was laid out in the Zhengde period.12 Almost all the references to gardens brought to light by a trawl through the Dictionary of Ming Biography (admittedly an inexact scientific process) are to new building campaigns in the sixteenth century. For example, Wu Guolun (1534-93) (DMB 1590) is described as constructing the first garden to be seen in his native district of Xingguo, in Huguang province, after he was castigated in the 1570s. It cannot have been the

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18 After Lu Ji and Lu Wenying, Birthday Gathering in the Bamboo Garden (Zhu yuan shou yi tu) (1499), woodblock print, from Two Garden Gatherings (Er yuan shu), c. 1560. Library of Congress, Washington, DC. This section of the print shows Wu Kuan (1435-1504), owner of the Eastern Estate in Suzhou.
case that horticulture was unknown in the area, but rather that the structure of learned references and aesthetic and social practices with which Wu chose to surround his property was new to the region, and may well have been done in conscious imitation of what was already becoming fairly widespread in somewhere like Suzhou. Oi Ryûta's listing of 191 gardens in his native region of Zhejiang contains only sites recently created. A modern collection of written 'Records' of famous gardens contains fifty-seven such prose pieces, of which four date from the Tang period (618–906), ten from the Song (960–1279), and twenty-two and twenty-one from the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1912) dynasties respectively. Of the Ming pieces, the oldest is Wu Zhengming's 'Record of the Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician' of 1533. While this is not a statistically rigorous sample, its inclusion of more texts for the last 210 years of the Ming than for the 267 years of the entire Qing is suggestive of the intense degree of attention paid to gardens at this period. Modern Chinese scholars all concur in seeing an absolute increase in the number of aesthetically constructed gardens as being a phenomenon of the sixteenth century.

Suzhou in the Later Ming

A less deterministic look at what the elite chose to record about Suzhou and its gardens in the latter half of the Ming period shows the degree of expansion in garden culture that was taking place. The Surfing Waves Pavilion (Cong lang ting) at Suzhou, which had been only a name from the distant past in the 1150s, when it was used by Wang Xianchen as the name of one feature in his own garden, was rebuilt from scratch in the Jiajing period by Hu Zunzong, prefect of the city. It is the gazetteers that give the clearest picture of how the elite perceived expansion in this type of activity to have taken place. Administratively, the city of Suzhou was part of two different counties, Changzhou county covering the eastern half, and Wu county comprising the western half of the city and the belt of territory to the shores of Lake Tai. The former was provided with a gazetteer in 1571, subsequently revised and published in 1587. It is a relatively modest affair as Ming gazetteers go, perhaps reflecting the status of Changzhou as the less affluent side of the city, and as such has no separate chapter devoted to gardens. Instead, chapter Thirteen combines 'Famous Sites' (Cu), 'Graves' (Zong mu), 'Residences' (Yu zhai) and 'Garden Pavilions' (Yuan ting). The first of these categories does include a certain number of historic garden sites, but the 'Garden Pavilions' category lists seventeen properties altogether, mingling vanished historic ones with extant gardens in a way which is less systematic than that of the gazetteer Guo zhi of 1506, where the purely literary gardens are listed first before the actual ones. Four of the seventeen in this case are records of gardens definitely no longer extant, leaving thirteen possibly real ones to be listed, a figure far higher than the five contemporary gardens listed in the gazetteer of 1506 for a far larger geographical area. In most cases only a bare listing is given, for example 'The Awakenning Heart Pavilion (Xing xin ting) is by the Pa Gate'. More extensive notice is given to two gardens already encountered, Wu Yong's Eastern Estate and Wang Xianchen's Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician:

The Eastern Estate was made by Meng Yong, father of Wu Xuan, [posthumously titled] Wending gong. In all it has/had twenty-two views (ting). There is a 'Record' by Grand Secretary Li Dongyang, and a painting by the recluse Shen Zhou. The Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician is/was within the Lou Gate, west of the Dahong Temple. It was opened up and enlarged by Censor Wang Xianchen, to over 200 mu. The splendour of its Engraving trees and curving waters was first in Suzhou. There is a 'Record' by the Expectant Official Wen Zhengming.

What is deemed worthy of record here are principally the distinguished literary and artistic figures who have celebrated the gardens, rather than the gardens' intrinsic features. Also noteworthy in the way the Eastern Estate is now reduced to a series of 'views'. A garden is now something to be looked at, and something where individual features take precedence over the integrative mix of land management types (fruit, vegetables, rice, mulberry) that were described by Li Dongyang in the 1470s. The other Suzhou gazetteer, that for Wu county published in 1642, has much more material on gardens, to which it devotes an entire chapter. This is entitled 'Garden Groves' (Yuan hui), the term that has won out in modern Chinese as the regular word for 'garden', though as we have seen in the Ming period it existed side by side with alternatives such as 'garden pavilion' (yuan ting) and 'garden ponds' (yuan chi) as the name for the whole category. The Wu county gazetteer lists fifty-five sites, a massive expansion since 1506 and still a considerably greater number than that seen in the 1598 gazetteer of the other Suzhou county. Twenty-seven of these predate the Ming dynasty, the remaining twenty-eight, beginning with the 'Pleasure Patch' of Du Qiuang, being Ming foundations. Several of these early Ming gardens were no longer extant at the time of
writing. For example the 'fast-so Patch' (Shí shí pǐ) of retired Grand Secretary Shen Shixing (1555-1614, DDB 1389-90), described as 'the most splendid of the garden groves in the western part of the city', was built on the site of the defunct Pleasure Patch. The accounts of individual gardens are considerably more extensive than the bare listing in the Changzhou gazetteer, often incorporating samples of prose or verse. In the majority of cases the identity of the garden's owner is given along with its location, and there are occasional editorial judgements on the quality of the result, on the lines of that given for Shen Shixing's property. Thus we are told about the 'Cold Mountain Detached Villa' of Zhao Huangguang (1539-1635) at Mount Zhixing, where the poet lives in retirement with his wife. In Zhao's wife was herself a noted writer, and the daughter of Wen Zhengming's great friend Lu Shidao. This is a 'spring of the immortals and a world apart', where even all the furniture is 'such as is not seen in the world of men'.

Prominence is given to the 'Fragrant Grasses Hilltop' (Xiang cǎo ché) of Wen Zhengheng (1585-1645), great-great grandson of Wen Zhengming, ardent arbiter of taste, and author of 'The Treatise on Superfluous Things' (Zhuo wu zhǐ, written c. 1615-20), a guide to appropriate consumption behaviour for the Suzhou elite, for which Zhao Huangguang had acted as an honorary editor. It is described in this way:

Tall trunks and rare rocks, square ponds and sinuous streams, towers of cranes and enclosures for deer, 'fabulous coaches and swallow-tail courtisans', as well as delicate bamboo shoots and fine grasses, great peaks and potted flowers, all splendour and luxury was prepared for this noble name.

The word used for 'luxury' (zhì) in rich negative connotations of lavish wastefulness and inappropriate excess. By 1643 it was terms such as this one that, rather than references to the morally ennobling sphere of productive resources, pervaded writing about gardens.

The period that saw the quickening of interest in the creation of new gardens, first of all in Suzhou, then in the other cities of the economically crucial lower Yangtze area, then in the wider empire, was one that witnessed an increase in all forms of luxury consumption behaviour by the elite. This was followed by an increase in the number of complaints that such behaviour was disruptive, wasteful and ultimately subversive of the right ordering of society. Two quotations will have to stand in for what was in fact a whole genre of such social criticism aimed directly at Suzhou:

As for the customs of the populace, in general those south of the Yangtze are more extravagant than those north of it, and no extravagance south of the Yangtze surpasses that of Suzhou. From old the customs of Suzhou have been accustomed to excess and splendour and a delight in the rare and strange, to which the sentiments of the people are invariably drawn. To turn people's inclination from moderation to excess is easy, but to return them from excess to moderation is difficult.

And again:

Although Suzhou has begotten in leisure activities, and enjoys the rich profits of rivers and seas, the people are flighty and cunning, and their customs are luxurious and extravagant. Everyone else considers them as stupid and laughable, but they flaunt themselves as famed for superior cleverness. They do not realize it is their very cleverness which makes them foolish.

These complaints about 'exaggeration' and 'excess' are to a large extent topos, though topos which were to become increasingly shrill as the sixteenth century wore on. Such terms began in the course of this period to be applied to the gardens of the wealthy. As we have seen in the previous chapter, as early as 1644 it was being argued that the prominence of gardens in Suzhou was due to a lack of 'frugality'. Gardens were seen by the end of the century as a natural part of the expansion and intensification of luxury consumption behaviour that had taken place during the previous fifty years. Shen Dafu writes:

At the end of the Jiajing period (1522-66) the empire was at peace, and prosperous members of the official classes, in intervals between the construction of gardens and the training of singers and dancers, turned to the enjoyment of antiquities.

These connections with luxury and with consumption were topos that it was not possible to apply to productive land, the essentially moral category to which I have argued the hegemonic early Ming great gardens such as the Eastern Estate and the Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician belonged. How had gardens changed from sites signifying 'production' to sites referring to the more problematic category of 'consumption'?

PLANTS, ROCKS, LUXURIES

Gardens had certainly changed physically in a number of ways. Groves of fruit trees gradually became less prominent in the garden landscape, to be replaced by rare flowering shrubs of no possible economic value, including types imported from south-east Asia.

One author notes that 'The glory of a garden lies in the number and
sites of its trees, and goes on to give a hypothetical complete list of desirable species:

The most precious are the Tianmu pine, the guzhi pine, the polio tree, the magnolia, the "Western Palace" crab apple, the "hanging threads" crab apple, the qiu zong, the gingko, the "dragon's claw" sophora, the pimpo, the quince, the citron, the pear flower, the hydrangea, the luhuan pine, the Guanyin pine, the green calyx flowering plum, the "flying butterfly" flowering plum, the prunus peach, the Indian coral tree and the cypress. Today, the various renowned gardens of Nanjing are rich in famous flowers and precious trees, but those which have all of the above are rare indeed.

This list is dominated not by 'oranges' or 'flowering plums' in general, but by specific rare varieties. The only plants on it that also appear in the contemporary 'Complete Book of the Administration of Agriculture' are the gingko and the quince, as well as the generic 'pine' and 'sophora', demonstrating the degree to which there has been a move away from an interest in economic species. There was an interest in rare species from beyond the borders of the empire, for, as in eighteenth-century Europe, the assimilation of the overseas Other to the natural world was easily made. The same author writes of the 'great embroidered red ball flower' (da long xun qiu hua), described as not native to China, but brought in an ocean-going ship from Thailand to Nanking, 'when Shun Shengyu was governor there'.

The crab apples in the courtyards of one Nanjing temple were said to have been brought from the Western Ocean by the great eunuch admiral Zheng He (1371-1433). New varieties were being developed, or transplanted at this time, as we see in the discussion of camellias.

There are two types of camellia in this region, one has single petals and a yellow heart in the middle, while the other is the "Precious Pearl", where in the middle of the single petals, fragments of little red petals cluster like petals, hence the name. Recently there has been another white variety, with flowers rather like the "Precious Pearl", but the colour has a tinge of light yellow, and it has a very strong perfume. It is far superior to the red one.

Another novelty was the red-rose azalea of Suzhou, which appeared for the first time in the gardens of Nanjing in the second half of the sixteenth century, transplanted with great difficulty. The Peking garden of Zhang, Earl of Hualan, was noted for its "tens of thousands" of herbaceous peonies, while on a much smaller scale a garden could still be renowned and attract attention in the early seventeenth century for its "several hundred plants from different places, and of different varieties, so many that even the gardeners could not identify them" (illus. 18). Such exotica played the same role in the great sixteenth-century gardens of China as they did in those of contemporary Europe, where the effect was that 'widened the gulf between an aristocratic or a connoisseur's garden and one whose planting was available to a much wider range of incomes and social situations'. They served to differentiate the practice of aesthetic horticulture from the continuing existence of other types of land use.

As well as rare plants, rocks played an increasingly important part in garden design. Here it is necessary to keep in mind the distinction between single rocks, whether set in the ground or in moveable tubs, and agglomerations of rock. The two did not have an equally long, nor a continuous history. The connoisseurship of stones goes back to the Song period and beyond, and is exemplified by a text like Du Wan's 'Stone Catalogue of Cloudy Forest' (Yun lin shi pu), which has a preface dated 1353, although, significantly, it was not printed until the late Ming. Single rocks, in particular, the naturally pierced and fortominate boulders known as 'Great Lake Rocks' (Taihu shi), after the body of water near Suzhou where they originated, were a particular focus of interest of the Song aesthetic emperor Huizong, who formed an infamous 'Flower and Rock Network' (or Malai) to supply his capital with the finest examples. However, these rocks seem not to have as yet been seen as an indispensable part of garden design in every area of China in the Song period. Wang Zhiheng, in the late Ming, noted that the Song 'Record of the Gardens of Luoyang' by Li Genyi makes no mention of rocks at all. It is possible that the vogue for these rocks owes something to their presence in temple gardens, where they were deemed to impart an other-worldly appearance redolent of the Western Paradise. A Japanese visitor to eleventh-century Suzhou was particularly struck by the rockwork in the garden of the Bao Temple there, and rocks may have remained a Suzhou specialty until a later date. The Suzhou writer Huang Zengzeng (1450-1456; DMA 661-5) certainly thought so. In his Wu zhu lu ('Record of the Customs of Suzhou'), he dates the fashion for Taihu rocks from the notorious figure of Zhu Mian, impresario of the 'Flower and Rock Network'. In his own day 'the wealthy and powerful of Suzhou compete for these rocks', the chief artisans of which were Zhu Mian's descendants, now established at Tiger Hill (Illus. 35, 36). One of the most famous ensembles of rockwork in the city in the Ming period belonged to a Buddhist temple, and was known as the Lion Grove, Shihai lin (Illus. 41).
Established in the Yuan dynasty, and painted by the great Yuan painter Ni Zan (who, despite later legend, played no part in the design of the rocks), this site was completely ruined by the early Qing, was built over for housing, and had to be rebuilt from scratch for a southern tour of the Qianlong emperor in 1762. Its present appearance is therefore no guide to its arrangements in the Ming, and the intriguing possibility of a central role for Buddhist symbolism in the popularization of garden rocks must remain no more than speculation. Rocks are not mentioned in the 'Record of the Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician', and Wen's paintings show only a single example of Taihu rock (illus. 9).

The elaborate 'artificial mountains' (zhi shan), a type of composite rockwork that was also a specialty of Suzhou, began to be one of the visually dominant features of the fashionable garden elsewhere in China after about 1550 (illus. 26, 36). They were seen as something of a novelty to the Mingzhou writer Lang Ying (1487–1566; omy 795–7), writing about the middle of the century, and one which was not without its negative side:

Recently rich and noble families have taken to piling up artificial mountains, and though they get their mountains, they naturally do not have the vital air of real mountains. Moreover, in spring and summer they are infested with snakes, which means that moonlit nights cannot be enjoyed (outdoors).\(^\text{24}\)

The artificiality and 'perverseness' of building artificial mountains when real mountains are all around, and the inevitable inferiority of elaborate gardens (associated with the taste of wealthy emperors) to the natural scenery they supposedly imitate, is a theme in the writings of the culturally conservative Fujian author Xie Zhaoshu (1567–1644; omy 546–50). These structures are rarely mentioned without some reference to the great expense of making them, as Lang Ying and Xie Zhaoshu make clear. The single piped and pierced 'Great Lake Rocks' could be dear enough:

A fine one is worth a hundred gold pieces (500 ounces of silver; 3,770 g), and even a poor one is never less than ten or twenty. A garden (wu xuan, 'garden pond') cannot be without one of these pieces, but they are very hard to obtain in my native Fujian. For they are stopped by the mountain ranges, and cannot reach here unless transported by sea. Kunshan rocks resemble carved jade, but they do not exceed two or three feet, and are only objects for the table. Lingbi rocks make a sound if struck, but fine ones are even harder to obtain. Ye Shaolin of the Song period tells how he once passed through Lingbi, and obtained a rock a little over four feet, for which he paid eight hundred gold pieces. This is excessively dear.

Nowadays there are no Lingbi rocks of four feet in height, nor are there any rocks costing eight hundred gold pieces.\(^\text{25}\)

However, a good artificial mountain could cost ten times that in Suzhou. The same Fujian writer, Xie Zhaoshu, laid down what constituted a 'good one' in terms that suggest a sophisticated audience deploying a specialist vocabulary of connoisseurship:

A skilful maker will take pains over the details, so that the scene is not piled and folded, the rocks are not reversed and turned, sparseness and looseness are appropriate, proportions are harmonious. Thus the natural (in can) is not lost in the make of human craft (ten gong), and a marginal piece of land preserves the flavour of wilderness. Eschew a fractured business, which is distasteful. Eschew a formal order, which approaches vulgarity. Do not have an excess that stirs up splendor. Do not have too much cleverness, which butts the real. Thus people will wander among them for a whole year without wearying. As for obtaining these things, in general rocks are easy to get, water is harder to get, and large and ancient trees are even harder to get.\(^\text{26}\)

Xie here provides another explanation for the greater prominence of rocks in late Ming gardens, the ease with which they could be purchased and the speed with which they could be installed. A rock garden was an instant garden, desirable for those who did not have a continuous involvement with land ownership dating back to the Yuan dynasty.

Although modern writers have often concentrated on the cosmological connections of rocks, and their links with deeply held views about the nature of the universe, Ming writers are as likely to associate them with the luxury consumption of the age. Thus Xie Zhaoshu:

The Yizhou Garden of Master Wang Shichen has a rock over 30 feet high, such that the city gate was demolished to effect its entry. This is very close to excess... The constructions of the men of old can be known by their extreme naturalization (in can). This is not like the rich and noble families of today, who do no more than contest for massive splendours.

Poppish great merchants do not fail to enjoy the delights of terraces and terraces, but these are not preserved because they do not deserve to be preserved. Narrow-minded vulgar officials devote themselves to building and ornamenting in order to amuse themselves, yet most of what they do is hateful - there are no hills and valleys in their breasts...\(^\text{27}\)

This concern with 'hills and valleys in the breast' was, as we shall see, to become one of the key responses to the enmeshing of garden landscape in the restless, competitive social world of the late Ming
The role of gardens in this competition is brought out very forcibly in a survey of the sites of Suzhou by the great essayist and poet Yuan Hongdao (1568-1610):

_A Brief Account of Gardens and Pavilions (Yuan yu)_

The gardens and pavilions of Suzhou known by name in olden days were the Southern Garden (Nan yu), of the Qian Family; Su Zimei's Saging Waves Pavilion, Zhu Changwen's Pleasure Patch and Fan Chengda's Old Homestead at Stone Lake (Xiu hu yi yuan). Nowadays they are all in ruins, and their vaunted lofty ridges and clear pools, secluded monticules and verdant stands of bamboo have become places where herdboys and woodcutters chop fodder and gather stumps. In recent days, within the city walls, the garden of Assistant Administration Commissioner Xu inside the Feng Gate has been the most splendid. Its painted walls assemble their timbers, flying streams encircle it. Water passes between rocks, people pierce the depths of caverns, and the ingenuity (qi) surpasses that of the natural world, to become as magical as the work of demons. There are a thousand streams and myriad ravines, so that the visitor almost becomes confused as to his directions. It is in competition for pre-eminence with Wang Shichen's little Garden of the Earth Spirit (Qi yu). The Garden of the Earth Spirit is spacious and open, with every flower and rock having the flavour of remoteness. Xu's garden is rather hampered by its cleverness and splendour. Wang Ao's garden was within the Chang and Xu Gates, by the side of Xiaia Lake. Its water and rocks are also beautiful, but there are several dilapidated spots, and it would be lovelier with some restoration. Xu Qiongjiang's garden is at Lower Pond (Xia tang) outside the Chang Gate. It is spacious and grand, wide and imposing, with towers to the front and dwellings to the rear, enough to intoxicate the visitor. The stone screen was erected by Zhou Shichen, and is thirty feet high, and perhaps two hundred feet in width, furiantimes and jaggedly sheer, like a broad landscape painting. There is on the mound is a single Taihu rock, called the Auspicious Clouds Peak (Bai yun feng), which is some thirty feet high, of an intrinsically unsurpassed in Jiangnan. The story goes that it was bored by Zhu Mian, who was just transporting it in a boat when the rock and its container suddenly sank to the bottom of the lake. He could not retrieve it, and went on his way without achieving his ends. Later it was bought by a Master Dong of Wuchang, who got it as far as mid-stream when the boat sank again. Master Dong then bought it in hiring expert divers to get it, who retrieved it in an instant, both container and rock appearing from beneath the water. Now it has eventually come into the possession of Master Xu. Fan Changhai told me that this rock has lights gleaming within it's cavities every night, and there can be no doubt that this rock is a divine object (shen shi). The Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician is within the Qi Gate, but I have never managed to see it. Tao Zhengwang praised it effusively, for its fine trees and luxuriant groves, its clear waters and green stems. It is about a li or more in circumference, and is the most unique of all the famous gardens.  

**THE SURVIVAL OF THE AGRICULTURAL TRADITION**

In Yuan's essay [datable by internal evidence to before 1600] there are some of no more references to the great gardens of Suzhou as containing rice-fields, vegetable patches or groves of mulberry trees. The early seventeenth-century writer Wen Zhenheng (1585-1645) is aware of the impeccable moral credentials of such features on a gentleman's property, but would rather they were well out of sight:

As for arbours of beans, vegetable patches or the wild herbs of the mountains, they are of course not odious, but they should form a separate area of several ching (a ching was 100 mu). It is not an elegant thing to have them planted in a courtyard.  

And he further writes with regard to green vegetables:  

...it is suitable to order the gardeners to plant a lot of them to provide side dishes, but this must be done without thoughts of commercial profit, which makes you no more than a vegetable peddler.  

Wen's great-great-grandfather, Wen Zhengming, almost a century earlier, had been happy to accept the patronage of, and depict and describe the garden of Wang Xianchen, a man who could happily quote a literary allusion that described him precisely as 'immigrating a garden and peddling vegetables'. By 1650, even to play at being a vegetable peddler was problematic for some members of the elite. Why should this have been so? One explanation is that the great expansion in the numbers of those engaging in hitherto very restricted elite practices of garden culture meant that it was no longer safe to say who was a gentleman rechuse alluding to the delights of bucolic self-sufficiency with his groves of orange trees, and who was an oranges magnate. For despite the changes made in the gardens of the very great, there was no doubt that the practice of economic horticulture continued, or even intensified during the sixteenth century. A foreign observer like Gaspar da Cruz, who saw China in the 1560s but had no contacts in the higher reaches of the elite, was struck by the qualities and variety of vegetables, nuts and fruits available in Chinese cities. He saw little in the way of 'gardens', though he did remark that in the houses of the 'common people' in Canton, 'It hath after the house that is at the entry a court with solacess of small trees and bowers with a very fair little fountain'.  

praise
The economic referents of the garden did not disappear all at once, nor did they ever disappear completely. The early seventeenth-century garden of Qi Buolun, at Shanyin county in Zhejiang province, still contained mulberry trees, and another which he merely visited contained a massive grove of over one thousand orange trees.\(^4\) Oranges, referred to by their nickname of 'wooden slaves' (from their profitability) were present in the 'Returning to the Fields Garden' (Guai tian yuan) laid out between 1631 and 1633 on part of the site of the by then deserted Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician in Suzhou, along with a quartet of peaches, plums and flowering plums. But by this date the garden's owner, Wang Xinyi, devotes considerably more attention in his account to his rockwork.\(^6\)

Agronomic literature flourished in the sixteenth century and early seventeenth, and books were written that addressed varying levels of the social hierarchy. Relatively lowly were the 'householder's manuals', works containing a wide range of information aimed ostensiably at small-scale landowners. Much of this was eminently practical, and much of it had to do with the successful practice of economic horticulture. One of the most widely circulated of this genre was Bian min tu zuan ('An Illustrated Epitome to Benefit the People'; Illus. 15) printed at least six times in various parts of the empire from the Chenghua (1465-87) reign to the Wanli (1573-1620). This is a composite, slowly accumulated work with no individual author. Like other works in the genre, such as Ja jia bi yong shi zai guan ji ('Complete and Categorized Essentials for the Householder') and Duo meng bi shi ('Generalized Competence in Humble Affairs'), it combines information on household tasks (in which horticulture is prominent) with information on imitating the luxury lifestyle of the urban rich. The 'Illustrated Epitome' contains basic information on what is needed for painting and calligraphy, and the care of the qin zither, the indispensable musical companion of the gentleman scholar.\(^9\) Other works contain information on how to create a 'study', how to create a fake patina in antique bronzes, and how to care for bronzes in one's own collection.\(^4\) But it is significant that none of these works contain any information on purely aesthetic horticulture (they never, for instance, discuss rocks). For the relatively humble audience at which they were aimed, raising plants purely for pleasure was a luxury too far. The same is true of the readership for a widely circulated work entitled Bu nong shu ('Enlarged Book of Agriculture') by Shen Lianghe, a small landowner from lixing in Hangju province, who wrote in 1659. Here economic considerations are firmly to the fore.
Though one often talks about the burdensome nature of heavy taxes, dwelling sites and graves are both suitable for consideration as sources of income. As grave sites plant gan ge [not identified], which is suitable for firewood. If your dwelling site is spacious and broad then in front plant elm, sophora, paulonia and catalpa, at the rear plant bambous, at the side set up a plot, and in the central courtyard plant fruit trees. All of these can provide for the expenses engendered by sacrifices, guests and relatives, and can save you spending money in the marketplace. For an inner courtyard, no trees are better than those such as flowering plum, jujube, citrus, orange and allamanda. None are worse than those such as peach, plum, apricot and persimmon, for the fruit bursts easily and cannot be stored, hence no profit. ①

This was the sort of attitude which a fastidious upper-class writer such as Wen Zhenheng had to take pains to distance himself from.

THE Triumph of Aesthetics

At a higher social level, the split between economic and aesthetic horticulture began to be marked. Texts published or republished in late Ming contain [collectanea; uniform editions of originally disparate works] confine themselves largely to technical matters. A number of works of this type are collected in the Ge zhi cong shu [Collectanea of the Investigation of the World], edited by the great bibliophile Hu Wenhuai and published in 1603. ② There is Nong song ji yuan [Essentials of Agriculture and Solecism]; preface dated 1590, and Zhong shu shu (‘Book of Planting Trees’) by Yu Zongben. The latter text does contain some of what might be called ‘cultural background’ to its technical prescriptions. The whole question of ‘planting trees’ is said in the preface to be an affair of ‘a scholar in retirement’. The ‘sacrifices and guests’ topos is invoked as a justification, before the author goes on to discuss flowers:

Flowers can form part of a prospect, and thereby give pleasure to the senses and delight to the eyes; furthermore they have a personal meaning to those scholars who are practicing withdrawal and searching for the Way of regulation of life. Thus it is well known that their presence in a garden is enough to provide for self-sufficiency and self-delection. ③

The form of this text is to set out month by month the various horticultural tasks, then to go through various plants systematically: grapes, mulberry, bamboo, trees [for timber], flowers, fruit and vegetables. The picture it paints is of a relatively small plot where decorative and economic species are freely intermingled. It specifically says ‘Plant tree peonies and peonies in a vegetable garden [cai...
31. Wen Zhengming (1470–1559), The Yingcai Studio (Yingcai xuan ju), hanging scroll, ink and colour on paper. National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan.

32. Wen Zhengming, Living Aloft (Lei zu yu shou), 1545, hanging scroll, ink and light colour on paper. Private collection.
Top 23: Du Qian (1597–1674), Refraining the Pines (Yun song tu), hand scroll, ink and colour on paper. Palace Museum, Beijing.

24: Qiu Ying (c. 1494–1552), Dwelling in a Garden (Yuan hu tu), hand scroll, ink and colour on paper. National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan. Note the grove of fruit trees in flower at the left of the picture.
24 Qian Gu (1508-74), The Small and Tranquil Garden (Xiao zhi yuan), album leaf, ink and colour on paper, from the album Travel Sketches (Ji xing zu ce). National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan.


27 Qiu Ying [c. 1494-1532], The Garden of Solitary Delight (Du le yuan tu), closing section of a hand scroll, ink and colour on silk. Cleveland Museum of Art.

28 Shen Zhou (1427-1509), The Thousand Buddha Hall and the Pagoda of Cloudy Cliff Monastery, leaf from the album Twelve Views of Tiger Hill (Shui qu shi er jing tu ce), ink and colour on paper. Cleveland Museum of Art.
yuan] and they will flourish particularly well, and 'Beside beautiful flowers and trees you must plant things like onions and shallots, for the stimulation of their musky smell.' Again, such reminders of the existence of edible vegetables would have been anathema to Wen Zhenheng, who ordered them removed to a distance.

Such a separation was not a one-way process, with the discourse of aesthetics banishing any hint of the economic. It happened in the other direction too. The most important agronomic treatise of the late Ming is the 'Complete Book of the Regulation of Agriculture' by Xu Guangqi (1562–1633), left incomplete at his death. Xu takes over more or less unaltered the section on 'plant fields' from the Nang shu of Wang Zhen, written in the Yuan period and cited in the previous chapter. However, Xu omits all of Wang's poems on horticulture, which actually make up the majority of the entry in the earlier book. If onions have no place in gentlemen's gardens, poems now have no place in agronomic treatises. Two entirely separate discursive fields, with different patterns of authorization of statements, have now been created.

Given the existence of this vast body of horticulture that retained earlier concerns, the wealth of the later Ming period was forced to differentiate themselves more rigorously from practices they had once (when gardens were rare) been prepared to embrace, albeit at a symbolic level. Differentiation has to be deployed most rigorously, and most stringently, against those practices or commodities that are closest to the thing being defended, and hence where the degree of confusion is potentially greatest. It was the ubiquity of 'orchards' that made the proponents of 'gardens' so vehement.

The withdrawal from engagement with the economic landscape in the latter part of the Ming is a phenomenon that occurred widely across the empire. In his study of Taich' county, John Dardennes notes that 'After the sixteenth century, interest in workaday landscapes faded away. Enthusiasm for landscape shifted from the actual to the ethereal and artificial.' He shows how patronage of local topographical painters, and involvement in horticultural activities, was replaced with a concern for gardens filled with imported exotic flowers, laid out in conscious imitation of the gardens of Suzhou. Contemporary descriptions of the 'Spring Floating Garden' (Chian fou yuen) of Xiao Shimei, built in the 1620s in the western suburbs of Taich' city, are at pains to point out that it is not a productive space. Dardennes points out that 'although these gardens happened to have been built in Taich' they had no special connection with it', and concludes:

39 Ma Yuan (c. 1190–1270), Egrets on a Snowy Bank, hanging scroll, ink and light colour on silk, National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan. Trees in paintings provided patterns for the appreciation of dwarfed specimens.
From the early Ming discovery of beauty and value in the real world of nature and life on the land, one ends in the late Ming and early Ch'ing determination to ignore and avoid that world, with the creation of toy fantasies in artificial lakes and landscaped gardens, and a preference for moonlit surrealism to the daylight world of work, settlement and subsistence.72

Dareless here may be idealizing the actual as opposed to symbolic involvement of the early Ming elite with ‘work, settlement and subsistence’, but the broad picture he paints is a convincing one. It is supported by Joanna Handlin Smith’s reading of the property of a single owner, in a context where it was the taste of that owner that defined the quality and renown of a garden. With the commodification of absolutely everything in the late Ming, and no barriers other than wealth to the possession of attributes formally limited to a relatively small elite, that elite began to fear a collapse of the social and wealth hierarchies into each other. There is ample evidence that gardens were not exempt from this general trend, and that they were either being created by, or were coming into the possession of, merchants who could not claim any connection with the sanctifying form of wealth derived from landholding. An account of the ‘Mysterious Plot’ (Xuan pu) of the Wu family of Ningpo, in Anhui province, makes it clear that a full kit of rare plants, fabulous rocks and Daoist religious attributes could be assembled by anyone who had the wealth to do so. Such anecdotes become a standard part of the half-admitting, half-effaced accounts of the rise of the Anhui platoons at this period.73 Gardens were now clearly commodities. Individual elements of gardens were equally commodities that could change hands with some frequency. The immensely wealthy family of the Chancellor Chen Zan lived at East Dongtigphu outside Suzhou, where they built a dwelling ‘resembling a palace’ with a ‘flower garden’ (hua yuan – the term is a relatively rare one in Ming texts) of 100 mu. They purchased at great expense a ‘master peak’ of a rock, and tried to ship it home in a raft, which sank in Lake Tai. They then took a month to build a coffer dam, but dredged up the ‘wrong’ rock, which subsequently turned out, when the stone was recovered, to be an exact pair. These miraculous monarchs had pride of place in Chen’s garden, but were sold by a descendant, passing very quickly through the hands of two separate owners.74

Here rocks and even whole gardens were no different from other forms of luxury cultural property, for example paintings, which could change hands with surprising rapidity.75 In such a commercially fluid situation, it came to be the case that less attention was paid to what was owned (since anyone could achieve that), and more to the way it was owned, in particular to the structure of references within which the possession was enmeshed. Hence the size of a garden became less important, indeed it was rather praiseworthy to have a small garden if this was compensated for by aesthetic excellence, and there is a burgeoning in the seventeenth century of names on the lines of ‘Half-Acre Garden’ and ‘Mustard Seed Garden’.76 The miniature here fulfills Susan Stewart’s definition of the ‘overly cultural’.77 What distinguishes the aesthetic garden from the productive one is not simply a different series of crops (flowers instead of fruit), since the former continued in many cases to include plants that had a market value. Rather, it is the manner of possessing that becomes important. This has always been the case for a few, but now in the latter part of the Ming it was to become a strategy that was much more widely available and much more widely practised. In Stewart’s trenchant phrase, “only taste”, the code word for class varieties of consumption, articulates the difference here.78

ACCESS AND RECLUSION

With the invention of taste as the central mechanism regulating the social dimension of consumption, and more importance granted to the manner of possessing, the question of access to gardens played a crucial part. Early western writers on Chinese gardens make great play of their inaccessibility, their role as a haven for their owners far from the cares of office or of family, as essentially a-social spaces. Certainly the concept of ‘reclusion’, zhu, is foremost in Ming writing about gardens, and particularly in the names given to gardens or to features within them.79 There is an equally long tradition of the acceptance of the fact that real reclusion in the remote depths of the countryside is not a real option for those possessed of social obligations. This acceptance appears as early as the apologia for landscape painting by the Northern Song painter Guo Xi.80 It was a commonplace of almost proverbial status that ‘The first choice of a location for making a home is the countryside, then the suburb, and lastly the city’,81 but this did not mean that it was the location most frequently chosen. The symbolic dissociation of the elite from celebration of the productive landscape was matched by a growing tendency for landlords to abandon the countryside in favour of the city as the sixteenth century progressed. Ming writers employed a term, first coined in the Southern Song, which contained within itself the connotative of simultaneous withdrawal and social engagement, the term shi zhu, ‘city recluse’ (illus. 30). On one level, this
meant no more than the man to whom it was applied was not an office holder, but one who pursued his own private interests. It could also be applied to gardens, as in the name Shi yan yuan, 'Reclusion in the City Garden', given to the property of Yao Zhe [Yuanbai] at Nanjing. The builder asked advice from Gu Lin [1467–1545], a figure from Suzhou who was part of the circle of Wen Zhengming, achieved the jinshi degree in 1496, and was a famous arbiter of literary taste in the southern capital. Gu's advice was to 'Plant many trees, build a few structures'. The idea of a hermitage in the city came to the fore with the Ming period, and it quickly became hackneyed. Xie Zhaozhe's complaint directed at the vulgarity and crassness of the names given to contemporary gardens and garden features cites shi yan as the very worst of all, prevalent in his native Fujian and in Zhejiang, eschewed in the more sophisticated circles of Suzhou. It made use of long available ideas (ideas with Buddhist connotations) that remoteness from the world was not a matter of physical distance but of inner mental state. The fourth century emperor Jianwen di [r. 371–32] had observed that 'The place where one is mentally alive need not be remote...'. The term 'place where one is mentally alive', or 'place where the mind is concentrated', hai xin chu, is one frequently alluded to in Ming writing on gardens. An early Ming text, the 'Record of the Deep Purple Studio', records that The ancients had a saying that the place where one is mentally alive need not be remote. With a thick grove of trees, the fish and birds will imperceptibly approach of their own accord... Now this studio is sited in the city, but will cause people to think of the hills and woods, is this not beautiful? The convenient effect of the deployment of these ideas was to allow the upper reaches of the Ming elite to eat their cake and have it, to enjoy the kudos of eremitism without actually eschewing the cultural, social and security benefits of life in or near to a major urban centre. As Wang Shizhen put it in the late sixteenth century: 'The character of dwelling in the mountains is silence, the character of dwelling in the city is clamour; only dwelling in a garden enjoys the happy medium.' Wen Zhenhong is even more explicit about the sheer impossibility of abandoning the convenience of his native Suzhou for some remote, if scenic spot: Dwelling among mountains and waters is best, next comes dwelling in a village, then dwelling in the suburbs. Even if our sort of people cannot rest in caves or sojourn in gullies, following the tracks of famous
hermits, but are admired in the city, it is essential that gates and
courtyards be elegant and clean, that dwellings and cottages be pure and
clear. Thus pavilions and terraces have feelings of the unstraddled
scholar, chapels and belvederes the charms of the recluse. One must
plant fine trees and rare bamboo, display epigraphic specimens, books
and pictures. Thus the dweller will forget his aging, the sojourner there
will forget to go home, the wanderer there will forget his weariness. In
hot weather there will be cooling zephyrs, in freezing times there will be
cheering warmth. If one indulges in extravagant earthmoving and
planting, valuing colourful effects, then it becomes like a letter, a mere
cage.73

One could argue on the basis of this a broadly three-stage model of
the development of concerns in the garden culture of the self-
conscious Ming elite: from a focus on its agronomic references, and
to the morally good life of self-sufficiency, through a concern for a
wide variety of rare and splendid plants, to a final engagement with
the more slippery mechanism of taste. Though undeniably crude,
this model as a heuristic device does have the benefit of introducing
some sense of change over time into what is too often seen as a static
phenomenon.

Both ostentation and taste can only be deployed in a social arena,
and both are meaningless without an audience. Timothy Brook has
put this well:

Possessions hidden away or gardens to which outside entry was
forbidden were of no value in the stressful competition for status in
late-Ming gentry society. Their consumption had to be conspicuous, and
that conspicuousness invariably imparted to every social interaction
a public significance. The gentry related to each other in public as a public
elite.74

The orientalist fantasy of the sepia-stained scholar will not survive a
reading of the copious Ming sources that make it plain that great
gardens were generally accessible, if not to absolutely everyone, then
to those of the respectable classes who could afford to tip the
doorkeeper. This was a practice with a long pedigree. The first private
gardens, those of southern aristocrats of the period after the fall of the
Han dynasty in AD 220, were by and large not available to anyone
other than inmates of the owner. The earliest Suzhou private garden
(listed as such in all the Ming gazetteers) was the fourth-century
garden of Gu Bixiang, who famously chased the great calligrapher
Wang Xizhi from the premises when the latter incautiously attempted
an uninvited visit. This changed over time. A former imperial hunting
park known as the Qujiang Park, situated south of the Tang capital
Chang'an, was effectively a public park from the early eighth century.
The imperial gardens of the Northern Song dynasty [960-1127], the
'Golden Lustre Pond' (jin ming chi) and the 'Grove of Jasper Trees',
were virtually opened in the second month 'for the officials and the
people' (fishi permits could be purchased), while the private
aristocratic gardens of Luoyang at the same period were also open to
visitors, and not merely at festival times. Fan Zhongyan in the Song
justified his frugal decision not to build a garden in Luoyang, and
instead to spend the money on charity, on the grounds that he could
costly visit all the gardens he wanted to. A Song poem by the author
Shao Yong, entitled 'Visiting the Gardens of Luoyang', runs: 'The
gardens of Luoyang do not closer their gates... who needs to know the
owner in order to enter?'.75 The famous 'Garden of Solitary Delight'
(Da le yuan) of the retired statesman Sima Guang was certainly
accessible to his peer group, and even to a wider public. In the Ming
period the imperial gardens in the late 1500s and early 1550s were not
indiscriminately open, but the 'guest' of a visit to them was relatively
easy to come by. By the end of the sixteenth century access was even
freer, and a trip to see the tigers and leopards of the imperial menagerie
being fed with live dogs was one of the sights of the capital for
gentleman visitors.76 The gardens of the hereditary imperial aristoc-
racies were open to visitors, as is clear from Shen Daxian's listing of them
under the heading of 'gardens which can be visited, and which I myself
have seen', and his statement that 'at peony time everyone visits the
Earl of Hui'an's garden'.77 The Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci was taken by
friends in 1598 to see the Duke of Weiguo's garden in Nanjing. He
describes it as 'il mio bello di questa città' and praises its towers,
terraces and 'alti edificii magnifici, as well as a hall of artificially
made rocks, full of many caves, loggias, steps, pavilions, shelters,
fishing places and other galanteries'. He describes the labyrinthine
nature of the garden, 'requiring two or three hours' to traverse it all,
but his account makes it plain that he had no prior social connection
with the owner, who was not present during the tour.78 Gardens were
prominently listed in guidebooks, with the clear implication that they
could be visited. Most Ming writing on gardens is placed within a
context of relatively easy access. Qi Baojia had visited nearly two
hundred properties in his native Shanyin county, and received a
stream of visitors (not all of whom can have been personally known to
him) in his own garden.79 A garden where guests were absolutely not
admitted was a rarity, and one worth recording, as in 'A Record of
Avoiding Guests in the Apt Garden' (Shi yan bu lu chi) by a native of
Huating, Lu Shuxing [1500-1606].80 Lu argues that most people
spend only one day out of ten in their gardens, and are not true owners but guests on their own property. On his modest plot of only two mu he is a true owner, since guests are never admitted. Xu, however, was out of step with the behaviour of the majority of his peers. The occasionally mass nature of garden visiting, even in gardens owned by the bureaucratic scholar elite, is seen in one source describing Suzhou in the late sixteenth century:

Xu Shaqua, by name Tinglu, was a man of Taicang in Suzhou prefecture, who later dwelled in Suzhou city, and served as Assistant Administrative Commissioner of Zhejiang province. His family dwelling was in a garden within the Feng Gate, and reached one to two hundred mu [15 to 30 acres] of rare rocks and sinuous ponds, splendid halls and high towers, all extremely majestic and grand. In springtime the visitors were like ants, and the gardeners admitted them for coins. Many of his neighbours set up wine shops to serve the visitors. A few of those who entered the garden did not behave themselves, but picked the flowers and shouted, they were all prosecuted, and for this reason people did not care to enter lightly. The household servants in his employ all took extreme care of his property, and lorded it over the district, the people of which feared them like tigers.

The same source goes on to tell how an unseemly wrangle between Xu’s servants and a mourning party in 1603 led to his garden being sacked by an angry mob and ‘over half of it’ being destroyed. It continues:

Mr Xu is no longer prominent, though the garden still exists, but commended to the name of some other official as owner, to avoid misfortune. The space between its halls and belvederes is already clogged with thick weeds.97

Now seen as a locus of conspicuous consumption, the garden of a rich man was an obvious focus for attack in the increasingly numerous social uprisings that swept across the Suzhou region in the closing decades of the Ming period.

The accessibility of the gardens of the rich in Ming Jiangnan has several implications. It clearly identifies them as spaces of social competition, as fully involved in the search for status and power. Far from being an unseem refuge, a garden was a way of proclaiming its owner’s wealth and taste to a wide audience. The garden of the Grand Preceptor in Peking announced itself to passer-by with its prominent inscription and red gateway. That gardens fulfilled this role runs counter to the received wisdom about the relatively private nature of luxury consumption in early modern China. In a recent essay distinguished for the breadth of its comparative approach, Peter Burke has written of China: ‘It was not the facade in itself but the interior of the house which was decorated on a lavish scale. The display was intended for the family and its friends’.98 A consideration of the evidence reviewed above may, on the contrary, support the view that Ming gardens (together with the commemorative arches to be discussed in chapter Three) played very much the same social role as did conspicuous expenditure on building in Italy at the same period. At the very least, they played the same part as did the great Italian gardens of the day, access to which has been studied by David Coflin. The garden of Cardinal Andrea della Valle, installed in the 1530s, had an inscription explicitly extending the right of access ‘for the delights of citizens and strangers’, while Giovanni Pontano, in his I concessioni delle virtù sociali, openly associates the virtù of Splendour with gardens made accessible to one’s peers and to a wider public. Foreigners in the sixteenth century frequently remarked on the right of access to great Roman gardens, from the 1560s often achieved by a street door that gave onto the garden without passing through the palazzo.99 The current debate among historians of early modern China regarding the aptness or otherwise of Jürgen Habermas’s concept of the ‘public sphere’ might do well to at least take account of the fact that at the time there may have been rather more ‘public space’, in a narrowly materialistic sense, than has been presented in standard accounts of Chinese cities.

By the late Ming, the construction of gardens had become an obsession celebrated among the upper classes. The gardens of this tiny minority were now fully established as objects of luxury consumption. In describing how he ruined himself through this means, Wang Shimin (1592–1680) is careful to stress the lack of any commercial acumen on his part. Gentlemen were supposed to know how to spend money, not make it:

Having been amply provided for by my forefathers, I am ignorant of anything to do with a livelihood. I do not even know how to use a scale or handle an abacus. Yet I was fatally addicted to gardens. Wherever I lived I set up rock arrangements and planted trees so as to express my sentiments and amuse my eyes. During the prime of my life I was bent on constructing and planting in hortic proportions. Once I gave in to my extravagant fancy I no longer thought about the consequences. Wang’s autobiographical account, translated in full by Pei-yi Wu, goes on to describe the simultaneous creation of two great tracts of pines, rocks and sculptured earthworks in a suburban setting.

96 97
When economic stringencies forced the sale of one of them to a Buddhist community it vanished back into the wider productive landscape almost immediately, its ornamental species cut down for firewood. The other garden is described as in full decay, ‘trampled underfoot by yokels and swains’ suggesting again a degree of access even in despite of the owner’s wishes.\(^{106}\)

The word 叹, here translated as ‘addiction’ but also meaning ‘obsession’ or ‘craving’, was important in Ming theories of the personality. The ‘craving’ was what formed the individual, distinguishing the man of taste from the common herd.\(^{107}\) The same word is used by Wang Xinyi in describing the impetus that led him to build his Returning to the Fields Garden on part of the site of the ruined Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician in the years 1631–5:

My nature has a craving for hills and mountains, and whenever I encounter a piece of fine mountains and water I wander back and forth indecisively, scarcely able to bear to leave, gazing at it for a long time till my heart pounds and my fingers itch — there is indeed enlightenment in painting.\(^{108}\)

The context he lays out for the garden, far from being in any sense the productive landscape, is natural uncultivated scenery, ‘mountains and water’ (山川), a term seldom if ever without a cosmological tinge, as we shall see. Despite the allusion to rural self-sufficiency in the title of the garden, there is nothing in its layout to allude to productivity at all. The family fields of glutinous rice may be visible in the distance from one of its towers, but they are kept well within its walls. The other context provided for the garden is the representation of ‘mountains and water’ in painting, an area of practice that came to dominate the terminology of garden making, as gardens were seen as exclusively aestheticized spaces. This type of reference is never made in earlier Ming texts, such as Wen Zhengming’s ‘Record of the Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician’. By the time Wang Xinyi got his hands on the same tract of land one hundred years later, it was very clear that the land was a surface to be manipulated in the way a painter manipulates the blank spaces of paper or silk:

The land was suitable for a pond, so I made a pond there. I removed the soil from the pond and piled it up high. It was suitable for hills, so I made hills. By the pond and between the hills it was suitable for a dwelling, so I made a dwelling.

Wang finishes his ‘Record of Dwelling in the Returning to the Fields Garden’ with an exordium on different types of rocks, which are
discussed entirely in terms of how they approximate to the styles of
two of the most prestigious old masters of Yuan dynasty painting.
Thus intricate rocks are in the style of Zhao Mengfu (1254-1322; illus. 26), while 'clumsy' (liubo, as in Zhao cheng ye) ones are like
the brushwork of Huang Gongwang (1269-1354). These luminaries
provide the inspiration for the garden's design:

I disposed their [the rocks] perspective and proportions according to the
style of these two, and entrusted the work to the skilled hand Chen
Shun, who took three years to complete it.

Paintings, as infinitely more prestigious cultural artefacts, might
provide the models by which the forms of the land could be
manipulated. Dong Qichang (1555-1636) owned several paintings on
the subject of 'Teach Blossom Spring' by the Yuan artist Wang
Meng (1308-85), and it was his ownership of these scrolls that led
him to attempt to buy the actual landscape depicted in them. Dong
also owned two scrolls, the 'Thatched Cottage' and the
'Wangchuan Villa', attributed to the Tang poet and painter Wang
Wei (701-61), and makes it clear that he expected them to be used in
the disposition of property:

Fortunately I possessed the copies of the 'Thatched Cottage' and the
'Wangchuan Villa',... some gentleman's gardens can be painted, but my
paintings can be gardened [ke yuan].

Another major result of the trend towards the ascendency of a
miniaturized and pictorialized aesthetic of gardens in the sixteenth
century was the growing practice of raising pot plants, and the
dwarfing of trees and other large shrubs to create the miniature
landscapes usually known in English by their Japanese name of
bonsai (Chinesse, pan zai, 'pot planting', or pan ting, 'pot landscapes').
Although there is a pictorial and textual evidence that some of the
necessary techniques were practiced as far back as the Tang
dynasty, it also seems plausible that such things were a speciality
of Suzhou and one that spread extensively through China only in the
course of the sixteenth century, as part of a wave of expansion of
garden culture that also has Suzhou as a key point of origin. In 1506
the author of the Suzhou gazetteer seemed to feel the need to explain
the term, as if it might be unfamiliar:

The people of Tiger Hill are excellent at planting strange flowers and rare
blossoms in a dish. A dish with pine or antique flowering plum, when
placed on a table, is pure, elegant and delightful.

Huang Xingzeng, writing before 1540, tells how, in the Suzhou
region, 'even humble families in rural hamlets decorate small dishes
with island[landscape] as a pastime'. Writers at mid-century, like
Tian Ruisheng, whose Xi yi shuo en zhi yu has a preface dated 1547,
are already imbued with the idea that it is the aesthetics of painting
that provide a system of discrimination for dwarfed trees:

As for the growing of pines, cypress and hat tong in dishes, they mostly
imitate a pictorial idea [hua ye]. Asdant and supine ones are in the Mu
Yuan [lli. c. 1350-1400] technique [illus. 24], those with erect trunks and
spreading foliage in the Gou Xi [c. 1601-90] technique. Other forms, such as
'phoenix and crane on pavilion and pagoda' are variously refined and
marvellous, and can be laid out for pure enjoyment.

At the end of the century, the Nanking writer Gu Qiyuan continues
to stress the importance of a 'pictorial idea', as well as providing
evidence that Suzhou was still considered to be the source of the
finest exponents of the art:

Of old, dish landscapes to be placed on a table consisted of no more than
one or two types of Dannanacanthus. Recently, flower gardeners [hua
yi yuanzi] have moved here from Suzhou, and the number of varieties has
increased, so that apart from Dannanacanthus there are things like
Tianma pines, yinhuo pines, crab apples, pistache pears, little-leaf
boxwood, carnations, Xiangfai bamboo, shihouying, narcissus, small
plantains, wolfberry, gingko and flowering plum. These must have roots
and trunks, with a pictorial idea to the branches and leaves, and may be
installed in an antique porcelain dish with fine stones. The price of the
expensive ones can go as high as several thousand cash.

That gardens were now pure objects of luxury is shown clearly by
their inclusion in morality books of the late Ming, texts that listed
among other types of transgression to be avoided those of excessive
consumption. The most influential and widely circulated of these
was Liu Zongzhou's Ren pu ('Chart of Humanity') of 1634, where a
"Warning against attachment to flowers and rocks' appears snidely
wished between similar warnings against love of leisure, gambling,
accumulating too many antiques, and lust. The warning takes the form of a
number of anecdotes about the refusal of noted gentlemen of the past
to allow the great expense of garden construction.

In a recent essay, Joanna Handlin Smith has foregrounded the issue
of garden building as conspicuous consumption in the late Ming, and
of explicit criticism directed against this practice by contemporaries
like Liu Zongzhou. One early sixteenth-century garden builder
avoided this criticism by having the construction work carried out
as part of a famine relief effort, to give wages to the displaced. In the case of the figure she studies, Qi Biaoja (1603–45), a defence against this criticism involved arguing for the garden as a site of elite solidarity, of shared social engagement, rather than as part of a brute struggle for prestige through the display of wealth. It must have been a defence of some weight since, as Handlin Smith points out, Qi remained on perfectly good terms with Liu Zongzhou, with whom he shared the connection of passing the examinations in the same year. Accessibility was a crucial part of this defence, for only access by the owner’s peer group in the elite (and their recording of the garden in prose, verse and pictorial compositions), only their shared consumption could serve to make wealth qing, or ‘pure’. ‘Access’ was here a practice that formed the aesthetic garden and differentiated it from economic horticulture, since the access denied was the very point of horticultural property. Access at one and the same time reinforced ownership, while submerging and disguising it in an aesthetic discourse of nature. The ‘garden’ was a way of making money look natural. The paradox was that in creating access to the site an owner also risked the resentment of those who felt that he was unreasonably flaunting the great wealth necessary to create one of these purely aestheticized landscapes. He risked allowing access to those who would break the flowers and shoot, and he risked ultimately providing an easily identifiable symbolic concentration of his wealth that could be wrecked relatively easily in a time of social unrest. There was to be no resolution of this paradox. The late Ming garden was not a set of meanings but a site of contested meanings: readable differentially as a pure space of aesthetics or as a luxury object exellente, a battery of wealth. In this respect it is similar to the concept of ‘luxury’ itself, also a site of contest that is historically generated in specific social circumstances, and which also can reach no resolved and stable meaning as long as those social circumstances endure. A luxury is not a type of artefact, but a type of transaction. In the Ming period it was inseparable from the idea of the market, or more precisely of the commodity, which can float free of ideas such as social reciprocity. A Ming painting became a luxury when it ‘came loose’ from the context of social relations it was created to serve. The possibility of inappropriate excess in the consumption of painting came along with this free-floating commodity state. In Confucian social theory, no property, and most certainly no property in land, should float free of social categories and the discourse of kinship. By the sixteenth century it is most certainly did, as famous gardens, like the paintings they increasingly resembled, frequently changed hands anything up to once a decade. This instability in what was meant to be most stable, property in land, was embodied in a particularly disquieting degree in the distinctive artefact of the garden, the oxymoron of ‘land’ as ‘luxury’.

The alternative of Garden of the Artists Official, proposed by Jan Stuart, "Ming Dynasty Gardens Reconsidered in Words and Images", Journal of Garden History, vol. 6 (1986), pp. 156-73, is in many ways superior, but I retain "Unsuccessful Politician" after some consideration, for the sake of congruence with modern Chinese garden scholarship.


Zhang Tingyu, Ming Shi, Zhonghua shuju edn., 38 vols (Beijing, 1953), XVII, pp. 180-3. Hereafter cited as MS.


WBM3, I, pp. 479-80.

Charles O. Hucker, The Conventional System of Ming China (Stanford, 1964), p. 79. Points out that ceremonial jobs in general were not given to men with less than three years experience in a lower post, and that Supervising Secretaries [bi shi zhuang] also ranked 74 were not supposed to be under thirty. If Wang Xianchen was thirty in 1493, when first a censor, he was born around 1460.

WBM3, I, p. 399.

WBM3, I, p. 103.

The irreplaceable value of Wang Xianchen's retirement is attested by the important ritual poem of a literally "feasting his official hat". WBM3, II, p. 1213. On this ritual see Chen Guowang, 'Shi yuan zhi feng lun tu - Ming en Qing dao shengyue yao cong de shihuahe duihang', Xin shi, 11 (1953), pp. 69-94.

Qiu Zhi, June 19, p. 114. There are at least six stories, unsupported by contemporary evidence, that Wang Xianchen feebly assassinated the monks to take possession of the site.


WBM3, II, pp. 805, 810, 813.

WBM3, II, pp. 1094-9, 955.


This album, the current whereabouts of which is not known, is reproduced in full in An Old Chinese Garden: A Three Full Masterpiece of Poetry, Calligraphy and Painting, by Wen Cai Ming, Famous Landscape Artist of the Ming Dynasty. Studies Written by Kuo Kehui, Translations by Ms Zung Chiang, Chiang Sheu Book Company (Shanghai, 1985) (I have used that of 'Zhao zhong yuen ju' in WBM3, II, p. 2275-9, comparing it to the photographs in Kehr. The two of the poems are WBM3, IV, pp. 2295-7. There is another essay version, in a private collection of the 'Record' purporting to be in Woor's calligraphy, also dated 1523. Anthology of Chinese Art: Ming China Society Silver Jubilee Exhibition, Hong Kong Museum of Art (Hong Kong, 1985), pp. 108-11.

This album, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, is reproduced, together with translations of the poems, in Iredale Whittlefield, with an Introduction by Wen Feng, In Pursuit of Antiquity: Chinese Paintings of the Ming and Ch'ing Dynasties Fossil the Collection of Mr and Mrs Carl Morse (Putland, VT, and Tokyo, 1986), pp. 46-70. It does not seem to have been noted that Wang Xianchen would, if still alive, have been well into his nineties when this second album was painted, given that he cannot have been born after 1460.

Wang Jiachen, "Wen Zhengzhang qi qing yuyan de xindu lixiang", International Colloquium on Chinese Art History: Painting and Calligraphy, 3 vols, National Palace Museum (Taipei, 1982), 1, pp. 319-70, Appendix, list those in addition to the albums.

Liu Dazhong, p. 55, n. 4.

The system supposedly planted by Wen Zhengzhang is mentioned in Nanfu, p. 41, and is still pointed to as evidence, but there is no real evidence for the existence of the plant in its gardens. It is not mentioned in Wen Zhengzhang's 1553 record of the site.


They are [Zha Ya-xiu's translations] Truth Waving Pavilion [De zhan tian], Little Surfing Wave [Xiao cong tian], Little Flying Rainbow [Xiao fei luo] and Leaping Jade Studio [Yin zuo mian] in Kehr, p. 167.

Liu Dazhong, p. 53, n. 6.


The phrase is Liu Dazhong, p. 53.

Qian Yong's colophon, dated 1533, to the 1553 Wen Zhengzhang album, reproduced in Kehr. This passage is omitted from the same author's published account of the garden.

None of them appear in the very comprehensive Zhang Jianhua, Ming Qing jingyun wen xi yin bian bian (Shanghai, 1984).

The fullest English discussion of this literature is Francesca Bray, Science and Civilization in China: Volume 6, Biology and Biological Technology. Part I: Agriculture (Cambridge, 1986).

Craig Clunas, Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 166-8.

WBM3, II, p. 1034.

The poem is WBM3, II, p. 1091, translated by Whittlefield, p. 66.

Rury, p. 25, 239-41, Durrant, p. 315-17.

Wang Zhen, Nan shi, Zhonghua shuju edn (Beijing, 1985), pp. 154. On this see, dated 1533, in Kehr, p. 59-64. The relevant passage is also translated in ibid., p. 143.


Rury, p. 145.


Sun identifies it on p. 6 of Malcolm Macfarlane's article.


Ricklefs, et al., pp. 31-3 and pp. 342-50.

Ye Guoguang, p. 770, also Sun Yanyi, p. 79-9.

It remains an important economic crop. Woven Young Chan, 441, in, Chinese Economic Trees (Shanghai, 1931), p. 164; Teng Hsing, Gaobao shihua (Beijing, 1983), pp. 549-77.


Wen Li, ed., Shanghai ziyu (Beijing, 1978), p. 36.


2 The Aesthetic Garden


2. Wu Changshuo, Chong yuan yu, bi (Shanghai jin jian wuxue congshu, 2 vols, Shanghai gui chubanshe, ed, [Shanghai, 1981], p. 350.


5. For a map, see Hou Shuming, ed, Furong Hu Jiu (Shanxi, 1985), pp. 350-9.


26 Chen Zhi and Zhang Gonggui, op. cit.
27 Jia Xuzhao, p. 52.
28 Gao Jin, 1801, pp. 60-61.
29 See the detailed map in Mapo, pp. 30-31.
30 Huangfu Yang, ed., Changchou xian zhi, 14 vol, preface dated 1777, published 1788.
31 Changchou xian zhi, yuan 15, pp. 114-115. [The rhetoric of a gazetteer makes it hard to tell if statements should be read in the present or in the past.grammatically there is no distinction between 'X Garden is outside Y Gate' and 'X Garden was outside Y Gate].
32 Wu xuan zhi, yuan 32, p. 318.
34 Ciliao, Superbious Things, pp. 67-68.
36 Zhang Han, Song chuang mung yuan, cited in Ciliao, Superbious Things, p. 145.
38 Shao Debu, 1912, p. 612.
39 One attempt to describe this change is Wang Jiyuan, 'Souzhou Ming Qing zhai yuan 'fangse de fenqi', Yuanzai shan 'fang (Acta Horticulturalia, 6:1 (1967), pp. 177-94.
40 Ga Qiyuan, p. 17.
41 Ibid.
42 Hardin Smith, p. 69.
43 Lannens, The Italian Rain Renaissance Garden, p. 36.
44 The 'cultures of flowers' was established in China well before this time, and an interest in new varieties was well attested in the Song period. Jack Goody, The Culture of Flowers (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 342-49, notes that for the Song period, 'the cultivation of flowers was a matter of empire'.
46 Edward H. Schaefer, The Wey's Stone Catalogue of Cloudy Forest (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1961), pp. 5-6. Schaefer argues that the use of large stones in the Six Dynasties was replaced by smaller stones in the Tang. He dates the commissioning of rocks to the seventh century.
49 More, 'Millennium', p. 42.
50 Huangxin Xinguang, Wu xian zhi, yuan 1, Xue bei zhi huan, Han fen luo xue reprint edn (Shanghail, 1980), p. 18.
51 Qian You, Zi yuan cong lu, Qiangdai shiliao hui congkan edn, 3 vols (Beijing, 1979), pp. 533-5.
52 Zang Yang, Qi xia lei jian, Shijie shuji edn, 3 vols (Taipei, 1984), yuan 3, p. 48.
53 Xie Zhenbo, Wu zao zhi, p. 105.
54 Xie Zhenbo, p. 110.
55 Xie Zhenbo, p. 116.
56 Zhi Xian was the chief collector of stones for Song Huizong, see Schaefer, Ciliao, Superbious Things, p. 8.
57 Yuan Huizong, Yuan Zhengzhong you yu' jin in Yuan Huizong, Yuan Zhengzhong yuans im (Shanghail, 1985), pp. 10-11.
59 Wen Zhenkang, p. 131.
60 Boxer, pp. 113-14 and 60. Du Chaoyu's 'little lousaine' are presumably ponds, since hydraulic works were not used at this period.
61 Hardin Smith, pp. 58, 60, 69.
62 Chen Zhi and Zhang Gonggui, p. 228-29.
63 Biao min tu zao, Zhanggou guke ren tu tu zong guan chu, p. 3, Zongguan guke fascimile of 1553 edn, 4 vol (Beijing, 1959), yuan 15, 'Manuseatures' (Shanghail, 210-210).
64 Ciliao, Superbious Things, pp. 78-80 and 114.
65 Chen Hongli and Wang Dianying, p. 266.
66 The contents are listed in Zhanggou congguan congbo, reved edn, 3 vols (Shanghail, 1985), pp. 1-47, 270.
68 Zheng zhi zhi, edn, p. 224, 156.
69 Bray, pp. 65-70.
70 Xu Qiangjun, p. 114.
72 Durand, p. 368.
75 Pang Yong, Xi zhi tang Ming lang bu xiao 'chao (compiled 1662), Ju an 16, quoted in Xie Caizhen, 111, p. 353.
76 Chinese, Superbious Things, p. 150-3, for two examples.
77 Hardin Smith, p. 69, argues 'shared aesthetic values overshadowed any distinctions in wealth that garden size suggested and provided a basis for social solidarity with the local elite'.
78 Susan Stewart, On Longing: Narrative of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection (Durham, N.C., and London, 1993), p. 70.
79 Stewart, p. 53.
81 Cahill, Three Alternative Histories, p. 63.
83 Mori Masa, p. 36.
84 Tong Jun, p. 41.
85 Xie Zhaobai, p. 118. See also Cahill, Three Alternative Histories, pp. 26-7.
86 Quoted in Tong Jun, p. 44.
88 Quoted in Tong Jun, p. 43. The context is a letter to Chen Jun.
89 Wen Zhenhong, p. 18.
92 Shen Defu, p. 606.
93 Craig Chao, "Moral and Reality in the Ming Garden," pp. 297-305.
94 Paulette M. D'Elia, ed., First RiS4ntcm ... etc. (Rome, 1942), n. 64.
95 Handlin Smith, p. 85.
97 Shen Zhe, Jin zhi cong cong, quoted in Xie Zhaobai, n. 67, p. 85-4.
98 Wang Zhen, Shi ci yi, cited in Xie Zhaobai, p. 91.
102 See the very fine article by Judith Zeitlin, "The Petrified Heart: Obsession in Chinese Literature, Art and Medicine," Late Imperial China, xii (1990), pp. 1-26.
103 Wang Xinyi, Guan yin yun fan zhu, quoted in Chen Zhi and Zhang Gonghui, p. 268.
105 Tong Jun, p. 41, citing Deng Qingshang, Yu cha zhi.
107 This quotation from Guan zui gui from Liu Fuxian, Guan ji qu li published (1950), n. 6, quoted in Xie Zhaobai, p. 73.
108 Huang Xingrui, p. 38.
109 Quoted in Xie Zhaobai, 1. 7. 70.
114 Handlin Smith, p. 75.
115 Ibid.
117 The Gardens of the Wen Family
118 Wen Zhengming, Pianning pí, Mingbái yushu shì huà, 3 vol. (Taipei, 1968) reproduces the posthumous thirty-fivejuan edition, which is the main contemporary source of his writings.
120 Quoted in Chen, Superfluous Things, p. 164. On Shen Chuntae see ibid., p. 33.
121 Gao Jiu, Juan Ju, p. 68 and June Jao, p. 48-8.
126 Xu Xajang, Chen zuo ji, quoted in Sun Yungwei, p. 23. The importance of impermeable boundaries is stressed by all the agronomic writers, e.g. Xu Guangqi, p. 1043, where the main purpose of the seven-foot-wall structure specified to be "Seep out robbers".
128 Merri, p. 46.
129 Wen Zhushui, ed. Wen Wenshi ji, i, Juan, Qiu Jiiu si shen shen ben chu, 2 edn. (Shanghai, 1931), pp. 1, 10-12. Cited hereafter as WWS.
130 Cahill, Peking, p. 78 & pl. 25.
131 WSW, I, p. 95.
132 WSW, I, p. 187.
133 WSW, I, p. 325.
134 WSW, I, p. 325.