EREMITIC LANDSCAPE DWELLING IN CONFUCIAN CHINA AND ENLIGHTENMENT EUROPE: STRUCTURING THE MORAL SELF IN RECLUSION AND PERFORMING PUBLIC DUTY.

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Abstract.

This thesis explores how the experience of reclusion in free landscapes and private gardens of Confucian China and Enlightenment Europe contributed to people's moral improvement by cultivating good passions such as temperance, encouraging introspection, increasing the sense of responsibility towards society and rendering erudite individuals prompt to perform their public duty as politicians and civil servants. The thesis is based on the comparative analysis of philosophical concepts, works of art, poems and cultural practices in order to highlight the similarities and divergences between Chinese and European – particularly British and French - eremitic landscape dwelling. Taking into account the historical context in which two important systems of thought were developed in different geographic regions, the research brings together the state-sanctioned Confucian ethics with Enlightenment Deism which, inspired by Roman Stoics, played a pivotal role in the promulgation of reclusive landscape culture and the creation of non-geometrical gardens used as retreats in the eighteenth-century Europe. Investigating human relationships with the natural environment and organized society, as well as views on interpersonal relationships, established religion and matters of cultural heritage, the thesis shows that gardens where Confucian literati and socially privileged Europeans, who had espoused Enlightenment ideals, liked to retire comprised mediating spaces between the private realm and the public sphere, solitude and public action. Eremitic landscape dwelling did not derive from a sentiment of contempt for the world or from a selfish desire to avoid hardships. Rather, this noble form of reclusion whose purpose was the cultivation of virtue and humaneness revolved around the greatest interest of individuals and the welfare of society.

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INTRODUCTION

I. Addressing the Idea of Chinese Cultural Influence on European Landscape Gardens.

Academic studies dealing with European landscape-gardens created in the 1700s often focus on the subject of foreign cultural influences; researchers like Yu Liu attempt to detect and highlight them while others like David Jacques and John Dixon Hunt strive to disprove them.[1] There has been much debate concerning the extent to which descriptions of Chinese gardens found in accounts written by Jesuits such as Jean Denis Attiret (1702-1768) and drawings made by people like Father Matteo Ripa (1682-1746), an Italian missionary of the *Propaganda Fide*, had a decisive impact on the new European garden-style which first appeared in the eighteenth-century Britain.[2] Some scholars have attached great importance to Robert Castell (d. 1728), an architect and classical scholar who belonged to the circle of Richard Boyle, Third Earl of Burlington (1694-1753).[3] It has been argued that Burlington's mission was to reinstate in Augustan England, which was obsessed with Roman culture, the rules of architecture as described by Vitruvius, exemplified in this latter's surviving works and practiced by Palladio (1508-1580).[4] The 1728 work of the architect Robert Castell, *The Villas of the Ancients Illustrated*, dedicated to Burlington, contains Pliny the Younger's (61-113 AD) letters describing his Tuscan and Laurentine Villas. It also includes Castell's detailed ground plans based on the ancient text which provided an extensive record of Roman architecture and garden design. In his annotations Castell designated three manners of making gardens. The first leaves the face of the ground unaltered, in the second every element is constructed by men according to specific rules while the third, which Castell regarded as the most perfect, combines the previous two and is identified as Chinese. In this latter

[1] *Entangled Landscapes: Early Modern China and Europe*, ed. by Yue Zhuang and Andrea M. Riemenschnitter (Singapore: NUS Press, 2017), p.35.
[2] Rodney M. Baine, "The Prison Death of Robert Castell and its Effect on the Founding of Georgia", *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 73, (1989) 67-78 (p. 67).
[3] Pierre de la Ruffinière du Prey, *The Villas of Pliny from Antiquity to Posterity*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p.140.
[4] *Classical Culture and the Idea of Rome in Eighteenth century England*, ed. by Philip Ayres, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997), pp. 106, 119.

manner, human intervention is invisible because the already existent natural forms are let free to thrive resulting in an agreeable disorder:

> By the accounts we have of the present Manner of Designing in China, it seems as if from the two former Manners a Third had been formed, whose Beauty consisted in a close Imitation of Nature; where, tho'the Parts are disposed with the greatest Art, the Irregularity is still preserved; so that their Manner may not improperly be said to be artful Confusion, where there is no Appearance of that skill which is made use of, their Rocks, Cascades and Trees bearing their natural forms.[5]

American historian Yu Liu, in his article "Castell's Pliny", maintained that a set of thirty-six engravings representing views from Emperor Kangxi's 康熙 (1654-1722) palaces and imperial gardens in Jehol (Chengde) and brought to Britain by Matteo Ripa, were important for Castell's interpretation of Pliny and had a pivotal impact on the eighteenth-century landscape design - more particularly on gardens which were created on British soil.[6] Countering to Liu's claim, David Jacques pointed out that there is no evidence that Lord Burlington ever met Matteo Ripa or acquired the images of Jehol during this Italian priest's short stay in London in 1724. The engravings found in Burlington's library at Chiswick House had probably not entered there before 1741; therefore, Castell who died in 1728 would not have had the opportunity to study them.[7] Even if he had, it seems risky to argue that an Italian priest's drawings showing Chinese landscape constituted the most determinant factor in the shaping of eighteenth-century English gardens. After all, as John Dixon Hunt among others has demonstrated, the elements of contrast, informality and variety which generate surprise, excitement and melancholy, mental and sensory enjoyment were already present in the Italian Renaissance gardens and in the English gardens that emulated them.[8] Also, men who, like William Kent, revolutionised the field of garden-making in the eighteenth century knew

[5] Robert Castell, *The Villas of the Ancients Illustrated*, (London: the author), 1728, p.116.
[6] Yu Liu, "Castell's Pliny: Rewriting the Past for the Present", *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 43, (2010), 243-257, (p.252).
[7] David Jacques, "On the Supposed Chineseness of the English Landscape Garden", *Garden History*, 18, (1990), 180-191, (p.191).
[8] *The Genius of the Place: The English Landscape Garden 1620-1820*, ed. by John Dixon Hunt and Peter Willis, (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: The MIT Press, 1988) p.8.

and appreciated the landscape paintings of Claude Lorrain (1600-1682), Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665) and Salvator Rosa (1615-1673).[9] Eighteenth-century treatises on gardening proposed to imitate these artists' compositions in the process of landscape design; by imitating their paintings, gardeners could create scenic views for all tastes and purposes: heroic, pastoral, elegant, wild etc.[10]

The term *jardin anglo-chinois* was coined by the French cartographer and printer Georges-Louis le Rouge (1707-1790) who, during the 1770s in the Royal Library of Paris, saw an album of Matteo Ripa's engravings along with some Jesuit engravings commissioned by the Qing emperor Qianlong (1711-1799).[11] Le Rouge reprinted some of these pictures and included them in his book *Jardins Anglo-Chinois à la mode*. This work, published between 1775 and 1790, consisted in twenty-one cahiers containing hundreds of detailed images representing new, "natural" gardens which flourished in the eighteenth-century Britain.[12] Le Rouge associated the "*jardin anglo-chinois*" with the Scottish architect and founding member of the Royal Academy Sir William Chambers (1723-1796) and with the latter's publications on Chinese architecture and gardens.[13] His term, which implied a communion between two cultures, became popular and was subsequently employed in order to define the non-geometrical garden design eagerly adopted by continental landscape architects.

Some erudite Englishmen driven by nationalist sentiments, refused to admit that their country's new gardens were of Chinese inspiration. For instance, Horace Walpole (1717-1797), Whig politician, writer and man of letters

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[9] John Dixon Hunt, *Greater Perfections: The Practice of Garden Theory*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), p.131 and Christopher Thacker, *The History of Gardens*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979), p.185.
[10] René de Girardin, *De la composition de paysages sur le terrain ou des moyens d'embellir la nature près des habitations en y joignant l'agréable à l'utile*, (Genève: Delaguette, 1777), pp.80, 81.
[11] *Goethe Yearbook 25*, ed. by Adrian Daub and Elisabeth Krimmer (Boydell & Brewer, 2018), p.83. retrieved from: doi:10.1017/9781787442795.005
[12] *China on Paper: European and Chinese Works from the Late Sixteenth to the Early Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Maria Reed and Paola Dematté. (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2007), p.130.
[13] *Beyond Chinoiserie; Artistic Exchange between China and the West during the late Qing Dynasty*, ed. by Petra ten-Doesschate Chu and Jennifer Milam, (Leiden; Boston: Brill 2019), p.59.

affirmed that the "imitation of nature" in the English landscape design was clearly the fruit of his compatriots' genius; therefore, to suggest a link with China was wrong.[14] For many Europeans, "imitating nature" – creating a park undistinguishable from a natural landscape – was regarded as a central characteristic of Chinese gardens introduced in Britain. However, if there was a Chinese quality in the fashionable English parks this quality should not be associated neither with the attempt to hide human intervention on the grounds nor with the designers' determination to avoid clear geometrical shapes. Chambers, who presented himself as an expert in all Chinese things, in the widely read *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (1772) explained that in China gardeners did not strive to conceal their involvement in the embellishment of such places but "made an ostentatious shew of their labour". Moreover, Chambers claimed, the Chinese were not enemies to straight lines and regular geometrical features.[15] According to the author of the *Dissertation*, in England which had rejected the ancient geometric order that prevailed in continental Europe most gardens "differ very little from common fields"; they are artless, monotonous and copy "vulgar nature."[16] "Inanimate, ample nature, is too insipid for our purposes; much is expected from us; and therefore, we have occasion for every aid that either art or nature can furnish", said Chambers. Taking example from the achievements of Chinese garden-makers, the English should not copy nature but give "a loose to their imagination, and even fly beyond the bounds of truth, whenever is necessary to elevate their subject. "[17]

The unparalleled mastery of Chinese garden designers who were trained to look at nature through eyes educated by a thousand years of landscape painting proves the uninterrupted continuity of an ancient tradition.[18] The European discovery of Chinese gardens was undoubtedly a revelation which occurred in an opportune moment; it probably accelarated the process which

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[14] *The Vision of China in the English Literature of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. by Adrian Hsia, (Hong-Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1998), p.131.
[15] William Chambers, *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening*, (London: Griffin, 1773), p.17.
[16] Chambers, *Dissertation*, p.iv, v.
[17] Chambers, *Dissertation*, p.21.
[18] Duncan Campbell, "Transplanted Gardens: Aspects of the Design of the Garden of Beneficence, Wellington, New Zealand", *Australasian Gardens and Landscapes* 31, (2011), 160-166, (p.162).

transformed landscape design in Britain and the rest of the Western world. The observation of cultural anthropologist Josselin de Jong concerning intercultural communication is elucidating: “in the analysis of contact between cultures, when a foreign element is introduced into a culture, and this element is relatively easily taken up by this culture, it is most often due to the fact that this culture already presented an internal movement which enabled it to accept the new.”[19] In the Chinese gardens Europeans found elements which corresponded to an ideal of variety, a sophisticated beauty they would like to reproduce in their own gardens. Nevertheless, Europeans’ knowledge of these Chinese scenic abodes was mostly based on written descriptions and visual interpretations of travellers and missionaries; they saw them “through a mirror, dimly”. They drew their inspiration from a subjective perception of these idyllic places which thrived in a distant land.

The structure of European like that of Chinese gardens reveals cultural priorities; the arrangement of a physical place destined to please and instruct, reflects aesthetic preferences, philosophical views and moral purposes which are discussed in the dissertation. Although academic debate about the foreign impact on European landscape design is stimulating, this thesis does not explore how indebted to China the irregular European gardens of the 1700s were. Instead, examining in their own contexts Enlightenment Deism which was inspired by Stoicism and Confucian tradition which evolved giving rise to Neo-Confucianism, this doctoral dissertation highlights the beneficial role of landscapes in human life and illustrates certain parallels and differences between them. Namely, in my thesis, I demonstrate that reclusive life in Chinese and European gardens or free landscapes was promoted as a way to cultivate good passions like temperance and increase the sense of social responsibility rendering learned persons who held public office more virtuous and prompt to perform their duties. Furthermore, I illustrate how, in the gardens of scholars, philosophers and noblemen, the desire to retire from the world, enjoy scenic views and practice introspection interweaved with the

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[19] Patrick Edward de Josselin de Jong, *Contact der Continenten . Een bijdrage tot het begrijpen van niet-westerse samenlevingen* (Leyden: Univeristaire Pers Leiden 1978), p.69, cited in Nicholas Standaert “Science, Philosophy and Religion in the 17th century Encounter Between China and the West”, *Synthesis Philosophica*, 7 (1/1989), pp.251-258.

flourishing of solid interpersonal relationships. In this thesis it is shown that Confucian literati[20] and Enlightenment thinkers who favoured eremitic landscape dwelling were inspired by common moral values, although they understood nature and positioned themselves in the cosmos differently. Finally, the exploration and juxtaposition of two cultural traditions through surviving gardens, philosophical treatises, poems and art works will not only fill in a lacuna in current landscape scholarship, but also it may allow future researchers of landscape exchange to be more able to take into account the complexities of cultural interaction, translation and hybridisation, and avoid a Eurocentric, or Sinocentric approach.

II. Analysing Key Terms and Concepts Related to Eremitic Landscape Dwelling, Moral Cultivation and Performance of Public Duty.

It would be useful to clarify from the introduction what I mean by eremitic landscape dwelling contributing to moral cultivation and the performance of public duty. To do this I need to engage with key terms and concepts regarding human relationship with natural environment and organized society. The same concepts are encountered in philosophical treatises and permeate various forms of artistic expression like poetry and painting, in China and the Western world. Throughout the thesis, I demonstrate how understanding these terms helped the appreciation of the development of Chinese and European cultural structures and the establishment of ethical systems with common characteristics**.** These concepts include eremitic landscape (yinyi shanshui 隐逸 山水)[21], reclusion (yinyi 隐 逸,), recluse (yimin 逸民), solitude (du 獨), self-cultivation or moral cultivation (xiu shen 修身), humaneness (ren

[20] Throughout the thesis, I use the term **Neo-Confucian** when I explicate specific terms or philosophical views proper to this current of thought, which emerged during the Song dynasty and thrived in China until the Qing Dynasty. Likewise, I employ this term when I talk about philosophers who established the Neo-Confucian tradition. However, like other researchers, when I refer to the scholar-officials (literati) who lived from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century I use the term **Confucian**. The writings of Ming and Qing literati who loved garden reclusion and dutifully served the empire, show that they drew directly from classic Confucian tradition. Besides, as stated in the thesis, Neo-Confucian ideas which inspired literati of this period did not abolish but revitalised old Confucian concepts.

[21] The literal translation of *shanshui* (landscape) would be "mountain and water".

仁), tranquillity (jing 静), genuineness (zhen 真), principle (li 理) and vital force, (qi 气). These concepts, individually and together, interacted with the praxis of garden dwelling and the training of human passions. Moreover, they conditioned people's understanding of themselves both as individuals and as useful, active members of an organized society; their meaning and history must be explicated.

In the Chinese language the same character yi 逸, would be used to express "eremitic" and "reclusive". I employ the word "eremitic" to define the type of landscapes I am going to discuss in the thesis. Richard Ellis Vinograd used it in his 1979 study which explored the case of Wang Meng (1308-1385), an artist of the Yuan Dynasty (early 1200s.-1380 AD) who focused on the theme of eremitic withdrawal in alpine regions.[22] Vinograd's book's title is: *Wang Meng's Pien Mountains: The Landscapes of eremitism in Later Fourteenth century Chinese painting*.[23] Andong Lu used the words "eremitic" and "reclusive" to describe the Ming painter Wen Zhengming's (文征明 1470-1559) landscapes and more particularly his representations of famous gardens which belonged to Chinese literati, scholarly men who occupied important public positions. Lu's article focuses on the Garden of the Humble Administrator, which he translates as Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician, in Suzhou.[24]

It is important to clarify that eremitism was initially linked to Daoism which is not the focus of my thesis; this school of thought existed before Confucianism becomes a state-sanctioned philosophy from the Han dynasty (206 BC-220AD) onwards. It is common to affirm that the adepts of Daoism refused to hold office and withdrew from the world believing that this later would transform itself without interference, while Confucians abandoned public service for an eremitic life only when they felt disappointed from the high level

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[22] Richard Vinograd, "Family Properties: Personal Content and Cultural Pattern in Wang Meng's Pien Mountains of 1366", *Ars Orientalis* 13 (1982), 1-29, (p.9).
[23] Richard E. Vinograd, *Wang Meng's Pien Mountains: The Landscapes of Eremitism in Later Fourteenth century Chinese Painting*, (Berkeley, California 1979)
[24] Andong Lu, "Deciphering the Reclusive Landscape: a study of Wen Zheng-Ming's 1533 Album of the Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician", *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes* 31, (2011), 40-59.

of corruption in the government.[25] However, this rule had its exceptions; Daoism did not always lead to socio-political aloofness; all Confucians were not determined to get involved in public affairs.[26]

In English, the word "eremitic" comes from the Greek word *έρημος* which signifies the desert (barren piece of land), the solitary person, as well as someone deprived from human affection.[27] In the first centuries of our era, *ερημιτες* (hermits) were the early Christians who lived a contemplative, secluded life in the desert of Egypt. In the Western world, from the thirteenth century onward the term eremitic almost always alluded to religious forms of reclusion, a solitary and ascetic life of prayer far from the world's temptations. John Fleming describes as "eremitic" the landscapes where the fifteenth-century Italian painter Giovanni Bellini situated Franciscan saints who lived as anchorites.[28] These works of art put forward the idea of a solitary existence which aims at a union with God, generally seen by Bellini's contemporaries as the highest form of moral cultivation.

During the eighteenth century a secular ideal which combined reclusive garden dwelling and self-cultivation was developed; an eremitic landscape was not necessarily a wilderness where solitary religious chose to dwell in silence and penance. The British poet William Shenstone (1714-1763) associated his decision to retire to his garden at Leasowes, Shropshire, with his determination to acquire an "eremitical temper of mind", although he never ceased to receive friends and interact with them.[29] The eremitic landscape he had created allowed him to nurture a tranquil mental state that served his poetic aspirations. The Marquis René Louis de Girardin (1735-1808) named a part of his garden in Ermenonville *Désert* (in Greek *ερημος*), not in order to signify the aridity of the specific spot but to underline its eremitic character

[25] Alan Berkowitz, *Patterns of disengagement: The practice and portrayal of reclusion in early medieval China*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2000), p.3.

[26] Aat Emile Vervoorn, *Men of the Cliffs and Caves: The Development of the Chinese Eremitic tradition to the End of the Han dynasty*, (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press 1990) p. 186.

[27] Liddel Scott, *Λεξικον της αρχαίας ελληνικής γλώσσης*, (Αθήνα: Πελεκάνος 2007), p.447.

[28] John Fleming, *From Bonaventure to Bellini: An Essay in Franciscan Exegesis,* (Princeton; New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982).

[29] *William Shenstone*, *Select letters between the late Duchess of Somerville, Lady Luxburough, Miss Dolman, Mr. Whistler, Mr. R. Dodsley, William Shenstone, Esq. and others*, ed. by Mr. Hull, 2 vols, (London; Dodsley, Pall-Mall, 1778), I, p.61.

which favoured a contemplative and relaxed mood. The *désert* was the place where the philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), who lived in Ermenonville during the last weeks of his life, used to spend time sauntering and botanizing.[30] Finally, the tendency to hire fake “hermits” to reside in eighteenth-century British and French parks which is discussed in the thesis, should be associated with the desire to emphasize the eremitic character of such places where moral cultivation could be pursued via introspection and the training of good passions.

An eremitic landscape may be a freely accessible, vast place in a mountainous region, or a private garden of any size, situated either in a rural area, or in the heart of an urban centre like the gardens of Chinese literati (alias scholar-officials) in Suzhou. The garden (yuan 园) is a landscape (*shanshui*, mountain-water) in miniature, containing the world in itself; at the same time the world may appear to our human eyes as a garden. This concept is encountered in the Doctrine of the Mean (Zhongyong 中庸**)**, one of the Four Confucian Classics, as *juanshi shaoshui* 卷石勺水:[31]

> The mountain now before us appears only a stone; but when contemplated in all the vastness of its size, we see how the grass and trees are produced on it, and birds and beasts dwell on it, and precious things which men treasure up are found on it. The water now before us appears but a ladleful; yet extending our view to its unfathomable depths, the largest tortoises, iguanas, iguanodons, dragons, fishes, and turtles, are produced in it, articles of value and sources of wealth abound in it."[32]

The conviction that gardens constitute a microcosm seems to have been shared by European garden-designers and artists who stressed that the grounds of private landscapes should be distinguished for their variety. Thus, in the seventeenth century, the royalist Anglican author John Evelyn (1620-1706) a key figure in the early history of British landscape design, claimed that

[30] André Martin-Decaen, *Le dernier ami de Rousseau: Le marquis René de Girardin (1735-1808) d'après des documents inédits* (Paris: Perrin, 1912), p.84.
[31] Literal translation would be “to wrap the rock and scoop the waters”.
[32] *Doctrine of the Mean, 27*, (trans. by James Legge) cited in *Chinese Text Project*, ed. Donald Sturgeon (2011) retrieved from: https://ctext.org/liji/zhong-yong

a gardener should be interested in the whole “Creation” because a garden is an all-encompassing thing: “Because the garden aims to be a perfect or universal world, have whatever it’s necessary to complete its site.[33] Evelyn also said that: “the Heavens, the Seas, the Whole Globe of Earth (from the variously adorned surface to the most hidden treasuries in her bowels) all God’s visible works are your Subject.”[34] In the eighteenth-century France, in his *Essay on gardens*, the artist Henri Watelet (1718-1786) posited that parks are composed of different scenes like theatre plays and each scene constitutes a universe in itself.[35]

In the *Analects* the word yimin 逸民 (recluse) refers to “men at leisure”. It signifies persons who are currently not holding office; although they used to be involved in state affairs they either decided, or were forced, to abandon their position. In this sense, a “recluse” is a man in retirement but not somebody who has broken every social bond.[36] Reclusion does not prevent interaction with friends nor does it mean disdain for the human realm. Analysing texts which refer to the benefits of landscape-dwelling, one understands that reclusion was perceived primarily as a disposition of the *xin* 心 (mind-heart) which should be brought to perfection; it was not a mood passively transmitted by the natural environment to the individual. The term *xin*, which literally means heart, is translated as mind-heart because in Chinese thought the heart is the seat of emotions, thinking and judgment.[37] A place took its reclusive character from the intention of the people who dwelled in it; to retire from the turbulences of public life or, more frequently, to escape the government corruption which could undermine their integrity were they involved in state affairs. The socio-political context was important; in dark,

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[33] *John Evelyn’s Elysium Britannicum and European Gardening*, ed. by Therese O’Malley and Joachim Wolschke Bulmahn, (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks 1993), p. 279.
[34] *John Evelyn’s Elysium*, O’Malley, p.115.
[35] Jacques Lucan*, Compositions et non-compositions ; Architecture et théories,* (Lausanne: Presses polytechniques et universitaires romandes, 2009), p.318.
[36] Vernoorn, Men *of the Cliffs and Caves*, pp., 7, 8.
[37] Hall, D., Ames, R.(1998). “Xin (heart-and-mind)”. In The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Taylor and Francis. retrieved 25 Oct. 2019, from https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/xin-heart-and-mind/v-1. doi:10.4324/9780415249126-G021-1/

crooked times righteous people chose the path of reclusion and should be sought "in mountains and forests, by the rivers and seas."[38]

The poem "*Revisiting the Eastern Fence*" reveals the aspirations of the iconic recluse-poet of the East Jin dynasty Tao Yuanming (陶渊明 365-427), who left public service to return to his native place in the country: "I built my hut within where others live, but there is no noise of carriages and horses. You ask how this is possible: a distant mind-heart makes any land remote."[39] Tao Yuanming, whose case is explored in the thesis, was not a typical Confucian scholar but mostly embodied Daoist values. Nevertheless, he became a role model for the Song, Ming and Qing literati who wished to live as recluses. His story, as I will discuss in detail later, was adapted to the political and social ideas promoted by Neo-Confucian thinkers who strived to invigorate the early classical Confucian tradition. Tao did not abandon his government post pushed by an egocentric desire to isolate himself, nor was he indifferent to the pains of humanity. To him, being a recluse meant to be disengaged from power structures (especially corrupt ones), control the desire for wealth and public praise and reject moral compromise.[40] Tao had chosen to retire in a farm near his village because, like the *junzi* (君子exemplary person) described in the Analects, he pursued a commendable emotional and mental disposition. "It is by dwelling in seclusion that they (*junzi*) seek the fulfilment of their aims",[41] aims associated with rectitude, equanimity and the capacity of discernment. The same virtuous individual, said Confucius (551-479 BC) in the Analects, contemplates what is good and is prompt to pursue it, but runs away from evil as if he had touched boiling water. Also, the desire of the junzi is to practice the Way (*Dao* 道) and carry out great principles;[42] Confucian reclusion is inscribed in this life-pattern.

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[38] Vervoorn, *Men of the cliffs and caves*, p.76.
[39] Hightower James, *The Poetry of T'ao Chien*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p.130.
[40] King Kok Cheung, "Two Forms of Solitude: Tao Qian's Reclusive Ideal and Emerson's Transcendentalist Vision", *Comparative Studies of China and the West* 1. (2013), 62-74, (p.66).
[41] *Analects* 16.11 Confucius, *The Analects*, Arthur Waley (trans),(London, Dent: Everyman's library 2001) p.195.
[42] *Analects 16.11* (trans. James Legge) cited in *Chinese Text Project*, Sturgeon, retrieved from: https://ctext.org/analects/ji-shi.

Reclusive landscape dwelling comprised an essential component of the *xiu shen* 修身, interpreted as self-cultivation or moral cultivation; this procedure preoccupied Chinese rulers and scholar-officials before the time of Confucius and until the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912). The theme connecting moral improvement with reclusion in an appropriate context had emerged during the Spring and Autumn Period (771-476 BC). In the *Guoyu* 国语, (*Discourses of the States*), a collection of anecdotes and discourses attributed to ancient Chinese rulers, we read:

> "Sage-kings arrange quiet and leisurely places for scholars [to study] ... to arrange scholars to gather together, in quiet and leisurely places the fathers will discuss righteousness, whilst the sons will discuss filial piety; those who serve the prince speak of respect, those who are still young speak of brotherly love. Dedicated to study when young, the mind-heart is calm and will not easily be distracted by external things."[43]

The Confucian Analects affirm that landscapes are associated with moral qualities like benevolence and wisdom which, in their turn, are related to self-cultivation: "The wise take pleasure in waters, the humane take pleasure in the mountains. The wise are active, the humane are tranquil."[44] A.E. Vervoorn argued that the ancient Chinese expression "scholars of the cliffs and the caves" might refer to persons who were committed to high ideals and adopted a perfect conduct thus epitomising self-cultivation.[45] During the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD), poet and politician Han Yu (768-824) wrote that: "mountains and forests are places where scholars wish to nourish themselves alone"[46] Actually, literati who wanted to withdraw themselves from public life but felt the need to contribute to the common welfare even without possessing an administrative post followed an old, cherished tradition; they physically retired

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[43] Cited in Yue Zhuang and Qiheng Wang, *Zhongguo yuanlin chuangzuo de jieshixue chuantong* [The hermeneutial tradition in Chinese gardens] (Tianjin: Tianjin University Press, 2015), p.43.
[44] *Analects, 6.23* (trans. James Legge) cited in *Chinese Text Project*, ed. Donald Sturgeon (2011) retrieved from: https://ctext.org/analects/yong-ye
[45] Vervoorn, *Men of Cliffs and Caves*, p.106
[46] Vervoorn, *Men of Cliffs and Caves*, p.32.

to a rural spot where they tilled the soil. This was also a way to advertise their virtue.[47]

In the Confucian tradition, *xiu shen* (修身) alludes to the fashioning and improvement of one's moral character, which consisted in cherishing the *ren* 仁, a term translated as humaneness, benevolence or, loving people.[48] Confucius and his followers considered that human interaction constitutes the basis of the *ren*. Fundamentally, a humane individual had to honour his parents, be a faithful subject to his ruler and care about other people's attachment to virtue. *Xiu shen*, which is altruistic par excellence, becomes possible when someone strives to keep his mind-heart stable and tranquil. The importance of tranquillity (jing 静) in a man's struggle to ethically improve himself is emphasized in the *Great Learning*, the Confucian Classic in which self-cultivation is connected with an orderly state and a happy society: "The Way of Great Learning lies in making bright virtue brilliant; in making the people new; in coming to rest at the limit of the good. Only after wisdom comes to rest does one possess certainty; only after one possesses certainty can one become tranquil; only after one becomes tranquil can one become secure."[49]

The Confucian *xiu shen* necessitates constant self-examination and pursuit of knowledge, cherishing righteousness and resisting corruption; it involves the capacity to show good judgment and follow the rules of propriety. Self-cultivation is about possessing the perfect virtue and perfect virtue depends on a rectified mind-heart.[50] The Great Learning illustrates these ideas in an extract concerning the *junzi* of ancient China who aspired to teach humanity by their example:

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[47] Vervoorn, *Men of Cliffs and Caves*, p.47

[48] *Analects 12.22*: "Fan Chi asked about benevolence. The Master said, "It is to love all men." (trans., James Legge) cited in *Chinese Text Project*, Sturgeon, retrieved from: https://ctext.org/analects/yan-yuan

[49] *Great Learning 1*, Robert Eno, *The Great Learning and the Doctrine of the Mean; An Online Teaching; Translation, Commentary and Notes*, 2016, p.27 retrieved from: https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/2022/23424/Daxue-Zhongyong_%28Eno-2016%29.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y site: https://chinatxt.sitehost.iu.edu/Resources.html

[50] Jordan Paper, *The Fu Tzu: A Post-Han Confucian Text*, (Leiden; New-York; Copenhagen; Koln: Brill 1987), p.40.

> Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts. Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts. Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost their knowledge. Such extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things. Things being investigated, knowledge became complete. Their knowledge being complete, their thoughts were sincere. Their thoughts being sincere, their hearts were then rectified. Their hearts being rectified, their persons were cultivated.[51]

Starting with a tranquil disposition that is best encouraged in an eremitic landscape (mountain or scholar garden), self-cultivation structures the moral self; it eliminates harmful inclinations like excessive ambition or love of luxury, fosters moderation and helps people develop a compassionate attitude towards their fellow-men. Self-cultivation is linked to men's capacity to keep their desires in good order and demonstrate resilience in the face of adversity. The important concept of *jing* (tranquillity) interweaves with that of equanimity or balance (*zhong* 中). Human beings who practice self-cultivation are expected to show the same calm attitude in times of wealth or poverty, happiness or misfortune. [52] In every occasion they are careful not to exceed the right measure; their sorrow and joy, pleasure and anger are expressed with moderation and dignity.[53]

Self-cultivation may be pursued in the advantageous reclusive context of mountains and scholar gardens. However, since self-cultivation is related to the *ren*, it ultimately aims at the harmonious functioning of social and political structures, the prosperity of the people and the thriving of the state. The moral self is fully formed and its virtues are perfectly manifested when the link between the private and the public realm is maintained. Personal fulfilment and contribution to the welfare of society are interdependent in Confucian China and, as it will be shown later in the thesis, in Enlightenment Europe. More particularly, in Confucian ethics, private and public sphere were not

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[51] *Great Learning 2*, (trans. Legge) in *Chinese Text Project*, Sturgeon, retrieved from: https://ctext.org/liji/da-xue.

[52] Griet Vankeerberghen, *The Huainanzi and Liu An's Claim to Moral Authority*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 2001), p.138.

[53] *Doctrine of the Mean 10*, (trans. Legge) in *Chinese Text Project*, Sturgeon, retrieved from: https://ctext.org/liji/da-xue.

totally separated; someone's conduct and attitude in private life was going to be carried onto his public life.[54] Thus, the perfect recluse, constantly aware of himself, should and could be an exemplary friend and a conscientious citizen. Furthermore, Confucian reclusion was seen as a life-stage rather than an immutable condition. During this stage individuals either recovered from the fatigue and disappointment caused from the exercise of public office or they prepared themselves to assume a public role. Therefore, for those who possessed the art of living in an eremitic landscape the comfort of withdrawing –temporarily- from the world of affairs interweaved with the willingness to assume social responsibility and perform public duty as a politician or a civil servant. Sima Guang (司馬光 1019-1086), Confucian literatus who retired to his Garden of Solitary Enjoyment (Dule Yuan 獨樂園) knew that he had to resume his active role when political circumstances allowed it.[55] Qi Biaojia 祁彪佳 (1602-1645), a scholar-official of the late Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), had scruples about investing money and time to the creation of the Allegory Mountain, a large private garden where he took pleasure to dwell.[56] Both cases are examined in the thesis.

In China, the character *du* 獨 which means to be alone, in solitude, was employed less frequently than yi 逸, to describe the reclusive life-style of scholar-officials.[57] This character is encountered in *Tengwengong* II 滕文公下, book of the Confucian philosopher Mencius ((孟子 372-288 BC). The passage refers to the pursuit of moral perfection in all circumstances: "To dwell in the wide house of the world, to stand in the correct seat of the world, and to walk in the great path of the world; when he obtains his desire for office, to practice his principles for the good of the people; and when that desire is disappointed,

[54] Joel Kupperman, "Confucian civility", *Dao; A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 9, (2010), 11–23.
[55] De See-Ma Kouang : Le jardin de See-Ma Kouang (645-650) in *Mémoires… de Chinois*, vol.2, (Paris : Nyon, 1777) p.650.
[56] Duncan Campbell, Qi Biaojia's "Footnotes to Allegory Mountain": Introduction and Translation", *Studies of Garden & Designed Landscapes*, 19:3-4, (1999), 243-271, (p.247).
[57] Vervoorn, *Men of Cliffs and Caves*, p.6. The character *du* 獨is found is the name of Sima Guang's garden.

to practice them *alone…*these characteristics constitute the great man."[58] Great principles should be applied by a person who holds office for the benefit of everyone. Nevertheless, when someone is alone and without obligations related to public service, he is not exempt from the practice of virtue. In the *Doctrine of the Mean*, the character *du* alludes to the state of being unobserved and to the moral dangers resulting from it. More specifically, the phrase "the junzi is cautious of his solitude" draws the readers' attention to the importance of monitoring their conduct even when nobody watches them in order to uphold established ethical standards.[59]

In Europe, the word solitude is used in relation to religious hermits but also to indicate the reclusive life of lay persons in landscapes and gardens. A thousand-year old tradition connected mountains and gardens with the solitude of Christian *monastics* (from the Greek word *μόνος*, *μοναχός*, which means alone).[60] Many medieval abbeys were situated in rural places, frequently on high planes, and possessed gardens where members of religious orders cultivated edible plants and medicinal herbs. The alpine environment where monasteries were built was believed to favour contemplation; silence and tranquillity played a salient role in the life of Catholic religious.

Francis Petrarch (1304-1374), the Italian humanist thinker and poet cherished the time he spent in the French countryside away from the papal court of Avignon, but the solitude he pursued did not resemble that of his contemporary monks. Although he was a devout man who respected religious recluses, Petrarch's ideal type of solitude constitutes a form of dialogical companionship. The eremitic landscape in Vaucluse (South-eastern France) was a perfect realm for the cultivation of interpersonal relationships. In this

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[58] *Mencius, Teng Wen Gong II 7*, (trans.James Legge) cited in *Chinese Text Project*, Sturgeon, retrieved from: https://ctext.org/mengzi/teng-wen-gong-ii

[59] Robert Eno, *The Great Learning and the Doctrine of the Mean,*p.37 retrieved from: https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/2022/23424/Daxue-Zhongyong_%28Eno-2016%29.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y site (https://chinatxt.sitehost.iu.edu/Resources.html)

[60] Reverend John Grove, *Dictionary Comprising All the Words in the Writings of the Most Popular Greek Authors*, (Boston: J.H Wilkins and R.B Carter 1844), p.398.

refuge he fortified his bonds with erudite friends.[61] Later, in the sixteenth century, for scholars, artists and learned men who lived and served in the royal courts of Europe, solitude comprised a temporary disengagement from their ordinary activities. Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574), painter, historian and biographer, found solitude very important for the purposes of study; like Petrarch, Vasari also believed that *solitude* boosted human creativity, especially of the artistic kind. In Vasari's writings, a mountainous landscape is described as an advantageous context for his reclusive ideal; the alpine scenery was a haven preserved from the noises of "public squares and courts."[62]

As Barbara Taylor observed, from the 1660s to the 1820s, in the English language, the word solitude stood for leisure, life in the countryside, philosophical contemplation, self-examination or a propensity to melancholy. None of these "solitudes" denoted complete loneliness; total lack of contact with other human beings was viewed as unnatural and harmful. [63] John Evelyn, whose ideas about landscape-dwelling are discussed in the thesis, advocated solitude for individuals with a strong moral fibre: "He ought to be a wise and good man indeed that dares trust himself alone, for Ambition and Malice, Lust and Superstition are in Solitude as in their Kingdom", he wrote.[64] For deist philosophers of the Enlightenment like Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713), solitude was a morally and emotionally beneficial state of being that people should occasionally pursue. Shaftesbury associated solitude with scholarship but stated that a person who had collected his knowledge in solitude, must learn its application by mixing with

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[61] *Petrarch: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works*, ed.by Victoria Kirkham and Armando Maggi, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press 2009), p.191.

[62] *Solitudo: Spaces, Places and Times of Solitude in Late Medieval and Early Modern Cultures*, ed by Christine Göttler and Karl A.E. Enenkel, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill 2018), p.170.

[63] Barbara Taylor, "Philosophical Solitude: David Hume versus Jean-Jacques Rousseau", *Historical Workshop Journal*, 89, (2020), 1-12, (p.2).

[64] *Public and Private Life in the Seventeenth Century: the Mackenzie-Evelyn Debate. Being a facsimile edition of George Mackenzie; A Moral Essay Preferring Solitude to Publick Employment &c. (1665); and John Evelyn Publick Employment and an active Life prefer'd to Solitude*, & c. (1667) ed. by Brian Vickers, (Delmar NY: Scholars' Fascimiles and Reprints, 1986), p. 168.

mankind'.[65] The social element, the idea of human interaction penetrated the realm of solitude where philosophical and poetical minds found refuge.

Generally, eighteenth-century men who promoted eremitic landscape dwelling had a Protestant background and were driven by an ideological opposition to established religion; therefore they did not take the self-imposed isolation of Catholic monks and nuns as a model. They interpreted it as a rupture with human society, a sign of indifference for the welfare of mankind. To their eyes, monastic solitude, combined with prayer and ascetic self-denial in order to stay in constant communion with God, should not be encouraged.[66] As I shall discuss in the thesis, Protestantism, whose founder Martin Luther despised cloistered life, had a pivotal role in shaping a hostile stance towards religious forms of solitude.[67]

The eighteenth century erudite, deist elite who wanted to find a model for their perfect reclusive landscape or garden dwelling, searched mostly in the classical antiquity. The Greco-Roman world brimmed with examples of statesmen and men of letters, particularly Stoics like Cicero, Pliny and Marc Aurelius who retired in the countryside where they could briefly forget the sordid aspects of public life. Pliny the younger retired in his Villa in Laurentum in order to walk in the countryside, read books and correspond with few good friends; his solitude offered him the joyful tranquillity of a carefree existence.[68] Even when he was in the city, in the midst of turmoil and dissipation, Pliny's temperament pushed him to withdraw for the sake of study and writing. Like Tao Yuanming in his poem quoted earlier, the Roman politician had a "distant mind-heart" which could not be distracted. Having no taste for the diversions of polite society, tranquillity was Pliny's desired state of mind while the pursuit of knowledge was his deepest desire:

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[65] Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, 'Sensus Communis, an Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour in a Letter to a Friend', Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times (1711), ed. Lawrence E. Klein, Cambridge, 1999, p. 30

[66] This view is not totally free from prejudice; by cultivating plants in walled gardens whose structure was rich in symbolism (*hortus conclusus*) cloistered religious worked together for the service and wellbeing of all their brothers. Also, by contemplating in silence in order to approach the divine as their faith perceived it- their sense of community was strengthened. Monks and nuns were not individualistic and were also conscious of their interdependence.

[67] *Solitudo: Spaces, Places and Times of Solitude*, Göttler, pp.19, 20.

[68] Ilaria Marchesi, *The Art of Pliny's Letters: A Poetics of Allusion in the Private Correspondence*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2008), p.31.

> For several days past I have read and written in the most delightful tranquillity. You ask me how that is possible in the midst of the metropolis. It was the time of our games at the Circus, which afford me not the smallest pleasure. When I think of the interest, eagerness and insatiable avidity, with which men crowd to scenes so vain, so insipid…
> I feel a certain joy in confessing, that these things afford me no delight.[69]

The Stoic philosopher and politician Seneca (4 BC- 65 AD), tutor to the Emperor Nero, addressed the pivotal role of solitude in human existence and, like the Confucians, connected it with the tranquility of the soul which rendered a person socially functional and emotionally stable. Interacting with people, performing duties related to one's social status and public position should be occasionally interrupted by periods of retirement.[70] The ideas of Seneca resonate in the writings of the English philosopher Shaftesbury, a major figure of the Enlightenment. Shaftesbury claimed that intervals of solitude in the life of men rendered them capable of taking pleasure in the company (*society*) of others in an appropriate way, but also allowed them to develop independent thought and increase their moral discernment. Shaftesbury regarded solitude as a school and a remedy; a means to cultivate and comfort people:

> Society itself cannot be rightly enjoyed without some abstinence and separate thought. All grows insipid, dull and tiresome, without the help of some intervals of retirement. What relish then must the world have, that common world of mixed and undistinguished company, without a little solitude, without stepping now and then aside out of the road and beaten track of life, that tedious circle of noise and show..?[71]

According to Shaftesbury, solitude contributed to self-cultivation which largely consisted in the ability to "regulate our governing fancies, passions and

[69] Cited in Johann Georg Zimmermann, *An Examination of the Advantages of Solitude and of its Operations in the Heart and Mind with an Inquiry into its Prejudicial Influence on the Imagination and Passions*, 2 vols. (Albion Press; James Cundee 1809), I, p.142.
[70] Gretchen Reydams-Schils, *The Roman Stoics: Self, Responsibility and Affection*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005) p.112.
[71] *Shaftesbury: Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. by Lawrence Klein, (Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.249.

humours".[72] His position is similar to the Confucian idea about nurturing our good passions. Shaftesbury focused on the development of moral sense which precedes men's capacity to discipline themselves through reason and allows them to use their rational faculties properly.[73] It is by training his passions that a person becomes virtuous and corrects his deficiencies. In the context of the European Enlightenment an exemplary human being, like the Chinese *junzi*, had to practice introspection, avoid harmful behaviours and abandon vicious habits. The cultivation of these commendable qualities forms the basis of a righteous, fulfilling life. As I will demonstrate later, in Shaftesbury's work the eremitic landscape appears to have a significant role in the self-cultivation procedure. It could offer temporary shelter from worldly affairs; in the tranquillity and beauty of such an environment, introspection was encouraged and the training of human passions was made possible.[74]

In the refuge of mountains and private gardens, corruption and affectation are not nurtured and therefore cannot subsist; the conviction that in this reclusive context gentle passions thrive and a frugal, modest taste may be developed appears to be common among Stoics, eighteenth-century philosophers such as Shaftesbury and learned garden-owners like Shenstone. The Roman poet Horace (65 BC - 8 BC) confessed that his retired life in the countryside made him desire simple things and disregard the public honours that most people coveted.[75] Marcus Aurelius, the Stoic Roman emperor, believed that living in the countryside, far from the urban sumptuousness of Rome, one could develop self-discipline and cultivate an ascetic temperament preferring frugality over luxury.[76] Discussing the importance of moral self-awareness which prevents people –and especially rulers like himself – from nourishing destructive passions Marcus Aurelius wrote: "Take care that you are not

[72] J.B. Schneewind, *The invention of autonomy: A history of modern moral philosophy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.307.
[73] *Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by James Harris, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) p.275 and Robert Voitle, "Shaftesbury's Moral Sense", *Studies in Philology* 52:1 (1955), 17-38. (p. 21).
[74] Shaftesbury*, Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times with a Collection of Letters by the Right Honorable Anthony Earl of Shaftesbury*, (J.J.Tourneisen and J.L Legrand: Basil, 1790), p. 285.
[75] *Oxford World's Classics: Horace: Satires and Epistles*, ed. by John Davie and Robert Cowan, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2011), p.78.
[76] Schils, *Roman Stoics*, p.111.

turned into a Caesar, that you are not stained with the purple… keep yourself simple...free from affectation"[77] In the 1700s Shenstone explained that Leasowes Park is a place where kindness, humility and moderation flourish and only tranquil joys may be experienced. Fields, woods and rivers could protect men from the world's turmoil and shield them against conflicts and corruption.[78] Entering in communion with these natural elements desires were purified and people were liberated not only from the ambition to gain public applause but also from the necessity to adopt conventional attitudes which were commonly assumed in social circles. Shaftesbury, an advocate of eremitic landscape-dwelling openly said that the pretentious manners and lifestyle of polite society made him weary; in the solitude of his garden he pursued simplicity, candour and erudition.[79] Similarly in China, in the reclusion of his cottage, far from the pomp and the restrictions of the imperial court, Tao Yuanming proclaimed his love for mountains and hills and adopted the frugal, simple lifestyle he praised in his poetry. In his work landscapes are presented free from strife, intrigues and falsehood; there, men who are not attracted by wealth and honours find inner tranquillity and live up to their virtuous ideal.[80]

In Europe as in China, an eremitic landscape is a place of cultural and aesthetic refinement and moral cultivation; as Shaftesbury put it, it is the realm where a man, through introspection, can discover "his own and other Natures."[81] Finding his true nature, a person becomes reliable and autonomous; increasing his self-awareness reaches the fullness of humanity. In Confucianism, this idea would find its expression in the concept of cheng 誠 (authenticity and sincerity) which implies that the individual is loyal to himself and perfectly realizes his own nature. The inner desires and convictions of a genuine person are in harmony with his exemplary conduct, he is true to his own word something which makes him a model of authentic humanity.[82] Thus,

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[77] Schils, *Roman Stoics*, p.89.
[78] Shaftesbury*, Characteristics of Men*, 1790, pp. 258-259.
[79] Lawrence Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness*; *Moral Discourse and Cultural Politics in early eighteenth-century England* (Cambridge University Press, 1994) p.78.
[80] Yim-tze Kwong, "Naturalness and Authenticity: The Poetry of Tao Qian", *Chinese Literature Essays, Articles, Reviews* (CLEAR) 11, (1989), 35-77, (pp.36, 37).
[81] Cited in *The Genius of the Place*, Hunt, p.122.
[82] Xuanwu Chen, *Being and authenticity*, (Amsterdam; New York; Rodopi 2004), pp.20, 21.

one may say that Tao Yuanming, who reconciled his inner desire for mountains and hills with his everyday actions, incarnated authenticity.

Li constitutes a crucial concept in the thought of Neo-Confucian philosophers who aspired to revive the earlier Confucian tradition and whose ideas became prominent from the Song dynasty (960-1279) through the Qing dynasty (1640-1912).[83] As a noun, li means the veins or detailed markings of a thing, and as a verb it means to regulate, to administer and to manage. In the Neo-Confucian discourse li signified pattern and order. In the English language its standard translation is "principle", although in certain contexts the words law, reason, organization or coherence could also render its meaning. One of the major schools of Neo-Confucian thought, based on the ideas of Song dynasty philosophers Cheng Yi 程颐 (1033-1107) and Zhu Xi (1130-1200), gave this concept a canonical dimension by affirming that it is the unifying principle of the universe, the cosmic pattern, or tianli 天 禮 (heavely li). At the same time, everything in the world – people, animals, objects, human relatioships and affairs – possessed their own particular li and had to meet the standard set by it in order to flourish.[84] Neo-Confucians encouraged men to pursue the unifying, heavely principle by adopting an appropriate conduct; they were morally obliged to interact with nature treating all things in accordance with their li, handle personal and social bonds respecting this ultimate norm. That was the way the world could preserve its balance and prosper.[85]

Finally, qi (气), translated as vital force or energy, is the substance of which all phenomena and living entities are constituted. Vast and powerful, it permeats the universe (macrocosm) and the human body (microcosm) giving life to myriad things. In the book of Mencius we are informed that qi is born of an accumulation of righteousness which must not be external, manifested in calculated, incidental acts, but internal. Qi flourishes when it is nourished by

[83] Philip J. Ivanhoe. *Neo-Confucian philosophy*, 1998, doi:10.4324/9780415249126-G004-1. Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Taylor and Francis, https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/neo-confucian-philosophy/v-1.
[84] JeeLoo Liu, *Neo Confucianism: Metaphysics, Mind and Morality*, (Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley Blackwell 2017), p.6.
[85] Liu, *Neo-Confucianism*, 2017 p.7.

the righteousness which resides in our mind-heart directing our will.[86] Zhu Xi repeatedly argued that qi is never separate from li (principle, order) although their nature is different. Trying to explain the Neo-Confucian philosopher's belief that li adhers to qi, Joseph Adler wrote that qi is always ordered by li and li is instantiated in qi. Li is metaphysical in the sense that it is the abstract, moral order of things, and is therefore "ontologically distinct from the qi-based existence of the things themselves."[87] Zhu Xi's claimed that the fullness of li may be found in the spirit of human qi which is purer than the qi of trees or rocks and enabled people to think and be responsible for their deeds. In the human world qi is the drive for moral virtues that li actualizes and cultivates.[88] In China qi was thought to thrive in natural landscapes.

III. Methodology and Sources.

This thesis is based on the comparative analysis of philosophical concepts, visual culture products, poetry and cultural practices in order to demonstrate the meeting points and discrepancies in eremitic landscape dwelling in Confucian China and deist Europe during the Enlightenment (eighteenth-century). An emphasis is put on the fact that both in the West and the East, human relationship with the natural environment comprised a vehicle to a more ethical, fulfilling existence.

There are reasons behind the choice of time-frame and geographical space which are investigated. The eighteenth-century was preferred as a more appropriate historical period in order to effectuate a comparative study of Chinese and European eremitic landscape dwelling. As stated in the beginning, in this era of secularisation and scientific progress Europe saw the flourishing of "informal" landscape-gardens which were broadly and systematically utilised as retreats of erudite men who often held public office;

[86] Daniel K. Gardner, *The Four Books, the basic teachings of the Later Confucian Trandition*, (Indianapolis Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2007), p.63.
[87] Joseph Adler, *Reconstructing the Confucian Dao: Zhu Xi's appropriation of Zhou Dunyi*, (New York: State University of New York Press 2014), p.79.
[88] *Dao Companion to Zhu Xi's Philosophy*, Kai Chiu-Ng and Yong Huang (eds), (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing 2020) p.12.

the equivalent of Chinese literati gardens. Moreover, during the Enlightenment, the understanding of human relationship with the natural environment and organized society presents parallels with age-old Confucian ideas on the same issues. Eighteenth-century deist philosophers, like the Confucians, understood happiness as a condition based on balanced emotions and had put the training of passions in the centre of their moral discourse. Actually, the Confucian thought became known in Europe before the Age of the Enlightenment. The first descriptions of the Confucian moral code came from Jesuits like Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) and Martino Martini (1614-1661), as well as from humanist scholars like Isaac Vossius (1618-1689). *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus,* published in 1687 in Paris, was the product of the diligent work of the Jesuit Philippe Couplet and three more men from the same religious order; this book contains the Latin translation of the Confucian Classics (including *Daxue, Zhongyong* and *Analects*).[89] The aforementioned Jesuits' works, which I will not analyse because my thesis does not deal with the transfer of Chinese knowledge in Europe, provided a picture of Confucian moral teachings which treated interpersonal relationships, social and political life without the assistance of organized religion.[90] Deist thinkers of the Enlightenment, who largely accepted the idea of an impersonal divinity, did not receive Confucian ideas on "an empty sheet". In these latter they found the necessary elements to confirm their convictions; doctrines, rituals, the expectation of heavenly reward and the fear of divine punishment were not essential for the nourishment of human virtue. In Confucianism, the Enlightenment and its forerunners saw a universal morality which had shared many things with the ethics of antiquity but did not derive its value from established religion. Without the assistance of theology and priesthood –as these two existed in the Christendom- the Chinese had shaped and preserved a civilization which prospered for more than a thousand years and was praised by Enlightenment thinkers as a Platonic

[89] Rowbotham Arnold H., "The Impact of Confucianism on Seventeenth-Century Europe", *The Far Eastern Quarterly 4*, (1945): 224-242, p.227.
[90] David Rogacz, "The birth of Enlightenment Secularism from the Spirit of Confucianism", *Asian Philosophy* 28, (2018), 68-83, (p.70).

Republic realised.[91] Castell's evocation of the layout of the Chinese garden to vindicate his reimagined plan for Pliny's villa is not a mere accident. Rather it betrays the intellectual atmosphere of the early eighteenth century in which the Chinese were regarded as the embodiment of the same wisdom as the European ancients.[92] Therefore, it would be useful to examine the Confucian thought in relation to the role of the Roman Stoics, whose ideas about self-cultivation in rural reclusion, human relationships and the significance of conscientious performance of public duty have been inspirational for the eighteenth-century European philosophers. For instance, the concept of eremitic landscapes, already available during the Roman Republic and the Early Renaissance revived and thrived in the western world during the 1700s. In the thesis, occasional references to Stoics and Petrarch venture to show this continuity of ideas which were inherited and developed by Enlightenment thinkers, like the early Confucian tradition was received and enriched by Ming and Qing scholars who withdrew in their gardens.

The dissertation deals with the dense history of two cultures and investigates complex notions which took shape during the course of time. For practical reasons the research topics had to be narrowed down; thus, the examples of European gardens in this thesis come only from Britain and France. As mentioned in the beginning, Britain is the country where informal landscape gardens which served as retreats for intellectuals and politicians first appeared; Britain set the example for the rest of Europe. Moreover, the first theorists of garden design and reclusive landscape dwelling in Europe are seventeenth-century British nationals; John Evelyn and the statesman William Temple (1628-1699), author of the work *Upon the Garden of Epicurus* where he wrote about "the sweetness and satisfaction" he derived from his retirement to his country estate at Moor Park.[93] It is logical to include France in the thesis; it was the centre of Enlightenment philosophy and native place of Lorrain and Poussin whose compositions stimulated the imagination of

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[91] Jonathan Irvine Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity and the Emancipation of Man*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.642 and Rowbotham, "The Impact of Confucianism", p.242.
[92] Rudolf Wittkower, "English Neo-Palladianism, the Landscape Garden, China and the Enlightenment", *L'arte* 6 (1969), 177-190,
[93] William Temple, *Upon the Gardens of Epicurus with other XVII century Garden Essays*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1908), p.62.

European garden designers. It was in France where the first asymmetrical, "*anglo-chinois*" gardens were transplanted from England.[94] One of these was the park of René de Girardin in Ermenonville, inspired by the poet William Shenstone's estate, The Leasowes. Ermenonville illustrates perfectly how an "eremitic landscape" appropriate for reclusion and introspection can benefit all members of the social body promulgating qualities indispensable to good governance and propagating a model of civic virtue.

In China, the conviction that reclusive life in mountains and gardens is beneficial to human development constitutes the integral part of an ancient, uninterrupted tradition which shaped the cultural identity of Chinese people. The examples of garden recluses discussed in this dissertation are mostly chosen from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century with few exceptions. One is Tao Yuanming who, as I mentioned earlier, comprised an iconic figure of eremitic landscape dwelling and virtuous leisure, a point of reference and an inexhaustible source of inspiration for the Confucian government officials who retired in their private gardens. I also study the case of Sima Guang from the eleventh century as an embodiment of moral integrity who set an illustrious example for his contemporaries as well as for the next generations of Chinese literati; Sima managed to lead a perfectly virtuous life both as an exiled, solitary scholar in the sufficiency of his small garden and as a conscientious, respected politician who struggled for the welfare of the kingdom.

Literati gardens, which epitomize the ideal of self-cultivation in reclusion, are usually analysed from a Daoist point of view because they are understood as expressions of Daoist philosophical views about nature.[95] My dissertation however, focuses on the way eremitic garden dwelling is connected to sociability and the efficient performance of public duty. Therefore, I explore these scenic places of scholar self-accomplishment from the perspective of Confucianism, the philosophical system which, from the second century AD onward, dominated every aspect of human life in China: interpersonal relationships, governance, moral values and artistic creation. The Confucian thought and its development which gave rise to Neo-Confucianism always

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[94] *The vision of China*, Hsia, p.352.
[95] Maggie Keswick, *The Chinese Garden*, (London: Academy Editions 1978) p.85- 88.

revolved around the theme of moral cultivation with an emphasis on social and political commitment. The practice of landscape reclusion was not only the realm of Daoist hermits who, unlike Confucians, believed that the world could transform itself without the active engagement of virtuous men. Rather, reclusion constituted a vital part of the Confucian ethos; it cultivated a calm temperament, offered a shelter in periods of political turpitude and provided the means to nurture humaneness and wisdom, two qualities necessary in order to contribute to public life. At the same time, although my thesis does not deal with Daoism, this latter is not totally excluded from the analysis. Across Chinese history and especially in Wei-Jin dynasties and Song dynasty, some Daoist concepts and principles have been integrated into the Confucian system of ethics.[96]

The socio-cultural background and political affiliations of those who retired in their gardens, whether these were situated in the city suburbs or in the countryside, are important; a person's identity shaped his reclusive ideal and determined the way he experienced the eremitic landscape. I examine mostly cases of Confucian literati who held public office and often excelled in the art of poetry and painting. Tao Yuanming, the most illustrious Chinese example of reclusion was a poet and, very briefly, a government official. Wang Xianchen (王献臣 ca.1460-?) was an imperial envoy before retiring in the Garden of the Humble Administrator in Suzhou. Qi Biaojia, senior official and wealthy landowner of the late Ming lived in his garden intermittently without abandoning his post. Emperor Kangxi linked the landscape around his Imperial Summer Palace in Chengde to his noble aspiration to govern righteously and compassionately over prosperous and happy subjects. His son Yongzheng (1678-1735) and his grandson Qianlong (1711-1799) who practiced reclusive garden dwelling in Yuanmingyuan (Garden of Perfect Brightness) followed his example. Reclusion interweaved with artistic exploits, thus it was not uncommon for literati or rulers like Kangxi and his successors to be accomplished painters, poets and calligraphers. Regarding Europe, I focus on British and French erudite men who had liberal political views and a

[96] See J.W. Freiberg, "The dialectic of Confucianism and Daoism in ancient China, *Dialectical Anthropology* 2, (1977), 175-198.

critical stance towards established religion. They were socially privileged persons, though not necessarily wealthy; all of them were theorists and practitioners of landscape gardening. The third Earl of Shaftesbury was an Enlightenment philosopher and a nobleman. The poet William Shenstone did not belong to the aristocracy. Girardin was a Marquis, as well as an essayist and landscape enthusiast persuaded for the necessity of radical changes which would create a more egalitarian society. Both Chinese literati and Europeans who retired in their gardens were often individuals whose relationship with political authority was challenged or were persons who regretted the high level of corruption in social and political structures. They were invariably men of vision, integrity, high moral standards and sense of responsibility for the wellbeing of the society in which they lived. Therefore it was possible to draw parallels and highlight the differences between them.

A wide range of material from different disciplines is used in order to show how crucial questions regarding eremitic landscape dwelling, training the passions and increase the sense of duty towards society were addressed. Philosophical treatises, poetry and paintings are prioritized and when appropriate they are examined comparatively. The Chinese Classics (Analects, Doctrine of the Mean, the Great learning), the discourse of Roman Stoics such as Cicero and Marc Aurelius, literati garden records by figures such as Wen Zhengming, Qi Biaojia and Yongzheng emperor, odes on eremitic landscape dwelling such as Tao Yuanming's *Returning Home*, letters regarding garden reclusion written by Shenstone, eighteenth-century French essays on landscape design, accounts written by garden visitors or owners and inscriptions placed in private landscapes comprise a vast primary material which explicates how moral principles and social concepts were received, put into practice and promoted in the periods under study. As stated earlier in the introduction, this thesis does not deal with the influence of Chinese philosophical traditions in the Western world or with the impact of European cultural elements introduced in China. The parallel study of texts, gardens and works of art allows me to demonstrate the Chinese scholars' and British or French erudites' common understanding of solitude, self-cultivation, virtue, friendship and ethical exercise of political authority. Furthermore, using this

material to explore the experience of landscape dwelling I point out the different aesthetic tendencies, sensibilities, perceptions of the natural world and the diverse ways to approach revered traditions or the historical past in China and Europe. This dissertation's purpose is, as I mentioned above, to be useful to researchers who will investigate complex matters of cultural translation with a particular focus on the field of landscape exchange.

Taking into consideration the historical context, the thesis brings together Deism and Confucianism, two philosophical traditions developed in relative isolation from one another. Although Enlightenment deists found in Confucianism an ethical system which responded to its worldview, the Stoic thought and Renaissance humanism were already available to give shape to eighteenth-century Western philosophy. Chinese and European landscape paintings disclose in an eloquent and often straightforward manner key aspects of reclusive landscape dwelling: the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom, the cultivation of temperance, the possibility of leading a fulfilling, humane existence without transgressing fundamental moral values. Visual analysis integrating with poetry and philosophical treatises takes into account the way each civilisation understood the relationship of human beings with the natural environment and underscores meeting points and divergences between Chinese and European eremitic landscape culture.

Certain thought-provoking, informative secondary sources used in the thesis need to be mentioned. The book of Li Zehou (2010) refers to many areas of artistic creation and investigates how the Chinese aesthetic tradition intersects with the development of cultural, moral and psychological structures.[97] The chapter analysing the role of music and the rites in the training of passions and the cultivation of humaneness was particularly edifying. Gretchen Reydams-Schils (2005) astutely analyses the way Roman Stoics integrated their virtue-centred philosophy into the private and public life, unfolding the importance these philosophers attached to reclusion, self-examination, political responsibility, sociability and duty to the national and universal community. Elizabeth Brotherton's article (2000) about Tao

[97] Li Zehou, *The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition*, (trans. By Maija Bell Samei) (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2010).

Yuanming's representations as a poet-recluse during the Song dynasty explores how the ideal of retiring from public affairs and living frugally in the countryside was adjusted to political and moral purposes.[98] The cast of the literati were compelled to conform to certain principles for the benefit of the Empire. Brotherton suggests that the purpose of several paintings representing Tao's life was to warn scholar-officials that the unconventional attitude of this poet should not be imitated unless it was put in an appropriate context. Maren Sophie Røstvig's thesis (1958) provides readers with a sharp and extensive study of the *beatus vir* (happy man) motif; this author examined the association of the specific theme with solitary meditation and landscape appreciation from 1600 to 1760.[99] Røstvig thoroughly unfolds the religious views held by European thinkers who were preoccupied with the benefits of rural seclusion and the radical transformation of these views in the course of time. Both in the mystical approach of the pious garden-designer John Evelyn (1620-1706) and in the deist, stoic approach of Shaftesbury Røstvig detects a common yearning for retirement either in the landscape or in parks designed for this purpose. John Hay's text (1985) on Chinese petrophilia elucidates the pivotal role of rocks - placed in scholar gardens as objects of aesthetic and moral value, as manifestations of cosmic structures and symbols of endurance or loyalty - in the process of Confucian self-cultivation.[100] Hung Wu's (2012) book dealing with the presence and absence of ruins in Chinese art increased my understanding of Chinese people's relationship with tangible remains from the past.[101] Wu's research disclosed the mechanisms utilised to maintain men's bonds with their ancestors, provoking introspective mood and awe. Philip Ivanhoe's (2000) study skilfully demonstrated in what way the Confucian ideal of learning and the scrupulous observance of rites were vital in the development of certain traits of the human character. His analysis concerning the purpose of self-cultivation to instil certain sensibilities and dispositions (humility, compassion) in the person who respects the rules of

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[98] Elizabeth Brotherton, Beyond the Written Word: Li Gonglin's Illustrations to Tao Yuanming's "Returning Home" *Artibus Asiae* 59, (2000) 225-263.
[99] Maren Sofie Røstvig, *The Happy Man. Studies in the Metamorphoses of a Classical Ideal*, Vol 2, 1700-1760, (Oslo: Oslo University Press 1958).
[100] John Hay, "The Rocks and Chinese Art", *Orientations* 16, (1985), 16-32.
[101] Hung Wu, *A Story of Ruins: Presence and Absence in Chinese art and Visual Culture*, (London: Reaktion Books, 2012).

etiquette and the standards of personal conduct was enlightening.[102] The insightful observations of Walter Davis (1983) regarding the one-dimensional reading of Chinese philosophy by Enlightenment humanists were crucial in my research. European deists were eager to deconstruct institutional religion which had often put obstacles to free inquiry; in order to promulgate natural religion and an ethical system which would not depend on dogmas these thinkers borrowed examples from Confucianism. However, Davis argued, deists overlooked the fact that Confucians did not focus on individual rights but emphasized the person's duties towards his family members and subsequently to society. These principles did not engender revolutionary movements; in China it was believed that society would be transformed through the practice of filial piety, respect to the authority of the father and the emperor and paternal care provided to the son or the subject. Davis claimed that European philosophers of the 1700s disregarded this essential part of Confucian thought because it did not suit their goals. They mainly retained the absence of a personal God and rigid doctrines, two elements which had nourished the moral self of Western men for centuries.[103] Leatherbarrow's article (1984) about Shaftesbury's principles of garden design thoroughly explained this English philosopher's predilection for uncultivated landscapes as spaces where the inquisitive mind grasps the hidden order of nature.[104] Shaftesbury's attitude apparently foreshadows the gradual abolishment of geometrical gardens in the eighteenth century. Finally, Jonathan Hay's book on Shitao (2001) gives a detailed presentation of artistic subjectivity during the late Ming Dynasty; the analysis of this painter's landscapes has put the expression of literati moral-cultivation and public engagement in a historical context.[105]

[102] Philip Ivanhoe, *Confucian Moral Self-Cultivation*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2000).
[103] Walter Davis, "China, the Confucian Ideal and the European Age of Enlightenment", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 44, (1983) 523-548 p.548.
[104] David Leatherbarrow, "Character, Geometry and Perspective: The Third Earl of Shaftesbury's Principles of Garden Design", *The Journal of Garden History* 4, (1984), 332-358.
[105] Jonathan Hay, *Shitao: Painting and Modernity in Early Qing China*, (New York: Cambridge University Press), 2001.

IV. Summary of the Thesis' Chapters.

The thesis contains two parts each of which is separated in two chapters. The first part focuses on the concept of self-cultivation in the context of eremitic landscapes in Europe and China. In the first chapter, Shaftesbury's ideas are used to clarify the connexion between eremitic landscapes and the training of good passions which is required to construct the moral self. Equanimity, self-restraint, frugality, wisdom, resilience to superstition, constitute the main qualities fostered in reclusion whether this later is experienced in private gardens or in the "quiet sanctuaries" of "fields and woods". Such an environment satisfies human senses and stands as a proof of nature's orderly structure; men develop the desire to lead an ethical life which is adjusted to this order. It is noted that the cosmological view of the European Deists who believed in a benevolent impersonal Creator, resembles the Chinese conviction about a life-giving cosmic principle which brought the universe into being and maintained it.[106] I explore the fact that in eremitic landscapes individuals lose their attachment to worldly manners and abandon the pursuit of vain honours. The form of solitude promoted during the Enlightenment valued scientific instruction and encouraged the quest of knowledge as means to embrace natural religion. Finally, reclusion was associated with refined forms of leisure; thus, in his retreat in Dorset, Shaftesbury wrote philosophical essays and studied ancient Greek authors, while in China, in the Garden of Perfect Brightness, Yongzheng and Qianlong emperors read the classics, practiced calligraphy, and wrote poetry. I examine how architectural relics situated in British and French gardens constitute a device of moral cultivation. Eighteenth-century artificial Roman and Gothic ruins forged people's historical identity, created a feeling of cultural continuity and trained human passions. Ruins stood as signs of splendour and reminders of the transient character of mortal works. Their contemplation provoked both excitement and nostalgia helping individuals to achieve an emotional equilibrium; their decaying state, promoted temperance and introspection. I compare the necessity of Europeans to possess tangible ruins with the Chinese attitude towards

[106] Walter Davis, "China, the Confucian Ideal", p.526.

material relics from a glorious or tragic past. Chinese gardens do not contain fake ruins. I emphasize the introspective way adopted by the Chinese in order to maintain a bond with their history and ancestors. Furthermore, the first chapter deals with the European fashion of placing hired hermits in private gardens; apart from satisfying a taste for the eccentric these personages exemplified the temperance and wisdom nurtured in eremitic landscapes.

Chapter two deals with the cultivation of moral character in the reclusive context of Chinese literati gardens. The first section introduces the Confucian concepts of music and the rites which were two indispensable components in the process of human improvement. Devotion to music and the rites allows the development of aesthetic conscience and the regulation of desire; it rectifies the junzi's mind-heart. The second section focuses on the idea that natural objects carry intrinsic moral qualities. Analysing artworks and poems with the assistance of Neo-Confucian theories which connected the human and the natural world, I demonstrate how the contemplation of things like bamboos and chrysanthemums contributed to the training of passions, the purification of *qi* and the development of moral resilience in the face of adversity. I deal with the long-standing tradition of rock appreciation and their being essential elements of Chinese garden culture. The cosmological view of rocks, referred to as bones of the earth, kernels of energy or micro-universes carrying primordial memories is emphasized. I examine the relationship established between rocks and literati, addressing ideas of immortality, solitude and companionship. I consider the capacity of rocks to express social hierarchies and essential moral truths. Moreover, I discuss how the insatiable appetite of scholar-officials for grotesquely-shaped stones could undermine temperance, a virtue inextricably linked to eremitic landscape dwelling. Employing Wen Zhengming's album of Garden of the Humble Administrator, I discuss how purifying the will and rectifying the mind-heart by disposing off harmful desires and thoughts was possible in the serenity of literati gardens; similarly, I consider Qianlong emperor's conviction that in his landscape of "Perfect Brightness" he could grow in virtue, acquiring temperance and self-awareness. Finally I study the representation of emblematic figures of

landscape reclusion such as the fisherman hermit as models of perfect conduct, humaneness and perseverance in the pursuit of self-cultivation.

The second part is separated in two chapters: theoretical background and case studies. This part explores how self-cultivation in garden reclusion helped people establish good inter-personal relationships and perform their duty as active, conscientious members of society. Analysing garden culture in Britain, France and China, this chapter shows that both in Enlightenment thought and in Confucian tradition the private realm is inextricably connected with the public.

In the theoretical background I explain that the tranquil, leisurely environment of European landscape gardens and Chinese literati gardens favoured self-inquiry, a practice via which someone learned to co-exist with other people becoming a good friend, a responsible citizen and a compassionate functionary of the state. In both civilisations, the ultimate aim of reclusion was not to satisfy escapist tendencies but to cultivate a sane sociability, promote civic virtue and nourish the desire to work for human welfare. In Confucian philosophy, which was preoccupied with the idea of moral improvement and political commitment, contemplating the landscape was associated with orderly thinking and moderating the passions; these two elements rendered enlightened governance possible. Similarly, for members of the liberal European elite temporary retirement in the countryside awakened a selfless need to serve the national and universal community; the eighteenth-century ideas on this matter owes considerably to the Roman Stoics who associated the moral qualities developed in rural reclusion with a person's ability to perform his duty as statesman. In the theoretical background I also explore the understanding of friendship, which thrived in sites like garden retreats, as a political virtue in Confucian and Western philosophy. During the course of centuries in China and Europe friendship evolved, although it maintained its' political dimension. I examine this evolution of interpersonal relationships during the Ming dynasty via the practice of an intellectual activity called *jiangxue* and explore how secularisation and social progress lead to the redefinition of sociability in Enlightenment Europe.

In the fourth chapter, the first section deals with the garden as a mediating space between solitude and public action. Shenstone's Leasowes Park exposes the educational purpose of a garden and its character as a secluded place where refined forms of friendship can flourish. Shenstone did not seek to cut his bonds with humanity by isolating himself in his park. There is strong connection between his eremitic ideal and companionship. Shenstone belongs to the community of his learned friends, alive and deceased, who are commemorated in his garden; they comprised the centre of his poetic existence and gave meaning to his reclusive ideal. Leasowes sought to communicate humanistic values about concord and peace via inscriptions; keeping his private garden open to the public, Shenstone declared his aspiration to "graft the love of human race".[107] In comparison the chapter also examines how the figure of the poet and rural recluse Tao Yuanming, hero of generations of literati who retired from public service for reasons of moral integrity, was transformed in order to fit the dominant Confucian ideal of actively working for the benefit of society. Several paintings produced during the Song dynasty and later represent Tao as a scholar-official in temporary retirement, interacting with his peers. Wang Xianchen's eremitic landscape dwelling in the Garden of the Humble Administrator is analysed in the light of his friendship with the painter Wen Zhengming who immortalized the garden of Wang and shared his solitary ideal. I further examine Wang's preoccupation with the transmission of Confucian values to young people for the sake of public welfare. The case of Girardin's park in Ermenonville is used to demonstrate that the eremitic landscape of the Enlightenment could nurture the idea of universal friendship and serve to promote a socio-political vision for the benefit of the nation in particular and of mankind in general. Ermenonville was the refuge of Rousseau, a lover of the countryside and indefatigable promoter of social justice; his friend Girardin, involved in revolutionary politics, ventured his landscape to provide moral guidance to his compatriots putting forward the ideas of the Enlightenment. Girardin wanted Ermenonville to be the laboratory of social reconciliation; the place where

[107] Shenstone William, *The Works in Verse and Prose of William Shenstone esq*; *Essays on Men, Manners and Things*, 2 vols, (London: for Robert Dodsley, Pall Mall, 1764), II, p. 335-336

different strata could co-exist in harmony. The Temple of Philosophy in the park is used as a device to transmit these ideas. The example of Qi Biaojia is examined in an attempt to find out whether the passion for gardens and the desire to spend time designing and enjoying them could interfere with the performance of public duty. Qi, a scrupulous follower of Confucian principles, was dedicated to his mission; comfort the weaker members of society by providing material assistance and moral instruction. Anxious to preserve social order Qi accused himself for loving his “Allegory Mountain” too ardently. In the virtue-centred China where social commitment had to form the greatest priority, the decision of Chinese literati to withdraw in the countryside and abandon their office could raise ethical issues. Finally, the poetry of Emperor Kangxi, who endorsed Confucian values like the literati inspired by the scenery of his summer resort in Chengde, illustrates how the passion for landscapes renewed his determination to act as a compassionate and righteous ruler.

FIRST PART: EREMITIC LANDSCAPES IN ENLIGHTEMENT EUROPE AND CONFUCIAN CHINA: SELF-CULTIVATION AND THE TRAINING OF PASSIONS

1. Advantages of Living in the Landscape

In European literary and philosophical texts dating from the Greco-Roman antiquity until the eighteenth century, living among trees, brooks and hills was often used to evoke simplicity and absence of vice. An example from the classical era illustrating this point is provided by Theocritus' *Idylls* a work which deals with several young herdsmen and their love affairs. The Greek poet's characters –Menelcas, Corydon and Daphnis - lead an unaffected, peaceful life in the countryside. Embodiments of the pastoral ideal, these shepherds exemplify the author's longing for a happy, tranquil existence. Without malice or political ambitions Theocritus' young heroes lack the sophistication and self-awareness of philosophers, statesmen and poets who, across time, yearned to experience the tranquillity of rural reclusion.[108]

In ancient Rome living in a landscape was essential for a virtuous person whose moral excellence is not the result of blissful ignorance but the fruit of self-cultivation, self-knowledge and understanding the cosmos. From his Villa in Laurentum, the famous magistrate and author Pliny the Younger invited his friend Caninius Rufus who resided by the Lake Como to abandon sordid pursuits related to worldly affairs. Rufus' enjoyment should lay wholly in this agreeable retreat, the shade plane-tree walk, the crystal canal winding along its flowery banks; he should let his studies occupy his hours, thus escaping from the common error of men who seek happiness in trivial things.[109] Residing in a garden would allow Rufus to leave behind political machinations and mundane gatherings for the sake of nobler occupations; study and

[108] Gary B. Miles, "Characterization and the ideal of *innocence* in *Theocritus*' Idylls", *Ramus* 6, (1977), 139-164, (p.139).
[109] Cited in *Elegant Epistles: Being a Copious Collection of Familiar and Amusing Letters selected for the improvement of young persons and for general entertainment*, ed. by Vicessimus Knox, (London: C. Wood, 1822), p.40.

contemplation of the enchanting scenery would let him cultivate his literary talents and nurture his humanity.

In Enlightenment Europe, temporary reclusion in "eremitic landscapes" provided an appropriate context for those who wished to develop their good passions, cultivate self-restraint and grow in wisdom. Eremitic landscapes were associated with the purification from harmful passions and self-improvement; living reclusively in these spaces was presented as a path leading to an ethical, fulfilling existence. In the landscape people acquire a tranquil temperament and are capable to act in accord with reason, not manipulated by their own immoderate desires or unrestrained affections. The contribution of "woods, rivers and seashores"[110] in the ability to discern beauty, make moral judgments and put emotions in good order was thoroughly treated in Lord Shaftesbury's influential philosophical work which will be examined in detail.

In the multi-millennial Confucianism-dominant tradition too, the *shanju* (山居 "living in mountains") consisted in an advantageous form of living because it assisted the Confucian process of self-cultivation. For the Chinese, mountains serve as meeting points of heaven and earth. Dwelling or roaming in the mountains not only rejuvenated the *qi* of the body but further nourished the *de* (德 human virtue).[111] *De*, etymologically meaning "to obtain from heaven", was thought to be received by everyone at birth but could be obscured by wrong desires or external forces. Therefore, like a seed, *de* needed to be continuously cultivated in order for anyone to lead an ethically satisfying life.[112]

Confucius, preoccupied with matters of righteous political governance which was closely related to self-cultivation, considered dwelling or roaming in the landscape as something more than a pleasant pastime. The Chinese philosopher associated human virtue with landscape, or *shanshui* (山水,

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110 Shaftesbury Anthony Ashley Cooper, *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times: In Three Volumes,* (London: John Darby 1733), II, p.393

111 Yue Zhuang and Qiheng Wang, *Zhongguo yuanlin* (The hermeneutical tradition) pp.49-51

112 Catherine Hudak Klancer, *Embracing Our Complexity: Thomas Aquinas and Zhu Xi on Power and the Common Good*, (SUNY Press, 2015), p.87.

mountain-water); “The wise delight in water, the benevolent delight in mountains” we read in the Analects.[113] It is probably one of the reasons why Confucius vibrated with the deepest yearnings of his disciple Zeng Dian which differed from the strictly political anxieties of his other disciples: “In late spring, when there is gentle breeze and bright sunshine, I would put on my spring clothing and go out with five or six young men and six or seven boys. We would bathe in the River Yi and feel the breeze and rain, then return home singing.”[114] Zeng Dian describes a feast for the senses but this bliss rises above self-indulgence. Swimming in the river and singing with other youth in late spring designates the performance of an ancient, established rite (li) which involves chanting.[115] Rite (li) and music (yue) – a notion which transcends composition and instrument-playing - are indispensable to Confucian self-cultivation and nourish the cardinal virtue of humaneness (*ren* 仁); this conviction permeates Chinese civilisation through time. Aesthetic pleasure linked to landscape-dwelling and tasted in a context of propriety and respect of ancient practices is inscribed in Confucian ethics, which are not limited in a moralising discourse.

Following the Confucian tradition, Zong Bing宗炳 [375–443], author of the earliest text ‘On Landscape Painting’ maintained that sages, individuals capable of mastering their passions, had much in common with mountains and rivers while the humane person delighted in their view.[116] Wang Xiyin 王心一 [1572-1645] in Record of Returning to Country Dwelling (Gui tianyuan ji 歸田園記) claimed that in the sight of fine landscapes he would linger until he

[113] *Analects 6.23*, (trans. James Legge) cited in *Chinese Text Project*, ed. Donald Sturgeon (2011) URL: https://ctext.org/analects/yong-ye
[114] Peimin Ni, *Understanding the Analects of Confucius: A New Translation of Lunyu with Annotations*, SUNY Press 2017) p.277.
[115] Qiheng Wang, “Xishang ting suoyin” 禊赏亭索隐 [A textual study of the Xishang Pavilion], in *Zijincheng xueshu lunwen ji* 紫禁城学术论文集 [Proceedings of the Forbidden City Academy], vol.1, ed. Shan Shiyuan and Yu Zhuoyun (Beijing: Zijincheng chubanshe, 1997), pp.196–206.
[116] *Classical Chinese Literature: An Anthology of Translations: From Antiquity to Tang Dynasty*, ed. by John Minford, Joseph S.M. Lau and Cyril Birch, (New York, Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 606.

felt the vibrancy of his qi flowing in his heart and fingers.[117] Much later, Zhang Zhaoqian 张昭潜 [1829–1907], in the Record of Ten Hu Garden (Shihuyuan ji 十笏園記) would summarize the intention of Confucians with these terms: "Every flower and every tree between heaven and earth, all nothing but embodiment of the wonder of Creation. I lodge my eye on the flowers and trees, so as to nurture ren 仁 in my chest (mind-heart), to make it abundant of vital force."[118] In China like in Europe landscapes interweave with moral improvement, moderating passions, refined culture and a virtuous life; in both cultures, the moral goal and the aesthetic aspect of residing in a landscape co-operated; the useful and the pleasurable side of this experience were interdependent.

CHAPTER ONE: BRITAIN AND FRANCE DURING THE ENLIGHTENMENT.

1.1 Landscape, Solitude and the Cultivation of Good Passions in Shaftesbury's Philosophy.

In Britain, Antony Ashley Cooper 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713), owner of a garden whose design he had diligently supervised and where he chose to retire for a long period of time, was constantly preoccupied with the regulation of *passions*, a term used in the 1700s to signify emotions. Inspired by Stoic philosophers like Epictetus (50-130 AD) Shaftesbury insisted that in order to train the emotions one should prune desire (ορεξις) and employ aversion (ἔκκλησις); Stoics had shown the necessity of fighting against disturbing

[117] Wang Xiyin 王心一 [1572-1645], Gui tianyuan ji 歸田園記 [Record of Returning to Country Dwelling] in Y*uanzong* 园综 [An Anthology of Garden Records], ed. Chen Congzhou and Jiang Qiting (Shanghai: Tongji University Press, 2004), p. 206.

[118] Zhang Zhaoqian, "Shihuyuan ji" 十笏園記 ["Record of Ten Hu Garden"], in *Yuanzong*, 74. Y*uanzong* 园综 (An Anthology), p.74.

passions in order to attain virtue and happiness. In his notebook titled *Exercises* Shaftesbury promulgated the extinguishing of any "wrong sort of Joy and enlivened Temper: the starving, supplanting that Exuberant, Luxuriant Fancy ….and the introducing of a Contrary Disposition".[119] Problematic, immoderate tendencies should be replaced by other, more advantageous ones; florid, unstable emotional dispositions allow too much freedom to human imagination. Shaftesbury invoked the importance of mental composure which necessitate an ascetic emotional basis; desires needed to be transformed through training.[120] Moderate desire was also one of Confucius' main concerns as it formed a crucial part of humaneness. In China, the preservation of a person's moral integrity depends primarily on his ability to control himself. The greatest danger, according to Confucius, lies in the lack of personal steadfastness and temperance, the ability to keep desires in good order. The wickedness of others had a secondary role in undermining humaneness.[121] In the old book of Odes (11th-7th centuries BC), which held a prominent place in Confucian teaching, we read: "Looked at in your apartment, be there free from shame as being exposed to the light of Heaven."[122] An exemplary man must be flawless in his will and always seek discipline;[123] his discernment leads him to take appropriate action in all occasions.

A call for temperance is also manifest in the Lay Monastery, a British journal published between 1713 and 1714 by John Hughes and Richard Blackmore who, following the line of Shaftesbury, encouraged people to exercise their virtue through the cultivation of good passions. The essays included in the Lay Monastery attempted to demonstrate that lasting, serene felicity depended on self-restraint:

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[119] Lori Branch, *Rituals of Spontaneity. Sentiment and Secularism from Free Prayer to Wordsworth*, (Baylor University Press, 2010), p.107.
[120] Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness*, p.84.
[121] Ying Zhu, "Corruption and its (dis)content: the Rise and Fall of Chinese Officialdom in Television Dramas" *Screen* 57 (2016), 235-249, (p.235).
[122] *Doctrine of the Mean* 33, (trans. by James Legge) in *Chinese Text Project*, Sturgeon, retrieved from: https://ctext.org/liji/zhong-yong
[123] *Analects 4.11*, (trans.by James Legge) in Chinese Text Project, Sturgeon, retrieved from: https://ctext.org/analects/li-ren

> The Practice of Vertue removes his secret Fears and Misgivings, and calms the Perturbations and Anguish of his Heart. A Principle of Vertue, by restraining our Appetites, bounding our Desires and governing our passions, by raising our Thoughts above the low Aims of Ambition and Avarice, and bringing the Soul to one Point the Acquisition of Immortal Happiness. A Man in this Condition is sequester'd from the Affairs of common Life, as if he had drawn in his Effects, broken off Commerce with the World, and was retired with the inestimable Possession of a Mind at Rest.[124]

The government of the passions, therefore, play a key-role for those who wish to progress in wisdom and virtue. The sage person experiences good passions such as compassion, friendship and love; he is profoundly humane but remains clear-headed. He controls his yearnings, feelings and inclinations; thus, the temptations and assaults of the external world cannot corrupt him. He is not apathetic but manages to preserve his equilibrium: transient miseries and disappointments do not disturb the tranquillity of his mind.[125] His virtue is the source of his happiness.

The ultimate target for the Shaftesburians was to obtain tranquillity and construct a reliable, resilient moral self; to achieve this target a person should learn to converse with himself, become capable of introspection, be self-conscious, examine and shape the influences of the exterior world.[126] Shaftesbury considered contemplation an indispensable tool for the building of the moral self and the conquest of goodness and happiness.[127] He suggested resistance to any form of dissipation and stressed that each man should learn to spend time alone and commune with his own heart instead of constantly seeking the presence of companions. Solitude, understood as emotional independence and detachment from wrong affections was essential

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[124] Richard Blackmore and John Hughes, *The Lay Monastery. Consisting of Essays, Discourses etc. Published singly under the Title of the Lay Monk*, 29, (London: Sam Keimer for Ferdinand Burleigh, 1714), p.174.
[125] *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, ed. by K. Algra, J. Barnes, J. Mansfeld, & M. Schofield, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.705.
[126] Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness*, pp.82, 83.
[127] Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks*, 1733, p.425.

to the self-cultivation process: “Cut off Familiarity, Inwardness and that Sympathy of a wrong kind. See what thou hast got by seeking others in this Society? Is it genuine and of a right kind, when it is that fond desire of companionship and want of talk and story? Remember that real Friendship is not founded on such a Need.”[128]

In Confucianism too, solitude taught a man to be constantly mindful of his conduct and disposition. The *Doctrine of the Mean* (Zhongyong) states that “The *junzi* (gentleman or exemplary person, 君子) is cautious even when not being watched, and is concerned even when no one is listening. Nothing is more visible than what is hidden; nothing more apparent than what is minute. Thus, the junzi is cautious in his solitude.”[129] This phrase is related to the process of self-cultivation and refers to the necessity of ethical self-monitoring when one is alone, or when one’s motivations are concealed from others. In this sense, “solitude” is an interior state rather than physical isolation; it concerns the mind-heart (the xin 心) which should constantly manifest the five great virtues (humaneness, justice, wisdom, rites and integrity). In Confucian thought, a person’s capacity to handle emotions - which were stimulated by the tangled web of human relationships - constituted the basis of self-cultivation and moral improvement.[130] A sage should be able to control his passions; this way his thoughts and conduct would constantly manifest the inherently tranquil, stable state of mind-heart. Preserving tranquility rendered righteousness and compassion possible; it guaranteed that a person would act appropriately in every occasion.[131] In China tranquility is about balance, moderation and centrality; a mental state achieved both in moments of rest and times of activity. Confucianism fosters moderation; the Doctrine of the Mean reads: “when joy and anger, sorrow and happiness are not yet manifest call it the center. When they are already manifest and yet all are hitting the proper measure, call it harmony.”[132] Trimming our dispositions so that these

[128] Lori Branch, *Rituals of spontaneity*, p. 107, 108.
[129] *Philosophers of the Warring States: A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*, ed. by Kurtis Hagen, Steve Coutinho, (Ontario; Broadview Press Peterborough, 2018), p.81.
[130] *Neo-Confucianism, A Philosophical Introduction*, Stephen C. Angle and Justin Tiwald, (Polity, 2017), p.142.
[131] *Neo-Confucianism*, Angle, p.152-153.
[132] Zhongyong 1, Cited in *Neo-Confucianism*, Angle, p.97.

reach propriety is an infallible sign of wisdom and the key to humaneness, the capital Confucian virtue.[133]

Shaftesbury's writings clearly show that in meditating, taming unrestricted desires, polishing temperaments and growing in virtue, natural elements present in landscapes had a crucial role to play. In a dialogue titled "*The Moralists: a philosophical Rhapsody*" he perceived the countryside as a sanctuary, a term which was not employed in a conventionally religious sense. The passage cited below, dense in meaning and charged with moral undertones, delineates the way "fields and woods" encourage introspection and participate in humans' mental and ethical improvement. Theocles, one of the two characters in the text, voices the "divine thoughts" that the eremitic landscape he described as "solitude"[134] stirred in his mind.

> Ye Fields and Woods, my Refuge from the toilsome World of Business, receive me in your quiet sanctuaries and favour my retreat and thoughtful Solitude. Blessed be ye chaste Abodes of the Happiest Mortals, who here in peaceful Innocence enjoy a Life unenvy'd, though Divine; whilst with its bless'd Tranquillity it affords a happy Leisure and retreat for Man; who made for Contemplation and to search his own and other Natures, may here best meditate the Cause of Things; and placed amidst the various Scenes of Nature, may nearer view her Works.[135]

For Shaftesbury, the purpose of solitary leisure savoured far from urban mayhem is not self-indulgence but the contemplation of serious things and the cultivation of a tranquil temperament necessary to men's personal welfare. The individual who seeks refuge in a landscape untainted by any form of corruption is invited to enter in communion with this landscape's intrinsic qualities: serenity and purity. Self-interest, political machinations, greed and worldly ambitions do not prosper in rural places; thus, roaming and dwelling in the countryside renders possible the elimination of harmful passions. As

[133] *Neo-Confucianism*, Angle, pp.100, 101.
[134] Shaftesbury*, Characteristics of Men*, 1733, II, pp. 258-259.
[135] Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men*, 1733, II, p. 285.

mental faculties function better in the silence of rural retirement[136] the "happy mortal" mentioned in *The Moralists* has the opportunity to penetrate to the secrets of the natural environment surrounding him. He may study the various categories of animals and plants, the stars, the earth and the rivers and the principles which govern them.[137] Investigating the origin of several natural phenomena he will discover his own nature. "By the help of what is noblest, his mind and reason"[138], he will realise that the vast universe (macrocosm) and himself (microcosm) constitute parts of the same harmonious structure. The idea that the human body mirrors the configurations of the cosmos and ideal society mirrors the order of Heaven had also shaped the Chinese thought. Thus, for the Song moral philosophers and cosmologists Zhou Dunyi (1017-1073) and Zhang Zai (1020-1077), Confucianism had transmitted the wisdom of the ancients but also demonstrated that human morality is founded on the organic processes of heaven and earth which should therefore be carefully studied.[139] From the same period, Zeng Gong (1019–1083) also posited that the three ancient sage-kings – Chinese models of virtuous leadership - had cultivated their mind-heart so that they could learn from the principles of heaven-and-earth and apply them in their enlightened governance.[140] The ultimate goal of admiring the splendour and variety of rural environment extends beyond the pleasure of the senses; Shaftesbury argues that beauty comprises a moral quality, it is men's "highest Good" [141] and therefore it lies beyond what we can immediately perceive with our vision. Appreciating the grace and harmony of eremitic landscapes in "thoughtful solitude" renders people conscious and worthy of their humaneness.[142]

The Moralists gave voice to Shaftesbury's ambitious project of human self-organisation. In the enthusiastic discourse of Theocles one part of which was quoted above, four crucial themes emerge in connection with the landscape's

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[136] Røstvig, *The Happy Man*, pp.56, 63.
[137] Basil Willey, *The Eighteenth-century Background: Studies on the Idea of Nature in the Thought of the Period*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1957), p.63.
[138] Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men*, 1790, p.425.
[139] Peter Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History*, (Harvard University Asia Centre; Harvard University Press 2010), p.61.
[140] Bol, *Neo-Confucianism*, p.67.
[141] *Shaftesbury, Characteristicks*, 1790, p.425.
[142] Willey, *The Eighteenth Century*, p.63.

role in the formation of people's moral and cognitive personality. One is innocence, perceived as inherent quality of the natural environment which was made by an all-loving Creator; the eremitic landscape purifies from destructive passions consequently encouraging moderation in every aspect of life. The association of innocence with the pastoral element was present, as I mentioned in the beginning, in the Greco-Roman culture (poetry of Theocritus); the erudite Shaftesbury who embraced and developed this ancient idea had an impact on the European thought of his era. A second theme *The Moralists* investigate is the knowledge of natural structures present in every particle of the cosmos and these structures' interdependency. Such knowledge constitutes a means to approach the divine, which Shaftesbury understood as a deist man of the Enlightenment. In the eighteenth century, the link between the divine and the landscape was made by many members of the deist intelligentsia. A third theme raised by Shaftesbury is the cultural refinement that elevates the person from a brutal state and makes him capable of distinguishing what is beautiful and good thus increasing in virtue. Theocles claims that those who yearn for woods, rivers and seashores are not only a handful of philosophers and "poor vulgar lovers" as his interlocutor Philocles assumes, but also the poets "and all those other students in Nature and the arts which copy after her… all who are lovers either of the Muses or the Graces".[143] Erudition and development of good taste constitute integral parts of Shaftesbury's project for the moral improvement of humans. The last theme found in the *Moralists* is human well-being; happiness is the final purpose of an educated person's purified desires and orderly passions cultivated in the "thoughtful solitude" of eremitic landscapes.

[143] Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks* 1733, p.296.

1.2 Landscape and Temperance: Endorsing Frugality, Purity and Simplicity.

In Europe, from the Augustan age until after the eighteenth century, being in eremitic landscapes interweaves with liberty of movement and action as well as lack of affectation; these places favour equanimity, and inspire a love for simplicity. In fields, woods and private gardens, individuals –especially those occupying important public positions - could escape from the “sordid pursuits of life”, as the statesman Pliny the Younger observed. Men yearn to dwell or ramble in landscapes because these latter render possible a refined, yet unpretentious and morally uncompromising way of life without intrigues, dishonesty or any other form of vice. The Roman poet Horace (65 BC - 8 BC), a reference and literary model to the eighteenth-century British elite, was deeply appreciated by Shaftesbury who considered him the “best genius, most gentleman-like among other classical authors” and explained how Horace stood for the same social and religious ideas he espoused himself.[144] In an epistle addressed to his friend Aristius Fuscus, Horace extoled the time he spent amidst idyllic views of his estate in Sabine hills. There he was trained to reject extravagance and develop a more frugal taste.

> I praise the brooks of the lovely countryside, its woodland and rocks overgrown with moss. In short, I know life and am a king the moment I leave behind those things you extol to the heavens with loud applause, and, like the slave who refuses the sacrificial cakes and runs away from his master the priest, it is bread I want and now prefer to honeyed cakes.[145]

Interestingly, Horace constitutes one of the first ancient authors who bestowed the landscape with an individual physiognomy, especially when he affectionately described the mountain scenery of his native region where he spent his childhood years. Coloured with nostalgia Horace’s eremitic

[144] *The poetic Enlightenment, Poetry and Human Science, 1650-1820*, ed. by Tom Jones and Rowan Boyson, (London: Routledge, 2015), pp.94, 95.
[145] *Oxford World’s Classics: Horace*, Davie and Cowan, p.78.

landscape is pure and maternal, shielding him from the brutal realities of life; he cradles it in his memory associating it with innocence.[146] It is a benevolent abode where nothing can harm him; its auspicious power accompanied him in his adult years. The Sabine Hills comprise the realm where his poetic vocation is born and nurtured; his affection for the Muses is elevated above the horrors of human strife such as the defeat of Roman Republicans at the battle of Philippi where he had participated in his youth.

> On pathless Vulture, beyond the threshold of my nurse's cottage, when as a child I was worn out with play and sleep, the legendary wood pigeons covered me with fresh leaves… how I slept with my body unharmed by bears and black vipers, how I was hidden under piles of sacred laurel and myrtle, thanks to the gods a spirited child. I am yours Muses, yes yours when borne aloft to the Sabine region… Because I loved your springs and dances, I was not destroyed by the rout of our line at Philippi, nor by the accursed tree, nor by Palinurus with his Sicilian waters.[147]

Shaftesbury who drew heavily from Stoic thought saw some parallels between Horace's decision to retire from public life with his own choice to leave the royal court and retire in his garden at Wimborne St Giles in Dorset where he would plunge himself in the comforting world of philosophy:[148] "I find it to be my part in the world to live as now a more retired sort of life."[149] For Shaftesbury who consistently promoted an active ideal of a citizen-philosopher,[150] involvement with politics had become increasingly difficult due to his fragile health; yet, the phrase "let others speak magnificently of virtue not thou" might subtly refer to the uncouth, incorrigible, corrupted character of his contemporaries.[151] In his retirement Shaftesbury looked for the "chaste abodes of happy mortals", to safeguard his tranquillity and general well-being.

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[146] *Brill's companion to Horace*, ed. by Hans Christian Günther, (Leiden-Boston: Brill 2012), p.10, 11.
[147] *Brill's companion to Horace*, Günther, p.10.
[148] *The Poetic Enlightenment*, Boyson, p.95.
[149] Leatherbarrow, "Character, geometry and perspective", p.335.
[150] Brian Cowan, "Reasonable Ecstasies, Shaftesbury and the Languages of Libertinism", *Journal of British Studies* 37 (1998) 111-138, (p.129).
[151] Leatherbarrow, "Character, Geometry and Perspective", p.354.

An engraving, made by Simon Gribelin in 1723 (Fig.1) after the original oil-painting created by John Closterman in 1701 or 1702 (Fig.2) represents an informal yet solemn-looking Shaftesbury wearing only a white under-shirt, a night gown and, on his bare feet, a pair of leather slippers. Typical in the eighteenth-century portraits of British aristocracy, a piece of heavy drapery and a column frame the standing figure of the Earl, whose left hand rests on a pedestal. The carefree, unaffected appearance of Shaftesbury on this image which I discuss in detail later, reminds the viewers that whereas he promulgated a refinement of the spirit, he advocated simplicity and rejected the false theatricality of high social circles: “all those forms and manners which come under the notion of good breeding”.[152] Like Horace who, in the “blissful countryside” became fond of frugality, ignored things which provoked loud applause and opted for bread instead of sacrificial cakes, the Earl felt at ease in a context where there was no need for “embroidery, gilding and colouring”[153] like in Wimborne St Giles. Fatigued by the compulsory use of worldly manners, the British earl maintained that it was preferable to possess “integrity, faith, innocence, to be a man and a lover of men”. [154] Consistent with simplicity, these attributes marked a higher form of politeness which pertained to people who are humane and without malice.

Some aspects of conventional conduct adopted from the members of high-society could be overlooked in the eremitic landscape, either this was a private garden or a corner in the countryside. There, from Roman times until the modern era, high ranking individuals were liberated from certain rules of etiquette. Thus, Pliny saw his villa and the surrounding countryside as a realm of relaxation from the bonds of conformist behaviour. Robert Castell, architect and translator of Pliny’s letters, visualized the Roman statesman naked and running barefoot over the sandy soil at the seaside, or tripping along the mossy acanthus paths in Tuscany without his sandals. In the same spirit, William Kent, the great landscape designer and Castell’s contemporary, once playfully depicted his patron Lord Burlington walking in the grounds of

[152] Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness*, p.78.
[153] Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness*, p.78.
[154] *The Life, Unpublished Letters and Philosophical Regimen of Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury*, ed. by Benjamin Rand, (New York, 1900), p.112.

Chiswick with a pet-dog beside him lifting his leg to urinate on its master.[155] In Gribelin's engraving the naked leg, the slippers and the half-open night gown of Shaftesbury, despite the sobriety of his face, comprise signs which could be associated with the freedom from societal rules enabled in places like the garden represented behind him; the British philosopher's lack of affectation interweaves with his purity and integrity.

The impact of Shaftesbury on other eighteenth-century thinkers can be seen in the four-volume work the Swiss physician and philosopher Johann Georg Zimmermann (1728-1795) wrote on solitude. Zimmermann, who referred to Shaftesbury as "elegant and philosophic" man,[156] exalted eremitic landscapes as abodes of innocence:

> Ah, how much preferable is the happiness which country life affords, to that deceitful felicity which is affected in the courts of Princes and in the brilliant circles of the great and gay; a truth severely felt by men of worldly pleasure, and consessed by the restlessness and languor of which they frequently complain; complaints unknown among the vallies of the Alps or upon those mountains where Innocence yet dwells and which no visitor ever quitted without the tribute of a tear.[157]

Solitary roaming in the mountains and valleys of the Alps can be a safeguard of virtue and generator of ethical improvement because these places awaken the conscience of people attached to their worldly affections, helping them distinguish genuine happiness from the pretentious gaiety displayed in royal courts and other circles of power. The purity of these landscapes communicate a feeling of tranquillity which is absent from the mayhem and constant agitation of the world. To abandon them and return to the urban turmoil would be similar to a forced falling from grace, causing sadness and nostalgia.

Inherited, bought, constructed or randomly discovered and freely accessed, the eremitic landscape can alleviate the burdens related to harmful

[155] Pierre de la Ruffinière du Prey, *The Villas of Pliny,* p.142.
[156] Zimmermann, *An Examination on the Advantages of Solitude*, p. 302.
[157] Zimmermann, *An Examination on the Advantages of Solitude*, pp.35, 36.

attachments. It shows its favours to individuals who do not focus on futile things but prefer simplicity over pomp; to those who, according to Zimmermann, were courageous enough to choose "the shade of the cypress" over the "intoxication of noisy pleasures and tumultuous joys."[158] These sentences echo the philosophical thought of Shaftesbury who castigated the hypocrisy of affected behaviour, the fascination with "embroidery, gilding, colouring and daubing."[159] Cutting the bonds with such meaningless affections after introspection, brought people closer to moral perfection and rendered them capable of happiness. It is "by this Freedom from our Passions and low Interests that we are reconcil'd to the goodly *Order* of the Universe; that we harmonize with *Nature;* and live in Friendship both with God and Man."[160]

In China landscape-dwelling was traditionally associated with simplicity, frugality and temperance; the wise and benevolent who loved the waters and the mountains were not anxious about trivial, passing things and showed resilience to moral decadence. In the *Analects* Confucius claimed that: "With coarse rice to eat and water to drink and my bended arm for a pillow I have still joy in the midst of these things. Riches and honours acquired by unrighteousness are to me as a floating cloud."[161] Temperance, honesty and diligent study are the "things" where the philosopher's joy is sought and found. The Master repeats this conviction when praising the conduct of his best disciple Yan Hui whose mirth did not depend on material comfort or other trifles but on his resilience to adversities and his constant will to perfect himself according to the rules of propriety: "How worthy is Hui! A simple bowl of food and a dipperful of drink, living on a shabby lane – others could not bear the cares, yet Hui is unchanging in his joy."[162]

Similarly, Tao Yuanming, the illustrious recluse-poet of the Early Jin Dynasty who left public service (Fig.3) to withdraw to his small estate and earn his

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[158] Zimmermann, *An Examination on the Advantages of Solitude*, p 9.
[159] Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness*, p.78.
[160] Shaftesbury*, Characteristics*, 1733, p. 433.
[161] Analects 7.16, (trans. James Legge), cited in *Chinese Text Project*, Sturgeon, retrieved from: https://ctext.org/analects/shu-er
[162] Analects 6.11, (trans. James Legge), cited in *Chinese Text Project*, Sturgeon retrieved from https://ctext.org/analects/yong-ye

living cultivating the land, presents his return to the countryside as an escape from falsehood and various excesses.

> In my youth I felt no comfort in common things, by my nature I clung to the mountains and hills. I erred and fell in the snares of dust and was away thirteen years in all. The cage-bird yearns for its former woods, fish in a pool yearns for long-ago deeps. Clearing scrub at the edge of the southern moors I stay plain by returning to gardens and fields. My holdings are just more than ten acres, a thatched cottage of eight or nine rooms. The far towns of men are hidden from sight, a faint blur of smoke from village hearths. No dust pollutes my doors or yard, empty space is offering ample peace. For a long time I was kept inside a coop, now again I return to the natural way.[163]

Tao's act of "coming back to the fields" atoned for the betrayal committed in the past against his genuine, unaffected and ascetic self. The landscape may offer the antidote to materialism, thirst for power and corruption which imprisoned human mind-heart; the landscape can teach men to keep the right balance, eliminate or rectify wrong desires. Embracing frugality Tao recovered authenticity, contented with his meagre means he became tranquil.

Modesty and lack of pomp, combined with the appreciation of scenic garden views were also pivotal to Qing emperors who wanted to cultivate the image of sage-rulers. Thus, Yongzheng, in his *Poem Anthology of the Palace of Prince Yong* presented himself as an incarnation of Confucian virtues and seemed particularly eager to publicise his humility and unaffected taste: "The territory of my residence is so leisurely. Furhtermore, my personality does not like ostentation. I am not keen on wealth and nobility, nor do I worry about being poor and lowly. I only expect to spend time and thus feel joyful anywhere where my emotion projects itself is so leisurely."[164] Leisure was a central idea in Yongzheng's life; it involved roaming in the landscape and finding poetic inspiration, being in harmony with himself at all occasions,

[163] Cited in Xiaofei Tian, *Tao Yuanming and Manuscript Culture: the Record of the Dusty Table*, (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press 2005), pp.98, 99.
[164] Hui Zou, *A Jesuit Garden in Beijing and Early Modern Chinese Culture*, (Indiana: Purdue University Press 2011) p.44

cultivating tranquility and simplicity. Leisure, he told us, was embedded in his light-hearted temperament, his detachment from riches, his capacity to keep the world away even when he was living in it. Like Tao Yuanming did in his poem *Revisiting the Eastern Fence*, Yongzheng emperor described himself as a genuine recluse with a distant mind-heart. His preface of the prose anthology *Yue xin ji* (Anthology of Delightful Heart) reads:

> My life always takes simple elegance as its principle. My personality is quiet, self-appreciative, satisfied with my own fate, peaceful in accordance with circumstances. When I lived in the Palace of Prince Yong, although it was located in a bustling area, in my sleep I felt tranquil, remote, at leisure, and open and seemed to transcend the dusty world. However, I did not let my body and heart idle, and browsed many anthologies edited by others in my spare time of studying classics and historical books.[165]

Simple elegance, a principle Yongzheng closely associated with garden dwelling, differentiated his leisurely attitude from the indolence of a corrupt king. Accompanied with noble scholarly endeavours, the emperor's unaffected enjoyment - casually roaming in the landscape, appreciating the coolness of the wind and delighting in the view of flowers - was a conscientious quest of self-awareness**.** His pursuit of simplicity trained his emotions; it served the imperial role but also surpassed it. In natural settings, "free and comfortable" Yongzheng could see himself as a simple, yet virtious man without forgetting he governed the empire.[166]

In Europe and China learned and politically engaged individuals who promoted leisurely reclusion in scenic gardens invariably emphasised their attachment to a simple, modest lifestyle. They were eager to proclaim their indifference to luxury and worldly honours as solid evidence of their virtuous character and the moral value of the practice they cherished. This essential characteristic is found in both Chinese and European discourse which

[165] Hui Zou, *Jesuit Garden*, p.45.
[166] Hui Zou, *Jesuit Garden*, p.46.

advocated solitary landscape dwelling many centuries before the Western culture gets in contact with Confucian tradition.

1.3 Landscape and Natural Religion: the Deist Approach of the Divine and its' Importance in Self-cultivation.

In the Western world, the quest for self-improvement and happiness sought in the context of eremitic landscapes implicated the necessity to find the hidden cause of things, to seek the scheme of the universe. Science, which was a significant component of the European landscape discourse, did not seem to preoccupy the Chinese Confucian scholars who retired in their private gardens or in the mountains. In Britain, since the late seventeenth century, Virgil's verse from the Georgics: *felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas*[167] had been invested with a scientific dimension, as it was believed to represent the inquisitive spirit of the early modern era. The thirst for truth and knowledge of the natural laws[168] could lead people to comprehend the perfect, wise creating Principle, the benevolent divinity of deists like Shaftesbury, who was a contemporary of Isaac Newton (1643-1726). The Newtonian doctrine which exercised great influence on deism consisted in the view that nature itself comprises both a divine revelation and a proof of the existence of God; the illustrious scientist expressed this conviction in a series of letters written to his theologian friend Richard Bentley in 1692.[169] British Enlightenment philosophers and essayists, who usually belonged to the Protestant tradition and had liberal political sympathies, frowned upon lavish Church rituals and rigid doctrines which were assumed to feed obscurantism; they called their contemporaries to free themselves from superstition. The triumph of natural religion which rejected superfluous formalities played a central role in the

[167] Dryden's translation of Virgil published in 1697 rendered it "Happy the Man who studying Nature's Laws/Thro' known effects can trace the secret Cause. *Dryden, Selected Poems*, ed.by Paul Hammond and David Hopkins, (Harlow; London: Pearson Education Limited 2007), p. 278.

[168] Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Society*. (trans. and ed. by Charles Loomis), (Mineola, New York; Dover Publications 2017), p.149.

[169] Alfred Owen Aldridge, "Shaftesbury and the Deist Manifesto", *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 41, (1951) 297-382 (p.299).

growing appreciation of landscapes, seen as small scale representations of the harmonious Creation. Confucianism, brought in Europe via Jesuit translations and writings since the seventeenth century, had contributed in the development of concepts such as natural religion and natural morality. Europeans deduced that the virtuous life of Chinese people was based on a rational, natural morality which permeated the created world and not on the precepts of an established Church.[170]

Shaftesbury's position is representative of the Enlightenment's disapproval of traditional attitudes related to faith which, until then, had shaped people's mindset. Revealed religion had conditioned, to an extent, the thought of illustrious humanists and scholars like the Catholic Francis Petrarch (1304-1074) and the seventeenth-century Anglican royalist author John Evelyn (1620-1706). Shaftesbury maintained that an infinite, perfect God does not experience wrath nor does he harbor vengeful feelings against mankind; consequently, this divinity does not expect human flattery, specific rites and prayers in order to be satisfied. Religion, claimed Shaftesbury, must be approached with a sweet and kind disposition instead of merely being a refuge in times of distress and adversity.[171] This attitude protected people from forming distorted, superstitious ideas about a rancorous God which would affect their own performance as members of society. Shaftesbury related the display of benevolence towards all men to the Supreme Being which is alien to human views of justice-and-retribution. Rejecting the existence of a personal God who could feel offended or demand atonement Shaftesbury's views differ dramatically from the traditional theological approaches. On the other hand his theses bear similarities to the Confucian idea of Heaven, which was not conceived as a supernatural deity which awards and punishes but rather as the source of all life and virtue, aligned to the universal moral order. Confucius encouraged sacrificial offerings for reasons of compliance with propriety rules but dismissed sacrifices or prayers that were carried out with the intent of inducing Heaven to provide one with

[170] Davis Walter, "China, the Confucian Ideal", p.536.
[171] Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 1733, I, p.130.

specific benefits.[172] To follow the mandate of Heaven would mean to cultivate benevolence, love humanity and diffuse morality to other people; the ruler to his subjects, the parents to their children.

The satisfaction which derives from the silent contemplation of the order and proportion observed in natural elements (fields, forests, flora and fauna) inspired deists the desire to reproduce this same order and proportion in their own lives. They strived to lead their existence righteously, control their passions, acquire moral discernment and attain goodness.[173] The term "nature" Shaftesbury employed in his philosophical dialogue to designate the rural landscape, constitutes the tangible proof of an "impowering Deity", who is "the source and principle of beauty and perfection." "Mighty Nature" is without blemish, a "substitute of Providence" equal and inseparable from its Maker.[174] More importantly, Nature communicates wisdom and virtue to the people: "Supremely fair and sovereignly good! All loving and all-lovely, all divine! Whose looks are so becoming and of such infinite grace, whose study brings such wisdom and whose contemplation such delight."[175]

The Chinese promoted the observation, comprehension and imitation of natural order because they believed there was constant interaction between the human and the natural realm. From the third century BC (Early Qin Dynasty) until the 6th century AD (end of Six Dynasties), the idea of "cosmic resonance theory" was very influential throughout China. This theory posited that all things and processes belonged to specific categories which depended on the qualities of the energy (qi) that constituted them. Things of the same category "resonated" with one another. Furthermore, cosmic resonance theory claimed that the categories into which things and activities fell were valid for both the natural and the human order. Since the natural order was of itself stable, predictable, and harmonious, human actions which failed to comply with it provoked social and political abnormalities.[176] Cosmic resonance theory was less invoked by Neo-Confucians who continued to

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[172] P.J. Ivanhoe, "Heaven as a Source for Ethical Warrant in early Confucianism, *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy*, 6 (2007), 211-220, (p.215).
[173] *Shaftesbury*, *Characteristics of Men*, Klein, 1999, p.206.
[174] *Shaftesbury, Characteristics* 1790, p.259.
[175] *Shaftesbury, Characteristics* 1790, p.259.
[176] Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History*, p.65,

argue that studying the cosmic processes was a part of “learning” (wen). Thus, Zeng Gong (1019-1083) said that people had to observe and apply the principles which maintained the universe for the sake of harmony and prosperity; his view resembles that of Shaftesbury who wanted natural order to be reproduced in the human realm.[177] Finally, throughout Chinese moral philosophers stressed that the making of civilisation was based on the ability of the sages to grasp heaven-and-earth’s principles which they would use for guidance.[178]

For Shaftesbury, the divine order of things is manifested in the supreme wisdom, goodness and beauty of Nature. In landscapes men could observe, meditate and understand natural phenomena in an attempt to reach the non-vindictive deity, the infinite mind, source of what is fair and moral.[179] Theocles’ discourse found in The Moralists reads:

> O mighty Genius! Sole animating and inspiring power! Author and subject of these thoughts! Thy influence is universal, and in all things thou art inmost ... thou movest (all things) with an irresistible and unwearied force, by sacred and inviolable laws, framed for the good of each particular being, as best may suit with the perfection, life and vigour of the whole. The vital principle is widely shared and infinitely varied, dispersed throughout, nowhere extinct.[180]

The process of understanding and admiring the divine origin of the universe is assisted by human reason. This phenomenally logical procedure further implicates the participation of the emotions.[181] Whoever seeks God in the incorruptible perfection of the cosmos unavoidably seeks beauty which Shaftesbury names “our highest Good.” To conceive beauty - and through this possess goodness- one must be aesthetically trained and able to control his passions. Such an individual has established within himself “the lasting and

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[177] Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History*, p.67.
[178] Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History*, p.68.
[179] Røstvig, *Happy Man*, p.7
[180] Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 256.
[181] *Emotional Minds: The Passions and the Limits of Pure Inquiry in Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. by Sabrina Ebbersmeyer, (Berlin; Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2012**)** p.125.

sure Foundations of order, peace and concord"[182] and is capable for a "disinterested appreciation of nature for its own sake."[183]

In the *Moralists*, through the mouth of Philocles, Shaftesbury spoke fondly and with lyrical enthusiasm about "the rude rocks, the mossy Caverns, the horrid Graces of the wilderness as representing Nature with a Magnificence surpassing the formal Mockery of princely Gardens".[184] Yet, his garden represented in the engraving of Simon Gribelin and known to us through Shaftesbury's own notes was geometrically organized; straight-line paths separated rows of pyramid-shaped yews from rows of globe–shaped yews, while trees were not left to grow haphazardly but were shaped into specific figures.[185] This should not be interpreted as a sign of compliance with his times' fashion (most aristocratic gardens looked like that), nor as a contradiction to his declared preference for uncultivated landscapes where the hidden order of nature could be better explored. Shaftesbury did not imitate the wildness of nature but the infallible forming principle of nature. The controlled, methodical arrangement of the garden reproduced "the perfect forms and not the figures, the substance of objects found in the free landscape and not their shadow."[186] Trimmed hedges and formal lawns, the horticultural symbols of an order which renders universe coherent seem to constitute a mental and visual preparation for the meeting with the natural deity which is gloriously manifest in the fields and the woods beyond the garden.[187]

In the works *Letters on Taste* and *The Life of Socrates* written by John Gilbert Cooper (1723-1769) and published in the 1750s the reader may see the impact of Shaftesbury's ideas. Cooper, poet, author and persuaded deist,

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[182] *Shaftesbury, Characteristick*s, 1733, p.427.
[183] Peter Marshall, *Nature's Web: Rethinking our Place on Earth*, (New York: Routledge, 1996) p.225.
[184] Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks*, 1733, p.393.
[185] Leatherbarrow, "Character, Geometry" p.343.
[186] Leatherbarrow, "Character, Geometry" p.343.
[187] Leatherbarrow, "Character, Geometry" p.354.

proclaimed that rural retirement constitutes a commendable and pleasurable way to pursue knowledge and cultivate natural religion.[188].

> To seek the Shades of Retirement in order to admire more at leisure the Works of the Creation, to grow thereby more familiar with the Conceptions of God, to harmonize the mind to Moral Beauty, by frequently contemplating upon Natural, and to anticipate in some measure the Bliss of Heaven, upon Earth; is a Resolution worthy of a Being, whose Soul is an Emanation of that eternal Source of Life and Light that created all Things.[189]

Virtue, posited Cooper, is acquired by the true knowledge of God[190] who can be discovered in the eremitic landscape, a physical place where people can develop the appropriate mental disposition. The impersonal divinity of Cooper was the Supreme Being of the Enlightenment and not the Trinitarian God preached by the Church for many centuries; it is quite revealing that in his work *Life of Socrates*, Christ is not identified as Son of God but as "our Guide in Religion" "teaching us the pure worship of the Deity in an unspotted Manner."[191] Natural religion was a matter of reason more than a matter of blind faith; maintaining the opposite could harbour superstition and have disastrous consequences for individuals and the whole human society.[192] The author of Nature should be approached through the meditation and comprehension of natural phenomena via sensible objects (trees, flowers) and not through prayer.

A similar preference for natural religion and an antipathy for anything he identified as bigotry was expressed by William Shenstone, the poet and designer of *The Leasowes*. Thus, in "*The Ruined Abbey: or the effects of superstition*" found in his poetic collection "*Moral Pieces*" verses 20-35 read as follows:

If solitude his wand'ring steps invite

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[188] John Gilbert Cooper, *Letters Concerning Taste; the Fourth Edition to which are Added Essays on Similar and Other Subjects*, (London: J.Dodsley 1771), p.204.
[189] Cooper, *Letters Concerning Taste*, p 204-205.
[190] John Gilbert Cooper, *The life of Socrates*, (London: R.Dodsley 1750), p.iii
[191] Cooper, *The life of Socrates*, p.167.
[192] Cooper, *The life of Socrates*, p.167.

To some more deep recess…

How pleas'd he treads her venerable shades,

Her solemn courts! The centre of the grove!

The root-built cave, by far extended rocks

Around embosom'd, how it sooths the soul!

It scoop'd at first by superstitious hands

The rugged cell receiv'd alone the shoals

Of bigot minds, Religion dwells not here,

Yet Virtue pleas'd at intervals retires:

Yet here may Wisdom as she walks the maze,

Some serious truths collect, the rules of life,

And serious truths of mightier weight than gold![193]

According to William Shenstone, in medieval times, the English landscape was filled with monasteries which hosted religious superstition and plunged people into obscurantism. In the eighteenth century, the purpose and use of eremitic landscapes like the *Leasowes* Park was transformed. The virtuous persons who dwelled or roamed in them –philosophers, politicians and men of letters- did not strive to mortify their senses living a cloistered life which revolved around ancient rituals. They enjoyed the psychological comfort of being in such landscapes and developed a new form of reverence for the orderly natural processes manifested in them. The former theological awe was replaced by the contemplation of truths perceived by the senses; this contemplation resulted in a feeling of admiration before the flawlessness of natural forms and laws.

[193] *The Works of the English Poets from Chaucer to Cowper*, ed. by Samuel Johnson, 21 vols, (London: for S. Johnson, 1810), XIII, p.321.

1.4 Learning, Virtue and Happiness in the Landscape.

The eremitic landscape, a privately-owned garden or a place in the countryside where someone could retire from the world's turmoil, was traditionally regarded as ideal for those who pursued learning, philosophy and poetic endeavours. In the Roman antiquity, similar spaces, coveted by the political and intellectual elite, were inextricably linked to scholarship, the noblest form of recreation. This fact is made explicit in Pliny's letters where he encouraged his friend Caninius Rufus to confide his petty duties to others and "bury himself among his books" in his "secluded yet beautiful retreat" by the lake of Como. Study, generating mental stimulation and psychological comfort, should become the business and the leisure of Rufus' life, his sole occupation and his rest.[194] In his Laurentine Villa Pliny practiced what he preached since his two main pastimes were reading and writing: "I hold converse with myself and with my books. It is a genuine and honest life; such leisure is delicious and honourable." Meanwhile, if lecture quenched his thirst for knowledge, natural elements such as the sea and the shore, being the true abodes of the Muses, constituted the sources of his literary inspiration and incited him to meditate on serious matters of human existence.[195] For Horace the "Sabine" farm where he authored the Odes was offered to him by his patron Maecenas and comprised a metaphor for poetic independence.[196] People relate to the landscape visually and mentally; their perception of rural scenery is based on their sensibility, socio-cultural background, education, worldview and political engagements. Pleasing and morally uplifting, facilitating study, contemplation and artistic creation, the physical topos which consists of hills, fields and rivers, is actually inseparable from the realm of culture.[197]

Heir to the Romans, Shaftesbury believed that the eremitic landscape, providing an aesthetically pleasing, leisurely context, can contribute to

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[194] *The Complete Works of Pliny the Younger*, (Delphi Classics 2014), p. iii.
[195] *Complete Works of Pliny*, p. xiii.
[196] Karen Dang, "Rome and the Sabine Farm: Aestheticism, Topography and the Landscape of Production", *Phoenix* 64, (2010), 102-112, (p.102).
[197] Dang, "Rome and the Sabine Farm", p.104.

people's cultural refinement and ethical improvement. This is not achieved merely by reading the texts of classical philosophers and historians who helped conscientious individuals comprehend higher truths about human existence. In *The Moralists* Shaftesbury clarifies that the procedure of self-cultivation in rural spaces is effectuated via introspection, a method used to discipline the mind. To him, the unsophisticated who cannot discern beauty or approach the divine are not only those who ignore Greco-Roman scholarship but people with "riotous minds" who do not practice self-examination and are incapable of moderating their emotions.[198]

In Gribelin's engraving mentioned earlier, the Earl was portrayed as an erudite man of his class, distinguished member of the British elite which was well-versed in Classics. Holding a book close to his chest, he is introduced to the viewer as a man deeply attached to his studies. Shaftesbury did not develop his ideas about the multiple benefits of natural environment in a historical and cultural vacuum. The work of Plato on the pedestal beside him emphasizes his interest in philosophy and his contemplative disposition. The volume of Xenophon must be associated with Shaftesbury's political engagements; public duty and affairs of the state did not leave him indifferent even during periods of retirement.[199] This latter element alone can be interpreted as a sign of integrity, balance and moderation, qualities that characterised Shaftesbury and permanently occupied his thought. The orderly garden behind him, a work he diligently supervised trying to materialize his ideas, forms part of his persona. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that in the engraving the Earl's body is not framed by the view of Wimborne St Gilles's with the geometrical parterres and the fields extending to the horizon. Shaftesbury is standing in a protective niche created by the column behind his back and the stone pedestal with the books on his left side. The discourse of Theocles, where he reveals the identity of men enamoured with landscapes and raises the theme of moderating the passions, may also help us understand why Shaftesbury's attachment to his garden is downplayed in this image. In *The Moralists*, the speaker claims that those who seek the woods,

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[198] *Characteristicks, Shaftesbury*, 1733, p.425.
[199] Leatherbarrow, "Character, Geometry", p.341.

the rivers and the seashores or feel moved in the sight of rude rocks and mossy caverns are some philosophers, as well as "students in Nature and the Arts which copy after her… all who are lovers either of the Muses or the Graces."[200] The appreciation of rural beauty does not regard the masses but the intellectual elite: art connoisseurs, poets, painters, philosophers. This elite was mainly composed of socially privileged individuals endowed with a high level of conscientiousness and thus desirous to achieve moral excellence. Theocles admits that passionately stricken with "objects of this kind" (fields, trees, mountains) he was sometimes filled with an excess of melancholy or enthusiasm. In these occasions he would immediately "check himself", learning to restrain his exuberant feelings.[201] The detached attitude of Shaftesbury in the engraving could be related to his own theories. The natural elements, the sea and the coasts, not only provide poetic inspirations but may be vessels of moral excellence by assisting humans in training their emotions. If passions are inflamed in the sight of rural scenery men are invited to moderate them, find the right balance, restore order and increase their capacity to discern the useful from the harmful, the beautiful from the trivial. Ancient knowledge and wisdom could assist the effort to form a dependable moral self. In the same dialogue Theocles tells his friend how men can accomplish themselves:

> To know Ourselves, and what that is, which by improving, we may be sure to advance our Worth and real Self-Interest. For neither is this knowledge acquired by Contemplation of Bodys, or the outward Forms the View of Pageantries, the Study of Estates and Honours: nor is He to be esteemed that self-improving Artist who makes a Fortune out of these; but he (He only) is the wise and able man who with a slight regard to these Things, applies himself to cultivate another Soil, builds in a different matter from that of Stone or Marble; and having righter

[200] *Philosophies of Art and Beauty: Selected Readings in Aesthetics from Plato to Heidegger*, ed. by Albert Hofstadter and Richard Kuhns, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), p.246.
[201] *Shaftesbury, Characteristicks*, 1790, p.327.

> Models in his eye, becomes in truth the Architect of his own Life and Fortune.[202]

A profound optimism can be perceived in the inspired, enthusiastic words of Theocles; the protagonist of the philosophical rhapsody appears convinced that people who seek moral perfection, independence and ultimately happiness may succeed by nourishing the virtue of temperance and maintaining a degree of detachment.

In Confucian thought too, self-cultivation, which necessitated the love of learning (wen), generated human virtue; virtue in its turn was consistently associated with happiness. Hui "loved learning, never transferred his anger; he did not repeat a fault"[203] In the same line, Sima Guang司馬光 (1019-1086), the Confucian historian and minister of the Song Dynasty used the Garden of Solitary Enjoyment (Dule Yuan) in Luoyang for self-cultivation and leisure. In his Garden Record Sima talks about his favourite pastimes and the sources of his joy. He spent large part of his day in a studio reading books, discussing with the ancient worthies as if they were his friends; he inquired into the origins of humanity and righteousness and investigated the sources of the rites and music.[204] To him the garden is a miniature of a well-functioning universe and a fortress of morality, far from the corruption of the court where the Way was lost and the chaos ruled. "My heart has its own joy; How can the vulgar world understand it? ...A loose cotton robe fits my body; Husked millet suits my appetite"[205]

In the early 1760s, a portrait of Qianlong created by the Italian Jesuit missionary Giuseppe Castiglione connects garden dwelling with self-cultivation and erudition (Fig.4). Castiglione, who took the name Lang Shining 郎世宁 (1688-1766) and served as painter in the court, represented the emperor in his study about to start writing a poem. Unlike Gribelin's

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[202] *Shaftesbury, Characteristicks*, 1790, p.354.
[203] *Analects 6.3* (trans. James Legge), cited in Chinese Text Project, Sturgeon, URL: https://ctext.org/analects/yong-ye
[204] *Sediments of Time: Environment and Society in Chinese History*, ed. by Mark Elvin and Liu Ts'ui-jung (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.621.
[205] Xiaoshan Yang, *The Metamorphosis of the Private Sphere*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003), p.203.

Shaftesbury who looks directly at the viewer Qianlong is rendered lost in contemplation; dressed as a sage of the Han dynasty, he is stroking his beard pondering his words.[206] On the desk before him "the four treasures of the Chinese literati": ink, ink stone, rice paper and writing brush [207] emphasise his identity as an accomplished scholar, like the books of Plato and Xenophon inform the viewer about Shaftesbury's solid philosophical background. Qianlong's back is turned to a large window open to a garden with a bamboo and a blooming plum tree. Both plants, as I will discuss in the second chapter, are related to self-cultivation, wisdom and artistic creation. Together with the Han-style garb which implies the sitter's respect for Confucian values the bamboo and the plum tree reinforce his icon as sage-emperor. [208] Qianlong, who never neglected his imperial duty, was attached to virtuous leisure, poetry and the appreciation of landscapes, as one may confirm after reading his *Poem of the Garden of Eternal Spring with a Preface*: "the wall winds along the banks of the Clear River, and sweet smells of corn float over the northern fields. Glancing at ancient books entertains my spirit; a hall is used for storing them. I wield the brush in writing poems to enjoy myself."[209] Qianlong continued the tradition of scholarly accomplishments and reclusive garden dwelling practiced by the emperors who preceded him. Conforming to the Confucian model of filial piety, he maintained that he followed "the diligent and frugal inclinations" of his father Yongzheng.[210] This latter, described in his writings the noble dispositions cherished by Qianlong: "During short breaks from my administration, I study the classics to shape my character. I explore rhythm for poems, practice calligraphy, and dedicate myself to the study of the classics…My life follows a strict routine, enlightened by my father's (Kangxi) holy model, which I respectfully observe all the time and dare not surpass."[211]

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[206] *The Human Record: Sources of Global History*, Volume II: Since 1500, Alfred J. Andrea, James H. Overfield (eds), (Boston MA: Cengage Learning 2016) p.211
[207] Benjamin Elman, *Civil Examinations and Meritocracy in Late Imperial China*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press 2013), p.51.
[208] Wu Hung, "Emperor's Masquerade- costume portraits of Yongzheng and Qianlong", *Orientations*, 26, (1995), 25-41, (p.39).
[209] Hui Zou A Jesuit Garden, p.28
[210] Hui Zou, A Jesuit Garden, p.24
[211] Hui Zou A Jesuit Garden, p.24.

The Confucians and Neo-Confucians virtuous joy closerly resembles the joy praised by Shaftesbury and the Roman Stoics who had inspired him; it transcended trivial self-interest, it loved leisure, rejected excesses and thrived in self-conscious minds. To Horace and Pliny the Younger, the retirement in rural places like the Sabine "farm" and the Tuscan Villa provided them with all the conditions for a blissful existence: serenity, self-sufficiency, freedom from various nuisances connected to public engagements or urban life in noisy Rome. In the Odes, Horace affirmed that the only thing he wished for was a piece of land, a garden and, near his residence, a spring of ever-flowing water and a little woodland; in this frugal context he could find happiness.[212] Pliny's letter to Caninius Rufus vibrates with longing about the beauties of the countryside near Como. In another part of his correspondence with his friend Fuscus, describing his personal experience related to the time he spent in his Villa, Pliny appears grateful for the possibility of meditation this place provided. Enumerating his scholarly occupations and describing how he manages to keep his eyes in subjection to his mind, he underlined the importance of restraining the leaps of imagination and passions.[213] The first-century Roman historian's appeal to show self-control in every occasion resonates in Shaftesbury's call for moderation which could guarantee lasting happiness.

William Shenstone too, reminded the visitor that in a landscape like his own at the Leasowes happiness is possible through virtue and virtue consists in a preference for self-restraint over thoughtless action, simplicity over artifice and silence over commotion. The natural elements function as examples of what is essential and worthy to be pursued in life: a carefree spirit and a kind disposition. Inscribed in one of his pastoral park's seats, William Shenstone's verses play a key role in helping the stroller realize the necessity to eliminate destructive yearnings and nourish moderation:

> "Shepherd wouldn't thou here obtain Pleasure unalloy'd with pain?" Joy that suits the rural sphere? Gentle shepherd, lend an ear" "If thou

[212] Dang, "Rome and the Sabine Farm", p.109.
[213] *Letters of Pliny by Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus*, ed by Bonsanquet, trans. by William Melmoth, Harvard University Press, 1909 cited in Project Gutenberg, retrieved from https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2811/2811-h/2811-h.htm

can’st no charm disclose in the simplest bud that blows, go, forsake thy plain and fold, join the crowd, and toil for gold.” Tranquil pleasures never cloy; banish each tumultuous joy.” “Artless deed and simple dress mark the chosen shepherdess; Thoughts by decency controul’d, well conceiv’d and freely told.” “Let not lucre, let not pride draw thee from such charms aside; Have not those their proper sphere? Gentler passions triumph here.[214]”

The word “shepherd” is employed as a term of address to the visitor in order to emphasize the candour a person should possess as opposed to the affectation which plagues human society. Good, mild emotions, thriving in the solitude of the rural space, assured a joyful existence.

Illustrious British and Chinese proponents of eremitic garden dwelling like Shaftesbury and Qianlong emperor affirmed that this practice, combined with introspection, cultivation of simplicity, diligent study of ancient wisdom and intellectual activities like writing poems or philosophical essays contributed to the moderation of passions and enhanced virtue. In both cultural traditions, landscape reclusion provide a most favourable context for noble-minded persons who wished to cultivate their humaneness.

1.5 Ruins as a Device of Self-Cultivation in the Landscape: Identity and Pride, Transience and Temperance.

During the eighteenth century, ruins constituted an important element of European landscapes and gardens; they were seen as vehicles which increased the sense of belonging to a specific culture, contributed to the formation of historical identity and assisted the training of passions. The sight of architectural relics decaying in various parts of the European countryside provoked a mixture of satisfaction and melancholy as they helped people realize the greatness and transience of human civilization. The growing fascination with ruins can be traced in sketchbooks and written accounts of

[214] Shenstone, *The Works in Verse and Prose*, pp. 346-347.

men who commemorated their experiences from the Grand Tour; a twelve-month scholarly pilgrimage around Europe –mainly France and Italy – traditionally undertaken by upper-class youth in the 1700s.[215] In Britain the trend of having ruins in private gardens which imitated the landscape paintings of Lorrain, Poussin and Rosa became a real passion.[216] These noble, dilapidated edifices were destined to serve political and social purposes; they affirmed concepts of national inheritance and nurtured people's pride for the often idealised past. In certain occasions, ruins invited viewers to adopt a critical stance towards past events or established situations. When, as was frequently the case, a piece of privately owned land did not contain any ancient debris, edifices in Greco-Roman or Gothic style were constructed to fill in the void and render the landscape morally instructing and diverse. The idea of variety was central in the making of an eighteenth-century garden which, as I said in the introduction, was considered a microscopic reconstitution of the world and as such it was characterized by irregularity, harmony and lack of uniformity.[217]

Serving an obvious aesthetic purpose, ruins formed a statement about the ruling classes' cultural inheritance and their duty to maintain it; they consolidated an aspired identity and forged patriotism. At the same time, their crumbling, melancholic appearance constituted a perpetual warning over the temporality of power, a reminder that empires and kingdoms perish and authors of wonders fall into oblivion. The shadows of past splendour manifested in ancient buildings operated as an invitation to moderation and humility; people were forced to admit their fragility and reconcile with it. The decay of great things gave a hard but comforting lesson.[218] Ruins are a fragmentary image of what fully "was" and is no more. People's memory and imagination assisted by nostalgia reconstitute the missing part of the once whole image. When garden ruins were not genuine they were deliberately built to look like ancient remains scarred by the passage of time; imitating

[215] *The Legacy of the Grand Tour: New Essays on Travel, Literature and Culture*, ed. by Lisa Colletta (Lanham, Maryland; Fairleigh Dickinson University Press 2015), p. xiv, xv.
[216] Lucia Impelluso, *Gardens in Art*, (Los Angeles: The Paul Getty Museum, 2007), p.88.
[217] Michel Baridon, "Ruins as Mental Construct", *Journal of Garden History* 5, (1985), 84-96, (pp.89, 91).
[218] René de Chateaubriand, *Le Génie du Christianisme*, (Paris : Librairie Hachette et cie, 1855), pp. 426-427.

forms of the past they were adapted to a set of ideas and conformed to certain civilisational and national needs. Ruins provoked associations and preserved or formed historic memory; they created a link with past times, a thread uniting the living men with their dead ancestors.

For Europeans, ruins historicised and therefore gave respectability to landscapes. C. Hirschfeld (1742-1796), a German authority in the field of landscape design, ruins affirmed that the garden belonged to the world of culture. An antique structure, an "embellishment", transformed a piece of land into an "aesthetically cultivated area" which allowed people to enter in a mutually beneficial relationship with the civilised society.[219] Later, in the book *Génie du Christianisme* (1802) Rene de Chateaubriand (1768-1848) asserted that ancient buildings, by their very existence, create a sense of morality in a landscape.[220] They established a dialogue between the natural and the cultural element; they educated the visitors of a place, sharpened their sensibility and were expected to provoke refined, thoughtful responses. Through ruins, cultured individuals with elevated social position, as well as persons of humbler status who strolled in gardens, were addressed as historical beings which belonged to a civilizational continuum.

Evidently, ruins incited nostalgia through the tangles of memory. The mechanism of "remembering" old things and events might appear spontaneous, even automatic because the discovery of a ruin in a landscape exercises an immediate effect on someone's mind. In reality memory is a more complex procedure. It is incited through a calculated way and evolves over long periods of time; it is not reduced to an impression or a temporary sentiment. In a transpersonal context memory acquires a normative status; it forms a source of stimuli for individuals with common cultural background and different temperaments. Gothic and Greco-Roman ruins appealed to the collective conscience and identity of European people and shaped them at the same time. In Europe, the reassurance of cultural and ideological continuity in a landscape or a private garden was possible via the concrete presence of

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[219] Linda Parshall, "Hirschfeld's concept of the Garden in the German Enlightenment", *The Journal of Garden History* 13, (1993), 125-171, (p 143).
[220] Ronnie Ellenblum, *Crusader Castles and Modern Histories*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007), p.14.

such relics of the past. Alois Riegl, in his essay on the cult of monuments analysed the significance of ruins from a European perspective and discussed the significance of “age value”. This notion proceeds from the signs of “orderly” disintegration which is visible on an ancient building and bestows it with aesthetic power. Riegl maintained that “age value” could be perceived by all people regardless their education or religious affiliation. He claimed that decay testified an unobstructed natural activity exercised upon the object; the more prominent this decay was the more forceful the effect it had on the viewer, provided that the object was not reduced to rumble of stones.[221]

In the West, the ruin constitutes part of poetic narrative but had to be visible and palpable. This idea - tangibility of ancient material - is considerably different from the concept of ruins prevalent in China where contemplating the past, preserving a strong link with the ancestors’ glory and being instructed by their wisdom were also immensely important. Chinese people venerated antique material remains but did not care very much about their aesthetic dimension - the “picturesque” effect which enthralled eighteenth-century Europeans. For instance, in China, rumbles of stones in a landscape denoting the spot where an old dynastic capital had flourished were considered sufficient to create a connection with the past and provoke strong emotions. The emotional and historical experience the Chinese sought for was of a different nature and was acquired in an introspective way. Thus, although ruins in Chinese free landscapes were abundant, the practice of building ruined edifices in an attempt to recall the past glories never became part of the garden-making culture. Wu Hung studied the phenomenon of the absence of ruins in Chinese painting; after conducting a thorough survey among works of art created between the fifth century BC and the nineteenth century AD, he only managed to find five or six cases where actual ruins are represented.[222] The fact that artists did not depict old architectural structures showing the ravages of time is in accord with the Chinese refusal to preserve the

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[221] *Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage*, ed.by Price Nicholas, Kirby Talley Mansfield Kirby and Allessandra Vaccaro, (Malibu: J.Paul Getty Trust 1996), p.73-74

[222] Hung Wu, *A Story of Ruins*, p. 13.

outmoded appearance of old edifices in an attempt to reconstruct the past.[223] In China architectural ruins did not enter the realm of aesthetics in order to become objects of national taste as was the case in Great Britain where the politician Thomas Whately (1726-1772), in his book *Observations on Modern Gardening*, underlined the importance of revising the aesthetically inappropriate extant ruins which failed to inspire the right effects on spectators.[224] In Europe appearances mattered immensely: the ruins had to be adjusted to the canonical sensibility of those who sought to see the "debility, the disappointments and the dissolution of humanity."[225] Ruins had to dictate a number of suitable feelings - "delicious sensations of regret, veneration and compassion".[226] Finally, although the reminiscence of old grandeur provokes sadness in most cultures, in China melancholy was not impulsively researched like a fashionable trend or a virtuous emotion in itself.

The Chinese had invented and developed the *huaigu*, a poetic genre which exemplified a specific experience: the confrontation of a man with the past. Huaigu verses describe images of desolation and effacement of past glory; they tell us how the view of a ruined city or a field where a historical site used to stand could stimulate feelings of sorrow and increase the need to remember and draw knowledge from the past. In this kind of poetry, ruins – the destructed old forms, the surviving or perished fragments- were usually evoked in a subtle way.[227] The Chinese did not hold the widely accepted idea expressed by Samuel Johnson that a "too ruined ruin offers no record at all and is thus unable to move someone to fruitful meditation."[228] Even when wilderness and desolation erase the material signs of human presence or when a ruined site is far from a person's standing point and cannot be physically observed, imagination and common sense can reconstruct this site's appearance. Likewise, the introspective gaze of a poet sufficed to recreate in his memory the relics of previous generations' – palaces, towns and cities.

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[223] Hung Wu, *A Story of Ruins,* p.18.
[224] Rivka Svenson, *Essential Scots and the Idea of Unionism in Anglo-Scottish literature, 1603-1832* (Lewisburg PA: Bucknell Uni Press, 2016) p.126.
[225] Chambers, *Dissertation*, p.38.
[226] Svenson, *Essential Scots,* p.126.
[227] Hung, *A Story of Ruins* pp. 13, 18.
[228] Svenson, *Essential Scots*, p.133 (similar to what Riegl said).

Wu Hung showed how the Chinese language elucidates the fact that close contact with tangible remains made by human hands was not necessary to recall irrevocably lost things and, contemplating mortality, grow wiser. The term employed to designate ruins used to be *qiu* which originally meant the mound or hillock, a concrete topographical feature. However, in the early Chinese encyclopedia Guang Ya *qiu* (丘) is defined as emptiness. Compound words with this same term in traditional literature signify "empty town" (*qiu cheng*) or "void" (*qiu xu*).[229] During the course of the centuries, the word *xu* (墟) which primarily meant emptiness became more common to denote ruins.[230] The void space, the absence of once flourishing architectural structures and their transformation into a wasteland were considered capable of cultivating humility and temperance since they generated thoughts about the fleeting character of human grandeur. A poem from the Mao version of the classic Book of Songs, *Shijing* 詩經 reveals the way historical past and memory were approached and understood. A field of millet covers the space where a great capital used to stand, hiding the temples and the palaces; this sight makes the heart of the poet sink. Part of the glorious story of a dynasty (1046-256 BC) can still be read under the millet which has grown and covered everything. Once harvested, the millet will grow again; unavoidably, in the mind of the discerning viewer, the cyclical continuity of nature is juxtaposed with decay, death and interruptions which mark the course of human history.[231] Qu Yuan's (340-278 BC) *Lament for Ai Ying* is another good example of early ruin poetry. Qu meditates the destruction of a formerly prosperous capital of the Chu State (楚). Before the irreversible loss of ancient greatness he is overcome by sorrow and dread:

> I climbed a steep islet's height and looked into the distance, thinking to ease the sorrow in my heart: but only grief came for the rich, blest River Kingdom, for its cherished ways, now lost beyond recall. I may not traverse the surging waves to return there, or cross south over the

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[229] Hung, *A Story of Ruins*, p.23.
[230] Hung, *A Story of Ruins,* pp. 25-26.
[231] Stephen Owen, *Remembrances; The Experience of the Past in Classical Chinese Literature*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1986), pp. 20-21

watery waste to reach it. To think that its tall palaces should be mounds of rubble and its two East Gates a wilderness of woods![232]

More than six centuries after Qu Yuan, one of Tao Yuanming's poems resounds with similar feelings of awe, sadness and resignation. Traversing a ruined site found in the midst of a natural landscape, Tao affirms the grave, chastening reality of the short-lived human glory and the common fate of mortals. He transmits these truths to the younger generation, his sons and nephews:

For long I left the joys of hills and lakes deprived of the pleasures of woods and fields. Today I led my children and their cousins and made a path to a deserted town. We walked around among the grave mounds and lingered by a dwelling from the past. There were traces of the well and fireplace and dry bamboo and stumps of mulberry trees. I asked the man who gathered firewood there, "Where are the people who used to live here?" The gatherer of firewood answered me "Dead and gone, none of them are left." In one's lifetime court and market change. This in truth is not an idle saying. Man's life is like a conjurer's illusion that reverts in the end to empty nothing.[233]

Like in Europe, authentic ruins in China could confirm people as historical beings with cultural affiliations, political attachments and social affections. They helped them to know themselves as individuals and members of a community bound with the land of their ancestors. Meng Chiao's (751-814) poem from *Autumn Meditations* emphasizes the fortifying as well as purifying effect of bonding with the past through the sacrosanct Confucian idea of transmission; the perpetuation of a treasured ethical system. Less preoccupied with the ruined object whose traces we may guess somewhere under the dust, the Chinese focused on the moral truth contained in sites covered by grain or with the sad destiny of worthy men whose memory was

[232] Hung, *A Story of Ruins*, p.20.

[233] Eugene Eoyang, "The Solitary Boat: Images of Self in Chinese Nature Poetry", *The Journal of Asian Studies 32*, (1973), 593-621, (p.597).

perishing. By preserving the bonds with those who preceded them they could escape corruption, strengthen their will, become wise and virtuous. This is the message of Meng Jiao's (751-814) poem:

> Hold with the past, don't lose the past: If you lose the past, your will easily breaks; if you lose the past even the sword snaps; if you lose the past, the zither too laments. And the Master's (Confucius) tears for the loss of the past in those days fell streaming in torrents. This old poet's mind cares for the loss of the past, by now a chill and sparkling white bones of the past have no corrupting flesh. Robes of the past are like the moss. I urge you: strive to hold with the past: hold with the past and all foulness melts away.[234]

China and Europe had different conventions through which memory was stimulated; the two cultures employed different media to stir emotions when they contemplated things from the past. In the Western world remembering old events and dwelling in the nostalgia provoked by their rumination would be impossible without the physical presence ruins; moreover, looking at an edifice ravaged by the passage of time, people tried to picture it in its original form.[235] Thus, in European landscape gardens of the eighteenth century there is an intrinsic need to imitate, to re-enact the shapes of obliterated objects. Thomas Whately wrote:

> Whatever building we see in decay, we naturally contrast its present to its former state, and delight to ruminate on the comparison. It is true that such effects properly belong to real ruins; they are however produced in a certain degree by those who are fictitious; the impressions are not so strong, but they are exactly similar; and the representation, though it does not present facts to the memory, yet suggests subjects to the imagination.[236]

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[234] Stephen Owen, *Remembrances*, p.18.
[235] Elizabeth Wanning Harries, *The Unfinished Manner: Essays on the Fragment in the Later Eighteenth Century*, (London and Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997), p.97.

[236] Thomas Whately, *Observations on Modern Gardening*, (London: T.Payne, 1770), p.132.

Whately focused on artificial ruins because he was interested in landscape-garden visitors who looked for picturesque effects. Actual, visible objects like destroyed palaces and demolished temples were indispensable in the attempt to revitalise the past and boost the creativity of European minds. A rumble of stones or a vacant space once occupied by a great old city were not considered powerful enough to incite emotional responses or to forge people's ties with their ancient history.

Europeans' increasing interest about genuine and fake ruins should not be attributed to erudite men's curiosity about the past or to the scientific interest of those who aspired to establish historical truths. The growing demand for scenic architectural remains was strongly connected with the training of passions. In British and French gardens historical conscience and national identity were formed and confirmed through the cultivation of affective states of conscience and the nourishing of imagination rather than via objective learning. The experience of viewing a monument which evoked ideas about grandeur, eternity, death and virtue was eminently aesthetic. Ruins addressed men's morality, intellect and patriotic sensibility via their emotive capacity, their ability to understand elegance and sophisticated taste and their desire to pursue appropriate pleasures.

The spectacle of ruins set in the landscape cultivated a contemplative disposition and favoured emotions which were useful in the process of becoming self-conscious, wise and humane. A poem written in 1745 by Thomas Warton (1718-1780) summarized quite successfully the popular idea which associated solemn ruins with the agreeable aspects of melancholy and solitary meditation. Melancholy, according to Warton, functions as an antidote to debilitating sorrow. It is a factor of emotional balance and prevents the thriving of harmful passions. Young Warton voiced his predilection for silent sorrow over "mirth's mad shouts"; he preferred "twilight cells and bow'rs" to the "laughing scenes of purple spring." The sight of ruins, he said, confronts us with "the fleeting state of things" and "the fruitless toils" of mankind

nurturing humility and temperance.[237] Another element of vital importance found in the poem of Thomas Warton is the elevated status he gives to the landscape; trees, moss, grass and moles are considered as the indispensable companions of ruins. Destroyed temples, arcades and columns fully produce impressions of magnificence when their antiquity and material degradation blend with thorns, “black pines” and “blasted oaks”. Rural scenery can be as efficient as architectural relics in one’s attempt to create links with the dead, remember lost things once cherished and develop historical awareness. The landscape is a bearer of memory as much as edifices, works of human hands: “Or let me tread It’s neighb’ring walk of pines, where stray’d of old the cloyster’d brothers: thro’ the gloomy void that far extends beneath their ample arch as on I tread, religious horror wraps my soul in dread repose.”[238] There is an intimate communion, a constant cooperation between the ruin and the landscape hosting it.

In France, Claude-Henri Watelet (1718-1786), author of the *Essai sur les Jardins*, also evoked the way natural elements add to the material remains, putting forward their value as objects for contemplation and visual pleasure. “A tree flourishing among ruins, shews the length of time they have laid neglected. No circumstance so forcibly marks the desolation of a spot once inhabited, as the prevalence of nature over it.”[239] Similarly, recording his impressions from a visit in Lord Lyttelton’s seat at Hagley, an obscure landscape enthusiast named Joseph Heely demonstrated how the respectability and apparent authenticity of an artificial ruin can be reinforced: “to throw a deeper solemnity over it and make it carry a stronger face of antiquity, ivy is encouraged to climb about the walls, and turrets; and it now so closely embraces those parts with its gloomy arms, that it is impossible to look upon it without a suggestion, of its being as ancient as it really appears.”[240] Furthermore, Claude-Henri Watelet who dealt with the fluid, volatile nature of buildings and other manmade objects devastated by the passage of time

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[237] Thomas Warton, *Pleasures of Melancholy: A poem*, (London R. Dodsley, M.Cooper 1747), pp. 4-24 (passim).
[238] Warton, *Pleasures of Melancholy*, pp.6.
[239] Whately, *Observations*, p 135.
[240] Joseph Heely*, Letters on the Beauties of Hagley, Enville and the Leasowes. With Critical Remarks and Observations on the Modern Taste in Gardening*, (New York: Garland Pub, 1982), p.176.

observed that all kinds of ruins exist in the borderline where the artificial is being absorbed into the natural.[241] Thus, between an old edifice and the ivy covering it, between the plant and the work of human genius there is often no clear separating line; the natural environment appropriates the building and vice-versa. Finally, in the same line as Watelet and Whately, the Anglican cleric, author and artist William Gilpin (1724-1804) affirmed that: "the sacred character of ruins which, rooted for centuries in the same soil were assimilated to it and became part of it; rather than works of art they were considered works of nature."[242]

Situated among timeless forests and groves, ancient debris stood as symbols of human skill vanquished by time and natural elements. Being fragments of their former self, ruins let us "glimpse the unknown".[243] Their enigmatic nature not only enticed human imagination to reconstruct certain narratives related to historical events but also awakened personal memories.[244] A damaged abbey, a medieval castle or a Roman temple in the landscape stand between a person's present self and the old experience they cause him to ponder; they allow him to observe both his current condition and his past acts taking some distance from both. Ruins provoke a mixture of pleasure and sorrow. They induce a contemplative state of mind and generate sentiments which can co-exist in equilibrium; in their view uplifting aesthetic gratification and reverie, awe and grief for the ravages of time, admiration of human genius and realisation of mortality are in constant dialogue. Ruins reconcile the horror inspired by decaying magnificence with the charm of their picturesque spectacle; they are sources of sadness as well as instigators of surprise and amusement.[245] By increasing the human ability to maintain profound and diverse emotions in balance, ruins play a key role in the training of passions.

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[241] Adolphe Watelet, *Dictionnaire des arts de peinture, sculpture et gravure*, (Paris: Fuchs, 1792), p.23.

[242] William Gilpin, *Observations Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty Made in the Year 1772 on Several Parts of England*, (London: R. Blamire, 1788), p.188.

[243] Donald Crawford, "Nature and Art: Some Dialectical Relationships", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 42, (1983) 49-58, (p. 54).

[244] Emily Brady and Arto Haapala, "Melancholy as an aesthetic emotion", *Contemporary Aesthetics Journal* 1, (2003) 275-290, p. 279.

[245] M. Coeuille, *Les Ruines, Epitre*, (Paris: V. Regnard 1768) p. 9. *Ne crois pas cependant que toujours ces Ruines Offrent à mes regards des images chagrines. Non, non; plus d'un*

The craving for artificial garden ruins first appeared in Britain, a fact often attributed to the particularity of this nation's temperament. Eighteenth-century British authors consistently examined their compatriots' tendency to seek joy in sorrow by indulging in the gloomy spectacle of crumbling abbeys set in landscapes. Instead of being ridiculed or criticised, this propensity for melancholy was identified as the source of civic mindedness, the natural inclination of free spirits who despise authoritarianism and therefore constitute models of political ethics.[246] The "spirit of Chagrin and splenetic Turn of Mind seems the original Cause of our Spirit of Liberty" said the essayist and clergyman John Brown (1715-1766). Brown, several decades before the French Revolution, juxtaposed the quality of English uneasiness with the French cheerfulness and contentment which he designated as cause of servitude and stagnation in the social realm.[247] Constant thinking and gloomy mood were conditions British nationals felt comfortable with. Their restlessness was not a lack of moderation which would lead to turpitude, but a useful psychological mechanism which rendered individuals prompt to change unjust social norms. Brown promulgated a stereotype in favour of his country; although there may be truth in it, his French contemporaries who lived under an absolutist regime also expressed their political anxieties, acknowledged the positive aspects of melancholy and discussed how the spectacle of ruins could contribute to people's moral improvement via the purification of passions. Thus, in 1768 in his poem *Les Ruines*; *l'épitre*, Jean-Baptiste Coeuille (1731-1801) referring to Roman antiquities dispersed in the Italian landscape wrote: "I come, before this spectacle, to purify my reason and every object here gives me a lesson".[248] Furthermore, the writer and botanist Bernardin de Saint Pierre (1737-1814) pointed out that ruins in the landscape

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tableau, d'un aspect enchanté, y brillant à leur tour, m'y tiennent arrêté Pittoresques objets, qu'assembla le caprice, Et qu'on croiroit l'effet d'un heureux artifice. Tantôt, j'observe un Dôme, à demi ruiné d'arbrisseaux verdoyans déja tout couronné. Tantôt, mon œil surpris, .avec plaisir contemple un lointain qui sourit au travers d'un vieux Temple.

[246] Eric Gidal, "Civic Melancholy: English Gloom and French Enlightenment", *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 37, (2003), 23-45, (pp.28, 30).

[247] John Brown, *An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times* (London: I. Davis and C.Reymers, 1758) pp. 31-32.

[248] Coeuille, *Les ruines*, 1768, p.7.

elevate noble sentiments in the soul.[249] In the epistle titled “The pleasure of ruins” and included in his *Etudes de la Nature* (1784), he emphasized their power to detach us from our prejudices and degrading passions. Ruins, he claimed, confirm the vanity of our ephemeral works and the eternal youth of nature.[250] Contemplating them is instructive because it links us with their tragic or heroic context and obliges us to enter in communion with men who preceded us in death. Finally, the sight of ruins anchors people in hard human realities, forcing them to discover the depth of their sensitivity[251] and inviting them to taste the most subtle nuances of emotion.[252] Manmade structures in parks constituted points of reference which could inculcate high principles in the stroller’s heart.

In several eighteenth-century texts ruins are associated with solitude, an important factor in the self-cultivation procedure. In Britain, William Gilpin observed that one of the reigning ideas in a ruin is solitude.[253] In France, commenting on Hubert Robert’s (1733-1808) landscapes with ruins, the philosopher and art-critic Denis Diderot (1713-1784) recognised these paintings aesthetic lure and argued that they allowed viewers to indulge in a meditative, fruitful solitude; this latter could shape and guide human passions, teach men to accept their destiny and help them nurture sane relationships with themselves and the others.[254]

> When the place where a ruin is situated promises me secrecy and security, I am freer, lonelier, more to myself, closer to myself. It is there where I call my friend. It is there where I reminisce my lover. It is there where we enjoy ourselves without witnesses, without troubles, without intruders or jealous people. It is where I inspect my heart, where I examine your heart, where I feel worried and then reassured.

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[249] Bernardin de Saint Pierre, *Etudes de la Nature*, 6 vols (Paris : Pierre François Didot, 1784), III, p.127.
[250] Saint Pierre, *Etudes,* p.117.
[251] Louis-Antoine de Caraccioli, *Le Tableau de la mort*, (Paris 1761), p.177.
[252] John McManners, *Death and the Enlightenment: Changing attitudes to death among Christians and Unbelievers in Eighteenth-century France*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1981), p. 334.
[253] Paul Smethurst, *Travel Writing and the Natural World, 1768-1840*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) p.144.
[254] Robert Ginsberg, *The Aesthetics of Ruins*, (Amsterdam; New-York: Rodopi 2004), p. 464.

> It is a long distance from this place to the cities, the dwellings of mayhem, the residence of passions, vices, crimes, prejudices and errors… In this deserted, solitary and vast asylum I can hear nothing; I have cut the bonds with life burdens. Nobody presses me or listens to me.[255]"

Accentuating the sentiment of seclusion, the contemplation of ancient debris in rural environment creates material and psychological circumstances appropriate for self-examination. The presence of ancient edifices in the countryside, far from urban chaos, reinforces the concept of the landscape as a retreat; a protected, silent, vice-free place where one can commemorate past events, ennoble his feelings and train his passions. In a context where the intruding voice of others cannot be heard and ordinary life problems fade away, some profound, existential questions regarding mortality, memory, loss and historical continuity may surface freely. The dialectic relationship between solitude and ruins results to the purification of the person who becomes more humane.

Certain ruins were constructed as forms of warning against the dangers of moral decline and civic corruption. Thus, in Lord Cobham's famous gardens at Stowe, the crudely built Temple of Modern Virtue (Fig.5) with the decapitated statue of the corrupt Prime Minister Robert Walpole was juxtaposed to the Temple of the British Worthies (Fig.6) and the polished, regular Temple of Ancient Virtue (Fig.7) whose interior was decorated with statues of Roman and Greek lawgivers, statesmen, poets and army leaders.[256]

> You will hardly, I fancy, dissent from me, when I introduce you to these great Heroes of Antiquity: There stands Lycurgus; there Socrates; there Homer; and there Epaminondas. Illustrious Chiefs, who made Virtue their only Pursuit and in whose Breasts mean Self-interest had no Possession." "This pompous Edifice is intended, I suppose, to represent the flourishing Condition, in which ancient Virtue still exists; and those poor shattered Remains of what has never been very

[255] Denis Diderot, *Œuvres esthétiques*, (Paris : Garnier 1988) p 644.
[256] David Steward, *Political Ruins, Gothic Sham Ruins and the* '45, Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 55 (1996), 400-411, (p.400).

beautiful (notwithstanding, I see, they are placed within a few Yards of a Parish-church) are designed to let us see the ruinous State of decayed modern Virtue.[257]

This passage comes from the 1748 *Dialogue* of William Gilpin. The author praised the moralising, instructive character of ruins and their emotional impact on the virtuous viewers. Standing before the Temple of British Worthies - filled with "Wits, Patriots and Heroes"- young Callophilus,[258] one of the protagonists of the *Dialogue* asks his companion*: "*Does not your Pulse beat high, while you thus stand before such an awful Assembly? Is not your Breast warmed by a Variety of grand Ideas, which this Sight must give Birth to*?"*[259] The penetrating spectacle of grandeur causes one's heart to palpitate, makes him sympathise with the previous generations who pursued noble causes and augments the desire to emulate valiant ancestors. The refined delectation experienced in a garden decorated with such ruins is related to people's ethical improvement and their ability to see themselves as parts of an important historical process. Thus, Callophilus proceeds claiming that from his point view "there appears to be a very visible connection between an improved taste for pleasure, and a taste for virtue. An inclination to indulge in certain exalted pleasures dilates the heart and broadens the mind; it renders a person capable of benevolent actions and makes him a more responsible citizen."[260]

Artificial ruins did not always idealize the past. They could also be inspired by a desire to criticise old forms of government and religious trends, often inciting comparisons with a superior political regime active in the present. In an article discussing the phenomenon of "*Gothic sham ruins"* erected after the Jacobite Rebellion (1745) - a failed attempt to reinstate absolute monarchy and Catholicism in Britain - David Stewart examined how certain edifices served to castigate England's Catholic and feudal past, stressing how perilous it would

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[257] William Gilpin, *A Dialogue upon the Gardens of the Right Honourable Lord Viscount Cobham at Stow in Buckinghamshire*, (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California 1976), p.21.

[258] Callophilus in Greek is the person who loves what is morally good and beautiful καλός (good) and φιλώ (love)

[259] Gilpin, *A Dialogue*, p.29.

[260] Gilpin, *A Dialogue*, p.49.

be if the influence of oppressive medieval social and religious structures were restored. The *Ruined Priory*, (Fig.8) one of the most characteristic edifices included in Shenstone's Leasowes Park stood as a reminder of dark moments in British history and an encouragement to safeguard precious liberties gained after struggles and sacrifices. Constructed from materials taken from the medieval Halesowen Abbey which was situated in Shenstone's grounds the *Ruined Priory* had a symbolic dimension.[261] Unlike Lord Cobham who dedicated a Gothic temple at Stowe to Saxon liberty, Shenstone did not use the building as an emblem of democratic, anti-authoritarian values. Coming from a humbler background this poet did not appropriate the favourite political myth of British aristocracy whose members, natives of Saxon lands where the Magna Carta was drafted and signed, advertised themselves as protectors of the citizens against the abuses of absolute monarchy.[262]

The priory at Leasowes invites the viewer to sober contemplation and aspires to stimulate a pleasing melancholy through its solemn, irregular forms; it was not supposed to provoke a furtive impression but to address the visitors' judgment or well-formed imagination.[263]. Shenstone, as I discuss in the second part of the thesis, assumed the pedagogical role of his garden; believing that a landscape –like a work of art- should cultivate virtue, he designed Leasowes in order to encourage a life of moral excellence, promoting a sense of British national identity among his fellow citizens. The ruin constitutes a reference to two basic components of the religious and political past of England –Catholic Church and absolute monarchy. It stood as a warning to himself and to those who shared his convictions: the self-conscious Protestant patriots of the eighteenth-century Britain. Shenstone's poem "*Ruin'd Abbey*" illustrates what this gothic building represented in his mind; a libel against papacy and corrupt kings who took advantage of people's labour and plunged them in superstition.[264] "Oh irksome days! When wicked thrones combine with papal craft to gull their native land! Such was

[261] Richard Graves, *Recollection of Some Particulars in the Life on the Late William Shenstone*, (London: J.Dodsley, Pall-Mall 1788), p.55.
[262] Baridon, "Ruins as Mental Construct", p.88.
[263] William Shenstone, *Unconnected thoughts on Gardening*, (New York: Garland Publishers, 1982) pp.112.
[264] David Stewart, *Political Ruins*, pp.404-405.

our fate, while Rome's director taught, of subjects, born to be their monarch's prey. To toil for monks, for gluttony to toil, for vacant gluttony, extortion, fraud; for avarice, envy, pride, revenge and shame" (257-265) [265] The damaged edifice in Shenstone's park addresses the visitors giving them the opportunity to identify themselves as heirs of a troubled past and partakers in the promising present of Georgian England. "While thro' the land the musing pilgrim sees tract of brighter green, and in the midst appears a mouldering wall, with ivy crown'd; O Gothic turret pride of ancient days ! Now but of use to grace a rural scene; to bound our vistas and to glad the sons of Georg's reign, reserv'd for fairer times."[266] (377-383). Graceful and melancholic, the spectacle of the ruined priory communicated a comforting message; the disorder of medieval times was succeeded by an era when prosperity, reason and justice were protected by the Constitution. Uvedale Price's (1747-1829) words are characteristic of the complacency with which many Protestant, liberal intellectuals viewed their nation's past: "the ruins of these once magnificent edifices, are the pride and boast of the island: we may well be proud of them; not merely in a picturesque point of view: we may glory that the abodes of tyranny and superstition are in ruin."[267] Ruins like the priory at Leasowes lead individuals to ponder the moral deficiencies of the past and, occasionally giving into a spirit of self-righteousness, rejoice in the glorious present; they affirmed people's place in history and edified their civic-mindedness.

An excessive, thoughtless use of artificial ruins could undermine the beneficial impact of their presence. Moreover, some people did not acknowledge their utility but rejected them altogether. Michel Paul Guy de Chabanon (1730-1792), musician, author and friend of Diderot, in his *Epître sur la manie des jardins anglais* (1775) expressed his repulsion for the tendency to fill English-style gardens with fake ruins. Chabanon thought that this fashion, fruit of a disordered passion for the picturesque, was distasteful, deceitful and pointless. Such objects, bad imitations of authentic monuments, were unable to engage the viewer's memory because they carried no memory themselves.

[265] *The Works of English Poets*, Johnson, p.323.
[266] *The Works of English Poets*, Johnson, pp.323-324
[267] Uvedale Price, *Essays on the Picturesque*, 2 vols., (London: J. Mawman, 1810), II, p.264.

False witnesses of a historical past they were never part of, they also had not experienced the natural ageing process of ancient edifices. Their antiquity had nothing respectable because they have never been new and intact; they retained the deformity of old age without its resourcefulness and wisdom.

> J'aime un vieux monument parce qu'il est antique C'est un témoin fidèle et véridique qu'au besoin je puis consulter. C'est un vieillard, de qui l'expérience Sait à propos nous raconteur, Ce qui l'a vu dans son enfance. Et l'on se plait à écouter Mais ce pont soutenu par de frêles machines Tout ce grotesque amas des modernes ruines Simulacres hideux dont votre art s'applaudit Qu'est-ce? Qu'un monstre informe, un enfant décrépit ! Il nait sans grâce et sans jeunesse; Du temps, il n'a rien hérité; Il ne sait rien et n'a de la vieillesse Que son masque difforme et sa caducité ![268]

Indeed, an important number of fake garden ruins could be judged superfluous, void of meaning or purely ornamental, constructed in order to satisfy the decadent taste of a capricious elite whose members had surrendered to their fancies. Furthermore, one might legitimately claim that the moral force and emotional charge of a real historical monument surpasses those of an artificial ruin in intensity and depth. The liberty of the person who wishes to imitate an architectural type can lead to arbitrary, injudicious decisions in matters of structure and design. Nevertheless, the scathing criticism of Chabanon, exasperated due to his contemporaries' immoderate desire for artificial debris, can be challenged. Such edifices in landscape gardens could be morally edifying, structure cultural identities and train the passions fostering a humble attitude towards fundamental problems of existence like the transience of human grandeur and the certitude of death. Finally, they engaged viewers in a dialogue with history, encouraging the

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[268] *I love an old monument because it is ancient, It is a faithful witness that I can consult if I need to. It is like an elderly man who knows how to narrate his experiences, to talk about what he has witnessed during his childhood and it is a pleasure to listen to him. But this bridge sustained by some fragile machinery, all this grotesque mass of modern ruins, this hideous imitation applauded by your art, what is it but a shapeless monster, a decrepit child! It is born without grace or youth, it has inherited nothing from the past, it knows nothing and from its antiquity the only thing it possesses is its deformed appearance and its caducity.* (My translation), Michel Cited in Roland Mortier, *La poétique des ruines en France; ses origines, ses variations de la Renaissance a Victor Hugo*, (Genève: Librairie Droz 1974), p 119.

personal and collective effort needed to maintain great achievements in the social and political realm.

When an architectural pseudo-relic did not copy a specific edifice from the past (i.e. Roman Pantheon) but attempted to reproduce a general category of buildings like Greek temples or Gothic churches it risked to appear trivial and even ridiculous. In order for a ruin's solemnity and charm not to be dented, imagination and creativity had to observe certain principles. Treating this question in the work "*The English Garden*" (1772), the author William Mason showed himself rather reserved concerning the excesses committed by the "picturesque imitators" of old architectural structures; he criticised the "silly caprices we daily see executed under the name of Gothic Buildings, to the disgrace of Observation and Taste. I have seen a Gothic Temple, an open Gothic Portico, a Gothic Cupola and I have seen an arched Gothic Rotunda!" he exclaimed indignantly. [269] Mason made clear that he did not request an exact copy but a "judicious selection of the parts of such buildings, and that each may be made with exactness to occupy its proper place". He did not approve of the "capricious mode of ornament and the total neglect of the real position of the parts."[270] Mixing different styles to create an impressive hybrid, or annexing parts foreign to the original purpose that a ruin was supposed to serve, could destroy the impression of harmony and lead to absurdity. Regarding ruins, William Mason was preoccupied with the idea of honesty and reliability; a building's form must suit the context provided by the topography and history of the place.[271] Thus, constructing a fake Roman temple instead of a medieval abbey in English grounds would be to disdain the importance of historic credibility, an attempt to deceive the viewer.[272]

A preference for a limited number of solemn ruins instead of the numerous extravagant follies one would encounter in eighteenth-century gardens was expressed by Charles Joseph, Prince de la Ligne (1735-1814). Like Chabanon, this Belgian field marshal and author used a strong language to denounce the obsession with ruins which he observed among respectable

[269] William Mason, *The English Garden: A Poem in Four Books*, (Dublin: Byrne 1786) p.248.
[270] Mason, *The English Garden*, p.249.
[271] Roland Mortier, *La poétique de ruines*, p. 119.
[272] Mortier, *La poétique de ruines,* p.119.

garden connoisseurs. In his book *Coup d'Oeil sur Beloeil* (1781) he maintained that the gothic monuments promoted by historian and Whig politician Horace Walpole, as well as various Grecian structures favoured in English landscapes, seemed inspired by a delirium provoked by a nightmare. The Prince criticised the crowding of Stowe with needless edifices which, in his opinion, had no significant effect on the viewer. He judged that these buildings did not please the senses nor did they inspire the secret awe one expects to experience by looking at them. [273] More importantly, to the Prince de Ligne such monuments like the Temple of British Worthies never existed; the question of historic credence emerges again, like in the writings of William Mason. Turning against established garden designers these critics showed that there was a preoccupation with the ethics of ruins. Artificial debris imitating old, cherished architectural forms should not be the fruits of a whim but those of a historically informed creativity. The author of ruins obeyed to certain rules concerning structure, form and placement in the grounds. He was accountable for the emotions he was expected to stimulate, the memories he would evoke and the values he had to affirm in the conscience of those who partook in a common cultural inheritance.

1.6 The Hermit in the Landscape: Epitomizing Wisdom and Virtue.

The wise, benevolent elderly recluse, who lived in the countryside and combined the qualities of a philosopher and a Christian monk, was a popular theme in eighteenth-century poetry and painting. The hermit epitomized the moral and physical benefits of landscape-dwelling described by Shaftesbury in the Moralists; a secluded life in "fields and woods", these "chaste abodes of happiest mortals" interweaved with knowledge, detachment from wrong affections and moral resilience. Hermitages in the form of small rustic houses or monastic cells were quite common in British landscape-gardens of the 1700s. Several garden owners in Britain would employ a person to dress,

[273] Charles Joseph, Prince de Ligne, *Coup d'œil sur Beloeil*, (A Beloeil : De l'Imprimerie du P. Charles de Ligne 1781) pp. 66, 67.

behave and live as a hermit in their premises, while cases of resident hermits can also be encountered in France; this trend faded away in the nineteenth century.

In 1763, after visiting the Whig politician Charles Hamilton's (1704-1786) Painshill Park at Cobham, Surrey, the Irish Member of Parliament Sir John Parnell (1720-1783) wrote that by following a serpentine path through the forest one would arrive at a hermitage made with the trunks of fir trees, whose branches formed natural Gothic windows. (Fig.9) This small, picturesque edifice had a room with a straw couch, an old table and some chairs, as well as a second space which furnished a pretty view of the countryside. Parnell found the hermitage the best adapted to its proper place than any other in England. [274] Although in his account he did not mention the presence of any hermit-in-residence, there are several anecdotes concerning the man Charles Hamilton hired to play the role of the hermit. He was an ordinary layman who, for appearances sake, had to adopt a penitential lifestyle. Victorian antiquary and author John Timbs (1801-1875), in his book titled *English Eccentrics and Eccentricities*, cited the job advertisement put in the newspaper by Charles Hamilton. The hermit, who would have to live in Painshill Park for seven years, was going to:

> Be provided with a Bible, optical glasses, a mat for his feet, a hassock for his pillow, an hourglass for timepiece, water for his beverage, and food from the house. He must wear a camlet robe, and never, under any circumstances, must he cut his hair, beard, or nails, stray beyond the limits of Mr. Hamilton's grounds, or exchange one word with the servant.[275]

The hermitage in Painshill Park –like most buildings of this kind- referred to the monastic life which had flourished in medieval Europe. Hamilton was Anglican but, unlike Shenstone, the reason for using the "gothic" style was not to denounce a religious establishment. The hermitage's architectural style rendered it familiar to the visitors of Painshill who had a common cultural

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[274] James Sambroke, "Painshill in the 1760s", *Garden History* 8, (1980), 91-106, pp.93, 95.
[275] John Timbs, *English Eccentrics and Eccentricities*, 2 vols, (London: Bentley 1866), I, p.156.

background; the edifice would be easily associated with a secluded, frugal existence. Apart from offering an attractive spectacle the ornamental hermit functioned as a symbol. He was expected to imitate certain practices of old monastic communities in order to exemplify introspection, moderation and tranquility. These same virtues, which could flourish unobstructed in an eremitic landscape, had already been designated by Shaftesbury and the authors of the Lay Monastery as prerequisites for human happiness; “restraining the desires and governing the passions”, as well as “raising the thoughts above the low aims of ambition and avarice” resulted in “the inestimable possession of a mind at rest.”[276] In Painshill, the successful applicant was soon proved unwilling to quit his ordinary habits which involved alcohol consumption in the local pub. He was dismissed after three weeks by Lord Hamilton and was never replaced.[277]

The Hawkstone Park in Shropshire also included a hermit’s residence and a hermit, placed there by baronet Sir Rowland Hill (1705-1783) who had inherited the garden from his uncle in 1727. A short guide to the garden contained a description of the hermitage as a well-designed little cottage. The edifice had an arched doorway with a stable door, a heather thatch and walls of rubble stonework. It used to be the home of ‘the venerable barefooted Father Francis’ who played the role of the hermit. He would reportedly sit at a table which had four items on it: a skull, an hour glass, a book and a pair of spectacles. If he was awake he would rise to greet the visitor and would politely engage in conversation sharing his grains of wisdom. The ninety-year old man was occasionally replaced by a younger hermit who was physically more capable of moving in the grounds.[278] The following lines, taken from the moral reflections of the obscure Joseph Whittingham Salmon who visited Hawkstone Park in 1794, were later engraved inside the hermit’s house: “Far from the busy scenes of life, far from the world its caves and strife, in the solitude more pleas’d to dwell, the hermit bids you to his cell, warns you sin’s

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[276] *The Lay Monastery*, Blackmore, p.174.
[277] Alison Hodges, “Painshill Park, Cobham, Surrey (1700-1800): Notes for a History of the Landscape Garden of Charles Hamilton”, *Garden History* 2, (1973) 39-68, (p.51).
[278] Gordon Campbell, *The hermit in the garden: from Imperial Rome to the ornamental gnome*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2013) pp.69, 70.

gilded bait to fly, and calls you to prepare to die."[279] Salmon, a manifestly pious man, inscribed Hawkstone Park's hermit in his religious worldview focusing on the necessity to refrain from sinful activities in order to be saved in the afterlife. It is not established that Sir Rowland Hill encouraged the elderly hermit to give the visitors this kind of moral instruction; besides, the younger man replacing Francis would occasionally dress as a druid, a picturesque note referring to the pagan past of Britain. In any case, the items Francis had on his table underline the concept of temperance and the transience of earthly things; the hourglass symbolises the passage of time and the skull comprises a typical emblem of mortality (*memento mori*). In the tranquil seclusion of this rural place, living frugally and far from the conflicts linked to worldly affairs it was appropriate to meditate the temporality of human existence and realise the need to cultivate temperance.

Baronet Rowland Hill and Lord Charles Hamilton were not recluses; they used their gardens to seek temporary retirement from the boisterous urban reality and their public duties. These people were not expected to isolate themselves renouncing activities which were part and parcel of their social identity. Their choice to employ someone to act as a hermit reveals a taste for the eccentric developed in the eighteenth-century British society. Hermits living in private parks which were destined to serve both as retreats and as attractions had become a well-respected convention. They could be considered an appropriate ornamental element which added a picturesque note in landscapes like Painshill and Hawkstone, turning them into vast theatre scenes. Persons performing the hermit's role were supposed to incarnate self-examination, wisdom, renunciation of vanity and luxury; at the same time, they were employees of a wealthy nobleman who could afford them. They were paid to be an accessory that would add to the variety and splendour of the grounds. The imitation of a frugal, secluded existence constituted integral part of some erudite landowners' project to affirm their ideology. A hermit's presence in the garden was associated with the way his employer perceived

[279] Joseph Whittingham Salmon, *Moral reflections in verse begun in Hawkstone Park, May 20th and 21swt. 1794; and wrote whilst, after viewing the beauties of that most charming, romantic and delightful Place*, (Nantwich and Drayton: E. Snelson; London; Parsons, Paternoster Row, 1796), p 26.

the eremitic landscape he possessed; the eccentric figure dressed in a camlet robe stood for solitude and introspection and designated a way to cultivate one's moral self and lead a virtuous life.

In the field of visual arts, the eighteenth –century garden-hermit had common traits with the emblematic figure of the philosopher who comprised a very popular subject among seventeenth-century painters like Jusepe de Ribera (1591-1652) and Salvator Rosa (1615-1673). However, baroque portraits of lonely, ancient philosophers exemplifying meditation, wisdom, frugality (Diogenes) or even scientific accomplishments (Democritus) were predominantly set in domestic interiors rather than in landscapes (Fig.10). When Salvator Rosa, deeply admired by garden-designers who tried to transfer his compositions in their grounds, represented solitary philosophers in the open air he usually opted for a simple but emotionally suggestive background, such as a sky heavy with clouds. In Rosa's the "*Philosophers' Wood*" of 1645, (Fig.11) the scenery accommodates a rather big group of people engaged in vivid discussion; as a result the emphasis is less on the idea of seclusion. In *Democritus and Protagoras* (1650s) the same artist appears to invite the viewer to concentrate on human interaction and not on the surrounding landscape (Fig.12). Interestingly, the connection between solitude, self-examination and natural elements seems more conspicuous in Rosa's paintings with religious context such as the dramatic *Rocky Landscape with the penitent Saint Jerome*. (Fig.13)

Both hermits and philosophers were supposed to meditate, communicate their wisdom and promulgate virtue. They avoided useless talk and favoured a certain degree of solitude; Rosa painted a portrait of himself as a sullen philosopher (Fig.14) holding an inscription with the words *aut tace aut loquere meliora silentio* (either be silent or say something which is better than silence). Despite the qualities philosophers and hermits had in common only the second would became established icons of introspection and solitude in the eighteenth-century Europe. Their identity reinforced the eremitic quality of the landscapes where they dwelt. It can be argued that the religious aspect of their appearance –a cassock, a residence resembling an anchorite's cave or a monastic cell and a Bible - was probably preserved and emphasized because

it encapsulated in a more straightforward manner the concept of seclusion, according to the example set by early Christian anchorites, penitent saints (Francis, Jerome) and ordinary medieval monks. Components of this lifestyle - apart from prayer and faith in doctrines- interweaved with ideas of erudition, tranquility, self-restraint and moral integrity which were cherished by the eighteenth-century proponents of retirement in eremitic landscapes. It is widely known that the members of certain monastic orders like the Benedictines and the Dominicans who lived in cloisters often situated far from urban centres, excelled in the study of multiple disciplines ranging from science to the humanities.[280] In the collective European conscience Greek and Roman philosophers did not monopolise learning. In the 1700s, the garden hermit kept the external characteristics of the monk and merged with the philosopher.

The eighteenth-century British poems, marked with the revival of medieval literature, brims with benevolent, virtuous and wise hermits who live in the countryside. Oliver Goldsmith's (1728-1774) "Vicar of Wakefield" (1766) contains a ballad whose first verses read: "Turn gentle hermit of the dale, and guide my lonely way, to where yon taper cheers the vale, with hospitable way."[281]"The Hermit" of Thomas Parnell's (1679-1718), published posthumously in 1721 narrates the story of a benevolent mountain hermit: "Far in a wild, unknown to public view, from youth to age a reverend hermit grew; the moss his bed, the cave his humble cell, his food the fruits, his drink the crystal well." [282] Finally, Mary Robinson (1758-1800), an actress who retired from the theatre to become an author, wrote the following lines which affectionately describe "Anselmo, the Hermit of the Alps":

> Where, mingling with Helvetia's skies, the snow-clad mountains glitt'ring rise; Far from the din of busy life, From specious fraud, and envious strife; From trivial joys, and empty show, and all the taunting tribes of woe; Deep in a forest's silent shade, For holy Meditation

[280] Paul Grendler, *The Universities of the Italian Renaissance*, (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 2002)
[281] Cambell, *The Hermit in the Garden*, p.44.
[282] Campbell, The Hermit in the Garden, p.44.

> made, Anselmo liv'd- his humble shed Rear'd, 'midst the gloom, tis rushy head.[283]

The terms employed by Mary Robinson show the undeviating perception of hermits in Britain; they find happiness in silence and contemplation of serious things - they are modest and disdain the trifles coveted by the majority of people. The fictional Anselmo was in concord with the human ideal promoted by Shaftesbury and his followers; in his quiet retreat he has "extinguished any wrong short of joy and enlivened temper", "starved the exuberant fancies", "broken off commerce with the world" [284] and conquered the peace of mind.

An iconic representation of the eighteenth-century European ideal which promoted reclusive life in landscapes as morally beneficial was produced by the painter Richard Wilson (1714-1782). The first version of this work executed outdoors and distinguished by its luminous colours was exhibited at the society of Artists in 1762 under the title *Landscape with Hermits* (Fig.15).[285] In the second version of the same theme, completed in his own studio, Wilson used a considerably darker palette bestowing the image with a more solemn character (Fig.16). This latter version which will be analysed below was engraved by William Woollett and William Ellis in 1778 (Fig.17).[286] Under the engraving, which bears the name *Solitude*, one can read a passage from James Thomson's (1700-1748) poem *Summer* (1727):

> Still let me pierce into the midnight depth; of yonder grove, of wildest, largest growth: That forming high in air a woodland quire, nods o'er the mount beneath. Solemn and slow, the shadows blacker fall, And all is awful listening gloom around. These are the haunts of Meditation,

[283] Mary Robinson, *The Poetical Works of the Late Mrs Mary Robinson, Including the Pieces last Published, The Three Volumes Complete in One*, (London: Jones and Company, 1824), p.95.
[284] Lori Branch, *Rituals of Spontaneity*, p.107.
[285] David Solkin, *Richard Wilson: The Landscape of Reaction*, (London: Tate Publishing 1981), pp.213, 70.
[286] The engraving was dedicated to the Baronet Sir George Beaumont (1753-1827), nobleman and amateur landscape painter.

these the scenes where ancient bards th' inspiring breath, Ecstatic, felt; and from this world retired.[287]

The idyllic atmosphere of this work draws its inspiration from the seventeenth-century landscape paintings of Claude Lorrain and Salvator Rosa. Wilson expressed the worldview of the social and cultural elite which advocated temporary retirement in the countryside or private gardens situated away from urban centres as a condition of happiness and an important factor of human improvement. The two hermits introduced in the visual space play an essential role in structuring the work's meaning. In the left corner of the canvas, the standing, elderly man and his seated young companion who reads a book under the shadow of an oak-tree are dressed as Franciscan monks. At the opposite side, on a base made of bricks, one can see the debris of a lion statue whose head and front leg have fallen on the ground. In the middle, the dark, still waters of a lake reflect the landscape while in the background, behind a strand of trees, viewers may discern a group of friars in procession with a crucifix in their midst; the edifice beside them could be a chapel. Wilson was the son of an Anglican clergyman; his work addressed a Protestant audience which, like him, did not hold the secluded life of Catholic religious in great esteem. Although his painting discretely referred to Christianity as an important component of English cultural identity he did not venture to put forward the practice of monastic life. The two friars embody the multiple advantages of finding refuge among the fields and the woods. They constitute a metaphor which stresses the importance of study, silence, tranquil disposition and introspection that can be fully and happily experienced in rural settings. Woollett's engraving secularized Wilson's oil painting by altering its title; the "Landscape with Hermits" becomes "Solitude" thus revealing more accurately the message Wilson attempted to communicate in order to express the ideology of a dominant class shaped during the Enlightenment. Analysing the work, David Solkin argued that the Italian, Claudean landscape in Wilson's painting vicariously stands for the parks constructed in British soil during the 1700s. The two monks, Solkin suggested,

[287] Thomson and Pollock*, Containing The Seasons by James Thomson and the Course of Time by Robert Pollock*, (Boston: Philips, Sampson and Company, 1894), p.49.

could be interpreted as the alter ego of erudite, privileged British landowners who built hermitages in their gardens alluding to a virtuous living made possible through study and self-examination.[288] It might be more accurate to say that the recluses painted by Wilson refer to the moral ideal some of the landowners tried to emulate.

In Wilson's work the rendering of natural environment surrounding the hermits is different from the elements of the landscape framing the destroyed statue of the lion. The tree above the two men is tall and upright, similar to those staging the scene with the monks in the background. The lion, a regal, yet violent and fearsome beast, is depicted in front of a weeping willow; the base it used to stand on is covered by weeds. The two men who engage in a scholarly discussion seem eager to elevate their spirit; they could be associated with the landscape's power to humanise the people who retire in it, purifying them from unrestrained desires. If the statue of the lion was only depicted as a random ruin, it might signify the ravages of time on works of human hands. Nonetheless, lions made of marble or stone were typically erected as signs of victory in battlefields during the Greco-Roman antiquity; they also symbolized worldly power, gallantry and strife.[289] Wilson's painting was exhibited in 1762, one year before the end of the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) and the triumph of the Anglo-Prussian coalition. Wilson addresses a nation implicated with other major European powers in a long armed conflict. Thus, the lion may refer to the disorder and loss of lives associated with the war; although this latter was fought in the colonies British casualties were not negligible. Being broken, the stone-made animal which has been as a traditional symbol of England does not stand as a sign of victory. Without claiming that the artist rejected the necessity of war in defense of the country's interests, one may argue that he attempted to give a message juxtaposing an inferior and a superior model of life. The lion embodied aggression and conflict which ultimately lead to death – the proud beast is shattered. Those who retire in the countryside far from discord and violence are more likely to live longer. Like the two hermits, they try to

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[288] David Solkin, *Richard Wilson*, 73.

[289] Hope B. Werness, *Continuum Encyclopedia of Animal Symbolism in World Art*, (New-York; London, Continuum 2006), p.257.

improve themselves leading a tranquil life of study and contemplation. They possess the composure of morally superior, disciplined and educated persons, qualities which distinguish them from ordinary people delivered to their passions and vices. [290]

As I mentioned in the beginning of this section, in the late eighteenth century, the British tradition of garden hermitages and resident hermits gradually spread in France. Thus, in the gardens of Bagatelle (1777), Francois Joseph Belanger designed a modest yet comfortable hermitage with a few Gothic touches, managing to combine a taste for “simplicity and pious idleness”. Moreover, in the garden of the Princess of Monaco Marie Catherine Brignolle in Betz, a hermit called Frère Alexis had signed a contract obliging him to live according to a set of rules written by his employer, the princess herself.[291] In a work titled *Ermite dans un jardin* (1790) Hubert Robert integrated the hermit in a vision of reclusion compatible with the Enlightenment spirit (Fig.18). He portrayed the cassocked, bearded man absorbed in his book and sitting at a rustic table under a wooden archway which supports a climbing blooming plant. The tame vegetation and the presence of a wall upon which runs a balustrade give the viewers the certitude that they are dealing with a private garden and not a spot in the wilderness; a strong, midday sunlight illuminates the ensemble. Unlike Wilson, Robert did not venture to create an awe-inspiring image. The door of the hermit’s small thatched cabin is open allowing us to see a modest interior with a sleeping dog. Four young women lean against the marble balustrade which separates their boisterous, youthful world from the tranquil space the elderly recluse dwells. One of the women waves towards the hermit either in an attempt to attract his attention or simply pointing him to her companions; their gestures and positions disclose curiosity and playfulness.

This work of Robert differs considerably from his previous landscape paintings including hermits. A theme he repeatedly treated during the eleven-year period he resided in Rome, Robert’s solitary friars were genuine monastics

[290] Solkin, *Wilson*, p.73.
[291] Sarah Catala and Gabriel Wick*, Hubert Robert et la fabriques de jardins*, (RMN : Collectif 2017) p 78, 80.

situated in the Italian countryside. When these individuals were not portrayed among solemn ancient ruins they constituted parts of architectural fantasies known as "capriccios." [292] In some of these images, the presence of young women invokes the idea of worldly temptation. For instance, in a 1760 work titled *Un Ermite priant dans les ruines d'une temple romain*, the young, frisky female figures irreverently invade the space where hermit kneels in prayer (Fig.19). One of these peasant girls is trying to distract him from his devotion tickling him with a branch while another is stealing the flowers placed before an icon of the Virgin and Child. However, in the painting of 1790 discussed here the hermit is comfortably seated in a neat corner of a garden which quite probably belongs to an aristocrat; he is presented to the viewer as a man of study and, judging by the pots of flowers around him, as a person interested in horticulture. One should probably take into account that Robert's *Ermite dans un jardin*, was created the year after the outbreak of the French Revolution. I would suggest that the man dressed in a monk's habit exemplifies the advantages of retiring in the countryside in a time of enlightened ideas and scientific progress. The work is about study, serenity, temperance and interest in botany – this last thing probably being a reference to the importance of knowing the laws and structures of the natural world. As it was stated earlier, the pursuit of knowledge in the favourable context of rural retreats had already been encouraged by Shaftesbury who emphasized the need to investigate the principles governing the physical universe; understanding the origins of natural phenomena was the basis of understanding one's own nature.[293] In Robert's work there seems to be no crucifix or chapel anywhere around the hermit; he is not on his knees, absorbed in prayer like in the early work of 1760. There are no ancient ruins like Wilson's lion to add a majestic or melancholic tone to the ensemble; the painting does not refer to the past. If the hermit bends over a book, his absorption does not exclude the possibility of engaging with people who lead a different kind of life; the language of the image is revealing. He is ready to receive visitors who come to him motivated by curiosity or respect; the door of

[292] Nina Dubin, *Futures and Ruins: Eighteenth century Paris and the Art of Hubert Robert*, (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Research Institute 2012), p.166.
[293] Willey, *The Eighteenth-century Background*, p.63.

his small hut is open, his private world is exposed to the public, the silent realm may be explored, his wisdom can be shared with the lively youth behind the balustrade.

The eighteenth-century European trend of placing resident-hermits in private gardens never existed in China. The concept of hiring a person who would enact this role in order to satisfy the visitors' taste for variety and promulgate the moral benefits of reclusion was alien to the Chinese culture where things did not have to be tangible in order to be contemplated. In Chinese art certain items – a flower or a plant – were employed to allude to the hermit. As I will show in the second chapter of the thesis, in China the hermit constitutes a moral hero, a paragon of exemplary conduct for his fellow men. Extolled for his perfect understanding of the Way (Dao) in painting, poetry and oral tradition, his figure permeated the ethos of Confucian literati becoming extremely familiar.[294] Daoist undertones, emphasizing detachment from the things of the world, can be prominent in works treating the theme of the recluse. Nevertheless, the portrayal of these individuals in China does not present the eighteenth-century European uniformity. Instead they emerge from Chinese artists' imagination in various forms and contexts. The solitary fisherman catching dinner in a lake, the lonely man playing music in the mountains, the sage reading a scroll in an isolated hut, the traveller crossing a bridge with a walking staff in his hand - sometimes their figures being only a tiny spot in the vastness of the landscape – are identified as hermits.

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[294] *The Artful Recluse: Painting, Poetry and Politics in 17th-Century China*, ed.by Peter C. Sturman, Susan S. Tai, (Santa Barbara, California: Santa Barbara Museum of Art; Munich; London: Delmonico Books/Prestel 2012), p.14.

CHAPTER TWO: CONFUCIAN CHINA.

2.1 Forming the Aesthetic Consciousness and Nourishing the Ren: Music and Landscape.

“Devote yourself to music in order to govern the heart. Administer the rites in order to govern your body.”[295] Developing one’s aesthetic conscience, like observing the rites (li), never ceased to be an integral part of the Confucian self-cultivation procedure. Aesthetic conscience is closely related to sensory pleasure. In Confucian China the taste for colours, sounds, smells and shapes was not censored for religious or other reasons, but fostered and celebrated. However, pleasure was regulated by a system of rituals and laws which defined measure and decorum in all things concerning human enjoyment.[296] Regulations should guide the passions generated by aesthetic gratification and contribute to people’s moral improvement. To cultivate the moral self and become humane depended on the ability of a person to govern the mind-heart. Confucius believed that a sage, reaching old age, would be able to follow his mind-heart’s desires without hesitation since, after decades of training the passions, he would have managed to assimilate the dictates of propriety. The yearnings of an exemplary man (junzi) were expected to be in harmony with his reason, tuned with social and universal order.[297]

Within Confucian philosophy, rites and music are typically examined as a pair. They share a common purpose; to teach moderation and humaneness (ren). The rites formed a virtuous person’s demeanour; they comprise a vast, complex set of rules and ceremonies applied in political and social occasions as well as in devotional practices. While they respectfully participated to ceremonies or fulfilled obligations related to the rites, individuals were obliged to assume their social status and role (filial, paternal, ministerial or other). At the same time, music (yue), being complementary to the rites, directly

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[295] Cited in Zehou, *The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition*, p.18.
[296] Zehou, *The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition*, p.10.
[297] Analects 2,4 (trans. James Legge), cited in *Chinese Text Project*, Sturgeon, retrieved from: https://ctext.org/analects/wei-zheng

addressed the interior man, appealing to his emotions.[298] Music was also regarded as an essential factor of balance and order; it contributed to the preservation of established hierarchies. Beyond the enjoyment it offered to humans, it was expected to safeguard the harmonious relationship of individuals with revered social structures and strengthen their connection with the cosmos.[299] Music was not supposed to revolutionize or excite, but to instruct and cultivate, to reconcile exuberant dispositions with reality and encourage people to accomplish their duty and conserve propriety. The Record of Music (Yue Zi 樂記) from the Book of Rites we read:

> The end to which ceremonies, music, punishments, and laws conduct is one; they are the instruments by which the minds of the people are assimilated, and good order in government is made to appear" "Thus we see that the ancient kings, in their institution of ceremonies and music, did not seek how fully they could satisfy the desires of the appetite and of the ears and eyes; but they intended to teach the people to regulate their likings and dislikings, and to bring them back to the normal course of humanity.[300]

In Confucian tradition music brought human nature to perfection, forming the *junzi*. Instrument playing and singing regulated unrestrained passions and whims, promoting the unity of each person with the myriad things and his smooth integration to organized society and cosmic order.[301] Music provokes aesthetic gratification but also transcends it. Thus, in ceremonies performed to honour the ancestors, it inspires a respectful conduct and establishes harmony between father and son, king and subject, fortifying the system of relationships which structures the human realm. In leisurely moments, song and melodies purify the heart and bring tranquillity. [302] Music showed people how to channel their emotions, nurtured and pruned temperaments; it was pivotal in freeing men from the tyranny of ungoverned, personal desires, in teaching them to cherish and respect natural and state law.

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[298] Zehou, *The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition*, p.11.
[299] Li Zehou, *The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition,* p.21.
[300] *Yue Zi (Record of Music) 19,2* (trans. James Legge) cited in Chinese Text Project, Sturgeon, retrieved from: https://ctext.org/liji/yue-ji
[301] Zehou, *The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition*, p.49.
[302] Zehou, *The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition*, p.26.

In Chinese poetry one may encounter the idea that music purifies the emotions and nurtures an orderly mind-heart. Moreover, in several cases, poetic verses disclose that performing music is inextricably linked to landscape dwelling. Based on a series of old poems dealing with self-indulgence and self-restraint, the poet-recluse Tao Yuanming composed a rhapsody titled “Quieting the Passions” an important theme in later Han and Wei-Jin literature. [303] As I extensively discuss in the second part of the thesis, having served as scholar-official, Tao retired permanently to his native village turning his back to public service. He was not a typical Confucian scholar; his texts and life-stance convey strong Daoist leanings. However, as I clarified in the introduction, the two schools of thought, which proposed two apparently different ways of attaining human perfection, were entwined and not separate. Confucianism, the driving philosophy in China, was neither static nor unreceptive. It evolved in the course of centuries, constantly assimilating Daoism and Buddhism into itself. Tao’s poem “*Quieting the Passions*” revolves around an attractive, refined and virtuous woman who plays the zither (se). Her presence has a stimulating effect of Tao: “She raises the red curtain and sits properly…She glances up at the heavenly road, She looks down, quickens her resonant strings – Her demeanour engaging and charming, her deportment calm and alluring.”[304] The refined woman in “*Quieting the Passions*’ conducts herself with decency; the melody absorbs her almost entirely. Despite the furtive glances, she is endowed with modesty and self-control: “she hides her tender feelings from the vulgar crowds.”[305] The poet communicates his impulse to touch her knee with his knee[306] but physical contact does not take place. Listening to the instrument’s sound Tao’s meditates the hard reality of human existence while a multitude of scenic images fill his mind: “…human lives see no end of distress, with no exception all perish in a hundred years, Alas, joys are so rare, sorrows so ready!” “A sad autumn wind shakes the woods, white clouds repose on the

[303] Lawrence C.H.Yim, Between Self-Indulgence and Self-Restraint; Tao Qian’s “The Passions”, *Zhongguo Wenzhe yanjiu jikan* 22, (2003), 35-64. (p.35).

[304] Yim, “Between Self-Indulgence”, p.44. (Lawrence Yim does not quote the entire poem in one page but does it in fragments; two verses here, two there in his article).
[305] Yim, “Between Self-Indulgence”, p.42.
[306] Yim “Between Self-Indulgence”,p.57.

hills."[307] Music cradles the desire of the man to approach the woman, a symbol of beauty, refined culture and erotic desire but, at the same time this music maintains the distance between the two individuals; Tao wishes to speak to her but they never exchange a word. Between the harmonies of the zither and his many thoughts Tao's impulsive yearnings are suspended. After giving over to imagination and struggling with desire he returns to tranquillity. The reality of nature calms his passion for the melodic sounds and the female musician. The changes he observes in the atmosphere due to the coming winter dispel his pathos; the view of hills and rivers bring him back to safety:

> I rise to put on my belt and await daybreak, heavy frost glistens on the white steps…I will that the lady is there, entrusting the floating clouds to convey her bosom. But the floating clouds pass by without saying a word. The time is gradually slipping away. In vain I am charged with such intense emotion and self-lament. Fate decrees that hills and rivers keep me at bay.[308]

The person who masters the art of music is presented as capable of governing his desires and aspirations, remaining composed and happy even in the face of material destitution. Tao Yuanming's "*After an Old Poem*" speaks about a noble recluse who, despite his ragged garments and empty belly, has cultivated tranquillity and benevolence; Tao Yuanming crosses forests and rivers to find him and listen to him playing old songs with his *qin*.

> In the east lives a gentleman whose clothes are always shabby. "In a cycle of thirty days he manages to have nine meals," "For the whole span of ten years he has worn the same hat." In terms of toils no one can beat him, yet he always wears a contented look. I longed to see him in person, so I set out at dawn, traversing rivers and passes. Green pines grew along the roadsides, white clouds slept atop the eaves. You knew the intention of my visit, and fetched the qin to play for me. First your strings awed me by the "Parted Crane". Then your strings played

[307] Yim, "Between Self-Indulgence", p.44.
[308] Yim, "Between Self-Indulgence", p.59.

> the "Solitary Phoenix." I would like to stay and live close to you now and till the year's cold days.[309]

The qin was the emblem of the sage and the junzi since the early Six Dynasties: "He who can fully appreciate the elegance of the qin can be none but the Perfect Man."[310] Both the hungry but contented mountain hermit who masters the art of playing the qin and Tao Yuanming, the recluse-poet who rejoices in the sound of the stringed instrument, exemplify humaneness. Music replaces human speech; the song becomes a superior form of conversation between two lofty persons. The blissful moment of perfect communion between the two men is inscribed in the self-cultivation procedure which could last as long as human life itself; Tao wishes his silent encounter with the hermit to be perpetuated – "I would love to stay and live close to you now and till the year's cold days."

Throughout its history, European thought also emphasized the role of music in human improvement. The theories of Stoic philosophers, who examined the way meaningful structures of musical harmonies could have a rational effect on the soul, present certain analogies with Confucian view of music as an essential tool of self-cultivation. Stoics believed that a musical composition involved the creation of an orderly arrangement of notes carried by the medium of sound and impressed on the mind of the listener.[311] The harmonious, wordless language of music reflected the cosmic balance and communicated it to men assisting them to develop a proper, coherent and unified relationship with the cosmos.[312] For the Greek Stoic Diogenes, musical harmonies have an ethical impact leading people towards virtue and helping them preserve it.[313] Cleanthes of Assos (330 BC -232 BC) suggested that musical patterns –meter, melodies and rhythms – were as potent as philosophical discourse in their capacity to express the highest realities of

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[309] A.R. Davis, *T'ao Yüan-ming (AD 365-427): His Works and Their Meaning*, (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1983) I, pp.122-123.
[310] Liuchen zhu Wen xuan (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), p. 339, c-d. cf, Selections of Refined Literature 3 Vols (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), III, p.303.
[311] *Selfhood and the soul: Essays on Ancient Thought and Literature in Honour of Christopher Gill*, ed. by Richard Seaford, John Wilkins and Matthew Wright, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p.198.
[312] *Selfhood and the soul*, Wilkins, p.199.
[313] *Selfhood and the soul*, Wilkins, p.202.

nature and human existence. Furthermore, Cleanthes, author of a Hymn to Zeus where the Olympian god is hailed as someone who brings order and concord, posited that music rendered possible the contemplation of the divine and ennobled human beings.[314] His disciple Chrysippus argued that appropriate melodies could tame wild passions and correct inappropriate conduct. Chrysippus claimed that during a symposium, a group of inebriated youth dropped their wild behaviour when the flute girl changed the sensual Phrygian mode she employed into the solemn, austere Doric mode, which was associated with temperance because it strengthened the mind against the attacks of passion.[315]

In the eighteenth-century landscape-poetry of the Scottish James Thomson (1700-1748) music is associated with the appeasement of strong passions and the restoration of harmony. In "*The Seasons*", one of the most important and widely read series of poems published between 1726 and 1730, Thomson presents music as a source of temperance and tranquillity; it is a tool which prevented the thriving of harmful tendencies, emotional excesses and vice. Like in China, music in eighteenth-century Britain is regarded as a factor of humaneness; it turns conflict into concord, transforms savagery into meekness. Furthermore, its appeasing, civilising power benefits the cosmos: men and beasts, forests, winds and rivers.

> This when, emergent from the gloomy wood, the glaring lion saw, his horrid heart was meekened, and he joined his sullen joy, for music held the whole in perfect peace. Soft sighed the flute; the tender voice was heard, warbling the joyous heart; the woodlands round applied their quire; and winds and waters flowed in consonance.[316]

Unlike Tao Yuanming's works where the moral message is subtly weaved in the poetic narrative, Thomson openly employs a didactic tone. The British author evokes the problem of lost innocence, feature of a past golden era he deeply regrets; musical harmonies which used to resonate in the ancient

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[314] E. Bréhier, *Les stoïciens*, (Paris : Gallimard, coll. Pleiade, 1962, pp.6, 7.

[315] *Selfhood and the Soul*, Wilkins, p.198. and Karl Otfried Muller, *The History and Antiquities of the Doric Race*, (London: John Murray Albemarle Street, 1839), p.32.

[316] *Thomson : The Seasons and the Castle of Indolence*, ed. by J. Logie, Robertson, (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1891), p.38.

woods and tame wild instincts are now gone. “Such were those prime of days. But now those white unblemished minutes whence the fabling poets took their golden age are found no more amid these iron times.”[317] Music is proposed as a humane response given to cruelty and malice by those who strive to triumph over their vicious tendencies: “Be not the muse ashamed here to bemoan her brothers of the grove, by tyrant man inhuman caught… If in your bosom innocence can win, music engage, or piety persuade.”[318]

2.2 The Role of Plants in the Self-cultivation Procedure; Bamboo, Chrysanthemums and Literati in Reclusion.

In Chinese culture, certain visible, tangible objects were believed to encourage introspection, contribute to self-cultivation and the thriving of the *qi* (vital force). In the *Record of Three Pavilions in Mount Ling*, Liu Zhongyan, (柳宗元 783-819 AD) said: “A nobleman must have things for him to tour about and rest with, instruments for his character to stay lofty and his mind-heart enlightened; his mind-heart is so calm and tranquil, smooth and gentle that his qi is affluent.”[319] According to Mencius, the abundant and unimpeded flow of the qi fortified men’s capacity to keep their thoughts in order, their emotions in balance and their intentions pure and unhindered; the unity of heaven and humans could only be achieved through the “flood-like qi”.[320] Nourished with these ideas, Chinese scholars who struggled to adopt an exemplary conduct and cultivate humaneness systematically associated themselves with items such as flowers, plants or rocks. Along with their aesthetic value these objects were believed to possess intrinsic moral qualities. The idea that natural elements correspond to ethical qualities had been introduced in the *Analects* where mountains are associated with benevolence and waters with wisdom. This principle is commonly known as ‘*bide’* 比德. For Confucius, people can

[317] *Thomson*, Robertson, p.38.
[318] Thomson, Robertson, p.50.
[319] Liu Zongyuan, “Ling ling san ting ji” 零陵三亭记 [“Record of Three Pavilions in Mount Ling”], in *Liu Zongyuan wenji*, 2 vols., ed. Liu Zhenpeng (Beijing Book Co. Inc., 2011).
[320] Mencius 2A.2 cited in Li Zehou, *The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition,* p. 64,

explore and appreciate natural beauty which has an edifying power. The moral reality of things like trees and flowers can render a person more righteous; additionally, natural objects convey emotions and constitute the vehicles through which an individual expresses noble aspirations related to the preservation of virtue: “When the year becomes cold, then we know how the pine and the cypress are the last to lose their leaves”.[321] In the chapter from Liu Xie’s Six Dynasties *Wenxin diaolong* entitled “Wu se” (The Appearance of Things) we read that “a jade tablet can arouse the heart’s benevolence, and blooming flowers is clear qi.”[322] The contemplation of a flower bud, a tree branch or a mountain embodied a lofty stance towards life; it could channel the passions and teach self-control to excessively ambitious, erring individuals.[323]

Neo-Confucian scholars insisted that the close observation of objects was indispensable to the acquisition of wisdom. Zhu Xi for instance, argued that it was very difficult to achieve self-knowlege directly. The human mind, although it is composed of pure and refined qi, it has a physical nature. This latter obscures a person’s self-awareness of the principle (li) of the mind allowing vices such as selfishness (*si* 私) and partiality (*pian* 偏) to flourish. Since overcoming the cloudiness of one's *qi* and achieving wisdom directly from within was a difficult task, Zhu Xi suggested that apart from the diligent study of Classics an aspiring *junzi* should also practice "the investigation of things" (*ge wu* 格物). Like the philosopher Cheng Yi who preceded him, Zhu Xi said that it is easier to perceive the underlying order or principles of things outside of ourselves, in nature.[324] Appreciating a blade of grass or a forest of bamboo facilitated the regular movement of qi and cleansed the mind of people who tried to satisfy the demands of their social state as politicians, emperors, poets, thinkers etc., without compromising their moral integrity and well-being.

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321 *Chinese Environmental Aesthetics*, ed. by Wangheng Chen, Gerald Cipriani, (Routledge, London and New York, 2015), p.12.

322 *Wenxin Diaolong*, 10.1, cited in Li Zehou, *The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition*, p.72.

323 Zehou, *The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition*, p.99.

324 Adler Joseph, *Varieties of Spiritual Experience, Shen in Neo-Confucian Discourse* in Tu Wei-ming and Mary Evelyn Tucker eds, Confucian Spirituality, vol.2 (New York:Crossroad, 2004), retrieved from: https://www.academia.edu/27168950/Varieties_of_Spiritual_Experience_Shen_%E7%A5%9E_in_Neo_Confucian_Discourse (1-31) p.16

It is important to state that Chinese scholars' relationship with humble or majestic objects remained the same whether these latter were physically present in their living environment or simply represented in a work of art they had personally created or acquired. In the self-cultivation procedure the painted chrysanthemum was considered as efficient as the physical one. Every element contained in the universe exists in constant motion and transformation; in a similar way, various forms of artistic creation like calligraphy and painting which employed the line to render the external appearance and internal structure of things were thought to represent the motive power and mutability of the cosmos.[325] Physical and depicted objects as well as abstract Chinese ideograms (characters) found in works of calligraphy supposedly reproduced universal emotional forms and established virtues, ultimately expressing the Dao. In the writings of the Qing painter Shitao (1641-1710) the Confucian moral analogy is still valid: the artist compares mountains with decorum, integrity and solemnity, ethical categories which are also conveyed in these natural objects' visual representation.[326] The nature perceived in an actual landscape and the nature contemplated in a landscape created by an artist communed with human emotion which was considered a motion of the qi. [327] The real and the represented thing – flower, tree, hill or river - expressed the same harmonious movement which structured men and the cosmos; both physical and depicted items helped in the training of passions and nourished the ren.

In Chinese culture, the cultivation of flowers was considered as uplifting and morally useful as the practice of calligraphy. The abstract, unrealistic form of written characters differs from the concreteness of physical objects. Nevertheless, calligraphy, whose performance had the rhythmic movement of music, was cherished for its power to express almost everything that exists in the universe: "…the mountains, rivers, cliffs, and valleys, the birds and beasts, insects and plants, sun, moon and stars, wind and rain, fire and water, thunder and lightning, and even the dances and battles of humankind—

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[325] Zehou. *The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition*, pp. 68, 114.
[326] Shitao, Kugua Heshang hua Yulu (Jinan: Shandong huabao chubanshe, 2007), chap.18, p.67 and Zehou, *The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition*, p.145.
[327] Zehou*, The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition*, p. 97.

indeed all the transformations of heaven and earth, whether those that delight or those that dismay..."[328] The Song dynasty scholar Su Shi (1037-1101) posited that calligraphy "must have spirit, qi, bone, flesh and blood" in order to be worthy of its name;[329] Chinese people acknowledged the analogy between a character drawn with black ink and a living being, human or plant.[330]

Like calligraphy, gardening was more than a pastime undertaken to overcome indolence. It constitutes both a physical and a mental activity which demands concentration and discipline; it trains the emotions and therefore contributes to human improvement. In calligraphy, the process of drawing a character is inseparable from the contemplation of its meaning, which penetrates the xin (mind-heart) and puts human thoughts and desires in order. Likewise, the cultivation of flowers, which depends on weather conditions, the quality of the soil and the diligence of the husbandman, can channel a person's passions and contribute to the building of his character. Conforming to the "*bide*" principle, the painter Shitao claimed that a flower is endowed with empathy and responds to human interrogations; it teaches the literatus the art of leisure and helps him structure his moral self. In the poem accompanying his painting *Leisure Cultivation Pavilion* (1703) from the Album *Landscapes for Liu Shitou* flowers are compared to Chinese characters (Fig.20).

> The flowers in the Leisure-Cultivation Pavilion grow like written characters; the master of the Leisure Cultivation Pavilion is busy with the everyday. His commitments, like flowers, are more numerous every day but the character-like flowers furnish real pleasure. Guests arrive just as he is engaged in the leisure of cultivation; Flowering has been delayed by the rain and snow of a cold spring. The master is a student of calligraphy and loves to cultivate flowers; the flowers seem to understand the man and each grows like a fine character. When I

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328 Zehou, *The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition*, p.113.

329 "Lun Shu" Dongpo tiba, juan 4 in Su Shi wen ji, vol.5 (Beijing Zhonghua shuju, 1986), p.2183.

330 *Encyclopedia of Chinese Philosophy*, ed. by Antonio S. Cua, (New York, London: Routledge 2002), p.26.

ask for one character among the flowers, all the flowers, smiling, bend towards the setting sun.[331]

There is a degree of complicity, a constant exchange between the scholar and the flower, which is personified - "all the flowers, smiling, bend towards the setting sun." Shitao's verses seem to conform to the Neo-Confucian idea which emphasised the linkage between the natural and the human world, or as Joseph Adler put it: "the immanence and naturalness of human values and the potential for consciousness in the fundamental substrate that constitutes all things in the natural world."[332]

In Chinese literati culture, cultivating, drawing, contemplating or composing poems about certain plants interweaved with the nourishment of virtue. More specifically, bamboo and chrysanthemums which is this section's focus, along with the plum blossom and the orchid, were known as the Four Gentlemen.[333] Indispensable features of every garden these graceful objects served as sources of literary and artistic inspiration throughout the centuries. Scholar-officials who were usually accomplished painters and poets regarded these items as vehicles for the moderation of emotions and the expression of ideas and aspirations related to the cultivation of ren.[334] The Chinese literati admired the elegance and proud demeanour of bamboo and chrysanthemums and conversed with them; they were convinced that such noble things possess their own subjectivity and communicate their inherent qualities to the human realm.[335]

In the eremitic ambiance of their private gardens, literati lived with the bamboo on a daily basis. The bamboo seems omnipresent in the material and intellectual life of China; it embodies a variety of meanings and is available for multiple functions. Its interior is edible while it was extensively used to make walking staffs, furniture and paper. The sight of its plain, slender figure comprised a source of aesthetic gratification and relaxation. Flexible and

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331 Hay, *Shitao*, p.234.
332 Adler, *Varieties of Spiritual Experience*, p.11
333 Dong Yue Su, *Chinese Bamboo and the Construction of Moral High Ground by Song Literati*, Master Thesis, (Department of Asian Studies, University of Toronto, 2013), p. 7.
334 Su, *Chinese Bamboo*, p.7.
335 Su, *Chinese Bamboo*, p.15.

resilient – it bends but does not break - the bamboo is associated with rectitude and self-restraint. Contemplated it transmits its loftiness; encountering it often and under many different forms reinforces the scholar's emotional connection with it. From every point of view it constitutes a good model for the Chinese literati who were expected to acquire genuineness (*hui gui yang zhen* 回歸養真), cultivate righteousness and temperance and stay imperturbable in the face of hardships.[336]

An emphasis on the moral dimension of the bamboo can be found in the Book of Odes (Shi-Jing诗经) (11th to 7th century BC) where this plant was associated with highly esteemed, honourable people of a certain social status. In the Shi Jing the poem titled Qi'ao read as follows: "Looking over at the Qi Water, we see green bamboos long and graceful. Here are the junzi. Eloquently and elegantly, they are arguing and discussing with literary grace. Their serious looks and self-respectful demeanour reveal their wealth and power. Here are the talented gentlemen. How can we forget them?" The verses relate the presence of the bamboo with sobriety, dignity and literary accomplishments.[337] Much later, the Tang dynasty poet Liu Yanfu (刘岩夫) gave an exhaustive list of the all-encompassing bamboo virtues and called every junzi to learn from this noble plant. Strong, loyal and righteous, humble yet splendid it had to be preferred over other forms of vegetation. Virile and delicate it bears the characteristics an individual should possess in order to accomplish his public duties and be able to spend the periods of retirement from public office in a dignified manner.[338] The text of Liu Yanfu explains that bamboo's antithetic but complementary pairs of qualities exist in perfect balance. This plant epitomizes the ideal described in the Doctrine of the Mean which teaches that in order to attain and preserve harmony in the human and cosmic realm the multitude of manifested, contrasting passions should hit the proper measure. The bamboo is perfectly integrated in the Confucian model of moral cultivation which promulgates moderation and leads to humaneness.

[336] Hay, *Shitao* p. 282.
[337] Su, *Chinese Bamboo*, p.8.
[338] Su, *Chinese Bamboo*, p. 36.

> A junzi or a truly moral gentleman has to compare his morality to the bamboo. The bamboo stem is firm and its joints are strong. It does not succumb to snow. This is masculine toughness. Bamboo leaves are green and stirred by the wind. This is feminine delicacy. The bamboo stem is straight and hollow inside. It has nothing to hide. This is its loyalty. Bamboo does not stand high alone as one tree. It always grows in abundance and the plants rely on each other. This is righteousness. Although bamboo is full of vital force it does not compete with other plants for splendidness. This is humbleness. Bamboo prospers for all four seasons and never fluctuates. This is its constancy… These good virtues are a good match for a gentleman. Therefore, I plant bamboo in my courtyard and exclude other plants. I want its singular beauty without distraction. I am afraid that some people may not understand me. Therefore, I wrote this book "Liu's Journal of Planting Bamboo as a tribute to its morality.[339]

In the *Leisure Cultivation Pavilion* created by Shitao for his patron Liu Shitou this latter is described as a man "pure and elegant in taste" with a heart "aimed at expression of culture".[340] Liu is portrayed holding a staff in his hand and crossing a small bridge which leads to a pavilion almost hidden in the heart of a bamboo grove. The grove is not mentioned in the poem accompanying the painting. However, bamboo stems - "growing together and supporting each other like junzi"[341] - dominate the wilderness where the building is situated; their slender and imposing figures bend towards the man as if making a gesture of recognition and welcome. Liu Shitou was a well-travelled, erudite gentleman whose moral self can be correlated to the bamboo. The plants allude to the purpose of his coming and refer to his refined and virtuous character. They protect the place where Liu Shitou's self-cultivation process occurs and denote his moral eminence praised by Shitao: "Ten thousand li of great waves have washed his bosom; wind and snow all over the sky have sharpened his eyes. Five thousand volumes of

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339 Su. *Chinese Bamboo*. p.14

340 Hay, *Shitao*, p.234

341 From the poem of Tang dynasty poet Liu Yuxi (772-842), Liu Yuxi 刘禹锡, *Liu Yuxi ji* 刘禹锡集 (Beijing: Chung hwa book co. ltd., 1990), p. 232 cited in Su, *Chinese Bamboo,* p.20.

distinguished books are on his shelves… I find myself composing poetry for his high ideals."[342] The viewer is confronted with an eremitic landscape which is real and metaphorical at the same time.

In Chinese poetry the bamboo is regularly presented as a companion to scholar-officials; it assisted their literary pursuits which formed – like music, drawing and calligraphy – an important part of the moral cultivation procedure. Thus, the Song poet Huang Shu (1019-1058) in his work "Planting Bamboo" wrote: "I grew it from the small gardening patch and got this gentleman. Its green shade is simple and elegant, as though full of intimacy. Normally, the gentle breeze, the bright moonlight and I make a group of three friends. But now our poetry society has a newly added guest."[343] The Confucian Su Shi (苏轼) alias Dongpo (东坡), was an illustrious poet, painter and statesman who also flourished under the Song Dynasty (1037-1101) and displayed a great predilection for the bamboo. In his poem *On Qian Seng's Green Bamboo Skin Veranda* he summarized the rich cultural and ethical connotations of this plant. He claimed that a life deprived of bamboo's presence might cause an irreparable harm; it could render a person indifferent to aesthetic refinement, cultural values and intellectual accomplishments obstructing the process of self-cultivation: "I would rather eat a meal without meat but live with bamboo. Without meat, one may get thin, without bamboo, one will get philistine. A thin man could get fat again, but a philistine man may not be cured."[344]

Like Sima Guang, Su Shi belonged to the conservative group which openly opposed and criticised the political and economic changes attempted by a reformist faction. When this latter prevailed in the imperial court Su Shi was exiled to Huangzhou in Hubei, where he remained for six years (1080-1086). Having no stipend, he endured poverty; with the help of a friend he managed to buy a small piece of land named Dongpo (Eastern Slope). Growing to love this place he adopted its name as literary pseudonym.[345] The Ming Dynasty

[342] Hay, *Shitao*, p.234.
[343] Su, *Chinese Bamboo*, p.25.
[344] Zhu Zhaohua and Jin Wei, *Sustainable Bamboo Development*, (Boston, MA: CABI 2018), p.77.
[345] *East Asia: A Cultural, Social and Political History*, ed. by Patricia Buckley Ebrey, Anne Walthall and James Palais, (Boston, MA: Wadsworth 2013), p.137.

artist Du Jin (1465-1509), in the work *Tizhutu* (Fig.21),[346] represented Dongpo facing a graceful bamboo which has grown in his private garden, as we may easily deduce from the enclosure in the background. The poet is attended by a young servant who holds an ink stone; next to him, Du Jin portrayed another scholar of the same social standing accompanied by a pageboy. The writing process has already commenced in a context unmistakably associated with Confucian self-cultivation – rocks, bamboo, garden and literati friends with common interests and lofty aspirations. The first characters are inscribed on the slender stem of the plant; pen in his lifted hand, immersed in his activity, the pondering author is presented to the viewers in a way which emphasizes his temperance. His figure is upright, composed and tranquil, without the conventional attribute of floating garments which was frequently employed either to accentuate the idea of poetic inspiration or to stress an official's temporary freedom from obligations related to his position. Dongpo is not just confronting the noble, "gentleman-like" bamboo as a common external observer. The Song literatus strived to imitate the bamboo which: "hold tight to the green mountains and never let loose" and "establish their stands in broken rocks." "Assailed by tens of thousand times of hits, they still stand there, no matter how the wind blows."[347] The heart of Dongpo is resilient like the plant that stands before him in Du Jin's painting; he went through the suffering and humiliation of the exiled official, he experienced distress and material destitution, but did not lose his inner calm. He has integrated this plant's virtues enumerated by scholar and statesman Li Fang (925-996): courage, gentleness, loyalty and righteousness.[348] The fortitude of Dongpo is similar to the equanimity that Stoic philosophers displayed in the face of hardships; for instance, Seneca posited that the peace of mind resides on one's virtue and wisdom and does not depend on external circumstances, while Horace argued that exile cannot disturb the composure of a sage.[349]

Dongpo had also employed the figure of bamboo to praise the character of a dead friend, the painter Wen Tong (1019-1079). Similar to the bamboo which

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[346] Meaning: "Painting of writing on bamboo"
[347] Zhu Zhaohua, *Sustainable Bamboo*, p.78.
[348] Zhu Zhaohua, *Sustainable Bamboo*, p. 77.
[349] Marcia Colish, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, I. *Stoicism in Classical Latin Literature*, (Leiden: E.J Brill, 1985), p.178.

is bending but not yielding, Wen could adapt to various situations without plunging into a degrading state of despair.[350] The sight of the bamboo consoled the benevolent man by constantly reminding him of unchanging truths, values he deeply cherished and made his own: “just seeing them (the bamboo) can dissipate one’s myriad grieves; and further, as for my friend resembling these gentlemen, the severity of his simple virtue defies the frosty autumn.”[351]

The bamboo was believed to be born with the innate capacity to become vigorous, and resistant to harsh weather conditions. The plant’s exemplary qualities which unfolded before human eyes were with it since the beginning; “when bamboo first comes into being, it is only an inch long shoot, but the joints and leaves are all in it. It develops from cicada chrysalides and snake scales to swords drawn out eighty feet, because this development is immanent in it.”[352] The idea that grace and vigour were inherent assets of the bamboo brings to mind the conviction concerning the *de* (德) which was mentioned earlier: *de*, human virtue or literally “endowment from heaven” was innate in every man and needed to be nourished constantly. If the Confucian *de* became prey to wrong desires it would never grow fully; the meticulous, conscientious practice of the rites (*li*), the use of music (*yue*) and the practice of arts were essential to maintain human virtue in good order and helped it manifest itself in every occasion. Nourishing the *de* people managed to internalize *ren* 仁 and lead a fully humane life.

The phrase of Dongpo “in painting bamboo one must first have the perfected bamboo in mind” is inscribed in the Neo-Confucian tradition. The mastery of technical skills alone could not render artistic creation unhindered. Dongpo’s perfect knowledge of the bamboo was obtained through constant interaction with it; during this interaction, the scholar handled the plant according to its own nature.[353] Conforming to the theories developed by Neo-Confucian philosophers such as Zhang Zai and Zhu Xi, it can be argued that Dongpo

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350 Susan Bush, *The Chinese Literati on Painting: Su Shih (1037-1101) to Tung Ch’I Ch’ang (1555-1636)*, (Hong Kong: Hong-Kong University Press, 2012), p. 34.
351 Bush, *The Chinese Literati*, p.35.
352 Su Shih, *Collected Prose*, IX.49.1a-2a cited in Bush, *The Chinese Literati,* p.37.
353 JeeLoo Liu, *Neo-Confucianism: Metaphysics, Mind and Morality*, p.7

went succesfuly through the process of absorbing and integrating the item he painted and chanted numerous times in his life.[354] The outflowing of *qi* from Dongpo's body to the bamboo allowed him to fully penetrate the object, apprehend its subtle qualities, conform to its internal order and finally embody it.[355] Therefore, he rightfully claimed that he "delighted in the *principle* (li 禮)"[356] of the bamboo; the fact that he rejoiced in the plant's virtuous presence interweaved with his own moral integrity, his refined, cultivated literatus self.

In literati garden-culture the chrysanthemum, like the bamboo, has a powerful symbolic import. This flower's visual representation and distinguished place in poetry are strongly associated with Tao Yuanming, the scholar-recluse who championed an unpretentious, quiet and self-sufficient life away from the nuisances, compromises and moral dangers related to public office. In reality, Tao owned a working farm which provided his family frugal means of subsistence. However, in literature and art produced during the Song and Ming dynasty, this man's legendary withdrawal from politics, his emotional disposition and high-mindedness were imaged in the physical space of a scholar garden.[357] In the course of centuries Tao's figure was frequently portrayed in the company of pines and chrysanthemums; these latter are mentioned only a few times in his writings, but he happened to refer to them in his most famous poems. Thus, in one of his *Twenty Poems on Drinking Wine*, Tao describes how the casual picking of chrysanthemums by the eastern fence of his hut was interrupted when his attention was caught by the sight of the South Mountain, a significant spot in northern Jiangxi Province where hermits, Buddhist religious and spirits were believed to dwell.[358] Chrysanthemums are associated with the qualities of seclusion which constitutes a state of mind and does not necessitate the physical departure of an individual from the human realm. Tao Yuanming explains that the eremitic landscape containing his cottage is situated in a populated place, but he can hear no sound of horses and carriages because his mind is detached from the

[354] Bush, *The Chinese Literati*, p.39.
[355] Adler, *Varieties of Spiritual Experience*, p.17
[356] Su Shih, Collected Prose, IX.54.9a-b cited in Bush, *The Chinese Literati,* p.42.
[357] Susan Nelson, "Revisiting the Eastern Fence: Tao Qian's Chrysanthemums", *The Art Bulletin* 83, (2001), 437-460, (p.441).
[358] Nelson, "Revisiting", p.441.

world and its turmoil.[359] Chrysanthemums might be associated with the human capacity of introspection, a tranquil heart and a lofty disposition; three essential components of Tao Yuanming's detachment. Furthermore, as I will demonstrate, this flower interweaves with the idea of immortality, good health and carefree life. Finally, in Chinese visual culture and literary imagination the chrysanthemum is linked to the concept of nourishing genuineness (*huigui yangzhen*); preserving one's natural, unaffected yet refined state of being.

In one of the portraits of Tao Yuanming, part of Chen Hongshou's series of episodes representing an idealised version of this recluse's life (1598-1652), Tao is shown seated on a rock, smelling a chrysanthemum (Fig.22). The flower is hiding the lower part of the poet's face; he seems to be eagerly pressing his lips on this object in order to taste it. A teapot and a cup can be seen in the foreground. The conviction that potions made from chrysanthemums bestow longevity to those who consume them was widespread in ancient China. The emperor Cao Pi (曹丕186-226) had suggested that their blossoming in late autumn and their ability to withstand the cold weather constitute a proof of their healing, reinvigorating power: "The fragrant chrysanthemums abundantly bloom by themselves. If they did not contain the pure harmony of Heaven and Earth and embody the clear essence of fragrance how could they do so? For supporting the body and prolonging life nothing is as valuable as these."[360] Tao, fond of the idea of vanquishing infirmities related to senescence and preserving a youthful constitution, extolled the legendary qualities of the flower which could provide relief from decrepitude and its resulting sorrows. Often associated with wine-drinking, the chrysanthemum became a vehicle this recluse-poet employed to voice the problems of existence. Thus, in the work "*Spending the Ninth Day in Solitude*" he wrote:

> Our lives are short and our ambitions many… and while one can with wine exorcise all sorrows chrysanthemums know how to restrain declining years. How is it with me the thatch-cottage scholar, vainly watching how my time and fate decline? ... These cold-weather

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[359] Hightower, *The Poetry of T'ao Chien*, p.130.
[360] Nelson, "Revisiting", p.444.

flowers bloom of themselves alone."[361] "In the fall chrysanthemums have lovely colours. I pluck the petals that are wet with dew and float them in this care dispelling thing to strengthen my sense of leaving the world.[362]

In Chen Hongshou's painting, the unconventional character of Tao is rendered almost theatrically;[363] the hairstyle and absence of head-kerchief underscore his idiosyncratic personality. The gesture of smelling the chrysanthemum encapsulates his life-goals; to turn his back to the world's turmoil and detach himself from the mundane burdens or vain glories of officialdom, to preserve a tranquil, happy mind-heart and cultivate his authentic scholar self, adapting to the unavoidable changes imposed on him by fate. "With genuineness in mind, in my heart from the start, who could say I am fettered by my body's doings? Now I go along with life's vicissitudes…" he wrote.[364] The poet's gaze tells the viewer that he is oblivious to everything around him. Chen underscored this by leaving the space around the man empty; there are no trees, or any other vegetation apart from a few blades of grass in front of the rock on which he sits. His face "sinks" in the chrysanthemum; his passion and concentration are directed to this overwhelming, absorbing thing. Reading this seventeenth-century painting in a Neo-Confucian context one can say that Tao investigates the object (ge wu) – its' perfume, taste, texture and meaning – and enters fully into it. He conforms to the chrysanthemum's internal order and understands its principle (li), thus transforming his own consciousness and refining his qi.

Leaving the human realm without departing in the mountains, coming home in his poor thatched cottage situated in a peopled place and embracing a frugal, carefree existence constitute the three actions which summarize the celebrated detachment of Tao Yuanming and illuminate the quintessence of loftiness. Elevated in the pantheon of moral heroes in the centuries after his death Tao is the man who "shunned the common ways". Based on the verses

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[361] Cheung King-Kok, Two forms of Solitude", p. 64.
[362] Nelson, "Revisiting", p.444.
[363] Shi Yee Liu, "The World's Stage: The Theatricality of Chen Hongshou's Figure Painting", *Ars Orientalis* 35 (2008) pp. 155-191. P. 178.
[364] Yuan Xingpei, Alain Berkowitz (translator), "Tao Yuanming: A Symbol of Chinese Culture", *Journal of Chinese Literature and Culture*, (2014), 216-240, (p.226).

of Dongpo, Tao Yuanming alone “was pure and true”;[365] a free spirit spelling out his inspirations, intoxicated by wine and poetry, picking, smelling and drinking chrysanthemums by steeping their petals in a cup of alcohol.

The recluse poet expressed his disbelief in immortality, a legendary power attributed to this flower; "If the immortals Song and Qiao [really] ever lived, where do you suppose they are today?” He naturally cherished his physical health, but the illusion of living forever never preoccupied him.[366] The chrysanthemum, reaching its splendour in late autumn, is not only a symbol of victory over the frailty of old age. Being the last flower of the year, it marks the end of a circle, the coming of winter. In this context, it alludes to death itself, the inescapable end of things regarding human existence. At the same time, the flower’s blooming despite the snow and the wind may be a herald of hope. It brings to mind that, in the withering years that precede someone’s demise, achievements and happiness are still possible. Furthermore, as with the bamboo, chrysanthemums endure difficult conditions. The Ming poet, Wang Xing (1331-1395) described how Mr Hua called an edifice “Picking Chrysanthemums Pavilion” as a symbol of virtues which flourish after a long maturity and an icon of tranquillity and resilience in the face of adversity, two noble qualities a humane person should strive to conquer in the life-lasting process of moral cultivation.

> All flowering plants are a delight to behold, yet some plants come into blossom from the time they start to grow, while others only come into blossom after they have reached maturity. Only the chrysanthemum comes into blossom after it has reached maturity. That which is unique to something is an expression of that which is worth preserving. Hence the gentleman emulates such qualities ... Moreover, when it is windy and frosty, and all other plants are blown about and lose their flowers and foliage, the chrysanthemum stands resplendent, it alone in

[365] Yuan Xingpei, *Tao Yuanming*, p.219.
[366] Nelson, “Revisiting”, p.446.

> blossom ... Mr Hua has sought to refer to the gentleman as one who also has the discipline to withstand the winter.[367]

Admired, emulated and integrated by the junzi, the intrinsic moral virtues and aesthetic value of chrysanthemums were associated with a life of unimpeded happiness based on a benevolent, equanimous mind-heart. In the Song and Ming Dynasty, Tao, who lived frugally and refused "to bow for five pecks of rice", was frequently portrayed in the tranquil space of an elaborate garden as a respected member of the literati class surrounded by chrysanthemums. For instance, in the 1619 painting *Tao Yuanming Appreciating Chrysanthemums* by Li Shida (Fig.23), the poet is sitting on the root of a pine-tree next to a rock, two other indispensable companions of a Chinese scholar. Opposite Tao a young servant is watering the flowers of his master's predilection while two others are carrying objects related to his comfort and refreshment: a fan and a large recipient containing some beverage. At first sight this representation seems far from the type of ascetic reclusion acclaimed by the fourth-century poet. Showing Tao in this opulent context Li Shida probably targeted an audience whose members craved to identify themselves with the heroised figure of the ancient poet, even though they had few things in common with him. In Li's work, instead of leisurely strolling in an eremitic landscape, chanting his aspirations, exorcising his sorrows and sighing in the view of the Southern Mountain Tao becomes a wealthy, refined gentleman attended by eager servants who look after his chrysanthemums. Government officials who lead more conventional lives than the poet could see themselves in this portrait. Li Shida put the emphasis on a sophisticated, relaxing lifestyle which encouraged self-cultivation but was easier to adopt for a large number of privileged, well-established men. Instead of pressing the flower against his face he appreciates it with affectionate self-restraint. The representation of Tao Yuanming by Li Shida's embodies a model of withdrawal and introspection which is compatible to wealth and preservation of social status. Affluence cannot hinder perfect reclusion which is above all a state of mind; the enemy of a literatus was not wealth itself but the unethical,

[367] John Makeham,"The Confucian Role of Names in Traditional Chinese Gardens", *An International Quarterly*, (2012), 187-210, (p.194).

disproportionate attachment to it.[368] Li's Tao is a junzi for whom chrysanthemums constitute sources of pleasure, companions in his carefree moments as well as objects appropriate for contemplation. In the shelter of his garden he nourishes genuineness and humaneness; he cultivates temperance without renouncing material comfort. The chrysanthemum, invested with multiple meanings, ultimately teaches him happiness.

In Europe, the symbolic import of plants has a long and rich history which commenced in the Greco-Roman antiquity. Apart from their practical, scientific and aesthetic utility, plants were cherished as reminders of human merits, icons of human conditions or expressions of ideals. However, unlike the Chinese, Europeans did not harbour the idea that a plant must be imitated for its intrinsic qualities; they only thought that its shape and form could allude to certain virtues men should try to develop. Found in free landscapes or private gardens, offered to individuals or placed somewhere for decorative purposes, trees and flowers were employed in multiple manners and served various circumstances. Blossoms and tree-branches could refer to numerous things; from victory over the enemy, political power and regal authority to athletic excellence, nuptial joy and mourning. For instance, the olive tree in Greece was a symbol of Pallas Athena and had an auspicious character for the Athenian citizens; an olive-wreath was given to the youth who won the Olympic Games every four years. In the tragic poet Aeschylus's trilogy *Oresteia* an olive branch is offered from the matricide Orestes to the god Apollo as sign of atonement.[369] Furthermore, throughout Europe, the deciduous oak alluded to male vigour and resilience in times of hardship. King Philip II, father of Alexander the Great was buried wearing a golden oak-wreath. In Rome the oak represented courage; soldiers who fought valiantly were crowned with the leaves of this tree. Christians appropriated certain pagan uses and connotations of flora specimens and gradually built up on their symbolic import. Thus, in the early Middle-Ages, the sacred oaks of

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[368] Nelson, "Revisiting", p.452.
[369] Graham Ley, *The Theatricality of Greek Tragedy: Playing Space and Chorus*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), p.38.

Druids in Celtic tradition ended up symbolising Christ's righteousness and the fortitude of martyrs.[370]

In the seventeenth century, in his unfinished book *Elysium Britannicum*, the Anglican, royalist author John Evelyn melded classical notions of perpetual spring (*ver perpetuum*) which refer to a golden age of humanity with Christian symbolism; he argued that planting evergreen trees in a garden could reproduce the paradisiac state enjoyed by Adam and Eve before their fall from grace.[371] One of his book's chapters deals with the philosophical-medical garden which, according to his words, constituted the most beneficial part of his study. His intention was to "comprehend the principall and most usefull plants" and to create "a rich and noble compendium of what the whole globe of the Earth has flourishing". The purposes of such garden "would be to provide opportunities for new and rare experiments… for enfranchising strange plant and civilizing the wild and rude… for the contemplation of nature and the accomplishment of an Elysium."[372] To create with the use of plants a paradisiac place in the realm of mortals might help men understand the order of nature. Furthermore, it had a moral dimension; it cultivated their diligence and fortified their belief in a God-given civilising mission to tame nature. With the expansion of the British Empire owners of landscape gardens fascinated with botany developed an obsession with variety. Particularly in the 1700s, the desire to obtain hundreds of exotic trees and flowers from newly conquered lands and the capacity to grow them successfully is linked to the will to display political power and affirm global domination.[373]

In eighteenth-century Europe certain trees' robust or elegant forms might occasionally allude to a person's moral excellence. In Marquis de René Girardin's (1735-1808) park in Ermenonville which is discussed extensively later in the thesis, strollers could encounter a chestnut-tree of rare beauty, so tall that it dominated the forest. The inscription on the trunk read: "Palaemon who was a righteous man planted this chestnut tree. May this beautiful tree be

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[370] Claire Gibson, "Symbols in Trees", *Living Woods* 28, (2018), p.22-23, (p.22).
[371] *John Evelyn's Elysium Britannicum,* O'Malley, p.12.
[372] *John Evelyn's Elysium Britannicum*, O'Malley, 31.
[373] Ian D. Rotherham, *Recombinant Ecology – A Hybrid Future*? (Springer Briefs in Ecology, Springer, Cham 2017), p.57.

dedicated to rectitude and ethical conduct forever! May the thunder and the evil man keep away from it!"[374] Girardin, man of the Enlightenment, anglophile and very familiar with British literature utilised the chestnut tree to perpetuate the memory of young Palaemon, a character from James Thomson's 1726 poem *Seasons*. Palaemon incarnated a virtuous rural lover and cherished poetic icon of the eighteenth-century; he is the herald of the Romantic era's heroes. The poem helps us understand on what consisted the model of honesty and purity to whom people should aspire: "The pride of swains Palaemon was, the generous, and the rich, who led the rural life in all its joy and elegance, such as Arcadian song transmits from antient, incorrupted times…with conscious virtue, gratitude and love, above the vulgar joy divinely rais'd".[375] The inscription referring to the fictional Palaemon invited the park's visitors to contemplate this man's virtue which was paralleled to the tree's magnificence. The tall chestnut was put there to commemorate human righteousness. Its splendour alludes to the fruits of a tranquil rural life free from vice; its imposing form is likened to the character of men who reject vulgar pleasures for the sake of simple joys. In Europe, noble human conduct could be compared to the vigorous or graceful shape of things like chestnut trees but men with noble aspirations and high moral standards did not attempt to fuse with natural objects. There is no concept of absorbing oneself to the item like in China where Dongpo, in his poem on a bamboo painting by Wen Tong, wrote: "When Yuke (Wen Tong) painted bamboo, he saw bamboo not himself. Nor was he simply unconscious of himself; trance like, he left his body. His body was transformed into bamboo, creating inexhaustible freshness"[376]

Although in Europe objects do not bear intrinsic moral qualities just by being, like men, participants of the same cosmic order, they are occasionally presented as being invested with subjectivity. The idea that natural elements responded to human emotions appears in some works of poetry and should

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[374] Stanislas, comte de Girardin, *Promenade ou itinéraire des jardins d'Ermenonville*, (Paris: Mérigot 1788), p.29.
[375] James Thomson, *The four Seasons and other poems*, (London, J. Millan: 1735), p.16,17 and 19.
[376] *Beauty*, ed. by Lauren Arrington, Zoe Leinhardt and Philip Dawid, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Darwin College, 2013), p.136.

be associated with the eighteenth-century cult of sensibility which heralded the European movement of Romanticism. In the early 1700s, the French poet Guillaume Amfrye de Chaulieu (1639-1720), envisaged his own death in his native place in Fontenay, Normandy, where he had retired in order to spend his last years in the tranquil solitude of the familiar landscape: “Beautiful trees which saw my birth, you will soon witness my death.”[377] Physical objects found in the rural environment are sources of joy, serenity but also consolation as they could “sympathise” with human sorrow. Several decades after Chaulieu, Jacques Delille in his poetic work *Les jardins* (1782) invites those who mourn to associate their pain with the forests.

> Here, far from madding crowds, your vigils keep; with you the woods, the streams, the flowers shall weep. Each object to the wretched seems a friend. To shade the tomb o’er which your tears descend, Dark firs and yews their mournful arms extend. And thou, sad Cypress, faithful to the dead, Thy boughs protecting o’er their ashes spread; To Joy the myrtle, leave the palm to Fame, Thee plaintive Grief, and Melancholy claim![378]

In the eighteenth century, when burials in landscapes and private gardens served as a device for the refinement of emotions like compassion and melancholy, the role of trees and flowers as companions to those who grieve for the loss of a loved-one is emphasized. The shadow of firs and cypresses protect the mortal remains of the deceased while their branches are symbols of grief condoling with men’s suffering.

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[377] Henri Potez, *L’Elégie en France avant le Romantisme (De Parny a Lamartine 1778-1820, (*Paris: Galmann Levy, 1898) p.6.
[378] Jacques Delille, *The gardens. A Poem*, (trans. Maria Henrietta Montolieu), (London: T. Bensley, Bolt Court 1805), p.132.

2.3 The “Bones of the Earth” in Chinese Gardens; the Moral Benefits and Hazards of Literati Petrophilia.

For thousands of years in China, rocks were considered to be the bones of the earth.[379] This conviction does not differ from the idea formulated by Leonardo Da Vinci in sixteenth-century Italy: “We can say that the earth has a spirit of growth and that its flesh be the soil, its bones be the arrangement and connection of the rocks of which the mountains are composed.”[380] In China, carefully chosen and extracted from mountainous regions for primarily aesthetic reasons, avidly collected by scholars and emperors, rocks comprised cherished sources of introspection and self-cultivation; without them a garden was considered incomplete. Literati attributed a sacred character and mythical qualities to these *organisms* - to employ a term in concord with the cosmological view of rocks developed in China over the centuries. Their shape is continuously transformed with the passage of time. They represent natural processes and the ways earth operates is inscribed in them; carrying cosmic memories they establish a relationship between the timeless universe and the humans who contemplate them.[381] In Europe, natural historians of the sixteenth century like Scipione Capece (1481-1550) claimed that rocks grow in the bowels of the earth. In his work *De principiis rerum* (On the principles of things) he wrote: “The cave under the great chain of hills, where the native of Lucca, rich in fat oxen, ploughs with the crooked plough, oozes drops of water. We may observe that the moisture oozing there has turned into hard stone, and that soft water, with the passing of time, becomes hard rock.”[382]

In contrast with bamboo and chrysanthemums rocks do not wither or die; all rocks belong to the same category of objects but each rock is eternal and has a distinct, unrepeatable form. Instead of signifying the transience of human

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[379] Hay, “The Rocks and Chinese Art”, p.22.
[380] Cited in Smith Webster: “Observations on the Mona Lisa Landscape”, *Art Bulletin* 67, (1985): 183-199, (p.187).
[381] Hay, “The Rocks and Chinese Art”, p.20.
[382] Luke Morgan, *The Monster in the Garden: The Grotesque and the Gigantic in Renaissance Landscape Design*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), p.147.

culture like ruins in European landscapes, the formal changes that rocks undergo comprise a successful, self-generated transition from one state of self-contained energy to another. Rocks are manifestations of renewal and immortality, not disintegration and decrepitude.[383] The raw materiality of the type of stones preferred by Chinese literati - eroded, perforated, with a restless surface full of twisting peaks – exemplified the self-creating and self-sustaining cosmos. Through constant alterations the rocks' past is contained in their present. Their spectacle provokes respect and amazement; their antiquity –they are considered old as the universe- emanates wisdom. Unlike the bamboo or the chrysanthemum, the diverse, fantastic shapes of rocks alluded to a vast range of beings and objects contained in the visually perceptible world; for instance, in the Lion's Grove garden in Suzhou one mass of rocks represented lions and another one clouds.[384] Transported from the mountains to become parts of literati dwellings, these stones served aesthetic and educational purposes; occasionally they were slightly touched with tools - like twentieth-century Dada ready-mades - but in a way that the human intervention would be invisible.[385] Rocks gave solemn status and rich context to the gardens of scholar-recluses. They did not deliver a dry moral lesson but their contemplation could be a source of self-knowledge and understanding the cosmos.

Chinese fancy with rockeries should be associated with the Daoist concept of "*dongtien*" (洞 天, cave - heaven). In the beginning, the word denoted a paradisiac, incorruptible universe inhabited by deities which was believed to exist in caves located on mountains. Later the meaning of *dongtien* was altered and designated the intermediary realms between heaven and earth situated underground.[386] However, the word always referred to entrances from where common men could penetrate the immortals' domain. Confucian scholars, without embracing Daoist religious principles, accepted the concept

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[383] John Hay, "Structure and Aesthetic Criteria in Chinese Rocks and Art", *Anthropology and Aesthetic* 13 (1987) 5-22, (p.5).
[384] David Ake Sensabaugh, "A Few Rocks Can Stir Emotions", *Orientations: The Magazine for Collectors and Connoiseurs in Asian Art* 31, (2000), 32-39, (p 32).
[385] *Evocative Objects: Things we Think with*, ed. by Sherry Turkle, (Cambridge; Massachusetts, London; England: MIT Press 2007), p 256.
[386] Kiyohiko Munakata, "Mysterious Heavens and Classical Chinese Gardens", *Anthropology and Aesthetics* 15, (1988), 61-88, (p.64).

of such a land inhabited by eternal beings not as a doctrine but as a drive to imagination and poetic inspiration.[387] Stephen Bauer said that the earth was visualised as a sponge-like structure, whose fissures, shafts and channels constituted passages to another world.[388] Depending on their shape and formation rocks selected for scholar gardens might configure a variety of things; they had a porous surface covered with solids and voids which gave them a painterly quality due to the modulations between light and dark. Rifted into chasms, such stones illustrated the Daoist idea of *dongtien* and stimulated the creativity of poets and painters.

Natural rocks which demonstrated no signs of human intervention were the most appreciated because, as Mezcua-Lopez put it, they “belonged to the space of the *shanshui* (landscape); they were subjected to a purely moral and aesthetic contemplation which could incarnate the Confucian ethic ideals without being stained by human greed.” [389] Ancient stones embody the ideal of a retired life, away from worldly affairs. Moreover, their sight possessed a cleansing power; it removed lewd desires and restored tranquility in human mind-heart.[390] In Chinese culture, the rock, firm, unshakeable and capable of enduring hardship like bad weather conditions and the passage of time, had the decorum of a righteous person. Established as a cultural icon, it evoked the virtues of loyalty and perseverance, while it was not uncommon to attribute human feelings to it. In this age-old object, solitary literati, disappointed from political corruption and horrified by the contempt for the Confucian principles, expected to find a good companion and maintain a tranquil mind-heart.[391] Bai Juyi (772–846), poet of the Tang dynasty who also served as governor of Suzhou, expressed the idea that a lonely, disillusioned elderly sage, stranger in a world unsympathetic to ageing men, would look for a faithful friend among the ancient stones: “for ten thousand years had been left at the water bank. Coming back, I asked the pair of stones “Could you keep company to an old man like me?” Although the rocks could not speak,

[387] Kiyohiko Munakata, “Mysterious Heavens”, pp 64, 65.
[388] Wolfgang Bauer, *China and the Search for Happiness: Recurring Themes in Four Thousand Years of Chinese Cultural History*, (New York: The Seabury Press 1976), p 195.
[389] Mezcua Lopez, “Cursed sculptures, forgotten rocks: the history of Hangzhou’s Feilafeng Hill”, *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes 37*, (2017), 22-76, (p.36).
[390] Mezcua Lopez, “Cursed sculptures”, p.36.
[391] Mezcua Lopez, “Cursed Sculptures”, p.66.

they promised that we will be three friends."[392] The humane person, unwilling to surrender to a vulgar world, projects his virtuous stance to the "solitary rock"; this is a common topos in Chinese poetry. The poem of Zhu Chao (6th century AD) reads: "Facing its own shadow, almost like two gates; Standing alone, as if a separated patch of cloud… Though it is close to the Seven Peaks, It stands alone and would not join the crowd."[393] The translocation of rocks from their initial position to the private setting of a garden, even in the midst of a city like Suzhou, signified these objects' possibility of entering into a personal, dynamic relationship with human beings. In the European thought where the organic and inorganic matter, the animate and the soulless formed separate categories; the idea of a man creating associations with a rock only emerged in the nineteenth century.[394]

When taken by real connoisseurs and not obsessional petrophiles, rocks were domesticated but also spiritualised, invested with several meanings.[395] In his garden in Kaifeng, emperor Huizong (1082-1035), painter and stone connoisseur, kept a large number of rocks resembling animals and humans.[396] A visitor once described how basic social hierarchies, pivotal in Confucian tradition, were manifested through these appealing items: "The rocks on the side had various forms. Some looked like ministers having audience with the Emperor. They were solemn, serious, trembling and full of awe. Some were charging forward as if they had some important advice or argument to present."[397] Epitomizing the sets of relationships upon which state and society were structured, alluding to the importance of keeping the rites and behaving according to propriety, Huizong's rocks nourished humaneness in people's mind-hearts and contributed to the preservation of social harmony.

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[392] Xiaoshan Yang, *Metamorphosis,* pp.100-101.
[393] Xiaoshan Yang, *Metamorphosis*, p.96.
[394] Arthur Schopenhauer, maintained that the mineral realm (there are three more realms: the vegetable, the brute and human) is animated by the same will that energizes human beings at a lower degree of objectification. Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, 3 Vols, (London: Kegan Paul Trench, Trubner and Co 1909), I, p.231.
[395] Xiaoshan Yang, *Metamorphosis*, p.101.
[396] Graham Parkes, "Thinking Rocks Living Stones: Reflections on Chinese Lithophilia", *Diogenes* 25, (2005), 75-87, p.77.
[397] From the record of Hua Yang Palace by the monk Zi-xui, cited in Maggie Keswick, *The Chinese Garden*, 1978, p.54.

Mi Fu (1051-1107), a court poet and calligrapher during the Song Dynasty, was a renowned petrophile and avid collector of stones. A popular story about him tells us that he "adopted" a large, oddly shaped rock as his relative. Known for his extravagant personality, this poet would put on an official garb and visit it frequently in order to pay homage to it.[398] Mi Fu reportedly addressed the rock employing the following words: "Older brother, it has been twenty years I made a vow to come and meet you."[399] Min Zhen painted the encounter of the eccentric poet with his beloved stone in a work of 1776. (Fig.24) The figure of Mi Fu appears standing before this majestic object, lifting up his arms and joining his hands in a typical display of reverence, normally reserved for humans. The scholar, accompanied by two young servants posing discretely two steps behind him, enters into a dialogue with the stone; their communication takes a hieratic dignity. The exaggerated affection that Mi Fu harboured for his rock possesses a central place in the history of stone connoisseurship; there exist quite a few versions of this story, painted several times, particularly during the Qing dynasty. The peculiar passion of Mi Fu was not necessarily identified as a morally compromising lack of moderation. Actually, the author and historian Zhang Dai (張岱 1597-1684) in his *Reminiscences in Dreams of Tao An* (*Tao An Meng Yi* 陶庵夢憶) considered obsession over a noble thing as a prerequisite for experiencing pure emotions and possessing an unadulterated qi.[400]

The virtuous literati attributed a moral power to the rocks which were regarded as miniature forms of mountains partaking of these latter's powers and virtues. The Ming literatus Qi Biaojia (1602-1645) identified the rocks as the finest feature of his garden, the *Allegory Mountain*. The language he employed in the text cited below resonates with the lofty qualities traditionally associated with these items, which are embodiments of moral excellence and humaneness.

[398] Zuyan Zhou, *Androgyny in Late Ming and Early Qing Literature*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press 2003), p.117.
[399] Che Bing Chiu, *Jardins de Chine ou la Quête du Paradis*, (Paris : Editions de la Martinière, 2010) p.117.
[400] John Hay, "The Rocks and Chinese Art", p.27.

> Placed in the midst of water, even the most recalcitrant of them (the rocks) seems to acquire a divine intelligence. And it is only from my Abode for the Study of the Book of Changes that this perfect marriage between rock and water can be observed to full advantage. The abode overlooks the eastern corner of Asymmetrical Pond and stands across the water from the Hall of My Four Unfulfilled Obligations. As one raises one's eyes upwards or stares downwards, the sky and the pond present a seamless flow of purity and one feels a profound affinity for the birds and the fishes."[401]

In the proximity of water the virtues of large, strangely shaped stones shone forth fulfilling their purpose. Biaojia claims that a rock possesses mental faculties; when it emerges from a garden pond it resembles an ever flowing stream of purity, a quality transmitted to the observer. As men contemplate a rock their kinship with other creatures – parts, like humans, of the same universe - is strengthened. Rocks were also seen as agents of self-restraint and equanimity which contributed to the ethical improvement of people. For example, one of the rocks in the Pingquan estate of the scholar Li Deyu was considered capable of bringing an inebriated person to sobriety.[402] Endowed with intelligence a stone imparted it. Rocks as expressions of universe's harmonious movement could be factors of order and balance, provided that a collector would not indulge in the accumulation of stones the same way common people surrender themselves in their worldly habits, trampling on principles which regulate public duties for the sake of personal pleasure. Defending the disproportionate petromania of Niu Sengru on a moral ground, Bai Juyi wrote:

> …they (the rocks) showed off their oddness and displayed their grotesqueness all becoming things in the eyes of Your Lordship. Then Your Lordship received them as distinguished guests, regarded them as sages, treasured them as precious jade, and loved them as sons and grandsons. I wonder if they were summoned by your deliberate intention? Or were those superb creatures simply returning to their

[401] *Creativity in Exile*, ed. by Michael Hanne, (Amsterdam: Rodopi 2004), p.258.
[402] John Hay, "The Rocks and Chinese Art", p.19.

proper place? How could they have come for nothing? There must have been a purpose.[403]

The rock with its outlandish shape could be more valuable than riches, revered as a wise man, even cherished as someone's own flesh and blood; more than a trivial object or a fashionable commodity it created and maintained bonds similar to social ones.

Appropriately situated in a garden, a rock can amend what visitors perceive as mistakes of the designer; it can compensate for the unfortunate lack of proportion, the useless embellishments or the outnumbered edifices, giving a comforting impression of visual order. Thus, in the novel *the Story of the Stone* the initial exasperation of the Jia family patriarch who traverses the garden gives its place to contentment. "This building seems rather out of place here, said Jia Zheng. But as he entered the gate the source of his annoyance disappeared; for a miniature mountain of rock, whose many holes and fissures, worn through it by weathering of the wash of waters, bestowed on it a misleading appearance of fragile delicacy, towered up in front of him…"[404] Rocks were thought capable of establishing emotional equilibrium; like music in Tao Yuanming's poem these items could "quiet the passions", comfort sorrow, repose the weary. In an account from the late Ming dynasty we find out that when the famous collector Mi Wanzhong was feeling depressed a stone would improve his mood, if he was tired he would look at it to find rest.[405]

In Shitao's (Zhu Ruoji, 1642-1707) work known as "Outing to Master Zhang Gong's Grotto" the tiny figure of a man is depicted near the opening of a large cave. (Fig.25) The solitary individual seems to be contemplating the awe-inspiring view, or conversing with two dark, anthropomorphic rocks placed before him. The strongly Daoist timbre of the image which would be easily recognised by Chinese viewers was further emphasized by the artist in a colophon accompanying his painting. The scenic spot represented by Shitao

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[403] Xiaoshan Yang, *Metamorphosis*, p.113.
[404] Cao Xueqin, *The Story of the Stone*, vol 1., *The golden days*, (trans. David Hawkes), (Penguin Classics: 1974), p.339.
[405] Parkes, "Thinking Rocks", p.78.

in the peak of his career (1700) was the renowned abode of Zhang Daoling, a great Daoist Master of the second century AD. The theme enjoyed uninterrupted popularity among Chinese artists. Shitao renders the mystical interior of the cave –passage from the finite world to the abode of the immortals – visible to us. The enormous entrance is adorned with stalactites. Abundant rockeries enveloping it stimulate the imagination with their fantastic forms. These stones seem to have grown from the entrails of Zhang Gong's grotto, revealing its secret structure. Shitao compares the melancholic cavern to a strange, uneasy person and refers to the mother-goddess Nu-Wa who, according to an old legend, repaired the broken pillars of Heaven with multi-coloured rocks and created the first people using clay. According to Jonathan Hay, the anthropomorphic stones who imitate two "polished gentlemen" could either be associated with the primordial humans made by Nu-Wa, or personify larger-than-life Daoist adepts. The lonely man has entered into a silent dialogue with the refined rocks; spoken words, the poet says, are insufficient when one wishes to speak about great marvels regarding cosmic realities.[406]

> None is in Zhang Gong's grotto, but from inside Zhang Gong's grotto a spring breeze comes; born to blow on tens of thousands of men. Although it causes the mysterious forces of nature to leak out, such marvels are seldom spoken of by men. When most people talk about it they are always rather vague, yet I must paint both its spirit and its principle. The cave is dark and melancholy like a strange person; its restless nature compels the world to take notice. Once you escape into the deep mystery of the caves' interior, its features appear like tigers and leopards. Do you not see? Repairing this crack was like writing a poetic essay; Nu Wa, refining the rock, spared no luxury. Adding trees and peaks to this mixture was like giving it wings; elegant and refined it looks like a polished gentleman. Cave, oh cave, now it is in my painting although it lies so still and hidden, yet its reds and purples are brilliant. It can be a landscape all by itself.[407]

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[406] Jonathan Hay, *Shitao*, p.260.

[407] Cited in Jonathan Hay, *Shitao*, p. 260.

A rock, taken from a mountain to decorate a garden constitutes “a landscape all by itself” both by virtue of its origin and by virtue of its appearance. In the first case, as it was stated in the beginning of this section, a stone comprises a manifestation of telluric energy exemplifying the reality of the self-renewing universe; in the second case, its’ strange and ingenious formations refer to the myriad things contained in a landscape. Rocks, the bones of the earth, were not placed in a scholar garden for the sake of variety like the exotic follies (i.e. Chinese pagodas, Turkish tents) built in European parks. Colourful and refined, symbols of the material world and the transcendental realm, carefully chosen rocks incarnate themselves the idea of variety. The channels and indentations (lou) on their surface indicate the cosmic forces which fashioned them, while their texture (zhou) and foraminate structure (tou) characterized by multiple holes and openings express the transformations that compose the world as a whole and the interaction between solid and void. These three characteristics (lou, zhou, tou), together with leanness (shou) were fundamental attributes of a rock coveted by literati.[408]

A characteristic specimen among highly appreciated rocks can be encountered in the Lingering Garden (*Liú Yuán* 留园) in Suzhou. Transferred there by Liu Rongfeng, owner of the property since the late eighteenth century, this stone measures six and a half meters in height (Fig.26). It is situated between two smaller, complementary rocks: the Auspicious Cloud (Ruiyun) and the Caved Cloud (Xiuyun).[409] Liu explained that he had the rock “placed at a spot of the multi-storied building of Listening to the Rain at Hanbi Mountain Villa (former name of the Lingering Garden). Looking down from the multi-storied building above, the rock shows a momentum of a thousand clouds.”[410] Like most rocks found in the scholar gardens of Jiangsu province, the Cloud-capped Peak (Guanyunfeng) was extracted from the karst geological formations of Tai Lake, thirty-five miles away from Suzhou. The imposing size and complex structure of its surface contributed to its renown; the Cloud-capped Peak filled all the conditions which rendered a rock

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[408] Parkes, “Thinking Rocks”, p.76.
[409] Ron Henderson*, The Gardens of Suzhou*, (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), p.51.
[410] Chen Congzhou, *On Chinese Gardens*, (Shanghai: Tongji University Press, 1984), p. 135.

venerable as well as appropriate for the particular place.[411] Its name responds accurately to the visual impression it gives, not only due to its shape but also due to its towering height; like Ji Cheng advised in his essay on the *Craft of Gardens* (Yuanye) “artificial mountains should have the appearance of being about to soar into the air".[412] Similar to the standardised theatricality of mountains represented in Chinese paintings, the Cloud-capped Peak constitutes a powerful dramatization of the ontology of rocks as it was perceived in China.[413] Ron Henderson describes the stately stone in the Lingering garden dividing it in three parts: the lower is compact with one deep recess; the central part is offset from the base in a manner that vitalises the shape of the rock while the upper part, reaching high into the sky, has a large hole framed by shallow linear incisions which convey the vigorous life force – a most crucial quality for petrophiles.[414] The introduction to the twelfth-century treatise *Cloud forest catalogue of rocks* by Du Wan it is stressed that: “the purest energy (*qi*) of heaven-earth world coalesces into the rock. It emerges, bearing the soil. Its formations are wonderful and fantastic… Within the size of a fist can be assembled the beauty of a thousand cliff*s*.”[415] Occupying a limited space, rocks have the capacity to condense energy and the privilege to encompass – by being each one “a landscape all by itself*”*- the qualities encountered in a multitude of natural objects like trees, hills, cliffs. Due to their form and essence rocks contained all things that an eminent person must “have to tour about and rest with in order for his character to stay lofty, his qi affluent and his mind-heart tranquil and enlightened.”[416]

Nancy Rosenblum argued that rocks transferred in scholar gardens can be considered as the meeting point of nature and culture.[417] By its structure and appearance a rock constitutes the reconciliation of opposites, it epitomizes

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[411] Ron Henderson, *The Gardens of Suzhou*, (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), p. 51.
[412] Ji Cheng, *The Craft of Gardens*, (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press 1988), p.110
[413] John Hay, “Structure and Aesthetic Criteria”, p. 6.
[414] Henderson, *The Gardens of Suzhou,* p.51
[415] John Hay, *Kernels of Energy, Bones of Earth: The Rock in Chinese Art*, (New York: China Institute of America, 1985), p.38.
[416] Liu Zongyuan, “Ling ling san ting ji” 零陵三亭记 [“Record of Three Pavilions in Mount Ling”], in *Liu Zongyuan wenji*, Zhenpeng, 2011.
[417] *Evocative Objects*, Turkle, p.254.

balance and refinement.[418] The finite space it occupies has an infinite capacity of movement and the solid parts are in dialogue with the void. The numerous holes piercing its surface let the people's gaze wander in the invisible places hidden in the mineral body. Sometimes, a large hole in a rock like the Cloud-capped Peek encloses a piece of the sky. Its soaring movement unites the earth and the firmament and, directing our gaze, invites us to look up – like a ruin which emerges from antiquity as reference to human history and establishes a link between the past and the present. Finally, the timeless, other-worldly realm is expected to be found inside the cavities of the stone, in its physical substance.

In Chinese painting the rocks –symbols of antiquity and immortality- are frequently depicted together with evergreen trees such as pines and cypresses. An example is the work "*Ancient Cypress and Rock*" created by the eighty year old Wen Zhengming and dedicated to his young friend Zhang Fengyi (1527-1613) who, having failed the imperial examination in order to become a government official, laid ill in a Buddhist temple outside Suzhou (Fig.27). The painting shows a shriveled cypress whose drooping branches follow the formations of a rock represented just beside it; the entire rock bends towards the ground resembling a breaking sea wave. The colophon accompanying the work was also composed by Wen Zhengming: "Crushed by snow, oppressed by frost through the changing seasons, branches twisted, crown bent down, its disposition is still lofty. An old man remembers Du Fu's words, "Already marvel enough to astonish the world without any need of embellishing."[419] The final verse was borrowed from the famous *Ballad of the Ancient Cypress* of Du Fu (712-770), an important Tang dynasty poet. The elderly artist paid homage to Du Fu citing this latter's words about a proudly standing evergreen grown in the temple of an ancient warlord. The military leader's fame has faded, his deeds had fallen into oblivion but the tree continued to be cherished among the people without the assistance of human

[418] The verses "*Dark, Sallow, two slates of rocks… Of vulgar use they are incapable.* read the verses of Bai Juyi cited in Xiaoshan Yang, *Metamorphosis*, p.100.
[419] Craig Clunas, "Reading Wen Zhengming: Metaphor and Chinese Painting", *Word and Image 25*, (2009) 96-102. (pp.98, 99).

intervention.[420] The twisted, withered cypress depicted by Wen in 1550 has suffered the ravages of time and endured the hard weather conditions but retained its dignity. Wen's verses encourage the young Zhang Fengyi to display fortitude and not be disheartened by temporary adversities –illness, failure – since these occurrences cannot affect his humanness. It is important to remind that the elderly artist had life experiences identical to those of Zhang Fengyi since he had also failed the examination to become a civil servant several times.[421] Memory of past misfortunes and empathy for his afflicted friend played a crucial role in the creation of this painting and in the writing of the poem which elucidates the artist's intention.

This image, observed Craig Clunas, is not a clear metaphor as we would interpret it in the West. The cypress does not constitute a symbol; its broken, bending branches do not signify the ailing person who will eventually rise up and regain his strength; neither is the work a "metonymy" where Wen Zhengming represented the tree instead of Zhang Fengyi.[422] The evergreen tree and the rock allude to a particular situation; they are suggestive of an instance related to a tormented, aspiring youth and communicate a message easily understood by the erudite Chinese milieu of that era. The stone and the cypress depicted physically close to each other adopt a common "behaviour". They follow the same movement –leaning towards the ground instead of reaching up the sky – and are integral parts of the same universal pattern; the pattern to which Zhang Fengyi, humbled by his experience, lying on his sickbed in a Buddhist monastery belongs. In Wen's work, the rock and the tree, both as ever-changing organisms and as cultural objects of tremendous import, are associated with consoling truths and morally fortifying ideas. A tree sees many generations of men and when it dies its matter returns to the ground from which the eternal stone emerges; either proudly standing or ailing under rude circumstances (snow, frost, wind) the *disposition*, the essence of such items remains intact. Operating within a cultural context –i.e. Wen's painting- primordial rocks and ancient evergreens, subjected to the cosmic

[420] Clunas, "Reading Wen Zhengming", p.98.
[421] Zoe Pei-Yu Li, *Consoling Frustrated Scholars: A Copy of a Parting Gift by Wen Zhengming*, MA Thesis, (The University of British Columbia, 2007), p.4.
[422] Clunas, "Reading Wen Zhengming", p.99.

modus operandi, comprise examples of resilience and virtue. They refer to marvels which need no embellishment or artifice to be praiseworthy, they allude to intrinsic human qualities which do not rely on temporary success. They educate and comfort mortals like Zhang Fengyi reminding them of eternal truths which really matter.

The passionate collecting of rocks in China raised a series of questions about the moral risks as well as other negative consequences related to this practice which grew into an obsession, particularly during the Ming Dynasty. A text written by Yu Chunxi, a sixteenth-century Buddhist layman, refers to the senseless pillaging of Feilaifeng Mountain, situated in the outskirts of Suzhou; Yu focused on the problem created by the unrestrained action of petrophiles who, in order to construct artificial mountains for their private gardens, stripped Feilaifeng of its magnificent stones. Yu's "*Words on behalf of the rocks*" is a dialogue between a scholar and the mountain whose very existence is threatened.[423]

> You think that the mountain is an open property: in order to build imitations of the Lingyin Mountain why not just take bits from the true mountain? They are unaware that the mountain is the place where the clouds arise; carelessly they cut the clouds into pieces carrying away the force and the beauty of the mountain. First they carried off the floating stones and now they excavate my entrails.[424]

The conscientious author gives Feilaifeng a voice in order to protest against the unprecedented situation it endured as chisels and hammers worked ceaselessly to satisfy the vulgar petrophilia of literati who dwelt in Hangzhou province. In a dramatic tone, the mountain expresses its' bitter complaint provoked by many decades of plundering; it affirms its right to dispose of itself. Using subtle irony, Yu deplored people's avidity and disrespect for Feilaifeng's identity; their erudition, being superficial, did not prevent them from acting selfishly and without moderation. In Yu's text, the scholar represents the class which greedily amassed the most interesting rocks for

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[423] Mezcua Lopez, "Cursed Sculptures", p.65.
[424] Mezcua Lopez, "Cursed Sculptures", p.65

personal use. It is to a literatus without *ren* that the mountain, endowed with human feelings, declares its divine origin and auspicious character, proclaims its antiquity and intrinsic virtue; "I have stood upright on this ground from the time of Emperor Pangu to the present sage ruler, my name is 'the one who came flying', I give security to the prefectural city and protect man and beast."[425] To create false clouds in their private property, the literati destroyed the abode of the clouds; amassing fragments for the sake of transient pleasure mortal men deformed the integrity and diminished the beauty of a heavenly made object.

As I mentioned earlier, the obsession with rocks had supporters like Zhang Dai who found it morally acceptable under certain conditions; this attitude could be excused when the collector was a lofty individual with few worldly attachments and belongings. Generally, over-indulging into various cravings and predilections was discouraged; any intense intellectual pursuit or fixation with material objects was considered possible to compromise moral order. The unrestrained tendency to extract stones for private use was understood as a harmful form of self-expression, a compulsive behaviour proper to individuals who had failed to develop the virtue of temperance.[426] The main hazards of Chinese petromania were thought to be an excess of self-absorption which undermined men's devotion to their public duties and a lack of self-control which might compromise integrity. The continuous preoccupation of connoisseurs with their mysteriously shaped stones rendered them single-minded, narcissistic and in constant need to display an unorthodox mind-set which increasingly alienated them from conventional society.[427] At some point the obsessive rock collector could become as odd as the shape of the stone he cherished; his intelligence was tainted by his passion.

The depth of the relationship established between an individual and his rock was questioned by some scholars who claimed that the fixation with such objects was due to their extravagant forms and not to their prominent place in

[425] Mezcua Lopez, "Cursed Sculptures", pp.65, 66.
[426] Xiaoshan Yang, *Metamorphosis*, p.92, 93.
[427] Judith Zeitlin, "The Petrified Heart: Obsession in Chinese Literature, Art and Medicine", *Late Imperial China* 12, (1991), 1-26, (pp.3, 4).

the making of the cosmos and the moral benefits one reaped from contemplating them. In most cases, said the Song literatus Jin Junqing, petrophiles suffered from a vulgar addiction which reduced the stone to a commodity: “I came to you not because I was attracted to your appearances; what I love is your undaunted essence of firmness. Eventually you should be melted for repairing the sky; how can you be content with being such a trifling plaything?”[428] Furthermore, the accumulation of these items at any cost in human toil and money disrupted established social hierarchies. It damaged the filial relationships between the elite and the lower classes, the emperor and his ministers. The social repercussions of petromania were already openly raised under the Tang Dynasty. Thus, Pi Rixiu 皮日休; (ca.834-883) verses from the poem “*Lake Tai Rocks: A Product from the Top of the Sea Turtle Mountain*” read:

> For the able-bodied men to gather the rocks is more difficult than to net the corals… People young and old are mobilised to find them… If they find what suits their mind in what they play with, ranks and salary are awarded on the spot. Should there be noblemen coming to the emperor’s rescue, rising from the district of Lake Tai, they would, laughingly toward the west, ask: Would we get to be treated the same as the rocks?[429]

Obsession annihilated the king’s capacity of discernment; collecting rocks for personal pleasure should not pass before the duty towards his ministers and his people. Briefly, this unrestrained passion could render people with political power unwise and lead to corruption.

In the text where he described the rocks as bones of the earth, Leonardo Da Vinci (1452-1519) compared tufa to cartilages, water sources to veins of blood and the flow and ebb of the sea to the increase and decrease of the blood in a person’s pulses.[430] This analogy between the human body and the earth is echoed in several giant, awe-inspiring figures which were carved out of “living

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[428] From the poem of Jin Junqing *A Grotesque Rock* (QSS, 400.4917-18) quoted in Xiaoshan Yang *Metamorphosis*, p.131.
[429] Poem of Pi Rixiu (QTS, 610.7041-42) quoted in Xiaoshan Yang, *Metamorphosis*, p.117.
[430] Webster Smith, “Observations on the Mona Lisa Landscape”, *Art Bulletin* 67, (1985), 183-199, (p.187).

rock"[431] and constitute a significant feature of certain sixteenth-century Italian gardens.[432] The Sacro Bosco (Sacred Wood) of Pier Francesco Orsini (1523-1583) in Bormazo and the Villa di Pratolino of Francesco de Medici, Great Duke of Tuscany (1541-1587) in Florence, provide illustrious and fascinating examples of colossal stones transformed into gigantic living beings. These latter do not cease to resemble the rocks from which they emerged. In sixteenth-century Italy rocks become "anthropomorphic" thanks to human intervention; a competent artist turned them into statues so that they would effectively convey telluric processes.[433] For instance, Giambologna's Appennino in Pratolino, a bearded, crouching giant, incarnates the mountain as a geological feature and, at the same time, is represented as creator of the landscape (Fig.28).[434] Like European ruins which could not be appreciated if they were reduced to a formless rumble of stones, a slight touch of the chisel did not suffice to render the rocks of Italian landscape gardens appealing to Western viewers. Inspiration and expertise shaped these items into recognizable figures whose meaning was spelt out and therefore became easily accessible to the beholders' intellect and imagination.

During the Enlightenment, European travellers and landscape enthusiasts did not stay indifferent toward the presence of rocks in natural settings or gardens. However, the respect and interest for these objects –which do not turn into pieces of sculpture like in Renaissance Italy-, vary from one author to another. For Bernardin de Saint-Pierre rocks constitute a kind of "natural ruins" and must be appreciated as parts of nature's harmony. Their holes, cavities and cracklings have a practical utility instead of a cosmic dimension; they are necessary as they allow some plants to grow on them and provide shelters to certain animals which try to escape from the heat or the frost.[435]

Shenstone in his essay *Unconnected thoughts on Gardening* stated that broken rocks to which "we can hardly attribute either beauty or grandeur, when introduced near an extent of lawn, impart a pleasure equal to more

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[431] The term "living rock" is used to signify the rock carved in situ, without being displaced.
[432] Morgan, *The Monster in the Garden*, pp.127,128.
[433] Morgan, *The Monster in the Garden* pp.147, 148.
[434] Morgan, *The Monster in the Garden*, p.128.
[435] Saint Pierre, *Etudes de la Nature*, p.128.

shapely scenes." [436] Unlike the Chinese, Shenstone believed that stones only played a supplementary role in the landscape and possessed no aesthetic or moral value by themselves; they covered the need for variety, a necessary attribute of eighteenth-century European parks. William Gilpin, who as I mentioned earlier, travelled extensively in the English countryside and recorded his reflections related on picturesque beauty, found the sight of rocks both stimulating and worthy of discussion, acknowledging their power to bestow magnificence on a scene: "Detached from this continent of precipice, if I may so speak, stands a rocky hill, known by the name of Castellet. Under the beetling brow of this natural ruin we passed; and as we viewed it upwards from its base it seemed a fabric of such grandeur that alone it was sufficient to give dignity to any scene."[437] After his visit at Leasowes, Gilpin emphasized the strange beauty of the rocks, praising Shenstone for succeeding to create the best rock-scenery without affectation. An opponent of artificial elements in landscapes Gilpin observed that most manufacturers of rocks lacked taste and dexterity; they failed to give viewers an idea of what they wish to represent, contended to compile large stones with no distinctive character. He admitted that Shenstone's rocks, as well as the cascades and streams, constitute the exact copies of natural originals.[438] Yet, he makes no mention as to these items' contribution in people's moral cultivation.

In his work discussing the beauties of Hagley Park, Joseph Heely admitted that mountains, which belonged to the same category as rocks, although not products of refined culture or human labour, had a dignity which made them highly appropriate for a garden. To Heely their decorum was only related to their form and not to their being regarded as sources of vital energy, self-knowledge and understanding the universe. "Indeed for me a mountain was ever the noblest object; and this, as it ought to be considered as belonging to the park, rearing its gay sides so proudly before me, from whose summit I was

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[436] Shenstone, *Unconnected thoughts,* p.112.

[437] William Gilpin, *Observations on several parts of England particularly the mountains and lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland. Relative chiefly to picturesque beauty made in the year 1772*, (London: for T. Cadel and W. Davies, Strand 1808), p.195.

[438] Gilpin, *Observations on several parts of England,* p. 63,64

certain of looking down upon a more magnificent shew of nature than from the tower, was too flattering a circumstance to turn away from and not enjoy."[439]

In eighteenth-century Europe, mountains which happened to be parts of a landscape and rocks employed by garden designers for the embellishment of a privately owned rural space provoked diverse emotional responses. They were objects of admiration, aesthetic pleasure and formed stimulating subjects for poets and painters who lived in the 1700s. Europeans indulged in the splendour of their sight but regarded them as incidents – "too flattering a circumstance to turn away from and not enjoy". These honourable "natural ruins", as Bernardin de Saint Pierre named them, were not invested with the immense value, the multi-layered meaning they possessed in China, where men cherished them as companions and moral examples of purity and resilience.

2.4. "Purifying the Will" and "Enhancing Virtue" in the Garden.

Unlike European philosophers like Shaftesbury who despised "those forms and manners which come under the notion of good breeding"[440] and rejoiced for not having to assume them when he retired in his garden, Confucians did not usually question formal attitudes adopted in the royal court or other social circles as signs of affectation and hypocrisy. Both the rigid rules of etiquette - which extended from gestures employed to greet one's superior to the complicated rituals performed to honour the ancestors - and the carefree moments of roaming in the mountains comprised indispensable parts of self-cultivation. Song philosopher Shao Yon's 邵雍 (1011-1077) verses: "In leisure I understand the grandness of the Way; in quietness I feel the expansion of my spirit"[441] conform to Confucian teaching. Sima Guang's words praising the joyful freedom he experienced in the Garden of Solitary Enjoyment: "When in the mood I would stroll away by myself, letting my stick lead me wherever it

[439] Heely, *Letters on the Beauties of Hagley*, pp.180, 181.
[440] Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness*, p.78.
[441] Yang, *Metamorphosis*, p.215

goes"[442] do not defy time-honoured worldviews transmitted by Confucius. Encouraging relaxation in the solitude of scholar gardens or isolated places in the country never exempted people from their obligation to observe the rites. For the adepts of Confucianism the attachment to rigid ceremonial practices strengthened human candour instead of undermining it. Established formalities instilled certain attitudes and dispositions in the person who practiced them, rendering legitimate their pursuit of leisure. Finally, the yoke of conforming to the rites made men humble and taught them self-restraint, ultimately bringing harmony to the social body.[443] Aesthetic pleasure and fulfilment of duty co-operated in the process of training the passions and nourishing humanness.

The apotheosis of *reason* as a means to undermine the bigotry of institutional religion is proper to the Enlightenment but cannot be found in Confucianism.[444] The Chinese focused on the regulation of emotions, an expression of supreme virtue which constitutes the characteristic of orderly and decorous persons endowed with the capacity of reasoning. Like Shaftesbury who closely linked sentiments to moral judgements and maintained that a man's business is to examine the good, natural affections separating them from the ill and unnatural ones,[445] Confucius believed that emotions constitute manifestations of our ethical constitution. To lead an accomplished, well-tempered emotional life, not occasionally but every single day,[446] was presented as a necessary condition for the flourishing of the ren仁. As the Doctrine of the Mean argues, harmony is possible if pleasure, sorrow and anger are centred; if they emerge by their proper rhythms, occupying their appropriate place.[447] Through introspection men had to purify themselves

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[442] Yang, *Metamorphosis*, p.203
[443] Ivanhoe, *Confucian Moral Self-Cultivation*, p.4.
[444] Davis "China, the Confucian Ideal", p.547.
[445] Schmitter, Amy M., "17th and 18th Century Theories of Emotions", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), retrieved from: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/emotions-17th18th/>.
[446] On-Cho Ng , "Is Emotion (Qing) the Source a Confucian Antinomy?", *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 25, (1998), 169-190, (p 173).
[447] *The Doctrine of the Mean* 1, (trans. James Legge) cited in *Chinese Text Project*, Sturgeon, retrieved from: https://ctext.org/liji/zhong-yong

from destructive passions and morally harmful desires.[448] The passions Confucius required to be controlled did not consist only in the love of luxury, or the excessively strong sentiments of grief and felicity. He also believed that an exemplary person who had attained moderation should not feel anxiety or fear since this was the sign of troubled conscience, of the secret harbouring of wrong inclinations.[449]

A sixteenth-century painting made by Wen Zhengming (文征明1470-1559) and titled “Purifying the Will Place” evokes the Confucian virtue of temperance cultivated in the privacy of a scholar garden; the secluded space may symbolically allude to introspection which is crucial for the channelling of passions. Wen, Confucian scholar, painter and calligrapher created two albums inspired from the renowned Garden of the Humble Administrator (Zhuozhengyuan 拙政园): one in 1533 and another in 1551. In 1527, after retiring from a four-year unsuccessful involvement in politics, Wen settled in his hometown Suzhou and had a fruitful artistic career until his death. He was a friend of Wang Xianchen (王献臣 ca.1460-before 1550), the owner of the Garden of the Humble Administrator who, before the age of fifty, left his position as imperial envoy to live as a man of leisure in Suzhou. The two albums give contemporary researchers an idea of how this place would have looked like before posthumous interventions.[450] Since poetry formed an integral part of Chinese painting, Wen Zhengming’s verses completed the allegorical meaning of the visual content. Destined to host the scholarly, reclusive leisure of a Confucian literatus, this garden is embedded in the heart of an urban environment, thirteen acres of tranquillity surrounded by the city’s turmoil; this fact emphasizes its identity as eremitic landscape. As the subjects treated in Wen’s garden’s record disclose, solitude encouraged self-examination and facilitated the process of moderating emotions and cultivating humanness.

In the painting *Purifying Will Place* (Fig.29) an unidentified man who has turned his back to the viewer appears to be washing his feet in a lake. He

[448] Yuan Xingpei, “Tao Yuanming A Symbol of Chinese culture”, *Journal of Chinese Literature and Culture* 1, (2014), 216-240. (p.224).
[449] On-Cho Ng , “Is Emotion (Qing) the Source a Confucian Antinomy?”, p.173.
[450] Andong Lu, “Deciphering the Reclusive landscape”, pp.40, 58

could be the garden's owner, as well as a random individual of lower social standing. The place is deliberately represented to resemble any part of the countryside rather than a scene from the specific scholar garden. The bamboos growing abundantly on the waterside, along with a single tree on the left of the male figure comprise the only forms of vegetation. The work exudes an air of stillness while the absence of colours accentuates the impression of an austere, candid simplicity. The modest charms of Wen Zhengming's landscape do not strive to impress the viewer; this image is not about idyllic rural beauty. The man and the rural surroundings constitute the manifestation of an idea; they reveal an elevated, refined spirit relevant to the cleansing of human desire and the moderation of passions. The poem supplementing the image reads:

> I love this winding pond so limpid, now and then I come to play with this cold jade. Seen from above, it reflects my beard and eyebrows. I take off my shoes and wash my feet. The sun sets below the winding pool, tall bamboos reflect on it like a painting. When a gentle breeze waves, the blue sky dissolves in the chilly clear water.[451]

The immersion of one's feet in the water is an act which fits well in the leisurely context described in Wen's verses. In his poem the water in the pond is described clear as a precious stone, possibly because secluded life in this garden allowed the literatus Wang to stay away from the corruption and hardships which marked the political life of the Empire in the 1530s.[452] The loneliness of the human figure reinforces the impression that we are dealing with a place where one withdraws occasionally - "now and then I come to play" - and can be both a material and a mental abode. The stark vegetation and the portrayed individual, commoner or literatus, occupy only one part of the image. In the other part, the slightly agitated lake surface is united with the sky in the distant horizon. Wen Zhengming allows us to assume that when the apparently physical procedure of washing the feet in the pond is accomplished, this man's desires shall emerge sane and clean; he will be free from immoderate passions and dangerous inclinations. However, it is

[451] Lu Andong, "Deciphering the Reclusive Landscape", pp.55, 56.
[452] Ying Zhu, "Corruption and its discontent", *Screen* 57, (2016), 235-249, (p.235).

introspection in the serenity of the eremitic landscape that purifies will and not water. This scenic spot corresponds to a specific state of mind; it is a conceptual landscape, materialized in the Garden of the Humble Administrator. The cleansing qualities of the place are accessible through the senses (gentle breeze, limpid cold water) and could be related to the noble purpose of the conscientious individual who desires to cultivate emotional tranquillity restraining certain destructive cravings.

The idea behind Wen's image might also be inspired by a passage from Mencius' (孟子 372-288 BC) work Li Lou I (离娄上):

> There was a boy singing, "When the water of the Cang Lang is clear, it does to wash the strings of my cap; When the water of the Cang Lang is muddy, It does to wash my feet." Confucius said, "Hear what he sings, my children. When clear, then he will wash his cap-strings; and when muddy, he will wash his feet with it. This different application is brought by the water on itself.[453]

Both Wen's poem and Mencius' text revolve around the element of water. Clear water represents benevolent government, ideal social conditions; muddy water stands for times when corruption prevails. The wise delight in the water, said Confucius; the quality of wisdom here might allude to the concept of flexibility. The water constantly moves and can take the shape of its recipient. The text of Mencius advises the worthy person to adapt himself to political or social situations without having to trample on inviolable moral principles and destroy his integrity. In times of adversity and moral crisis, certain actions are possible without compromising your virtue. Evil comes from ourselves and not from external factors; Mencius' passage continues:

> A man must first despise himself, and then others will despise him. A family must first destroy itself, and then others will destroy it. A State must first smite itself, and then others will smite it. This is illustrated in the passage of the Tai Jia, "When Heaven sends down calamities, it is

[453] *Mengzi, Li Lou I* 9 (James Legge) cited in *Chinese Text Project*, Sturgeon, retrieved from: https://ctext.org/mengzi/li-lou-i

still possible to escape them. When we occasion the calamities ourselves, it is not possible any longer to live.[454]

The significance of self-examination interweaves with the idea of personal responsibility. Everyone is accountable for his success or his failure; the prosperity or the destruction of a state is determined by the rulers not by the actions of its external enemies. Happiness or ill-fate, acclamation or disdain, depend on the diligence of the individual who understands the mandate of Heaven and fulfils his duty in all propriety: to practice introspection, cultivate temperance and nourish humaneness.

Espousing the Confucian principle of *bide* (edifying power of natural beauty) Qianlong Emperor proclaimed that living in a garden was one of the most appropriate ways for developing one's noble, pure dispositions; the association of enjoying scenic views and increasing in virtue is prominent in an album containing forty scenes from the Imperial Garden of Perfect Brightness. Commissioned by Qianlong in 1744, the work was undertaken by court painters Sehn Yuan and Tang Dai, as well as the calligrapher Wang Youdun; each scene is accompanied by a poem written by the emperor. The album constitutes one of the few visual records of Yuanmingyuan before this latter was burned down and looted by French and British troops (1860) during the Second Opium War.[455] The poem composed for the thirty-sixth scene (Fig.30) and titled "Bathe Body and Enhance Virtue" (*Zǎoshēn yùdé* 澡身浴德) reads: "The autumn water is in harmony with the skylight, It is neither exhausted nor overfilled, Only such a situation is the virtue of a virtuous man. I look upon the empty brightness of the water, In this mirror I recognize myself silently". The water in Qianlong's text refers to the Fortunate Sea (Fuhai 福海), a large water surface situated in the garden. Bathing the body in this lake a man could emerge more virtuous. Constantly reflecting the light, the Fortunate Sea functions as a looking glass where the silently meditating emperor

[454] *Mengzi, Li Lou I* 9, cited in *Chinese Text Project*, Sturgeon, retrieved from: https://ctext.org/mengzi/li-lou-i
[455] Li, Lillian. *"The Garden of Perfect Brightness – 1: The Yuanmingyuan as Imperial Paradise (1700-1860)".* MIT Visualizing Cultures. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2012 Retrieved from: https://visualizingcultures.mit.edu/garden_perfect_brightness/ymy1_essay03.html

"recognizes himself", increases in self-awareness and achieves enlightenment.[456] The phrase "neither exhausted nor overfilled" alludes to the Confucian middle (temperance), which preoccupied Qianlong's father Yongzheng: "when the ultimate middle and the harmony is reached heaven and earth will be positioned and all things will be raised. A virtuous man's middle way is his being timely and on the middle. The middle of a virtuous man is to respectfully unify all the behaviours towards the middle."[457] Wen Zhenming's "Purifying the Will" and Qianlong emperor's "Bathe Body and Enhance Virtue" are inspired by the same principles and transmit a common moral message.

2.5 Chinese Hermits: Epitomizing Virtuous Life in Eremitic Landscapes.

In China, eremitism had gained great popularity and esteem since the Han dynasty (206 BC -220 AD). As a result, some excessively ambitious officials who wanted to attract attention would hypocritically assume the posture of the high-minded recluse who withdraws from the world in order to pursue self-cultivation. With their insincere attitude they further hoped to reinforce their worldly ties and take up high positions, trampling on the eremitic ideal. Recognizing the authentic recluse was important. During the Han dynasty a man's capacity to espouse the eremitic identity was not associated with his social and professional background but with his refined or lofty nature; his moral integrity. Thus, we encounter the terms shiyin - the "recluse of the marketplace"- who might work at a number of occupations and chaoyin - the "recluse of the court"- who was involved in politics and culture.[458] The figure of the hermit became increasingly linked to the scholar-officials.

Withdrawal from the turmoil and strife of public life was not eulogized in a society where Confucian values had prevailed; humanness and aloofness were incompatible. Reclusion was above all a virtuous disposition; to conquer it, it was not necessary to physically retire in the mountains but to adopt a

[456] Hui Zou, *A Jesuit Garden*, p.49
[457] Hui Zou *A Jesuit Garden*, p.48
[458] *The Artful Recluse*, Sturman, p.21.

disengaged attitude towards public office and the honours deriving from it.[459] Several literati were reduced to lead a retired life due to war, exile or personal failure in their role as civil servants. Others who aspired to become perfect recluses had to reconcile the obligations related to their political responsibilities with their deep-seated desire to distance themselves from worldly affairs. To live as a genuine hermit depended on one's capacity to transcend external circumstances, an idea expressed in the verses of Tao Yuanming: "When the mind is detached, the place becomes remote by itself."[460] Bao Rong, poet of the Tang Dynasty (8th century) also wrote about exemplary eremitism:

> By the river there is a true hermit: You have lived quietly for years now. The hut you constructed is near the western avenue; the trees you planted have long formed shades. Human footprints barely reach your door; Carriage noises in the distance are separated by the grove. You say you understand things of the dusty world: Even the narrowest of spots, dust stirred by a canopied carriage can rise. One doesn't have to be in Mount Lu or Mount Huo to practice the Way; understanding serenity comes from the mind.[461]

Although the hermit could be found in the emperor's court, in the artistic realm his secluded existence is inextricably linked to the landscape. In painting and poetry the junzi can be represented or described as a hermit. In the process of becoming hermits men involved in state governance encounter ideal recluses in various forms and contexts. Thus, a junzi who is enamoured with the landscape delights in the "secluded freedom of fishermen and woodsmen".[462] Strolling in the countryside he comes across the "man of the hills"[463] and asks him the way to the mountains, where lofty people can cultivate their "fundamental nature."[464] The hermit is carefree, independent and willingly abides poverty. Frugal and pure, he is detached from public

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[459] *The Artful Recluse* Sturman, p 21.
[460] *Ancient and Early Medieval Chinese Literature: A reference guide*, David Knechtges and Taiping Chang (eds), (Leiden-Boston: Brill 2014), p. 1106.
[461] Xiaoshan Yang, *Metamorphosis*, p.52.
[462] Susan Bush and Hsio yen Shih, *Early Chinese Texts on Painting*, (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press 2012) p.150.
[463] *The Artful Recluse*, Sturman, p.114.
[464] Bush, *Early Chinese Texts*, p.150.

praise and does not desire worldly compensation. His moral strength is exemplary and his wisdom is coveted. Fishing, carrying wood or reading, he is always refined and never vulgar. Like the European hermit he seeks peace and fulfilment away from turmoil; he wants to take life in his own hands and “spend it happily, communing with nature.” [465]

The lonely fisherman, his face hidden under a straw hat, plying his line in an immense mass of water which is separated from the sky with remote mountains, comprised an emblematic figure of reclusion. Zhang Xuezeng’s work (active: 1633-1657) treating this specific theme was created in the years that followed the overthrowing of Ming dynasty (Fig.31). The poem accompanying his painting emphasizes the moral superiority of the anonymous man who does not lose his tranquillity due to hardships. Renouncing the burdens of worldly affairs, humbly dressed on his leaf-like boat, he focuses on the simple task of catching fish for his meal.[466] “Reincarnated, mystifying return: a single fisherman’s skiff; don’t speak of fortune or misfortune; don’t record the years. The general at the head of his troops wears a thousand layers of armour, but these cannot match in strength the half collar of the green coir jacket.”[467] The verses probably refer to the stance of valiant Ming loyalists who refused to serve the foreign Qing choosing exile and accepting loss of social status. During the Manchu rule, the painter Zhang assumed a position as prefect of Suzhou but relinquished his post after one year.[468] In the fortitude and equanimity of the fisherman which allude to the courage of the artist and his likeminded friends, we may discern both Daoist and Confucian elements. The poem suggests an ideal existence of emotional detachment; the passage of time, good fortune or adversity, the good or poor outcome of his modest labour are of no importance to the man who lodged in the infinitude of this landscape, unsullied from the dust of the world. At the same time, the pure disposition of

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[465] The verse is from the poem Temple Lamentation and Robe burning of Chen Jiru, To participate in worldly affairs produces clamour; to dissociate from worldly affairs results in peace… Spending one’s life in calculation is as unreal as the image of a flower in the mirror. I intend to take the rest of my life into my own hands and spend it happily, communing with nature, James Greenbaum, *Chen Jiru (1558-1639); The Background to Development and Subsequent Uses of Literary Personae*, (Leiden-Boston: Brill 2007), p.18.

[466] *The Artful Recluse*, Sturman 184.

[467] *The Artful Recluse*, Sturman 185.

[468] *The Artful Recluse*, Sturman 185.

the poor fisherman, superior to that of a military leader, is the fruit of his virtue more than the result of his leaving the human realm; as Mencius said, evil and corruption comes from within the man and not from external factors. The recluse of Zhang Xuezeng, a detail in the immense space comprised of water and mountains, has forged his will, channelled his desire and is capable to regulate his passions. Finally, I would argue that the natural environment into the vastness which he has merged is not only the refuge offering him peace but could also be interpreted as an allusion to his inner freedom.

Xiang Shengmo's (1597-1658) ambitious "*Invitation to Reclusion*" (1625-1626) is related to his failed attempt to become a scholar-official and his subsequent decision to dedicate himself to painting (Fig.32). In this work Xiang portrayed himself as a gentleman dressed in white, holding a walking staff and trying to traverse a serpentine path among the cliffs. In the middle of the scroll the wandering young artist meets the person who will show him the way deeper in the mountain; wearing a dark shirt, the hermit takes Xiang by the hand and extends his arm in a gesture of invitation, encouragement and guidance. The joys of reclusion are both known and awaiting to be discovered in the paradisiac scenery with pine groves, waterfalls and villas.[469] In one of the twenty-six poems included in his work, some verses describe Xiang Shengmo's eremitic ideal: "Entering the mountain is not avoiding the world. But a deep desire to be far from floating fame…The submerged fish knows not to take the bait; forest birds have never been startled. Surely I will dream of dissolving all dust."[470] Again, we are told that to withdraw is to maintain the right disposition, to ignore the sirens' song which cradles vain ambitions, to cultivate the moral self and become tranquil and humane.

Like in Europe, the figure of the Chinese recluse often interweaves with the idea of erudition. As I discussed in the first part of the chapter, Richard Wilson's hermits engage in a scholarly discussion in the wilderness while Hubert Robert's recluse is portrayed absorbed in his book inside a private garden. In Mi Wanzhong's (1570-1628) work of 1609 "Reading in a Pavilion by a Stream" (Fig.33) a lonely scholar sits inside his thatch-roofed house with

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[469] *The Artful Recluse*, Sturman, p.114.
[470] *The Artful Recluse* Sturman, p.113.

a manuscript open on the table before him. The modest dwelling is situated by the foot of a mountain near a pine-tree thicket and overlooks an imposing waterfall. In the vertical space of the paper, the artist deployed a succession of wafting rock formations and groves. Another pavilion and a Buddhist monastery built higher up in the mountain allude to the presence of people who also lead a secluded life. The hermit in his cabin has lifted his eyes from the book; his gaze is fixed on the cascade. The magnificence of the landscape dwarfs the humble, discrete sage whose solitary existence and occupation (reading) constitute, nonetheless, the theme of this work.[471]

The extremely small size of human figures depicted in rural settings is typical in Chinese painting. The argument maintaining that this way artists tried to underline the splendour of the natural world showing that human beings are subordinate to it seems to be based on a Western, anthropocentric concept. I would argue that the grandeur of the depicted landscape, the overpowering presence of high mountains, vast lakes and precipitous rocks correspond to the importance they have in the hermit's existence. The infiniteness and endurance of the landscape are not simply juxtaposed to the temporal, trifling presence of men. The magnificence of natural elements echoes the recluse's noble aspirations, moral perfection and happiness. Towering hills and deep forests reflect his will to train his emotions, control his passions and raise his mind-heart above vain desires of ephemeral glory. The landscape is as big as the person's yearning for virtuous reclusion:

> He is fond of hidden solitude, never seeking wealth he is always content. His heart is like still water, his form like arid wood. He wears cotton robes and dwells in a yellow thatched hut. His body is in peaceful repose; his dreams are pure and sound. He is a man of a thousand books and a song of the qin zither.[472]

Temperance, frugality, moral integrity, wisdom, serenity and well-being are concepts which permeated the ideal of eremitic life in the landscape both in Europe and in China. Although related to a social and intellectual elite

[471] *The Artful Recluse*, Sturman, p.118.
[472] The poem comes from a portrait of Suzhou recluse, scholar and poet Pan Qintai, created in 1621 by Zeng Jing (1564-1647). Cited in *The Artful Recluse* Sturman. 117.

pursuing self-cultivation, the awe-inspiring Chinese landscapes with hermits give an impression of humility which seems entrenched in the conviction that human beings share the same dignity with rocks, rivers and trees. In a poem of Xiang Shengmo the natural elements themselves invite a person to become a hermit: “If the mountains do not summon me to reclusion, then when would I become a Lord recluse?”[473] In the iconic fisherman of Zhang Xuezeng, the message is delivered with subtlety and discretion, while colourful British works like Wilson’s *Solitude* which voiced the eremitic ideal of British landed gentry have a more conspicuous moralising character. At the same time, in Wilson’s painting the two hermits’ position in the landscape does not appear hegemonic; the two men draw virtue and worth from their relationship with the rural environment which is of vital importance for their moral improvement and do not try to subdue it. Eighteenth-century European landscapes with hermits like that of Wilson allow us to deduce that the orthodox anthropocentric perception of the natural world in Europe had changed during the Enlightenment.

The eremitic landscape in China and Europe is a physical and cultural topos appropriate for introspection; a place of virtue and self-awareness, where recluses retired to preserve themselves from urban turmoil, political corruption and tribulations which risked compromising their integrity. In these landscapes, Chinese men from the time of Confucius until the Qing dynasty and Europeans from the Roman antiquity to the eighteenth-century would seek tranquillity and moral excellence. There, studying the cosmic order and meditating social realities, people might understand their relation to the universe and their role in the human realm, cultivate temperance, nourish their good passions and become perfectly humane. An eremitic landscape could be a vehicle for the consolidation of historical identity in both civilisations; however Chinese and Europeans who strolled in the countryside or withdrew in their private gardens had different ways of forming links with the past. In the first case, bonding with ancestral grandeur and realizing human transience were achieved introspectively; a rumble of stones under a field of millet sufficed. In Britain and France, images of ancient glory had to be artificially

[473] *The Artful Recluse*, Sturman, p.113.

reproduced, becoming fully visible and tangible in order to generate national pride and humility for the passing of greatness. The Chinese recluses employed natural objects -which they regarded as invested with subjectivity- as vehicles for training their passions and nurturing the ren. In the European thought such objects (flowers, trees) could be used to commemorate virtues but did not possess intrinsic moral qualities. Certain elements (fake ruins, collections of rocks) associated with the reclusive landscape-dwelling contributed to moral improvement; at the same time they entailed the danger of becoming obsessions, undermining the virtue of moderation. Finally, both cultures emphasized the necessity of maintaining the right disposition – tranquillity, detachment and propriety- in order to fully taste the advantages and enjoy the fruits of living in eremitic landscapes.

SECOND PART: EREMITIC LANDSCAPES, FRIENDSHIP AND PUBLIC DUTY IN CONFUCIAN CHINA AND ENLIGHTENMENT EUROPE: CULTIVATING EMPATHY IN RECLUSION.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND.

3.1 Performing Public Duty as Ultimate Purpose of Self-cultivation.

Confucius who connected the noblest human qualities to the landscape: "The wise delight in water; the benevolent delight in mountains. The wise are active; the benevolent are tranquil. The wise are joyful; the benevolent are long-lived", had also claimed: "I can't form associations with birds and beasts; if I don't associate with humans who then will I associate with?"[474] Rural environment favours virtue but the end of virtue is to benefit mankind. *The Doctrine of The Mean* (Zhongyong 中庸) focuses on conscious human self-cultivation which is associated with a person's capacity to act for the public welfare (gongyi 公益). Zhongyong outlines how the establishment and maintenance of external social hierarchies which govern rulers and ministers, fathers and sons, husbands and wives, older and younger brothers depend upon the conscientious cultivation of certain inner qualities: knowledge, benevolence and courage.[475] The most concise definition of self-cultivation which leads to benefit the people may be found in *The Great Learning* (Daxue 大学) which taught "to illustrate illustrious virtue; to renovate the people; and to rest in the highest excellence."[476] Referring to the self-cultivation of kings, the *Daxue* affirms: "Their persons being cultivated, their families were regulated. Their families being regulated, their states were rightly governed. Their states being rightly governed, the whole kingdom was made tranquil and

[474] *Analects* 18,6, (trans. James Legge) cited in *Chinese Text Project*, Sturgeon, retrieved from: https://ctext.org/analects/wei-zi
[475] Li Zehou, *The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition*, p.15.
[476] *Great Learning* 1, (trans. James Legge), *Chinese Text Project*, Sturgeon, retrieved from: https://ctext.org/liji/da-xue

happy."[477] Meanwhile Daxue clarifies that self-cultivation is important for men regardless of social status: "From the Son of Heaven, down to the mass of the people, all must consider the cultivation of the person the root of everything besides." [478] The ideal has sustained throughout the imperial age of China. The Neo-Confucian philosopher of Song Dynasty Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017-1073) for example, also posited that: "The five moral principles of man's nature (humaneness, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and faithfulness) are aroused by and react to the external world and engage in activity; good and evil are distinguished and human affairs take place."[479] Self-cultivation depends on the exemplary person's (junzi) faithful observance of the rites (*li*). As I discussed in the previous chapter compliance with the rites was not concerned simply with a mechanical enactment of specific behaviours, but regarded the diligent performance of duty related to a person's social role towards the other: father, son, king, brother or friend. It was about assuming the role and accepting the responsibilities related to it.[480] The Confucian *ren*, which ultimately denoted love of humanity, depended on functional interpersonal relationships as did the preservation of social harmony; in the Book of History (Shu 书) this is made explicit: "Oh! Simply by being a good son and friendly to his brothers a man can exert an influence upon government"[481] The ability of relating to other persons in all propriety determined the capacity of the ruler to exercise authority and that of the minister to advise his king.

Confucianism is permeated by a profound sense of altruism and compassion. In the Analects the disciple Zilu asked the Master about governance and the

[477] *Great Learning* 2, (trans. James Legge), *Chinese Text Project*, Sturgeon, retrieved fro: https://ctext.org/liji/da-xue
[478] "Son of Heaven" was the title of the Chinese Emperor. *Great Learning* 2, (trans. James Legge), *Chinese Text Project*, Sturgeon, retrieved from: https://ctext.org/liji/da-xue
[479] Davis, *China, the Confucian Ideal*, p.525
[480] Robert Eno, *The Great Learning*, p.17 retrieved from: https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/2022/23422/Daxue-Zhongyong.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y
[481] *Analects* 2:21, Cited in "He Yuanguo Confucius and Aristotle on Friendship: A Comparative Study", *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 2, (2007), 292-307, (p.292).

latter replied, "Be first to the task and comfort others at their labours."[482] During the Song Dynasty (eleventh century AD) the same preoccupation for public welfare emerges. Fan Zhongyan in his Record of the Yueyang Pavilion (1046 AD) communicates the ideal of moral commitment towards the people. "First feel concern for the concerns of the world. Defer pleasure until the world can take pleasure."[483] The ruler's main duty in the Confucian state was to educate and reform the people. Reading the Analects we deduce that this was ideally accomplished not by violent enforcement of law, but by exercising benevolent authority and setting an illustrious moral example: "If the people be led by laws, and uniformity sought to be given them by punishments, they will try to avoid the punishment, but have no sense of shame. If they be led by virtue, and uniformity sought to be given them by the rules of propriety, they will have the sense of shame, and moreover will become good."[484] The same rule applied to all Chinese government officials. In Confucianism the acquisition of wisdom and moral integrity is inscribed in an unselfish mindset; it transcends the personal profit and has a social effect. Actions for the greater good of society, altruism and a sense of communal obligation acquired through introspection constitute core themes of the Confucian discourse; in Europe the same is true for Roman Stoics, Renaissance Humanists and Enlightenment philosophers.

In ancient Rome, the Stoics held the conviction that leisure and self-cultivation in secluded rural spaces should be accompanied by social interaction and a determination to participate in public affairs. The duty of a philosopher or a sage, even when he retired in the countryside, was to serve the common good; his wisdom had to profit the entire social body, be a benefactor of his fellow-men. The ideas of Stoics found their continuity in the Early Renaissance. In the fourteenth century, Francis Petrarch, later regarded as

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[482] Analects 13:1 cited in Robert Eno, *The Analects of Confucius: An Online Teaching Translation*, 2015 p.66 retrieved from https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/2022/23420/Analects_of_Confucius_%28Eno-2015%29-updated.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y

[483] Cited in Richard Strassberg and Stephen Whiteman *Thirty Six Views*: *The Kangxi Emperor's Mountain Estate in Poetry and Prints*, (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection 2016), p.226.

[484] *Analects,* 2,3 (trans. James Legge) in *Chinese Text Project*, Sturgeon, retrieved from: https://ctext.org/analects/wei-zheng

the father of Humanism, had acknowledged the moral weight of classic authors such as Cicero and Seneca without discarding the medieval scholasticism shaped by doctors of the Church such as saints Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. Petrarch argued in favour of solitude as a form of defence against the corruption of city life. The seclusion he occasionally enjoyed in the French valley of Vaucluse, away from the papal court in Avignon where he held various clerical positions and excelled as a scholar, provided him with a sense of comfort, well-being and safety.[485] Petrarch found it hard to deal with his popularity; his fame did not allow him to experience any solitary moments: "Whether I go out into the open or remain sitting at home, I must still be in the public gaze,"[486] he complained. Petrarch clarified that he rejected self-indulgence and selfish detachment from the world. He envisaged forms of solitude and leisure which would be productive and advantageous to many people.[487] In his mind, preoccupation with public welfare was an ultimate proof of human kindness provided that the socio-political context permitted it:

> For what is more blessed, more worthy of a man, and more like divine goodness than to serve and assist as many as need help ? Whoever is able to do so and does not, has repudiated, I think, the glorious duty of humanity and proved false to the name as well as the nature of man. If it is proved that this is possible, I shall freely subordinate my private inclination to the public welfare and, abandoning the place of retirement in which I consulted only my own humour, I shall venture forth where I can be of use to the world.[488]

Petrarch, in a letter written to an unknown friend delineates the hostile context which would legitimise withdrawal from public life. The text gives a very bleak image of the corrupted papal court in Avignon, qualifying it as the *Babylon* of the West, a term employed in the New Testament book of Revelation to

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[485] Brian Vickers, "Leisure and idleness in the Renaissance: The Ambivalence of Otium", *Renaissance Studies* 4, (1990), 107-154, (pp. 111, 112).
[486] *Petrarch A critical guide*, Kirkham, p.184.
[487] From Petrarch's *De Vita Solitaria*: "I mean a solitude that is not exclusive, leisure that is neither idle nor profitless, but productive of advantage to many." Cited in Vickers, "Leisure", p.112.
[488] Cited in Charles Trinkaus, "Views on the Individual and His Society", *Osiris* 11 (1954), 168-198, (p.187).

describe an evil kingdom which provokes divine wrath. Instead of serving Christ, posited Petrarch, contemporary popes were guilty of all vices. The princes of the Church, despising the apostolic example, had willfully abandoned sobriety and frugality and had surrendered to iniquity, cupidity, ambition, gluttony and various lustful pleasures.[489] Petrarch's idea about retiring from public affairs can be traced in the texts of Stoic philosopher and statesman Seneca (4 BC- 65 AD) who believed that, when unfavourable political conditions could compromise virtue and good life abstention was a legitimate option; in times of great disorder a sage man should not participate to governance because he would be unable to benefit his country.[490] Similarly, as stated before, in Confucian thought periods of moral decadence were not considered favourable for those who occupied government positions. In certain cases, pulling out was promulgated as a safer, morally acceptable choice: "My doctrines make no way. I will get upon a raft, and float about on the sea", said Confucius.[491] In Europe, during the Enlightenment, a person's virtuous character and personal felicity were expected to actively serve a universal cause which is not concerned with metaphysical enquiries or religious devotion – Petrarch's scruples related to his Christian faith were obsolete - but with the moral and physical well-being of all the others. Finally, Lord Shaftesbury maintained that virtue was part of the bigger concept of goodness; something is good only if it contributes to the welfare of the entire system of which it is a part. "To love the Public, to study universal good, and to promote the Interest of the whole World, as far as lies within our power, is surely the Height of Goodness", he posited.[492]

3.2 Tranquillity of the Mind and Public Welfare.

[489] James Harvey Robinson, *Readings in European History*, vol 1, (Boston-New York, Chicago London: Ginn and Company, 1904) pp.502-503. "Instead of holy solitude we find a criminal host and crowds of the most infamous satellites; instead of soberness, licentious banquets; instead of pious pilgrimages, preternatural and foul sloth; instead of the bare feet of the apostles, the snowy coursers of brigands fly past us, the horses decked in gold and fed on gold, soon to be shod with gold, if the Lord does not check this slavish luxury"

[490] Schils, *The Roman Stoics*, p.85.

[491] Analects 4,7, (trans. James Legge) in *Chinese Text Project,* Sturgeon, retrieved from: https://ctext.org/analects/gong-ye-chang

[492] *Shaftesbury*, *Characteristic*, Klein, p.20.

To those Confucian scholars implicated in public affairs, rural environment offered the tools to acquire a tranquil temperament and cultivated people's good passions by helping their mind-heart stay lofty and enlightened. Tranquillity is the basis of wisdom and good judgment which enable men to exercise authority benevolently: "The point where to rest being known, the object of pursuit is then determined; and, that being determined, a calm unperturbedness may be attained to. To that calmness there will succeed a tranquil repose. In that repose there may be careful deliberation, and that deliberation will be followed by the attainment of the desired end."[493] In a passage from the "*Record of Three Pavilions in Mount Ling*" cited in the previous chapter, the Tang dynasty scholar official Liu Zongyuan claimed that touring and viewing the landscape was associated with the capacity of enlightened governance because it kept thoughts in good order, the mind-heart gentle and prevented the agitation of *qi* maintaining one's will and intentions unhindered.[494] The Neo-Confucian Zhou Dunyi confirmed the idea that equanimity and self-restraint, fruits of self-cultivation, are essential in performing public duty. In his work Shengxue (Study of the Sage) we read: "Unity is having no desire. If one has no desire, then one is tenuous while tranquil, straight while active. Being tenuous while tranquil, one becomes intelligent and hence penetrating; being straight while active, one becomes impartial and hence all-embracing."[495] Following the Neo-Confucian concept of yi ('oneness'), according to which everything in the world contained within itself all the principles in the universe, and the concept of jing (still, or tranquil) Qianlong Emperor (reign 1736-1795) named his garden Jingyi Yuan 静宜园.

[493] *Great Learning* 1, (trans. James Legge), *Chinese Text Project*, Sturgeon, retrieved from: https://ctext.org/liji/da-xue

[494] Liu Zongyuan, "Ling ling san ting ji" 零陵三亭记 ["Record of Three Pavilions in Mount Ling"], in *Liu Zongyuan wenji*, 2 vols., ed. Liu Zhenpeng (Beijing Book Co. Inc., 2011). "Some consider that touring and viewing landscape does not concern governance; this is not true. Because once qi is agitated, our thoughts will be disordered; once our sight is obstructed, our intention is hindered. A nobleman must have tools for him to tour about and rest with, instruments for his character to stay lofty and his mind-heart enlightened."

[495] *Neo-Confucianism A Philosophical Introduction*, ed. by Stephen C. Angle and Justin Tiwald, (Cambridge: Polity Press 2017), p.102.

[496] In the same spirit, explaining the name of his studio "Ao-Kuang" (innerness-openness), Qianlong maintained that sagehood (*sheng-ren*, 聖人), developed privately in the innerness of a benevolent man's mind-heart, had to manifest in the "myriad things' in the universe and benefit society. "*Kuang* enables one to deal with the broadness of public affairs; *ao* makes one adaptable to such affairs. If one only cultivates the self and fails to open to public affairs, one fails to engage with society. If one deals with myriad things without paying attention to self-cultivation, one will be lack of guidance." [497]

In the same spirit, Qianlong's *Later Record of Yuanmingyuan* emphasized the importance of finding the perfect balance between garden-dwelling, which was a source of tranquility, and the strenuous task of governing a kingdom. A reasonable amount of time spent in a scenic environment could shape the character, calm the passions and render the emperor capable of exercising his authority efficiently and humanely.

> "During leisure hours between court audiences, an emperor must have his own place for roaming around and appreciating expansive landscapes. If a balance of work and leisure is obtained, the garden will foster good personality. If balance is not achieved, he will indulge in futility and confuse his sense of purpose. If he pays too much attention to palace buildings, riding and archery, rare skills and curiosities, his attention to worthy officials and their propositions, his diligent administration and his love of the people will grow thin. The damage is really beyond description."[498]

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[496] Ivanhoe explains how the Neo-Confucians developed a stronger sense of oneness as a kind of identity between self and the world, Philip Ivanhoe, *Senses and Values of Oneness*, Paper presented in December of 2010 (East Coast APA) p.8 (http://www.cityu.edu.hk/ceacop/kpcp/draft_paper/Oneness.pdf)

[497] "Like one's mind heart which is one square cun, yet it is in charge of a myriad things." "Aokuang shi," in *Qinggaozong (Qianlong) yuzhi shiwen quanji* 清高宗（乾隆）御制诗文全集, vol.5, *juan* 1, p. 226, cited in Zhuang and Wang, *Zhongguo yuanlin*, 154–5.

[498] Hui Zou, A Jesuit Garden, p.27

The name “Perfect Brightness”, inspired by the *Doctrine of the Mean*, indicated the timeliness and moderation of a virtuous person’s conduct.[499] Everything in the world – object, thought, activity, behaviour- had its appropriate place; if this principle was respected it would bring inner harmony and universal welfare. Yuanmingyuan (Fig.34) was about leisure and public duty; enjoying a vast garden and taking care of people’s prosperity were related. The first of the forty vistas **(**Fig.35) from the 1744 visual record of Yuanmingyuan represents the Main Audience Hall, titled “Hall of Rectitude and Honour” (正大光明 Zhèngdà guāngmíng). This enclosed edifice where the emperor received his ministers was surrounded by trees and undulating hills instead of walls. In the poem written for this scene Qianlong praises the landscape and explains how the magnificence of Yuanmingyuan provided him with a model of good governance. He promises that his reign will be frugal like the green of the foliage, inspired by the serenity of the mountains, which are suffused with human spirit.[500]

In Europe, the theories of Roman Stoics which regarded the importance of a calm temperament acquired in the leisurely, secluded context of rustic life and influenced Enlightenment philosophers like Shaftesbury, resemble the positions held in China from the time of Confucius until the Qing Dynasty. Seneca, for example, maintained that a virtuous life is not contradictory to pleasure, but necessarily brings with it the inner state of tranquility.[501] For Cicero, an even-tempered soul in itself is virtue, from thence springs forth all good wishes, thoughts, and deeds.[502] Finally, years before becoming emperor, young Stoic Marcus Aurelius demonstrated that the countryside constituted a perfect training ground for a man who would get involved in governance and aspired to build up a disciplined, frugal character. Staying away from the temptations of turbulent and crowded Rome, avoiding contact with noise and vice for a period of time was necessary. Marcus Aurelius also emphasized the importance of adopting a balanced lifestyle by sharing one’s

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[499] Hui Zou, A Jesuit Garden, p.25
[500] Li Lillian M. *The Garden of Perfect Brightness*, retrieved from: https://visualizingcultures.mit.edu/garden_perfect_brightness/ymy1_essay03.html
[501] Gisela Striker, “Ataraxia: Happiness as Tranquillity,” *The Monist* 73 (1990) 97-110, (p.99).
[502] Cicero, *The Offices*, (trans. By Cockman), (New York : J Harper, 1833), p.53.

time between studying and agricultural activities; mental and physical toil had to be combined in order to cultivate a serene, virtuous disposition. [503] Stoics connected equanimity and self-restraint with the capacity to embrace political responsibility. Their ideas had an impact on Renaissance humanists like Petrarch, as well as on Enlightenment philosophers like Shaftesbury.

A good life consisted in a sensible combination of withdrawal and fulfillment of public duty. Seneca, in his work *De Tranquillitatae Animi* (On the Tranquillity of the Mind) posited that solitude and company must be alternated: "The one will make us hanker after humans, the other after ourselves and the one will be the remedy for the other: solitude will heal loathing of the crowd; the crowd will heal the boredom of solitude."[504] An individual involved in politics had to be committed to his duty but also preserve a certain degree of detachment in order not to be overwhelmed by the fatigue provoked by his constant interaction with other people. Reclusion facilitated systematic self-examination and constant care of the mind which were indispensable to keep someone safe from harmful passions, preserve his tranquillity and render him capable to realise practical goals related to public welfare. Seneca's ideas echo those of Cicero (106 BC- 43 BC), who was not formally a Stoic but appreciated the fact that this school of philosophy prioritized sociability and ventured to bring the sage person close to the community. [505] Cicero, orator and consul of the Roman Republic, was actually crucial in the development of Stoic ethics: "Those who take charge of the state must have greatness and a perspective from above on human affairs, as well as the tranquility of mind and steadfastness, at least if they are to be free from anxiety and to live with dignity and self-composure."[506]

The ideas of Stoics concerning the importance of performing one's public duty would be further developed in the eighteenth century Britain and France where literary and political circles displayed a renewed interest in the Roman

[503] Schils, *The Roman Stoics*, p.111.
[504] *De Tranquillitatae Animi* 17:3, cited in Schils, *The Roman Stoics*, p.112.
[505] Schils, *The Roman Stoics*, p.39.
[506] Schils, *The Roman Stoics*, p.95.

Republicanism, its institutions, legal system and ways of governance.[507] The fullness of human joy, they claimed, should be sought in moral action and in a serene disposition. For instance, the authors of the journal Lay Monastery which was mentioned earlier in the thesis wanted to promote moral reform and advised people not to run from external causes of sorrow. They posited that the Greek philosopher Epicurus whose ideas appealed to many people in various historical periods "has stupidly made the Supreme Good to consist in a lazy Indolence of Body and supine Tranquillity of Mind, for those only remove the Impediments, but by no means express the Constitution of Man's Felicity."[508] In the early eighteenth century we observe a shift in the attitude towards a form of Epicureanism which was associated with reclusive life in the countryside during the 1600s, when distinguished individuals (noblemen and intellectuals) promoted complete retirement at the expense of active service for the sake of an imperturbable happiness; this latter largely consisted in the pursuit of self-indulgence.[509] However, Epicurus (371-270 BC) had not promulgated an unreserved quest of self-gratification. Valuing friendship as source of safety and well-being, he had established a mini-society comprised by his most devoted, like-minded companions and disciples. Restricting his activity in the premises of the walled garden he had bought near Athens, this Greek philosopher believed that public life was a prison and generated mental stress. He posited that his modest existence was more likely to lead someone to happiness. Nonetheless his worldview was not exclusively hedonistic; he was strongly opposed to the pursuit of luxury, promoted frugality and acknowledged the necessity to display infallible loyalty –to the point of self-sacrifice- towards a trusted friend.[510]

Anti-Epicureans like the authors of the Lay Monastery castigated "sluggish" seventeenth-century men of leisure for whom pleasure was the supreme good; their ideology was presented as shallow, egocentric and immoral.[511]

[507] Edward G. Andrew, *Imperial Republics: Revolution, War and Territorial Expansion from the English Civil War to the French Revolution*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2011), p. xi.
[508] *The Lay Monastery*, Blackmore, p. 171.
[509] Røstvig, *The Happy Man*, p.15.
[510] *The Epicurus Reader: Selected Writings and Testimonia*, ed. by Brad Inwood and Lloyd, P. Gerson (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), pp.56, 57, 58.
[511] *The Epicurus Reader,* Inwood 1994 p xv.

The libertine John Wilmot, 2nd Earl of Rochester (1647-1680) and the philosopher and theologian John Norris of Bemerton (1657-1711) were not concerned with the miseries of their country: “Let plots and news embroil the State, pray what’s that to my books and me? Lord of myself, accountable to none, like the first man in Paradise alone” Norris wrote.[512] In the eighteenth-century, Enlightenment thinkers opted for the Stoic model of a blissful rural retirement; they rejected the idea that happiness is a state of a perfect, self-contained euphoria which must be protected at any cost.[513] They took their distances from individualistic, escapist attitudes and criticised the idea of permanently withdrawing from public affairs in order to safeguard a carefree existence.[514] Temporary rural retirement was promulgated because it restored mental powers, removed man out of the sphere of worldly attractions –as Marcus Aurelius believed- and calmed the passions. It offered a context in which a man could know himself.[515] The perfect retreat of the Enlightenment encouraged the cultivation of friendship like Epicureanism but did not incite people to remain beyond the grasp of painful events, renounce their public role and withdraw from social life; an ethical form of mental serenity did not come through lack of empathy for the miseries of humanity or indifference towards public welfare.[516]

3.3 Cosmopolitanism and Public Duty.

Confucianism is permeated by a cosmopolitan spirit. In the Analects we read the following advice: “Let the superior man never fail reverentially to order his own conduct, and let him be respectful to others and observant of propriety – then all men within the four seas will be his brothers.”[517] The exemplary

[512] John Norris, *A Collection of Miscellanies Consisting of Poems, Essays, Discourses and Letters*, London: Manship 1699), p.19.
[513] Røstvig, *The Happy Man*, p.16.
[514] Alastair and Carola Small, “Evelyn and the gardens of Epicurus”, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 60, (1997), 194-214, (p.197, 198).
[515] Røstvig,*The Happy Man*, p.16.
[516] Røstvig, *The Happy Man*, pp. 18-22.
[517] Analects Lunyu 12.5 in Brian Arthur Brown, Four Testaments: *Tao Te Ching, Analects, Dhammapada, Bhagavad Gita*, (Lanham; Boulder; New York; London 2016) p.186.

person exercises his virtue and understands the idea of reciprocity; he treats everyone benevolently as he wishes to receive benevolent treatment. The feeling of "commiseration" for all men is considered as something inherent in human nature but needs to be cultivated.[518] Thus, Confucius would eat frugally in the presence of any person in mourning,[519] not only out of respect for the latter's sorrow but also in order to increase his personal awareness that mortality constitutes every man's fate. The behaviour which made human beings mindful of their transience also encouraged them to strengthen family ties and cultivate their friendships. The conscience of participating in a common destiny where death and adversity were inevitable nourished feelings of solidarity and empathy in people's hearts.[520] Constantly manifesting compassion towards the others nurtured the intrinsic goodness of human beings who, according to the orthodox Confucian teaching, should first focus on the welfare of their immediate family members; through filial piety people realised that there is such a thing as universal fraternity.[521] Neo-Confucian scholar Wang Yangming (1472-1529) took Confucian cosmopolitanism one step further, claiming that a sage regards the whole world as one family: "He looks upon all people of the world, whether inside and outside his family, whether far or near, all with blood and breath, as his brothers and children. He wants to secure, preserve, educate and nourish all of them, so as to fulfil his desire of forming one body with all things."[522]

In Europe, cosmopolitanism is present in the thought of Shaftesbury. For this latter, a virtuous person must strive to develop an "equal, just, and universal Friendship" with humanity as a whole, without expecting any reward from their beneficiaries or seek revenge against their foes;[523] righteous men would thus imitate the supreme goodness of the Creator of universe. The writings of other Deist philosophers like David Hume (1711-1776) communicated the

[518] Davis, "China, The Confucian Ideal", p.529.
[519] Analects 7:9 (trans. James Legge) cited in *Chinese Text Project*, Sturgeon, retrieved from: https://ctext.org/analects/shu-er
[520] Philip Ivanhoe, *Confucian Moral Self-Cultivation*, p.6.
[521] Davis, "China, The Confucian Ideal", p.529.
[522] Martin Huang, "Male Friendship and Jiangxue (Philosophical Debates) in Sixteenth-Century China", *Nan Nü* 9 (2007), 146-178, (p.161).
[523] John Brown, *Essay on the Characteristics of the Earl of Shaftesbury*, (London: C.Davis 1752), p.345.

conviction that solitude and self-inquiry experienced in a favourable rural environment could create a generous disposition and awaken the desire to serve not only the fatherland but humanity as a whole. Thus, in the conclusion of Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* we read:

> At the time, therefore, that I am tired with amusement and company, and have indulged a reverie in my chamber, or in a solitary walk by a river-side, I feel my mind all collected within itself, and am naturally inclined to carry my view into all those subjects, about which I have met with so many disputes in the course of my reading and conversation. I feel an ambition to arise in me of contributing to the instruction of mankind, and of acquiring a name by my inventions and discoveries.[524]

The emphasis that eighteenth century European thinkers put on a "universal cause" is affiliated with the cosmopolitanism of Stoics who looked at human beings as part of a whole underlining their common origin and qualities. Thus Seneca claimed that the world is in reality a city common to gods and men[525] while, in his *Letter on philosophers and kings* addressed to the procurator of Sicily Lucilius he affirmed that "a sage considers nothing more truly his own than that which he shares in partnership with all mankind."[526]

3.4 Landscape dwelling and the evolution of friendship in China and Europe.

In the Confucian worldview friendship was associated with the procedure of assiduous moral cultivation which rendered men worthy to hold office and serve the empire. Confucius praised the joy of receiving like-minded friends coming from faraway places[527] while his disciple Tseng Tze stated that "a gentleman makes friends through being cultivated, but looks to friends for

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[524] *David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature*, , ed.by L.A. Selby –Bigge (ed.), (Oxford, Clarendon Press 1888), p.271.

[525] "Seneca and the Divine: Stoic Tradition and Personal Developments", International Journal of the Classical tradition, Vol 13, No.3, Winter 2007 pp 333-368., p. 339.

[526] Seneca Epi. 73.7.

[527] Analects 1:1 Cited in He Yuanguo "Confucius and Aristotle", p.292.

support in order to maintain his benevolence.[528] Friendship was about solidarity, exchange of wisdom, improvement of one's character and willingness to advance in virtue and perform their public duty. Self-cultivation in China constitutes the source and highest achievement of friendship; in its turn, friendship comprises an educational process that ethically benefits both parts. A loyal and virtuous person wants to safeguard the virtue of his friend; one would show the other how to cultivate the *ren* and thus they would progress together, understanding and following the Way.[529] Men's contribution to public affairs can be based on this noble interaction.

As it was mentioned several times since the beginning of the thesis, Confucius and those who embraced his teachings considered mountains and waters as realms favourable to self-cultivation and necessary for those involved in politics and administration. The contemplation of scenic beauty assisted the exemplary persons to develop their good passions, acquire a tranquil temperament and engage more efficiently in governance. Landscapes and scholar gardens comprised traditional places of seclusion as well as realms where lofty forms of sociability (i.e. friendly relationships between the wise and the benevolent) thrived. Literati engaged in public service used their gardens to enjoy temporary solitude but the ideal of dwelling in the landscape originates from "collective" activities which took place in the countryside. Confucian scholars with public positions or the ambition to excel as government officials would assemble in scenic spots, converse with each other and engage with the rural environment by playing musical instruments, reciting verses and performing purification rituals.[530] A famous example of this type of event was the Orchid Pavilion Gathering of 353 AD during the Spring Purification Festival, when forty-two literati met on Mount Kuaiji to accomplish ancient rituals, drink and compose poetry (Fig.36). Activities in such gatherings correspond to the three basic elements: yue (乐 music) wenzhang

[528] Analects 12:24 Cited in He Yuanguo, "Confucius and Aristotle", p.293.

[529] He Yuanguo, "Confucius and Aristotle", p.301

[530] Yue Zhuang, "Performing Poetry-Music: On Confucians' Garden Dwelling", in Jacquet B (eds) *From the things themselves: Architecture and Phenomenology*, Kyoto: Kyoto University Press, 2012, 373-405 (pp. 379, 380, 389).

(文章 civilized accomplishments) and li (rites) which nurtured the ren and were encompassed in the concept of becoming a cultivated person (wen 文).[531] Yue, wenzhang and wen involved a man's capacity to create friendly bonds and maintain them. Sociability and landscape played a key role in the indispensable for governance process of Confucian self-cultivation.

In Europe, the Stoic view of friendship as a relationship of mutual help and trust between like-minded, erudite people greatly inspired Western culture from the Early Renaissance onward; during the Middle-Ages literature, theology and philosophy did not focus very much on friendship. According to the biographer Diogenes Laertius (third century AD), Stoics would see in their friends another self they deeply cherished.[532] Only a perfectly virtuous person could maintain such a noble form of human bonding. Through their moral excellence they were capable of treating this "other I" as they treated themselves.[533] The relationships they created were based on their flawless knowledge of human nature; a Stoic friend is a lucid person who knows the true value of things and men. His wisdom constitutes the safeguard of the infallible affection displayed towards his companion.[534] According to Cicero, friendship is a political virtue often developed between two individuals "who are engaged in state governance and agree on all things human and divine, along with good will and affection".[535] Stoic friendships are relationships of mutual assistance but they are not based on personal interest nor do they aim at material benefits. Acquisition of wealth and improvement of one's social position can be the incidental benefits drawn from friendship, which is a high moral good cultivated for its own sake and that of the friend.[536]

In the Stoic discourse, landscapes would often become the site where ideal forms of companionship flourished. One example is the Ciceronian dialogue *De Oratore* set in a period of political turmoil which preceded the Social War

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[531] He Yuangao, "Confucius and Aristotle", p.301.
[532] *Thinking about Friendship*; *Historical and Contemporary Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. by Damien Caluori, (Palgrave, Macmillan 2013) p.224.
[533] *Thinking about friendship*, Caluori, p.237.
[534] *Thinking about friendship* , Caluori, p.229.
[535] (Cicero; Laelius or De Amicitia 6.20) cited in *Augustine through the Ages, An Encyclopedia*, ed.by Allan D. Fitzgerald, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1999, p.372.
[536] *Thinking about friendship*, Caluori p.48.

(91-88 BC), a three-year conflict between the Roman Republic and other Italian cities formerly allied to Rome. In this work, Marcus Licinius Crassus, Marcus Antonius and Mucius Scaevola, three elderly, venerable members of the political elite are described leaving the city and directing themselves to Crassus' villa in Tuscany along with two young companions. Leisurely making their way through a landscape charged with philosophical and political analogies and later strolling in Crassus' estate the five men discuss the importance of rhetoric to state governance and society.[537] The plane tree under which they sit and converse explicitly refers to Plato's *Phaedrus*, a work which also revolves around the art of rhetoric and its good practice. Cicero's protagonists are emblematic statesmen and friends standing on the threshold of a new era; leaving the crisis-stricken Rome where political decisions are made for the serenity of the countryside should not be interpreted as an appeal to withdraw from public life. *De Oratore* is rather a call to revisit the rustic beginnings of Rome, which had gradually evolved into a city marked with cultural greatness and political splendour, in an attempt to recover its former virtue.[538] In Cicero's work "*De Legibus*" the landscape is described as the appropriate realm for an intellectual discourse; a philosophical laboratory where matters associated with public welfare can be resolved:

> Is it your wish, then, that, as he discussed the institutions of States and the ideal laws with Clinias and the Spartan Megillus in Crete on a summer day amid the cypress groves and forest paths of Cnossus, sometimes walking about, sometimes resting—you recall his description—we, in like manner, strolling or taking our ease among these stately poplars on the green and shady river bank, shall discuss the same subjects along somewhat broader lines than the practice of the courts calls for?[539]

A discussion among friends with common engagements was expected to focus on the elements which unite all men such as the origin of law and

[537] Diana Spencer, *The Roman landscape: Culture and Identity*, (Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.65.
[538] Spencer*, The Roman landscape* p.67.
[539] *The Great Legal Philosophers; selected readings in jurisprudence*, ed. by Clarence Morris, (University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia, 1997), p.43.

justice or how a perfect state should function from a broad, global perspective. During the Enlightenment friendship maintained its political dimension. The landscape-garden of the eighteenth century provides the setting for fruitful political and philosophical discussions between virtuous, scholarly men. This can be observed in Gilpin's aforementioned *Dialogue* (1748) where Callophilus and Polyphton, strolling in Stowe Park, find the opportunity to discuss the need to struggle for the welfare of mankind following the example of ancient worthies: "To establish a well-regulated Constitution; to dictate the soundest Morality, to place Virtue in the most amiable Light; and bravely to defend a People's Liberty, were Ends which neither the Difficulty in overcoming the Prejudices, and taming the savage Manners of a barbarous State; the Corruptions of a licentious Age, and the Ill-usage of an invidious City." [540]

In China, as well as in Europe, the way friendship was perceived evolved; although it never lost its political quality, other aspects of it were identified and promulgated. Already for the Confucian literati of the Jin dynasty, the idea of a perfect form of companionship, which consisted in being in full communion with another person and cultivating virtue, interweaved with the carefree euphoria generated from landscape dwelling. Thus, for the distinguished men gathered in the Orchid Pavilion in 353 AD virtue was not a theoretical concept but something related to their emotional development. Righteousness flourishes when good passions are nurtured and thrives when there is sincere and amiable exchange between refined, humane individuals; empathy engenders virtue. Wang Xizhi's王羲之 (309-c.365) in his Preface to the Orchid Pavilion wrote:

> In the ninth year [353] of the Yonghe [Everlasting Harmony] reign, which was a *guichou* year, early in the final month of spring, we gathered at Orchid Pavilion in Shanyin in Guiji for the ceremony of purification. Young and old congregated, and there was a throng of men of distinction. Surrounding the pavilion were high hills with lofty peaks, luxuriant woods and tall bamboos. There was, moreover, a

[540] Gilpin, *A Dialogue*, p.20

swirling, splashing stream, wonderfully clear, which curved round it like a ribbon, so that we seated ourselves along it in a drinking game, in which cups of wine were set afloat and drifted to those who sat downstream. The occasion was not heightened by the presence of musicians. Nevertheless, what with drinking and the composing of verses, we conversed in whole-hearted freedom, entering fully into one another's feelings.[541]

Many centuries later, in his Record of Yuanmingyuan, Yongzheng emperor described the euphoric experience of wandering in his private landscape in the company of princes and devoted ministers. Most of the scenic views of the Garden of Perfect Brightness were reserved to the Chinese monarch and his family. [542]However, amiable interaction with dutiful government officials in this setting constituted a cherished tradition he had inherited from his father Kangxi; this tradition fulfilled the Qing emperors' need of being in communion with men who served them, far from administrative problems, in a carefree context. Yongzheng occasionally invited his ministers not to boast about the splendour of Yuanmingyuan but to let them "appreciate the scenes at their own pace, to boat and enjoy fruits…in a place where nature discloses itself to the fullest, while heart and mind exult with joy".[543] In his discourse, which typically links the jubilation provoked by the idyllic scenery (Fig.37.) with the cultivation of virtue, the emperor did not separate himself from the men who worked for him. During the process of sauntering in the garden they are presented together, noble men of a common tradition and sensibility: "*we* give a free rein to our feelings, displaying accordingly *our* sense of well being, looking up and gazing down and roaming at leisure." The phrase "looking up and gazing down" alludes to a passage from the "Orchid Pavilion Gathering": "look up at the bigness of the cosmos, gaze down at the flourishing of

[541] H.C.Chang . *Chinese Literature: Volume two: Nature Poetry*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1977) pp 8-9.
[542] Attiret, Jean Denis, *A particular account of the Emperor of China's gardens near Pekin: in a letter from F. Attiret, a French missionary, now employ'd by that emperor to paint the apartments in those gardens, to his friend at Paris*. Translated from the French by Sir Harry Beaumont (London: printed for R. Dodsley; and sold by M. Cooper, 1752)
[543] Hui Zou, *A Jesuit Garden*, P.24, 25

categories of things".[544] A literatus who read the Record of Yuanmingyuan would recognise it and resonate with its meaning. For Yongzheng, drawing inspiration from the same scenes and sharing the same emotions with his ministers comprised a central aspect of landscape dwelling. Finally, by welcoming government officials in a garden destined to himself, he imitated the example of his father's Kangxi who showed "openness to worthy and virtuous people and consideration for his courtiers". [545]

A re-evaluation of friendship is observed from the late Ming through the Qing Dynasty when certain Neo-Confucian philosophers reviewed the status of this type of human relationship in the alternative sphere of *jianghui* or *jiangxue*. The two terms were used interchangeably; their exact translation would be "philosophical debates" but they signify the gatherings of literati which could take place either in academies or monasteries situated in scenic spots on the mountains. *Jiangxue* was already a popular intellectual activity during the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279); connected with frequent travelling in the country and a particular taste for adventure – since the assemblies occurred rather frequently in various places far from each other - *jiangxue* came to be regarded as a sign of virility. Moreover, the philosophical debates prepared the socio-cultural ground which allowed friendship to thrive in a context of freedom one cannot encounter in the orthodox Confucian teachings.[546] For *jiangxue* enthusiasts, the experience of roaming in the country and later sharing this experience with other literati was pivotal for preserving a clear, pure mind-and-heart. Discovering new sceneries due to a peripatetic lifestyle interweaved with the liberty of these scholars to spend a lot of time with friends. Even if *jiangxue* demanded to be far from one's family regularly this practice was presented as essential for a man's general welfare. The scholar Wang Ji (1498-1583), professed that during his exchanges with several scholar-officials he bonded with, he had the opportunity to focus on the sole question of moral cultivation thus fortifying his humaneness: "When I was able to concentrate on it day and night, lazy thoughts and vain hopes had no

[544] Hui Zou, *A Jesuit Garden*, p.25.
[545] Hui Zou, *A Jesuit Garden*, p.25
[546] Huang, "Male Friendship and Jiangxue", p.147-149.

chance to creep into my mind."[547] Wang's cosmopolitanism is important. He repeatedly boasted for participating in such gatherings with "comrades coming from the four corners of the earth" and did not omit to stress the fact that he had "visited almost all the well-known mountains, deep caves and famous scenic areas".[548] Explaining the significance of *jiangxue* among friends, Wang Ji defended the primacy of male companionship over all other, traditionally viewed as superior sets of relationships designated by Confucius. However, Wang did not venture to compromise the social order by reversing established hierarchies; he tried to facilitate its maintenance. All other four cardinal human relationships such as those between ruler and minister, father and son, husband and wife, and between older brother and younger brother, respectively, cover only one single area of human interaction, whereas friendship could aid human interactions in all areas.[549]

Friendship made every type of human association work better because it is formed through free will and founded on mutual trust. It does not depend on sexual attraction (conjugal bond), personal interest or fear of punishment (king and subject) nor is it based on sacrosanct obligations (filial). It is genuine, natural and unselfish; it has value in itself.[550] It never lacks sincerity, since to a good companion we speak without censoring our thoughts due to a conventional sense of respect. Gu Dashao (d.1526), an obscure Ming scholar who practiced *jiangxue*, attempting to stress the transcendence of friendship, posited that a father is someone "to whom you owe your body while a friend is the person to whom you owe your heart"; [551] the body perishes but the heart is immortal. So, a man's relationship with someone he is not connected with by blood, matrimony or authority is the most important and perfect relationship; it regulates his associations with everybody else, relative, spouse or ruler. In this idea, the Confucian concept of universal brotherhood[552] finds its affirmation and fulfilment.

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[547] Huang, "Male Friendship and Jiangxue", p.160.
[548] Huang, "Male Friendship and Jiangxue", p.151.
[549] Huang, "Male Friendship and Jiangxue", p.170.
[550] Huang, "Male Friendship and Jiangxue", p.173.
[551] Huang, "Male Friendship and Jiangxue", p.171.
[552] Let the superior man never fail reverentially to order his own conduct, and let him be respectful to others and observant of propriety – then all men within the four seas will be his

In the Western world, from the fourteenth until the eighteenth century, the concept of friendship evolved considerably; the re-evaluation of Stoic ideas, as well as the appearance and expansion of Protestantism played an important role in this evolution. Certainly, in Europe, like in China, landscapes provided a favourable context for the development of these morally beneficial relationships.

For Petrarch dwelling in the countryside was an appropriate form of existence for individuals eager to pursue study, poetic endeavours, physical recreation, introspection and interpersonal relationships of great quality.[553] Petrarch attempted to reconcile his attachment to Catholic doctrines with the heritage of Greco-Roman philosophy. To him, Stoic ethics seemed compatible with the precepts of Christianity; he believed that the Stoic idea of virtue was the closest to "true virtue" preached by the Church.[554] Instead of identifying solitude with the medieval contempt of the world[555], Petrarch envisaged it as a form of dialogical companionship between two virtuous persons. *Volo solitudinem non solam* (I want a non-lonely solitude) was the somehow paradoxical definition he gave to describe the ideal lifestyle in his work *De Vita Solitaria*.[556] For the humanist scholar rural seclusion could be better appreciated in the company of a faithful, understanding companion; solitude was the celebration of an exclusive, perfect friendship enjoyed far from the public eye, the intimate relation between two noble spirits with common interests and worldview. Indeed, Petrarch's retreat in Vaucluse was imprinted by the presence of his friend the bishop Philippe de Cabassolle, (1305-1372) the man who increased the poet's self-awareness and confirmed him in his literary genius; "*you will be my solitude*" he once wrote to the prelate.[557] In his

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brothers. From James Legge, *The Life and Teachings of Confucius*, (North Charleston SC, USA: Createspace 2015), p.169-170.

[553] Conaway-Bondanella Julia, "Petrarch's rereading of Otium in De Vita Solitaria", *Comparative Literature*, 60, (2008), 14-28, p.18.

[554] John Sellars, *Stoicism in the Renaissance* p.7 (Entry on Stoicism forthcoming in *Encyclopedia of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. by Marco Sgarbi, (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing 2021).
https://www.academia.edu/25590448/Stoicism_in_the_Renaissance

[555] Bernard of Cluny, a twelfth century monk was the author of a poem titled *De Contemptu Mundi*. Leonard Paul Kurtz, *The Dance of the Death and the Macabre Spirit in European Literature*, (Genève: Slatkine Reprint 1975), p.11.

[556] *Petrarch: A Critical Guide*, Kirkham, p. 191.

[557] Petrarch, *A Critical Guide*, 2009 p. 184.

letters, Petrarch reminisced the time he spent with Philippe de Cabassolle in the secret French valley. The object of his nostalgia seems to be mainly their common emotions and meditations and less the rural site that accommodated their experience.

The appearance of Protestantism in the sixteenth century also contributed to the shift in the way Europeans viewed friendship and secluded life. During the Middle-Ages and the Renaissance reclusion was usually associated with monasticism but after the Reformation cloisters were regarded with growing suspicion and disdain. Martin Luther, former Augustinian monk, vocally opposed the secluded existence led by the pious residents of convents. Unlike Petrarch, a Catholic erudite layman who unreservedly admired anchorites and friars such as Francis of Assisi, Luther likened the monastery - a physical place of solitude par excellence - with an abode where human vices proliferated. For the founder of Protestantism self-imposed isolation cradled the melancholic tendencies of religious individuals; it engendered fear and gloom which could only be treated with sane forms of social interaction.[558] Luther's view was shared by the Protestant free-thinking elite of the 1700s: philosophers, poets and garden owners (Shenstone). The radical changes brought by the Reformation influenced the dominant mind-set in many Western European countries and facilitated the thriving of liberal socio-political and theological ideas which prevailed in the Enlightenment.

In Protestant Britain, the idea that meaningful relationships among people with common values could be forged - especially in turbulent times - in the solitude and silence of rural retreats can be traced in the seventeenth century. This concept was actually advocated by John Evelyn, the Royalist, devout Anglican writer and pioneer in landscape design. Evelyn's distressing experiences related to the English Civil War (1642-1651), the replacement of monarchy with a republican regime and the disappointment he and his ideological allies endured after seeing their political cause defeated, may explain the reason why he dedicated himself to the creation of gardens

[558] *Solitudo*, Göttler, pp.19, 20.

situated in secluded valleys: Albury, Wotton and Deepdene.[559] Evelyn's purpose was to protect and comfort individuals who were forced to stop their political activity and wanted to withdraw from prying eyes (Fig.38).[560] The idea of a garden embedded in the English countryside, developed in Evelyn's unfinished book *Elysium Britannicum*, corresponded to the author's desire to create an eclectic society of *paradisi cultores*. In a letter addressed to the polymath Thomas Browne (1605-1682), we read that these cultivators of *paradises* (private gardens) should be "persons of ancient simplicity, Paradisian and Hortulan Saints."[561] Evelyn posited that the air and genius of such places could lead the human spirit of few, chosen people towards virtue and sanctity, preparing it to "converse with good angels."[562] Self-cultivation and companionship among the members of an elite were in the heart of Evelyn's ambitious project, which was strongly conditioned by a mystical, religious temperament.[563] The Anglican John Evelyn did not harbour a particular sympathy for the monastic lifestyle which had thrived in medieval, Catholic Britain. Nonetheless, the intrinsically supernatural character of his vision and his conventional piety contrasted with the deist spirit which rejected established doctrines and formed the thought of eighteenth-century moral philosophers and politicians with liberal positions such as Joseph Addison (1672-1719), Shaftesbury and David Hume. In the texts of such authors we find a sense of balance which excluded egoistic self-indulgence, ascetic austerity, as well as conventional religious meditation, an element which is usually associated with all traditional expressions of Christianity (Catholicism, Anglicanism and Lutheranism).

During the 1700s companionship and social bonds were redefined in the framework of a secularised society which promoted an anthropocentric worldview.[564] Deist philosophers defied the supremacy of religion as source

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[559] *John Evelyn's Elysium Britannicum*, Therese O'Malley, pp.78,98.
[560] *John Evelyn's Elysium Britannicum*, Therese O'Malley, p.12.
[561] *The Letterbooks of John Evelyn*, ed. by Douglas Chambers and David Galbraith, 2 vols (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2014), II, p.271.
[562] Graham Parry, *The seventeenth century: the intellectual and cultural context of English literature*, (London and New York: Routledge 2013), p.58.
[563] Røstvig, *The Happy Man*, p.21.
[564] Lisa Hill & Peter McCarthy. "Hume, Smith and Ferguson: Friendship in Commercial Society", *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 2, (1999), 33-49. (p.37).

for ethical guidance in interpersonal relationships. In the light of ground-breaking ideas they confidently promulgated, the older models of sociability changed.[565] Thus, friendship ceased to be a mere outgrowth of men's love for the Trinitarian God; it is worth noting that even the Petrarchan humanism designated the personal, Christian divinity as ultimate object of human affection and generator of all friendship.[566] According to David Hume, the radical alteration which had occurred in various forms of social interaction during the eighteenth century constituted the happy outcome of progress in mechanical and liberal arts and the result of industrial development –this same development which pushed people to seek life in the countryside and increased their preoccupation with the landscape. Scientific and technical advances banished certain biases and reduced religious superstition improving men's capacity to associate with each other in a spirit of freedom and trust. They craved to share their experiences as the number of stimulating things around them increased ceaselessly: scientific discoveries, flourishing in the field of "polite" arts.[567] Engaging with a world of constant progress, people developed tender passions and their mind became more refined, "incapable of rougher and more boisterous emotions"; they grew friendlier, more open to their fellow men.[568] Eighteenth-century landscape gardens were inscribed in the new, fascinating reality described by Hume; they were adapted to modern forms of sociability, integrated new ideas about culture, religion, relationships, art and politics. Parks with exotic follies and fake hermits (Painshill), ancient ruins and inscriptions (Leasowes), were designed as places of self-examination, scholarly accomplishment and seclusion, but also as realms of human interaction, friendship and entertainment.

3.5 Maintaining the Balance Between Seclusion and Contribution to Public Welfare.

[565] L*ove, Friendship and Faith in Europe 1300-1800*, ed. by Laura Gowing, Michael Hunter and Miri Rubin, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2005) p.198.
[566] Alexander Lee, *Petrarch and St Augustine: Classical Scholarship, Christian Theology*, (Leiden-Boston: Brill 2012), p.252.
[567] Hill, "Hume, Smith and Ferguson", p.36.

[568] Hill, "Hume, Smith and Ferguson", p.42.

Having achieved the equilibrium between retirement and public action, the Confucian historian and high-ranking scholar-official Sima Guang constitutes an emblematic figure of perfect garden-dwelling since the Song Dynasty. Sima was compelled to withdraw to his small scholar *Garden of Solitary Enjoyment* in Luoyang (Fig.39) for political and moral reasons; as a conservative statesman he opposed the socio-economic changes promoted and enacted by the reformist faction led by Wang Anshi in China.[569] In his poetry, Sima Guang presented himself as a simple garden-owner unaware of the mayhem of a morally decadent world: "A desolate garden, on a mere *mu* of land... As I have forgotten about machinations, birds come down from the woods…To the gust from court and market, I ask, how thick is the red dust out there?"[570] Su Shi, a friend of Sima Guang insisted that this latter was actually less obscure than he pretended to be; despite his voluntary isolation his righteousness was renowned in the whole empire the subjects of which looked at his example to receive moral instruction.[571]

Sima Guang's description of his garden disclose a man who, like the Stoics, was contented with his frugal lifestyle and cherished the company of friends with whom he shared his literary exploits and discussed philosophy. Sima delighted in a non-lonely solitude. The group of Confucian scholar-officials who occasionally visited Sima Guang sharing his seclusion, realised the contrast between the sirens of courtly corruption and the tranquil context of isolation which favoured wisdom and safeguarded virtue. Yet, the idea of public duty, the moral obligation to serve the country penetrates the conscience of the distinguished historian and his elderly, like-minded friends.

> My friends often come to interrupt my solitude, read their works and listen to me reading mine. I associate them to my enjoyments: the wine renders our frugal meals more jovial, Philosophy makes them tastier; and while the court calls for voluptuousness, favours calumny and sets traps, we invoke wisdom and we offer our hearts. My eyes are always turned towards her. But unfortunately its rays only send

[569] Yang, *Metamorphosis*, p.206.
[570] Yang, *The Metamorphosis*, p.240.
[571] Yang, *The Metamorphosis*, p.238.

their light through one thousand clouds. What do I say? Father, Husband, Citizen and Scholar, I have one thousand duties. My life does not belong to me. Goodbye my dear Garden. The love of my family and my country call me back to the city. Keep all your pleasures to dissipate my new sorrows and save my virtue from their attacks.[572]

Sima was conscious that his obligations towards his family and the great tasks related to his government post came before the deep-seated desire to perpetuate his blissful state as leisurely recluse. After the group led by his rival Wang Anshi collapsed, Sima returned to the world of duty.[573] Nourished in the garden of Solitary Enjoyment, his humaneness was ultimately used to benefit the Chinese people.

Concerning the use of Yuanmingyuan, Yongzheng emperor's ideal was not different from that expressed by Sima Guang seven centuries earlier; happy seclusion in a private, vast landscape cultivated the *ren* and could not be an impediment to the exercise of his duties. "The name Round Brightness is used to highlight the meaning of the residence, stimulate the body and mind, piously experience the idea of heaven, cherish forever my father's holy instruction and maintain harmony and peace. I do not seek leisure for myself but rather long for happiness for all the people, so that generation after generation can step on the spring terrace and wander in the happy kingdom."[574]

In Europe, the form of seclusion that was ethically approved during the Enlightenment is successfully summarized in an inscription found in the Seifersdorfer Tal, one of the oldest German landscape gardens: "True wisdom lies in the midst between the world and solitude." [575] For eighteenth-century deists, dwelling in an eremitic landscape was about the well-being of the

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[572] Le Jardin de See Ma Kouang in *Mémoires… de Chinois*, p.650.

[573] Dieter Kuhn, *The Age of Confucian Rule: The Song Transformation of China*, Cambridge, Massachusetts; (London, England, The Belknar Press of Harvard University Press 2009), p.59-60.

[574] Hui Zou, *A Jesuit Garden*, p.25.

[575] Linda Parshall, "C.C. Hirschfeld's concept of the garden in the German Enlightenment", *The Journal of Garden History* 13, (1993), 125-171 (p.125). This garden house is situated next to the monument dedicated to the German C.C.Hirschfeld (1742-1772) an Enlightenment figure considered to be an authority in the art and history of gardens.

person whose self-accomplishment was inextricably linked to his capacity to live in communion with his elect friends without disregarding the necessity to labour for public welfare. The essayist and politician Joseph Addison, editor of the journal Spectator in 1711, argued that:

> True Happiness is of a retired Nature, and an Enemy to Pomp and Noise; it arises, in the first place, from the Enjoyment of oneself; and in the next, from the Friendship and Conversation of a few select Companions. It loves Shade and Solitude and naturally haunts Groves and Fountains, Fields and Meadows. In short, it feels everything it wants within itself and receives no Addition from Multitudes of Witnesses and Spectators.[576]

Expressing the wish to keep the crowds at a distance and encouraging the relationship with few select companions Addison communicated an elitist view of rural retreat which was recurrent among erudite Europeans who championed solitude in the countryside from the Early Renaissance and the Interregnum (1649-1660) to the 1700s. Thus, Petrarch envisaged to "sow the seeds of his new projects in the field of his genius"[577] in a shaded rural site like Vaucluse and Evelyn's Elysium Britannicum was addressed to the "best refined of our Nation who delight in gardens and aspire to the perfection of the Arte",[578] while Addison's privileged model of sociability flourished among fountains, fields and meadows. Addison's elitism did not originate from a disdain towards the "masses" as it would contradict the cosmopolitan, humanistic ideal; it derived from the certainty that interaction with distinguished persons contributed to self-improvement and increased one's capacity to be useful to the entire social body. Addison's writings frequently focused on issues regarding public duty, models of citizenship, and ethical ways of governance or fighting corruption and displaying integrity in positions of authority.[579]

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[576] Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*, (London: for Isaac Tuckey and Co 1788) p.21.
[577] Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, *Petrarch's Genius: Pentimento and Prophecy*, (Berkeley; Los Angeles; Oxford: University of California Press, 1991), p.59.
[578] *John Evelyn's Elysium Britannicum*, Therese O'Malley, p. 4.
[579] Adam James, The Legacy of Joseph Addison's The Free Holder: The Textual Transmission of a model of Citizenship, Track Changes: *The Postgraduate Journal for the*

In eighteenth-century Europe, the rural environment was more than an anonymous, idyllic corner of the countryside like Petrarch's literary refuge in Vaucluse. It became a landscape-garden; a privately owned, yet accessible space with a well-defined identity and designated borders (Leasowes, Ermenonville) created to accommodate distinguished forms of solitude, communicate liberal social ideas, provide moments of leisure and even display its owner's erudition. Landscape gardens in Europe hosted intellectuals and statesmen who needed a temporary shelter from the world's turmoil in order to pursue self-cultivation and better perform their political and administrative roles**.** Secluded life in such retreats interweaved with the necessity of establishing associations among individuals who like Stoic friends thought and felt the same way about important matters regarding state governance, society and ethics. The people who found refuge in new landscape gardens were motivated by a need to attain a tranquil mind and cultivate self-restraint eliminating their bad inclinations or vices. From a moral point of view, such places provided an appropriate alternative to monasteries. Unlike men and women who took perpetual vows confining themselves to cloisters, secularist part-time recluses of the 1700s were often driven by a strong sense of public duty; they hoped to actively contribute to the improvement of society.

The long-standing Chinese tradition of rural retirement which was shaped by the Confucian system of values and evolved during the centuries is comparable with the tradition which, being rooted in the Greco-Roman culture and Renaissance Humanism, was crystallised in the Western world during the 1700s after social, political and religious transformations. In China and Europe the final purpose of self-cultivation was to increase the capacity of working for public welfare and become an accomplished human being. In both cultures exercising governance or assuming another form of public duty necessitated a tranquil state of mind. For eighteenth-century British philosophers and Confucians thinkers the importance of undertaking social or political

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Faculty of Art and Humanities (University of Sheffield), (2013), 1-14, (p. 3). Joseph Addison, "The Free-Holder Number 1, The Free Holder 23rd December 1715, p.2 "This love to our country as a moral virtue is a fixed disposition of the mind to promote safety, welfare and reputation of the community in which we are born and of the constitution under which we are protected."

responsibilities interweaved with a cosmopolitan ideal; people should want to benefit humanity as whole, not only their nation. Close friendships between men with common ideals and life-goals reconciled the process of self-cultivation which was effectuated in a reclusive context and the exercise of public duty. Enlightenment Europe and Confucian China regarded the strong communion connecting private individuals as a political virtue. However, beyond this traditional, broadly accepted conviction, friendship was multi-dimensional and the way it was perceived evolved during the centuries. Finally, the necessity to keep the right balance between rural seclusion and public duty, private and social realm which are strongly linked to one another constitutes a preoccupation encountered both in Chinese and European thought.

CHAPTER FOUR: GARDEN RECLUSES AS FRIENDS AND MEN OF PUBLIC ACTION IN CONFUCIAN CHINA AND ENLIGHTENMENT EUROPE.

4.1 The Garden as Mediating Space between Solitude and Public Action.

Unlike the common understanding, withdrawing from the turmoil of the world to the relative solitude of landscapes was not motivated by escapist tendencies or the unrestrained desire to satisfy personal whims. In the eyes of Roman Stoics, Petrarch, eighteenth-century Deist philosophers, Confucian and Neo-Confucian thinkers, the eremitic landscape is the mediating space between withdrawal and public action. As it was shown in the first chapter, in an aesthetically pleasing, pastoral environment of peace and leisure individuals had the opportunity to practice self-inquiry; although this process appeared to, temporarily, isolate them from the world it ultimately developed their moral sensibility and trained their good passions. Through this process of self-improvement, their capacity to interact and be in communion with other people increased.

Eremitic landscapes offered a material, social and cultural context in which ambitions and antagonisms could not subsist, forming a favourable realm to the cultivation of friendship. In these places human bonds based on mutual trust might thrive uncompromised by possible conflicts of interest. The capacity to establish solid interpersonal relationships with like-minded people preceded, as a prerequisite, the desire to benefit the whole social body. Like family bonds, friendships engendered social empathy. It has already been

discussed that during the late Ming Dynasty and particularly after 1500 AD, the conviction that friendship comprised the most important among the five sets of relationships designated by Confucius (the other four being parent-child, ruler-minister, husband-wife, older and younger siblings) was promulgated with great persuasion by certain scholars.[580] Friendship could serve as a training ground, a school where someone nurtured his humanity and altruism; by conversing with a cherished companion and sharing his joys or anxieties an individual got to know himself and comprehend his place in the world as well as his duty towards society. He got prepared to play his role as honest subject of an empire, conscientious citizen of a republic, wise man of letters, righteous politician or caring leader prompt to exercise his benevolent authority for the welfare of his fellow men.

It would be difficult to disassociate self-cultivation in an eremitic landscape from the process of developing harmonious interpersonal relationships which in their turn were pivotal in nourishing the willingness to act diligently and efficiently for the public good. This latter did not depend exclusively on the enactment of policies guaranteeing economic prosperity and national security. Striving for the improvement of other society members, contributing to the awakening of their moral sensibility, venturing to train their good passions and increase their moral discernment were all actions aiming at the welfare of the social body. Both in Europe and in China virtuous recluses – erudite members of the gentry engaged in politics or scholar-officials - would want to communicate their virtue and cultivation.

4.2 Cultivating Friendships in Garden Reclusion: William Shenstone and Wang Xianchen.

In Europe and China, men's need to retire in a private garden designed according to their taste interweaves with their desire to cultivate select forms

[580] Lü Kun (1538-1618), a *jiangxue* activist wrote: "Only with friends does one spend so much time every day unlike seeing a teacher only for a limited period of time; only with friends can one speak freely without many taboos as one would have in the presence of one's father or brothers.. . . This is why friendship is what the other four cardinal human relationships rely on." Huang, "Male Friendship and *jiangxue*", p.169.

of friendship. For instance, the eremitic tendencies of the British William Shenstone, the reclusion of Chinese Wang Xianchen and, much earlier, the solitary garden dwelling of Sima Guang were linked to the pursuit of a morally uplifting, balanced and healthy sociability.

Shenstone's correspondence with his close friend Henrietta Lady Luxborough (1699-1756), an accomplished poet well-known among the British literary circles,[581] discloses that through his pastoral landscape at Leasowes Park he "aspirated to progress towards an eremitical Temper of Mind." "Perhaps" he wrote, "Politeness, Elegance and Taste, may be some of those privileged accomplishments which it may be allowed for a Recluse to admire, under certain limitations. If not, I can only say, that I must remain a very imperfect Hermit, till I am able to forget the Honour you have done me" [582] he concluded, referring to one of Lady Luxborough's frequent visits in his grounds. It seems evident that Shenstone yearned for solitude. The following verses reveal his certitude that the idyllic shelter he created could secure rest and happiness: "O Sweet disposal of the rural hour! O beauties never known to cloy! While worth and genius haunt the favour'd bow'r, and every gentle breast partakes the joy![583]" Noisy crowds constitute an impediment to scholars and artists' creativity. Retired among silent forests, meadows and fountains - the same natural-cultural context advocated by the Stoics and Petrarch and endorsed by Shaftesbury and Addison – the designer of Leasowes Park found contentment and nurtured his poetic inspiration.

Contemporary sources disclosing various aspects of Shenstone's social life let us deduce that, unlike the Chinese scholar officials or some European landscape-garden owners with government positions, the creator of Leasowes Park was not involved in the affairs of the state. He had personally claimed to be a man without political affiliations.[584] His contribution to the common good should therefore be associated with his status as a man of letters. Robert

[581] *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H.C. G. Matthew, Brian Harrison and Lawrence Goldman (Oxford University Press 2004) Knight, née St John, Henrietta, Lady Luxborough, retrieved from: https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/15720
[582] *Shenstone*, *Select letters*, Hull, I, p. 61.
[583] Shenstone, *The Works in Verse and Prose*, I, p. 111.
[584] William Shenstone to Lady Luxborough, 17 April 1755 in *The letters of William Shenstone*, ed. by Marjorie Williams, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1939) p.444.

Dodsley (1704-1764), his personal friend and editor of his work, described him as an affectionate, generous person who never failed to show his *benevolenc*e towards his friends, poor neighbours and servants. A humble servant of art, Shenstone valued the opinion of his literary companions to the point that he never published anything without submitting his work to their judgment.[585] Although his human qualities were well-regarded, his poetic exploits and erudition were not widely acclaimed during his lifetime; thus, the illustrious essayist and literary critic Samuel Johnson did not hold Shenstone in esteem and reproved his lack of sophistication, stating that he had a reduced intellectual curiosity and "his only ambition was rural elegance."[586]

Shenstone's intellectual life and sociability revolved around this pastoral landscape whose design was the fruit of his genius; his friendships were consolidated and flourished in the context of Leasowes in Shropshire. In a letter to a certain Mr B.,[587] the poet made a statement which shows that he rejected absolute seclusion:

> Though I first embellished my Farm, with an Eye to the Satisfaction I should receive from its Beauty, I am now grown dependent upon the Friends it brings me, for the principal Enjoyment it affords; I am pleased to find them pleased, and enjoy its Beauties by Reflection. And thus the durable Part of my Pleasure appears to be, at the last, of the social Kind.[588]

If his park offered him precious moments of solitary enjoyment, sharing the Arcadian scenery with others provided him an equally elevated form of satisfaction. Shenstone admitted that his rural retirement was meaningful when the garden's graceful beauty was acknowledged. His hosts would come to stroll, admire and meditate; he drew joy from their gratification. Based on a

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585 Dodsley gave this information in a preface he wrote for, *Shenstone, The Works in Verse and Prose*, Dodsley, 1: pp. i-viii.
586 *Lives of the English Poets by Samuel Johnson,* ed. by Harold Spencer Scott and George Birkbeck Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905) III, pp.348-359.
587 This would probably be Mr. Binnel, one of his most intimate friends along with Richard Graves and his old schoolfellow Richard Jago. *A Complete Edition of the Poets of Great Britain*, 22 Vols, Edinburgh: Mundell and Son, 1792-1795), ix, p. 584.
588 *Shenstone*, *Select Letters*, Hull, p.234.

communion of emotions his bliss was renewed interminably because visitors never ceased to flow to his park (Fig.40, Fig.41).

Shenstone corresponded with a considerable number of erudite men and women who shared his interests, passions and anxieties. Being in the presence of persons with whom he could converse consoled and delighted him: “And if a friend my grass-grown threshold find, O how my lonely cot resounds with glee!” we read in one of his Elegies.[589] In his letters he expressed himself expansively on the matter of friendship which he considered more valuable than the trifling things that fettered the ambitious, worldly minds of his contemporaries. Thus, in 1747, he wrote to Richard Jago, an old college-fellow from Oxford, poet and man of the cloth: “A Coach with a Coronet is a pretty Kind of Phenomenon at my Door;—few Things are prettier—except the Face of such a Friend as you; for I do not want the Grace to prefer a spirituous and generous Friendship to all the Gewgaws that Ambition can contrive.”[590] And in 1748, he avowed to Richard Graves, poet and Protestant minister, that the company of certain people saved him from the shameful state of despising mankind. “My Soul now leans entirely on the Friendship of a few private Acquaintances, and if they drop me, I shall be a wretched Misanthrope.”[591] Like Confucius who could not bond with beasts and birds but only with people, Shenstone, by virtue of his humanity, had to form associations with human beings. In the above-cited extracts from this English poet’s correspondence, it is worth observing his statements that he sought “a spirituous friendship” and relied on “a few private acquaintances.” Moreover, at the end of the path cutting through a grove in Leasowes there was a bench upon which strollers could read an engraved verse from the first ode of Horace: “Me the ivy, prize of learned brows, makes to mingle with gods above; me the cool grace and the light-footed companies of nymphs and satyrs set apart from the people.”[592] A certain degree of elitism appears to be inscribed in the process of cultivating a healthy sociability.

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[589] *A Complete Edition of the Poets of Great Britain*, (Mundell and Son, p.593.
[590] *Shenstone, Select Letters*, Hull, p.72.
[591] *Shenstone, Select Letters*, Hull, p.72.
[592] Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 232.

In China too, the psychological and moral benefits deriving from select forms of companionship are emphasized in certain poems dealing with the theme of reclusion. The desire to withdraw from the human realm –usually in a physical place like a garden or a mountain - but more importantly cultivating an "eremitical temper of mind", a degree of detachment from trivial anxieties, did not compromise the joy resulting from encountering friends. In the noble solitude which increases self-awareness a person's communion with his friends may grow stronger and more profound; in retirement relationships may be experienced in their fullness. Thus, the last verses of Tang Dynasty Bao Rong's poem "In Reply to Lord Zhong's Poem 'Pavilion by the Grove'", part of which was quoted in previous chapter, read: "One doesn't have to be in Mount Lu or Mount Huo to practice the Way; Understanding serenity comes from the mind…When the mood strikes and the whim rises I come to look for you along the path for picking chrysanthemums. Thoughts of dust vanish when I reach your gate; our long friendship deepens as I meet you face to face."[593]

Shenstone emphasized the necessity of an optimistic, happy disposition for the accomplishment of a man's duty towards his friends. Distress and worry are incapacitating; they render people unable to communicate ideas and emotions to the others. Human relationships are cultivated in a spirit of tranquillity, not one of anxiety; the more promptly we respond to the obligations resulting from a friendship, the more this latter flourishes and delights us. When we cultivate our sociability assiduously the pleasure we get from it increases and endures. Shenstone formulates his thoughts as follows:

> For Pleasure I have in writing to my Friends, when my Mind is free from Anxiety, and that Pleasure connected with a Duty I owe to Friendship, superior to what is claimable by any mere Visitant or Acquaintance; Of this Kind are the only Pleasures which accompany us through Life; they increase upon Repetition, and grow more lively from Indulgence. '*Vient l'Appetit en mangeant,*' the Maxim is only universal, in regard to social Pleasure.[594]

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593 Cited in Yang, *Metamorphosis*, p.52.
594 *Shenstone, Select Letters*, Hull, p.233-234.

Shenstone followed the line of several eighteenth-century European philosophers and essayists who warned their readers against the danger of becoming a cynic loner, a self-centred, embittered hermit useless to society; a temporary recluse's disposition of mind could be salutary or destructive. David Hume claimed that associating with other people comprised the cure against philosophical melancholy, dreary speculations and the feeling of being abandoned or unappreciated by society.[595] The author John Gilbert Cooper, in his *Letters Concerning Taste*, also insisted on the importance of men's prevailing tendencies when they opted to retire in the countryside. "Solitude is not good or bad in itself", he argued; but "takes its quality from the disposition of its votaries." Landscapes, Cooper posited, should function as "Temples of Repose" and not as "Dens of Misery" due to a disproportionate affection for seclusion or a condemnable desire to flee society. Temporary rural retirement ought to give peace to "free-thinking individuals" instead of sheltering the misery of "wretched misanthropes" who had developed a loathing for society, setting a deplorable example to their fellow-men.[596] Cooper's position is similar to that of Johann Georg Zimmerman (1728-1795) whose treatise on solitude was frequently printed in England after 1790. Zimmermann strongly opposed the cases when solitude becomes a sort of self-extinction, an annihilation of the person. He referred to people who suffer from a pathological form of melancholy - depression, as we would call it today- and choose to live outside the orbit of society. To illustrate his thesis Zimmermann employed a telling example: "When melancholy seizes to a certain degree the mind of an Englishman, it almost uniformly leads him to put a period to his existence; while the worst effect it produces on a Frenchman is to induce him to turn Carthusian."[597] Apart from comparing the different impact of melancholy on diverse national temperaments, another crucial point made by the Swiss author is found in the word *Carthusian*. The Carthusians constituted a monastic order whose members lived a strictly isolated life, observing absolute silence; each one would dwell in a small, self-contained cottage with

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[595] *Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. by Selby-Bigge, (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1949) p.270.
[596] Cooper, *Letters*, pp.207, 208.
[597] A.C. Goodson, "The Eye of Melancholy: Zimmermann's *Solitude* and Romantic Interiority", *European Romantic Review* 13, (2002), 147-151, (p.147).

a private garden.[598] This kind of seclusion, eradicated from Protestant England since the time of Henry VIII, was viewed as anti-social and thus self-destructive. As I discussed earlier in the thesis, hostility towards such forms of solitary life comprised a common denominator in the Enlightenment thought and was manifest in Shenstone's poem *Ruined Abbey*: "The rugged cell received alone the shoals of bigot minds, Religion dwells not here, yet Virtue pleased, at intervals, retires."[599]

Shenstone's interpersonal relationships shaped his park defining the character of various scenic views. The poet's erudite friends who walked through the garden were confronted with the tribute he paid to their common acquaintances via inscriptions and funereal urns. Visiting Leasowes, these men and women conversed with Shenstone and his loved ones, strengthened their bonds with the poet and felt compelled to explore his identity as man of letters and amiable individual. Through his landscape Shenstone advocated the ideal of experiencing emotions in an affectionate communion with others.[600] Robert Dodsley gave a detailed description of different garden spots where Shenstone honoured people he cherished deeply, often poets like himself:

> One seat first occurs under a shady oak as we ascend the hill; soon after we enter the shrubbery which half surrounds the house where we find two seats, thus inscribed to two of his most particular friends. 'Amicitiae et meritis Richardi Graves: 'Ipsae te Tityre, pinus, ipsi te fontes, ipsa haec arbusta vocabant.' (*To the friendship and merit of Richard Graves. For thee Tityrus! The pines, the crystal springs, the very groves, invok'd*.) A little further the other, with the following inscription: 'Amicitiae et meritis Richardi Jago.' (*To the Friendship and merit of Richard Jago*.)[601]

[598] Denis Martin, *Fifteenth Century Carthusian Reform: The World of Nicholas Kempf*, (Leiden; New York; Koln: E.J Brill, 1992, p.3.
[599] The Poems of William Shenstone, vol.1, Chiswick, From the Press of Whittingham, 1822 p.220.
[600] Sandro Jung, "Shenstone, Woodhouse and Mid-Eighteenth-Century Poetics Genre and the Elegiac-Pastoral Landscape", *Philological Quarterly* 88, (2009), 127-149, (p.136).
[601] *The poetical Works of William Shenstone with the life of the Author and a Description of the Leasowes*, ed.by R. Dodsley, (London, W. Suttaby and C.Corrall 1804), p. xxxviii.

In the first case, the Shenstone quoted from the dialogue between Meliboeus and Tityrus, a pair of herdsmen from the First Eclogue of Virgil whose works had nourished the literary imagination of Europeans for many centuries. The choice was appropriate and hardly surprising; the pastoral landscapes emerging from the *Georgics* and the *Eclogues* comprised a model for eighteenth-century British garden designers regardless of their political affiliations or religious convictions.[602] The words of Meliboeus in the Virgilian text constituted an affectionate reproach to his good companion who had temporarily left their common abode in the countryside to go to Rome; even the natural elements –trees and water- found the absence of Tityrus unbearable.[603] Shenstone employed Virgil's verses as a permanent invitation to Richard Graves who served as a rector in Calverton, a village and civil parish outside Bath, Somerset. Graves rarely left his residing place which was likewise renowned for its outstanding beauty.[604] Permanently installed in his park, Shenstone commemorated his distant friend; the pastoral landscape nurtured his desire to meet him again.

In Chinese poetry, wandering or dwelling in a landscape could also be associated with sentiments of nostalgia for a far-away friend. However, trees, scents of flowers and scenic beauty do not accentuate the melancholy caused by a cherished person's absence; they are remedies to it. In the Tang Dynasty poem "*After missing the recluse of the Western Mountain*", Qiu Wei (邱為 694-789) described how he encountered his friend who lived withdrawn in the mountain without physically meeting him. Qiu Wei arrives in the humble dwelling of the recluse but he is not there. To compensate for this unexpected absence, he rests his gaze on the images the mountain-hermit sees every day; he listens to the sounds that accompany the permanent resident of the place during his long solitary hours. The elements which provide Qiu Wei with tranquillity and comfort are the same which soothe and console the recluse. The poet is in communion with the hermit's habits, meditations and emotions;

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[602] Richardson Tim, *Arcadian Friends*: *Inventing the English Landscape Garden*, (London; Toronto Sydney: Bantam Press 2007), p.235.
[603] *Eclogues* 1, 39-40 in *Pup. Virgilii Maronis, Bucolicorum, Eclogae Decem ; the Bucolicks of Virgil with an English Translation*, ed. John Martin, London: R.Reily, T. Osborne 1749) p.13.
[604] *Dictionary of National Biography*, ed.by Stephen Leslie, Lee Stephen, (London: Smith Elder and Co 1890), "Graves Richard"

the invisible friend penetrates his thought and becomes vividly present. The physical distance between them becomes unimportant.

> Sorry though I am to be missing you, you have become my meditation- the beauty of your grasses, fresh with rain, and close beside your window the music of your pines. I take into my being all that I see and hear, soothing my senses, quieting my heart; and though there be neither host nor guest, have I not reasoned a visit complete?[605]

Although the friend who is in a distant place constitutes a recurrent theme in literary expressions of both European and Chinese landscape cultures, in Chinese gardens we do not encounter memorials to dead friends, a practice which became popular in eighteenth century Britain. The commemoration of loved-ones who passed away comprised an integral part of Leasowes. Funereal urns and seats with verses referring to the virtues of the deceased and the regret provoked by their loss gave a solemn character to this English park. An urn made of coade stone and situated in a thicket close to a stream was dedicated to Shenstone’s cousin Maria Dolman. Daughter of a clergyman, the young woman who died of smallpox at the early age of twenty-two kept a regular correspondence with the poet. This latter loved her dearly and her demise grieved him profoundly. The emotionally charged words on the urn which served as a cenotaph read: “Ah, Maria most elegant among the maidens! Ah snatched from us when all your charms were in full flower, farewell forever! Oh how inferior the most familiar converse with other women is to the bare remembrance of thee!”[606] Visitors were invited to participate to Shenstone’s intimate, perpetual exchange with the deceased woman, share his nostalgic mood and sympathise with his sorrow. The elegiac tone of the specific spot contrasted with the joyful quality of others; the strollers would pass from enjoyable, light-hearted thoughts to serious reflections concerning the transience of human existence. Joseph Heely, who visited Leasowes

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[605] *300 Tang Poems: A New Translation, Commercial Press*, ed. by Yuan-zhong Xu, Bei-yei Loh, Juntao Wu, (Hong – Kong: Commercial Press) 1987 (Poem 22) retrieved from: http://www.lingshidao.cn/hanshi/tang.htm as PDF: https://www.aoi.uzh.ch/dam/jcr:ffffffff-c059-cfbc-0000-00007065080a/TangPoems.pdf (p.8)

[606] George Lipscomb esq., *A journey into South Wales through the counties of Oxford, Warwick, Worcester, Hereford, Salop, Stafford, Buckingham and Hertford; in the year 1799*, (London: T.N.Longman and O.Rees, Paternoster-Row, 1802), p.304.

around 1777, described how the unexpected transition from emblematic scenes which celebrate the carefree pastoral life as envisaged in the Eclogues to more solemn views commemorating dead friends resulted in the succession of opposing emotions:

> Hence we learn that part of the dell to be dedicated to the rural deities- pleasingly reminding us of those excursive sights of poetical invention, giving revelry and dance to the ideal god Pan and his jolly crew; while on the other hand, the soft murmurs of a rill, and a lone urn in a solitary nook have equal power to call the mind from festivity to solemn meditation, and to fill it with those tender feelings, of which we are susceptible, when any circumstance recurs to revive the memory of a lost friend.[607]

The text engraved on another urn paid tribute to the genius and friendship of William Somerville (1675-1742); Shenstone erected this small monument "sprinkling with tears the ashes of his poetical friend." With this epitaph he ensured that his emotional outburst for the loss of a senior acquaintance would be widely known; Shenstone obliged the visitor to visualise him in a state of grief. Leasowes rendered public the intimate, private act of lamenting for a friend's passing. Actually, the memorial consecrated to Somerville should be interpreted as an attempt to repair a relationship which was once put into test. Thus, after receiving the news that Somerville was dead the poet wrote to Richard Graves: "I did not imagine I could have been so sorry as I find myself on the occasion. I can now excuse all his foibles: impute them to age, and to distress of circumstances. The last of these circumstances wrings my very soul to think on."[608] The letter allows the reader to interpret the epitaph; Shenstone needed to confirm publicly that he did not harbour any grudge against Somerville whose demise had resolved former conflicts and misunderstandings. Those who knew the two men and read the inscription on the urn realised that old bitterness had changed to compassion. Shenstone's rural retreat honoured, fostered and celebrated friendship, or preserved the

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[607] Heely Joseph, *Letters on the Beauties of Envil, Hagley and the Leasowes,*(London , 1777), pp.26, 27.
[608] Somerville William, *The Chase; to which Annexed Field Sports*, (London: Sherwood, Neely and Jones by C. Whittingham 1817), p.9, 10.

memory of his late companions through a constant exchange of thoughts and emotions which emerge from the vast, open text of his Arcadian garden.

The cultivation of relationships, so important to the owner of Leasowes, was a necessary step towards human improvement. Once he admitted that he had built the garden in order to "bring the world home to him whenever he felt to idle to go forth in quest of it."[609] To satisfy this need, he granted the general public access to the grounds; in 1749 he noted: "it is now Sunday evening, and I had been exhibiting myself in my walks to no less than a hundred and fifty people."[610] Regularly and personally welcoming crowds of unknown individuals to his garden, the owner of Leasowes demonstrated affability, simplicity and a degree of social conscience; he wanted his pastoral park to have a pedagogical role for his guests, therefore the scenes contained in the garden were meaningful on many levels.[611] Thus, following a winding path down a valley, the stroller would come across a root-house where, on a tablet, a poem written by the designer of Leasowes was inscribed. The verses were copied in Robert Dodsley's description of the park; they give an idea regarding the convictions and aspirations that Shenstone sought to communicate to his guests.

> Here in cool grot and mossy cell, We rural fays and faeries dwell; Tho' rarely seen by mortal eye, When the pale moon, ascending high, Darts thro' you limes her quivering beams, We frisk it near these crystal streams."… Would you then take our tranquil scene, be sure your bosoms are serene; Devoid of hate, devoid of strife, Devoid of all that poisons life: And much it 'vails you in their place, To graft the love of human race.[612]

The text served an educational purpose. It referred to the landscape around the particular spot and emphasized the mental disposition someone should have if he desired to profit from rural beauty, cultivate a serene state of mind

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[609] Shenstone, *The Works in Verse and Prose*, p. 236.
[610] Blanche Linden, *Silent City on A Hill: Landscapes of Memory and Boston's Mount Auburn*, (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), p.46.
[611] David Fairer, "Fishes in his Water: Shenstone Sensibility and the Ethics of Looking" *The Age of Johnson* 19 (2009), 129-148, (p.135).
[612] Shenstone*, The Works in Verse and Prose*, pp. 335-336.

and nurture compassionate feelings for mankind. Leasowes is a morally charged landscape, an abode appreciated by those who reject conflict and are filled with fraternal sentiments towards their fellow men. The poem alludes to an idea of "reciprocity"; the garden inspires good, noble passions, but only well-disposed individuals who are capable of such passions can fully enjoy the garden. To communicate a universal, humanistic ideal, instead of employing the authority of a philosopher or a sage the poet uses fairies, a popular supernatural entity. According to Robert Dodsley the heralds of Shenstone's message are in harmony with the valley's "romantic" appeal, while the verses' uplifting tone helps the people preserve the enchanting rural scenery in their memory. Dodsley, for whom the emotions expressed in the poem are appropriate for a place inhabited by fairies, believed that Shenstone designated a utopia; like fairies which exist only in the realm of imagination, the vision of men "devoid of strife" is unfathomable beyond this secluded rural context.[613] Shenstone's hyperbole –to graft the love of human race- should be read in the light of his yearning to see the actual world becoming more peaceful and humane. His garden, which encapsulated the idea of ethical improvement, proposed a way to reach this goal. In this rural realm, the virtues of temporary retirement could be revealed for the moral benefit of all**.** The desire to be lifted above the burden of common anxieties caused by unworthy reasons like ambition and vanity interweaved with the notions of civic engagement and a benevolent attitude towards humanity as a whole, grafting "the love of human race".

This pastoral version of a landscape, so popular among members of the liberal British elite,[614] comprised a sheltered universe where someone finds asylum not because he strives to escape social duties but because there he has the opportunity to restore his vigour through morally appropriate forms of leisure. A sane type of solitude enabled men to live independently but was consistent with social interaction. Again, Shenstone's appeal "to graft the love of human race" was not incompatible with the elitist aspiration he expressed via Horace's verses: "me the prize of learned brows, makes to mingle with

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[613] Shenstone, *The Works*, 1764, p.336.
[614] Linden, *Silent City*, p. 46.

gods above" and "be set apart from the people". Happiness and virtue depended on one's capacity to choose his friends and find the balance between the private and the public sphere. The following text, taken from an eighteenth-century "*Monthly literary intelligencer, forming a universal repository of amusement and instruction*", designated how social obligations and public duty must be reasonably combined with the appreciation of rural beauty:

> Did nature bring forth the tulip and the lily, the rose and the honeysuckle to be neglected by the haughty pretender to superior reason? To omit a single social duty for the cultivation of polyanthus were ridiculous as well as criminal; but to pass by the beauties lavished before us, without observing them, is no less ingratitude than stupidity. A bad heart finds little amusement but in a communication with the active world, where scope is given for the indulgence of malignant passions; but an amiable disposition is commonly known by a taste for the beauties of the animal and the vegetable creation.[615]

Shenstone's park continued to serve its purpose by providing comfort, delight, inspiration and instruction until the nineteenth century. The text of Dodsley on Leasowes was widely read and attracted a large number of people who played a pioneering role in British cultural life of the 1700s; Samuel Johnson, though not a fan of Shenstone's poetry, visited the garden in 1774 and recommended it to his friends. Blanche Linden affirmed that Leasowes became "a place of pilgrimage for the Whig intelligentsia"; the philosopher Edmund Burke and the economist Adam Smith are counted among this park's enthusiasts.[616] Whig politician and later first minister William Pitt the Elder (1708-1778) was charmed by Leasowes and wanted to invest a considerable sum of money for the improvement of its grounds, a proposal rejected by Shenstone.[617]

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[615] *The Berwick Museum, or monthly literary intelligencer forming an universal repository of amusement and instruction*, 3 Vols, (Berwick: W. Phorson 1787), III, p.363.

[616] Blanche, *Silent City*, p.46.

[617] Richard Graves, *Recollection of Some Particulars from the Life of the Late William Shenstone in a Series of Letters*, (London: Dodsley 1788), pp. 82, 83.

In 1778, on the other side of the Channel, the Marquis de Girardin (1735-1808) would use Leasowes as a model for his own garden in Ermenonville, an estate he inherited after the death of his maternal grandfather in 1762. Located in the north of Paris, Ermenonville, which is thoroughly discussed below, became a rural retreat and place of human interaction, where friendly relationships were honoured and the improvement of the social body was endorsed in a context provided by the Enlightenment thought. Although solitude is evoked in several inscriptions scattered in Ermenonville, this garden celebrated friendship a source of human comfort and well-being. Thus, on the "Altar of the Grove" Girardin put the words: "To Friendship, the soothing balm of life";[618] it was not his propensity to rural retirement but his relationship with Jean-Jacques Rousseau, mentor and friend that marked the character of his park.

Chinese literati gardens, destined for aesthetic pleasure and self-cultivation, were sites where friendships could flourish. [619] Scholar officials retired there mostly in times of social turmoil and political adversity, when the government was corrupt and they felt unable to fulfil their professional duty without compromising their moral integrity. Literati would usually abandon their secluded lifestyle when wise and benevolent rulers rendered participation in public life opportune. In the rich, complex context of such places solitude was a possibility, a personal choice and not an absolute necessity or a self-imposed discipline which would make the experience of garden-dwelling more dignifying or praiseworthy. Sincere, affectionate fellowships among kindred spirits constituted a significant part of retired literati's life.[620]

Sima Guang, the Confucian official and historian of the Song Dynasty, who has been introduced before, in his *Garden of Solitary Enjoyment* which protected him from the miseries of the vulgar world, maintained a sense of camaraderie with scholars he cherished and honoured, sharing with them the ethics of governance and the experience of exile. In the state of retirement

[618] Jacques Antoine Dulaure, *Nouvelle description des environs de Paris*, (Paris: Chez Lejay 1787), p.230.
[619] Che Bing Chiu, *Jardins,* p. 69.
[620] Alfreda Murck, Wen Fong, "A Chinese Garden Court: The Astor Court at the Metropolitan Museum of Art", *The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New Series*, 38 (1980-1981) 2-64, (p.22).

dictated by his lofty conscience, personal fulfilment came not only from introspection and study but also from human interaction.[621] In the first of his "*Two Short Poems Inviting Colleagues to Take a Trip to My Back Garden*" Sima wrote: "Young men from the Five Mounds district vie for spring light, riding on fat horses with silver saddles and jade bridles; how about us, as we brew fresh tea under the pine trees and then return to resume the unfinished chess game among the flowers?"[622] Cultivating relationships with his dearest friends brightened and accomplished the peaceful, reclusive existence of the ageing Sima; he craved to be in the presence of his former associates in an environment which accommodated a comfortable yet frugal lifestyle. In his verses, the Confucian literatus juxtaposed youthful camaraderie and rivalry, grandeur and opulence (jade bridles, silver saddles) with the tranquil and humble spirit of togetherness he had adopted; a spirit which rejoices in casual pastimes and thrives among trees and flowers.

Allusions that retired scholars pursued a "non-lonely solitude"[623] and were open to noble forms of companionship can also be traced in the work of Wen Zhengming. As it was indicated in the previous chapter, the prolific artist created two Records for the *Garden of the Humble Administrator*, property of the former censor Wang Xianchen. These albums comprise the fruits of the two men's friendship; Wang had generously offered Wen a studio inside the garden, further giving him permission to assemble his friends and students in its premises.[624] In the same place, before the demise of the literatus Wang who had left a government post to live in leisurely retirement in Suzhou, Wen Zhengming accomplished the first album. Andong Lu argues that the artist developed the "eremitic landscape" which grew very popular among the literati of Jiangnan region during that time.[625] Apparently, his painting style corresponded to the turbulent political climate of the sixteenth century: the harsh forty five-year rule of Jiajing emperor (嘉靖 1507-1567) which was

[621] Le Jardin de See Ma Kouang, *Mémoires… de Chinois*. p.650.
[622] Cited in Yang, *Metamorphosis*, p.204.
[623] George W. McClure, *The Culture of Profession in Late Renaissance Italy*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p.218.
[624] Andong Lu, "Deciphering the Reclusive", p.40.
[625] Andong Lu, "Deciphering the Reclusive", p.40.

marked by a high level of corruption in the court.[626] Wen's art disclosed the anxiety and melancholy of scholar officials who, disappointed with the Empire's situation, sought consolation in an aesthetically and intellectually satisfying reclusive life in their private gardens.[627]

In the album of 1533, images like the "*Tower for Dreaming of Reclusion*" (Fig.42) were meant to communicate ideas and feelings deriving from solitary garden dwelling, an experience Wang Xianchen shared with his painter friend. The imposing hills in the background make the tower - a three-store pavilion – appear rather small. In a note, Wen Zhengming informs the reader that the hills were situated outside the walls of Suzhou but could easily be viewed from this edifice.[628] I would argue that by omitting to depict the walls demarcating the boundaries of the Humble Administrator's garden in his painting, the hills which resemble solemn mountains seem to constitute parts of this same garden. Consequently, a restricted piece of land gives the impression of a free, vast landscape. The tower *(lou* 楼), from where Wang "dreamt of solitude", could be associated with the noble purposes of an erudite gentleman. The term "dreaming" employed in the work's title is not without importance. It denotes a mental process leading to the accomplishment of an ideal; it reveals the aspiration of withdrawing from an agitated world. In Confucian literati culture reclusion was translated into a topos. It was actualised in a real space but, at the same time, it comprised a vision conveyed in the images and rhyming poems of Wen Zhengming.[629] The humble administrator Wang Xianchen did not keep himself away from social interaction; on his tower, he dreamt of seclusion either alone or with company. Already before commencing the creation of his album, Wen evoked the long hours he used to spend with the retired censor in this eremitic landscape, emphasizing the intimate communion established between them: "On the second day of the New Year I braved the snow to visit Wang Jingzhi and climbed his Dreaming of Reclusion Tower, where he detained me drinking the

[626] Ying Zhu, "Corruption and its Discontent", p 235.
[627] Andong Lu, "Deciphering the Reclusive", p.40.
[628] Andong Lu, "Deciphering the Reclusive", p.54.
[629] This solitude would often reassure reputation, although being a hermit to gain the world's admiration was not approved (Alain Berkowitz, "Topos and Entelechy in the Ethos of Reclusion in China", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 114, (1994), 632-638, (p.632.)

whole day."[630] In this Chinese garden, like in Leasowes Park, solitude interweaved with the cultivation of interpersonal relationships, especially with people who shared common values and interests. In another drawing from the album of 1533 titled "*Hall like a Villa*" (Fig.43), the literatus Wang is represented accompanied by a servant, standing a few meters away from the open gate, ready to welcome some visitors.

In the painting titled *Xiang Bamboo Bank* from Wen Zhengming's second album (1551) two scholar officials are depicted sitting in a garden pavilion while a servant attends to their needs. Both persons' attention is attracted by a crane standing beside a forest of bamboo, the plant which, as I showed before, embodies the capital virtues of a Confucian literatus: righteousness, integrity and loyalty.[631] (Fig.44) This element of shared focus reinforces the idea of communion established between the mind-heart of the two individuals who converse calmly in the garden's reposeful environment and have a common social status, sensibility and aspirations. Interestingly, an image bearing the same title - *Xiang Bamboo Bank* - is included in the first album (1533). In this earlier piece, no human figure can be seen in the untamed landscape (Fig.45). Poetry forming an integral part of Chinese painting, Wen's verses completed the meaning of the visual content:

> I grow bamboo trees around a flat ridge; the ridge is circular and the bamboos form a valley. Summer has reached its peak, startling autumn; in the depth of the bamboo grove one does not feel the heat of noon. In there, there is a reclusive figure who is at ease with his zither and wine cup. A breeze comes, waking him up from drunkenness; sitting up he listens to the rain falling on the Xiao and Xiang bamboos…Slim bamboos extend, the realm is quiet, deep and remote.[632]

The poem focuses on tranquillity and solitude experienced in a canonical context of literati leisure: wine, music, and sleep in a cool grove. The breeze

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[630]George W. McClure, *The Culture of Profession,* pp. 46-47.
[631] Dong Yue Su, *Bamboo High Moral Ground*, p. 36.
[632]Wen Zhengming, Zhuozhengyuan tuyong *zhushi* 《拙政园图咏》注释 [Poems and paintings on the Humble Administrator's Garden, with annotations], annotated by Bu Fuming (Beijing: Chinese Building and Construction Press, 2012), pp. 110,111.

awakens the inebriated recluse; the pleasure drawn from the zither is succeeded by the satisfaction caused by the sound of the falling rain. Everything enhances the experience of solitude. The painter does not mind the striking differences between two representations of a single theme; the same poem accompanies both the old and the new painting. Reclusion is not about avoiding the company of other people but about acquiring a serene disposition and not losing the Way.

In his work, Wen Zhengming expressed an ethical stance he shared with his patron Wang Xianchen; their moral eminence conditioned and cradled their friendship. When the artist composed his verses and represented the garden which epitomized the worldview of a “humble administrator”, he also voiced his personal convictions regarding the necessity of detachment from futile things; fleeting fame, pursuit of wealth and clinging to power at any cost. Although this garden was not Wen Zhengming’s property he dwelt in its grounds and played a pivotal role in perpetuating its fame. In a sense Wen possessed the garden by virtue of the essential, profound things which united him with Wang Xianchen, like their common principles conveyed in the grounds’ structure and their lofty ideals manifested in the names of scenic spots and pavilions (Fig.46, 47). The garden was the “solitude” which brought together two men who strived to cultivate humaneness; their shared reclusion nourished their solidarity binding them with an unbreakable bond.

4.3 Garden Reclusion, Detachment from Public Praise and Sense of Public Duty.

Both in Europe and in China, distinguished people’s preoccupation with various aspects of landscape culture and, more importantly, the choice to reside in relative seclusion in the countryside, interweaved with a critical stance against the quest of ephemeral glory. The poet Alexander Pope (1688-1744), in his very early *Ode on Solitude* (1700), envisaged a blissful, carefree existence in a specific rural environment; the inherited, paternal land. In this enclosed, idealised universe, time goes by quietly divided between study,

meditation and rest. No infirmity threatens the body while the fertile ground provides all means of subsistence. The protection of his physical well-being was crucial for the fragile, ailing Pope. The end of the poem manifests the adolescent author's will to remain "unseen, unknown" and his astonishing desire to die unlamented emphasizes his wish to lead a secret, hermitic life.[633]

The Virgilian verse "flumina amem silvasque inglorious" (let me inglorious love the streams and the woods) became a popular quotation among the eighteenth-century European intelligentsia. One could find it inscribed in the premises of private eighteenth-century gardens used as retreats; Shenstone, for instance, had these words engraved beside a serene view of meadows and cascades in his park. The Leasowes did not contain ostentatious monuments or other impressive arrangements which would render it more engaging; this garden's appealing simplicity expressed the idea of resistance to the pursuit of public praise, a recurring theme in Shenstone's poetic work.[634] In his *Ode to Rural Elegance* dedicated to his late friend the Duchess of Somerset Frances Seymour (1699-1754) who was also a poet, Shenstone greeted this woman's preference for the tranquil, discreet rural beauty over the well-deserved accolades she regularly received from literary circles; the silence of the countryside was superior to the enthusiastic applause of her admirers.

Fatigu'd with form's oppressive laws,
When SOMERSET avoids the Great;
When cloy'd with merited applause,
She seeks the rural calm retreat…
When deafen'd by the loud acclaim,
Which genius grac'd with rank obtains,
Could she not more delighted hear
Yon throstle chaunt the rising year?
Could she not spurn the wreaths of fame,

[633] *The Kentish Songster or Ladies and Gentlemen's Miscellany, A new and choice collection of the most celebrated English Songs.* (Canterbury, Simmons and Kirkby, 1784), p. 262-263.
[634] Christopher Thacker, *The History of Gardens*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles California: University of California Press 1979), p. 200.

To crop the primrose of the plains?
Does she not sweets in each fair valley find,
Lost to the sons of pow'r, unknown to half mankind?[635]

In Ermenonville, the first “English garden” in France, visitors were also warned to avoid vanity, immeasurable ambition and other contemptible passions. For Girardin, who had served in the court of the king of Poland Stanislas Leczinski (1677-1766) as a youth[636] and was actively involved in politics during the French Revolution, rural elements were related to innocence, humility and liberation from every kind of vice. Thus, the inscription in a leafy boscage of Ermenonville reads as follows: “O limpid fountain, o dearest fountain! May senseless human vanity never disdain your humble, flowering banks! May this simple path never be visited by any plague of life, like ambition, envy, avarice and falsehood!”[637] The owner of Ermenonville put his ideal into practice; his garden offered asylum to Rousseau, the virtuous philosopher who “suffered because he despised the vain grandeurs of the world.”[638]

In China, Tao Yuanming (陶渊明465-526 AD), a poet and intellectual also known as Tao Qian, constitutes an illustrious example of someone who, disenchanted with the world of public office rejected honours for the sake of a secluded rural existence. An atypical Confucian scholar-official without strong political ambitions, Tao disdained social conformity and left his position as local magistrate to retire in his native place in the countryside. Heroised and, as I will show below, transformed into a role model which complied to cultural norms crystalized during the course of centuries, Tao’s figure provided the Song and Ming literati with an alternative to their worldly pursuits in times of political turbulences.[639] In his famous Rhapsody titled *Returning Home*, Tao passionately renounced the splendour of a career heavily-burdened with various obligations for the joy of a frugal, peaceful life in his village; in his poetic work he sublimated the eremitic ideal. As he radically distanced himself from the milieu of civil service, this scholar managed to preserve his moral

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[635] Samuel Johnson, *Poets of Great Britain and Ireland with Prefaces Biographical and Critical*, (London: Andrew Miller, Strand, London 1800), p. 121.
[636] Decaen, *Le dernier ami de Jean Jacques Rousseau*, p.6.
[637] Stanislas de Girardin, *Promenade ou Itinéraire*, p.55.
[638] René de Girardin, *De la composition des paysages,* p.49.
[639] Yuan Xingpei, “Tao Yuanming”, p. 217.

integrity and independent spirit; during his reclusion he was surrounded by his wife and children while he occasionally received friends in his residence. His happiness relied on the contemplation of trees and birds, which reminded him of the things that –unlike the power and wealth idolised by human vanity - endure despite the passage of time:

> The three paths are almost obliterated, but the pine and chrysanthemums remain…" I lean on the southern window sill and let my pride expand, and consider how easy it is to be content with little space…" "The world and I have nothing more to do with one another. If I were to mount my carriage and go abroad again, what should I seek? ..." "What is to gain from running around frantically? Riches and luxury are not my desire... [640]

In Confucius' time individuals who decided to live in permanent seclusion in the countryside were treated as extraordinary phenomena that belonged to the realm of legend. Objects of anecdotes rather than representatives of an essential facet of society, such persons reportedly tried to escape moral decadence. Their choice to withdraw in the mountains and their refusal to assume public positions were seen as gestures of nonconformity. By the time of the Six Dynasties (220-589 AD) the choice of retiring in the countryside or in a garden situated near a city had gradually integrated into the Chinese ethos and society, becoming a highly appreciated practice especially in the ranks of the literati.[641] For Confucius and the adherents of his philosophy born after him, to live in seclusion when the nation was governed by corrupted leaders was a virtuous act; in times of moral degradation a righteous man would better not engage in public affairs if he wished to preserve his principles. However, to serve under the authority of an enlightened monarch comprised a gentleman's filial duty; to refuse it and live retired showed a grave lack of responsibility and humanness. Wang Wei (王維699-759) poet of the Tang Dynasty affirmed that: "In a happy reign there should be no hermits;

[640] *Classical Chinese Literature*. Minford, p. 518.
[641] Berkowitz, *Patterns of Disengagement*, p 227. Li Chi, "The Changing Concept of the Recluse", *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 24, (1962-1963), 234-247, (p.235).

the wise and able should consult together."[642] Either in the temporary refuge offered by rural retreats or in the court of a benevolent king, the virtue-centred Confucian thought was always preoccupied with moral improvement for the advantage of the individual and ultimately for the benefit of many others. By controlling his passions, channelling his desires and being able to sympathise with his fellow men, a person achieved self-cultivation. His effort to improve himself inevitably involved a social dimension.[643]

The paintings of Li Gonglin (李公麟, 1049–1106) representing Tao Yuanming's story and the works of artists who focused on the same theme imitating Li, convey the need to achieve a certain balance between rural reclusion and social existence, retirement from official government and commitment to the human realm. Li Gonglin, a Northern Song painter and government official, illustrated the *Rhapsody* of Tao in an attempt to render this poet's eremitic ideal culturally relevant, adapted to the values of the eleventh-century bureaucratic elite. Created in the socio-political context of the Song Dynasty Li's images had a didactic purpose and were reproduced many times in the following centuries.[644] Redefining Tao's vision they gave moral legitimacy to the ideas and sentiments he expressed in his renowned *Rhapsody*. Bringing together Northern Song painting and Eastern Jin literature, Li's images and their subsequent reproductions disclose meanings that existed beyond the words of the famous ancient poem.[645] Paintings inspired from the *Rhapsody* respect its structure and sympathize with the aspirations of Tao Yuanming but do not comprise a pictorial translation of his verses; they can be viewed and interpreted independently since they employ the fifth-century poem as a vehicle to promulgate principles suitable to their time.

In an article written in 2000, Elizabeth Brotherton argued that the Freer Gallery *Returning Home* hand scroll, made by an unknown artist during the

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642 Jean Elizabeth Ward, *Wang Wei: Remembered*, (Starward Studio 2007), p.109.
643 Tu Wei-Min, "Self-cultivation in Chinese philosophy", 1998, doi:10.4324/9780415249126-G014-1. Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Taylor and Francis, https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/self-cultivation-in-chinese-philosophy/v-1.
644 Brotherton, "Beyond the Written Word", p.227.
645 David Couzens Hoy, *The Critical Circle: Literature, history and Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Berkeley University of California Press 1978) p.133.

twelfth century, imitated the earlier compositions of Li Gonglin. Most of the odd-numbered scenes from the Freer Scroll correspond to the desire which Tao Yuanming communicated in his Rhapsody; to dwell in the countryside free from the restraints related to governance.[646] They demonstrate this man's strong affinity with natural objects – clouds, trees and chrysanthemums- echo his disengagement from official society and affirm his desire for a life deprived from conventional honours. Thus, in the third scene, (Fig.48) the poet is represented standing alone on a hillock, between a perforated rock and a tall pine-tree, while the drapery of his robe is floating in the breeze. His portrayal emphasizes his identity as a recluse who broke the fetters binding him to the worldly occupations and escaped the dangers that came with them, finding self-accomplishment in natural elements like trees which cannot be corrupted by human actions. The seventh scene (Fig.49) shows Tao in the emblematic pose of an inspired scholar, standing upright on the top of a hill beside a large pine, holding his staff and looking at the horizon, oblivious to the presence of two men depicted below. As these latter sit on the ridge of the hill and have their backs turned to the poet, the idea of his seclusion and detachment from the human realm is further highlighted. Tao returned home because he did not wish to "go against his own self" anymore, making "his mind his body's slave."[647] His lofty figure expresses his quest for happiness and self-accomplishment; he looks for a higher truth which cannot be found in the acclaim of court circles and bureaucrats.

It has already been explained that reclusion was pre-eminently the inner experience which took shape in a virtuous literatus's mind; scholar-officials rarely decided to withdraw completely from state affairs. In order to exonerate Tao Yuanming for parts of the Rhapsody which seem discordant with Confucian norms of social and political commitment, the creator of Freer illustrations who probably reproduced the work of Li Gonglin exploited a sentiment of uneasiness perceived in some verses from Tao's poem:

"Every day I stroll in the garden for pleasure,
There is a gate there, but it is always shut,

[646] Elizabeth Brotherton, "Beyond the Written Word", p.235.
[647] *Classical Chinese Literature*, Minford, I, p. 518.

Cane in hand I walk and rest,
Occasionally raising my head to gaze into the distance.
The clouds aimlessly rise from the peaks,
The birds, when weary of flying, know it is time to come home.
As the sun's rays grow dim and disappear from view,
I walk around a lonely pine tree, stroking it."[648]

The aimless rising of the clouds, the weariness of the birds, the closed gate, the caress given to the lonely pine-tree, could be interpreted as implicit signs of anxiety and self-interrogation provoked by a lifestyle which cut him off the world of men. Confucian literati of the Song dynasty took as a role-model the author of these verses: "May my friendships be broken off and my wandering come to an end. The world and I shall have nothing more to do with one another."[649] Such phrases should be elucidated and justified; the artists had to read between the lines to find hidden meanings, confirming that Tao's rural retirement had a great moral significance. He had to be transformed into an orthodox Confucian sage, a guardian of virtues who did not abdicate his public post nonchalantly for the sake of pastoral peace.[650] The illustrations portraying him as a lonely man merging with elements of nature are therefore succeeded with even-numbered scenes where his sociability is underscored. Having depicted Tao as a family man surrounded by his wife and children in his garden in the second scene, (Fig.50) the fourth one represents him sitting in a pavilion where he drinks and converses with his peers (Fig.51). Several servants attend the needs of the poet and his illustrious hosts while some page boys wait outside with the horses. The impression Tao gave as an introverted eccentric man is somehow amended; the idea of total seclusion and rejection of the world is softened. The painter bequeaths contemporary viewers the image of an exceptionally virtuous person who appreciated social interaction and enjoyed the esteem of other literati in a Confucian context of propriety. A link to his public post is preserved; looking at the images one

[648] *Classical Chinese Literature*, Minford, p. 518.
[649] *Classical Chinese Literature*, Minford, I, p. 519..
[650] Brotherton, "Beyond the Written Word", p.254.

could assume that this is the temporary retirement of a scholar official, conforming to the moral precepts of this era. [651]

A righteous person would retire and live as a recluse in the countryside in order to avoid serving a corrupt system and compromising his moral principles. The *humble administrator* Wang Xianchen's idea of solitude which ultimately shaped his attitude towards worldly fame and public office should be interpreted in this context. As I discussed earlier, Wang left his post in the government and never reassumed it, adopting a secluded lifestyle that appealed to him. [652] The term "humble administrator" 拙政园, emphasized Wang Xianchen's ineptness as a politician and exposed this quality not only to his immediate audience in Suzhou where he remained until his death, but to the every corner of the empire which was reached by the reputation of his garden. In the *Record of Wang shi's Zhuozhengyuan*王氏拙政园记[Humble Administrator's Garden]', Wen Zhengming wrote:

> Wang Xianchen said: "Pan Yue of the Jin Dynasty (265-317) did not do well as an official, therefore he turned to gardening, saying, 'this can also be a way of making a living.' Now it has been over forty years since I first served in the government. Of those who started in the same time with me, some have climbed onto very distinguished posts like ministers, whereas I retired early when I was still a prefect. I came back to my hometown, living a reclusive life. Since I cannot quite be equal with Pan Yue as an official, therefore I use his idea to name my garden.
>
> You were once a senior official of Ministry of Supervision, and you were righteous and uncorrupt. However you were removed from your post soon. Later you were re-appointed, but then removed again, until in the end you were ostracized. How can you be a petty person with base conducts or someone who only seeks self-preservation and goes with the flow? That reason you compare humbly yourself with Pan Yue, is because you want to release the dissatisfaction about your career. But

[651] Brotherton, "Beyond the Written Word", p.237.
[652] Alain Berkowitz, "Topos and Entelechy", (p.632)

> the life you prefer originally was indeed the enjoyment of leisure, instead of serving in the government... [653]

In his text Wen Zhengming passionately defended Wang Xianchen because he identified himself with this literatus. Wang's decision to leave his public office at the age of fifty could not be disassociated with the Wen's earlier choice to live far from the court; writing about the reclusion of his senior friend with respect and admiration, the painter affirmed his own rectitude. When the country is governed by crooked men, someone's lack of skill in dealing with public affairs is a sign of virtue; only a depraved individual would accept to jeopardize his integrity maintaining positions of authority at any cost. Under normal conditions, being inappropriate for office was not something to boast about, but it always demanded a degree of self-awareness and humility to publicly acknowledge being incompetent for government. Wang Xianchen's perfect honesty was an obstacle to the pursuit of a conventional career; it was not indolence which made him choose the freedom of reclusive life in his garden. When he withdrew from government he did not loathe society, nor did he think public service was altogether useless. Wang shared the sort of many lofty men who are despised in moments of moral crisis, when only petty persons flourish. Refusing the transient glory of official career and proclaiming himself an inept administrator he consolidated the reputation of his virtue which outlived him.

Wen Zhengming's poem accompanying the image "*Tent of a Scholar Tree*" in both albums of 1533 and 1551 evokes the moral principles Wang Xianchen stood for and suggests that he was fully conscious of the need to perpetuate them for the sake of public welfare.

> A tall scholar tree under the pavilion tends to cover the wall; the cool and green mist wet my clothes; sporadic gorgeous flowers spread their fragrance far away; cool shade adds lustre to generations. I recall the

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[653] Wen Zhengming, Zhuozhengyuan tuyong *zhushi* 《拙政园图咏》注释, Bu Fuming, p.151.

past event in civil exams; our forefathers; glorious achievements all depend on the younger generation to develop.[654]

The “Humble Administrator” hoped that the glory of the ancestors would shine in the future generations; Wen’s illustration of 1551 (Fig.52) portrays him with his peers, suggesting that they all shared the same concerns. The memory of state exams he had to pass as a literatus indicate that he was a committed Confucian. In the poem, the pleasure of the senses stimulated by the cool mist, the sight of the trees and the fragrances of the garden are associated with virtue and its transmission. The flowers whose perfume travels away is clearly metaphorical; “sporadic” and rare, they symbolise fundamental Confucian values - righteousness, propriety, humaneness, wisdom - which were highly regarded, without being put into practice by the vast majority. These qualities define a *junzi* and guarantee his reputation among his contemporaries and the generations to come. If good principles are respected rulers exercise authority with benevolence and society thrives free from corruption. Finally Wen’s text helps one realise how memories of past events and emotional experiences derive from aesthetic gratification and how this later interweaves with the endorsement of longstanding moral qualities.

Like Wang Xianchen in Ming China, René de Girardin Marquis de Vauvray, owner of the Ermenonville Park in eighteenth-century France, was conscious of the fact that instilling high moral principles to the people was indispensable for the welfare of society. If Wang’s noble intentions became known via the diffusion of a garden record, Girardin tried to propagate moral values and social ideals by letting people visit his garden freely. Girardin was a man with strong political convictions which defined his public engagement as officer of the National Guard, a citizen’s militia formed to maintain social order, from 1790 until 1792.[655] Furthermore, during 1790 he regularly participated in the meetings of the Jacobins whose positions he espoused; this anti-royalist political group alias known as “Society of the Friends of the Constitution” had

[654] Wen Zhengming, Zhuozhengyuan tuyong *zhushi* 《拙政园图咏》注释, Bu Fuming, p.118.
[655] Amy Freund, *Portraiture and Politics in Revolutionary France*, 2014, p.179.

vowed to protect crucial achievements of the French Revolution (1789) such as the equality of French citizens against any aristocratic reaction.[656]

An uncompromising republican visionary, Girardin was fascinated with the idea of agricultural reform for the benefit of peasantry. In his essay on the composition of landscapes he appears convinced that gardens should play a pivotal role in the procedure of human improvement since they could prevent mental or physical ailments and contribute to the renewal of ethics.[657] Hosting the remains of Jean Jacques Rousseau, whose views about the general will of citizens as only source of law and authority had inspired the Jacobins and formed the sixth article of the Declaration of Human Rights,[658] Ermenonville would be almost anticipated to have an edifying character. Girardin wanted his garden to be a school of virtue for the French people. He kept it open to the public until 1788, the year before the outbreak of the Revolution; he was obliged to restrict the access to it due to the large number of visitors who occasionally caused damages in the premises. His first-born son Stanislas de Girardin affirmed that some statues on the Isle of Poplars where Rousseau was buried were mutilated and that obscenities were written on the philosopher's tomb. The sacrilegious behaviour of those the Marquis hoped to educate was discouraging.[659]

Girardin wanted to provide the visitor of his landscape garden with quotations which would reinforce the superiority of Enlightenment ideals. He therefore sought for appropriate extracts in the matrix of Greco-Roman culture, Renaissance Humanism, as well as in contemporary philosophy and literature. The inscriptions figuring in this park come from Virgil, Horace and Theocritus; Girardin also cited Montaigne, Petrarch, modern English poets (Shenstone and Thomson), Voltaire and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In several cases the verses were composed by the Marquis himself. [660] The cultural

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[656] Decaen *Le Dernier Ami*, p.209.
[657] Girardin, *De la composition de paysages*, p.121-123.
[658] Joshua Stein*, Commentary on the Constitution from Plato to Rousseau*, (Plymouth UK: Lexington Books, 2011), p.308.
[659] This happened ten years after the death of Rousseau, in Stanislas de Girardin *Promenade ou tineraire*, p.25.
[660] *Inscriptions du Parc d'Ermenonville: fac-simile d'un manuscrit du XVIIIe siècle*. Bulletin d'information; études et documents, Association des amis de Jean Jacques Rousseau, p.43, (1992), 1-48, (pp. 35-42, passim).

establishment of the *Grand Siècle* (French seventeenth century) represented by Corneille and Racine and the millenary literary heritage of the Middle-Ages are absent from the intertext that was Ermenonville. Unlike Wang Xianchen who did not question any of the Confucian teachings revered by his ancestors, Girardin was not preoccupied with the perpetuation of all the established precepts cherished by his forefathers. The eighteenth-century French nobleman saw an eventual rupture with the status-quo expressed by the Catholic Church and the absolute monarchy as salutary for the future of French people. He envisaged the reinvention of fundamental concepts which he believed were distorted in the course of previous centuries. For those who visited Ermenonville the numerous inscriptions were supposed to function as emotional stimuli or provoke serious reflections about every aspect of human life. Their reading gave moral guidance; they inspired the love of rural environment and a sense of social duty while they generated a variety of feelings ranging from nostalgia and melancholy to hope, comfort and happiness.

Inscriptions with Montaigne's passage: "we have overcharged the intrinsic beauty and richness of Mother Nature's works with our inventions"[661] and Shenstone's call to "shun the vicious waste of pomp"[662] justify Girardin's choice for a landscape free from the tyranny of geometry and emphasize his love for simplicity in all things. The following verses constitute a call for universal brotherhood addressed to the visitors "in this wild place, all people will be friends and all languages accepted".[663] Petrarch's words disclose the identity of those who sought refuge in such landscapes: "the thick shadows that cover this seat are appropriate for Poets, Lovers and Philosophers."[664] On the door of a cabin dedicated to Philemon and Baucis, a poor elderly couple rewarded from Zeus for their hospitality, Girardin reminds the strollers that a frugal, carefree life could offer more enduring pleasures than luxury. The love of the countryside as antidote to the vain pursuit of riches, constant

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661 Cited in Stanislas de Girardin, *Promenade ou Itinéraire* p.7.
662 Cited in Stanislas de Girardin, *Promenade ou Itinéraire*, p.35.
663 Stanislas de Girardin *Promenade ou Itinéraire*, p.15.
664 Stanislas de Girardin *Promenade ou Itinéraire*, p 22.

source of fraternal discord, is underscored with a passage from Virgil.[665] The latter's "Love unites all things" and Petrarch's "Water, winds, tree leaves, little birds, fish, herbs and flowers speak about love"[666] are inscribed in the spirit of national and universal fraternity that Girardin fervently promoted via this garden.

The Temple of Philosophy in Ermenonville, built in the form of a rotunda, was inscribed in Girardin's project to create an ideologically charged space where the Enlightenment humanism would be acclaimed and transmitted. The edifice was constructed on the top of a hill from where the entire park could be viewed in all its splendour (Fig.53) At first sight one might classify the temple as a ruin; Girardin regarded ruins as integral parts of gardens and suggested that they should exude magnificence, unity of style and simplicity.[667] Nevertheless the apparently crumbling appearance of the building is the result of its being left intentionally unfinished. It strongly resembles the Temple of Vesta in Tivoli which Girardin might have seen during the course of his Grand Tour which had lasted nearly four years. Had he not encountered this monument when he visited Italy, he would have been familiar to it due to its famous representations. For instance, Claude Lorrain who had portrayed it in his "*View of Tivoli at Sunset*" (Fig.54) was unreservedly admired by Girardin, who considered his artistic work source of inspiration and model for landscape design.[668]

Like the inscriptions in the park, the Temple of Philosophy had a pre-eminently pedagogical role communicating political optimism and certain social expectations to the visitors. It is dedicated to Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592), statesman, author and illustrious humanist of the French Renaissance who, according to René de Girardin, "had spoken about everything" (*qui omnia dixit*). The inscription mentioning Montaigne emphasizes the reason why this building was left unfinished; philosophy itself was not yet brought in to perfection (*nondum perfectae*).[669] The choice of this

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[665] Stanislas de Girardin, *Promenade ou Itinéraire*, p.32.
[666] Cited in Stanislas de Girardin, *Promenade ou Itinéraire,* p.60.
[667] René de Girardin, *De la composition de paysages*, p.107.
[668] René de Girardin, *De la composition de paysages,* pp.80, 118.
[669] Cited in Stanislas de Girardin, *Promenade ou itinéraire*, p.38.

sixteenth-century French thinker is particularly significant to anyone who would attempt to interpret Girardin's intentions. Montaigne was not a typical philosopher but, according to his own words, an accidental one. In his famous essays treating a variety of subjects, readers find no evident philosophical teaching, no principles or conclusions. In Montaigne's writings, apart from a substantial number of quotations from ancient philosophers, we encounter mainly spontaneous thoughts, fruits of his intellectual method of constant questioning and assessment.[670] His work reveals a profound scepticism which contested human certitudes and claims of infallible knowledge; for him, the greatest achievement was to recognize one's limitations and live without illusions. Montaigne, a Catholic living in the 1500s, strongly opposed fanaticism and intolerance. He was therefore considered as a precursor of free thought (*libre pensée*), a fundamental component of the Enlightenment.[671] Even more so, Montaigne modestly proclaimed that he did not hold his own syllogisms in high regard; he believed that an increased sense of self-esteem was harmful, a source of bias that made philosophers reluctant to speak publicly for fear of being regarded as weak-minded. A true philosopher had to overcome his pride, be selfless and seek new experiences in the world of here and now; not in the realm of metaphysics.[672] In the texts of Montaigne it is easy to discern some grains of secular mentality as well as the questioning of absolute authorities in the domain of human thought. Unsurprisingly, Girardin, supporter of novel, enlightened ideas felt strongly attracted by Montaigne. This latter, to whom the Temple of Philosophy in Ermenonville was dedicated, maintained that joy is an undisputable sign of wisdom. The following passage is taken from the first book of *The Essays* which Montaigne wrote during a ten-year period of self-imposed seclusion in the library of his citadel, "weary of the servitude of the court", in a quest for freedom and equanimity:[673]

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[670] Ann Hartle, "The invisibility of philosophy in the Essays of Michel de Montaigne", *The Review of Metaphysics*, 65, (2012) 795-812 (pp.795-797).
[671] Tilde A. Sankovitch, "Michel de Montaigne" in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Retrieved from: https://www.britannica.com/biography/Michel-de-Montaigne
[672] Ann Hartle, "The invisibility of philosophy", p.810.
[673] *A New History of French Literature*, ed.by Denis Hollier, (London, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press 199, p.249. In the year of Christ 1571, at the age of thirty-eight, on the last day of February, his birthday, Michael de Montaigne, long weary of the servitude of the court

> The soul in which philosophy dwells should by its health make even the body healthy. It should make its tranquillity and gladness shine out from within; should form in its own mould the outward demeanour, and consequently arm it with a graceful pride, an active and joyous bearing, and a contented and good-natured countenance. The surest sign of wisdom is constant cheerfulness… Why, she makes it her business to calm the tempests of the soul and to teach hungers and fevers to laugh, not by some imaginary epicycles, but by natural and palpable reasons.[674]

The Temple of Philosophy could not be associated with feelings of sorrow and regret that would inevitably emerge from contemplating an edifice referring to illustrious past achievements. The building was agreeable to behold but its ultimate goal was not to encourage people to venerate an idealised historical period. Placing this temple in his garden Girardin promulgated an optimistic worldview. He wanted Ermenonville's visitors – French and foreigners- to develop a vigorous civic conscience and a confident attitude towards the future based on the values represented by renowned, respected men whose names are engraved on the six columns supporting the dome. Every single one of the aforementioned columns, built in Tuscan rhythm, is consecrated to the memory of an individual who serviced humanity with his philosophical writings or scientific discoveries. The names are accompanied by a Latin word which encapsulates the essence of each of the six persons' intellectual endeavours: Newton (Light), Descartes (Nothing is vain in nature), Voltaire (Ridiculous), W. Penn (Humanity), Montesquieu (Justice), Rousseau (Nature). Above the temple's door, Virgil's phrase "Know the reason of things" (*Rerum cognoscere causas*)[675] evokes the necessity to explore and question the world surrounding us. This quotation from Georgics, considered together with the choice of names, corresponds to the eighteenth-century spirit embraced by Ermenonville's owner; an inquisitive spirit which labours for the welfare of

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and of public employments, while still entire, retired to the bosom of the learned virgins, where in calm and freedom from all cares he will spend what little remains of his life, now more than half run out. If the fates permit, he will complete this abode, this sweet ancestral retreat; and he has consecrated it to his freedom, tranquillity, and leisure

[674] *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, Donald, M. Frame (trans.), (Stanford California: Stanford University Press 1958), p.119.

[675] Stanislas de Girardin, *Promenade ou Itinéraire*, p.35.

humanity, defends social justice and believes that science will triumph over superstition.

The most striking thing about the Temple of Philosophy is its "unfinished" state. Its architectural form is the only thing connecting it with the past; the building refers to the world to come and stands as an unfinished pantheon of modern philosophy and science. The names inscribed on it do not include any illustrious Greek or Roman sage who would establish the traditional link between present times and classical antiquity. The edifice derived its respectability from Montaigne and eighteenth-century geniuses like Newton and Voltaire. "Who shall bring this to perfection?" (*Quis hoc perficiet*) asks the inscription engraved on a broken pillar on the base of which we read the confident affirmation that "falsehood will not subsist" (*Falsum stare non potest*).[676] Girardin praised individuals who revolutionised human thought and expressed his hope that their work will be continued and accomplished. The three columns lying on the ground before the rotunda wait to be erected when a worthy philosopher will arise to edify the people; they may be interpreted as a sign of anticipation, a wink to Girardin's contemporaries or to the future generations among which other geniuses will arise. It is also possible that this modern pantheon testifies to the limits of human capacity to understand the mysteries of existence and the immensity of the cosmos. "Maybe", observed a visitor, "the columns will have to remain on the ground for centuries, since it is easier to obtain a place in the French Academy than to merit a column in the Temple of Philosophy in Ermenonville."[677] The question "who will accomplish it" indicates a degree of anxiety mixed with hope; the answer to it remains open. A lack of certitude for the future accompanied with a feeling of uneasiness might shake the confidence of those beholding the monument but could also awaken their sense of responsibility. Girardin seems hopeful in his declaration that the truth, as opposed to "falsehood", will have the last word. His building heralds the triumph of good ideas; the basis of a healthy society.

[676] Promenade ou Itineraire, p.35.
[677] Promenade ou Itineraire de jardins d'Ermenonville, p 34-36.

It celebrates the achievements of modern times instead of lamenting for the lost splendour of the past or the moral decadence of contemporary life.[678]

The design of the Temple of Philosophy in Ermenonville has been attributed to Hubert Robert. However, this artist and garden designer's involvement in this park's making has been disputed by specialists because no official document provides us with certain evidence in favour of Robert's participation to the creation of follies in Girardin's grounds. Nevertheless, even if the distinguished landscape painter - who certainly designed the tomb of Rousseau - was not the author of this specific edifice, he represented it quite a few times; one of the most interesting versions he produced seems to be a work created around the year 1800. In this oil-on-canvas, the names, quotations and phrases engraved on the Temple are not visible (Fig.55).

Seven persons are portrayed in the painting where the unaccomplished monument, instead of being a shadowy, discrete presence in the background of Ermenonville's landscape, imposes itself as the true protagonist. Near the temple's threshold a solitary man wearing a tunic, holding a walking stick and absorbed in his thoughts leans against one of the columns which support the dome. In the foreground, on the right, a group of individuals could be mistaken for a family of four if their clothes did not betray their different social backgrounds. Nobody is facing the viewer. A young woman in Empire-style robe is half-lying on a pillar base with her elbow resting on the capital. The building has absorbed her attention. Next to her and her little daughter, a barefoot peasant lays prone on the edifice's broken frieze. He and his son seem engaged in a conversation concerning the Temple of Philosophy; the father is talking to the boy, his stretched hand showing the building. In the background another female figure and a child are leaving the glade and move towards the forest.

The painting transcends the idea of reclusion and pensive mood epitomised in the figure of the old man who stands beside the temple's gate. Enveloped in an ancient garment, silent, lonely and plunged in his thoughts, he probably

[678] Nina Dubin, *Futures and Ruins*, p. 49. Dubin maintained that the Temple of Philosophy constitutes the antithesis of Cobham's Temple of Modern Virtues at Stowe. The French edifice, Dubin argues, suggests progress rather than decay, hope rather than despair.

incarnates wisdom and introspection. Coming from the distant past, he is closely associated to the majestic Greco-Roman forms of the unaccomplished temple. The climbing plants covering the upper part of the edifice demonstrate the power of nature over works of human hands.[679] Like actors in a theatre scene, the figures who contemplate the building are vehicles of meaning, communicating the garden's optimistic message. The young adults who symbolize the present time and the children, who epitomize the days to come, enter in a dialogue with a world of cultural and social ideals which they are invited to meditate and adopt. The procedure of admiring and interacting with a monument dedicated to philosophy takes place in an attractive natural setting, thus being appropriately inscribed in the edifying context of Ermenonville. Everybody – man, woman and children- enjoy together a scene which is morally instructive and capable of elevating the intellect without being strictly didactic. The ordinariness of the mother and child playfully moving among the trees underlines the relaxed atmosphere which permeates the educational process and puts forward the democratic, autonomous spirit with whom the garden is inextricably linked. Philosophy is not reserved to the solitary genius who transmits his thoughts to a passive recipient - the people. This is in concord with the convictions of Montaigne who argued that reason and sound judgement are attributes of every living man; anyone endowed with self-awareness is capable of discovering the truth.[680] Finally, one may suggest that Robert's painting expresses egalitarian ideas. It shows and promotes the emergence of a fraternal society, fruit of the Enlightenment; it alludes to a happy realisation of the aspirations of the French Revolution during which the artist was imprisoned.[681] As it was stressed earlier, the elegantly dressed young mother belongs to another social stratum from the barefoot man next to her. However, they look at the same direction and, regardless of their status they share a historical destiny and must build a common future. Great ideals contemplated in an environment made by Girardin for their moral edification have bridged the gap between them.

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[679] Guillaume Faroult, Catherine Voiriot et als, *Hubert Robert: Un peintre visionnaire 1733-1808*, (Somogy, Les éditions Musée du Louvre 2016), p.62.
[680] Raymond C. La Charité, *The Concept of Judgment in Montaigne*, (The Hague: Martinus Nihoff, 1968), p.132.
[681] Perrin Stein, "Drawings by Hubert Robert in the Metropolitan Museum of Art: Some Restored Attributions", *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 35 (2000), 179-191, p.183.

Girardin had an uninterrupted social and political activity until 1792. He and his family spent winter in Paris and stayed in the chateau next to the garden during summer.[682] When the Marquis was in Ermenonville he dedicated his time to nature, philosophy and the arts; he walked in the countryside, read, drew and played music.[683] The pastimes of the French nobleman resemble those described by Tao Yuanming in his Rhapsody: "daily I stroll in the garden" and "take pleasure in books and cither to dispel my worries."[684] Though implicated in the Jacobin's cause, Girardin soon realized that the Revolution he wholeheartedly supported showed signs of corruption. The new political establishment was not eager to put into practice Rousseau's ideas which, as it was stated earlier, were pivotal in the drafting of the Declaration of Human Rights (1789). Based on Rousseau's *Social Contract*, Girardin insisted that every law approved by the Assembly should be submitted to a plebiscite, ratified by the vote of the electorate; sadly, his appeal was ignored.[685] The persons who struggled to abolish absolute monarchy seemed to distance themselves from the principles of justice and equality they were supposed to serve. Like Wang Xianchen who withdrew from public life, Girardin's disillusionment and refusal to compromise his principles resulted in his complete retirement in Ermenonville in 1792. The following year the country went through a phase of violent repression known as the period of Terror (*La Terreur*). Many among those who supported the Revolution were fiercely persecuted for the slightest, often unfounded, suspicion over ideological deviation. Girardin did not escape mistreatment; on August 1793 his conformity to the First Republic was questioned and the authorities came after him as a traitor who would undermine the new regime. Luckily, his life was spared.[686]

In the 1790 portrait attributed to Jean-Baptiste Greuze (Fig.56), Rene de Girardin emerges as an epitome of the Enlightenment: lover of the rural environment, well-read, affable and engaged in public life within the contemporary republican context. The middle-aged marquis is shown in a

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[682] Decaen, *Le dernier ami de Rousseau,* p. 87.
[683] Decaen, *Le dernier ami de Rousseau*, pp.173-174.
[684] Cited in Brotherton, "Beyond the Written Word", p.260.
[685] Decaen, *Le dernier ami de Rousseau*, p.212.
[686] Decaen, *Le dernier ami de Rousseau*, p.215.

relaxed posture, sitting on the grass in front of a tree and crossing his legs with a contented smile. One hand affectionately rests on his dog while the other holds a book. His clothes –a white waistcoat, a muslin tie and a pair of comfortable leather trousers correspond to the male fashion which prevailed during the Revolution. The bust of Rousseau, sculpted by Houdon after the sitter's request the year of the philosopher's demise, is turned towards Girardin;[687] his benevolent gaze fixes the owner of Ermenonville. One could suggest that the painter made a "double" portrait; the dead mentor communicates his virtues to his living disciple who laboured for the continuity of Rousseau's vision: a society where all men may live harmoniously together by submitting their personal wills to a collective, general will, created through agreement with other free and equal persons. Fresh flowers below the sculpture probably indicate that Girardin always cherished the deceased philosopher's memory. Placed on a pedestal, the bust comprises an auspicious presence and an ideological statement. This philosopher's concern for justice, democracy and children's education are expressed in his 1762 books *The Social Contract* where he argued for people's sovereignty opposing the divine right of monarchs to legislate, and in *Emile*, which inspired the modern, liberal educational system established in France after the Revolution. In Ermenonville Rousseau's dedication to the common good and his amiable disposition are underlined via inscriptions which eulogize him as embodiment of simplicity and candour. "Here reposes the man of nature and truth", reads the inscription on one side of his tomb in Girardin's park, while the other side reads "dedicate your life to the truth",[688] further promulgating the deceased as a model of moral excellence. In this garden Rousseau is presented the pinnacle of virtue and humaneness.

Girardin's ardent love of landscape is made effectively known to us through Greuze's painting. The view behind him is unmistakably one of his own garden, fruit of his inspiration and vehicle of his ambitious projects for the French nation: agricultural reform, prosperity, equality and fraternity. The

[687] Ronit Milano, *The Portrait Bust and French Cultural Politics in the Eighteenth Century*, (Brill, Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2015), p.44.
[688] Ian Dunlop, *The Companion Guide to the Country Round Paris,* (London: Collins 1986), p.263.

cypresses underline the Arcadian dimension of the pastoral park which received the body of a great thinker capable to stimulate many visionaries who were convinced for the need to work for socio-political change in France. The hat with the tricolour cockade is discreetly placed next to the Marquis as sign of his revolutionary ideas and his public engagement; when he sat for the portrait he had not yet retired in the idyllic context of his Elysium. The flowers, the tree, the bust of Rousseau, the book and the revolutionary hat tightly enfold Girardin. The author of the image informs the viewer that the French nobleman was deeply committed to all the things he cherished; rural environment, philosophy, civic virtue and political action for the sake of public welfare.

4.4 Reclusive Garden-dwelling as Vehicle of Good Governance.

Among benevolent individuals involved in governance and state affairs, a private garden where they could retire, exult and meditate was associated with the development of a heightened sense of public duty. In China and Europe, this type of eremitic landscape functioned as a stimulus for virtuous civil servants, noblemen and emperors. Agreeable retreats inspired their owners a need to examine their conscience as to whether they performed their public duties diligently or not, while reclusion also nurtured their feelings of empathy. Administrators and rulers commiserated with the population whose happiness depended on their capacity to exercise authority responsibly, considerately and with sense of justice.

Qi Biaojia (1602-1645), proprietor and designer of a garden he named "*The Allegory Mountain*", was a senior official of the late Ming Dynasty. He was assigned the task of relieving the suffering of indigent people. In China helping men in need was not left to the spontaneous generosity of philanthropists. The distribution of food and money to the destitute, as well as the care of orphan children, constituted standard functions of Chinese governors. As a Confucian, Qi wanted to set a model of benevolence and magnanimity which would be imitated by his fellow men regardless of their

rank; his conviction that virtue was spread by example[689] conformed to the *Analects*: "Guide the people by law, subdue them by punishment; they may shun crime, but will be void of shame. Guide them by example, subdue them by courtesy; they will learn shame, and come to be good."[690] Qi Biaojia realized the importance of preserving public order. The members of underprivileged classes would revolt if they were deprived from things necessary for their survival and he wanted to prevent the disastrous consequences of social unrest. Thus, one year before the riots provoked by the famine of 1641 broke out, he wrote in his diary: "I first gave one hundred silver pieces to aid the village poor in order to encourage a fondness of charity thereafter."[691] His accounts mention certain community compact meetings during which rural residents would be lectured on fundamental Confucian maxims such as filial love and respect for their elders. Qi Biaojia ensured that rice would be distributed before these teachings took place; the hungry would then be more attentive to moral instruction. Additionally, this official was preoccupied with the rehabilitation of rebels and wrongdoers.[692] In his diary he recorded the period during which he struggled to alleviate the problem of food shortage while confronting the aggressive behaviour of starving peasants: "I thought of how in the first month the people had been plundering and I went out to mediate the conflict. From that point on, with the relief efforts, soup kitchens, the infirmary and the dispensary, and with the recommending of reward and the completion of reports, I scarcely had any leisure."[693]

In his writings Qi Biaojia never failed to emphasize the heavy physical toil his office involved, the dangers he encountered, as well as the hatred he had to put up with for assuming a responsibility towards people with clashing interests; the wealthy were not eager to share their possessions with the destitute.[694] Setting a virtuous example of active charity, Qi wished to teach men of his own rank how practicing kindness could bring personal gratification and contribute to social harmony.

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[689] Johanna Handlin Smith, *The Art of Doing Good; Charity in Late Ming China*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), pp. 263, 264.
[690] Lucas Bergkamp, *The Sayings of Confucius*, (New York: Barnes and Noble 1994), p.5.
[691] Handlin Smith, *The Art of Doing Good*, p.263.
[692] Handlin Smith, *The Art of Doing Good*, p. 264.
[693] Handlin Smith, *The Art of Doing Good,* p.269.
[694] Handlin Smith, *The Art of Doing Good*, p. 272.

The case of Qi Biaojia may highlight the importance of moderation, a virtue that every responsible Confucian official had to display when he indulged in the lofty practice of reclusive garden dwelling. A literatus's ability to regulate his affection for his garden determined this garden's utility as a vehicle of moral cultivation, which could increase the man's capacity to act as an exemplary minister of the empire. Qi Biaojia had dedicated a lot of time to the construction of the "*Allegory Mountain*" (Fig.57). In his writings every scenic spot and pavilion is described fondly and thoroughly disclosing his fascination with this place where he used to find rest and happiness. However, Qi did not omit to express his regret for being excessively occupied with the making of his lavish garden when simplicity was the ideal which had initially inspired its creation:[695] "In the beginning all I conceived of was a single studio and solitary hall. As time went by, however, I gradually expanded my plan of it, my heart turning as it was possessed by material things."[696] His remorse for finding too much pleasure in pretty objects related to the *Allegory Mountain* reflected his Confucian morality and was analogous to the level of his commitment to the public welfare. In his diary Qi Biaojia narrated an episode which reveals his ethical stance towards personal enjoyment and public duty. Apparently, the manifest poverty of some relatives who came to visit him in 1639 filled him with embarrassment; he was "living in a garden with pavilion upon pavilion" when the majority suffered. The realization of this fact forced him to think about taking more relief measures for the poorer subjects of the Empire.[697]

Endowed with the scrupulous conscience of a *junzi*, Qi Biaojia aspired to follow the Confucian principles meticulously and believed there was always progress to be made in his struggle to achieve perfection; a great man, said Confucius, is distressed by his want of ability.[698] Thus, Qi humbly accepted the reproach of his friend, the literatus Wang Chaoshi (1603-1640) who accused him of neglecting grave responsibilities related to governance, not because he practiced self-cultivation in garden reclusion, but because he

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[695] Duncan Campbell, "Qi Biaojia's Footnotes to Allegory Mountain introduction and translation , studies", *History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes,* 19, (1999), 243-271, (p.255)
[696] Campbell, "Qi Biaojia's Footnotes", p.257.
[697] Handlin Smith, *The Art of Doing Good*, p.113.
[698] Analects 15.19 (trans. James Legge) cited in *Chinese Text Project*, Sturgeon, https://ctext.org/analects/wei-ling-gong

wasted his time obsessing with the creation of trivial things to increase his garden's splendour. In his essay titled "*Footnotes to Allegory Mountain*" Qi cited the letter where the Prefect Wang rebuked him:

> But for the past two years[699] that you have been here, far from concerning yourself to the construction of your garden with carving and engraving, with flowers and rocks. In order to display your mastery of such petty skills you have neglected the Grand scheme of things as far as your state goes. If everyone were to be like you, what then could the state rely upon? This then can be said to be the manner in which you have failed to fulfil your obligation to the sovereign.[700]

The admonishment of Wang Chaoshi, a man he called "teacher" although they had the same age[701], had preceded Qi Biaojia's decision to accept a government post in order to assist a Chinese peasantry afflicted by hunger and disease. Qi expressed gratitude for the excellent counsel he was given. He did not hesitate to acknowledge his failings publicly, showing his like-minded friends and his progeny what they should avoid (lack of moderation, surrendering to impulses) and what they must desire. In a spirit of self-criticism he called one of the garden's pavilions *Hall of my four Unfulfilled Obligations*;[702] through a place of leisure, he strived to transmit a lofty idea of service and honour to his compatriots and his sons.

During the Ming - Qing transition, Qi Biaojia felt that the eagerness to embellish the "*Allegory Mountain*" with numerous pavilions trampled on the ideal of frugality and demonstrated a lack of social responsibility, although his actions during his life proved his righteousness and deep sense of public duty. On the other hand, in pre-revolutionary France, Girardin integrated the creation of his park in Ermenonville in a plan inspired by his egalitarian political vision. Designing a garden in the land inherited by his grandfather, the zealous follower of Rousseau's ideas wanted to improve the life quality of

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[699] Duncan Campbell, "Qi Biaojia's Footnotes", (p. 247). Qi Biaojia started the construction of his garden during the mid-winter of the yi hai year (1635). According to his own words, the garden was worthy of its name in 1638 (13th day of the 4th month).
[700] Duncan Campbell,"Qi Biaojia's Footnotes", p. 263.
[701] Duncan Campbell, "Qi Biaojia's Footnotes", p.271. Wang Chaoshi (1603-1640) and Qi Biaojia were listed as disciples of the late Ming thinker Liu Zongzhou (1578-1645)
[702] Hanne, *Creativity in Exile*, pp. 257-259.

lower social classes in France. Ermenonville, which was not lavished with luxurious buildings –the chateau was there before the park's creation- should stand as a model for a fair society, where the cruel injustices of the *Ancien Regime* against the disadvantaged majority could be repaired.[703] His *Essay on the Composition of Landscapes; or the means of improving and embellishing the country round our habitations, joining the pleasant with the useful,* published in 1777, reveals that through the garden Girardin sought to communicate his vision for an agricultural and social reform in favour of the peasantry which suffered greatly from the deregulation of the grain industry caused by the financial measures of Turgot, minister of Louis XVI.[704]

Every visitor should be able to learn from the free arrangement of this landscape which served as an answer to the "forced" arrangement established by the royal garden designer Le Nôtre (1613-1700), creator of the gardens in Versailles. The pretentious geometrical compositions of Le Nôtre, who "massacred nature by subjecting everything to the ruler and the try-square of the master mason",[705] were thought to convey the rigid sense of hierarchy and order represented by absolute monarchy. Ermenonville announced this political system's decline and the need to be replaced; in this sense the park constitutes a precursor of imminent social changes in France. According to Girardin, to accept a landscape arrangement where human intervention would be more discreet could bring people to develop an authentic taste for the beauty of nature. Furthermore, a free design of the grounds would mean to abolish geometrically-shaped parterres and stop unnecessary deforestation. This practice, explained the Marquis, would increase the vegetation and allow the maintenance of larger livestock numbers; it could also provide enough space to cultivate wheat, thus getting more abundant crops. By promoting this type of landscape design, the state would ensure the physical subsistence of the neglected majority, who laboured in order to feed those who defended the country (soldiers) or instructed the social body (priests).[706] Like Qi Biaojia, Girardin knew that

[703] René de Girardin, *De la composition*, P. 149
[704] Jean de Cayeux, *Hubert Robert et les jardins*, (Paris : Fayard 1989), p.97.
[705] René de Girardin, *De la composition*, p.15.
[706] Decaen, *Le dernier ami du Rousseau*, p.47.

famine engendered social unrest and was concerned with malnutrition which plagued parts of the French population. Every living being must be nourished, he maintained;[707] the basis of moral order is to care for those who resemble us.[708] The park was meant to serve as a "model" for the harmonious coexistence of different strata: peasantry, army and the clergy who was charged with children's education.

It has been clarified that Ermenonville was initially conceived and created to be an inclusive space, accessible to everyone. On Sundays, the villagers with whom Girardin's family maintained cordial relations were invited to spend time in the park.[709] Apart from the "*Temple of Philosophy*", Hubert Robert painted several views of the garden showing how people from different backgrounds moved in the landscape, as well as their leisurely interaction with the tomb of Rousseau which he had personally designed[710] and which was often the focus of his works depicting Ermenonville. In a capriccio dated in 1780, two young village-women and their children are portrayed next to the sarcophagus containing the philosopher's remains (Fig.58). Far from contemplating the solemn monument and the temporality of human life which would have subsumed the work to the elegiac tradition of Poussin's *Arcadian shepherds* (Fig.59) one of the two mothers engages in a casual argument with her little daughter who plays around an ancient marble fragment near the tomb. The dog following this group and a pensive male figure complete the scene. Another work by Hubert Robert made between 1786-1790 renders the mélange of social classes and activities in the garden's grounds (Fig.60). Two oxen – reference to animal husbandry and agricultural tasks such as ploughing - walk past two women washing clothes, while a group of visitors is rowing in the lake surrounding the islet with Rousseau's sepulchre; further back, on the right, members of an aristocratic family enjoy themselves by the lakeside. Robert had established himself as an artist and numbered powerful men (i.e. the banker Marquis de Laborde) among his clients.[711] Nonetheless, the paintings mentioned above were not commissioned; their creation should

[707] Decaen, *Le dernier ami du Rousseau*, p.51.
[708] Decaen*, Le dernier ami du Rousseau*, p.211
[709] Stanislas de Girardin *Promenade ou Itinéraire,* p.40-41
[710] Stanislas de Girardin*, Promenade ou Itinéraire*, p.26.
[711] Nina Dubin, *Futures and Ruins*, p.7, 45

probably be linked to the artist's friendship with Girardin and the demands of a market which had developed a taste for picturesque subjects mixing oneiric rural scenes with ruins and various human types interacting with each other.[712] It is likely that Girardin's democratic, egalitarian ideas - being pro-open pastures he had even broken the walls around his property – resonate in Robert's works with the cattle and the laundresses. Finally, in an anonymous engraving from 1783 titled *Entrée du Parc d'Ermenonville* (Fig.61), three laundresses are represented beside some upper-class individuals – a man, two women and a child- who visit the place for leisure purposes. The voluminous vegetation dominates the image; a cascade, a rowing group and some oxen can be seen in the background. The unforced co-existence of different social strata in this rural space appears to be the engraving's central idea.

According to the owner of Ermenonville, the appropriate arrangement of landscapes evoked to kind, honest persons - *les hommes du bien* - the love of mankind, a concept close to the Confucian *ren* (humaneness). Girardin's love of humanity refers back to the Stoic cosmopolitan ideal according to which rural retreat and leisure should be oriented towards the "double" community; the fatherland in which we happen to be born and the universal community of Gods and all men.[713] In the clean air of the countryside before the joyful spectacle of natural elements like trees and rivers, well-disposed citizens would realize that the suffering of their fellow-men is the most sorrowful thing on the face of the earth. The view of a "pastoral" landscape could render public welfare their main pre-occupation; beauty generated compassion.[714] Starting with charming country scenes, Girardin believed, one would inevitably seek to form philosophical landscapes which might captivate the soul by imparting an ideal of peace and justice. The noblest and most comforting spectacle is that of universal happiness and prosperity.[715] The vision of Girardin expressed the humanistic dictates of the Enlightenment and proposed a sane alternative to an unjust, antiquated political establishment. It

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[712] Daniel Brewer, *The Enlightenment Past: Reconstructing Eighteenth-century Enlightenment Thought*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 188.
[713] Schils, *The Roman Stoics*, p.102.
[714] Schils, *The Roman Stoics*, p.48.
[715] Decaen, *Le dernier ami de Rousseau*, p.48

is not a coincidence that he focused on the neglected issue of people's prosperity just before the outbreak of the Revolution; reading the signs of his time, Girardin understood that the moment was opportune to materialise his plans.

The lower classes' material welfare as a moral obligation and a safeguard of peace was taken to heart by many Chinese monarchs who knew that destitution led to social upheaval. The Thirty-Six Poems written the Kangxi emperor (1653-1722) for his *Mountain Resort for Escaping the Heat* (*Bìshǔ Shānzhuāng* 避暑山庄), apart from commemorating his recently completed Summer Palace in Chengde (Fig.62-63), reveal how this his love for "mountains and waters" fortified his sense of responsibility for the well-being of his subjects, most of whom based their survival on a good harvest. The book containing the imperial poetry is a unique specimen published in 1712. The poems are accompanied by woodblock prints made by Chinese court artists. The Italian missionary Matteo Ripa who served at Kangxi's court was subsequently involved in the project producing thirty-six copperplate engravings; it is the first co-operation between a Western artist and a Chinese ruler.[716] The great concern the Manchu emperor displayed for the Chinese people was founded on traditional Confucian teachings which inspired the successful system of governance adopted by his predecessors. According to Confucius: "If you would govern a state of a thousand chariots you must pay strict attention to business, be true to your word, be economical in expenditure and love people. You should use them according to the seasons; you should not enlist farmers during seeding or harvest time."[717] The same philosopher had stated that the happiness of the subjects is the pride of worthy kings: "When a country is well governed, poverty and a mean condition are things to be ashamed of."[718] Benevolent government was consistent with the exemplary man's pursuit of virtue and comprised a proof of steadfastness and resilience: "He who exercises government by means of his virtue may be

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[716] Strassberg, *Thirty-Six Views*, p. ix.

[717] *Analects* 1.5 (trans. James Legge) cited in *Chinese Text Project*, Sturgeon, https://ctext.org/analects/xue-er

[718] *Analects* 8.13 (trans. James Legge) cited in *Chinese Text Project*, Sturgeon, https://ctext.org/analects/tai-bo

compared to the north polar star, which keeps its place when all the stars are rotating about it."[719]

The verses of Kangxi delighting in the natural setting of Chengde show his unfailing attachment to the Confucian ethics and affirm his identity as a compassionate, fatherly ruler who constantly strives for perfection. Moreover, the poems manifest his desire to perpetuate an idealised self-image for the generations to come. Kangxi's reflections regarding the benevolent exercise of power punctuate his thoughts on the aesthetically uplifting and morally beneficial solitary contemplation of the landscape. The fertility of the ground in a vast empire where the maintenance of crops ensured everybody's survival emerged as a main royal concern whilst the enchanting scenery gratified the senses: "An Immense Field with Shady Groves. I stop and rest to enjoy the fields, Gazing into the distance and cherishing the people. The Shady Groves is a place worth admiring: The whole land shows signs of an abundant harvest."[720]

Kangxi's poetry shows that he was divided between an intimate longing to withdraw, dedicating his time to lofty spiritual quests and his obligation to govern, dealing efficiently with practical matters: "Encountering coolness in this season, I appreciate the beauty of things. Constantly mindful of my imperial ambitions, I ponder indecisively how to rule in these times. When I can no longer hold to the Valley spirit, I'll go back to Venerating Governance. For now I cultivate Returning the Mind on this estate of mountains and streams"[721] The "Valley Spirit" (gushen 谷神), which judging by other poems deeply attracted Kangxi, was first mentioned in the Daoist text *Laozi* (fourth-third century BC). [722] The term might refer either to an internal spirit nurtured in men's attempt to attain immortality or to an aspect of the cosmic reality; the otherworldly and inexhaustible "Dark Mare" whose door was the root of

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[719] *Analects* 2:1 (trans. James Legge) cited in *Chinese Text Project*, Sturgeon, https://ctext.org/analects/wei-zheng

[720] Strassberg, *Thirty-Six Views*, p.262.

[721] Strassberg, *Thirty-Six Views*, p.134.

[722] From the poem A Fragrant Islet by Flowing Waters (Fanzhu linliu) "*Groves of trees line the shores as wildflowers bloom. I sit alone by the flowing waters, cherishing the Valley Spirit*." Cited in Strassberg 230)

heaven and earth.[723] The “Hall for Venerating Governance” (chongzhengdian 崇政殿), was associated with a practice adopted by Song emperors who attended courses on the Confucian principles of governance delivered by leading literati. When the time comes, said Kangxi, the solitary pursuits are put aside for the sake of public duty. Yet, the last verse recalling his practicing “Returning the Mind” (huixin 回心) in the idyllic beauty of his country estate let the reader deduce that the emperor attempted to bring together the state-oriented Confucian ideal with his own Buddhist beliefs in the realm of mountains and water. Probably, the same verse also regards the habit of introspection in an attempt to achieve enlightenment by learning the nature of all things.[724]

The poem quoted below demonstrates that the pleasure taken from looking at the scenery strengthened the monarch’s bond with his people and stimulated his compassion for their fatigue, consequence of their honest, everyday toil. The enjoyable, enriching experience of wandering in the landscape around his resort increased the emperor’s capacity to discern the immense significance of his conduct; his acts would have an impact not only during his lifetime but also after his death. Therefore, he aspired to consolidate his authority over a prosperous population and he desired his governance to be a model for his successors.

> The verdant crops ripen with good harvests year after year. Mindful always of straining the people when traveling for pleasure, I also feared burdening them to obtain construction workers... I preferred the rustic and rejected flamboyance to accord with the people’s taste.[725] How could I ever build a Great wall and rely on border guards? Story has well recorded those cruel and extravagant rulers. This is a reason to urge myself towards caution and restraint. Then I can become a model for all, pacifying near and far. I’ll continue to strive in every way to govern together with worthies. Promoting farming in accord with the

[723] Ellen M. Chen, *In praise of Nothing: An Exploration of Daoist Fundamental Ontology*, (USA: Xibris Corporation 2011), p.93.
[724] Strassberg, *Thirty-Six Views*, p.135.
[725] Strassberg, *Thirty-Six Views*, p.129.

seasons is my imperial ambition. So the beacons of war will no longer flare for millions and millions of autumns.[726]

This passage discloses Kangxi's need to advertise his humility and concern for the people; he posited that he took into account the taste of his subjects and presented himself as an enlightened, humane individual guided by high moral standards set by men who ruled before him. The Qing emperor emphasizes the ideal of peace he is determined to incarnate after the years strife and turmoil which marked the seventeenth century when his own dynasty overthrew the Ming. Social peace is strongly associated with the landscape; not only this latter is a realm which inspires and nurtures the will to be virtuous but it further comprises a source of material affluence which prevents the flourishing of vice brought by misery and conflict.

Commitment to the imperial duty is also stressed in the preface of the *Thirty-Six Views* where Kangxi celebrates the accomplishment of his landscape. The author delineates his enduring ethical stance; his way of governance was the testimony of a sixty-year old man who tried to govern benevolently and without arrogance for decades.

> When traveling for pleasure, our concern never ceases for the fortunes of the harvest. Whether attending to affairs in the morning or evening, we never forget the cautions in the classics and histories. We encourage planting in the southern fields, anticipating baskets filled with abundant crops. This is a general description of our residence at the Mountain Estate for Escaping the Heat. On cannot fail to recognize that what a ruler receives is obtained from the people. Those who do not feel love for them are deluded indeed. Thus we have committed this to writing so that morning and evening. We shall not alter.

The engravings included in Kangxi's Thirty-Six Views from the Imperial Mountain Resort do not focus on activities related to husbandry and farming (Fig.64). However, Chinese images showing agrarian work processes and textile production with a particular emphasis on the use of new methods and technology date back to the Southern Song dynasty; Lou Shu (樓璹1190-

[726] Strassberg, *Thirty-Six Views*, p.130.

1279), scholar-official and painter created two hand-scrolls containing "Tilling and Weaving" scenes intended to promulgate a programme of successful governance.[727] In the 1690s Kangxi emperor commissioned a set of forty-six pictures of "Tilling and Weaving", each one of which bares poetic inscriptions he had composed.[728] Executed by Jiao Bingzhen (焦秉贞 active 1680-.1726), these didactic paintings drew their inspiration from Lou Shu's works of 1237 but were adjusted to their time; they portray an idealised, well-ordered Confucian society in which social hierarchies are cherished under the benevolent authority of the emperor (Fig.65-68).[729] Indeed, Kangxi had applied a generous policy reducing taxes for peasants and showing great care for issues regarding agricultural improvement. For instance, as his love of landscape interweaved with his concern for the well-being of his people and the preservation of peace, he allocated government money to construct the irrigation system of Yellow and Huai rivers and supervised the works himself.[730] Not surprisingly, Jiao Bingzhen's Confucian approach stresses the canonical gender roles affirming the Han saying "men plough, women weave"[731]; the illustrations show that tasks were clearly distributed between the two sexes, an element perceived as factor of social harmony. The first edition of the *Imperially Commissioned Illustrations of Tilling and Weaving* circulated in 1696 and had a considerable impact rekindling the interest in this genre. Kangxi made sure these illustrations would be widely distributed and reproduced in porcelain and other materials;[732] many items were exported to

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[727] Ina Asim, "Reviewed work: Pictures of Tilling and Weaving: Art, Labor and Technology in Song and Yuan China by Roslyn Lee Hammers", *East Asian Science, Technology and Medicine*, 46 (2017), 213-220. (p.213)

[728] The Illustrated Guide of Tilling and Weaving: Rural Life in China. Geng zhi tu 耕織圖 (Pictures of Tilling and Weaving) Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) Work contains 46 album leaves, ink and color on silk, after the paintings of the court painter Jiao Bingzhen (1650-1726) 23 leaves depict rice cultivation and 23 depict silk production. Retrieved from: https://www.wdl.org/en/item/289/view/1/1//

[729] Ina Asim, "Reviewed work: Pictures of Tilling and Weaving", p.219.

[730] *Historical Farmland in China During 1661-1980, Reconstruction and Spatiotemporal Characteristics*, ed. by Jin Xiaobin, Zhou Yinkang, Cheng Yinong and Yang Xuhong, (Cham: Springer 2018) p.20.

[731] *Women Out of Place: The Gender of Agency and the Race of Nationality*, ed. by Brackette F. Williams, (New York-London: Routledge 1996), p. 92.

[732] Jan Stuart, "Timely Images: Chinese Art and Festival Display" from a lecture on Chinese Archaeology and Culture, *Proceedings of the British Academy* vol. 167 (2009), 295-248, (p.306).

Europe.[733] Every picture sets a moral example; propriety, respect for the rites, impeccable work ethics, smooth co-operation between the persons who toil for their subsistence, while the relationships between men and women or parents and children depicted in various instances comply with the Confucian principles. In the world governed by Kangxi, everyone knows and keeps his place. The fertile, domesticated landscape reflects different purposes to the gardens where literati dwelled in order to pursue self-cultivation. Jiao Bingzhen's landscape conforms to the image of those who inhabit it and flourish in it; these fields, waters and trees cradle and preserve the tranquillity of ordinary people.

Qi Biaojia, Emperor Kangxi and Girardin were passionate with garden design, sensible to human suffering and endowed with a strong sense of public duty. The Ming literatus probably had a more direct contact with the population ravaged by material destitution than the French marquis had with poverty-stricken peasants. Girardin, who possessed, designed and enjoyed the garden like Qi, never expressed remorse for the money he spent and the years he dedicated to this project. He utilized Ermenonville, the first non-geometrical French garden, to voice his socio-political aspirations which conformed to the Enlightenment humanism. He believed the French countryside should eventually be structured as an immense, eye-pleasing "English" park where agriculture and animal husbandry could be practiced in ideal conditions.[734] He thought that living in a context represented by his landscape would result to the general improvement of lower classes. Ermenonville was the pastoral utopia of a French ideologue; bearer of novelty and harbinger of the new era Girardin longed for.

Unlike Girardin who was a nobleman with great vision but hardly any political power, ignored and persecuted by his fellow-revolutionaries, the Chinese emperor Kangxi, managed to fulfil the ambition of turning his reign into an era of abundance and happiness, probably to a lesser extent than his poems and moralising images make us believe. The contented and proud Kangxi described the sight of peace and prosperity unfolding before his eyes as the

[733] Asim, "Reviewed work: Pictures of Tilling and Weaving", p.219.
[734] Decaen, *Le dernier ami de Rousseau*, pp.51-52.

justification of his humane governance; "The soil so rich, yields double headed grain; the spring water is so sweet, we can cut open green melons. In the past armed men fortified this area; now soldiers no longer sound martial flutes. Farmers and merchants attend to life's needs and the people have increased to myriad households."[735]Qi Biaojia, as it was mentioned earlier, also wanted the disadvantaged subjects of the Empire to cultivate a sense of virtue thus contributing to their moral development (i.e. by making sure they would learn the Confucian maxims). Qi Biaojia's garden expressed a Confucian literatus's identity, as well as his need for aesthetic satisfaction and ethical improvement; Qi had the words "quiet" and "restraint" carved into several rafters of his *Chamber of Restraint* because he believed that control over one's passions was the greatest human virtue.[736] His conscience was troubled because he had failed to display moderation, a quality he cherished, in the making of his garden; for two years, he consumed his energy and resources to build a number of pavilions which were not indispensable for the purpose of self-cultivation this place was destined to serve. Meanwhile, the *Allegory Mountain* was a scholar garden inscribed in the continuity of an all-encompassing ancient tradition which was embodied in the personality of its owner; a virtuous and committed government official. When the foreign Qing came to power, after the fall of Nanking and Hangzhou, Qi Biaojia who had faithfully served the overthrown Ming "proceeded to his lake wherein he sat bolt upright and awaited his death."[737]

The concept of rural seclusion in eighteenth century Europe bares strong similarities with the Chinese approach of temporary retirement in private gardens and landscapes. In both cases, such forms of solitude did not exclude but encouraged interaction with other human beings and strengthened friendships among people with similar preoccupations and socio-cultural backgrounds. The choice to live as a recluse in the countryside, being essential for individuals' moral improvement, further accentuated the desire and capacity to work for the common welfare. For those who, like the Chinese literati, aspired to preserve their principles and dignity in times of

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[735] Strassberg, *Thirty-Six Views*, p.124.
[736] Duncan Campbell, "Qi Biaojia's Footnotes", p.256,257.
[737] Duncan Campbell, "Qi Biaojia's Footnotes", p. 244.

political corruption, secluded rural life was a necessity; for exhausted Confucian scholars who found temporary refuge in their gardens, solitude was a remedy. Dwelling in these places virtuous people were expected to cultivate humanness and be more effective in public service. In Enlightenment Britain and France, the new landscape gardens, abodes of learned, socially privileged men with liberal political and religious views provided the eremitic context where the love of humankind and the necessity of performing public duty were promulgated. Rural reclusion, revolving around the greater interest of private individuals and large social groups, was anthropocentric and not misanthropic.

CONCLUSION

This thesis showed the connection between eremitic landscape dwelling and human improvement in Enlightenment Britain and France and in Confucian China with a focus on the sixteenth-eighteenth centuries. Two civilisations which flourished in geographic regions separated by a vast distance, shared common views concerning the moral advantages of temporary reclusion in private gardens, where nature meets culture and erudite people develop a tranquil disposition.

Confucian and Neo-Confucian thought which had embodied certain Daoist and Buddhist elements, as well as Enlightenment philosophy which was inspired by Stoic tradition and Renaissance Humanism, put rural reclusion in the heart of the self-cultivation procedure; this procedure fashioned wise and humane individuals, willing and able to act efficiently for the public welfare. Both in the virtue-centred culture of Chinese scholar-officials who were preoccupied with governance matters and in the culture of eighteenth-century European thinkers who valued public good more than private interest and promulgated the ideal of politically engaged citizens, to withdraw in the haven of eremitic landscapes far from the turbulent realities of the public realm was not the act of self-centred men. The purpose of solitude experienced in Chinese literati gardens and British or French landscape-gardens was to create reliable, mindful and tranquil individuals. Reclusion was instrumental in the training of good passions; it particularly contributed to the cultivation of equanimity and moderation. Chinese scholar-officials and eighteenth-century learned, socially privileged Europeans were persuaded that solitude prepared them for public life; a serene temperament helped them nurture a sane sociability and deal with the unavoidable turmoil, hostility and contradictions of the human realm.

It has been demonstrated that in Confucianism and Enlightenment philosophy periods of reclusion spent in mountains and gardens were supposed to encourage introspection and facilitate the study of natural order. The learning of rules and principles which structured the universe and sustained all forms

of life rendered a person aware of his humanity and conscious of his role as useful member of society. As I discussed in the first chapter, the Western world's approach concerning the investigation of natural phenomena during the eighteenth century had a scientific, pragmatic dimension. Europeans who advocated landscape dwelling and dealt with garden design were often interested in the study of flora, fauna and astral bodies, all of which were classified into specific categories distinct from the human realm. The knowledge of these categories sharpened their mental faculties and comprised an integral part of the self-cultivation procedure. In Confucianism, the inspection of biological and physical processes or geological phenomena – the understanding of "nurturing transformations of heaven and earth"[738] - was not separate from the study of human nature. In China, heaven, earth and men exist in unity since they constitute parts of the same harmony; every person is integrated in the creative flow of the cosmos. The *Doctrine of the Mean* emphasizes the fact that "the things of the world are nourished side by side and do not harm one another. Their Ways walked side by side and were not contradictory."[739] These ideas explain the intimate communion of Chinese literati with bamboo, chrysanthemums and rocks; scholar-officials correlated their moral self with these items because they believed them to be, like human beings, constituted by qi (vital force) and possess subjectivity and dignity.

The thesis has shown that the pleasure resulting from eremitic landscape dwelling played a major role in the moral cultivation procedure. Temperance and tranquillity can be the fruits of aesthetic gratification provided that this latter is not violating the rules of decorum. In Confucian tradition enjoyment was reconciled with propriety; living in the mountains and by the rivers was at the same time a blissful experience and a practice associated with humaneness and wisdom. In the Greco-Roman world of the first centuries AD whose ethics, social models and political discourse were largely shaped by Stoic philosophy, there are noticeable resemblances with Confucian China;

[738] *Doctrine of the Mean* 32, in Robert Eno, The Great Learning and the Doctrine of the Mean, 2016, p.38 retrieved from: http://www.indiana.edu/~p374/Daxue-Zhongyong.pdf
[739] *Doctrine of the Mean*, 30, Robert Eno, The Great Learning and the Doctrine of the Mean, 2016, p.38 retrieved from: http://www.indiana.edu/~p374/Daxue-Zhongyong.pdf

for ancient Romans, pleasures of reclusive life in the countryside are connected with human improvement. Thus, Pliny the Younger's descriptions of Como echo the enchantment provoked by the sight of harmonious shapes and colours he encountered in the landscape. His letters transmit the feeling of well-being that permeated him when he strolled under the shadow of the trees or bathed in waters kept warm by sunrays. The language Pliny employed directly refer to the senses implying bliss and comfort: "How is life in the beautiful villa with its colonnade of eternal springtime, its deep-shading plane tree, its emerald-watered rivulet, its low-lying and serviceable lake, its soft and yet firm grounds, its baths always drenched in sunlight. Its living rooms for the many and the few…?"[740] Meanwhile, Pliny was not a hedonist but a man dedicated to his studies and poetic exploits; he was committed to his official duties as consul, felt concerned with the cultivation of virtue and, as it was mentioned in the introduction, he proved himself openly hostile to forms of dissipation that were popular among his contemporaries. Later, in the long centuries during which Christianity established its cultural domination, the pleasure of the senses - even when this derived from scenic beauty - was dissociated from moral cultivation; rather the first thing was believed to exclude the second. Even young Petrarch felt guilty for indulging in the charms of Mount Ventoux; arriving in the summit of the mountain, the scrupulous, religious young humanist opened a book of Saint Augustine and felt that the ancient words are addressed to him: "And men go about to wonder at the heights of the mountains, and the mighty waves of the sea, and the wide sweep of rivers, and the circuit of the ocean, and the revolution of the stars, but themselves they consider not."[741] Still in the fourteenth century, the observation of natural environment did not forge the moral self, it was viewed as an impediment to introspection; it could push men to neglect their immortal soul. The passage, which comes from a letter Petrarch wrote to his confessor Dionigi di Borgo San Sepolcro, continues with the following words: "I closed the book, angry with myself that I should still be admiring earthly things …nothing is wonderful but the soul, which, when great itself, finds nothing

[740] Ilaria Marchesi, *The Art of Pliny's Letters: A Poetics of Allusion in the Private Correspondence*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), P.31
[741] *Petrarch: The First Modern Scholar and Man of Letters*, ed. by James Harvey Robinson, (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1898) p. 317

great outside itself. Then, in truth, I was satisfied that I had seen enough of the mountain; I turned my inward eye upon myself…"[742] Eighteenth-century deist philosophers like Shaftesbury, turning to the Stoic tradition and developing the humanist ideal, removed this sentiment of guilt associated with the experience of enjoying scenic landscapes. The passage from the *Moralists* quoted in the first chapter of the dissertation tells us that fields and woods are chaste, they offer a "life unenvied though divine" and are appropriate for introspection and contemplation. In Shaftesbury's discourse, nature - fields and woods - is "supremely fair and sovereignly good"; the "substitute of Providence". [743] There, men do not risk compromising their relationship with God since God is one with nature; on the contrary they find themselves and increase in virtue. Connecting human improvement with the pleasure found in landscape dwelling, European thought met the Confucian tradition which did not cease to associate mountains and waters with an ethical existence for over two thousand years.

Investigating the role of British and French eremitic landscapes in moral cultivation, it was deduced that during the Enlightenment human emotions were not seen as entities detached from reason. These two things were coextensive, which explains why moderation and equanimity were promulgated as highly important qualities. For eighteenth-century European philosophers if strong passions and deep-seated tendencies were properly directed, they would serve the rational faculties of a virtuous person. Equally, Confucians persistently promoted the channelling of human emotions because they believed that reason, cognition and emotion are inseparable. This unity, which pervaded Chinese ethics, is expressed in the concept of *xin* which is translated as mind-heart. The exemplary person, who rectified his *xin*, did not suppress his vicious tendencies to adopt a correct behaviour. He had a righteous conduct because he desired the appropriate things. Endowed with a virtuous demeanour and a virtuous disposition, his good actions were the reflection of his good feelings.

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[742] Cited in *Petrarch*, Robinson, p.317.

[743] Shaftesbury*, Characteristics,* 1733, p.259.

Both in China and Europe the educational role of gardens defined their identity; the creation of such places was conditioned not only by the will of their owners to learn, meditate and cultivate themselves but also by their aspiration to teach and service other people. It was demonstrated that erudite recluses like Shenstone, Girardin, Wang Xianchen and Qi Biaojia were eager to transmit great ideals and noble principles to their contemporaries and to the next generations. The ultimate purpose of their private, eremitic landscapes was to benefit other members of the social body; their solitude was not exclusive or deprived of empathy.

The instructive character of Shenstone's Leasowes is manifest in the multitude of inscriptions which are addressed to the visitors and invite them to adjust their moral and emotional disposition to the serenity of the place, embrace simplicity, quit vice, and discard their ambition to be applauded for worldly achievements. In this garden the English poet used architectural relics (Gothic Abbey) as a vehicle to confirm his compatriots in their role as guardians of religious liberty, civil rights and political freedom. In France, the educational purpose of Ermenonville was also very pronounced. Girardin created a garden where he would occasionally withdraw from public life but his 'retreat" was open to the people regardless of their social background and erudition. Before the degradations on Rousseau's tomb were committed, everybody could access Ermenonville at any time; later, entry restrictions were imposed but the park did not close its gates completely to visitors.[744] Ermenonville existed to epitomise and perpetuate Enlightenment ideas regarding equality, social justice and public duty. It promulgated fraternity and reconciliation between different social classes via numerous inscriptions and edifices. Employing an informal, non-geometrical design inspired from Leasowes Park, Girardin decisively broke with a tradition associated with absolutism and oppressive state structures. Herald of a new era, Ermenonville was made to spread civic virtue, a sane form of patriotism but more importantly, universal brotherhood.

In China the will of garden recluses to affirm and promote respected Confucian values, mostly among established and aspiring scholar-officials

[744] Decaen, *Le dernier ami de Rousseau*, p.143.

whose integrity would ensure benevolent governance and state prosperity, is detected in certain garden records. An illustrious example is the one created by Wen Zhengming for the Humble Administrator's garden which was extensively discussed in the thesis. In Wen's work, the poem "Tent of Scholar Tree" reveals that the retired Wang Xianchen genuinely cared about the transmission of moral qualities like righteousness, humaneness and propriety and was worried to see that his young contemporaries neglected the cultivation of virtue. Even when a Confucian literatus lived withdrawn in his private, eremitic landscape, he was not exempt from the duty to instruct his fellow men; he should adopt a perfect conduct which other men would strive to imitate. The Humble Administrator's garden was admired in China for many generations, because it was inspired by lofty, time-honoured ideals and epitomized his owner's refusal to compromise his principles for the sake of ephemeral glory. In the late Ming dynasty, Qi Biaojia regarded his garden reclusion and his career as senior official as two conditions difficult to reconcile. However, in the record of the "Allegory Mountain" he disclosed how the moral diligence of a devoted civil servant who was attached to the rules of propriety could be reflected in the making of a garden; his virtue as a statesman shaped both his affection for scenic landscapes and his desire to spend time in happy solitude. The Allegory Mountain contained material testimonies of Qi's contrition for being – as he believed - an imperfect minister; edifices' names (Hall of my Unfulfilled Obligations) were chosen to remind him, his children and the scholar-officials of present and future times that public duty, and particularly the obligation to assist the unfortunate subjects of the Empire should be prioritized over other passions.

Chinese and European paintings representing the life of recluses in free landscapes and private gardens unveiled how societies shaped by Confucian thought and Enlightenment philosophy respectively associated the eremitic ideal with moral improvement. It was explained that Wen Zhengming's "Purifying the Will Place" links scholar reclusion with the nurturing of temperance and humaneness. In Wilson's "Solitude" the representation of two hermits next to the statue of a broken lion constitutes a metaphorical juxtaposition of tranquillity and turmoil, moderation and violent passions.

Furthermore, it was demonstrated that in Chinese and European visual cultures the hermit, situated in a rural environment, exemplifies wisdom and virtuous life. Epitomes of solitude, these men were role models for those who venture to vanquish harmful passions. Finally, paintings discussed in this dissertation raised themes related to learning and cultural refinement, two basic components of the self-cultivation procedure in eremitic landscapes, while some works also alluded to the public engagements of recluses. Thus, in Gribelin's engraving Shaftesbury is portrayed next to three books written by classical authors to highlight this man's philosophical ideas, erudition and political commitments; his garden may be discerned in the background. In France, Greuze represented Girardin in his park, next to Rousseau's marble bust and with a revolutionary hat behind him; the portrait commemorates the Marquis as a lover of landscapes, attached to the ideas of social justice. In China, where the connection between scholar-garden and artistic creation is particularly strong, Du Jin depicted the literatus Dongpo writing verses on a bamboo, a plant which epitomized Confucian virtues while Shitao, in the poem accompanying the work *Leisure Cultivation Pavilion* extoled his patron Liu Shitou as a man with pure and elegant taste whose mind-heart was focused to the expression of culture.

Investigating eremitic landscape dwelling, self-cultivation and performance of public duty one may detect a significant point of difference between Confucian China and Enlightenment Europe. Unlike Confucians, Deists did not have an invariable admiration towards all moral principles, ways of thinking and forms of governance inherited from the past. The idea of venerating the heritage of the ancients had a great import in China, where a remarkable continuity of cultural modes and social structures can be observed. Of course, Chinese civilisation did not stagnate. It evolved and adapted itself to new realities such as dynastic successions without undergoing radical changes which would provoke serious ruptures with the past; the core of the culture remained the same. As this thesis has shown, Confucianism, which dominated Chinese ethics and had incorporated some Daoist and Buddhist elements, fostered the rigorous practice of the rites and the preservation of a successful system of values. The Chinese knew those rulers who, in the past, had plunged the

empire into misery; they were aware that their history included some dark pages and that their sons might have to endure the consequences of bad governance. However, they never attributed vicious, turbulent times to the failing of cherished old principles; they believed that corruption was due to the non-respect of an ancient established order which safeguarded human virtue. The poem “Tent of Scholar Tree” recalling the ancestors’ grandeur and the duty of young people to prove themselves worthy of it, as well as Meng Jiao’s verses: “strive to hold with the past and all foulness melts away” are telling of Confucian literati attitude towards the past.[745]

On the other hand, the Enlightenment, whose ideals transformed the Western world, embraced certain periods from Europe’s history. For example, philosophers like Shaftesbury treasured Greek and Roman philosophy (particularly Stoicism) and acclaimed the humanist scholarship which flourished since the fourteenth century (i.e. Petrarch), but did not have a particular taste for Thomas Aquinas. The great eighteenth-century movement which determined the future of Europe in so many levels thrived through its opposition to a long historical past which was regarded as backward, oppressive and hostile to human progress. The Enlightenment was essentially structured on the rejection of a moral model based on the Christian religion as this latter was represented and defended by the Catholic Church. It disputed the legitimacy of a worldview which had played a major role in the shaping of a European identity manifested in institutions and social norms which flourished during the thousand-year period conventionally called Middle-Ages. The case of Ermenonville quite clearly expresses the Enlightenment’s rupture with a part of Western history; it was discussed that the inscriptions in Girardin’s park come from three periods: classical antiquity, Renaissance and eighteenth century. In my opinion, the fact that several eighteenth-century thinkers who advocated eremitic landscape dwelling rejected an integral part of their own continuity might be one of the reasons why they needed to put fake material remains in their gardens in order to be able to connect with the past. They felt that visible and tangible relics would tell them more clearly who they are and what they strive to become. On the other hand, the Confucians

[745] Owen, *Remembrances*, p.18.

who "held with the past" in its entirety felt more secure about their identity and linked with their history introspectively, without this form of mediation.

In eighteenth-century Europe which was inspired by the Stoic tradition and in Confucian China the erudite individuals' predilection for eremitic landscapes did not derive from a sentiment of contempt for the human realm as this would be egocentric, self-destructive and detrimental to society. A very important conclusion of this dissertation is that for secular-minded, liberal Europeans who advocated reclusive life in the landscape, as well as for Chinese scholar-officials who withdrew in their scenic gardens, the experience of solitude fashioned exemplary persons by reconciling seemingly opposite things. This way of existence, which involved study, artistic creation and gardening, united a carefree disposition with a sense of responsibility towards organised society; it encouraged people to be detached from the world and stop pursuing public applause but it also generated in their heart genuine feelings of sympathy for the miseries of humanity. Garden recluses created solid interpersonal relationships because they were trained to be emotionally independent; they were good friends because they knew how to be alone. In the refuge of their eremitic landscapes they were taught to practice introspection, acquire an "eremitical temper of mind" and fulfil their public duty as conscientious citizens and men of state; they were not oblivious to their fellowmen's suffering. It was by bringing together human conditions that the common understanding regarded as essentially irreconcilable that eremitic landscapes helped people acquire temperance and equanimity.

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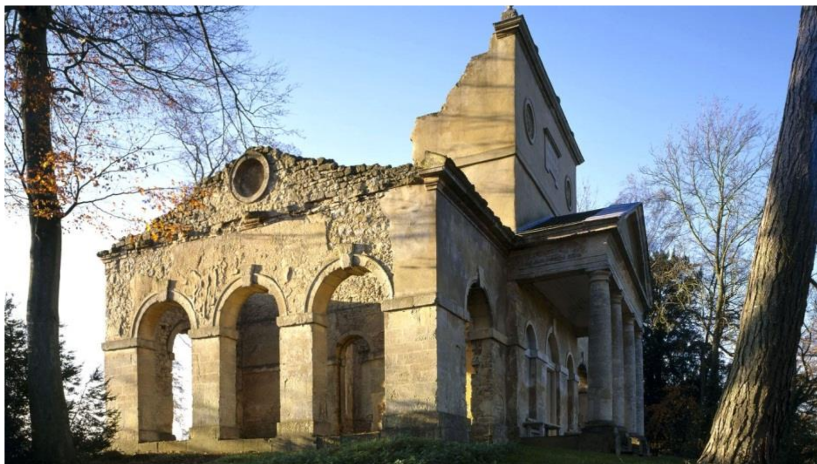

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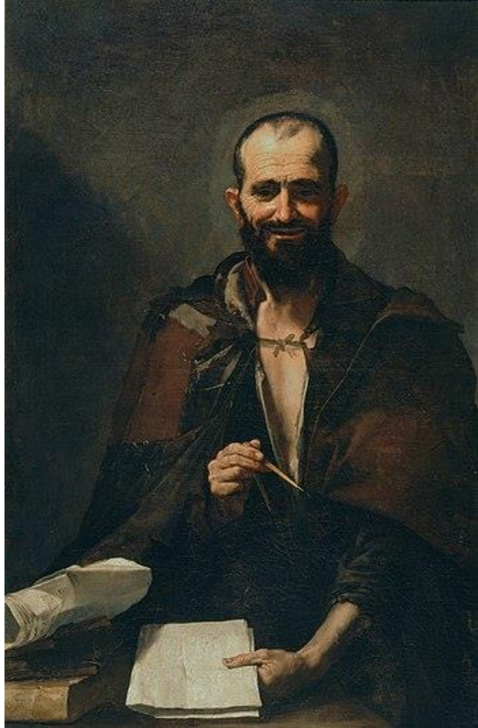

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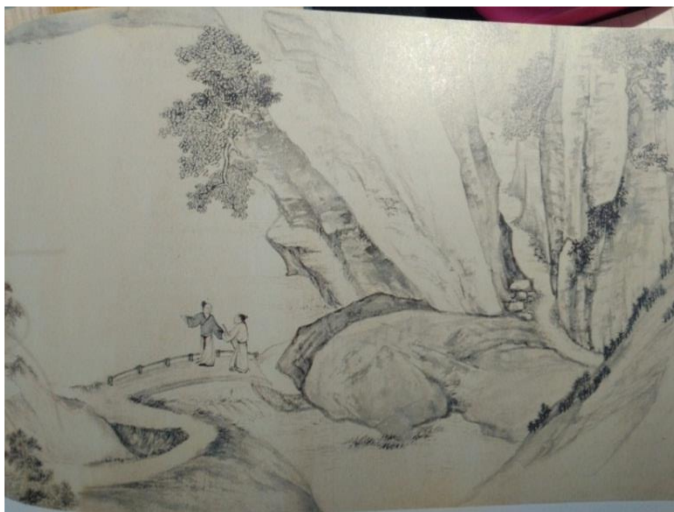

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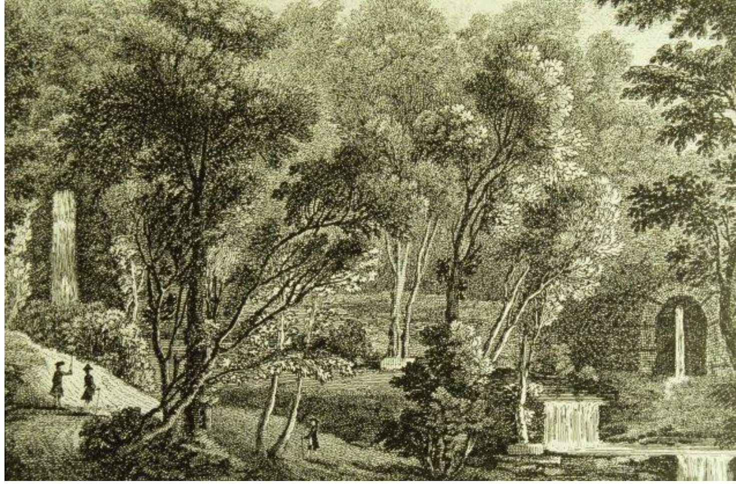

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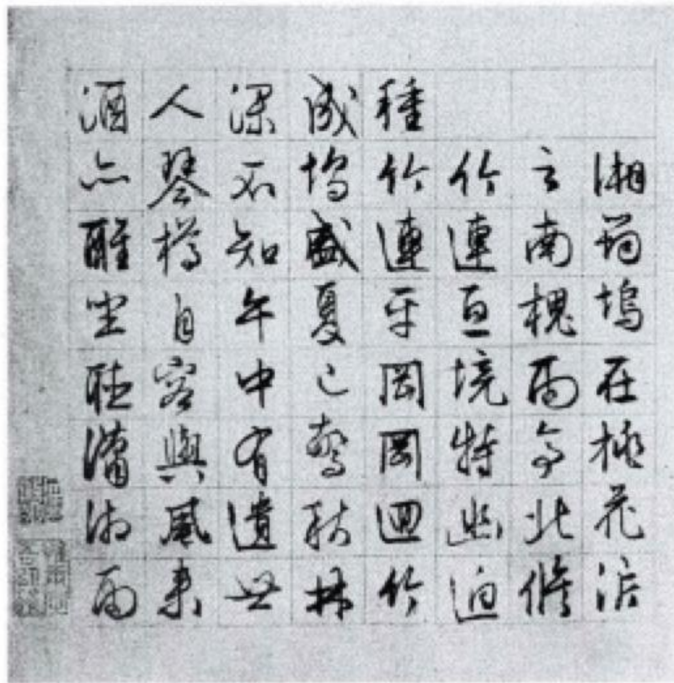

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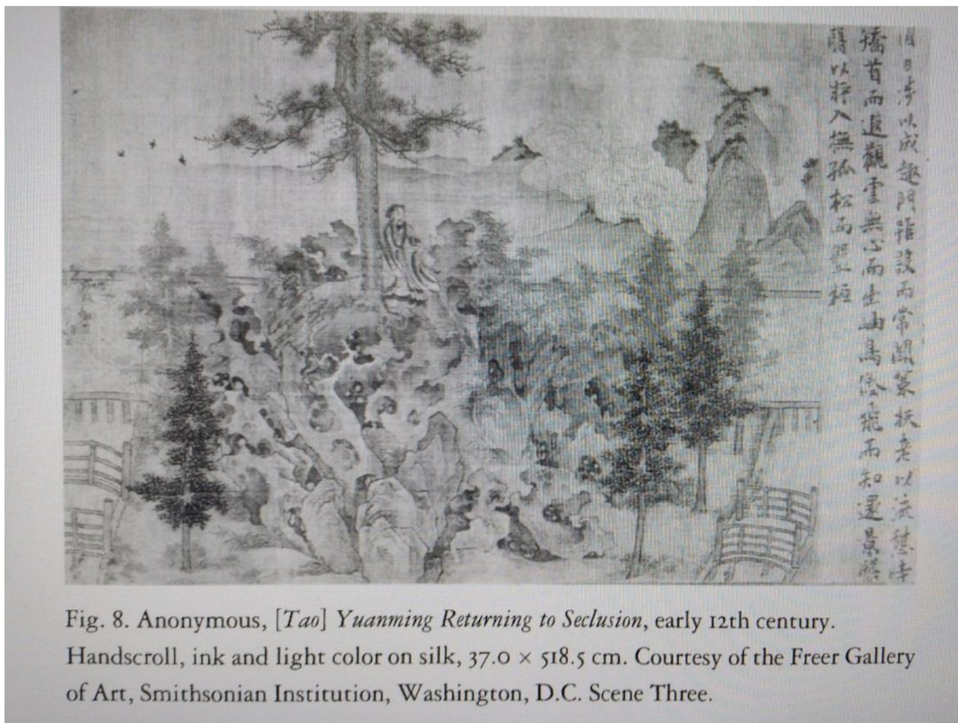

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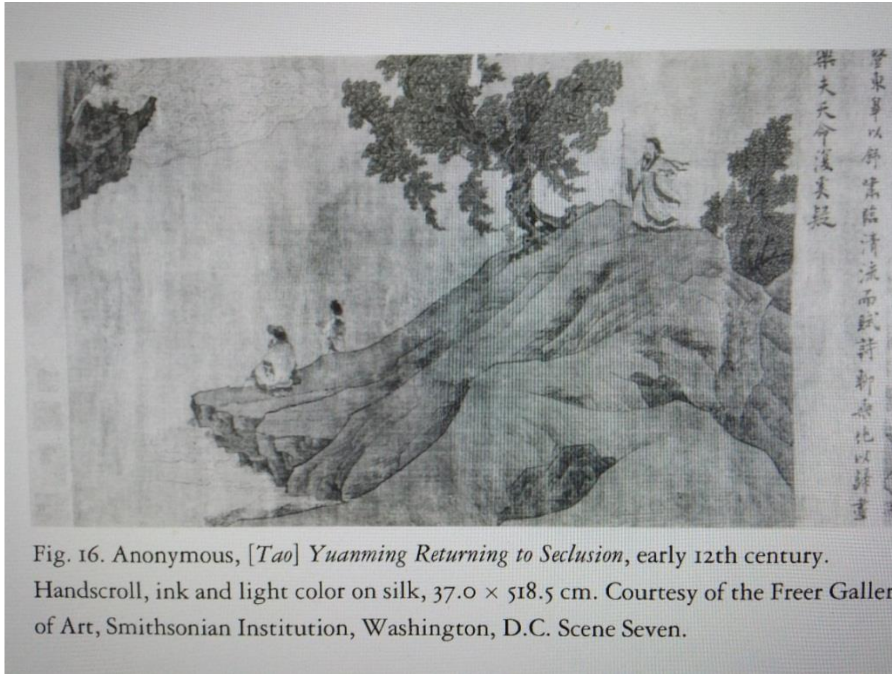

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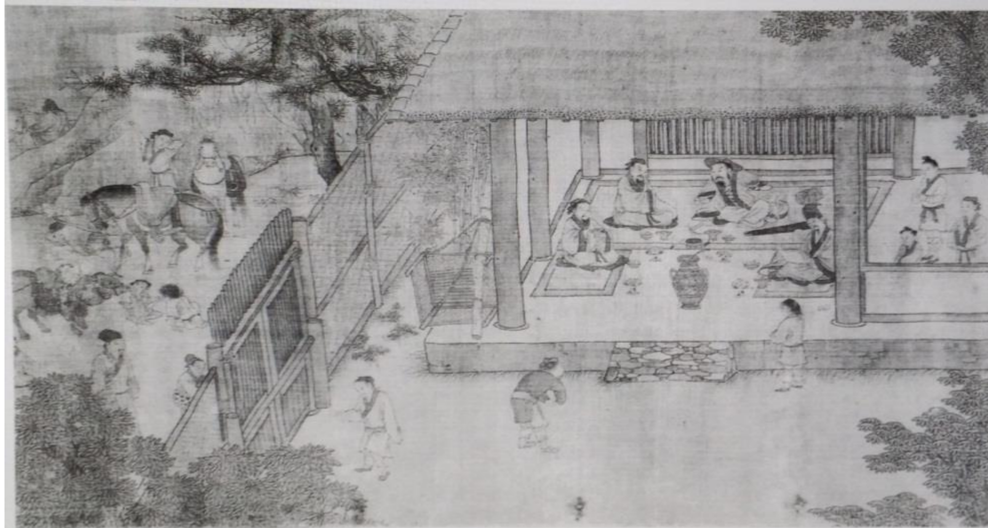

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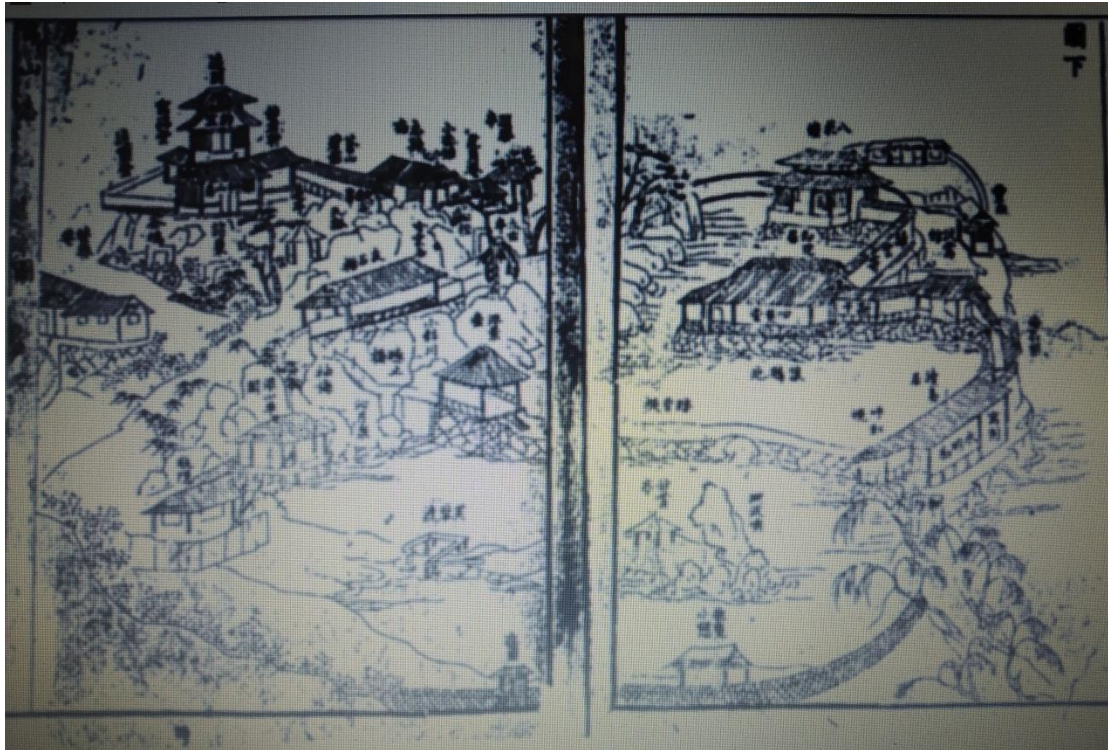

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