

TILTAC

LIMBO

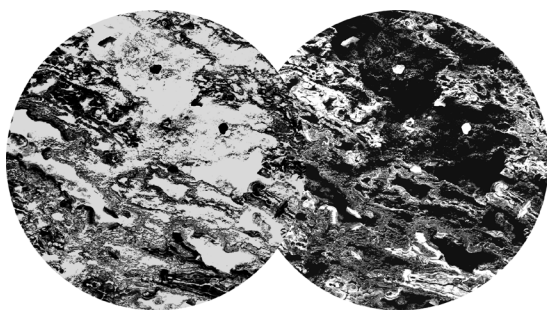
TICTAC LIMBO, CORAL FUGUE

A MEMENTO OF A MIRAGE GARDEN

CHIN TSAO

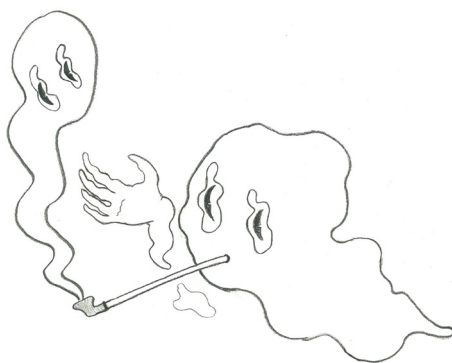
Special thanks
to
Lim Jang





JOURNEY

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THE GARDENER'S MUMBLE

*“ The gravel, the stone and the marble were spread in strict
array in unmysterious shapes.
At first sight, it seems impossible to lose your way.
At first sight...
Along these stone paths and amidst these statues,
where you were already losing your way for ever in the still
night, alone with me. ”*

- Last Year in Marienbad, Alain Resnais

As I arrived at the entrance of the garden, the gardener with her crazy eyes blocked my way and insisted on explaining.

“Before entering the garden, you must know that cosmology gave life and death to the garden. This garden design is based on the concept of the Chinese garden... However, while those gardens once seen as ideal landscapes have long vanished, this one, a failure in terms of an ideal landscape, has survived for it itself was an organic creature.

It doesn't matter who the designers were; they were painters, poets, scholars or aristocratic elites. All traditional Chinese gardens represented a private and intimate sphere, and this one is no exception. More than three generations of an old noble family have lived here, and my family has worked here as hereditary gardeners since my great-grand-whatever-father.

Now, you might be wondering, if I am talking about a garden belonging to a Chinese family or if the story is set in China. Well...I also cannot give you an answer to this question because I have spent all my life here and it is the first memory I have.

I don't know what kind of country this family originally came from, and it is not important. You can't tell their nationality from their skin tone, accent and outfit. No one ever asked and no one was

interested in figuring out where they came from. All we know is that the first generation of the family was culturally influenced by China. That is why the structure of this garden resembles that of a Chinese garden. But as I said, this one is a bizarre one, as its harmonic nature has been twisted for some reasons.

The family has continuously kept expanding and collapsing, and so has the garden. As you walk into the garden, you will see that this family has their own unusual history and perfect eccentricities. Every feature in this garden has its symbols and metaphors, which are carefully arranged to please the family.

All of us who have been involved in this family's garden can't leave this place. It's our world, a prison or an utopia, as you like to call it. The family never stopped expanding this place, until they all completely lost themselves in their own house. But their memories still hang around here, so we know they are still alive somewhere, we feel them... ”

The gardener turned around and opened the door. She raised her arm as an inviting gesture as I entered the garden...

LANDSCAPE IN CHINESE CULTURE

“Religion, philosophy and science are all rooted in cosmogony, an attempt to explain the meaning of existence within the natural world and the creation of cosmos from chaos...

The garden, or landscape design, reflects the cosmology of culture through its projection of relationship between people and place...In the garden, human beings have long been reshaping the nature with art and technology in their own cultural context. (Rogers, E. Barlow. 2001)”¹

Traditionally, Chinese Garden design and landscape painting were deeply connected to each other. The ideal landscape represented spirituality, tranquility and immortality. According to Taoist philosophy, mankind is only one part of the entirety of nature. Everything, no matter if “Xian”(deities), creatures or objects, all comes from nil but is shaped by the dynamic “Qui”(pneuma). In contrast to the rigid hierarchical confusion order that was predominant in the social and cultural sector, nature stood as a place of harmony and circular flow, through which people could express their emotions.

Mountain and water were the key factors that were often

¹ Rogers, E. Barlow (2001). *Landscape Design: A Cultural and Architectural History*. NY: Harry N. Abrams.

used to illustrate balance in landscape paintings, which represent different states of time and space. One is rugged like a solemn giant while the other is flexible like a tender phantasma, and together they construct a symbolic entirety. This idea of harmony can also be found in literary texts. In ancient mythology, deities reside on the peak of immense mountains on islands which are surrounded by different forms of water (sea, lake, cloud or fog). This is why those two elements are always classic features in all Chinese gardens.²

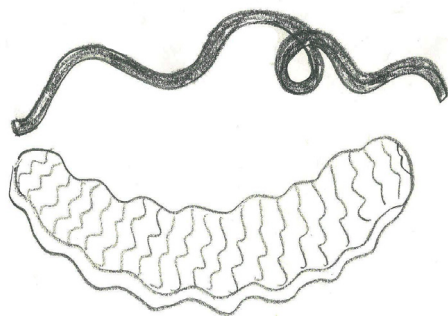
The designers of Chinese gardens were required to have a particular background in painting and literature. Those popular sceneries they “borrowed” for designing the gardens were not meant to represent nature in the most realistic way possible, but rather to interpret it with a painterly and poetic touch.

The whitewashed walls divide the garden into several small chambers with different sceneries. As one strolls through the waving paths, a series of microcosmically symbolic landscapes are unravelled representing an amalgam of the dated ideals of utopian landscapes with literary and mythic nostalgia.

² Keswick, Maggie (1980). *Chinese Garden: History, Art and Architecture*. London: Academy Editions.



Qiu Ying(仇英), "*Gathering of Scholars in the Western Garden*"
(西園雅集圖), 1500s. Ink painting, China.



IN THE DOORWAY

“...in one of his hands he holds onto an arm of a faceless goddess who firmly grasps his head. He is the only one who still has a complete face, which shows all his pain and fear. But as his face is forever frozen, I can't judge his emotions anymore. The snake is wrapped around his body, biting his chest. Is it maybe a metaphor of his strange struggle between terror and love? The end of his finger points to his mother, the goddess of Earth, who lost half of her face, like a moth, without a mouth to cry or scream. Only her upper body appears on the ground, in an attempt to touch the hip of the dominant goddess, begging her for mercy...”

- Diary: 17.12.2016

I still remember a sculpture (or sort of stone) from the entrance of this garden. It looked like a crocodile catching a snake, with their tails entangled, their bodies wrestling in an infinite circle. It was already bizarre to have this kind of sculpture there. I'm wondering if this sculpture may refer to Maria Sibylla Merian's¹ illustration of a Caiman crocodilus and an Anilius scytale, which was done after her expedition to Surinam, which at the time was a Dutch colony.²

Compared to other entomological illustrations of Maria Sibylla Merian, "*Caiman Crocodilus and Anilius Scytale*" is not especially significant as a scientific contribution. The image itself is much more exotic and dramatic with elegant violence. It seems as if the background of the author had become an obscure landscape of these two animal symbols. Maybe the crocodile and the snake are a metaphor for colonialism and scientific revolution, which have evolved in a coincidental tangle since the 17th century. Since then, modern science has become the most powerful cosmology.

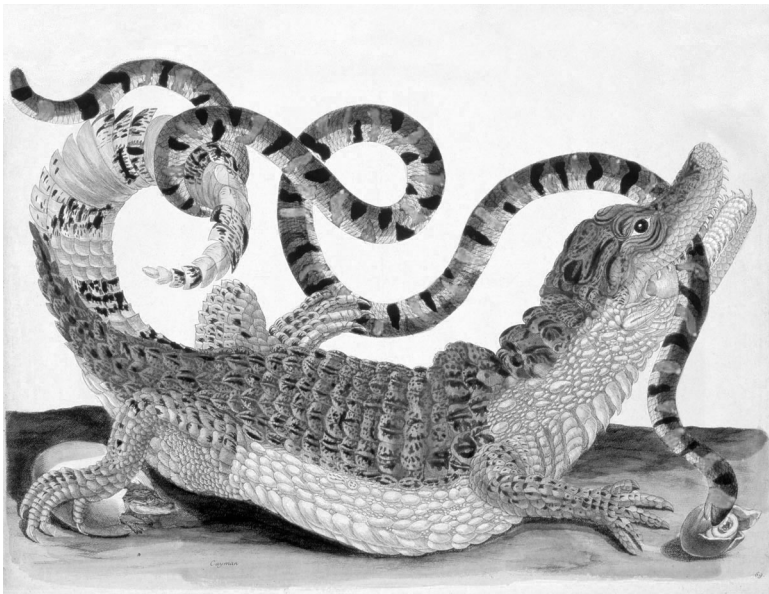
¹ "Maria Sibylla Merian(1647-1717) was working as an entomologist in the Dutch Empire and was one of the first trained artists to conduct detailed, long-term studies of living organisms. As the first published female naturalist, was also the first to observe and document the moment of metamorphosis, where caterpillars turn into butterflies....."

- Kristensen, Niels P. (1999). "Historical Introduction". In Kristensen, Niels P. *Lepidoptera, moths and butterflies: Evolution, Systematics and Biogeography*. Volume 4, Part 35 of Handbuch der Zoologie: Eine Naturgeschichte der Stämme des Tierreiches. Arthropoda: Insecta. Walter de Gruyter. p. 1. ISBN 978-3-11-015704-8.

² Merian, Maria Sibylla, (1699). *Die Reise nach Surinam*. Stuttgart: Schuler Publisher.

While our approach to nature has gone through disquieting change in blind pursuit of globalised capitalism, the age of overdevelopment of urbanization and industrialization has arrived. We will probably never be able to reverse the gradually merging cosmology between different cultural landscapes.

But don't take my daydream too serious...



Maria Sibylla Merian, "*Caiman Crocodilus and Anilius Scytale*",
1701 - 1705. Hand colored copper engraving, Netherland.

ANOTHER WAY TO APPROACH NATURE

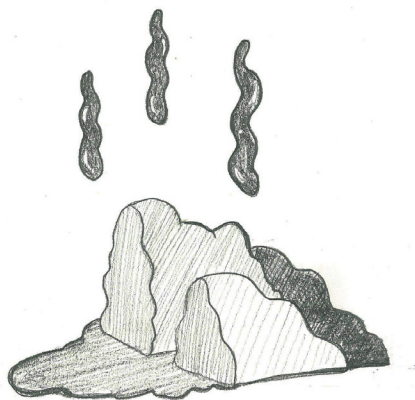
The Renaissance, a cultural movement which flowered from the 14th to the 17th century, was an important turning point in European culture. The rediscovery of classical Greek works had deeply influenced the various aspects of perception and knowledge.³

Readapting ancient Greek philosophy has led people to approach nature with human reason based on mathematical and logical models. Nature has been clearly classified by disciplines such as mathematics, physics, astronomy, biology and chemistry, which sought to explore the multi-layered structure of nature. From the 17th century onwards, methodological practice became more and more systematic, relying on careful observation and examination. Meanwhile, technology, increasingly representing the most important economic demand, and scientific research had improved each other efficiently, which led to the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century.⁴

³ Butterfield, H (1959). *The Origins Of Modern Science 1300-1800*. UK: Macmillan Publishers.

⁴ Butterfield, H (1959). *The Origins Of Modern Science 1300-1800*. UK: Macmillan Publishers.

STROLLING THROUGH
THE VANISHING PLACES



1

THE BLACK DWARF CAVE

“...what first strikes the eye is the massive roof of tile or thatch and the heavy darkness that hangs beneath the eaves. Even at midday cavernous entryway, doors, walls, and pillars all but invisible...have you never felt a sort of fear in the face of the ageless, a fear that in that room you might lose all consciousness of the passage of time, that untold years might pass and upon emerging you should find you had grown old and gray?”

- In Praise of Shadows, Tanizaki Jun'ichirō

The entrance of the garden is a long dark passage constructed with different shapes of black fossil reef stones. The gardener has told me that the name of this cavernous passage was actually a mistake, but that no one intended to correct it.

The stone connoisseurs transported those pitch-black exotic stones from an unknown island, where the rocks are shaped in restlessly erratic forms by wind and tides. Those carefully selected rocks were interweaved with each other and appeared as an outlandish mountain. In the novel *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, the author has once described vividly such love of unusual stones in the Chinese garden. If he saw the rocks here, for sure, he would write the same about this false mountain, which formed of “large black rocks in all kinds of grotesque and monstrous shapes, rising course upon course up one of its sides, some recumbent, some upright or leaning at angles, their surface streaked and spotted with moss and lichen or half-concealed by creepers, and with a narrow zig-zag path only barely discernible to the eye winding up between them.”¹

Inside the mountain, the low ceiling wept inky oil every now and then, some of them have congealed in the stalagmite shapes. Caves always link to the legend of the underworld in folktales of different cultures. I might actually fall into the large intestine of the devil, on the other side awaits the lascivious kingdom ruled by a noble dwarf and his French wife. In the end lies the small chamber of the death, where his

¹ Tsao, Hsueh-Chin (18th century). *The Story of the Stone*. Vols. 1-3. Translated by Hawkes, David (1973-86). UK: Penguin.

poet lover chase him obsessively, floating through mirrors to the underworld, crossing through thousands of miles of nowhere only to reach him. But I'll reach death faster than his lover.

I was desperately creeping in the cave for quite a long time, lost my sense of time and ran out of thoughts. I just kept quiet, moving in the dimness. Maybe the phantom in the darkness wanted to correct my frivolous delusion of space.

Slowly, I heard whisper within the monotonous echo of liquid dropping. The stones were whistling the fossil of an epic in a now extinct language of mineral. They were narrating the story about their last memory in the womb of their mother mountain before they had been forced to move out. The stream of the dead washed over them for days and nights, and left them with the unique beautiful black surface. It was an unwilling gift from their old friends in the forgotten past.

THE CAVE ON THE NAMELESS ISLAND

No one knows the original name of the island and its inhabitants anymore. The Taiwanese aborigines called it Lamey Island a long time ago, nowadays it is referred to as Hsiao Liu Chiu (小琉球). It is located in the south-west of Taiwan. The island is now populated by Han Chinese, but a cave on the island named 'the Cave of the Black Spirits (or Ghosts)' (烏鬼洞) by the locals suggests the existence of a past where the island was populated by other inhabitants. Documents from the Qing mention that 'black spirits', who were African slaves of the Dutchmen, lived there. Until the late 1960s, a different version was still known locally. The story of the cave has been forgotten for long time. Until 1994, by means of archeological research and Dutch historical investigations, Taiwanese historian Yung-ho Tsao rediscovered the history of the Lamay Island massacre in the Dutch colony age.²

"The thrust of this legend is: that dark people with gill-like tattoos on their necks from the island used to be skilled divers. When these people had murdered the crews of shipwrecked foreign ships and refused to allow the Chinese to settle on their island...(Chiu, Hsin-Hui. 2007)"³

² 曹永和 (2000). 小琉球原住民的消失—重拾失落台灣歷史之一頁. 《臺灣早期歷史研究續集》. 臺灣: 聯經出版. ISBN 9570821531

³ Chiu, Hsin-Hui (2007). *The Colonial 'Civilizing Process' in Dutch Formosa, 1624-1662*. Brill Press. p. 61.

At the beginning of the 17th century, the Dutch Empire started to develop their overseas trade routes. Because small European trading companies often lacked the capital or the manpower for large scale operations, the imperial ambitions of the Dutch were bolstered by the strength of their existing shipping industry, as well as the key role they played in the expansion of maritime trade between Europe and the Orient. The Dutch West India Company(WIC) and the Dutch East India Company(VOC) were considered the largest and most extensive maritime trading companies at the time.⁴

At the beginning of the 17th Century, VOC established its presence on Taiwan (was named “Formosa” by the Portuguese sailor) to trade with Far East Asian countries.

Even Han Chinese immigrants had already started to move to the ‘Taiwanese Austronesians tribal world’ since the 14th century, but the Chinese Empires had never been interested in Taiwan until the end of the 17th century. Between 1624 and 1662, part of Taiwan was ruled as a Dutch colony under the Dutch East India Company. The Dutch Empire was the first foreign regime in Taiwan.

While South Taiwan was a Dutch colony region, Lamey Island was located on the one of thier shipping routes. From the Chinese, the Dutch had already heard the story about ‘the evil cannibals’ living on this island. In 1622, some Dutch sailors

⁴ Hunt, John (2005). Campbell, Heather-Ann, ed. *Dutch South Africa: Early Settlers at the Cape, 1652–1708*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. p. 2–13. ISBN 978-1904744955.

wanted to fetch some water on the island. They disappeared into the tropical copse and failed to return. Some years later it was reported that the islanders had eaten all the missing crewmen. Due to these conflicts and limited understanding of Lameyan's culture, the Chinese, the Formosan mainlanders (the aborigines lived in the mainland of Taiwan), and the Dutch had all shaped their own negative image of these isolated islanders on the basis of their experiences.⁵

“The Dutch were convinced that the Lameyans were aggressive and dangerous barbarian, as they believed the negative stereotype of xenophobic islanders who would not trust anybody outside their own people. The sum total added up to the belief that the island population was hostile ‘to the whole world’. This legitimated the action of depopulation incited the deadly revenge by the Dutch, the English, and the Chinese(Chiu, Hsin-Hui. 2007).”⁶

The first expedition arrived in 1633, led by Claes Bruijn and consisting of 300 Europeans, forty Han Chinese pirates and 250 aboriginal Formosans.⁷ Through this expedition, the Dutch found out the strategy and custom of the islanders. The Lameyans hid themselves in the deep rock cleft under

⁵ Chiu, Hsin-Hui (2007). *The Colonial 'Civilizing Process' in Dutch Formosa, 1624-1662*. Brill Press.

⁶ Chiu, Hsin-Hui (2007). *The Colonial 'Civilizing Process' in Dutch Formosa, 1624-1662*. Brill Press. p. 67.

⁷ Blussé, Leonard (2000). *"The Cave of the Black Spirits"*. In Blundell, David. *Austronesian Taiwan*. California: University of California. ISBN 0-936127-09-0.

the high mountain when more powerful enemies from outside arrived on their island.⁸

In 1636, the second expedition was undertaken. As they already knew, the Lameyans would hide themselves in the cave. The Dutch and their allies proceeded to block up all the entrances of the cave, leaving small holes where pans of burning pitch and sulphur were placed. No matter which party sought revenge, the theme was the same: there were caves where the dark people hid themselves and the invaders finally smoked them out. Overcome by the fumes, many people suffocated (Dutch soldiers found around 200 to 300 dead people in the cave, but by the horrible stench, they could not count the actual number of the dead).⁹

After the massacre, there were numerous other raids following this expedition until the island. In 1645, a Chinese merchant, who had permission from the Dutch East India Company(VOC) to cultivate the fields on the island, removed the last few inhabitants.¹⁰

Most survivors were either relocated in Taiwan or sent to the other Dutch colonies in the east-south of Asia, working as servants or slaves. Some of Lameyan children worked as

⁸ Chiu, Hsin-Hui (2007). *The Colonial 'Civilizing Process' in Dutch Formosa, 1624-1662*. Brill Press. p. 61.

⁹ Chiu, Hsin-Hui (2007). *The Colonial 'Civilizing Process' in Dutch Formosa, 1624-1662*. Brill Press. p. 61-67.

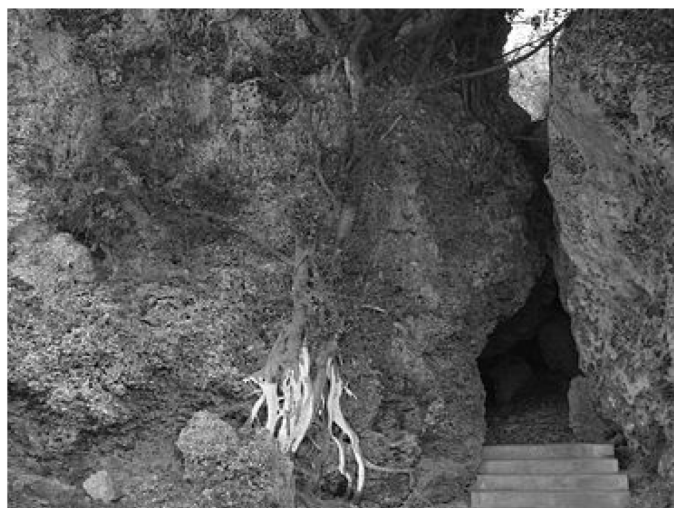
¹⁰ Blussé, Leonard (2000). *"The Cave of the Black Spirits"*. In Blundell, David. *Austronesian Taiwan*. California: University of California. ISBN 0-936127-09-0.

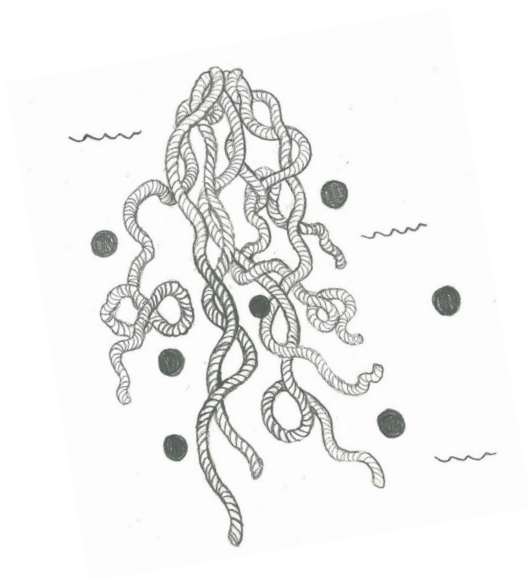
domestic servants, to be raised and educated according to Dutch custom.¹¹ Some of those boys had achieved success and worked as employees in the Dutch East India Company.

After a few decades, the Dutch colony ended by the force of Ming loyalist Koxinga. Koxinga failed against the Qing dynasty and turned his military to Taiwan. After he defeated the Dutch colony government in 1662, he established his small Kingdom in Taiwan for only 20 years. Until 1683, Qing Empire took over Taiwan after his son surrendered.

On the island, after all the rotting bodies had sedimentated into the cavernous underworld. This means that nothing is known about their languages, their cultures and the question of how they had named their island.

¹¹ Chiu, Hsin-Hui (2007). *The Colonial 'Civilizing Process' in Dutch Formosa, 1624-1662*. Brill Press. p. 74.





2

THE ODD SEMI-PALACE

“Space, but you cannot even conceive the horrible inside-outside that real space is.

*Certain (shades) especially, girding their loins one last time, make a desperate effort to “exist as a single unity.”
But they rue the day. I met one of them.*

*Destroyed by punishment, it was reduced to a noise,
a thunderous noise.*

*An immense world still heard it, but it no longer existed,
having become simply and solely a noise, which was to rumble
on for centuries longer; but was fated to die out completely, as
though it had never existed.”*

- Shade-Haunted Space, Henri Michaux

The rhythm of the epic looped in the dark void. I stopped creeping and lay on the ground. I started wondering if I was just a fossil inside the stones. Could the archeologist find me and read all the nonsense in my mind?

Before I merged into my memory, the fresh damp air breathed into my nose and brought me into the light. I saw my body levitating in the suffusive mist. The water mirrored the hazy outlines of the architectures and mountains which softened the zigzag edges of the land. After roaming around for a few hours, I felt as if I was in the middle of infinitely connected islands. It's very hard to believe this lake is totally man-made, it looked much more natural than nature itself, but what is natural anyway?

I was not sure if there were other people or visitors or if it was just the wafting shadows of plants and the sounds of a gurgling spring. There were several different sizes of islands connected with bridges on this artificial lake. Some pavilions just floated on the surface of water, surrounded with exotic aquatic plants. Aquatic plants?

There was a rumor about the designers who only worked at night while they were sleepwalking. They dreamed that they were the slaves who had to rebuild the Old Summer Palace from the remainders with their imagination...The source of water is originally from the mountain beside this place. They hired numerous inhabitants of the mountain to connect the canals and dug the huge pond. Actually, the designers were not sure if they were the inhabitants or not. When they found

them, they were a group of weeping people. Maybe it's just a weird custom: every year the whole group of those people went to the valley of the mountain, smoked opium and reflected on their past, wept and dropped their tears into the river. The weeping season hadn't passed when they were working in the garden. I assume the sleepwalking designers were perhaps pretty scared, since they threatened the workers to burn their mountain. In their dream they were slaves, but in the reality they were the dominant cold-blooded masters. So the workers wept and sweated till they finished the construction.

Even though the designers didn't remember anything when they woke up in the morning, somehow an unknown bad feeling still lingered in their mind. It was the last day of the weeping season that year when they finished digging this huge lake. They connected the canals to the garden and filled the pond with water. The sleepwalkers decided to offer the workers free opium as an apology, and celebrated the completion of construction. But the workers had already run out of their tears in the devastating working process. After they smoked opium, the extreme melancholy swallowed their consciousness. When they looked into the water, they saw the beautiful moments they once had experienced in the past. Attempting to catch those beautiful moments again, all of them fell into the lake. At that point, all the designers suddenly woke up and opened their eyes. They found they were the ones who were holding the opium pipe. On the surface of the water into which thousands of workers fell, there was nothing but rippled aquatic plants in the slow

summer breeze, and the reflection of the bright full moon floating in the middle of the lake.

THE IMPERIAL GARDEN

It is told that the empire started to wither as the extravagance of imperial garden reached its full blossom.¹

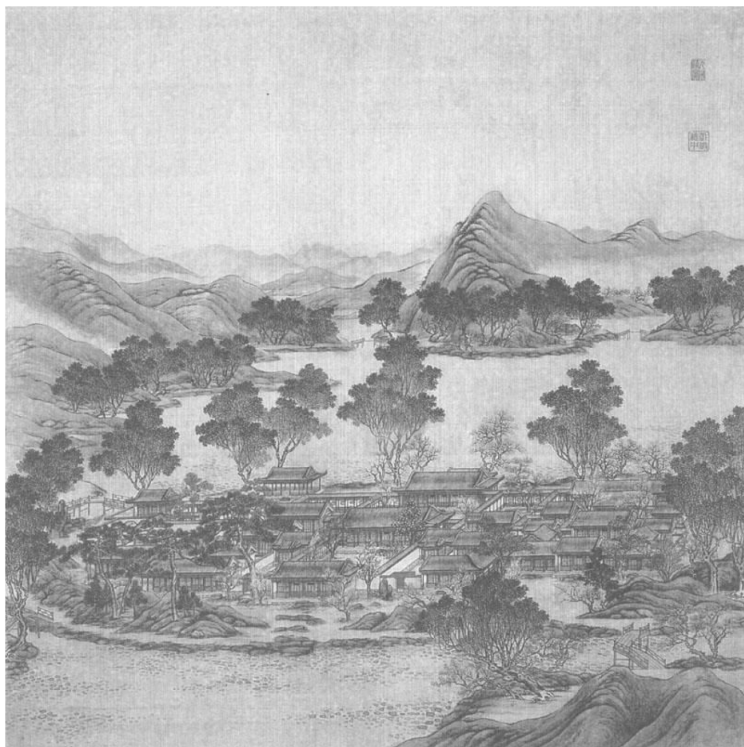
The Old Summer Palace, known in Chinese as Yuan Ming Yuan (圓明園, the Garden of Perfect Brightness), was one of the last and the most majestic imperial gardens in Chinese history. This 3.5 km² garden had been constructed in 3 different parts, from the beginning of 18th to the early 19th century. The theme of this garden was water. The water occupied more than half of the Garden, and waterways were connected through artificial canals to several lakes and rivers nearby.² It was conceived of as the wonder of architecture and landscape design which compressed various fields of arts, while it itself served as a museum of treasures.³

The Emperor Kangxi travelled to the South several times and was captivated by the imperial lifestyle of the Han dynasty. He wanted to recreate what he had seen on his travels in the periphery of the city. Following Kangxi's demise, his successor Yong-zheng decided to move the court to Yuan Ming Yuan. He had the garden renovated and expanded with government bureaux, palaces, themed pavilions, and living tableaux designed for amusement. It was more of a

¹ Keswick, Maggie (1980). *Chinese Garden: History, Art and Architecture*. London: Academy Editions.

² Keswick, Maggie (1980). *Chinese Garden: History, Art and Architecture*. London: Academy Editions.

³ Geremie R. Barmé, ed (1996). *Paper on Far East Asian History*, number 11. AU: Australian National University.



"Clear and Calm View of Nine Realms"(Jiuzhou qing yan, 九州清晏), the residence of the imperial family, built on nine small artificial islands (as the symbol of nine realms of the empire) connected by bridges and adjoining buildings.

Shen Yuan & Tang Dai, *"Forty Views of the Yuanmingyuan"*, 1744, Ink painting, China.

microcosm than a mere garden.⁴

The French Jesuit missionary Pierre Attiret described the scene in a famous letter written to M. d'Assaut in Paris in 1743:
⁵

“... a little township in the very midst of these park grounds ... measures a quarter of a lien [one kilometer] on each side, and has gates at the four points of the compass, towers, walls with crenellated parapets, it has its streets, squares and temples, its halls, shops, courts of law and palaces, and even a harbour. In a word, everything to be found in the capital one may find here in little ... Perhaps you ask what purpose this serves? The chief motive has been to create for the emperor a condensed picture of the bustling life in a great city where he wishes to see this.”⁶

Yuan Ming Yuan was developed to its full splendour by the Qianlong Emperor, the son of Yongzheng. Like Kangxi before, he decided to recreate more of those southern wonders in his northern imperial pleasure.

⁴ Geremie R. Barmé, ed (1996). *Paper on Far East Asian History*, number 11. AU: Australian National University.

⁵ Geremie R. Barmé, ed (1996). *Paper on Far East Asian History*, number 11. AU: Australian National University.

⁶ *Lettres édifiantes*, vol.27 (1749 edition), in Sirén, Gardens of China, p.124-5

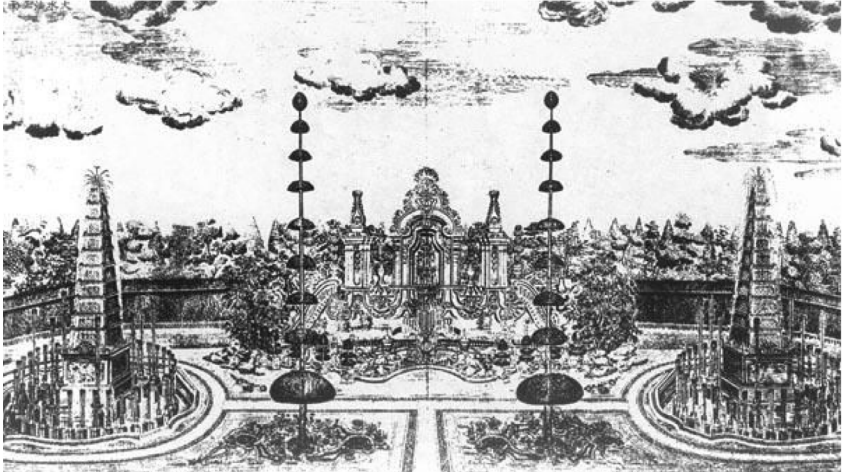
On the other hand, the 18th century was also a time when Jesuit missionaries continued to be favoured at the Chinese Court. Since 1723, because of the religious conflict, Yongzheng had forbidden Christian missionaries to stay in China except for the few of them who served in the court. In their efforts to ingratiate themselves into the imperial family and the ruling elite of the empire, they offered their services as astronomers, designers, artists and artisans instead of serving as missionaries.⁷

In 1747, for the first time in Chinese history, the construction of large-scale baroque style palaces -“Xiyang lou”- had been started in the north-east of the garden. The Italian and French missionaries oversaw the construction for decades. It was also the first time to build such a fountain in the Chinese garden. Traditionally, every natural element in the Chinese garden was supposed to be as natural as possible; just like the water, it should flow in a natural way. The symmetric architectures and the spraying fountain were perhaps too much of a perversion of nature’s way, which was also too exotic to evoke the traditional poetic feeling. The successors after Qianlong had especially neglected the restoration of the Western palaces.⁸

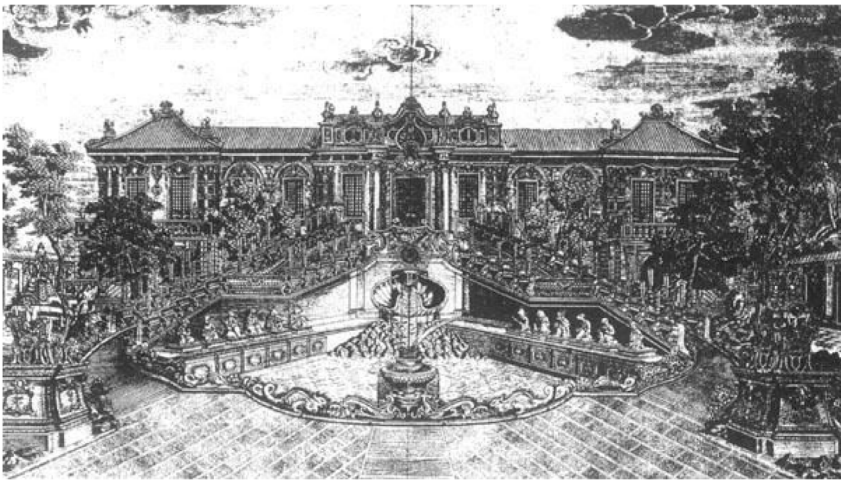
Through the amalgamation of Chinese and Western-style architecture collections in the garden , Qianlong projected his ambitious weltanschauung as the lord of the world.

⁷ Geremie R. Barmé, ed (1996). *Paper on Far East Asian History*, number 11. AU: Australian National University.

⁸ Geremie R. Barmé, ed (1996). *Paper on Far East Asian History*, number 11. AU: Australian National University.



Yi Lanttai, "*Dashuifa* (大水法)" in the Xiyang Lou section, 1780s. Copper engraving, China.



Yi Lanttai, "*Haiyantang* (海晏堂)" Water Clock Fountain in the Xiyang Lou section, 1780s. Copper engraving, China.

Ironically, Qianlong was the last Emperor in the heyday of the Qing Empire history. In his last years, occupied with inner wars and satisfied with the wealthy economy, he didn't put much effort into understanding the world outside of China, while the industrial revolution in Europe had already progressed.

In the beginning of the 19th century, along with the industrial revolution came rapid developments in the fields of finance and banking in United Kingdom. After being involved in the enormously expensive Napoleonic Wars, the United Kingdom faced the first serious stock market crash in 1825.⁹ For the British East India Company (EIC) it was urgent to find a huge export market, and China was an obviously ideal option. However, China had long developed its agriculture owing to its rich natural environment and large population. Therefore, China had a self-sufficient internal market and restricted the access of Europeans to China's interior. Since 1757, the port of Canton had been the only one that allowed international trade.

The Chinese market had no demand for most English goods but opium was purchased on the blackmarket. EIC created a British monopoly on opium, buying in India. As the opium trade was illegal in China, EIC still smuggled a huge amount of opium to China at any opportunity. The Qing Empire was concerned by the increasingly serious problem of opium addicts and decided to block any opium trade by confiscating

⁹ "The impact of the Napoleonic Wars in Britain". *The British Library*. Retrieved 7 December 2015.

thousands of opium chests without compensation.¹⁰ Together with the incandescence of the international import-export market, this aggravated the conflict between Qing China and the United Kingdom. After Qing China announced breaking off every trade with England, the British government found their own excuse to dispatch troops to China in 1839. After 40 years of Qianlong's demise, the defeat of the First Opium War in 1843 proved the weakness of Qing China to the Western world and forced China to open its international trade. This event was also the cornerstone of modern Chinese history.

After admitting the unequal "Treaty of Nanking" with the United Kingdom, other western countries started to require their trade right. The first Opium War was a diplomatic war based on economic interests;¹¹ but most Qing Chinese didn't realize the facts and regarded it only as a short event.

After this, Qing authorities rejected renegotiations of the "Treaty of Nanking". Following the further conflicts of the maritime trade, the Second Opium War started in 1856, this time with the British and French Empire. Again, the Qing Empire was failed.

In the autumn of 1860, a delegation of English and French negotiators was dispatched to Beijing to exchange treaties with the Chinese Court following a peace settlement that had

¹⁰ Farooqui, Amar (March 2005). *Smuggling as Subversion: Colonialism, Indian Merchants, and the Politics of Opium, 1790–1843*. Lexington Books. ISBN 0-7391-0886-7.

¹¹ Tsang, Steve (2007). *A Modern History of Hong Kong*. I.B.Tauris. p. 3–13, 29. ISBN 1-84511-419-1.

been forced on Beijing as a result of the Second Opium War. Among other things, that treaty stipulated the establishment of permanent foreign diplomatic representation in the Chinese capital.¹²

Following the arrogant ignorance and increasing xenophobia among the Qing Court, the 39 members of the delegation were detained and imprisoned in the Yuan Ming Yuan. They were used as hostages in the negotiations with the foreign powers, and subsequently cruelly tortured.¹³

On the morning of 18 October 1860, while the Emperor had already escaped to his mountain resort, French and British troops marched into Yuan Ming Yung, looted and smashed the Imperial collection in the open courtyards. Then they set fire to everything that was left. A great pall of smoke rose up over the towers of the Yuan Ming Yuan, the fireflow spread ruthlessly through the wooden Chinese traditional architectures. In two days of burning they thus destroyed almost two thirds of all the three thousands of varied buildings. The destroying of the Garden was in many ways a symbolic manifesto that the Qing Empire was in its moribund age.¹⁴

¹² Geremie R. Barmé, ed (1996). *Paper on Far East Asian History*, number 11. AU: Australian National University.

¹³ Geremie R. Barmé, ed (1996). *Paper on Far East Asian History*, number 11. AU: Australian National University.

¹⁴ Keswick, Maggie (1980). *Chinese Garden: History, Art and Architecture*. London: Academy Editions.

After decades, the wooden Chinese building had almost vanished after the arson. Only some marble friezes of the Western-style section are still standing on the ruins of the Garden, as most impressive but ironic reminders of this tragedy.



Alfons Mumm von Schwarzenstein, "*Ruins of the Xiyang Lou section*", 1900s. Photography, Germany



3

THE CROOKED LABYRINTH

“...The light is falling to pieces. So, Jakob, you'll have no long-enduring happiness. Does my frankness hurt you? No. come further now. We must hurry a little, for we must walk and tremble through several other apparitions...At length, as the stone stairs came to end, we were walking over moist, soft earth. I felt that we were standing in the middle of the earth's sphere, so deep and lonely was the place...One must always keep moving, as we are doing here, one must dance in freedom. It is cold and beautiful. Never fall in love with it!...”

- Jakob Von Gunten, Robert Walser

Perhaps it was because of the weird refraction of light rays in the mist. I could barely feel my body shambling on the paving stones, like cockroaches scrambling zigzag without directions in this abstract cosmos. All the doors of the buildings here were locked. I was wondering if someone lived inside and was looking at me through the windows.

The extended, whitewashed walls of buildings divided the space into several closed scenery cells, each with its own layout. The walls of the cells opened partly through the fine-cut wooden latticeworks with intricate geometric patterns. The infinitely connected cells were like the corridors of the maze, with no straight passageways but full of corners, blind alleys and hidden curve paths.

But the deeper I went into the garden, the more peculiar the scenes became. Some mountains were made out of concrete, and some plants looked plastic. In some parts the water had solidified into jelly-like crystal. Somehow those industrial materials were breathing, vividly presenting themselves. Concrete mountains merged into concrete houses, which then jumbled delicately with glass, metal and weed. The water streamed out of the house and inundated the floor. The architectures and the landscapes fell into each other until the boundary between interior and exterior didn't exist anymore. It seemed that the garden had not finished growing and was still in progress. No matter how, the landscape was just gradually collapsing along my way. Perhaps it had not actually collapsed, but only transformed in an enigmatic way that I could not fathom.

The family has kept engraving their poems around the corners of the wall. It looked as if those poetries were in fact an obscure family history which has been passed down and assembled throughout several generations. There were too many stories, and some of them were too bizarre to neglect.

“...As a successful merchant family, all their kin have traveled around the world. They sold everything which could be commercially viable. They could sell millions of giant turtles as beam columns for the inhabitants who lived on the unstable flat earth... Such prosperity didn't bring them satisfaction but only obsessive addictions. The family then turned their interest towards excessive gardening as a cure for the terrible boredom in their wealthy life.

....They made a deal with Chaos to adopt her son in exchange for a stretch of priceless land to build their dream garden...Only if they had known that Chaos was a notorious gambler. She gave the family an immense fecund land which in fact was one of her gambling tables. The family could raise Cosmos on this land, and showed him the garden as the prototype of the world. It didn't take so long for them to find out that they were dwelling on Chaos' gambling table and were forced to make a bet with her. Afraid and worried of losing all their fortune, the family conspired to murder Chaos. They invited Chaos to visit their garden, and then killed her as if they were

slaughtering a pig. It all happened behind the peony shrubs. Unable to bear the screaming voice of his mother, Cosmos passed out. The family's revenge towards Chaos didn't stop there as they scared for cosmos's revenge for his mother when he grows up. While Cosmos lied unconscious, the family removed all his senses.

Playing around Cosmos became their trendy amusement. Every time they only gave back one of his sense and watched his panic reaction to transient sensation. The pleasure inspired the family to extend their garden with more alien fantasies, so they could laugh more about the madness of Cosmos. After ages of torture, Cosmos had already lost all the memory of his mother. The later generations of the family became fed up with Cosmos' absurd drama since they now had their new delight. Taking into consideration that cosmos has been an old pet of the family, they wanted to treat him with kindness and humanity. They gave him back the only thing he could still possess – his sensation; and for the rest of his life, he was employed at their factory of freedom...”

When I raised my head, I could still see the small part of the “classic garden” in the latticework from the other side of the wall. It looked like a painting. I wished to turn back to the classical part of the garden for a last look, but I couldn't find my ways back anymore.

THE PASSAGE TO MODERNITY CORRUPTION

Bruno Schulz (1892-1942) was a Polish Jewish writer, artist, literary critic and art teacher. The town of Drohobych where Bruno lived was one of the largest oil industry centers. From Schulz's birth on July 12, 1892, until his assassination by a Nazi officer on November 19, 1942, and in the years since, Drohobych has had a number of different political affiliations: it was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, then belonged to restored Poland after World War I, then became Soviet-occupied territory after the Nazi invasion of Poland, and then Nazi-occupied territory until the end of World War II...¹

His writings avoided all of the worldly events but focused on the details of his town. From his family house to every street he had strolled upon, all these experiences became bricks of his intimate labyrinth which he kept for his mythic world.

¹ Davide A. Goldfarb(2008).*The Street of Crocodiles and Other Stories*, Introduction. NY: Penguin books.

THE STREET OF CROCODILES

BRUNO SCHULZ



THE STREET OF CROCODILES

My father kept in the lower drawer of his large desk an old and beautiful map of our city. It was a whole folio sheaf of parchment pages which, originally fastened with strips of linen, formed an enormous wall map, a bird's-eye panorama.

Hung on the wall, the map covered it almost entirely and opened a wide view on the valley of the River Tysmienica, which wound itself like a wavy ribbon of pale gold, on the maze of widely spreading ponds and marshes, on the high ground rising toward the south, gently at first, then in ever tighter ranges, in a chessboard of rounded hills, smaller and paler as they receded toward the misty yellow fog of the horizon. From that faded distance of the periphery, the city rose and grew toward the center of the map, an undifferentiated mass at first, a dense complex of blocks and houses, cut by deep canyons of streets, to become on the first plan a group of single houses, etched with the sharp clarity of a landscape seen through binoculars. In that section of the map, the engraver concentrated on the complicated and manifold profusion of streets and alleyways, the sharp lines of cornices, architraves, archivolts, and pilasters, lit by the dark gold of a late and cloudy afternoon which steeped all corners and recesses in the deep sepia of shade. The solids and prisms of that shade darkly honeycombed the ravines of streets, drowning in a warm color here half a street, there a gap between houses. They dramatized and orchestrated in a bleak romantic chiaroscuro the complex architectural polyphony.

On that map, made in the style of baroque panoramas, the area of the Street of Crocodiles shone with the empty whiteness that usually marks polar regions or unexplored countries of

which almost nothing is known. The lines of only a few streets were marked in black and their names given in simple, unadorned lettering, different from the noble script of the other captions. The cartographer must have been loath to include that district in the city and his reservations found expression in the typographical treatment.

In order to understand these reservations, we must draw attention to the equivocal and doubtful character of that peculiar area, so unlike the rest of the city.

It was an industrial and commercial district, its soberly utilitarian character glaringly underlined. The spirit of the times, the mechanism of economics, had not spared our city and had taken root in a sector of its periphery which then developed into a parasitical quarter.

While in the old city a nightly semiclandestine trade prevailed, marked by ceremonious solemnity, in the new district modern, sober forms of commercial endeavor had flourished at once. The pseudo-Americanism, grafted on the old, crumbling core of the city, shot up here in a rich but empty and colorless vegetation of pretentious vulgarity. One could see there cheap jerry-built houses with grotesque facades, covered with a monstrous stucco of cracked plaster. The old, shaky suburban houses had large hastily constructed portals grafted onto them which only on close inspection revealed themselves as miserable imitations of metropolitan splendor. Dull, dirty, and faulty glass panes in which dark pictures of the street were wavily reflected, the badly planed wood of the doors, the gray atmosphere of those sterile interiors where the high shelves were cracked and the crumbling walls were covered with cobwebs and thick dust, gave these shops the stigma of some wild Klondike. In row upon row there spread tailors' shops, general outfitters, china shops, drugstores, and barbers' saloons. Their large gray display windows bore slanting semicircular inscriptions in thick gilt letters:

CONFISERIE, MANUCURE, KING OF ENGLAND.

The old established inhabitants of the city kept away from that area where the scum, the lowest orders had settled—creatures

without character, without background, moral dregs, that inferior species of human being which is born in such ephemeral communities. But on days of defeat, in hours of moral weakness, it would happen that one or another of the city dwellers would venture half by chance into that dubious district. The best among them were not entirely free from the temptation of voluntary degradation, of breaking down the barriers of hierarchy, of immersion in that shallow mud of companionship, of easy intimacy, of dirty intermingling. The district was an El Dorado for such moral deserters. Everything seemed suspect and equivocal there, everything promised with secret winks, cynical stressed gestures, raised eyebrows, the fulfillment of impure hopes, everything helped to release the lowest instincts from their shackles.

Only a few people noticed the peculiar characteristics of that district: the fatal lack of color, as if that shoddy, quickly growing area could not afford the luxury of it. Everything was gray there, as in black-and-white photographs or in cheap illustrated catalogs. This similarity was real rather than metaphorical because at times, when wandering in those parts, one in fact gained the impression that one was turning the pages of a prospectus, looking at columns of boring commercial advertisements, among which suspect announcements nestled like parasites, together with dubious notices and illustrations with a double meaning. And one's wandering proved as sterile and pointless as the excitement produced by a close study of pornographic albums.

If one entered, for example, a tailor's shop to order a suit—a suit of cheap elegance characteristic of the district—one found that the premises were large and empty, the rooms high and colorless. Enormous shelves rose in tiers into the undefined height of the room and drew one's eyes toward the ceiling which might be the sky—the shoddy, faded sky of that quarter. On the other hand, the storerooms, which could be seen through the open door, were stacked high with boxes and crates—an enormous filing cabinet rising to the attic to disintegrate into the geometry of emptiness, into the timbers of a void. The large gray windows, ruled like the pages of a ledger, did not admit

daylight yet the shop was filled with a watery anonymous gray light which did not throw shadows and did not stress anything. Soon, a slender young man appeared, astonishingly servile, agile, and compliant, to satisfy one's requirements and to drown one in the smooth flow of his cheap sales talk. But when, talking all the time, he unrolled an enormous piece of cloth, fitting, folding, and draping the stream of material, forming it into imaginary jackets and trousers, that whole manipulation seemed suddenly unreal, a sham comedy, a screen ironically placed to hide the true meaning of things.

The tall dark salesgirls, each with a flaw in her beauty (appropriately for that district of remaindered goods), came and went, stood in the doorways watching to see whether the business entrusted to the experienced care of the salesman had reached a suitable point. The salesman simpered and pranced around like a transvestite. One wanted to lift up his receding chin or pinch his pale powdered cheek as with a stealthy meaningful look he discreetly pointed to the trademark on the material, a trademark of transparent symbolism.

Slowly the selection of the suit gave place to the second stage of the plan. The effeminate and corrupted youth, receptive to the client's most intimate stirrings, now put before him a selection of the most peculiar trademarks, a whole library of labels, a cabinet displaying the collection of a sophisticated connoisseur. It then appeared that the outfitter's shop was only a facade behind which there was an antique shop with a collection of highly questionable books and private editions. The servile salesman opened further storerooms, filled to the ceiling with books, drawings, and photographs. These engravings and etchings were beyond our boldest expectations: not even in our dreams had we anticipated such depths of corruption, such varieties of licentiousness.

The salesgirls now walked up and down between the rows of books, their faces, like gray parchment, marked with the dark greasy pigment spots of brunettes, their shiny dark eyes shooting out sudden zigzag cockroachy looks. But even their dark blushes, the piquant beauty spots, the traces of down on their

upper lips betrayed their thick, black blood. Their overintense coloring, like that of an aromatic coffee, seemed to stain the books which they took into their olive hands, their touch seemed to run on the pages and leave in the air a dark trail of freckles, a smudge of tobacco, as does a truffle with its exciting, animal smell.

In the meantime, lasciviousness had become general. The salesman, exhausted by his eager importuning, slowly withdrew into feminine passivity. He now lay on one of the many sofas which stood between the bookshelves, wearing a pair of deeply cut silk pajamas. Some of the girls demonstrated to one another the poses and postures of the drawings on the book jackets, while others settled down to sleep on makeshift beds. The pressure on the client had eased. He was now released from the circle of eager interest and left more or less alone. The salesgirls, busy talking, ceased to pay any attention to him. Turning their backs on him they adopted arrogant poses, shifting their weight from foot to foot, making play with their frivolous footwear, abandoning their slim bodies to the serpentine movements of their limbs and thus laid siege to the excited onlooker whom they pretended to ignore behind a show of assumed indifference. This retreat was calculated to involve the guest more deeply, while appearing to leave him a free hand for his own initiative.

But let us take advantage of that moment of inattention to escape from these unexpected consequences of an innocent call at the tailor's, and slip back into the street.

No one stops us. Through the corridors of books, from between the long shelves filled with magazines and prints, we make our way out of the shop and find ourselves in that part of the Street of Crocodiles where from the higher level one can see almost its whole length down to the distant, as yet unfinished buildings of the railway station. It is, as usual in that district, a gray day, and the whole scene seems at times like a photograph in an illustrated magazine, so gray, so one-dimensional are the houses, the people, and the vehicles. Reality is as thin as paper and betrays with all its cracks its imitative character. At times

one has the impression that it is only the small section immediately before us that falls into the expected pointillistic picture of a city thoroughfare, while on either side the improvised masquerade is already disintegrating and, unable to endure, crumbles behind us into plaster and sawdust, into the storeroom of an enormous empty theater. The tenseness of an artificial pose, the assumed earnestness of a mask, an ironical pathos tremble on this facade.

But far be it from us to wish to expose this sham. Despite our better judgment we are attracted by the tawdry charm of the district. Besides, that pretense of a city has some of the features of self-parody. Rows of small one-story suburban houses alternate with many-storied buildings which, looking as if made of cardboard, are a mixture of blind office windows, of gray-glassed display windows, of fasciae of advertisements and numbers. Among the houses the crowds stream by. The street is as broad as a city boulevard, but the roadway is made, like village squares, of beaten clay, full of puddles and overgrown with grass. The street traffic of that area is a byword in the city; all its inhabitants speak about it with pride and a knowing look. That gray, impersonal crowd is rather self-conscious of its role, eager to live up to its metropolitan aspirations. All the same, despite the bustle and sense of purpose, one has the impression of a monotonous aimless wandering, of a sleepy procession of puppets. An atmosphere of strange insignificance pervades the scene. The crowd flows lazily by and, strange to say, one can see it only indistinctly; the figures pass in gentle disarray, never reaching complete sharpness of outline. Only at times do we catch among the turmoil of many heads a dark vivacious look, a black bowler hat worn at an angle, half a face split by a smile formed by lips which had just finished speaking, a foot thrust forward to take a step and fixed forever in that position.

A peculiarity of that district are the cabs, without coachmen, driving along unattended. It is not as if there were no cabbies, but mingling with the crowd and busy with a thousand affairs of their own, they do not bother about their carriages. In that area of sham and empty gestures no one pays much attention to the precise purpose of a cab ride and the passengers entrust

themselves to these erratic conveyances with the thoughtlessness which characterizes everything here. From time to time one can see them at dangerous corners, leaning far out from under the broken roof of a cab as, with the reins in their hands, they perform with some difficulty the tricky maneuver of overtaking.

There are also trams here. In them the ambition of the city councillors has achieved its greatest triumph. The appearance of these trams, though, is pitiful, for they are made of papier-mâché with warped sides dented from the misuse of many years. They often have no fronts, so that in passing one can see the passengers, sitting stiffly and behaving with great decorum. These trams are pushed by the town porters. The strangest thing of all is, however, the railway system in the Street of Crocodiles.

Occasionally, at different times of day toward the end of the week, one can see groups of people waiting at a crossroads for a train. One is never sure whether the train will come at all or where it will stop if it does. It often happens, therefore, that people wait in two different places, unable to agree where the stop is. They wait for a long time standing in a black, silent bunch alongside the barely visible lines of the track, their faces in profile: a row of pale cutout paper figures, fixed in an expression of anxious peering.

At last the train suddenly appears: one can see it coming from the expected side street, low like a snake, a miniature train with a squat puffing locomotive. It enters the black corridor, and the street darkens from the coal dust scattered by the line of carriages. The heavy breathing of the engine and the wave of a strange sad seriousness, the suppressed hurry and excitement transform the street for a moment into the hall of a railway station in the quickly falling winter dusk.

A black market in railway tickets and bribery in general are the special plagues of our city.

At the last moment, when the train is already in the station, negotiations are conducted in nervous haste with corrupt railway officials. Before these are completed, the train starts, followed slowly by a crowd of disappointed passengers who accompany it a long way down the line before finally dispersing.

The street, reduced for a moment to form an improvised station filled with gloom and the breath of distant travel, widens out again, becomes lighter and again allows the carefree crowds of chattering passersby to stroll past the shop windows—those dirty gray squares filled with shoddy goods, tall wax dummies, and barber's dolls.

Showily dressed in long lace-trimmed gowns, prostitutes have begun to circulate. They might even be the wives of hairdressers or restaurant bandleaders. They advance with a brisk rapacious step, each with some small flaw in her evil corrupted face; their eyes have a black, crooked squint, or they have hare-lips, or the tips of their noses are missing.

The inhabitants of the city are quite proud of the odor of corruption emanating from the Street of Crocodiles. "There is no need for us to go short of anything," they say proudly to themselves, "we even have truly metropolitan vices." They maintain that every woman in that district is a tart. In fact, it is enough to stare at any of them, and at once you meet an insistent clinging look which freezes you with the certainty of fulfillment. Even the schoolgirls wear their hair ribbons in a characteristic way and walk on their slim legs with a peculiar step, an impure expression in their eyes that foreshadows their future corruption.

And yet, and yet—are we to betray the last secret of that district, the carefully concealed secret of the Street of Crocodiles?

Several times during our account we have given warning signals, we have intimated delicately our reservations. An attentive reader will therefore not be unprepared for what is to follow. We spoke of the imitative, illusory character of that area, but these words have too precise and definite a meaning to describe its half-baked and undecided reality.

Our language has no definitions which would weigh, so to speak, the grade of reality, or define its suppleness. Let us say it bluntly: the misfortune of that area is that nothing ever succeeds there, nothing can ever reach a definite conclusion. Gestures hang in the air, movements are prematurely exhausted and cannot overcome a certain point of inertia. We have already

noticed the great bravura and prodigality in intentions, projects, and anticipations which are one of the characteristics of the district. It is in fact no more than a fermentation of desires, prematurely aroused and therefore impotent and empty. It is an atmosphere of excessive facility, every whim flies high, a passing excitement swells into an empty parasitic growth; a light gray vegetation of fluffy weeds, of colorless poppies sprouts forth, made from a weightless fabric of nightmares and hashish. Over the whole area there floats the lazy licentious smell of sin, and the houses, the shops, the people seem sometimes no more than a shiver on its feverish body, the gooseflesh of its febrile dreams. Nowhere as much as there do we feel threatened by possibilities, shaken by the nearness of fulfillment, pale and faint with the delightful rigidity of realization. And that is as far as it goes.

Having exceeded a certain point of tension, the tide stops and begins to ebb, the atmosphere becomes unclear and troubled, possibilities fade and decline into a void, the crazy gray poppies of excitement scatter into ashes.

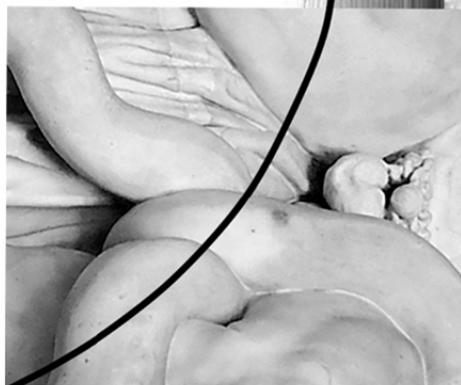
We shall always regret that, at a given moment, we have left the slightly dubious tailor's shop. We shall never be able to find it again. We shall wander from shop sign to shop sign and make a thousand mistakes. We shall enter scores of shops, see many which are similar. We shall wander along shelves upon shelves of books, look through magazines and prints, confer intimately and at length with young women of imperfect beauty, with an excessive pigmentation who yet would not be able to understand our requirements.

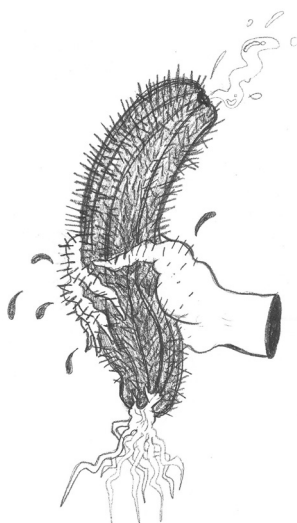
We shall get involved in misunderstandings until all our fever and excitement have spent themselves in unnecessary effort, in futile pursuit.

Our hopes were a fallacy, the suspicious appearance of the premises and of the staff were a sham, the clothes were real clothes, and the salesman had no ulterior motives. The women of the Street of Crocodiles are depraved to only a modest extent, stifled by thick layers of moral prejudice and ordinary banality. In that city of cheap human material no instincts can flourish, no dark and unusual passions can be aroused.

The Street of Crocodiles was a concession of our city to modernity and metropolitan corruption. Obviously, we were unable to afford anything better than a paper imitation, a montage of illustrations cut out from last year's moldering newspapers.

Schulz, Bruno (1934). *The Street of Crocodiles and Other Stories*.
Translated by Wieniewska, Celina (2008). UK: Penguin.





THE END OF THE JOURNEY

“...At that passed moment in my apartment in Berlin, I slept with a writer, who works as gardener. He fondled my back so roughly like planting on the soil. Our lyng bodies became moist and soft, sinking slowly into the bed in the darkness of that midnight...”

- Diary: 02.07.2014

In the darkness, I'm not sure if I left the garden or if the garden has disappeared.

I woke up in front of swiftly fleeting landscapes with my father next to me, driving.

Maybe it's all only my semi-amorous imaginations of a mysterious garden I had in a state of trance. All I have now is just a piece of souvenir. A souvenir reminds me of the place in absentia.

Ironically, I must admit, I've have never seen any of the great Chinese garden and only read about them in the book. Since the Chinese were the last to exert violence on Taiwan and at the same time its largest population, we have had to learn Taiwanese-Chinese history by heart for the past 40 years. Looking back on our complicated colonialist history and for a short time having been even the factory of the world in the modern capitalist era, everything was just a transient illusion which took so much our blood and culture just for the egoism of hegemonies.

My father is a civil engineer. He was one of those young engineers at the beginning of the era of modernization who built highways through the mountains and breakwaters on the sea side. When I was a kid, he drove me and my sister to the construction sites. There, I saw the unfinished bridge in a muddy chaos. It was as though someone had spilled rusty metals and concrete onto every place we passed. At the end of the day, we drove back home to the center of the modern city.

Outside the window lay nothing but rows of grey boxes which hardly ever let any sunshine in.

I was curious to know what my father's idea of landscape design was.

He only replied:

“Civil engineering now only has to do with mechanics and materials science.”

Anilius Scytale:

“Is the nature still immortal?”

Caiman Crocodilus:

“Yes, the nature is still immortal, the immortal part of the culture.”

ALONE WITH ME

ALONE WITH ME



CORAL
FUGUE