

environments of New Zealand, albeit within very different frameworks. Christensen analyzes the counterpoint between oral (narratives, intergenerational storytelling, metaphor) and written (maps, documents, written archives) spatial traditions to contrast these two ways of mastering. He argues that each of these methods codified the land in particular ways, with the colonizers using maps as part of the process of violent dispossession. New Zealand history, in these terms, is a history of spaces, where knowledge and practice translate to changed environments.

The epilogue rounds out the new material. Pawson and Brooking provide a conclusion, but also map out some key themes for further research. Here we find a hidden gem. Included in the epilogue is a pedagogically useful section called ‘doing environmental history’. The editors must have faced a quandary in deciding where to place this piece. Although it allows for methodological reflection after the completion of chapters, it risks being overlooked. Pawson and Brooking outline the value of interdisciplinarity, diverse perspectives, spatial scales and, to my mind the fundamental distinguishing method for this sub-discipline, that of reading ‘nature’s own archive’. New Zealand’s stories are richly told in this important volume, showing over and over again the value of critical thinking about the environment.

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Lan Yuan 蘭園: A Garden of Distant Longing. By James Beattie and Duncan Campbell, images Wynston Cooper, poetry Sue Wootton. Dunedin Chinese Gardens Trust and Shanghai Museum, Dunedin, 2013. 112pp. NZ price: \$29.99. ISBN: 9780473257996.

Lan Yuan, A Garden of Distant Longing describes the inception and construction of Dunedin’s Chinese Garden. The idea for a garden grew out of the desire for a permanent memorial to honour the contribution of early Chinese settlers to the province of Otago. Its realization was intimately linked to the sister-city status of Dunedin and Shanghai, a link that saw the project benefit from specialist advice from the prestigious Shanghai Museum and access to Chinese expertise and architectural knowledge. The garden’s structures were prefabricated in Suzhou in accordance with traditional building techniques, and at ‘friendly’ discounted prices. Most of its distinctive perforated grey rocks were obtained from Lake Tai, near Suzhou. Although, after years of botanical contact, a majority of the Chinese plants could be sourced in New Zealand, most originated in Jiangnan, the region south of the Yangtze and thus the broad area from which the first settlers came.

This book comprises a record of a remarkable joint cultural endeavour. It also represents something of a fusion itself. Its text, seamlessly composed by James Beattie and Duncan Campbell, is illustrated with Wynston Cooper’s sumptuous photographs and enhanced by Sue Wootton’s evocative poems, composed in couplets after the

classical Chinese style. *Lan Yuan* is designed to provide the information that will enable those without Chinese background, and some with it, to understand, or better understand, the conception of the garden, its historical connections, its architecture and other material aspects of its construction and, most importantly, the multiple aesthetic effects it seeks to express. That background is conveyed in rich but accessible detail in the chapters labelled 'Construction' and 'Design'. Five appendices provide specific information, from the planting plan to the translation of names and poetic couplets, and the names of those involved in the project.

The writers' erudition is lightly worn. *Lan Yuan* is less manual than companion; it is as if the reader is strolling beside a guide who – paving the way with the introduction of concepts that inform centuries of garden design, conceptions drawn from the classics and worked out in key texts of garden architecture and construction – easily relates that background to this particular garden. With its multiple views and view shafts, a Chinese garden is constructed around ideas of concealment and revelation, of expectation confounded. Effects are frequently achieved by the introduction of 'borrowed views', views that draw in larger perspectives from outside. Illusion is fostered by the presence of water. It is a feature that is stunningly evident in this garden, as many of the photographs illustrate. The most exquisitely symmetrical among them is a small photograph entitled 'Reflections on Jade' (p.66). Plants are chosen and placed with regard to their symbolic properties as well as in relation to the buildings and rock-work. Strollers are provided with this knowledge and examples, and invited to apply it. The lush photographs and meticulously placed poems embody conceptions particular to explicated philosophical and aesthetic principles, and so become enactments of ideals like the balance of light and shade, of still and moving, of straight and winding, of near and far.

If the rise and fall, and restoration, of private gardens in premodern China may be taken as reflective not merely of the fortunes of their owners but also of dynastic change more generally, the Dunedin public garden may also be regarded as marking a historical transformation – of the relations between Chinese and non-Chinese in New Zealand. For behind the creation of *Lan Yuan*, the southernmost Chinese garden, is a story as full of historical contrast as Chinese philosophy is replete with dualisms. Underpinning its existence is a trajectory that saw the Chinese, who for many decades had endured social and legal discrimination, gradually acquire the status of equal citizens. In Otago, it was the cultural respect implied in the offer to present a 'China week' as part of the province's 150th anniversary celebrations that generated a complementary initiative from the Chinese community: the gift of a memorial in the form of a southern Chinese garden.

Movingly, the book is dedicated to the memory of the first generation of Cantonese settlers in Otago, and to their descendants. The garden's English designation, 'A Garden of Distant Longing', is to be read in the context of ancestor worship and the longing of earlier Chinese to return to their ancestral villages to be buried. Extraordinary efforts were made to carry out this imperative, including the transportation home of the bones of many of those who had died here. But, shadowing the words *Distant Longing*, we can find another, geographically opposite, momentum. The English description

might also cover the desire that drove the first Chinese to leave their homeland for the gold fields of Australia and New Zealand. The name 'new gold mountain' applied to Dunedin and its hinterland, as to other places in the British colonial world, pinpoints the motive that drove them here, the desire for prosperity.

A private Chinese garden, such as the one which became the model for Lan Yuan, the Garden of the Master of the Fishing Nets, functioned as a repository of cultural and literary allusion and was itself expected to generate those products of high culture, occasional poems, prose accounts and painted representations. It was those responses that would serve to keep the original garden alive when it became subject to change and decay. It is poignant to reflect that such a garden could hardly have been an ideal to which the original miners aspired. On the other hand, it does not seem fanciful to see in the work of the garden's excavation and planting a connection with the occupation into which many of the miners, and subsequent generations of Chinese settlers, next moved: that of market gardening.

The existence of a Chinese garden set on New Zealand soil, comprised of materials sourced from Jiangnan and containing many of the same plants that grow in Suzhou gardens, represents a piece of China in New Zealand. In the twenty-first century the descendants of the Otago settlers are encouraged to regard the Garden as a place that acknowledges their history as it anchors them to this country. One needs little encouragement to view the beautiful, tranquil, inspiring, social space represented here as a site that might, in the way of the old gardens on which it is modelled, spur both Chinese and non-Chinese visitors to fresh responses. This finely thought out and beautifully executed introduction might stand as the first of them.

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Creature Comforts: New Zealanders and Their Pets: An Illustrated History. By Nancy Swarbrick. Otago University Press, Dunedin, 2013. 292pp. NZ Price: \$55. ISBN: 9781877578618.

A New Zealand Book of Beasts: Animals in Our Culture, History and Everyday Life. By Annie Potts, Philip Armstrong, Deidre Brown. Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2013. 288pp. NZ price: \$49.99. ISBN: 9781869407728.

It is odd how things have their moment. Both of these books claim a novel field, but they approach it in very different ways and from different theoretical and methodological standpoints. Nancy Swarbrick's illustrated history is focused on the history of pets, and *A Book of New Zealand Beasts* engages with a spectrum of animals, from farmed, pet, wild and 'pest' animals to symbolic and imagined beasts in art. Each caters to a rather different readership, and perhaps a different kind of history.