

RODGER MARTIN

TEA CEREMONY AT HONGQIAO SCHOOL OF POETRY AND MUSIC, SLENDER WEST LAKE

For Bu Lan-Chen, Yangzhou, 2018

Within the Academy of Rainbows, its courtyard
bounded by water sculpted stone,
a girl, silk soft, sits behind a silent table
set with five stencilled, porcelain cups.
Incense rises from an alembic at one side;
on the other, fine tea fills a small, carved teak scoop.
In the corner, a second girl plucks her *guqin*; its music
meanders as if through a mountain meadow
and returns to the girl in silk, who sifts leaves from teak
into a bowl and pours steaming water over them.
Time, like the vapour rising from the tea, disappears.

Forearm formal as a crane, she pours
from the lip of the bowl into a ceramic teapot,
music, soft as the incense, wafts with the steeping.
Then this homage to the crane pours again
from teapot spout into five cups.

Five patrons each tap two fingers twice.
Ten fingers meditate around each cup.
Five times she does this, five times they tap.
Five times they sip. The *guqin*'s pentatonic scale
rises and falls like the hills of Jiangsu.

If heaven watches from the clouds
and the earth, listening, stretches below,
the red-crowned crane who both walks the earth
and flies with heaven has gifted this centre,
this middle, this rainbow bridge,
to man, water, and tea.

Translated by Shao-Pin Luo

茶道，虹桥艺术学校，瘦西湖
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虹桥艺术学校
水雕石环绕的庭院中，
柔如丝的女孩，静静地坐着
桌上设有五个纹印瓷杯。
一边，焚香炉中香气缭绕上升；
另一边，雕木茶匙里盛满了珍茶。
角落上，另一个女孩手拨着古琴；
音乐蜿蜒仿佛穿过高山草甸
再回返到着丝的女孩。她将柚木匙中的茶叶
拨入茶碗，再泼入沸水。
时间，如茶中蒸汽，冉冉飘失。

女孩扬起的手臂，如起重机般庄重，如云鹤般优雅，
茶水从碗唇注入茶海，
音乐，柔如香火，随着茶的浸泡而飘荡。
随后，手臂再次优雅升降，
茶水从茶海倾入茶杯。

五位顾客每人轻点两下手指；
十个手指凝思于每个杯沿。
五次她斟茶，五次他们敲点，
五次他们啜饮。古琴的五声音阶
如江苏的山丘起伏不定。

倘若上天从云端俯首观望
地球倾听着延伸无限，
那丹顶鹤，既行走在大地
又飞翔于天空，将一个中心，
一种中道，一座彩虹桥，
赠予了人，水，还有茶。