What do people do in gardens? What goes on in a garden where, in Robert Pogue Harrison's happy phrase, the human and the nonhuman natural world are “conjugated” in the same space and time? A very long tradition of visual and verbal representation, found in both East and West, insists on strong affinities between the cultivation of gardens and the cultivation of certain human, sociable arts – conversation, music, reading and writing – but not, curiously, drawing or painting. What is particular to the practice of verbal or musical arts that lends their practice, more readily than that of the visual arts, to our imaginations of what people do when they inhabit the time and place of a garden? What can the presence or absence of an art tell us about how we think about gardens?